

Dear Mr. Henshaw

by Beverly Cleary

1984 Newbery Medal Winner



A Teaching Guide

by Margaret Whisnant



Objective Tests
with
Thinking and Writing Prompts
and
Answer Keys

for
Dear Mr. Henshaw

By Beverly Cleary

1984 Newbery Winner

A Teaching Guide

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DEAR MR. HENSHAW

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Pages 1-15

May 12-November 20

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. When Leigh Botts was in second grade (A) his teacher read Mr. Henshaw's book to the class, (B) his mother read Mr. Henshaw's book to him, (C) his grandmother gave him a copy of Mr. Henshaw's book.
- _____ 2. Which of the following was not a word Leigh misspelled in the first letter to Mr. Henshaw? (A) friend, (B) liked, (C) teacher.
- _____ 3. In third grade, Leigh (A) bought a copy of **Ways to Amuse a Dog** (B) read **Ways to Amuse a Dog**, (C) wrote three letters to Mr. Henshaw.
- _____ 4. In fourth grade, Leigh (A) made a diorama of **Ways to Amuse a Dog**, (B) got his own dog, (C) decided he didn't like Mr. Henshaw's book.
- _____ 5. Leigh asked Mr. Henshaw to answer his letter (A) in his own handwriting, (B) by the end of the day, (C) so he would get an A in reading.



- _____ 6. Leigh wanted to be (A) a dog trainer, (B) an astronaut, (C) a famous book writer.
- _____ 7. Leigh sent a picture of himself to Mr. Henshaw (A) because he wanted to include an enclosure in the letter, (B) so Mr. Henshaw would know who Leigh Botts was, (C) because Mr. Henshaw asked him to.
- _____ 8. In fifth grade, Leigh (A) gave a report on **Ways to Amuse a Dog** (B) bought a copy of **Ways to Amuse a Dog**, (C) made a C in reading.
- _____ 9. Leigh read **Moose on Toast** because (A) he was tired of **Ways to Amuse a Dog**, (B) his teacher assigned it, (C) Mr. Henshaw suggested it.

DEAR MR. HENSHAW

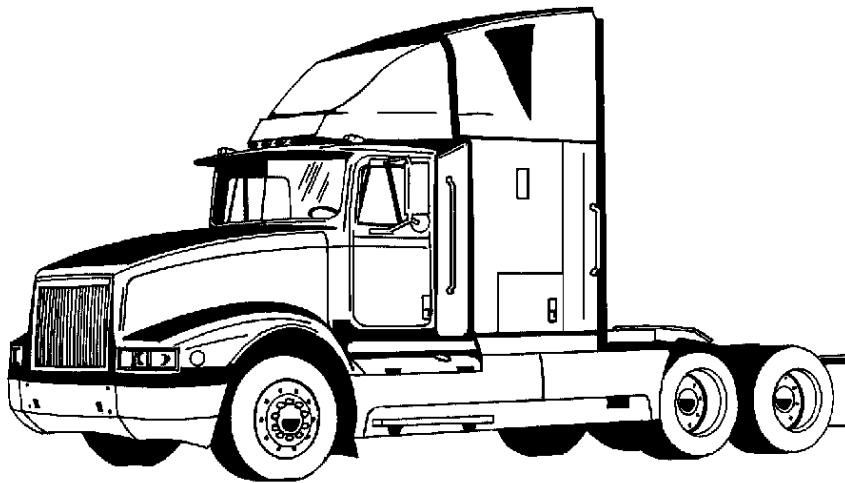
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Pages 16-33

November 22-December 4

Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Did Mother refuse to have the TV repaired because she felt it was rotting Leigh's brain?
- _____ 2. Did Leigh and his parents once live in a mobile home park outside Bakersfield, California?
- _____ 3. Did Leigh write that his dad's dream of owning his own truck was the reason his parents got divorced?



- _____ 4. Did Bandit leave with Leigh's dad?
- _____ 5. Did Leigh's mom work part time for a catering service?
- _____ 6. Was Leigh's mother away from home most of the time because she worked and was also studying to be a nurse?
- _____ 7. Did Leigh and his mother move to a really little house on California's Central Coast after the divorce?
- _____ 8. Did Leigh spend a lot of time hanging around the gas station and Taco King near his house?
- _____ 9. Did Leigh's dad like to take Bandit in his truck because the dog helped him stay awake on long hauls?
- _____ 10. Was Leigh happy about writing answers to Mr. Henshaw's questions?

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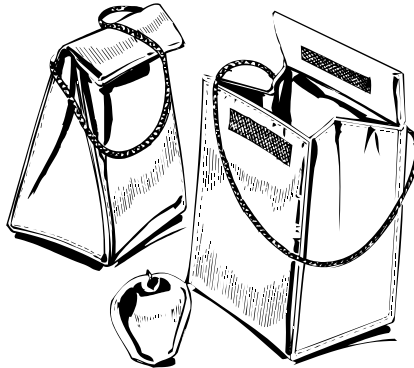
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December 12-Tuesday, January 9

Wyoming	a partition	Joe Kelly	Mr. Fridley
Miss Martinez	Oregon	potatoes	shoes
retainers	a quilted down jacket	a diary	cheesecake
the bear	Katy	a burglar alarm	Leigh
Leigh's mom	Dear Mr. Pretend Henshaw	Leigh's dad	Mr. Henshaw

From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that fits each clue below and write it in the blank. Each answer will be **used only once**.

- _____ 1. When Mr. Fridley raised the California flag, this was upside down.
- _____ 2. Someone took this from Leigh's lunchbag even though he put a fictitious name on it.



- _____ 3 . He asked Leigh to help him raise the flags each morning.
- _____ 4. One Christmas, Leigh and his parents made up songs about seeing single ones of these along the highway.
- _____ 5. Leigh's father phoned him from here.
- _____ 6. She said it took two people to get a divorce.
- _____ 7. Mr. Fridley suggested Leigh put one of these on his lunchbag.
- _____ 8. She was Leigh's teacher.
- _____ 9. The fictitious name Leigh put on his lunchbag.
- _____ 10. This was Leigh's Christmas gift from his father.
- _____ 11. Mr. Henshaw sent Leigh a postcard from here.

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Pages 50-64

Wednesday, January 10-Wednesday, January 31

Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- _____ 1. Leigh's plan to cover his lunchbag with scotch tape proved to be a good idea.
- _____ 2. One of Mr. Henshaw's tips to Leigh on how to be a writer was to *listen*.
- _____ 3. Leigh's mother said his dad was in love with a truck.
- _____ 4. The librarian allowed Leigh to be the first person to read the school's copy of Mr. Henshaw's new book.
- _____ 5. Leigh did not like ***Beggar Bears*** because it was not funny.
- _____ 6. Sometimes, Leigh worried that something might happen to his mom.
- _____ 7. Leigh received the promised phone call from his dad.
- _____ 8. Leigh thought he felt better when he wrote about things in his diary.



- _____ 9. Leigh's teacher said he should write a story for the young authors' book the school was planning to publish.
- _____ 10. Leigh got a postcard from his dad and a postcard from Mr. Henshaw on the same day.

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Something to Think About. . . Something to Write About. . .

Leigh began writing to Mr. Henshaw when he was in second grade after his teacher read ***Ways to Amuse a Dog*** to his class.

- Why do you suppose Leigh kept using Mr. Henshaw's book for class projects until he was in fifth grade?
 - Find three examples from his series of letters to Mr. Henshaw that show how Leigh is making progress both as a student and as a person.
 - How do you know that something happened to Leigh between fifth and sixth grades?
-

In his November 15th answer to Leigh's letter, Mr. Henshaw included a list of questions.

- How does Mr. Henshaw reveal that he has a sense of humor?
 - How would you characterize Mr. Henshaw's comments about the purple monster who ate children? *humorous irritating sarcastic mean cynical critical*
Use the definition of the word you chose in your answer.
 - Do you believe it occurred to Mr. Henshaw that his letter might be read aloud to a class and he included the cutting remarks on purpose? Explain.
 - Do you think Mr. Henshaw did the right thing in refusing to read Leigh's work and in sending a list of questions for him to answer? Why or why not?
-

Leigh's mother insisted that he answer Mr. Henshaw's questions and follow his tips for being an author.

- From Mr. Henshaw's point of view, how did Leigh's mother do the right thing?
- Based on the letter that he received from Leigh, how do you suppose Mr. Henshaw would describe Leigh's life after his parent's divorce? Explain your choice.

unhappy boring uncertain lonesome angry improved stable

About Your Teaching Guide

Objective Tests

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

Rationale:

Focus on the Plot. . .

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students’ ability to **Summarize**: With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Report the News: Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

Twist the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

The Characters. . .

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character’s personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from ***Something to Think About, Something to Write About***, is a well of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students’ vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character’s personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did or said something—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying **implied meaning**. **Story clues** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

Discussion Guide Capability. . .

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as *fun*.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)*. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Organization. . .

Chapter-specific activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Short Answer Questions** and **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel.

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages are a teacher's smorgasbord of culminating possibilities.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A broad spectrum of **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of this component. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Activities. . .

Something to Think About/Something to Write About includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a word or a group of words to describe a character's personality or behavior. The following example is from *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Opal comforted Winn-Dixie during thunderstorms, holding on to him tight so that he wouldn't run away. She decided that the best way to comfort Gloria was to read a book to her, loud enough to keep the ghosts away.

From the list of words below, all of which can correctly describe Opal's behavior, which *two* do you think are the best? Cite facts from the story and the words' definitions to support your choices.

<i>empathetic</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>nurturing</i>	<i>warmhearted</i>
<i>sympathetic</i>	<i>loving</i>	<i>devoted</i>	<i>benevolent</i>
<i>unselfish</i>	<i>generous</i>	<i>thoughtful</i>	<i>considerate</i>

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have varying strengths of meaning. It is the student's task to analyze both the character's behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Teachers may opt to narrow the choices to fewer words, choose words for individual students, divide the class into groups and offer a specific set of words to each group, or use the assignment as it is written. Whatever the technique, it is here that the word *nice* can be knocked off the shelf, shattered on the floor, and swept out the door. No longer necessary. Useless. Gone!

Other items in this section challenge students to . . .

<i>create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps,</i>	<i>make predictions</i>
<i>form opinions and theories</i>	<i>understand point of view</i>
<i>cite “evidence” from the story to support their</i>	<i>imagine</i>
<i>explanations and opinions</i>	<i>categorize</i>
<i>connect personal experience to story situations</i>	<i>engage in research and data gathering</i>
<i>become familiar with and identify literary elements</i>	<i>recognize and perceive story theme(s)</i>
<i>analyze story characters and events</i>	

Note: Inclusion of activities will vary with each novel title.

Options, options, and more options. . .

Something to Think About, Something to Write About is purposely jam-packed to give teachers **pick-and-choose options** for

<i>individualizing assignments</i>	<i>homework</i>
<i>group work</i>	<i>short-term and long-term projects</i>
<i>whole class activities</i>	<i>differentiating assignments for two or more classes</i>
<i>capitalizing on student interest</i>	

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packets are designed for use as supplementary material. They are not intended to be a total program. I do hope, however, that this work can provide a core resource for busy teachers and eager students as they strive to become competent readers.

Author

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