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Dramatic Publishing

Beverly Cleary's
Ramona Quimby

*AATE Distinguished Play
Award Winner*



Comedy
Dramatized by Len Jenkin

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A.A.T.E.
Distinguished Play
Award Winner

Beverly Cleary

Len Jenkin

Ramona Quimby

Comedy. Dramatized by Len Jenkin.

From Beverly Cleary's books.

Cast: 5m., 9w., extras. Unpredictable. Exasperating. Boisterous and independent. That's Ramona Quimby for you. Always aggravating her older sister, Beezus, getting into trouble and "making a big, noisy fuss" when things don't go her way. As narrator, Beezus introduces the family and friends and thereby sets the scene for the collection of vignettes that trace Ramona's tumultuous third-grade year. The characters and the material, adapted by Obie Award-winning playwright Len Jenkin, are very "today." The problems facing the Quimbys are problems common to many families, and their togetherness in tackling the sacrifices and adjustments required when Dad is fired from his job is a clear demonstration of traditional family values. Along with the discovery that life is not always fair, eventually Ramona and Beezus come to realize that although sisters may not be easy, they can be pretty good to have around. *Unit set. Approx. running time: 1 hour.*

Front cover: Seattle Children's Theatre.
(l-r) Megan Mostyn-Brown, Christopher Bloch and Emily Mostyn-Brown.
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RAMONA QUIMBY

by
LEN JENKIN

From the novels of
BEVERLY CLEARY



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(RAMONA QUIMBY)

Cover design by Susan Carle. Cover photo by Cheryl Walsh Bellville. *Used by permission.* The Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis production, featuring (left to right) Megan Mostyn-Brown (Beezus), Christopher Bloch (Robert Quimby) and Emily Mostyn-Brown (Ramona).

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RAMONA QUIMBY

A Full Length Play
For Five Males and Nine Females, Extras

CHARACTERS

- RAMONA QUIMBY an imaginative, lively third-grader
who is sometimes wistful or sad
- BEEZUS QUIMBY . . . a conscientious older sister who loves,
but is often exasperated with, Ramona
- DOROTHY QUIMBY . . . a loving mother who is often tired
- BOB QUIMBY . a father who is fun when he isn't down-hearted
- AUNT BEA Dorothy Quimby's younger sister,
a third-grade teacher
- HOWIE KEMP serious third-grade friend of Ramona's
- UNCLE HOBART Howie's rugged uncle
who works in oil fields, is full of fun, and likes to tease
- MRS. KEMP Howie's humorless grandmother
and Ramona's sitter
- MRS. GRIGGS strict third-grade teacher doing her job
- SUSAN . . vain third-grader who doesn't like Ramona. Jealous.
- TAMMY a high-school waitress
- SELMA too chic saleswoman with stylish hair
- MR. FROST large man with white beard
- OLD MAN lonely man
wearing what are probably his son's old clothes

DOCTOR
DIRECTOR

Miscellaneous third-graders, wedding guests, Cub Scouts and
Brownies, Ramona's reflections in mirror.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *Ramona Quimby*...

“It was fun to work on a play for children that mostly avoided ‘sweet’ situations and resolutions. This play is wise and funny. It speaks to today’s kids—and our audience loved it.”

City of Davenport Parks Recreation, Davenport, Iowa

“Well loved by cast and audience alike! *Ramona* speaks to a variety of ages. Can’t wait to produce *Henry and Ramona*!”

Darlene Lentz, Sand/Storybook Theater Center, Deland, Fla.

“Fast-paced, funny, yet poignant interpretation of the trials and triumphs of growing up, in addition to reinforcing family values in a society ‘full of really crazy, scary stuff.’ ”

Jane Meier, Rundlett Middle School, Concord, N.H.

“This was, by far, our best-received production in our history. Just from word of mouth, our final performance was ‘standing room only.’ Since our entrances came from various parts of the entire auditorium, we had to literally step around and over people.”

*Scott Marcum, Oz Drama Group,
Blockton, Iowa*

RAMONA QUIMBY

(Closed curtain. A yellow leaf falls in the light. Then another. More leaves fly by. It's autumn.

BEEZUS enters, jacket, jeans.)

BEEZUS. Hi. My name is Beatrice Quimby and my job is to help you. Usually, at a play like this, or at the movies, we see people really different from us: princesses, or detectives, or presidents or even mermaids. Or people who lived a long time ago, or even in the future. At school, you learn a lot more about people really different from you, like a unit on Eskimos where you study igloos and walruses and blubber. So I thought, what about us? People like you see in the street every day—or even like your own family. It might be pretty neat if we took a good look close to home. So my idea for this play, *Ramona Quimby*, is to take us all to my house. Come on, I'll show you around.

(BEEZUS opens the stage curtain, revealing Klickitat Street.)

BEEZUS. If you watch TV news, it looks like the whole world is full of really crazy, scary stuff. Wars, and homeless people, and all—but the street we live on, Klickitat Street, is just there, in a nice sort of quiet way. Sprinklers and bikes and garage door openers, and the rows of houses

full of couples and their kids. A big bomb could drop on Washington, D.C., where the president is, and on Klickitat Street everybody would still mow their lawn. Sometimes I wonder what would happen if we didn't mow, but we always do.

SCENE TWO

(RAMONA QUIMBY enters. She looks over the street, BEEZUS, and the audience.)

BEEZUS. My mom says it looks nicer, and Dad says we wouldn't want our place to be an eyesore.

RAMONA. If we didn't cut the lawn there'd be a jungle—with armadillos and gila monsters and venus flytraps, and we'd get lost in it and never come out.

BEEZUS. That's my little sister Ramona. She exaggerates.

RAMONA. Ramona Geraldine Quimby. And her name is Beezus.

BEEZUS. Ramona! Let me explain...everybody calls me Beezus 'cause when she was a baby she couldn't say my name right. Beezus! Beezus! It stuck. She can be a pest sometimes.

RAMONA. If I am a pest, you are a rotten dinosaur egg.

BEEZUS. Let's ignore that, shall we.

(MRS. KEMP appears outside the Kemp house. She waters the flowers.)

BEEZUS. There's Howie's grandma, Mrs. Kemp. She lives next door with Howie. She used to baby-sit for me, and

now if Mom's busy and I'm off at Pamela's or someplace, she baby-sits for Ramona. *(Calling over.)* Mrs. Kemp!

MRS. KEMP *(turns toward BEEZUS, spots the audience.)*

Hello, Beezus. Who are all these people?

BEEZUS. Friends of mine.

RAMONA. Mine, too!

MRS. KEMP. Oh, hello, Ramona. Well, make sure they don't trample the lawn. *(Ad libs. MRS. KEMP heads off inside.)*

BEEZUS. She watches soap operas on TV. All day.

RAMONA. And her hair is getting thinner, too.

(An OLD MAN in a straw hat crosses the stage. He wears a slightly frayed dark suit, like an eccentric elderly academic.)

BEEZUS. Lots of other people live around here. Some of them are nice. *(OLD MAN looks curiously at BEEZUS and RAMONA as he crosses. Then he salutes energetically in their direction.)* Some are pretty weird.

(As OLD MAN salutes, a troop of marching CUB SCOUTS in uniforms sweeps past. A troop of BROWNIES, all holding boxes of cookies, enters opposite the CUB SCOUTS, crosses.)

CUB SCOUTS and BROWNIES.

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;

HAVE TO MARCH MY BIKE'S GOT A FLAT
DOWN THE STREET CALLED KLUCKITAT

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;
WALKED ON A LAWN, GOT SPRAYED BY A HOSE
IN THE CITY OF THE ROSE
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT;
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT.

CUB SCOUT LEADER. Corps, halt! Scout Law Formation!
(*Whistle.*) Corps, ten hut!

BROWNIE LEADER. Scout Motto!

SCOUTS. BE PREPARED!

CUB SCOUT LEADER. Scout Law!

BROWNIE and CUB SCOUT LEADERS. Ready and...(ALL
SCOUTS do the Scout Law in sign language.)

CUB SCOUT LEADER. Scouts...FALL OUT!

BEEZUS. And then some are just always around.

(As all SCOUTS march off, MR. QUIMBY enters, goes purposefully across the stage. He's wearing a winter hat with earflaps, and holds a heavy winter jacket.)

MR. QUIMBY. Beezus, don't forget to tell them about your sister.

BEEZUS. I did. I told 'em already. Here's my dad, Mr. Robert Quimby. (*MR. QUIMBY takes a bow.*) He's a pretty wonderful dad. He takes us all to fun places when the family budget can afford it. If you've got a school problem, you should ask him about it. He knows stuff about almost everything.

MR. QUIMBY (*modestly*). Beezus, you're exaggerating.

BEEZUS. Am not. I am especially proud of my dad because he quit smoking two weeks ago, which was pretty tough to do.

MR. QUIMBY. It's still tough. And don't forget your Aunt Bea. Santa's helper is late for the North Pole. Have to run.

BEEZUS. That's a joke. My dad works in a frozen food warehouse. He'd like to be a teacher, but he can't right now. He's got to find time to go to college first.

RAMONA. He drives a fork-lift, whatever that is.

BEEZUS. As I was saying before all these interruptions, Klickitat Street is one of those places that's—well, sort of regular. And the next street over is pretty much like it, and the one after that, till you get to the highway.

RAMONA. Aunt Bea has a yellow convertible.

BEEZUS. It's really comfy here in a way I guess you could only understand if you...

RAMONA. Aunt Bea lives in the tallest building in the city.

BEEZUS. All right, Ramona. We'll introduce Aunt Bea, who lives in an apartment.

(In the distance, BEA appears in her apartment window. She is hip and fairly glamorous. Interesting music plays.)

BEEZUS. She's a third grade teacher. Ramona thinks she is the coolest person in the entire world.

RAMONA. Because she is. Aunt Bea has an apartment you get into with a buzzer. *(Pressing one finger onto the set somewhere. A loud buzzer sounds. BEA hears it, looks out her window, sees RAMONA and BEEZUS.)*

BEA. Who are those fantastic looking girls down there?

RAMONA. Ramona!

BEEZUS. And Beezus!

BEA. My own nieces! I thought so, but you both look so grownup I wasn't sure. What do you say we play hooky and go shopping for bubble bath and fabulous hats. (*RAMONA heads toward BEA, but BEEZUS grabs her and holds her back.*)

BEEZUS. Aunt Bea, you know we can't. It's the first day of school.

BEA. Neither can I, really, but it's a good idea. For another day. Have a fabulous first! Don't let it get boring! (*BEA laughs and disappears. The light in her apartment window goes out.*)

(*HOWIE KEMP appears on Klickitat Street. He's carrying a package.*)

HOWIE. RAMONA!

BEEZUS. It's Howie. Ramona's best friend, and our next door neighbor.

HOWIE. Hey, Ramona. Day one of third grade! We don't wanna be late.

BEEZUS (*looks at watch. To audience*). I got to get to school myself. I'll tell you more later. It may look a little ordinary around here, but once you...

RAMONA. A car hit a telephone pole. You should tell about that.

BEEZUS (*trying to leave for school*). Ramona, I'm trying to calmly introduce the neighborhood, so people can learn how we live here.

RAMONA. The telephone pole's in the neighborhood.

BEEZUS. Don't butt in, okay? (*BEEZUS exits. RAMONA shrugs, turns to HOWIE.*)

RAMONA. I wanna tease the second graders, like we got teased last year.

RAMONA and HOWIE. Second grade baby, stick your head in gravy, wash it out with bubble gum and send it to the navy!

(MRS. QUIMBY appears in front of her house.)

MRS. QUIMBY. Ramona, sweetie, you don't want to be late, and start off on entirely the wrong foot with Mrs. Griggs.

RAMONA. That's my mom. Her job is taking care of everyone. Me and Beezus, and my dad. She's very smart, and bakes amazing cookies that are better than anything except maybe Oreos. Or Ding-Dongs.

MRS. QUIMBY. Ramona! Off to school!

RAMONA. Mom, I'm talking to the audience.

MRS. QUIMBY. That's Beezus' job.

RAMONA. Why don't I get to...

MRS. QUIMBY. Because Beezus is older. Now go off to school.

HOWIE. Race you to the school yard!

RAMONA and HOWIE. Second grade baby, stick your head in gravy...*(RAMONA and HOWIE run off. Klickitat Street is gone.)*

SCENE THREE

(A school yard fence appears. A sign reads: GLENWOOD SCHOOL)

SUSAN, with a beautiful head of curls, dressed for third grade success. She's carrying a package. HOWIE races on, followed by RAMONA.)

SUSAN. Hi, I'm Susan.

HOWIE. Hi, I'm Howie.

RAMONA. I'm Ramona.

SUSAN (*opens her glitzy shopping bag. She pulls out a gorgeous, curly-haired doll that looks exactly like herself.*
This is Tiffany.

HOWIE. No kidding.

SCENE FOUR

(A bell rings. MRS. GRIGGS appears, along with the three desk/chairs of the classroom. RAMONA, HOWIE and SUSAN take seats, sit nervously at attention. MRS. GRIGGS is stern and domineering.)

MRS. GRIGGS. Good morning, class.

ALL. Good morning, Mrs. Griggs.

MRS. GRIGGS. Now class, in kindergarten we have cookies and juice, play "London Bridge," and have fun.

HOWIE. London bridge is fall...

RAMONA. Shhh...Howie.

MRS. GRIGGS. In second grade, we read about Dick and Jane, play dodgeball, and still have fun. You are now in third grade. Fun is not allowed in this classroom. We are here to learn. Any questions?

(As MRS. GRIGGS sternly strolls the class, BEEZUS appears in another area.)

BEEZUS. Oops! I forgot to tell Ramona. First day in Griggs' class is always Show and Tell. She sent a note to Mom in

the mail, but that was the day Ramona turned all the letters into paper airplanes. Uh oh...*(BEEZUS is gone.)*

MRS. GRIGGS. I'm sure all of you are ready for Show and Tell.

ALL *(RAMONA with surprise and fear)*. Yes, Mrs. Griggs. *(RAMONA desperately considers everything within her reach as an object for Show and Tell—a hair clip, a dirty Kleenex, shoes. It's hopeless.)*

MRS. GRIGGS. Howie Kemp, what do you have for us?

HOWIE. My brick factory! *(He comes forward with his paper bag tied with twine. He unties it, takes a brick out, puts it on a desk.)* This is how I make bricks. *(He takes out a hammer, and smashes the brick to pieces. Brick dust and chips fly everywhere. He takes out another brick, lays it carefully where the first one was.)* Good work, men! Make more bricks! *(He raises his hammer again.)*

MRS. GRIGGS. That's quite enough bricks, Howie. Thank you for sharing. Susan? *(HOWIE sits, as SUSAN comes into the spotlight with her doll.)*

SUSAN. This is Tiffany. She has a beautiful new dress, and she's all ready to go shopping at the mall. First she'll go to Toys R Us, and then to Kandy Kitchen, and then...

MRS. GRIGGS. Thank you for sharing, Susan. Yours was an excellent example for Show and Tell. *(As SUSAN takes her seat...)*

RAMONA *(reaches into her pocket, takes out a small beat-up doll with blue hair)*. This is Chevrolet.

SUSAN. Nobody names a doll Chevrolet. That's dumb.

RAMONA. It's French. My Aunt Bea gave her to me, and she's named after my aunt's car.

SUSAN. What if your aunt drove a Mack truck? Would you name your doll Mack Truck?

HOWIE. I would.

RAMONA. No. But Chevrolet is the most beautiful name in the world. It sounds like a fairy tale name.

MRS. GRIGGS. Ramona Quimby! An overactive imagination leads to daydreaming, idleness, and wanting all sorts of things you can never have. Yours will get you in a lot of trouble in this class—someday. Class, open your readers to page 42. Today we're going to hear a lovely fairy tale. *Hansel and Gretel.* (Reading.) "Once upon a time, in a deep dark forest, lived a poor woodcutter and his children, Hansel and Gretel. One day... (MRS. GRIGGS' voice fades under, as *Glenwood School disappears.* RAMONA rises, begins to drop crumbs out of her pocket in imitation of Gretel in the story, as she walks home.)

SCENE FIVE

(*Klickitat Street, and then in the Quimby living room.*)

BEEZUS. Ramona! What are you doing? You're making a mess.

RAMONA. My father is a poor woodcutter. In Germany.

BEEZUS. Your father works in a frozen food warehouse. Two miles away. On Grand Avenue near the shopping mall.

RAMONA. I have to leave this trail of crumbs so he can find me at the house of the wicked witch.

BEEZUS. Witch?

RAMONA. Mrs. Griggs. She hates me, Beezus.

BEEZUS. Griggs hates everyone. She's a sourpuss, but she's really not that bad. Just try to go along with her. What are those crumbs?