


Beverly Cleary

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Beverly Cleary, née **Beverly Atlee Bunn**, (born April 12, 1916, McMinnville, Oregon, U.S.—died March 25, 2021, Carmel, California), American children’s writer whose award-winning books are lively, humorous portrayals of problems and events faced in real life by school-aged girls and boys.



Beverly Cleary

Beverly Cleary, 1971.

State Library Photograph Collection,
1851–1990, Washington State Archives,
Digital Archives,
<http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov>

Beverly Bunn lived on a farm near Yamhill, Oregon, before moving to Portland—the setting of many of her books—when she was six. She was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned a B.A. in 1938, and at the University of Washington, where she took a second degree in library science the following year. From 1939 to 1940 she was a children’s librarian at the public library in Yakima, Washington. In 1940 she eloped with Clarence T. Cleary. Their twin children later became models for her fictional fourth-

grader twins, Mitch and Amy. After serving as the post librarian at the U.S. Army Hospital in Oakland, California, from 1942 to 1945, Cleary became a full-time writer for young people.

In 1950 her first book, *Henry Huggins*, was published, and, ever since, middle-grade schoolchildren have enjoyed reading about the adventures of its eponymous hero and his friends, including Beezus and Ramona Quimby, on Klickitat Street, a real street near Cleary’s childhood home in Portland. Cleary’s books realistically portray ordinary children in search of fun and friendship. Her adventurous and mischievous characters attempt to find reasonable solutions to the problems that they confront, such as an unsympathetic teacher or the discovery of a stray dog. Cleary was praised for treating children’s concerns with both seriousness and gentle humour. Among the perennial favourites are *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* (1965), *Runaway Ralph* (1970), and the Ramona series, whose notable titles include *Ramona the Pest* (1968), *Ramona and Her Father* (1977), and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* (1981).

Cleary, the recipient of many awards, won a Newbery Medal in 1984 for *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983), an epistolary novel about a boy who copes with his parents' divorce by writing to his favourite author. She also had several of her works adapted for television, and in 2010 *Ramona and Beezus*, a film adaptation that draws from several titles of the Ramona series, was released. In addition to more than 35 works of fiction for children and young adults, Cleary also published the volumes of memoirs *A Girl from Yamhill* (1988) and *My Own Two Feet* (1995).

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