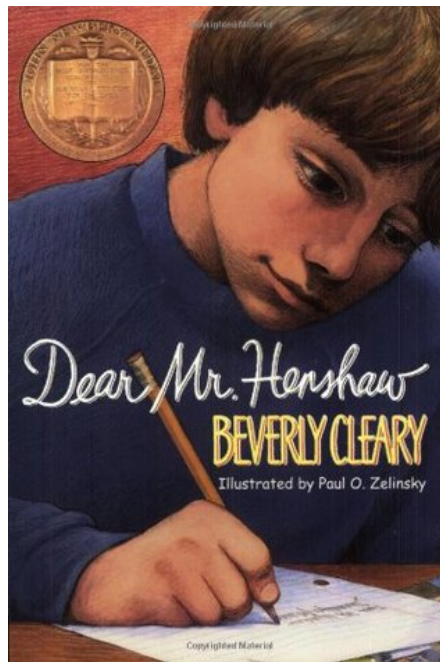




Dear Mr. Henshaw

Beverly Cleary , Paul O. Zelinsky (Illustrations)

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Beverly Cleary's timeless Newbery Medal-winning book explores difficult topics like divorce, insecurity, and bullying through the thoughts and emotions of a sixth-grade boy as he writes to his favorite author, Boyd Henshaw.

After his parents separate, Leigh Botts moves to a new town with his mother. Struggling to make friends and deal with his anger toward his absent father, Leigh loses himself in a class assignment in which he must write to his favorite author. When Mr. Henshaw responds, the two form an unexpected friendship that will change Leigh's life forever.

From the beloved author of the Henry Huggins, Ramona Quimby, and Ralph S. Mouse series comes an epistolary novel about how to navigate and heal from life's growing pains.

Dear Mr. Henshaw Details

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Author : Beverly Cleary , Paul O. Zelinsky (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Dear Mr. Henshaw for online ebook

Brina says

One of my comfort reads as a kid was Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary. I read my copy enough times to leave the pages tattered. This week my first grader brought a copy home from her school library, and I could not resist reading along with her. As it is always a struggle to for me to find quality books for kids, I figured it was time for a trip down memory lane, and, as always, Beverly Cleary does not disappoint her readers.

Leigh Botts is a fifth grader whose parents have just gotten divorced. His mother Bonnie comes from a small town outside of Bakersfield, California, a town so small that she says the lights of Bakersfield look as bright as Paris. After graduating from high school, she was smitten with Bill Botts, a long distance trucker, and the two married without many thoughts in the world. Yet, they were not compatible as Bill was more in love with her truck and driving than he was with Bonnie. After attempts to hold together as a family for the sake of their son Leigh, the couple divorced, Bill taking his truck and dog Bandit and Bonnie taking Leigh in hopes of creating a stable life for them.

Bonnie moves Leigh to coastal Pacific Grove and starts working at a catering service and enrolling in a local community college. Leigh becomes a latch key kid and has issues fitting in at his new school, the most crucial one being that mean kids steal items from his lunch. To cope with his lack of both friends and a father figure, Leigh starts writing letters to Boyd Henshaw, an author whose books he has enjoyed. Sensing that all may not be happy in Leigh's life, Henshaw writes back, starting an unlikely friendship that lasts the duration of the book. Henshaw encourages Leigh to keep a diary and offers him tips on how to be a good writer. Leigh takes these to heart and admits that writing has helped him with both school and life. While Henshaw along with school custodian Mr. Fridley can not replace Leigh's father, their life lessons help Leigh cope with his parents' divorce.

I remember reading many of Cleary's books as a kid, either on my own or with my dad reading them to me before bed. Yet, I remember these books as fun stories, not ones that would impart life lessons. Dear Mr. Henshaw stood out from all of these books even as a kid most likely because the protagonist was a kid who enjoyed reading and writing, and Leigh stood out for me. Reading this story through adult eyes has given me a greater appreciation for Beverly Cleary's books for elementary school readers. Not only does she create well fleshed out characters, she has given children a protagonist who is not a superhero or super athlete, but an everyday kid who is coping with real life problems that they can relate to.

While the subject matter may be a touch over my first grader's head, I am glad that she brought Dear Mr. Henshaw home so that I could relive a childhood favorite. I remember touching scenes like eating fried chicken in the rain and the lunchbox alarm as though I read the book yesterday, and have gained a deeper appreciation for Beverly Cleary from reading her work through adult eyes. I have found out that there is a follow up book Strider which I may or may not have read, but I will be looking for it now to see where Cleary takes Leigh on his journey through life.

5 stars

Michelle Isenhoff says

Dear Mr. Henshaw is Beverly Cleary's highest award-winner, capturing the Newbery and Christopher Awards in the early 80's, yet it is one of my least favorites. Written as a series of letters and journal entries,

with absolutely no narration, Mrs. Cleary somehow, miraculously, weaves together a plot, a central-California setting and a well-rounded character. This accomplishment is a testament to her craft; the story is emotional and compelling. I simply don't care for the style.

In a departure from her usual optimistic, fun-and-quirky subjects, Mrs. Cleary introduces us to Leigh Botts, a troubled boy who wants to become a writer. Through a series of letters sent to his favorite author, Mr. Henshaw, we catch insights into Leigh's likes and dislikes, his hopes and insecurities, his absent, immature, truck-driver father, his wonderfully strong and supportive mother, and his loneliness. He quickly catches our hearts and our sympathies.

As Leigh's first letters are rather insulting and demanding (humorous peeks into a child's mind), Mr. Henshaw encourages him to keep a journal instead. We watch Leigh's writing abilities grow stronger and stronger. Though Leigh's never receives the happy turn of fortune he longs for, he learns, he grows, he meets with some success, and he grows stronger. For a child, this is a story of the triumph of the human spirit. For a parent, it is a wake-up call to consider exactly what adult selfishness and irresponsibility can do to the children who depend on us. One not to be taken lightly.

Though I much prefer traditional narration, the skill, the message, the powerful emotion of Dear Mr. Henshaw prompts me to recommend it.

Kate says

I like to imagine the replies from Mr. Henshaw. "Dear Leigh, Please stop writing to me every single day. I'm glad I impressed you, but you must cease and desist."

Danielle says

Man, how I love this book.

Nick Black says

This cunningly-woven allegory of the Cold War's nuclear buildup is simple and gripping enough for children to understand, if a bit fleshless. Our adolescent narrator, one Leigh Botts of California (both an immediate reference to Harvard President and Interim Committee member James Bryant Conant and a deep *frappe* indeed to the testicles-or-vagina of Bridge to Terebithia's androgynous lead character), devoid of a father figure (the waning British Empire, their ocean-spanning fleet here captured in Botts Senior's beet-trucking service), has his lunch repeatedly stolen (bombed) by unknown (presumed Japanese, un-interred and dangerous) students or perhaps external forces (Rome-Berlin Axis, spreading spectre of Bolshevism, Reverse Trilateral Commission, etc). Ms. Botts strikes an elegant and delightful, at times even eerie, Kittie Oppenheimer throughout. Leigh launches an all-out crash program to develop an alarm system (note the reference to Teller's "Alarm Clock" (failed) layered thermonuclear device, prior to the Teller-Ulam application of reradiation, plasma and finally ablation), sparing no expense (a jowly local electronics store owner's a passable cameo for General Leslie Groves). Finally, with the weapon system complete, Leigh flies a bus we may as well dub the *Enola Gay* to school...only to find that, as the sole remaining hyperpower, his

defenses have become his undoing. We dream of a world without the threat of nuclear extinction and shed a tear as Leigh opens his lunchbox, assaulting friends, foe, and self with literally hundreds of millipascals of acoustic overpressure in a scene that disturbingly anticipates the 9/11 incidents and perhaps also steroids in baseball.

Let Leigh Bott's alarm be an alarm for all of us.

There was also something about butterflies, the details of which I've forgotten. Maybe that was just Jurassic Park. No...no. Anyway, doesn't matter, a classic tale of love in the chivalric era.

Bailey R says

I am currently reading Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary this book is very interesting and funny. Leigh Botts (the main character) writes letters to Mr. Henshaw because the book he is reading is by Mr. Henshaw. They have to do a report on the author of the book they are reading in class. Leigh and Mr. Henshaw write letters to each other about themselves. Leigh has a hard life because his parents got divorced and he lives with his mom. His mom and him don't have a lot of money so they struggle at times. You learn a lot about Leigh and Mr. Henshaw from the letters. This book is interesting and enjoyable because you learn about the characters and their personalities in the letters. I like this book because it is very descriptive and funny! I recommend it to anyone who likes to read a good and different book with instead of chapters there is letters. I would give this book five out of five stars!

Will McGee says

Rereading this book, I was struck with how Cleary manages to convey her narrator's complex of feelings in the limited vocabulary and understated style of Leigh Botts, a lonely and isolated young boy. Leigh faces several problems in the narrative--his lunch is stolen, he doesn't understand his parents' divorce, he resents a "pizza boy" whose mother Leigh's father seems to be dating--but none are neatly solved; Cleary refuses to resolve them conclusively and instead shows Leigh struggling to address them as best as he can, reflecting Leigh's use of his writing to understand and, perhaps, learn from the experiences. Eventually Leigh's interest in writing leads him to enter a contest by writing a "story"--a description, rather, of a ride in his father's truck--that only wins "Honorable Mention" and fails to attract the attention of his schoolmates, but a visiting author notices it and compliments Leigh for writing honestly about something he knows and has feelings about. Likewise, this novel is an honest account of what seem to be a genuine young boy's complex of feelings.

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Calista says

A brilliant book! Beverly does a fantastic job of showing how Leigh's writing changes as he keeps writing. At first it is short with little to say and by the end he is getting good at showing what happens. A simple story. This is similar to Crenshaw in several ways. This is a powerful story and I can't believe it took me this long to read it. There are great tips if children really want to be a writer too. Please get kids to read this. It's a story will enjoy.

Stephen says

I picked this up in a thrift store thinking that it was another book entirely but when I started it I found that it was charming story told from the point of view of a young man dealing with the fallout of his parent's divorce. The young man is given an assignment in school to write to a favorite author and when the author mails him back a list of questions, he endeavors to answer them in series of letters and then journals as he grows up a bit.

Overall it's a great book for children of middle school age and yet there's a story here that adults might find enjoyable as well. At 132 pages with illustrations thrown in as well, its a lightning fast read and well worth the reading time.

The author is best known for her Henry Huggins stories but this one is a stand-alone that does a fairly nice job of giving youngsters a picture of what some divorces may be like. Given the number of THOSE in this country, the home of DOMA legislation, it's surprising that more children's books don't deal with this subject.

Yasaman A says

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Alan says

Watching the movie "Stuck in Love" a character makes reference to this book as his favorite while the hard character of his affection felt the same. It is now one of my favorites as it has so many parallels to my life as a young boy. It doesn't bother me this is Jr. Fiction, what bothers me is, it took so long for me to find.

Bobby says

"Are You There God, It's Me Margaret" for boys, well sorta. Boy this book is depressing.

Dear Mr. Henshaw, my errant dad stopped by for his bi-annual visit last night.

Dear Mr. Henshaw, I sleep in the back of a gas station on a forgotten stretch of highway.

Dear Mr. Henshaw, my life is so lonely that the only entity I can think to communicate with is the name of an author I've never met.

Dear Mr. Henshaw, life has no meaning.

The End

Drew Graham says

Get to know Leigh Botts, first through his letters to an author he admires, and then through letters to himself in his journal. It's not easy getting through sixth grade in a new school while also dealing with divorced parents, but Leigh's correspondence with Mr. Henshaw helps him cope with changes in his life and alternating disappointments and triumphs.

I've been trying to remember when I first read this book. I think I must have been in grade school, and although I can't remember exactly whether I liked it or not (Leigh and I didn't really have that much in common), there are a lot of things about this book that I *distinctly* remembered while reading: feeling indignant at Leigh's lunch goodies being stolen (and a naive sort of disappointment in the resolution of that plot line), his gradually less formal writing style in his letters, and that "De liver de letter de sooner de better" bit. After all these years I experienced it at a deeper level, and it is sad, but I think it's important for these issues to be addressed in kids' books, as long as it's done right and in a not heavyhanded sort of way. I didn't exactly relate to Leigh then or now, but I still empathized with him, and felt sorry at his disappointment and hoped for his success. I think this book walks the line well and has the right balance of realism and optimism. I think Leigh is in a hard situation, but he's a good kid and not generally unpleasant, which is refreshing compared to books written for the same age group today. Beverly Cleary knows kids.

Overall I feel like the following quote is actually a perfect justification for this book and summation of its purpose:

January 15

Dear Mr. Henshaw,

I finished Beggar Bears in two nights. It is a really good book. At first I was surprised because it wasn't funny like your other books, but then I got to thinking (you said authors should think) and decided a book doesn't have to be funny to be good, although it often helps. This book did not need to be funny.

When my mom informed us kids that this is the year of Beverly Cleary's 100th birthday and we decided to pick books from her extensive library and read them for our family book group, I was glad to pick this book up again after maybe 25 years. It's sad but it's not maudlin about it (as Leigh would say, "this book did not need to be funny... a book doesn't have to be funny to be good"), and it addresses things that really affect kids, but in a realistic and overall uplifting way. I was amazed at the details that seemed crazy familiar to me

after all this time.

Arvy says

Dear Mr. Henshaw,

FUCK YOU. I heard you reply to children writing letters to you so this I gotta try. Fuck you for replying to Leigh Boots, (that boy who was dumbly obsessed with your books) with 10 stupid questions that are by definition, useless (unless you're a 6-year-old pixie spending afternoon sipping apple juice answering questions from a slumbook.) You might as well stab him in the eye with a corkscrew. It killed his potential, Mr. Henshaw. I know Leigh wouldn't like me writing to you but I got to give it some shit. He works as an electrician now, just two blocks away from the Main Curb. Guess he diverted his attention to Thomas Edison. Oh, in case you don't know, we're close friends. Probably because we we both given a girl's name. Anyway, he's move on over your twisted cannibalism. He gave up writing because of you. He thinks you're stupid. He thinks *Ways to Amuse a Dog* is stupid. Fuck you Boyd. And no, don't even bother replying.

Your Was No. 2 Fan,
Arvy
