

Week 10 at a Glance

Book for the Week: *Random House Book of Poetry for Children* by Jack Prelutsky and Arnold Lobel

"Measurement" by A. M. Sullivan, p. 23

"Who Has Seen the Wind?" by Christina Rossetti, p. 27

"Grandpa Bear's Lullaby" by Jane Yolen, p. 60

"Dust of Snow" by Robert Frost, p. 121

"Six Weeks Old" by Christopher Morley, p. 135

"Have You Ever Seen?" Anonymous, p. 195

"Who's In" by Elizabeth Fleming, p. 219

"From a Railway Carriage" by Robert Louis Stevenson, p. 224

Optional Materials:

More poems in the book

Grammar and Mechanics:

Meaning in Poetry

Poetry terms

Composition: Rewrite a poem in prose



Day One

Literature

This is the first of four chapters on poetry. By now, most children will have had some exposure to poetry, but usually that exposure is sporadic. I always like to start the year with a good foundation—covering some basic poetry terms and showing students that although the syntax and language of poems is different from that of prose, even poems that seem confusing at first can be understood.

Day One’s questions on the poems focus on understanding any unfamiliar words, phrases, or ideas. While I sometimes ask about specific words, if there are any others in the poem your child does not understand, be sure to explain them before moving on. Day Two’s questions focus on specific aspects of the poems—those terms introduced in Day One’s grammar page. Day Three’s questions focus on the poems’ meanings—sometimes just their literal, surface meaning, but sometimes also deeper meanings.

I have structured the poetry weeks differently from the others. Rather than having optional grammar on Day Three, the grammar pages for the first three days are required. But, on Day Four, rather than reading the poems a fourth time or having grammar workbook pages, I combine these items into a brief biography of a poet read during the week. For example, look at the Day Four grammar page for this week, and you’ll find a biography of Christina Rossetti. Students can read these biographies on their own or you can read them together.

Some children immediately love poetry and will easily catch a poem’s meaning, sometimes without being able to articulate how they know. Others find poetry incomprehensible at first, and you may need to prepare more examples than I’ve given here. I have provided you with additional suggestions from the same book, although for this topic almost any poem will work.

In any event, remember that—except for those born poets—appreciation of poetry is a gradual process, and students will have plenty of time for that process throughout these courses.

Your child should choose one of these poems, or another, to memorize this week. Once they’ve chosen one, work together on memorizing the first quarter of the poem. You will continue to work on memorizing the poem throughout the week. (I assign this memorization each poetry week. If there is a week when your child is not excited about any of the week’s poems, one I think is particularly good to memorize is the last poem in this book, “Keep a Poem in Your Pocket” by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers on p. 226.)

Read the following poems from *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children* for this lesson. Ask the questions:

“Measurement” by A. M. Sullivan, p. 23

“Who Has Seen the Wind?” by Christina Rossetti, p. 27

“Grandpa Bear’s Lullaby” by Jane Yolen, p. 60

“Dust of Snow” by Robert Frost, p. 121

“Six Weeks Old” by Christopher Morley, p. 135

“Have You Ever Seen?” Anonymous, p. 195

“Who’s In” by Elizabeth Fleming, p. 219

“From a Railway Carriage” by Robert Louis Stevenson, p. 224

"Measurement," page 23

Do you know what <i>vary</i> means? (It means to "differ.")	
Do you know what <i>blunder</i> means? (It means to "make a mistake.")	
What are the balls in the line "As any ball the sun has hurled?" (This could refer to the planets, asteroids, moons, comets—any heavenly body.)	
What does <i>picayune</i> mean? (Picayune means "worthless.")	
What does <i>girth</i> mean? (Girth is "the measurement around the middle of something.")	
What does <i>reckoning</i> mean? (Reckoning means "calculating something or judging something.")	
Are there any other words in this poem you don't understand? (While unfamiliar words can often be discerned from context in prose, this is much more difficult in poetry. I will not repeat this question for every poem, but students need to be in the habit of finding the meaning of words they don't understand in poems. Your student can ask you, look in a dictionary, look online—however you prefer is fine.)	

There are no questions today for "Who Has Seen the Wind," page 27.

"Grandpa Bear's Lullaby," page 60

What are the bears about to do? (The bears are about to hibernate. [Knowing the situation of a poem can be important to understanding it.]	
--	--

"Dust of Snow," page 121

What time of year is it in this poem? (It is winter. [This may seem obvious, but sometimes children need to be reminded that one thing in the poem—the snow—can tell them something else—setting.]	
What does <i>rue</i> mean? (To rue something is to regret it.)	

"Six Weeks Old," page 135

What does <i>ebb</i> mean? (<i>Ebb</i> means "to leave or get smaller.")	
What does <i>ken</i> mean? (<i>Ken</i> means "knowledge.")	
Whose world is being described here? (a six-week year old baby's)	

"Have You Ever Seen?" page 195

This poem is full of puns, something we saw a bit of in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. A pun is a play on words where you use two meanings of one word, usually in a joking way. Explain this if your student isn't yet familiar with puns. These questions examine each pun in this poem. If you have a more advanced student, you can ask them to identify both the word being punned and the two meanings, for example, "What word has two meanings in line one and what are those meanings?"

What are the two meanings of <i>bed</i> in line one? (the furniture we sleep on and the bottom of a river)	
What are the two meanings of <i>head</i> in line two? (a person's head and the top of a hammer)	
What are the two meanings of <i>foot</i> in line three? (the bottom of a mountain and a person's foot)	
What are the two meanings of <i>hose</i> in line four? (pantyhose and garden hose)	
What are the two meanings of <i>eye</i> in line five? (the opening of a needle and a person's eye)	
What are the two meanings of <i>wing</i> in line six? (the wing of a building, which is a large part that is attached to the main part, and the wing of something that can fly, like a bird)	
What are the two meanings of <i>ribs</i> in line seven? (a person's ribs and the curved wooden pieces of a parasol that give the fabric or paper its shape when open)	
What are the two meanings of <i>trunk</i> in line eight? (a large, usually wooden, container you keep things in and a tree trunk)	
What are the two meanings of <i>teeth</i> in line nine? (the projecting parts of a rake that do the raking and the teeth of a person or animal)	
What are the two meanings of <i>hands</i> in line ten? (the hands of a clock and the hands of a person)	
What are the two meanings of <i>plot</i> in line eleven? (an area of ground and the story-line of a story or a plan (usually to do something bad))	
What are the two meanings of <i>bark</i> in line twelve? (the covering of a tree and the sound a dog makes)	

There are no questions today for "Who's In," page 219.

"From a Railway Carriage," page 224

What does "in the wink of an eye" mean? (very quickly)	
What are brambles? (prickly shrubs or vines)	
What is a tramp? (a beggar or hobo—someone who is usually homeless)	

Grammar and Mechanics

Today I introduce some basic poetry terms. The sooner children learn terms specific to poetry the better, as that makes it much easier to talk about and understand the concepts more deeply. Much of this will be review for children who completed Lightning Literature 2, but I also introduce a few new terms.

Introduce the idea more gently by completing this page with your child.

Answers to Workbook Pages

- D 1. Imagery
- C 2. Line
- F 3. Couplet
- G 4. Repetition
- A 5. Rhyme
- B 6. Stanza
- E 7. Speaker

Composition

This week your child will choose one of this week's poems (or, if they prefer, a different poem) and rewrite it in their own words in prose. Today, choose which poem. (This exercise of rewriting a poem as prose is a life-long skill for better understanding poetry. Any time someone has trouble understanding a poem, I recommend rewriting it as prose, as this can help them see what parts they're having trouble with.) Help guide your student in their choice of poem depending on how much challenge they require. If you feel none of these poems would challenge your child enough—or you just want something different—you can choose any poem from this book, another book, or online.

The extra challenge for this composition is described on Wednesday.

Day Two

Literature

Continue with your memorization of the chosen poem, adding in at least another quarter of the poem. Ideally, ask your child to recite this first half of the poem at various times throughout the day to help place it in long-term memory.

Read the poems again with your child. Ask the following questions:

"Measurement," page 23

How many stanzas are in this poem? (7)	
Each stanza has two lines and is an example of what type of rhyme pattern? (couplet)	
What are some specific images in this poem? Does it have much imagery? (Stars, atoms, seed, sun, moon, and space are the words conveying imagery. However, this poem does not have much imagery. There is nothing addressing the other senses and these words are mostly vague with no adjectives to enliven them, nor are they doing anything. You may want to compare the imagery in this poem to the imagery in the other poems first, then come back to ask the second of these questions. This is not a fault on the poet's part, but helps to underscore the theme, as we will see tomorrow.)	

"Who Has Seen the Wind," page 27

How many stanzas are in this poem? How many lines are in each stanza? (There are two stanzas with four lines in each.)	
What is the imagery in this poem? (wind, leaves hang trembling, leaves bow down their heads)	
What is repeated? (The first line of the first stanza is repeated as the first line of the second stanza. The idea in the other three lines is repeated as well, with minor variations.)	
Is there a definite speaker in this poem? How do we know? Do we know much about the speaker? (There is a definite speaker referred to as "I." But we don't learn much about the speaker.)	

"Grandpa Bear's Lullaby," page 60

How many stanzas does this poem have? How many lines are in each stanza? (It has 4 stanzas. The first three stanzas each have four lines, the last has one line.)	
What rhymes with <i>deep</i> in this poem? (sleep)	
What words are repeated in this poem? (<i>sleep</i> and <i>but</i> are repeated)	
What words in this poem are things you can see (imagery for sight)? (fur, dreams [if you're the one dreaming it], cave, dark, bright, winter, light)	
What words in this poem are things you can feel or taste? (fur, warm, sweet, meat)	
Who is the speaker? (Grandpa Bear)	

"Dust of Snow," page 121

What are the pairs of rhymes in this poem? (crow/snow; me/tree; heart/part; mood/rued)	
What imagery is in this poem? (crow, shook, dust of snow, hemlock tree)	
The way the poet uses <i>heart</i> here—do you think this is a concrete noun or an abstract noun? (Here it is an abstract noun. He is not talking about he heart beating in his chest. He is talking about his feelings, his emotions.)	

"Six Weeks Old," page 135

How many stanzas does this poem have? How many lines are in each stanza? (There are two stanzas with four lines each.)	
What are the rhyming pairs in this poem? (know/snow; again/ken; sees/knees; breast/rest)	
Why type of rhyme pattern does the poem use? (couplets.)	
What words here provide imagery? (summer sun, winter snow, spring, little world, mother's arms, mother's knees, hides, face, breast)	

"Have You Ever Seen?" page 195

How many stanzas does this poem have? How many lines are in each stanza? (There are three stanzas with four lines each.)	
Why type of rhyme pattern does the poem use? (couplets)	
What repetition is going on in this poem? (Every line is a question.)	
What are the specific images in the first stanza of this poem? (sheet, river bed, hair, hammer's head, foot, mountain, toes, garden hose)	

"Who's In," page 219

How many stanzas does this poem have? How many lines? (one stanza with 12 lines)	
What words provide imagery? (door, shut fast, fly on the wall, flame on the coals, dog on his rug, mice in their holes, kitten curled up, spiders that spin)	
Who is the speaker for the first two lines? (Someone outside a house or apartment is saying this.)	
Is the same speaker saying the rest of the poem? How do we know? (No, because the next sentence is "But people don't know/What they're talking about!" followed by "says the . . .")	

"From a Railway Carriage," page 224

How many stanzas does this poem have? (three)	
What are the pairs of rhymes in the first stanza? (witches/ditches; battle/cattle; plain/rain; eye/by)	
What sort of rhyme pattern does this poem use? (couplets)	
Who is the speaker? (a passenger on a speeding railway carriage)	
What imagery in this poem describes what the speaker actually sees? What are some vivid images that he doesn't see? (The things he sees are bridges, houses, hedges, ditches, meadows, horses, cattle, hill, plain, painted stations whistle by, child who clammers and scrambles/All by himself and gathering brambles, tramp who stands and gazes, green, daisies, cart run away in the road/lumping along with a man and a load, mill, river—but it's fine if your student says only a subset of these. The important thing is they understand that some of the other "imagery" in this poem isn't something the speaker actually sees—fairies, witches, troops in a battle, driving rain—these are just things he's using for comparison. Nevertheless, they impart certain images and feelings to the reader.)	

Grammar/Mechanics

Today covers the same terms as yesterday, but rather than simply recognizing the terms and matching them to the definitions, the student must now recall the terms and write them next to their definition. If your child struggles with writing, they may dictate the answers.

Answers to Workbook Page

1. line One line of words in a poem
2. stanza A group of lines together—a poem's "paragraph"
3. rhyme When two words sound alike because they have the same vowel and ending consonant sound
4. couplet Two lines in a row that rhyme
5. repetition To say the same thing more than once
6. speaker Who or what is saying the poem
7. imagery Words that describe what we can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell

Composition

Today, your student will make their first attempt at rewriting the poem as prose. Today's focus will be on choosing different key words from the poem's and different structure.

For example, for the poem "Measurement," I might write this:

Even with modern technology, people cannot accurately measure anything in nature, whether it is stars or atoms. Things that seem small to us are just as complex as huge things. Things that seem important are as worthless as a bit of rock. We can never really understand time or space. But God understands that everything holds a universe in it.

These changes address the wording (vocabulary and syntax) of the poem while still retaining the surface meaning. Because we have not yet discussed any deeper meaning to the poem, I have not yet included that. When we look again at the poems tomorrow, your child may find more to say.

Notice I have written this in a condensed manner. Your child can be more detailed if they like. For example, I could have included this sentence, "A seed is just as large a world as any planet, asteroid, or comet." I chose this example paragraph to demonstrate that even a student who isn't writing much yet may be able to tackle a longer poem, if you feel their ability to understand poetry is up to the task.

Day Three

Literature

Continue with your memorization of the chosen poem, adding in at least another quarter of the poem. Ideally, ask your child to recite this first three-quarters of the poem at various times throughout the day to help place it in long-term memory.

Read the poems again with your child. Ask the following questions:

"Measurement," page 23

<p>The title of this poem is "Measurement" and the second stanza says, "Men and instruments will blunder/calculating things of wonder." Often poets write poems about the stars or the moon to help us see or feel these things in a different way—so they put a lot of imagery in the poem. Does this poem do that or does it list various "things of wonder" with little description? Why? (This poem does the latter—its purpose is not to describe these things, but to list things that have vastly different sizes and values—at least from our limited perspective.)</p>	
<p>According to this poem, who or what measures things incorrectly? Who can see the true measurement of everything? (Men and instruments measure things incorrectly. God knows the true measure of everything.)</p>	
<p>If the poet described the things listed—the moon, stars, etc.—with a lot of imagery, how would that work against the theme of the poem—that only God knows the true measure of everything? (It would focus your attention on the poet's view of these things—that of a mere person. Instead, the poet wants to direct your thoughts to the idea that we cannot really understand anything in its fullness, only God can.)</p>	

"Who Has Seen the Wind," page 27

<p>This poem says the "leaves hang trembling" when the wind passes through. What does "trembling" make you think of? (Students will have different answers, but part of this should include such feelings as excitement, fear, or other strong emotions.)</p>	
<p>In the next stanza we read that the leaves "bow down their heads," when the wind is passing by. When do people bow down their heads? (Again, various answers are possible. Some good answers are in sorrow, in thought, in prayer, and before someone who commands respect and honor.)</p>	
<p>What conclusion about the wind can we make from this poem? What larger message can we take from this? (We can conclude that even though we can't see the wind, we know it's there because of the effect it has on other things. In the same way, sometimes things we can't see still have a large effect on us.)</p>	

"Grandpa Bear's Lullaby," page 60

<p>How do you think the cubs feel before Grandpa Bear starts his lullaby? Why? (They might feel nervous or scared because the night is long, the food is gone, and the cave is dark. Students may have other good answers.)</p>	
<p>How do you think the cubs feel after Grandpa Bear finishes his lullaby? Why? (They probably feel comforted and sleepy. Grandpa Bear has told them how they will get through the long winter. Students may have other good answers.)</p>	

"Dust of Snow," page 121

<p>How did the speaker feel before the crow shook down some snow on him? How does he feel afterward? How do we know? (He was unhappy before, but feels better afterwards. We know from the last four lines of the poem.)</p>	
<p>What message might we take from this poem? (Sometimes something small and unexpected can brighten our day. Students may have other good answers. For a more advanced student, you can point out that the first four lines focus on the concrete (specific images of a crow, a hemlock, snow), then there is a turn (a change of some sort in a poem) and the last four lines focus on the abstract (the poet's mood). We can deepen the meaning here to say that if we take time to notice the world around us—even something as small as a bird knocking some snow down onto us—it can make our lives richer and happier. Indeed, this is a common theme and purpose of poetry—to bring our attention to the seemingly small things and deepen our experience of the world with the hope that it will then enrich our internal life.)</p>	

"Six Weeks Old" page 135

<p>What do you think the poet hoped the reader of this poem would better understand? (He hoped the reader would better understand how an infant experiences the world.)</p>	
<p>Do you see any value in this? If so, what?</p>	

"Have You Ever Seen?" page 195

<p>Often poets write poems about rivers or mountains that describe how beautiful or awesome they are. Is that the focus of this poem? If not, what is? (No, this poem is not about describing nature, or anything else. The focus of this poem is humor and its puns.)</p>	
--	--

"Who's In" page 219

<p>Who does "everyone" refer to in line 2? (It refers to the people who live in the house or apartment.)</p>	
<p>Who does "everyone" refer to the last line? (It refers to all the things listed in the poem—the fly, the flame, the dog, etc.)</p>	
<p>What is important from the speaker's point of view? (The speaker of this poem believes that the things listed in the poem—the mice, the kitten, the spiders, etc.—are at least as important as the people who live there, maybe more so. Again, for the more advanced student, you can compare this focus on "small" things with the theme of "Dust of Snow." This also relates to the theme of "Measurement." Even though in that poem the poet is not attempting to have us see small things in a new way, they are stating that in God's eyes, what we see as small is equally important to what we see as much larger or more magnificent.)</p>	

"From a Railway Carriage," page 224

<p>Why does the poet begin by saying the things are moving, "Faster than fairies, faster than witches"? (He wants to give a sense of speed right from the start.)</p>	
<p>Like "Measurement," this poem lists several things (bridge, horses, stations, a child, etc.). How is this poem's treatment of these things different from that of "Measurement" with its items? Look at each stanza to see how the things are treated differently in each one. (At first, the items are treated similarly—as a list. In the first stanza no details of the things are given. But there is a reason for this—the speaker is moving so quickly. At the end of the first stanza, we are given one adjective—"painted" for "station." In the second stanza, the speaker gives more details about what the child and tramp are doing, then again about the cart and man. This poem provides more detail, and thus a sense that the speaker would see even more details if only he were moving more slowly. Again, you can bring this idea back to "Dust of Snow" and "Who's In." If we speed through life without paying attention to what is around us, we are the poorer for it. Poets want us to notice the world around us.)</p>	

Grammar/Mechanics

Today students analyze the poem "The Snowflake" by Walter de la Mare on p. 32 of the poetry book. I ask the meaning of two words here. You can decide how you want your student to find the answers to these questions. If they have questions about other meanings, they should answer those to their satisfaction as well.

Introduce the idea more gently by completing this page with your students.

Reinforce the concept by using this as a template for examining the structure of the poems listed under Day Five's "Extending the Lesson."

Answers to Workbook Page

1. The poem has one stanza.
2. The poem has 15 lines.
3. *Filigree* means "an intricate and delicate object."
4. *Skeyey* means "sky-like" or "of the sky;" (The snowflake is made from the cold of the sky.)
5. This is a couplet.
6. *White* rhymes with *night*.
7. Words that provide imagery include *lovely, icy, filigree, forest, night, wilderness, white, skyey, cold, crystals, softly, finger, breathe*. (Only three are required.)
8. The snowflake is the speaker.

Composition

Today your child will rework or add to yesterday's rough draft to include any additional understanding they have of the poem after today's discussion. For example, yesterday's brief paragraph might change to this:

Even with modern technology, people cannot accurately measure anything in nature, whether it is stars or atoms. Things that seem small to us are just as complex as huge things. Things that seem important are as worthless as a bit of rock. We can never really understand time or space. But God understands that everything holds a universe in it. We need to remember that our perspective will always be limited and to view the world with greater awe and humility.

As you can see, the change needn't be large—I only added one sentence. This sentence pulls out a theme from the poem, reminding the reader of our humanity and limitations.

Extra Challenge

To provide extra challenge, have your student write another paragraph detailing how their prose version differs from the original poem. This is not primarily about the details (although some of those can be included), but about the overall ability to communicate an idea. What do we lose by changing poetry into prose? Is anything gained? Perhaps the prose version is clearer, but maybe it is also less interesting, less beautiful, and less memorable. Maybe the poem has a greater emotional force. Maybe there were specific words your student changed or left out because they were unnecessary for the prose version, but in doing so that also diminished the power of the message.

The object of this extra challenge is to foster a greater understanding of the power and purpose of poetic language.

Day Four

Literature

Finish with your memorization of the chosen poem. Read the biography of Christina Rossetti in the Student Workbook. For further reading: *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti* by

Christina Georgina Rossetti and William Michael Rossetti. London, New York: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1904, and the website <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/christina-rossetti>.

Grammar/Mechanics

Your child can choose five to ten words to put in the dictionary pages or to add to the word collection, words from this week's reading, from daily life, etc. For extra challenge, aim for ten words and require that one or more be from the book, preferably ones not known before reading the book.

Answers to Workbook Pages

Hurt	living	no	thing
thing	no	living	Hurt
living	Hurt	thing	no
no	thing	Hurt	living

1. Stars and atoms have a girth
Small as zero ten times Earth ("Measurement")
2. But when the leaves bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by. ("Who Has Seen the Wind?")
3. He is so small, he does not know
The summer sun, the winter snow; ("Six Weeks Old")
4. And here is a mill and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone for ever! ("From a Railway Carriage")

Reading Journal

Turn to the appropriate pages in the workbook. Have your child choose their favorite poem, write its title at the top of the first reading-journal page, and complete the journal pages as normal.

Composition

Today your child completes their final draft. (If there is still a lot to do and it would be too stressful to complete the composition today, they can use tomorrow as well.) Review the rough draft together:

1. Does the paper express the same thing as the poem (at least as far as your child's understanding of it)?
2. Does the paper contain anything extra not found in the poem? (It should not.)
3. Review for any grammar and mechanics the student knows.

The final draft of the paper should be in the composition book.

Day Five

Today is a free day to use however you choose. Finish any unfinished work from the week, explore some of the ideas below, or simply take a day off language arts.

Extending the Lesson

Finding the basic meaning is important for any poem, and how difficult it is varies widely among children. If your child wants or needs more practice, you can look through the book together for any that catch your eye. But here are a few to get you started:

"On Mother's Day" by Aileen Fisher, p. 43

"Song" by Ruth Krauss, p. 124

"Leopard" by Gretchen Kreps, p. 61

"The First Tooth" by Charles and Mary Lamb, 135

"Ode to the Pig: His Tail" by Walter R. Brooks, p. 64

"My Brother Bert" by Ted Hughes, p. 158

Week 11 at a Glance

Book for the Week: *Ramona and Her Father* by Beverly Cleary, Chapters 1-2

Optional Materials:

Paper and pencil to make a Christmas list

Grammar and Mechanics:

Subject Pronouns

Object Pronouns

Possessive Pronouns

Reflexive Pronouns

Composition: Begin a paper on a family member



Day One

Literature

Ramona and Her Father: The Ramona series is a long-popular one. Although it is dated in some ways (no computers, for example), children and parents still enjoy them for good reason. The writing is impeccable, and Ms. Cleary captures the emotions of childhood and family life with deft, subtle touches. Ramona and her family face some challenges, but all works out well in the end.

Again, we have a female protagonist, but I have never viewed these books as particularly gender-specific. Much of what Ramona experiences, especially when she is younger, is about being a child and a younger sibling, not specifically about being a girl.

When you begin the book, you may be surprised to find that Ramona’s father smokes. Don’t worry—the issue is addressed (by Ramona and her sister) in a lively, positive way. In fact, this part of the story is the springboard for the second composition assignment for this book.

Each chapter is read over more than one day, so I describe where to end your reading if it is mid-chapter. (Unfortunately, I can’t give page numbers, because there are multiple editions of this book.) Of course, if your student can’t stand the wait, feel free to read further.

Read until Mr. Quimby gives the girls the gummybears (“Mr. Quimby always remembered these things.”). Ask the following questions:

How old is Ramona? (She’s in second grade, so she’s about 7.)	
Why does Ramona like her father’s paydays so much? (Paydays mean treats.)	
What are some of these treats? (A trip to the movies, gifts for the girls, dinner out.)	
Why is Ramona’s mother “not at all worried” when Beezus comes in, flops down, and sighs? (Most likely, Beezus has been acting like this a lot, so Ramona’s mother knows nothing really bad has happened.)	
What are Ramona, her mother, and her sister looking forward to when Ramona’s father gets home? (They’re looking forward to going out to dinner.)	
What does Mr. Quimby bring his daughters? (gummybears)	
What sentence in this section gives a clue (foreshadowing) about what might happen next? Hint: It’s near the end of this section. (“Somehow he did not look as happy as usual.”)	

Grammar and Mechanics

This week is all about pronouns. Today I cover subject and object pronouns, even introducing those names. But don’t worry if your child can’t remember what they’re called. This will be important in later years, but right now we’re focusing simply on pronoun use. This will be review for many students.

Introduce the idea more gently by completing the page with your student.

Reinforce the concept by looking for pronouns in your reading, or by asking what pronouns would replace words in sample sentences in the book.

Answers to Workbook Pages

- She** **it**
1. Ramona was writing a Christmas list in September.
- She**
2. Mrs. Quimby hopes they can go out to dinner.
- They** **them** **him**
3. Ramona and Beezus love getting gummy bears from Mr. Quimby.
- He** **her**
4. Mr. Quimby tells Mrs. Quimby he needs to talk to her.

Composition

This week and next, students will write a paper on a family member. We learn a lot about Ramona's family members through description of them, through what they say, and through what they do. Students will use these same tools to create a portrait of someone in their family.

Today students should choose a family member to write about. Once they know who they are going to write about, they need to jot down notes telling what they want to reveal about this person in their paper. A paper this size is too short to know everything about someone, so they need to decide what sort of focus the paper will have. For example, they may sometimes get very annoyed with their little brother, but they may want to focus on how fun and playful he can be.

A simple way to prompt this is to have your student complete the sentence:

"My little brother is. . ."

Have them choose up to three related characteristics to complete the sentence. For example, "My little brother is fun, adventurous, and silly" could work, but "My little brother is fun, moody, and smart" would not, because even if he is all those things, they won't work well together to provide a strong focus for the paper.

A student who struggles with writing may need to complete the sentence with only one characteristic ("My little brother is fun.") and that's fine. It's better to have a few good sentences with a proper focus than to overtax a reluctant writer.

The final job for today is to write a one-paragraph physical description of the subject. For now, this should focus on basics like height, build, hair and eye color, etc. It can be complete sentences or just jotted notes. For example:

Cameron is six. He is a little taller than his friends and a little skinnier. He has light blond hair that is straight and usually too long (my grandmother says —I think it's OK). He has blue eyes and everyone says they're large. He usually wears t-shirts and always wears jeans.

Today's composition work underscores the importance of focus in a paper and gives practice in descriptive writing. By the end of today students should have a topic chosen and a first draft of a descriptive paragraph. There is no extra challenge for this paper.

Day Two

Literature

Read the remainder of chapter 1 with your child. Ask the following questions:

What makes the girls uneasy while they're dividing the gummybears? (Their parents stop talking.)	
What makes them even more frightened? (They hear their parents whispering, but can't hear what they say.)	
What turns out to be the problem? (Mr. Quimby has lost his job.)	
What are some ideas Ramona and Beezus have to try to help? (Beezus volunteers to babysit. Ramona thinks she could maybe sell lemonade or perfume, but she discards these ideas. Finally, she crosses out almost all of her Christmas list.)	
What one thing does Mrs. Quimby ask the girls not to do? (She asks them not to annoy their father.)	
If someone in your family lost their job, what things could you and your siblings do to help out?	

Grammar/Mechanics

Today I introduce the possessive pronouns. Again, this will be review for many students. I take a moment to emphasize the fact that possessive pronouns never take an apostrophe (the way possessive nouns do). I think this is important to reinforce throughout the elementary years because I see this problem crop up even in adults' writing.

Introduce the idea more gently by completing the page with your student.

Reinforce the concept by looking for possessive pronouns in your reading, or by asking what pronouns would replace possessive nouns in sample sentences in the book.

Answers to Workbook Pages

1. ~~Their~~ parents needed to talk, so **they** Ramona and Beezus went to ~~their~~ room.
2. **they** **their** The sisters divided Ramona and Beezus's gummy bears fairly.
3. **Her** **his** Mrs. Quimby's job is only half time, not full-time like Mr. Quimby's was.
4. **She** Ramona knew ~~her~~ Christmas list was too long.
5. **Its** The list's last item now is, "One happy family."

Composition

In addition to using description, students are also going to use the subject's words and actions in their portrait. Today's first task is to choose one of two ways to do this.

First, students can tell a specific story that involves the subject. This story must include a decent amount of action and speech on the subject's part. For example, we learn a fair amount about Beezus simply from the way she enters the room, flops down, then begins to complain about her life. We also learn about Ramona from the Christmas list she is writing and what she is saying while she does it. We learn something about Mr. and Mrs. Quimby from the way they discuss his job loss even though we don't hear this conversation. (Imagine how different this beginning would be if Mr. Quimby came home and yelled at everyone or Mrs. Quimby loudly blamed her husband when she heard the news.)

These are small examples, but they still communicate the idea. If your student wants to tell a story to reveal what their subject is like, it should:

1. Include the subject speaking
2. Include the subject doing something
3. Highlight the aspects of the subject the student wants to reveal in this paper.

The second way to approach this is to show ongoing actions and speech. "My brother always says/does. . ." "Every morning my mother. . ." "Every weekend our father takes us. . ." "My sister is constantly saying things like. . ."

Once students have chosen one of these approaches, they should make a list of the actions and speech they want to include in the paper. If they just write notes about speech for now, that's fine, as long as they use exact quotes in the final paper. You will see this in my example.

Continuing with yesterday's example, here is what I might write:

Actions: Wakes me up every morning by jumping like a rabbit into my room. Stares in my face. Begs me to take him to the park. Brings me all my clothes to change into. Dashes down the stairs ahead of me.

Speech: "Wake up, Buttercup!" Asks how I've slept and starts talking about the park. Yells to Mom on the way downstairs about everything we're going to do. He usually talks softly, but when he gets excited he yells.

By the end of today students should know what speech and actions they want to include in the paper. As always, it will be fine to add to or subtract from this list when writing the rough and final drafts.

Day Three

Literature

Beginning at chapter 2, read until Ramona's school day ends but before the parent-teacher conference ("Ramona felt better.") with your child. Ask the following questions:

Why is Ramona's father with her after school now? (Her mother has switched to a full-time job.)	
Is spending this time with her father like Ramona hoped it would be? (No, rather than taking her to the park or doing other fun things, he fills out job applications or simply sits and watches TV.)	
What is Ramona's idea to get a million dollars? (She wants to be in a TV commercial.)	
Why do you think the Quimbys are no longer buying pickles or potato chips? (Most likely they aren't buying them because they're saving money.)	
Do you think what Ramona said to her teacher was rude or not? Why?	

Grammar/Mechanics

Today, have your child choose five to ten words to put in the dictionary pages or to add to the word collection. They can be words from this week's reading, from daily life, etc. For extra challenge, aim for ten words and require that one or more be from the book, preferably ones the student didn't know before reading the book.

Answers to Sentence Puzzles

Answers will vary.

Composition

Today students write a rough paragraph of the actions from yesterday's notes. They will either tell the story or write a paragraph detailing what the subject does on a regular basis. If speech needs to be part of the story, they can leave it as brief, reported speech for now rather than quotes. Continuing with my example:

Every morning my six-year-old brother, Cameron, comes bouncing into my bedroom. I'm still in bed but he's been up for at least an hour. You'd think I would get used to it, but it still gives me a jolt to open my eyes to his staring face. After waking me, he begins begging me to take him to the park. He brings me my clothes and, once I've dressed, bounds down the stairway shouting to Mom about what we'll be doing.

The focus of today's work is developing a paper, specifically in regard to a subject's actions. By the end of today students should two rough paragraphs—the earlier one on description and today's on action—and additional notes on speech.

Day Four

Literature

Read the rest of chapter 2 with your child. Ask the following questions:

Ramona wants to know what her teacher told her father. Do you like to know what your teachers or other adults say to your parents about you? Why or why not?	
What are some of the things Ramona's teacher tells her father? (Ramona is impatient, she's a good reader but poor speller, she draws and prints very well, she sometimes shows off and forgets her manners. Students need not remember all of these.)	
Ramona causes trouble for herself with her crown of burs because she is bored. Have you ever caused trouble for yourself or someone else when you were bored?	
As her family tries to remove the crown of burs, what is Ramona most worried about? (She's most worried about one of them guessing why she did it, that she imagined herself being in a commercial.)	
Why does Ramona want her father rather than her mother to cut out the burs? (She knows her father will work more carefully. Also, she would rather that her mother fix dinner.)	
How does Ramona's father make her feel better? (He tells her he wouldn't trade her for a million dollars.)	
Mr. Quimby mentions a few funny things Ramona has done in the past. What's the funniest trouble you've ever gotten into?	

Grammar/Mechanics

Today I introduce reflexive pronouns. This is one of the trickier personal pronoun topics. I frequently hear adults misuse them, especially "myself." (There's even a name for this mistake: untriggered reflexive. Students don't need to know this—really, nobody does.) For now, I'm only introducing the reflexive so students recognize they're pronouns. Again, if the student can remember the name (reflexive), that's great. If not, no worries. In future years I will detail when to use them (and when not to).

Today's workbook page asks students to recognize all the types of pronouns learned this week.

Introduce the idea more gently by completing the page together.

Reinforce the concept by looking for reflexive pronouns in your reading.

Provide more challenge by requiring an additional step of your student for today's page. Instead of just underlining the pronouns, have them identify what type each is with a letter (subject=S; object=O; possessive=P; reflexive=R).

*I have provided these answers to the right of each question in the proper order. But this is not a requirement of the page, so do not penalize a student for not getting them right.

Answers to Workbook Pages

1. Mr. Quimby asked himself why he was so unlucky as to lose his job. (R, S, P)*
2. Ramona and Beezus tried to prepare themselves for whatever bad news their parents had. (R, P)
3. While waiting, they amused themselves by dividing their gummy bears. (S, R, P)
4. I cut myself while cooking for us. (S, R, O)
5. Don't hurt yourself while moving their furniture. (R, P)
6. The cat cleaned itself after eating its dinner. (R, P)

Composition

Today students will rewrite their notes on speech. First, if they included mostly reported speech (as I did in my example), they now need to turn this into accurate quotes. Ideally, they should have at least three sentences of direct speech from the subject—more is always welcome. We learn a lot about people from the way they speak. Not just what they choose to say, but their vocabulary, how much they say, their intonation, etc. So students should try to make the quotes as accurate as possible. They may also want to describe aspects of the subject's speech (quickness, loudness, etc.).

At this point it's fine for students to have a separate paragraph of just speech—it can even be more a list of quotes rather than a flowing paragraph. It doesn't matter at this stage because next week students will work at integrating the description, action, and speech. But it's also fine if they want to try to integrate it into the story some (although they will have a whole day next week to do so).

Here is my example:

"Wake up, Buttercup!" he says in a soft voice. Then it's the same questions always in the same order. "Did you sleep OK? What should we do? Can we go to the park with sandwiches and cookies and twenty-seven books?" As he hands me my clothes it's, "Shirt! Underwear! Pants! Socks!" Then down the stairs: "Mom! We're going to the park park park! Park park park! Parkety park park!"

The focus of today's work is reporting accurately on speech. By the end of today, students should have a longer rough draft.

Day Five

Today is a free day to use however you choose. Finish any unfinished work from the week, review, complete the lesson extension below, or simply take a day off language arts.

Extending the Lesson

It may be a good time of year to make a Christmas list. Students can do one for what they want and one for what they want to give to people.