



Ramona and Beezus

Rated: G

Running Time: 103 minutes

Themes: Family unity through hard times, personal sacrifice, forgiveness,

romantic commitment, perseverance, sibling rivalry, nurturing creativity and imagination, adjusting to change, coping with loss, valuing people above material things

Cautions: Ramona's disdain for rules yields passive-aggressive behavior at times. Couples kiss. Adults drink a toast. Ramona vomits in class. Name-calling includes "jerk," "doofus" and "nutball." At a wedding, a teacher tells Ramona, "Go shake your booty."

Story Summary

It's not easy being nine.

"Ahem. That's nine and three months."

Right. Sorry, Ramona.

Because at nine and three months, following rules can be a challenge for a charming, headstrong little girl with an active imagination and a knack for causing trouble...

"Pretty much always on accident."

Duly noted. Do you mind?

"I'll be playing outside if you need me."

Thank you. Now where was I? Oh yeah, Ramona Quimby is just such a girl.

She lives on Klickitat Street with her loving parents, an adorable new baby, and a teenage sister who has never quite forgiven Ramona for saddling her with the nickname Beezus—or for constantly embarrassing her in the presence of her longtime friend

and newfound crush, Henry.

As Ramona fantasizes about her own bigger-than-life adventures, life in the Quimby home takes a hard turn. Her dad loses his job. Fearful that the bank will take their house (literally), Ramona sets out to save the day by selling lemonade, washing cars and even auditioning for a peanut butter commercial. But her best intentions usually end in comical disasters. When chaos ensues, the puckish fourth-grader often turns to her understanding Aunt Bea, a sweet young woman whose slippery ex-boyfriend Hobart has breezed into town and would love nothing more than to reel her back in.

This film captures the gentle, playful spirit of Beverly Cleary's popular books, as well as their occasional melan-

choly as trials mount for Ramona's family. Their cat passes away. Then they learn they may have to move, and Aunt Bea appears to be headed to Alaska. Ramona's world is unraveling, and nothing she does seems to help. In fact, she feels like a liability, so she runs away. Her family doesn't let her get far, and everyone pulls together to embrace their uncertain future—which gets brighter in no time. How was that, Ramona? Ramona?

"Uh ... mister? Was that your car parked at the top of the hill?"

Family Activity

Ramona and her dad make a memory by drawing a huge mural together. Gather the family and use sidewalk chalk to create a colorful work of art in front of your home. Let each person design a section of sidewalk, or make the driveway a shared canvas. Include a message to passersby. Whatever you do, be sure to take a picture!

Talking Points

1. A creative speller, Ramona complains that her teacher is too rigid ... and no fun. If you and your child could eliminate certain rules from your lives, what would they be? Why? Relish the possibilities for a moment. Then adopt the rule *maker's* perspective and consider how those regulations actually do serve a purpose. Hebrews 13:17, Romans 13:1-5 and Ephesians 6:1-3, 5-8 talk about our need to submit to authority.

2. Has your family been impacted by change or loss? Sometimes even "good" change can be traumatic for kids. If any of the Quimby's challenges hit close to home, invite your children to express their feelings. Then share the comforting promises of Romans 8:28 and Proverbs 3:5-6.

3. Ramona learns that her nasty classmate Susan is a child of divorce whose dad moved out of state. That doesn't excuse Susan's behavior, but it reminds us that the difficult people in our lives may be dealing with serious personal challenges of their own. Is there a Susan in your child's world? Pray together for that individual, and discuss ways you can reach out with love and understanding. —by Bob Smithouser

