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Tradebook



Title: *Dear Mr. Henshaw*

Author's name: Beverly Cleary

Publisher: HarperTrophy

Copyright year: 2000

Reading level: Fifth Grade

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Synopsis of Story: When, in second grade, Leigh writes to an author to tell him how much he "licked" his book, he never suspects that he'll still be writing to him four years later. And he never imagines the kinds of things he'll be writing about. It's not easy being the new kid in town, with recently divorced parents, no dog anymore, and a lunch that gets stolen every day (all the "good stuff," anyway). Writing letters, first to the real Mr. Henshaw, and then in a diary to a pretend Mr. Henshaw, may be just what he needs.

Theme: Diary

Activity One: Author Letters

Source: <http://www.nancypolette.com/LitGuidesText/dearmrhenshaw.htm>

Standard: English 5.4.4 – Use organizational features of printed text, such as citations, endnotes, and bibliographic references, to locate relevant information.

English 5.4.6 – Create simple documents using a computer and employing organizational features, such as passwords, entry and pull-down menus, word searches, the thesaurus, and spell checks.

English 5.5.4 – Write persuasive letters or compositions.

Objective: The students will write a friendly letter to their favorite living author.

Description of activity: The students will follow the directions on this web site (<http://www.carolhurst.com/authors/authors.html>) for finding their favorite living author. They can read about the author and either write or email the author depending on the information given.

Activity Two: Writing Evaluations

Source: <http://www.albion.edu/education/mcoatt/balbery/portfolio/>

Standard: English 5.4.8 – Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning and clarity.

English 5.4.9 – Proofread one’s own writing, as well as that of others, using an editing checklist or set of rules, with specific examples of corrections of specific errors.

English 5.4.10 – Edit and revise writing to improve meaning and focus through adding, deleting, combining, clarifying, and rearranging words and sentences.

Objective: The students will examine how Leigh’s writing has changed over time. They will use an editing checklist to edit his writing, as well as writing down critiques about his writing. Finally, they will summarize how his writing has changed over time.

Description of activity: The main character in the book, Leigh Botts, grows up as we read. He begins his diary in second grade, and he is in sixth grade when the book ends. I thought that it was important for my students to examine how his writing changes as he gets older. I copied four letters from his diary written in four different grades. The students analyzed how both the grammar and the content of his letters change and also his general feelings about writing. The links below show both the assignment itself and a student's work.