

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Grades 4-6

Written by Ron Leduc
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Expectations

The students will:

- practice the major strategies used during the reading process.
- practice and reinforce a variety of language skills.
- develop a love for humorous readings.
- improve and develop their creativity.
- be assessed through the use of a novel as a teaching tool.

Story Summary

Meet the Herdmans: Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Claude, Ollie and Gladys. They lie, steal, smoke cigars, talk dirty, cuss their teachers, and take the name of the Lord in vain. They are, no doubt, the worst kids in the world.

They learned a valuable lesson when they set fire to Fred Shoemaker's toolhouse - that whenever there's a fire, there will be free doughnuts sooner or later. Their cat was the meanest-looking animal you ever saw. When Claude took it for Show-and-Tell, the entire class emptied in three minutes. The teacher, Miss Brandel, tried to chase the cat. The result was a wrecked room, a wrecked teacher, and hysterical children.

Imogene never learned anything except dirty words and secrets about everyone. If she didn't know a secret, she would make one up and blackmail everyone.

Leroy used to steal desserts. When Charlie told him about the desserts they served at Sunday School, the Herdmans decided to go to church. When they heard about the Christmas Pageant, Imogene wanted to be Mary and Ralph wanted to be Joseph. Leroy, Claude, and Ollie decided to be the Wisemen. Gladys was the Angel of the Lord. No one else (for fear of their life) dared to volunteer for these parts.

When the Herdmans learned about the birth in a manger instead of in the inn, they were flabbergasted. What astonished them even more were those spies



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for Herod: the Wisemen. They wanted someone to be Herod in the play so they could beat him up.

When the Herdmans wanted library cards to learn about Jesus, knowing she had finally seen everything, the local librarian decided to retire.

Throughout rehearsals they drank the Communion wine, stole crayons from the Sunday School supplies, and money from the piggybank. When Imogene was smoking cigars in the washroom, the fire department was called to the church.

Everyone came to the pageant to see what the Herdmans would do. Imogene and Ralph looked like refugees sent to wait in a strange place with all their boxes and sacks around them. "Hey! Unto you a child is born" hollered Gladys. The Wisemen marched up the aisle but instead of Gold, Frankincense and Myrth they brought their own ham from the food basket. Imogene, who was holding a doll, started to cry. The pageant now had a new meaning. It was about a new baby and his mother and father, who were in a lot of trouble. They had no money, no place to go, no doctor, nobody they knew, and then arriving late from the East, were rich friends.

About the Author

Barbara Robinson was born in 1927 in Portsmouth, Ohio, but now makes her home in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. During her formal education Ms. Robinson received a B. A. degree from Allegheny College. She is a freelance writer.

She has written several books for children including "Temporary Times, Temporary Places" which was an ALA "Notable Book" and a School Library Journal "Best Book", both in 1982.

Her short stories have appeared in McCalls, Good Housekeeping, Redbook, Ladies Home Journal, and the Toronto Star Weekly. She and her husband have two daughters, Carolyn and Marjorie. Ms. Robinson states that every book she writes for boys and girls is a book that she has written for herself. If she doesn't find the story interesting or exciting, she doesn't think that boys or girls will either.



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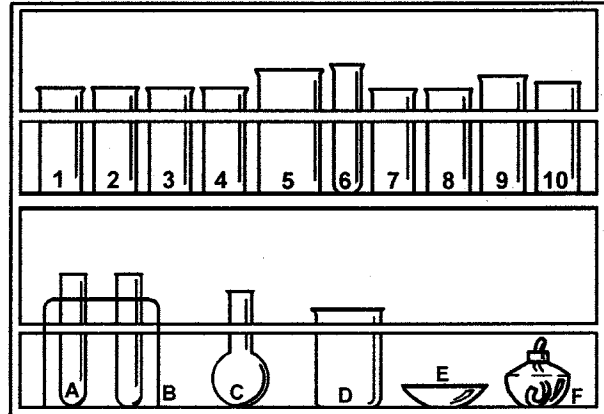
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Chapter 1 - Title: _____

A. Leroy Herdman stole a _____ from the hardware store. These are some of the things in the set. Label them. Write scientific names for some of the powders.

Powders

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |



Apparatus

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| a) _____ | d) _____ |
| b) _____ | e) _____ |
| c) _____ | f) _____ |

B. Illustrate the result of Miss Brandel's chase of the Herdman cat.

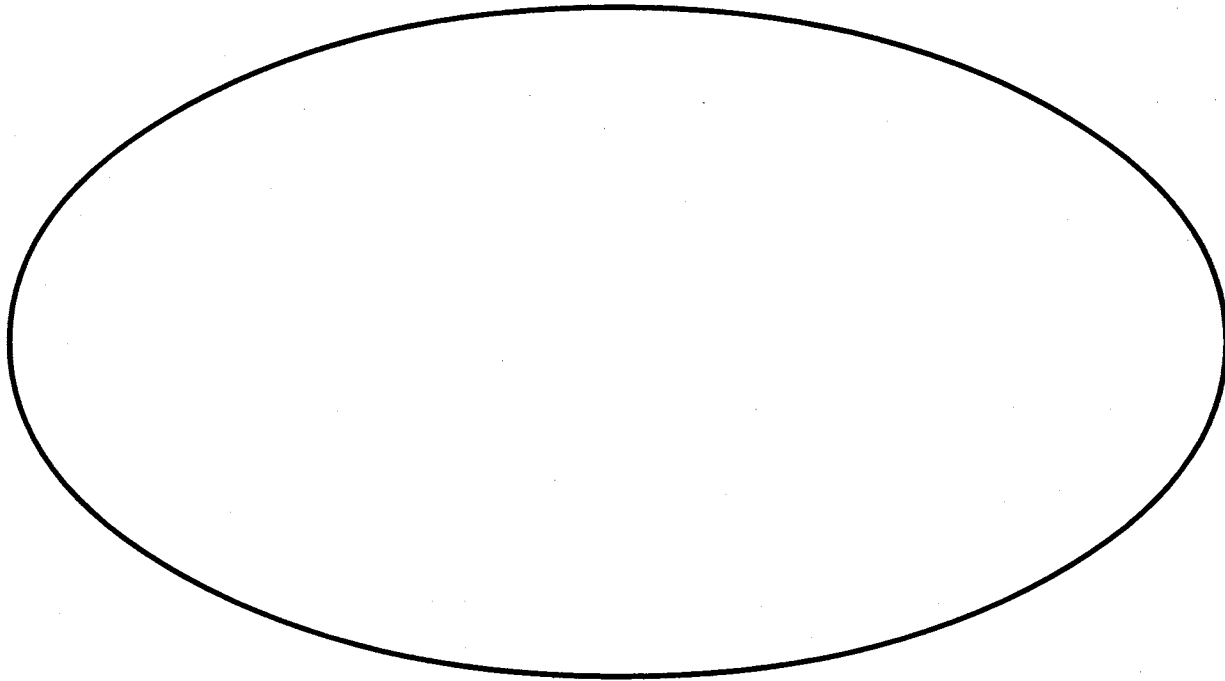


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Chapter 1

- A. Wanda Pierce's hobby was a _____. Pretend that you have one. Illustrate it with seven to ten of your favorite things.



- B. Write **eight** reasons why the Herdmans were the worst kids in the history of the world.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

- C. Why was Leroy mad about the fire?

- D. What great lesson did the Herdmans learn about a fire?
