

Dear Mr. Henshaw won the Newberry Medal in 1984 and became favorite with young readers because it deals honestly with struggles they face. It is the story – by way of letters and journal entries – of a young boy’s life and acceptance of his parents’ divorce.

Questions for Discussion:

1. The boy’s letters start off poorly written and misspelled, and later they improve. What is the author’s purpose in leaving bad spelling and grammar in the letters to Mr. Henshaw?
2. Although we only get to read Leigh’s side, we can follow the correspondence. What are some of the clues we’re given regarding Mr. Henshaw’s responses?
3. Leigh is in a new home, a new school, and without his father or his dog. How does he feel about these things?
4. Rather than dwelling on the negative things and acting out badly – the janitor advises Leigh to change his attitude. Was this good advice? Why or why not?
5. What was the outcome of the changes Leigh made?
6. Finally, Leigh’s father comes to see him. Did the story end the way you expected?
7. Beverly Cleary had a purpose in mind when she wrote *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, something she wanted to communicate to her readers. You may call it her **theme**. What was the theme of *Dear Mr. Henshaw*?

Activity:

Write to your favorite author and tell them what you liked about their book. Let them know a little about your life. You may send the letter – or it may become the first entry in your journal. Either way, you must share it with someone!