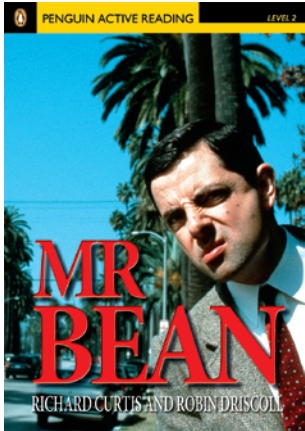




## Mr Bean

Richard Curtis and Robert Driscoll  
(retold by Joanna Strange)



### About the authors

Richard Curtis and Robert Driscoll wrote the film script for *Bean*, which was released in 1997. It was based on a character originally developed by Curtis and the comic actor, Rowan Atkinson. Curtis was born in New Zealand but studied at Oxford, gaining a first class degree in English Language and Literature. He has written several successful TV series, such as the BBC's *Not the Nine O'clock News* and *Blackadder*, although he is probably better known for his film scripts, which include *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Love Actually*. He now lives with his wife and children in Suffolk. Rowan Atkinson was born in Durham and gained a master's degree in electrical engineering from Oxford University. It was at Oxford that he met Curtis and they began to write and perform comedy. They continued to work together for many years, not only on the *Mr Bean* series and film, but also on the TV series mentioned above, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Love Actually*. Atkinson has also worked on other films including *The Lion King*. Atkinson now lives in a village near Oxford with his wife and children. He loves cars and is a shy, serious person in real life, not at all like the parts he plays.

### Summary

Mr Bean is a very strange man who has lots of problems dealing with other people and everyday situations. In this book, he works in a famous art gallery, called the National Gallery, in London. At the beginning, he is sent to the Grierson Gallery in Los Angeles to talk about a famous painting called *Whistler's Mother*. On the journey he has several problems and when he arrives, he goes to stay with David Langley, who works at the gallery. David's family is

not very happy because they think Mr Bean is strange. On a trip to the fairground, Mr Bean gets into trouble with the police, but this is nothing compared to what he does at the gallery. When left to look after the famous painting, he completely ruins it and has to think of an elaborate scheme to make things right. Later, he also cures David's daughter Jennifer, who has had an accident. Things look good for Mr Bean, although some years later the truth about the painting is finally discovered.

**Chapters 1–2:** In the National Gallery in London, everybody is discussing who should go to America to talk about the painting. But they are also discussing how awful Mr Bean is. Suddenly the boss arrives and decides to send Mr Bean to America. Everybody, except Mr Bean, is very unhappy. Mr Bean begins his journey by plane. A young boy, who is sitting near him, is sick in a bag and Mr Bean, who didn't see this, plays an unfortunate trick with the bag. When he arrives at the airport, he has more problems with the police, who think he has got a gun.

**Chapter 3:** Mr Bean arrives late at the Langley house, looking very strange. The next day, he goes with David to the gallery to meet Mr Grierson. First, he goes to the Men's Room and he wets his trousers when he washes his hands. He tries to dry them with a hand-dryer, but his trousers are still wet when he gets to Mr Grierson's office, which is full of important people. He sees a fan and dances around in front of it to dry them some more. Mr Grierson tells 'Dr Bean' that he will have to talk about the painting for about twenty minutes.

**Chapters 4–5:** David's family decide to go away for the weekend to escape Mr Bean and David takes Mr Bean to a fairground. Mr Bean plays with the computers, makes one of the rides more dangerous and gets into trouble with the police again. On Monday, they go back to the gallery and Mr Bean is left to look after the painting. He tries to clean it with his handkerchief, gets blue ink all over it, and then stands on it by accident. Then he washes the face away and has to draw another. David sees it and is very unhappy.

**Chapters 6–7:** That night Mr Bean gets an idea from David's son. He takes some things from David's house and goes to the gallery. He takes a poster of *Whistler's Mother* from the gallery shop. He uses eggs and other things to put a new surface on the painting and dries it with a hairdryer. The next day there are a lot of important people at the gallery. David is very worried, but then he sees the painting. It looks wonderful. Mr Bean gives a silly speech



## Mr Bean

and everybody is very happy. But then a policeman arrives and tells David his daughter is in hospital.

**Chapters 8–9:** David and Mr Bean go to the hospital. David goes to see his daughter and Mr Bean waits for him. One of the doctors thinks Mr Bean is a medical doctor and takes him to the operating room. Everybody leaves him alone with a man on the operating table. Mr Bean throws a sweet and it goes in the man's stomach. He tries to get it but finds a bullet instead. Then, David sees Mr Bean dressed as a doctor and asks him to go to help his daughter. Mr Bean tries to wake her. He pulls faces and then hits her. She wakes up and her parents are very happy. Now, they love Mr Bean.

**Chapter 10:** Mr Bean stays with the Langleys for another week and he has a good time. On the last day they have a party to say goodbye and then Mr Bean goes back to England. Three years later, Mr Bean is at home, thinking about his good friends in America. David is at the gallery, thinking about *Whistler's Mother* when the ground begins to move. The painting falls off the wall and Mr Grierson sees that it is really a poster. He wants to know where the real painting is. Back in England, Mr Bean says good-night to a face on his bedroom wall, which is *Whistler's Mother* of course.

### Background and themes

Atkinson and Curtis created the character for a one-man show at the Edinburgh Festival in 1979. Atkinson said that Curtis was bored with writing words and Mr Bean was the person he naturally became when called on to perform an entirely visual routine. It began with the idea of a man who has trouble staying awake and ends up asleep on the person sitting next to him in church. Ten years later, Mr Bean had his own half-hour TV programme, which became the highest-rated comedy series in British history. In the thirteen episodes that were produced, Mr Bean finds himself trying to deal with one disastrous situation after another, caused mainly by his inability to manage everyday interactions with other people. Mr Bean appears to be like a naughty child trapped in the body of an adult, having problems with things as basic as dressing himself, eating out or shopping. On the one hand, the audience can feel sorry for him as he seems to be lost and alone in a world that he doesn't understand, but on the other hand, he can be selfish and inconsiderate, often not thinking about how he may affect others.

**Bean (the film):** The character of Mr Bean develops in the film as he begins to accept responsibility for his actions, trying to help others and compensate for the things he has done. He even makes friends with the American family he stays with. What's more, he talks at times, although in a strange voice. When the film was released, many critics claimed it was stupid and unpleasant and it didn't win any prizes. Nevertheless, *Bean* has been one of the most successful films in the history of British cinema, taking huge sums of money at the box office. The film contains jokes that ordinary people of all ages can enjoy on an international level and many would like to see a sequel. Atkinson, however, thinks that maybe it's time to say goodbye to the character and move on.

### Discussion activities

#### Before reading

- 1 Write and discuss:** Write the word 'FUNNY' on the board and check that students know the meaning. Tell students to make a list of things they find funny. Put the students in small groups and ask them to compare their lists, saying if they agree with each other about what is funny or not.
- 2 Discuss:** Write 'MR BEAN' on the board. Ask the students: *What do you know about this person?*

#### Chapters 1–2

##### While reading (At the end of p. 3)

- 3 Pair work:** Ask students to talk about what they know about Mr Bean.  
*Describe Mr Bean. What does he look like? Is he intelligent? What is his job? Why don't the other people at the gallery like him? What does and doesn't he like doing? Do you think he wants to go to America?*
- 4 Discuss:** Explain to the students that Mr Bean is going to travel to America by plane. Ask them if they have ever been on a plane and if they enjoyed the experience. Ask them what problems people can have on a plane and to imagine what could happen to Mr Bean.  
*Do you ever travel by plane? Do you like it? What problems can people have when travelling by plane? What do you think Mr Bean will do wrong?*

#### After reading

- 5 Write and guess:** Write *'I'm happy because an important painting is coming to my gallery.'* on the board. Ask students to guess which person in Chapters 1–2 says or thinks this. Now, have students choose a person from Chapters 1–2 and write a sentence to say what they are thinking at one particular moment. Students read out the sentences and the others guess who it is.



## Mr Bean

### Chapter 3

#### After reading

- 6 **Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *late, trousers, hand-dryer, climb, office, poster, fan*. Have the students talk and write in pairs to say how these words were used in Chapter 3.

### Chapters 4–5

#### While reading (After the first section on p. 16)

- 7 **Role play:** Put students in pairs to act out the conversation between David and Alison.  
Student A: *You are Alison. Say 'hello' to your husband. Ask if Mr Bean is coming. Explain you don't like him and why and say you are going away with the children for the weekend.*  
Student B: *You are David. Say 'hello' to your wife and tell her Mr Bean is coming home for the weekend. Ask her to stay with you to help.*

#### After reading

- 8 **Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 4–5. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the mistakes.

### Chapters 6–7

#### Before reading

- 9 **Discuss:** Talk about Mr Bean's problem and possible solutions.  
*What is Mr Bean's problem? How do you think he feels? What do you think will happen when Mr Grierson sees the painting? What can Mr Bean do now?*

#### After reading

- 10 **Write and ask:** Write 'Why was David asleep in the living room?' on the board and elicit the answer (Because Alison was angry with him). Ask students to write another question about something in Chapters 6 and 7. Check their work as they do this. Now have students stand up and mingle, asking and answering each others questions.

### Chapters 8–9

#### Before reading

- 11 **Pair work:** Give students five minutes to write a list of all the words they know in English that could be related to hospitals. The pair with the most words wins. Check their words by having them read out the list and write the words on the board.

#### After reading

- 12 **Write and guess:** Ask students in pairs to choose one picture from Chapters 8–9 and to write a sentence to describe what is happening. Then students can read out their sentences and the other students can guess which picture they are describing.

### Chapter 10

#### While reading (After first two sentences on p. 44)

- 13 **Guess:** Put students in pairs or small groups to imagine an accident that Mr Bean had during his week in Los Angeles. Students can then explain their accidents to the rest of the class and then vote for the funniest.

#### After reading

- 14 **Write:** Put students in pairs to write a list of all the good things and the bad things that Mr Bean did in the book. Check the answers with the whole class and have a vote about whether he is mostly good or bad.
- 15 **Act and guess:** Put students in small groups and ask them to choose one scene from the whole book. Tell them they have to mime the scene. Give them time to practise and then get them to perform it for the whole class. The rest of the students have to say what is happening.
- 16 **Pair work:** Choose two short scenes from the film and organise the students in pairs. Show the first scene, allowing only one of each pair to watch. The other sits with their back to the screen. After, have the student who watched explain what happened to the one who didn't. Now the students change roles to watch the second scene.
- 17 **Write:** Tell students to imagine they are Mr Bean. They have to write a letter to Mr Grierson to say sorry for what happened and to explain how it happened.
- 18 **Role play:** Put students in pairs to imagine a telephone conversation between Mr Bean and David, which happens just after the end of the book. David explains what happened in the museum and Mr Bean talks about the picture on his wall and what he is going to do with it.

#### Vocabulary activities

For the Word list and vocabulary activities, go to [www.penguinreaders.com](http://www.penguinreaders.com).