BULLYING

Book Discussion Guide

INCLUDES CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

RHTeachersLibrarians.com
Dear Colleague,

Bullying and relational aggression have received a lot of media attention recently, but these are not new problems. What is new is society’s attitude towards bullying and relational aggression. What used to be accepted as a natural part of growing up has our full attention because now we know that bullying has serious consequences for everyone involved. Stop and think for a moment about your own experiences growing up. We all have memories of being teased, taunted, excluded, bullied, and harassed in childhood and even in adulthood. Many of us have memories of being the bully ourselves. We know that the emotional scars of bullying are painful and permanent. We want healthier social and emotional experiences for the children in our lives. Bullying prevention is everyone’s responsibility. As educators, we must be willing to take a stand for the social and emotional well being of all of the children placed in our care.

As a primary school counselor, I am devoted to the prevention of bullying behaviors. Every student can benefit from gaining the knowledge and skills needed to safely and effectively address bullying behaviors if encountered in any setting. My goal is to empower children to stand up for themselves and each other. My bullying prevention lessons are focused on developing a school culture of kindness and compassion; effective communication; problem solving and conflict management skills; strategies for standing up for themselves and others; and reinforcing the importance of reporting bullying behaviors to trusted adults.

I believe strongly in the importance of quality literature for children to teach social and emotional skills. For my class lessons, I seek out books that are well written, relevant, and meaningful with believable characters that are relatable to children. I know what the current issues are in our classrooms, on our playgrounds, and on our buses, so I am able to plan my lessons according to need.

Trudy Ludwig’s books—My Secret Bully, Just Kidding, Sorry, Trouble Talk, Too Perfect, Confessions of a Former Bully, Better Than You and The Invisible Boy—are the core of my counseling curriculum. Ludwig is a powerful advocate for children and her books address issues of relational aggression while developing empathy and resiliency in children. Her books also provide research-based information to educate and support adults to empower children with social and emotional skills to navigate their complicated social worlds.

As bullying becomes a greater concern in the lives of young adults, we must look to well-written novels with believable characters in real-life situations. These books can bring social problems out into the light in a nonthreatening manner, and create teachable moments for engaging students in rich discussions in which problem solving and emotional support can occur. Wonder by R. J. Palacio, Twerp by Mark Goldblatt and The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin by Josh Berk address directly issues of bullying, cyberbullying, stereotypes, popularity, peer pressure, dating violence, exclusion, intentional, and unintentional bullying. In each of these novels, empathy, kindness, and friendship overrule bullying.

Laura Barbour
School Counselor

Laura Barbour, M.A., has taught and counseled children from preschool through high school in a variety of educational and mental health settings for over 20 years. She presently works as an elementary professional school counselor at Stafford Primary School in West Linn, Oregon.
Pre-Reading Activity: Stand Up In Silence

OBJECTIVES
- To further develop a culture of compassion and caring in our classrooms and school community.
- To sensitize students to the effects of bullying, stereotyping, prejudice, ridicule, teasing, and other hurtful behaviors.
- To address character traits of justice, fairness, tolerance, empathy, integrity, respect, responsibility, compassion, and courage.
- To identify the different roles in bullying behaviors and acknowledge the roles we play.

INTRODUCTION
I am going to read several statements out loud. If I read a statement that is true for you, please quietly stand up. If I read a statement that is not true for you, please remain seated or sit down.

You may have strong feelings during this activity. It is important that we honor each other’s feelings by doing this activity in silence.

ACTIVITY
1. Stand up if you have been teased about the clothes you wear, your height, your weight, or the size or shape of your body.
2. Stand up if you have ever been teased or made fun for how you look or talk.
3. Stand up if you have ever been put down, teased, or excluded because of the color of your skin.
4. Stand up if you have ever been put down, teased or excluded because of your faith or religious beliefs.
5. Stand up if you have used words to hurt others by calling them names or putting them down.
6. Stand up if you’ve been on the giving or receiving end of the silent treatment or intentional exclusion from a group, game, or activity.
7. Stand up if you’ve smiled, laughed, clapped, or remained silent when someone was being teased or bullied in front of you.
8. Stand up if you’ve ever emailed, texted, or posted something online about someone that you wouldn’t say face-to-face.
9. Stand up if you’ve been told that you look or act like a boy or a girl and that is not who you are.
10. Stand up if you have ever been on the receiving or giving end of comments like “loser” or “retard.”
11. Stand up if you’ve been told by someone who you can and cannot be friends with.
12. Stand up if you’ve ever felt pressure from friends to do something you didn’t want to do and felt sorry or ashamed afterwards.
13. Stand up if you’ve spread rumors or gossiped about someone else.
14. Stand up if you or someone you know was physically or emotionally hurt and you were too uncomfortable or afraid to say something.

DEBRIEF
It takes courage to stand up. Everyone here knows what it feels like to get hurt, to see someone be hurt, and to cause the hurt. When you stood up, you remembered what it feels like to be the target, the bystander, or the bully. That is what empathy feels like. If we can remember what we’ve learned here today—that we’ve all been hurt by bullying—we will stand up, speak up, and stop others from being hurt. We share a collective responsibility to prevent bullying behaviors.

Remember: It is a choice! If you don’t like how you are being treated or how you are treating others, do something about it. You choose which role you play.

If you are a target of bullying, report it to an adult you trust at school and an adult you trust at home.
If you are a bystander, be a hero! Stand up! Comfort the target. Include the target. Report it to an adult.
If you are a bully, get help! Talk to an adult you trust and learn skills to manage your emotions and behavior.

Note to Educators:
This is a powerful activity that may provoke strong feelings in your students. It is essential that this lesson be taught in an emotionally safe and respectful environment. The language in the activity should be adapted based on your audience.
Vocabulary

Ask students to define the following words:

- bully
- target
- bystander
- upstander
- teasing
- taunting
- inclusion
- exclusion
- harassment
- cyberbullying
- tattling
- reporting
- put-ups
- popularity
- clique
- peer pressure
- stereotype
- discrimination
- prejudice
- tolerance
- cooperation
- competition
- empathy
- kindness
- compassion
- politically correct language
- people-first language

FEATURED TITLES BY TRUDY LUDWIG

MY SECRET BULLY
Illustrated by Abigail Marble
Tricycle Press • Grades 1–4
HC: 978-1-58246-159-5

Here is the all-too-familiar story of Monica. She and Katie have been friends since kindergarten. Monica loves being around her when she’s nice. But there are times when Katie can be just plain mean. And Monica doesn’t understand why.

THE INVISIBLE BOY
Illustrated by Patrice Barton
Alfred A. Knopf • Grades 1–4
HC: 978-1-58246-450-3
GLB: 978-1-58246-451-0

Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party . . . until, that is, a new kid comes to class.

JUST KIDDING
Illustrated by Adam Gustavson
Tricycle Press • Grades 1–4
HC: 978-1-58246-163-2

D.J.’s friend Vince has a habit of teasing D.J. and then saying, “Just kidding!” as if it will make everything okay. It doesn’t, but D.J. is afraid that if he protests, his friends will think he can’t take a joke.

TROUBLE TALK
Illustrated by Mikela Prevost;
Foreword by Charisse L. Nixon
Tricycle Press • Grades 1–4
HC: 978-1-58246-240-0

Maya’s friend Bailey loves to talk about everything and everyone. At first, Maya thinks Bailey is funny. But when Bailey’s talk leads to harmful rumors and hurt feelings, Maya begins to think twice about their friendship.
Exploring Trudy Ludwig’s Picture Books

Trudy Ludwig is an award-winning author who specializes in writing children’s books that explore the colorful and sometimes confusing world of children’s social interactions. Visit her website at TrudyLudwig.com

My Secret Bully

Paper doll activity—prepared by Trudy Ludwig

- Cut a large paper doll out of butcher paper and decorate it to look like a girl.
- Read My Secret Bully by Trudy Ludwig.
- Have the kids take turns calling out specific incidents in My Secret Bully in which Monica was intentionally hurt by Katie. Scrunch up the paper doll with each example.
- Once the paper doll is completely scrunched, explain to the children that bullying can crush the human spirit, but that you can get built back up again with the helpful support of allies—adults and peers.
- Have the students now take turns calling out specific incidents in the story that illustrate who helped Monica and how. As they give their examples, unfurl the crumpled doll, explaining how having allies or people who support you can build up the human spirit.
- Ask the kids, “Now that she’s built back up again, what do you see on the doll?” Kids will point out that the doll now has wrinkles. Share with the kids that the wrinkles are the scars of the heart. Explain how all of us have scars somewhere on our bodies that are lifelong reminders of what happened to us as kids. Share with them that you have a scar on your body, a memory marker of what had happened to you when you were a child.
- Ask the kids, “If you can touch your scar, does it hurt?” They’ll say, “No.” Tell them, “That’s because your skin has toughened up. YOU have toughened up, but that scar is a lifelong memory of what had happened to you when you were a kid.”
- Now ask the adults in the classroom to raise their hand if they remember, as a child: a) watching others getting intentionally hurt; b) being the one who was hurt; or c) being the one who hurt another. Usually, every adult hand goes up. This lets kids know that even adults have gone through hurtful experiences as children, and they’ve gotten through them. They’re okay now, but they still carry that memory of hurt with them.
- End this activity by encouraging the kids to remember the power of their words and their actions: They have the power to create memories of kindness or memories of cruelty for others. They should use their power to create memories of kindness.

Confessions of a Former Bully

Illustrated by Beth Adams

- Read Confessions of a Former Bully as an extension or closure to My Secret Bully.
- Teach about the roles of bullying and develop compassion and empathy for the bully, target, bystander, and hero bystander.
- Explore perspective and author’s voice by comparing Confessions of a Former Bully and My Secret Bully.

Correlates to Common Core State Standard Reading Literature: RL.K.1; RL.1.1; RL.2.3; RL.2.1; RL.3.1; RL.4.1; RL.5.2; and RL.5.3
Exploring Trudy Ludwig’s Picture Books

THE INVISIBLE BOY

Ask students, “What is it? What does it look like? What does it feel like?” Make a T-chart to brainstorm examples of inclusion and exclusion. Ask students to share their own experiences. How does it feel to be excluded? How does it feel to be included? How can we work and play together cooperatively to ensure that everyone is included?

Role play relevant scenarios with your class. For example: You enjoy playing kickball during recess. The same two students are always captain and they choose their friends to play on their teams. You notice the same student does not get chosen for kickball day after day.

• What would you do if this happened to you?
• What would you do if you saw this happen to someone else?
• What would you say or do to include the student who is being left out?
• What is our commitment to address the issue of exclusion? What can we do to prevent it from happening?

JUST KIDDING

Guide your students in an activity to identify the difference between playful teasing and hurtful taunting. Using a T-chart, brainstorm examples with your class based on their experiences with teasing. Categorize each example under the heading of “Teasing” or “Taunting.” This activity will clarify the fine line between playful teasing and hurtful taunting.

TROUBLE TALK

Explain to students, “I am going to ask a series of questions and I want you to think about your answer without saying anything out loud, nodding, or raising your hands.”

• Have you ever been made fun of or teased by a friend?
• Has a friend ever called you a name you didn’t like?
• Have you ever been excluded by your friends?
• Has a friend ever used humor to hurt you?
• Has a friend ever hit or hurt you and claimed it was just a joke?

Teasing can be a playful way to show affection and have fun, but it can go too far and feelings can get hurt. However, if the teasing hurts, humiliates, ridicules, or devalues another person, then the teasing has crossed the line into taunting. Taunting is a form of emotional bullying or relational aggression that can be hurtful. This story is about a friend who takes teasing too far.

Correlates to Common Core State Standard Reading Literature:
RL.K.1; RL.1.1; RL.2.3; RL.2.1; RL.3.1; RL.4.1; RL.5.2; and RL.5.3
TWERP

Mark Goldblatt

Random House • Grades 4–7
HC: 978-0-375-97142-6
GLB: 978-0-375-97143-3

Julian Twerski isn’t a bully. He’s just made a big mistake. So when he returns to school after a weeklong suspension, his English teacher offers him a deal: if he keeps a journal and writes about the terrible incident that got him and his friends suspended, he can get out of writing a report on Shakespeare. Julian jumps at the chance.

And so begins his account of life in sixth grade—blowing up homemade fireworks, writing a love letter for his best friend (with disastrous results), and worrying whether he’s still the fastest kid in school. Lurking in the background, though, is the one story he can’t bring himself to tell, the one story his teacher most wants to hear.

THE DARK DAYS OF HAMBURGER HALPIN

Josh Berk

Alfred A. Knopf • Grades 7 up
PB: 978-0-375-84625-0
HC: 978-0-375-85699-0

Being a hefty, deaf newcomer almost makes Will Halpin the least popular guy at Coaler High. But when he befriends the only guy less popular than him, the dork-namic duo has the smarts and guts to figure out who knocked off the star quarterback. Will can’t hear what’s going on, but he’s a great observer. So, who did it? And why does that guy talk to his fingers? And will the beautiful girl ever notice him? (Okay, so Will’s interested in more than just murder. . . .)

WONDER

R. J. Palacio

Alfred A. Knopf • Grades 3–7
HC: 978-0-375-86902-0
GLB: 978-0-375-96902-7

August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting fifth grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can’t get past Auggie’s extraordinary face.

Wonder, now a #1 New York Times bestseller and included on the Texas Bluebonnet Award master list, begins from Auggie’s point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community’s struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

“SHALL WE MAKE A NEW RULE OF LIFE . . . ALWAYS TRY TO BE A LITTLE KINDER THAN IS NECESSARY?”

—J. M. BARRIE
Exploring Middle-Grade & Young Adult Books

SOCIAL STATUS
We know that bullying can result from an imbalance of power and social status. Recent research indicates that social isolation is a significant risk factor for children and teens to be targets of bullying. Shy, quiet, passive children are at greater risk for being the target of aggression and bullying. Social power and social connection are risk factors for children and teens to bully their peers. Put simply, popular students are more likely to bully unpopular students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
• What does it mean to be popular?
• How are cliques formed?
• What are the social boundaries at your school?
• How is one’s social status determined?
• What characteristics are valued in boys? In girls?
• What characteristics result in someone being socially outcast?
• Can someone change his/her social status? How?
• How does social status contribute to bullying?

ACTIVITY
Rank the following qualities in the order of importance according to social status at your school:
• Appearance
• Character
• Material possessions
• Athletic ability
• Academic performance
• Sense of Style
• Parental Social Economic Status
• Personality
• Sense of Humor

CONNECTION TO LITERATURE
Students who are targets of bullying are perceived as different from other students due to their size, race, sexuality, disabilities, or different interests. They may appear to be weak or insecure and seek approval from their peers. Targets of bullying are often students who don’t report the behavior to adults for fear of retaliation.

What factors contributed to students being bullied in Wonder, Twerp, and The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin?

What was Will Halpin’s social status at the beginning of The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin?
What was his social status at the end of the book?
How did he change his social status? What qualities determined in popularity at Carbon High School?

What was Auggie’s social status at the beginning of Wonder? What factors determined Auggie’s social status at Beecher Prep? As classmates got to know Auggie, what character traits were valued? How did Auggie change his social status in the story? How did Auggie change the social dynamics at Beecher Prep?

What qualities determined social status among the characters in Twerp? Which character had the most social power? What characteristics were valued among Julian’s friends? Did Julian’s social status change in the story? How did Julian change his social status?

POPULARITY & PEER PRESSURE: BE TRUE TO YOU
How do you remain true to yourself without giving into peer pressure or following the crowd? It is important to find friends who share your interests, values, and beliefs. When you are with these friends, you feel comfortable being yourself and speaking your mind. These friends are your allies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
• Is it more important to be popular and follow the crowd or be true to yourself?

“Nobody can hurt me without my permission.”
—MAHATMA GANDHI
Is peer pressure an issue at your school or with your group of friends?

How do you respond to peer pressure?

How does peer pressure contribute to bullying?

Think about a time you stood up for something you believed in. How did you do it? How did you feel?

When you stood up for something you believed in, how did others treat you? Were you respected for being honest and true to yourself?

Have you even been in a situation when you wish you had stood up for something you believed in? How did you feel?

Do you and your friends stand up to bullying? How do you stand up for one another?

**CONNECTION TO LITERATURE**

Who are Auggie’s allies in *Wonder*? How do Auggie’s friends, family, and teachers stand up for him? Did peer pressure have an impact on bullying in *Wonder*? Give examples of students standing up to peer pressure. Give examples of students giving in to peer pressure. Do you believe that kindness can win out over bullying?

Why did Julian give in to peer pressure in *Twerp*? Was Julian being true to himself when he played along with Lonnie’s dares? Why did he participate in Scrambled Dope Day? Does Julian stand up for what he knows is right?

How does Julian accomplish being true to himself? Who are Julian’s allies?

Who are Will’s allies in *The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin*? How do characters in the story respond to peer pressure? What characters remain true to themselves throughout the story? How did Will stand up for himself and others?

**TEACHING KINDNESS**

*Wonder* is the ideal novel for teaching the power of kindness, compassion, and empathy. There are many examples of bullying behaviors in *Wonder* overshadowed only by endearing acts of kindness.

- Compare and contrast incidences of bullying and incidences of kindness in *Wonder*.
- Publish, film, or blog a collection of your students’ precepts.
- Research Treacher Collins Syndrome/Mandibulofacial Dysostosis and prepare, class presentation, PowerPoint presentation, or brochure.
- Host a Disability Awareness Week at your school
- Train peer advocates to provide social support and friendship for students with special needs in your school.
- Start a kindness campaign in your school community. Students can work together to create a public service announcement for your school.

**Choose Kind** is an anti-bullying initiative inspired by WONDER. Visit choosekind.tumblr.com to share your story and pledge to CHOOSE KIND in your school and community! You can also join the conversation on Twitter: #thewonderofwonder

Correlates to Common Core State Standard English Language Arts Grade 6–8: Production and Distribution of Writing: Literacy.WHST.6-8.4: Literacy. WHST.6-8.5 and Literacy. WHST.6-8.6; Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Literacy. WHST.6-8.7; Literacy. WHST.6-8.8 and Literacy. WHST.6-8.9; Range of Writing: Literacy. WHST.6-8.10
I AM NOT A STEREOTYPE

A stereotype is a fixed, commonly held notion or image of a person or group, based on an oversimplification of some observed or imagined trait of behavior or appearance. Stereotypes can be either positive or negative. But most stereotypes tend to make us feel superior in some way to the person or group being stereotyped. Stereotypes ignore the uniqueness of individuals by painting all members of a group with the same brush.*

Ask students to write their own definition of the word *stereotype*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think people stereotype others?
- What are labels? Do you think labels are helpful or hurtful?
- Give examples of ways people are labeled by stereotypes.
- What happens when we generalize people based on labels and stereotypes?
- What examples of stereotyping caught your attention in *Wonder*, *Twerp* and *The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin*?
- What examples of labels and stereotypes do you witness in school? What examples of stereotypes do you witness in literature and media?
- Have you ever been stereotyped? What words were used to label you?
- How does it feel to be labeled or stereotyped?
- How do you correct someone who labels others?
- What can you do to eliminate stereotyping in our school?

CONNECTION TO LITERATURE

*The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin* by Josh Berk is full of examples of labels and stereotypes. The characters of the story are categorized based on personal characteristics that determine their level of popularity.

Will Halpin makes sense of his new social world by keeping notes in his secret notebook, labeling his new classmates and teachers. For example: PLANDERS=INSECURE JOCK FAWNER.

What are additional examples of Will’s labels for classmates and teachers?

Will struggles with labels and stereotypes of his own. His Individualized Education Plan states that he is “profoundly deaf yet intellectually capable.” Will is haunted by the DEAF CHILD AREA sign near his house that serves as a permanent and public label.

What other labels and stereotypes does Will face?

How does Will tear down his labels and make a name for himself at Carbon High School?

In *Twerp* by Mark Goldblatt, many characters are described based on their race, gender, disability, or ethnicity in ways today’s reader may find offensive or politically incorrect. For example: Stanley Stimmel is nick-named “Danley Dimmel” and described as “hard of hearing and soft in the head” and Eduardo’s friend Hector is described “as dark-skinned as a Negro kid.”

What other descriptive language did you find surprising or offensive?

Do you consider these descriptions to be stereotypes or discrimination?

Consider the time and place in which this story took place. Do you think this language was socially acceptable in Queens in the 1960s? Do you think this language would be socially acceptable today?

What would be the impact of using similar language in your school? Would it be considered discrimination or stereotyping? Give examples of politically correct and people-first language.

*This definition is based on ones in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, fourth edition, and from the Media Awareness Project.*

Correlates to Common Core State Standards Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL.9-10.4; Literacy.W.9-10.6 and Literacy.RL.11-12.4

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration Literacy. SL.9-10.1 and Literacy.SL.9-10.2 History/Social Studies: Craft and Structure Literacy.RH.6-8.4 and Literacy.RH.9-10.4
Post-Reading Discussion

These questions can be used during or after the reading of a book about bullying. They can be used to spark a class discussion or the answers may be written.

- What are your friendship qualities? What makes you a good friend?
- What qualities do you look for in a friend?
- How do friends treat each other?
- What can you do if a friend is being unkind to you?
- What is your definition of bullying?
- What do you know about bullying?
- List five examples of bullying behavior.
- What is the difference between teasing and taunting?
- What are the roles people play in bullying behavior?
- Why do you think people engage in bullying behaviors?
- Do you think people can play more than one role in bullying?
- What do you think it feels like to be bullied?
- What can you do if you see someone being bullied?
- What is the difference between tattling and reporting?
- What can you do if someone is bullying you?
- Who can you talk to if someone is bullying you?
- What can you do if you are being a bully?
- What is something everyone needs to know about bullying?
- What is your favorite quote in the book you’ve just read? What does that quote mean to you?
- What can you do to prevent bullying at school?

Internet Resources for Bullying Prevention

adl.org
ADL is a leading provider of anti-bias education and diversity training programs that help create and sustain inclusive home, school, community, and work environments.

olweus.org
The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is designed to improve peer relations and make schools safer, more positive places for students to learn and develop.

stopbullyingnow.com
Stan Davis’s website offers intervention strategies and advice for those impacted by bullying.

stopbullyingworld.org
The mission of the International Bullying Prevention Association is to support and enhance quality research based bullying prevention principles and practices in order to achieve a safe school climate, healthy work environment, good citizenship, and civic responsibility.

tolerance.org
A place to find thought-provoking news, conversation, and support for those who care about diversity, equal opportunity, and respect for differences in schools.
For more related titles, visit RHTeachersLibrarians.com

Visit TheBullyConversation.com for a selection of audiobooks to spark conversation about kids and bullying; includes an interview with bestselling author Jay Asher.

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