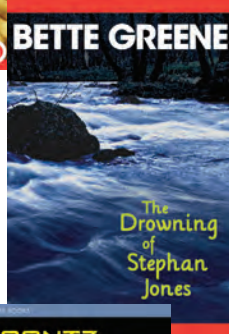
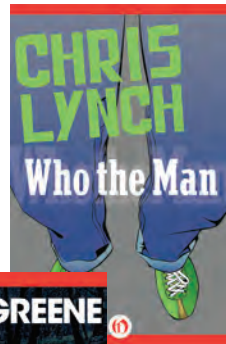
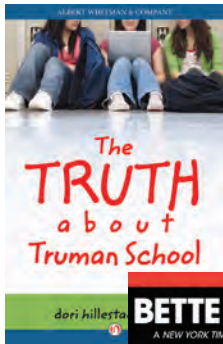


# BULLYING

## A THEMATIC GUIDE TO BULLYING IN LITERATURE



# BULLYING

Bullying isn't a new issue in schools. There have always been schoolyard rumbles, mild name-calling, and teases and taunts that escalate to more serious issues if the behavior isn't addressed. The attention to zero tolerance in schools for a laundry list of "bad" behaviors doesn't solve the problem, and sometimes puts the bullied and the bully at greater risk. The challenge for schools is to recognize that bullying is a serious public health problem and find ways to engage students in conversation about a responsible solution. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), 40–80% of school-age children experience some degree of bullying during their school years. This may include social isolation, mild or serious threats, sexual harassment, spreading rumors, hitting and punching, or making fun of those who are different. These behaviors may damage a student's self-esteem, cause him or her to do poorly in school, or lead to more violent behavior. Now, technology has given the bully a new voice. There are reported cases of severe cyberbullying that go so wrong that victims have actually committed suicide. This type of bullying has become so prevalent that some school districts

ban the use of any type of social media in school. But students communicate through social media, and they must be taught how to become responsible users.

One of the best ways to address the bullying epidemic in the nation's schools and communities is to use fiction to spark open and honest conversation among students. The six novels in this guide deal with various types of bullying and call upon readers to think about the issues before they fall victim to such behaviors.

In *Summer of My German Soldier* by Bette Greene, Patty Bergen, the twelve-year-old daughter of the only Jewish family in the small town of Jenkinsville, Arkansas, is ignored by both parents and brutally beaten by her father. Only Ruth, the black housekeeper, sees Patty's worth. Then, Patty disgraces her family when she befriends and hides a German soldier who escaped from a nearby POW camp. Too young to be tried for treason, Patty is sent to reform school, where her only visitor is Ruth.

Seventeen-year-old Carla Wayland, the main character in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* by Bette Greene, is the only child of a single mother and social activist in Racketville, Arkansas. Carla is so eager to "fit in" and gain the affection of star athlete Andy Harris that she temporarily abandons her better judgment and ignores Andy's aggressive behavior. Andy's idea of fun is to harass two gay guys from an adjacent town, and on prom night, he is responsible for the drowning of one of them. At this point, Carla can only see hatred in Andy's heart, and hypocrisy in the entire Harris family and the Baptist church they attend.

In *Who the Man* by Chris Lynch, Earl Pryor is big for his age, but his dad wants him larger. An only child, Earl is a loner and is often teased by his classmates. He retaliates in the only way he knows how—with his giant fists. His dad encourages Earl's behavior, but his mother wishes her son could be more like Bobby, a meek and mild-mannered

boy who is Earl's only friend. Earl is about to end a week of school suspension when he sees his father coming out of a bar with another woman. "Love my boy," his dad says. Earl answers, "Hate my dad." And he does.

Adele Griffin deals with social bullying in *Overnight*. Seven girls, called the "Lucky Seven," are celebrating Caitlin Donnelley's birthday with a slumber party. Gray is worried that the other girls might tease her because her mother brings her the wrong sleeping bag. The truth is that Gray mostly fears Martha, the mean-spirited ringleader of the group. When Gray is reported missing from the Donnelley home, it's Martha who holds the clue to her disappearance. Caitlin is angry that her party is spoiled, and Martha encourages the girls to give Gray a hard time if she returns. Gray is guilty of making an irresponsible decision that could have been life threatening, but she escapes the situation with a clear vision of the true meaning of friendship.

In *The Truth about Truman School* by Dori Hillestad Butler, Zebby and Amr are disturbed that the content of their school newspaper is controlled by the administration. They decide to create a website, a sort of underground newspaper, where students can post true facts about their middle school experience. The fine line between rights and responsibility is skewed when some students use the website to bully others. Lilly, one of the biggest bullies in the school, is taken down by "Anonymous," and Zebby and Amr realize that words hurt, and make the responsible decision to take down the site. This time, the two decide to create a new website about bullying.

Dean Koontz offers a fable that cautions readers about good vs. evil in *Oddkins*. Uncle Isaac, the creator of magical toys that bring goodness to children, has died and he has left Amos in charge of organizing the toys. The charge is to notify Colleen Shannon that she has been chosen to

take Uncle Isaac's place. Before the toys take leave, they realize that something strange is happening in the cellar of the toyshop. Rex, the evil tuxedoed marionette, and Gear, a mean robot, come alive and follow the magical toys on their journey. Amos is lost in battle, but not before the toys make a different kind of magic and convert Victor Bodkins, Uncle Isaac's evil brother, to their brand of goodness.

# PREREADING ACTIVITY

Ask students to define bullying. What types of behavior lead to bullying? Have them review the types of bullying on the following website:

[http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/recognizing\\_bullying.page](http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/recognizing_bullying.page)

Then have them observe the behavior of students in the school cafeteria or hallways for an entire week. Instruct them to graph the numbers of incidents that might be classed as bullying behavior. Share in class. Based on the data collected, what is the biggest discipline problem in the school?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 6-10.1, 6-10.2; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-10.4, 6-10.5, 6-10.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 6-10.1; Knowledge of Language L. 6-10.3.

## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Ask students to discuss the idiom “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” How can words hurt? How is verbal bullying different from mild teasing? Discuss how Patty Bergen’s parents in *Summer of My German Soldier* verbally abuse her. How does it affect her? Explain how Andy Harris, the bully in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, feels when his father calls him “Peabrain.” How does Earl Pryor, the main character in *Who the Man*, react when he is called a “mental case” by Derek and “melon head” by his father?



Discuss the atmosphere in Jenkinsville, Arkansas, the summer the German soldiers are brought to the POW camp. Patty says that she tries to read the faces of the soldiers for signs of terror, brutality, and humiliation. How does Patty experience what she can’t see in their faces? Compare and contrast how the bullies in each of the novels terrorize their victims.

Lilly Clarke in *The Truth about Truman School* is guilty of verbal bullying. Why is Trevor so anxious to get back at her? How does the online newspaper make it easy for Trevor to attack Lilly? Discuss how writing under “Anonymous” is a cowardly act. Explain what Trevor means when he says that writing those mean things about Lilly didn’t give him the “satisfaction” that he thought he would feel. What could Trevor have done to solve his issue with Lilly?



Patch in *Oddkins* says that others are hurt when you don’t take the time to think. How is this especially true in *The Truth about Truman School*? How does hurting others cause Zebby and Amr to think about creating a new website that discusses issues like bullying? What subtopics should they include in this new focus? How does it take courage to admit what went wrong, and change the course of the project?



Discuss social bullying. Why is it so common among adolescents? Describe the “Lucky Seven” in *Overnight* by Adele Griffin. How was the group formed? Who sets the rules for the group? Why was Gray almost expelled from the group? Cite specific evidence from the novel that shows Gray feels bad for girls like Annie Dearborne, her writing partner, who aren’t members of the “Lucky Seven.” Describe Martha. How do the other girls fear her? Why does Zoë think that it takes too much effort to stay in the “Lucky Seven?” Explain why it would take courage to leave the group.





Gray's mother calls her emotional, but not irresponsible. Find direct quotes from *Overnight* that prove that Gray is emotional. How is this typical adolescent behavior? Gray does make an irresponsible decision when she goes with Katrina, the woman who comes to the Donnelleys' door. What causes her to make this choice? Describe each girl's reaction to Gray's disappearance. Why doesn't Martha tell the police about the woman she saw at the mailbox? How is it an individual's responsibility to report such incidents to law enforcement? How might each girl in the "Lucky Seven" react when they learn that Gray is safe? Explain why Gray wants to call Annie Dearborne once she is safely home. What might they say to one another? Discuss how the slumber party and Gray's disappearance might change the group dynamics of the "Lucky Seven."



Most all adolescents have the strong desire to belong to a group, or in a family. Discuss Patty Bergen's struggle to belong in *Summer of My German Soldier*. How is she an outsider among girls her own age in Jenkinsville, Arkansas? How does Ruth, the Bergens' housekeeper, recognize Patty's struggle within her own family? Gray worries about not having the right sleeping bag in *Overnight*. What does this say about her need to "fit in"? Earl Pryor in *Who the Man* doesn't care about belonging to a group. How might belonging to a group solve some of his problems?



Carla Wayland, a character in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, has a crush on Andy Harris. Discuss how she is willing to give up her social values to gain his affection. Explain how her mother's social activism causes Carla problems

among her peers, and in the community. How does the drowning of Stephan Jones cause Carla to reexamine the kind of person she wants to be? Explain how Carla finally understands her mother's core beliefs and social activism.



Describe Earl Pryor's relationship with his parents in *Who the Man*. What is his dad's attitude toward fighting? Why doesn't Earl tell his mother that he is suspended from school? How is the video *Falling Down* symbolic of Earl's issues with other kids? At what point does Earl turn his anger toward his dad?



How does Butterscotch in *Oddkins* explain the vicious dog's behavior? Discuss how being bullied might cause someone to become a bully. In what ways are Earl Pryor's dad and Andy Harris's dad bullies? How does this explain the behavior of their sons? In *Oddkins*, Nick Jagg is recently out of prison and uses his misery to fuel hatred. Discuss what fuels the hatred in Mr. Bergen in *Summer of My German Soldier*, Andy Harris in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, Earl Pryor in *Who the Man*, Martha in *Overnight*, and Lilly in *The Truth about Truman School*.



The toys in *Oddkins* are aware that forces of good and evil are always present in the world. Identify the good and evil in each novel. Rex and the evil toys have no mercy, no compassion, and show no kindness. How is this true of the bullies in the other five novels?



Discuss what Earl in *Who the Man* likes about church. How is Pryor Church especially comforting to him? Explain what Earl means when he says that Pryor Church isn't about God but about gods. Discuss what Anton in *Summer of My German Soldier* means when he says, "I have seen the evil perpetrated by religious men" (Chapter Twelve). How is this especially true in *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*? Discuss how sexual preferences and racial, cultural, and religious prejudices cause bullying in *The Truth about Truman School*, *Overnight*, *Summer of My German Soldier*, and *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*.



Compare and contrast the structures of *Overnight* and *The Truth about Truman School*. Why are multiple points of view effective in these particular novels?



What do Bette Greene, Chris Lynch, Adele Griffin, Dean Koontz, and Dori Hillestad Butler want readers to know about bullying? Discuss what might be included in one last chapter of each novel.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 6-10.1, 6-10.2, 6-10.3; Craft & Structure RL. 6-10.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration 6-10.1, 6-10.2, 6-10.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-10.4, 6-10.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 6-10.1.

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Writers use similes to create certain images. For example, in Chapter Five of *Summer of My German Soldier*, Patty says, “I saw the hate that gnarled and snarled [my father’s] face like a dog gone rabid.” Have students find other examples of simile in the six novels. Then have them write a simile to illustrate an encounter between the bully and the bullied in these types of bullying: verbal, social, and physical. These may be real or imagined situations.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 6-10.5.



At the end of *The Truth about Truman School*, Zebby says that she wanted the online newspaper to be something that mattered. She envisioned it as a place where students could write about their middle school experiences. Have students work in small groups and develop guidelines for the students at Truman School to follow when they post to the website. Then, following these guidelines, encourage

students to write a post for SchoolTube about their first week of middle or high school and their reaction to the various cliques.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-10.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 6-10.4, 6-10.6.



Divide the class into six small groups and ask them to write an original one-act play in which characters from two of the novels interact. Perhaps they will select Carla and Gray, or maybe they will choose Patty and Earl. Then, have them perform their work for another class for Bullying Awareness Week.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-10.3; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-10.6.



Patty Bergen reads *Reader's Digest*. Write a story about Ruth that Patty might write for the magazine's column "My Most Unforgettable Character." Include Ruth's reaction to the way the Bergens treat Patty and how Ruth gives Patty courage to hold her head high. Encourage peer editing for spelling, grammar, and clarity.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-10.2, 6-10.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 6-10.5.



Earl's mother in *Who the Man* tells him that things are better when you talk about them. Divide the class into small groups and instruct them to role-play one of the following conversations: Earl's meeting with the school administration on his first day back; Gray's discussion with her parents once she is safely home; Zebby and Amr's talk about the new website; Patty's talk with her grandmother and grandfather in Memphis the night before she is charged; or Carla Wayland's talk with her mother after Andy's trial. Each conversation should include an understanding of right and wrong.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-10.4, 6-10.6.



The Oddkins are magical toys that bring goodness to a child. Have students match one of the Oddkins with a character from one of the other novels. Then, have them write an essay about their choice. For example, which animal would they give Carla Wayland or Patty Bergen? Allow students to share their writing in class.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-10.2, 6-10.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 6-10.4.



Tell students that an editorial expresses a person's opinion about issues related to society. Talk about elements in an editorial: What is the issue? What is the argument? Are there statistics to support the point of view? What is the solution? Who is responsible for the solution? Then have

students tape an editorial about one form of bullying. Air the editorials via the school network during Bullying Awareness Month. Refer viewers to five websites that may increase their sensibilities about bullying.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-10.1; Production & Distribution of Writing: W. 6-10.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 6-10.7, 6-10.8, 6-10.9; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-10.4, 6-10.5, 6-10.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 6-10.1.



A fable features animals or inanimate objects to illustrate a moral. How is *Oddkins* by Dean Koontz a fable? What is the moral of the story? Read about cyberbullying on the following website:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/>

Then, have students write and illustrate a two-page fable that communicates issues related to cyberbullying. They may consider a main character who misuses email, texting, Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites. Allow time in class for students to read their fables aloud.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 8-10.9; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-10.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 6-10.4; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 6-10.7.



Have students read about the Anti-Defamation League on the following website:

<http://www.adl.org>

What is the purpose of the organization? How does it disseminate its resources? Then, sponsor a panel discussion of community leaders who have fallen victim to hate groups. Perhaps it's hatred based on religion, sexual preference, or ethnicity. Allow students to work in small groups to prepare questions for the panelists. Encourage them to consider issues they learned about from reading the six novels. Ask students what they learned from the panelists about bullying and hate groups in their community.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 6-10.1, 6-10.2, 6-10.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-10.4, 6-10.6.



# COMMON CORE LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS REFERENCED IN THIS GUIDE

## Reading: Literature

### KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

RL. 6-10.1—Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL. 6-10.2—Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL. 6-10.3—Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact.

### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

RL. 6-10.6—Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

## **INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS**

RL. 8-10.9—Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works.

## **Language**

### **CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH**

L. 6-10.1—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

### **KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE**

L. 6-10.3—Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

### **VOCABULARY ACQUISITION & USE**

L. 6-10.5—Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## **Speaking & Listening**

### **COMPREHENSION & COLLABORATION**

SL. 6-10.1—Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues for grades six to ten, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL. 6-10.2—Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats.

SL. 6-10.3—Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

## PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

SL. 6-10.4—Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples.

SL. 6-10.5—Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentation to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

SL. 6-10.6—Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

## Writing

### TEXT TYPES & PURPOSES

W. 6-10.1—Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W. 6-10.2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W. 6-10. 3—Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

## PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION OF WRITING

W. 6-10.4—Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W. 6-10.5—With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

W. 6-10.6—Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing, and link to cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

## RESEARCH TO BUILD & PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

W. 6-10.7—Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

W. 6-10.8—Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

W. 6-10.9—Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.