

Study Guide for Teachers

Don't Feed the Bully

Before my visit

Write on the board, "Don't Feed the Bully". Brainstorm: What are the ways people bully? What do they get out of bullying others? Ask for definitions of what "feeding the bully" might mean?

Before reading the book

Write these names on the board: Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, Nate the Great, Ellery Queen, Encyclopedia Brown. (Add any favorite literary detectives of your own.) Ask students, "Who are these people?" Talk about what makes a great detective and a great detective story.

1. What kind of education does a great detective need?
2. What part does integrity play in a detective's life?
3. Are good and bad absolute?
4. Can someone with bad traits also be good?

Classroom discussion after visit

1. How can you lessen the impact of intimidation in your own life?
2. When is it time to tell?
3. Can you see bullying all around you?

(Ask your students to notice situations outside of school where they see people bullying. Give examples like, bad treatment of store clerks.)

Classroom questions during book reading

Chapters 1-4

1. Is a cage an appropriate response for perceived bullies?
2. How is William B. Travis different from your school?
3. Handy describes the playground as animals from The Lion King. What animals are you?
4. Who are the bullies?

Chapters 5-9

1. How important are your perceptions of people?
2. Why is Handy harder to bully than other kids are?
3. Ralphie talks about being pressured to bully. How far do you go to keep friends? What is a friend? What was the greatest factor in Ralphie's decision to stop bullying?
4. What do you think of Handy's decision of not letting Kayla and Ralphie help in his plan?

Chapters 9-16

1. How does perception of power affect those bullying and those being bullied?
2. Who was the real bully?
3. How does your perception of people change as you get to know them?
4. What character from Don't Feed the Bully are you most like? (Perhaps you could have them tell what characteristics they see in others.)
5. What role can technology play in detective work? Sherlock Holmes vs. CSI.

6. Compare the awareness of the teachers and staff at William B. Travis to your school.

Appendix

1. Who has the most control over the effect bullying has on you?
2. What would happen if everyone around came to the aid of someone being bullied, friend or not?
3. How do you stop bullying from being cool?
4. Is there a difference between intimidation and joking around?

Language of the book

Don't Feed the Bully is a humorous version of a "Hard Boiled" detective novel, and was heavily influenced by the work of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Donald Sobol, and many others. The style uses simile, metaphor, and analogy to mold the narrative to incredible descriptive heights. In Don't Feed the Bully I used them at parody level proportions for comedic effect and to give teachers a way to discuss not only the concepts of simile, metaphor, and analogy, but to use many specific examples from the book to broaden the students knowledge on a wide range of subjects. How many do they understand? Research the ones no one knows.

Writing

Have students write their own mystery story using metaphor, simile, and analogy to enhance their descriptions. How funny, crazy, or serious and on target can they be without losing the story for the reader?

Try these great sleuths

Early readers

Nate the Great, by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Pre-teen

Encyclopedia Brown books, by Donald J. Sobol

Middle to high school

Ellery Queen mysteries

Sherlock Holmes, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Philip Marlowe novels, by Raymond Chandler Sam Spade novels, by Dashiell Hamm