

# THINK TWICE PLAY NICE

Correlates  
to Common  
Core  
Standards

Using the Power of Children's Literature  
to Take a Stand Against  
**BULLYING**

A Guide for Teachers, Librarians, Educators, and Students

Featuring a Q & A with **HEATHER BREWER**

# THINK TWICE PLAY NICE

## Using the Power of Children's Literature to Take a Stand Against Bullying

One in three children has been bullied. Recent studies have shown that 32% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 have reported being bullied; 64% of those bullied did not report it to teachers.

Think Twice, Play Nice is an anti-bullying resource for teachers, librarians, educators, and students. The books included in this guide feature thought-provoking plots and unforgettable characters that will facilitate classroom discussions about the roles we can all play to reduce bullying and its negative influence on building community.

**bul•ly•ing** – verb, transitive  
– the repeated and intentional targeting of a student who cannot defend himself or herself due to an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, or target. Bullying may be verbal, physical, or a combination of both and can lead to feelings of social isolation.

## Why is the fight against bullying so Important?

More than ever, our personal and professional lives depend on our ability to interact and work with people from a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures, faiths, lifestyles, and personalities. Tolerance of others is not enough; acceptance of our differences is critical to success in the 21st century.

### Consider the following:

- Words and actions are only a click away from permanent circulation on the Internet.
- Poor choices can lead to loss of access to future opportunities in school, athletics, extracurricular activities, college, and employment.
- Many kids do not bully and there is a growing sentiment that bullying is not something kids "just have to go through."

# The Power of Positive Relationships

**Sometimes a friend makes all the difference in the world when a child is targeted by a bully.**

**We often view bullying through two lenses, through students who are socially:**

- Connected, where social skills, athleticism, popularity, and attractiveness often play a role, enabling bullying to happen “in plain sight”
- Marginalized, where social status eludes the bully, leading him or her to feel cruelty is the only way to maintain standing in school culture

**Even though we traditionally associate bullying with pre-adolescence, the patterns begin as early as kindergarten. Recognizing that bullying is, at its roots, an imbalance in power between the aggressor and the victim, allows teachers and students to have meaningful conversations that address and eliminate bullying. Great stories facilitate these conversations by:**

- Building empathy for all students by all students
- Connecting readers with courageous characters who inspire us to emulate their ideals
- Developing a greater understanding of the pain and persecution bullying victims feel
- Dispelling the myth that bullying is a rite of passage that cannot be avoided
- Demonstrating how students can make a difference through intervention and support

**It is never too early to have meaningful conversations about how we treat each other in school communities.**

## Curriculum Connections and Common Core Standards

Each Curriculum Connection section is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Specific core standards are included with each activity; the activity and discussion ideas that follow support that standard and its related strand. Standards are identified in this manner: 2.RL.4.

- The first number, 2, indicates the grade level.
- The letters RL indicate this is part of the Reading, Literature standards
- The second number, 4, indicates the standard, which is also included for your reference

**Note that all standards within a strand are related and increase in complexity with each higher grade level. So an activity that is associated with a specific grade level can be readily adapted for other grade levels within that same strand.**

# Focusing on Bull



Ages 4-8 · Grades PreK-3  
978-0-698-11427-2 (PB) · \$5.99

## Bootsie Barker Bites

by Barbara Bottner,  
illustrated by Peggy Rathmann

Common Core  
State Standard  
**1.RL.1**

*I tell my mother I don't like playing with Bootsie Barker.  
My mother tells me I have to learn to get along with all kinds of people.*

This classic plot and theme will resonate with young readers: when Bootsie comes over, no one seems to notice how she bullies the narrator of the story. Whenever the door closes to her room, Bootsie takes over, until our young heroine comes up with a plan that will help her stand up to Bootsie.

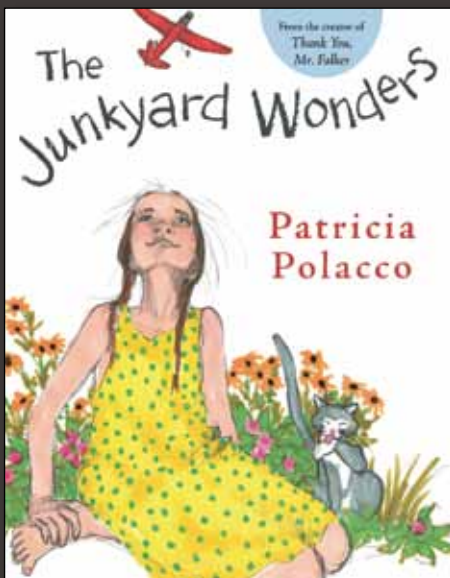
### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.*

After too many visits end up making our narrator miserable, she finds a way to assert herself in a way that is both positive and self-affirming. During and after reading this story aloud, encourage students to ask and answer questions related to how it feels when someone is not nice and you do not know how to get help. Consider the following prompts to help students get started:

- Why doesn't she want Bootsie to come visit?
- Why do you think it is hard for her to ask her mother for help?

After class and partner discussions, follow up by having students share the questions they developed on their own or with a friend. Encourage them to provide illustrations for their questions, that will help classmates and classroom visitors understand why the ideas in the story were important. Use their illustrated questions for a classroom display showing how questions help good readers while they read.



Ages 6-9 · Grades K-3  
978-0-399-25078-1 (HC) · \$17.99

## The Junkyard Wonders

by Patricia Polacco

Common Core  
State Standard  
**3.RL.3**

*"Mrs. Peterson, we're all junkyard kids, even though you try to make us feel better about it. We're throw-aways, junk, and everyone knows it."*

*"Oh, my dear, that's where you are wrong. Every one of you is my wonder . . . What some see as bent and broken throwaways are actually amazing things waiting to be made into something new. Something unexpected. Something surprising."*

Trisha does not want to return to her old school, where everyone knows she is "dumb" and struggles to read. At her new school, she gets the same looks and treatment, until Mrs. Peterson builds an atmosphere of warmth, inspiration, and celebration, that the author remembers for years to come.

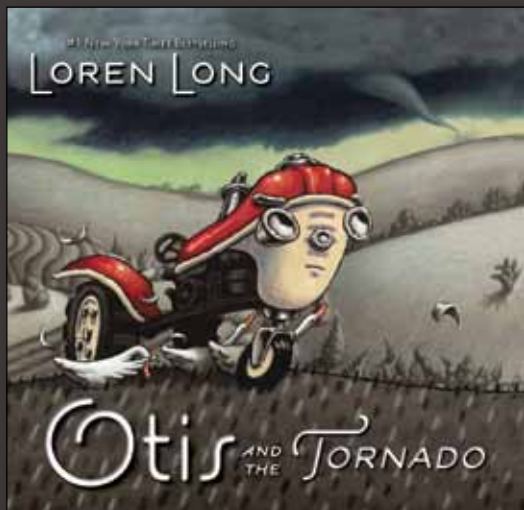
### Common Core Connection:

*Reading: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.*

This book is ideal for kicking off the school year. Students will be able to use Mrs. Peterson and her students to identify positive character traits (such as resilience and consideration for others). Create a bulletin board to track character traits, beginning with those on display in this read-aloud and maintained by other read-alouds and students' independent reading. Each day, encourage students to find examples of characters, figures in the news, or people in their lives who exemplify these traits, adding those names under the trait words on the bulletin board or display, using sticky notes to post their connections. Encourage students to use these traits in their own writing.



# ying in Picture Books



Ages 3-7 · Grades PreK-1  
978-0-399-25477-2 (HC) · \$17.99

## *Otis and the Tornado*

by Loren Long

Common Core  
State Standard  
**K.RL.2**

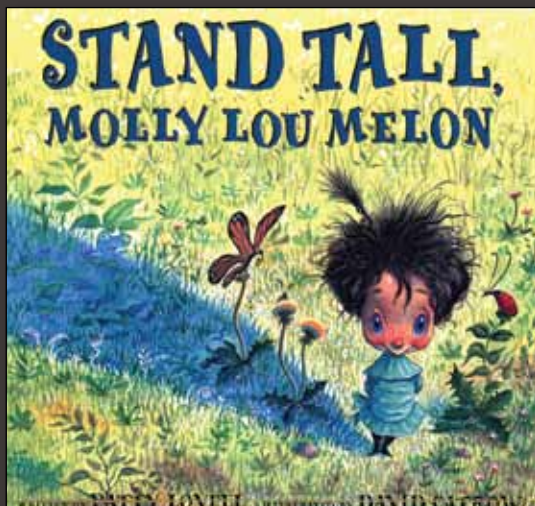
*Once Otis tried to make friends with the bull. He took him a shiny red apple from the apple tree and invited him to play. But the bull snorted and snarled and glared at Otis. Then he stomped his hooves in the dirt and charged! The bull slammed into the fence just inches away from where Otis stood. From that day on, Otis stayed clear of the bull altogether.*

Otis enjoys fun and games with all his friends on the farm, except for the bull. The bull has no interest in being friendly with anyone and delights in scaring the other animals. That all changes after a tornado puts a scare into all the animals, including the bull, and only Otis is brave enough to save the day.

### Common Core Connection:

*Reading: With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including details.*

*Otis and the Tornado* is full of details and events that students will enjoy hearing repeated. As students discuss the story in whole class and small group discussions, encourage them to organize the details of the story into categories for the beginning, middle, and ending of the story. Use this categorizing of details as scaffolding for students' own story writing that includes a beginning, middle, and end. This story provides teachers and students with an excellent platform for discussing friendship and forgiveness. Even though the bull was unkind to all the farm animals, Otis went out of his way to treat him the same way he treated his friends. Use Otis as an example when disagreements arise during recess or classroom transitions by asking students how Otis would act if he were in the same situation.



Ages 4-8 · Grades K-2  
978-0-399-23416-3 (HC) · \$16.99

## *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*

by Patty Lovell,  
illustrated by David Catrow

Common Core  
State Standard  
**2.RL.4**

*Molly Lou Melon stood just taller than her dog and was the shortest girl in the first grade. She didn't mind. Her grandma had told her, "Walk as proudly as you can and the world will look up to you."*

Taking her grandmother's advice, Molly Lou doesn't worry about being the shortest, buck-toothed, funny sounding, and fumble-fingered new student at her school. Her heart and spirit wins over her new classmates and the school bully.

### Common Core Connection:

*Reading: Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.*

Molly Lou Melon is the model of confidence, even when she is headed to a new school. As you read this story aloud and share it with students, take care to notice the playful language. Ask students how this language makes them feel about Molly as a character. As she faces each challenge, how does the author's use of repeated lines and parallel structure make the reader feel as if Molly will always succeed? *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*, is a wonderful candidate to use for studying the author's craft. Use the story and discussions surrounding the story to encourage students to write their own versions of *Stand Tall*, where they are the main character. As they create their own personal narrative to show little moments of personal bravery, look for opportunities to share and celebrate different ways students stand up for themselves and one another.

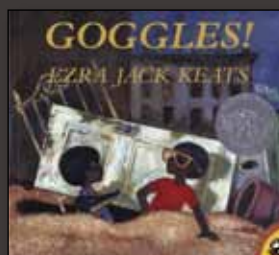
# Picture Books for Elementary Students



## ***Each Kindness***

by Jacqueline Woodson  
illustrated by E.B. Lewis  
978-0-399-24652-4 (HC) | \$16.99

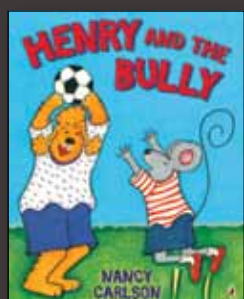
Chloe and her friends won't play with the new girl, Maya. Every time Maya tries to join in, they reject her.



## ***Goggles***

by Ezra Jack Keats  
Ages 3-8 | Grades PreK-2  
978-0-14-056440-2 (PB) | \$6.99

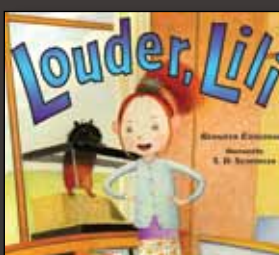
In this timeless classic, Archie and Peter outrun and outsmart the older boys in the neighborhood who want to take their cool new goggles away.



## ***Henry and the Bully***

by Nancy Carlson  
Ages 3-5 | Grades PreK-K  
978-0-670-01148-3 (HC) | \$15.99

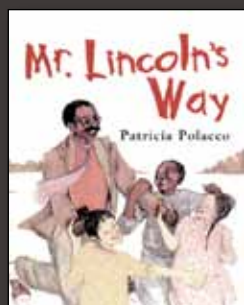
When a bully steals Henry's soccer ball, he has to learn how to solve his problem.



## ***Louder, Lili***

by Gennifer Choldenko  
illustrated by S. D. Schindler  
Ages 4 up | Grades PreK up  
978-0-399-24252-6 (HC) | \$16.99

Lili is the quietest kid in class and allows Cassidy do her talking for her. But will Lili have the courage to speak up when it means keeping a classmate from getting hurt?



## ***Mr. Lincoln's Way***

by Patricia Polacco  
Ages 6-10 | Grades 1-5  
978-0-399-23754-6 (HC) | \$17.99

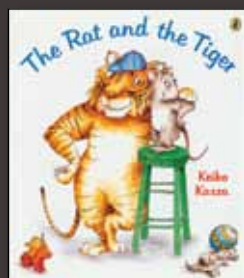
"Mean Gene" is a bully, a bad student, and he calls people awful, racist names. But Mr. Lincoln, the principal, knows that Eugene isn't really bad—he's just repeating things he's heard at home.



## ***My Best Friend***

by Mary Ann Rodman,  
illustrated by E.B. Lewis  
Ages 4 up | Grades PreK up  
978-0-670-05989-8 (HC) | \$15.99  
978-0-14-240806-3 (PB) | \$5.99

It's summertime at the neighborhood pool, and Lily has her best friend picked out: Tamika. But Tamika already has a best friend and doesn't care about Lily.



## ***The Rat and the Tiger***

by Keiko Kasza  
Ages 3 up | Grades PreK up  
978-0-14-240900-8 (PB) | \$6.99

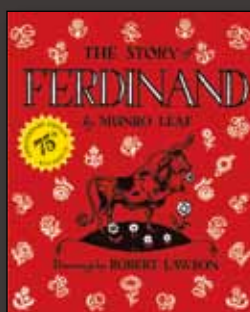
Rat and Tiger are best friends, but Tiger always wants to do things his way.



## ***Stand Straight, Ella Kate***

by Kate Klise,  
illustrated by M. Sarah Klise  
Ages 6-8 | Grades 1-3  
978-0-8037-3404-3 (HC) | \$16.99

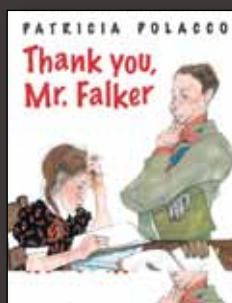
Ella Kate was a real-life giant, but she refused to hide herself away. Instead she used her unusual height to achieve her equally large dreams.



## ***The Story of Ferdinand***

by Munro Leaf  
illustrated by E.B. Lewis  
Ages 3-8 | Grades PreK-3  
978-0-670-67424-4 (HC) | \$17.99  
978-0-14-050234-3 (PB) | \$3.99

All of the other bulls like to snort and bash their heads together—but Ferdinand would rather smell the flowers.



## ***Thank You, Mr. Falker***

by Patricia Polacco  
Ages 6-10 | Grades 1-5  
978-0-399-23166-7 (HC) | \$16.99  
Discussion Guide available

When Trisha starts school, she can't wait to learn how to read, but the letters just get jumbled up. She hates being different, and begins to believe her classmates when they call her a dummy.



# Books for Transitional Readers

The transition from beginning to fluent reader can be both exciting and stressful for students. Not only is becoming an independent reader important for academic growth; learning to read also plays an important role in a child's social and emotional growth. As students explore new ideas in the books they read, they are also learning about relationships and growing up. At this stage, it is important to remember that students are not simply learning to read; they are also learning how to act. Books that help them through these transitional stages can be even more engaging when the characters they meet face challenges that are recognizable. Classrooms that provide access to an environment rich with different reading and learning opportunities help teachers establish and build positive relationships, providing students with the foundation they need for academic, social, and emotional growth.



## ***Bully***

by Patricia Polacco  
Ages 3-5 | Grades PreK-K  
978-0-399-25709-9 (HC) | \$17.99

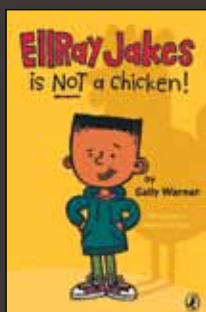
Lyla makes a great friend in Jamie on her very first day at school, but when she makes the cheerleading squad and a clique of popular girls invites her to join them, she jumps right in, leaving Jamie behind.



## ***Dragonbreath***

by Ursula Vernon  
Ages 8-12 | Grades 3-7  
978-0-8037-3363-3 (HC) | \$12.99  
Discussion Guide available

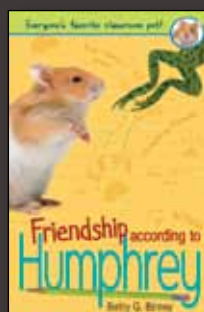
It's not easy for Danny Dragonbreath to be the sole mythical creature in a school for reptiles and amphibians—especially because he can't breathe fire like other dragons (as the school bully loves to remind him).



## ***EllRay Jakes is Not a Chicken***

by Sally Warner  
illustrated by Jamie Harper  
Ages 6-8 | Grades 1-3  
978-0-670-06243-0 (HC) | \$14.99  
978-0-14-241988-5 (PB) | \$5.99

EllRay Jakes is tired of being bullied by a classmate and when he tries to defend himself he always winds up in trouble.



## ***Friendship According to Humphrey***

by Betty Birney  
Ages 8-12 | Grades 3-7  
978-0-399-24264-9 (HC) | \$14.99  
978-0-14-240633-5 (PB) | \$5.99  
Discussion Guide available

Room 26 has a new class pet! Humphrey tries to welcome Og the frog but Og doesn't welcome him back. Friendship can be tricky, but Humphrey is an intrepid problem-solver. If any hamster can become buddies with a frog, he can.



## ***Katie Kazoo: Anyone But Me #1***

by Nancy Krulik  
illustrated by John and Wendy  
Ages 7-11 | Grades 2-6  
978-0-448-42653-2 (PB) | \$3.99  
Discussion Questions available

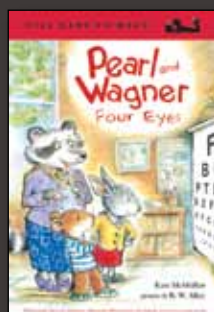
Katie can't stand George, the class bully. He constantly picks on everyone, but he really torments Katie. One day she wishes she could be anyone but herself . . .



## ***Mal and Chad: Food Fight!***

by Stephen McCranie  
Ages 8-11 | Grades 3-6  
978-0-399-25657-8 (PB) | \$9.99

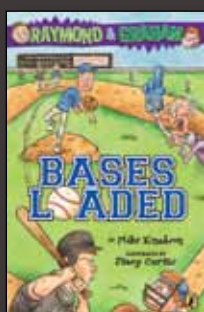
Poor Mal. It's not easy being a kid genius who wears a lab coat to school. Megan, has formed a club that has a no-boys-allowed policy. Mal would do anything to feel like he belongs.



## ***Pearl and Wagner: Four Eyes***

by Kate McMullan  
illustrated by R. W. Alley  
Ages 5-8 | Grades K-3  
978-0-8037-3086-1 (HC) | \$15.99

Wagner's new glasses earn him some mean nicknames—until Pearl turns things around.

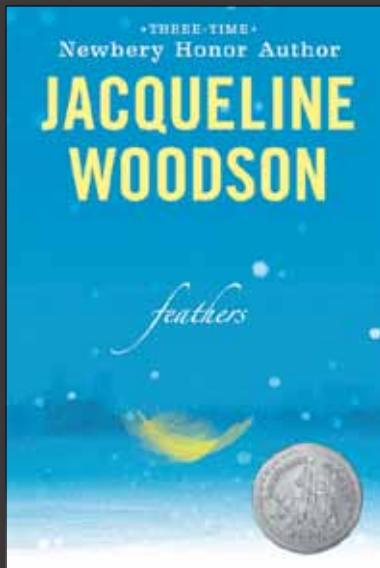


## ***Raymond and Graham: Bases Loaded***

by Mike Knudson  
illustrated by Stacy Curtis  
Ages 8-12 | Grades 3-7  
978-0-670-01205-3 (HC) | \$14.99  
978-0-14-241751-5 (PB) | \$6.99

Raymond and Graham can't wait to defeat their rival team and win the Little League championship. But the road to victory is long when a bully tries to get in the way . . .

# GREAT books for MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS



Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241550-4 (PB) · \$7.99

## Feathers

by Jacqueline Woodson

Common Core  
State Standard  
5.RL.4

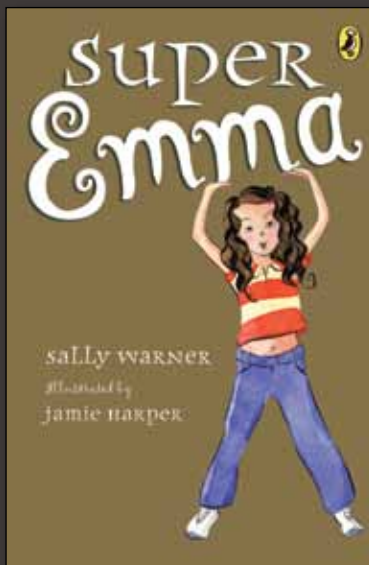
*"My daddy said it would be better here," he said, almost whispering it. "He said people would be . . . he said people would be . . . you know, nice to me." He looked down at his hands again. After a minute, he put his head down on his desk and sighed.*

Growing up in the 1970s means that Frannie's friends still think about which side of town you are from. As a new student joins Frannie's class, fears and prejudices seem even more heightened than normal. When a confrontation with the class bully leads to a moment of surprising tenderness and forgiveness, Frannie begins to develop a newfound sense of confidence and understanding.

### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.*

Jacqueline Woodson makes extensive use of the Emily Dickinson poem "Hope is the thing with feathers," returning to it throughout the narrative as Frannie's understanding of hope and the poem develops, through her experiences with friends, family, and classmates. Woodson uses the poem to help illustrate Frannie's struggle not just to understand the poem, but show how hard it can be to develop hope in the face of intolerance. Encourage students to identify some of their favorite poems. Have them share memorable lines or lyrics with a partner or small group, and discuss why those lines stand out to them. Use these conversations as a springboard to having students create their own poems around a central theme (i.e., hope, loyalty, bravery) and illustrate that theme through the use of figurative language and extended metaphors. Be sure to model your own writing process with students; be sure to demonstrate that it takes writers multiple attempts to develop truly memorable and meaningful representations of important ideas.



Ages 8 up · Grades 5 up  
978-0-14-241088-2 (PB) · \$5.99

## Super Emma

by Sally Warner, illustrated by Jamie Harper

Common Core  
State Standard  
3.RL.5

*"Quit it, you big bully," that person yells.*

*Hey, it's me! Emma McGraw!*

*I must be the most surprised person in the world right now, because I am not exactly brave. I like peace and quiet too much for that.*

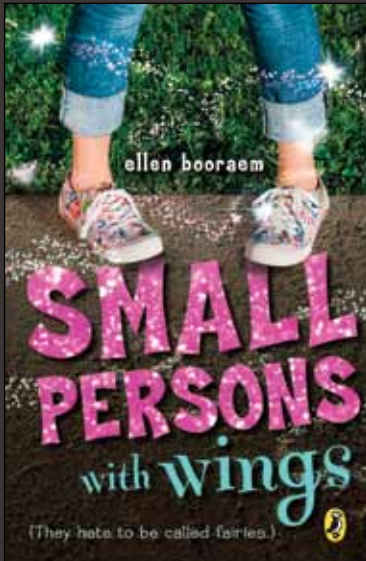
When Emma sticks up for her friend who is getting bullied, life just gets more complicated. Even though she feels good for doing the right thing, she also feels nervous and queasy about what will happen next. Will Jared try to get even with her? Will she be able to be just regular Emma again, rather than Super Emma?

### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.*

When Emma sticks up for her friend EllRay, she doesn't think of herself as brave. Things get even worse when EllRay is embarrassed because a girl saved him from a bully. With lots of dialogue and quick action, many sections of *Super Emma* are well suited for Reader's Theater. Have students practice performing scenes with partners, including a narrator who can help describe the scene to the class. As each group prepares for their Reader's Theater performance, direct them to identify the chapter and scene they are acting out as part of the introduction. Have them make sure that they identify key events that lead up to and result from the scene they present, and how it fits into the overall plot of the story.





Ages 10 up · Grades 5 up  
978-0-14-242054-6 (PB) · \$7.99

## Small Persons with Wings

by Ellen Booraem

Common Core  
State Standard  
**6.RL.6**

*I made myself look up, and the first person I saw was Janine. Our eyes met, and in that instant we both knew everything. She knew I didn't have a fairy on me. I knew she'd never let anyone forget this moment.*

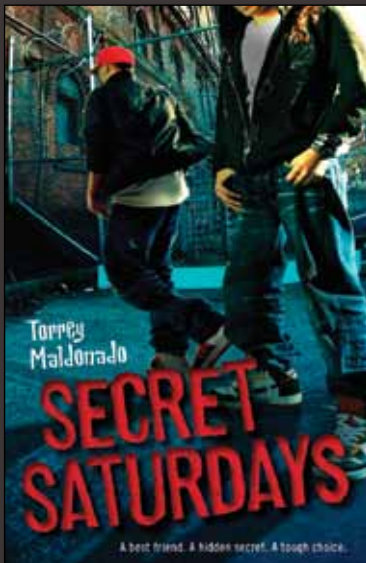
The day Mellie told her kindergarten class that she had a fairy in her bedroom continues to haunt her each and every school year. Even moving to a new town does not help her escape her bullies . . . or the fairies who make her life seem alternately magical and miserable.

### Common Core Connection:

**Standard:** Craft and Structure: Explain how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

After Mellie's family moves to a new town and into an inherited inn filled with "small persons with wings" Mellie still struggles to make friends. Ellen Booraem shares this about bullying on her blog: "Back in those days, we thought we were supposed to deal with this stuff on our own . . . It would never have occurred to me to tell an adult what was going on." Encourage students to read more of the author's bullying advice (available at <http://www.ellenbooraem.com/itsreal.php>) She shares that, like Mellie, she "was a nerdy only child more comfortable with adults than with my peers." How does this perspective on her own life shape Mellie's character? Have students compare and contrast this advice with how Mellie struggles with bullying. How do authors' experiences make them better writers? How did Booraem's experiences with bullying shape this story?

More resources and information about Ellen Booraem and her books maybe found at [www.ellenbooraem.com](http://www.ellenbooraem.com).



Ages 10 up · Grades 5 up  
978-0-14-241747-8 (PB) · \$7.99

## Secret Saturdays

by Torrey Maldonado

Common Core  
State Standard  
**8.RL.2**

*I was about to say, "This is hot, right? But I noticed Sean's eyes were closed. He inhaled real deep. Maybe he was thinking about something. I closed my eyes and did what I thought he was doing. "Justin, it's cool," Sean said. "What's cool?" "I won't tell anyone we came up here."*

Justin's life seems full of secrets, but none bigger than the secrets Sean seems to be keeping from him and his friends. As Sean's life seems to slip out of control and he slips from being tough to being a bully, Justin wonders if the friendship is worth saving.

### Common Core Connection:

**Standard:** Determine the theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text

Throughout this novel, Justin faces a dilemma: do you ask the hard questions to save your friend but risk losing his friendship, or do you not say anything and potentially lose your best friend?

*Secret Saturdays* provides opportunities for students to put themselves in the characters' shoes. Using the knowledge that they gain from reading about Justin's and Sean's separate struggles, have students act out improvised scenes that extend scenes from the book. Students should be able to justify the actions and thoughts they improvise by connecting what they say and do to major themes in the book.

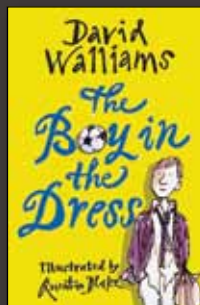
# More books for MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS



## ***The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had***

by Kristin Levine  
Ages 10 up | Grades 5 up  
978-0-399-25090-3 (HC) | \$16.99  
978-0-14-241648-8 (PB) | \$6.99

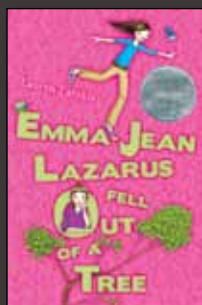
Proper-talking, brainy Emma doesn't play baseball or fish too well, but she sure makes Dit think, especially about the differences between black and white.



## ***The Boy in the Dress***

by David Williams  
illustrated by Quentin Blake  
Ages 9 up | Grades 4 up  
978-1-595-14299-3 (HC) | \$15.99

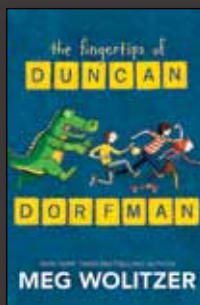
Dennis is the best scorer on his soccer team—but he also loves fashion. Will his teammates still accept him if he wears a dress?



## ***Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree***

by Lauren Tarshis  
Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up  
978-0-14-241150-6 (PB) | \$6.99

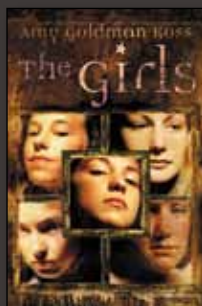
Emma-Jean Lazarus classmates don't understand her, but that's okay because Emma-Jean doesn't quite get them either. But one afternoon, all that changes when she sees Colleen Pomerantz crying in the girl's room.



## ***The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman***

by Meg Wolitzer  
Ages 8–12 | Grades 3–7  
978-0-525-42304-1 (HC) | \$16.99

Duncan discovers he has a magic power—he can feel words beneath his fingers and tell what they are without looking. When a classmate wants Duncan to use his powers to help win Scrabble games, Duncan must decide which is more important—honesty or being liked by others.



## ***The Girls***

by Amy Goldman Koss  
Ages 10-14 | Grades 5-7  
978-0-8037-2494-5 (HC) | \$17.99  
978-0-14-230033-6 (PB) | \$5.99

Maya has been part of the group ever since the day Candace asked her if she wanted to "do lunch" in the cafeteria. Yet when Candace suddenly deems her unworthy, Maya's so-called friends just blow her off.



## ***Larger-Than-Life Lara***

by Dandi Daley Mackall  
Ages 10 up | Grades 5 up  
978-0-525-47726-6 (HC) | \$16.99

When Lara Phelps walks into Laney Grafton's fourth-grade class, Laney thinks there will finally be someone else for the boys to pick on.



## ***The Liberation of Gabriel King***

by K. L. Going  
Ages 8-12 | Grades 3-7  
978-0-14-240766-0 (PB) | \$6.99

Frita is spending her summer helping Gabe get over his list of fears. But can Gabe help Frita face her fear of the Ku Klux Klan?



## ***Notes from a Liar and Her Dog***

by Jennifer Choldenko  
Ages 10-14 | Grades 5-7  
978-0-14-250068-2 (PB) | \$6.99

Living in a family with two perfect sisters and parents who just don't get her, Ant finds it easier to lie. But when a concerned teacher sees the truth behind Ant's lies, it seems as though she might be in for a change . . .



## ***Slob***

by Ellen Potter  
Ages 8-12 | Grades 3-7  
978-0-399-24705-7 (HC) | \$16.99

Owen is the fattest kid in school. But he's also a genius who invents cool contraptions. It takes a revelation for Owen to see that no matter how large he is on the outside, he doesn't have to feel small on the inside.



## ***Sticks***

by Joan Bauer  
Ages 10 up | Grades 5 up  
978-0-14-240428-7 (PB) | \$7.99

Mickey wants to be a pool champion like his dad. But a game with his archrival might mean an end to that dream.

# Establishing a culture of ACCEPTANCE

Developing a culture of acceptance by all members of a school community begins with a common, agreed upon definition of bullying. As Landrum, Lingo, and Scott (2011) thoughtfully point out, “the same routines used to teach and reinforce reading, math, or science concepts can and should be used to teach and promote positive social and classroom behavior.” The fight against bullying is more authentic and purposeful when built on a foundation of shared beliefs.

**Once teachers and other staff members have accepted a common definition of bullying, the next three steps provide a strategy and structure for any school’s anti-bullying efforts:**

1. Assess the culture and climate of your classroom and school. How prevalent do students think bullying is? Does their perception mirror that of parents? Teachers? How does your school respond to reports of bullying?
2. Raise awareness by publicizing your anti-bullying efforts. Share the school’s definition of bullying, plans to support any victims of bullying, and the strategies in place to address those students who are bullies.
3. Create a school-wide culture of acceptance. Promoting the positive attributes valued by the school community—respect, responsibility, and safety for all—helps establish that bullying is not part of growing up. Provide students with explicit explanations of expectations.

**What is your school’s or community’s definition of bullying? Identify attitudes and actions that coincide with the definition and incorporate them into your anti-bullying efforts.**

**All members of a school community bring different background experiences and feelings about bullying. School communities must work together to dispel the myths that bullying is something that:**

- is a rite of passage that all students must go through
- students need to deal with on their own
- only affects the victim

**When bullying is reported, it is important to remember that many victims:**

- Are unwilling to report bullying
- Fear that reporting bullying will lead to retaliation and continued harassment
- Lack confidence that adults will be able to understand what is happening or that reporting to intercede in any meaningful way
- End up feeling they have done something wrong when the solution offered is to reconcile a “conflict” between the bully and the victim



# BULLYING BITES:



## A Q&A WITH HEATHER BREWER

- **Why do you think anti-bullying efforts are so important in schools today?**

I speak from experience—the majority of bullying is happening inside our schools. A school is a place of teaching, a place where kids are sent to learn. Shouldn't we teach them what behavior is acceptable and what is not, in a place where they're already learning so much?

- **What role can books play in supporting anti-bullying efforts?**

I cannot tell you how many (thousands, maybe) teenagers have contacted me to tell me that they had been at the end of their rope, when they found solace in this book or that, making a connection with a character, with a writer, with anyone at all, can really make a difference in how a bullied teen views themselves, and in the choices they make.

- **When you create characters such as Vlad—or characters who interact with Vlad—what kinds of relationships do you think about?**

I largely think about the relationships I've had, and the relationships that I wish I'd had. I initially wrote *Eighth Grade Bites* in order to cleanse my soul of all of the pain and torment of having been bullied all through school. I had no idea how my efforts to heal would eventually reach so many teens.

- **How does bullying affect students, both targets and bystanders, and their families?**

It affects them in every way imaginable. But let me tell you how it affected me. See, I was bullied from kindergarten through my senior year. It got so bad in high school that I became suicidal. I simply did whatever I could not to exist, without actually taking the steps to remove myself from existence. Did anyone know? I don't think so. Which is frightening. I was a terribly bullied child, and no one would have necessarily realized that I'd wanted to take my own life until I was gone. Someone should have seen it. Someone should have made it their job to see.

- **Why do you think the movement to face and fight bullying is strengthening and capturing the attention of so many more people today?**

Frankly, I think people are sick of it—sick of students getting pushed around, sick of their child being tormented, sick of students being harassed. Together, we can make a difference to bullied teens. Together, we can save lives. We just have to speak up, speak out, and never give up.

- **What steps should students, teachers, and parents take to diminish the influence bullying has in schools today? What strategies can we implement to help end bullying?**

The biggest thing you can do help lessen bullying—and it seems so small—is to speak up. Say something. If you see a child bullying another child, call the bully on it. I'd also love to see more programs put in place for the bullies themselves. To give them a healthy dose of empathy. If you see bullying happening to an adult, point out the example to your own child or student. Tell them the truth: that bullying will never go away completely, but that we can stand strong together.

# The Outcasts

Common Core  
State Standard  
7.RL.6



Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241187-2 (PB) · \$8.99

## *The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod 1: Eighth Grade Bites*

by Heather Brewer

*In fact, Vlad had secretly wished he would be lucky enough someday to find friends that seemed so like him. Henry was great, but sometimes it was really hard being his shadow.*

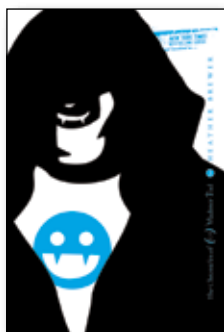
Middle school isn't easy for a vampire. Vlad, an eighth-grader, has to deal with bullies every day, and a principal who thinks he is a troublemaker, and he must live with the fact that the girl he likes has a crush on his best friend instead. None of that seems like a problem, though, after his teacher disappears and a mysterious note is scribbled across his homework by the substitute: "I know your secret."

### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.*

Students will empathize with Vlad and the challenges he faces—from how to hide blood in his sandwich to dealing with bullies who don't like how he looks—even though he is a vampire. It certainly doesn't help that his best friend Henry, a human, doesn't seem to have nearly as difficult a time navigating the trials and tribulations of middle school.

Have students read *The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod* with a friend, keeping a dialogue or dual-entry journal to keep track of the different characters and their interactions. Encourage students to think of their exchange as if it were on Facebook or some other social network. Which characters do they identify with? How do the different characters' perspectives influence the way the plot advances?



*Ninth Grade Slays*  
Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241342-5 (PB) · \$8.99



*Tenth Grade Bleeds*  
Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241560-3 (PB) · \$8.99



*Eleventh Grade Burns*  
Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241647-1 (PB) · \$8.99



*Twelfth Grade Kills*  
Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241752-2 (PB) · \$8.99

You've heard Vlad's side of the story . . .  
now, it's Joss's turn

### *The Slayer Chronicles: First Kill*

The adventures continue, but this time they're told from the perspective of Vlad's former friend turned mortal enemy: vampire slayer Joss Macmillan. Perfect for helping kids put themselves in someone else's shoes, *The Slayer Chronicles* will quench the thirst of even the hungriest veteran minions.

Ages 12 up · Grades 7 up  
978-0-803-73714-9 (HC) · \$17.99



# Giving Students a VOICE

**Asking students what they do to handle bullying shows a wide range of strategies, including these identified by the Youth Voice project (Davis and Nixon, 2011):**

- Pretended it didn't bother me
- Told a friend
- Told the person or people to stop
- Walked away
- Reminded myself that what they are doing is not my fault and that they are the ones who are doing something wrong
- Told an adult at home
- Did nothing
- Made a joke about it

**Giving students a voice and the confidence to oppose bullying may be one of the most important supports and lessons we can provide them in school and in our communities. Good young adult and children's literature can help readers experience feelings and situations they normally would avoid. Through greater understanding of bullies, bystanders, and victims, students can delve into realistic conversations about how youths handle bullying today. Students need to have a voice in creating school and classroom climates that:**

- use more inclusive language in everyday conversations
- are considerate of race, religion, abilities, intelligence, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality
- encourage students to intervene and end rather than ignore and perpetuate bullying that happens in their social circles

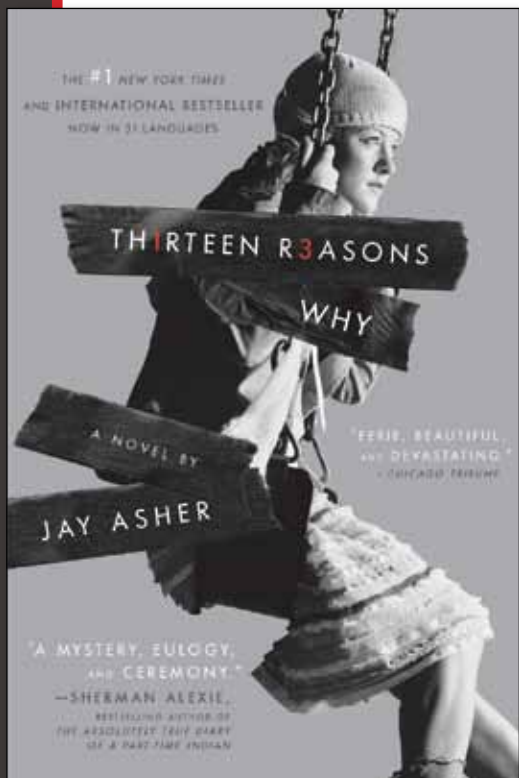
**In today's connected world, the choices students make are just a mouse click away from being publicized, influencing their ability to learn at school, participate on teams and extracurricular activities, and, in the most extreme cases, attend college or gain desirable employment. Luckily, the internet and social networking outlets also allow students, teachers, and researchers to share solutions and strategies that help create safe and supportive environments for all students.**

**Engaging students in important discussions about empathy and positive school relationships will build democratic classrooms and improve school climate. Peers play an important role in promoting conditions that lead to the prevention of bullying. When students are part of the solution, they begin to understand the power they have by not being a bystander. Together, we can help ensure students grow up in healthier, safer school communities.**



# EVERYTHING affects EVERYTHING

Common Core  
State Standard  
9.RL.3



Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-1-595-14188-0 (PB) · \$10.99

## *Thirteen Reasons Why*

by Jay Asher

*I think I've made myself very clear, but no one's stepping forward to stop me. A lot of you cared, just not enough. And that . . . that is what I needed to find out. And I did find out. And I'm sorry.*

Clay Jensen does not want to have anything to do with the tapes his classmate and crush, Hannah, has left behind after committing suicide. Compelled to listen as she shares each act of cruelty or selfishness that contributed to her feelings of ostracism, Clay relives the pain Hannah felt, as her classmate's lack of empathy becomes increasingly disturbing.

### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

In haunting prose and page-turning suspense, Clay's and Hannah's stories unwind as her final days and hours are revealed on the cassette tapes she has left behind. Encourage students to keep a journal to record their feelings and reactions to the raw emotions that both characters reveal on the pages of *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Have non-fiction resources on teen suicide available to students as they read this book.

The online media for this book give readers multiple ways to interact with the content and characters, especially through links and artifacts on Hannah's blog. From song lyrics to podcasts to video tributes, the emotional rawness of this book inspires creative responses that eulogize Hannah's life. Have students work in teams to create timelines that feature memorable aspects related to the book's theme and message by comparing and contrasting how Clay's and Hannah's characters change and evolve through the intertwined narratives shared in the book.

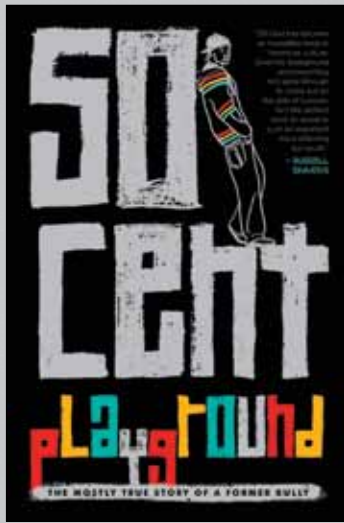
To learn more, visit  
[www.thirteenreasonswhy.com](http://www.thirteenreasonswhy.com) and [13RWProject.com](http://13RWProject.com).

## USING *THIRTEEN REASONS WHY* AS A COMMUNITY READ

Start a common dialogue about bullying, abuse, and suicide. Visit [www.penguin.com/13RWcommunityread](http://www.penguin.com/13RWcommunityread) to download resources including:

- Discussion Guide
- How to Start a Successful Community Read
- Using *Thirteen Reasons Why* in Your Community
- The Complete Stageplay (Adapted from the Book)
- 13 Questions for Author Jay Asher
- And more!

# The mostly TRUE STORY



## *Playground*

by 50 Cent

Thirteen-year-old Butterball begins his story by shutting everyone out. Even though he has ended up in a therapist's office to avoid expulsion, he still isn't about to tell anyone why he used a sock full of D batteries to attack the only kid who'd been friendly to him at Watkins Middle School. Butterball is overweight, out of place, and alone, with no one to talk to at school or at home. Gritty and unflinchingly honest, *Playground* will speak to readers from an uncommon perspective. Butterball is a flawed protagonist who struggles to discover what made him a bully.

978-1-5951-4434-8 (HC) - \$17.99

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

### Hook #1: Real Life

**Common Core State Standard 8.3, Reading:** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision

**Common Core State Standard 8.6, Reading:** Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., those created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Draw students into discussion by having them explore aspects of 50 Cent's life that seem to influence the characters, actions, and thoughts shared through Butterball's narrative. Encourage students to compare information taken from biographical sources (Wikipedia, for example) to events in *Playground*. To facilitate ongoing discussion and reflection, encourage students to use simple graphic organizers (such as Venn diagrams or story webs) to find intersections between 50 Cent's and Butterball's experiences. Prompt students to share their evidence as they discuss questions such as:

- How does 50 Cent's own life story lend credibility to Butterball's voice and story?
- What dialogue or narration feels most honest to you? Which scenes make you most uncomfortable?

### Hook #2: What's in a Name?

**Common Core State Standard 9-10.3, Reading:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

50 Cent has explained his own nickname as being a metaphor for "change." Throughout the course of *Playground*, Butterball comes to terms with both his nickname and his given name, a major turning point in the story. Encourage students to explore how artists express themselves through nicknames, lyrics, song and album titles, and the words and images they choose. Often, it is these images and expressions that help forge those first connections between an artist and audience. Encourage students to:

- Share how they pull deeper meanings out of the lyrics to one of their favorite songs through the personal connections they make with an artist's message or imagery.
- Create their own lyrics to demonstrate the changes Butterball goes through. If 50 Cent were to write lyrics for Butterball's story, what would be the title of the song? What would be the hook, rhyme, or chorus?

# of a **FORMER BULLY**

## Hook #3: Reel Life

**Common Core State Standard 8.6, Writing:** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

A large part of Butterball's creative life is his movie-making. His love of movies is first communicated as a connection with his father but grows into a fresh start at a high school for the performing and visual arts. This transformation not only has Butterball looking more carefully at his own life but makes him more aware of those around him, their feelings, and how to understand and accept different perspectives.

Visual imagery is a powerful medium through which to communicate metaphors. Animoto, a free online tool for turning photos, video, and music, into professional quality presentation videos, is a great online tool for students to show their creativity. Just as Butterball created his video, *The Superhero of Suburbia*, students can create their own videos to communicate important themes of transformation and change. Encourage students to use this tool to:

- Create a music video, complete with featured lyrics, that serve as a trailer to promote *Playground* to other students and readers
- Create a public service announcement with a strong but honest anti-bullying message with Butterball's character serving as an inspiration for change
- Create a spoken word piece that promotes acceptance of other cultures, backgrounds, and sexual orientations
- Help guide their storytelling by developing imagery that helps establish an accessible metaphor for the theme or message behind the video.

## For further discussion

### Reaching Reluctant Readers

"There's a lot of me in Butterball," 50 Cent shares in the introduction to his semi-autobiographical novel. Music fans will be drawn to *Playground* to get a little closer to the artist who delivered two multi-platinum albums, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* and *The Massacre*. Hip-hop star, actor, writer, record producer, and entrepreneur Curtis Jackson III's own life story will draw in even the most reluctant of readers. A drug dealer at age twelve, survivor of nine gunshot wounds at age twenty-four, 50 Cent rose from the streets of New York on street cred and sheer determination.

### Why *Playground*?

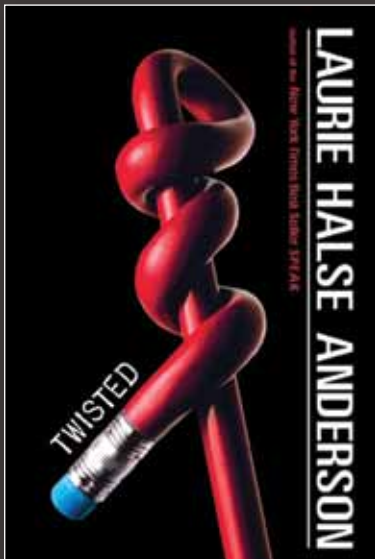
Engaging students in a wide range of reading is crucial to their development, both intellectually and emotionally. To fully engage students in the pursuit of becoming lifelong readers, we must make sure our classroom libraries and curriculum reflect a wide range of experiences present in American culture. 50 Cent gives us a glimpse into the mind of a bully, ranging in emotion from unrepentant to remorseful.

"Life on the edge has taught me a lot," 50 Cent shares in the closing lines of the introduction. "Like the fact that being mentally strong will get you ahead in life. But being a bully won't get you anywhere. Some kids don't figure that out until it's too late." Many of the characters in *Playground* (including Butterball's father) never figure that out, a source of rich discussion throughout this novel. Perhaps one of the most interesting topics for conversations that can be held in conjunction with this novel is not the change that Butterball goes through but the change readers see in themselves. Final discussion questions could include:

- What in our environment leads some of us to use personal cruelty as a way to improve our social standing or get what we want?
- Why is it hard to resist peer pressure, even when it leads to choices that conflict with what we believe?



# Thought-provoking books for YOUNG ADULT STUDENTS



Ages 12 up · Grades 6 up  
978-0-14-241184-1 (PB) · \$9.99

## Twisted

by Laurie Halse Anderson

*I closed my eyes and let my enemy win.*

*All it took was one mistake to move Tyler from hardly noticed to in the spotlight.*

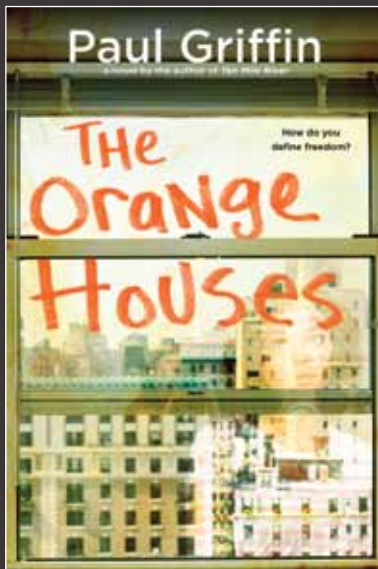
Although his prank—graffiti on the side of the school—gains him a little notoriety and popularity, expectations and closer scrutiny at home and school are now beginning to paint him into a corner. Bullying comes in many guises and all contribute to Tyler's growing feeling that his life is spinning out of control.

### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

Have students explore the different perspectives each character has on Tyler as they interact with him at different stages in the story. As he experiences a fall from grace, what perspectives seem to dominate his classmate's opinion of him? Guide your students to consider this idea: when Tyler's classmates believe that he is responsible for humiliating a popular girl (even though he isn't), does the way they shun and threaten him constitute bullying? Ask students to incorporate technology and social media to re-create scenes and conflicts at George Washington High as if they were students there with Tyler. What might a blog post say? What might an online comment lead to? How does the language of a blog post or online comment change coming from different perspectives? As students explore this activity, have them create different entries from the viewpoint of a bystander, another bully, or another bullying victim.

Common Core  
State Standard  
10.RL.3



Ages 14 up · Grades 9 up  
978-0-14-241982-3 (PB) · \$7.99

## The Orange Houses

by Paul Griffin

*She'd do a slow kid's math or help a blind lady cross the street. Hit and run, over and done, like that. She didn't know why she did these things. They didn't make her feel good. They didn't make her feel bad either. She couldn't figure it out.*

Fifteen-year-old Tamika Sykes is largely deaf and uses her failing hearing aids to shut out the world. She prefers what is in her own mind, until she meets Fatima, a sixteen-year-old refugee, and Jimmi Sixes, a recovering addict and war veteran. Together they face an explosion of violence and prejudice, in ways that will forever change them all.

### Common Core Connection:

*Standard: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.*

Tamika's and Fatima's stories are seamlessly woven together in this powerful narrative. As Tamika deals with bullies by shutting them out, Fatima displays courage by facing each day with optimism and positive attitude despite the odds stacked against her. Each character symbolizes a different perspective on the world, one half full in the face of tragedy, the other half empty in the toils of everyday life. As Fatima's faith begins to melt Tamika's unwillingness to join the world of the hearing, encourage students to explore how each character's traits contribute to the unfolding of a richer story. Have students keep notes on key events and interactions that help build Tamika's confidence and self-reliance.

Common Core  
State Standard  
10.RL.3

# More Books for Young Adult Students



## ***Because I Am Furniture***

by Thalia Chaltas

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-14-241510-8 (PB) | \$8.99

978-0-670-06298-0 (HC) | \$16.99

Anke's father is abusive to her brother and sister. But not to her. Because, to him, she is like furniture—not even worthy of the worst kind of attention.



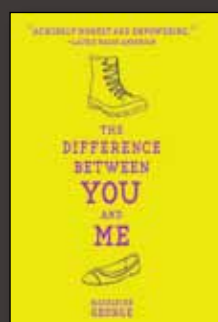
## ***Crossing Lines***

by Paul Volponi

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-670-01214-5 (HC) | \$16.99

Can Adonis stand up for what's right when the rest of his team are planning to pull a dangerous prank on a cross-dressing classmate?



## ***The Difference Between You and Me***

by Madeleine George

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-670-01128-5 (HC) | \$16.99

Two girls who have nothing in common except for the secret time they spend together on Tuesday afternoons find themselves on opposite ends of a heated school conflict.



## ***Freak Show***

by James St. James

Ages 13 up | Grades 8 up

978-0-525-47799-0 (HC) | \$18.99

978-0-14-241231-2 (PB) | \$8.99

When Billy Bloom has to move to Florida and ends up in a school of Bible Belles, Aberzombies, and Football Heroes, his efforts to fit in and stand out at the same time are both hilarious and heartrending.



## ***Jerk, California***

by Jonathan Friesen

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-14-241203-9 (PB) | \$9.99

Discussion Guide Available

Living with Tourette's Syndrome and a ridiculing stepfather, Sam sets out to learn his real father's secrets.



## ***Keep Holding On***

by Susane Colasanti

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-670-01225-1 (HC) | \$17.99

Noelle's life is all about survival. Even her best friend doesn't know how much she gets bullied. When the antagonism of her classmates takes a dramatic turn, she realizes it is time to stand up for herself.



## ***Leverage***

by Joshua Cohen

Ages 14 up | Grades 9 up

978-0-525-42306-5 (HC) | \$17.99

It's gymnasts versus football players in this steroid-fueled high school war.



## ***Looks***

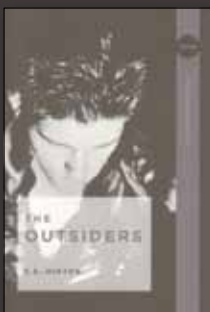
by Madeleine George

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-670-06167-9 (HC) | \$7.99

978-0-14-241419-4 (PB) | \$7.99

Aimee is as skinny as Meghan is large, and as outwardly angry as Meghan is inwardly sad. Together they join forces against one girl who hurt them both.



## ***The Outsiders***

by S. E. Hinton

Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-670-53257-5 (HC) | \$17.99

978-0-14-240733-2 (PB) | \$10.00

It's the haves versus the have-nots in this ultimate YA classic.



## ***The Rules of Survival***

by Nancy Werlin

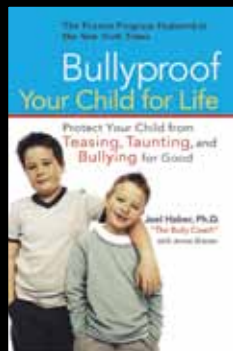
Ages 12 up | Grades 7 up

978-0-8037-3001-4 (HC) | \$17.99

978-0-14-241071-4 (PB) | \$8.99

It all starts when Matthew observes a heroic scene in a convenience store: A man named Murdoch puts himself between an abusive father and his son. Matt is determined to find out why.

## FURTHER READING



*Bullyproof Your Child For Life*  
by Joel Haber and Jenna Glatzer  
978-0-399-53318-1 (PB) | \$14.95



*It Gets Better*  
Edited by Dan Savage and Terry Miller  
Ages 14 up | Grades 9 up  
978-0-525-95233-6 (HC) | \$21.95

## RESOURCES

[StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov)

Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center  
[www.pacer.org/bullying/](http://www.pacer.org/bullying/)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jerry Michel is currently principal at Willard Elementary School in Evanston, Illinois, and has been involved in literacy education for more than twenty years as a classroom teacher, literacy coach, consultant, and school administrator. He is the co-author of *Can You Hear Me Now? Applying Brain Research and Technology to Engage Today's Student*.



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[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)



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