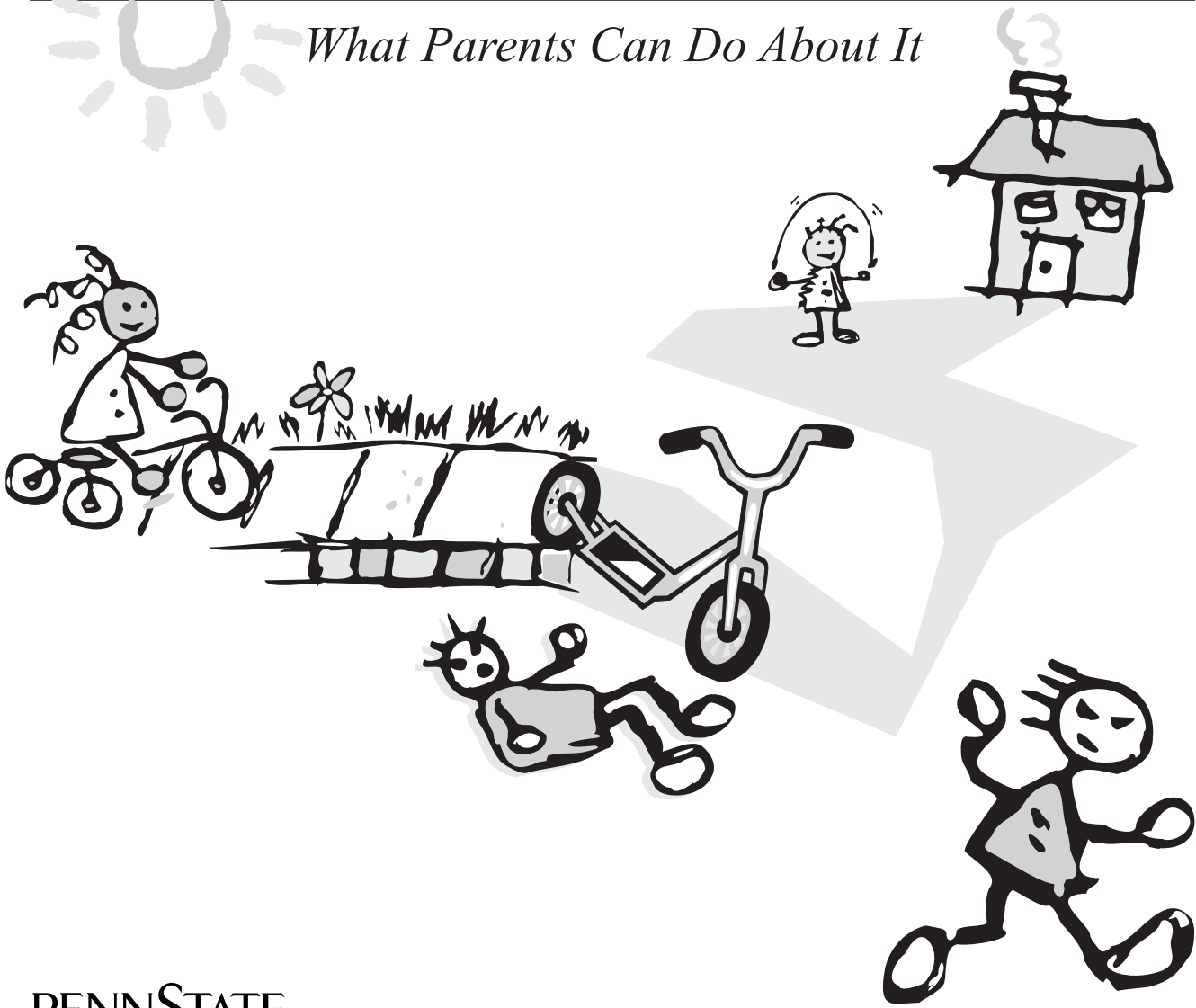


BULLYING
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*It's not just
child's play!*



What Parents Can Do About It



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CONTENTS

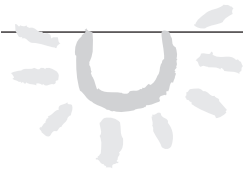
Introduction	3
Three Forms of Bullying	3
Addressing Bullying	3
Strategies for Parents	4
Look for Symptoms	4
Ask the Right Questions	4
Listen and Understand	4
Don't Say	4
Teach How to Avoid	4
Encourage Speaking Out	4
Advocate for Your Child.....	4
Increase School Safety.....	4
Peer Mediation.....	4
Consult Your Child	4
References.....	5
Other Resources	5
Children's Books Related to Bullying	6

About this Bulletin . . .

Bullying: What Parents Can Do About It is a resource that addresses what can be done by parents to prevent or stop bullying among children. As part of this bulletin there is an annotated bibliography of children's books related to the topic of bullying. In addition, a companion bulletin entitled *Bullying: What Educators Can Do About It* was developed for elementary school teachers.

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BULLYING



What Parents Can Do About It

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a form of violence common among children. Bullying can be found in schools, neighborhoods, and homes throughout the United States. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice, bullying is frequently misunderstood by adults as an unavoidable part of growing up and, as a result, often occurs in the presence of adults who fail to do anything about it. The focus of this publication is about bullying at school and what can be done about it.

Bullying affects a school and students in many ways. Bullying has a negative effect on the social environment of a school and creates an atmosphere of fear among students. Bullying also reduces students' abilities to learn. A child who bullies is also more likely to engage in other negative behavior (such as stealing and taking drugs). More than 16 percent of U.S. school children said that they had been bullied by other students during a school term, according to a study by Ericson (2001). The survey, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, included 15,686 students in grades six through ten in public, parochial, and private schools throughout the United States. The researchers found that bullying occurred most frequently in sixth through eighth grades, with little variation between urban, suburban, town, and rural

areas. Males were both more likely to bully others and more likely to be victims of bullying than were females. In addition, males were more likely to say they had been bullied physically (being hit, slapped, or pushed), while females more frequently said they were bullied verbally and psychologically (through sexual comments or rumors).

THREE FORMS OF BULLYING

According to researchers, there are three forms of bullying:

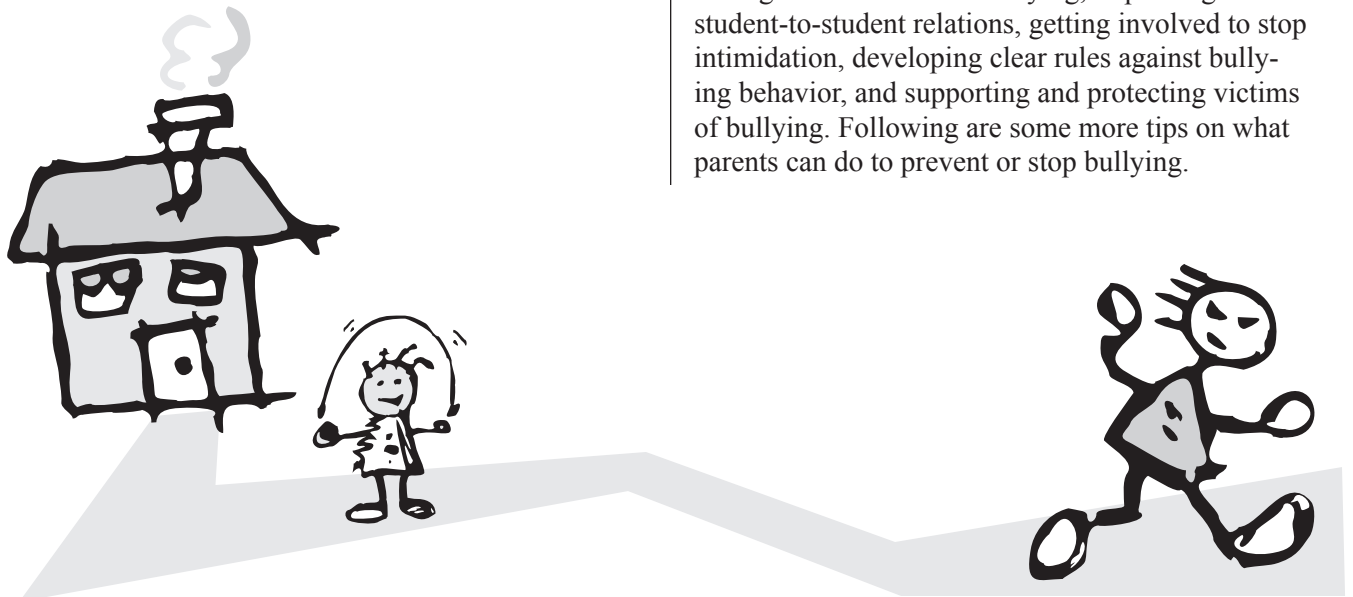
Physical: the most commonly known form; includes hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and taking personal belongings.

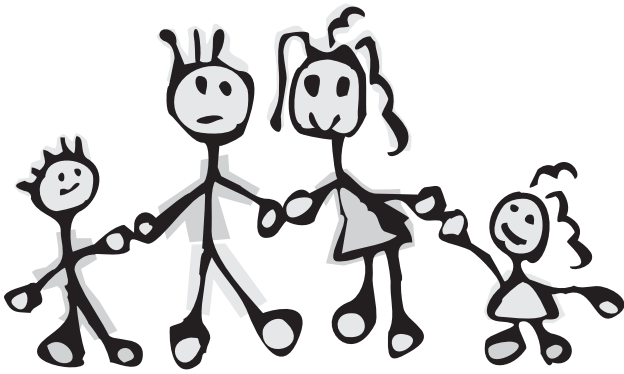
Verbal: includes taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, and making threats.

Psychological: involves spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, and engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation.

ADDRESSING BULLYING

Bullying can be prevented if students, parents, teachers, and school administrators are proactive. Strategies to prevent or stop bullying include: raising awareness about bullying, improving student-to-student relations, getting involved to stop intimidation, developing clear rules against bullying behavior, and supporting and protecting victims of bullying. Following are some more tips on what parents can do to prevent or stop bullying.





STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

The following are steps for parents to take to protect their children from bullying.

Look for Symptoms

Since most school children won't tell you they're being bullied, often because they are afraid of reprisals, it's important that you can recognize the symptoms. These include: unexplained reluctance to go to school; fearfulness or unusual anxiety; sleep disturbances and nightmares; vague physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches), often on school days; and belongings that are missing altogether or come home ripped.

Ask the Right Questions

If you do suspect your child is being bullied, don't ask them about it outright. Instead, ask your child questions about how he or she is spending lunch hour or what it's like walking to school, walking home, or riding the school bus. Ask if there are any children at school who are bullies, without asking whether your child is being bullied.

Listen and Understand

If you learn your child is being bullied, stay calm and give your child plenty of time to tell you how he or she feels. Be a good listener. Make it clear it's not your child's fault.

Don't Say

Do not tell a child who is being bullied to just ignore it. If that were possible, the child would not be asking you for help. Don't suggest that your child simply fight back either. That may increase your child's chances of further victimization.

Teach How to Avoid

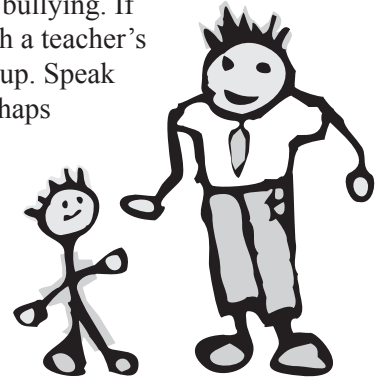
Help your child avoid the situations that expose him or her to bullying. If it occurs on the way to or from school, find a safe route and arrange for an older child companion.

Encourage Speaking Out

Encourage your child to tell you, a teacher, or another adult when they are having a problem. It's important for them to let someone know early, before the situation escalates. Explain the difference between tattling and telling. Tattling is when you report something just to get someone in trouble. Telling is when you report that you or someone else is in danger.

Advocate for Your Child

Work with the school authorities and your child's teacher to combat the bullying. If you are not happy with a teacher's response, do not give up. Speak to someone else—perhaps another teacher or the principal. Let the school authorities know about the problem and keep a written record of incidents, listing who was involved.



Increase School Safety

Suggest closer supervision in hallways, bathrooms, lunchrooms, under stairways, and on the playground. Your child has the right to feel safe at school, so find out your school's policies on bullying.



Peer Mediation

Ask the school or PTA to sponsor safety-training workshops and initiate a peer mediation program in which staff and students are trained in nonviolent conflict resolution.

Consult Your Child

Always discuss things with your child before you take action. If you do not do this, you might damage your relationship with your child.

REFERENCES

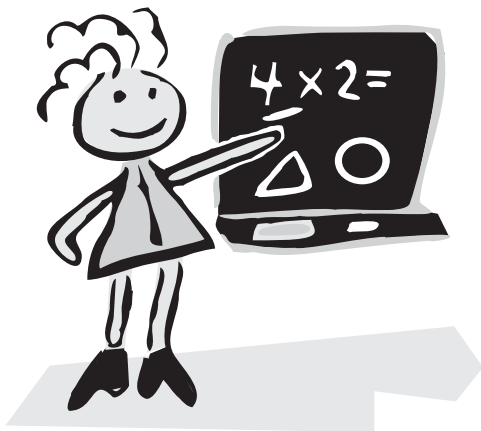
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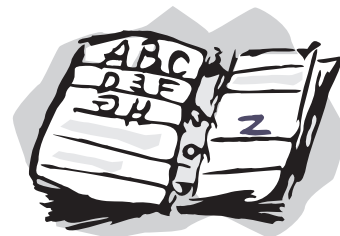
OTHER RESOURCES

For more information, visit the Web sites listed below:

- <http://www.bullybeware.com/tips.html>. This Web site was created by a group of teachers who have dedicated their careers to studying the subject of bullying. All hold advanced degrees in education and have written books on the subject of bullying based on both practical experience and research.



- <http://www.antibullying.net/>. This is the Web site of the Anti-Bullying Network, a part of the Positive School Ethos Program that is based at the Moray House Institute of Education, University of Edinburgh. The Anti-Bullying Network offers research-based newsletters on bullying, conferences, and training sessions for teachers and other education professionals.
- http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed407154.html. This article, entitled “Bullying in Schools,” is from the Eric Clearinghouse on Elementary Education. The author offers a survey of the current research on bullying and the most effective solutions to the problem.
- <http://www.gold.ac.uk/euconf/>. This Web site contains summaries of the keynote addresses at the European Conference on Initiatives to Stop School Bullying. Educators, psychologists, and youth professionals from countries across Europe came together to discuss the problem of bullying and the methods that scholars from their countries had found most effective in combating the behavior.
- <http://www.successunlimited.co.uk/bullycide/school.htm>. This is the official Web site of school bully on-line, a part of the U.K. National Workplace Bullying Advice Line. The Web site offers research-based tips on combating bullying as well as suggestions of other bullying resources.
- <http://www.childsafetyexperts.com/school/school-bullies.shtml>. This page appears on the Web site of the Child Safety Experts organization, which offers safety advice and information for parents from child experts. The page offers general guidelines on handling bullying, and also offers a recommended reading list of books on bullying by child experts.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS RELATED TO BULLYING (listed by ascending age-group)

The Sneetches

Dr. Seuss

All ages

This Dr. Seuss tale deals with the common peer problems of exclusion and prejudice. The Star Belly Sneetches have a star on their bellies to symbolize superiority and prestige, and they reject the Plain Belly sort. All of the Sneetches fall prey to a money-hungry stranger, and as a result join together and learn a lesson about inclusion and tolerance in the end.

Move Over Twerp

Martha Alexander

Ages 4-7

The first day that Jeffrey rides the bus to school, older boys shout at the youngster and remove him from his seat in the back of the bus. Jeffrey makes a daring plan to deal with the boys, and he gets just what he wants.

The Big Bad Bully Bear

Ginnie Hofmann

Ages 4-7

Arthur and his friend Emmy Bear teach Bully Bear an important lesson when they recruit all of their friends to join together. Bully Bear learns what he needs to do to make friends and keep them.



The Berenstain Bears, No Girls Allowed

Stan and Jan Berenstain

Ages 4-8

In this classic tale of sibling rivalry, Brother Bear and the other male cubs try to exclude Sister from their new club after she beats them at baseball and other “boy” activities. Sister then plans a way to win the guys over.

The Berenstain Bears and the Bully

Stan and Jan Berenstain

Ages 4-8

Sister Bear learns self-defense after she is beaten up by a class bully, and together they learn about forgiveness and getting along. Brother teaches Sister Bear the basics of self-defense while reminding her to avoid the Bully, but Sister and the Bully do fight. Children can discuss other non-aggressive ways to deal with bullies and get along with peers.

Mean Maxine

Barbara Bottner

Age 5-7

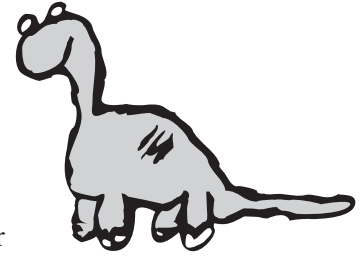
Ralph works up enough courage to confront Mean Maxine who has called him names and picked on him repeatedly. The ending of the story takes an interesting and friendly turn.

Tyrone the Horrible

Hans Wilhelm

Age 5-8

The earth’s first bully, Tyrone the Horrible, bullies little Boland dinosaur. Tyrone teases, punches, and steals from Boland who seeks the advice of his dinosaur friends. He solves the problem in a way that provides an opportunity for discussion.



Maxine in the Middle

Holly Keller

Ages 5-8

In this easy-to-read story, Maxine, the middle child, often feels left out and rejected. She believes that her older sister and younger brother are the only children who get new clothes and toys. Maxine runs away to the family tree house, where she later becomes cold and hungry. Maxine returns home and realizes how much she enjoys spending time with her brother and sister and that “sometimes middle things are best.”

Chrysanthemum

Kevin Henkes

Ages 5-8

Chrysanthemum is a brightly illustrated book that addresses the troubles a young girl faces after being picked on because of her unique name. Before going to school, she is proud of her name and loves the way it sounds. After being taunted by her peers, Chrysanthemum wants to change her name.

Not until a teacher that the children admire compliments Chrysanthemum on her name do the other children accept her.



Loudmouth George and the Sixth Grade Bully

Nancy Carlson

Age 5–8

On the first day of school, a huge sixth grader startles George on his way to school and steals his lunch. From then on, every day starts the same way. By the end of the week, George is a nervous wreck and hungry all of the time. George turns the tables with a little help from his friend Harriet. Discussion could include other ways for George to deal with Big Mike, the bully.

Camp Big Paw

Doug Cushman

Ages 5–8

Cyril and his friends run into trouble with the bully of Camp Big Paw, Nigel Snootbutter. During field day competitions, Nigel sets out to make sure Cyril and his cabin mates lose every field day event, but Cyril saves the day with some smart thinking.

Who’s Afraid of the Big, Bad Bully

Teddy Slater

Ages 6–8

In this easy-to-read chapter book, big, mean Bertha threatens everyone, especially Max. Max learns self-defense, but he is reluctant to stand up to the bully until she tries to take his dog, Fang. Max is assertive and, along with his friends, refuses to hand over his puppy. At the end of the book, the children are getting along with the reformed bully.

The Berenstain Bears and the In Crowd

Stan and Jan Berenstain

Ages 6–10

In this Berenstain Bears tale, Sister Bear is teased by the new cub in town, Queenie McBear. Queenie steals Sister’s Double Dutch partners before the big jump rope tournament and excludes Sister from their fun. The tournament proves to be a success for Sister as she learns how to deal with being left out.

What a Wimp!

Carol Carrick

Age 7–10

Barney and his family move from the city to the country where his Mom said that people were so friendly. But, he soon becomes the target of Lenny Coots who targets Barney as his easy, smaller, and younger victim. Lenny waits for Barney daily after school. Although his teacher, mother, and brother are sympathetic and intervene, Barney learns he must face up to Lenny and do something on his own.

Joshua T. Bates Takes Charge

Susan Shreve

Age 7–10

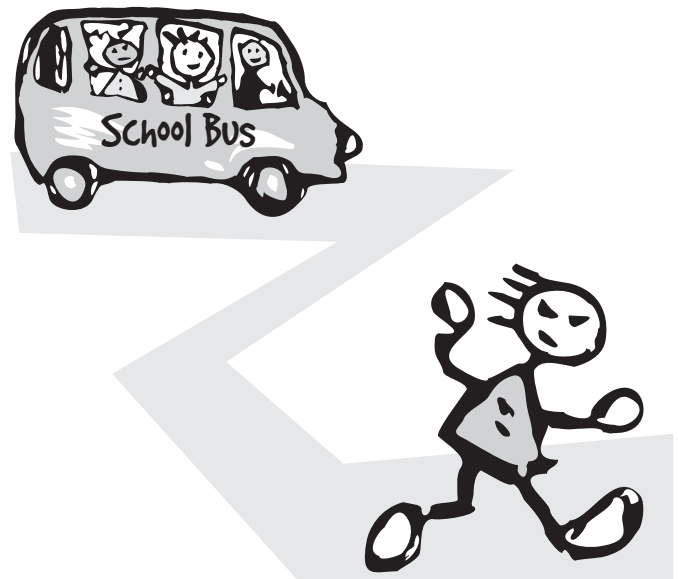
Joshua T. Bates struggles with the biggest decision of his life as he decides whether to disclose who is victimizing the new kid in fifth grade, Sean O’Malley. No stranger to bullies, Joshua flunked third grade and knows what it is like to be the target of Tommy Wilhelm and his gang, the Nerds Out. An excellent book that tells what it is like to be an outcast and what it takes to be a hero.

Bully on the Bus

Carl W. Bosch

Ages 7–11

Written in a “choose your own ending” format, the reader decides what action to take while dealing with a bully. The reader can choose from many alternatives that include ignoring, talking to an adult, confronting the bully, fighting, and reconciling. There are many options and opportunities for excellent discussions with this book.



Finding the Green Stone

Alice Walker

Ages 7–11

In this tale set in a friendly rural neighborhood, Katie and her brother Johnny each possess an iridescent green stone with special powers. When Johnny loses his stone, he accuses Katie of stealing it. Later, he tries to steal her stone, and the stone immediately loses its luster. When he finds the stone, Johnny learns that it embodies his character and integrity. The stone loses its power and radiance as a result of its owner’s failings and mean-spirited actions.

Mitch and Amy

Beverly Cleary

Ages 8-12

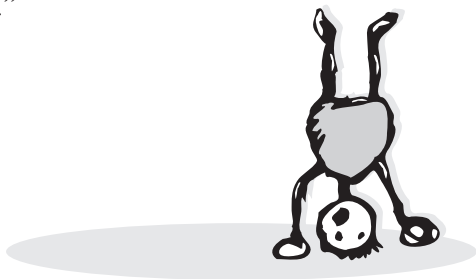
In this amusing book, twins Mitch and Amy put aside their squabbles and rivalry and join together to deal with a neighborhood bully, Alan Hibbler. Mitch and Amy try various ways of dealing with Alan, even choosing fist fighting. There are numerous opportunities to discuss the benefits and consequences of all of the possible ways to handle Alan.

Bullies are a Pain in the Brain

Trevor Romain

Ages 8-13

Funny and easy to read, this book describes truths about bullies and offers advice on how to effectively cope with them. For bullies, this book also helps explain how to get along with other kids and feel good about yourself. The book is loaded with practical suggestions for kids to help them gain the confidence to handle themselves and become more "bully proof."

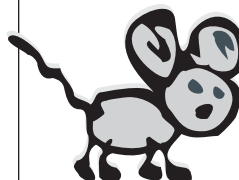
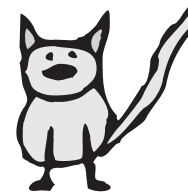


Fourth Grade Rats

Jerry Spinelli

Ages 9-12

A lighthearted Spinelli story about some boys recently promoted to fourth grade. The narrator, Suds, who acquired his name because he enjoys taking warm baths to relax, is having a difficult time complying with his friend



Joey's demand that he grow up and follow the familiar chant, "First grade babies. Second grade cats. Third grade angels. Fourth grade rats!" Suds learns that he doesn't have to be a tough guy in order to grow up.

Crash

Jerry Spinelli

Ages 9-12

Crash is a seventh grader who loves football and tormenting his geeky neighbor. The story follows Crash as he grows from an obnoxious teenaged jock into a more mature and accepting young man. Spinelli deals with real issues like bullying and illness in a lighthearted but realistic manner.

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