Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute, ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Posted

John David Anderson (Author)

Words are not just words, especially in middle school. Words can be weapons or they can be gifts. The right words can win you friends or make you enemies. Words can come back to haunt you, and sometimes they can change things forever. When cell phones are banned at Branton Middle School, Frost and his friends Deedee, Wolf, and Bench come up with a new way to communicate: leaving sticky notes for each other all around the school. It catches on, and soon all the kids in school are leaving notes—though for every kind and friendly one, there is a cruel one as well. In the middle of this, a new girl named Rose arrives at school and sits at Frost's lunch table. Rose is not like anyone else at school, and it's clear that Frost's close circle of friends isn't interested in adding another member. As the sticky-note war escalates, and the pressure to choose sides mounts, Frost soon realizes that nothing will ever be the same after this year.

ISBN: 978-0062338204

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Year Published: 2017

Age Range: 8–12

Book Themes

Bullying/Cyberbullying, Bias, Appearance, Acting as an Ally, Power of Words

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See also ADL's Glossary of Education Terms.

■ aggressor	■ confiscate	■ hubris	■ phoniness
■ ally	■ defamation	■ inappropriate	■ privilege
■ aphorism	■ delusional	■ inclusive	■ protest
■ banned	■ derogatory	■ inexcusable	■ sarcastic
■ bullying	■ disrespectful	■ insulting	■ slurs
■ bystander	■ discrimination	■ label	■ superfluous
■ catalyst	■ emphatic	■ name-calling	■ target
■ censored	■ exaggeration	■ offensive	■ teased
■ compromise	■ exasperated	■ petition	■ trendsetters

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

■ What is the book about?

■ When you first looked at the book's title and cover, what did you think it might be about?

■ What did you think about Frost when you were first introduced to him? How does your perception of him change throughout the book?

■ What does it mean when Frost's mother says: "You find your people and you make your tribe and you protect each other from the wolves?" Do you agree or disagree with this? Please explain.

■ What do you learn about Frost's friends (i.e. "the tribe") from his explanation of each of them, their nicknames, and how they became friends?

■ What does Frost mean when he says, "I found the people who weren't quite like other people, and we used that difference as glue?" Is that something you can relate to and if so, how?

■ What are some of the examples Frost describes for how technology is used for mean and bullying behavior? Have you seen that type of bullying/cyberbullying in this school?

■ What event pushes the school to forbid students from bringing phones to school? How do the students react to this?

■ What are some of the "labels" that Frost identifies in his school? How do labels impact the people who are targeted and those around them?

■ What are some of the other labels students use in this school?

■ When Rose Holland comes to school as a new student, what impact does her presence have on Frost and his friends? What happens when she joins them at their lunch table?

- Can you describe the conflict Frost and his friends have about Rose joining their lunch table?

- Have you ever been in a situation where someone outside of your friend group wants to join in? What happened?

- Why does Frost lie about how much he enjoys and writes poetry? When he says," I know what words can do," what does he mean by that?

- What happens when Frost and his friends are playing soccer in the park and accidentally hit a group of high school students? What do you take away from that incident?

- In what way is middle school a "minefield," as described by Frost? In what ways is our school a minefield?

- How does the spread of sticky notes on lockers evolve and how does it become a prominent way for students to communicate without cell phones?

- Why does Bench stop joining his friends at lunch and what does he tell Frost about what other players are saying about Rose?

- In thinking about the aphorism assignment, what causes Frost to say to himself, "Getting a message through to some people was like trying to hammer a nail through a concrete block with your forehead?"

- When Bench scores the winning touchdown in the school's football game, what happens after that which impacts his relationship with the rest of the "tribe?"

- What are the different ways that students respond to the sticky notes, specifically the nasty and derogatory ones (e.g. acting as an ally, bystander, aggressor, target)? (See Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying for Elementary Age Children)

- What happens in Mr. Sword's class the day that Wolf gets into an argument with Jason and leaves school? Why did he react the way that he did?

- How did you feel while reading the scene in which Cameron and his friends threaten Deedee and Frost in the bathroom? Do you think something like that has or could happen at our school? What might you do if it did happen here?

- Why do you think Rose makes the bet with Cameron? Why do you think it was so important to her? How did her friends and other react at the outcome?

- Were you surprised by Cameron's punishment (e.g. the sticky note he had to wear all day that said "I'm sorry")? As you read this part, what were your thoughts?

- What happens and what impact did it have when someone wrote "TOTAL ROMAN" on Wolf's locker? What specifically do his friends do to support him?

- What bullying behavior takes place throughout the book and how do some students act as allies in those situations? How do people act as allies (or not) in our school?

- What are the different ways that Frost and his friends support each other?

- What parts/passages of the book were most meaningful or important to you? Please explain.

- What are the overall themes and messages of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. **Acting as an Ally**

   Ask students: *What is an ally?* Elicit a definition and define an **ally** as someone who speaks out on behalf of someone else or takes actions that are supportive of someone else. Write the definition on the board/smart board. Then ask: *Which characters in the book acted as allies and how did they act as allies?* If they can't think of anything, remind students about how Rose showed her support of Deedee or how many students plastered Wolf's locker with positive and affirming sticky notes to cover up the permanent marker insult on his locker. Ask: *How did those characters use ally behavior in those situations? What are other ways you have seen people act as allies or you have acted as an ally?* Then, distribute a copy of Six Ways to be an Ally and read the sheet aloud, asking for examples of each of the six ways. Emphasize that there are many ways to be an ally and that various situations may require different or multiple ally strategies. Have students write a story about someone who acts as an ally, either a real-life situation or a fictional one. You can also have them make the story into a comic, having them draw storyboards and include illustrations and dialogue/thought bubbles.

2. **Aphorisms**

   Ask students if they remember what "aphorisms" are, as discussed in the classroom of Mr. Sword's, a teacher in the school. Ask them to explain the term in their own words. (This section begins on page 154.) Then read aloud how Mr. Sword describes **aphorism**:

   "An aphorism is a pithy or witty saying like a kernel of wisdom wrapped up in a single sentence. We might think of them as quotes, except they are designed to say something deep and true about the world and not all quotes do that."

   Ask students to share any of the aphorisms they remember from the book and/or other ones they may have heard, and ask them to reflect on whether they like the aphorism and why. Then, as Mr. Sword does in the book, have students write an original aphorism on a sticky note. They can then discuss the aphorism with a partner and then share it with the rest of the class. They can describe what their aphorism means, why they like it and for whom they would like to share it. If appropriate, do what Mr. Sword did and have students identify a place in the school where the aphorism "will get the attention of the people who would benefit most from reading it;" have students place the aphorism there. This may require that you inform the school administration and other teachers that you are doing this. It could also be a way to engage the larger school community in a pro-social campaign started by your classroom.

3. **Reading Response Writing Activities**

   - **Write the Next Chapter of the Book**

     Have students discuss what might happen next in the book and write an additional chapter of how they think it would continue. Remind students how the book ends by asking the following questions: *What do you think happens after the school implements their new policy on phones? How do you think the school's program to combat bullying and discrimination impacts the students and the school? Do you think Bench starts hanging out with the "tribe" again or does he remain with his new group of friends?* Have students write the next chapter of the book as they imagine it, beginning with the day after Bench comes to Frost's house for D&D night.

- **Diary/Journal Entry of Character**
Have students select a character from the book, which could include: Frost, Deedee, Wolf, Bench, Rose, Jason, Cameron and Frost's mother. Then have them write diary entries for the chosen character, writing 8–10 diary entries that the character might have kept before, during and/or after the book's events. Remind students that the character's thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events and other activities that take place throughout the book. You may choose to have students engage in pre-writing discussions with a partner about their character in order to get some of their ideas out. After they have completed the assignment, have them share their diary entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the diary entries.

- **Send the Author a Letter or Email**
Have students write a letter or email to the book's author, John David Anderson. Students should first consider what they want to say to the author, which may include their own personal reflections about the book. Their letters can include how they felt about the book and characters, what they learned, what more they wanted to know. They could also write about what they wish had been included and ways in which the book did not meet their expectations. In addition, students can also raise questions with the author such as how he got the idea for the book, how long it took him to write it, what the student wish they had included but didn't, etc. Have students engage in conferencing with each other to write several drafts of their letters or emails, share them aloud with the rest of the class and finally mail or email them to the author. John David Anderson's website includes his contact information. If they receive responses from the author, those can be shared as well.

ADL Resources
The following are curriculum and resources on bullying/cyberbullying and acting as an ally.

Curriculum Resources
"Cyberbullying: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty," *Curriculum Connections,* www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/cyberbullying-understanding-and-addressing-online-cruelty.

"Identity-Based Bullying," *Current Events Classroom,* www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying.

"What is Weight Bias," *Current Events Classroom,* www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/what-is-weight-bias.

"Words That Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying," *Curriculum Connections,* www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/words-that-heal-using-childrens-literature-to-address.

Websites
Anti-Bias Education
www.adl.org/what-we-do/promote-respect/anti-bias

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways
www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources
www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/bullying-and-cyberbullying-prevention-strategies

Provides a collection of ADL resources on bullying and cyberbullying for educators, administrators, students and families and caregivers.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment
www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment

Provides tips for the classroom educator to create an anti-bias learning environment.

Labeling Behavior, Not People
www.adl.org/blog/labeling-behavior-not-people

Concerns about bullying in schools have motivated hundreds of books, many which aim to change the behavior of "bullies." This blog talks about bullying and the disconnect between being labeled a "bully" and actually engaging in bullying behavior.

National Bullying Prevention Month
www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-bullying-prevention-month

Some resources to help students be motivated and empowered to act as allies and help contribute to creating a positive "ally culture" at their schools.

Rosalind's Classroom Conversations: Every Conflict Isn't Bullying
www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/what-bullying-is-and-is-not

Rosalind Wiseman's classroom essay on how to have conversations with youth about bullying that are more productive and what resources are available to assist in bullying prevention.

Table Talk: What Bullying Is and Is Not
www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/classroom-conversations/every-conflict-isnt-bullying

Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about bullying/cyberbullying and how to be an ally.

Children's Books
Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Bullying Awareness & Prevention, www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[165]=165&tid[166]=166&tid[167]=167&tid[168]=168&tid[169]=169

Size Bias, www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[180]=180