

Bystander By James Preller Teacher Guide



Bystander by James Preller Teacher Guide

James Preller's novel "Bystander" is an important literary work that explores themes of bullying, friendship, and the moral dilemmas faced by individuals in social situations. As educators, guiding students through this compelling narrative can foster meaningful discussions about empathy, social responsibility, and the impact of one's choices on others. This teacher guide aims to provide educators with comprehensive tools and strategies to effectively teach "Bystander," including lesson plans, discussion questions, and activities that promote critical thinking and personal reflection.

Overview of the Novel

"Bystander" tells the story of a new student, Eric, who witnesses the bullying of a classmate, a boy named a "freak" by his peers. The novel unfolds as Eric grapples with his own identity and the choices he faces regarding whether to intervene in the bullying or remain a bystander. As the plot develops, readers are introduced to a range of characters who embody different responses to bullying, from complicity to bravery.

Key Themes

1. **Bullying and Peer Pressure:** The novel illustrates the dynamics of bullying and how peer pressure can influence behavior.
2. **Empathy and Moral Choices:** Eric's internal struggle highlights the importance of empathy and making moral choices in challenging situations.
3. **Friendship and Loyalty:** The relationships between characters showcase the complexities of friendship and loyalty in the face of social challenges.
4. **Consequences of Inaction:** The narrative emphasizes that being a bystander can have significant consequences for both the victim and the observer.

Character Analysis

Understanding the characters is crucial for students to engage with the themes of the novel.

Main Characters

- Eric: The protagonist who faces the moral dilemma of whether to stand up against bullying.
- Mary: Eric's friend who struggles with her own feelings about the bullying.
- The "Freak" (The Target): A victim of bullying whose experience raises critical questions about the effects of bullying on mental health.
- The Bullies: Their motivations and backgrounds can be explored to understand the cycle of bullying.

Character Development

- Discuss how each character evolves throughout the story.
- Examine how Eric's perspective changes after witnessing bullying.
- Explore the relationships between characters and how they influence one another's actions.

Lesson Plans

Creating effective lesson plans around "Bystander" can enhance students' understanding of its themes and characters.

Sample Lesson Plan Structure

1. Objective: Understand the themes of bullying and empathy.
2. Materials Needed: Copies of "Bystander," writing materials, and art supplies.
3. Activities:
 - Reading Assignment: Read chapters 1-5 and identify instances of bullying.
 - Discussion: Engage students in a conversation about their feelings regarding bullying. Ask questions like:
 - What would you do in Eric's situation?
 - How do you think the bystander effect plays a role in bullying?
 - Creative Project: Create a visual representation (poster, collage) of how bullying affects individuals and the community.

Discussion Questions

Facilitating discussions can deepen comprehension and encourage students to express their thoughts.

Guiding Questions

1. Personal Reflection: Have you ever witnessed bullying? How did it make you feel?
2. Character Choices: Why do you think Eric hesitates to intervene? What factors contribute to his decision-making process?
3. Theme Exploration: How does the author portray the consequences of being a bystander? Can you think of real-life examples?
4. Empathy Building: How can we cultivate empathy within our school community to prevent bullying?
5. Role-Playing: Imagine you are one of the characters in the book. How would you respond differently in the situation?

Activities to Promote Engagement

Engaging students in activities can help solidify their understanding and encourage critical thinking.

Interactive Activities

1. Role-Playing Scenarios: Create role-playing situations where students can act out different responses to bullying. Discuss the outcomes of each response.
2. Journaling: Have students maintain a journal where they reflect on personal experiences related to the themes of the book.
3. Group Projects: In small groups, students can create a presentation on the impact of bullying, using statistics and personal anecdotes.
4. Community Service: Organize a service project that focuses on promoting kindness and inclusivity in the school environment.

Assessment Strategies

Assessing students' understanding of "Bystander" can take many forms.

Assessment Ideas

1. Literature Response Essays: Students can write an essay reflecting on the moral choices made by the characters and how they relate to real-life situations.
2. Creative Writing Assignment: Ask students to write an alternate ending to the novel, exploring different choices Eric could have made.
3. Presentation: Students can present their group projects to the class, fostering discussion and deeper comprehension of the material.

Resources for Further Learning

Educators may benefit from additional resources to support their teaching of "Bystander."

Recommended Resources

1. Books:
 - "Wonder" by R.J. Palacio
 - "Thirteen Reasons Why" by Jay Asher
2. Websites:
 - StopBullying.gov
 - PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center
3. Films and Documentaries:
 - "Bully" (2011)
 - "The Hunting Ground" (2015)

Conclusion

Teaching "Bystander" by James Preller provides an opportunity for students to engage with critical social issues that resonate in today's world. By utilizing the strategies outlined in this teacher guide, educators can facilitate meaningful discussions that encourage empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the consequences of bullying. This novel not only serves as a narrative of struggle and resilience but also acts as a catalyst for change in the classroom and beyond, inspiring students to become proactive members of their communities.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'Bystander' by James Preller?

The main theme of 'Bystander' revolves around bullying, the complexities of friendship, and the moral dilemmas faced by witnesses to bullying behavior.

How can teachers utilize the 'Bystander' teacher guide in their classrooms?

Teachers can use the 'Bystander' teacher guide to facilitate discussions on bullying, empathy, and taking action. It includes lesson plans, discussion questions, and activities that encourage students to reflect on their roles as bystanders.

What age group is 'Bystander' by James Preller most appropriate for?

The book is primarily aimed at middle-grade readers, typically suitable for ages 10-14, making it an

excellent choice for upper elementary and middle school classrooms.

What are some important discussion questions included in the teacher guide?

Important discussion questions may include: 'What are the consequences of being a bystander?', 'How can we support someone who is being bullied?', and 'What actions can we take to foster a positive school environment?'

Does the teacher guide provide strategies for addressing bullying in the classroom?

Yes, the teacher guide offers strategies for addressing bullying, including creating a safe classroom environment, promoting open communication, and encouraging students to share their experiences and feelings.

What activities can be found in the 'Bystander' teacher guide to engage students?

The teacher guide includes various activities such as role-playing scenarios, group discussions, creative writing prompts, and projects that encourage students to think critically about their responses to bullying situations.

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