

# Literature Responses to Bullying

**Pillar: Positive Social Environments**  
**Division: II**  
**Grade Level: 4-6**  
**Core Curriculum Connections: Language Arts**

## I. Rationale:

In this series of lessons, students have the opportunity to reflect upon bullying behaviours and explore how to handle these scenarios appropriately. The lesson could be used with other stories containing comparable themes or issues; however, *A Bad Case of Stripes* allows for a personal connection by having students relate to similar emotions and situations in their own lives. Acceptable behaviours and ways to prevent bullying and promote a positive environment in the classroom and school are also discussed. Literature response groups allow students to explore issues of common interest and relate what they have read to their own lives. Social interactions invite readers to extend their thinking and prolong their involvement with the text.

## II. Activity Objectives:

*The students will:*

- Comprehend and interpret a text by applying a wide range of strategies
- Participate in literature response groups by sharing ideas, insights, and collaborating with peers to clarify meaning and extend learning
- Make personal connections to a story by writing and telling about a time when they experienced a similar situation or emotion as one of the characters

## III. Curriculum Outcomes: Language Arts

### **Specific Outcomes: Grades 4-6**

#### **1.1 Discover and Explore**

- Express ideas and develop understanding

#### **1.2 Clarify and Extend**

- Consider others' ideas
- Combine ideas
- Extend understanding

#### **2.1 Use Strategies and Cues**

- Use prior knowledge
- Use comprehension strategies

#### **2.2 Respond to Texts**

- Experience various texts
- Construct meaning from texts

#### **2.3 Understand Forms, Elements and Techniques**

- Understand techniques and elements

## **2.4 Create Original Text**

- Generate ideas
- Elaborate on the expression of ideas
- Structure texts

## **5.1 Respect Others and Strengthen Community**

- Appreciate diversity

## **5.2 Work Within a Group**

- Cooperate with others
- Work in groups
- Evaluate group process

## **IV. Materials:**

- [Literature Group Discussion Checklist](#) (student handout)
- [Character Emotions](#) (student handout)
- [It's My Life: Beat the Bully](#)
- [It's My Life: Story Strips](#)
- [Out on a Limb: A Guide to Getting Along](#)
- *A Bad Case of Stripes* by David Shannon (Scholastic, 2004)
- Chart paper and markers
- Large index cards
- Lima beans
- Post-it notes
- Reader Response/Reflection journals

## **V. Procedure:**

### **a. Preparation:**

1. Locate a copy of *A Bad Case of Stripes* by David Shannon. This book is about a little girl named Camilla Cream, who worries excessively about what other people think of her. She is so worried, in fact, that she stops eating her favorite food, lima beans, because none of the other kids at school like them.

If you can't find a copy of *A Bad Case of Stripes*, try one of these alternative books with similar themes:

- *Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber (Houghton Mifflin, 2000)
  - *First Grade King* by Karen L. Williams and Lena Shiffman (Clarion Books, 1992)
  - *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie dePaola (Harvest Books, 1979)
  - *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes (HarperTrophy, 1996)
2. Students will need to have a reader response/reflection journal.
  3. Bring in some lima beans to use when introducing the book *A Bad Case of Stripes* in Lesson 1.
  4. Before beginning the lesson, use index cards to assign students to literature response groups. Groups should be heterogeneous and contain no more than five to six students each.

## b. Instructions and Activities:

### Lesson 1

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of some of their favourite foods. Record their ideas on chart paper or the board.
2. Now show the students the lima beans, and explain that in the story you are about to read, the main character's favorite food is lima beans.
  - Have you ever tried lima beans? Did you like them?
  - If you haven't tried them, would you like to?
3. Read aloud the book *A Bad Case of Stripes*. At preselected points during the reading, you may wish to stop and use think-aloud questions. Think-aloud questions provide an opportunity for you to model the thought processes used by proficient readers by demonstrating how to question, predict, and connect the text to prior knowledge. Some think-aloud questions for this story include:
  - What do you think will happen when Camilla returns to school? (page 7)
  - Why won't Camilla just ask her dad for some lima beans? (page 13)
4. Following the read-aloud, discuss the story with students.
  - Why do you think Camilla Cream was afraid to have people find out that she liked lima beans? Was she right?
  - What could Camilla's teacher have done to help Camilla deal with the students who were making fun of her?
  - What could Camilla's teacher have done to help the students accept Camilla?
  - Do you think the students in the story were bullying Camilla? Why or why not?
5. After the discussion, have students write their reflections on the story in their journals. Post the class discussion questions on the board or chart paper so that students can refer back to the questions as they write in their journals.
6. Have students meet in their literature response groups. If this is a new activity for them, explain the expectations—they will speak quietly, demonstrate respect for other speakers by listening carefully, not comment until the speaker is finished, and stay on topic. Appoint one student to be the group manager; he or she will contact the teacher if there are any problems following these procedures.
7. In their groups, have students share their journal responses. They do not need to read aloud, but can paraphrase instead. After they have had an opportunity to think about and discuss their personal reflections to the story, pose the following questions to the groups:
  - What is this author trying to say to the reader?
  - What is the lesson from *A Bad Case of Stripes*?

Have these two questions posted on chart paper at the front of the classroom to help keep the groups on task as they continue their discussions.

8. Have students write a follow-up reflection in their journals based on their group discussions in response to the question, "What do you think is the lesson from *A Bad Case of Stripes*?"

## **Lesson 2**

1. Start by discussing how Camilla's classmates treated her when she arrived at school with a bad case of stripes.
2. With a partner, have students brainstorm all the emotion words they can think of that would describe how Camilla might have felt. Have each pair choose two words from their list, and write each word on a Post-it note to bring to the front of the class. Read the words aloud and sort them to see which emotions appear most frequently. Then record the class list on chart paper.
3. Then have pairs of students brainstorm a list of general emotions. If they are having difficulty, suggest various situations such as, "You thought everyone forgot your birthday (disappointed), but when you got home, everyone was waiting with cake and presents (surprised, excited)."
4. Have students complete the Character Emotions chart (attached) by identifying two emotions that they think reflect how each character in the story was feeling. Students should also provide the reasons for their choices of emotions.
5. Have each student choose two emotions from the Character Emotions chart, and write in their journals about a situation in which they have experienced that emotion or a similar situation as the character in the story.
6. Gather students in their literature response groups (same as in previous session), and have them share one or both of their journal entries. Remind students that they should demonstrate respect for their classmates by listening carefully and not making hurtful comments. Assign a new group manager for each group.
7. Following the group discussion, have students complete the Literature Group Discussion Checklist (attached).

## **Lesson 3**

1. In this session, students will need access to classroom or school computers with Internet access. Assign or let students select one or more of the online games to work through with a partner:
  - [It's My Life: Beat the Bully](#). In this game, students answer a series of questions about dealing with bullying.
  - [It's My Life: Story Strips](#). Students should choose the first story strip situation that describes a school bully, and fill in the character bubbles with how they think the scene would play out.
  - [Out on a Limb: A Guide to Getting Along](#). Students learn about the three ways people usually react to conflict and which is the best approach.
2. Ask each pair of students to create a hypothetical problem that someone their age might face in school or in the community, and present three possible solutions, only one of which is correct. Students should write and illustrate their hypothetical problem and possible solutions on a situation card (e.g., a large

index card), with the correct answer and reason on the back.

3. Combine pairs of students into groups of four. As one set of partners reads their situation card aloud, the other pair provides peer feedback on the clarity of the situation and the possible solutions.
4. Have students edit and revise their cards, and submit a final copy.

### c. Follow-up sessions:

Read aloud one or two situation cards each day, using each as an opportunity to talk about appropriate ways to deal with the problems students may face in school or the community. Focus specifically on the different acceptable behaviours and solutions for dealing with conflict and bullying.

## VI. Extensions and Variations:

- Read other books about accepting people and celebrating our differences (see booklist in **Preparation** for suggestions). Have students meet in their literature response groups to discuss and reflect on the lessons and characters in the story.
- Have students create 'I Like Me' collages. Students can sketch and cut out silhouettes of themselves, and then use newspapers and magazines to create a collage of words and pictures that describe themselves (e.g., favourite foods, sports, music, movies, TV shows). Post the collages in the classroom without including the students' names, and encourage students to do a gallery walk of the display. After four or five days, have students create nametags to display with their collages. Students can then write in their journals about something new or surprising that they learned about one of their classmates.

## VII. Assessment Ideas:

- Observe students while in their literature discussion groups, and review the completed Literature Group Discussion Checklists. As an alternative, you can use a simple "thumbs-up/thumbs-down" response. For example, "thumbs up" if they were listening carefully to others in their group. In addition, you may wish to have your own checklist of the same criteria for the class to record student sharing and listening behaviour.
- Review the students' journals entries; however, keep in mind that responses to literature are personal, and multiple interpretations and responses are often acceptable. Rather than, or in addition to, using a checklist or rubric to evaluate student responses, you may wish to write back to the student in the journal, seeking clarification, giving encouragement, or sharing a similar experience.
- Try not to focus on spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors in the students' journal entries. Instead, to assess students' abilities to make connections to the text.
- Were students able to think of possible solutions to Camilla's problem?
- Were they able to identify the moral of the story?
- Could they describe a situation in which they experienced a similar emotion or situation as one of the characters in the story?
- When assessing the situation cards created during Lesson 3, consider the following:
- Did students describe a problematic situation clearly?
- Did they present three possible solutions, with one correct answer identifying an acceptable response to the problem

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Literature Group Discussion Checklist

Were you a good member of your literature discussion group? Read the questions below, and circle the happy face if you did well and the sad face if you didn't.

- \* I shared my ideas.



- \* I listened carefully to others in my group while they were sharing.



- \* I made a positive comment about someone's work.



- \* I made a suggestion to someone about his or her work.



- \* I listened to a positive comment someone made about my work.



- \* I listened to a suggestion someone made about my work.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Character Emotions

in *A Bad Case of Stripes* by David Shannon

Think about the different characters in the story *A Bad Case of Stripes*. List two emotions that you think each character was feeling and write a brief sentence explaining why.

	Camilla	Camilla's teacher	Camilla's parents	Camilla's classmates
Emotions				
Sentence				