

Bystander

Preller, J., 2011

Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)

for students with disabilities

Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

COST: \$8.80 Paperback and Kindle
\$6.38 on Amazon

PUBLISHER: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company
New York, NY 2011

Description of content:

Eric is the new kid in seventh grade, and when you are new in town it is hard to know who to make friends with. More importantly, it is hard to navigate who *not* to be friends with. After a lonely summer of coping with his father's absence due to mental illness, the first peer exposure Eric has is to Griffin and his "posse." Griffin and his friends seem cool enough, and they want to be Eric's friends. The only problem: Griffin and his friends participate in bully role behavior.

Despite his disapproval of his new friends' actions, Eric justified his friendship with them by claiming he himself does not engage in the bully behavior. In other words, Eric was often participating in *bystander* behavior.

Eventually due to an escalation in the severity of bullying, Eric wants to do the right thing and break away from the group; however, this choice renders him to be Griffin's next and favorite victim. Throughout the course of the novel, the reader observes Eric navigate various bully roles from bystander, to assistant, to victim, to even engaging in bullying behavior himself. Themes of the novel explore the conceptualization of what bullying is in the eyes of middle schoolers who are just trying to survive the social jungle of middle school.

Strengths:

- Age appropriate vocabulary for a middle school audience.
- Exposes audiences to environmental factors that may be influencing and encouraging bully role behaviors in peers such as mental illness in the family, verbal and physical abuse, neglect, and absence of a parent.
- Includes representation of involvement in all five bully roles (bully, victim, bystander, assistant, and outsider).
- Displays the fluid nature of student participation in all five roles as opposed to holding each character to one label.

Limitations:

- Actions portrayed by the main character may come across as glorifying retaliation toward students who engage in bullying behaviors.
- The ending of the novel gives the impression that consequences of bullying behavior tend to go away in time without approaching an adult for help, which is not always the case.
- May encourage readers to remain silent if they are involved in or witness bully role behavior by not including an effective adult intervention.

Audience:

- Middle school students.



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



Office of Special
Education Programs

Disclaimers: This information was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H325K. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Bonnie Jones. This document was made by incorporating information from a variety of authors and organizations and is intended to be a resource. We do not claim sole ownership over any of the facts or ideas mentioned. A list of common resources can be found on the handout titled, "Resources."