



BLUBBER

By Judy Blume

Wendy is an intelligent and popular girl, but she leads her classmates in bullying Linda. The story describes the behaviour of preteen group dynamics and observes the ease with which bullying shifts targets, especially late in the story when another girl becomes the focus of harassment after standing up for Linda.



WITS LEADS Connection: Did it work?

Questions



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think "Blubber" refers to?
2. What do you think the character in the story will be bullied about?



POST-READING QUESTIONS

Dialogue

1. Dialogue is an important element of the story. What is it? What is its function? *It can help readers discover how characters think and feel by what they say and what others say about them.*
2. Some of the characters in *Blubber* use curse words in their conversations. Why? *Sometimes children use this kind of language so the author includes it to make the conversation realistic. That doesn't mean this language should be used.*

Problem Solving and Perspective Taking

1. What is the problem in the story? *Wendy, the leader of a clique, uses her power to bully others. Linda (Blubber) is the first target, followed later by Jill who is a member of the group.*
2. From whose point of view is the story told? Who is the "I"? *"I" refers to Jill. "I" is a first person pronoun; therefore, the story is told in the first person narrative.*
3. What types of bullying do Wendy and the other children use? *Both overt and covert bullying. They exclude her, humiliate her, control her words and behaviour, threaten her, trip her, put her in the cupboard and tease her.*
4. Why doesn't Linda get help?
5. Tracy's mother says to ignore bullying and to laugh it off. Does that work? Why? Why not?
6. Jill's thoughts and actions don't always match. Below are some examples from the story. Why do you think Jill's thoughts and actions are different?
 - In the book, it says Jill would never smash a carved pumpkin or steal loot from little kids; yet, she throws eggs at Mr. Machinist and puts toilet paper and silly string on Linda's house. These actions don't match her other thoughts. Why does she do it? *She rationalizes that "they deserve it."*
 - In the book, Jill has to sit in the corner because she was smiling in class. She thinks: "Damn that Blubber! It's all her fault. She's the one who made me smile with her disgusting smell." Why is Jill blaming Blubber when it was her

own actions that caused her to be punished? *She is embarrassed and feels bad that she is sitting in the corner so she blames Blubber to make herself feel better and rationalize her behaviour towards Blubber. This is called "generating alternative strategies."*

Bystander Roles

1. What role do Tracy, Jill and Caroline play in Linda's bullying? *Supporters in bullying Linda in the bathroom and classroom at lunch. Why do they play this role?*
2. What role do the boys at lunch play in Linda's bullying? *Passive observers. Sometimes they laugh. How do they contribute to the bullying?*
3. What role does Rochelle play in Linda's bullying? *Doesn't usually pay attention to the rest of the girls but sometimes looks like she's enjoying the show. Why might it be fun for her to watch someone else being bullied?*
4. What role does Jill play when she becomes the target herself? *She begins to speak up for Linda and for herself. Jill puts to action the feelings she had about Wendy: that she is a bully who needs to be confronted. She changes from a bystander who is a bully to a bystander who uses her WITS to LEAD. She acts on her feelings which helps her and others.*
5. What can bystanders do to stop bullying?
6. Do you think Wendy will stop being a bully at the end of this book?

Effective Leadership

1. Who leads the group in bullying Linda?
2. Why do people like Wendy? How does she control the other children? Why do they do what she says? Why are the children afraid of Wendy?
3. Why does Jill think the following: "I smiled not because the note was funny but because Wendy was watching me"? *Jill knew that Wendy had power as a leader and the head of many clubs. Jill wanted to belong to her group.*
4. Why did Jill say: "Everyone knows you don't cross Wendy"? *Wendy called herself Queen Wendy because she ran the social network of the class, deciding who was in and who would be the subject of ridicule, whispers, ostracism and physical violence. The price of being in was to be actively involved in the bullying.*
5. Do the teachers know what Wendy is doing? Why does the principal believe Wendy's lie about Linda saying that she was forced to eat a chocolate ant? *Because Wendy participates in class, is smart and is good at telling the teachers what they want to know.*
6. Why does Tracy stop doing what Wendy says?
7. What are the characteristics of a good leader? *Speaks out, suggests fun things to do, is fair in picking a group, works hard on group projects, is reliable and a "self-starter," etc.*
8. What are some different aspects of life where children can be leaders? *Sports, service, friendship groups, etc.*
9. Who are the leaders in your class? In your school? What are you good at?

Activities



1. DON'T LAUGH AT ME

Exercise

- Read the poem below aloud to students:

Don't Laugh At Me

Don't laugh at me, don't call me names.
Don't take your pleasure from my pain.

I'm a little boy with glasses,
the one they call the geek.
A little girl who never smiles,
'cause I've got braces on my teeth.
And I know how it feels,
to cry myself to sleep.

I'm that kid on every playground,
who's always chosen last.
A former angry bully,
trying to overcome my past.
You don't have to be my friend,
but is it too much to ask...?

Don't laugh at me, don't call me names.
Don't get your pleasure from my pain.

I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, and I'm tall...
I'm deaf, I'm blind; hey, aren't we all?

Adapted from lyrics written by Steve Seskin and Allen Shamblin

Discussion

Discuss the poem with students using the following questions:

- Why would kids feel they have a right to disregard, scorn, or hate another kid simply because the child is different in some way from themselves?
- Why would kids take pleasure in another's pain? *They feel a need to put someone down in order to feel superior; they need to humiliate someone to feel strong.*

Notes: