



BLUE CHEESE BREATH AND STINKY FEET: HOW TO DEAL WITH BULLIES

By Catherine Depino

Gus bullies Steve at school. Steve tries to manage the situation on his own but becomes increasingly anxious and upset. It takes a call home from Ms. Ruiz, Steve's teacher, and learning about "The Plan" from his parents to help Steve deal with the bullying once and for all.



WITS Connection: Seek help

Questions and Activities



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think "Blue Cheese Breath and Stinky Feet" have to do with the story?
2. Look at the picture on the cover of the book. What do you think the boys are saying to one another?



POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Gus says "You have blue cheese breath and stinky feet" to insult Steve?
2. Why doesn't Steve ask his parents for help at first? What happens when he does tell an adult?
3. Have you ever felt like Steve when he wants to tell his parents and teacher that he's being teased or bullied but feels that he can't? What was that like? How could someone being bullied break the silence and share what was happening to them?
4. On page 13, Gus threatens Steve by saying, "Give me your money or you'll be sorry." Has anyone ever threatened you like this? What would you do if this happened to you?
5. On page 15, Gus bullies Steve on the bus. After disembarking, Steve feels like a "firecracker ready to go off." The author describes that Steve's "knees were shaking" and that his "mouth tasted like [he'd] swallowed chalk." What does that mean? In plain language, how does Steve feel?
6. How does Ms. Ruiz figure out that Steve is being bullied? *She finds a note from Gus and she sees Gus trip Steve in the hall.*
7. What is "The Plan" all about? What strategies does Steve learn for how to deal with bullies? *Avoid the bully, ignore the bully, stay with friends, be strong, look up not down, use power words, make short statements instead of questions, call the bully by his name, be loud if being threatened, seek help if need be.*
8. What can you do to protect yourself from bullying? *Use your WITS.*



POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- Brainstorm how to use “The Plan” to make your classroom a better place.
- Use the [Bully Circle poster](#) to talk about the roles the other children in the class play in bullying Steve. *The other children are bystanders.* What could they have done to become Steve’s defenders instead?
- Draw a cartoon sequence to describe the story and the solution. Put what the characters are thinking and saying in thought and speech bubbles.
- In small groups, have students act out the various strategies outlined in “The Plan.” *Note: Assign groups of students randomly to prevent friendship cliques from acting out what they usually do.* Discuss which strategies the students think they could use and ask them to describe why they’re effective.
- Have students demonstrate the body language used by Steve before and after he learns about “The Plan.” *Before: head down, shoulders slumped, soft voice. After: head up, standing tall, loud, clear voice.*
- Ask the students to write their own story that involves bullying and to create a plan of how to deal with bullying.

Notes: