



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

**About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide:** This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



## Posted

John David Anderson (Author)

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Age Range: 8–12

## Book Themes

Bullying/Cyberbullying, Bias, Appearance, Acting as an Ally, Power of Words

## About the Book

Words are not just words, especially in middle school. Words can be weapons or they can be gifts. The right words can win you friends or make you enemies. Words can come back to haunt you, and sometimes they can change things forever. When cell phones are banned at Branton Middle School, Frost and his friends Deedee, Wolf, and Bench come up with a new way to communicate: leaving sticky notes for each other all around the school. It catches on, and soon all the kids in school are leaving notes—though for every kind and friendly one, there is a cruel one as well. In the middle of this, a new girl named Rose arrives at school and sits at Frost's lunch table. Rose is not like anyone else at school, and it's clear that Frost's close circle of friends isn't interested in adding another member. As the sticky-note war escalates, and the pressure to choose sides mounts, Frost soon realizes that nothing will ever be the same after this year.

## Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- What were your initial impressions of Frost and his close friends and how did those thoughts change while reading the book?
- What makes the school decide to forbid students from bringing phones to school? Do you think it was the right decision? Why or why not?
- What are “labels” and how are they discussed in the book? How do you think labels make young people feel?
- How does Bench’s winning catch at the football game impact his friendship with the rest of the “tribe?” Has something like that ever happened to you?
- Why do you think Rose chose the words “I’m sorry” for Cameron to wear all day? What impact do you think those words had on the larger school community?
- What are some of the examples in the book of name-calling, bullying and cyberbullying? Do incidences of bullying like that happen at your school? If so, what are some appropriate ways to handle it?
- What does it mean to be an “ally” when name calling, bullying and cyberbullying happen? How do different people in the book act as allies to others?
- What were your favorite parts of the book and why?
- What do you think is the overall message of the book?

## Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

### 1. Friendship, Differences and Acceptance

Remind your child about what Frost’s mother says about friendship: “You find your people and you make your tribe and you protect each other.” Talk with your child about what this means to them and whether they can relate to this sentiment. Then discuss the group of friends that Frost has and the ways in which they connect and support each other. At one point, Frost reflects on the fact that that he found a group of people who aren’t quite like other people and those differences represent “the glue that holds them together.” Talk with your child about their friendships and what the glue is that holds those friendships together. Ask your child about the extent to which they have friends who are different in some way. Stress that in the book, the “tribe” of friends doesn’t ignore their differences or let those differences prevent them from becoming good friends. Highlight that differences don’t have to get in the way of friendship and connecting with one another and in fact, can make the person and the friendship more interesting. Also talk with your child about welcoming new people into their circle of friends and getting to know the different things about them.

## 2. Roles We Play in Bias and Bullying

Talk with your child about the different ways we behave and roles we take on when we are faced with bias and bullying, using examples from the book. Those roles include:

**Aggressor:** Someone who says or does hurtful things on purpose and over and over.

**Ally:** Someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of prejudice.

**Bystander:** Someone who sees bullying or prejudice happening and does not say or do anything.

**Target:** Someone who is bullied or treated in harmful ways by a person or group of people on purpose over and over.

You can find a link to these and other elementary-age definitions [here](#). Highlight how these are behaviors—not people—and that people can change their behaviors. Explain that no one engages in just one of these behaviors and we have probably all played each of these roles at different times or in different situations. Ask your child about the times they have engaged in each of these behaviors, why they acted as they did, and how they felt in those situations. Also, emphasize that there are many different ways they can [act as an ally](#) in bias and bullying situations. Let them know that in many situations, as we saw in the book, the number of people who act as bystanders far outweighs those who engage in ally behaviors. Think together about times they have acted as a bystander. Then, help them imagine what would happen if they (and other people) were able to move from acting as bystanders to acting as allies. Ask them: *what would that look and feel like in your school?*

## 3. The Power of Words

The power and impact of words is a central theme in the book and should be something you focus on with your child as you explore the book. Explain that communication is an important part of life and when students are not allowed to use their phones to communicate in school, they turn to sticky notes to send messages to each other. Some of those notes have positive and affirming messages, and many negative, mean and bullying messages. There are several places in the book where the power of words and language are conveyed:

- how Frost liked poetry because of words and language;
- the discussion of “labels” (e.g. “kid who always gets picked last,” “kid who never brushes his hair,” etc.) and their power to confine, define and mock each other;
- how words are used verbally and on paper to tease and bully people;
- the sticky notes themselves and the power they held and; and
- names they call each other

Talk with your child about the words they use and encourage them to be thoughtful and sensitive to the power of words on themselves and others. Reflect on your own experience with this if it is relevant.

## Other Books You May Like

*Because of Mr. Terupt* by Rob Buyea, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/because-of-mr-terupt](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/because-of-mr-terupt)

*The Misfits* by James Howe, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-misfits](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-misfits)

*The Best Man* by Richard Peck, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-best-man](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-best-man)

*Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/wonder](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/wonder)

## ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on bullying and bias.

### Curriculum Resources

"Identity-Based Bullying," *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying).

"What is Weight Bias?," *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/what-is-weight-bias](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/what-is-weight-bias).

"Words That Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying," *Curriculum Connections*, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/words-that-heal-using-childrens-literature-to-address](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/words-that-heal-using-childrens-literature-to-address).

### Websites

Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying

[www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-and-bullying](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-and-bullying)

A listing of terms and definitions relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children.

Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways)

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Love Has No Labels

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/love-has-no-labels](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/love-has-no-labels)

The Ad Council's Love Has No Labels is a public service advertising campaign that encourages people to examine and challenge their own implicit bias. This page provides discussion guides for Family and Caregivers, Educators and Campuses.

National Bullying Prevention Month

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-bullying-prevention-month](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-bullying-prevention-month)

Some resources to help students be motivated and empowered to act as allies and help contribute to creating a positive "ally culture" at their schools.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html)

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

### Table Talk: What Bullying Is and Is Not

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/classroom-conversations/every-conflict-isnt-bullying](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/classroom-conversations/every-conflict-isnt-bullying)

Tips and strategies for parent and family roundtable discussion with youth about bullying/cyberbullying and how to be an ally.

### Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Bullying Awareness & Prevention, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[165\]=165&tid\[166\]=166&tid\[167\]=167&tid\[168\]=168&tid\[169\]=169](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[165]=165&tid[166]=166&tid[167]=167&tid[168]=168&tid[169]=169)