

Annotated Bibliography of Children’s Fiction on Bullying

Below is a list of suggested books grouped by grade level. Additionally, ADL’s **Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice**, an online bibliography of recommended children’s books about bias, bullying, diversity and social justice, represents the best anti-bias and multicultural literature for educators and parents of children ages 0-12. [Browse](#) a comprehensive listing on books related to Bully Prevention and Awareness.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (Preschool to Grade 1)

Arnie and the New Kid by Nancy Carlson

Philip uses a wheelchair and has the additional challenge of being new to town. This combination makes him the target of the bullying Arnie, until Arnie falls, breaks his leg, and finds himself in a similar situation. As Arnie begins to understand the challenges and capabilities of Philip, they become friends. (1990, 32 pages, Grades PreK-3, Viking Press)

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Before going to school, Chrysanthemum is proud of her name and loves the way it sounds. After being taunted by her peers at school, however, Chrysanthemum wants to change her name. When the class learns that their popular music teacher has an unusual name herself—Delphinium—Chrysanthemum feels better and the other children accept her. (1991, 32 pages, Grades K-2, William Morrow & Company)

Goggles! by Ezra Jack Keats

Archie and Peter find a pair of motorcycle goggles that the neighborhood bullies try to take from them. They use their dog, Willie, to help them outsmart the bullies. (1998, 40 pages, Grades PreK-3, Viking)

Jacob’s New Dress by Sarah Hoffman and Ian Hoffman

Jacob loves playing dress-up, when he can be anything he wants to be—a pirate, a bird, a firefighter. But he also wants to just be himself and wear his favorite thing... a dress! This heartwarming story speaks to the unique challenges faced by boys who don’t identify with traditional gender roles and promises to spark discussions of gender, identity and self-confidence. (2014, 32 pages, Grades PreK-2, Albert Whitman and Company)

King of the Playground by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Sammy, self-proclaimed “King of the Playground,” will not let Kevin play on the swings, slide, or monkey bars. Fortunately, Kevin’s father, who believes that words are stronger than fists, subtly suggests ways to respond to Sammy, and a friendship between the two boys begins. (1994, 32 pages, Grades K-2, Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing)

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi

[View the ADL Discussion Guide for this book](#)

It’s a new country, a new town and a new school for Unhei (pronounced “Yoon-hye”). So what about a new name? Having just arrived from Korea with her family, Unhei is anxious about making friends and worried that no one will be able to pronounce her name. Instead of introducing herself on the first day of school, she decides to pick a new name. The only problem is that she doesn’t know what name to choose. Her classmates try to help her by making a name jar and suggesting names, but it mysteriously disappears. This book will spark a lively discussion about names, culture, immigration and whether it’s more important to “fit in” or be yourself. (2003, 40 pages, Grades Pre K–2, Dragonfly Books)

Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell

When Molly Lou Melon starts at a new school, the class bully, Ronald, teases her for being short, having buckteeth and a voice that sounds like “a bullfrog being squeezed by a boa constrictor.” Molly remembers what her grandmother told her and she feels good about herself, which helps her overcome the bully’s taunts. (2001, 32 pages, Grades PreK-2, G.P. Putnam’s Sons)

The Recess Queen by Alexia O’Neill

Mean Jean is the playground bully. All of the children are fearful of her and nobody ever questions her leadership. When a new student, Katie Sue, comes to school, she unknowingly does all of the things that Mean Jean forbids. When Mean Jean attempts to set the record straight, Katie Sue pulls out a jump rope and asks Mean Jean to play with her. She does, and the social environment of the playground is improved for everyone. (2002, 32 pages, Grades PreK-2, Scholastic Press)

Rosie’s Story by Martine Gogoll

Unhappy because the other students in her class make fun of her red hair and freckles, Rosie writes a story about how she feels and discovers that she is not alone. (1994, 24 pages, Grades PreK-3, Mondo Publishing)

The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade by Justin Roberts

Sally notices everything—from the twenty-seven keys on the janitor’s ring to the bullying happening on the playground. One day, Sally has had enough and decides to make herself heard. And when she takes a chance and stands up to the bullying, she finds that one small girl can make a big difference. (2014, 40 pages, Grades PreK-1, Putnam Juvenile)

Yoko by Rosemary Wells

When a young girl brings her favorite lunch of sushi to school, her classmates make fun of what she eats until one classmate tries it for himself. (1998, 38 pages, Grades PreK-1, Hyperion Books)

LOWER ELEMENTARY (Grades 1–3)***Alley Oops*** by Janice Levy

Named for that “alley oops!” moment when a child experiences the empowerment that comes from doing the right thing, this story relates the aftermath of bullying from the perspective of the bully. J.J. Jax has been tormenting an overweight boy, Patrick, who is now afraid to go to school. After Mr. Jax tells J.J. a story about when he acted as a bully and how sorry he feels now, J.J. bikes over to Patrick’s house to talk things over. J.J. is surprised to discover how much he and Patrick have in common, including the sport of arm-wrestling. Trounced at the table, J.J. is impressed with Patrick’s “hammer hand” and decides to become his manager. The boys’ shared interest in arm-wrestling becomes the conduit for resolution and budding friendship. (2005, 32 pages, Grades K-3, Flashlight Press)

Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Maria Surat

Ut has just come to the United States from Vietnam, and she does not like her new American school. The children all laugh when she speaks in Vietnamese, and a red-headed boy named Raymond picks on her almost every day. Most of all, Ut misses her mother, who had to stay behind in Vietnam. But to Ut’s surprise, it is Raymond who thinks of the perfect way to help her. (1983, 35 pages, Grades K-3, Scholastic)

Benjamin and the Word by Daniel A. Olivas

While Benjamin waits for his father to pick him up from school, he doesn’t hear the screams of the kids playing dodge ball on the playground. The only thing he hears is, “a word. The word.” Earlier that day, Benjamin beat his friend James while playing handball, and James retaliated by calling Benjamin “the word.” When confronted with James’ epithet, Benjamin sets off on a poignant journey to understanding and forgiveness. This book is bilingual—English and Spanish. (2011, 32 pages, Grades K-2, Pinata Books)

My Secret Bully by Trudy Ludwig

Monica and Katie have been friends since kindergarten. Monica loves being around her when she’s nice. But there are times when Katie can be just plain mean. Monica doesn’t understand why but learns she is a target of relational aggression. She gets a little help from her mother. (2005, 32 pages, Grades 1-4 Tricycle Press)

Nobody Knew What to Do by Becky Ray McCain

In this short but powerful book, a boy tries to figure out what to do when he repeatedly witnesses a classmate being bullied. Though frightened, the boy decides to tell his teacher. When the bullies start up again, the boy and his classmates band together with the student who is being harassed until adults intervene and help. (2001, 24 pages, Grades K-3, Albert Whitman & Co.)

Oliver Button Is a Sissy by Tomie dePaola

This picture book tells the story of a boy who is teased because he likes to dance. He overcomes the bullying, not by fighting, but by continuing to do what he likes best in spite of the harassment.

1979, 48 pages, Grades K-3, Harcourt Brace & Company

Pinky and Rex and the Bully by James Howe

Pinky is worried that because he likes the color pink and his best friend is a girl, this makes him a “sissy.” After repeated taunts by Kevin, the bully, Pinky decides that maybe he shouldn’t like pink and maybe he should start going by the name Billy. With the help of his neighbor, Mrs. Morgan, he realizes it is difficult to be different. In the end he stands up to a bully and is true to himself. (1996, 40 pages, Grades K-2, Aladdin Paperbacks)

Simon’s Hook: A Story about Teases and Put Downs by Karen Gedig Burnett

Simon experiences a “bad hair day” after his sister cuts out portions of his hair to remove some chewing gum. When his friends tease him, the boy rushes home in tears. He finds consolation when his Grandmother tells him “a fish story” that illustrates the pitfalls of providing an easy target for teasing by “biting the hook.” Simon’s self-esteem returns, and he rejoins his friends and withstands their comments by following his grandmother’s advice. Burnett concludes with useful information for adults about teasing and instructions for using the book. (1999, 40 pages, Grades 1-3, G R Publishing)

Wings by Christopher Myers

Wings is the retelling of a myth that highlights the beauty and perils of being different. Ikarus Jackson is very different: he has wings and he can fly. But at school, his wings attract too much attention, and kids think he is “showing off.” One girl realizes he must be lonely and resolves to step in and stop the hurtful words coming his way. (2000, 40 pages, Grades K-3, Scholastic)

UPPER ELEMENTARY (Grades 3–6)***Amelia Takes Command*** by Marissa Moss

In this fourth title in the series, Amelia is beginning fifth grade and is the target of the class bully. Through candid notebook entries and captioned drawings, readers share Amelia’s frustration and anger at being ostracized and cheer when she gains the necessary confidence at Space Camp to stand up to her intimidator back home. The format resembles a hand-written, blue-lined composition book filled with full-color childlike drawings. (1998, 40 pages, Grades 3-5, Pleasant Company Publications)

Attack of the Killer Fishsticks (Wacky Facts Lunch Bunch No. 1) by Paul Zindel

Four friends—two girls, two boys—routinely gather in the cafeteria, keep a file of facts that are “shocking, amazing or gross,” and trade jokes. When they see that Max, a new kid, has been targeted by the class bullies (“the Nasty Blobs”), they decide to protect him, then ask him to join their group. Soon they nominate Max to run for class representative against one of the Nasty Blobs, in the process helping Max to heal his grief at his mother’s recent death. (1993, 117 pages, Grades 3-5, Skylark)

Blubber by Judy Blume

Fifth-grader Jill Brenner succumbs to the power of the most popular girl in the class and joins her in tormenting Linda Fischer, a vulnerable overweight girl who gives a report on whales and earns the name Blubber. The girls do mean things to Blubber until one day the tide turns, and Jill finds herself the outsider and the victim. (1976, 153 pages, Grades 4-6, Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers)

Bully on the Bus by Carl W. Bosch

Written in a “choose your own ending” format, the reader decides what action to take while dealing with a bully. The reader can choose from many alternatives that include ignoring, talking to an adult, confronting the bully, fighting, and reconciling. (1988, 64 pages, Grades 2-5, Parenting Press)

Confessions of a Former Bully by Trudy Ludwig

After Katie gets caught teasing a schoolmate, she’s told to meet with Mrs. Petrowski, the school counselor, so she can make right her wrong and learn to be a better friend. Bothered at first, it doesn’t take long before Katie realizes that bullying has hurt not only the people around her, but her as well. Told from the unusual point of view of the child engaging in the bullying

rather than the target, the book provides children with real life tools they can use to understand, identify and do something about bullying. (2012, 48 pages, Grades 3-6 *Dragonfly Books*)

Felita by Nicholasa Mohr

Felita faces prejudice and harassment from the kids on her street when her Puerto Rican family moves to a new neighborhood. Her supportive relatives, especially her grandmother, encourage her to take pride in her heritage and her strength. (1979, 112 pages, Grades 3-6, *Puffin*)

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes

In this classic book, Wanda Petronski wears the same faded dress to school every day, and is teased relentlessly when she claims to have a hundred silk and velvet dresses at home. The taunting forces her to leave the school, and causes Maddie to examine her role as a silent bystander during the abuse. (1974, 96 pages, Grades 2-6, *Harcourt Brace & Company*; also available in Spanish: *Bt Bound*, 1999)

Jake Drake, Bully Buster by Andrew Clements

A fourth grader looks back over his years in school and his early experiences as a “bully magnet.” He relates how, in second grade, he came up against a Super Bully who made his life miserable. When the boys were paired up to do a Thanksgiving project, Jake was forced to do all the research. Then, moments before their class presentation, Jake discovered that Link was terrified of public speaking. Although briefly tempted to take revenge, he instead agrees to let Link be a silent participant while he gives the oral presentation. (2001, 80 pages, Grades 2-4, *Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing*)

Joshua T. Bates Takes Charge by Susan Shreve

Joshua T. Bates struggles with the biggest decision of his life as he decides whether to disclose who is victimizing the new kid in fifth grade, Sean O'Malley. No stranger to bullies, Joshua repeated third grade and knows what it is like to be the target of Tommy Wilhelm and his gang. (1993, 112 pages, Grades 3-6, *Alfred A. Knopf*)

Milton's Dilemma by Patricia Gatto, John De Angelis

Milton struggles to fit in, but is teased by the school bullies. With the help of a mischievous gnome, he learns the difference between right and wrong and the consequences of his actions when he vows to take revenge. (2004, 32 pages, Grades 2-5, *Providence Publishing*)

Mr. Lincoln's Way by Patricia Polacco

Eugene “Mean Gene” Esterhause, the school bully, picks on students, gives his teachers a hard time, and uses racist slurs. Mr. Lincoln, the beloved school principal, is determined to reach the boy, and asks him to help attract birds to the new school atrium. “Mean Gene” is enthusiastic, but continues making racist remarks. As the story unfolds and a bond develops between the Caucasian student and his African-American principal, it becomes apparent that “Mean Gene” learned his hatred at home. (40 pages. 2001, 40 pages, Grades 2-4, *Philomel Books*)

My Brother Bernadette by Jacqueline Wilson

Bernard is not thrilled with the idea of going to summer camp. Early on, Bernard tangles with the bully Big Dan and earns the hated nickname Bernadette. Eventually he finds a safe haven in the clothing design class. Bernard' grandmother has taught him some basics about sewing, and he has a flair for design. Pretty soon he creates a jacket, draws an admiring crowd and lets these kids know that his name is Bernard. When Bernard designs the costumes for the end-of-camp play, he shows that brains and skillful fingers can overcome the bully' brawn. (2002, 48 pages, Grades 2-4, *Crabtree Publishing Company*)

My Secret Bully by Trudy Ludwig

Monica is bullied, not by the class thug, but by her close friend Katie. This book explores relational bullying, a phenomenon that is often ignored. In her tightly knit group of friends, Monica is the victim of Katie's hurtful words and gossip. But Monica's mother gives her advice that helps her cope successfully. (2003, 32 pages, Grades 2-5, *White Cloud Press*)

The Night the Bells Rang by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock

Mason is the victim of bully, Aden Cutler, and often takes his frustration out on his own younger brother. But an unexpected act of kindness from Aden, followed by his death in World War I, makes Mason reevaluate his treatment of his sibling and his perceptions of his tormentor. (2000, 80 pages, Grades 3-6, *Puffin*)

Nothing Wrong with a Three-Legged Dog by Graham McNamee

[View the ADL Discussion Guide for this book](#)

Keath and his best friend Lynda are in the fourth grade. Some kids call Lynda “Zebra” because her mother’s black and her father’s white. And Keath is “Whitey.” “He’s vanilla in a chocolate school” where Toothpick, a bully, has it in for him. Lynda and Keath both love dogs. Dogs don’t care about what color is the right one. Dogs don’t hate anybody. Their favorite dog is Leftovers, Lynda’s three-legged beagle. When he got hurt, his first owners gave up on him, but Lynda and Keath turn him into a winner, a pooch that shows Keath that sometimes it’s good to stand out, to be special, and that even when you look different, there are ways to fit in. (2000, 134 pages, grades 4-6, *Yearling*, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books)

Say Something by Peggy Moss

[View the ADL Discussion Guide for this book](#)

A young narrator describes different examples of bullying that she witnesses at school and on the bus, but remains silent. One day, when her friends are absent, she must sit alone in the cafeteria, and several students make jokes at her expense. In addition to feeling angry about being treated this way, the girl is frustrated with the other kids who look on sympathetically but say nothing. She is then able to empathize with other victims. The next day, she approaches a quiet girl who is often teased and finds a new friend. (2004, 32 pages, Grades 2-4, *Tilbury House Publishers*)

Shredderman by Wendelin Van Draanen

Nolan Byrd is a small but intelligent fifth grader, whose “dorky” ways earn him the nickname of “Nerd” from Bubba Bixby, a seemingly unstoppable bully who cheats, lies, steals, and terrorizes little kids. Tired of Bubba’s relentless tormenting, Nolan anonymously launches shredderman.com, an online forum that chronicles the bully’s transgressions. The name Shredderman is inspired by the compliment Nolan’s math teacher writes on a quiz, “You shred, man!” (2004, 144 pages, Grades 3-6, *Alfred A. Knopf*)

Wonder by R. J. Palacio

August (Auggie) Pullman was born with a facial deformity that has prevented him from attending a mainstream school—until now. He’s about to enter fifth grade at Beecher Prep, and if you’ve ever been the new kid, then you know how hard that can be. The thing is Auggie’s just an ordinary kid, with an extraordinary face. But can he convince his new classmates that he’s just like them, despite appearance? Using compelling character and story development, this book explores bullying, bias, difference, friendship and empathy. (2012, 320 pages, Grades 3-7, *Random House*)

MIDDLE SCHOOL (grades 6 and up)**Atticus Weaver and His Triumphant Leap From Outcast to Hero and Back Again** by Alexandra Powe Allred

A young wheel-chair bound boy—named for Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*—contemplates life in junior high and his status as an “outcast” among his peers. While the rest of the school celebrates Kevin Thurston as the “hero” quarterback, Atticus knows better. He’s a bully. Only when Kevin Thurston does something to hurt the most popular girl in school does everyone see Kevin for who he really is. But is he really guilty? There are plenty of twists and turns as Atticus turns “hero” to save his enemy from a crime he didn’t commit. (2003, 204 pages, Grades 6-10, *Perfection Learning*)

Beast by Margaret Wild

Jamie, 11, has many fears, but two rule his life. First, there is the beast. This creature, visible only to him, thrashes outside his bedroom at midnight, waiting for the moment to destroy him. His only protection is a series of superstitious rituals that he performs with increasing complexity. Simultaneously, he is terrorized by the school bully. Avoiding Brendan’s threats and mischief become an obsession as well. One night, Jamie accidentally witnesses his nemesis being abused by his father. This incident leads to a confrontation with Brendan and ultimately to a better understanding of him. Buoyed by this success, Jamie comes to realize that while magic can’t stop bad things from happening, intelligence and courage can. (1995, 112 pages, Grades 4-7, *Scholastic*)

Buddha Boy by Kathe Koja

At Rucher High, the new kid, Jinsen, is called “Buddha Boy” and considered a freak. He dresses in tie-dye shirts, shaves his head, and begs for lunch money in the cafeteria. So when Justin, the book’s narrator, has to work with Jinsen on a class project, he hopes to get it over with fast. But the discovery of Jinsen’s artistic talent leads to a friendship that changes both boys forever. (2003, 117 pages, Grades 6-10, *Farrar, Straus, and Giroux*)

Chernowitz! By Fran Arrick

Ninth grader Bobby Chernow is targeted by Emmett, a bully who displays anti-Semitic behavior and calls Bobby, “Chernowitz.” What begins with one bully soon becomes a tormenting campaign of prejudice and hatred during which Bobby’s friends turn into enemies. After a cross is burned on his front lawn and the family car is defaced with a swastika, Bobby decides it is time to fight back. (1983, 183 pages, Grades 8-11, Signet (Penguin Group))

Crash by Jerry Spinelli

“Crash” Coogan, celebrated school jock, has been bullying Penn Ward—small, poor, Quaker, and vegetarian—since the first grade. Crash begins to question his brutality, materialism, and winner-takes-all attitude when his beloved grandfather is disabled by a stroke. Crash takes a second look at Penn, finally accepts his friendship, and begins to grow into a mature and empathetic young man. This powerful story is told from the bully’s point of view. (1997, 176 pages, Grades 4-8, Alfred A. Knopf)

Geography Club by Brent Hartinger

Russell Middlebrook is convinced he is the only gay student at his high school until he stumbles across a small group of other gay students. United by their secret, they form a club intended to appear so boring that nobody in their right mind would ever join: the Geography Club. The treacherous terrain of high school dynamics and the pull to be popular undermine even their best intentions and test their values about friendship and bullying. (2003, 226 pages, Grades 7-11, HarperCollins)

Holly’s Secret by Nancy Garden

When Holly starts seventh grade in a new town, she decides to hide the fact that her parents are a lesbian couple in order to avoid the taunts and teasing of classmates. Her charade falls apart, and as she endures the barbs of some, she finds out who her real friends are. Mary, one of Holly’s classmates, demonstrates excellent ally behavior. (2000, 144 pages, Grades 4-7, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux)

The Misfits by James Howe

Skeezie, Addie, Joe and Bobby are best friends trying to survive the seventh grade in the face of all too frequent taunts based on their weight, height, intelligence, and sexual orientation/gender expression. Motivated by the inequities they see around them, the “Gang of Five” create a new political party during student council elections and run on a platform aimed at wiping out name-calling of all kinds. The Misfits explores themes including popularity and what it means to be different through characters that are not cast as victims, but as self-empowered agents of change. (2001, 274 pages, Grades 4-8, Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing)

The Revealers by Doug Wilhelm

[View the ADL Discussion Guide for this book](#)

At Parkland Middle School, three students—Elliot, Russell, and Catalina—have had enough of the bullying that plagues their daily lives. By starting an up official email forum at school, their collective statements inspire words from other kids who are equally fed up with these harmful acts. Just when the tide seems to be turning for the better, an act of revenge by a few students still bent on bullying others threatens the underground rebellion that has the whole school talking. (2003, 207 pages, Grades 5-8, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux)

The Skin I’m In by Sharon Flake

[View the ADL Discussion Guide for this book](#)

Seventh-grader Maleeka Madison is tormented by other students because of her dark skin. When Maleeka sees her new teacher, whose skin is blotched from a rare skin condition, she thinks she has finally met someone who is worse off than her. As she watches Miss Saunders refuse to accept the taunts of children, Maleeka begins to explore her response mechanisms to the cruelty of her peers. In rethinking how she defends herself, Maleeka learns that she too often judges people by their appearances. This novel explores the ways in which people’s own insecurities can affect how they are treated along with how they behave. (1998, 176 pages, Grades 8-12, Hyperion)

Stepping on the Cracks by Mary Downing Hahn

There is a war going on, World War II, and Elizabeth and Margaret have brothers fighting in Europe. On the home front these sixth-graders have their own war going on with the class bully, Gordy Smith. The girls plot to get even and during their plan they uncover an amazing secret about Gordy. Hahn raises many issues, among which are pacification, dealing with a bully, and developing self-esteem. (1992, 216 pages, Grades 5-8, HarperCollins Publishers)

Stitches by Glen Huser

Travis lives in a trailer park outside a small prairie town, where his love of sewing and desire to become a professional puppeteer make him different from his classmates. These interests make Travis a ripe target for Shon and his friends, the school thugs. As ninth grade graduation approaches and Travis and friends create a puppet production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the taunts and schoolyard ambushes escalate until Shon's anger, jealousy, and prejudice erupt in violence. (2003, 200 pages, Grades 7-10, Groundwood Books)