

TAPROOT THEATRE

TOURING COMPANY

The Case of the Missing Friends Teacher's Guide

The performance of *The Case of the Missing Friends*, along with the materials in this guide, is intended to supplement (not replace) current education and guidance on bullying and other related issues in the schools.

DISCUSSION ETIQUETTE

Due to the sensitive nature of the issues presented in *The Case of the Missing Friends*, it is very important for everyone to follow the standard ground rules for group discussion.

- ◆ Respect what others say without passing judgment.
- ◆ All things said within the group should remain confidential. Students ought to bear in mind that they should speak in general terms, as opposed to specific, when talking about personal or uncomfortable facts.
- ◆ Only those students who feel comfortable speaking should be asked to do so.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Breakdown of Main Characters

Jessie (Google) Blackstone: A new 5th grader at Hardy Elementary who loves solving mysteries and has an extraordinary memory

Pete Wimsey: 5th grader at Hardy Elementary and son of a local police detective

Jack McOboe: 5th grader at Hardy Elementary, welcoming and eager to make new friends

Mrs. Marple: 5th grade teacher, loves her class pet Ms. Sniffles

Tessa Moriarty: 5th grader at Hardy Elementary, has been friends with Jack and Pete since kindergarten

Detective Wimsey: Pete's dad who is a local police detective

Miss Irene: Elderly woman with pet dog named Rascal

Play Summary

Jessie "Google" Blackstone is new to Hardy Elementary. Google has an excellent memory, keen observation skills, and a knack for solving puzzles. She is quickly welcomed by classmates Pete and Jack. However when she uses her observation skills to deduce that her classmate Tessa is lying, Tessa is embarrassed and reluctant to let this new student into her group of friends. Meanwhile, Jack, Pete, and Google work with Pete's dad, Detective Wimsey, to solve a case of stolen jewels involving Irene, a mysterious elderly woman, and her dog Rascal. Tessa becomes jealous that her friends Jack and Peter have been spending time with Google, and she purposefully excludes her and calls her names when their teacher Mrs. Marple isn't around. Google is hesitant to say anything, but when Mrs. Marple explains the 3 R's of bullying prevention: recognize, report, refuse, she learns the power she and her friends have to stop the bullying behavior. When Tessa bullies Google again, Jack and Pete stand up for Google. Using empathy, Google points out that Tessa may have been acting the way she was because she was worried about losing her friends leading Tessa to apologize. All four realize that it is important to have friends of all different kinds just in time to work together to solve the case of the missing class rabbit, Ms. Sniffles.

***The Case of the Missing Friends* Education Goals**

Bullying Prevention:

Recognizing Reporting Refusing Supportive Bystander Skills

Forming Friendships:

Empathizing with others Care and Forgiveness Respect for self and others

Accepting Diversity:

Acceptance despite differences Sensitivity to others feelings

PRE-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

To place the students in a proper frame of mind for viewing the play, we suggest using the following discussion questions.

1. Have you ever seen someone get bullied (picked on unfairly) before? How did that make you feel?
2. Can you define bullying? What are some examples of bullying?
3. What does it mean to respect others? How can you respect someone you don't get along with, or who is different from yourself?
4. What should you do when you see someone being bullied? How do you know if the situation is safe for you to help?
5. Have you ever been picked on because you were different?
6. Do you think bullying is a problem at our school? Why or why not?

POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

All Ages:

1. What parts of the play did you like the best? Were there parts that made you think more than others? Were there things in the play that surprised you?
2. What characters did you like best, and why? What characters did you not like, and why? Of the characters, who did you most identify with?
3. What is bullying?
4. How did Tessa bully others in the play? Have you ever seen kids or adults treat each other in these ways before?
5. What should you do when you see someone getting bullied?
6. How do you make and keep friends?
7. What were Jack and Pete's responsibilities as a "bystander?"
8. What are the negative effects of bullying? For the student who is being bullied? For the student who is bullying?
9. What can we do to help stop bullying in our school?

Definitions

Bullying: Bullying is one-sided and unfair. It happens when someone who is more powerful, physically or socially, repeatedly hurts, scares, threatens or leaves out another person on purpose.

Bystander: Someone who witnesses bullying behavior.

Supportive Bystander: Someone who witnesses bullying behavior and helps the student being bullied, either by intervening in the situation or by reporting the behavior to an adult.

Tattling: Telling on someone just to get them in trouble or to get revenge.

Reporting: Telling on someone to keep you or someone else safe.

Recognize, Report, Refuse: When faced with a bullying situation, it is important to *recognize* that the behavior is a bullying behavior, *report* the behavior to a trusted adult who can help you *refuse* the behavior by staying calm and confident when asking them to stop. Recognizing, reporting, and refusing bullying focuses on safe ways to keep someone/yourself from getting hurt.

*The definitions used in this show and study guide are brought to you through our partnership with **Committee for Children**, and their **Steps to Respect** bullying prevention program. Please visit them at www.cfchildren.org for more information.*

For Teachers Only

Handling Bullying Reporting with Students

From Committee for Children's *Steps to Respect* curriculum

www.cfchildren.org

Following performances of our shows, schools often experience an increase in bullying reporting as students become aware that bullying is not acceptable and help is available. Administrators, counselors, and teachers are all seen by students as responsible adults who can help in a bullying situation.

Every school has their own process for handling bullying reporting. The following guidelines are used by permission of Committee for Children. They are taken directly from the *Steps to Respect* curriculum and are intended to supplement (not replace) existing curriculum and guidelines already used in your school.

Handling Bullying Reports

The Four-A Response Process

Because *Steps to Respect* is a schoolwide program, it is essential that all staff know how to respond to bullying reports. Following is the process adults should use when a student reports bullying.

1. **Affirm the child's feelings.**

Ideas:

- a. "You were right to report/get help from an adult."
- b. "I'm glad you asked for help with this."

2. **Ask questions.**

Ideas:

- a. "Tell me more about what happened."
- b. "Has this happened before?"
- c. "Did anyone try to help you?"
- d. "Are you telling me this to get someone in trouble or to keep someone safe?"

3. **Assess the child's safety.**

Determine what the child needs to feel safe now.

4. **Act.**

Coach the child or refer the child for coaching.

Tell the child what will happen next.

Coaching Students Involved in Bullying Situations

Steps to Respect Coaching Models

Once bullying has been reported, both the student who was bullied and the student who did the bullying must receive coaching—it is essential that no exceptions to this rule occur. *Steps to Respect* recommends that all classroom teachers be prepared to coach students. The following sections detail the models teachers should use when coaching students.

Coaching the Student Who Was Bullied

Children rarely report the bullying they experience to adults—in part because they believe that adults are unable or unlikely to stop the harassment. Adults can combat children's feelings of helplessness by (1) affirming children's actions in reporting (which demonstrates that adults will provide the needed support and consequences) and (2) checking back with students who report bullying to see whether the problem has stopped.

Steps to Respect recommends the following five-step model when coaching a child who has been bullied.

1. **Affirm the child's feelings.**
 - a. "You were right to report/get help from an adult."
2. **Ask questions.**

Get information about the current situation and the history of the situation
3. **Identify what has and has not worked in the past.**
4. **Generate solutions for the future.**

Ideas:

 - a. Discuss how the child can avoid the student who has bullied him or her. (Examples: The child could sit somewhere else, play somewhere else, or travel with a group of friends.)
 - b. Coach the student in using assertive refusal skills. (If relevant to the situation, remind the student that aggression is *never* an appropriate solution.)
 - c. Identify others (parents, teachers, friends) who can support the child
5. **Follow up.**

Ideas:

 - a. See how the plan is working.
 - b. Contact parents as appropriate.
 - c. Refer more serious or chronic cases to an administrator or counselor.

Coaching the Student Who Bullied

Your school's bullying policy should provide the necessary framework for applying consequences for student bullying. In addition to those consequences, children who bully need more targeted help addressing their problem behavior. Children are more likely to change problem behavior if adults help them select positive alternative behaviors and provide consistent feedback on their progress.

This coaching model (for use with students who bully) has five steps.

1. **Identify the problem and diffuse reporting responsibility.**

Ideas:

 - a. "I have been hearing that..."
 - b. Many students have reported that..."
2. **Ask questions and gather information.**

Ideas:

 - a. "I'd like to hear from you about what happened."
 - b. "How would you feel if this happened to you?"
3. **Apply consequences.**

Ideas:

 - a. Review the school policy regarding bullying.
4. **Generate solutions for the future.**

Ideas:

 - a. "What are some ways to prevent this happening again?"
5. **Follow up.**

Ideas:

 - a. See how the plan is working.
 - b. Contact parents as appropriate.
 - c. Refer students for further discipline as appropriate.
 - d. Refer more serious or chronic cases to an administrator or counselor.

Note: Be sure to coach the students who have been bullied separately from those who bullied them. Bullied children are often frightened, and may deny that there is any problem when face-to-face with children who have repeatedly harassed them.