

In the Center of Things

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Learning Objectives

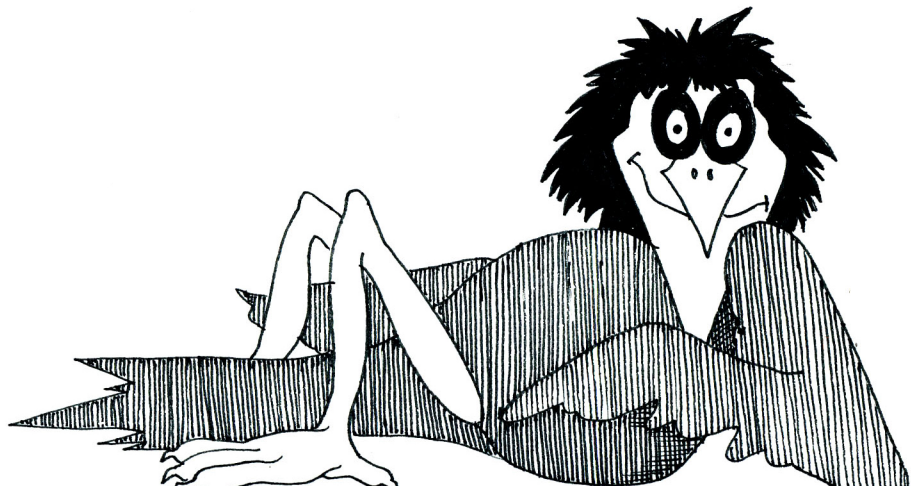
After seeing "*In The Center of Things*", the students will be able to...

- Demonstrate the child's acceptance of human differences verbally in a "Role Play" situation.
- Demonstrate three strategies for handling a bullying situation.
- Demonstrate an awareness that standing with someone being picked on may defuse the situation.
- Demonstrate an understanding that one solution to a bullying situation may be to walk away.
- Demonstrate that when all else fails, it is proper to go to an adult for help in handling the situation.



Strategies for Handling Bullies

- Make sure that the person is really a bully and doesn't just look like he or she could be a bully. Give him or her a chance.
- If someone is being mean or cruel, see if you can talk to him or her and work out the differences.
- If someone is being bossy, mean or doesn't care about your feelings, you can leave.
- If one of your friends is being picked on, help him or her if you can.
- If someone is picking on you and you have tried to make it right, find an adult to help you solve the problem.
- If the first adult you find will not listen or help, find another adult.



Writing a puppet show for Bullying Prevention

When you write a show for Bullying Prevention you can use fairy tales or Aesop's Fables or tall tales and change them to get the message across or you can write a completely original show.

- The first step is to decide on your message. With Bullying Prevention, your message can be "here are some ways to handle someone bullying you" or "let's brainstorm about how to stop a bully " or "Friends don't let Friends be picked on by bullies" or whatever you decide it should be.
- If you are going to use a fairy tale, think of one you can change to get your point across. For instance in "The Three Little Pigs", the wolf makes a perfect bad guy. He can use a different type of bullying on each of the pigs. Together the pigs can learn how to handle the situation. If you are writing an original script, you can create your own story. But KEEP IT SHORT, FUNNY, FILLED WITH ACTION AND TO THE POINT!
- Work your message through the whole story. But make sure you have humor and wit there too.

FIRST THE SCRIPT:

A puppet play is the perfect way to talk about bullying. Here are all the things you will need to write a show, make the puppets and put on the play. Here are some general thoughts to help you make your puppet show as entertaining and informative as possible:

In General:

- Good Puppetry is Good Entertainment.
- Good Entertainment is a situation that has a Beginning, Middle and End.
- Good Entertainment is fast-moving, to the point, and is only as long as it needs to be.

More Specific:

Good entertainment incorporates the 4 “W”:

Who? What? Where? and Wrong!

In the Beginning of your play you need to handle 3 of the 4 “W”:

WHO are the main characters? You should know about each character. Name? Loud or soft spoken? A know-it all or a smart guy? Young or Old? The more you know about the characters the better they will be in your play.

WHAT is the play about? This play will have an anti bullying message.

WHERE does this take place? You are going to let us know where the play (and when) the play takes place.

In the Middle of your play you will deal with the Wrong:

WRONG. What's wrong? Something is making life difficult for the main character(s). In this case, that something will have to do with someone being a bully and how to get him/her to see why they shouldn't. Only through intelligence, cleverness and humor with a few setbacks does our hero resolve the WRONG... just in time for the...

HAPPY ENDING is where whatever was wrong is fixed. Or at least there is hope it will be fixed. The end also has a KICKER. The kicker is a tag on the end that let's the audience know the play is over and everything is going to be alright.

Look through some fiction stories & identify each of the 4 “W”.

They will be there every time.

The Who, What and Where parts are the easy parts. The WRONG is the fun part... for you and your audience. And the Happy Ending is where the message comes across strongly and all live happily ever after.

When you write your own puppet plays you can use other stories and adapt them to your own ideas or you can write a completely original idea. Establish three of the four "W"s right away in the beginning-Who? What? Where? Devote the middle section of the play to the activities the puppets take to resolve the fourth "W"—the WRONG. The end comes when everything gets back to normal (happily ever after).

P.S. Remember short and sweet is the key. Be careful to avoid long winded speeches and sermons. Puppets are better at action—slapstick even!

Events & Characters

The series of EVENTS your CHARACTERS become involved in makes up your play. List them out. List out the anti-bullying message you are trying to get across. Your next job is to carry the CHARACTERS through the EVENTS in the most goofily believable way possible. Remember these are puppets you are writing for....they demand to be outrageous. Humor is a great way to get your message out there to the audience.

All actors need characterization, especially those made of fabric, fluff and stuff. In other words, CHARACTERS need to be distinctive in some way: smart, dumb, superhuman, barely human, or bloomin' human. The more you know about your puppet characters the better they will be on stage.

Each EVENT encountered by the **CHARACTERS** should be dealt with within their own distinctive framework.

**So... Sneezy always sneezes the answers, Bellowin' Billy always yells out (even when he is being sweet or tender.)
Bullyin' Bob... (well you get the picture).**

**The most important thing to remember is to have
FUN laughs, FUN giggles, FUN groans, FUN, FUN ,FUN!**

Puppets ought not to be preachy or boring or long winded. They are meant to faint and snort and fall over again and again. After all, Burt and Ernie didn't get where they are today by being Jerry the Janitor. (Ya, Jerry the Janitor, I can see it now. He is working late, on a darkened, rainy, starless eve (sound effect.. water...thunder), in the Betterworld Elementary School basement when the dreaded Chewing Spitting Creepy Spider climbs out of the furnace)

NEXT THE PUPPETS:

Now that you have your script done, it is time to find or create your puppets. One possibility is to gather puppets who will work for the characters in your play. You can check with your friends or around the school and/or library to see if anyone has a supply of puppets you can use. Make sure the puppets work well and can do whatever action you need them to do in your play.

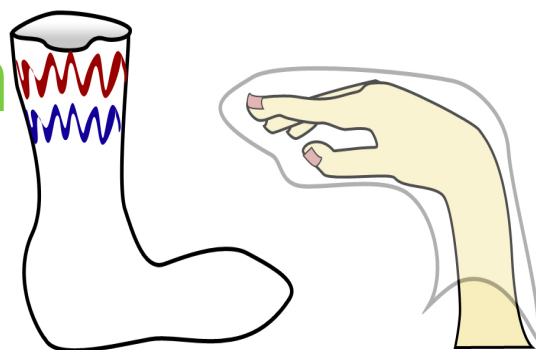
OR if you would rather—you can make your own puppets!

Sock puppets are wonderful. They can be humans or animals or aliens or monsters or rock or trees. It is up to you what your puppet will be when it is finished. Here is a simple pattern for sock puppets. Be sure to use your imagination to make your character all that he/she can be.

Sock Puppet Pattern

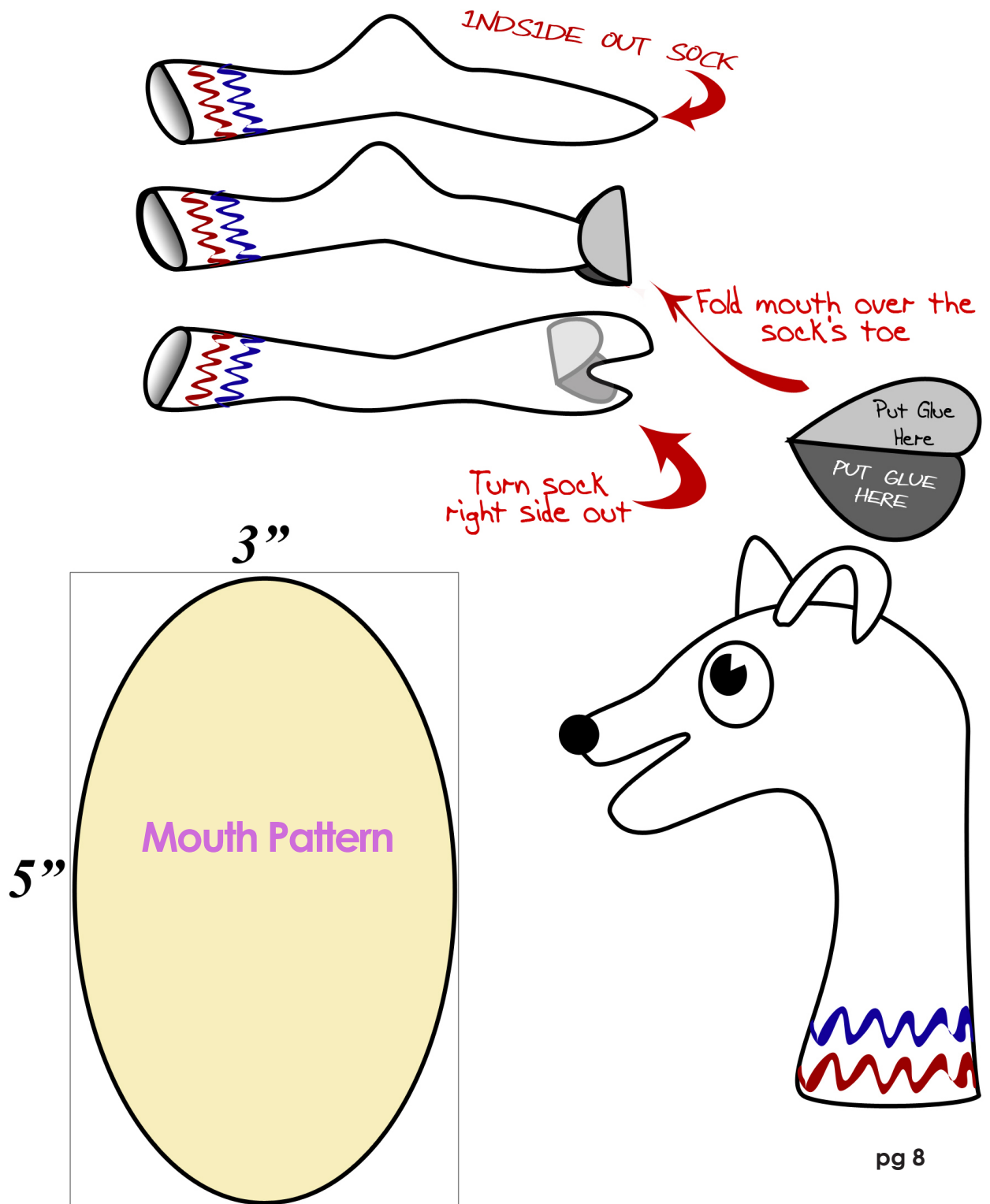
Supplies:

- A tube type sock
- Poster board or other light cardboard
- White glue
- Scissors
- Pen or Pencil
- Puppet stuff such as yarn scraps, fabric scraps, buttons, pipe cleaners, felt, pom-poms, rick rack



1. Look your sock over carefully. Decide which side you would like to be the outside. Then turn the sock inside out. (You will be working inside the puppet's head).
2. Straighten the sock out so that there are no wrinkles and the toe's stitch line is flat.
3. Cut a 3"x5" oval out of the poster board. (Milk carton works very well and is quite durable).
4. Fold the oval exactly in half.
5. Spread glue evenly over the inside of the oval.
6. Place the oval over the end of the sock, with the glue on the inside. Gently pull the edges of the toe toward the fold of the oval.
7. While you hold on to the oval (fingers on the top, thumb on the bottom), have a friend pull the sock over your arm. This will turn the puppet right side out. The folded oval inside the puppet's head is your puppet's mouth.

8. Now your puppet is ready to become someone or something. It can be a dog, a frog, a lizard, a rat, a kitty, a super hero, etc.
9. Add eyes, hair, a mustache-if you want, ears, a tongue—anything you want. But take some time before you start to decide what your puppet will be when you are finished.
10. Use craft melt glue or white craft glue to glue on the eyes, nose, etc.



THEN REHEARSAL AND STAGING

You have the script and the puppets. Now it is time to get to work. You can use anything for a stage or you don't need to have a stage at all. Check around to see if there is a puppet stage in the school. Or cover a table and duck behind it or put a pole across the door jam and cover it with a cloth or cut a "stage" out of a refrigerator box you get for the local hardware store. Just make sure it is strong enough so that it will not fall over during the show.

Once you have figured out what you will use for the stage, it is time to start rehearsing. Remember to use the stage. Do not let the puppets just stand there, have them doing something. Action is Good! You can use your puppets on either hand. Make sure they are looking with their eyes at the world around them. Make them stay alert - even if your arm is tired. Make your puppet have a voice different than your voice and every time your lips move make sure your puppet's lips move too. Practice with your puppet in front of a mirror. Watch to see if the puppet looks alive and is fun to watch. Then start rehearsing your play. Go over it and over it and over it and over it. The more you rehearse, the better the play will be.

REMEMBER--

BE OUTRAGEOUS!

HAVE FUN AND YOUR

AUDIENCE WILL TOO!

Discussion Guide

"In The Center of Things" is the story of Hedgy Hedgehog and his best friend Sally A. Wolf. Hedgy is forced into the Big Woods by the Niggle Naggles who constantly tease and pick on him. He must find his way home but not before he comes face to face with a bully caterpillar, a sly fox who wants Hedgy to do his work for him, and a nasty wind with an awful attitude. Throughout Hedgy's adventure, Sally and Growl, a friendly troll try to help Hedgy get out of the Big Woods and back home. This discussion guide and activities that follow provide a springboard for discussion in the classroom.

There are many different types of bullies in this show. Which one do you think would be the hardest to deal with? Have you ever had to deal with a situation like Hedgy does with Natilly? Sly Fox? The Wind?

1. How did Hedgy stop Natilly, the caterpillar from pick on him? Why did she think it was alright to pick on Hedgy? Was she right? Do you think you could stop a bully by talking to him or her? What could you do if someone like Natilly continued to pick on others?
2. Was Growl being a bully? Why did Hedgy think he was one? Can you think of examples of someone who looks like a bully but wasn't one? How did you find out that he or she wasn't a bully?
3. Did Sly Fox ever plan to help Hedgy? When did Hedgy figure this out? Why did Hedgy leave Sly Fox without saying goodbye? Was this the best way to handle this? How would you have handled it?
4. The Wind was nasty from the beginning. Why did Hedgy listen to it? Why didn't he just get away? Do you ever meet people who start out being mean? What do you do about it?
5. Can you think of other ways Hedgy could have handled the bullies in the Big Woods? Would it have been alright for Hedgy to have treated them like they treat him? Why or why not?
6. Why did Sally say she was babysitting Hedgy? Was she afraid that The Wind would pick on her? What happened when she decided to stand up against The Wind with Hedgy? Have you ever been afraid that someone who is mean to your friend will be mean to you too if you stand up for your friend? What would you have done if you had been Sally?
7. What are Hedgy and Sally going to do about the Niggle Naggles if they don't stop picking on them? What would you do?

Role Plays

Role plays are a great way to encourage students to practice skills that will keep them from being harassed by those who are bigger, stronger or meaner than they are. Your students can help you create situations that will help them test their skills. The students should use their imaginations for creative solutions but make sure that, even when pretending, no one's feelings are hurt.

Here are a few situations to get the group started:

1. Someone (either a student or the teacher) plays the part of a student who won't let others use the basketball hoop on the playground. Several other students will need to figure out how to fix the situation. Try several scenarios.
1. Several students will wear hats. They will create a list of reasons that everyone should wear hats. Several others will not wear hats. They will list why everyone must not wear hats. The two groups will first try to convince each other that their group is right. Then they will try to figure out a compromise.
2. Some students will act the part of the crafty character who only wants to use others to do his or her work. Several others will play people the crafty characters are trying to trick. They will need to think up several ways to show this character that his or her way is not the best way. Encourage them to use their imaginations.
3. Have several students pretend to be the Niggle Naggles. Have them pick on one student who is pretending to be the victim. Have other students be his or her friend. How would they help? Experiment with different solutions for the situation.
4. Create a situation where the victim cannot stop being picked on. Have a student play an adult. How would they handle the situation? If the victims are not satisfied with the adult's solution, have them find another adult.
5. Start a chain of events. Have one student pick on another. Then have the victim deal with the next student. Again, try out several approaches. Student I picks on Student II. Student II picks on Student III (Like a mean game of "Gossip") OR have one of the students turn it around and try to break the chain.

