The Anti-Bully Machine

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Range: Story in a familiar setting
Theme: Bullying
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Synopsis
Steve doesn't know what to do about being bullied. Telling the teacher might make things worse. Then a new boy, Neil Gregory, arrives at school. Neil has a way of dealing with bullies, but it's very frightening.

Group or guided reading

Introducing the book
- Read the title. Ask: What might an anti-bully machine do? What does it look as if it is doing in the picture?
- Read the blurb on the back cover. What does ‘the contest is wide open’ mean?
- Read ‘About the author’ on page 64. What gave the author the idea for this story?

Strategy check
- Read the first paragraph. Is this a first person or a third person account?
- Turn to page 6. What is the name of the narrator?
- Turn to page 9 and find the title of Chapter 2. What does ‘Bully for you’ usually mean? Do you think it will mean that here?
- On page 10, ask the children to find the word ‘wrestler’. What do you notice about the spelling? Can you think of other words that begin with silent letters? (write, knee, gnome etc.)

Independent reading

Focus: Explain that you want them to think about this question while reading: Do you think everyone thought the anti-bully machine was a good thing?
- Ask individuals to read aloud while the others read silently.
- If children find any new words, e.g. ‘soldering’ (page 35), remind them to try to work out the meaning from the context, then use a dictionary, if necessary.

Returning and responding to the text
- Ask the children to say whether they thought the anti-bully machine was a good idea.
- What did Steve think about it? Did his ideas change? Turn to page 43 to find out what Steve thought at first. Then turn to page 44 to find out why he wanted Neil to stop.
- Why did Neil turn the machine on to Steve? (page 45)
- Why did Steve say they couldn’t go home? Would their parents have thought that the machine was a good idea?
How did Neil explain to Meatball what the machine was for? Did Meatball believe him at first? What made him change his mind? (page 54)

What did Neil say when Steve switched off the machine? Did he understand? Why did Neil say he had made the machine? (page 56)

What had Steve found out about Neil? (page 56)

Did the anti-bully machine work? How did Steve manage when the machine’s chip had been thrown away?

What did Steve learn from Neil and his anti-bully machine? (page 60)

Speaking and listening activities

Talk about what happens in your school if children are being bullied. Does it help to tell a teacher? What would you like to happen? Does it work if you show bullies that you are not scared of them, like Steve in the story? Does it help if you tell a friend? Or your parents? Would it help to have a box where you could leave a note for teachers to read?

Give all the children time to talk about being bullied. What happened? Did the bullying stop?

Explain to the children that you want them to decide how things could be made better at your school. Encourage them to listen to each other and say whether they agree or disagree.

Arrive at some conclusions where most children agree. If it is undecided, have a vote to find out what the majority think.

Write down what you have decided. Take it to your school council or to the head teacher.

Further reading activities

Ask the children to read the first page of Chapter 7 (page 46) and rewrite it as a third person account, beginning ‘Steve didn’t know how long he was on the ground’.

Provide other stories that have a theme of bullying, e.g. Snooty Prune (TreeTops Level 12 Pack A) or Me and My Newt (TreeTops Level 12 Pack B) both by Pippa Goodhart. Find out how the bully was dealt with in each case.

Suggestions for using ICT

Ask the children to research some ideas for what to do if they are being bullied using the Internet (ensure they have access to child-friendly sites only).

As a group, make a list of rules around the issue of bullying for the classroom. Then ask the children, in pairs, to use a drawing software package to present the rules. Vote on which design has the most impact and print this out to display in the classroom.

Writing activities

Remind the children what a fable is. Talk about a well-known fable, such as ‘The Hare and the Tortoise’.

Fables have a moral, or saying, that sums up the point of the story. For ‘The Hare and the Tortoise’ the moral is ‘Slow and steady wins the race.’

Talk about the moral or point of this story, e.g. ‘Do as you would be done by’; ‘Pride goes before a fall’ or ‘Everyone gets what they deserve.’ Think of some more ways to sum up this story. Write them on the board as a reference.
• Ask the children to choose one of the morals and use it as a title for a short story or fable which involves a bully. It can involve the anti-bully machine, if children want to use that idea.
• Read the stories aloud. Check that the stories match the moral.