

Blubber

by Judy Blume

After Linda gives a report on whales, the other kids, including Jill Brenner, begin calling her "Blubber" and making her life miserable. When Jill becomes the object of similar teasing, she realizes how Linda must have felt.

THEMES

peer pressure, bullying, family, friendship

Middle Grade Unabridged Audio

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:

giggles, hiccup, stomach, genuine, curtsy, machinist, suffocate, goblins, nickels, rouge, sauerkraut, aisles, saliva, disgusting, custodian, clutched, bar mitzvah, alcohol, gruesome, hyena, symphony, acrylic, planetarium, intercom, patriotic, outfield, thermometer, lecture, agency, fountain, carnivore, consequences, hoarse, swallow, enormous, synagogue, sanctuary, reincarnation, reciting, ointment, thrashing

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:

1. Do you know someone who is always left out of things, like eating lunch with friends or having fun on the playground? Why is this person excluded? How do you think he or she feels?
2. Why do we sometimes do things when others do them, even though we don't think they're right? How can we avoid doing this? How can we speak out when our views differ from those of the group?
3. What is your definition of a friend? Of a leader?
4. Discuss tolerance and respect for those who are different. Why do people sometimes tease or bully people who look, act or sound different from themselves? How can we stand up to a bully? If one of our peers is doing something we think is wrong, or treating someone in an unfair way, how should we handle the situation?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:

1. Begin with chapters 1 - 6: What happens in Mrs. Minish's class during the reports? What does Wendy's note say? What does Wendy do when Linda gets on the bus? What is Jill and Tracy's hobby? Why has Jill always been a witch at Halloween? What does she decide to be this year? Why is she disappointed when the prizes are given? What does Mrs. Minish tell her about her math? What do Wendy and the other girls do to Linda in the girl's room? Why do Jill and Tracy want to get back at Mr. Machinist? What do she and Tracy do to him?
2. Advance to chapters 7 - 12: How does Jill's mother plan to give up smoking? What is Jill's daydream? What

happens in gym class? What does Linda ask her? Who will be taking care of Jill and Kenny while Mrs. Sandmeier is away? How does Jill feel about this? What do Wendy and the others do to Linda next? What does the letter from Mr. Machinist say? What do Jill and Tracy have to do? Who does Jill think told on them?

3. Complete the story with chapters 13 - 19: What happens at the Bar Mitzvah? Why has Great Maudie brought her own food? What is fun about Great Maudie? What makes Jill change her mind about Great Maudie? How does Tracy stand up to Wendy? How does Wendy react when Jill takes over the trial? What happens to her after that? How does she feel about the way she's treated? What happens at the bus stop? In the girl's room? How does Jill find someone to eat lunch with?

B. For Discussion:

1. Discuss with students how Wendy gets the others to do what she wants. In what ways is she a leader? How does she intimidate the others? Why do the others want to be her friend? Why doesn't anyone stand up to her?
2. Have students discuss the difference between teasing and bullying. Is Linda teased or bullied? Is she at all to blame for how she's treated? Why or why not?
3. Have students discuss Jill's behavior. Why does she go along with the way Linda is treated? What does she learn when she is bullied herself?
4. If Tracy had been in the same class with Wendy, how might she have been treated? How might she have acted when the bullying started?
5. In what ways does Jill's and Tracy's treatment of Mr. Machinist resemble Wendy's bullying of Linda? Does he get "what he deserves"? Why or why not?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

A. Language Arts:

1. Have students write about a time when they were teased or bullied or when they teased or bullied someone else. How did it make them feel?

2. Have students form groups and write a pamphlet about how to make friends, especially when you are at a new school.
3. Have students come up with ways to handle a bully. What can you do if someone teases you? Bullies you?
4. Have students listen to the chapter headings and discuss how they prepare the listener for what the chapter is going to be about.

B. Art and Music:

1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. The singing of whales might illustrate Linda's report. Taunting music might fit the scenes when they pick on Linda. Spooky music could be used for the Halloween scenes.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could divide the board into the places where the action takes place, like the girl's room, the classroom, the gym, the bus stop, Mr. Machinist's yard with his mailbox, or his backyard with piles of leaves.
3. Have students find especially beautiful stamps or pictures of stamps to show the class.
4. Have students design original costumes to wear for Halloween.

C. Social Studies:

1. Have students learn about the origin of Halloween and of trick-or-treating. Why do we celebrate Halloween? Why do we go out in costumes?
2. Bullying is a serious problem in schools today. Have students find out about bullying. Why do students bully other students?
3. Have students find *The Guinness Book of World Records* in the library and learn three facts on a subject that interests them. How are these records compiled?
4. When Jill and Tracy go trick-or-treating, they gather pennies for Unicef. Have students find out what Unicef is, how it got started, and how the money collected on Halloween helps their cause.
5. Have students hold a mock trial in class.
6. Have students find out about stamp collecting. Why do people enjoy collecting stamps? Why are some stamps worth a lot of money? Why does the post office issue special stamps for different occasions and on different subjects?

D. Science and Math:

1. Have students do reports on mammals as Jill's class does. Have them find more interesting ways to present the information.
2. Scientists are reporting that obesity is becoming a serious national problem among teens and younger children. Have students find statistics to prove or disprove this. Have them discuss why it's important for young people to eat right and exercise.
3. Tracy's teacher has them play math games. Have students find some fun math games, such as those in books by Martin Gardner, and lead the class in playing some of them. Discuss why it's easier to learn something if you make a game of it.
4. Jill's teacher insists that Jill do her math only one way. Hold a debate on this subject: *There is only one way to do math*. You might share with students some of the ideas from Marilyn Burns' book, *Math: Facing an American Phobia*.
5. Have students find out about diseases caused by smoking. What are the dangers of smoking? Since *Blubber* was written in 1974, how have attitudes toward smoking changed? Why do some people, especially teens, still take up smoking? What are the most effective ways to discourage young people from smoking?

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