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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

INCLUDES COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS

BULLY.COM

Written by

JOE LAWLOR



Chris stopped suddenly. She stuck her arm out, forcing Jun to stop, too. "Um . . . is it just me or are people staring at us?"

Jun scanned the hall. She was right. Pockets of kids stood beside their lockers and in doorways, whispering and pointing at them.

Jun studied the angle of their extended fingers. Correction: they were pointing at him!

Seventh grader Jun Li is a brilliant student, but his world turns upside down when the principal accuses him of posting pictures online that expose the eating disorder of one of his classmates. Can Jun prove his innocence?

ABOUT the Author

JOE LAWLOR (www.joelawlorbooks.com) works as a sixth grade language arts teacher. He enjoys the challenge of working with adolescents, while secretly taking notes on his target audience. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife and young son.

PRAISE FOR *Bully.com*

"The puzzle's solution is well-plotted, and author Lawlor concludes it with the classic gathering of suspects for the big reveal."

— *Kirkus Reviews*

"*Bully.com* is full of suspense with a surprise ending skillfully written to keep readers hanging on every word."

— *The New York Journal of Books*

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ Cyberbullying
- ❖ Eating Disorders
- ❖ Identity Theft
- ❖ Loyalty vs. Responsibility
- ❖ Mystery

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

In chapter 1, why is Mr. Dunne reluctant to raise Jun's grade? What could Jun have done differently in this situation to avoid the scolding he received from the teacher? What does this incident reveal about Jun's character? **(RL.1)**

What makes the task of tracking down the cyberbully particularly challenging for Jun? How does he use the internet to his advantage in his detective work? **(RL.1)**

What qualities allow Jun and Chris to operate well as a team? As friends? **(RL.3)**

In chapter 7, Chris compares Jun's unhealthy diet to Kimmie's eating disorder. Is this a fair comparison? Does Chris have a point? **(RL.3)**

Kimmie is both a bully and a victim. After learning about her family problems, do you have any sympathy for her situation, or did she get what she deserved? **(RL.3)**

What drives Jun's parents to hack into his email account? Are Mr. and Mrs. Li justified in reading through Jun's private emails? **(RL.3)**

Why does Jun decide not to tell his parents about the accusation against him? Do you agree with his decision to remain silent? **(RL.3)**

What are some of the major themes in *Bully.com*? How do you see these themes developed throughout the novel? Refer to specific details in the book to support your points. **(RL.2)**

SPEAKING AND LISTENING / WRITING

Agatha Christie, one of the most famous mystery writers of all time, once said, "Very few of us are what we seem." Pick two characters from the novel and write an essay explaining how they were different from what you initially suspected. Be sure to reference specific details from the novel in describing both your initial expectations and your final impressions of the characters. **(RL.3 / W.2)**

Start an anti-cyberbullying campaign at your school. Use print or online resources to research facts about cyberbullying. Choose facts that you find most surprising, and create anti-cyberbullying signs. Each sign should focus on one particular aspect of cyberbullying. Use large paper and colorful markers to craft your message. Finally, choose an area of the school to display your work. It should be a location where your peers are most likely to read the signs. **(W.3 / W.8)**

With a few other students, discuss the following questions: How is cyberbullying different from traditional bullying? Is one worse than the other — and if so, why? Have you ever been the victim of either? **(SL.1)**

Volunteer to go two days without using the internet, except for educational purposes. See if you can enlist others to join you. At the conclusion of the two days, have a discussion about the following questions: What activities replaced time spent on the internet? How were your social interactions different? What did you learn about yourself from this challenge? **(W.4 / SL.4)**

Imagine you are a student at Brookfield Middle School. Write a letter to Principal Hastings that mentions two key events from the novel and then discuss three practical steps that might help reduce incidents of cyberbullying in the future. **(W.3)**



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

VOCABULARY USE AND ACQUISITION

Encourage students to write down any unfamiliar words they encounter as they're reading the book. If possible, have them guess the meaning from the context. Otherwise have them use an online or print dictionary to find the meaning, and then share the words with the class. **(L.4)**

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

The novel portrays several different ways the internet and texting can be used to bully others. With a group of other students, brainstorm six ways these same tools might be used to help a friend or benefit your school community. Talk with your teacher about implementing one of these ideas. **(RL.7 / SL.1)**

What other mystery novels have you read? If possible, consider reading another book from this genre, and then think about what these novels have in common. Do they have similar plots or types of characters? **(RL.9)**

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Upon first hearing his name, many characters assume Jun is a girl. How does this gender confusion mirror the larger themes of mistaken identity in the novel? **(RL.5)**

The climax of a novel is the dramatic turning point in the story. Which scene provides the climax for *Bully.com*? Explain your choice using specific references to the story. **(RL.5)**

When Melanie Stevens learns of Kimmie's eating disorder, she tells the school guidance counselor. Can you understand each character's perspective? Why does Kimmie feel betrayed? Did Melanie do the right thing? What justification can you see for each character's reaction? **(RL.6)**