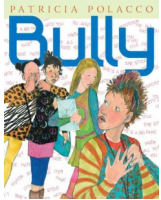


Bully

National Bullying Prevention Month



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Author and Illustrator Patricia Polacco has a knack for creating picture books for older readers. Her thoughtful, sensitive stories have addressed a range of issues including cancer, cultural differences, race relations and slavery. Her most recent book, *Bully*, takes on a topic she has written about previously in both *Thank You, Mr. Falker* and *Mr. Lincoln's Way*, but this story depicts how bullying can take place via social media, as well as through direct interactions with peers.

Bully describes how Lyla attempts to make friends and fit in at her new school. A new friend encourages her to get a cell phone, a laptop computer, and a Facebook account so that she can "stay connected with the world!" Her parents relent, and her new friend Jamie, who is a computer wiz, helps her set everything up. The cool "celebrity" girls invite Lyla to join their clique -- not for her newfound electronic communication skills, but for her tumbling and cheerleading abilities.

Lyla appreciates the attention of the celebrity girls and wants to be popular, but when she observes the girls writing mean comments on classmates' Facebook pages, she is torn, and eventually decides their acceptance isn't worth it. When they see they've been rejected, the cool girls get back at Lyla by conducting an online whisper campaign of hurtful rumors and accusations intended to smear her good reputation.

Polacco provides a reassuring "good guys win in the end" resolution, but she closes with Lyla and Jamie realizing that bullies will always be looking for someone to put down. The friends wonder whether they should return to school and hope for the best, or try to switch schools? They finally ask the reader: what would you do? It's the obvious, but exactly the right question to ask to prompt discussion about bullying and how best to handle it. This story also offers opportunity to discuss responsible use of computers and social media.

Recommended for ages 8 and up, *Bully* is a timely story for National Bullying Prevention Month in October, and an important story to share anytime. For additional resources about bullying prevention, see:

- [PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center: October is National Bullying Prevention Month](#)
- [NEA's Bully Free: It Starts with Me](#)
- Stopybullying.gov

Posted by Lisa C. on October 23, 2012

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