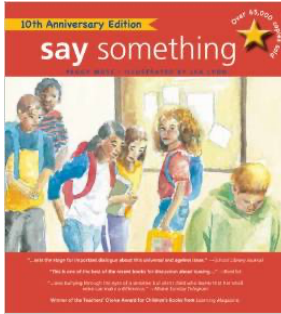


Discussion Guide for Grades 2–4

Say Something

Summary



A young narrator describes different examples of bullying that she witnesses at school and on the bus, but remains silent. One day, when her friends are absent, she must sit alone in the cafeteria, and several students make jokes at her expense. In addition to feeling angry about being treated this way, the girl is frustrated with the other students who look on sympathetically but say nothing. She is then able to empathize with other victims. The next day, she approaches a quiet girl who is often teased and finds a new friend. Resources at the end of the book help parents and teachers to talk with children about teasing and bullying, and find ways to stop it at school.

Say Something © 2004 by Margaret Paula Moss, Illustrated by Lea Lyon
2013, 32 pages, Grades 2–4, Tilbury House Publishers

Requirements

➔ [Say Something](#)

Questions for Discussion and Writing

After reading *Say Something*, use the questions below for small or large group discussion, or to guide reflective writing.

- At the beginning of the book, the storyteller talks about students in her school who get “picked on all the time.” Why do you think these students get picked on? How do you think they feel?
- How does the storyteller feel about this situation? What does she do?
- Are there students in your school who get picked on often (no names, please)? Why do you think some people pick on them?
- How does it make you feel when others get teased or bullied? What do you do when this happens?
- How did the storyteller feel when the other students taunted her?
- When the other kids laugh at her, the storyteller wishes she could disappear. Have you ever felt like “disappearing”? What happened to make you feel that way?
- How does the storyteller feel when the kids at the next table just watch her getting teased, and she can tell they feel sorry for her?
- The storyteller’s brother says that the kids at the next table “didn’t do anything.” Do you agree? Should those students have gotten involved in some way?
- Have you ever watched another student get teased or bullied? Did you get involved in some way? What are some safe and helpful ways you could have gotten involved?
- At the end of the story, why does the storyteller sit next to the girl who “always sits alone”? How does this make both girls feel?
- What does it mean to be an ally to someone else? Are there things that you can do to be an ally to someone who is picked on or bullied at your school?

Suggestions from the Author for Teachers and [Students](#)

Part I: For Teachers

Before reading the book to the class:

1. Preview the book. Know how the story goes and be prepared for a discussion with the kids afterwards.
2. Sometimes kids want to know more about the two girls after the story is over. It's okay to spend a little time speculating about that, but ultimately it's important to lead the kids into a discussion of their own experiences with the book's big issue—teasing in school and how to stop it.
3. It's a good idea to let the group know about me, Peggy Moss. Kids are interested to learn that my job has been to work with kids and teachers to stop bullying in schools so kids can feel safe and they can learn. I have also worked as a civil rights prosecutor.

After reading the story aloud, lead a discussion:

4. Begin the discussion by asking a “brainstorming” question: Ask “Do kids in our school get teased or picked on?” Make it clear that you aren't interested in finger-pointing—“I don't want you to tell me any names.” Brainstorm with the kids about the types of things that kids get teased about. For example, ask if kids get teased because of what they wear, their body size (tall/fat/short, etc.), how they smell, how much or how little money they have.
5. Then ask, “How do you think it feels to get teased?” Have the kids be specific. “Do you feel sick to your stomach?” “Like running and hiding?” Really build a group consensus about how bad bullying feels.
6. Ask the group, “Do you think you can focus on learning at school if you are being teased?”
7. Ask, “What can you do or say to stop teasing when you see teasing or bullying behavior.” As closure you may want to say the following:

One of the most important things that experts have discovered is that it is kids who are the BEST people to get teasing to stop! It's not your teachers or a parent, it's you and your friends who can make a difference.

Kids bully because they think it is cool, but if you or your friends tell them otherwise, then you take away their power. You can make bullying uncool.

Never be afraid to ask an adult for help. That's why we are here.

Source: “For Teachers-Some Tips from Peggy Moss.” Reprinted with permission from the [Tilbury House website](#).

Part II: For Students

Now that you have read *Say Something*, take a few minutes to think about your school, and answer these questions. Keep in mind that it can be an emotionally challenging conversation because some students may be actively engaged in bullying situations (either as a target or aggressor) and could be triggered by the conversation. Be mindful of what's going on in your classroom around bullying as you decide which of these questions to ask:

1. **Do kids at your school get teased? If “Yes,”** think about how. In most schools, students are teased about being “different”—which means almost everyone gets teased at one time or another. We get picked on because of the shape of our bodies, the color of our skin, our clothes, our grades, our gender, or our religion. **If “No,”** think about the question differently. Do some kids get left out? Do they sit alone at the lunch table every day? Do they spend their outside time alone? Are they picked last for every school game or not included at all? If there are students in our school (and in most schools there are) that have days like this, consider answering “yes,” and look at the discussion above.
2. **What do kids get teased about at your school?** Kids get teased for all kinds of reasons. What do kids in your school get teased about? If you really think about it, some of the answers might be longer than you'd expect. Here's what we've heard:

Kids get teased because they need extra help in class. Kids get teased because they are smart, work hard, or get good grades or special praise from the teacher. Kids get teased because they don't wear the right clothes because they are old or worn or dirty or too new or clean. Kids get teased because of the way they smell, how much money they have, where they live, the color of their skin, if they have an accent, the way they walk, or because they can't walk or see or hear as well as other kids.

3. **How do you think it feels?** How do you think teasing makes kids feel? Really think about this one, because some of the answers might surprise you. If you don't know how it feels to be teased, ask someone who knows. I did. Here's what I found out:

I got teased in the back of the classroom for months because of my religion. Nobody did anything about it, so the kids who teased me started to push me around outside. Then one afternoon, one of the kids threatened to kill me. I never felt safe at school after that.

Kids saw where I lived when I got on the bus. Two boys on my bus made fun of my house and my clothes and called me names. I decided to walk to school every day, even though it took a really long time. I was late almost every day.

I cried. Okay? I cried every single day after I got home from school. But if you asked me then, I would have said, 'Teasing doesn't bother me. I can handle it.' That's what I would have told you.

I think about it all the time. I sit in math class thinking about how I am going to get to science class without getting teased or pushed into a locker. I can't concentrate on school.

4. **Do you think YOU could make a big difference for kids in your school?** Here are three things you could do to help make sure every student at our school feels safe.

- Tell a teacher, the principal, or another trusted adult. Particularly when teasing gets aggressive, it's important for you to let someone know, before anyone gets hurt.
- Say something to the person who is getting teased. Students in schools where there has been violence say that if you want your school to feel safer, "you should sit with the kid who sits alone at lunch." Teasing and bullying are cowardly acts-committed by kids who want peer approval-YOUR approval. They don't get it. They bolt.

I'm shy, and if a kid is bigger than I am, I won't say anything to the bully. But I've walked up to kids who are getting teased and said, 'Hey, you want to come to lunch with me?' The bully usually just walks away.

I saw a kid getting teased in the hall. I said, 'Hey, how you doing?' and the two of us walked away together. That's all. He said, 'Thanks.' We're not best friends, but I'm pretty sure he'd stick up for me if he saw me getting teased.

- Say something to the person who is bullying. But don't put yourself in harm's way. In the halls, on the playground, in the cafeteria, often just a quick word or two will make the teasing or the mean-spirited joke stop. "I don't want to hear about it... Knock it off... Cut it out... That's so 10 minutes ago..." Each of us has our own way of saying: I don't want that talk in my school. You are the only person who can make it stop. Me? I say, "Oh, nice one." Or, "Yeah, that's cool." Or, "Grow up." Usually whoever is teasing stops.

5. **Are those things easy to do, or hard? Why?**

It's hard because I might get teased, too.

I don't want to be a goody-goody.

I'm scared-I might get hurt.

I don't think they mean anything by it.

6. **Even if it's hard, give one reason why you should say something anyway?**

- Because you'll almost certainly save a day, and you might save a life.** Almost every act of hate violence that takes place at a school starts with words. Before a student is physically hurt, he or she endures months of name-calling and teasing. When no one steps up to stop the teasing, the bullies get bolder, sometimes with disastrous results.

- **Because you can make teasing UN-Cool.** Most bullies tease because they want peer approval. They want YOU to think, “That’s so funny... He's such a hot-shot... She’s so tough...” But teasing isn’t cool. It's low. You know that. If nobody laughs, the joke is over.
- **Because teasing will happen to you.** Because it happens to all of us. You're going to want someone to speak up for you. So show them how it's done.

Source: “Teachers Take Note-Our Suggestions for Your Students.” Reprinted with permission from the [Tilbury House website](#).

Extension Activities

See the extension activities that follow for ideas on ways to increase awareness about bullying and encourage ally behavior using *Say Something*.

Say Something Extension Activities

Follow up your reading of *Say Something* with one or more of the extension activities below, which can help to increase awareness about bullying and encourage ally behavior.

“Say Something” Campaign

After reading the story, introduce the idea of a class or school-wide campaign to “Say Something” when teasing or bullying occurs. Work with students to identify interventions and strategies that are helpful and appropriate (view examples of [Constructive Responses to Bullying](#)). Next divide students into small groups and challenge them to come up with a slogan and logo or graphic for the campaign. Allow each group to present its ideas, and then help the class to settle on a final concept. Allow students to create posters and decorate the classroom with the final slogan and graphic. Hold follow-up discussions at least once each week where students can share instances of teasing or bullying that they may have encountered and how it was handled. Read additional [stories and literature](#) that reinforce positive ways of responding to and intervening in bullying situations. If there are opportunities to take the campaign school-wide, publicize it at a school assembly and through the school newsletter or website. Work with colleagues to implement the campaign in their classrooms, and train responsible students to read stories and lead discussions with their peers in younger grades.

One Person, Many Roles

Help students to explore the roles that they have played in the past when teasing or bullying has occurred. Distribute the worksheet, [One Person, Many Roles](#), to each student and ask them to spend 5–10 minutes filling in each square (with words or pictures). Tell students that you will not be collecting the worksheets or asking them to show it to others, and encourage them to be completely honest. When students have finished, introduce the vocabulary that corresponds with each square (A-target; B-aggressor; C-bystander; D-ally). Ask for volunteers who would like to share one of their squares with the class. Ask each volunteer why s/he chose that particular square, how it felt to be in that role, and what was positive or negative about the way s/he responded in that particular situation. Help the class to see patterns in the way different students have behaved when teasing or bullying occurs. Highlight constructive responses to bullying that come up, and reinforce the importance of being a friend and ally to peers who are the targets of bullying.

Acting as an Ally

Help students to explore safe and realistic ways in which they can act as an ally to peers who are the targets of name-calling and bullying. Read the scenario, [The New Girl](#), to the class and ask students how the story makes them feel. Introduce the term ally and ask students to define it (someone who helps, supports, or speaks out on behalf of someone else). Ask if anyone in the story acted as an ally to Jane. Label a sheet of chart paper, “Acting as an Ally,” and divide it into two columns titled “Risks” and “Benefits.” Ask what risks Stephanie took when she spoke out in defense of Jane (e.g., losing friends, being teased herself). List students’ ideas about the risks of acting as an ally. Ask students what benefits may have come from Stephanie’s behavior (e.g., the teasing stopped, Jane felt supported, Stephanie felt proud, both girls made a new friend). List students’ ideas about the benefits of acting as an ally. Tell students that although there are risks involved in acting as an ally, there are always safe ways that we can help others. Ask students to suggest high-risk and low-risk ways that students in the story might have acted as an ally to Jane. Divide the class into groups of four and provide each with the [Pyramid of Alliance](#). Instruct each group to brainstorm low, moderate, and high levels of alliance. Allow each group to share their ideas and hang the pyramids on a bulletin board. Reinforce the importance of finding ways—small or large—to act as an ally to others when name-calling or bullying occurs.

One Person/Many Roles Worksheet

(Bullying version)

<p>BOX A: TARGET</p> <p>Describe a time when someone's words or actions hurt you.</p>	<p>BOX B: AGGRESSOR</p> <p>Describe a time when your words or actions hurt someone.</p>
<p>BOX C: BYSTANDER</p> <p>Describe a time when you saw teasing or bullying take place and you did not help. Why do you think you didn't help?</p>	<p>BOX D: ALLY</p> <p>Describe a time when you helped someone who was being teased or bullied.</p>

The New Girl

Jane was new to the school; her family had only recently moved into the area. Because Jane and her family moved a lot, she was used to starting over in new places, but even so it was always hard to meet new friends and get used to new teachers. It was also difficult for Jane to keep up with her studies because she had to care for her brothers and sisters when she came home from school while her parents worked.

As Mr. Borden introduced Jane to the class, some students in the back of the room began to giggle. One student whispered loud enough for others to hear, "Look at that outfit! Does this girl get her clothes from charity, or what?" Others joined in the laughter. Jane knew the laughter because she had heard it many times before. She knew the kids laughed at her clothes because they weren't the latest style, and when they found out that her parents were farm workers, she would be nicknamed "lettuce picker." It had all happened before. Mr. Borden paused for a moment while the giggling stopped and then continued by saying, "Let's all make Jane feel welcome."

As the day continued, Jane felt anything but welcomed. There was a group of girls who giggled every time they looked her way, and when it was time to divide into small groups to work on an assignment, no one in the group even talked to her; in fact, everyone acted as if she was invisible. When lunchtime came, everyone began running to the cafeteria. A few of the girls who had been laughing at Jane all morning, brushed by her and one of them said, as if to no one in particular, "Hope she knows there's no free lunch program at this school." This seemed to be the funniest thing the other girls had ever heard, but as they laughed and continued walking, one of the girls, named Stephanie said, "C'mon, leave her alone, she hasn't done anything to us."

Pyramid of Alliance

(Ally Version)

