



Literature & Character Education

A Different Kind of Hero

by Ann R. Blakeslee

Teacher Resource Guide

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Grades 6 – 8

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UNIT OVERVIEW

A DIFFERENT KIND OF HERO

The Teacher Resource Guide for *A Different Kind of Hero* incorporates the following literacy skills and character development concepts.

Theme	Conflict Resolution
Central Question	What are different ways we can stand up for other people?
Character Development Activities	Different Ways to Take a Stand ABC Problem Solving Method Conflict Escalator In the Characters' Shoes
Reading Comprehension Strategies	Predict Infer Use Multiple Strategies
Reading & Critical Thinking Skills	Draw Conclusions Problem & Solution Cause & Effect Compare & Contrast Synthesis Character, Setting, Plot Points of View Evaluate Author's Style Main Idea
Writing	Literature Response Journal Expository Writing Final Writing Project Narrative Prompt: Story Expository Prompt: Essay Descriptive Prompt: Character Sketch Persuasive Prompt: Letter
Vocabulary & Literary Analysis	Word Log Antonyms
Oral Language, Listening, & Fluency	Teacher Sharing Partner Sharing Role Play Readers' Theater Character Interview Peer Response Oral Presentation

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ABOUT VOICES LITERATURE & CHARACTER EDUCATION

The Voices Approach

Voices Literature & Character Education encourages young people to develop their own voice. These innovative materials feature award-winning multicultural literature and comprehensive Teacher Resource Guides that integrate character education, violence prevention, social and emotional learning, literacy, and writing.

Voices & Literacy

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension instruction is organized around eight strategies and fifteen skills. The National Reading Panel reports significant improvement in comprehension when students (1) receive explicit instruction in the use of specific reading strategies, and (2) are able to flexibly use multiple strategies as they read. Each guide focuses on two reading comprehension strategies, and students also are instructed in the use of multiple strategies. Reading and critical thinking skills are labeled throughout the guide at the point of use.

In each guide, students learn, practice, and apply two reading comprehension strategies that help deepen their understanding of the text. The instructional plan leads to the gradual transfer of responsibility from teacher to student through these steps:

Explain The teacher explains to students what the strategy is, when to use it, and why it helps with comprehension.

Model The teacher demonstrates how to use the strategy by thinking aloud as he/she reads a portion of the text. This is particularly effective as a tool to show students how a reader uses more than one strategy to understand a difficult part of the text.

Practice The teacher provides guided practice with students, giving feedback and support as needed. Later, students practice the strategy in pairs and small groups.

Apply Students use the new strategy as they read a new piece of text—from a textbook, a different genre, or a more difficult text.

Writing

Students use a writing process that includes prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing or presenting. Writing activities encourage students to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas across a range of writing genres and to demonstrate their understanding of the Central Question, the book, and the issues the book raises. Expository, narrative, persuasive, and descriptive prompts are included in each guide.

Vocabulary & Literary Analysis

Students expand their vocabulary by relating vocabulary words to the mood, plot, characters, and setting of the story, and by tracking unfamiliar words they encounter during reading in a Word Log. Students learn a variety of word-solving strategies to help them analyze and unlock unfamiliar words. Each guide also features vocabulary words that give students a common language for discussing the thematic social development concepts they encounter in the book.

Oral Language, Listening, & Fluency

Oral language development, or oral literacy, involves fluency in speaking and listening, and both are related to improved text comprehension. Through activities such as partner sharing, paired reading, readers' theater, oral presentation, and others, students deepen their understanding of themselves, of others, and of the text.

Voices & Character Development

Six thematic concepts are embedded in *Voices Literature & Character Education* to help students develop self-understanding, enhance their social and emotional learning, and strengthen their understanding of democracy.

Identity Awareness Students explore who they are and how to integrate the various parts of their lives into a healthy self-concept.

Perspective Taking Students learn to express their own points of view and to take the perspectives of their peers and the characters from the literature they read.

Conflict Resolution Building on Perspective Taking, students learn ways to resolve conflicts with their peers and in society.

Social Awareness Students develop their awareness of social realities and injustices in their world.

Love & Friendship Students gain insight into the nature of their relationships with friends, family members, and neighbors.

Freedom & Democracy Students reflect and act upon their social responsibilities in a democratic society.

The Voices Instructional Plan

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Each *Voices Literature & Character Education* Teacher Resource Guide is organized around a Central Question related to the theme of the book. The following sections help develop the Central Question as they promote literacy skills and social and emotional learning.

To Connect Prereading activities introduce students to the Central Question, provide students with the social and historical context of the story, and give students the opportunity to connect their own personal experiences to the issues raised in the book.

To Read This section supports reading comprehension by introducing and revisiting the two comprehension strategies that students practice throughout reading. Students track unfamiliar words that they encounter during reading in individual Word Logs.

To Discuss Open-ended Critical Thinking Questions spark whole-class discussions that deepen students' comprehension and broaden their perspectives about social issues addressed in the text.

To Practice Individual, partner, and group activities, such as role plays, debates, and interviews, allow students to practice social skills related to the Central Question and the text.

To Express Through a variety of writing activities, students appreciate the author's style and develop their own writing skills. A final writing project enables students to express their understanding of the book and of the Central Question.

To Participate Students use their social skills as they participate in a community service learning project.

Additional teaching resources are available in the appendices of each guide. These include:

Appendix 1: Reproducibles Additional support for literacy and character development activities

Appendix 2: Additional Resources An annotated bibliography of teacher and student materials related to the book

Appendix 3: Assessment Optional multiple choice and essay tests and a theme-related observational checklist

ABOUT THE BOOK

Story Summary

A twelve-year-old Irish boy named Renny Sholto confronts a problem in Miner’s Chance, a gold-mining town in 1881 Colorado. His father wants Renny to grow up to be a “tough guy” like him. But Renny thinks with his heart, not his fists. When a Chinese immigrant named Wong Gum Zi moves to Miner’s Chance and is faced with hostility and discrimination, Renny befriends him. By standing up for Zi and his family, Renny shows that he is tough and courageous in ways that are different from his father. He is a different kind of hero.

About the Author

Ann R. Blakeslee was born in Alexandria, Virginia, while her father’s company was building the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. She is a graduate of Rockford College in Illinois, and holds a master’s degree in English literature from Mount Holyoke College. She is the author of two other books, *After the Fortune Cookies* and *Summer Battles*.

Literary Analysis

Genre *A Different Kind of Hero* is a novel of historical fiction set in late nineteenth-century Colorado.

Themes in *A Different Kind of Hero* include learning different ways to take a stand; understanding the bystander effect; friendship; courage; Chinese immigration in the nineteenth century; and identifying and solving conflicts.

Point of View *A Different Kind of Hero* is told in the first person.

Author’s Style *A Different Kind of Hero* is a dramatic narrative describing a series of events occurring over several weeks in the western mining town of Miner’s Chance, Colorado, in 1881. The author juxtaposes the actions of the protagonist with those of his tough-guy father to show that there is more than one way to be courageous and to stand up for what you believe.

Awards & Honors

UNESCO Prize for Children’s and Young People’s Literature in the Service of Tolerance

Context of the Story


Development of the American West in the Nineteenth Century

Westward Expansion During the nineteenth century, American pioneers were lured westward by the abundance of land and the possibility of making a better life for themselves and their children. Fur traders, cattle ranchers, farmers, and miners led the western migration, with merchants and other businesspeople following. Western migration was encouraged by the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862 by the U.S. Congress, which gave 160 acres of free land to any person who had lived on the land and improved it for five years. The possibilities opened by western development proved extremely enticing to recent immigrants such as the Sholto family in *A Different Kind of Hero*. Lon Sholto, an Irish immigrant, works in the mines while his wife makes extra money by selling homespun lace. At that time, the Irish faced considerable prejudice and discrimination in eastern seaboard cities such as Boston and New York.

The Gold Rush Many pioneers and industrialists were attracted to the West by the prospect of finding gold. The greatest gold rush in United States history began with the discovery of gold by James Marshall in January 1848 in territory that later became California. Similar gold rushes soon followed in other parts of the West. The discovery of gold in 1858 set off the Pikes Peak gold rush. The influx of prospectors and other pioneers into that territory, which later became Colorado, led to the formation of towns and a large-scale mining industry. *A Different Kind of Hero* is set in a fictionalized version of one of these mining towns, depicted as it might have been in 1881.

While the common perception is that miners either struck it rich or perished in poverty, the fact is that most miners stayed in the West for two or three years and then returned East. In the case of Chinese immigrants, for whom return was more arduous, many settled in San Francisco and Sacramento and created “Chinatowns,” earning their living by operating dry goods stores, restaurants, and laundries.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 Chinese immigrants originally came to the American West beginning in the 1820s to work on farms and later on the transcontinental railroad and in mines. The Chinese were viewed favorably by employers as industrious workers who would toil diligently for low wages. This view was not



shared by white workers from the eastern seaboard, many of whom were recent immigrants themselves. These European immigrants viewed the Chinese as a threat to “free labor” (because of their willingness to work for low wages) and they often—as demonstrated in *A Different Kind of Hero*—used physical violence as a means to discourage Chinese settlement. The antagonism toward the Chinese did not stem only from the threat they posed to white wages. Chinese immigrants faced racial prejudice similar to that faced by free blacks.

The California legislature passed a number of laws with the stated purpose of discouraging Chinese immigration to California. In 1882, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred all Chinese from immigrating to the United States for ten years. This act was renewed for ten more years in 1892 and then renewed indefinitely in 1902. The first relaxation of this ban did not occur until 1943, when the United States granted China a quota of 100 immigrants per year. Later, the Immigration Act of 1965 radically changed the ethnic mix of immigrants and refugees to the United States by removing national quotas entirely. This act, more than any other, opened new opportunities for immigration from China and other Asian countries. Today, the Chinese population in the United States is the largest in the world outside of China.

ABOUT THE TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Overview

This guide divides *A Different Kind of Hero* into four readings. In the first, the teacher introduces the Central Question. Subsequent readings explore different ways of taking a stand, the ramifications of failing to take a stand, and the ways in which stereotypes and cultural differences can foment conflict. Students also have the opportunity to construct and learn how to use an abacus.

Central Question

*What are different ways we can
stand up for other people?*

Character Development Concept

Conflict Resolution involves identifying conflicts and applying a variety of strategies to resolve them. In *A Different Kind of Hero*, students investigate different ways to solve conflicts and strategize solutions for real-life conflicts that they face. In a variety of classroom exercises, students discuss and practice different ways to take a stand in difficult situations or in the face of opposition.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

This guide focuses on two reading strategies and models the use of multiple strategies. The following strategies are featured in the *A Different Kind of Hero* Teacher Resource Guide.

Predict The reader uses prior knowledge along with information from the text to make and confirm or change predictions before and during reading. Making predictions helps the reader set a purpose for reading.

Infer The reader synthesizes new ideas and information from the text to draw logical conclusions, form one's own opinions, evaluate and make decisions and judgments, and create new understandings. Inferring requires the reader to go beyond the literal meaning of the text.

Reading & Critical Thinking Skills

The following skills are embedded in reading, writing, and discussion activities throughout the guide: Draw Conclusions; Problem & Solution; Cause & Effect; Compare & Contrast; Synthesis; Character, Setting, Plot; Points of View; Evaluate; Author's Style; and Main Idea.

Writing

Students engage in writing activities in a variety of genres, including Literature Response Journal options. In a final writing project, students write a personal narrative about a time they stood up for someone, a time they saw another person stand up for someone, or a time another person stood up for them. This guide also includes alternative writing prompts for descriptive, expository, and persuasive writing.

Vocabulary & Literary Analysis

A variety of activities encourage both vocabulary development and vocabulary enrichment. Students keep a Word Log in which they record vocabulary words and other unfamiliar words they encounter, and they engage in literary analysis to analyze the author's style. Students work with vocabulary in relation to the mood, plot, characters, and setting of the story.

Oral Language, Listening, & Fluency

Students have numerous opportunities to develop their oral language, listening, and fluency skills through partner sharing, readers' theater, character interviews, and more.

Unit Planner for *A Different Kind of Hero*

Use this four-week planning guide to develop your own teaching schedule for *A Different Kind of Hero*. Your plan will depend on

- the length of the class period or literacy block,
- the activities you select, and
- whether students complete reading, writing, and other assignments in class or as homework.

Unit Planner

Time Frame	Readings
Week 1	Reading 1, Pages 9–37
Week 2	Reading 2, Pages 38–69
Week 3	Reading 3, Pages 70–103
Week 4	Reading 4, Pages 104–143

Teaching Focus

In this reading, students are introduced to the Central Question, discuss conflicts and stereotypes, and learn the ABC Problem Solving Method.

READING 1

Trouble! *(Chapters 1–3; pp. 9–37)*

Overview

Twelve-year-old Renny Sholto's Irish immigrant, coal-mining father thinks that Renny is too softhearted to make it in the world, and he feels his son needs to toughen up. One day, a Chinese boy named Wong Gum Zi is brought to school. Zi's father is a servant for Mrs. Maynard, a wealthy widow who recently bought the Rejoice Mine. Most of the men in Miner's Chance work either at the Rejoice Mine or at the Kitkat Mine, operated by Mr. Paunce, whose children also attend school with Renny. Miss Steele, the school's teacher, reluctantly admits Zi to her classroom, and Renny agrees to let Zi sit with him. After school, Zi is beaten up by an older boy named Finn Brodie. When Renny sticks up for Zi, all of the other boys turn against him. Mrs. Maynard thanks Renny for his kindness and asks him to befriend Zi. Although he is uncertain about making such an unpopular move, Renny tells the widow that he will try.

TO CONNECT

Central Question

What are different ways we can stand up for other people?

Ask students what they think it means to stand up for other people. Then ask them to name historical figures they know of who have stood up for other people or for causes. What was the conflict in the situation? What or who did the person stand up for? What was the result? Did the person's standing up resolve the conflict or change it? Explain that standing up for people often involves big social issues that affect a lot of people; however, standing up for someone can be less dramatic or attention-grabbing but just as important. Emphasize that there are a number of ways to stand up for people in our everyday lives. For example, you can stand up for a neglected neighborhood pet by feeding it, you can stand up for someone who is often excluded by inviting him or her to join a game, or you can stand up for a sibling or friend who's being bullied on the bus or at school.

Teacher Sharing

Tell the class about a time you stood up for another person or saw someone else stand up for another person. Or, relate an instance in which someone stood up for you. What was the situation or conflict? What did you (or someone else) do? What was the outcome? After you tell your story, ask students how the situation would have been different if you (or someone else) hadn't acted, and what the results of your actions were.

Partner Sharing

Have partners share stories about a time they stood up for someone or witnessed someone else standing up on another person's behalf. Encourage students to think of instances from their own lives and experiences. Invite volunteers to share their stories with the class.

Character Development Vocabulary: Prejudice & Discrimination

Write the word *prejudice* on the board and ask students what it means. Tell students that the word *prejudice* derives from the Latin word *praejudicium*, meaning “judging in advance.” In other words, a prejudice is a prejudgment, or an opinion formed in advance. We prejudge people when we view them through the lens of a previously held opinion about the group to which they belong. Ask students to name examples of prejudice that they have witnessed or experienced.

Next, write the word *discrimination* on the board, and ask students what it means. Tell students that discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person (or group of people) based on prejudice about the group to which that person (or group of people) belongs. Explain that prejudice often leads to discrimination. In other words, *prejudice* is a judgment about a person or group of people; *discrimination* is an action that arises out of a prejudice. Have students brainstorm examples of discrimination they have witnessed or experienced. Can they name the prejudices that may have led to the discrimination?

Point out that prejudices and discrimination often lead to conflicts that require people to take a stand. One way we can stand up for other people is to take a stand against prejudice and discrimination. Have students share examples of times they have seen people stand up against discrimination. Explain that they will read a story about a young boy who stands up for his friend who is discriminated against in their small town.

To Read

Introduction to *A Different Kind of Hero*

Read the title of the book aloud, and ask students what the traditional meaning of the word *hero* is. Have them name examples of heroes. What makes each example a hero? Then ask them what they think the title *A Different Kind of Hero* might mean.

Read aloud the description from the back of the book that begins “It’s 1881 in a gold-mining town . . .” Then have students look closely at the front cover of the book. Who do they think the two characters pictured are? Point out that Renny, the boy holding the bird on the cover of the book, is an Irish immigrant and that Zi, the boy holding the abacus, is a Chinese immigrant.

Background Knowledge: The Setting of the Story

Have students locate Colorado on a map of the United States. Invite students to share their experiences with and what they know about Colorado with the class. Tell them that the story takes place in Colorado in 1881, when many people, including Chinese and Irish immigrants, worked in gold mines following the American gold rush. Share the History Trivia from the novel’s inside cover to help establish the setting and context of the story. You may want to share more information about the setting of the story from the Context of the Story section of this guide.

Vocabulary: Word Log

While reading, students will keep track of vocabulary words, as well as unfamiliar words they encounter, in a Word Log. (Students should include the page number on which they found each word.) After reading, students will explore these words in the context of the book as well as in relation to the characters, setting, plot, or mood of the story. The Word Log should stimulate students to familiarize themselves with these words, experiment with them, and, ideally, begin to incorporate them into their own vocabulary.

Reading Strategy: Predict

Explain that readers use prior knowledge and information from the text to make predictions about the story. Tell students that making predictions helps a reader set a purpose for reading. Using the model in the sidebar, draw a Prediction Chart on the board. Read

Prediction Chart

Prediction	Confirm/Modify

Chapter 1 aloud, and then model this strategy with a Think Aloud and the Prediction Chart.

Make a prediction about the text, write it in the first column, and state the evidence on which your prediction is based. Explain to students that as you read, the text will either confirm your prediction or give you a reason to modify it, which you will write in the second column. Encourage students to use this two-column format to make predictions in their Literature Response Journal, and to confirm or modify their predictions throughout reading.

Reading Strategy: Infer

Explain that readers can increase their comprehension of a text by drawing inferences as they read. Point out that an inference is a judgment or evaluation made about the plot, setting, or characters of the story. To infer is to form an opinion that is based on evidence in the text that does not exist literally in the text.

Reading 1: Chapters 1–3, Pages 9–37

After reading aloud the first chapter, have students read Chapters 2 and 3, pages 21–37, at home or in class, or read these pages aloud to the class. Before they begin, remind students of the following:

Set a Purpose: Practice Reading Strategies Remind students to make predictions and draw inferences as they read. They should make predictions and confirm or change previous predictions on their Prediction Chart in their Literature Response Journal.

Set a Purpose: Conflict Resolution Have students note the conflicts that occur in this reading and the strategies characters use to resolve them.

Vocabulary: Word Log Remind students to record unfamiliar words in their Word Log.

To Discuss

Vocabulary: Word Log

Write the vocabulary words on the board and have students record the words and definitions in their Word Log. Ask questions that encourage students to think about how the words relate to each other and to the mood, plot, characters, and setting of the story. For example:

- What is the difference between a fight and a *quarrel*?
- Who would Da regard as his *foe*? Why?

Teacher Think Alouds

A Think Aloud provides a way for teachers to model how they use a comprehension strategy (or multiple strategies) while reading. It is one of the best ways to make reading comprehension concrete for students. As you read a section of text aloud to students, stop and explain how you are using the strategy: tell students what you are thinking, what connections you are making, the questions you ask yourself, the predictions and inferences you make, and what you visualize.

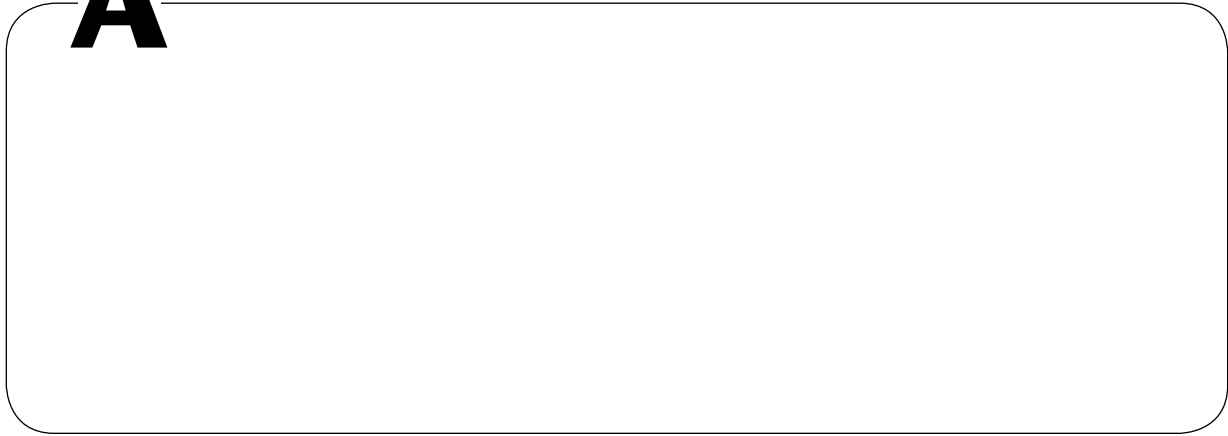
Multiple Reading Strategies

Tell students that readers often use more than one reading strategy at a time. Reread to students the first three paragraphs on page 9, and then use the following Think Aloud to model how readers can use the strategies Predict and Infer: “The boy says it ‘doesn’t seem fair’ to drown the puppies. Because he says this, I predict that he will not drop the sack of puppies in the creek. I think, or infer, that the boy is too kind to kill the puppies.”

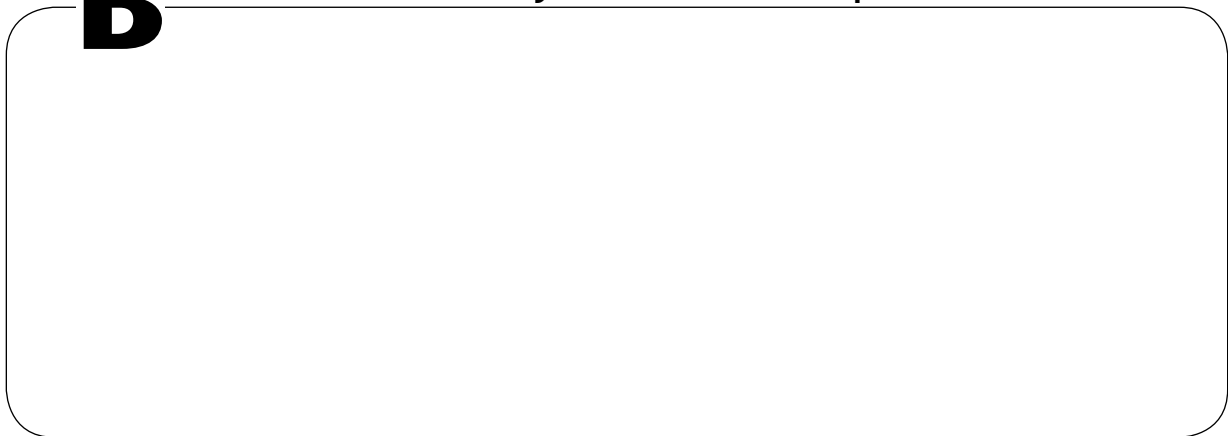
ABC PROBLEM SOLVING

Name _____ Date _____

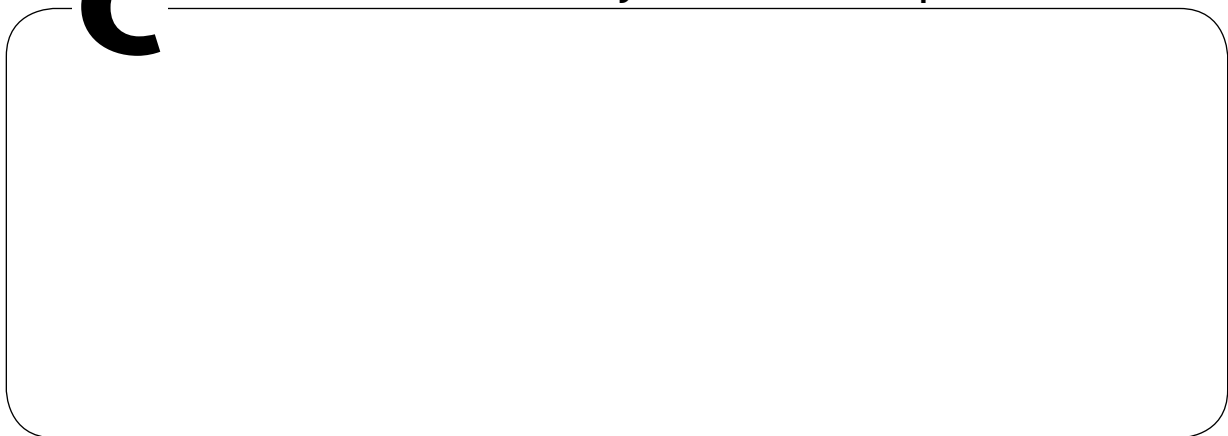
A Ask what the problem is.



B Brainstorm ways to solve the problem.



C Choose the best way to solve the problem.



DIFFERENT WAYS TO TAKE A STAND

Name _____ Date _____

- Say something that makes it clear you do not agree with the mistreatment.
- Make a lighthearted joke that is not directed at any one person.
- If you feel safe, firmly tell the person causing the problem to STOP IT.
- If you do not feel safe saying anything, go and stand beside the person who is being mistreated. Make it clear with your stance that you do not agree with the mistreatment.
- Don't increase the tension with more name-calling or other unfair treatment.
- Ask the person who is causing the mistreatment why he or she is doing it. Tell the person that you do not agree with his or her actions.
- Be a friend. Tell the person who was treated unfairly that you're sorry it happened and that it was not his or her fault. Listen to the person's feelings.
- Tell other bystanders who may have laughed or joined in the hurtful behavior that they're not helping the situation.
- Tell an adult. Think about who you can tell in your school, and take a friend with you when you report the incident.

Other strategies: