



## Anti-bullying assemblies for secondary schools The same old story

**Participants:** Readers 3 Mimers 5-10

**Props:** 3 newspapers: broom: bag of rubbish: wand: selection of candles of varying shapes, sizes and colours: table: optional number placards with names of organisations concerned with anti-bullying, eg. Anti-Bullying Alliance, Kidscape, Childline etc  
Music

*The candles are in place on the table at the side of the stage, clearly visible for all to see. They are not yet lit. Readers 1&2 enter, one to each side, accompanied by a few bars of lively opening music. As the music fades, Mimers 1-3 enter one at a time, each absorbed in reading the inside of a newspaper, in which their lines are pasted. They take up solitary positions around the stage area. Alternatively, they could form a line across the stage, facing the audience holding the newspaper with one hand and an imaginary strap in the other, depicting tube commuters. To give added dramatic effect, they should sway slightly!*

**Mimer 1** "Modern bullies are seeking out victims through the internet."

**Mimer 2** "In a recent government survey of children, more than two thirds said they had witnessed bullying, including name-calling, punching, kicking and text-messaging."

**Mimer 3** "Childline received 22,000 calls from children complaining of bullying last year."

*Mimers 1-3 exit.*

**Reader 1** Depressing headlines.

**Reader 2** Bullying on the increase and spreading at an alarming rate.

**Reader 1** But in fact, this is probably not true. Our parents and grandparents will probably tell you that they had bullying when they were at school.

**Reader 2** Not from the Internet of course

**Reader 1** Nor of course through mobile texting.

**Reader 2** But the plain truth is, there have always been bullies.

**Reader 1** Here is a short English Literature test.

**Reader 2** Very short – there's only one question actually. And there are no prizes for the answer.

**Reader 1** What do the following stories all have in common: Cinderella, Tom Brown's School Days and Lord of the Flies?

*You can either choose to wait for answers or to treat the question as rhetorical and carry straight on with the dialogue.*

**Reader 2** The answer is that they are all about serious bullying.

**Reader 1** Let's take what is probably the best known one – Cinderella, the famous fairy story we were told, or saw as a pantomime, when we were very little,

*The following dialogue could be accompanied by Mimers 1-3 as CINDERELLA and the UGLY SISTERS, acting out the scene, with suitable props and/or costumes.*

**Reader 2** *(in bullying tones)* Cinders! Cinders! Get in here! Sweep this floor! Go on – move!

**Reader 1** *(also in bullying tones)* Lazy cow! Don't look so pathetic! And after you've done it PROPERLY, you can scrub it.

*If mimed, some muck is then thrown by one of the sisters on to where the sweeping has been done.)*

**Reader 2** Oops! Oh dear – more rubbish! Do it again!

*They exit laughing. CINDERELLA continues for a few seconds, accompanied by sad music. She then exits dejectedly.*

**Reader 1** All a bit of a laugh really. No one cares for too long about poor old Cinders being treated so badly, bullied by her sisters.

**Reader 2** That's probably because it's a fairy story, and like all good fairy stories we know it all comes right in the end.

**Reader 1** The bullies are humiliated and Cinders gets her man.

*(Mimers enter briefly, with UGLY SISTERS cowering and cursing as CINDERELLA struts past them looking triumphant, brandishing her crown or slippers. Even better would be a male student or member of staff accompanying her as PRINCE. It should be done with slickness and not be allowed to hold up the readers who echo the triumphant tone as CINDERELLA passes the UGLY SISTERS with:*

**Readers 1&2** Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah!

*Mimers exit.*

**Reader 1** And Cinders lived happily ever after.

**Reader 2** Lucky her! If only all bullies could be banged to rights like that.

**Reader 1** What about the second story? Story number 2 is Tom Brown's School Days. This is not a fairy story and much of it is based on the author's own experiences at boarding school.

*Enter Mimer 4 as TOM to centre, looking timid as Mimer 5 follows on a few seconds later as FLASHMAN, looking very confident. Tom cowers as FLASHMAN stands over him aggressively.*

**Reader 2** Tom suffers for years at the hands of one of literature's most famous bullies, an older pupil called Flashman. Here are the author's words from the book, which was written many years ago:

*Enter Reader 3 to the centre.*

**Reader 3** "Flashman left no slander unspoken, no deed undone which could in any way hurt his victims or isolate them."

**Reader 1** On one particular occasion, Tom tried to stand up to Flashman by refusing to give in to his demands. It had serious results.

*The following story could be mimed. If done sincerely, it could be a powerful accompaniment to the words. It will require the addition of extra mimers as both bullies and friends of TOM. If the scene is not going to be acted out, TOM and FLASHMAN should now exit with FLASHMAN pushing TOM, who winces with pain.*

**Reader 3** "Very well then, let's roast him," cried Flashman and catches hold of Tom by the collar; one or two of the boys hesitate, but the rest join in. East, Tom's friend, seizes Tom's hand and tries to pull him away, but is knocked back by one of the boys and Tom is dragged away struggling. His shoulders are pushed against the mantelpiece, and he is held by force before the fire.

'Will you now give in?' says one of the bullies, who is beginning to relent, 'I say, Flashman, he has had enough. 'No, no, another turn will do it,' answered Flashman. But Tom is done already, he turns deadly pale and his head falls forward."

**Reader 2** Tom's friend, who has gone for help rushes in at this point. 'You cowardly brutes!' is all he can say, as he catches Tom from them and supports him to the hall table. 'Good God! He's dying!' ...

Flashman and one or two others slink away."

*Mimers act out the careful removal of TOM. Exit Reader 3)*

**Reader 1** But Tom didn't die. His courage won through, his friends got help, and once again, it all came right in the end. Tom became quite a hero.

**Reader 2** And now to our final story – The Lord of the Flies. Also about someone being bullied.

**Reader 1** But this story is rather different from the others.

**Reader 2** Cinderella was bullied, but she was attractive and got the prince.

**Reader 1** Tom was bullied, but he was brave and became a popular hero.

**Reader 2** The person who was bullied in Lord of The Flies wore glasses.

**Reader 1** He was fat

**Reader 2** He wasn't cool.

**Reader 1** He was known as Piggy, and he certainly didn't live happily ever after.

**Reader 2** If you don't know what happened to him, then you'd better read the book. It would spoil it if we told you.

**Reader 1** So what do we learn from these stories?

**Reader 2** That bullying isn't a modern invention – there have always been bullies.

**Reader 1** That people who are bullied need help. Cinderella had a fairy godmother.  
*CINDERELLA and or mimer as FAIRY GODMOTHER waving magic wand could pass through briefly.*

**Reader 2** Tom had some loyal friends.  
*TOM as hero could pass through, held on the shoulders of his FRIENDS.*

**Reader 1** But this little Piggy had none.

*During the next dialogue, Mimer as PIGGY enters and sits centre stage, back to audience and head bowed. Other mimers could briefly pass through, either ignoring him, pointing, laughing or hurting him.*

**Reader 2** No fairy godmother for him. No loyal friends.

**Reader 1** No "Happy Ever After".

**Reader 2** We started with some depressing headlines. But there is a positive side to everything.

*Mimers re-enter with their newspapers and replay their opening scene, this time with interruptions as follows:*

**Mimer 1** "Modern bullies are seeking out victims through the Internet."

**Reader 1** At least the papers are drawing attention to it, making the public aware.

**Mimer 2** "In a recent government survey of children, more than two thirds said they had witnessed bullying, name-calling, punching, kicking and text-messaging."

**Reader 2** That's good – it means the government are on the case.

**Mimer 3** "Childline received 22,000 calls from children complaining of bullying last year."

**Reader 1** Thank goodness for Childline. It means there are people who care and people who will listen.

*Mimers exit.*

**Reader 1** The news papers may horrify us with sad stories and depressing statistics but they are bringing bullying out into the open. This has got to be a positive.

**Reader 2** When our parents and grandparents were young, bullying was just an accepted part of life. You just had to put up with it.

**Reader 1** Today, society has woken up to the fact that we *don't* have to put up with it.

**Reader 2** And it's up to us all to make sure that we won't.  
*Enter Reader 3 to the centre. Music could set a reflective mood before or through the reading. The candles are lit by Readers 1&2.*

**Reader 3** Let's reflect on what we have seen and heard.  
Life is not a fairy story, it's real.  
There have always been bullies.  
But does that mean we should accept that there always will be?  
Probably, but at least we know there is help out there, people we can turn to.  
*Mimers enter and hold up placards showing examples of relevant organisations. (Afterwards, details of these should be given a prominent and permanent place within the school.)*  
And we shouldn't forget that if we're lucky not to be bullied, we *ourselves* can often provide that help.  
We may not be able to wave a magic wand like a fairy godmother, but we *can* make a difference.  
We can become loyal friends.  
We can try and remember that it's not just the attractive, not just the cool people who need protecting.  
It's not just the popular, not just the likeable who need our support.  
We're all different, but we are all human beings. Whatever the differences, inside we can feel the same hurt, the same loneliness.  
Look at the candles – the all appear different, tall, short, fat, thin, a variety of colours - but the flame is the same in each of them.

Let's resolve to keep the flame of humanity and caring alight wherever and whenever we can.  
*Music continues for a few moments.*