

The Berenstain Bears

BIG CHAPTER BOOKS™

Teacher Activity Guide



Random House paperback • 0-679-88953-1

Featured books and their themes are:

The Berenstain Bears . . .

- ... *Accept No Substitutes*
- ... *and No Guns Allowed*
- ... *and the Dress Code*
- ... *and the Drug Free Zone*
- ... *and the Nerdy Nephew*
- ... *and the New Girl in Town*
- ... *and the Red-Handed Thief*
- ... *and the School Scandal Sheet*
- ... *and the Wheelchair Commando*
- Substitute Teachers
- Violence
- Individuality
- Drug Awareness
- Appreciating Differences
- Conflict Resolution
- Stealing
- Freedom of the Press
- Disabilities

About This Guide

Through their books, Stan and Jan Berenstain have helped generations of children deal with issues ranging from sibling rivalry to self-acceptance. Now, in their newest book, *The Berenstain Bears and No Guns Allowed*, they come face to face with the timely issue of guns and violence in schools.

This guide offers educators important tools to use a number of the Big Chapter Books™ in their classrooms. While highlighting some of the more universal themes, the guide focuses on the new book and examines the very real issue of children and violence. It encourages teachers to examine, with their students, some of the factors that may be contributing to the problem—television, movies, video games, and dangerous Internet sites. This guide is only a beginning to opening discussions with students. We hope you find it useful.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Gun Awareness

Safety

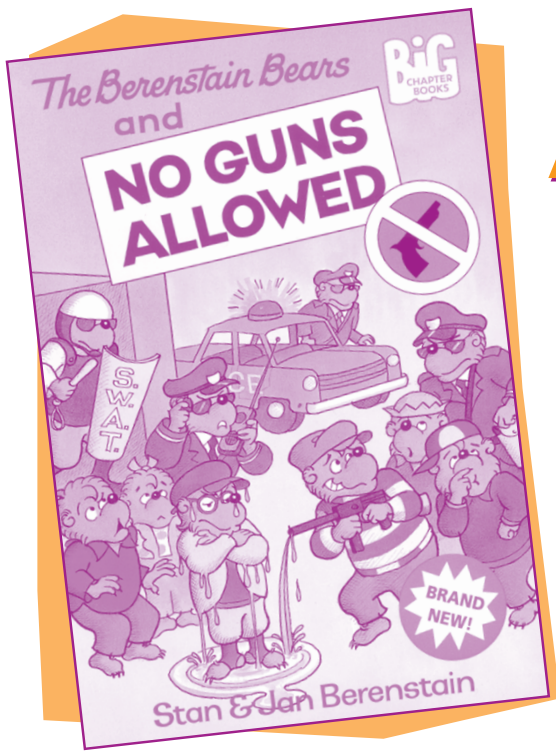
Friendship

Current Events

Grades 3–5



Visit Teachers@Random on the Web at www.randomhouse.com/teachers



About the Book



Once again, the Berenstains have focused on a subject of great concern for parents and kids alike: guns. When Ferdy, the nerd, gets paired with Too-Tall, the jock, in an assignment to study inventions, the one subject they can agree on is guns. While Ferdy's interest is strictly intellectual, Too-Tall's is, unfortunately, basically bang-bang. The whole class learns a valuable lesson: in the wrong hands, guns can be bad business—whether they are real or toys.

Classroom

Media

Discuss whether students think that graphic images on television, in movies and videos, and on Internet sites have a negative influence on society. Do they encourage some young people to commit acts of violence? Why, or why not? Divide the class into two teams for a debate. Give each team ample time to gather facts. After the debate, have the class determine which team won, by making a list of the pros and cons of each team's argument. Have the students polish their debating skills by inviting in parents and other classes. Lead a group discussion.

Have each student spend time with a parent or adult and a television guide to determine the best programs to watch. Which shows are educational? Which feature intriguing plots and likable characters? Challenge students to create class criteria for ranking shows. Present the winning and losing programs on a bulletin board.

Censorship

When talking about the problem of violence in Bear Country, Miss Glitch recommends removing all “violent literature” from the library shelves. Have students define censorship. How would they feel if they were suddenly not allowed to read a book that used to be in the school library? Have the class make a list of books that may be considered violent or disturbing to some people, including Miss Glitch.

Gender

Discuss whether “bang, bang, shoot 'em up” games are just for boys. Do girls also like to play these games? Have the class identify action figures, games, music groups, and trends that are popular today. Which ones do both girls and boys enjoy? What toys and games are specific for each? Have the class make a chart presenting this information.



Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students about their attitudes toward guns. Do they believe guns have a place in society? How do they feel about young people who have access to guns? Have students collect recent newspaper articles about young people and violence. What are the stories behind the tragedies? What conclusions can be made about guns from the news stories? Check out the Web site of the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, located in Washington, D.C., to find statistics about gun violence. (See “Research,” below.)



Connections



Research

Have students work in small groups to present information about gun control and gun safety. Challenge students to find out the latest laws concerning guns. Ask them to research and explain the Brady Bill. Students can contact the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, located at 1225 Eye Street NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005, and use the following Internet sources for more information:
www.handguncontrol.org/
www.childrensdefense.org/

Art

Provide groups of students with large pieces of butcher paper and art materials. Have each group illustrate a memorial to young victims of violence.

Music

Do students believe that certain songs can encourage violent behavior? Identify some of them. What songs might encourage peace? Can music alone be blamed? What other factors must be taken into account? Ask students if they think that some musicians might purposely choose names for their bands that evoke violent images. Why? Share these names of actual bands with students, and ask them to imagine the music that each name suggests.

Social Studies

Ask students to describe what makes them feel safe at school. Have them propose ways to make their school a safer place. Ask students how law enforcement officials could be involved. Parents? What kind of after-school programs might be implemented to prevent school violence? Encourage children to involve their community in these safety initiatives.

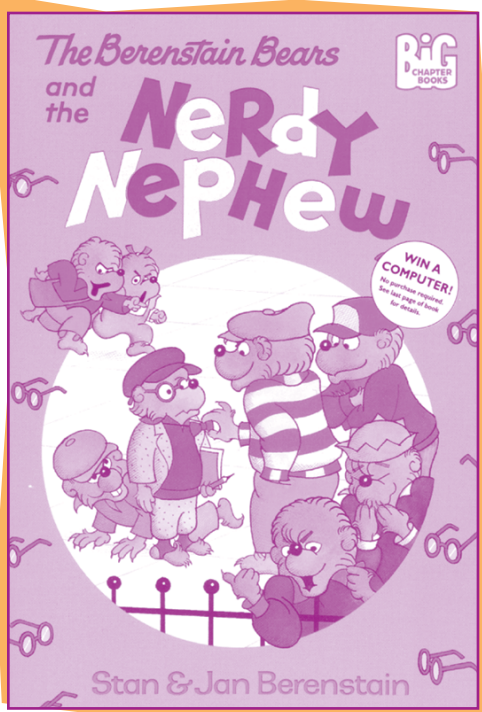
Math

Discuss whether people can watch too much television. Have your students survey the school body to determine the average number of hours a week that a student spends watching TV, doing homework, playing video games. Ask them to graph the results.

Drama

Too-Tall turned into a “shivering, shaking bowl full of jelly,” while Ferdy “kept his cool.” Have students explain how these two characters might have switched roles. Challenge students to describe the personalities of each member of Too-Tall’s gang.

Exploring Other Berenstain Bears Big Chapter Books™



0-679-83610-1

Make way for Nerdy Ferdy, the genius with the bad attitude. Ferdy is so stuck-up, he corrects textbooks and his teacher's grammar for sport. But Brother and Sister—who are involved in Operation Ferdy, a plan to help Ferdy fit in—soon realize that sometimes cubs are so afraid of not belonging, they go out of their way to be different.

Themes

- Getting along with others
- Appreciating differences
- Friendship

Character Talk

Is it mean for Queenie to use Ferdy? What is she trying to accomplish? Do you think Ferdy is cool or uncool? What makes someone cool?

Let's Discuss

What is peer pressure? How does it make a person do something he or she might not ordinarily do? Is fitting in always easy? What are some positive ways to fit in with the crowd? What advice about fitting in could you give a child who's new at your school?

One Step Beyond

Publish advice! Have students publish a kid's guide to fitting in, complete with tips from students of varying ages and an advice column. Teachers may want to distribute the finished product to other classes.



The cubs have had enough of Miss Glitch and her stuffy school newspaper, so they decide to take matters into their own hands and publish two newspapers—the one that Miss Glitch has approved, and one that comes as a complete surprise to her and the rest of the school! The bears learn all about the First Amendment—which includes freedom of the press—as they revamp the *Glitchville Gazette*.

Themes

- Freedom of the Press
- Honesty
- School rules

Character Talk

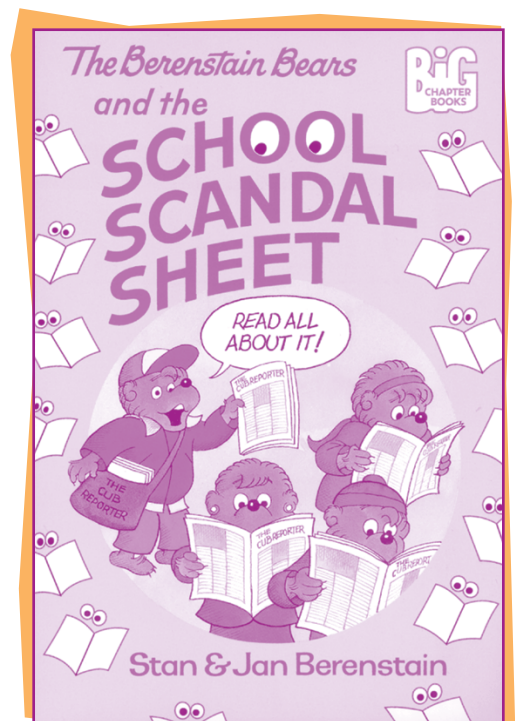
Do you think Queenie acted responsibly when she put the story in the paper without Brother's permission? Did it take guts to publish *The Cub Reporter*? Do you think the cubs got a fair punishment?

Let's Discuss

What does freedom of the press mean to you? When is it not all right to print a story? What does *slander* mean?

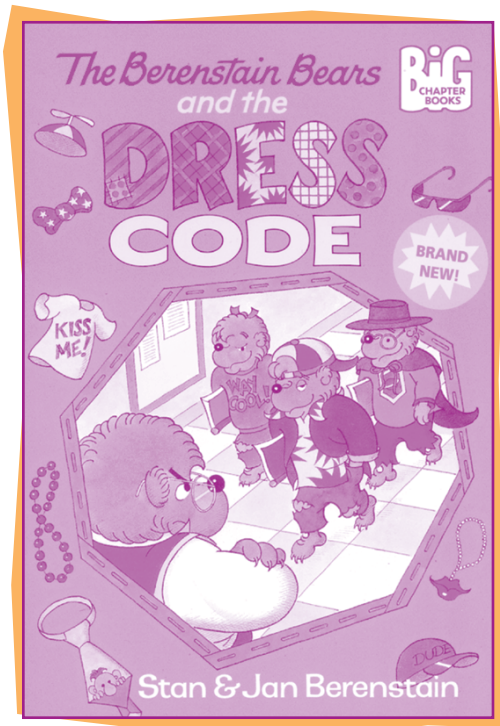
One Step Beyond

Publish a class newspaper! Have the class research what goes into making a newspaper. Then have students decide on the content, and challenge them to write editorials that describe how they feel about certain issues.



0-679-85812-1

The Berenstain Bears provide young readers with insight into the real world. Children learn how to cope with a multitude of issues—fitting in, getting along, standing up for what you believe, and much more. These paperback chapter books feature lively illustrations that will entertain even the most reluctant reader.



0-679-86665-5



Newfangled fashions are the rage at Bear Country School. But when the faculty decides that the cubs have taken their fashion fads too far and a super-strict dress code is enforced, the cubs protest. But isn't Queenie's bright red body stocking and very short skirt the same outfit that her mother wore as a cub? As everyone learns, fashions come and go.

Themes

- Fashion
- Decision-making
- Individuality

Character Talk

Did Sister do anything wrong by wearing jeans with big knee-holes and keeping it from her parents? Why do you think she did it?

Let's Discuss

What do your clothes say about you? Have students describe their own personal style. Do students prefer casual dress, such as jeans and a T-shirt, or do they like to dress up in fancy clothes?

One Step Beyond

The perfect school uniform? Do students believe that schools should have a dress code? What are the arguments for it? Against it? Which argument is stronger? Should boys and girls wear the same thing? Have each student design the perfect school uniform, encouraging them to be as detailed as possible. Have students share their designs, and hold a class vote on the winning uniform.



Who is responsible for bringing drugs into Bear Country? Is it the infamous Too-Tall and his gang? Is it Ralph Ripoff? Is it the new Ugly Roomer? Brother, Sister, and Freddy try to solve the mystery, using their beginner detective skills. But danger lurks, and the cubs realize that drug dealing is big-time crime that should be solved by Chief Bruno and his force.

Themes

- Drug awareness
- Detective skills

Character Talk

What kind of character is Ralph Ripoff? How do you think Too-Tall should be punished for his involvement?

Let's Discuss

What does it mean that "you can't always tell a book by its cover?" How is the saying relevant to this story? What is a drug-free zone? What does it mean that the only drug-free zone is the one in your heart?

One Step Beyond

Launch a schoolwide drug-free campaign! Separate students into groups to write drug awareness messages for the lower grades, to meet with a police officer, to organize an assembly, and to work on slogans and songs that can be used to spread the word around the community.



0-679-83612-8



0-679-84034-6

Harry McGill, the new kid in town, is determined not to make one single friend. Convinced that the only reason other cubs may talk to him is to find out how he ended up in a wheelchair, he distributes computer printouts that explain how he became disabled. But Harry's computer savvy and basketball-playing skills aren't the only things he has to offer his schoolmates. Once he lets down his guard, Harry can't help but fit right in.

Themes

- Disabilities
- Computer skills
- Making friends
- Appreciating differences

Character Talk

How can you explain Too-Tall's changing attitude toward Harry? Why was Too-Tall jealous? Do you think it's healthy for Harry to spend so much time at his computer?

Let's Discuss

Define the word *disability*. Do you think some people act as if they are afraid of a disabled person? If so, why?

One Step Beyond

Role play. Have students simulate what it would be like to have a disability. Have students blindfold a partner, direct him or her around the classroom or school grounds, then switch roles. Discuss the experience. Was it scary? Did students feel as though they were going to get hurt? Did they know where they were at all times? How did they feel about their partners? Ask students to research the history of the Special Olympics. How does having the right attitude help a disabled person?



When Brother catches sight of the beautiful new cub, Bonnie Brown, he can't take his eyes off her. But there are big problems: she's a Grizzly and he's a Bear. Can these star-crossed cubs teach everyone a lesson by starring in *Romeo and Juliet* to demonstrate that family feuds can result in tragedy?

Themes

- Differences
- Conflict resolution
- Shakespeare
- First kiss

Character Talk

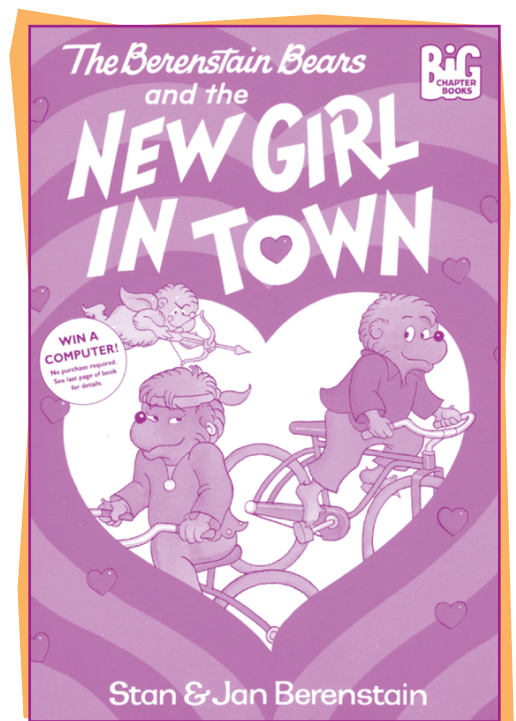
Why do you think Brother is so shy when it comes to girls?

Let's Discuss

Why do people fight? List the most common reasons for feuding among friends, families, and strangers. What usually happens when tempers flare? What are some positive ways to solve a disagreement?

One Step Beyond

Host a Shakespeare extravaganza. Research the life and plays of William Shakespeare. Have students share information about the stories, the language, and the characters in Shakespeare's plays. Have groups of students perform various scenes. Some children may interpret the scenes, while others translate Shakespeare's dialogue into contemporary language.



0-679-83613-6



0-679-84033-8

Has Mr. Dweebish, the new social studies teacher, gone too far in his efforts to demonstrate the principles of his Foundations of Democracy course? When several cubs report that they've been robbed, the cubs assume that Too-Tall and his gang are to blame. But as Mr. Dweebish explains, without evidence, "you're innocent until proven guilty." When the evidence points to Mr. Dweebish, the cubs learn a valuable lesson.

Themes

- Stealing
- Democracy

Character Talk

Do you think Mr. Dweebish was a good teacher? Was it wrong for him to demonstrate his ideas to the class the way he did? Did he have a responsibility to be truthful to his students? What did they learn from him?

Let's Discuss

What is your school's policy on stealing? What would happen if people didn't need evidence to charge a person with a crime?

One Step Beyond

"Innocent until proven guilty." Challenge students to think of several examples where this axiom could work for or against a person.



Even though Ms. Barr, the new substitute teacher, has to endure a frog wriggling around her blouse and a bucket of ice-cold water on her head, Too-Tall doesn't get the best of her. Too-Tall's Operation Substitute fails miserably when Ms. Barr surprises everyone with her black belt in karate. And Brother learns the hard lesson that fitting in with the crowd isn't worth it when it's at the expense of someone else.

Themes

- Substitute teacher
- Karate
- Fitting in



Character Talk

Why did it feel good for Brother and Freddy to be part of Too-Tall's plan and to be called "one of the guys"?

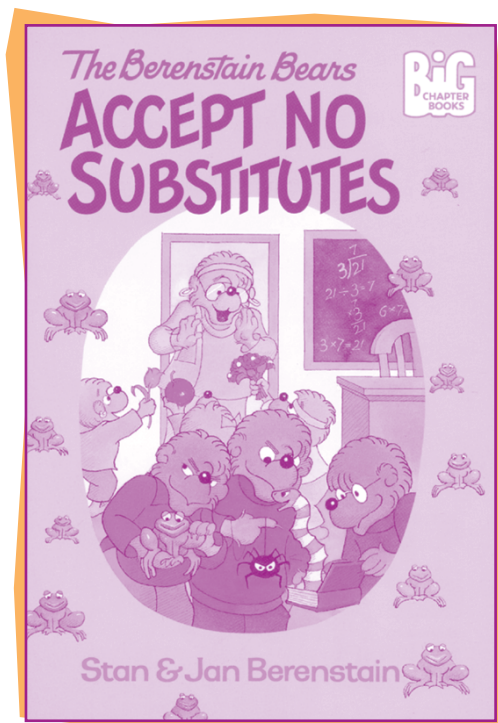
Let's Discuss

Did you ever do something for the sake of fitting in? What were the consequences?

Why do you think some people try to torment a substitute teacher? What advice can you think of to help a new substitute teacher?

One Step Beyond

Role play. Have students pretend that they are substitute teachers. How would they endure students like Too-Tall and his gang? Have children write stories about their adventures as a substitute teacher. Encourage them to interview a substitute for some input as to the challenges they face.



0-679-84035-4

About the Authors

Stan & Jan Berenstain got their start in 1956, when they first began the feature *It's All in the Family* in *McCall's/Good Housekeeping Magazine*. Their first Berenstain Bear book, *The Big Honey Hunt*, was published in 1962, and the Berenstain Bears have been touching generations of young children ever since! Learn more about Stan & Jan and all the Berenstain Bears at their official Web site: www.berenstainbears.com

Berenstain Bears Big Chapter Books™

The Perfect Read-Alouds for Your Classroom!

About Big Chapter Books™

Stan & Jan Berenstain's Big Chapter Books™



- tell easy-to-read, simple stories, dealing with a wide range of subjects and contemporary situations
- **provide** young readers with insight into the real world
- **teach** children how to cope with a multitude of issues
- **feature** bright illustrations that entertain and charm even the most reluctant reader
- are all **available in paperback!**

Random House Children's Books • School & Library Marketing
1540 Broadway • New York, NY 10036

BN523
Printed in the U.S.A.

2/00
Suggested Retail Value: \$6.95

Random House Children's Books
School & Library Marketing
1540 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

