

Essential Questions:

- What does this story teach us about standing up for others when we see injustice, and how can we apply this lesson in our own lives?
- How can stories like *Terrible Things* help us understand real events in history, such as the Holocaust, and why is it important to remember these lessons today?
- What responsibilities do we have to speak up when we see unfairness or injustice in the world, and what might happen if we don't?

Subjects

ELA

Grades

3-4

Lesson Objectives:

- Explain how words can be empowering or destructive
- Explore what causes people choose to act in caring or hurtful ways
- Discuss how all choices have both good and bad consequences and making good choices is important in life
- Define prejudices against individuals or groups and explain how prejudices hurt everyone and everyone suffers as a result of it
- Define what a bully is and differentiate between friends and bullies by understanding the specific actions or behaviors of each
- Explain the differences between upstanders and bystanders

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

This unique introduction to the Holocaust encourages young children to stand up for what they think is right, without waiting for others to join them. It introduces the themes of discrimination, bystander behavior, and standing up for others in an age-appropriate way.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* by Eve Bunting
- [Animated](#) read-aloud of *Terrible Things*
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Discussion questions

LESSON SEQUENCE

WARM-UP & DISCUSSION

Ask students:

- Have you ever seen someone being left out or treated unfairly? How did it make you feel?
- What do you think courage means?
- Why do you think people sometimes do not speak up?

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Involve students in analyzing the cover of *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust*. Have them make predictions about the content of the book based on the title, subtitle, and illustrations.

READ ALOUD

Explain that this is a story about a forest where different animals live together, but one by one, they are taken away. The animals that remain don't speak up until it's too late. Tell students that it is an allegory—a story that represents a bigger idea.

Read the story aloud, stopping when appropriate to address comments, clarify, predict and guide students' understanding. You can use the questions below to guide a class discussion during the read-aloud:

- How did the animals in the woods get along before the Terrible Things entered their lives?
- How did the animals in the woods react to the Terrible Things when they first came for the creatures with feathers on their backs?
- What were Little Rabbit's father's reasons for disagreeing with Little Rabbit when he suggested that they leave the woods because the Terrible Things might return?

- Why do you think the animals stayed silent?
- What do you think the author is trying to teach us?

**ACTIVE
ENGAGEMENT**

After reading the story to students, explain that this book is an allegory about the Holocaust. Discuss, in simple terms, how during the Holocaust, many people were treated unfairly, and others stayed silent. Use this as a jumping-off point to discuss personal responsibility with students. Write student responses on chart paper under two columns:

- "Why didn't the animals speak up?"
- "What should we do if we see unfairness?"

**INDEPENDENT
REFLECTION**

Have students complete a reflection based on either prompt:

- Write about a time you helped someone who was being treated unfairly.
- Draw a picture of someone standing up for another person.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY
& EXTENSION
ACTIVITIES**

[Who Is an Upstander?](#) Facing History and Ourselves Video

[You Can Be an Upstander](#) Video Lesson Plan

[5 Creative Ways to Teach Kids to Be Upstanders](#)

[Teaching Elementary Students to Become Upstanders Against Bullying](#)

[Where We Stand](#) Activities
