

STAND TALL Teaching Guide by Christine Blair

stand tall

SUMMARY:

Sam Benton has always been the tallest student in his class. In fourth grade, Jeremy Liggins began calling him Tree, the nickname stuck, and now that is what everyone calls him. Because of his height, Tree has endured much teasing from classmates. But the worst part is that coaches, players, classmates, and his family all equate height with athletic prowess, which in Tree's case is not true.

But seventh grade is the hardest. His physical strength is needed to help his grandfather, Leo, whose right leg has been amputated below the knee, and his emotional strength is sorely tried by his parents' divorce and the declining health of his beloved dog Bradley.

Through this minefield of deep hurts, Tree is guided by Leo, who teaches him to concentrate more on what he has than on what he has not, and when their town needs heroes in the spring, Tree and Leo are ready.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How does Tree's life change because of his parents divorce? He even thinks of it as being winter in his life. (p. 7) Why would he feel that way?

What can be learned about life from Grandpa?

What are some assumptions made about a person based upon physical attributes?

What is the difference between a house and a home?

How did the divorce affect each member of the Benton family?

If there were a memorial wall for divorce, what kinds of mementos might be brought to it?

How can students help prevent bullying?

What should someone do if caught in a flood?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

The best part of the week for me is. . .

I think would be a good nickname for me because. . .

ACTIVITIES:

Draw a diagram of a tree, labeling the parts and explaining their importance. Interview a veteran of the Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, or the War on Terror.

Pretend for a day (or part of a day) that you have a disability. Ask a classmate to be your partner and help you.

Create a motto for yourself.

Organize a Mix It Up at Lunch Day for your school.

Have your school organize a drive to help disaster victims and donate the contributions to a disaster relief agency.

Take dancing lessons.

Write a thank you note to someone who has helped you.

BOOKTALK:

"How's the weather up there?" This is a common question to someone who is unusually tall. Tree has heard it for years, because he has always been the tallest student in his class, and, along with such comments, he has also suffered from the expectations that he would be good in sports. Unfortunately for Tree, this is not the case.

What Tree is good at is helping others, especially his beloved grandfather, Leo, a Vietnam War vet, who has had to have his right leg removed below the knee. Tree is also a good friend to Sophie Santack, a newcomer to Eleanor Roosevelt Middle School, who is taunted by the “in” crowd.

Dealing with his parents’ divorce has been difficult for Tree, but, when the town of Ripley needs a hero in the spring, Tree is ready to do all that is needed

taught his little brother to read and count. Mrs. Gladstone is willing to offer Tanner a second chance, but will Jenna be able to do the same?

Also, Jenna delves into the world of shoe intrigue, hunting for the source of shoddily-made footwear, knowing that she must solve the mystery before the good name of Gladstone Shoes is irreparably harmed.

TIE-INS:

What does Sophie have in common with Ellie (Squashed) and Mickey (Sticks)?

Read “Children of War.” How do disasters change people and how can they deal with the aftermath of them?

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” This quote from Eleanor Roosevelt is found in both “A Letter From the Fringe” and Stand Tall. How does one conquer feelings of inferiority?

Discuss the role of grandparents in works by Joan Bauer

RELATED MATERIALS:

Bauer, Joan. “A Letter From the Fringe.” *On the Fringe*. Ed. Donald R. Gallo. New York, Dial Books, 2001. 181-193.

Bauer, Joan. “Children of War.” *911: The Book of Help*. Ed. Michael Cart; with Marc Aronson and Marianne Carus. Chicago: Cricket Books, 2002. 39-47.

Bauer, Joan. *Squashed*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1992.

Bauer, Joan. *Sticks*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1996.

RELATED WEB SITES:

MayoClinic.com: Phantom Pain - <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/phantom-pain/DS00444>

Stop Bullying Now! - <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp?area=main>

Tolerance.org: Mix It Up at Lunch Day - <http://www.tolerance.org/teens/lunch.jsp>

Pacer Center’s Kids Against Bullying - <http://www.pacerkidsagainstabullying.org/>

Juvenile Justice – Developing an Anti-Bullying Program: Increasing Safety, Reducing Violence - <http://www.theiacp.org/Training/bullyingbrief.pdf>

How to Help Disaster Victims - <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/disaster/help.html>

NASP Resources: Helping Children After a Natural Disaster - http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/naturaldisaster_ho.aspx

Iguanas - <http://www.iguana-reptiles.com/>

Reader’s Guides for Stand Tall - <http://www.joanbauer.com/standtallguides.html>

Thoughts on Stand Tall - <http://www.joanbauer.com/StandTallThoughts.html>