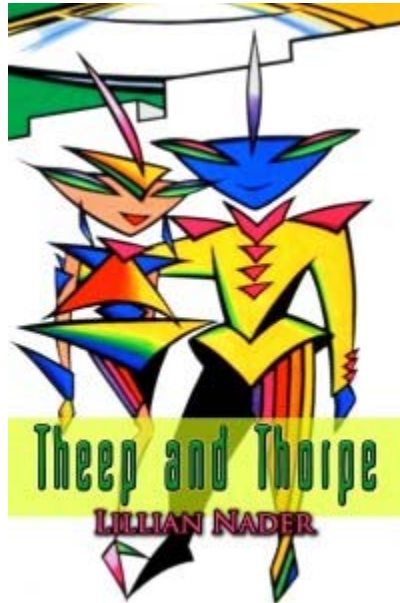


About Bullies



As a reading teacher, I encourage my students to make connections from one aspect of literature to another. For example, a pig in one story may remind me of the pig in *Charlotte's Web*. When I read the story by R. G. Frazier, *Don't Blame Hazel*, I noticed some similarities and differences to *Theep and Thorpe*, the story I have written.

Don't Blame Hazel is a children's picture book while *Theep and Thorpe* is a sci-fi novel for young readers. One is set in the present time and the other takes place in the future. Both have characters named Hazel, and they both talk about bullies.



Bullying is something that may appear in the form of verbal abuse such as name calling and ridicule. This type of bullying is aptly portrayed in the illustrated story book, *Don't Blame Hazel*. Hazel likes to dress in a style that reminds the other children of a witch. Instead of being

accepted and welcomed as a new student in school, she is picked on by Helga and others. They laugh and make fun of the way she dresses, call her names, and hit her with paper airplanes when the teacher isn't looking.

The truth about the bully, Helga, is revealed after she is transformed into a toad frog. She appeals to Hazel to free her from the witch's spell. Hazel informs Helga that the spell came from her own fear and insecurity, not from Hazel. Hazel is able to forgive Helga for bullying her, and when she does, Helga changes back into a pretty young girl. Helga and Hazel become friends. Sometimes, it's easier to make fun of others than to face our own problems.

In *Theep and Thorpe*, Billy is a bully who takes advantage of a young child who can't defend himself. He tries to take the child's backpack with his lunch and computer notebook inside. This makes Quan, the young protagonist of the story, so angry that he unwittingly manifests a phazer gun out of thin air to frighten Billy away. Apparently, anger isn't the best way to deal with bullies because Quan is the one who ends up in trouble with the authorities and is ultimately sent away to Juvenile Court School in outer space. Billy ends up there as well, but he's sent by a close friend of the school director, Dr. Weir, to work as a barracks guard at the school. When Quan continues to get into scrapes with Billy, Dr. Weir insists that Quan make friends with him.

Quan is forced into befriending Billy in order to be released from the solitary confinement he got himself into. At first, Billy is resistant to Quan's effort to be friendly and converse with him, but after Dr. Weir moves Billy from position of guard to a student at the school, Billy starts to feel accepted by Quan and the students on his team. Being accepted by the other students causes the change in Billy from being a bully to being a valuable part of a team. Hazel is Quan's friend who also becomes friends with Billy.

Both stories have bullies who end up becoming friends with their victims. Most bullies are acting out in inappropriate ways to gain negative attention. I imagine they are lonely and confused. In most cases, they are following a pattern learned from adults and others around them. Many are often neglected and no one has taken the time to teach them more appropriate, positive resolution to their problems. Their unhappiness and poor self-esteem drive them to pick on others rather than to face up to their need for love and affection.

In today's news there are numerous examples of bullying behavior online, in schools, and in cases of family abuse. The sports figure who abused his fiancé and was suspended from his team is one of many examples of bullying behavior in this country.

These are patterns that have been condoned, ignored, and pushed under the rug for too long. Finally, public opinion and outrage is calling for change in addressing these issues. Workshops are being held to teach school personnel how to handle bullies in a way to end the negative results such as teen suicide and/or abuse. Books like *Don't Blame Hazel* and *Theep and Thorpe* provide excellent ways to teach children about bullying, friendship, and forgiveness at an early age.

In *Don't Blame Hazel*, Helga learns that, "being a bully doesn't make you look good." In *Theep and Thorpe*, Billy learns that as a team player, he can use his sports ability and his brain to help solve problems. He no longer needs to pick on anyone smaller or weaker than he is to gain

respect and attention. Both books teach that bullies need love too, and becoming friends and allies is a good way to change bullies into productive, nonviolent citizens.

To purchase the book, *Don't Blame Hazel*, please click this site: <http://dontblamehazel.com/>

Look for the announcement of publication of *Theep and Thorpe* in my next newsletter!

About the author:

Lillian Nader (Ed.M) is currently writing a science fiction novel for young readers entitled *Theep and Thorpe*. She is the published author of educational workbooks and the librettist of the musical, *Pandora*. Lillian is a retired teacher who does part time tutoring and freelance copy editing at reasonable rates. She can be reached at Lnader1910@sbcglobal.net
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