

A Curriculum Guide to

How to Beat the Bully, Book Three: *Revenge of the Bully*

By Scott Starkey



About the Book

All Rodney wants is a peaceful first day at his new middle school. Of course, that’s not going to be easy with a best friend like Rishi! Before they can even enter the building, Rishi gets Rodney drafted onto the school football team. Forced to compete with kids twice his size—including the team bully—Rodney is soon tackling more than football problems. The toughest guy in town needs his help and won’t take no for an answer, a certain former teacher is up to her old tricks, and Rodney’s girlfriend, Jessica, is still mad after her surprise visit to Camp Wy-Mee.

Everyone is out for revenge in this funny and exciting third novel in the How to Beat the Bully series. With fast-moving action on and off the football field, including an underground chase through pitch-black caves, *Revenge of the Bully* keeps readers hooked—and laughing—at every step.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

Prereading Activity

This activity aligns with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.2) (RL.6.2) (SL.4–6.1, 2, 3)

As a prereading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

<i>Before Reading</i>	<i>After Reading</i>	<i>Statements</i>
		There are many ways to deal with a bully.
		Acts of bravery always require action.
		Being brave is the same thing as acting brave.
		Friends always know what’s best for you.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Exploring *Revenge of the Bully* through Writing and Research

The following questions may be utilized throughout the novel study as reflective writing prompts or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection. These

discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3, 7, 9) (RL.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9) (RL.6.1, 2, 3) (SL.6.1, 2, 3) (W.4–6.4)

1. In *Revenge of the Bully*, Rodney has moved from elementary school to middle school. What is it about this transition that Rodney finds challenging? What does he hope will be different about middle school from his previous school experience?
2. At the opening of *Revenge of the Bully*, Rodney shares, “The front doors of Garrettsville Middle School loomed before me. I paused and tried to swallow but my mouth was too dry.” Based on your personal experience, are first days of school always difficult? What are the biggest challenges for students to overcome?
3. Describe Rodney. What makes him an interesting character? Is he the type of friend you would want? Why or why not?
4. What makes Josh’s attack on Toby so unusual? How does this action on the first day of school help set the stage for the relationship between Rodney and Josh?
5. Rodney has a gift of finding ways to turn bad situations around to his advantage. How is he able to accomplish this? What are some specific examples from the *Revenge of the Bully* you liked best?
6. After Coach Laimbardi recruits Josh to play football, Rishi announces that Rodney is “tougher” and “faster,” and Coach L immediately states, “I’ve been looking for players like you” to Rodney and Josh. In what ways is this typical behavior for Rishi? Do you find his enthusiasm for celebrating Rodney’s “accomplishments” to be a benefit to their friendship? Would you want a friend like Rishi?
7. After their first encounter, Toby’s brother, Trevor, tells Rodney, “Now I see what he’s been talkin’ about. You just come waltzin’ in here like you own the place, thinking you’re the baddest. Thinking you can take my spot! Thinking all the cheerleaders are gonna like you! I don’t care what you did in that nursery school last year, you’re in middle school now and I’m going to be real happy showing you just how *bad* bad can be.” Do you believe Rodney is wise to fear Trevor? In what ways does he operate much like his younger brother, Toby? How does the relationship between Trevor and Rodney change throughout the course of the book?
8. In *Revenge of the Bully*, what are the most impressive obstacles Rodney overcomes? Which of these hurdles did you like best?
9. Describe Rodney’s relationship with Jessica. What makes it particularly challenging? Do you think she reacts appropriately to the attention Rodney receives from others?
10. In what ways does Rodney’s mom’s new career as a food critic cause potential drama for Rodney? Did you find the resolution to this satisfying?

11. Why does Rodney work so hard to convince Josie to consider a second date with Trevor? Do you feel she is being overly critical of Trevor?

12. After learning that Mrs. Lutzkraut has been released, Rodney thinks, “I was struck with an alarming thought: either half of Garrettsville was after me or I was losing my mind. Or both.” Do you agree with Rodney’s assessment?

13. Throughout the novel, author Scott Starkey uses clever chapter titles such as “Fernando Knows Best” to whet the reader’s appetite and introduce the action of that chapter. Considering the various chapters, which chapter title in *Revenge of the Bully* was your favorite? What about it did you like best?

14. How does knowing that Mrs. Lutzkraut is obsessed with seeking revenge against him impact Rodney? Why do you think she is unable to let her preoccupation with Rodney go?

15. After getting a promise from Fernando that he’d come help him, Rodney explains, “I trusted Fernando and began to feel better about things. For the first time all day, I actually relaxed . . .” What is it about Fernando that puts Rodney at ease? Does Fernando’s presence actually help Rodney solve his problems?

16. Consider the cast of characters in the novel: Who did you like the most? The least? Of all of the characters, who did you feel was most similar to you due to his/her personality or experiences?

17. In what ways is Rodney and Rishi’s work for The Boss problematic? Though he is a tough character, what does seeing him interact with his mother indicate about The Boss/Francis?

18. Like both *How to Beat the Bully Without Really Trying* and *The Call of the Bully*, *Revenge of the Bully* is told by Rodney in first person. How would this third installment of Rodney’s story be different if another narrator was telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse?

19. Explain the significance of the novel’s title. Do you think the title is appropriate for this installment of Rodney Rathbone’s adventures?

Extended Writing and Research Prompts

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3) (RL.5.1, 2, 4) (RL.6.1, 2) (W.4–6.4)

1. In *Revenge of the Bully*, Rodney, his friends, and his classmates change throughout the course of the novel. Based on your observations, which character do you believe demonstrates the greatest growth? Compose a short persuasive essay offering your position on this issue. While considering your selected character’s experiences, use textual evidence to provide specific examples to support your case.

2. Throughout the course of the novel, readers are offered great insight about Rodney’s point of view based on the events of *Revenge of the Bully*. Assume the role of one of the secondary characters from *Revenge of the Bully* and draft a diary entry detailing what you experienced and witnessed. To prepare, create an outline using the five Ws (who, what, when, where, and why). Remember to write in first person and give special attention to sensory imagery (what you saw, smelled, heard, etc.)

Extension Activities

These activities align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–6.1, 2)

1. Making thematic connections. Consider the following themes of *Revenge of the Bully*: bravery, ingenuity, friendship, and perseverance. Select one of the themes and find examples from the book that help support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at:

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf

2. One of the central themes of *Revenge of the Bully* is friendship. Ask students to journal a response to the following prompts:

- Describe what it means to be a friend.
- What is the value of friendship?
- What can we learn about ourselves from our friends?
- What does Rodney learn about himself from his friends like Rishi, Fernando, or Jessica? Use evidence from the story to support your response.

Have students post journal responses or blogs to a site such as Kidblog.com. As an extension activity, invite them to read and offer feedback to classmates.

3. A strength of Starkey as a writer is his ability to offer richly descriptive scenes. In small groups, have students select a favorite scene from *Revenge of the Bully* and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic novel for that scene. Using a digital comic strip creator (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/> or <http://infinitecomic.com/> for example), have students begin by using the strips to create storyboards for their scene. Have students select original art, images, and graphics. Alternatively, students could assume the roles of two of the characters with each one's personality and voice and have them interact with one another by creating an extension of a scene from one of the novels. As part of the evaluation component, consider panel size and number of panels, transitions and layouts, artwork, writing, and lettering.

This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, a teacher and school librarian in Coppell, Texas. Dr. Brock holds a Ph.D. in Library Science, specializing in children’s and young adult literature.

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