

A STANDARDS-ALIGNED GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-8

EDUCATORS GUIDE

*Middle School - Safety Goggles Advised:
Exploring the Weird Stuff from Gossip to Grades,
Cliques to Crushes and
Popularity to Peer Pressure*

With activities, writing prompts, and choose-your-own-ending scenarios in each chapter, *Middle School - Safety Goggles Advised* is an excellent classroom read-aloud or independent reading selection. Great for book clubs, too!

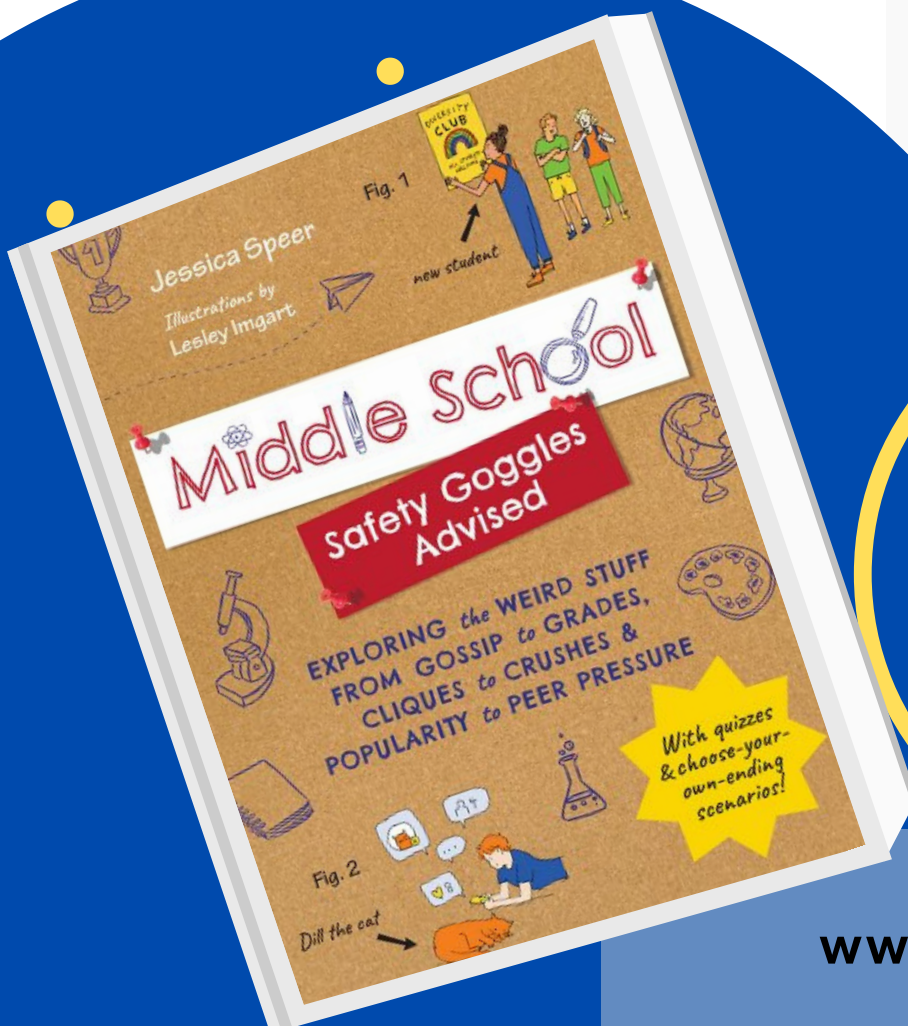
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With quizzes
& choose-your-
own-ending
scenarios!

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ABOUT THE BOOK



Book Summary

Yes, there are cool things about middle school, like more independence, new friends, and new activities.

But there's baffling stuff too, like harsh judgment, the whole "popularity" thing, and drama. With insights from hundreds of students, this guidebook explores the halls of middle school, especially the odd behaviors that lurk in the shadows.

Slip on your lab coats because we will dissect these behaviors one by one to understand what's going on. With quizzes, choose-your-own-ending scenarios, and a dash of science, *Middle School: Safety Goggles Advised* helps you navigate and define who you are when things get, well, weird.

Author's Inspiration

Jessica Speer wanted to better understand the middle school experience. She also wanted to know what students wished was in a book about middle school. So she asked them.

She visited classrooms to gather feedback and listen. Through these discussions with students, ten topics rose to the surface. These topics became the chapters of the book. Combining humor, a dash of science, choose-your-own-ending stories, and the wisdom of students, this book tackles it all.

Topics Explored

Changing friendships, judgment by peers, popularity, crushes and dating, cliques, gossip, drama, social media, conflict and bullying, peer pressure, and stress. Plus the many cool things about middle school and how to inspire change.

GUIDE TO INTERACTIVE COMPONENTS

Each chapter includes interactive components that prompt self-reflection and discussion.

Here's an overview of how to use these sections of the book.



Research Questions

Chapters begin with a few simple questions. These questions get students thinking about their personal experiences with each topic. Educators may choose to pause after students complete these questions to discuss responses and insights.

Under the Microscope - What's Really Going On

In this section, the reasons driving behaviors are explored through the insights of students and a dash of science. This offers another opportunity for class discussion.



You Choose the Ending Scenarios

Middle school scenarios in each chapter give students a chance to decide how they might respond in situations. There are no "correct" responses. If students prefer, they can create a new ending for a scenario. Educators may pause here to discuss and share story endings.



Antidotes from Middle Schoolers: How to Deal

This section includes insights from students on how they deal with tricky situations and behaviors. Encourage students to add their own antidote and discuss ideas.



Challenge for Change

To dig deeper into topics, each chapter includes two challenges for students to explore their own actions and activities to prompt change. Classes might take on these challenges and discuss findings.

BEFORE READING

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Look over the book's cover, table of contents, and chapter titles. What is your first impression of this book? What word best describes how you feel about starting this book? (For example, interested, curious, nervous, etc.)
- The book explores ten "weird" things about middle school. (See the table of contents) While the author researched this book and spoke with students, these ten things rose to the top as the trickiest parts of middle school. Do these things happen in your middle school? Is there a chapter you are especially interested in reading?



WHILE READING

AFTER READING EACH CHAPTER, CONSIDER THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS MAKE CONNECTIONS TO THE CONTENT

Important: When responding to these questions, be sure not to share names to protect the privacy of others (and to avoid drama-o-rama).

Chapter 1: Weird Behavior #1 - Harsh Judgement

On a scale of 1 to 5, how much harsh judgment is floating around the halls of your middle school? (1 = not that much; 5 = tons) Explain why you chose that number. What type of stuff do students tend to judge others about? How much judgment is actually "jumping to conclusions," or people assuming others judge them when they are not.

Chapter 2: Weird Behavior #2 - Changing Friendships

Have you experienced friendship changes in the last year? What was the hardest part of that change? Did anything positive come out of it? Describe.

Chapter 3: Weird Behavior #3 - The Whole "Popularity" Thing

This chapter describes two different types of popularity, "well-liked" students and "high-status" students. Does this description fit the popularity scene at your school? Explain. If not, describe the scene. If you could change something about popularity at your school, what would you change?



WHILE READING

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Chapter 4: Weird Behavior #4 - Crushes & Warp Speed Dating

This chapter explores that there is pressure in some groups to start dating. Does that happen at your school? Why do you think there is pressure to date in middle school?

Chapter 5: Weird Behavior #5 - The Ins and Outs of Cliques & Groups

What is the group scene like at your school? Do groups have different labels and ranks? What are the negative effects of this group scene? What are the positive effects?

Chapter 6: Weird Behavior #6 - Gossip & Drama-O-Rama

Everyone gossips from time to time. Gossip that is judgmental, one-sided, and shared behind someone's back is especially toxic. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much gossip is shared at your school? (1 = not much; 5 = tons) How do you handle gossip about others? How do you deal with gossip about you?

Chapter 7: Weird Behavior #7 - Social Media, Phubbing & F.O.M.O.

Social media has both positive and negative effects. What positive impact does social media have in your middle school? What are the negative impacts? When your parents were in middle school, social media didn't exist. Do you think middle school was better, the same, or worse back then? Explain.

Chapter 8: Weird Behavior #8 - Conflict and Aggressive Behaviors...Ouch!

This chapter breaks down the difference between rude, mean, and bullying behavior. What advice would you share with a student dealing with these behaviors? Is there something your school could do to improve the environment?

Chapter 9: Weird Behavior #9 - Peer Pressure Party

What things are kids pressured to do at your school? Have you felt pressure from your friends or peers to do things you didn't want to do? Are kids that stand up to peer pressure respected? Explain.

Chapter 10: Weird Behavior #10 - STRESS!

Rate your stress level on a scale of 1 to 5. (1 = not much; 5 = tons). If you feel a lot of stress, where does it come from? (pressure I put on myself, pressure from my family, pressure from peers, something else, all of the above) Do you have things that you do to manage your stress? Explain.

Afterword - Ideas and Resources to Help Schools Combat Weird Behaviors

The book's afterward shares ideas to improve middle school campuses. Which of these ideas do you think would improve your middle school? Feel free to share a new idea.

AFTER READING

AFTER READING THE BOOK, CONSIDER THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. The book combines text with stories, facts, activities, and quotes to share information. How did this structure help to develop the ideas and content shared? What did you like about this structure? Would you change anything about this structure to better share the information?
2. The book explores middle school experiences and how to inspire kindness and change. Describe 3 insights you gained from the book about yourself and/or others? Find 2 quotes from the book to support each insight.
3. Looking back over Chapters 1-10, which chapter did you find the most useful? Why? What was "The Final Word" from this chapter? How might this guide you in middle school?
4. Several themes run through the book, such as the human need to belong and be accepted. Choose one theme that resonated with you and write an essay. What can readers take away from the book in relation to this theme?
5. The book references the mythical United Unicorns Middle School. These references illustrate that no middle school is perfect. Like unicorns, UUMS doesn't exist. People grow, learn, and change, especially during the preteen and teen years. Mistakes are common at every age. Describe a mistake you made in middle school that proved to be an opportunity for you to grow and change.
6. Create your own book trailer for *Middle School - Safety Goggles Advised*, or draw an illustration for your favorite chapter..

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

This guide aligns with the standards for Grades 6-8

Reading, Writing and Communicating CCSS: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5

SEL/Physical and Personal Wellness: healthy peer relationships, advocating for self and others, effective communication skills, self-management, personal responsibility, decision making, stress management

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR



Jessica Speer is the award-winning author of *BFF or NRF (Not Really Friends)?*, *A Girls Guide to Happy Friendships* and *Middle School - Safety Goggles Advised*. Her interactive books engage and entertain readers by combining the stories of preteens and teens with fun activities, like quizzes and fill-in-the-blanks. She has a master's degree in social sciences and explores social-emotional topics in ways that connect with kids. For more information, visit www.JessicaSpeer.com

Lesley Imgart is a German illustrator living in Edinburgh, Scotland. She came to the UK for her BA and returned for an MA (and the salt and vinegar crisps). She is interested in autobiographical comics and telling other people's stories.