



# EDUCATORS' GUIDE

*The kid was going to snap. Anyone with a set of working eyes should've been able to see that. Those children could have been nicer to that boy, maybe all this wouldn't have gone down.*

— From *Hello Herman*

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying is not a new phenomena, but bullying in schools has reached epidemic proportions. Victims of bullying often suffer emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression, putting them at an increased risk for substance abuse and suicide. According to recent statistics, harassment and bullying have been linked to 75% of school-shooting incidents. That's a huge number, and one that all educators need to be aware of as they work to address bullying in our schools.

In the play *Hello Herman*, sophomore Herman Howards goes on a school-shooting rampage, killing 39 students and 3 teachers. Over the course of the play, we learn that Herman has been the victim of incessant abuse from peers: verbal, relational, and physical bullying. While a work of fiction, the events in *Hello Herman* are all too familiar: one simply needs to recall the tragic events at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech to make a connection between the play and the ever-increasing incidents of high school shootings and gun violence.

*Hello Herman* raises important questions surrounding the bullying epidemic, including such issues as:

- student isolation
- erosion of human dignity
- lack of empathy
- blame
- parental and societal responsibility
- and the clique warfare that fosters exclusion, labelling, and the narrow social categorization of young people that can lead to bullying behavior

Currently, 49 states have passed anti-bullying legislation. Many school districts across the country are implementing anti-bullying programs into their curricula. Use *Hello Herman* and this educator's guide to assess student attitudes about bullying and to generate a dialogue and inspire written reflections on bullying issues in your school and community. Finally, consider using some of the post-reading activities to empower your students to affect positive change in the nation's efforts to put an end to bullying. Join us in this national effort to put an end to bullying.

## BEFORE READING

### Get a Copy of the *Hello Herman* Play

Go to [www.thehellohermanproject.com/play](http://www.thehellohermanproject.com/play)

### Preview of Vocabulary and References

The following words may be unfamiliar to students. Consider reviewing definitions before reading *Hello Herman*: advocate, anarchy, bastardization, conformist, culture, exclusive (as in a news exclusive), execution, facade, karma, massacre, rampant, remorse, secedes, towelhead, vengeance. (See Appendix for definitions.)

Introduce the following three books referenced in *Hello Herman*. See appendix for descriptions of each title.

*The Anarchist's Cookbook*, by William Powell (1971), *In Cold Blood*, by Truman Capote (1966), and *Mein Kampf*, by Adolph Hitler (1925-26).

### Assessing Background Knowledge

Give students an overview of what they are about to read, and in particular, that the main character was a victim of bullying at school. Begin a pre-reading discussion by asking the following questions:

- What makes a bully? Are there certain “types” of kids that become bullies or victims of bullies?
- What emotions do you think victims of bullies experience? (Possible responses might include: fear, isolation, chipping away of self-dignity, humiliation, loneliness, despair, anger, and desperation).
- Have you ever witnessed bullying? What did you do in response, if anything? Why?
- Do you think that young people have the ability to stop bullying? If so, how? If not, why?