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QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Ask a few of these and let the conversation begin!

1. Neally and Sam, using evidence and applying principles of logical thinking, proved Matt's accusation against Quinn to be false. Have you ever been falsely accused? How did the accusation make you feel? Were you able to prove that the accusation was false, and if so, how?
2. What does it mean to be tolerant, or to practice tolerance? How is having tolerance for a person or an idea different than respecting a person or an idea?
3. Friends and classmates often tease or play pranks and practical jokes on each other. When do such acts cross the line into cruelty or bullying?
4. Bullies often try to avoid taking responsibility for their actions by blaming their victims ("Why are you so sensitive?" "It's not serious—can't you take a joke?" "He was asking for it, he _____!"). Who is responsible for their own behavior—the bully, the victim, or some combination?
5. Some people criticize so-called "green" or "do-gooder" deeds. They say a small action like recycling makes you self-satisfied and smug, and is a distraction from dealing with wider or more difficult issues. ("I pick up aluminum cans at the park, so it doesn't matter that much if I drive two blocks to the store instead of walking or taking the bus.") What do you think?
6. After Quinn tells Mr. Standers who wrote on the bridge, he wishes he hadn't seen anything because Matt is angry and calls Quinn a "rat fink." Have you ever been in a similar situation? If you know that someone has done something bad, should you always tell? Even if you know that the person will be mad or call you names?
7. Traffic congestion; cutbacks to public services like libraries, parks, or police and fire department staffing; water pollution; classroom overcrowding; street gang activity; wildlife habitat loss. What are some of the problems and challenges—large and small—facing your school, neighborhood, or community? Which of these problems can be addressed by students, and which, in your opinion, can or should only be handled by adults?
8. Some people stay silent or do nothing when they see someone being bullied, while others intervene. What do you think makes those people get involved instead of just walking away? How do the different characters in the book react to bullying?
9. Name some school or community service projects that you think actually do some good, and some other projects that might only be "for show." How do you judge whether or not a project is successful? Do you think Quinn's class's project at the Noble Woods Nature Preserve was successful?
10. If you had unlimited resources (time, money, organizational skills), what are some of the service projects you might try to implement?



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WHAT YOU CAN DO

Here are some projects and activities to do at home and in your community

1. Clean up your community park or playground.

Just like Quinn and his class did, you can volunteer to pick up trash in your community. You can even get your friends and family involved. Make sure you contact your local Parks and Recreation Department first to see if you are required to follow any guidelines or have a permit. You might even be able to get local businesses to donate money for garbage bags, gloves, and other materials.

2. Grow your own garden.

Neally's family has a greenhouse where they grow many different kinds of vegetables. Growing your own fruits and vegetables is a great way to promote sustainability. Just make sure that the plants are able to survive in the zone that you live in and that you follow their needs for water and sunlight.

3. Donate items you no longer need.

You can donate items like clothing, toys, books, or games that you are no longer using to local shelters and donation centers. Encourage your friends and family to look for items that they could donate as well.

4. Pay It Forward

Paying it forward is the idea of doing a random act of kindness for someone, and instead of repaying you, that person does a random act of kindness for someone else. And so on. These simple acts of kindness not only help you feel good, but help to counteract things like cruelty and bullying.

5. Recycle!

Do some research to make a list of materials that can be recycled. Investigate all of the materials that your school and family throws away. Are there materials that you have been throwing away that could be recycled instead? Discuss these items with your family and plan a recycling system that works for your home and your family's lifestyle.

6. Upcycle!

Some of those items that you throw away can also be repurposed into decorations for your home or classroom. Ask an adult to help you look online for ideas, and turn your unwanted trash into something useful.

7. Volunteer at a local animal shelter, food pantry, or soup kitchen.

A few hours may not seem like a lot of time, but it makes a big difference for local organizations that rely on volunteers to function. You should be able to locate such organizations online or in a phone book.

8. Volunteer at a nursing home or retirement home.

There are many things that you can do at a local nursing or retirement home. You could read, perform, play games, go on a walk, or just simply sit and chat with the residents. They will enjoy having a visitor, and you will get to meet someone new. Have a parent contact facilities in your area to see what their needs are for volunteers.