SPAGHETTI IN A HOT DOG BUN
By Maria Dismondy
Lucy gets teased by Ralph because of her appearance and the lunch she eats. When Ralph finds himself stuck at the top of the monkey bars Lucy initially thinks she will tell him just how mean he is but when she sees that Ralph is genuinely afraid Lucy overcomes her own hurt feelings and decides to help Ralph.

WITS Connection: Ignore, Talk it out, Seek help

Questions and Activities

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover of the book. What is different about the way the girl is eating her spaghetti? What are the different ways in which we eat spaghetti? Some people cut up their spaghetti, others roll their spaghetti with a fork, some people eat spaghetti in a bowl. What other foods can be eaten in different ways? French fries, eggs, rice, fish.

2. What would happen if you brought spaghetti in a hot dog bun for lunch?

3. Are there foods you would like to bring for lunch but don’t bring because you are concerned you will be teased?

4. What does courage mean? Courage comes from the French root word, “coeur” which means heart. To have courage may be defined as “strength of heart.”

5. The subtitle is “Having the Courage to Be Who You Are.” How is having courage related to eating spaghetti? Sometimes our customs and habits are different from others. It takes courage to be different from those around us because mutual understanding and acceptance may take a little longer.

6. Why do you think it takes courage to be who you are? Sometimes being different is hard because you don’t feel like you “fit in” or connect with others easily.

POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Page 3: Papa says, “Even if we are different from others on the outside, we all have a heart with feelings on the inside.” What does this mean? Despite our differences on the outside we all experience similar emotions - joy, pain, sorrow, excitement. What kinds of feelings do we have? Look for clues in the facial expressions of the characters in the book.

2. Why do you think Ralph starts to tease Lucy? Sometimes people are uncomfortable with new people. In the illustrations throughout the book Ralph seems to always be alone. Maybe Ralph is lonely. Maybe Ralph was teased by other children and thinks this is the way he should make connections with other people.

3. What do you think is Ralph’s family background?

4. What are some ways in which Ralph hurt Lucy?

   a) Tripped on her foot
   b) Made dog noises to describe the appearance of her hair
   c) Called her a poodle
   d) Made fun of her lunch - spaghetti on a hot dog bun
   e) Wrote cruel notes to her
   f) Put a crayon in her hair

5. How does this affect Lucy? She couldn’t sleep. She was sad, embarrassed and furious.
6. Does Lucy use her WITS during the story? Yes, Lucy tried to ignore Ralph’s teasing. Did this work? No, Ralph continued to tease Lucy.

7. What other WITS strategies could Lucy try? Seek help from her teacher or grandpa.

8. In the lunchroom how did the other students react to Ralph’s teasing about Lucy’s spaghetti in a hot dog bun? They ignored Ralph and turned their backs on him.

9. Did this stop the Ralph’s negative behaviour? No, afterschool on the bus Ralph put a crayon in Lucy’s hair?

10. In what other ways could Tony and the other children at the lunch table act to help stop the bullying? They could tell Ralph to stop. They could defend Lucy and suggest that there is nothing weird about Lucy’s lunch. Maybe everyone could bring spaghetti for lunch on the same day. They could talk it out or seek help from an adult.

11. How would you respond if you witnessed someone being teased about their lunch?

12. On the way home from school Lucy wonders why Ralph keeps teasing her. She says, “Maybe Ralph is mean to me because he thinks being different is bad.” Is Lucy correct about this statement? Why or why not?

13. After receiving the dog bones and a nasty note from Ralph Lucy spends the recess playing alone. She does not want to tell her teacher, Miss. Marcia about Ralph’s behaviour because she does not want to be a tattletale. What is the difference between being a tattletale and asking for help? A tattletale aims to get people into trouble. Seeking help aims to help people (including themselves) out of trouble.

14. When does Ralph stop teasing Lucy? When she helped Ralph down from the top of the monkey bars. Why does he stop? Sometimes people need to be shown compassion before they demonstrate it to others.

15. Do you think Ralph’s response would happen in real life? Why? Why not?

16. What else might make Ralph stop bullying Lucy? If Lucy or the bystanders sought help the bullying may have stopped.

17. How does Lucy demonstrate courage in the story? Lucy told Ralph how she felt after she received the dog bones and nasty note. Lucy talked it out again and named Ralph’s behaviour. When Ralph was stuck on the monkey bars Lucy helped Ralph to the ground despite her own hurt feelings.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- Different On The Outside - Same On The Inside

Ask students to trace an outline of themselves on a 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper. Around the outside of their shape students write descriptions of what makes them unique “on the outside” based on characteristics that we can see (hair colour, eye colour, height, accent). On the inside of their shape students write personal characteristics that cannot be seen immediately (examples: favourite foods, books or places, fears, dreams). Once completed, students share their seen and unseen characteristics with one another. In a class discussion, summarize on chart paper the many ways the children are different on the outside and the many ways they are the same on the inside.

- Fixing It Together

Lucy felt that she should deal with Ralph on her own. Papa Gino is concerned about his grand-daughter and says to her, “Always remember, if something’s not right, we can work on fixing it together.” Students fill in the chart Fixing It Together by describing other ideas and strategies for dealing with Ralph’s teasing.
• Cooking Up Courage

Brainstorm words that describe the meaning of courage with the class. After collecting synonyms and examples of courage ask students to write a recipe for courage. Show an example of how a recipe is written. Explain the two parts of a recipe - the ingredients and the directions. Review common verbs that are used in recipes (stir, preheat, measure, sift, bake, knead, roll, squeeze, pour). Display the “Courage Recipes” on a bulletin board in the class.

• Hot Dog Book Covers

Brainstorm with your students ways in which other cultures would fill a hot dog bun with a food item other than a wiener. In India it might be butter chicken in a hot dog bun, in China it may be sweet and sour pork in a hot dog bun, in Poland it might be a perogy in a hot dog bun. Ask students to re-create the title and book cover for the book, *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun*. The title should reflect a unique food item from their culture. Each student will draw a self-portrait showing them eating their unique hot dog on the cover of the book. Discuss with the class the similar and different spices, smells, and consistencies (potential messiness) of the various unique hot dogs.

• Family Celebrations

Discuss with the class the unique foods that are eaten in their families during special celebrations. Ask students to bring in pictures of these celebrations or if appropriate hold a special luncheon in which students bring celebration foods that are important to their family traditions.

• Related WITS Book: Courage

Read the WITS book, *Courage* by Bernard Waber and describe the types of courage in this book with the types of courage Lucy demonstrated in the story.
Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun: Fixing It Together

“Always remember, if something’s not right, we can work on fixing it together.” Papa Gino

In each of the boxes below write and draw how Lucy or the other children could respond differently in order to deal with the teasing and bullying.

Ralph whispered “Woof! I can’t see the book with this poodle in front of me.” Lucy could hear him giggling behind her. “Oh no, why did it have to be me?” she wondered.

Across the table, Ralph hollered, “Yuck. That’s the disgusting smell. Whoever heard of eating spaghetti in a hot dog bun? Don’t you think that’s gross Tony?” Tony and the other children turned away from Ralph.

“How was your day?” Papa Gino asked. “Fine,” Lucy mumbled. Papa reached over and pulled a crayon out of her hair. “How did this happen?” he asked. Lucy didn’t say a word.

Lucy took the bag Ralph handed her. Inside were dog bones and a picture with a note that read: Lucy, Lucy eats stinky food that puts us in a big, bad mood. Lucy, Lucy, hair shaped like a cone, here’s a treat for you- a yummy dog bone!
Cooking up Courage to Stop Bullying

Recipe name:

Ingredients:

Directions:
Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun: Hot Dog Book Covers

Name: