

#12063

POPULARITY: WHAT'S THE PRICE?

SUNBURST VISUAL MEDIA, 2003

Grade Level: 5–10

16 Minutes



CAPTIONED MEDIA PROGRAM RELATED RESOURCES

[#9263 IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE: WHEN IT'S COOL TO TALK](#)

[#10894 THE DARK SIDE OF DATING: GOSSIP, HURT, AND RISKS](#)

[#11098 EVERY YOUNG PERSON HAS CHALLENGES](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Learning Objectives | 5 |
| Program Summary | 6 |
| Discussion Questions | 9 |
| Suggested Activities | 12 |
| Handouts | 14 |
| <i>(may be copied for class distribution)</i> | |
| Suggested Reading | 18 |
| Script | 23 |

Running Time: approximately 15 minutes

INTRODUCTION

As children move from elementary into middle school, their standing in the popularity polls becomes increasingly important in their lives. Early adolescence is a time of flux, a time when teenagers' self-esteem, confidence, and social interaction are at a precarious, formative stage. Lacking a clear sense of their own identity, they turn to peers as a source of activities, influence, and support, using their tentative understanding of the social landscape to figure out where and how they can fit in. It is at this point that the popularity game—who's in and who's out—comes into play.

Everyone who has already lived through the turmoil of adolescence has vivid memories of a middle-school social landscape where peer acceptance is paramount, and success or failure in the competition for popularity can loom larger than life itself. Although they may not do it consciously, middle-school kids can find themselves conforming in their dress and opinions to the demands and expectations of other middle-school kids, suffering indignities rather than stand up for themselves lest their more popular friends choose to not like them anymore.

Popularity: What's the Price? is designed to give middle-schoolers insight into the nature of popularity, its drawbacks as well as its benefits. Hanging out with people who dress, talk, and act alike does indeed provide young teens with much-needed affirmation and a sense of identity. The problem is, membership in a group of kids who exclude others simply because they are different promotes snobbery and cruelty, something that can be particularly threatening to children of middle-school age because of their vulnerable self-image and confusion about social roles.

Using four realistic scenarios dramatizing the different ways popular kids keep their followers in line, **Popularity: What's the Price?** also looks at what makes some kids more popular than others and highlights the price some teens may pay to be popular. Who's in and who's out can depend on the whims of the more popular kids, and conforming for the sake of fitting in can bring with it a sacrifice of another sort: integrity. The program suggests that you can't buy popularity and that in some situations, opting for acceptance can prevent you from becoming the kind of person you want to be.

To further extend the program's scope and usefulness, the Teacher's Guide provides thought-provoking discussion questions, a number of suggested activities, and an extensive reading list.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This program is designed to help students:

- gain insight into the nature of popularity.
- recognize that the yearning to be popular and to fit in is fairly universal.
- understand that popularity can't be bought.
- become aware that popularity and happiness are not the same.
- understand that popularity can have a price and that the price may be one's integrity.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

In the girls' locker room, Desiree, Valerie, and Zoe are discussing Josh's upcoming party while changing into their gym clothes. "Are you going?" Desiree asks Valerie and Zoe. Regina tries to break into the three girls' conversation, but they ignore her. When she asks what party they are talking about, she still gets no answer. But after learning from Claire that she wasn't invited to Josh's party either, and then hearing Claire get invited, Regina wonders why. "You know how it is," Claire tells her. "The popular kids decide who's in and who's out. Who knows why?" Regina asks if she can go too and Claire says it's up to the other girls.

The end of the day finds Claire and Regina sitting outside the school looking at a magazine. As Valerie, Desiree and Zoe join them, Valerie tells Regina to move so she can sit next to Claire. Valerie and the others then proceed to encourage Claire to join their soccer team, meanwhile ignoring Regina's attempt to impress them with her soccer experience. However, as soon as Regina announces what outfit she'll be wearing to Josh's party, Valerie indignantly turns to Claire and demands to know whether she invited Regina. "It's up to you guys, I guess," Claire replies weakly. Valerie immediately says no to Regina's going, and although Desiree tries to intercede for Regina, the interchange ends with Regina in tears.

In class the next day, Regina thanks Desiree for sticking up for her, and asks why Valerie and Zoe don't like her. "I try to be nice to them," Regina says. "Yeah, I know, maybe too nice...and you try too hard," replies Desiree. "You shouldn't let them push you around." *An on-screen discussion question asks: What is Desiree trying to tell Regina about being popular?*

Like Evan, Dominick is a popular kid with a following. Trevor and Richard play up to him, joining him in making fun of other kids, flattering him about his cool sneakers, and announcing that they want the same style for themselves. They even tell him that as long as he's going on the class trip to Boston, they'll go, too. But when Trevor's mom learns how much the sneakers cost, she tells him he'll have to use his own money. What's more, the class trip is out of the question: she's sorry but she just can't spare the money. Trevor is sure he'll never be popular if he can't do the things everyone else does. As it turns out, Trevor discov-

ers that Richard won't be able to go on the trip either. *On-screen questions ask: What effect do the right clothes and having money have on being popular? Does popularity bring happiness?*

In the next scenario, Miranda and Evan are campaigning for votes for class president. With all the kids milling around Evan, Miranda is sure she doesn't have a chance. Her friend Danielle, however, insists that even though Evan is popular, Miranda would be better in the job and should find a way to get kids to listen to her ideas. It's popularity, not ideas, that count, asserts Miranda. "I just have to figure out a way to get more popular."

Her plan is to ask her classmates to a party. Danielle is skeptical that it will make Miranda popular, although she adds that the idea can't hurt. Nevertheless, it can and does: Miranda overhears Valerie and Zoe discussing the campaign and maintaining that party or not, no one will vote for Miranda over Evan. Miranda is devastated.

In her campaign speech, however, Miranda does a much better job than Evan in getting her ideas across, and while Evan still wins, her total vote comes close to Evan's. Encouraged by Danielle, Miranda decides not to try and buy popularity but to work harder on her ideas, and run again next year. *An on-screen discussion question asks: What do you think about Miranda's plan for next year's election? Could it work? Discuss.*

In the last scenario, Coach Reilly is giving the soccer team a pep talk, telling them they look like a bunch of clowns on the field, and exhorting them to play harder in the big game on Saturday. After practice, Evan and Josh head for the lockers. Seeing their new teammate Jason a few steps behind them, they ask him to come with them for pizza, making Jason very happy. Once at the pizza parlor, however, the three discuss Sam, one of the players on the team they will play on Saturday, who in their last match scored four goals against them. To win we have to take Sam out, say Evan and Josh, and they propose that Jason help do it. But this idea doesn't sit well with Jason: he's not into hurting anyone on purpose or playing dirty, he tells them. We can make it look accidental, Evan and Josh tell him. "If you want to be one of us," they add threateningly, "you need to help out. We're counting on you."

Later, playing catch with his dad, Jason asks whether when he was in school and playing sports, if he ever hurt someone on purpose. Alerted by the question, his dad asks if someone has asked Jason to cheat. Jason admits it, adding that he doesn't like the idea and wouldn't like someone to do it to him. "But if I don't go along...", he continues. "You won't be one of guys?" his dad says. He sympathizes with Jason, but tells him that before he decides, he needs to think about the kind of person he wants to be. *An on-screen discussion question asks viewers: Is it okay it to do something you know is wrong to be popular? Discuss why some teens are willing to pay this price.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Please note: Questions marked with an * appear on-screen at the end of the corresponding scenario.

- (1) Why would Desiree and Zoe refuse to go to Josh's party if Valerie isn't allowed to go? Do you think most kids in an in-group would follow what the leader does?
- (2) Why does Regina keep trying to break into the group's conversation when they keep ignoring her? Do you think wanting to belong to an in-group is common among teenagers? Why or why not?
- (3) After Claire is invited by the group to go with them to Josh's party and Regina wonders why, Claire tells her, "You know how it is: the popular kids decide who's in and who's out." Is this true at your school? How can teens deal with this issue?
- (4) Ignoring Regina altogether, Valerie and the other girls try to convince Claire to try out for their soccer team. Why would Claire tell them she'd think about it?
- (5) When Zoe questions Claire about inviting Regina to Josh's party, how does Claire respond? How does Valerie respond? Would it have been a big deal if Regina did go with them to the party? Why or why not?
- (6) Discuss why you think Valerie is so cruel to Regina. Do you think Valerie is a bully? Why or why not? Is it possible for someone who is popular to also be a bully? Why or why not?
- (7) In class, Regina tells Desiree that all she's trying to do is to be nice to Valerie and Zoe, and Desiree replies, "Maybe too nice." What does Desiree mean?
- (8) What price does Desiree seem willing to pay for being part of the popular group?
- (9*) What is Desiree trying to tell Regina about being popular?

- (10) How do Trevor and Richard play up to Dominick? Do you think they really like him? Why or why not?
- (11) Why is it important for kids to have the same clothes as other kids, even if they're expensive? Is it important to you? Why or why not?
- (12) Why does Trevor feel he'll be an outcast if he can't do the things everyone else does? What does it mean to "be yourself"?
- (13*) What effect do the right clothes and having money have on being popular?
- (14*) Will popularity bring happiness? Why or why not?
- (15) Miranda says that the kids in school don't care about ideas, that what they care about is who's popular. Do you think this is true in your school? Why or why not?
- (16) Miranda thinks that throwing a free party for her classmates is a way to become popular. What do you think of her idea?
- (17) In the end, Miranda decides that you can't buy popularity. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- (18) Why would anyone vote for a person just because he or she is popular? Would you? Why or why not?
- (19*) What do you think about Miranda's plan for next year's election? Could it work? Discuss.
- (20) Do you think intentional "accidents" happen often in kids' sports? In professional sports? Explain.

- (21) Should Jason accept Josh and Evan's plan to play dirty so that he can be one of the guys? Why or why not?
- (22) What do you think of Jason's dad's advice about whether to go along with the crowd?
- (23*) Is it okay to do something you know is wrong just to be popular? Discuss why some teens are willing to pay this price?
- (24) What did you learn about yourself from the program?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- (1) On the chalkboard, write three headings: Girls, Boys, Both Sexes. Ask students to brainstorm the traits that make girls popular. List their suggestions under the appropriate heading. Do the same for the traits that make 'boys' and then 'both sexes' popular. Lead a discussion about the traits on each list. Do students have reservations about any of these? How would they rank them in order of importance? Do students think it's necessary to sacrifice being oneself in order to be popular, and is it worth it?
- (2) In today's society, a shared cultural belief is that in order to be popular, a teenage girl must be beautiful, while a teenage boy should be athletic and strong. Having money helps in either case. Lead a discussion about the role of teenage movies and television shows in fostering these beliefs. Ask students, are the teenage attitudes about popularity as portrayed in movies or TV realistic or just entertaining? If they wish, have interested students select a movie to see or TV show to watch for its depiction of what makes young people popular, and report back to the class on what they have learned. What are some stereotypes in the movies about popularity?
- (3) Some music and music videos have lyrics and elements of how popularity, or the lack thereof, affects teens. Ask interested students to survey current songs for what they say about popularity, and report back to the class on their findings.
- (4) Ask interested students to lead a panel discussion with the title, "Popularity isn't everything." Have each person present something in their own life that is more important to them than being popular. Raise the following points as they lead the discussion: Are the popular kids the best liked? Like everyone else, do popular kids have problems too? Can you be popular one year, and unpopular the next? Why?
- (5) Since poetry is the language of feelings, have interested students write back-to-back poems, describing in the first poem what it feels like to be popular, and in the second, what it feels like to be an outsider. The poems need not reflect a writer's personal experience, but rather describe what he or she imagines the character in the poem to be feeling in each situation.

- (6) Ask interested students to select one of the works of fiction found in the Suggested Reading section of this Guide, or another book on the subject of popularity that your school or local librarian might recommend. Have them write a report on the book that focuses on their reaction to the way the issue of popularity is portrayed. Have them read their reports to the rest of the class.

HANDOUT 1

If you're like most kids, you want to be popular. Being at the top, knowing other kids see you as cool, gives you a feeling of self-confidence. But sometimes the desire for popularity can cause teens to act contrary to their values, or do something they regret later. In each of the situations below decide what you would do. Be as honest as possible in your answers: no one will see them but you. Then decide whether or not popularity can sometimes have a price.

| | YES | MAYBE | NO |
|---|-----|-------|-----|
| 1. Would you dress or act in a certain way just to fit in? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Would you let your desire to be popular discourage you from having friends outside your group? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Would you do things you don't really enjoy, because your popular friends are doing it? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Would you keep your opinions to yourself if you thought your popular friends might disapprove? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 5. Would you keep silent if your popular friends should be cruel to someone? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 6. Would you try to include someone who was ignored by your popular friends? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 7. Would you go along if your popular friends harassed or put down other kids? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 8. Would you vote for someone for class office just because he or she is popular? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 9. Would you take it to heart if your popular friends should find fault with you or criticize your taste in clothes, music, etc.? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Would you feel your friends might drop you if you couldn't afford to do the same things they do? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Would you go along if your popular friends asked you to do something you believe is wrong? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Would you go along if your popular friends smoked, drank or used drugs? | ___ | ___ | ___ |

HANDOUT 2

Some qualities that are often attributed to "popular" teens are intelligence, good sense of humor, talent, good looks, etc. Think about the qualities you think make someone popular. List them below. You may include any of those mentioned that you agree with.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Some qualities that are often said to make a person a good friend are sensitivity, perceptiveness, honesty, humility, etc. Think about the qualities you look for in a friend. List them below. You may include any of those mentioned that you agree with.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Decide which are the three most important qualities you look for in a friend and list them in order.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HANDOUT 3

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

HANDOUT 4

Read the following vignettes and then write what you think the character will do and why. Then say whether you think it's the wisest choice. If not, why?

- 1) Mara is having a party and has been talking about it to several of her classmates. Wendy, who is very popular, tells Mara not to have the party on the date she has picked because Wendy will be away that weekend. Even though Mara has already sent invitations, Wendy tells Mara to reschedule the party.

What do you think Mara will do? Why? _____

Is this the best choice? Why, or why not? _____

- 2) Zack is good at most sports and can choose what teams he will play on. The most popular boys in his school play hockey. Zack enjoys basketball more than hockey. His friends ask him what team he's going out for.

Which team do you think he'll pick? Why? _____

Is this the best choice? Why, or why not? _____

- 3) Kenny needs new soccer shoes. His friends are all buying the latest sneakers and they tell him to forget about the soccer shoes and join in and buy the new sneakers. His mom says she'll only pay for one or the other.

Which do you think Kenny will buy? Why? _____

Is this the best choice? Why, or why not? _____

- 4) Rachel and her friends prefer one kind of music, but the popular crowd prefers another for the class dance. The class has included Rachel on the music committee for the dance, along with the popular kids. When the committee meets, the members start talking about the music they will have. Lisa, the committee chairman asks if anyone disagrees with the choice being discussed.

Do you think Rachel will speak up for what she and her friends like? Why, or why not? _____

Is this the best choice? Why, or why not? _____

SUGGESTED READING

Reading for Educators and Parents

Blanco, Jodee. *Please Stop Laughing at Me...One Woman's Inspirational Story*. Adams Media Corporation, 2003. A publicist and author details her experiences in grade school and junior high when she found herself ostracized, bullied, and unable to maintain her friendship with the “cool” group of kids after she took it on herself to defend some classmate underdogs.

Eberlein, Tamara. “What Really Makes a Kid Popular?” *Family Life*, August 2001, p.60. How parents can help their child cope with the pressure to be cool.

Giannetti, Charlene C. and Margaret Sangarene. *Cliques: 8 Steps to Help Your Child Survive the Social Jungle*. Broadway Books, 2001. A blueprint for parents for understanding contemporary adolescent culture, along with tools to help them fight the tyranny of the “in-crowd.”

Koubek, Christine Wickert. *Friends, Cliques, and Peer Pressure: Be True to Yourself*. Enslow Publishers, 2002. Sensitizes educators and parents to the pressures young adolescents encounter, and provides practical advice for helping teens deal with peer pressure.

Orecklin, Michele and Rebecca Winters. “Beware of the In Crowd.” *Time Magazine*, August 21, 2000. Reports on a study by the American Psychological Association that finds that far from being social misfits, bullies are likely to be the most popular kids, “the ones everyone wants to hang around with.”

Simmons, Rachel. *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*. Harcourt, 2002. Arguing that girls are socialized to value friendships but not express the anger that might destroy them, describes the many kinds of aggression girls act out to one another. Provides parents, teachers, and girls themselves clear-cut strategies for resisting them.

Thompson, Michael, et al. *Best Friends, Worst Enemies*. Ballantine Books, 2001. A guide to raising healthy children that explores each stage of development and doesn't shy away from describing negative experiences, including some outright cruel acts that can be hard on parents and children but is sometimes necessary for learning about the world.

Wiseman, Rosalind. *Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and Other Realities of Adolescence*. Three Rivers Press, 2003. Help for parents in understanding their daughters' friendships, the power of cliques, and the roles of girls within them.

Reading for Grades 5 to 9

Carey, Joely. *Staying Cool*. Barrons Educational Series, 2002. How teens can say no to peer pressure while staying popular with their friends.

Cooney, Caroline B. *Among Friends*. Laurel Leaf Reprint, 1988. Writing in their diaries from their separate points of view, six friends detail how they punish any member of their peer group who might actually outshine them.

Cullen, Lynn. *Meeting the Make-Out King*. Clarion Books, 1994. Seventh-grader Nora's happiness at being accepted by the cool crowd at school turns into dismay as her new friends pressure her to begin dating, something she's not quite ready for.

Gerson, Corinne. *The Closed Circle*. Scholastic Press Reissue, 1981. Audrey's been accepted into a secret circle of popular girls, but her best friend hasn't.

Greene, Constance C. *Ask Anybody*. Puffin Reprint, 1991. How newcomer Nell takes over the leadership of the Chum Club.

Griffin, Adele. *Overnight*. Putnam Publishing Group Juveniles, 2003. Although a member of the sixth-grade in crowd at Fielding Academy, Gray Rosenfeld keenly feels her loss of status within the group after group leader Martha chooses her as her victim.

Hinton, S.E. *The Outsiders*. Prentice Hall Reprint, 1997. Two kinds of people exist in Ponyboy's world: "greasers" like him and his friends, and the "Socs," rich kids from across town who enjoy beating up "greasers." Trouble between the two groups begins the night someone takes things too far. For older readers.

Howe, Norma. *In With the Out Crowd*. Flare Reissue, 1989. Robin is part of the in crowd until she refuses to "really" be Bill's girl.

Kaye, Marilyn. *Atonement of Mindy Wise*. Harcourt Young Classics, 1991. On the Jewish Day of Atonement, Mindy finds herself with lots to repent for: now that she's hanging out with the popular group at school, she's turned into a cheat and a troublemaker.

Koss, Amy Goldman. *The Girls*. Dial, 2000. In this realistic and suspenseful novel, five members of a clique that is falling apart give their differing versions of events, offering clear insight into why young teens should think twice before sacrificing their individuality to chase an elusive popularity.

Martin, Ann M. *The Slam Book*. Scholastic Reprint, 1989. The slam book gives Anna's group an edge in popularity, but it also sets in motion a chain of events that none of them can control.

Mazer, Norma Fox. *Silver*. William Morrow, 1988. When 14-year-old Sarabeth Silver transfers to a new school, she's thrilled to find herself part of the in crowd, until she becomes privy to an awful secret.

- Moehn, Heather. *Everything You Need to Know About Cliques*. Rosen Publishing Group, 2001. Shows teens the realities of cliques and makes clear that everyone, including “popular” people, must deal with rejection and insecurity.
- Park, Barbara. *Buddies*. Random Library. 1985. Part of the in crowd for the first time in her life, Dinah acts out of character and learns a lesson.
- Peck, Richard. *Princess Ashley*. Laurel Leaf Reissue, 1990. Newcomer Chelsea is almost overwhelmed by her sudden insider status as part of an “in” group.
- “Real Friends.” *Current Health* 2, February 1998, p.16. A look at the psychological aspect of the importance of friends in one’s life. Offers suggestions for making friends.
- Richards, Arlene Kramer and Irene Willis. *Boy Friends, Girl Friends, Just Friends*. Atheneum, 1984. Useful insights into making and getting along with friends.
- Schneider, Meg. *Popularity Has Its Ups and Downs*. Julian Messner, 1991. How to have good friends and feel good about yourself.
- Scott, Sharon. *How to Say No and Keep Your Friends: Peer Pressure Reversal for Teens and Pre-Teens*. 2nd Edition, Human Resources Development Press, 1997. How to check out the scene, make a good decision, and act to avoid trouble, all without losing friends.
- Slade, Arthur G. *Tribes*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2002. A teen whose father was a famous anthropologist studies his classmates’ behavior and divides them into tribes: the Logo Tribe, addicted to wearing brand name clothes; the Digerati Tribe, worshipers of “bytes and silicon chips,” and the Busybody Tribe, dedicated to picking up “every kind of vibration and echo.”

Stewart, Gail B. *Peer Pressure*. Macmillan, 1989. Explores problems of conformity and adolescence and teens' fear of being different.

Vail, Rachel. *Popularity Contest*. Bt Bound, 2000. Down-to-earth Zoe Grandon competes for the office of class president and the approval of all her friends.

Vail, Rachel. *Wonder*. Bt Bound, 1999. How 7th-grader Jessica survives the first year of junior high and learns self-respect as she deals with the loss of a best friend who abandons her for a clique.

Voight, Cynthia. *Izzy, Willy-Nilly*. Atheneum, 1986. After losing part of her leg in a car crash, Izzy struggles to rethink who her real friends are.

Additional Materials Available from Sunburst Visual Media

"*Student Workshop: Learning Relationship Skills*"

37-minute video for Grades 5 to 9

"Choosing Your Friends"

19-minute video for Grades 5 to 9

"*Real People Cliques: Who's In, Who's Out*"

25-minute video for Grades 5 to 9

"*Student Workshop Gossiping, Taunting, Bullying: It's All Harassment*"

24-minute video for Grades 5 to 9

"How to Say No and Keep Your Friends" - pamphlet

"Drugs, Your Friends and You: An Update" - pamphlet

"Healthy Relationships: Choosing Your Friends" - pamphlet

SCRIPT

POPULARITY: WHAT'S THE PRICE?

Desiree

Are you guys going to Josh's party Saturday night?

Zoe

Yeah, definitely.

Valerie

As long as my dad lets me go.

Desiree

He has to! It's the weekend.

Zoe

If you don't go, I'm not going.

Desiree

Me either!

Regina

Hey Valerie, I really like your jeans.

Valerie

Thanks.

Regina

Where'd you get them?

Desiree

So what are wearing to the party...if you go?

Regina

What party are you going to? Is someone having a party?

Valerie

Josh. Weren't you invited?

Regina

I guess not.

Aren't you friends with Josh?

Claire

We live on the same block, but he didn't invite me either.

• • •

Regina

Wait for me!

Claire

I *am* waiting.

Zoe

Claire, come to the party with us.

Claire

Okay, thanks.

Regina

You're going to the party?

Claire

Yeah, why not?

Regina

Those girls are starting to like you. I wonder why?

Claire

Thanks a lot. You know how it is: the popular kids decide who's in and who's out. Who knows why.

Regina

Maybe I could come with you to the party? In case it's not that great. Can I?

Claire

It's okay with me, but you'd better ask them first.

• • •

Valerie

Regina, let me sit there will you?

Regina

Sure, okay.

Valerie

Thanks. I'm so tired from soccer practice.

Zoe

Me too. You going to watch the tryouts on Thursday?

Valerie

Sure...gotta see who we'll get. We need a good goalie.

Zoe

Claire, we're all on the team together. Do you play?

Claire

Well I was on a rec team for a while a few years ago.

Regina

I play soccer all the time with my brothers.

Zoe

Claire, you should try out Thursday.

Desiree

Yeah, it would be great if you were on the team too.

Claire

I don't know. I'm trying out for the play.

Zoe

Oh come on, it would be so good for us all to be together and everything.

Claire

Okay, I'll think about it.

Regina

Maybe I will too.

Valerie

I decided what I'm going to wear to the party tonight. You know that black dress with the spaghetti straps?

Regina

I have a top like that. You know...with... the...skinny...little straps. But that's not what I'm wearing to the party. If I could come too, that is.

Zoe

Claire, did you invite her?

Claire

She asked if she could, but it's up to you guys I guess.

Valerie

No, I don't think so.

Desiree

Valerie, what's the big deal if she comes?

Valerie

I don't want her tagging along all night.

Zoe

Yeah, she's *really* annoying.

Desiree

You guys don't have to make her cry.

Valerie

We should stop wasting our breath on her. She's not worth it.

Claire

You guys...she's not so bad.

• • •

Regina

Thanks for sticking up for me the other day. I don't know why Valerie and Zoe don't like me. I'm trying to be so nice to them.

Desiree

Yeah I know. Maybe too nice.

Regina

What do you mean?

Desiree

Sometimes it's just...I don't...you try too hard.

Regina

Now they like Claire. She doesn't even try to get in with them.

Desiree

That's what I mean.

Regina

I don't get it.

Desiree

You can't let them push you around. They don't respect you.

Regina

I'm just trying to be friends.

Desiree

Whatever.

Discussion Question

- What is Desiree trying to tell Regina about being popular?

"Trevor"

Dominick

That shirt looks like he got it at the flea market!

Richard

Yeah, on sale.

Dominick

Loser!

Richard

Hey Dominick, where'd you get those sneakers? They're so cool!

Dominick

At the mall. Sneaker Warehouse.

Trevor

Do they have more?

Dominick

Yeah, in all different colors.

Richard

I got to get a pair of those.

Trevor

Me too.

Richard

Hey, you guys going on the class trip to Boston?

Trevor

Sure, no parents man. I'm there!

Richard

There will be parents there.

Trevor

Not mine!

Dominick

I'm going...you going?

Richard

Yeah, I've still got to get permission...but I'm going.

Trevor

Me too. My mom will give me the money.

• • •

Richard

These are the ones I want.

Trevor

They're great. I need a pair of these, too.

Richard

Wow, look how much they cost!

Trevor

Whoa! That's a lot.

Richard

You think your mom will give you that kind of money?

Trevor

Yeah, I hope so. I have to have them.

• • •

Mother

I can't afford that for a pair of sneakers Trevor...no way. *My* sneakers only cost about half that much.

Trevor

What if I pay half with the money Grandpa gave me?

Mother

If you want to spend that much using your own money, go for it. But you better like them 'cause that's a lot of money on one pair of sneakers.

• • •

Trevor

All of the kids are going on the trip! This year it's Boston—it's educational! You know, the Revolutionary War and Paul Revere.

Mother

I'm glad it's educational. How much is this all going to cost me?

Trevor

Two hundred and fifty dollars.

Mother

Ouch! Trevor, that's a lot of money.

Trevor

Yeah, but it's educational.

Mother

I'm sorry honey, but I had to put all that money into the car last week. Things are really tight now.

Trevor

But everybody's going!

Mother

I doubt that.

Trevor

It's true!

Mother

Look honey, I know this is hard for you to understand, but I just don't have the money.

Trevor

If I don't go, I'm going to be an outcast.

Mother

An outcast?

Trevor

Seriously! How am I ever gonna be popular if I can't do the things everyone else can do.

Mother

I'm really sorry, honey. It's out of the question.

• • •

Trevor

I can't go to Boston. My mom won't give me the money.

Richard

Mine won't either.

Trevor

Really?

Richard

Yeah, my folks said it's just too expensive right now.

Trevor

Now I don't feel so bad.

Richard

Jack can't go either, so he's coming over to my house. Why don't you come, too?

Trevor

That's cool...we can be outcasts together.

Richard

Yeah, and rent some movies or something.

Discussion Question

- What effect do the right clothes and having money have on being popular? Does popularity bring happiness?

“Miranda”

Danielle

These cookies are great.

Miranda

Yeah, thanks. Now go vote for Evan.

Trevor

What do you mean?

Miranda

That’s what they all did. Look. I don’t have a chance.

Danielle

It’s just that Evan is so popular.

Miranda

I know.

Trevor

I think you’d be better in the job though. You just have to find a way to get the kids to listen to your ideas.

Miranda

They don’t care about my ideas. They care about who’s cool. I have to figure out a way to get more popular.

• • •

Mother

So how's the campaign going?

Evan

Great. Tomorrow we make our speeches.

Mother

I'd like to hear yours after you written it.

Evan

I don't need to write it out. I'll just make it up.

Mother

I don't know if that's a good idea.

Evan

It doesn't matter. All my friends are voting for me. Miranda's smart...but she's not really that popular. I'll win.

• • •

Danielle

Cool! At Sport Time! This is great. I can't wait. Let me help hand out those invitations.

Miranda

This will make the kids like me more. ...What?

Danielle

Well, I don't know. I guess it can't hurt.

• • •

Desiree

What a great party!

Miranda

Thanks, Desiree. I hope you're going to vote for me.

Desiree

Sure. There's Valerie, I have to go!

Danielle

Maybe this *will* work.

Miranda

I hope so.

Valerie

I don't know who she thinks she's kidding. I mean party or not, no one's voting for her over Evan.

Zoe

Yeah, she's dreaming. I still don't understand why she tried.

• • •

Trevor

Three hundred and one for Evan...three hundred and two for Evan...three hundred and three for Evan. Two hundred ninety nine for Miranda. Three hundred for Miranda. Three hundred and one for Miranda. Three hundred and four for Evan. Three hundred and five for Evan. Three hundred and six for Evan. That's the final count.

Danielle

It's official: 306 to 301. Evan Miller wins.

Trevor

Congratulations to Evan Miller, our next Student Body President.

Miranda did better than I thought she would.

Danielle

She made such a good speech. Plus she had so many good ideas. I'm a little disappointed.

Trevor

Yeah, well you know, a lot of kids were really talking about that idea she had for a school garden. Maybe she could do it anyway, even though she lost the election.

Danielle

It would be cool.

Trevor

Talk to her about it. I'll help.

Danielle

Okay.

• • •

Miranda

I learned a lot from this election.

Danielle

Like what?

Miranda

That you can't buy popularity, for one thing.

Danielle

It's too bad that popularity always wins out.

Miranda

I would have won if I worked harder on getting my ideas out. Mrs. Klein said I made a great speech.

Danielle

Everyone said so.

Miranda

Maybe next year. And if I run again, I'm going to really focus on my ideas. Forget parties.

Danielle

You think?

Miranda

Thanks for helping me.

Danielle

No problem.

Discussion Question

- What do you think about Miranda's plan for next year's election? Could it work? Discuss.

“Jason”**Coach Reilly**

Listen up! Evan, you're looking aggressive.

Evan

Thanks, Coach.

Coach Reilly

The rest of you: you're going to have to play harder on Saturday. You're looking like a bunch of clowns out there.

This is serious. If you goof around on Saturday like that, you're dead. This is the big game—the Warriors! Don't forget that! Now get out of here.

Josh

Should we ask Jason to come?

Evan

Yeah, talk to him about the game.

Jason, we're going for pizza, want to come?

Jason

Yeah, I'll go.

• • •

Evan

Do you guys remember that kid on the Warriors...he played Striker, I think. He scored three or four goals against us last time?

Josh

Yeah, he scored four goals. His name is Sam.

Evan

He's going to be a problem.

Josh

That's what I was thinking.

Evan

Jason...

Jason

Yeah?

Evan

I was thinking. You and I will be playing near him. We ought to take him out.

Jason

You mean hurt him?

Evan

Yeah.

Josh

Yeah, good idea.

Jason

Hurt him on purpose?

Evan

Yeah.

Josh

That's the way we play the game Jason. You're new, you've got to learn how it's done.

Jason

I don't know. It doesn't sound right.

Evan

We can make it look accidental. If we each take a foul, we can still play.

Jason

I'm not into hurting anyone on purpose and playing dirty.

Josh

Even if we're losing?

Evan

You want to be one of the guys, right?

Jason

Yeah, sure.

Evan

Well, this game is important to the guys.

Josh

To the whole school.

Evan

If you want to be one of us, you need to help out. We're counting on you.

• • •

Jason

Are you coming to the game on Saturday?

Father

Yeah, sure thing.

Jason

Dad, when you were in school and you played sports, did you ever, you know...hurt someone on purpose? To win.

Father

Our team wasn't that good. It never mattered enough to cheat.

Jason

Then if it did matter—it would be okay?

Father

That's not what I meant. Jason, did somebody tell you to cheat?

Jason

Some of the guys were saying we should take out this guy on the other team. So we could win. Hurt him by accident or something.

Father

“By accident” on purpose?

Jason

Yeah.

Father

How do you feel about it?

Jason

I don't like it. I mean I wouldn't want someone to do that to me. But if I don't go along...

Father

You won't be one of the guys?

Jason

Yeah, and I really want to be.

Father

Well Jason, you know me. I don't believe in cheating. When you cheat that's what you become...a cheat. It's a tough thing to go against the crowd.

Jason

Yeah, especially when they're the popular ones, and you're just a new kid on the block.

Father

You need to think about what kind of person you want to be...ask if you'd be proud of yourself.

Discussion Question

- Is it okay to do something you know is wrong to be popular? Discuss why some teens are willing to pay this price.

THE END

