

An invitation for kids to be cruel

adapted from an article by Nancy McDermott

- 1 By now, millions of people across the world have viewed the latest internet hit 'Making the Bus Monitor Cry', which is a video of a slew of vile, verbal abuse against 68-year-old New York bus monitor Karen Klein from four 13-year-old boys. It is hard to know what is more shocking: the methodical cruelty with which the children ply their insults; or the grandmother's inability to respond effectively to the humiliating onslaught. Childish cruelty is allegedly old news, but, recorded and broadcast across the world, it is still jarring. Not only is the video footage completely at odds with the way we usually like to regard children — as innocents in need of protection — but their willingness and, most of all, their success at targeting an adult is unsettling.
- 2 Karen Klein was, we're told, another victim in a nation in the grip of a bullying epidemic. Writing in *Slate Magazine*, Jeremy Stahl argues that the problem is buses, because the enclosed space and enforced togetherness creates a mob mentality that spurs bullies. Charles Blow, writing in the *New York Times*, linked the incident to US political culture: '[It is] a remarkably apt metaphor for this moment in the American discourse in which hostility has been drawn out into the sunlight.' He claims the boys represent 'that part of society that sees the weak and vulnerable as worthy of derision and animosity.'
- 3 These responses to the Karen Klein incident betray a real confusion, not just about the nature of bullying but about adulthood itself. 'Bullying' is most often understood as a situation in which a powerful person or a group behaves aggressively towards someone with less power. This hopelessly broad definition might apply to anything from international affairs to hockey, but even by these standards, it does not apply to what occurred on the school bus.
- 4 It is easy to forget in an age when so many adults find it hard to keep children under control that adults are inherently more powerful than children. Adults bear both rights and responsibilities for making and acting on their own decisions. Children, in contrast, have no real autonomy. The little they do have is 15 the adults in their lives. And rightly so: children lack both the experience and the maturity to be held legally or morally accountable for their actions.
- 5 To suggest that adults like Karen Klein are capable of being bullied by children represents an abdication of the responsibilities of adulthood itself. In situations like the one on the bus, the individuals in charge derive their power to protect children and to keep them in line from all adults. When solidarity between adults is strong, it doesn't much matter if someone like Karen Klein is not personally authoritative because kids understand that they will still be held accountable by

the other adults in their lives: teachers, parents, etc. In this case, 16. The boys taunting her seemed confident that there was little possibility of being held accountable by anyone.

- 6 The seventh graders who taunted Klein did not do it because they had no empathy or awareness of bullying, or because they were overcome by a claustrophobic mob mentality, or because they are worse than children anywhere else. They behaved the way they did because none of the people or institutions responsible for guiding them in their journey to adulthood 17 clear standards of behaviour. The sad truth is that unless we wake up and recognise this phenomenon for what it is, and start letting children know where they stand, behaviour like that on the bus will continue.

spiked-online.com, 2012

Tekst 4 An invitation for kids to be cruel

- 1p 12 What does the writer find disturbing, according to paragraph 1?
- A The anti-social behaviour of children directed against a grown-up.
 - B The global impact offensive internet clips have on teenagers.
 - C The risks involved in travelling by public transport in New York.
 - D The unsafe working conditions bus monitors are confronted with.
- 1p 13 What is the function of paragraph 2?
- A To list some of the explanations for the Karen Klein incident.
 - B To make clear who is responsible for the Karen Klein incident.
 - C To show that the Karen Klein incident has high political priority.
 - D To stress that the Karen Klein incident came as a surprise.
- 1p 14 What conclusion does paragraph 3 lead up to?
- A Bullying exists in all walks of life, from politics to sports.
 - B Karen Klein herself is partly responsible for being bullied.
 - C What happened to Karen Klein is not a case of bullying.
 - D What triggers bullying has not been researched properly.
- 1p 15 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 4?
- A completely undermined by
 - B entirely dependent on
 - C often blamed on
 - D readily accepted by
- 1p 16 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 5?
- A Klein acknowledged her mistakes
 - B Klein got away relatively easy
 - C Klein showed she was vulnerable
 - D Klein was left on her own
- 1p 17 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 6?
- A accepted
 - B enforced
 - C lacked
 - D understood
- 1p 18 How can the tone of the text be characterised best?
- A as factual
 - B as mocking
 - C as optimistic
 - D as worried

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.