



PROJECT
CORNERSTONE
A YOUNG AT RISK PROGRAM

Asset Building Champions

BUILDING YEAR



Title: **Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon**
Author: **Patty Lovell**
Illustrator: **David Catrow**
Publisher: **G.P. Putnam's Sons**

Accept
You



BOOK SUMMARY

Patty Lovell's *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* tells the story of Molly Lou Melon, a small girl with a big heart and unique qualities, who faces a challenge when she starts a new school and encounters a bully named Ronald Durkin. Armed with the wisdom and self-affirmation taught to her by her loving grandmother—to "stand tall, smile big, and sing loud"—Molly Lou demonstrates incredible resilience. Through her unwavering confidence and positive self-talk, she not only deflects Ronald's teasing but also inspires those around her, transforming negative interactions into positive ones and fostering a more welcoming and inclusive environment. The book celebrates self-acceptance, personal power, and the impact of a growth mindset.



GOALS

- Students will use positive self-talk.
- Students will understand that "standing tall, smiling big, and singing loud" are tools to build positive relationships.
- Students will identify caring adults in their lives and build strong relationships with them.
- Students will recognize that they have personal power over how they respond and act.



KEY IDEAS

Molly Lou Melon, the main character, demonstrates that while teasing and name-calling (bucket dipping) can occur, our reaction is key. The lesson reinforces that **students have the power to control their own responses**. Molly Lou's positive thinking is an example of the growth mindset—the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work, fostering a

love of learning and resilience. She also accepts that she is who she is without worrying about others' judgement of her. Her confidence is contagious.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Building Rapport and Reintroduction: Begin by warmly greeting the students and expressing your excitement to be back. Remind them of your name and ask them if they remember the last book. Remind them briefly what you discussed during your last visit. You can also share a quick, positive personal anecdote related to the age group or the topic to make yourself more relatable. Note - *Bucket language*: Please review the terms "filling someone's bucket" and "dipping from their bucket" for kindergarteners and also for new students to Bubba who don't have that background. There are references to these in the lesson.

Standing Tall

- Read the title and show the cover. Ask what "stand tall" means and **have them demonstrate**. "Can you show me?"
- Discuss how standing tall makes them feel and what else makes them feel strong or in control. "How does it feel inside your body when you stand tall and proud?" "What other things make you feel strong or in control?"
 - **For the upper grades:** As older students, you have a lot of influence. How can your actions set a positive tone for the whole school community? How can you use your 'power' to build a good reputation for yourselves and for our school?"



READ THE BOOK

Tell students they will hear a story about Molly Lou, her caring grandmother, and Ronald Durkin (a student with an empty bucket). Have them focus on Molly Lou's interactions. She accepts who she is and is proud of it. For a more varied read-aloud, encourage a choral response when the repeated line "So she did!" appears in the story.

Older Student Reading Tips:

- Acknowledge the Picture Book Format but let them know it has a really powerful message about being true to yourself and standing up to unkindness – something we *all* deal with, no matter our age. Ask them to "Pay close attention to Molly Lou's wisdom and how she handles Ronald."
- Encourage Critical Thinking: Pause at key moments to ask more probing questions. Instead of just "How did Molly Lou feel?", try "What do you think Ronald Durkin might have been feeling that made him act that way?" or "How did Molly Lou's *choice* to react differently create a ripple effect?" This shifts the focus from simple plot to deeper social dynamics.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K-2

Younger Students:

- Molly Lou's grandmother gave her amazing advice: "Walk proud, smile big, and sing loud!" Let's try it!
- What does it feel like when you walk proud? When you smile a big, genuine smile? When you sing loud and confidently?

- How do you think Molly Lou's confidence affected Ronald and the other kids? Did it make them want to be around her more, or less?
- Molly Lou had her grandmother who believed in her. Who are the caring adults in *your* life who help you 'stand tall' and feel good about yourself? (Remind them you, as the volunteer, are one too!)

3-5

Older Students:

- When Ronald tried to tease Molly Lou, she chose not to react. How would it go if you chose not to react when someone is trying to 'dip' into your bucket? How does choosing your response act like a 'lid' for your bucket?
- Discuss how not reacting prevents bucket dipping and allows them to control what's taken from their bucket. Emphasize letting go of bad feelings, forgiving, and using positive self-talk.
- Why is it so powerful to control your reaction, rather than letting someone else's unkind words control how you feel?
- Molly Lou lets go of bad feelings and uses positive self-talk. What are some positive things you can tell yourself if someone says something unkind, or if you're feeling down about yourself?
- When Molly Lou acted confidently and kindly, it created a 'ripple effect' at school. What does a 'ripple effect' mean, and what kind of ripple do *you* want to create with your actions on the playground, in the classroom, or online?



ACTIVITY OPTIONS

K-2

Molly Lou Says: A "Simon Says" style game using positive self-talk and confident body language to boost self-confidence.
Materials: none

1. Explain that the game is like "Simon Says," but instead of Simon, it's "Molly Lou Says."
2. Tell students that Molly Lou wants them to practice showing confidence and being proud of who they are.
3. Lead the game by giving commands such as: Molly Lou Says, 'Walk proud!' Molly Lou Says, 'Smile.' Molly Lou Says, 'Shake hands with a classmate.' Say commands that are not aligned with Molly Lou's message like, "Make a grumpy face." "Walk sad." "Don't give eye contact."
4. Students follow commands only if they begin with "Molly Lou Says." If you give a command without "Molly Lou Says," students should not perform the action.
5. End with "Molly Lou Says, 'Tell yourself, 'I am a lovable and capable person!'" (or similar positive affirmations). Have the students repeat after you.

K-5

Positive Self-Talk Shield: Students design a personal shield with positive words or pictures and practice using it to respond to teasing.

Materials: paper shields handout (with hand loops, optional), thunderbolts cut from cardstock with bucket dipping behaviors written on them. Note - there is one shield for lower grades, and a different one for upper grades.

1. Distribute paper shields to each student. Explain that this shield will be their personal "confidence shield" or "positive self-talk shield."
2. Brainstorm together some positive words or phrases they can say to themselves when they need to feel strong, confident, or happy, or when someone is unkind to them. Examples: "I am strong," "I am kind," "I can do it," "I am special," "It's okay to be me." Pictures could be smiles, friends holding hands, or some of their skills like a color art palette or a soccer ball. Write these on the board.
3. Students write or draw these positive words/pictures on their shields. Encourage them to decorate their shields to reflect their unique strengths. (Optional - cut out and attach hand loops for easy holding).
4. Practice: Read a "bucket dipping situation" written on a "thunderbolt" cutout (e.g., "Someone calls you a mean name," or "Someone says you can't play").
5. Ask students to refer to their shields and share how they would respond using their positive self-talk or confident body language. Encourage them to hold up their shields as they share.

3-5

Our Umbrella of Support: Students will map their personal strengths and supportive relationships, using this "umbrella" to identify coping strategies and protect their well-being in challenging social situations.

Materials: Poster paper with an umbrella, pre-cut raindrops

1. Introduce the Umbrella Metaphor: "Molly Lou uses her inner strength and her grandmother's advice like an 'umbrella' to protect herself from Ronald's teasing or bucket dipping. This activity is about building our own strong 'umbrella' of protection."
2. Inside Your Umbrella: "On the inside of the umbrella, list or draw personal strengths and coping strategies you have. Think about things Molly Lou used: positive self-talk ('I am lovable and capable'), deep breaths, walking away, or even forgiving and letting go of bad feelings. What "umbrellas" do *you* use when faced with unkindness or challenges?" Discuss and list on poster.
3. Under Your Umbrella (External Support): "Underneath your umbrella, we will list the people in your 'cheering section' – caring adults (parents, teachers, counselors, family) and trusted friends. These are the people who support you and help you feel strong. How do they help you 'stand tall'?"
4. Raindrops of Challenges: "Around the outside of your umbrella, there are 'raindrops.' (Hand out a raindrop to each student) Inside your raindrop, briefly write a type of challenging behavior or situation you might encounter (e.g., 'being teased online,' 'gossip at recess,' 'feeling left out')."
5. Connect & Strategize: "Now, connect each 'raindrop' to a specific support person on your umbrella. How would one of your internal strengths or a person in your cheering section help you deal with *that specific challenge*? This helps us proactively think about our resilience." Optional - pair share or call on students to share. Attach raindrops to the poster.
6. (Optional) Role-Play a Strategy: Invite students to share one challenge and how they might use a specific support from the umbrella. Briefly role-play one or two scenarios focusing on confident body language and clear communication.

**Optional:* students can draw their own umbrella on a piece of paper and do this activity individually.



CLOSING

Remind students that you are part of their cheering section. Ask for examples of other caring adults at school they could go to for advice or help. To sum up, ask students to choose one strategy from the lesson to use on the playground, modeling positive body language and self-talk. Remind them they have the power to choose how they react. Optional - have them "stand tall" before you leave.



READER REFLECTION

This section is for after you, the Reader, leave the classroom to reflect on how the lesson went and to inform your ongoing developmental relationship work with students.

- Overall Lesson Reception: Which parts of the lesson were most engaging for students? Which were less so, and how might you adjust for next time? Which activities or discussions seemed to best help students understand and embrace the concept of "Accept You"?
- Individual Student Observations: Did you notice any students who seemed to gain a new sense of confidence or self-worth? How did they demonstrate this? Did students identify and articulate the importance of caring adults in their lives? How can you continue to foster these connections and identify additional "cheerleaders" for students? Were there any breakthrough moments in their understanding of personal power?
- Building on the Lesson: How can you build on this lesson's focus on self-acceptance and confidence in subsequent Project Cornerstone lessons or daily interactions with students?