



BULLYING – B1

I. About this Lesson

Activity title: Bullying

Level: B1+

Recommended Age: 15-18

Subject: English as a foreign language

Timing: 50 minutes. If need be, allot double timing for this lesson.

Resources: computer with internet access, video projector

Learning objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

- a. acquire the vocabulary related to bullying;
- b. revise Present Perfect Simple and Continuous;
- c. identify various forms of bullying in different environments using comic strips;
- d. use the vocabulary and the revised tenses in real-life communicative activities.

Materials needed: worksheets, digitally created comic strips, infographic; graphic novel to help students get in contact with 'Anya's Ghost' by Vera Brosgol or simply go to Vera's web page here [Anya's Ghost — verabee](https://www.verabee.com/anya-ghost) to go through the online page extracted from the book and enjoy the writer's drawings together with other surprises for her fans; paper strips with the characters in the graphic novel.



II. Lesson Scenario

1. Instructions for the teacher

Preparation to do before the lesson

Present the book to the class (print or virtual form) and let students browse through it and look at the **colours and style** used by the author just to make a general idea of the novel. The comic page chosen for the lesson will give them the chance to **infer meaning** and build **communicative activities** through your guidance. Keep in mind that the **bullying** theme should be carefully dealt with at this age, but here is the novel chosen which responds very well to this issue. Encourage **extensive reading** outside the class. As usual, be enthusiastic and rely on your amazing pedagogical skills.

Introduction (5 minutes): what is bullying?

- a. Connect the students with the topic of bullying by having a brainstorming activity on bullying.
- b. Engage them effectively in a collaborative discussion about this phenomenon.



HINT: A powerful activity about the effects of bullying

The teacher can give the students one sheet of paper to be filled in by everybody in the class. There can be mean words the students heard or told their classmates. A student will read out loud all the words written and then will pass the paper to the teacher who pretends to crumple it by mistake. Of course, the teacher apologises for this thoughtless gesture and carefully tries to uncrumple the paper. They can try, too. The students observe that as much as they smooth it out, the scars will remain for a lifetime. Conclusion: Cruel words and unkind behaviour have a great impact on people. What a powerful activity to teach about bullying!

Setting the lesson vocabulary (10 minutes)

- a.** Bring the comic strip about BULLYING (worksheet – exercise 1) to the class or display it on a screen so that all the students can see it.
- b.** Analyse together each frame and discuss upon the type of bullying which can occur in each environmental situation. They try to elicit the specific vocabulary which is going to be used in the following activities.
- c.** Give your students the key-words list included in the exercise or in the corresponding **annexed infographic** so that they can read, get familiarized with the key-words about bullying and feel comfortable with the next communicative tasks.
- d.** Check your students' understanding by encouraging them to speak about the context these key-words may be encountered. They can use the comic strip as a prompt to talk about the events in each frame, using the given





vocabulary. They can practise communicative skills by **role-playing** each panel.

- e. Use different strategies to help your students grasp the meaning of the words: mime, use reading groups, cover the words and leave out only the meaning, etc.
- f. Move on to exercise 2, use the vocabulary worksheet and tell them to fill in the blanks with the suitable words, according to the context.

Exercise 2 answers: A. emotional, B. Internet, C. tease, D. bully, E. intimidation, F. criticised.

Setting the grammar topic (10 minutes)

- a. For this grammar topic the students should remember the present perfect tense, simple and progressive forms. Before starting the grammar topic, find out how many of the class know the form and use of present perfect by asking simple questions (**Have you been attentive so far? What have you been learning since the beginning of our class?**).
- b. Tell your students to work in groups or in pairs; give them time to read the grammar points included in exercise 3 of the worksheet or in the corresponding **annexed infographics** and to take notes and then encourage them to raise queries they have about the present perfect.
- c. If necessary, look at the grammar summary with the whole class and explain forms and uses.
- d. Ask students to work individually and do the exercise that follows.
- e. If there is disagreement when checking the answers, have students give reasons for their choice of answer.



Exercise 3 answers:

1. She has had a lot of problems lately.
2. They have been bullying her for two months.
3. Have you ever been bullied?
4. She hasn't made any friends so far.
5. Nasty words have appeared about her on Facebook.
6. Teachers have been trying to stop bullying.
7. Has Tommy been calling you names since June?

HINT: Teaching Present Perfect

Present Perfect is an important tense and probably the commonest in the English language, but learners who are not native speakers of English might have difficulties in grasping its uses. Keep in mind that this tense must never be used if we state or suggest a definite time in the past.

Practice (25 minutes)

- a. Introduce to your students the notes on the graphic novel where the comic strip to be used as a practice activity is derived from.
- b. Support this book presentation with the author's web page at [Anya's Ghost — verabee](#) where you can show students the graphic art of V. Brosgol inside the novel's pages. If you have more time, you can also go to [Anya's Ghost - Wikipedia](#) for extended plot and book publication references.





HINT: Introducing 'Anya's Ghost' by Vera Brosgol

Anya's Ghost is a graphic novel published in 2011, written and drawn by Vera Brosgol, a Russian immigrant who currently lives in the United States. Anya Borzakovskaya, the main character of the book, embodies the writer's own life experiences in another country, having to cope with a different culture and mentality. As a teenager, Anya struggles not only with day-to-day high school problems, but at the same time she has to face her family whom she blames for fit in problems. Fantasy occurs when she unexpectedly runs into a ninety-year-old ghost of a young lady, Emily, who gives Anya some supernatural powers: cheating on biology tests or spying on Sean, her crush. Eventually, Anya befriends the ghost and learns to accept her image and the others.

c. Exercises 4, 5 and 6 are based on the graphic novel, where the students will assimilate both linguistic and cultural information. Go round and monitor the activity. Check students' answers constantly.

d. Exercise 4: Meet the characters of the book! (8 minutes).
Students are divided in 6 groups of 3 or 4 members. On a paper strip, each group receives a biographical note of one book character which they read and present in front of the other students. Each group member should have the possibility to contribute to the speaking activity and use in presentations the bullying key-words they have previously acquired.

Example: Anya is a high school teenager who is often bullied by her classmates. She doesn't accept her looks and criticizes her mother for cooking traditional fat meals. She wants to lose weight in order to be accepted by the boy she likes.



e. Exercise 5: Role-play (9 minutes)

The students receive (printed or digital) the page selected from the graphic novel. Ask your students to analyse the comic strips in pairs and make inferences about Anya's feelings. As a general idea, they can notice the struggles in Anya's head regarding the people who she constantly interferes with: her best friend, mom, little brother and her crush. They create small dialogues for the comic page. Practically, they give voice to her thoughts.

Exercise 5 answers: (Siobhan) 'You are my best friend, but you have always criticised me for the way I look.' (Anya) 'Oh, Siobhan! You're right! I have been mean to you!'

HINT: Integrating the comic page in the activity

This comic page will help students obtain a visual idea of the sensitive issue of bullying in a non-threatening way. The comic strips emphasise the struggles due to teasing, intimidation or humiliation the protagonist goes through. Analyse together the comic strips and help students get a clearer mental picture of the way Anya feels and the contextual situations. The students feel free to imagine possible dialogues between Anya and the people she interacts with.

unexpectedly runs into a ninety-year-old ghost of a young lady, Emily, who gives Anya some supernatural powers: cheating on biology tests or spying on Sean, her crush. Eventually, Anya befriends the ghost and learns to accept her image and the others.



f. Exercise 6: Anya meets the school counsellor (8 minutes)

Give students the comic strip and ask them to provide answers to the school counsellor's questions. Print the comic strip and give enough copies to students. In pairs, they should use the vocabulary and grammar acquired as much as possible.

Worksheet 7 answers:

- I have always felt humiliated in front of the whole class.
- I have never been invited to my classmates' home parties.
- I have often tried to convince my mom to cook healthy meals.
- I have been in love with Sean for two weeks.
- I have been smoking since my family and I moved to the United States.
- I haven't told my mom yet about the smoking issue.

Evaluation

Settle a follow-up activity for your students, asking them to write an article in which to interview Anya as a university student. Encourage her to tell you about how she managed to overcome the high school bullying problems. She will have a lot to tell!



2. Worksheet for the student

EXERCISE 1:

Analyse the comic strip and discuss upon the type of bullying in each situation.





Vocabulary	Definition
Bullying	Repeated physical, verbal or emotional aggression
Cyberbullying	Bullying occurring on the Internet
Bully	A person who constantly threatens with words or action
Tease	To make fun of someone
Intimidation	The act of frightening or threatening someone
Emotional	Characterized by intense feeling
Criticise	To express disapproval of someone or something
Insult	To call names, to speak in a hurtful, disrespectful

EXERCISE 2: Complete the sentences with one word from the list.

- Intimidation
- Internet
- bully
- criticised
- tease
- emotional

- a. Teenagers like to play with people's feelings, which is called _____ bullying.
- b. Many bullies use the _____ to make people feel bad.
- c. Some old people often _____ their neighbours' children
- d. A _____ is usually another classmate who is aggressive to others through words or actions.
- e. _____ is causing fear or bad mood to the victim.
- f. Employees are often _____ for their mistakes at the workplace.



EXERCISE 3:

Grammar points:

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE AND CONTINUOUS

Uses of the present perfect simple

Form: subject + have/ has + part participle

With adverbs of indefinite time or expressing frequency: **ever, never, often, seldom, always.**

- They **have never visited** Paris.
- I **have often entered** this crowded cafeteria.

With words denoting an incomplete period of time: **today, this week, this month, this year, all day, all night, this morning;**

- Last week we wrote ten e-mails, but **this week** we **have written** only three.

To express completed activities in the immediate past with **just, lately, yet, already, so far, up to now, the last few days;**

- The plane **has just landed.**
- **Have** you **done** your homework **yet?** I **have already done** it.

To talk about future in time clauses starting with **before, until, after, when, by the time, as soon as.**

- They will start the video **as soon as** she **has made** the popcorn.



PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE AND CONTINUOUS

Uses of the present perfect continuous

Form: subject + have/ has + been + verb-ing

To state an action which started in the past and is still continuing at the present moment, using the adverbs **for** and **since**;

- I **have been living** there **for** five years.
- She **has been studying** English **since** September.

To emphasize the fact that an action has been uninterrupted, even though it is not continuing now;

- I'm cold because I've **been swimming** four an hour.
- He is very tired. He **has been running** round the town all day.

Do not use the continuous form with verb like **be, have, know, seem.**

✓ I **have known** them for a lifetime.

✗ I **have been knowing** them for a lifetime.



Task: Join the boxes to make complete sentences and questions. Use the grammar summary!

A	She	a	has	problems	had	lately	lot	of
B	have	two	bullying	for	been	They	her	months
C	you	Have	ever	been	bullied?			
D	made	friends	far	any	She	so	hasn't	
E	Nasty	her	Facebook	words	about	on	appeared	have
F	Teachers	trying	to	been	stop	bullying	have	
G	calling	Tommy	names	Has	been	you	June?	since

EXERCISE 4:

In groups, read one of the book characters' biographical notes below and present him/her to the others.



Annushka or 'Anya' Borzakovskaya (Photo from [illustration — verabee](#))

A Russian-American girl convinced that she's fat and unattractive, the protagonist of the story. She's an immigrant living with her mother and brother Sasha, attending the third worst private school in the state and trying to get by amongst unruly classmates and boring classes by smoking and hanging out with her friend Siobhan. She is in love with a boy at her school and she is always dieting in order to lose weight and look nice for Sean, her crush. She even started smoking because her best friend does it. She struggles with the daily trials of high school life until she finds Emily.







Siobhan (Photo from [illustration — verabee](#))

Siobhan is Anya's best friend, although the two of them often have disagreements. She's an Irish girl with a load of terrifying older brothers and the only female student in the school to wear pants. She's also caustic, smokes, and has a delinquent behaviour —despite this, she genuinely cares for Anya and she tries to help in her own way. She has a very short cut hair that makes her look unfeminine.

This is the link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHfXjmJcqfE> teaching you how to pronounce her Irish name: (Shi-vawn).

	<p>Mrs. Borzakovskaya (photo taken from Anya's Ghost / Characters - TV Tropes)</p> <p>Anya's mother does not have a name in the novel; she brought herself and her children over from Russia. Anya is embarrassed by her mom who is an obese woman whom Anya seems terrified of turning into, yet she is a kind and caring mother who is often worried about her daughter's moodiness and negativity. She can't speak English as well as Anya and often uses Russian words or idioms in pleasant or less pleasant domestic situations.</p>
	<p>Sean (photo taken from Anya's Ghost / Characters - TV Tropes)</p> <p>Anya's crush, Sean, is the school star of the basketball team, a handsome boy who is dating the nicest girl in the high school. His popularity actually reveals his true character: he cheats on his girlfriend and dates other girls at the same time, including his friend's girlfriend.</p>

	<p>Elizabeth (photo taken from Anya's Ghost / Characters - TV Tropes)</p> <p>One of the prettiest girls in the school is Elizabeth Standard, Sean's girlfriend and Anya's rival in the book. Although she appears happy and nice, she suffers a lot because she knows about Sean's unfaithful behaviour. At a party Anya finds out the truth about the two and the fact that Elizabeth would feel miserable without Sean, consequently accepting his cheating on her.</p>
	<p>Sasha (photo taken from sasha. anya's ghost - Bing images)</p> <p>Anya's little brother is a young boy with a fascination with dinosaurs and other large scary animals. He drives Anya up the wall with as he likes stealing her jewellery and burying it in the backyard so he can "discover" it later. He becomes very cheerful when Anya is moody or depressed.</p>

EXERCISE 5:

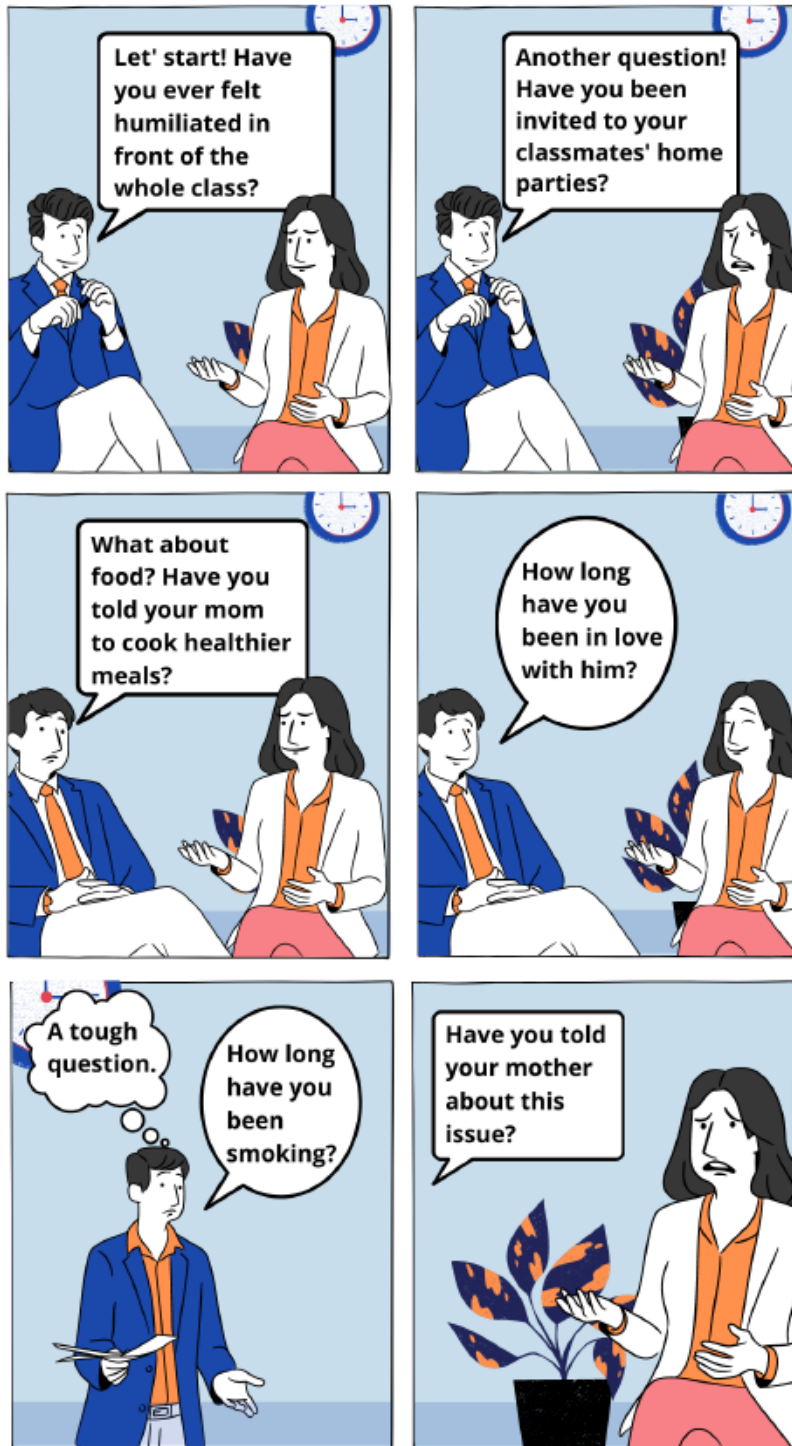
In pairs, analyse the comic strip below and make inferences about Anya's feelings.

Give voice to her thoughts!



EXERCISE 6:

In pairs, use the vocabulary and grammar studied in the lesson to provide answers to the school counsellor's questions.





III. Modification and Differentiation ideas

When proposing this lesson, bring into consideration the working pace of your students. You may want to expand the duration for one more hour so that the students can wholly understand the tasks regarding vocabulary, grammar and the practice activities.

The themes involved in the graphic novel are utterly relevant to our days: the difficulty of being accepted if you are an immigrant and the bullying issue, the body size which should be skinny, the notion of being a 'popular' student, school crushes, accepting others and own mistakes and failures. Interdisciplinary lessons based on these themes may be conducted, where teachers, school counsellors, students and parents can be invited to.

IV. References

Digital comics tools: www.storyboardthat.com and www.canva.com

Digital comic page no 1: [Anya's Ghost — verabee](#)