



Stand Up, Speak Out

Directions: Read the story carefully and focus on what the characters say to each other. Find the lines of dialogue that show the message about standing up for others. **Highlight or underline** those lines. Then, write a **short paragraph** explaining what lesson the story teaches and how the characters' words show that message.

"The Empty Seat"

The classroom buzzed with noise as students shuffled to their seats. In the back, an empty desk sat near the window. When Mr. Jones called roll, he paused. "Eli's out again?" he asked quietly.

"Probably hiding," said Mark with a smirk. "He's always scared of everything." Laughter rippled through the room. Nora looked at Mark, then at the empty desk. "He's not scared," she said firmly. "He's sick. My mom told me his family's having a tough time." Mark shrugged. "Still weird to miss this much school."

"It's not weird to need help," Nora said. "It's weird to make fun of someone who does." The room fell silent. Mr. Jones smiled faintly and moved on with attendance. But everyone glanced once more at the empty desk, this time without laughing.

Response Prompts

1. Which lines of dialogue best express the story's message about standing up for others?
2. How does Nora's tone and choice of words reveal her courage?
3. What lesson do readers learn from her actions?
4. Why might the author have chosen to communicate this message through dialogue instead of narration?