

Join the national conversation!



Focus Words

assault | abuse | trigger | distort | physical

Weekly Passage

In the hallway of Stevens High School, Franny and Jada, two seventh-grade girls, are leaning against their lockers reading a magazine. They read a horrible story about their favorite pop-singing couple: Shelley and James. Jada reads aloud: “James became angry at Shelley. He hit her in the face, then punched and bit her repeatedly, threatened to kill her, and even choked her, over the course of 20 minutes.” At first, neither girl can believe that James, the beloved star, physically assaulted Shelley. “Maybe Shelley is lying,” Jada says. “Maybe Shelley wasn’t hurt that badly. Or maybe she did something that triggered the assault.” But when they see the photo of Shelley’s bruised, bloody face, they changed their minds.

According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, dating violence is a serious problem. One in three teenage girls is physically, emotionally, or verbally abused by a dating partner.

Franny and Jada read on. The article says that when James was young, he saw his father beat his mother. His attitude toward women and violence may have become distorted by these experiences. But is this a good explanation? Does it excuse his behavior?

Finally, the article says that Shelley eventually forgave James and dropped the charges. Franny and Jada are outraged. “Even if Shelley drops the charges, the police should make James pay,” says Franny. “He broke the law!” Franny’s and Jada’s friend, Kim, overhears their conversation. “No one really knows what went on between Shelley and James,” she says. “If Shelley wants him back, that’s her business.”

What do you think? Should Shelley press charges, or is it her right to decide that James should be forgiven? Is dating violence a private matter, or a public one? How should we handle dating violence?

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Discussion questions:

- ▶ What did James do?
- ▶ What was James’s childhood like?
- ▶ How is physical abuse different from verbal and emotional abuse?
- ▶ How did Franny and Jada’s attitude about Shelley change as they read the article?
- ▶ How is Kim’s opinion different from Franny and Jada’s?

Unit 1.24 - Dating Violence: Who is responsible?

Focus Word Chart (teacher version)

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
abuse	(v.) – to inflict harm	abuse (n.) abuses abused abusing	use	abusable abusive abusively abuser	misuse
assault	(v.) – to attack suddenly	assault (n.) assaults assaulted assaulting		assaulter assaultive	somersault assailant
distort	(v.) –to misrepresent or give false meaning to	distorts distorted distorting	tort	distortion	tort retort confort extort torque torture
physical	(adj.) – of the body		physic	physically	physique physics physician
trigger	(v.) – to make something happen	trigger (n.) triggers triggered triggering			trigger-finger trigger-happy triggerman

Unit 1.24 - Dating Violence: Who is responsible?



Problem of the Week

Many dating violence victims have **distorted** ideas about relationships. They may think that jealous behavior and even **physical assault** are ways of showing love. They may blame themselves for **triggering** verbal or physical **abuse**. Violence prevention programs urge teens to recognize that mean and controlling behavior has no place in a healthy relationship and can lead to more serious abuse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide the following dating violence statistics.

- ▶ Each year, 1 in 4 adolescents is verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually abused by a dating partner
- ▶ One in ten students report being physically hurt by a girlfriend or boyfriend in the past year

Option 1: What percent of students was physically hurt by a girlfriend or boyfriend in the past year?

- A) 10%
- B) 15%
- C) 20%
- D) 25%

Option 2: One in four adolescents is abused or assaulted by a dating partner. In a group of 5 students, if each one has a one-in-four chance of being a victim, what is the likelihood that there are NO victims?

Answer: $.75 \times .75 \times .75 \times .75 \times .75$, or $.75^5$, $\approx .24$, or about a 24% chance

Math Discussion Question: According to the CDC, 72% of 8th and 9th graders date. In your opinion, do students understand healthy relationships or do they have **distorted** ideas about how dating partners should act? Do students know which behaviors constitute **abuse**? Which do you think is a more common problem: **physical assault** or emotional abuse? If a girlfriend or boyfriend does something that **triggers** a violent response in their dating partner, who is responsible for the violence?

Dating Violence: Who is responsible? Debating the Issue



GO!

I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A A victim of dating violence might have triggered the assault. If the victim drops the charges, the police should stay out of it.

B Assault is wrong. Police should encourage victims of dating violence to press charges.

C Assault is always wrong. A person who physically abuses a dating partner should always be punished, even if the victim won't press charges.

D People who come from abusive homes may have distorted ideas about dating. If a person from an abusive home assaults a dating partner, he or she should be given counseling, not punished.

E _____

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

TEACHER

» Some students may need help defining their position on the weekly topic. Here are some examples:

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting - can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

Unit 1.24 - Dating Violence: Who is responsible? Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professor Seemy's class is discussing dating violence. Some researchers think this kind of **abuse** stems from **distorted** ideas about gender. Some young men believe that "being a man" means solving arguments with **physical** force. If these men don't know how to solve their problems with words, a disagreement can **trigger** an **assault**. Do teens today still believe in "being a man"? Professor Seemy decides to find out.

Question:

Do teens today link being male with being violent?

Hypothesis:

Most of the time, teens will say that words that have to do with violence are "male" rather than "female" or "neither."

Materials:

- ▶ 50 teens, half female and half male
- ▶ List of 10 violent words

TEACHER

Sources

Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (n.d.). Dating violence. Retrieved on October 28, 2009 from <http://www.acadv.org/dating.html>

Real Research

-The fictitious WG experiment is a simplified version of an Implicit Association Test - a controversial test used to assess people's unconscious associations. Students can try out a real Implicit Association Test at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/>

Procedure:

1. Write a list of 10 words related to violence (for example, push, fight, hit, etc.), 10 neutral words (for example, *round*, *sit*, *write*, *play*, *worker*, etc.)
2. Give teens the word list.
3. Tell them to put each word as quickly as possible in one of three categories: male, female, or neither.
4. Give them 50 seconds to complete the task.
5. Calculate the average number of words in each category.

Data:

	“Male”	“Female”	“Neither”
Average Number of Power Words Per Category (out of 10)	6.0	1.4	2.6
Average Number of Neutral Words Per Category(out of 10)	1.7	1.9	6.4

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

Answer: Teens placed an average of 6/10 power words in the “male” category.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



Writing Prompt

Dating Violence: Who is responsible?

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

assault | abuse | trigger | distort | physical

TEACHER
Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.
Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

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.