OVERVIEW

I won’t describe what I look like. Whatever you’re thinking, it’s probably worse.

August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can’t get past Auggie’s extraordinary face. Wonder, now a New York Times bestseller, begins from Auggie’s point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community’s struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

In a world where bullying among young people is an epidemic, this is a refreshing new narrative full of heart and hope. R.J. Palacio has called her debut novel “a meditation on kindness” — indeed, every reader will come away with a greater appreciation for the simple courage of friendship. Auggie is a hero to root for, a diamond in the rough who proves that you can’t blend in when you were born to stand out.

BOOK ANALYSIS

Wonder

AUTHOR R.J. Palacio
COPYRIGHT 2012
LA BOOKSHELF KM286
VOICETEXT Yes
LEXILE LEVEL 790L
GRADE EQUIVALENT 4.8

OVERVIEW

I won’t describe what I look like. Whatever you’re thinking, it’s probably worse.

August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can’t get past Auggie’s extraordinary face. Wonder, now a New York Times bestseller, begins from Auggie’s point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community’s struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

In a world where bullying among young people is an epidemic, this is a refreshing new narrative full of heart and hope. R.J. Palacio has called her debut novel “a meditation on kindness” — indeed, every reader will come away with a greater appreciation for the simple courage of friendship. Auggie is a hero to root for, a diamond in the rough who proves that you can’t blend in when you were born to stand out.

SUGGESTED GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

• Character Map
• Vocabulary Graphic Organizer
• Character Traits Worksheet

AUTHOR INFORMATION

R.J. Palacio resides in New York City with her family, including her two sons and two dogs. A former art director and book jacket designer for over twenty years, Wonder is Palacio’s first novel. Check out some of R.J. Palacio’s newest additions to the Wonder series including Pluto, The Julian Chapter and 365 Days of Wonder.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

• Information on Bullying and Bullying Prevention
  > “Teaching Wonder” by Trudy Ludwig w/ information on bullying
  > StopBullying.Gov – Bullying prevention and resources for schools
  > PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center
• Information Craniofacial Syndromes
• Children’s Craniofacial Association

WRITING PROMPTS

• What are your perceptions of August as he tells his story? Why?
• What are the perceptions of August through Via and other characters’ eyes?
• How do the different narrators in each chapter help shape the story?
• What are some examples of kindness in the story? Examples of unkindness?
• What character from the story do you most identify with? Why?

LITERARY DEVICES

Point of View

Narrated in first-person point of view by differing characters

Symbolism

• Astronaut helmet – Auggie’s need to hide
• Padawan braid – Auggie cutting off his braid symbolized him “coming of age”
• Eyes – August’s mom says that is his best feature, August makes several references to peoples’ eyes throughout the story.
• Daisy – unconditional love
BOOK ANALYSIS

Wonder

Metaphor
Via’s perception of her family and August’s as “center of the universe”

Simile
Like a lamb to the slaughter

SUPPORTING MEDIA (graphic novels, movies, video clips)
• Natalie Merchant, Song, “Wonder” — YouTube
• Choose Kind campaign http://choosekind.tumblr.com/
• Book trailer video

COMMON CORE BIG IDEAS
• Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.
• Determine the theme of the story, using explicit examples and inferences.
• Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story.

WAYS TO HELP DIVERSE LEARNERS
• Allow students to use audiobook version at home or in class
• Verbally read chapters of the book aloud while students follow along
• Allow students to use a scribe or Assistive Technology for written assessments
• Provide picture cues for big ideas, vocabulary, lesson objectives, directions
• Change modality of assessment from written work to an approach most successful for student (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic)