



EDUCATORS'
GUIDE

R.J. PALACIO

**You can't blend in when
you were born to stand out.**

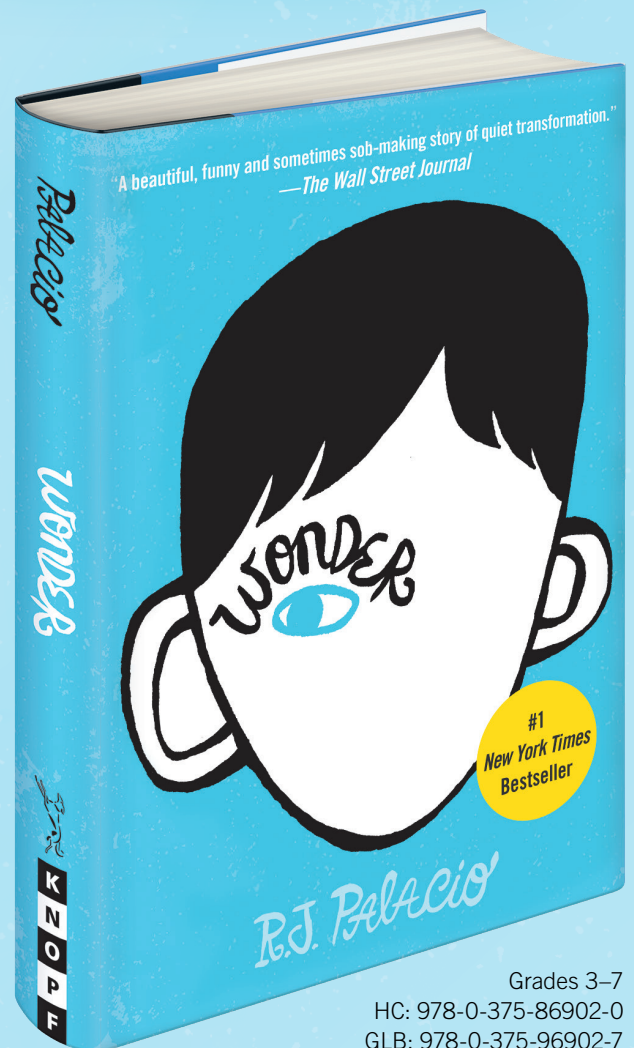
WONDER IN THE CLASSROOM

ABOUT THE BOOK

After being home-schooled for four years, Auggie, who was born with a facial difference, enters the fifth grade at Beecher Prep School and does his best to be just an ordinary kid with an extraordinary face.

The first few days of school are more than difficult. Try as he might to ignore them, Auggie must endure the looks and whispers—even the cruel game “The Plague,” where everyone is afraid to touch him. Julian, especially, causes Auggie’s days to be miserable, making references about Auggie’s face and veiled threats to harm him. The flip side is that Auggie has the steadfast support of his first friend, Summer, and his best friend, Jack, and his teachers and the principal like him. But for every positive, there is a negative: Jack betrays him, a gang of kids try to hurt him, and some particularly insensitive parents even try to have him removed from the school. Yet, Auggie shows amazing understanding and compassion.

As the school year progresses, Auggie learns that, though there will always be people who want to taunt him and make his life miserable, he can have true friends despite his looks. The wonder of Auggie’s extraordinary presence is that the people around him learn what it is to be kind and courageous.



Grades 3–7

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R. J. PALACIO is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Wonder*, which has sold over 14 million copies worldwide. The book’s message inspired the Choose Kind movement and has been embraced by readers around the world, with the book published in over 50 languages. *Wonder* was made into a blockbuster movie starring Julia Roberts, Owen Wilson, and Jacob Tremblay. Palacio’s other bestselling books include *365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne’s Book of Precepts*, *Auggie & Me: Three Wonder Stories*, the picture book *We’re All Wonders*, and the graphic novel *White Bird*, which is currently being filmed as a major motion picture starring Gillian Anderson and Helen Mirren. Her newest book, *Pony*, is an enthralling story of adventure, friendship, and the invisible bonds that connect us. Palacio lives in Brooklyn with her husband, two sons, and two dogs.



Photo courtesy of author

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Give the class an overview of Treacher-Collins Syndrome using information from the following website:

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001659.htm

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

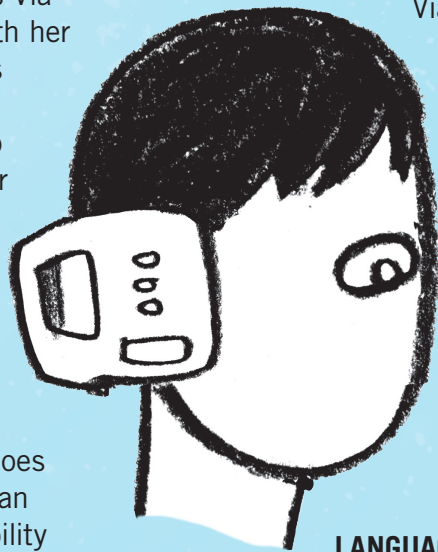
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS—Discuss Auggie’s relationship with each of his family members. How does Via react to Auggie’s face? How is Via’s life affected? She says, “I’m always going to be the sister of a kid with a birth defect; that’s not the issue. I just don’t always want to be defined that way.” (p. 91) What does Via mean by this statement? How could her parents help Via’s life be more normal even though Auggie’s isn’t? What sacrifices does Via have to make in her relationship with her parents? What qualities do Auggie’s parents possess that help them to be good parents to Auggie? How do respect and trust play a role in their family dynamics?

FRIENDSHIP—Discuss the characteristics of a good friend. Which of Auggie’s friends demonstrate these qualities? What characteristics of a good friend does Auggie possess? How does Auggie help his friends see him as an ordinary kid? How does Auggie’s ability to be comfortable in his own skin make it easier for his friends and family to relate to him? Share examples from the book to support your responses.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES—Auggie’s attendance at Beecher Prep creates issues for students, parents, teachers, and the principal. What are some of the challenges that arise? How does each group of individuals overcome the challenges? What role does Auggie play in either helping or hurting the situation? What lessons are learned because of Auggie’s attendance at the school? In Mr. Tushman’s speech at the end of the year, he shares this quote, “Always try to be a little kinder than necessary.” How does being kind help someone overcome challenges?

BULLYING—Kids that are different are almost always bullied in some way. How does Auggie know the first time he meets Julian that he will be a bully? In what subtle ways does Julian bully Auggie? What purpose does Julian have in bullying Jack? What power does Julian have to force the other students to join in his cruelty toward Auggie and Jack? What prompts the seventh graders to attack and bully Auggie? In general, what is Auggie’s response to the bullying?


BETRAYAL—Auggie and Jack are great friends; they laugh together, they talk about anything and everything, and they feel comfortable together. So why does Jack betray Auggie by talking badly behind his back? How does Auggie feel when he hears what Jack has said? At the same time Auggie is experiencing betrayal by his friend, Via is also feeling betrayed by her two best friends, Miranda and Ella. How do Miranda and Ella betray Via? What is Via’s response? How do Via and Auggie resolve their individual conflicts and cope with the pain of betrayal?




The above discussion questions correlate to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.5.1 and RL.5.3; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL.5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English: L.5.1

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

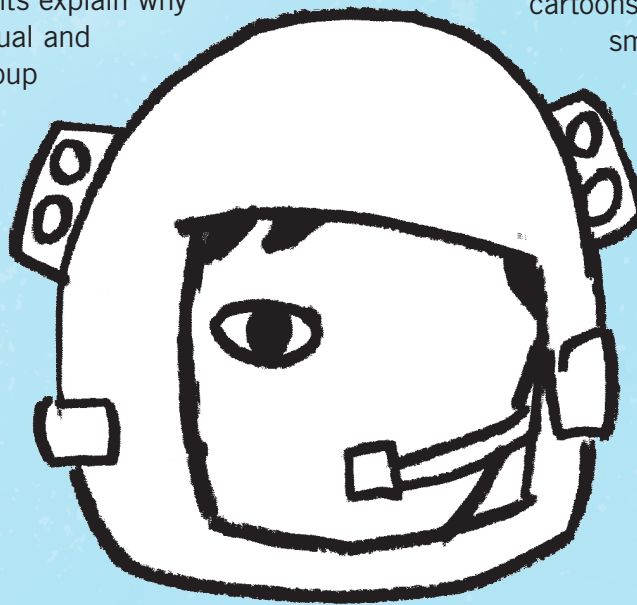
LANGUAGE ARTS—Auggie says, “I felt very sad and a tiny bit happy at the exact same time, kind of like that laughing-crying feeling.” (p. 33) Most everyone has experienced this juxtaposition of emotions. Ask students to select a partner and write a poem in two voices: one voice expressing Auggie’s sadness at points of the story and the other voice expressing his happiness. Have students read their poems to the class.

 Correlates to Common Core State Standards Writing: Text Type and Purposes: W.5.1


SOCIAL STUDIES—Mr. Browne’s monthly precept helps students to see outside their world and to think about their beliefs. Mr. Browne’s definition of a precept is anything that helps guide you when making important decisions. Ask students to brainstorm precepts that could be applicable to all students in their school to make it a safer, kinder place to be. Ask students to work in pairs and choose one precept for which they create a poster illustrating its concept. Post the precept posters in all common areas of the school.

 Correlates to Common Core State Standards Writing: Text Type and Purposes: W.5.2

SCIENCE—Break the class into small groups to investigate Treacher-Collins Syndrome, answering questions about the causes, the treatment, the life expectancy, and the genetic makeup of the syndrome. Have students explain why Auggie’s case was so unusual and severe. Then have each group select an extension project to spotlight their research: a classroom display, a PowerPoint or other media presentation, a nonfiction book, or an informational brochure. Have students present their projects to other classrooms and schools in the district to start a discussion on this and other childhood diseases.




FINE ARTS—In small groups or with a partner, ask students to find a scene in the book they can portray by illustrating the scene, creating a music montage to accompany an oral reading, or adapting and performing the scene. Have students display or present their projects to the class.

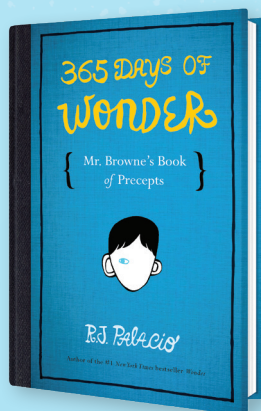
 Correlates to Common Core State Standards Language Knowledge of Language: L.5.3

VOCABULARY/ USE OF LANGUAGE

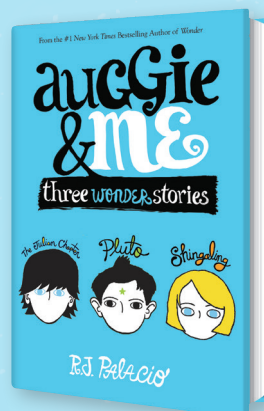
To help the reader make connections with Auggie and his life, the author uses allusions to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Star Wars*, and the *Augie Doggie* cartoons. Ask students working in small groups to brainstorm other allusions that would help convey Auggie’s situation and then to write their best allusions on four sentence strips. Have each group swap allusions with another group and discuss how the allusions apply to Auggie and his situation. Post discussion comments along with allusion strips around the classroom.

 Correlates to Common Core State Standards Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.5.5

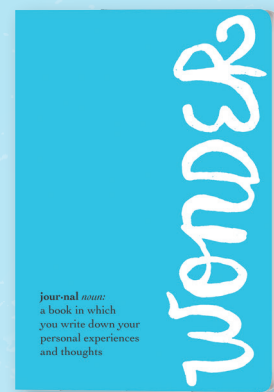
ALSO AVAILABLE



HC: 978-0-553-49904-9
GLB: 978-0-553-49905-6
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GLB: 978-1-101-93486-9



HC: 978-0-553-49907-0

WONDER IN THE COMMUNITY

It's rare to come across a middle-grade book with writing powerful enough to make both adults and young readers see the world differently. *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio is such a book. It has reached over 14 million readers and counting, and every day is adapted by more classrooms, schools, and communities all eager to choose kind and help spread the wonder of *Wonder*.

When reading *Wonder*, you see what it is like not only to be Auggie, but to be his parent, his sibling, his teacher, his classmate, and finally his friend. *Wonder* is truly the portrait of, and a tribute to, a community.

After you have gotten to know *Wonder*, we hope you will consider sharing Auggie's story and introducing him to the people of your town by setting up a community-wide reading.

Here are some tips on how to set up a community-wide reading of *Wonder*:

- **The American Library Association** has created a guide on how to set up a community-reads event. Use this document to help budget for, plan, fundraise, and advertise a *Wonder* community-reads campaign: www.ala.org/programming/onebook
- **Public libraries and independent bookstores** are a natural fit for marketing community-reads events and distributing promotional materials. Below please find a list of possible program **partners** you might approach in your community:

**Theater Companies • Art Galleries
Museums • Reader's Theater Ensembles
Literacy Organizations • Local Businesses
Minority Group Associations • City Council
Elected Officials (i.e., State and U.S.
Representatives/Senators) • Media
Area Business Owners • Local Clergy**

PRAISE

"I believe without hesitation that **every middle-grade classroom in America** should have a copy of R. J. Palacio's *Wonder*."

—Colby Sharp, fourth-grade teacher

"[*Wonder*] will lead to **amazing discussions in classrooms** about Auggie's courage, the need for kindness, and the fact that bravery can take many forms."

—Katherine Sokolowski, fifth-grade teacher

★ "A great discussion starter about love, support, and judging people on their appearance. A well-written, thought-provoking book."

—*School Library Journal*, Starred

★ "A memorable story of kindness, courage and wonder."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred