

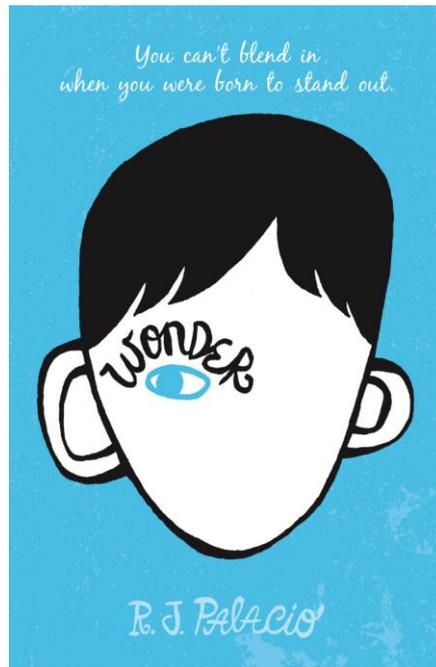


*Educational
Resources*

By Prue
Goodwin

R.J. Palacio

Teacher's Introduction to the Resource



Dear Colleagues,

Are you looking for a book to engage and motivate your Key Stage 3 students? Do you need to replace that well-loved, but overused, book studied by Years 7 & 8? In *Wonder* you will find a well-written and thought-provoking novel that will engage young readers' emotions and offer plenty of opportunity for valuable literary study.

Why should I choose to teach *Wonder*?

Wonder immediately involves readers in a captivating narrative. As well as being gripping, the book is in turn amusing, poignant and inspiring. Beyond its central theme, it requires readers to consider sensitive issues related to growing up, family relationships and school life. The author's engaging writing style not only makes for an engrossing read but also provides many opportunities for students to explore literary devices and language study.

A focused study of *Wonder* would help students to look beyond the book. Use of drama, discussion and creative expression would encourage them to express possible feelings of empathy and moral outrage. The themes may also enable students to recognise their own fears and personal doubts about how they would react in situations experienced by the characters.

The following ideas for using *Wonder* in the classroom can be developed in whatever way suits your teaching style. I am sure that sharing this book with your students will be rewarding for both you and them, whatever way you decide to use it.

Good Luck!

Tell us what you think on Twitter [#thewonderofwonder](https://twitter.com/thewonderofwonder)



The storyline

My name is August. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse. August Pullman is about to start secondary school. He does ordinary things. He eats ice cream. He plays on his Xbox. He feels ordinary - inside. But Auggie is far from ordinary. Ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids don't get stared at wherever they go.

Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life, in an attempt to protect him from the cruelty of the outside world. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted - but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?

Narrated by Auggie and the people around him whose lives he touches forever, *Wonder* is a funny, frank, astonishingly moving debut to read in one sitting, pass on to others, and remember long after the final page.

The author



R. J. PALACIO is a graphic designer by day and a writer by night. She lives in New York City with her family and a black dog named Bear.

Praise for Wonder...

'The breakout publishing sensation of 2012 will come courtesy of Palacio, a New York graphic designer whose debut novel, *Wonder*, is destined to go the way of Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, and then some. Telling the story of August, a schoolboy born with an unspecified facial deformity, it is dark, funny, touching, and no tube carriage will be without a copy this year' ***The Times***

'I really do believe, just like Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, Palacio's *Wonder* has the potential to alter young people's outlook, sensibilities and ideas...'

NATE Classroom

Tell us what you think on Twitter [#thewonderofwonder](https://twitter.com/thewonderofwonder)



Teaching Wonder

- First things first: Give yourself a treat and read *Wonder* from beginning to end for your own pleasure. Don't make notes, don't plan teaching activities, just wallow in the pleasure of reading. This is not so that you can have a break, it is the only way you can decide how best to teach it ... or not.
- If you have decided to use *Wonder*, now is the time to jot down ideas for teaching. The key to using a book when teaching is to captivate students in the unfolding narrative. All good books deserve to be valued first and foremost in their own right and should not be treated purely as educational resources. Once a class enjoys a story, students will want to know what is going to happen next and will become involved in the fictional lives of the characters. Engaging them in creative response to the themes and ideas in the book will offer opportunities to look at writing style, setting and other literary features.
- Although not strictly necessary, it is possible to plan a traditional NC scheme of work on *Wonder* covering any aspect of the current reading curriculum. The ideas for teaching suggested below encompass all the AFs listed in this table:

Reading Objectives	
AF2	Locating evidence Referencing from the text
AF3	Inference and deduction Asking questions Making predictions Exploring through drama: Sculpting characters and thought-tracking Hot-seating Empathy
AF4	Text structure
AF5	Use of language Using drama techniques to explore character Performance reading Making freeze frames
AF6	Reader response through creative activity Asking questions Reading between the lines and making inferences



Whatever any official curriculum requires, all teachers of English will see the value of using creative approaches to explore *Wonder*. Drama, discussion and quieter sessions to think, write and draw will enable students to express their responses to the range of sensitive issues explored in the book.

BEFORE READING

Introduce the book by looking at the words and images on the cover. Briefly discuss what is implied by the line 'You can't blend in when you were born to stand out'.

Different groups will need different levels of support with the reading of *Wonder*. Getting into a book is often hard for youngsters so start by reading the first few chapters aloud to them - once they are caught up in the narrative they can be asked to read on independently.

Perhaps your group cannot read books alone; if that is the case, read the entire book aloud to them in generous instalments over a few sessions.

DURING READING

Concentrate first on responding to the content of the story rather than analysing the text in depth (that can always come later and will be more satisfactory if the students know the whole book). For example, at relevant points, you may enquire how the different narrative voices offer new points of view:

- Auggie's face is not fully described until quite far on in the story, in Via's chapter 'August: Through the Peephole'. How close is this description to your own mental picture of Auggie? Did you have a picture of his face in your mind while reading the book? Did this description alter that picture?

Or you may consider recurring themes, such as the films and books that Auggie enjoys:

- *Star Wars* is one of Auggie's passions. Why do you think this is? Do you see any reasons for Auggie to identify with these characters, or to aspire to be like them?

You could explore what impact adults have on Auggie's predicament. How do Auggie's parents, teachers and other adults affect his life? For example:

- Look at the emails between Mr Tushman, Julian's parents and Jack's parents in the chapter 'Letters, Emails, Facebook, Texts'. Up to this point in the story we have seen how the children at Auggie's school have reacted to him. Is Mrs Albans' attitude towards Auggie different? What do you make of her statement that Auggie is handicapped? Do you think she is correct in saying that asking 'ordinary' children, such as Julian, to befriend Auggie places a burden on them?

Tell us what you think on Twitter #thewonderofwonder



AFTER FINISHING THE BOOK

There are many aspects of the novel that could be taken as a focus for literary exploration:

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

- *What do you think of the line 'You can't blend in when you were born to stand out' which appears on the back cover of the book?*
- *Did this affect how much you wanted to read the story?*
- *How much did this line give away about the story you were about to read?*

Auggie's personality:

- *How would you describe Auggie as a person in the first few chapters of the book?*
- *What about the final few chapters?*
- *Has he changed significantly?*
- *Are there any experiences or episodes during the story that you think had a particular effect on him? If so, how?*

Auggie's appearance:

Throughout *Wonder*, Auggie describes the way that many people react to seeing his face for the first time: by immediately looking away.

- *Have you ever been in a situation where you have responded like this to seeing someone different?*
- *Having now read *Wonder*, how do you feel about this now?*

Seeing things from different points of view:

Handling challenging circumstances seen from the positions of being a parent, a sister, a teacher, a friend etc.



Via:

- *What did you think of Via as a character?*
- *Did you empathise with her?*
- *Why do you think Via was so angry to learn that Auggie cut off his Padawan braid?*
- *Do you think Via's own attitude towards her brother changes throughout the story?*

Mrs Albans:

Look at the emails between Mr Tushman, Julian's parents and Jack's parents in the chapter 'Letters, Emails, Facebook, Texts'. Up to this point in the story we have seen how the children at Auggie's school have reacted to him.

- *Is Mrs Albans' attitude towards Auggie different?*
- *What do you make of her statement that Auggie is handicapped?*
- *Do you think she is correct in saying that asking 'ordinary' children, such as Julian, to befriend Auggie places a burden on them?*

Use of disguises, costumes and masks:

In the chapter 'Costumes' Auggie describes the astronaut helmet that he wore constantly as a younger child. We later learn that Miranda was the one to give Auggie the helmet, and is proud of the gift, but that it was Auggie's father who threw it away.

- *What do you think the helmet signifies to each of these characters and why do you think they all view it so differently?*

The use of humour in Wonder:

Auggie's parents bring Auggie around to the idea of attending school by joking with him about Mr Tushman's name, and telling him about their old college professor, Bobbie Butt.

- *To what extent is humour used as a tool throughout Wonder to diffuse difficult or tense situations, or to convey a part of the story that would otherwise be depressing or sad? Look at the chapter, 'How I Came To Life'.*

Tell us what you think on Twitter #thewonderofwonder



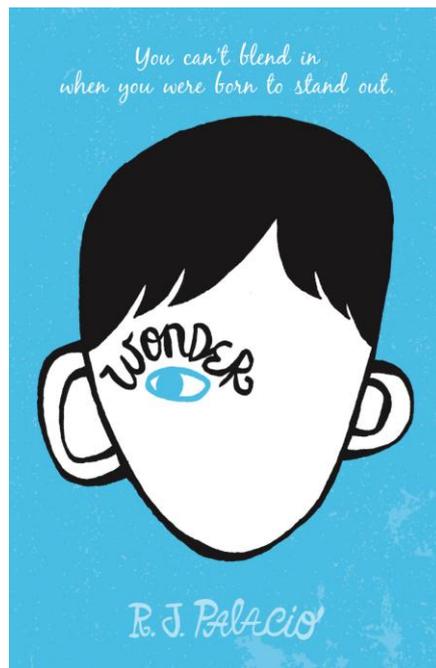
R. J. B. B. B.

- **What do the characters mean by calling someone a jock, a cheerleader or a boffin?**
- **How does bullying go unseen by adults?**
- **How do the adults in school deal with difficult situations or with parental concerns?**

At the ice cream parlour:

The author has explained that she was inspired to write *Wonder* after an experience at a local ice cream parlour, very similar to the scene described in the chapter 'Carvel', where Jack sees Auggie for the first time. In this scene, Jack's babysitter Veronica chooses to get up and quickly walk Jack and his little brother Jamie away from Auggie, rather than risk Jamie saying something rude or hurtful.

- **What do you think you would have done, if put in that position?**



Materials created by Prue Goodwin. Prue is a former middle school teacher responsible for Year 7, she is now a freelance lecturer, an INSET provider and children's book consultant (pruegoodwin@btinternet.com)

Tell us what you think on Twitter #thewonderofwonder



R.J. Palacio



Just one act of kindness can make an impact. We are encouraging people to take the pledge to **CHOOSE KIND**, you can sign the pledge here and see how **WONDER** has affected the lives of adults and children all over the world:

<http://choosekind.tumblr.com/>

If you would like to share your experiences of **WONDER** with us please email photos, reviews, thoughts and pictures to RHCPEducation@randomhouse.co.uk

We're also on Facebook www.facebook.com/wonderthebook

For video resources go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/kidsatrandomhouse> and search 'Wonder'

<http://rjpalacio.com/>

<http://randomhousechildrens.co.uk/>

<https://facebook.com/RandomHouseChildrensPublishersUK>

[@RHKidsUK Edu](#)

[@RHKidsUK](#)

To join the Random House Children's Publishers Education mailing list, email RHCPEducation@randomhouse.co.uk

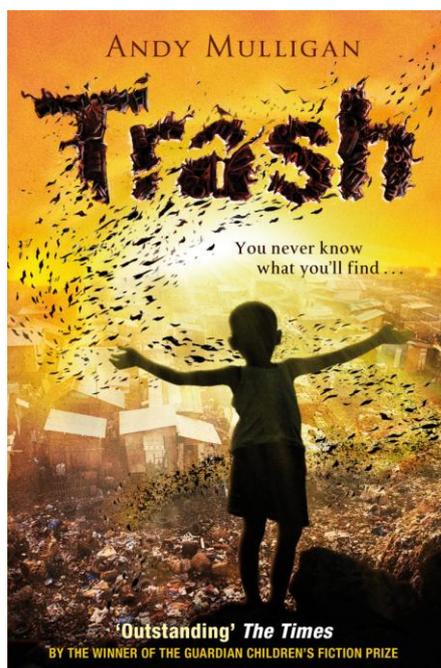


Tell us what you think on Twitter [#thewonderofwonder](#)

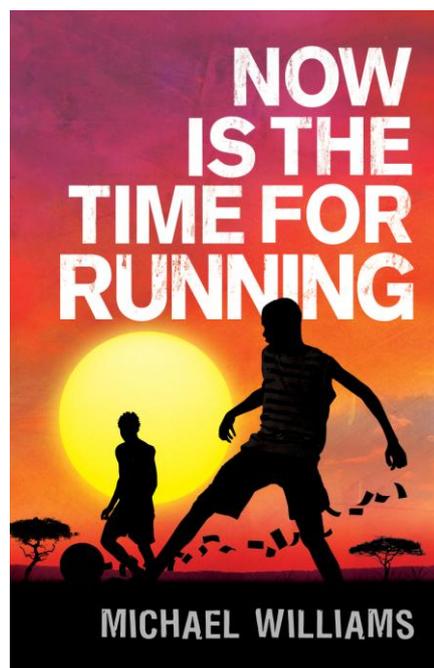


R.J. Palacio

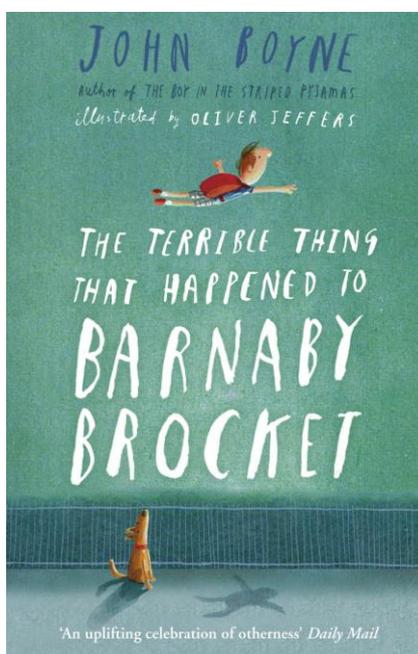
IF YOU ENJOYED TEACHING WONDER, WHY NOT ALSO TRY:



Trash by Andy Mulligan



Now is the Time for Running by Michael Williams



The Terrible Thing that Happened to Barnaby Brocket by John Boyne