

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

Wonder

R. J. Palacio

 **NOVEL UNITS**



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WONDER

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Parts of this novel deal with sensitive, mature issues. Please assess the appropriateness of this novel for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Predictions, analysis, inferences, research, supporting judgments, compare/contrast, pros/cons

Comprehension

Cause/effect, summarizing, identifying attributes

Literary Elements

Epigraphs, allusions, theme, character analysis, figurative language, author's purpose, point of view, symbolism, conflict/resolution

Vocabulary

Definitions, application, word maps, dictionary entries

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, presentation, skit

Writing

Journal entry, alternate ending, essay, poem, newspaper review

Across the Curriculum

Music—"Wonder" by Natalie Merchant, zydeco music, baroque violin vs. hardanger fiddle; Art—collage, watercolor, chalk drawing, pencil sketch, brochure, comic strip; Health—cleft lip/cleft palate, tics, bullying; Entertainment/Popular Culture—*Doogie Howser, M.D.*, *Star Wars*, *Auggie Doggie and Doggie Daddy* cartoon; Literature—*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney, novels about children with differences; Science—acids and bases, Punnett squares

Supplementary Activities

1. Entertainment: Research the following *Star Wars* references, and then tell how each is important in the novel's context: Padawan, Jedi, Jango Fett, Darth Sidious, Boba Fett, clone trooper, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Darth Vader.
2. Science: Look up the scientific terms "acid" and "base." Then, use a T-chart to classify the following everyday substances as either acids or bases: lemon juice, baking soda, mustard, vinegar, coffee, orange juice, toothpaste, aspirin, vegetable oil.
3. Literature: Read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney. In one to two paragraphs, explain the origin of the "Cheese Touch." Discuss whether you think Auggie's comparison is a good one.

A Tour of the Galaxy—the Egyptian Tomb

Via describes living in Auggie's shadow, including the sacrifices she has made and the guilt she often feels. Now, in high school, Via is drifting away from her old friends, Miranda and Ella. Though Via knows her problems could never eclipse Auggie's, she still yearns for more of her parents' attention. Via also discusses the likelihood that she or Auggie will have a child with Auggie's condition. Via decides to cut ties with Miranda and Ella, which affects her more than she realizes. The novel then shifts to Summer's point of view as she highlights Auggie's many redeeming qualities. When Summer is invited to a popular girl's party, she is excited—that is, until people at the party attempt to convince her to ditch Auggie. Despite setbacks, Summer and Auggie remain close friends.

Vocabulary

celestial
disproportionately
catastrophe
bizarre
dynamics
obsession
decisively
exotic
transition
emphatically
literally
platoon
caption

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Via claim that "this year there seem to be a shift in the cosmos" and "planets are falling out of orbit" (p. 83)? *Answers will vary. The shift Via is referring to might relate to the fact that both she and Auggie are starting different schools, with Auggie attending a real school for the first time. Via might also be implying that she plans to demand more of her parents' attention now that Auggie's brain is relatively stable.)*
2. Describe the two Augusts that Via mentions. What does Via ponder about the "two Augusts" demonstrate about her? *The "two Augusts" are two different viewpoints on the child that Via has experienced. One is the Auggie she has always known—a fun-loving, affectionate, tough little brother. The other is the Auggie other people see—a child with a terrible deformity. Answers will vary. Though Via hates herself for loving Auggie—even for a second—as strangers do, her thoughts demonstrate that she is an intelligent, compassionate girl who seeks to understand all viewpoints.)*
3. What did Via love the most about middle school, and, now, high school? *(Via loved that her middle school "was separate and different from home" [p. 91]. Since everyone in her elementary school knew Auggie and her parents, Via enjoyed the relative anonymity middle school afforded her. Now, in high school, Via relishes the fact that no one knows her or Auggie. In effect, she has a clean slate. She is not ashamed of Auggie; rather, she wishes to have an identity independent of any of her family members.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Art: Using Via's metaphor in which Auggie is the Sun (see page 82 of the novel), create a visual representation of the Pullman "galaxy," labeling each part with a person's name and what they represent (e.g., Via—a planet).
2. Comprehension: Review the family history Via relates on page 103 of the novel. Beginning with Auggie and Via Pullman, create a family tree for the Pullmans.
3. Science: Use library resources or the Internet to find information about Punnett squares. Then, complete a Punnett square for the child of two people with alleles Bb and bb, where Bb = brown eyes and bb = blue eyes. Answer the following questions:
 - a. What is the likelihood that the child will have brown eyes?
 - b. What is the likelihood that the child will have blue eyes?
 - c. What is the likelihood that the child will be a carrier for allele b (i.e., will carry the recessive trait for blue eyes)?

The Cowardly Boyfriend

Jack confesses his initial reluctance to befriend Auggie to Mr. Tushman's request and tells how he changed his mind when he realized the difficulties Auggie would be facing. Jack describes his family's tight finances and modest lifestyle, which often separates Jack from his wealthier classmates. He realizes Auggie heard him gossiping with Julian one fall evening, and after Julian makes yet another cruel comment about Auggie, Jack's anger boils over. He punches Julian and refuses to say why. Jack and Auggie mend their friendship, while Julian turns most of the blame at lunch for the punch against Jack. One day, while Auggie and Jack are working on their science project at the Pullmans' house, Via enters and introduces them to her new boyfriend, Justin.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Jack react to Auggie the first time he saw him? What did his babysitter mean when she said, "...sometimes you do not have to mean to hurt someone to hurt someone" (p. 137)? *(Jack cried out in surprise and immediately with his babysitter, speaking her in a whisper, what was wrong with the boy he saw. Answers will vary, but Veronica was most likely trying to stress that the boy, his mother, and his sister probably each felt hurt after seeing Jack's reaction, even though it was unintentional. Just because Jack "didn't mean it" [p. 137] did not mean the other people's feelings weren't hurt.)*
2. Why does Jack agree to help out Tushman? What can the reader infer about Jack based on this decision? *(Jack realizes that "if a little kid like Jack, who is usually a nice enough kid, can be that mean, then a kid like August doesn't stand a chance in middle school." [p. 41].) In other words, Jack decides that Auggie can use all the help he can get. Answers will vary. Though Jack initially*

wants to turn Mr. Tushman down, he considers the situation from Auggie's viewpoint, proving that Jack is sympathetic and compassionate. Perhaps Jack, who feels set apart by his family's financial hardship, can identify with Auggie's loneliness.)

Vocabulary
alabaster
kinetic
inkling
valid
retrospect
stringent
protocol
resolute
mutual
hypocrite
addiction
organic

I Predict...

Directions: Spend a few minutes looking at the cover of the novel and flipping through its pages. What can you predict about the characters, the setting, and the problem in the novel? Write your predictions in the spaces below.

The Characters	The Setting	The Problem

From the information you gathered above, do you think you will enjoy reading this novel? Circle your response on the scale below.

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

I will not like this novel.

I will really like this novel.

Explain your prediction on the lines below.

Word Map

Definition

Synonyms

Vocabulary Word

Antonyms

Pronunciation

Part of Speech

Sentence

Conflict

The **conflict** of a story is the struggle between two people or two forces. There are three main types of conflict: person vs. person, person vs. nature or society, and person vs. self.

Directions: The characters experience some conflicts in the story. In the chart below, list the names of three major characters. In the space provided, list a conflict each character experiences. Then, explain how each conflict is resolved in the story.

Character:

Conflict

Resolution

Character:

Conflict

Resolution

Character:

Conflict

Resolution