

Reading Questions: Prompt Sheet

Wonder by R J Palacio

p. 205–227 North Pole, Auggie Doll, Lobot, Hearing Brightly, Via's Secret, My Cave, Goodbye, Daisy's Toys, Heaven

Content Domain Focus: 2f Identify/explain how information/narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole
2h Make comparisons within the text.

p. 207 Mom says, 'like seeks like'. Can you think of other examples in the book where this is so?

- Julian's friends are not very nice and have all gathered together. There are 'gangs' or cliques all over the school – the D&D group, the jocks and Summer and August, who share the same interests or just get on with one another. It's the same situation in Via's school where people split off according to their 'types'.

p. 207–208 August uses two extended metaphors in this chapter. Can you explain them?

- August says that people's eyes are like compass needles when they look at him. It's as if their eyes are drawn to his face by magnetism. It's as automatic and routine as that. The author might have deliberately used the word 'needles' because another meaning of the word might suggest pain.
- August describes people's reactions to him as precipitation. A regular reaction is like drizzle but with everyone collected together in the hall, their combined reactions hit him like a hurricane or wall of water. August has become used to people's reactions and says they don't upset him. The metaphor describes the magnification of how he feels in this situation.

p. 211 Why couldn't August wear a standard hearing aid? How does he feel about this?

- August doesn't have outer ears to attach the inner bud in place, so he has to have a hearing aid with a heavy-duty headband that wraps around the back of his head. August isn't happy about it. He already thinks he looks strange and to add another strange thing for people to look at and make fun of is the last thing he wants.

p. 216 Why are Mom and Via annoyed with one another?

- Mom is annoyed that Via didn't tell them about or invite them to the play. She knows that it was probably to do with August and people's reactions to him. She can't understand why Via would do such a thing. She's also concerned about how moody she's been lately.
- Via is annoyed that she's been found out. She wanted to keep it secret so that the reasons for her not inviting them wouldn't come out. She's also annoyed at Mom because she feels she's been neglected because of August's condition and medical treatments.

p. 219–220 Why doesn't anyone come into the room for ten minutes? What does August think Mom wants him for?

- Daisy has become sick and Mom and Via will be checking on her rather than going to see if August was OK as Mom usually would. August thinks Mom wants him to apologise to them for his outburst. He's ready for another argument.

p. 221–224 How does Mom know that Daisy is going to die?

- Mom knows that Daisy is going to die because she's been sick a lot lately, she's old and has been to the vet's three times in the last month. Daisy also bit Mom, so Mom knows she's in pain and suffering.

p. 222 Why does Via hug August so tightly?

- Via is sorry that she's been ashamed of August. She's upset about the fight. She's upset that Daisy is going to die. She wants to comfort August as his big sister. But mostly, it occurs to her that it could be August that is dead – he's had lots of scares in the past, after all. The family must have gone through this quite a lot in the past with August.

Deeper Reading

p. 207 Why do you think the teachers aren't running the Science Fair like they did the Egyptian Museum? Give two reasons.

- It makes sense for the people who have made the exhibits to explain them themselves. And the school will want the children to meet more people and challenge themselves by having to speak to strangers rather than just speaking to their own parents – it helps them to grow up.

p. 208–209 This chapter forms a turning point for Julian and August. Can you explain?

- The other children are starting to turn against Julian. They're getting sick of his bullying and don't want to join in any more. They're probably growing up too but Julian is still doing childish things like sending notes or putting pencil shavings in Jack's backpack. They like Jack and for Julian to be behaving like that will make them think about whether they want to be connected to him. For August, this anti-Julian feeling will be a relief since Julian was the person making it most difficult for him. The other children are more likely to accept him as a result. This allows August's personality to come out – in the Uglydolls incident with Maya, for example.

p. 212–213 How does the doctor persuade August to wear the hearing aids.

- The doctor picks up on August's Star Wars fixation and calls the radio transmitter the Lobot wears 'cool'. He links himself to Star Wars gadgetry by saying he 'practically invented it'. Most of all, the Star Wars link gives him time to show August how much they'll improve his hearing. Once he hears the difference, he's hooked.

p. 216 What do you think Mom's reaction was to Via's 'you've been really good at leaving me alone my whole life'?

- Knowing Mom, she probably sobbed – she'd have done it quietly since August would have heard with his new super-powered hearing aid! She would have been shocked but probably recognised that what Via was saying had some truth in it. Mom would see how upset Via was about the situation and would understand how she felt. She and Via would probably have hugged one another. It's clear that they made an agreement about what to do when August asks about it in the next chapter.

p. 219–220 The author often uses sharp contrasts in the book. Can you explain the effect of this sharp change of mood?

- August is in his room sulking. He's waiting for his mum to come in and feeling sorry for himself. He's acting in a childish way, wishing guilt on Via and burrowing himself in stuffed animals. Suddenly on p. 220, the seriousness of Daisy's situation occurs and he's got to snap out of it and face the difficult reality that a member of the family is dying. The effect is to surprise the reader and to put them on the back foot, in the same way that the sudden shocking news does this to August – it makes us empathise with him. It also has the effect of seeing a situation where August must suddenly grow up.

p. 225 Mom, Dad and Via are grieving separately to August. August's not involved at all. Why do you think the author has done this?

- Daisy's death is a metaphor for what could have happened to August. The long hug between Via and August at the end of p. 222 is a subconscious clue to this (see Chekhov's Gun). The scene shows you how the three remaining members of the family would have reacted if August had died (or how they will if he dies early). It's as if August is a ghost, looking at his family after his death.

