

Reading Questions: Prompt Sheet

Wonder by R J Palacio

p. 268–310 **Voices in the Dark, The Emperor’s Guard, Sleep, Aftermath, Home, Bear, The Shift, Ducks, The Last Precept, The Drop-Off, Take Your Seats Everyone, A Simple Thing, Awards, Floating, Pictures, The Walk Home**

Content Domain Focus: 2c Summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph.
2g Identify/explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases.

p. 268–270. How would you describe the structure of these pages? (How are they written?)

- This section is mainly speech. The speeches are short, with one person speaking soon after another which makes the pace very quick.

p. 271–272. Explain why this chapter is called ‘The Emperor’s Guard’? Who is the emperor and why?

- The other boys are surrounding August so that he is protected. They’re looking after him so that nothing else happens to him. August is the emperor because he’s now important – he’s the focus of their attention in a way that he has never been before. He’s probably also the emperor in a Star Wars reference too.

p. 274. At the top of the page, the author uses the word ‘same’ a lot. Is this bad writing?

- The author deliberately uses the word ‘same’ repeatedly because it emphasises the sameness of everything. The repetition of ‘same’ is the same, so the way the passage is written matches what August is trying to describe about the scene. It’s not bad writing at all!

p. 277. Why does August laugh when his mum says, ‘thugs’?

- Mom pauses before and after she says ‘thugs’, as if she’s choosing the word carefully and deliberately. It’s quite an old-fashioned word and August thinks it’s funny. She has a laugh afterwards about the word and substitutes it for more modern words and one that her mother would have used.

p. 282. Describe a ‘seismic’ shift and a ‘cosmic’ shift. How does the choice of those phrases add to your understanding of August’s new situation?

- A seismic shift is where the Earth moves, a cosmic shift is where the whole of space moves. The phrases are hyperbolic (exaggerated) to emphasise the massive social shift that’s happened for August.

p. 284–287. Can you summarise this chapter in five bullet points?

- Various answers.

p. 289–290. What is the significance of August’s hair on these pages and at different points in the story?

- August had bangs at the beginning of the story that covered up his face. He used his hair to hide his disfigurement. Now he’s had his hair cut and gelled, so he’s not now afraid of showing his face because others have accepted what he looks like. He’s also wanting to look good – just like any other teen – and make his hair fashionable. He cut off his Padawan braid just before he started school because he felt self-conscious about it – the braid was also part of the Star Wars theme.

Look at the last and first paragraphs of each of the final chapters. How does the author use chapter breaks?

- Example answer: The author uses chapter breaks as natural pauses. The last and first paragraphs are related to one another and they move the story on. For example, at the end of p. 304, August wins the award and the beginning of the next chapter relates August’s feelings about it with a description of what happens next. The breaks mean that the reader has some time to think – they’re a bit like the pauses in reality TV competitions, building up the drama.

What do you think of the book? Have you learnt anything from August?

- Open response.

Deeper Reading

p. 268-270. What does the structure of this section tell you about the characters at this point?

- The pace is quick because of the amount of short speech followed by short description. This pace reflects the relief, excitement and adrenalin going on with the characters after the scary experience. They're relieved and joking around with each other to get over the shock of what's just happened.

p. 273. The author uses a quotation from *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* at the beginning of this chapter. Why?

- This is the book that August has taken away with him. He was reading it before he left and he's reading it now because he can't sleep.
- 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' is about good overcoming evil and, in a way, this is what Wonder is about – August's positive influence and his family's love overcoming the negativity of others towards his difference.
- The scene August is reading reflects the fight August has just been through. It's like he can't get the fight out of his head and is reliving it over again, even in his reading.
- It's interesting that the horrible creatures are described as 'deformed' because that's a word that's used negatively against August.

p. 274. At the end of the chapter, August remembers his dad's words, 'like a lamb to the slaughter'. Explain the synonym with reference to the 'Alien' chapter (p. 265-266).

- August is a lamb because he's innocent and powerless. He doesn't know what he's walking into when he walks into the wood – he's never experienced this amount of hatred and violence before. He's slaughtered because they're physically violent to him but also, they've traumatised him mentally and emotionally – he can't get Eddie's face out of his head. This is another evil reference – it's originally from the Bible.
- August's realisation of what the phrase means in reality might be a milestone on his way to growing up.

p. 276-280. There are lots of emotions going on in this chapter and a mix of moods. Can you map out some of the moods and emotions through the chapter and match them to paragraphs or phrases? Here are some ideas to work from: *Worry, laughter, love, family, hunger and food, funny, sad, serious, pride, gauche (look it up), learning, relief, excitement*. There are no right answers, by the way.

- Various answers.

p. 285. What's the significance of Mr Tushman calling August 'Auggie'?

- Mr Tushman has always called him August before now. This is the first time he's called him Auggie. It's what his family and people who love him call him. That Mr Tushman is using the name now tells us how close he's got to August and how much he values him. He's being quite open with him in this chapter – not really speaking to him like a Principal, more as a friend or parent. He had given him a quick hug in the earlier chapter after the Eddie incident. The use of August or Auggie is a signifier of relative closeness.

p. 290-291. Can you track the changing emotions of Dad and August during their talk about the astronaut helmet? You can draw it as a roadmap (or two), annotate the text, or just discuss each shift of emotion.

- Various answers, covering: matter-of-fact, shock, laughter, realisation, anger, tenderness, revelation, love, humour/mischief, conspiracy, humour.

p. 293. Why does August say 'dear ol' Dad' at the end of the chapter? He doesn't seem to like those reminders of childhood.

- August and his dad have just had a bonding moment in the car. Even though August wants to move away from 'childishness', the Auggie Doggie reference is and always will be a part of his relationship with his dad. He's using it to tell his dad, in a roundabout way, that he loves him – it's their language with one another. Dad responds using the same language, 'bye my son...'

p. 306, 310. August says he's 'an ordinary kid'. At the end of the book, his mum says he's 'a wonder'. Which is he? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

- Various answers weighing up August's ordinariness and extraordinariness backed up by reference to the text.

What do you think of the book? Has it changed you reading it?

- Open response.