

Reading Questions: Prompt Sheet

Wonder by R J Palacio

The covers & p. 3-14

Reading Questions and Answers

Content Domain Focus: 2a/2b

What information about the plot of the book can you glean from the front and back covers?

- Example answer: There is no clear plot information given on the cover other than a theme of someone who stands out, probably because of her/his looks.

What can you work out about the main character from the back cover?

- Example answers: Her/his name is August. There's something bad about the way s/he looks (or s/he thinks there is). S/he won't tell us what s/he looks like, so s/he's probably ashamed of it. S/he cares about what other people think about her/him (s/he says, 'whatever you're thinking') and it's likely that s/he's had bad reactions from others about her/his looks (it's the very first thing s/he says about her/himself).

In the quotation on the back cover, August has nothing positive to say about her/himself. Contrast this with the words describing the book and character in the reviews (on the outer and inner covers).

- Positive vocabulary examples: 'has the power...', 'tremendously uplifting', 'all-too-rare power', 'charming', 'brilliant', 'moving', 'uplifting', 'hopeful', 'important', 'touches the heart', 'life affirming', 'a character whom readers will remember forever', 'your life will be better for it', 'powerful', 'terrific'.

Ambivalent vocabulary examples: 'wreaks emotional havoc', 'brutal'.

The title of the book is 'Wonder'. What does 'wonder' mean?

- A feeling of being amazed.
- A person or thing that's remarkable.
- A miracle.
- To be curious.
- To be doubtful.

August uses the word 'ordinary' seven times in the first paragraph. Why?

- Example answer: He's ordinary in the sense that he does normal things that any ten-year-old would do and he feels ordinary. But he doesn't feel ordinary (in his first sentence, he says he's not). He's not ordinary because of the way other people treat him ('running screaming' and 'staring'). He wants to be ordinary and to be seen as ordinary; he's probably deeply hurt at the way he's routinely treated by others ('wherever [I] go').

Find evidence on p. 3 to show how others react to August as not 'ordinary'.

- Others: 'that look-away thing', 'the faces people make', 'older kids made some noises', 'running away screaming', 'star[ing]'

Via: gets annoyed at others being rude to August; she's protective of him.

Mom and Dad: pretend they don't see the 'faces'; they see him as extraordinary (in a positive sense).

On p. 4, August mentions the operations he's had. What were the operations for? How do you know?

- August says he doesn't have a 'normal face' on page 3, so the operations were likely to be on his face.

Do August's current friends treat him now the same way they previously treated him?

Explain your answer.

- Example answer: Christopher treats him the same way as ever (he invites him to his party) but he doesn't see him as regularly since he now lives a long way away.

When they were younger, they saw a lot of each other but now Zach and Alex don't invite him to their parties, don't see him (they 'bump into each other') and don't engage with him when they meet ('they always say hello'). They have now started school, have other friends and are probably now embarrassed about August's face.

His other 'friends' weren't really friends at all – they didn't engage with him and never/rarely invited him to parties. He's unlikely to see them at all. They were probably always embarrassed about August's face.

Find words and phrases that show that this book is set in the USA.

- 'Play ball', 'Mom', 'yelling', 'fifth grade', 'homeschools', 'hang out', 'playdates', locations.

Deeper Reading

Do you think August hides the way he feels? Find evidence in the text to back up your ideas.

- Example answer: He pretends not to see the faces people make when they see him. He doesn't display any annoyance at his treatment in the same way Via does. He's matter of fact about all the surgeries he's undergone. He simply describes upsetting events such as not being invited to birthdays or not being invited back again without commenting on his feelings about this. He says 'maybe' he's making a big deal about parties.

He says Zach and Alex are still nice to him and describes them as 'really good friends', but the only contact he has with them now is bumping into each other in the street. Maybe he doesn't want even to acknowledge the poor quality of this relationship.

