

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and secondary
11+ years

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- English
- History, society and culture
- Science

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Story Forms: Rite of Passage/Realistic Fiction
- How an author constructs voice and character
- First Person Accounts
- Building vocabulary
- Structure
- Values: kindness, fortitude, resilience, bravery

THEMES

- Identity and Rite of Passage
- Physical Deformity and Self-Image
- Bullying
- Kindness
- Friendship
- Loss and Grief

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Australia

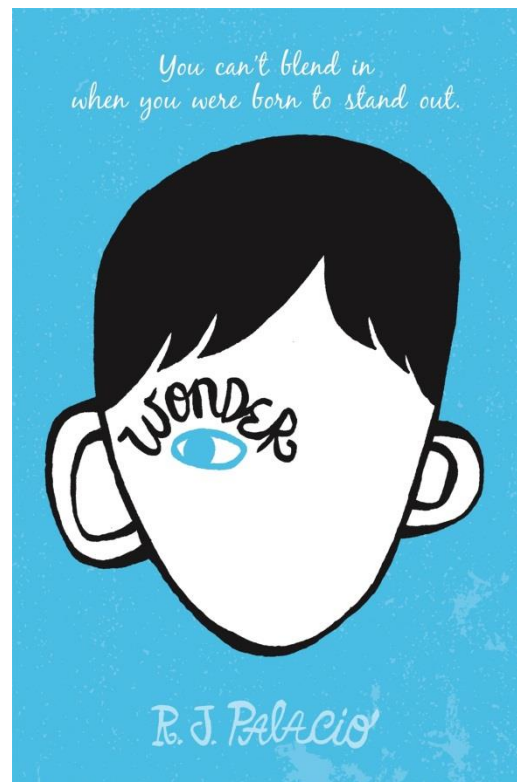
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Wonder

R.J. Palacio

INTRODUCTION

'My name is August, by the way. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.' (p 3)

August Pullman is different, which is a classic theme in children's and YA literature. But Auggie has a real problem because his facial deformities make him look very different indeed. People have to look very hard to see beyond Auggie's face, and to appreciate the person he is inside.

His story of going to school for the first time, after being home-schooled for years, coincides with his elder sister Via going to high school. Both experience major emotional changes, and their family dynamics change as well.

The story is told in first person by Auggie, but also includes parts told in first person by Via, and their friends Summer, Jack, Justin, and Miranda.

Auggie's irrepressible spirit has been nurtured by the love which has cocooned him all his life. This hasn't come without penalties, though, because now he has to face the world outside that world which has been constructed by his family, in which neighbourhood friends, and those who've given him medical treatments, have offered him sanctuary, and they all know that this new world won't be quite as kind to him. Fortunately, love, and a sense of humour help him through some of the darkest times.

'I mean, I don't want to brag or anything, but I am actually considered something of a medical wonder, you know.' (p 130)

PLOT SUMMARY

Auggie is terrified of going to school and facing the inevitably bad reactions from kids and their parents. Even his parents can't agree on whether it will be a good or bad thing for him. But he does go to Beecher Prep and almost immediately finds a friend in Jack and an enemy in Julian. He is also befriended by Summer, who shares her lunch table with him. Things seem bearable until he overhears a conversation which plunges him into despair. Meanwhile, his sister Via has started high school and is relishing being anonymous. The trouble is that her two best friends, Miranda and Ella, seem to be avoiding her, and she's not sure what's going on with them.

Via finds a boyfriend in Justin and understudies to Miranda in the school play opposite Justin as the lead. Auggie makes things up with Jack, and all the kids who were against him gradually come round. The school camp proves a turning point, though, and Auggie finds he has more friends than he knew.

Everything is changing, and neither knows if it's going to be for the better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RJ Palacio lives in NYC with her husband, two sons, and two dogs. For many years, she was an art director and book jacket designer, designing covers for countless well-known and not so well-known writers in every genre of fiction and non-fiction. She always wanted to write, though. She kept waiting for the perfect time in her life to start writing, but after more than twenty years of designing book jackets for other people, she realized that the perfect time would never really present itself. It's never the perfect time to start writing a book. So she decided to just go for it. *Wonder* is her first novel. See her website: <http://rjpalacio.com/>

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

On her website there is an insightful FAQ section which answers a lot of the questions you might have asked RJ Palacio yourselves.

Some of her inspiration can also be found in the interviews below:

1. Hodgson, Heather 'Interview with RJ Palacio' *Daily Telegraph*
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/9086974/Interview-with-RJ-Palacio-author-of-Wonder.html>
2. 'RJ Palacio in interview with Chip Kidd, designer, Random House'
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4psz--ziXB4>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/9086974/Interview-with-RJ-Palacio-author-of-Wonder.html>
3. The book has also engendered the 'Choose Kind' campaign
<http://choosekind.tumblr.com/>

WRITING STYLE

Alternative First Person Accounts

This is August's story, but it actually consists of six different characters telling their versions of it in first person: Part 1 (p 1): August; Part 2 (p 80) Via; Part 3 (p 118) Summer; Part 4 (p 133) Jack; Part 5 (p 186) Justin; Part 6 (p 205) August; Part 7 (p 235) Miranda; Part 8 (p 249) August.

Such alternating accounts offer an interesting perspective on the action, and in this case, make this a more subtle and complex rendering of the trauma August has endured as a result of his genetic deformity. The first person voice always lends an empathy and an immediacy to the action, since the reader is given insight into the feelings of those involved in a series of events. But here we are also offered the perspectives of others who have suffered as a result of August's affliction as well. Everyone has a story ... and everyone has issues.

Activities

1. Within these parts, there are a number of sections told in different types of literary text. For example, The chapter headed 'Letters, Emails, Facebook, Texts (pp 160-7) includes Jack's letters of apology to Mr Tushman and Julian; Mr Tushman's reply; a letter to Mr Tushman by Julian's mother (Melissa Perper Albans); Mr Tushman's reply to her; John and Amanda Will's reply to Melissa Albans; messages between Jack and Auggie. Discuss the use of such different forms and how they enhance the framing first person narrative.
2. Justin's Part Five is written entirely without capitals for sentences (pp 186-204). Why do you think this is?
3. Re-write a section in the novel in Mr Tushman's voice.
4. Until the end of the novel, we don't know why Miranda has been acting the way she has. Write a chapter in Ella's voice and try to imagine a scenario which has made her turn away from Via.
5. Verse novels offer a very immediate form of personal writing. Write a sequence in the novel as if it is a poem in a verse novel. (Study some contemporary verse novels in order to prepare for this exercise.)

Questions

1. Why do we not hear from either of Auggie's parents? Listen to RJ Palacio's interview with Chip Kidd (listed above) after you have answered this question.
2. Which other character in Auggie's class would you like to have heard from?

Literary Devices and Symbols

This novel employs a range of literary devices and symbols to cement themes. Devices such as simile, metaphor and personification are used to describe things in a more obtuse way than is possible when using literal language or description. Symbols can also be used to denote something in a more suggestive fashion. Some of the various types of literary language used in this novel are discussed in the points below.

Activities

1. Part Two is Via's view of the situation. It opens with a quote from David Bowie's 'Space Oddity' and then a chapter headed 'A Tour of the Galaxy', and continues to employ metaphors of space and planets to describe the family situation. She suggests that Auggie is the sun and that she and her parents are like planets revolving around him. She ends by saying: 'The galaxy is changing. The planets are falling out of alignment.' (p 83) How does the use of such metaphor enrich the reader's understanding of this situation? Would it have been less effective if she had simply described her home life in completely realistic terms?
2. Mr Browne's 'Precepts' are discussed (pp 45, 48). On p 65 Auggie writes a piece on being remembered for the things we do. Invite students to write a piece based on this, or any other precept included in the book. On p 288, Mr Browne writes his last precept at the end of term, and on pp 311-13 the precepts are listed and also the postcards that kids send Mr Browne over the break. Write a postcard to Mr Browne containing your favourite precept.
3. Part Three opens with a quote from Christian Aguilera's song 'Beautiful'. Part Seven quotes

Andain's 'Beautiful Things; Part 8 quotes Eurythmic 'Beautiful Child'. Discuss 'beauty' in relation to physical and moral or mental attributes. There is a touching scene where Nate confesses to Auggie that he threw out the astronaut helmet because he missed looking at his face. 'I love this face of yours, Auggie, completely and passionately.' (pp 290-2) How should beauty be defined?

4. Identify any other literary devices (e.g. Personification/ simile/ metaphor) used in the novel. e.g. 'Like I had my own emperor's guard' (p 272).

Questions

1. Were there any literary devices which seemed most evident in this text?
2. What symbols or motifs did you notice in this text?

Literary, Film and Popular Culture References

Each part opens with a quote and there are many references to literary and film texts.

Activities

1. Discuss one of these quotes in relation to the section which follows. e.g. Part Four opens with a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*. Discuss in relation to Jack. Part Five refers to Bernard Pomerance's *The Elephant Man*; Part Six is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. How do these relate to the action thematically?
2. Identify any other quotations referred to or employed in this novel.
3. *Star Wars* is Auggie's favourite thing, and the novel is littered with references to the film franchise. How do the characters and themes of *Star Wars* relate to the action symbolically? Identify any other literary devices (e.g. Personification/ simile/ metaphor) used in the novel. e.g. 'Like I had my own emperor's guard' (p 272).
4. He also refers to *The Lord of the Rings*, and Isabel is reading *The Hobbit* to him. He later reads CS Lewis's *Narnia* series, and on p 273 there is a quote from it. Discuss the latter and its significance.
5. Mr Tushman's speech refers to JM Barrie's *The Little White Bird* (p 299) and to

Christopher Nolan's *Under the Eye of the Clock* (p 300). Discuss these quotes.

Questions

1. Auggie and Nate have fun reciting the lines from a favourite song *The Luckiest Guy on the Lower East Side* written by Stephen Merritt and performed by The Magnetic Fields (pp 289-92). What does this song mean to them?
2. What literary reference or quote had most resonance for you?

Characterisation

August, his sister Olivia (Via), his parents Nate and Isabel Pullman are a loving family with a much-loved dog named Daisy. When the two siblings go to new schools, though, Via's old friendships are tested, and Auggie finds new friends, and new enemies.

Activities

1. Julian is an unlikeable character. What do you think has influenced his development into such a mean and unthinking bully? Is moving to a new school likely to improve him?
2. How does dialogue inform character in this novel? Choose a passage and detail what it tells you about the characters speaking to each other.
3. Trace a character arc for one of the characters showing the various changes in that character.
4. Describe one of the characters in your own words.

Questions

1. Which character did you engage with most and why?
2. Which did you like least and why?

Structure and Suspense

An author creates structure in a work by plotting and planning, and ensures thematic cohesion by integrating stylistic details into this overall plan. This novel (like many prose narratives) is arranged as a chronological sequence of events, but also contains flashbacks which inform the action.

Activities

1. The opening and closing sentences of a chapter are very important in terms of maintaining tension and engagement with the reader. Choose examples in the book and how they work to maintain suspense and interest. e.g. *Opening*: 'I was really bummed when Christopher moved away three years ago.'(p 8) *Closing*: I wanted a hole I could fall inside of: a little black hole that would eat me up.'(p 78)
2. Create a Book Trailer based on the novel's structure. View some of the other Book Trailers based on the book on both the author's and publishers' websites, and those created by students, which are available on YouTube.
3. Create a timeline detailing the events described in the novel. Begin with Auggie's birth and mark on the timeline the events which you consider to be thematically significant.

Questions

1. What are the major themes in the novel, and how do they influence the structure?
2. What other devices does the author use to maintain suspense?
3. Imagine if there were a sequel to this novel. What might happen in it? Or do you think that the ending is all that the story needs and that a sequel would spoil it?

Humour

Auggie and his family have lots of jokes together, and Auggie is a funny guy, as is his friend Jack.

Activities

1. What role does humour play in helping the family cope with their situation?
2. Justin's trick when he encounters the bullies from Auggie's school whom he had seen

taunting Jack is a 'slapstick' joke or incident (p 199). What does 'slapstick' mean?

3. Sarcasm is often used as a form of self-defence, but it is a form of humour which can also be very hurtful. Locate examples of sarcasm in the book, and how the characters respond to it.

Questions

1. What was the funniest line in the novel?
2. What was the funniest scene?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Several social topics are raised in the book. Students might further examine any one of them.

Identity & Rite of Passage

Each of the characters in this novel mature in certain ways, and Auggie's problems assist them in doing so; they also help Auggie to gain in maturity.

Activities

1. 'You can't blend in when you were born to stand out' is written on the cover of this book. Watch the Book Trailer for this novel on RHA (UK) site <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOXDD3atWco> Discuss this quote in relation to the theme of identity.
2. A kid like Auggie might variously be described as a 'child with special needs', 'a gifted kid', 'a differently abled child'. These epithets elide the concepts of different, special, and in need of care or help. Are they useful terms? What sort of identity does Auggie suggest he has, when he repeatedly describes himself as 'ordinary'?
3. Each of the Parts in the novel open with a line drawing of the alternate narrators which are similar to, but different to that of Auggie on the cover. The thing which unites them is the eye/s and the headdress which suggest a type of costume. Is identity based on how we look and how other people see us? Or is it based on what we are and what we do?
4. A 'rite of passage' is a commonly used trope or structure in young adult fiction. The main

character experiences a 'ritual' event which changes the way he/see himself and assists him/her in making a transition to maturity or towards adulthood. Arnold van Gennep in *Les rites de passage* (1909) described this 'rite of passage' as having three phases: 'separation, transition, and reincorporation'. Consider the novel and how these three phases are illustrated in it. Read about this concept at 'Rite of Passage' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rite_of_passage. Does Auggie's sense of his own identity change in the course of the novel?

Questions

1. Auggie has been so protected by his family, that he is really still living the life of a toddler when the novel opens. How do things change when he goes to Middle School?
2. Does Via gain any new insights into herself during this same period?
3. Which of the students (apart from Auggie), matures in the course of this narrative? Choose quotes to support your answer.

Physical Deformity and Self-Image

Activities

1. 'I eat like a tortoise, if you've ever seen a tortoise eating. Like some prehistoric swamp thing' (p 50) Throughout the novel, such similes and comparisons to animals or lesser lifeforms suggest that Auggie has been enculturated to think of himself in this way. 'At Becher Prep I'm the old moldy cheese.'(p 72) Discuss.
2. Via describes what it is like to live in a family with a child with special needs (pp 82-3). Discuss the effects which such a deformity or other disability might have on the siblings of the afflicted. (Teachers need to handle this with care, and to be sensitive with regards to the possible experiences of students in their class.)
3. 'Here's what I think: we've all spent so much time trying to make August think he's normal that he actually thinks he is normal. But the problem is, he's not.' (p 90) Discuss Via's statement. Can parental over-compensation leave a person vulnerable when strangers encounter him/her?

4. Study the background to Auggie's affliction (pp 103-4), and the seemingly random origins of such deformities in a complex gene pool. What have you discovered about the origins of such conditions?
5. Summer is described as a 'saint' for hanging out with August (p 90.) Why is it 'saintly' to be friendly to someone with a disability?
6. The book opens with a long quote from Natalie Merchant's song 'Wonder' and then Part One opens with another shorter quote from the song: 'Fate smiled and destiny laughed as she came to my cradle'. Watch the music video of her singing the song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zpYFAzhAZY> How does this song relate to August's situation?

Questions

1. When Auggie wins the Henry Ward Beecher Medal (p 304), everyone is thrilled for him. Auggie accepts, and loves the adulation, but expresses a truer feeling: 'But hey, if they want to give me a medal for being me, that's okay. I'll take it.' (p 306) Would such an award please everyone who suffers such an affliction? Might it also have been traumatic to have one's pain put on public display?
2. Once, it would once have been very difficult for a child like Auggie to have the surgery or the special care he needed, in order to breathe and eat while he was recovering from countless operations. How much is medical science responsible for Auggie's living as long as he has?
3. Via writes: 'Countless babies who'll never be born. Like mine.' (p 106) She doesn't expand on this but it is a sad statement. Why?

Bullying

Bullying is another key topic in this novel. Not only is Auggie bullied, but his friend Jack is as well. The novel reveals the ways in which bullying manifests itself and some strategies for dealing with it.

Activities

1. Julian is sometimes overt in his bullying, but is often secretive or 'covert' in his bullying, as well. For example, he makes a reference to Darth Sidious (p 44) which Auggie realises is aimed at him. Discuss the two

- forms of public and private bullying. Is one more dangerous than the other?
2. Taking sides can be a way of gaining power in the schoolyard. Julian draws up a list (p 177) and forces everyone to take a side in the campaign to ostracise Auggie. But the list was metaphorically drawn in the opening scenes when Mr Tushman asked Julian, Jack and Charlotte to welcome Auggie to the school. Julian's Side was drawn against Jack's Side, and Charlotte was politely neutral. But, interestingly, she doesn't appear on Julian's list at all. Are 'neutrals' even more dangerous than bullies? Discuss.
 3. Bullying can be infectious, too. Julian's 'game' to pretend that touching August would spread 'The Plague' (p 120) is soon being played by most kids in the school. Auggie compares it to the 'Cheese Touch' in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (p 72). Have you observed this sort of behaviour in your school? How did you respond to it?
 4. Words can also be a cruel form of bullying: e.g. 'Zombie Kid', 'freak' (p 119) or the list (p 79). Discuss the words which have power to hurt you, or those who are close to you, and why?
 5. Read other novels about bullying and compare to this one. E.g. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier (1974) or *The Present Takers* by Aidan Chambers (1983) are contemporary classics. [See Further Reading below.]
 6. Teachers might address the topic of bullying by visiting the Stand Together 2013 Lesson Plans on the Australian government website: Bullying. No Way! <http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/news-research/teacher-resources/bullying-lesson-resources.php> or by celebrating the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence which was first held on March 15, 2013, when the government launched the Safe School Hub <http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/>. Organise an Anti-Bullying Program in your school. Invite students to design a poster and slogan to launch the program.

Questions

1. What would you have done in Jack's situation?
2. Was Via's advice to Auggie (when she tells him to go back to school and ignore the 'jerks') good advice?
3. Does your school have an anti-bullying policy and strategies for dealing with the problem?

Kindness

Activities

1. When Henry first sits next to Auggie he puts his bag between them (p 40), as a sort of barrier, so that later, instead of offering to help Henry with his lock, Auggie doesn't. Does lack of kindness engender unkindness? Discuss.
2. Mr Tushman's speech (pp. 298-300) is all about kindness. Read it carefully, and discuss what he says in it.
3. The novel includes some very unlikeable parents who obviously gain some vicarious sense of superiority from having their kids attend an elite school such as Beecher Prep. The ambitions of these parents make them very unkind indeed. Discuss.
4. Visit the Choose Kind website <http://choosekind.tumblr.com/> and use some of the activities with your students. Read about some of the projects which schools have undertaken to celebrate being kind. Invite students to write about a 'random act of kindness' which they have experienced.
5. Charlotte's character is an interesting one in this context. Auggie notices that although she is perfectly civil and polite in acknowledging him, after their first meeting she never goes out of her way to speak to, or sit with him. She is perhaps typical of many of us, who choose to remain aloof from those people or things which upset us. Discuss.

Questions

1. Is this a novel about kindness? Is this the central theme?
2. Do you believe that people are naturally kind, or is it something we need to be taught?

Friendship**Activities**

1. Discuss how you should welcome a newcomer to your school, and how you would befriend someone who was different. Did Jack, Charlotte and Julian do a good job in making Auggie feel welcome?
2. Discuss whether there is peer group pressure to conform, and to ostracise people who don't fit in, in your school and how you should resist that pressure.

Questions

1. Jack's betrayal of August is eventually forgiven. Is such forgiveness or understanding a characteristic of true friendship?
2. In comparison to Via as a friend, Miranda reflects on Ella not asking her questions or expecting much of her: 'she was an easier friend to have in that way' (p 238). Is a friend's role to demand the best of us as people? Discuss.
3. Charlotte goes out of her way to warn Auggie about the list Julian has drawn up of people who are for or against Auggie, or who are 'neutral' but when she leaves, he writes: 'I guess even though she was neutral, she didn't want to be seen with me.'(p 173) How easy is it to be 'neutral'?
4. What sort of friend is Summer to August?

Loss and Grief

Loss and grief are experienced by everyone at some point in their lives. Several characters in this novel experience loss and grief. E.g. Via feels the loss of her Grans, very keenly as does her mother; and the whole family loses Daisy; Miranda's dad has left her family; Auggie's friend Christopher has moved away.

Activities

1. Discuss loss and grieving and strategies for dealing with it.
2. Can one gain strength from losing someone? Does it necessarily make us a stronger person to have experienced such feelings?

Questions

1. How has the loss of her Grans affected Via?
2. Auggie feels that Daisy's ghost is watching over him. Is this a common response to grief?

KEY QUOTES

1. 'What kind of person are you? Isn't that the most important thing of all?' (p 47)
2. "For me, Halloween is the best holiday in the world. It even beats Christmas. I get to dress up in a costume. I get to wear a mask ... Nobody notices me Nobody knows me.' (p 73)
3. "Does August see himself as he might have looked without that single gene that caused the catastrophe of his face?" (p 89)
4. 'Like if all the guys in the fifth grade were lined up against a wall and I got to choose anyone I wanted to hang out with, I would choose August.' (p 143)
5. 'Olivia reminds me of a little lost bird sometimes... a little lost bird looking for its nest.' (p 203)
6. 'Everyone's way too hung up on being in the popular group, and he's just as far from the popular group as you can get ... I don't actually enjoy hanging out with the popular group that much.' (p 145)
7. 'Funny how you worry a lot about something and it turns out to be nothing.' (p 215)
8. 'And I wondered how it would feel to be in heaven some day and not have my face matter anymore. Just like it never, ever mattered to Daisy.' (p 227)
9. 'Daisy's ghost made me feel super strong inside knowing wherever I am, she'd be there with me.' (p 256)
10. 'there are more good people on this earth than bad people, and the good people watch out for each other and take care of each other,' (p 279).

FURTHER READING

Bullying ('Explorations of Bullying in Children's Books: an historical survey by Dr. Carlisle Sheridan.) *The Literature Base* Vol 7, No 4, October 1996, pp 18-21.

Bullying (A list of books that deal with the topic of bullying – Junior Primary, Middle Primary, Upper Primary, Lower Secondary and Teacher Reference.) *The Literature Base* Vol 7, No 4, October 1996, pp 22-25.

'**Bullying** (An updated list of novels dealing with the topic of bullying to go with the teachers' reference, A Literature Based Approach to Bullying)' *The Literature Base* Vol 12, No 3, August 2011, pp 22-7.

Bullying solutions: evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools. Editors: Helen McGrath and Toni Noble Pearson Education, 2006.

Field, Evelyn M. *Bully blocking: six secrets to help children deal with teasing and bullying* Finch Publishing, 2007.

Healey, Justin, ed. *Dealing with Bullying* (Issue in Society, Vol 330) Spinney Press, 2011.

Rigby, Kenneth *Bullying Interventions in Schools: Six basic Approaches* ACER Press, 2010.

Websites:**Resources on Bullying:**

Bullying Lesson Resources

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/news-research/teacher-resources/bullying-lesson-resources.php>

Bullying. No Way!

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/news-research/teacher-resources/bullying-lesson-resources.php>

'11 Facts About Bullying' DoSomething.Org

<http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying>

'Facts and Figures about Bullying'

<http://www.kidspot.com.au/schoolzone/Bullying-Facts-and-figures-about-bullying+4065+395+article.htm>

Safe Schools Hub <<http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/>>

Stand Together 2013 Activity

<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/national-day/stand-together-2013/index.html>

Organisations which address the Issue of Facial Deformities include:

Little Baby Face Foundation

<http://www.littlebabyface.org/>

Operation Smile < <http://www.operationsmile.org/>

Operation Smile Australia

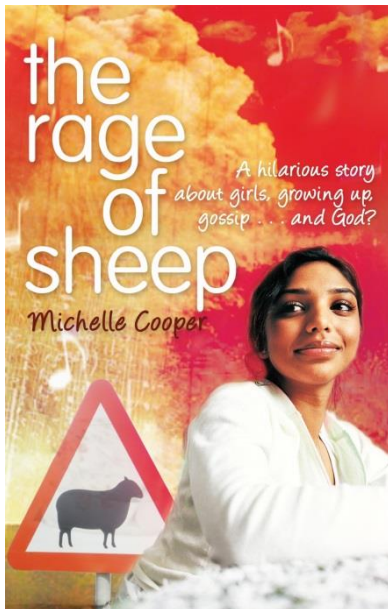
<http://australia.operationsmile.org/>

Operation Smile *Wikipedia*

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Smile

There are also many sites which include interviews with parents of children who have facial deformities.

FURTHER READING



The Rage of Sheep
by Michelle Cooper

Why this story?

I'd grown up being told that if I found myself tempted to behave in an unkind way, I just had to ask myself, 'What would Jesus do?' And then do that. Something hard pinged off the back of my seat and bounced down the aisle. So the question was, what would Jesus do if the Jameson sisters started chucking Jaffas at his head? It is 1984 and fifteen-year-old Hester Jones is not having a good year. Her best friend has moved away and, even though Natalie and Lynda are allowing her to hang out with them, Hester's struggling to keep up with her cool new friends. Plus, she has the most embarrassing dad in the world, who's never, ever going to let her go to the birthday bash Natalie's planning. Worst of all, her Science teacher's making her work on a project about evolution with that weird Joshua Mason . . . When everything goes wrong and the world stops making sense, Hester has to decide: is it better to be a sheep, or a goat?

Teachers' resources available.

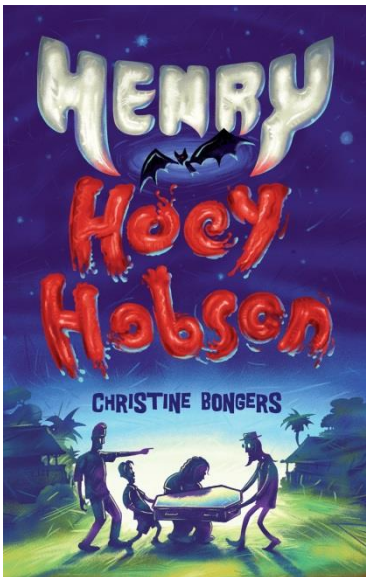


Faking Sweet
by J.C. Burke

Why this story?

Best friends, betrayal and bitchiness. It's all part of surviving year nine . . . Holly might be new, but she already knows who to watch out for: Jess Flynn, the most popular girl in year nine. Holly's best friend back in Melbourne, Calypso, says Jess is a liar, a shoplifter and a boyfriend-stealer. Calypso wants revenge for her ex-friend's betrayal, and Holly's only too happy to oblige. But it's not proving easy to follow Calypso's plan and catch Jess out. And then there's the fact that as Holly gets to know her, Jess isn't fitting the terrible picture Calypso has painted of her.

Teachers' resources available.

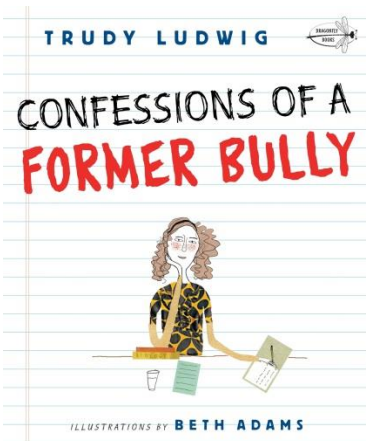


Henry Hoey Hobson
by Christine Bongers

Why this story?

Twelve-and-a-half-year-old *Henry Hoey Hobson* is drowning in the dangerous waters of Year Seven. He arrives at his sixth school in as many years, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, to discover that he is the only boy in the grade. The tiny school in inner-city Brisbane has lost most of its older boys to bigger Catholic colleges, leaving only a trio of male misfits a year below him, and in his year, an intimidating all-female line-up. Fatherless, friendless and non-Catholic, Henry earns a reputation as a vampire on his first day, when ill-fitting braces make his mouth bleed. To make matters worse, a pack of weirdos moves in next door. Manny, Vee, Caleb and Anders are creatures of the night. With their pale skin, black clothing and eerie coffin, they freak out the local kids. When they befriend Henry, they drive a stake through the heart of any chance he might have had of fitting in. Henry's only chance to redeem himself is the school swimming carnival. But first he must deal with the withdrawn and tortured Anders' attempts to overcome his own dark past and earn a place in the light, at Henry's side. Finally, Henry and his motley cheer squad must choose how they want to live their lives. Is living life at the margins enough for any of them?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Confessions of a Former Bully
by Trudy Ludwig

Why this story?

After Katie gets caught teasing a schoolmate, she's told to meet with Mrs. Petrowski, the school counselor, so she can make right her wrong and learn to be a better friend. Bothered at first, it doesn't take long before Katie realizes that bullying has hurt not only the people around her, but her, too. Told from the unusual point of view of the bully rather than the bullied, *Confessions Of A Former Bully* provides kids with real life tools they can use to identify and stop relational aggression.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)

WORKSHEET 1

CURRICULUM TOPIC – COMPREHENSION

	Questions	Answer
1.	Where does Auggie live?	
2.	Who is Auggie's best friend from kindergarten?	
3.	What is Nate's family background?	
4.	What is Isabel's family background?	
5.	Who is Melissa Perper Albans?	
6.	What book is Via reading during much of the action of the novel?	
7.	What sort of band does Justin play his fiddle in?	
8.	What science project do Auggie and Jack do?	
9.	Who are Julian's accomplices as bullies?	
10.	What added medical problem besets Auggie after he starts at Beecher Prep?	
11.	Why did Miranda stop the drama teacher from putting on <i>The Elephant Man</i> ?	
12.	What play did Via and Justin play lead roles in?	
13.	What is Miranda's nickname for Auggie?	
14.	What film do they watch in the open air theatre on school camp?	
15.	What was Mr Browne's last precept for the end of year?	

Answers: 1. North River Heights, at the top of Manhattan. 2. Christopher. 3. They were Jews from Russia and Poland. 4. They are from Brazil. 5. She is Julian's mother. 6. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. 7. A zydeco band (a type of Creole music). 8. They make an organic battery out of potatoes. 9. Henry and Miles. 10. His hearing worsens and he has to get hearing aids. 11. Because the book and film are about a deformed man and the troubles he had in his life; she didn't want Augie to be upset by it. 12. *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. 13. Major Tom. 14. *The Sound of Music*. 15. Just follow the day and reach for the sun!

WORKSHEET 2

CURRICULUM TOPIC – VOCABULARY

This book contains some words which students may be unfamiliar with. Invite them to write a meaning and then a synonym in the columns below.

WORD	EXAMPLE	DICTIONARY MEANING	SYNONYM
Anomalies	p. 6		
hindsight	p. 11		
notion	p. 61		
phobia	p. 70		
automatically	p. 79		
Noble	p. 83		
catastrophe	p. 89		
inappropriate	p. 94		
sepia	p. 103		
syndrome	p. 129		
sympathetic	p. 140		
stringent	p. 162		
addiction	p. 180		
monologues	p.200		
fragile	p. 203		
bionic	p. 216		
ovation	p. 231		
mayhem	p.246		
incantation	p. 255		
sermonizer	p. 303		

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