

Wonder

R.J. Palacio

Reviewed by: Anika 17

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

For most of his life, August Pullman was always different from the other kids. He was born with a severe facial difference that set him apart from everyone else. He was homeschooled by his family because regular school wasn't an option for him with all the surgeries he had. But when Auggie hits the 5th grade, his mother thinks it's time for him to have a real school experience. Having been shielded from the world for most of his life, Auggie is afraid of how the other kids might treat him. Despite that, August gives school a shot because he wants to feel normal for once. He's introduced to the school by the principal, Mr. Tushman, and a couple of students that have very mixed reactions to his face. August continues to notice that as he makes his way through his first year in middle school. There are people who accept him, ignore him, or hate him. But through it all, August's quiet strength helps him rise up and truly shine in a way he never thought he could before.

Wonder is such a moving and uplifting story to read. For a book that's mostly for middle-schoolers, I am taken aback by the level of complexity and depth that R.J. Palacio manages to weave in. This gives older readers something to appreciate as they read this book. The author crafts multi-faceted characters that are not defined by only their roles, but by so much more. There are backstories, flaws, and inner feelings that many of the characters have. Palacio beautifully expresses this by using the perspectives of different characters to move the story forward. She does the same with the relationships the characters have, making them just as well developed with family members, friends, and classmates. They all proved to be vital to the story. August's family support him as his ventures into middle school, but also let him find his own way and his own strength. Every character, in one way or another, contributes a lesson for all readers to learn from. Something I found especially intriguing were the precepts. They helped add a whole new layer of depth to the overall message about kindness and really gave some food for thought as I saw August grow in his journey. Wonder could make way for discussion around peer pressure and bullying. The author goes so far to provide resources for bullying and craniofacial differences, which I found to be very thoughtful. I definitely would suggest giving Wonder a read!

Wonder does have a few things to look out for. There is violence that happens with kids fighting one another and bad language throughout the book as August is continually bullied, verbally abused, and name called. There are also situations that occur as a part of the hardships Auggie faces in the story that can be upsetting for some readers. In terms of romance, nothing especially major is present, as only a few of the characters have romantic relationships. For these reasons, I would recommend this novel for readers 10 years and up. Wonder would make a great gift for fans of school stories and for students in middle school.

Recommended Titles:

The Julian Chapter by R.J. Palacio (Wonder #1.5)

Pluto by R.J. Palacio (Wonder #1.6)

Shingaling by R.J. Palacio (Wonder #1.7)

365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne's Book of Precepts by R.J. Palacio

We're all Wonders by R.J. Palacio