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CRF Novel Response
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* Wonder *

Wonder by R.J. Palacio is a heartwarming story of a ten year-old boy named August "Auggie" Pullman who isn't your average 5th grader. Due to some complicated health issues, he has been homeschooled his entire life. Until now. His parents realize that he needs to enter the real world: middle school. Middle school is tough enough, but when you were born with a craniofacial abnormality so severe that people cannot even look at you without gasping, it's even worse. *Wonder* starts in the first person from Auggie's perspective, then switches to a few other main characters' perspectives, which is important because we not only see August's fears, but we see what the world around him thinks. Throughout the novel, Auggie not only conquers bullies and all the classic middle school drama, he makes friends, becomes comfortable with himself, and finds out who he really is in the world.

Personally, I think this book would be great for 5th-8th graders, but there are several important messages even for adult readers. I was on the verge of tears several times throughout the novel and it really made me appreciate things that I normally take for granted. That feeling is something I hope young readers can relate to as well and I

think it is important as a future educator to provide them with literature that helps them reach this feeling of simple gratitude.

When thinking about diversity in literature, one almost automatically thinks of “out of the norm” race or culture, which is anything other than White western culture; however, although there is not a lot of distinct diversity in this sense in *Wonder*, August, the protagonist, is diverse in a unique way. As a child born with a ‘disability’ that he has no control over, August is an extremely relatable character for many young readers who may have gone through similar circumstances; however, personally, I think this book would not be considered particularly diverse. It lacks descriptive characterization that would allow a reader to think the characters are anything other than White middle class “normal” families. Nonetheless, Palacio does a wonderful job at making the characters relatable to children.

The overarching theme of *Wonder* is the importance of simple kindness. Kindness is scarce in August’s world at first; however, his peers prove how much of a difference a little basic kindness can make. Palacio shows which characters truly make a positive difference in August’s school experience as well as showing the ones who don’t. The theme of kindness is crucial because it is the sole thing that encourages August to keep putting himself out in the world. When children read about August’s perspective, they will realize how much being nice to their peers really matters.

“Such a simple thing, kindness. Such a simple thing. A nice word of encouragement given when needed. An act of friendship. A passing smile...if every single person in this room made it a rule that wherever you are, whenever you can, you will try to act a little kinder than is necessary—the world really would be a better place” (Palacio, 2012, p. 300-301).

This passage is an absolutely perfect summary of how kindness was valued in the novel. At the very end of *Wonder*, the school principal, Mr. Tushman, gives a graduation speech, where he emphasizes the importance of implementing kindness in your everyday life and being more kind than is necessary. This quote wraps up the book perfectly because as a reader, you really realize that yes; just simply being nice is all that it takes to make someone’s day. All in all, I absolutely loved this novel and it truly inspired me to be consciously kinder every day.

Works Cited

Palacio, R. J. (2012). *Wonder*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.