

# Wonder by R. J. Palacio

Recommended Year Group: Year 6  
Recommended Edition: 9780552565974



## Unit overview

In this six-week study, themes of kindness, being 'different', relationships, coming of age, bullying and change will all be explored. Children will be given many opportunities throughout the learning journey to express their understanding of these themes through making connections with them, selecting and analysing content from the story as evidence of these themes as well as engaging with them on a personal level. Children will develop understanding of and empathy with August, what he experiences, how this affects him and his relationship with others. They will explore how the story is written, the different perspectives and how these impact on our impression of Auggie and the other characters. There are a range of writing opportunities within this study, including writing internal monologues, non-fiction and telling the story from a third-person perspective. Finally, the children will apply all that they have learned from the unit to create their own part of the story from Julian's POV, giving the story another perspective. **All extracts, resources, session planning and teaching slides are included within this unit.**

## Key questions

- Does everyone deserve a standing ovation at least once in their lives? What constitutes a need for a standing ovation?
- What is more important, inner or outer beauty?
- What is the difference between being kind and nice? Can they be separate?
- Are there reasons for the way bullies act or are people just born mean?
- How do relationships have lasting effects on who you are or how you treat others?

## Themes and cross-curricular links

- **Science** – Science experiments, science fair projects
- **Geography** – Map out states in America and make connections with how to get to school from home
- **Art** – Sketching skills: comparing self-portraits to portraits of others to see how we identify/view ourselves compared to others
- **SMSC** – Relationships, friendship, dealing with change and bullying
- **Drama** – Performance of scenes from *Wonder*, hot seating
- **Extra curriculum** – Host a science fair

## Related books for wider reading

- *The Boy at the Back of the Class* by Onjali Q Raúf
- *The Day I Was Erased* by Lisa Thompson
- *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
- *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* by Louis Sachar
- *Holes* by Louis Sachar
- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J. K. Rowling
- *Street Child* by Berlie Doherty
- *Matilda* by Roald Dahl

## Curriculum coverage

### Reading:

- speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- recommend books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- identify and discuss themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- make comparisons within and across books
- discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader
- explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary
- draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- predict what might happen from details stated and implied
- provide reasoned justifications for their views
- identify main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarise these

### Grammar, punctuation and spelling:

- use expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely
- use conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions to express time and cause
- indicate possession by using possessive apostrophe with plural nouns
- use modal verbs or adverbs to indicate degrees of possibility
- use relative clauses beginning with 'who', 'which', 'where', 'when', 'whose', 'that' or with an implied (i.e. omitted) relative pronoun
- use commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity in writing

- use hyphens to avoid ambiguity
- use brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis
- use semi-colons, colons or dashes to mark boundaries between independent clauses
- use and punctuate direct speech

### Spoken language:

- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- compose and rehearse sentences orally (including dialogue), progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures

### Writing:

- identify the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own
- note and develop initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
- write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting the appropriate form and drawing independently on what they have read as models for their own writing (e.g. literary language, characterisation, structure)
- exercise an assured and conscious control over levels of formality, particularly through manipulating grammar and vocabulary
- in writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in material read, listened to or seen performed
- select appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning
- use further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader (for example, headings, bullet points and underlining)
- in narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action
- assess the effectiveness of their own and others' writing

## Writing outcomes

- **Personal narrative about a big move (session 3)** – To entertain
- **Diary entries (sessions 4 and 6)** – To reflect
- **Continuations of the story (sessions 10, 15, 16)** – To entertain
- **Non-fiction piece on friend qualities (session 12)** – To explain
- **Internal monologues (sessions 14, 19, 23, 24)** – To reflect
- **Apology letter (session 20)** – To explain
- **Email/text string (session 21)** – To reflect/to inform/to entertain (depending on the topic of the messages)
- **A story from Julian's POV (sessions 26–30)** – To entertain

## Essential teaching guidance

- This unit is written in such a way that children can freely discuss their feelings throughout, so it is important that there is clear guidance about respecting the thoughts and emotions of others. There are many themes discussed throughout this unit, but the two main ones are 'coming of age' and 'bullying/friendship issues'. *Wonder* is all about growing up, how we handle things and the knock-on effect this can have on others. It also helps to be more aware that things aren't always as we perceive them and to be more open to what others might be going through.
- As the reading and writing are closely related, it would be optimal to have guided reading and English lessons close together. You may also consider completing some of the reading at other times throughout the day to ensure all reading is complete before the next session's activities.

# Planning Overview

## Week 1

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- explore themes in the book and gain early interpretations of key characters in the story
- begin to make connections with the big theme 'identity, change and friendships'
- gain an understanding of key concepts (inner beauty vs outer beauty)
- discuss the language Palacio uses to reveal character
- create early impressions of August and his family
- empathise with characters

By the end of the week the children will have:

- understood the theme of identity
- written their own personal narrative based on the theme of identity
- understand what 'impression' means and how it relates to understanding characters
- written a personal narrative about a big change in their own life
- participated in several role plays, empathizing with the characters' emotions
- completed a short diary entry based on the POV of August
- understood the use of a hyphen
- analysed language for 'show not tell'

### Resources provided:

- Pupil resource – Identity
- Pupil resource – Impression/evidence chart
- Pupil resource – Character profiles
- Pupil resource – Role on the wall template
- Pupil resource – Tour children evidence chart
- Teaching slides to aid discussion

## Week 4

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- understand how the author changes POV
- develop an understanding of narration by transferring a first-person chapter to third-person omniscient
- make comparisons between the two siblings to understand their relationship and continue to develop understanding of varied POVs in the story
- develop their understanding of the theme of 'struggles with kindness'

By the end of the week the children will have:

- written in third person omniscient
- analysed language used and its effect
- completed a Venn diagram comparing the siblings
- re-enacted scenes and hot seated character
- developed an understanding of other key characters
- connected with Jack through an internal monologue
- written an apology letter from Jack to Julian

### Resources provided:

- Pupil resource – Venn diagram
- Pupil resource – Comprehension questions
- Teaching slides to aid discussion

## Week 2

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- encourage sympathy for main character
- empathize with Auggie's emotions
- discuss the theme of relationships
- understand the term 'motif' and how it differs from a symbol and how it relates to *Wonder*

By the end of the week the children will have:

- further develop and understand August
- a deeper understanding of themes
- written a personal narrative about their first-day experiences
- recorded or acted out a podcast discussing recurring themes and making predictions
- completed a free write about a close friend
- re-enacted scenes and hot seated characters
- begun to make connections to storyline and Palacio's style of writing
- developed a stronger connection to August

### Resources provided:

- Pupil resource – Impression/evidence chart
- Pupil resource – Mr. Browne's September precept
- Teaching slides to aid discussion

## Week 5

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- explore their understanding of formal and informal tones
- connect with another character and analyse how Palacio decided to write it
- analyse a shift in Auggie's character and discuss what has affected these changes
- explore the theme 'coming of age' and how it relates to other characters in the story
- evaluate the whole story

By the end of the week the children will have:

- analysed language used in a string of messages between characters
- understood other ways authors develop characters
- made links to changes in Auggie's character
- related to changes in Miranda's life
- written a diary entry from Miranda's POV
- written a reflection based on what they understood about the story's themes and what they have learned through the reading
- created their own precept and reflected on what it means to them

### Resources provided:

- Teacher resource – Letter
- Pupil resource – Impression/evidence chart
- Pupil resource – Formal and informal words and phrases
- Pupil resource – Scenes with Justin
- Teaching slides to aid discussion

## Week 3

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- begin to explore the theme of growing up
- continue to make connections with other themes previously discussed – friendship and bullying
- develop their story continuations
- understand how Palacio uses dialogue within the story and the impact it has
- analyse shift in narration
- compare how the voice changed from August's section to Olivia's

By the end of the week the children will have:

- deepened their understanding of switch in narration
- re-enacted scenes and hot seated characters
- further increased their understanding of themes
- edited their own writing to ensure their dialogue is used for purpose and impact

### Resources provided:

- Pupil resources – Impression/evidence charts
- Teaching slides to aid discussion

## Week 6

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- reflect on what they have learned about Julian in *Wonder* and consider the themes present in the story to create a plan for their own stories from his POV
  - plan a story from Julian's POV
  - develop a backstory that seems believable
- By the end of the week the children will have:
- drawn on their reading as a model for their own writing
  - drafted, edited and published a story that relates to what they have learned in this unit and what they understand about Palacio's style of voice, characterisation, emotive language, range of sentence openers, vivid vocabulary and range of sentence lengths

### Resources provided:

- Pupil resource – Bullying comparison
- Teaching slides to aid discussion