

# Wonder

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Wonder* is a novel that has been embraced by readers of all ages because of its powerful themes of overcoming challenges and the importance of kindness. August Pullman was born with a severe facial difference and has been homeschooled by his mother for most of his life. The Pullman family is extremely close-knit, but Auggie's facial difference has created interesting dynamics that are worthy of discussion in all families. *Wonder* also contains universal issues related to friendships gained and lost and dealing with bullies that are important topics for families and whole communities to tackle together.

Pick a few of the discussion questions from the guide on the following pages to inspire a conversation about *Wonder*.

The discussion questions are open-ended for the purpose of inviting critical thinking. It is recommended that the novel be read in its entirety before engaging in discussion, but if your group hasn't completed the book, try to choose questions for discussion that allow for the most participation.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The first chapter of the book is titled “Ordinary.” Discuss the ways in which August Pullman is ordinary. His parents say he is extraordinary. Talk about specific passages from the book that show that Auggie is both ordinary and extraordinary. What ordinary and extraordinary qualities do each member of your family possess?
2. Describe the Pullman family. Compare Auggie’s family to Julian’s and to Miranda’s. Explain why Miranda feels safe around the Pullmans. Compare and contrast the Pullman family with your own.
3. Define friendship. Christopher, Zachary, and Alex are Auggie’s closest friends. How does their friendship change when Christopher moves away and Zachary and Alex start school? Auggie thinks that Joel, Eamonn, and Gabe are his friends, but they don’t invite him to their birthday parties. What does this say about their friendships?
4. Auggie is homeschooled by his mother until fifth grade. He overhears his mother telling Christopher’s mother that Auggie will begin at Beecher Prep in the fall. Discuss Auggie’s reaction to this news. Why didn’t his parents tell him their plans?
5. At first, Auggie’s father is hesitant about his son going to Beecher Prep. Why does he think sending Auggie to middle school is like sending “a lamb to the slaughter”? (p. 10) Why does he change his mind after Auggie has been in school for a while? Explain how middle school is tough for many kids. How is it natural for parents to want to protect their kids as they grow up?
6. How do Auggie’s parents use humor to make him feel better about attending Beecher Prep? Talk about how families can use humor to deal with tough issues.
7. Mr. Tushman asks Jack Will, Julian, and Charlotte to show Auggie around Beecher Prep before the school year begins. Julian isn’t very kind to Auggie when they first meet each other. Why is it good for Auggie to know what Julian is like before he encounters him in the fall?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Continued...)

8. Explain why it's natural for kids to be curious about someone with differences like Auggie's. How are Julian's questions about Auggie's face rude? How does Julian embarrass Jack Will and Charlotte? What are some polite ways that Julian could have asked about Auggie's facial difference? Do you think Mr. Tushman could have better prepared the kids before meeting Auggie?
9. After returning from the tour of Beecher Prep, Auggie says, "I felt very sad, and a tiny bit happy" (p. 33). How can a person be happy and sad at the same time? What makes Auggie sad? What makes him happy? Think about a new experience like attending a different school, moving, or saying goodbye to a friend or relative. How do these experiences evoke both happiness and sadness?
10. Bravery is an underlying theme in the novel. What is Auggie's bravest moment? Name the kids at Beecher Prep who demonstrate exceptional bravery. Who are the cowards?
11. Think about bullies you have encountered at school or in your neighborhood. What is the best way to deal with a bully?
12. Mr. Browne explains that a precept is something that can help guide us when making decisions about important things. His September precept is "When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind." How does this precept assure Auggie that school is going to be okay? How does Summer choose kindness? Explain how this precept extends to your family and friends.
13. Part Two is told from Via's perspective. At what point does Via see Auggie the way other people see him? How might Via say Auggie's facial difference has affected the family dynamics? Discuss Via's relationship with her grandmother. How does her grandmother sense that Via needs attention?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Continued...)

14. Via feels abandoned by her best friend, Miranda. Auggie feels betrayed by Jack Will. How does Jack react when he realizes what he did to Auggie? Explain why Miranda calls Auggie after she has ignored Via. Jack and Miranda turn their thoughts to kindness. What does each do that reunites them with their friend?
15. Why do you think Justin's part of the book is written in lowercase letters?
16. How does music play a role in *Wonder*?
17. While on the fifth-grade nature retreat, Auggie and Jack come face to face with older bullies. How do Amos, Miles, and Henry protect them? Mr. Tushman offers Auggie the chance to press charges against the boys who destroyed his hearing aid. Why does Auggie refuse to do so? How does this class trip reveal just how much Auggie has grown up in a year?
18. At the end of the year, Auggie receives the Henry Ward Beecher Medal. It recognizes a student who has displayed courage, kindness, friendship, and character. Cite passages in the book where Auggie exhibits each of these qualities. How do his classmates react when he receives the award? Why is it significant that Auggie poses for pictures at the graduation ceremony with his friends?
19. Auggie's mother tells him that he is a wonder. What does she mean? His life has changed, but how does he change the lives of those around him? What might you do to change the lives of those around you?