

wonder

Discussion Guide

Introduction

Based on the New York Times bestseller, *Wonder* tells the incredibly inspiring and heartwarming story of August Pullman, a boy with facial differences who enters fifth grade, attending a mainstream elementary school for the first time.

One of the most entertaining and inspiring family films of the last decade, *Wonder* is full of themes and moments that will spark conversations long after the credits roll. Below are a series of discussion starters for *Wonder*.

Get ready to meet Auggie Pullman.

Julia Roberts
Owen Wilson
Jacob Tremblay

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BASED ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

november 17

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PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
Some material may be inappropriate for children under 7

#Wonderful
Wonder Movie

MADEBY

WIDESCREEN

Partnership
Program

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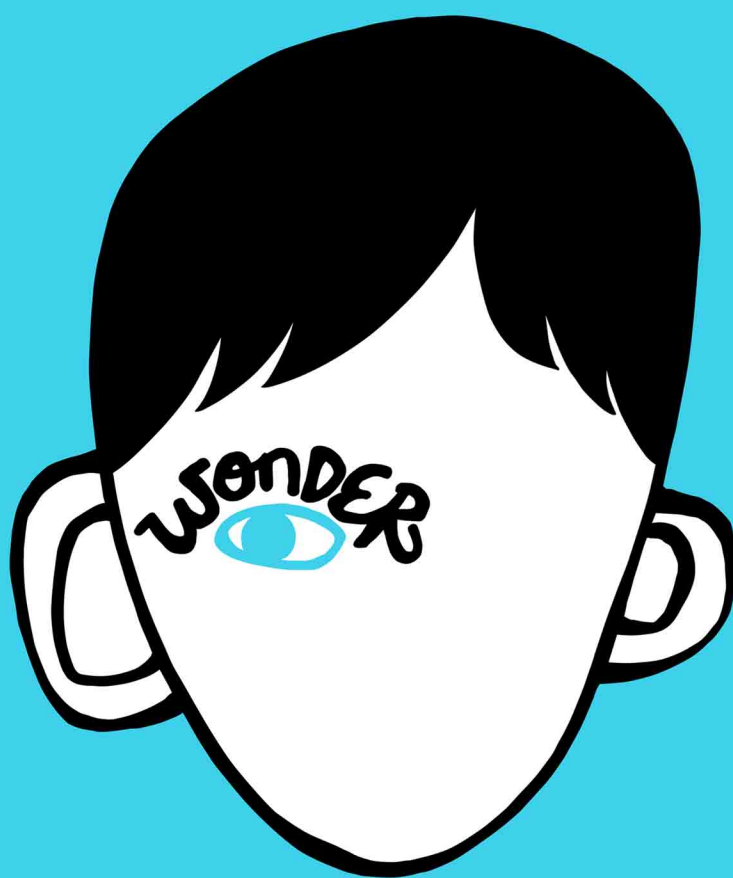
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No Ordinary Kid

Auggie Pullman is no ordinary kid...and he knows it. Born with a severe facial difference, it has taken over 20 surgeries for him to "look this good." Unlike so many of his peers, Auggie is marked as different and, potentially, less than. Thankfully, he is surrounded by a loving family and a core group of friends who know better. But more on them in a moment.

Auggie's life is an example of an important truth: to not be ordinary is to be extraordinary. And so much of Auggie's extraordinariness is his attitude and outlook on life. Because he is different he knows, deep down, what it feels like to be marginalized, bullied, and mistreated. But he doesn't let these experiences define him. In fact, he does just the opposite, he uses them to explode his world, to literally break it open to the endless possibilities to encourage and uplift everyone with whom he comes in contact.

None of us is ordinary. To be human and alive is to be part of a cosmically diverse species with endless possibilities. To try to fit in is as impossible as two fingerprints ever being alike. So go on, be extraordinary!



Questions for Consideration

1. Do you struggle to fit in? If so, how? What are the pressures to do so and who puts them on you?
2. If you don't worry about fitting in, when did you stop? What made you ignore the idea of what others thought of you?

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“Always try to
be a little kinder
than necessary.”

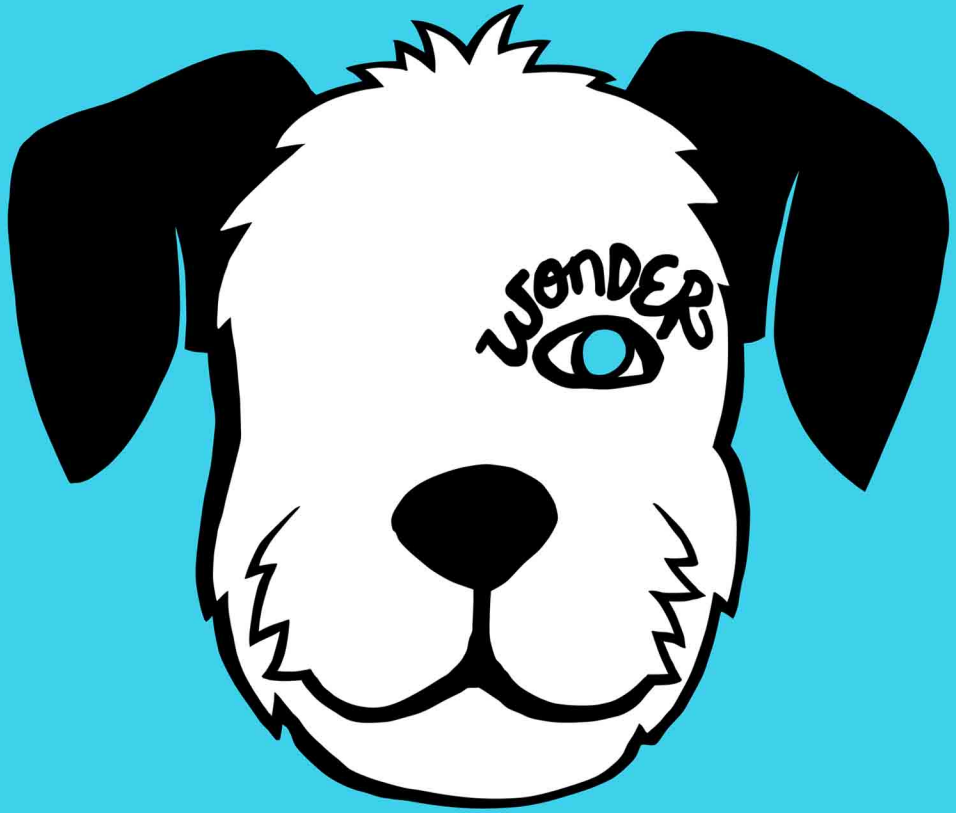
-- J.M. Barrie

Picture Where You Want to Be

It's easy to become frustrated with where we are in life. We hate going to class and get swamped by homework; we get stuck in a rut at our job and struggle with feeling unfulfilled; we hang on to friendships or relationships that are no longer truly life-giving. Before we can break out of the routines that trap us and make us feel this way, it is important to picture where we want to be.

Auggie used a similar visualization technique to help home cope with stressful situations. Of course, we should strive to be content with what we have in life. But picturing a future different from our present may do two things. First, it could show us the good things in life that will help us build a path to that future. Second, it gives us a goal for which to strive.

Your picture of the future might be high school graduation, a new job, or a new friendship or relationship. Whatever wherever you want to be looks like, knowing where you want to go is the first step in getting there.



Questions for Consideration

- 1.If you feel stagnant or in a rut, how did you get here.
- 2.When have you seen someone break out of a difficult situation? How did they turn the corner on life?

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"When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind."

-- Dr. Wayne Dyer

Kind or Right

Wonder is full of important lessons, but none may be as timely as this assertion, "When given the choice of being right or being kind, choose kind." We are caught in a time—thanks in no small part to our increased participation in social media—when everyone's first inclination is to be right, to prove their point, to win an argument. Usually, this doesn't lead to understanding between two different parties, but instead often results in fights and broken relationships.

What would happen if we resisted the urge to win, to be right, and to instead act with kindness, humility, and grace? Would we enjoy a greater victory than winning an argument?



Questions for Consideration

1. When have you let a disagreement or an argument get out of hand? What happened? How could you have acted differently to deescalate the situation?
2. Where do you see leaders and Influencers acting from a place of foundational kindness?

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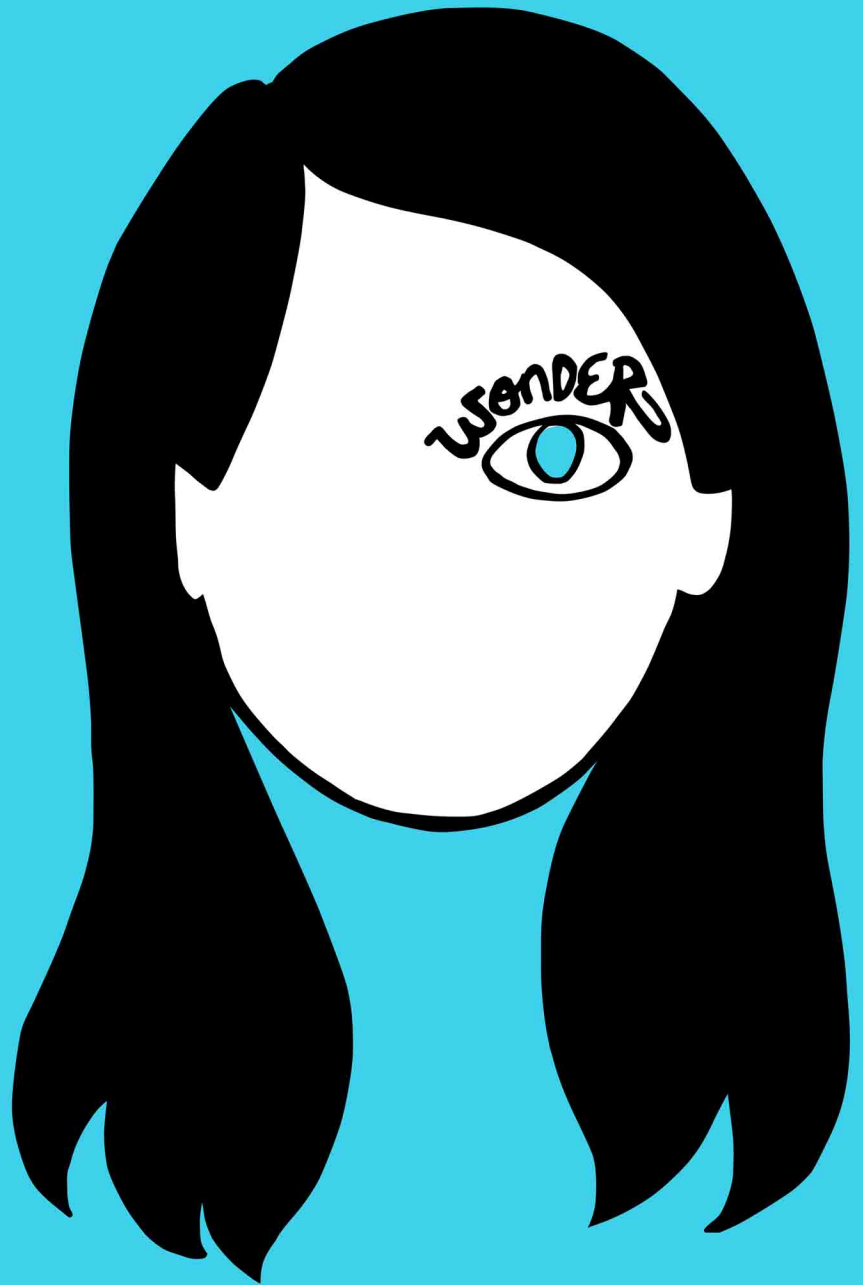
“Everyone deserves a standing ovation because we all overcometh the world.”

-- Auggie Pullman

Be the Bigger Person

At every turn, Auggie has the opportunity to react negatively—or in anger—to his peers for their abuse or neglect. Sometimes he gives in, but more often than not, he follows his parents’ advice to be the bigger person. Elementary school drama and the accompany schoolyard bullies are a microcosm of the broken world in which we live. They are a perfect lens through which to view our local and global interactions.

If we respond to violent bullies with more violence, it continues to escalate the situation, and often draws other people into a cycle that seems to have no end. If we break that cycle by being the bigger person, it might be emotionally or physically painful for us, but that damage stops right there, we don't perpetuate it. Being the bigger person is also an inspirational act that draws others close to you. We rarely, if ever, look at a bully and desire to be like him or her. However, when we see people like Auggie on the big screen or in our daily lives, we know that theirs is a life worth emulating.



Questions for Consideration

1. Where do you see cycles of violence continuing because someone won't be the bigger person?
2. Have you ever seen someone break a violent cycle to create new, stronger communities and relationships?

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We Are Not Alone

Throughout the film, even though he is surrounded by a loving family and a few close friends, Auggie still battles feelings of loneliness. It's completely understandable. He rationalizes his feelings: no one at school looks like him, his parents *have* to love him, and any of his new friends just take pity on him. Even though we may not suffer a similar situation to Auggie, we know these feelings too.

As simple and as cheesy as this may sound, we must combat these feelings with gratitude and a recognition that we are *not* alone. We are surrounded by family members and loved ones and friends who want the best for us, to celebrate with us when we are happy and to lift us up when we are sad.

One real challenge within *Wonder* is the subtle encouragement for us to be on the lookout for those who might feel alone or outcast and to be the friend that lets them know they truly aren't, so long as we are there to walk by their side through life.



Questions for Consideration

1. Think about times when you felt alone or lonely. Who saw you through those experiences and how did they help?
2. Do you see people in your communities—at school or work or in your neighborhood—who appear to be lonely? How might you encourage and uplift them?

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True Strength Comes from Within

We've talked about the extraordinary Auggie and how both his appearance and his attitude and outlook on life set him apart. His character is a model of inner strength. Late in the film, we hear that true strength is measured by how many people your heart can lift up.

The goal of our lives should be to see how widely we can extend the circle of compassion and empathy and love for those in our world, both close to home and further away. It's easy to lift up our family members and friends (most of the time anyway), but do we have the courage to do the same for our "enemies," those people that the media tell us are bad or those of whom we have been conditioned to be suspicious?

**“Kind words
do not cost much.
Yet they
accomplish much.”**

-- Blaise Pascal



Questions for Consideration

1. Who is part of your closest circle of family and friends. How do you show love to them and lift them up? Now think about the people on the outside of that circle? What are actions that you can take to widen it?
2. Where do you see individuals having compassion for—or even loving—their enemies?

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"Your deeds are your monuments."

— Inscription on ancient
Egyptian tomb

Our Deeds are our Monuments

No doubt, Auggie leaves a lasting impression on those who know him. After the initial shock of his appearance wears off, newfound friends are impressed by his intelligence, good humor, and empathy.

Auggie's life and interactions with his friends and family are monuments that he leaves behind that will make his life truly unforgettable. It is a lesson that we would do well to practice. We can't take anything with us when we leave this life, but we can certainly leave things behind. Sure, we can donate money and possessions to those who we leave behind, but more importantly, we can leave behind a legacy of love, compassion, and empathy that will echo across generations.



Questions for Consideration

1. What do you hope to leave behind?
2. Who has left a legacy for you? Who were they and what did they do?