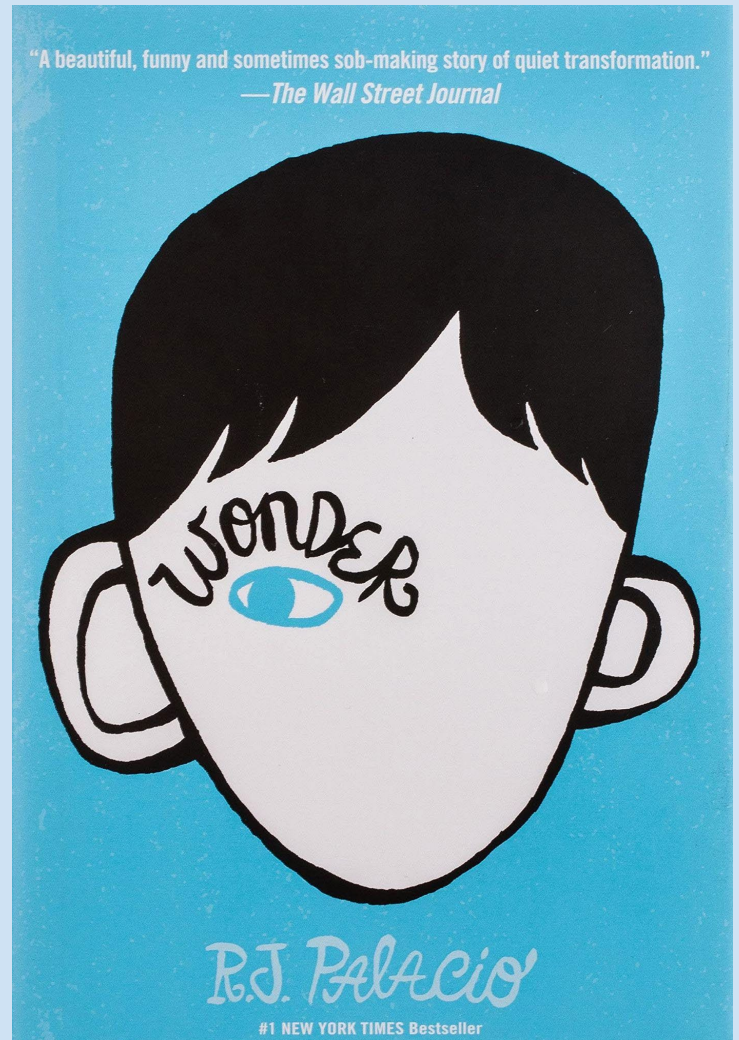
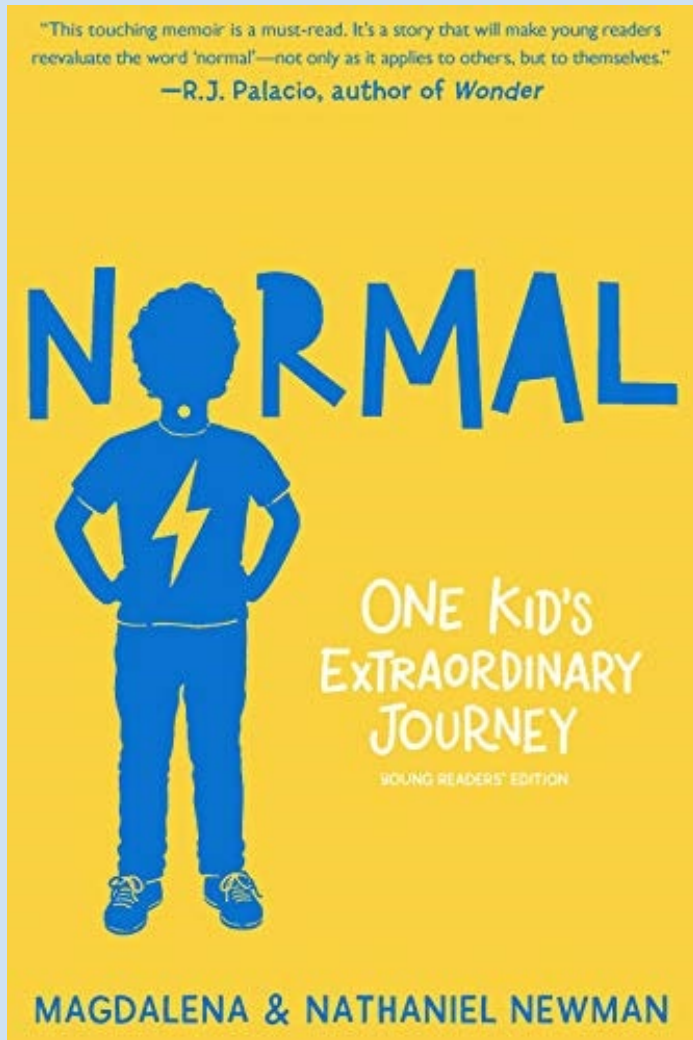


Wonderfully Normal

A Teacher's Guide to Paired Text for Grades 5&6:



Cover Art Citation: Newman, M., Newman, N., Liftin, H., Swaab, N., & Newman, M. M.

(2019). *Normal*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Cover Art Citation: Palacio, R. J. (2012). *Wonder*. Bodley Head.

Pre-Reading Activity

We are about to read the non-fiction book *Normal* and the fiction book *Wonder*. Both are books about boys with facial abnormalities. Think of a time when you felt out of place or different. Maybe you felt like people were staring at you or talking about you. How did it make you feel? What did you do in that situation? This assignment will be kept confidential.

Bulletin Board Idea

Cut out large letters that spell out Wonder” and “Normal.” Print quotes from the book, *Wonder*. Examples include: “It is not enough to be friendly. You have to be a friend” and “ When given the choice between being right and being kind, choose kind.” Have the students use post it notes to write one thing they can do to be a friend or be kind. They can add ideas throughout the unit.

Synopsis of *Wonder* (Fiction) by R.J. Palacio

Wonder is a brutally powerful story of a 10-year-old boy named August Pullman, who has a facial anomaly. He is an ordinary kid who plays Xbox, is obsessed with Star Wars, but despite the 27 operations done for his face he will never look normal.

“Rich and memorable... It’s Auggie and the rest of the children who are the real heart of Wonder and Palacio captures the voices of girls and boys, fifth graders and teenagers, with equal skill.”

-The New York Times (April, 2012)

<https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2016/jun/25/wonder-rj-palacio-review>

About R.J. Palacio

R. J. Palacio lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband, two sons and two dogs (Bear and Beau). Her debut novel, *Wonder*, has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list since March, 2012, and has sold over 5 million copies worldwide. The book's message of kindness has inspired the Choose Kind movement, and has been embraced by readers, young and old, around the world.

<https://wonderthebook.com/about>

Synopsis of *Normal* (Non-fiction) by Magdalena and Nathaniel Newman, illustrated by Neil Swaab

In this uplifting and humorous memoir brimming with black-and-white comic illustrations, Nathaniel and his mother, Magda, tell the story of his growing up with the same craniofacial syndrome as the boy from *Wonder*—from facing sixty-seven surgeries before the age of fifteen, to making friends, moving across the country, and persevering through hardships. How they tackle extraordinary circumstances with love and resilience is a true testament to Nathaniel and Magda's extraordinary family, and to families everywhere who quietly but courageously persist. "This touching memoir is a must-read for anyone who wants to know more about the real-world experiences of a child with craniofacial differences and his extraordinary family. It's also more than that. It's a story about the love between a mother and a son, a child and his family, and the breadth of friends, helpers, and doctors that step in when the unexpected happens. It's a story that will make young readers reevaluate the word 'normal'—not only as it applies to others, but to themselves. Any book that can do that is pretty wondrous, as far as I'm concerned." —R.J. Palacio, author of *Wonder*

<https://www.hmhbooks.com/shop/books/Normal/9781328631831>

About Magda and Nathaniel Newman

Magdalena and Nathaniel Newman live in Seattle, Washington, together with the rest of the family—dad, brother, and 4 dogs. Nathaniel was born with a rare craniofacial difference called Treacher Collins.

Discussion Questions about *Normal*

1. How did you feel about the illustrations in the book? How did it make the book better?
2. Nathaniel was very brave when it came to having surgeries and recovering from them. Do you think all the pain and the recovery (like having to wear a cage around your head) would be worth it if it made you look a little more normal or helped you hear and breathe better?
3. Nathaniel moved very often. Do you think it was fair for his parents to move and have him be the new kid so many times? Why or why not?
4. Did you think it was more beneficial having the book written from Nathaniel's and his mom's point of view? Did it help to read about not only what Nathaniel went through but what his mom and family went through also? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions about *Wonder*

1. How do Auggie's parents and sister treat him?
2. Julian isn't always obvious with his bullying. What does he do to bully Auggie that other people may not even recognize as bullying?
3. Who turns out to be a true friend to Auggie? What characteristics does he possess that makes him a true friend?
4. Jack and Auggie are good friends, but Auggie finds out Jack betrayed him. What did Jack do to make Auggie so upset?
5. Although Auggie is the one with the craniofacial deformity, Via suffers as well. How does Auggie's issue affect his sister?

Comparative Questions

1. In *Normal*, Nathaniel didn't seem to be scared of going to school and meeting new people. In *Wonder*, Auggie hated going to school. Would you feel more like Nathaniel or Auggie? Would you want to avoid people or would you be confident enough to go places and not worry about what others thought of your appearance?
2. Jacob is the brother of Nathaniel and Via is the sister of Auggie. How do their brothers having Treacher Collins affect them differently? Is one more protective than the other?

3. *Normal* is told from two points of view- Nathaniel's and his mom's. *Wonder* is told from several different points of view. Which way did you prefer? Do you think you were able to get more insight by having more points of view?
4. Discuss the importance of dogs in both books. Why do you think they were so important? How does their death affect their families?
5. Although the situations are almost identical, *Normal* focuses more on the medical aspect of Nathaniel's life and the effect it has on the family. *Wonder* focuses more on the things that go on at school with Auggie and the way his sister is affected. Which of the two did you prefer reading? Explain your answer.

Other Books by R.J Palacio

Pony

White Bird

We're All Wonders

365 Days of Wonder

Auggie and Me

Shingaling

Pluto

The Julian Chapter

Another Book by Magna Newman

Normal: A Mother and her Beautiful Son

Similar Reads

Ugly by Robert Hoge

Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

Fish in a Tree by Lynda Hunt

The Bubble Wrap Boy by Phil Earle

Firegirl by Tony Abbott

Websites of Interests

<https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/treacher-collins-syndrome/> - Learn more about Treacher Collins Syndrome

<https://wonderthebook.com/books/wonder> - Find lots of interesting things about the book and the movie.

<https://www.prhspeakers.com/speaker/r-j-palacio> - Learn more about author R.J. Palacio.

<https://www.hmhbooks.com/shop/books/Normal/9781328631831> - Learn more about the book and the authors of *Normal*.

<https://kidskonnnect.com/science/treacher-collins-syndrome/> - Find more teaching resources and materials about Treacher Collins Syndrome.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75J9I5ULfgA> - Watch and interview with Magda and Nathaniel Newman.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41U_bCnsouY - Nathaniel Newman joins the actor, Jacob Tremblay, who plays a character with Treacher Collins in the movie, *Wonder*.

SOL Connections

Reading

5.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, and poetry.

5.6 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts.

6.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, and poetry.

6.6 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of nonfiction texts.

1. Complete a plot structure diagram on *Wonder*. Include details from the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
2. Describe how the author used character development to show changes in mom, dad, Auggie, and Via.
3. Compare the similarities of Nathaniel, his family, and his situations in the non-fiction book, *Normal* and Auggie, his family, and his situations in the fiction book, *Wonder*.

Writing

5.7 The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive

5.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources to create a research product.

6.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources to create a research product.

6.7 The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on narrative and reflective writing.

1. Write an expository essay informing the reader of the effects of Treacher Collins.
2. Write a persuasive essay persuading others to be kind. Give examples of what they can do to help people feel accepted.
3. Write a research paper on Treacher Collins.

Fine Arts

5.2 The student will apply a creative process for artmaking.

6.2 The student will apply steps of a creative process.

1. The student will paint a picture of his/her own face using inspiration from the cover of the books, *Wonder*. Write words around the picture that describe them and make them unique.

Music

- 5.1 The student will improvise and compose music.
- 6.1 The student will demonstrate creative thinking by composing and improvising original music.
1. The student will write the lyrics to a song about Nathaniel in *Normal* or Aggie in *Wonder*.

Health

- 5.2 The student will demonstrate responsibility for developing personal health habits and practicing behaviors that promote an active, healthy lifestyle.
- 6.2 The student will describe the influence of family, peers, and media on personal health decisions.
1. Write an essay discussing why it is important to develop and maintain a positive self image, even if there are things we would like to change about ourselves. Discuss healthy ways to deal with stresses like when people pick on you about things you can't change.

Library Connection

5.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources to create a research product.

6.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources to create a research product.

1. Students will visit the library to find at least one print source for their paper.
2. The librarian will do a lesson on using the school's database for finding online and print materials.
3. Review rules for safely and ethically using the internet in school

References:

About R.J. Palacio. Wonder. (2021, November 21). Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://wonderthebook.com/about>.

Commonwealth of Virginia. (2017). English standards of learning for Virginia public schools. *Virginia Department of Education*. Retrieved from https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/index.shtml

Commonwealth of Virginia. (2020). Health standards of learning for Virginia public schools. *Virginia Department of Education*. Retrieved from https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/health/index.shtml

Commonwealth of Virginia. (2020). Visual arts standards of learning for Virginia public schools. *Virginia Department of Education*. Retrieved from https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/fine_arts/index.shtml

Guardian News and Media. (2016, June 25). *Wonder by R.J. Palacio – review*. The Guardian. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2016/jun/25/wonder-rj-palacio-review>.

N. hmhbooks. (n.d.). Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://www.hmhbooks.com/author/Nathaniel-Newman/122156717>.

Newman, M., Newman, N., Liftin, H., Swaab, N., & Newman, M. M. (2019). *Normal*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Normal: One kid's extraordinary journey. hmhbooks. (n.d.). Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://www.hmhbooks.com/shop/books/Normal/9781328631831>.

Palacio, R. J. (2012). *Wonder*. Bodley Head.