

By Harshul Singh

Book Selected: Wonder By R.J. Palacio

Characters: Auggie & Mum

Question 2

The Big Picture

The conversation was uncalled for in both time and place. Halfway through 6th grade, everyone was either accepting or tolerant of my appearance. Just as I was about to settle down, my parents sprung the question which would unravel the tenuous grasp I had on reality. I would be forced to make a decision with such a weight that even an adult would have a hard time coming to a conclusion. You know what the worst part was? I had 24 hours.

I woke up, uncannily, to, not the sound of my droning alarm clock, but to the soft, tenor voice of my mom, just like she used to when I was 5; my eyes drowsily fluttered open.

“Auggie we need to talk.” Mom lingered on the word talk; a lump formed in my throat. The only time my mom was like this was when I needed to have surgery. I turned my gaze towards her hazel eyes. Usually, I manage to catch a snippet of emotion from people’s eyes, but this time, I saw every emotion running through my mom’s mind in a chaotic, fragmented maelstrom. In the fraction of a second that I had I divined her Love for me, her hope for me and an unfiltered wave of disquietude. Usually, I tend to be an optimistic person, but this morning my brain was obsessed with pessimism. Without even trying to discern what these emotions meant, I knew something was wrong. “What’s wrong?” The words shot out of my mouth, I braced myself waiting for a reply.

“Auggie, there is a way,” Mom said somberly.

“A way for what? Tell ME ALREADY!” I was yelling; I didn't know why, I just knew that whatever my mom was about to say had terrible implications.

“You, You- There is a way, a way for you to...” She gasped for air. “Your face, your beautiful face can be just how you have always dreamed of it looking. A doctor, he has a way to restore your face. We would have done this earlier, but we knew of no skilled enough surgeon and didn't have enough money.”

I was taken back in astonishment, her words reverberated around my head, resonating and shattering the fragile structure of my mind. I could be normal. I could be human. I could truly be me.

In a daze, I trudged my way through the day, the decision I faced, it was something else. There were countless implications of undergoing the procedure. Would it mean to others that I gave up and couldn't take it anymore? Would it display my bravery? I shook my head to clear my thoughts, but to no avail. My attempt to concentrate on class was futile, I needed time to think otherwise I could make the wrong decision and that could spell disaster. To increase my window of time & depth of thinking I feigned sickness and got sent home. Upon arrival I went up to my room walked over to my favorite place, my sanctuary. It was a small alcove tucked

between the space of 2 windows in a v shape; the walls were covered in old soft velvet panels which made leaning and sitting very comfortable. I took a deep breath and focused my gaze on the dust motes dancing between the rays of sunlight that penetrated the smooth, opaque curtains. Soon my breathing slowed and I entered a trance, I contemplated deeply and became unawares to the progression of the sun.

After the last crimson ray was enveloped by darkness I came to a conclusion. When mom came home I told her, she nodded gravely and proceeded to prepare dinner almost unperturbed, but by the gait of her walk I could tell she was nervous. Aren't all mothers? As dad walked in the door I watched, crouched behind the stairwell while mom and dad solemnly conversed in hushed whispers. That night I picked at my food and was eventually excused to my room. I slumped down on my bed and drifted into sleep.