

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016
Massachusetts Center for the Book
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Level I Honors Award

Dear RJ Palacio,

I read your book Wonder and it changed the way I look at how the whole world treats people with disabilities. It helped me to understand that everyone should be treated the same. It doesn't matter how they look, what color they are or what disabilities they have. People learn, look and act different and people shouldn't change who they are to be "normal". People need to accept that without judging them, but I also understand that when people judge, it is something that is natural and we need to ignore that and move on.

There are similarities between Auggie, the main character in your book, and me. In kindergarten, I was diagnosed with ADHD and a learning disability. It was very hard for me to keep focused and keep my hands on my own body. Lots of kids treated me differently and wouldn't want to be friends with me. Sometimes they looked at me weirdly, just like the kids did to Auggie in your book because he had a facial disorder. Some parents wouldn't let their kids have playdates with me because I was too impulsive because I liked to tackle kids and run around like a "madman". After I read your book, I understood why my mother always told me to ignore what other parents or kids said about me because sometimes people didn't understand my situation. She was trying to tell me that people were naturally judgmental and I need to understand that, too. When I read your book, it made me realize that people are naturally judgmental, they only judge on what they see without understanding. In your book, Auggie's classmates judged him and looked at him weird too because of how he looked. They thought he was dumb and had no other qualities and no one wanted to be his friend. The children thought being friends with him would ruin their reputation of being cool. Auggie understood that people can be mean but it didn't stop him for being who he was. He knew he had a facial disorder but also knew he had other qualities. He was smart and had a sense of humor. He joked about his face in your story too. I think it was to make him feel better and the people around him more comfortable about being around him, so they didn't have to focus on his face. In my situation, sometimes, I was asked "why did you do that or say that?" Most of the time, I didn't know why, my body just reacted. I get so excited at times, so I would laugh and say "it's my ADHD kicking in". I couldn't always control my impulses. Sometimes the parents and the kids would say things about me that wasn't nice but I tried my best to make them understand. These are some of the examples of how your story hit close to home with my life story. The world treats people with disabilities differently and sometimes not in a good way.

No one should have to change to be "normal". Auggie had a facial disorder, so what? What is normal? Is there a definition of normal? Normal to me is what a person considers themselves to be. I have ADHD and a learning disorder. That is my normal. I spend hours and days studying before a test when maybe another person spends one or two hours before a test. I take ADHD medication to stay focused when lots of other kids just take vitamins. If everyone in the world was the same, it would be a boring place to be. This book and with my own experience helped me accept differences in people and knowing that being judgmental is a natural thing, but I realized that it is ok but I need to also take a step back and understand the other person. Today, I try not to be judgmental and I try to understand other people's disabilities and treat them with the same respect.

Sincerely,

Anthony

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