

Dear R. J. Palacio,

When differences are set aside and similarities are looked at closely, great things can be discovered. *Wonder* shows that true friendships are found and strengthened by personality, not appearance.

In fifth grade, when I read your book *Wonder*, I realized everybody can be great friends even if they did not start like one. Julian Albans the school bully, made Auggie feel bad by leaving rude comments, turning everybody in the school against him (that he could), and made Jack Will say what he really didn't mean. Jack in the beginning supported Auggie against Julian. But Jack, not wanting to get on Julian's bad side, told a lie which hurt Auggie's feelings. In your sequel *Auggie and Me*, Julian confesses that he regretted for what he did, after Mr. Tushman suspended him, which shows that everybody can change.

In my fifth grade, some students would always expect to have their way and try to turn students against one another. After watching and discussing the movie as a class, many of my classmates had changed a little and were not like their previous selves. I was motivated to read the book after watching the movie. After reading *Wonder*, I also changed the way I look at people. Now, I am able to better understand others' emotions and empathize with them, which shows the value of kindness.

In *Wonder*, Auggie goes to school for the first time and is scared about what classmates and other students would say about his appearance. Because of differences, it is truly hard to find someone who is an honest friend. In *Wonder*, Summer Dawson sat with Auggie during lunch because she felt bad for him. But afterwards, she realized how fun it was to hang out with Auggie. The power of friendship comes from within, not popularity or other factors.

While reading *Wonder* in fifth grade, I was able to connect to a similar experience of mine. When I started third grade in a new school, because of my different cultural heritage, I was anxious of finding new friends. Not many people in my small town were of Asian heritage. For the first few days of school, I sat alone because I took Indian food for lunch which was different from the typical American food. However, my mom encouraged me to sit with my classmates and get to know them. After a few days I joined them, who took interest in my food and complimented on its appearance and aroma. Later, they asked me questions about my Indian heritage and language. This made me feel welcomed and part of the group. I was no longer nervous to share my culture, but proud. Even simple conversations can turn into strong friendships.

In the book, Auggie goes through a similar incident as well. Because of my experience, I was able to understand and connect with Auggie better. I understood what it is like to be left out. I could see how such simple words of kindness could create a great impact. *Wonder* conveys many

morals about kindness, friendship, support, and more. After reading it, I value every moral in your book better. Now, I have sewn these values into my daily life as much as I can.

Your book shows changes in many people because of friendship. *Wonder* truly inspired me to give everybody a chance and not just judge based on appearance. True friends don't mind about how people look, what they eat, or what they speak, but rather who that person is inside. Many great friends are different in one way or another, and to strengthen a friendship only character should be in mind, not the appearance.

Sincerely,

*Padmalakshmi Ramesh*