# Reading Questions: Prompt Sheet

## Wonder by R J Palacio

**Reading Questions and Answers on p.76-78 The Bleeding Scream**

**p. 76. Would the person who high-fived August on the stairs have done so if they'd not been wearing masks? Why not?**

- I doubt that they would have high-fived him. In a previous chapter, August told us about the Cheese Touch. Many of the other children were effectively bullying him by denying him ordinary human touch (touch is a basic human need). The other child saw that he was the same as August, so he high-fived him as a form of acceptance and affinity. He probably would not have accepted August as he looks normally, since he would see him as somehow different because of his looks and that would be justification for avoiding or shunning him.

**p.76. In the first paragraph, August says he wants to be seen. Why?**

- August has always loved fancy dress and masks at Halloween. It has meant that he was just like everyone else or he might say that everyone else looks like him (or the way some people see him). He very rarely gets the feeling of acceptance other than from close family. He often pretends to joke and make light about the way others treat him, but his happiness at this moment tells you clearly how he feels at other times when he's not accepted.

**p.76. How did August know that Darth Sidious was Julian? How is Julian's mask appropriate?**

- Darth Sidious is an evil villain in the Star Wars films, Julian is the villain in this book. Julian is wearing the costume to insult and humiliate August - he made reference to Darth Sidious in an earlier chapter. Ironically, he is revealing his true nature in the mask/costume he's wearing. Masks often reveal more about our inner workings than we're happy to reveal face-to-face. Online bullying works in a similar way.

**p. 76. Why do you think August went to stand near the other boys?**

- August knew that they didn't know who he was. They were expecting him to come as Boba Fett and August had deliberately not come dressed as they expect because he expected - from their previous conversation - that Julian would bully him with the Darth Sidious costume. He knew that they would talk about him in a way that they wouldn't had they known he was there and he was curious to know what they really felt about him. It's like a scab you can't help but pick, even though you know it's going to hurt!

**p. 77. Who is the second mummy?**

- Jack Will.

**p. 77. August would be upset about two aspects of what the second mummy said. What are they?**

August knew that the second mummy was Jack at the point where Julian asks "Then why do you hang out with him so much?" He would have been upset at anyone insulting him by comparing him to shrunken heads and orcs - ridiculing him. But that one of those people was revealed as Jack, someone he thought was a good friend, would have been especially hurtful.

That Jack said that he would kill himself if he looked like August and that he only hung out with him because Tushman told him to, would have hurt August deeply. He thought that Jack was a good friend and enjoyed his company - that he accepted him. Here, he finds that the friendship was nothing of the kind.

**p.77. Why do you think August leaves the classroom at this point?**

- August is overwhelmed with emotion. He probably knows he's going to cry and so reveal who he actually is behind the mask. He also just wants to get away from this upsetting situation. He's in shock.

## Deeper Reading

**p. 76. Why might it be ironic that August is proud to walk around in a scary 'freak' mask?**

- It might be seen as ironic because many of the other children in school treat August as a 'freak' because of his face. August isn't proud of the look of the mask; it's that he's proud because he's suddenly – once a year – the same as everyone else. He's not special, he's not different; he's the same and he's treated the same – that's something rare for August to experience. It's doubly ironic that everyone is dressed as 'freaks', so they all look like their perception of August. You might say that August's face is a mask in itself – his face is unattractive to most (certainly at first) but his personality (beneath the mask of his face) is beautiful – he's one of the most attractive characters in the book.

**p. 76. This is a quotation from The Rose Society by Marie Lu: "Those who wear masks often tell us more truths than those with open faces." How might this quotation be true in the case of the scene on page 77?**

- The boys behind the masks felt as if they were able to be cruel and insulting towards August, probably because they didn't know he was there. It was as if their words were said by the masks they were wearing rather than by their true selves and, as a result, they weren't their responsibility and they could be as cruel as they wished. Politeness would normally have stopped them from revealing this inner cruelty but the masks allowed that side of their personalities to come through undisguised. Julian's chosen mask reveals his villainous side, while August's scream mask would act as a visual representation of his shock as he realises that one of the mummies is Jack Will.

**p. 77. August is listening to the conversation throughout page 77. At the point where Julian asks "Then why do you hang out with him so much?" how do you think August's emotions would change?**

- August's heart would have dropped. He would be quite used to people talking about him like this. He would be upset but it wouldn't be unexpected. He knew how Julian and his friends felt about him and what they were likely to say about him behind his back. That he suddenly realised it was Jack Will – his best friend in school – that was saying these horrible things, would have been devastating for August. Jack's line, "I think that I'd kill myself," is one of the most cruel lines in the whole book – the author has deliberately positioned it here to maximise the shock felt by August and the reader. In addition, August realises that Jack Will is on Julian's side, not on his. August's fixation with Star Wars would make him tend to see this in terms of 'sides' – Jedi and Sith – and Julian dressed as Darth Sidious would reinforce this.

