

At a Glance – “Ordinary”

RL 5.3 (contrast)
5.6 (narrator impact)

- **Lesson Objective:** Contrast the narrator's perspective on himself with the way others see him.
- **In the Text:** The narrator, August, introduces himself in the novel's first chapter, “Ordinary.” He explains that while he sees himself as an ordinary person, his appearance is so different that no one else can see how ordinary he really is. He does not attend school because of his medical condition. In “How I Came to Life,” August shares the story his mom often tells about the day he was born.
- **Key Questions:** Questions 2, 5, 7, and 9 are most aligned to the objective.
- **Words to Watch For:**

*in text

Page	Word	Meaning	Page	Word	Meaning
3	extraordinary	unusual and remarkable, something outside the ordinary (Note: “ordinary” is taught explicitly in this lesson.)	6	Doogie	a reference to <i>Doogie Howser, MD</i> , a sitcom about a teenage doctor
4	petrified	so afraid that you are unable to move or act (taught in Lesson 2)	7	hysterical	feeling or showing extreme and uncontrolled emotion
6	cleft palate	an opening or split in the roof of the mouth that occurs when a baby is developing in the womb	7	overcometh	overcomes; wins a victory over
6	anomaly	something different from the norm; strange or not easily described (taught in Lesson 2)			

- **Homework Options:**
 - Excerpt from *Normal: One Kid's Extraordinary Journey* reading and questions (attached)
 - Questions from the lesson that were skipped for time

Agenda:

- Do Now (10 minutes)
- Explicit Vocabulary (10 minutes)
- Introduce *Wonder* (1 minute)
- Cycle 1 – Read Aloud: Page 3, “Ordinary” (25 minutes)
- Cycle 2 – Read Aloud or FASE Reading: Pages 4-5, “Why I Didn't Go to School” (15 minutes)
- Cycle 3 – Read Aloud or FASE Reading: Pages 6-7, “How I Came to Life” (20 minutes)

• Exit Ticket (10 minutes)

Lesson Plan

Do Now (10 minutes)

- Give students ~~6-7~~ minutes to read the quote and respond to at least 2 of the reflection questions independently. Then, review student responses using Cold Call, Turn and Talk, share out, or a brief discussion.
 - Note: This Do Now is intended to give students an opportunity to reflect on some of the novel's major themes and ideas through their personal experience before beginning to read. Students should choose 2 of the questions to respond to, and they may respond in any order.
 - Q1: What does it mean to be kind? Is being kind different from being nice? How so?
 - Q2: When might "[choosing] kind" be hard to do?
 - Q3: Can you think of a situation when someone would have to choose between "being right" and "being kind"? When might "being right" be unkind?
 - Responses will vary; you may wish to ask 1-2 students to share their ideas or allow them to Turn and Talk to share responses with peers.

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction (10 minutes) – Wonder, Ordinary

- Teach each word to students, one at a time.
- Read or ask a student to read the example sentence that includes the vocabulary word.
- Shift focus to how the picture demonstrates the word (while projecting the image).
- Lead Active Practice questions and ensure that students use the vocabulary word in their answers.

Introduce the Text (1 minute)

- Frame: Before beginning to read, give students a 1-2 sentence explanation of the new book. You may choose to use or adapt the following language:
 - "I'm excited to introduce to you our new book, Wonder, by R.J. Palacio. This book is about a boy named August who was born with a facial difference. That means that the bones of his face and his features look different from a typical person's face, and he has had many surgeries since he was born to help restructure his face and allow him to eat, breathe, and use his senses more easily. Because of his medical condition, he has always been homeschooled, but as the book begins, he is about to start fifth grade at a school for the very first time."

Cycle 1 (25 minutes) – Page 3: "Ordinary"

Before reading Note Ch. Title
cc: What does it mean to be ordinary?

- **Read:** Read Aloud the first chapter of the novel, "Ordinary" (p. 3). You may also opt to play the audiobook (one version available [here](#)).
 - **Note:** You may wish to have a student share the definition of "ordinary" once more before beginning to read
- **Write:** Ask students to Turn and Task in response to Q1.
- **Discuss:** Lead a brief discussion to surface the key ideas.
 - **Note:** This task is a place to note initial impressions. Rather than a lengthy discussion, ask students to share out 1-2 observations and stamp the narrator's name.
 - **Q1:** Who is telling this story? What is your first impression of him? Jot 1-2 notes about the narrator in the box below.
 - The narrator is August, a ten-year-old boy.
 - Something about August's face isn't "normal" and causes others to react with fear, curiosity, and surprise. (While his face is not described yet, he says "it's probably worse" than what we're thinking).
 - He mentions his family: Mom, Dad, Via (not yet explained, but likely his sister)
 - He likes the same activities and hobbies most kids like.
 - He sounds like a regular kid in the narration—his tone is casual and informal ("I mean, sure," "Stuff like that") and he seems to be speaking directly to readers.
 - **Note:** Students will have the opportunity to analyze August's voice and tone as the narrator in more depth throughout this lesson and in subsequent lessons.
- **Discuss:** Ask students to Turn and Talk to respond to Q2a, then share out 1-2 responses.
 - **Q2a:** What is ordinary about August? What is not ordinary about him? 1-2/each question
 - August's interests and activities are ordinary. He seems to like most of the same things other kids do. He also feels ordinary on the inside. His thoughts, mind, and emotions are the same as every else's.
 - However, he's not ordinary because of his appearance. Something about the way he looks makes kids run away or stare at him. He is not treated like everyone else or in an ordinary way.
- **Write:** Ask students to respond independently to Q2b.
- **Discuss:** Lead a brief discussion of Q2b. You may also wish to Show Call students who successfully captured their ideas in one clear sentence, beginning with "Even though."
 - **Q2b:** What is August explaining in the opening paragraph of the novel? Write one sentence, beginning with the phrase "Even though."
 - Even though August does ordinary things and feels ordinary on the inside, he knows he's not ordinary because of the way people react when they see him.

Perspective
of others

- Even though others treat him like he is different or frightening, August feels like he is the same as everyone else on the inside.
 - **Note:** You may wish to use this sentence as a mini lesson on punctuating complex sentences. Because “even though” is a subordinating conjunction, the first clause in the sentence is a dependent clause, and students must use a comma before finishing the sentence with an independent clause. (For more, see Commas in Complex Sentences, via Grammarly)
- **Write:** Ask students to **Turn and Task** to respond to Q3a.
- **Discuss:** Show Call or share out exemplar annotations in response to Q3a.
 - Q3a: Reread p. 3 with your partner and underline evidence of how people respond when they see August.
 - * ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds
 - * get stared at wherever they go
 - I would wish that I could walk down the street without people seeing me and then doing that look-away thing.
 - I know how to pretend I don't see the faces people make.
 - some older kids made some noises
- **Write:** Give students time to respond to Q3b. **silent solo 3min**
- **Discuss:** Share out or Cold Call an accurate response to Q3b.
 - Q3b: How does August react when people respond to him this way? What does he wish would happen? Why?
 - August is used to the way people respond to him, so he usually pretends not to notice. **ignores**
 - However, he wishes he had a “normal face that no one ever noticed at all” so he could walk down the street without getting these reactions.
 - With a more typical face, everyone would realize August is as ordinary as he thinks he is. If his face was less unusual, he believes people would see him the way he sees himself.
- **Write:** Ask students to respond to Q4.
 - **Note:** For pacing, you might opt to make this a Turn and Talk instead of a written question.
- **Discuss:** Share out responses to Q4.
 - Q4: Why does August think he is “the only person in the world who realizes how ordinary [he is]”?
 - August thinks he's the “only person in the world” who realizes he's actually ordinary because even his family sees him differently from the way he sees himself. Though his sister says she sees him as ordinary, she feels like she needs to protect him more than she would a typical kid. August's parents see him as extraordinary rather than average or normal. Because of his face, he is special and different to everyone but himself.

x
SKIP
unless
students
need
extra at bat
w/ others'
perspective

- Discuss: Ask students to Turn and Talk to respond to Q5a, then share out or Cold Call an accurate response.
 - Q5a: Who is August speaking to in this line? What is he explaining?
 - August is speaking directly to us, the readers. He is saying that he knows we are probably trying to imagine what he looks like, but whatever we are imagining, he actually looks "worse," and he won't describe it.
- Write: Give students time to respond to Q5b. *silent solo (jot first ideas, not sentences)*
- Discuss: Lead a brief discussion of Q5b. Encourage students to jot notes from discussion in the box provided so they have a resource to use during revision.
 - Q5b: Why might R.J. Palacio have ended the first chapter of the novel with these lines?
 - Palacio may have ended the chapter with these lines because they introduce us to August as the narrator and show us that we will be getting his story from his perspective. Directly addressing readers makes us feel connected to August, like he's telling us this story in person.
 - The narration also allows readers to see August the way he sees himself rather than the way people who only notice his face see him. We have started to get to know how funny and ordinary he really is, without being distracted or overly influenced by his appearance. He is choosing not to describe his appearance at this point in the novel, so as readers, we get to know who he is on the inside instead of learning what he looks like.
 - This line also introduces August's funny and self-deprecating tone—he knows how others perceive him and isn't afraid to be honest and direct in his narration.
 - Possible Supporting Questions
 - What is the purpose of this first chapter?
 - How do we respond to August as the narrator?
 - What have we learned about August already? What do you notice about his tone?
 - Who is telling this story? Whose story is it?
 - How do you feel about August after reading the first chapter?
- Revise: Give students an opportunity to revise or add on to their responses after discussion. You might ask students to do one or more of the following in their revisions: *→ silent solo*
 - add a new idea they heard in the class discussion
 - synthesize their ideas into one clear sentence
 - elaborate further on what they had written before
 - include the term narrator or narration
 - Potential Revisions
 - By ending the chapter with these lines, Palacio helps readers feel connected to our narrator and become invested in August's story.

Pre call
Look for students who:
- mention August as narrator
- talk about connection btw narrator/readers

show call revisions (if time)

- The final lines of the story make us feel like August is speaking to us directly through his narration, so we get to know his voice and personality before learning the details of his appearance.

Cycle 2 (15 minutes) – Pages 4-5: “Why I Didn’t Go to School”

- **Read:** Read Aloud or use FASE Reading to read pp. 4-5, “Why I Didn’t Go to School.” While reading, ask students to annotate evidence of anything ordinary in August’s life as well as anything about him that does not seem ordinary.
- **[Optional] Discuss:** Share out or Show Call strong annotations. You may also opt to have students Turn and Talk to share their annotations. *T+T → precall 1-2*

- **Note:** In this and subsequent plans, the list of potential annotations is provided as a guide for teachers in the monitoring of student reading. We would not expect students to make all these annotations. Prior to the lesson, you might select 1-2 annotations to prioritize or plan to debrief.

- **Annotation Task:** As we read, underline evidence that helps you respond to these questions:

- **What is ordinary about August’s life?**

- What I wanted was to go to school, but only if I could be like every other kid going to school. Have lots of friends and hang out after school and stuff like that. (p. 4)
- I have a few really good friends now. (p. 4)
- We’ve known each other since we were babies. (p. 4)
- When we were little, we used to have playdates all the time, but then Christopher moved (p. 5)
- I have other friends, too (p. 5)
- And, of course, I always go to Christopher’s birthday (p. 5)

- **Note:** Students should be noticing that August’s perspective on friendship is the same as any other kids—he has a few good friends that he’s known a long time (even though one has moved away), and he wants to have lots of friends to hang out with.

- **What does not seem ordinary or typical?**

- I’ve never been to a real school before (p. 4)
- It’s because of all the surgeries I’ve had. Twenty-seven since I was born. (p. 4)
- I’ve had two or three surgeries every year since then [...] I have some other medical mysteries that doctors never really figured out (p. 4)
- I used to get sick a lot (p. 4)
- Mom homeschools me. (p. 4)

- **Note:** Students will likely recognize that August’s medical conditions make his life much less ordinary. He has frequent illnesses and surgeries, and he hasn’t been healthy enough to attend a “real school.”

What seems familiar or similar to your life?

- **Write:** Ask students to write responses to Q6.
- **Discuss:** Show Call or share out exemplar sentences. Several options are provided below; student sentences may vary but should capture the key ideas and accurately use each conjunction.
 - **Note:** If this is the first developmental writing prompt you are using in class, you may wish to model completing the sentences. To roll out this type of prompt, you might use or adapt the following language:
 - “In this type of question, part of a sentence and a conjunction are provided for you. Your job is to complete the sentence in a way that makes sense with the given conjunction. In the first sentence, for example, the conjunction given is “because” which means we need to end that sentence with a clearly stated reason. August doesn’t go to school because...why?”
 - **Q6:** Complete each of the following sentences:
 - August doesn’t go to school **because** he needs frequent medical attention. / **because** he gets sick a lot and often needs surgery.
 - August doesn’t go to school, **but** this year he is starting 5th grade. / **but** he still has friends he likes to hang out with.
 - August doesn’t go to school, **so** his mother homeschools him. / **so** the idea of starting 5th grade is scaring him.
- **Write:** Ask students to write responses to Q7.
- **Discuss:** Lead a brief discussion of Q7.
 - **Q7:** On p. 5, August thinks, “Maybe I’m making too big a deal about birthday parties.” Why do you think birthday parties are so important to him? What might they represent? Challenge: Include the word ‘ordinary’ in your response.
 - Birthday parties might be important to August because they are so ordinary, a part of the “typical” life he wants to have. They might represent being included or having real friends. He seems to use invitations to birthday parties to gauge if people are his real, “good” friends. His careful attention to birthday parties and invitations shows us he wants real friends, and he notices when he isn’t invited or when he isn’t treated the same way other kids are in their friendships. Birthday party invitations seem to be his way of tracking whether or not he is included or fits in.
 - **Possible Supporting Questions**
 - What does August say that he wants on p. 4?
 - How might birthday parties show us more about what August wants?
 - What might a birthday party invitation mean to August?
 - Why does he say his other friends are “not as good as Christopher and Zack and Alex were”? How does he know?

* Preview that this chapter talks about Farts 😊

stay focused

Remind to

Cycle 3 (20 minutes) – Pages 6-7: “How I Came to Life”

- **Read:** Read Aloud or use FASE Reading to read “How I Came to Life,” pp. 6-7. While reading, ask students to annotate any parts of this story that might make August laugh. Students should also note any moments in this chapter that they think are particularly funny.

○ **Note:** You may also choose to play this [video](#) of R.J. Palacio reading the chapter aloud.

- **[Optional] Discuss:** Show Call or share out strong annotations. *X no debrief (model noticing during reading)*

○ **Annotation Task:** According to August, when his mom tells “this story,” he and Via “just start cracking up.” As we read, underline any parts of the story that might make August laugh. Are there any moments you think are particularly funny?

- She had very big arms and (here comes the funny part), she kept farting. (p. 6)
- Like she’d bring Mom some ice chips, and then fart. She’d check Mom’s blood pressure, and fart. (p. 6)
- Mom got stuck with this cranky kid doctor she and Dad nicknamed Doogie (p. 6)
- But guess what? He had fainted! Right on the floor! (p. 7)
- So when the farting nurse saw that he had fainted, she started pushing him with her foot to get him to wake up, yelling at him the whole time: “What kind of doctor are you? What kind of doctor are you?” (p. 7)
- And then all of a sudden she let out the biggest, loudest, smelliest fart in the history of farts. Mom thinks it was actually the fart that finally woke the doctor up. (p. 7)

- **Discuss:** Ask students to Turn and Talk to respond to Q8, then share out or Cold Call an accurate response.

○ **Q8:** Why does the whole room “[get] very quiet” when August is born (p. 6)?

- When August is born, the room “[gets] very quiet” because everyone is shocked and worried about him. Because of his condition, he is very sick and struggling to survive. Even the medical staff seems overwhelmed and stunned because no one was expecting these complications.

unexpected

- **Write:** Ask students to respond to Q9a.

- **Discuss:** Share out responses to Q9a.

○ **Q9a:** Consider this experience from Mom’s perspective. How do you think she felt after August was born? Do you think his birth felt “so funny” to her? Underline any evidence that supports your thinking.

- At the time, August’s birth likely did not feel funny at all. Mom was probably worried, scared, and confused like everyone else in the room when August was born. She didn’t even get a chance to see her baby—he was taken away immediately. No one would let her get out of bed or follow him. She wasn’t sure if August would live through the night.

- **Note:** The word “hysterical” on p. 7 might confuse students if they’re interpreting it to mean “very funny.” You may wish to point out that in this case, “hysterical” means showing extreme and

Turn + Task

Silent
solo
(if time)
notes/
bullets

- uncontrolled emotion (likely fear and pain in Mom's case) rather than the more familiar use of the word.
- **Write:** Ask students to respond to Q9b.
 - **Discuss:** Lead a brief discussion of Q9b.
 - Q9b: Why might Mom emphasize the humor when she tells this story to August? What could this tell us about her character and about their family?
 - Mom might tell the story in a funny way because she doesn't want August to feel embarrassed or sad about what happened when he was born. Even though she was afraid and surprised when he was born, she loves him and wants him to understand that his birth was a source of joy. This might also show us that the family uses humor and laughter to handle tough experiences—they focus on what's funny rather than what's painful or traumatic.
 - **Possible Supporting Questions**
 - ✿ How might August feel if Mom emphasized her sadness or fear when telling this story?
 - Why might this be an important story to August and his family?
 - ✿ What does Mom want August to understand about the day he was born? Why?
 - **Discuss:** Ask students to Turn and Talk to respond to Q10, then share out 1-2 responses.
 - Q10: When the doctors tell Mom August might not live through the night, the nurse tells her, "Everyone born of God overcometh the world" (p. 7). The word "overcometh" means to overcome or win a victory over. What do you think the nurse means by this? Why might she say this to Mom?
 - The nurse might mean that everyone who is born can overcome challenges in the world or win their victory over what the world throws at them. The nurse is trying to support August's mom and encourage her that her baby will be able to overcome and win his fight to live.

Exit Ticket (10 minutes)

- Q1: Who is the narrator of this story? What is he explaining in this line? Challenge: Include the words 'wonder' and/or 'ordinary' in your response.
 - The narrator of this story is August, a ten-year-old boy who was born with a face that looks different from a usual or typical face. In this line, he's explaining that he sees himself as an ordinary kid who is interested in the same things as everyone else. However, he is not actually ordinary because no one else sees him the way he sees himself and he is not treated like everyone else. To his strangers, he is someone to stare at or run away from. His family sees him as a wonder, someone extraordinary and special who needs to be protected.