

ALL INCLUSIVE?

TODAY YOU WILL...

- > WORK TOWARDS DEVELOPING YOUR EMPATHY FOR OTHERS
- > MAKE AN IMPACT ON DISCUSSION THROUGH CHALLENGING AND CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS
- > USE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES AND THOSE OF YOUR PEERS TO DEVELOP AN ARGUMENT

YOU WILL NEED

- > WONDER BY RJ PALACIO
- > MAX THE CHAMPION BY SEAN STOCKDALE AND ALEXANDRA STRICK

Sean Nasen brings two texts into the classroom that could help develop learners' empathy alongside their critical skills



Like many English teachers I am always on the lookout for those special books that will provide me with an ideal springboard for discussion and writing. **Wonder**, by RJ Palacio, is an inclusive text that allows for the exploration of issues of disability in the classroom, whilst avoiding the usual

stereotypes. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the story, it centres around a young boy called August (Auggie) who is born with a facial deformity, and documents his struggle to be accepted having moved to a mainstream school. A significant amount of time in this lesson is given over to speaking, listening and role play; this is in part to start to help learners develop their 'emotion toolkit' in preparation for going into Auggie's world.

STARTER ACTIVITY

Before the lesson starts appoint two pupils as scribes, they will document key points through the lesson (a flip chart works well for this).

WARM UP

Begin the lesson by asking the students to discuss with a partner a time they felt self-conscious. Can they sum up the situation in one word? Share their word with the class using 'conscience alley' technique (anyone the teacher points at shouts the word – swipe quickly at first to warm them up, then use slower movements to focus on particular groups' words). Scribes choose a selection of words to document on flip chart.

HOT SEATING

Ask pupils to talk about themselves, switching between confident and self-conscious. Can their peers identify key differences and build each other's performances?

PICTURE THIS

Show students a 3-second flash of a scene from Max the Champion (fig 1) using an interactive whiteboard, or by holding up an enlarged print out (the time limit really focuses them on the second and third pass).

- What can they see?

Repeat for a 5- 10 seconds flash, depending on how much detail learners spot on the first pass.

- Look at the detail – try and build a picture in words.

Finally, reveal the image once more, and leave it on display.

Ask the students to look more closely at the picture. Is there anything unusual about it? Did they notice that it is full of inclusive characters?

Ask the students which character in the picture is being described in the following statements:

- I love basketball.
- I enjoy going to school and seeing my friends.
- I'm in top set for maths.

Reveal to the students that all three statements are from the same child, the character that uses a wheel chair. Ask the students why they made their character choices?

Use the image of the wheel chair user to discuss then hot seat how people make assumptions based on appearance. If they were to use a wheel chair what assumptions might annoy them?

+ KEY RESOURCE



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FIG 1.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

Tell the pupils that they will be reading **Wonder**, which is about a child with Treacher-Collins syndrome. Show the front cover of **Wonder**, then an image of a pupil with Treacher-Collins syndrome.

1 THROUGH OTHERS' EYES

In pairs, discuss the kind of problems a child like this might have to face in situations such as school, visiting a theme park, at a party, in a shop.

Extension: Learners can come up

with their own situation, exploring any potential problems.

2 WISE WORDS

Wonder has a number of precepts within the text that are presented to students by the inspirational Mr Browne, for example: 'YOUR DEEDS ARE YOUR MONUMENTS'. Working in pairs, students should explore their meaning and effectiveness, and select one which would be the most pertinent to them.

Extension: Learners can create their own examples or find precepts they think would add to the text.

INFO BAR

+ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

+ TINYURL.COM/TSWONDER (INTERVIEW WITH RJ PALACIO)
 + TINYURL.COM/TSFACE (NEWSPAPER ARTICLE REFERENCING FACIAL DEFORMITY AND ACCEPTANCE)

+ ABOUT THE EXPERT



Sean Stockdale works for nasen as editor of Special magazine; he is also an Advanced Skills Teacher for ICT and children's author. His first book, Max the Champion (co-authored with Alexandra Stick) was published in June 2013. For information about Max and disability issues visit maxthechampion.co.uk.

HOME LEARNING

Asking the pupils to find examples of characters in stories who have a disability or a special need really opens up the debate on how few books there are that feature positive inclusive characters.

Alternatively, they could do some research on why RJ Palacio wrote Wonder, which is an account I've found really affects even the most cynical of students.

3 REASONABLE OBJECTIONS?

Display this quote from the text (p162), "*I was disturbed that more consideration was not given during this child's application process to the fact that Beecher Prep is not an inclusion school. There are many parents – myself included – who question the decision to let this child into our school at all.*" Ask students to work in pairs, and create an email response, giving reasons why August *should* attend the school. Ensure that the response is measured and includes any benefits to the other pupils of his presence.

SUMMARY

To assess pupils' knowledge, give students a sticky note and ask them to write a tweet summing up what they have learnt today. These can be added to a wall display and build up a picture of learners' expanding knowledge as you progress through a unit. Getting what you want to say in so few characters is a skill in itself and also helps develop note taking.

Many students have little or no experience of inclusive story characters but plenty will have experience of disability issues. This lesson will have prepared them for many of the themes that run through Wonder, but would also serve as an ideal opportunity to put disability issues in a wider school context, such as contributing to your school disability policy.