

**AUGUST PULLMAN'S STRUGGLE AS A NEW STUDENT WITH FACIAL  
DISFIGUREMENT IN R.J. PALACIO'S *WONDER***

**THESIS**



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isolated, failing to make friends, or getting teased. Most of their friends see them for the way they look, not for the way they are. Although children with disfigured face are not handicapped in the same way as someone on a wheelchair, people sometimes consider them as socially handicapped because of their odd-looking face (Frances, 2004: 4). Thus, the way they look can make the challenges at school bigger than others with the ordinary look because people consider them as socially handicapped.

The initial challenge for a pupil with facial disfigurement is unpleasant reactions from people who meet them, especially for the first time. People commonly give various responses such as staring, looking away, avoiding, and so on (Frances, 2004: 32). Moreover, they will face bullying done by their schoolmates. Children with disfigurements are twice as likely to be severely bullied as their counterparts without visible difference (48). Those reactions and bullying make the transition into the new school become harder for children with a facial difference. The condition may become worse when those treatments persistently happen during the school year. This condition occurs to August Pullman, the main character in a novel entitled *Wonder*.

*Wonder* is a children novel written by R.J. Palacio. It is Palacio's first novel. It was published in 2012. *Wonder* has been sold millions of copies worldwide since its publication. It also leads to the "Choose Kind" campaign on Tumblr and Twitter. Schools around the world have applied *Wonder* in their curriculum to teach students about empathy and kindness to those who have facial differences or disabilities. *Wonder* has won some awards such as the ALA Notable Children's Book and the

Christopher Award (Casalme, 2016: 2). It has been on the *New York Times*' best-seller list in Children's Chapter Book category.

*Wonder* is considered as children literature. According to Price et al., children's literature serves several purposes. It provides a context for understanding social norms and behavior, helps children learn how to adapt to society, and facilitates the development of appropriate social-emotional skills (Price et al., 2016: 5). Thus, children literature has significant role in teaching moral value to children. Moreover, it can give insight to children about the way they adjust in society and help them to develop their social skills.

Some researchers have conducted research using *Wonder* as an object. They were Nuriza (2014) from Indonesia University of Education, Khairani (2018) from Sumatera Utara University, Adesia (2018) from Widya Mandala Catholic University, and Stevanie (2019) from Widya Mandala Catholic University. They all used *Wonder* as an object in their studies. Different topics and theories are discussed and applied in their studies. The researcher reviews their studies to make sure that the issue chosen by the researcher is different from other research topics.

Nuriza finds out August Pullman's character development by using focalization from other characters in the novel. Meanwhile, Khairani in her research compared interpersonal behavior between August Pullman and Angel; the main character in "*Ayah Mengapa Aku Berbeda*". Adesia finds out moral value from the novel how to be good parents. On the other hand, Stevanie analyzed the secondary character in *Wonder*, Olivia Pullman. None of them focus on August's challenge as a

new kid with facial disfigurement. From the result of the previous studies, the researcher finds a gap to analyze August's challenges and how he overcomes the challenges.

The researcher applies new criticism theory in this study. This study attempts to find out challenges faced by August Pullman in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder* and to explain the way August struggle to overcome the challenges. The researcher chooses this topic because the challenges faced by August Pullman is twice as hard as challenges faced by the pupil without a facial difference. So, he also has to struggle harder than other pupils to fit in. From knowing August's challenge, hopefully, people become more grateful for what they have and manage their better response to the people with a facial disfigurement.

### **1.2 Statement of Problems**

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher formulates the statement of problems as follows:

1. What challenges are faced by August Pullman as a new student in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*?
2. How does August struggle to overcome the challenges in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the statement of problems, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find out August's challenges as a new student in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*.
2. To find out the way August struggle to overcome the challenges in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Regarding the background and objectives of the study, this thesis is expected to give a valuable contribution. Theoretically, the thesis findings will provide additional information to other researchers about new criticism and children literature, notably R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*.

Practically, this thesis hopefully can be useful for common people who read this thesis in a sense how to overcome the challenges, especially for those who have a facial disfigurement.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The scope of this thesis is created to make the discussion clear and systematic. Therefore, the scope of this study focuses on August Pullman as the main character in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*. Meanwhile, the limitation of this thesis makes the research focuses on the specific discussion, which is chosen by the researcher. Hence, in this study, the researcher limits the discussion to challenges faced by August Pullman as a new student with facial disfigurement and the way he struggles to overcome the challenges. Based on the statement of problems, this thesis uses a new criticism theory to analyze August's challenges and August's struggle to overcome the challenges.





not emphasize measurement in amount or numbers, the researcher explained the analysis or research findings in descriptive words without numeral data.

### 1.7.2 Data Source

Since the research design was qualitative, the data sources were library based, that contains printed books, journals, and articles to support the research. There were two data sources in this study. They were primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source in this research was the novel, *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. Moreover, the researcher took the secondary data sources from both digital and non-digital sources. The digital sources involved e-book, e-journals, trusted blogs, and other sources relevant to the topic of this research. Whereas non-digital sources included printed books, journals, theses, and articles.

### 1.7.3 Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher used some steps, as mentioned below:

1. Read the novel carefully and repeatedly to get a full understanding of the novel.
2. Underlined and highlighted some quotations that relevant to the topic to answer the research questions. The quotations were about August's challenges and the way he struggles to overcome the challenges. Besides, the quotations were in the form of dialogues, sentences, and phrases taken from the novel.
3. Selected the related references from the secondary source such as the explanation of the theory which were new criticism and psychological approach, and other information to support the primary source.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

In conducting the research, the researcher realizes that it is important to comprehend the theory that is used to support the discussion in the next chapter. Therefore, in this chapter, the researcher discusses new criticism as the theory used to analyze the data. Besides, this chapter discusses some previous studies as well, to see the differences between this current study and the previous studies.

##### 2.1.1 New Criticism

New Criticism involves the analysis of literary texts (Gillespie, 2010: 172). New Criticism guides the way when the readers read and write about literature. New Critics claimed that each text, each object being interpreted, would itself dictate how it would be interpreted. According to Tyson in *Critical Theory Today*, the New Critics introduced to America and called "close reading." It means that New Critical focus the reader's attention on the literary work as the sole source of evidence for interpreting the text so that Tyson also called New Criticism as "the text itself" (Tyson, 2006: 136). The language in the text itself provides all the evidence such as the Images, symbols, metaphors, rhyme, meter, point of view, setting, characterization, plot, and so on. It needs to understand the meaning of the text itself. It should be given the textual text to validate data.

New Criticism is clearly characterized in premise and practice: it is not concerned with *context* – historical, biographical, intellectual and so on; it is not interested in the ‘fallacies’ of ‘intention’ or ‘affect’; it is concerned solely with the ‘text in itself’, with its language and organization; it does not seek a text’s ‘meaning’, but how it ‘speaks itself’; ... it is concerned to trace how the parts of the text relate, how it achieves its ‘order’ and ‘harmony’, how it contains and resolves ‘irony’, ‘paradox’, ‘tension’, ‘ambivalence’ and ‘ambiguity’ (Selden et al., 2005: 19). Since new criticism is a concern in the text itself, it does not need to see the meaning of the text from outside. Thus, new criticism ignores the historical background, author biography, philosophical issues.

Sometimes a literary text does not live up to the author’s intention, and it is even more meaningful, rich, and complex than the author realized. Sometimes the text's meaning is merely different from the meaning the author wanted it to have. By knowing an author’s intention, therefore, tells us nothing about the text itself, which is why the term intentional fallacy emerged. This term refers to the mistaken belief that the author's intention is the same as the text's meaning (Tyson, 2006: 136). Meanwhile, readers' feelings or opinions about a text may be produced by some personal association from experience rather than by the text, such a conclusion would be an example called affective fallacy (137). In other words, according to new criticism, there are two mistaken beliefs might happen in analyzing literary works. They are an intentional fallacy and affective fallacy. The intentional

fallacy will confuse the text with its origins, whereas affective fallacy leads to an impressionistic response. New criticism believes that it is better if ignore the author's intention and readers' feeling or opinion in analyzing literary works to avoid these two fallacies.

Furthermore, for new criticism, a literary work is a timeless, autonomous (self-sufficient) verbal object. Readers and readings may change, but the literary text stays the same (Tyson, 2006: 137). This statement shows the reason why, in new criticism, it does not need to know other aspects outside the literary text while interpreting the text. Its meaning is as objective as its existence on the page. The words are placed and constructed in a specific relationship with one another, in which another combination of words cannot replace this construction.

#### **2.1.1.1 Character**

One of the intrinsic elements in a story is character. A character, then, is presumably an imagined person that inhabits a story (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007: 73). Thus, character is an important element that built the story. Further, Abrams stated that characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do—the action (Abrams, 1999: 32). In short, characters are made up people who occupy a story. Characters can be

differentiated from their personalities, including their manner, moral, mind, or emotional qualities.

There are two types of characters. Characters may seem flat or round, depending on whether a writer sketches or sculpts them. Flat characters tend to stay the same throughout a story, but round characters often change—learn or become enlightened, grow or deteriorate (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007: 74). In other words, flat characters do not change or make a significant development throughout the story, whereas round characters show a development from the beginning to the end of the story. It can be said that flat characters are static but round characters are dynamic.

#### **2.1.1.2 Characterization**

Characterization is the way author depicts characters to convey to the reader what sort of people they are (Murphy, 1972: 161). That is the process in which the writer reveals the personality of a character. So the author presents details to give the reader clues about the character's personality.

According to Abrams, there are two methods of characterization:

A broad distinction is frequently made between alternative methods for characterizing (i.e., establishing the distinctive characters of) the persons in a narrative: showing and telling. In showing (also called "the dramatic method"), the author simply presents the characters talking and acting and leaves the reader to infer the motives and dispositions that lie behind what they say and do. The author may show not only external speech and actions,

but also a character's inner thoughts, feelings, and responsiveness to events; for a highly developed mode of such inner showing, see *stream of consciousness*. In telling, the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters (Abrams, 1999: 33).

To Abrams, there are two ways the author conveys the character's personality: by showing or telling. In *showing*, author indirectly reveals the character's personality through his or her inner thought, speech, actions, feeling, and responds. In *telling*, author describes the character's personality directly to the reader.

Moreover, Klarer provides clearer explanation of Abrams' idea about characterization. The first method is explanatory characterization or telling. In this method, character is described through a narrator. This technique intentionally places the narrator in the foreground, inserting him or her as a judgmental mediator between the action and the reader (Klarer, 2004: 18-19). Through this method, the reader will know how the characterization of the characters directly through the explanation of the narrator.

The second method is dramatic characterization, or showing. In this method, the position of an obvious narrator kept away to avoid any overt influence on the reader by a narrative mediator. This method of presentation creates the impression on the reader to perceive the acting figures without any intervening agency, as if witnessing a dramatic performance. The image of a person is shown solely through his or her actions and utterances without interfering commentary, thereby

suggesting an objective perception which leaves interpretation and evaluation solely to the judgment of the reader (Klarer, 2004: 19). In this method, the characterization can be revealed through the narration of the third person. Different from the first method, dramatic characterization makes the readers interpret the characterization of the characters. So, the characterization is indirectly told in the story.

To sum up, the characterization is the way author convey character's personality to the reader. Then, there are two methods of presentation. The first is explanatory characterization or telling and the second is dramatic characterization or showing.

### **2.1.2 Bullying and Peer Pressure**

Psychological interpretation can afford many profound clues toward solving a work's thematic and symbolic mysteries (Guerin et. al., 2005: 153). It can be applied to analyze the literary works from psychological insight. The focus in this framework is the psychological notion of new kid who faces challenges in school. One of the challenges is bullying.

The notion bullying is a unique but complex form of interpersonal aggression, which takes many forms, serves different functions, and is manifested in different patterns of relationships. Bullying behavior is not just the result of individual characteristics, but is influenced by multiple relationships with peers, families, teachers, neighbors, and interactions with societal influences (Swearer and Hymel,



2015: 344). Bullying happens because of many factors and influence such as peer or family influence. Peer pressure is one of the causes of bullying. Peer pressure is the influence exerted by a peer group or an individual encouraging other individuals to change their attitudes, values or behaviors in order to conform to group norms (Maina, 2015: 1). Peer pressure often force individual to behave like mostly people in a group. When one or more members of the group bully a person, the other members will follow his step to bully that person. It can be happened because others did not want to experience the same bullying as the victim.

The most common types of verbal bullying are verbal and physical bullying. Verbal bullying includes such behaviors as taunting, teasing, name calling, and spreading rumors. Physical bullying encompasses behaviors, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, and destruction of property or theft (Baier, 2007: 9). These two kinds of bullying often occur especially in school. The bully often does violence through words or physic to the victim.

## **2.2 Review of Related Studies**

Reviewing literature has a function to refer to some previous studies which have the same object and obviously with different theory and findings. Besides, it also emphasizes the popularity of the object by describing the frequent analysis of the novel, which has done by some researchers.

The first research comes from Rindra Nuriza, student of the Indonesia University of Education. Rindra analyzed the title "*A Child Character's Development in R.J. Palacio's Children Realistic Fiction Novel Wonder*" in 2018. The study is about August Pullman's character development through the story, as seen in other characters' focalization. Rindra uses Bal's narratology theory as the main framework. The result shows that the main character developed through four narrative events and different focalization.

The second is from Nidya Adesia, student of Widya Mandala Catholic University. She researched in 2018 entitled "*The Moral Value in Encouraging Special Need Child from the Novel Wonder.*" This study is attempted to understand deeply about the moral value taught by the parents in the novel "*Wonder*" by R.J. Palacio. This study can show readers how to be good parents, especially for parents with disabled children.

The third is a research conducted by Nini Khairani from Sumatera Utara University. The research entitled "*Interpersonal Behavior As Portrayed In R.J. Palacio's Novel Wonder And Agnes Davonar's Novel Ayah Mengapa Aku Berbeda: A Comparative Literature Analysis.*" This study is attempted to find out interpersonal behavior portrayed in the main character in the two novels and to find out the similarities and differences of interpersonal behavior in the two novels. She applied interpersonal behavior theory by William Schutz in this study. The finding shows that

inclusion, control, and affection are found in the novels' main character, August Pullman and Angel.

The fourth is research by Lidya Stevanie, student of Widya Mandala Catholic University. Her thesis entitled "*Love and Affection Reflected in Olivia Pullman from Wonder Novel by R.J. Palacio.*" The theory used in this study is the objective theory. The study analyzes the secondary character of the novel, Olivia Pullman. Olivia is August's elder sister. Lidya observes how Olivia expresses her love and affection toward August and how August reacts to her affection. The findings show that Olivia had been a great impact for August. She protects him from bullies, gives her concern to him, comforts him, expresses her love and affection directly, gives advice, relents to him, put him as her top priority, helps him, and even manages to make him back to school. August's reaction toward Via's affection was quite unpredictable. At first, he reacts with his ego, but in the end, he realizes that he survives in the environment because of his sister. He started to obey and love his sister more than before.

From the four previous studies above, the researcher finds the similarity and difference between this current study and those previous studies. The similarity is the novel as an object of research. The novel is entitled "*Wonder*" written by R.J. Palacio. Meanwhile, the difference is the topic or issue that becomes the focus of the study. Differs from those previous study, this study is aimed to find out August's challenges as a new kid with facial disfigurement and the way August struggles to overcome the challenges.

## CHAPTER III

### AUGUST PULLMAN'S STRUGGLE AS A NEW STUDENT WITH FACIAL DISFIGUREMENT IN R.J. PALACIO'S *WONDER*

In this chapter, the researcher answers the research questions. Accordingly, this chapter consists of two parts. The first part is a discussion about the challenges faced by August Pullman. The second part, the researcher analyzes how August overcomes the challenges.

#### 3.1 August Pullman's Challenges

Being a new kid in a brand new school is a challenge for August Pullman. Every new kid in school has the challenge to adapt and fit in. August's challenges are harder because this is his first time going to school, and he has disfigurement on his face. August got a syndrome called *mandibulofacial dysostosis* that made deformity on his face. He has undergone twenty-seven surgeries to fix his face. Despite those surgeries, his face still looks weird. Because of the surgeries, August's parents decided to homeschool him for his entire elementary. August started middle school at a private school called Beecher Prep school.

August's face makes people give various reactions when they see August. So, when he starts attending school, he has to face a bigger challenge than the common kids. He was not the only new kid in middle school, but he was the only kid whom

people stared at and gossiped. He also experienced bullying and a condition where most of the students kept their distance from him.

### 3.1.1 People's Staring

One of August's challenges is the way people look at him. People usually stared at August when they see him especially for the first time. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson in her book, *Staring: How We Look*, defined staring as:

Staring is an ocular response to what we don't expect to see ...We don't usually stare at people we know, but instead when unfamiliar people take us by surprise (Garland-Thompson, 2009: 3).

August has facial disfigurement that will surprise people. Since August's face condition is rare, people did not expect they will see a boy with facial disfigurement like August.

August found out that the kids in his school stared at him every time they saw him. It happened even before school started. August went to school with his mom to meet Mr. Tushman, the principal of Beecher Prep school. Mr. Tushman arranged a school tour for August to ease his transition to school environment. There were three kids from school who were asked by Mr. Tushman to accompany August during the school tour. They were Jack, Charlotte, and Julian. Mr. Tushman asked them to be welcoming committee for August since they would be in the same homeroom.

Jack, Charlotte, and Julian showed August room by room in their school. When they were in performance space, August noticed that the boy named Julian stared at him. It appears in the quotation below:

“While she was talking, I noticed Julian staring at me out of the corner of his eye. This is something I see people do a lot with me. They think I don't know they're staring, but I can tell from the way their heads are tilted.” (Palacio, 2012: 27)

The pronoun "she" above refers to Charlotte, who was talking to August about a play she has ever played. From the quotation above, it is evident that August used to know every time someone stared at him. Although they did not realize that August noticed their stare. He could notice it from the way they move their head. August felt sad about the stare. It presents in his narration below:

“I could tell I was being stared at without even looking up. I knew that people were nudging each other, watching me out of the corners of their eyes. I thought I was used to those kinds of stares by now, but I guess I wasn't.” (Palacio, 2012: 49-50)

Having experienced so many stares makes August can feel every time people stared at him even when they do it secretly. In the cafeteria at lunch time which full of kids, August noticed most of the kids stared at him. August got used to it, but still, he felt sad. He was still uncomfortable although he has experienced it so many times.

On the first day school, other students in the school stared at August. It was the first time the students saw August. On his way to homeroom, August noticed some kids stared at him like he mentioned as follow:

"I went straight to room 301 on the third floor. Now I was glad I'd gone on that little tour because I knew exactly where to go and didn't have to look up once. I noticed that some kids were definitely staring at me now." (Palacio, 2012: 37)

August used to walk with his head down so did not have to look at kids who stared at him. He knew anyone stared at him without even looking up. He was grateful because he attended the school tour before the first-day school started. On the first day of school, he did not need to look for his homeroom, room 31, in the entire school. It minimized the possibility of being stared by more kids along the hallway.

Other 'stare' experience happened to August was occurred in the homeroom. The teacher called the students one by one to come forward and to take their folder. By the time August's name was called, everyone's eyes were like burnt into August.

"August Pullman?" said Ms. Petosa.

"Here," I said quietly, raising my hand a bit.

"Hi, August," she said, smiling at me very nicely when I went up to get my folder. I kind of felt everyone's eyes burning into my back for the few seconds I stood in the front of the class, and everybody looked down when I walked back to my desk. (Palacio, 2012: 39)

In the normal condition, friends will stare at the new student to recognize or memorize his or her face. They will look at the new student, and he or she will look at them back. But in August's condition, with his extraordinary face, his friends stared at him when he did not notice them. When August walked facing them, they suddenly looked down like they were afraid August would catch them staring.

August got stares in almost wherever he was in school. Not only in the classroom but also in the cafeteria and hallways, students stared at him.

“I walked to classes with Jack, too. I know he noticed kids staring at me, but he pretended not to notice.” (Palacio, 2012: 63)

When he moved from one class to another class, he found out kids stared at him. It also happened when he walked with his friend, Jack. He even knew that Jack notices those stares. August looked at Jack's expression when Jack knew kids stared at him. But Jack acted as if nothing has happened.

Every day, August used to know that students stared at him. In school events, the challenge was twice as hard as usual because some parents and grandparents stared at him:

“Here's the math on that one: Sixty kids in the grade equals sixty sets of parents—and doesn't even include grandparents. So that's a minimum of one hundred and twenty pairs of eyes that find their way over to me. Eyes that aren't as used to me as their kids' eyes are by now. It's like how compass needles always point north, no matter which way you're facing. All those eyes are compasses, and I'm like the North Pole to them.” (Palacio, 2012: 206)

August used a metaphor to describe the situation. It was like everyone eyes looked at him. The parents mostly knew August for the first time, so they automatically direct their stare in August. In this condition, August felt more uncomfortable as he thought the situation was like a hurricane. It was a hundred times harder than the stares he used to face in the daily situation.

From all the quotation above, it is obvious that August is so sensitive about staring. He knew someone stared at him without even looked up. He caught every sign that indicates someone was staring at him. It proved that he had experienced it so



many times. Although he tried to get used to it, he realized that he still felt uncomfortable with those stares.

### 3.1.2 Peoples's Malicious Talk

The next challenge faced by August is people gossiped him. Most of the kids in his school barely talked to him. But they mostly talked about him since he was the only kid in the school with facial disfigurement. His friends at school gossiped him, and he knew about it.

Only once did I look up to see some girls looking my way and whispering with their hands cupped over their mouths, but they looked away when they saw me notice them (Palacio, 2012: 36).

This moment happened in the school entrance on the first day of school. August had not even reached the classroom yet when he knew that some kids talked about him. He realized it from the way they whispered and covered their mouth while looked at him.

At lunch time, August caught a similar moment on which some girls were whispering one another while looking at him.

There was one table of girls that I knew were whispering about me because they were talking behind their hands. Their eyes and whispers kept bouncing over to me. (Palacio, 2012: 50)

The moment happened in the cafeteria at the first-day school. August knew that the girls were gossiping him because they whispered, but their eyes looked at August. Besides his weird-looking face, August was not a neat eater. He had

undergone surgeries to fix his cleft palate, but he still has a hole in the roof of his mouth. It made him chew his food in the front of his mouth. Because the way he ate, food crumbs often shoot out of his mouth. It made him look so messy when he was eating. So, other kids whispered about him.

The whispered experience was not only happened in the cafeteria. It also happened everywhere they passed August. It appears the quotation below:

And I knew after the first couple of days that word had gotten around about me because every once in a while I'd catch a kid elbowing his friend as they passed me, or talking behind their hands as I walked by them (Palacio, 2012: 61)

August often saw the kids talked about him. He noticed every time the kids whispered and looked at him when he passed them. Most of his friends did not speak to him, but most of them talked about him.

Furthermore, kids called August with other names behind his back that sound embarrassing. It appears in the quotation below:

Rat boy. Freak. Monster. Freddy Krueger. E.T. Gross-out. Lizard face. Mutant. I know the names they call me. I've been in enough playgrounds to know kids can be mean. I know, I know, I know. (Palacio, 2012: 79)

Behind August's back, the kids called August with other names that sound shameful. August has known that kids called him with other bad names although not directly. In the school, Julian nicknamed him as Zombie kid or sometimes 'freak.' This kind of calling spread fast around the school.

The data show that August caught every sign and gesture that indicates kids were whispering or talking about him. His facial difference and his messy eating became an interesting topic among other pupils. He also found out kids called him with other name. August knew pretty well about the figure whose name they used to call him. This knowledge made him felt hurt.

### **3.1.3 Verbal Bullying**

Another challenge that faced by August is being an object of verbal bullying. He is bullied by his schoolmates and by students from another school in nature retreat. Here, the verbal bullying faced by August was arranged based on the timeline, when and where the verbal bullying happened.

#### **3.1.3.1 On School Tour**

The first kind of verbal bullying faced by August is being insulted by his peer. It happened when he was in a school tour, and they were talking about some electives they could take in middle school. August said that he would choose science elective.

It appears in the quotation below:

"I'm taking the science elective," I said.

"Cool!" said Charlotte.

Julian looked directly at me. "The science elective is supposedly the hardest elective of all," he said. "No offense, but if you've never, ever been in a school before, why do you think you're suddenly going to be smart enough to take the science elective? I mean, have you ever even studied science before? Like real science, not like the kind you do in kits?"

"Yeah." I nodded.

"He was homeschooled, Julian!" said Charlotte.

"So teachers came to his house?" asked Julian, looking puzzled.  
"No, his mother taught him!" answered Charlotte.  
"Is she a teacher?" Julian said.  
"Is your mother a teacher?" Charlotte asked me.  
"No," I said.  
"So she's not a real teacher!" said Julian, as if that proved his point.  
"That's what I mean. How can someone who's not a real teacher actually teach science?" (Palacio, 2012: 28-29)

The quotation shows that Julian doubted August's capability to join science elective. Julian underestimated August because he has never gone to a formal school before. August's mom used to teach him at the home through his elementary because of his medical issues. Since he was born, August had undergone twenty seven surgeries to fix his cleft palate and chin. He had two or three surgeries every year. These surgeries made him sick a lot. That was why it was better if he did not go to school. August went to regular school in fifth grade as he did not have to have any more surgeries for another couple of years. According to Julian, homeschooling was not providing all facilities needed by the student to learn science. So, Julian assumed that August was not smart enough. Julian thought August could not keep up with students who take formal school before entering middle school.

The pronoun "she" in the quotation above refers to August's mom. Moreover, Julian also underestimated August's mom, who was not a real teacher. She was a children's book illustrator. Therefore, in Julian opinion, someone capable to teach science was a science teacher, not an amateur teacher. In other words, Julian also doubts August's mom capability to make August understand science.







laughed when he imagined what he would do if having a face like August. August stayed calm and continued overhearing the conversation till he knew that one of the mummies was Jack Will, his best friend. Jack said if he had a face like August, he would kill himself and said that the face was terrible. August ran away from homeroom and went to the bathroom to cry. He was really sad because Jack was kind in front of him. August felt bad that Jack had said that words behind his back. Because of this moment, August thought to quit school. The next day after Halloween incident, August acted as if he had stomach ache so he did not have to go to school. It was because he really disappointed with Jack.

#### **3.1.3.4 In February**

Another form of verbal bullying faced by August is getting some rude notes inside his locker. One of the note was:

I got notes like: *Freak!* And another that said: *Get out of our school, orc!* (Palacio, 2012: 208)

Those notes were from Julian. Not only bullied August directly, Julian also left some rude notes inside August's locker. It was not enough for Julian to insult August by saying rude questions or calling with bad names, but also sending him notes with some rude words.

#### **3.1.3.5 On School Nature Retreat**

Not only August's schoolmates who insulted him, the kids from another school also called him with other bad names in front of his face.



"I didn't know we were watching *Lord of the Rings* tonight!" he said. "Look, guys, it's Gollum!"

This made his friends hysterical. Again we tried to walk away from them, and again the kid named Eddie cut us off. He was at least a head taller than Jack, who was about a head taller than me, so the guy looked huge to me. "No man, it's *Alien*!" said one of the other kids.

"No, no, no, man. It's an orc!" laughed Eddie, pointing the flashlight in my face again. This time he was right in front of us

... "Are you talking to me, Freddie Krueger? I don't think you want to mess with me, you ugly freak," said Eddie. (Palacio, 2012: 266).

Every year in the spring, the fifth graders of Beecher Prep go away for three days and two nights to the Broarwood Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania. On second day of school nature retreat, the students were watching movie on the big screen at fairgrounds. In the middle of watching movie, Jack told August that he wanted to pee. August and Jack would go to toilet, but they saw a huge line there. Jack could not bear that he needed to pee. Then they decided to go to the woods. Jack and August found a tree to pee there. When they headed to back, they met some kids from another school in the wood.

There were six seventh-graders, four boys and two girls. It was night so the kids brought a flashlight. When they pointed the flashlight to August, they screamed as if they saw a monster. They called August as Gollum, alien, orc, and Freddie Krueger. A boy named Eddie even said that August was ugly.

### **3.1.4 Physical Bullying**

The next challenge faced by August is physical bullying. In the school tour, after August and the three kids had visited performance space, they headed to down the stairs. Suddenly, Julian cut August's way off, which made him stumble backward.

I started to follow her, but Julian cut right in front of me, which actually made me stumble backward. "Oops, sorry about that!" said Julian. But I could tell from the way he looked at me that he wasn't really sorry at all. (Palacio, 2012: 30)

The pronoun "her" in the conversation above refers to Charlotte. The moment happened when August was about to follow Charlotte down the stairs, then Julian made him suddenly stumbled backward. Julian said sorry to August, but August observed Julian's expression. August found out that Julian did not sincerely say sorry because Julian said it sarcastically. Julian deliberately did it to August. Julian did it because he thought that verbal bullying was not enough to make August down. After getting some rude questions or sentences from Julian, August still showed bit bravery by correcting Julian's word "*supposably*". Julian felt embarrassed and decide to do revenge to August by bullying him physically.

The other occurrence was when August in the nature retreat in Pennsylvania. He met some kids from another school. The kids were seventh-graders. After insulting August's face, a boy named Eddie pulled August's hood which made him fell backward.

Then out of the blue, the Eddie guy grabbed my hood as I passed by him, yanking it really hard so I was pulled backward and fell flat on my back. It was a hard fall, and I hurt my elbow pretty bad on a rock. (Palacio, 2012: 185)

August knew that his elbow was bleeding. He was about to cry, but he tried so hard not to do that. Then he touched his ears and realized that his hearing-aid was gone. He could not help to cry. Feeling embarrassed, he hid his face in his arm. He tried to stop crying, but he could not do it.

Although he got physical bullying that made him hurt and even lost his hearing-aid, August did not report the bullies to his parents or his teacher. He handled it himself; even he defended the bully in front of his mom and the principal.

### 3.1.5 People's Avoidance

The other August's challenge is people kept a distance from him. Because of his facial deformity, people managed not to touch him. The first occurrence was in his school tour. It appears in the quotation below:

I shrugged and walked over to the door. Julian moved out of the way quickly, like he was afraid I might accidentally touch him as I passed by him. (Palacio, 2012: 25)

Jack, Charlotte, and Julian were showing August the science lab. Julian was standing in front of the door. When August walked in, Julian suddenly moved from there as if he stayed in his place; August might touch him. Julian did it like August was disgusting to touch. This moment was the first time August felt avoided in school.

Another data that show people kept their distance from August is the moment he started his class. On the first day school, in his homeroom, August did realize no one sat on the desk next to him.

As the desks started to fill up, I did notice that no one sat down next to me. A couple of times someone was about to sit next to me, then changed his or her mind at the last minute and sat somewhere else. (Palacio, 2012: 37)

The data indicate that kids in his homeroom did not want to be near August. Two kids even chose to sit on one desk, whereas a desk next to August was still empty. August tried to stay calm and quiet on his desk.

The same moment happened again in English class. No one sat next to August desk. The only student who sat next to August was Jack since he had already known August when he took a school tour.

Basically, the same thing that happened in homeroom happened again: no one sat next to me except for Jack, who was joking around with some kids who weren't in our homeroom. (Palacio, 2012: 45)

The data show the same thing happened twice in first-day school. August realized it, but he did not want to tell his teacher about that. Moreover, the students in the school still kept a distance from him wherever they saw August, including in the hallways. It appears in the quotation below:

They would take the longest way around me to avoid bumping into me in any way, like I had some germ they could catch, like my face was contagious. (Palacio, 2012: 61)

The quotation shows that the reason why the students kept a distance from August is they considered August had germ. It was like, if they might touch August, they would also get that germ. It was clear that it was not only in August's opinion, but they mean it. The following quotation proves that August's friends kept a distance from him:

I noticed not too long ago that even though people were getting used to me, no one would actually touch me. I didn't realize this at first because it's not like

kids go around touching each other that much in middle school anyway. But last Thursday in dance class, which is, like, my least favorite class, Mrs. Atanabi, the teacher, tried to make Ximena Chin be my dance partner. Now, I've never actually seen someone have a "panic attack" before, but I have heard about it, and I'm pretty sure Ximena had a panic attack at that second. She got really nervous and turned pale and literally broke into a sweat within a minute, and then she came up with some lame excuse about really having to go to the bathroom. (Palacio, 2012: 71)

In dancing class, the teacher paired August with a girl named Ximena. She suddenly looked scared when she had to dance with August. She ended up going to the bathroom instead of dancing. August noticed that his friend avoid touching him.

The similar thing also happened in the science lab. One of his friends accidentally touched his hand and acted like he had a contagious disease. It happened, as mentioned below:

Anyway, everything was going fine until Tristan's mystery powder started melting. He moved his foil off the plate just as my powder began to melt, too, which is why I went to move mine off the plate, and then my hand accidentally bumped his hand for a fraction of a second. Tristan jerked his hand away so fast he dropped his foil on the floor while also knocking everyone else's foil off the heating plate. "Tristan!" yelled Ms. Rubin, but Tristan didn't even care about the spilled powder on the floor or that he ruined the experiment. What he was most concerned about was getting to the lab sink to wash his hands as fast as possible. That's when I knew for sure that there was this thing about touching me at Beecher Prep. (Palacio, 2012: 72)

When the students, including August, were experimenting in the science lab, a boy named Tristan accidentally touch August's hand. Tristan washed his hands as fast as he could and even ignoring the experiment he had ruined. Tristan only paid attention to his hand to not get a plague.



perseverance tried to fit in. He wanted his friends to realize that he is just an ordinary kid like them, despite his extraordinary face.

### 3.2.1 Ignoring Stares

August's effort to manage the stares showed ups and down from the beginning. At first, he knew how to pretend as if he did not notice people's stares. He said: I know how to pretend I don't see the faces people make (Palacio, 2012: 3).

Before started going to school, August used to cover his face using astronaut helmet so that people could not see his face. He did some effort to make people hardly see his face, such as chose the desk in the back, or kept his head down while walking or talking to other people. As the time goes by, he can manage the stares better by ignoring them.

August noticed various reactions of people when seeing his face. People often stared at him and then looked away or looked down when August faced them. He had learned how to pretend that he did not know the stares people give to him. In the school, he also did that pretending when he knew kids stared at him.

I noticed that some kids were definitely staring at me now. I did my thing of pretending not to notice. (Palacio, 2012: 37)

In the hallways, in the classroom. August's friends used to stare at him because of his facial difference. As August has learned how to ignore it, he tried to pretend not to notice the stares the kids did.

August tried to ignoring their stares. He got used to the stares to strengthen himself. It appears in the following quotation:

Anyway, it's not that I care that people react to me. Like I've said a gazillion times: I'm used to that by now. I don't let it bother me. (Palacio, 2012: 207)

Although he felt uncomfortable with the stares that people used to give to him, August tried to ignore those stares. He got used to it. He did not want those stares to disturb him.

It took about one week for the kids in August class to get used to his face. These were the kids I'd see every day in all my classes. It took about two weeks for the rest of the kids in his grade to get used to his face. It took about a month for the rest of the kids in the entire school to get used to it. These were the kids in all the other grades.

### **3.2.2 Ignoring Spread Words**

August tried to ignore the words that spread about him. He frequently caught his friends in school whispered or talked about him. He knew it from the way they talked or whispered while looked at him secretly. It was happened in the canteen at lunch, and frequently through the hallways or stairs when August passed them.

I can only imagine what they were saying about me. Actually, I prefer not to even try to imagine it. (Palacio, 2012: 61)



The pronoun “they” refers to August’s schoolmate who had whispered and talked about August. At first, August wondered what they have said about him. But then, he decided to ignore it.

### 3.2.3 Responding to Verbal Bullying

#### 3.2.3.1 Talking Back to the Bully

After Julian underestimated his capability in learning science, August did not scream nor replied Julian’s words in a mean way. Instead, he corrected Julian’s word:

“The word’s ‘supposedly,’ by the way,” I said.

“What are you talking about?”

“You said ‘supposably’ before,” I said.

“I did not!”

“Yeah you did,” Charlotte nodded. “You said the science elective is *supposably* really hard. I heard you.”

“I absolutely did not,” he insisted. (Palacio, 2012: 30)

During the school tour, August mostly stayed quiet. He did not say anything although Julian said annoying words to him. Then, Jack suggested him to talk. August needed to break his silence so that Julian knew that he was not just a passive boy. Julian, at the beginning assumed that August was not smart enough. By correcting Julian’s word, August showed that he was careful and smart kid, even smarter than Julian. He exactly knew that there was no word called “supposably”, it should be “supposedly”. Julian insisted that he did not say the word “supposably”. Fortunately, Charlotte supported August’s statement that Julian said the wrong word.





After getting the rude notes from Julian, Summer suggested August and Jack to report it to their teacher. But instead of told the teacher, August and Jack replied Julian's note in a funny way. They made a fictional character named Beulah who loved Julian. They made love letters in the name of Beulah and put them in Julian's locker.

August did not report Julian because he did not want to snitch between Julian and the teacher. But it did not mean that he did nothing. He and Jack chose a funny way to take 'revenge' to Julian. It proved that August did not keep quiet and cried like he used to do. He did something, but not in a mean way.

#### **3.2.3.5 Trying to Avoid Conflict**

Experiencing verbal bullying from kids who were bigger from him, August, along with Jack, tried to stay calm in order to avoid conflict. They managed to leave the woods before the seventh-graders made worse noise. Jack tried to get August out from there, but the seventh-graders cut them off. Then, Jack argued with the boy named Eddie. August, who did not want to extend the conflict, persuaded Jack to leave the place: "Jack, let's just go," I said, pulling him by the arm (Palacio, 2012: 266).

Surprisingly, the seventh-graders threw firecrackers to their feet. Eddie even pushed Jack. August tried to tell the seventh-graders: "Look," I said, stepping in front of Jack and holding my hands up in the air like a traffic cop. "We're a lot smaller than



him to see art room, he was not interested. Instead of get his revenge to Julian, August preferred to go away from Julian. August's mom caught his signal. She said to Mr. Tushman that they would pick Via up and apologized for leaving earlier. Before leaving the room, August convinced Mr. Tushman that everyone was friendly. He did not want the kids got trouble because he looked unhappy about the tour, although only Julian, who made him felt bad. August was good in handling himself. He did want to show his bad feeling in front of the principal.

The similar way happened when August was bullied by seventh graders in school nature retreat. He did not hit them back, because he realized that he was smaller than them. August ran away from them with the help of his friends, although his elbow was bleeding.

We were running like crazy, and it was pitch black, and whenever I started to slow down, the guy pulling me by my arm would yell, "Don't stop!" (Palacio, 2012: 267)

August's schoolmates, Amos, Miles, and Henry, who were Julian's friends before, suddenly helped him ran away from the bully. They found out seventh-graders bully August and Jack in the woods. They saw that August bravely talked to the bully that he and Jack were smaller than them. August whose elbow bleeding ran as fast as he could to leave the woods. Finally, they were safe from the bully and headed back to the fairgrounds. Amos, Miles, and Henry then told everyone about how brave August faced the bully in the woods. It made everyone being nice to August when they back to school.



like Julian. August answered he had undergone plastic surgeries to fix some features on his face, but still, his face looked strange. August was not sad like when Julian asked him the similar question. Instead, August drove the conversation away from self-pity by using humor.

That quotation shows the bonding moment between August and Jack. August's sense of humor made Jack felt comfortable to be his friend. At the beginning, Jack befriended August because Mr. Tushman asked him to be nice to August. But after knowing that August was nice and quite funny, he befriended August because of the way he is.

Another August's joke appears in the conversation between August and Summer, his good friend.

.....I mean, I don't want to brag or anything, but I'm actually considered something of a medical wonder, you know."  
He smiled.  
"That was a joke," he said. "You can laugh."  
I smiled and shook my head.  
"You're funny, Auggie." I said.  
"Yes, I am," he said proudly. "I am cool beans." (Palacio, 2012: 129-130)

The pronoun 'he' in the conversation above refers to August. The conversation took place in Summer's home. Summer asked him carefully about what happened to August's face. August told her in short before he said a joke that he was a medical wonder. Summer did not get it at first. But then, August told her that it was a joke, and then Summer smiled. Summer was the only student who sat down with August at first lunch in the school. At first, Summer did it because she felt sorry for August



because he sat alone at his table. But after knowing that August was a funny kid, Summer kept sitting down with him. Summer did not feel sorry for him anymore. Instead, she felt comfortable to be August's friend because he had good sense of humor.

August used the same strategies with how he answered questions about his face. He threw away his self-pity or anger and used humor to explain his answer. Those two quotations prove that August's ability to make jokes saved him from complete isolation. His jokes made Jack and Summer glad to be his friend. August's friendship with Jack and Summer saved him from feeling complete loneliness.

The next quotation showed August's joke when he was in the classroom. He saw one of his friends, Maya, used Uglydolls stationery. Then August said a joke that had the name Uglydolls based on him.

"Did you know the guy who created the Uglydolls based them on me?" Maya looked at me with her eyes wide open like she totally believed me. Then, when she realized I was only kidding, she thought it was the funniest thing in the world.

"You are so funny, August!" she said, and then she told Ellie and some of the other girls what I had just said, and they all thought it was funny, too. Like at first they were shocked, but then when they saw I was laughing about it, they knew it was okay to laugh about it, too. (Palacio, 2012: 209)

August's friends barely talked to him before, except for Jack and Summer. After he said this joke, the girls in his class knew that he was so funny. Since then, his friends were not afraid anymore to talk to August. It proved that this joke is a kind of transition of August to be seen as an ordinary kid by his friends. August gets better

at defusing pity through humor. He extends his circle of friends using a strategy stated by Garland-Thomson as “introducing rather than avoiding the issue of [one’s] appearance” (Wheeler, 2013: 344). August introduced his face condition through humor rather than avoid issue about it.

Thus, by making jokes, August finally was not avoided by his friends anymore. At first, he only had two good friends, Jack and Summer. But then he got more friends. His jokes made his friends knew that he was a funny kid and an easy-going kid to talk to. Moreover, his friends stopped playing the ‘plague’. They never avoid bumping him or touching him. It appears in the quotation below:

I’m pretty sure everyone’s stopped playing the Plague game behind my back, too. No one really cringes if I bump into them anymore, and people borrow my pencils without acting like the pencil has cooties (Palacio, 2012: 209).

By the end of March, most of the kids did not mind if they bump into August. They did not consider August had the plague anymore. By the end of the year, everyone was nice to August. The only kid who was not nice to August was Julian. Till the end of the year, Julian still gave August dirty looks and did not talk to him. But Julian did not bully August anymore, since August finally had more friends. Although Julian still was not nice, August did not care anymore to Julian.

All in all, August overcame the stares by ignoring them. He did not let the stares bother him anymore. He also ignored the words that spread about him. He knew many kids in his school whispered about him. But he decided to not imagine



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis discussed in the previous chapter, in this part, the researcher will draw conclusion based on the research findings. It consists of two parts. The first is dealing with challenges faced by August Pullman. Meanwhile, the second is concerning the way August struggle to overcome the challenges.

Firstly, August has to face some challenges since he started his fifth grade in Beecher Prep middle school. The first challenge is people's stares. People stared at him because of his facial disfigurement. Although he got used to it, he realized that he still felt uncomfortable with the stares. The second challenge is people's malicious talk. The pupils in August's school often whispered about him. The third challenge is verbal bullying. The verbal bullying was not only done by pupils in his school, but also by students from another school in nature retreat. The fourth challenge is physical bullying. August got physical bullying in school from Julian. Not only bullied by Julian, but August was also bullied by seventh-grader from another school at the school nature retreat in Pennsylvania. Because of this physical bullying, August's hearing-aid was lost. The fifth challenge is people's avoidance. In the classroom, no one wanted to sit next to him. In the hallways, pupils would take the longest way to avoid bumping into August. He did not take those moments seriously





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