

**Honorable Finalist, Level I**  
**Ariel Page**

**Letter to author and graphic designer Raquel Jaramillo Palacio (aka R. J. Palacio)**  
**concerning her book *Wonder***

Dear Raquel J. Palacio:

I used to wonder what people with birth defects were thinking about but I never thought that when they walked down the halls that they knew, sensed, we were looking at them. I didn't know their life stories, anything about their backgrounds, why they looked the way they did. After reading *Wonder* my perspective regarding people with birth defects changed.

I used to avoid them but having read *Wonder* I now try to learn their story and be their friend. They always seem so lonely when no one walks with them and people whisper and point. I used to stare at the kids with birth defects when I was younger. I never really took the time to understand them. When my teacher asked me to be friends with a particular classmate with a birth defect I was scared. I thought that she had this thing and I would get it if I got too close to her, as if it were a cold or the flu. I finally did it and we talked. I wasn't scared anymore and found out that she was a normal kid. I know a girl who was a lot like Auggie and got laughed at as a kid. I can really relate to Jack when he stood up for Auggie and when he felt strange when he went to show Auggie around the school.

I can relate because when I was about four years old I had a good friend in preschool who was blind and missing a hand. I forget her name because it was about six years ago, but I do remember that there was this one particular kid who always made fun of her and laughed. One day, I chased him around the playground; eventually, he got too tired to run anymore and rested, holding onto a pole to catch his breath. To get him to stop teasing my friend, I pushed him into the pole. He got the message and stopped.

Now whenever I see someone with a birth defect being bullied I stand up for them—they don't need to do anything. I do my best to be their good friend and cultivate their friendship. *Wonder* has a magical effect that can change everything about a person and their perception of the world. That is the effect it had on me.

Sincerely,  
Ariel Page