

“Wonder”

By Helen Lutz

Dr. Seuss once asked “Why fit in when you were born to stand out?” Many times however, through no fault of our own, our differences make us a curiosity. It’s unfortunate that curiosities must endure the snide remarks, the quick sideways glances and all of the actions that come from those who ‘fit in’. When going through cancer treatments I didn’t have a hair on my head – or anywhere else for that matter (at least my ‘curiosity’ was temporary). Withstanding the glances and comments about the ‘poor dear’ and the giggles from the little ones (and some big ones) just made me stronger and more determined to stand out instead of ‘fitting in.’



In the new movie “Wonder” we meet a ten year old little boy named Auggie Pullman played by Jason Tremblay. Auggie isn’t your run of the mill fifth grader, he has been sheltered and home schooled by his mother Isabel (Julia Roberts) his entire life. Auggie entered the world with massive genetic cranial deformities. At birth he was whisked away without Isabel even having the chance to see or hold him. The first few years of life presented nothing but one challenge after another with Auggie enduring 27 surgeries to enable him to see, hear, speak and live any kind of normal existence. Auggie knows that his face is scary enough to make babies cry; but he does love Halloween (and not just for the candy).

Time to start middle school and it takes all their strength for the Pullmans to begin to let go. Enrolled in a prep school, Auggie must endure that first day in a new school knowing no one and handling the shocked looks and comments – keep away, he might be contagious. Just being the new kid on the first day is hard enough for anyone, it’s almost impossible for Auggie; life just isn’t fair.

“Wonder” explores Auggie’s first year of middle school dealing with being an outcast and bullied to finding friendship. What’s interesting about the movie is how much Auggie’s deformity affects those around him with the major characters each receiving a chapter of their own in the film. Auggie has an older sister Olivia, Via for short, played by Izabella Vidovic who has lived in his shadow her entire life. Probably the best sister in the whole wide world, Via also must survive her own first day of high school and the loss of her best friend Miranda (Danielle Rose Russell).

Another chapter involves Jack Will (Noah Jupe) who is one of the students assigned by Mr. Tushman (Mandy Patinkin), the principal, to show Auggie around the school and help make him feel welcome. Jack Will is the first student to embrace Auggie in friendship only to be pulled to the dark side when trying to ‘fit in’.

“Wonder” tells a wonderful story of struggle, love, betrayal, bullying, reconciliation, friendship and the ability to conquer just about anything life throws at us. Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson, who plays Auggie’s father Nate, bring their characters to life so much so that it’s easy to get lost in the story and tissues are the order of the day at a couple of points during the film, poor Daisy.

Director Stephen Chbosky pulls every heart-string in “Wonder” making it totally predictable in the best sort of way. His use of astronauts and Star Wars characters is refreshing and funny. If we have no other take-away from the movie other than ‘kindness matters,’ instead of all the political gibberish we are surrounded with every day, simple kindness can change the world. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “Wonder” FOUR HARTS. It’s the feel-good, must see movie of the year.