

# THE NOVEL AND THE FILM *WONDER*

DRAGICA HARAMIJA

University of Maribor, Faculty of Education, Maribor, Slovenia, e-mail:

dragica.haramija@um.si

University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts, Maribor, Slovenia, e-mail:

dragica.haramija@um.si

**Abstract** This paper is an analysis of a literary work and a secondary media, a film, using the example of the children's novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio. The author published her novel *Wonder* in 2012 (in the US). A full-length film with the same title (*Wonder*) premiered in November 2017. The paper discusses the children's novel -a bestseller that received numerous awards (their official website lists about 50 awards by the end of 2015, which the book either received or was shortlisted for) and was translated into multiple languages -and the film adaptation, taking into account the basics of intermediality, narrativity, and reception theory. *Wonder* is a novel and a film discussing social and family relations that promote empathy, or, as headmaster Tushman says in his speech at the end of the school year, always trying to be a little kinder than is necessary.

**Keywords:**

*Wonder*,  
empathy,  
literature,  
media,  
R. J. Palacio.



University of Maribor Press

DOI <https://doi.org/10.18690/978-961-286-358-6.15>

ISBN 978-961-286-358-6

## 1 Introduction

The article presents an analysis of the literary work and its transfer to a second medium, film, which is one of the options for discussing literature and (other) media as component parts of culture and arts education. The primary interest of this analysis is in the differences between the book (the language mode) and the film which uses several codes of communication, and in how the film presents the narrative through various codes of communication, that is what was said in the film (everything that is included in the language code) and what was presented visually or acoustically. The analysis also deals with the question of how much of the original story was kept in the film.

The novel *Wonder* was the fourth most-sold novel on Amazon in 2017 (following the film premiere, more than five million copies were sold in the United States alone<sup>1</sup>). The work received numerous awards; the official website lists approximately fifty awards that the book received or was shortlisted for by the end of 2015 (the data has not been updated). By the end of 2015, the novel was published in more than forty countries around the world. The most surprising fact is that the novel *Wonder* is the author's debut. She explained that she wrote the novel after meeting a child similar to Auggie. She had made a mess of the meeting: her younger son was scared of the child, so she took both her children and left instead of speaking to the child and setting a good example. She explained: "It made me wonder what it must be like for that child, facing a world every day that doesn't know how to face you back." (About the author, n.d.) The author also disclosed that she picked the name August for the main character because she likes the name, and she gave August the last name of one of her favourite children's book authors, Philip Pullman. The novel was the inspiration behind the campaign Choose Kind. It stems from the quote by an American psychologist, dr. Wayne W. Dyer (1940–2015), who famously wrote, "When given the choice between being right and being kind, choose kind."

---

<sup>1</sup> The data was collected from the novel's Wikipedia article (*Wonder* [Palacio novel], n.d.). Based on the data collected from WorldCat (on July 7, 2019), 183 editions of this novel have been published so far, including 99 English-language editions, 14 French editions and 12 Chinese-language editions. The data also includes one Slovenian edition (translated in 2014 by Boštjan Gorenc – Pižama).

For the comparative analysis of the novel and film, the children's novel *Wonder* was selected; the novel became the source for the motion picture with the same title. It was written by R. J. Palacio, whose full name is Raquel Jaramillo Palacio. Her official website (About the author, n.d.) states: "A first generation American (her parents were Colombian immigrants), Palacio was born on July 13, 1963 in New York City. Her birth name is Raquel Jaramillo (Palacio was her mother's maiden name)." Palacio is an author and a graphic designer specializing in book cover design. She has also illustrated a number of her own stories, including a Peter Pan retelling. Palacio has published multiple literary works, among which the novel discussed here is the most important. In addition to *Wonder*, Palacio has published three more books about August Pullman: *365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Bronne's Book of Precepts* (August 2014), *Auggie & Me* (October 2015), which "includes print editions of the original e-book novellas: *The Julian Chapter*, *Pluto*, and *Shingaling*. Palacio's newest work, a picture book called *We're All Wonders*, which she both wrote and illustrated, introduces Auggie -and the themes of kindness and empathy and tolerance -to younger children" (About the author, n.d., para. 4).

## 2 Method

The article presents the analysis of a literary work and a second medium, film, through the example of the children's novel *Wonder* by J. R. Palacio. The analysis of the novel includes the methodology of studying literature, which involves defining the topic, theme, motifs, (both main and secondary) characters, narrators, narrative perspective, structure, story, as well as literary time and space. The analysis of the film includes a multi-modal analysis of various codes of communication in the film (language code, gestural and symbolic codes, spatial code, and the acoustic code of communication) and the method of micro-analysis of the film, that is its structure (scene analysis) and its narration. The method of comparing the literary work and the film rests on the theory of intermediality. The concluding part of this article, while taking into account the reception theory (and especially the reception abilities of young readers), presents the opportunity for developing the students' social sensibilities while discussing the novel and the film.

### 3 Results

The basic message of the novel and film *Wonder*, accepting diversity, speaks to all generations of children and adults. A reflection on the story from the novel and the motion picture demands a simultaneous reflection on human (or rather, the readers' or viewers') values and interpersonal relationships. The campaign Choose Kind, which was formed on the basis of this novel, is aimed at publishers, teachers, parents, and young readers who discuss the story at school (a part of it is aimed specifically at teachers) or read it at home (it includes incentives to read the novel in the community).

#### 3.1 The novel *Wonder*

The main literary character of the novel is ten-year-old August Pullman (whose birthday is October 10). Everyone calls him Auggie. He is an intelligent boy who loves natural sciences and space and is a big fan of George Lucas' *Star Wars*. This iconic series of films is referred to throughout the story, establishing an intermedial relation between the novel and the films (especially with the fifth part of the series, *The Empire Strikes Back*). At the beginning of the novel, he explains about his appearance (Palacio, 2014, p. 3): "I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse."

The novel is divided into eight chapters which are titled after the literary character who functions as the first-person narrator of that chapter. Thus, Chapters 1, 6, and 8 have the title "August", Chapter 2 is titled "Via", Chapter 3: "Summer", Chapter 4: "Jack", Chapter 5: "Justin", and Chapter 7 "Miranda". The six first-person narrators cast light on the events from their own perspectives. The main theme of the novel -inclusive relationships -is presented synthetically, so that in places, the description of one event is repeated from another perspective. In most cases the narration from each of the characters allows the reader to fit together the pieces into a cohesive whole. Various narrators or literary characters describe the same event in different ways because their experience is different. Each character's narration is based on their own experience and their own perception of a certain event, which is why the literary characters are described indirectly -their characteristics are not presented upfront. Instead, readers can gather hints about their personalities based on what they describe, how they describe it, what they notice, what they emphasize,

and so forth. August, his older sister Via, her boyfriend Justin, and Via's friend, Miranda, retrospectively talk about events that happened before the beginning of the novel -about August's birth, his illness, his anxiety from strangers' reactions to his face (which is the reason why Miranda bought him a space helmet; Justin remembers seeing him at the café), while August, Summer, and Jack describe the events that happened in school. Justin, Via's boyfriend, is a secondary literary character to whom other narrators (everyone but Summer) tell a secret, which allows the characters to solve misunderstandings and disagreements.

The main character of the novel is crucial in establishing interpersonal connections among other narrators. The relations between the literary characters show relationships, their actions and reactions, which is why they are the basic motifs of the novel.

In Chapter 1, August shows his feelings at his first contact with school and future schoolmates; the basic relationship between them is marked by what occurs on Halloween. August explains that he will dress up as Boba Fett from *Star Wars* but changes his mind in the morning and puts on The Bleeding Scream costume (no one recognizes him, so they freely and loudly gossip about him, which August hears; he is especially hurt by what his friend, Jack Will, says). His visit of his sister's school performance is also an important motif. In Chapter 8, two motifs are especially important: the incident at the camp (older children from another school attack August and Jack, but their schoolmates come to the rescue), where his schoolmates close ranks around him after he is bullied (the bullies call August "Gollum"), and the event at the end of August's first school year (with the principal's speech and the award).

In Chapter 2, Via (Olivia) explains the family tree (especially their father's parents, who were Jews from Russia and Poland, and their mother, who is Brazilian) and August's illness (the entire family carries the mutated gene, but it presented in August only). Via also summarizes the crucial event of Halloween, where August heard others talking about him, and convinces her brother to stay in school.

In Chapter 3, Summer explains why she became August's friend on the first day of school -she pitied him, thus she hung out with him, but soon realized that he was funny, kind, and smart (Palacio, 2014, p. 119): "He's just a kid. The weirdest-looking kid I've ever seen, yes. But just a kid." She is the character who unveils what *the plague* means (in the beginning, almost all August's schoolmates take part in the game; the game is played for the purpose of ignoring and teasing August with the rule of whoever touches him, he/she will become like August; this is a clear example of verbal violence). She is August's confidante, so he tells her why he does not want to spend any more time with Jack: on Halloween, Auggie heard Jack gossiping about him. Summer also gives Jack the hint: "The Bleeding Scream." (The Bleeding Scream is the mask that August wore on Halloween, and at the same time it is a metaphor for the ugly and for death.)

In Chapter 4, Jack reminisces about how he first met August (and thought his face was monstrous). He only finds out in December that, on Halloween, August overheard Jack saying nasty things about him. He then understands August's hurt feelings and sadness. Jack hits Julian, who called August a freak, then apologizes to August. They become friends once more. This triggers the boys' war, where they are ignored by almost all their schoolmates, started by Julian.

Justin, Via's boyfriend, learns three crucial bits of information in Chapter 5: Jack explains the boys' war to him, causing Justin to threaten Julian; Miranda confides in him that she and Via used to be friends and that she was the one who bought August the space helmet that he wore for two years, and that Via does not want to invite her family to the performance because everyone would gossip about August behind her back.

Miranda was Via's best friend who knew and accepted August since his birth. She changes her group of friends but later gets close to Via again (and even lets her have the main role in the school performance).

Some of the secondary literary characters, August's family -his mother, father, and sister, are extremely important. The sister sometimes feels left out because their parents must devote more time to Auggie, but she is also very understanding. Along with Via, some of the most important secondary characters are the first-person narrators, especially August's friends, Jack and Summer.

Jack Will and August meet before school even begins, when the school's principal, Mr. Tushman, asks three students to show August around the school (those roles fall to Jack, Charlotte, and Julian). Jack is the only one who remembers August from when they were little, because he got scared of him at the café. He first refuses to go to school and show August around. He changes his mind because of what his mother says (Palacio, 2014, p. 137): "Jack, sometimes you don't have to mean to hurt someone to hurt someone. You understand!" Soon, August's looks cease to bother him, and they become friends. Their friendship is first broken on Halloween (their schoolmates are gossiping about August, and Jack, who wants to be accepted, follows their example) but then deepens when Julian insults August, prompting Jack to fight him.

Summer is the kindest character and is never selfish or calculating. Her view on accepting diversity is very clear, which influences August a lot. She supports him throughout the story and even sits with him during their first lunch break. Together they form a "summer" table (Summer, August). Julian is the most negative character, a fact that August recognizes upon their first meeting. Julian pushes past August when they are visiting the school, and he almost falls (Palacio, 2014, p. 30): "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." Soon after the school year begins, Julian asks August if he wears a braid like Jedi initiates from *Star Wars*; August confirms this and tells him his favourite character is Jango Fett. Julian then asks him:

"What about Darth Sidious?" he said. "Do you like him?" [...] Maybe no one got the Darth Sidious thing, and maybe Julian didn't mean anything at all. But in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, Darth Sidious's face gets burned by Sith lightning and becomes totally deformed. His skin gets all shrivelled up and his whole face just kind of melts. I peeked at Julian and he was looking at me. Yeah, he knew what he was saying." (Palacio, 2014, p. 44)

Julian is the boy who comes up with "the plague" and "the boys' war". He is the only one who does not accept August, not even at the end of the school year, and instead transfers to another school. Among other secondary characters, the principal Mr. Tushman and the teacher Mr. Browne are important as examples of acceptance:

the principal always acts correctly and gives an impactful end-of-the-year speech, while the teacher helps with his famous 'Mr. Browne's precepts'.

The literary space of the novel is New York City, specifically Manhattan. Important micro-locations include the Pullman family home, Beecher Prep School, and the nature camp at the Broarwood Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania.

The literary time is specifically limited; the story unfolds within one school year. It begins just before school starts and ends with the event at the end of the school year. August Pullman goes to fifth grade and is enrolled in regular schooling for the first time in his life. The novel's chapters include some inserted stories (mostly retrospective) that deal with August and feature the warm relationships in the Pullman family, confrontations with people who do not accept him, and similar. Chapter 1 (August) takes place from one week before school starts up until Halloween (including the holiday). Chapter 2 (Via) features a retrospective of her relationship with her brother, with Halloween and August's confession being the key events. Chapter 3 (Summer) takes us from the first day of school to Halloween. Chapter 4 (Jack) starts with the principal's call before school starts, instructing him to show August around the school, and ends in January, when the boys' war begins after the winter break, and includes a retrospective of his feelings from when he first saw August as a child. Chapter 5 (Justin) takes us from the beginning of the school year, when he meets Via, to the moment when the high school performance roles are distributed among students. Chapter 6 (August) starts in January and ends with the school performance (in May). Chapter 7 (Miranda) is mostly retrospective but also focuses on the school performance. Chapter 8 (August) focuses on the nature camp and the end-of-the-school event.

Based on its themes and motifs, *Wonder* is a contemporary children's novel with audience crossover potential -it is not intended to be read by young readers only. The author deals with issues of empathy, tolerance, and friendship, which are all connected to values.<sup>2</sup> Values are human beliefs (Schwartz, 1992, 2012) or rather criteria for judging behaviour, both our own and the behaviour of others (Licardo, 2016). The divide between values and personal characteristics is presented in two

---

<sup>2</sup> Shalom H. Schwartz (1992, 2012) argues that values are studied by all scientific disciplines that are human-focused. Those theories study values as criteria by which people choose and judge actions as well as accept people (including themselves) and events. Schwartz lists equality, the feeling of acceptance, and social power, which are the cornerstones of empathy, to be among universal values.



first-person narrators, Jack and Miranda. They are both friendly people, but they want to hang out with ‘popular’ schoolmates at certain times, so they ditch the friendships that they cultivated and valued. Jack likes August, yet he agrees with the antagonist, Julian, on Halloween, just to fit in. Miranda throws away her long-lasting friendship with Olivia. Both Jack and Miranda are very positive characters, so they learn from their mistakes, fix them, and renew their friendships.

The teachers of Beecher Prep School are good characters as well, among them especially the principal and the English teacher, Mr. Browne. The novel’s appendix includes “Mr. Browne’s Precepts” and “Postcard Precepts” (Palacio, 2014, pp. 311–313). All of Mr. Browne’s maxims are collected in one place -each month, the teacher gives his students a basic idea on the basis of which they have to write an essay. The precepts are the baseline for the values and developing empathy throughout the novel; they include famous thoughts from important authors such as Confucius, Virgil, Sappho, John Donne, and James Thurber, the scientist Blaise Pascal, the cleric John Wesley, lines from a ballad called “Light and Day” by The Polyphonic Spree, an inscription on an Egyptian tomb, and words by a famous lecturer and author of numerous self-help books, Dr. Wayne W. Dyer. The latter wrote (quoted from Palacio, 2014, p. 311): “When given the choice between being right and being kind, choose kind.” His idea was chosen for the aforementioned campaign, Choose Kind, that was inspired by *Wonder*.

Before the start of each chapter, the page which bears the name of the narrator also includes quotes, and snippets of song lyrics from popular hits (cited in order of appearance in the book): the songs “Wonder” by Natali Marchant, “Space Oddity” by David Bowie, “Beautiful” by Christina Aguilera, the novel *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the tragedies *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance, and *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, and the songs “Beautiful Things” by Andain, and “Beautiful Child” by Eurythmics. Each quote showcases the personal characteristics of the narrator of each chapter. There is an intertextual relation between the chosen quotes and their placement in the novel; the quotes that are snippets of song lyrics also establish an intermedial connection to music.

August Pullman is presented at a crucial time in his life, when he first enters regular schooling, which is not easy. Despite being a gifted child, he is generally not well-accepted among his peers because of his appearance -most of his schoolmates participate in a game called *the plague*. The meanest of all schoolmates is Julian, though he loses all his friends by the end of the story (and transfers to another school). Peer bullying is mostly verbal (Julian's comments on August's looks, nasty messages that he writes to August and Jack), but also includes rejection and ignoring (the boys' war). Twice, physical violence erupts -when Jack hits Julian for calling August a freak, and at nature camp, when the older boys attack August and Jack but are stopped by August's school mates. This last fight is the key event after which August is accepted as an equal (Palacio, 2014, p. 282): "When I went back to school the next day, the first thing I noticed was that there was a big shift in the way things were. A monumental shift. A seismic shift. Maybe even a cosmic shift."

At the end of the novel, the principal quotes Henry Ward Beecher, the school's namesake, in his speech (Palacio, 2014, p. 304): "Greatness [...] lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength ... He is the greatest whose strength carries up the most hearts ... [...] by the attraction of his own." Then he continues: "Without further ado, this year I am very proud to award the Henry Ward Beecher medal to the student whose quiet strength has carried up the most hearts. So will August Pullman please come up here to receive this award?" August Pullman receives a standing ovation and is fully accepted in his environment, by his peers, for the first time in his life. On the way home from the event, his mother whispers (Palacio, 2014, p. 310): "You really are wonder, Auggie. You are a wonder."

### 3.2 Film *Wonder*

The film *Wonder* is a transfer of the novel *Wonder* into a second medium. It has a narrative basis which includes a presentation of human subjectivity; with this, Zorman (2009) warns that it is not enough to limit the film to pictures and literature to words.<sup>3</sup> Buchbinder (2011) and Bergala (2017) come to a similar conclusion, claiming that films cannot be observed simply from a linguistic perspective.

---

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Zorman mentions various film theories and cites the monograph *Novel into Films (The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema)* by George Bluestone as one of the first works that systematically study film adaptations of literary works. She also mentions Christian Metz, Alexander Astruc, and Marie Claire Ropars as the founders of European film theory in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Wonder is a 2017 American comedy-drama film, directed by Stephen Chbosky and starring Jacob Tremblay (August), Millie Davis (Summer, one of Auggie's best friends), Noah Jupe (Jack Will, Auggie's best friend), Bryce Gheisar (Julian Albans), Julia Roberts (mother), Owen Wilson (father), Izabela Vidovic (August's sister), Mandy Patinkin (Mr. Tushman), Daveed Diggs (Mr. Browne). The screenplay was written by Jack Thorne, Steven Conrad, and Chbosky, and the music by Marcelo Zarvos and Bea Miller. The film score features several well-known songs, including Natalie Merchant's song "Wonder" (the song is played during the film's end credits). A quote from this song is also printed at the beginning of the novel.

The film does not expressly show the location of the events, nor are the locations named, with the exception of the Broarwood Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania and Coney Island, which are real geographic locations (this leads the viewer to assume that the Pullman Family lives in New York City). This gives the film a more universal appeal, as the story could have unfolded anywhere: at any school, beach, park, or street. Filming took place in several locations in British Columbia, Canada, and Coney Island, NY (the New York City skyline is recognizable). The film portrays the environment of a small elementary school that August goes to, and a large high school where his sister Olivia is enrolled (this second school space is shown as quite cold compared to the elementary school spaces). Clothing and footwear are used to show the economic status of the children; the relations between the rich (who pay steep tuitions and therefore probably believe they can get away with anything) and the less fortunate (who go to the private school because they receive scholarships). Emotions are mostly shown through facial expressions and gestures (the signs are quite straightforward, as this is a family movie). Understanding the characters is heavily influenced by the choice of the actors who portray them. Film logic dictates that all previews and trailers included Julia Roberts, who plays August's mother, in first place, even though August (who is played by a much lesser-known Canadian child actor, born in 2006) is the main character of the film.

The story unfolds chronologically, and the structure of the film is synthetic with a scenic perspective. It includes retrospective inserts of specific narrators; the inserted stories involve the personal viewpoint of the narrator on the main character or a certain event. Each narrator is announced with a title: Auggie, Via, Jack Will, and Miranda. Their inserted stories interrupt the synthetic story of the film, but they also complete it.

The first scene shows space and an astronaut in a spacesuit. The camera then pans over to a helmet and then to a child wearing a helmet who is jumping on the bed (his movements are similar to the astronaut's). The film begins with a first-person monologue by August, who introduces himself; the text is identical to the first chapter of the novel, which is told by the main character and bears the title "Ordinary." His story briefly touches on his birth, mentions the twenty-seven operations he's had, and focuses on exploring the school and the first school day. The film especially stresses August's interest in space -he wears a space helmet and has star stickers on his ceiling, the rug in his room has our solar system printed on it, and his pillow and bed covers feature a spacesuit.

The school environment focuses primarily on the principal, Mr. Tushman, the home room teacher, Mr. Browne, and the evil schoolmate, Julian Albans. On his first school day, Auggie arrives to school wearing a helmet. When kids look at him "like that", he imagines he is an astronaut, and everyone is applauding him. In Mr. Browne's class, when August makes his introduction, Julian asks him whether he wears the braid because he is a *Star Wars* fan. August confirms the fact and tells him his favourite character from the series is Jango Fett. Julian then asks him what he thinks of Darth Sidious; at that moment, the character from *Star Wars* is shown, so the viewers immediately understand Julian's nasty comment, even if they are not familiar with the film series. Chewbacca, another *Star Wars* character, always appears in the film when there is talk about diversity. August cuts his braid off in the evening and says he does not want to go to school anymore. His family is very understanding, they talk about everything, and his sister Olivia is always ready to comfort him.

Next up is Olivia's view of the events of the first school day -it is her first day of school as well, since she is starting high school. She realizes that Miranda does not want to be her friend anymore and she feels lonely. In the depths of her loneliness, when she thinks nobody cares about her anymore, Via goes to Coney Island, which she used visit with her late grandma. She remembers a very nice day they spent at the beach. On the first school day, she meets Justin. They soon become a couple and attend the drama club together.

Auggie's mother suddenly realizes she has a lot of spare time, because she used to take care of Auggie since his birth. She had also home-schooled him up until that year. She decides to finish the studies she had dropped because of August's illness. Then we see the photo shoot for August's class. At science class, August lets Jack cheat off his test, so Jack sits with him at lunch. They start to hang out together, which makes August's mom very happy. August's happiness is once again represented by a happy, jumping astronaut.

Daisy the dog destroys August's Boba Fett (a *Star Wars* character) costume for Halloween, so he puts on last year's costume, The Bleeding Scream. Since no one expects him to be wearing that costume, he overhears some gossiping at school, and runs back home. He hears Jack tell Julian that he would not be August's friend if August did not force him to, and that he would kill himself if he looked like August. Via comforts August and they go trick-or-treating together -Halloween has always been Auggie's favourite holiday. He no longer wants to be friends with Jack.

What follows is Jack Will's tale, which begins with the day when his mother convinces him to show the new schoolmate around because the principal asked him to. Jack remembers August from childhood and he soon realizes four things: that August is a great kid, that it is easy to get used to his face, that he is smart, and that he is funny. After Halloween, August does not let him sit at his table while Jack still does not understand why August is angry with him.

Summer joins August at his table because she wants to hang out with him and she does not approve of the way their schoolmates bully him (the plague).

Miranda gets the main role in the play, with Via as her substitute. Via is disappointed with Miranda because they are not friends anymore. At the same time, she is happy that Justin is now her boyfriend. Miranda is lonely as she no longer has Via, so she calls August, telling him she misses him and his entire family.

Miranda's narration is linked to memories of how happy and safe she felt with Via's family, and how she bought the space helmet for Auggie. Her own primary family is shown to be very cold (her parents are divorced, and her mother is an alcohol addict).

Next up is a scene where the kids go sledding; Summer and August are enjoying themselves, even though August still will not speak with Jack. Jack finds an abandoned sled -he later finds out that his rich schoolmate threw it away. He realizes he does not belong in the group of boys who hang out with Julian. During recess, he asks Summer to tell him why August will not be friends with him anymore. Summer mentions The Bleeding Scream in a whisper. Jack remembers what he said on Halloween and that he saw the mask of The Bleeding Scream in class for a moment. He connects the dots and finally understands why August is hurt. In science class, the teacher hands out science project assignments and tells Jack and August to work together. Julian says he could work with him; Jack resists the idea, so Julian asks him why he would want to cooperate with a freak. Jack attacks him and is suspended from school for two days (even though the principal knows he was defending his friend).

Miranda, now distanced from Via, realizes on performance day that she does not have anyone coming to see her perform. Even though she was supposed to play the main role, she lets Via have it, pretending she does not feel well. Via understands that this is a very unselfish act on Miranda's part, so they become friends again. The scene shows the conclusion of the performance, with Via's effective monologue on the meaning of being; Via performs it as though it was addressed to her mother. After the event, everyone gathers at the Pullmans': August, Via, their mother and father, as well as Justin and Miranda. All six of them are in a good mood, and the scene exudes friendliness, love, and peace.

August and Jack make the best science project -they present a camera obscura. This makes Julian like them even less.

The resolution of the film's story presents the meeting of Julian Albans' family with the principal; the mother is not concerned about the fact that her son had spent the entire school year causing grief to August -she feels that "such children" do not belong in school -and also to Jack. The parents decide there and then that they will enroll their son in a different school. Julian understands what he did was wrong and apologizes to the principal; he would like to remain at the school but his parents do not allow it.

The nature camp is especially important for the developing friendships among the schoolmates. When two older boys attack Jack and August, their schoolmates jump in to help. Trust and an inclusive relationship develop between them.

The last scene of the film shows the end-of-the-school event during which the principal awards August with the Henry Ward Beecher medal. Just before August walks up to the stage, his mother whispers to him that he really is a wonder. Chewbacca is standing on the stage next to the teachers. August's happiness is represented by a character dressed in a spacesuit.

#### 4 Discussion and Conclusion

*Wonder* is a novel and a film about social and family relations that encourages empathy, or, as principal Tushman says in his end-of-the-year speech, the effort to be a bit nicer than is necessary. In *Wonder*, Auggie's teacher Mr. Browne presents a monthly precept, the first (in September) is the thought by Wayne W. Dyer about the choice between "right" and "kind". In her novel, Palacio used famous quotes from Virgil, Confucius, and Pascal, as well as an inscription from an Egyptian tomb, etc. She later presented them in more detail in the novel *365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne's Book of Precepts* (2014).

The comparison of the novel and the film shows some crucial differences in the representation of the story, which stems from the differences between the two mediums, or, as McFarlane (1996) states, that literature is entirely based on the verbal code while film includes verbal, acoustic, and visual codes. Compared with the film, the novel has multiple layers of motifs and themes, even though both versions share the narrative structure of the story and the film version (or transfer) includes the main motifs from the novel. The intermedial relation between the novel and the film does not only mean the work was transferred from one medium to another, but rather concerns the understanding and construction of multimodal messages that appear in each medium. Intermediality is a phenomenon where understanding the work in one art medium is crucial for understanding the work in a different medium (Juvan, 2000; Coats, 2018; Rek, 2019). The film is mostly focused on three themes: accepting diversity, peer violence, and the role of the family (with emphasis on the mother's role, likely because of the casting choices). There are fewer narrators in the film, and they are announced with titles: Auggie, Via, Jack Will, and Miranda. In the

film, Summer and Justin are never narrators, and Charlotte's role is diminished. The inserted narrations of the four narrators are short, followed by the continuation of the story, without a break; the first-person narrator does not quit, but the perspective changes, moving from first-person to general. The novel presents the children's/teenagers' (the narrators') perspective, their feelings and understanding of certain events, while the film does not use the children's/teenagers' perspective as much -the story is much more linear. Music also has a significant impact in the film. The film music was not simply written as an accompaniment to each scene but rather paints emotions in each important event. The songs that were not written for the movie (and are well-known, popular hits), are also important, for example songs by Bruce Springsteen, Jacques Gauthe & The Creole Rice Jazz Band, Rupert Lang/Vancouver Children's Choir, and Bea Miller. The film does not use the songs that appear in the novel.

Vanesa Matajc (2011, p. 26) cites Johansen's (2002) four aspects of intermediality, which can be connected to the chosen novel and film: (1) the physiological aspect - the book belongs to the visual media and the film to the audio-visual media, (2) the physical aspect -both the novel and the film include language, while the film also includes music, space, gestures, symbols, and similar; this is the multimodal system of codes of communication, (3) the technological aspect -the book has written language in it, while the movie uses all the art forms, and (4) the sociological aspect -the novel and the film both emphasize empathy. A large part of intermediality in the book involves quoting or at least referencing bodies of work, such as well-known books, films (or film characters), rock ballads. Juvan (1999, p. 398) warns that "quotes only have communication value if the literary and cultural intertextual code is global or at least partially common to both the author and the readers." Further on are presented several obvious references.

There is a reference to the series of graphic novels, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, written and illustrated by Jeff Kinney (the first instalment was released in the US in 2007). August from *Wonder* is a bit younger than the main character Greg Heffley from the *Wimpy Kid* series. However, Greg too is experiencing something new: he is starting his freshman year of high school and he wants to prove himself; the stories take place in the school environment and represent adolescent troubles in a humorous way. The game called 'the plague' from *Wonder* (the schoolmates must not touch August and have to wash their hands quickly if they accidentally brush against him) is very



similar to the game called 'Cheese Touch': if someone has Cheese Touch, they must not be touched and are stuck with it until they pass it on by touching someone else. The attitude of schoolmates towards Greg Heffley is thus very similar to the attitude of schoolmates towards August. Halloween is also mentioned in the *Wimpy Kid* books, even though it has a much more significant role in the novel *Wonder*. Both novels mention *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), a children's novel written by author L. Frank Baum and illustrated by W.W. Denslow. *Wonder* also includes an intertextual reference to the novel *The Hobbit* (1937), which is a children's fantasy novel by the English author J. R. R. Tolkien, and an intertextual reference to the tale *The Ugly Duckling*, written by Hans Christian Andersen. At art class, the principal asks August why he drew a duckling during a class when they had to draw a self-portrait of themselves as an animal. The principal expected August to answer that he wanted to become a swan one day, but the boy answers that he resembles a duck.

There are references to popular music and the narrator's personalities, as well as references to excerpts from famous texts, which are used as the introductory motto in each chapter of the novel, and texts that are presented in the novel and the film as Mr. Browne's Precepts.

The story also includes references to the film series *Star Wars* by film director George Lucas; the first movie was made in 1977 and quickly became a worldwide pop-culture phenomenon. For the novel *Wonder*, two characters are especially important: Jango Fett (August's favourite character) and Darth Sidious (Julian compares August to him). The film *Wonder* also includes Chewbacca. The film also stresses the importance of references to space flights and astronauts.

Without understanding the intermedial connections, the (young) reader/viewer cannot understand certain parts of the text/film. Coats states:

Intertextuality does not just refer to the practice of making specific allusions to other texts though that is part of its definition. However, it also refers to specific and nonspecific connections between texts and contexts that readers and viewers recognize on both conscious and unconscious levels. In other words, the sites of a text's production, form and audience response are webbed and mutually informing, so that we can never say that we are reading or viewing a straightforward, linearly conceived adaptation of an

original source text, and nor can we analyze it purely on those grounds. (Coats, 2018, p. 222)

Depending on the young readers'/viewers' reception capabilities, it is prudent to take into account their overall development, general knowledge, as well as the literary works and films that they know already, so that they can understand (construct) the multiple layers of the story and its message.

## References

- About the author J. R. Palacio. (n.d.). <https://wonderthebook.com/about>
- Andersen, H. Ch. (2018). *Grdi raček* [The ugly duckling]. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- Bergala, A. (2017). Vzgoja za film: Razprava o poučevanju filma v šolah in drugih okoljih [Education for Film]. Ljubljana: Društvo za širjenje filmske kulture Kino!: Membrana.
- Buchbinder, D. (2011). From 'Wizard' to 'Wicked': Adaptation theory and young adult fiction. In K. Mallan & C. Bradford (Eds.), *Contemporary children's literature and film: Engaging with theory* (pp. 127–146). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chbosky, S. (Director). (2017). *Wonder* [Film]. Lionsgate Films.
- Coats, K. (2018). *The Bloomsbury introduction to children's and young adult literature*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
- Diary of a wimpy kid* by Jeff Kinney (n.d.). Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diary\\_of\\_a\\_Wimpy\\_Kid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diary_of_a_Wimpy_Kid)
- Haramija, D. (2017). Vrednote v sodobni mladinski prozi [Values in contemporary children's prose]. *Otrok in knjiga*, 44(99), 15–28.
- Juvan, M. (1999). Medbesedilnost – figure in vrste [Intertextuality -figures and types]. *Slavistična revija*, 47(4), 393–415. [https://srl.si/ojs/srl/article/view/COBISS\\_ID-12026210](https://srl.si/ojs/srl/article/view/COBISS_ID-12026210).
- Juvan, M. (2000). *Intertekstualnost* [Intertextuality]. Ljubljana: DZS.
- Kinney, J. (2011). *Dnevnik nabritega mulca* [Diary of a wimpy kid]. Ljubljana: Grica.
- Licardo, M. (2016). *Teacher's role in child's introducing into social environment*. Maribor: Faculty of Education.
- Lucas, G. (Director). (1977). *Star wars* [Film]. Lucasfilm Ltd.
- Matajc, V. (2011). Literatura in elektronska komunikacija: intermedialnost sodobnega romana [Literature and electronic communication: The intermediality of the contemporary novel]. *Ars@Humanitas*, 5(1), 25–39.
- McFarlane, B. (1996). *Novel to film: An introduction to the theory of adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Palacio, R. J. (2014). *Wonder*. London: Penguin Random House (Corgie books).
- Rek, M. (2019). Media education in Slovene preschools: A review of focus studies. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 9(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.659>
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Psychology*, 25, 1–65.
- Schwartz, S. H. (2012). An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116>
- Star wars*: The official site. <https://www.starwars.com/>.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. (2000). *Hobit* [The hobbit]. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- Wonder* (Palacio novel). (n.d.). Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wonder\\_\(Palacio\\_novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wonder_(Palacio_novel))
- Wonder Educational Planner* (2019). Retrieved from [https://wonderthebook.com/assets/downloadables/Wonder\\_EduPlanner14\\_WEB.pdf](https://wonderthebook.com/assets/downloadables/Wonder_EduPlanner14_WEB.pdf)
- Zorman, B. (2009). *Senca besede: Filmske priredbe slovenske literature (1948–1979)* [The shadow of the word: Film adaptations of Slovenian literature (1948-1979)]. Koper: Založba Annalee.