

**Inference Instruction  
to Support Reading  
Comprehension  
for Upper-Elementary  
and Middle-Grades Students  
With Learning Disabilities**

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# Introduction

The following lessons are a sample from a set of 24 lessons developed as part of the Reading for Understanding Research Initiative, supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences through Grant R305F100013 to The University of Texas at Austin. The lessons aim to improve upper-elementary and middle-grades students’ inferential comprehension of narrative text.

## Background on Inferences

Reading with comprehension involves building and continuously revising a mental model of the text in memory (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). This mental model looks something like a “network, with nodes that depict individual facts and events, and connections that depict meaningful relations between them” (Rapp, van den Broek, McMaster, Kendeou, & Espin, 2007, p. 292). The connections in this network are what we call **inferences**. A reader makes inferences by establishing appropriate, meaningful connections between separate pieces of information literally stated in the text (i.e., **“text-connecting” inferences**) and between information literally stated in the text and the reader’s background knowledge (i.e., **“knowledge-based” inferences** or “gap-filling” inferences).

Text-connecting inferences include inferences of pronoun referents, inferences of word meanings, and inferences that connect different parts of a text and help students understand how one part of the text recasts or refers back to something said previously.

Knowledge-based inferences enable readers to establish causality, draw conclusions, and infer important relationships. Knowledge-based inferences require students to search their memories and connect knowledge from outside the text with information in the text.

## Importance of Inferences

Students with higher levels of inference skill score higher on reading comprehension tests than students with lower levels of inference skill. This finding is true for elementary readers (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004; Kendeou, Bohn-Gettler, White, & van den Broek, 2008) and adolescent readers (Ahmed et al., 2016; Barth, Barnes, Francis, York, & Vaughn, 2015; Cromley & Azevedo, 2007).

Students with learning disabilities tend to make fewer inferences than their typically developing peers; in fact, they often fail to make inferences altogether when reading (Barnes, Ahmed, Barth, & Francis, 2015; Barth et al., 2015; Denton et al., 2015).

The Common Core State Standards highlight the importance of inferences. For example, the standards expect students to

- “make logical inferences” and “cite specific textual evidence...to support conclusions drawn from the text” (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1);
- “determine central ideas or themes” (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2);
- “analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact” (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3); and
- “assess the ways in which point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text” (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9).

## How the Lessons Were Used in the Study

During the research study, inference lessons were delivered to small groups of sixth- and seventh-grade students who struggled with reading comprehension (i.e., they had below-average scores on a measure of reading comprehension administered at pretest). Lessons were delivered in addition to core English language arts instruction for 40 minutes per day, 2 to 3 times per week, for 24 sessions.

The novel *Wonder* (Palacio, 2012) was used in the study. It has a Lexile level of 790L.

At the beginning of each of the first 10 intervention sessions, students received explicit instruction in generating a specific type of inference. Students were taught to notice gaps and/or lack of coherence in text, identify clue words or phrases, and integrate their background knowledge with information in the text. Graphic organizers helped students through the process of knowledge-based inference generation, making visible the integration of information in text with information in background knowledge (Elbro & Buch-Iversen, 2013).

A tutor modeled generating a particular type of inference while reading a passage from *Wonder* and then engaged students in guided practice using the same passage or a subsequent passage. Finally, the tutor directed students to continue reading *Wonder* independently with a partner or

in a small group. For the first 10 sessions, students read aloud throughout the session; during the remaining 14 sessions, students read at least every other page silently.

Each student's book was prepared with stopping points marked with tabs. Tutors explained how students should stop at each tab and refer to the next inference question. Stopping points were chosen deliberately; they were places where the text lacked coherence or where generating an inference would furnish a more complete understanding. The tutor taught and modeled for students how to discuss and find text evidence in support of potential answers to each inference question before choosing a final answer.

Initially, students received feedback after they answered questions via a scratch-off answer sheet. If a partnership chose and scratched off the correct answer, a star was revealed. If the partnership chose and scratched off an incorrect answer, there was no star and the partnership knew to discuss and select an alternate answer. After the first 10 sessions, students began discussing and writing the answers to open-ended rather than multiple-choice inference questions.

## Results of the Study

Participants who were randomly assigned to this small-group inference instruction scored statistically significantly higher than students who received business-as-usual instruction (the Accelerated Reader program) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension subtest ( $d = 0.60$ ), but no statistically significant differences were found between groups on the more proximal measures of inference skill.

## Materials List

Many of these materials are provided at the end of this lesson packet.

- Document camera
- Iceberg image
- *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
- Graphic Organizer 1
- Graphic Organizer 2
- Graphic Organizer 3
- Blank graphic organizers
- Question sheet
- Scratch-off answer sheets (more information on these answer sheets is available online—for example, see: <https://ctl.yale.edu/UsingIF-ATForms>)
- Index cards

# Lesson 1: Introduction to Inferences

## Preparation

[Display the iceberg image.]

## Teach

In this first lesson, I want to talk about what an **inference** is, and I want to try to persuade you that reading is like looking at an iceberg.

[Point to the iceberg image.]

As you can see, when we look at an iceberg from the vantage point of a boat or a plane, we actually see just a small part of it, just the “tip of the iceberg” that floats above the water. Most of the iceberg is below the water’s surface. It’s amazing how much of it is invisible to the eye!

Reading a book is similar to looking at an iceberg. The words on the page are just the “tip” of the story. If you want to understand the full meaning of the story, you have to look beneath the surface of the words. Often, you have to think hard, dig into your knowledge about people and the world, and make educated guesses about why characters say and do things. These educated guesses based on information in the text and information from the reader’s background knowledge are what we mean when we talk about inferences.

## Model

We make inferences all the time in our everyday lives when we're not reading. Let me give you an example. Today, as I was driving to school, I saw a man running and frantically waving his arms at a bus that was pulling away. When I saw him, I immediately, almost unconsciously, made an inference. I looked at some key clues: his actions (running, frantically waving arms) and what was going on around him (the bus driving away). Then, without even realizing it, I dug into my knowledge and experience with buses and people running and waving their arms to infer that the man must have just barely missed his bus, and he was waving his arms to try to get the attention of the bus driver, hoping that the bus would stop and let him on.

[Project Graphic Organizer 1.]

## Guided Practice

Let's try another example together. You are at a corner and see two cars stopped at an intersection. Picture it. The rear car starts honking its horn. Don't say anything; just think about it. What do you think is going on? What are some clues that you can use? Use your knowledge about the world. What inference can you make about why the car is honking?

Now, turn and talk to your partner and try to make an inference.

[Pause for partners to discuss.]

Does anyone have an answer?

[Accept possible answers.]

Maybe the light turned green and the driver of the first car wasn't paying attention and didn't move, so the driver of the second car started honking. Our inference: The driver of the second car was impatient; that's why he or she was honking.

[Project Graphic Organizer 2.]

We can also try to make an inference about why the car in front didn't go. For example, the driver might have been distracted by a text message or a phone call, or maybe he or she was just daydreaming. However, that's more of a guess than an inference because we don't have a lot of evidence to go by in the scenario that I presented.



## Independent Practice

[Hand out two blank graphic organizers to each student.]

Now it's time to try a couple of examples on your own. After I read an example aloud, first think about potential clues and then put the clues you find into a blank graphic organizer. Remember to use your knowledge about people and the world.

After you've noted some clues, turn and talk to your partner and try to make an inference.

Here's the first example: You are walking down a street. All of a sudden, a dog runs out of an open door with its tail between its legs. Why might the dog be running out of the open door with its tail between its legs?

[Give students time to fill out their graphic organizers and discuss inferences with their partners.]

Here's another example: Your sister comes home from spending the evening with her friends, slams the front door, and runs to her room crying. Why might she be crying?

Again, think about the clues and note them in your graphic organizer before you turn and talk with your partner.

[Give students time to complete the task.]

## Closing

You all did a great job making those inferences. You used your knowledge about people and the world to make a bunch of inferences about why people (or dogs) behaved the way they did; even though none of it was said explicitly, you used clues to figure it out.

It's amazing to see that people who make great inferences in their everyday lives sometimes forget to make inferences while they're reading.

When you read in this class, don't just try to read the words quickly and accurately; instead, focus on creating a deeper understanding of the book. Keep asking yourself what the words mean and how inferring beyond the surface of the words might give you a better sense of who a character is, what he or she might be thinking, or where he or she might be going. That will be important as we read the book *Wonder*.

# Lesson 2: Inferences About Characters

## Preparation

[Write the following on the board: “The nurse said, to Auggie’s mom: ‘Everyone born of God overcometh the world.’ What might she have meant?”]

## Review

In the last lesson, we learned that when we read, the words on the page are only the “tip of the iceberg.”

[Point to the image of the iceberg.]

If we want to really learn about an iceberg—to understand the size and shape of the iceberg—we need to look below the surface of the water. Similarly, if we want to really understand a book that we’re reading, we need to guess what is below the surface of the words on the page.

## Teach

Today, we will read *Wonder*. As we read, keep your brain awake to inferences. You’ll need to combine clues in the text with your knowledge about people and the world to make inferences

about who the characters are, not only what they look like on the outside, but also who they are on the inside.

## Model

Let me start by reading the first paragraph and modeling how I make inferences as I read.

[Read the first paragraph.]

The first inference I need to make is what makes the speaker, Auggie, “not an ordinary 10-year-old kid.” I know that Auggie says that he “feels normal,” but he then says that he feels normal only on the “inside.” So I can infer that he must not feel normal on the outside. I can also use clues in the text, such as “make other ordinary kids run away screaming” and “get stared at,” and think about times when I’ve seen kids stare or when I’ve stared myself. I know it has something to do with the way Auggie looks, and he must look really different—a bit scary, even, if he makes ordinary kids run away screaming.

[Project Graphic Organizer 3.]

## Guided Practice

As we read on, let’s focus on collecting more clues, more evidence that I made a correct inference. Are there any other clues to suggest that what makes Auggie “not ordinary” is something about the way that he looks? As I read aloud, give me a thumbs-up every time you hear a potential clue.

[Read until “I know how to pretend I don’t see the faces people make.” Potential clues: “wish that I had a normal face that no one ever noticed,” “doing that look-away thing,” and “the faces people make.”]

## Independent Practice

[Hand out question sheets, scratch-off sheets, and index cards to each student.]

When you continue reading with your partner today, the first partner will read the rest of the page aloud; then, the second partner will read the next page aloud. You’ll continue alternating pages this way. You’ll stop when you get to a flagged part.

[Show students how to refer to the appropriate question on their question sheets. Show students how the question sheet is organized by chapter. Show students how to match questions with bubbles on their scratch-off sheet.]

Here’s the important thing: Before you look at the answer options, just consider the question on its own. Cover the answer options with an index card, and you and your partner can invent your own answer. I’m more interested in how you think on your own about a question than I am about how you choose the correct answer out of the four options I give you.

[Demonstrate this process using a question sheet and an index card.]

Then, after you discuss answers to questions with your partner, remove the index card and decide on a correct answer from among the options. Then, scratch it off on your answer sheet.

Remember, every time you get to a flagged part in the book, find the relevant question on the question sheet. Read the question, covering the answer options with your index card. Present your evidence, discuss, and make sure you agree with your partner on an answer. Remove the index card and look at the answer options. After discussing with your partner again, decide on the answer, and **then** scratch it off.

## Closing

[Tell students that if they finish answering the questions on their question sheet and have extra time, they should discuss the question on the board with their partner. Then, they should write their answer on their index card as an “exit slip.”]

# Lesson 3: Inferences About Pronoun Referents

## Preparation

[Write the following on the board: "What does Auggie's dad mean when he says that they're sending Auggie off 'like a lamb to the slaughter?']

## Review

Yesterday, we practiced making inferences about characters. We inferred that Auggie doesn't feel "normal" on the outside, which refers to his appearance.

## Teach

Today, I will focus on a different kind of inference—inferences about pronouns. Pronouns, as you know, are words like *he*, *she*, *them*, *this*, and *that*. Pronouns refer to another word. For example, *she* might refer to [name of a student in the class].

When we read, we have to connect each pronoun with the word it refers to. It's easy to turn your brain off and keep reading right past pronouns without even thinking about them. They're such small, seemingly unimportant words, after all! But sometimes, they're really important.

## Model

Let me show you an example. In the third paragraph, Auggie’s mom whispers to Auggie’s dad, “We can’t just pretend he’s going to wake up tomorrow and **this** isn’t going to be his reality, because it is, Nate, and we have to help him learn to deal with it.”

What does the word *this* refer to? First, let me reread.

[Reread the sentence.]

So *this* refers to Auggie’s reality, something that he’ll definitely wake up with tomorrow. I guess it is the way he looks, his face. Let me substitute “the way he looks” for “this”: “We can’t just pretend he’s going to wake up tomorrow and **the way he looks** isn’t going to be his reality, because it is...”

OK, I think that works.

## Guided Practice

Let’s try another one.

[Read the last sentence of the third paragraph and the next phrase, which ends with “slaughter.”]

To whom does *him* refer in this sentence? Whom is Auggie’s dad talking about?

[Call on raised hands. Then ask students what clues they used to make the inference. The biggest potential clue is “sending him off to middle school.” Who is being sent to middle school?]

## Independent Practice

Finish reading the rest of that sentence with your partner.

[Wait for students to finish reading.]

There are two references to *he* in the sentence. Turn and talk to your partner: Who is the first *he*? Who is the second *he*?

[Pause for students to discuss.]

Great job connecting pronouns with the people or things they refer to. You’ll continue reading with your partners today. Remember, the first partner will read the rest of the page aloud; then, the second partner will read the next page aloud. You’ll continue alternating pages this way.

[Hand out question sheets, scratch-off sheets, and index cards to each student. It may be necessary to remind students how to read the question with the answers covered up with an index card, discuss answers with their partners, present evidence and clues, etc.]

## Closing

[Tell students that if they finish answering the questions on their question sheet and have extra time, they should discuss the question on the board with their partner. Then, they should write answers on their index card as an exit slip.]

# Lesson 4: Inferences About Word Meanings

## Preparation

[Write the following questions on the board: “Based on clues in these three chapters, what are you learning about Julian’s personality? How about Charlotte’s personality? How about Jack’s personality?”]

## Review

Yesterday, we practiced connecting pronouns—those little words like *he*, *them*, *this*, and *that*—to the people or things they refer to.

## Teach

Today, we will practice using context clues to make inferences about word meanings.

## Model

Turn to page 15 in your book and read along with me.

[Read the sentence starting, “Hi, I mumbled...”]



I will show you how I might use context clues to figure out the meaning of the word *mumble*.

Well, from this sentence alone, I can tell that *mumble* has to do with the way he says “Hi”—maybe he said it loudly or softly or happily or with sadness. I’ll read on to look for more clues.

[Read to the end of the page and then the first sentence of the next page.]

Oh, I can see that Mr. Tushman can’t understand Auggie. Maybe he’s not pronouncing his words clearly. Also, Auggie’s mom asks him to “speak up.” That must mean that Auggie is speaking quietly, too. So that’s my best inference for the meaning of *mumble*: to speak quietly and indistinctly, so that it’s hard to hear.

To make sure that the meaning I inferred is correct, let me substitute “spoke quietly and indistinctly” for “mumbled.” Does it work? “Hi,” I spoke, quietly and indistinctly, dropping my hand into his hand while I looked down at his feet.”

It works!

## Guided Practice

[Note: This example references a lesson not included in this sample packet.]

Turn to page 6.

Remember how you figured out that the word *anomalies* at the end of the second paragraph meant “unusual things”? Turn and talk to your partner to answer these questions: What did you do to infer the meaning of the word *anomalies*? Did you look backward or look forward in the text? What clues did you find?

[After students have time to think and discuss, come together and discuss the clues as a whole group.]

## Independent Practice

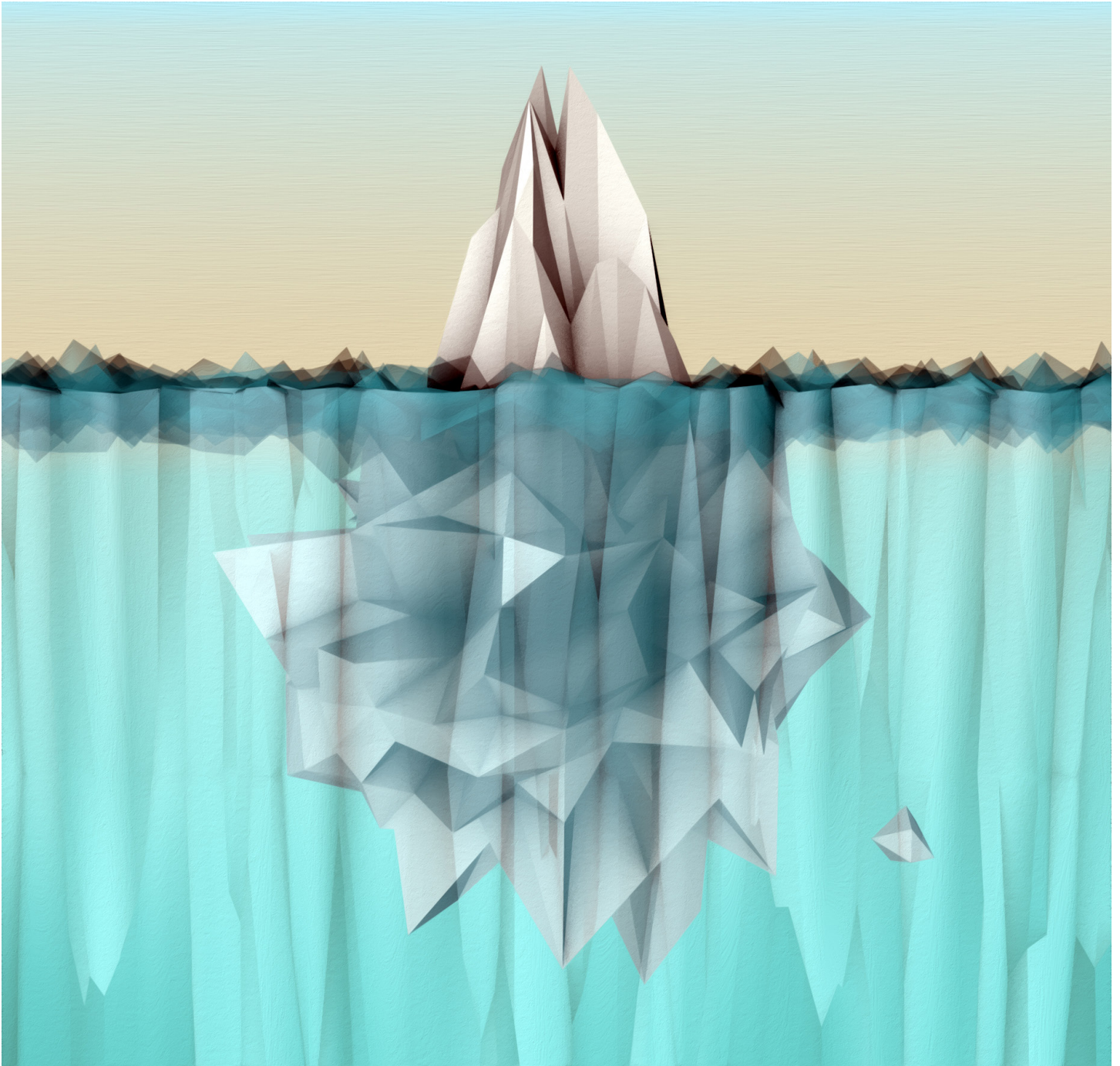
Great job inferring word meanings based on clues in the text. For the rest of today, you will read the chapters “Jack Will, Julian, and Charlotte”; “The Grand Tour”; and “The Performance Space.” Continue reading aloud with your partner, alternating pages. Stop when you get to a highlighted part.

[Hand out question sheets, scratch-off sheets, and index cards to each student. It might be necessary to emphasize using an index card to cover answer choices while discussing evidence and coming up with an answer.]

## Closing

[Tell students that if they finish answering the questions on their question sheet and have extra time, they should discuss the questions on the board with their partners. Then, they should write their answers on an index card as an exit slip.]

# Iceberg Image



*Iceberg Painting 2* by Phillippe Put. Licensed under Creative Commons CC-BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>).

# Graphic Organizer 1

## Information From the Text

- A man is running, frantically waving his arms at a bus.
- The bus is driving away.

## Information From the Reader

- People usually wave their arms frantically when they're upset or want to get someone's attention.
- People usually get upset when they miss a bus.



The man wanted to get the bus driver's attention. He didn't want to miss that bus!

# Graphic Organizer 2

## Information From the Text

- Two cars are stopped at an intersection.
- The rear car is honking.

## Information From the Reader

- Cars stop at intersections because traffic lights tell them to stop.
- Drivers honk car horns because they're annoyed or want to get another driver to pay attention.
- Drivers get annoyed when other drivers don't immediately go when the light turns green.



The car in the rear is probably honking because the light turned green and the car in front didn't go.

# Graphic Organizer 3

## Information From the Text

- Auggie "makes other ordinary kids run away screaming."
- People stare at him.

## Information From the Reader

- People run away screaming when they're scared.
- People usually stare when someone looks funny or different.

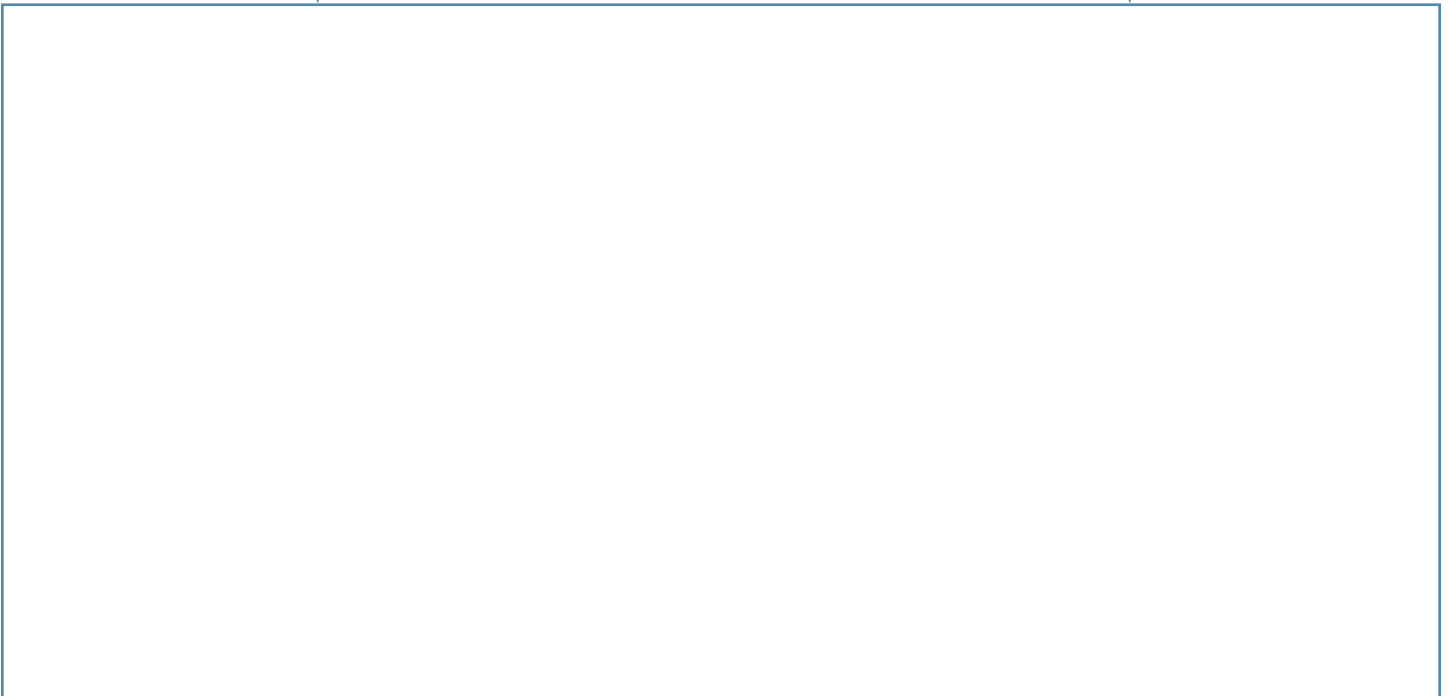
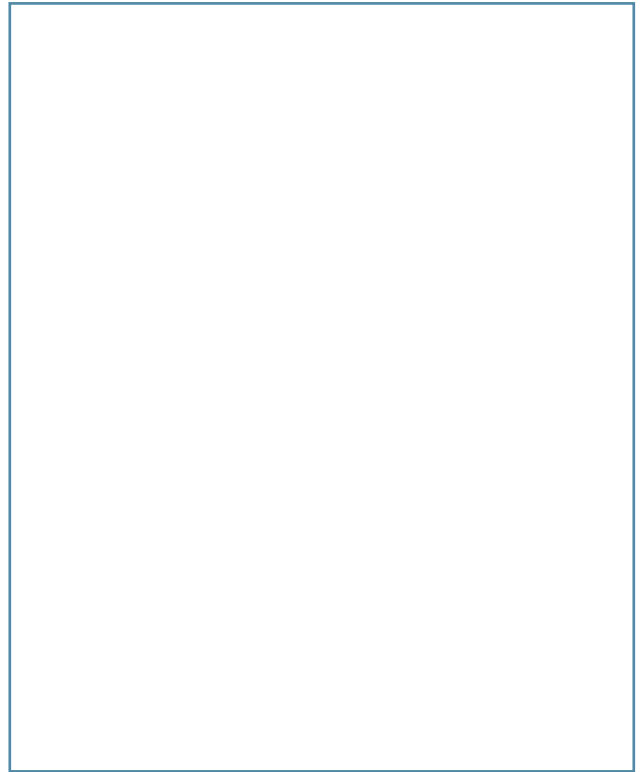
Auggie must look different. He must look almost frightening.

# Blank Graphic Organizer

Information From the Text



Information From the Reader



# Question Sheet

## PART I: AUGUST

### Chapter 1. Ordinary

1. What can you infer about Via's personality, based on clues in the text? (p. 3)

She is:

- a. Kind and careful
  - b. Shy
  - c. Creative
  - d. Fiercely loyal
2. Who is Via, probably? (p. 3)
- a. August's mom
  - b. August's friend
  - c. August's sister
  - d. August's teacher

### Chapter 2. Why I Didn't Go to School

3. Auggie explains: "Next week I start fifth grade. Since I've never been to a real school before, I'm pretty much totally and completely petrified." (p. 4)

What does the word *petrified* probably mean?

- a. Thrilled
  - b. Terrified
  - c. Worried
  - d. Angry
4. "That's why my parents decided it was better I didn't go to school." (p. 4)
- What does *that* refer to?
- a. I'm little for my age.
  - b. I have some medical mysteries that doctors never really figured out.
  - c. I've had two or three surgeries every year and I used to get sick a lot.
  - d. Mom used to be a children's book illustrator and she home schools me.

### Chapter 3. How I Came to Life

5. What might the word *anomalies* mean? (p. 6)

- a. Miracles
- b. Unusual things
- c. Typical results
- d. Questions

6. What clue helps us infer that the doctors and nurses were surprised by Auggie's appearance when he was born? (pp. 6-7)
- The whole room got very quiet.
  - The nurse rushed Auggie out of the room.
  - The doctor fainted.
  - All of the above.

## Chapter 4. Christopher's House

7. Why do you think Auggie feels like crying? (p. 8)
- He doesn't like the idea of school.
  - He doesn't want his mother and father to argue.
  - He isn't having a good time at Christopher's house.
  - He's worried his parents chose a school he doesn't like.
8. Why do you think Auggie makes his voice sound "babyish"? (p. 9)
- He thinks sounding babyish will make his mom take pity on him.
  - He thinks sounding babyish will make his mom angry.
  - He thinks sounding babyish will make Christopher pay attention to him.
  - He thinks sounding babyish will make everyone laugh.

## Chapter 5. Driving

9. Infer the ending to Auggie's mom's sentence: "We can't just keep avoiding situations that..." (p. 10)
- ...make Auggie vulnerable to potential teasing or slights.
  - ...protect Auggie forever.
  - ...prevent Auggie from being bullied.
  - ...make Auggie angry and confused.
10. Auggie asks, "Did you tell him anything else?" (p. 11)
- What, in particular, do you think Auggie wonders about?
- Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman about the way Auggie's face looks?
  - Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman that Auggie didn't want to go to school?
  - Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman that Auggie's family wasn't very wealthy?
  - Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman that Auggie's sister was Via?
11. "We showed him pictures of the whole family. And that great shot of you holding that flounder on the boat!" (p. 11)
- A flounder is probably a:
- Fish
  - Pencil
  - Paintbrush
  - Calculator



12. "We showed him pictures of the whole family. And that great shot of you holding that flounder on the boat!" (p. 11)

To whom does *him* refer?

- a. The school principal
- b. Christopher
- c. Auggie's dad
- d. Auggie

13. "Last year? ... So you've been thinking about this for a whole year and you didn't tell me?" Auggie asks his parents. (p. 11)

How do you think Auggie feels?

- a. Angry, betrayed
- b. Relieved
- c. Surprised, unsure
- d. Happy

14. "Last year? ... So you've been thinking about this for a whole year and you didn't tell me?" (p. 11)

What does *this* refer to?

- a. The idea of sending Auggie to middle school
- b. The idea of visiting Christopher
- c. The way Auggie's face looks
- d. The trip to Montauk

15. Why do you think Auggie's mom looks guilty after Auggie asks her about the woman who came to this house? (p. 11)

- a. She feels she should have told Auggie who the lady was.
- b. She feels she shouldn't have argued with Auggie's father.
- c. She feels she shouldn't have brought up the school idea.
- d. She feels badly about Auggie's face.

## Chapter 6. Paging Mr. Tushman

16. "Hi, I mumbled, dropping my hand into his hand while I looked down at his feet." (p. 15)

What does Auggie's mumbling and looking down at people's feet (instead of into their eyes) tell you about him as a person?

- a. He's shy.
- b. He doesn't want people to notice him.
- c. He wishes he were invisible.
- d. All of the above

17. What does the word *mumbled* in the passage above probably mean? (p. 15)
- a. Fumbled
  - b. Spoke quietly and not very clearly
  - c. Yelled at the top of his lungs
  - d. Cried out

### Chapter 7. Nice Mrs. Garcia

18. Why do you think Mrs. Garcia’s smile was so “shiny”? (p. 17)
- a. She was uncomfortable and pitied Auggie but didn’t want to show it.
  - b. She was a very happy person.
  - c. It was her first day back at work and she wanted to do her best.
  - d. She was young and beautiful.

### Chapter 8. Jack Will, Julian, and Charlotte

19. Auggie notices that when Jack, Julian, and Charlotte walk into Mr. Tushman’s office, “none of them looked over at me or at mom: they looked straight at Mr. Tushman like their lives depended on it.” (p. 21)

Why do you think they didn’t look at Auggie and his mom and looked only at Mr. Tushman?

- a. They were afraid to see Auggie’s face.
- b. They were angry at Mr. Tushman.
- c. They thought Mr. Tushman was angry at them.
- d. They were angry about having to be there.

20. What might be a different reason why the kids didn’t look at Auggie and his mom and looked only at Mr. Tushman?

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21. When Auggie leaves with Jack, Julian, and Charlotte, Auggie’s mom says “See you soon,” and her voice sounds a little higher than normal. (p. 23)

Why do you think her voice sounds higher than normal?

- a. She is nervous but wants to sound cheerful instead.
- b. She is surprised that Auggie would go off on his own with children he has just met.
- c. She is excited that Auggie is going off and might make new friends.
- d. She is worried that Auggie will not come back.

## Chapter 9. The Grand Tour

22. Julian smirked when Auggie asked what a homeroom was. (p. 25)

What is your best guess for the meaning of *smirked* based on clues in the text?

- a. Smiled in an irritatingly conceited, know-it-all way
- b. Made a quizzical expression, as in disbelief
- c. Shrugged
- d. Frowned concernedly

## Chapter 10. The Performance Space

23. Charlotte tells Julian, "You're being so obnoxious!" (p. 28)

What is your best guess for the meaning of *obnoxious* based on clues in the text?

- a. Extremely unpleasant
- b. Extremely aggressive
- c. Intelligent
- d. Boring

24. "Julian's a jerk," Jack whispers to Auggie. "But dude, you're gonna have to talk." (p. 30)

Try to make an inference. What kind of a person is Jack? Will he be a friend or an enemy to Auggie?

- a. Friend
- b. Enemy
- c. A little of both
- d. Neither

## Chapter 11. The Deal

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What do the first sentences Summer speaks to Auggie tell you about who she is as a person?

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36. Auggie infers that Summer has switched tables; she used to be at the table with the whispering, staring girls, but she switched to his table. (p. 51)

Why do you think she chose to switch tables?

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37. By the end of the chapter, what else can you infer about Summer’s personality? What clues did you use? (p. 53)

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### Chapter 20. One to Ten

38. Why do you think that Auggie was mad at his mom? (p. 55)

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### Chapter 21. Padawan

39. Why do you think that Via would be angry that Auggie cut off his Padawan braid? (p. 57)

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40. Why do you think that Auggie starts to cry as his mother reads to him? (p. 59)

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## Chapter 22. Wake Me Up When September Ends

No questions

## Chapter 23. Jack Will

41. Do you think that Auggie felt closer to or farther away from Jack after their laughing conversation? Why? (pp. 63-64)

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## Chapter 24. Mr. Browne's October Precept

No questions

## Chapter 25. Apples

42. How do you think Auggie felt when he learned that only five or so people said they could come to his birthday party? Why? (p. 67)

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## Chapter 26. Halloween

43. Auggie says to Summer, "I thought you didn't care what those girls think." (p. 69)  
Do you think that Summer cares what Savanna and her group think? Why?

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44. Are you gathering any more evidence about Summer's personality and/or Auggie's personality? What evidence can you add to your list?

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## Chapter 27. School Pictures

45. What does the word *aversion* probably mean? (p. 70)

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## Chapter 28. The Cheese Touch

46. Do you think Tristan's really afraid of Auggie touching him? What's your evidence? (p. 72)

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## Chapter 29. Costumes

47. Auggie's favorite holiday is Halloween. Why? (p. 73)

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48. Auggie says that Via's always been "so calm and cool" and that she's had a couple of "fits." (p. 74)  
What do you think her fits are probably about?

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## Chapter 30. The Bleeding Scream

49. What do you think about Julian's decision to wear the Darth Sidious costume? Does it connect with anything else in the book? (p. 76)

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50. How do you think that Auggie feels at the end of page 78?

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## Chapter 31. Names

No questions

# PART II: VIA

## Chapter 1. A Tour of the Galaxy

51. What does Via mean when she says that she's a planet orbiting Auggie's sun? And how does she feel about it? (p. 82)

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## Chapter 2. Before August

No questions

## Chapter 3. Seeing August

52. Why do you think that Grans told Via that she "loved her more than anyone else in the world," even though grandmothers aren't supposed to have favorites? (p. 87)

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## Chapter 4. August Through the Peephole

53. Via says, "We circle around [Auggie] like the baby he used to be ... But he needs to grow up now. We need to let him, help him, make him grow up. Here's what I think: we've spent so much time trying to make August think he's normal that he actually thinks he is normal. And the problem is, he's not." (p. 90)

Do you agree with Via? Why or why not?

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## Chapter 5. High School

54. Via says, "The best thing about high school is that hardly anybody knows me at all." (p. 91)

What does she mean? Why might that be the best thing about high school for Via?

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## Chapter 6. Major Tom

55. Why does Via say that she felt a lump in her throat throughout lunch? Why did her voice quiver as she said, "See you later" when the bell rang? (p. 94)

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56. Why do you think that Via yelled the response to her mother's question about homework on the first day of school? (p. 96)

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## Chapter 7. The Padawan Bites the Dust

57. Do you understand better why Via was upset when Auggie cut off his braid? Try to explain why she was upset. (p. 97)

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58. Via's mom asks Via, "So you want to tell me what's up?" (p. 97)

What is up with Via? What can you infer?

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## Chapter 8. An Apparition at the Door

59. Why do you think Auggie's mom was standing outside Auggie's door? (p. 99)

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## Chapter 9. Breakfast

60. What does the word *palate* probably mean? (p. 101)

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61. What does the word *indifferently* probably mean? (p. 101)

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62. What does the word *sternly* probably mean? (p. 102)

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63. What does the word *exasperated* probably mean? (p. 102)

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# Question Sheet Answer Key

## PART I: AUGUST

### Chapter 1. Ordinary

1. What can you infer about Via's personality, based on clues in the text? (p. 3)

She is:

- a. Kind and careful
- b. Shy
- c. Creative
- d. **Fiercely loyal**

2. Who is Via, probably? (p. 3)

- a. August's mom
- b. August's friend
- c. **August's sister**
- d. August's teacher

### Chapter 2. Why I Didn't Go to School

3. Auggie explains: "Next week I start fifth grade. Since I've never been to a real school before, I'm pretty much totally and completely petrified." (p. 4)

What does the word *petrified* probably mean?

- a. Thrilled
- b. **Terrified**
- c. Worried
- d. Angry

4. "That's why my parents decided it was better I didn't go to school." (p. 4)

What does *that* refer to?

- a. I'm little for my age.
- b. I have some medical mysteries that doctors never really figured out.
- c. **I've had two or three surgeries every year and I used to get sick a lot.**
- d. Mom used to be a children's book illustrator and she home schools me.

### Chapter 3. How I Came to Life

5. What might the word *anomalies* mean? (p. 6)

- a. Miracles
- b. **Unusual things**
- c. Typical results
- d. Questions

6. What clue helps us infer that the doctors and nurses were surprised by Auggie’s appearance when he was born? (pp. 6-7)
- The whole room got very quiet.
  - The nurse rushed Auggie out of the room.
  - The doctor fainted.
  - All of the above.

## Chapter 4. Christopher’s House

7. Why do you think Auggie feels like crying? (p. 8)
- He doesn’t like the idea of school.
  - He doesn’t want his mother and father to argue.
  - He isn’t having a good time at Christopher’s house.
  - He’s worried his parents chose a school he doesn’t like.
8. Why do you think Auggie makes his voice sound “babyish”? (p. 9)
- He thinks sounding babyish will make his mom take pity on him.
  - He thinks sounding babyish will make his mom angry.
  - He thinks sounding babyish will make Christopher pay attention to him.
  - He thinks sounding babyish will make everyone laugh.

## Chapter 5. Driving

9. Infer the ending to Auggie’s mom’s sentence: “We can’t just keep avoiding situations that...” (p. 10)
- ...make Auggie vulnerable to potential teasing or slights.
  - ...protect Auggie forever.
  - ...prevent Auggie from being bullied.
  - ...make Auggie angry and confused.
10. Auggie asks, “Did you tell him anything else?” (p. 11)
- What, in particular, do you think Auggie wonders about?
- Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman about the way Auggie’s face looks?
  - Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman that Auggie didn’t want to go to school?
  - Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman that Auggie’s family wasn’t very wealthy?
  - Did his mom tell Mr. Tushman that Auggie’s sister was Via?
11. “We showed him pictures of the whole family. And that great shot of you holding that flounder on the boat!” (p. 11)
- A flounder is probably a:
- Fish
  - Pencil
  - Paintbrush
  - Calculator

12. "We showed him pictures of the whole family. And that great shot of you holding that flounder on the boat!" (p. 11)

To whom does *him* refer?

- a. The school principal
- b. Christopher
- c. Auggie's dad
- d. Auggie

13. "Last year? ... So you've been thinking about this for a whole year and you didn't tell me?" Auggie asks his parents. (p. 11)

How do you think Auggie feels?

- a. Angry, betrayed
- b. Relieved
- c. Surprised, unsure
- d. Happy

14. "Last year? ... So you've been thinking about this for a whole year and you didn't tell me?" (p. 11)

What does *this* refer to?

- a. The idea of sending Auggie to middle school
- b. The idea of visiting Christopher
- c. The way Auggie's face looks
- d. The trip to Montauk

15. Why do you think Auggie's mom looks guilty after Auggie asks her about the woman who came to this house? (p. 11)

- a. She feels she should have told Auggie who the lady was.
- b. She feels she shouldn't have argued with Auggie's father.
- c. She feels she shouldn't have brought up the school idea.
- d. She feels badly about Auggie's face.

## Chapter 6. Paging Mr. Tushman

16. "Hi, I mumbled, dropping my hand into his hand while I looked down at his feet." (p. 15)

What does Auggie's mumbling and looking down at people's feet (instead of into their eyes) tell you about him as a person?

- a. He's shy.
- b. He doesn't want people to notice him.
- c. He wishes he were invisible.
- d. All of the above

17. What does the word *mumbled* in the passage above probably mean? (p. 15)
- a. Fumbled
  - b. Spoke quietly and not very clearly
  - c. Yelled at the top of his lungs
  - d. Cried out

### Chapter 7. Nice Mrs. Garcia

18. Why do you think Mrs. Garcia’s smile was so “shiny”? (p. 17)
- a. She was uncomfortable and pitied Auggie but didn’t want to show it.
  - b. She was a very happy person.
  - c. It was her first day back at work and she wanted to do her best.
  - d. She was young and beautiful.

### Chapter 8. Jack Will, Julian, and Charlotte

19. Auggie notices that when Jack, Julian, and Charlotte walk into Mr. Tushman’s office, “none of them looked over at me or at mom: they looked straight at Mr. Tushman like their lives depended on it.” (p. 21)

Why do you think they didn’t look at Auggie and his mom and looked only at Mr. Tushman?

- a. They were afraid to see Auggie’s face.
- b. They were angry at Mr. Tushman.
- c. They thought Mr. Tushman was angry at them.
- d. They were angry about having to be there.

20. What might be a different reason why the kids didn’t look at Auggie and his mom and looked only at Mr. Tushman?

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21. When Auggie leaves with Jack, Julian, and Charlotte, Auggie’s mom says “See you soon,” and her voice sounds a little higher than normal. (p. 23)

Why do you think her voice sounds higher than normal?

- a. She is nervous but wants to sound cheerful instead.
- b. She is surprised that Auggie would go off on his own with children he has just met.
- c. She is excited that Auggie is going off and might make new friends.
- d. She is worried that Auggie will not come back.

## Chapter 9. The Grand Tour

22. Julian smirked when Auggie asked what a homeroom was. (p. 25)

What is your best guess for the meaning of *smirked* based on clues in the text?

- a. Smiled in an irritatingly conceited, know-it-all way
- b. Made a quizzical expression, as in disbelief
- c. Shrugged
- d. Frowned concernedly

## Chapter 10. The Performance Space

23. Charlotte tells Julian, "You're being so obnoxious!" (p. 28)

What is your best guess for the meaning of *obnoxious* based on clues in the text?

- a. Extremely unpleasant
- b. Extremely aggressive
- c. Intelligent
- d. Boring

24. "Julian's a jerk," Jack whispers to Auggie. "But dude, you're gonna have to talk." (p. 30)

Try to make an inference. What kind of a person is Jack? Will he be a friend or an enemy to Auggie?

- a. Friend
- b. Enemy
- c. A little of both
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