Wonder: Discussion Questions:

* What do you think of the line ‘Don’t judge a boy by his face’ which appears on the back cover of the book?
* Did this affect how much you wanted to read the story?
* How much did this line give away about the story you were about to read?
* Throughout *Wonder*, Auggie describes the way that many people react to seeing his face for the first time: by immediately looking away. Have you ever been in a situation where you have responded like this to seeing someone different? Having now read Wonder, how do you feel about this now?
* Auggie’s face is not fully described until quite far on in the story, in Via’s chapter ‘August: Through the Peephole’. How close was this description to your own mental picture of Auggie? Did you have a picture of his face in your mind while reading the book? Did this description alter that picture?
* How would you describe Auggie as a person in the first few chapters of the book? What about the final few chapters? Has he changed significantly? Are there any experiences or episodes during the story that you think had a particular effect on him? If so, how?
* In the chapter ‘Costumes’ Auggie describes the astronaut helmet that he wore constantly as a younger child. We later learn that Miranda was the one to give Auggie the helmet, and is proud of the gift, but that it was Auggie’s father who threw it away. What do you think the helmet signifies to each of these characters and why do you think they all view it so differently?
* Star Wars is one of Auggie’s passions. Why do you think this is?
* Do you see any reasons for Auggie to identify with these characters, or to aspire to be like them?
* What did you think of Via as a character? Did you empathise with her?
* Why do you think Via was so angry to learn that Auggie cut off his Padawan braid?
* Do you think Via’s own attitude towards her brother changes throughout the story?
* Look at the emails between Mr Tushman, Julian’s parents and Jack’s parents in the chapter ‘Letters, Emails, Facebook, Texts’. Up to this point in the story we have seen how the children at Auggie’s school have reacted to him. Is Mrs Albans’ attitude towards Auggie different?
* What do you make of her statement that Auggie is handicapped?
* Do you think she is correct in saying that asking ‘ordinary’ children, such as Julian, to befriend Auggie places a burden on them?
* The author has explained that she was inspired to write *Wonder* after an experience at a local ice cream parlour, very similar to the scene described in the chapter ‘Carvel’, where Jack sees Auggie for the first time. In this scene, Jack’s babysitter Veronica chooses to get up and quickly walk Jack and his little brother Jamie away from Auggie, rather than risk Jamie saying something rude or hurtful. What do you think you would have done, if put in that position?

The Juvie Three: Discussion Questions

1. Was Arjay’s sentence fair?
2. Terence has difficulty reading and writing. Could this be a learning difference (aka learning disability)?
3. “Welcome to the new normal” is a phrase used by Arjay in chapter sixteen. How does that describe their situation and his attitude?
4. Terence talks about “dogs” and “crew” and how important they are. What does he mean by this, and how does it relate to the story? Does his view change over time?
5. How would you describe the main characters? Have their experiences brought about changes?
6. What impact did family have on each of the boys’ lives? Were there any positive role models?
7. What were the community service projects the boys were involved in? What types of programs exist in your community? Is there a volunteer project that could benefit your community? Describe a volunteer experience you had, or one that would appeal to you.
8. The genre of this story is realistic fiction. What was realistic about the story? Was any aspect unrealistic?
9. Terence responds to some situations with humor. Provide two examples.
10. What song does Arjay play over and over while in prison? What instrument does he play, and why do you think this song appeals to him?
11. How did social class and stereotypes impact Gecko’s relationships with Roxanne and Diego? Describe a situation where first impressions were true or false.
12. Arjay and Diego were bullied at school. What could someone in their situation do to make it stop? If you witness bullying, what are some steps you could take to prevent the bullying? Is bullying a problem for students at your school? Do you feel you can seek help from someone in the school?
13. Did Gecko’s and Terence’sviews of their crimes change, and if so, how?
14. Was Mr. Healy’s program successful in its goal of rehabilitation?
15. Would the story be different if the main characters were girls? Why or why not?
16. Were you satisfied with the ending? Would you read a sequel?
17. During a science lab, Gecko offers to go for mothballs. What is the scientific term for this item?
18. In group therapy, the boys were with three other teens. What were their offenses? Do you think their punishment fit their crimes?
19. A major theme in the book is second chances. Do the boys deserve a second chance?
20. Are gangs a problem in your school or community? Do gangs, crime and violence go hand in hand?

One Crazy Summer: Discussion Questions

* Delphine has to stand up to Cecile and finds it to be very hard to do so, what is something that you have had to do in life that was hard to do?
* What does “crazy” mean to you? Is Cecile really crazy in your opinion?
* How do you think life will be different for Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern when they return to Brooklyn?
* According to the author, what is the difference between mommy and mother?
* Why do you think Pa decided to send his 3 daughters to their mother and her environment? He must have known about the dangers in Oakland, CA.
* Why do think Fern stood up to Cecile about insisting that she call her by by her name?
* Refer to page 137, what does it mean to eat crow?
* Refer to pages 121-125, when Delphine thinks about the time that the girls drove with their father to Alabama and the police came to car when they were sleeping at the side of the rode, why do you think Pa didn’t tell Big Ma about it?
* How would you describe Delphine’s relationship with her sisters? How is it like your relationship with your sibling(s) or like the relationships of siblings you know? How is it different? What does Delphine mean when she says she enjoys her role as Vonetta and Fern’s “enemy and big sister”?
* What does Delphine expect from Cecile? Do her expectations differ from Vonetta’s and Fern’s expectations? Why? What word or words would you use to describe Cecile?
* What does Delphine decide about Oakland on her first night there? If you were in her place, would you have come to a similar conclusion? Have you ever felt similarly about a place you’ve visited? Did you discover anything that changed your mind?
* Are Cecile and Delphine at all alike? How? How are they different? What does Cecile mean when she tells Delphine that it wouldn’t kill her to be selfish (p. 110)?
* What elements in the story give you clues about the characters’ personalities? Some of the characters have objects that are closely associated with them, like Delphine and her Timex, Cecile and her printing press, and Hirohito and his go-kart. What do these objects say about the characters? Can you find more examples of characters with close associations to objects in the story?
* Are the Black Panthers Delphine observes at breakfast her first few mornings in Oakland like she expected them to be? How do Sister Mukumbu and Sister Pat differ from Delphine’s expectations? What do you think she means when she says that “beating eggs never makes the evening news” (p. 64)?
* What kind of image does Crazy Kelvin project? Is it possible to judge the whole Black Panther group based on Crazy Kelvin’s actions? Do you think groups can be distinguished negatively or positively by the actions of individual members?
* What does the stool in the kitchen mean to Delphine? Does her relationship with Cecile change the evening the stool appears? How?
* How does Delphine feel about the messages of the Black Panthers? Why does she want to stop taking her sisters to the People’s Center and skip the rally? Do her beliefs about the Black Panthers and their messages change throughout the story? How would you have felt in her place?

Mexican Whiteboy: Discussion Questions

* After reading the first two pages, what can you infer about Danny’s self-image—how he feels about himself? Think about how he reacts when he meets Sofia’s friends, how he describes his body, and the things he says about his skin color. (p. 1-2)
* Danny is largely silent throughout most of the book. Why do you think that is?
* Danny digs his nails into the underside of his forearms until they bleed. Why does he do this? In what ways is this not considered “typical” behavior for a teen boy? How is self-mutilation often portrayed (by authors, the media, etc)?
* Why do you think Danny’s father (and family) does not want Danny to know he is in jail? What does this lie cost Danny emotionally?
* Danny & Uno are unlikely friends. How are Danny and Uno alike? What makes their friendship work?
* Why does Danny dig into his skin with his fingernails? How does the pain make him feel real? How do Danny’s mom and uncles react when they realize what he is doing? How could they have helped him?
* Danny feels too brown to be a part of the baseball team at his private school and too white to be a member of his Mexican father’s family and community. What could Danny do to fit in at both places? Why does he let the color of his skin prevent him from being a member of either community? How would Danny’s life have been different if he had been raised in National City?
* How does Danny react to the news that his mother is moving to San Francisco with a white man? Why does he feel that his mother is dishonoring his father? What plans does Danny make as a result of his mother’s decision?
* When Uno’s brother, Manny, is hurt by Danny’s broken bat, why does Uno attack Danny? Is Uno’s attack justified? Why or why not? Who is hurt the most —Danny, Manny, or Uno? Why?
* Danny’s ability to play baseball is remarkable by any standard. What pushes him to practice hours a day, striving to be the best he can be? Why does he choke on the pitching mound? Why is it so important for him to show the team at his private school how good he is?
* The showdown between Uno and Uncle Ray is an important event in establishing Danny’s reputation. What is at stake? What does Danny gain from the exchange? What, if anything, does Uno lose? How does the showdown shift the balance of power among all of the guys?
* The relationship between fathers and sons is examined through Uno and his father and Danny and his father. How are the boys’ relationships with their fathers different? How are they the same? Does either Uno or Danny come to accept the relationships with their fathers? In what ways do they accept or reject their fathers?
* After Danny witnesses Uncle Ray murder a man in the streets, Danny is stunned and overwhelmed at the rage his uncle displayed. How does this help give him an understanding of his father’s character?
* When Danny learns the truth about his father, what is his initial reaction? How does Danny overcome the fear that he will one day be like his father and his uncles?
* Sophia asks Uno, “We all start out believing we can do anything. But at some point we lose it. Why is that?” (p. 212) This is true for all of the characters in the book and many people in real life. What happens in life that causes people to lose sight of their dreams?