Film review: Understanding and Evaluating Films

Wonder is a 2017 American family drama directed by Stephen Chbosky and based on the bestselling novel by R. J. Palacio. Starring Jacob Tremblay, Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson, the film follows a young boy with facial differences as he faces the challenges of attending school for the first time. Exploring themes of friendship, bullying, acceptance and self-confidence, Wonder delivers a heart-warming message about kindness, empathy and the importance of looking beyond appearances.

1. Complete the film review with the missing phrases (1-12) from the box.

Wonder – Film Review

A. *Have you ever wondered what it feels like to be judged simply because you look different? This question lies at the heart of Wonder, a heart-warming American drama directed by Stephen Chbosky and released in 2017.* [1] _____ *, the film explores the challenges of growing up, dealing with prejudice and finding the courage to be yourself. Although its central message about kindness may seem straightforward, the film presents it through an emotional and thought-provoking story that* [2] _____*.*

B. *Set in modern-day New York, the film follows August Pullman, known as Auggie, a ten-year-old boy born with facial differences who has undergone numerous surgeries.* [3] _____ *, he faces a major challenge when his parents decide to enrol him in a mainstream school. Although Auggie is intelligent, curious and passionate about science, his appearance attracts unwanted attention,* [4] _____*. As he experiences bullying, forms unexpected friendships and gradually gains confidence, the film explores the importance of acceptance, courage and looking beyond physical appearances. What I found particularly interesting was that the story is told from several characters' perspectives, allowing the audience* [5] _____*. While some developments are fairly predictable, the storyline remains engaging because the characters' experiences feel believable and relatable.*

C. *One of the film's greatest strengths is its convincing acting, particularly Jacob Tremblay's performance as Auggie. He successfully portrays a sensitive yet humorous boy who struggles with insecurity but* [6] _____*. His facial expressions and body language communicate both his vulnerability and growing confidence. Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson are equally convincing as Auggie's loving parents, whose encouragement provides him with emotional support. However, I was especially impressed by Izabela Vidovic, who plays Auggie's older sister, Via. Although she genuinely loves her brother, she sometimes feels overlooked* [7] _____*. Her character adds depth to the story by showing that even supportive families can unintentionally neglect someone's emotional needs. The changing friendship between Auggie and Jack Will is also particularly meaningful, as it demonstrates* [8] _____*.*

D. *The film's visual and sound elements contribute significantly to its emotional impact. One particularly effective detail is Auggie's astronaut helmet,* [9] _____*. As the story develops, it becomes a meaningful reminder of his struggle to accept himself. I also enjoyed the imaginative sequences inspired by Auggie's fascination with space and Star Wars, which* [10] _____*. The use of close-up shots during difficult conversations draws attention to the characters' emotions, making their experiences feel more personal. Furthermore, the contrast between crowded school corridors and quieter family moments helps communicate Auggie's feelings of anxiety and security. The background music also supports the emotional atmosphere, particularly during moments of disappointment, friendship and personal achievement. Together, these techniques make the film visually engaging without relying on spectacular special effects.*

E. *Overall, I found Wonder deeply moving, entertaining and inspiring. What affected me most was the way the film demonstrated that bullying can damage someone's confidence, while even small acts of kindness can make a significant difference. I also appreciated that the story encourages viewers to consider the feelings of characters other than Auggie, particularly his sister and friends. Nevertheless, I occasionally felt that* [11] _____ *and that certain emotional scenes were slightly exaggerated. The ending, although satisfying, seemed somewhat idealistic compared with the difficulties people may face in real life. Despite these minor weaknesses, I believe the film successfully communicates its central message about empathy, acceptance and the importance of treating others with respect. I would strongly recommend Wonder to teenagers, parents and teachers, as it raises awareness of bullying and* [12] _____*. Ultimately, it is a memorable film that reminds us how much our words and actions can affect the lives of others.*

2. Read the film review and identify which paragraph (A–E) answers each question.
You may use each letter more than once.

Which paragraph...

1. _____: explains how visual details reflect the main character's personal struggles?
2. _____: provides a final recommendation and identifies who might benefit from watching the film?
3. _____: discusses how different perspectives help the audience understand the characters' experiences?
4. _____: introduces the film and gives the reviewer's general first impression?
5. _____: evaluates how convincingly the actors portray their characters' personalities and emotions?
6. _____: identifies aspects of the film that could have been more realistic or convincing?
7. _____: provides background information about the film and its production?
8. _____: examines how music and contrasting settings contribute to the film's atmosphere?
9. _____: outlines the protagonist's main challenges and the broader issues explored in the storyline?
10. _____: explores how family relationships and social pressure influence the characters' behaviour?

LIVEWORKSHEETS