SPECIAL SANTA MONICA READS EVENTS

The Power of Bullying
Tuesday, February 19 at 7:00 pm
Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard
UCLA Psychology Professor Jaana Juvonen, an expert in the field of bullying and youth peer pressure, presents this discussion on bullying for adults wanting to know what they can do to combat the problem.

J.R. Martinez: Full of Heart
Wednesday, February 20 at 7:00 pm
Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard
Wounded and burned by a bomb blast while serving in Iraq, J.R. Martinez dug deep and found the spirit and determination to succeed and thrive. Tickets are available one hour prior to program.

Screening: The Elephant Man (1980)
Tuesday, February 26 at 6:30 pm
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David Lynch’s award-winning film introduced the world to John Merrick, an intelligent and sensitive man in late-19th century Britain, who was marginalized by society due to physical deformities.

Bonus Book Discussions: The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
Thursday, March 7 at 7:00 pm
Main Library, Community Room, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard

BOOK DISCUSSIONS
Trained volunteer facilitators lead these free public book discussions. No registration required. Discussions are open to readers of all ages, but those designated as Family Discussions will have a focus on families reading together.

Saturday, February 16 at 11:00 am
Fairview Branch Library, 2101 Ocean Park Boulevard*

Wednesday, February 20 at 7:00 pm
Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Avenue*

Thursday, February 28 at 4:00 pm
Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th Street*

Tuesday, March 5 at 1:00 pm
Earth Wind & Flour Restaurant, 2221 Wilshire Boulevard

Wednesday, March 6 at 7:00 pm | Family Discussion
Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Avenue*

Saturday, March 9 at 11:00 am
Ocean Park Branch Library, 2601 Main Street*

Monday, March 11 at 4:00 pm | Family Discussion
Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard*

Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00 pm
Barnes & Noble, 1201 Third Street Promenade

Thursday, March 21 at 6:30 pm | Family Discussion
Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Avenue*

Thursday, March 21 at 6:30 pm
Virginia Avenue Park, Thelma Terry Bldg., 2200 Virginia Avenue*

Saturday, March 23 at 11:00 am
Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard*

THANKS TO:
Barnes & Noble Booksellers
Thank you for supporting book discussions and programs. And thanks to the Friends of the Santa Monica Public Library for their ongoing support for Santa Monica Reads.

JOIN A CITYWIDE BOOK CLUB
FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH MARCH 23
For free public book discussion groups and other events, check the Santa Monica Reads website at smpl.org/SMReads.aspx or call 310.458.8600

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Wonder is the moving story of ten-year-old August (Auggie) Pullman, an ordinary boy in every way, except for a congenital facial deformity that has kept him away from kids his own age for much of his life. The novel follows Auggie, previously home-schooled, as he attends school as a fifth grader and learns to navigate the challenging terrain of his peers’ alternately cruel and kind reactions to his physical appearance. Narrated by Auggie, his older sister, her boyfriend and several of Auggie’s classmates, Wonder is a universal story that everyone can relate to and is sure to provoke discussion among readers of all ages.

R.J. Palacio, under the pen name R.J. Palacio, began writing Wonder in 2007 following a real-life interaction with a young girl with a craniofacial disorder similar to Auggie’s. Palacio’s immediate reaction was to face the scene, but mirroring Auggie’s story of quiet trans-formation, she later realized this was the wrong move. “I wish I had the courage to turn around and look at the girl at the store,” Palacio said in an October 2012 interviews with Slate.com’s Emily Bazelon. “Even if my son kept crying, I should have just said, ‘I’m so sorry, my son’s not used to seeing people like you. What’s your name?’ Just simply acknowledge her instead of running away. That would have set an example for my kids.” In the end, Wonder is less an indictment of bullying than it is a call for all of us, when given the chance, to look past the surface and choose kindness in our interactions with others.

Stop Bullying
Managed by the United States Department of Health & Human Services, the Stop Bullying website offers a wealth of resources for anyone affected by bullying and those who want to help. The site addresses the issues from the perspective of Teens and Kids, as well as Parents, Educators, and Community Members. A great resource on the site is its section of videos, including animated shorts that help children recognize what is and is not bullying behavior and how to respond.

Children’s Craniofacial Association
Created to empower and give hope to individuals and families affected by facial differences, the Children’s Craniofacial Association website is also filled with information and stories for readers wanting to know more about conditions such as the one experienced by Auggie in Wonder. In particular, the Association’s newsletters provide a great introduction to some of the extraordinary, real-life individuals that Wonder encourages us to embrace.

The Bluest Eye
by Toni Morrison
Norton Prize-winner Toni Morrison’s dazzling debut novel introduced readers to Pecola Breedlove, an 11-year-old girl in 1940s Ohio, who prays every night for blonde hair and blue eyes, which she believes will help her fit in with a world that shuns her for her dark skin, lanky hair and brown eyes. A poignant and groundbreaking examination of society’s obsession with physical appearance, The Bluest Eye is a striking companion piece to R.J. Palacio’s Wonder.

Autobiography of a Face
by Lucy Grealy
Stricken with cancer in her early youth, author Lucy Grealy endured agonizing pain and a distorted self-image when numerous reconstructive surgeries left her jaw and face disfigured. In this memoir, Grealy portrays the brutal rejection she suffered at the hands of her peers and the cruel abuse she inflicted on herself based on her fear of never being loved. This real-life story offers a hard look at the struggles we face in gaining social and personal acceptance.

Freak the Mighty
by Rodman Philbrick
This Young Adult classic is a winning portrait of friendship against all odds. In the eighth grade, Max, a boy who is large for his age and struggling with learning differences, becomes friends with Kevin, a genius, classmate who is physically disabled and empowers himself by assuming the name Fake before bulks his age can call him the same. These two unlikely allies become much stronger as a result and demonstrate the power of kindness and friendship.
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About the Author

“I could have a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant.” – Henry David Thoreau

R.J. Palacio is the pen name of first-time novelist Raquel Jaramillo. A publishing industry veteran for more than two decades, Jaramillo has worked as a creative director in the art departments of St. Martin’s Press and Henry Holt. Readers may have seen her book cover designs for such best-selling authors as Sue Grafton and Salman Rushdie. At Holt, she began illustrating books for her own kids and that prompted a career switch from adult cover design to the children’s market. In 2006, Jaramillo became the director of children’s literature at Workman Publishing.

The seed that bloomed into Wonder grew from a chance encounter in 2007 with an extraordinary child outside of an ice cream store. When a young girl with a face much like Auggie’s sat down at a table next to Raquel and her son, she became concerned with what her boys’ reactions might be. Her three-year-old began to cry and her older son looked visibly discomforted, and as Raquel hustled to leave the store, she was struck by the grace and calm demonstrated by the young girl’s mother. Embazoned by her own response to the encounter and consumed with thoughts of the young girl’s story, Raquel started writing that night the first words that would eventually become Wonder.

Upon the novel’s completion, Raquel submitted the book to publishers outside her own firm under the pen name R.J. Palacio—taking her Colombian mother’s maiden name. The book quickly won support from the Alfred A. Knopf imprint of Random House Children’s Books, and was published to critical acclaim and enthusiastic reader support in February 2012.

Auggie Jaramillo lives in New York City with her husband, her two sons and their dog Bear. She is currently at work on her second novel.

Resources

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Wonder is a rewarding experience that brings us together as a community through literature.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Wonder, we hear from narrators other than Auggie. What do you think about this storytelling structure? How do you think it contributes to the scope and tone of the novel?
2. One of the characters we do not hear from is Julian. In what ways would his voice have contributed to or distracted from the story being told?
3. How is Auggie’s relationships with his family members changed after he starts at Beecher Prep? How effectively are the adults’ stories told in the novel?
4. Wonder is marketed by its publishers as a children’s title, but it has drawn great interest from adult readers as well. Why do you think the book appeals to adults, as much as to kids?
5. If you are an adult reader, you know that bullying is not a new problem among youth. Has the scope of the problem changed since you were a child, and if so, how has it changed?
6. What would your own personal precept be?

Get involved and join Choose Kind!

RECOMMENDED READS

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Random Acts of Kindness

A foundation designed to inspire people to practice kindness and pass it on to others. Of particular note on this website is the Kindness Ideas Lab, a regularly-updated list of suggestions of things one can do to practice kindness every day, plus a list of quotes from literary figures and others on kindness, as well as an online form to share your own ideas on how to treat others well.

WWW.STOPBULLYING.GOV

WWW.KINDNESS.ORG
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Thursday, March 7 at 7:00 pm
Main Library, Community Room, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard
Wednesday, March 20 at 7:00 pm
Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Avenue
Toni Morrison’s first novel is a complex portrayal of the social pressures placed upon children based on physical appearance. Join us for either of these bonus discussions of a classic novel with themes similar to those examined in Wonder.

Screening and Filmmaker Q&A: Mask (1985)
Saturday, March 9 at 2:00 pm
Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard
Join us for a screening of the 1985 hit film starring Cher as the mother of a teenage son living with a craniofacial condition similar to the one portrayed in Wonder. Oscar-nominated screenwriter Anna Hamilton Phelan will introduce the film and participate in a post-film Q&A with cast members (schedules permitting).

Cinema Connections Screening & Discussion: Bully: The Movie (2012)
Saturday, March 16 at 2:00 pm
Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard
This frank documentary takes us behind the scenes, into the lives of bullied children and asks what we can do to stop this epidemic of psychological and physical violence. Following the screening, teens and older adult filmgoers are invited to participate in a discussion of the film. This event co-sponsored by the Older Adult Task Force.

An Afternoon with R.J. Palacio, featuring The Voices of Wonder
Saturday, March 23 at 2:00 pm
Lincoln Middle School Auditorium, 1501 California Avenue
Author R.J. Palacio presents an engaging discussion of Wonder, followed by a book sale and signing. A special staged reading of scenes from Wonder, directed and adapted for the stage by Edward Edwards, precedes the author’s presentation.

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Earth Wind & Flour Restaurant, 2222 Wilshire Boulevard
Wednesday, March 6 at 7:00 pm | Family Discussion
Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Avenue*
Saturday, March 9 at 11:00am
Ocean Park Branch Library, 2601 Main Street*
Monday, March 11 at 4:00pm | Family Discussion
Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard*
Thursday, March 14 at 6:30pm | Spanish-Language Family Discussion
Virginia Avenue Park, Thelma Terry Bldg., 2200 Virginia Avenue*
Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00pm Barnes & Noble, 1201 Third Street Promenade
Thursday, March 21 at 6:30pm | Family Discussion
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SANTA MONICA READS 2013

THANKS FOR SUPPORTING BOOK DISCUSSIONS AND PROGRAMS, AND THANKS TO THE FRIENDS OF THE SANTA MONICA PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT FOR SANTA MONICA READS.