Four Corners
A Teaching Strategy

What is Four Corners?
Four Corners is a teaching strategy that provides students with the opportunity to discuss controversial topics. The teacher asks students a question or provides a debatable statement. Students then express their opinion to the topic by moving into groups with students who have similar opinions.

How to Implement this Strategy
1. The teacher prepares the activity by taking four pieces of paper. Label each piece with one of the following: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Post these pieces of paper in the four corners of the room.
2. The teacher next thinks of a controversial statement. During the activity, this statement may be written on the board or displayed on the SmartBoard for students to use as a reference.
3. The teacher then reads the statement to the students. Students determine what opinion they have and move next to the posted paper that best conveys their opinion.
4. Once students are divided into four groups, they discuss their feelings about the topic. A recorder makes a list of reasons why their opinion is the best.
5. A spokesperson is then elected.
6. The spokesperson expresses the group's reasons why they are right on the topic to the class.
7. Finally, allow time for students to move to a new corner if opinions were changed after hearing the discussion.
Using Four Corners with the Novel

Wonder

On the next pages you will find debatable topics to use with the novel *Wonder*. Each topic is placed on a separate piece of paper so they may be displayed on the SmartBoard.

Here is the full list of topics:

• The author’s use of humor to lighten difficult situations was a good idea.

• The author should have described Auggie’s appearance at the beginning of the story.

• Miranda was doing the right thing when she gave Auggie the helmet.

• Did wearing masks help or hurt Auggie?

• Who is your favorite narrator?

• Which character do you think changed the most from the beginning to the end of the story?

• Mrs. Albans is correct in thinking that asking Jack and Julian to “befriend” Auggie put too much pressure on them.

• The best action for Veronica to take in the ice cream parlor when Jack first saw August would be --
  • introduce Jack to August
  • leave in the ice parlor in a rush
  • start up a friendly conversation with August
  • ignore the situation

• Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following precept...
Use of Humor

The author’s use of humor to lighten difficult situations was a good idea.

Example #1

Part One: August -- How I Came To Life

When I came out of Mom’s stomach, she said the whole room got very quiet. Mom didn’t even get a chance to look at me because the nice nurse immediately rushed me out of the room. Dad was in such a hurry to follow her that he dropped the video camera, which broke into a million pieces. And then Mom got very upset and tried to get out of bed to see where they were going, but the farting nurse put her very big arms on Mom to keep her down in the bed. They were practically fighting, because Mom was hysterical and the farting nurse was yelling at her to stay calm, and then they both started screaming for the doctor. But guess what? He had fainted! Right on the floor! So when the farting nurse saw that he had fainted, she started pushing him with her foot to get him to wake up, yelling at him the whole time: “What kind of doctor are you? What kind of doctor are you? Get up! Get up!” And then all of a sudden she let out the biggest, loudest, smelliest fart in the history of farts. Mom thinks it was actually the fart that finally woke the doctor up. Anyway, when Mom tells this story, she acts out all the parts—including the farting noises—and it is so, so, so funny!

Example #2

Part One: August -- Driving

“Auggie, you know, you should go to that school just so you can hear his name said over the loudspeaker!” Dad said excitedly. “Can you imagine how funny that would be? Hello, hello? Paging Mr. Tushman!” He was using a fake high, old-lady voice. “Hi, Mr. Tushman! I see you’re running a little behind today! Did your car get rear-ended again? What a bum rap!”

I started laughing, not even because I thought he was being that funny but because I wasn’t in the mood to stay mad anymore.

“It could be worse, though!” Dad continued in his normal voice. “Mommy and I had a professor in college called Miss Butt.”

Mom was laughing now, too.

“Is that for real?” I said.

“Roberta Butt,” Mom answered, raising her hand as if to swear. “Bobbie Butt.”

“She had huge cheeks,” said Dad.

“Nate!” said Mom.

“What? She had big cheeks is all I’m saying.”

Mom laughed and shook her head at the same time.
Auggie’s Appearance
The author, R.J. Palacio, doesn’t describe Auggie’s appearance until “Part Two: Via -- August Through the Peephole.”

His eyes are about an inch below where they should be on his face, almost to halfway down his cheeks. They slant downward at an extreme angle, almost like diagonal slits that someone cut into his face, and the left one is noticeably lower than the right one. They bulge outward because his eye cavities are too shallow to accommodate them. The top eyelids are always halfway closed, like he’s on the verge of sleeping. The lower eyelids sag so much they almost look like a piece of invisible string is pulling them downward: you can see the red part on the inside, like they’re almost inside out. He doesn’t have eyebrows or eyelashes. His nose is disproportionately big for his face, and kind of fleshy. His head is pinched in on the sides where the ears should be, like someone used giant pliers and crushed the middle part of his face. He doesn’t have cheekbones. There are deep creases running down both sides of his nose to his mouth, which gives him a waxy appearance. Sometimes people assume he’s been burned in a fire: his features look like they’ve been melted, like the dripings on the side of a candle.

The author should have described Auggie’s appearance at the beginning of the story.

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Auggie’s Helmet

Part 1: August -- Costumes
When I was little, I used to wear an astronaut helmet everywhere I went. To the playground. To the supermarket. To pick Via up from school. Even in the middle of summer, though it was so hot my face would sweat. I think I wore it for a couple of years, but I had to stop wearing it when I had my eye surgery. I was about seven, I think. And then we couldn’t find the helmet after that. Mom looked everywhere for it. She figured that it had probably ended up in Grans’s attic, and she kept meaning to look for it, but by then I had gotten used to not wearing it.

Part 7: Miranda -- Camp Lies
I’ve watched all six episodes of Star Wars for his sake, so I could talk to him about the aliens and bounty hunters and all that. I’m the one that gave him the astronaut helmet he wouldn’t take off for two years. I mean, I’ve kind of earned the right to think of him as my brother.

Part 8: August -- The Drop-Off
“No, I didn’t hate it.” He smiled, shaking his head. “But I will admit to hating that astronaut helmet you used to wear, do you remember?”
“The one Miranda gave me? Of course I remember! I used to wear that thing all the time.”
“Good God, I hated that thing,” he laughed, almost more to himself.
“I was so bummed when it got lost,” I said.
“Oh, it didn’t get lost,” he answered casually. “I threw it out.”
“The day is beautiful, and so are you,” he was singing.
“Dad!” I said, turning the volume down.
“What?” he said.
“You threw it out?!”
He finally looked at my face and saw how mad I was. I couldn’t believe he was being so matter-of-fact about the whole thing. I mean, to me this was a major revelation, and he was acting like it was no big deal.
“Auggie, I couldn’t stand seeing that thing cover your face anymore,” he said clumsily.
“Dad, I loved that helmet! It meant a lot to me! I was bummed beyond belief when it got lost—don’t you remember?”
“Of course I remember, Auggie,” he said softly. “Ohh, Auggie, don’t be mad. I’m sorry. I just couldn’t stand seeing you wear that thing on your head anymore, you know? I didn’t think it was good for you.” He was trying to look me in the eye, but I wouldn’t look at him.

Miranda was doing the right thing when she gave Auggie the helmet.
Auggie’s Masks

Did wearing masks help or hurt Auggie?
Favorite Narrator

Who is your favorite narrator?

Justin
August
Jack
Via
Miranda
Summer

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Via  Miranda  Summer

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Character Change

Which character do you think changed the most from the beginning to the end of the story?

Justin
August
Jack
Via
Miranda
Summer

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Mrs. Albans’ Opinion

Mrs. Albans is correct in thinking that asking Jack and Julian to “befriend” Auggie put too much pressure on them.

To: ltushman@beecherschool.edu
Cc: johnwill@phillipsacademy.edu; amandawill@copperbeech.org
Fr: melissa.albans@rmail.com

Subject: Jack Will
Dear Mr. Tushman,

I spoke with Amanda and John Will yesterday, and they expressed their regret at Jack’s having punched our son, Julian, in the mouth.

...To that end, I wonder if Jack’s unexpectedly violent behavior might have been a result of too much pressure being placed on his young shoulders? I am speaking specifically of the new child with special needs who both Jack and Julian were asked to “befriend.” In retrospect, and having now seen the child in question at various school functions and in the class pictures, I think it may have been too much to ask of our children to be able to process all that. Certainly, when Julian mentioned he was having a hard time befriending the boy, we told him he was “off the hook” in that regard. We think the transition to middle school is hard enough without having to place greater burdens or hardships on these young, impressionable minds. I should also mention that, as a member of the school board, I was a little disturbed that more consideration was not given during this child’s application process to the fact that Beecher Prep is not an inclusion school. There are many parents—myself included—who question the decision to let this child into our school at all. At the very least, I am somewhat troubled that this child was not held to the same stringent application standards (i.e. interview) that the rest of the incoming middle-school students were.

Best,
Melissa Perper Albans
The Ice Cream Parlor

I remember seeing him for the first time in front of the Carvel on Amesfort Avenue when I was about five or six. Me and Veronica, my babysitter, were sitting on the bench outside the store with Jamie, my baby brother, who was sitting in his stroller facing us. I guess I was busy eating my ice cream cone, because I didn’t even notice the people who sat down next to us.

Then at one point I turned my head to suck the ice cream out of the bottom of my cone, and that’s when I saw him: August. He was sitting right next to me. I know it wasn’t cool, but I kind of went “Uhh!” when I saw him because I honestly got scared. I thought he was wearing a zombie mask or something. It was the kind of “uhh” you say when you’re watching a scary movie and the bad guy like jumps out of the bushes. Anyway, I know it wasn’t nice of me to do that, and though the kid didn’t hear me, I know his sister did.

“Jack! We have to go!” said Veronica.

The best action for Veronica to take in the ice cream parlor when Jack first saw August would be - --

- introduce Jack to August
- leave in the ice parlor in a rush
- start up a friendly conversation with August
- ignore the situation

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Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following precept...

"When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind." —Dr. Wayne Dyer

"Your deeds are your monuments." —Inscription on ancient Egyptian tomb

"Have no friends not equal to yourself." —Confucius

"Fortune favors the bold." —Virgil

"No man is an island, entire of itself." —John Donne

"It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers." —James Thurber

"Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much." —Blaise Pascal

"What is beautiful is good, and who is good will soon be beautiful." —Sappho

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can." —John Wesley

"Just follow the day and reach for the sun." —The Polyphonic Spree

"Everyone deserves a standing ovation because we all overcometh the world." —Auggie Pullman

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