

## 4 How Other People See Us

### Objective

Understand how a narrative viewpoint contributes to a text.

### Activities

SPAG

- Write down three **adjectives** that you think describe yourself (your character, not your looks). Then write down three **adjectives** that you would use to describe your partner. Share your descriptions with your partner. Talk about whether you see yourself the same way other people see you.

As we grow up, we become more aware of our individual identity and also more aware of how other people see us. There is often a difference between how we see ourselves, how other people see us and how we want to be seen.

In the novel *Wonder*, the author R. J. Palacio explores the confusion of identity that a young boy feels as he grows up and tries to fit in at a new school. Read the extract on the right and then complete Activities 2–5.



### Extract from *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio

I know I'm not an ordinary ten-year-old kid. I mean, sure, I do ordinary things. I eat ice cream. I ride my bike. I play ball. I have an Xbox. Stuff like that makes me ordinary. I guess. And I feel ordinary. Inside. But I know ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. I know ordinary kids don't get stared at wherever they go.

If I found a magic lamp and I could have one wish, I would wish that I had a normal face that no one ever noticed at all. I would wish that I could walk down the street without people seeing me and then doing that look-away thing [...]

But I'm kind of used to how I look by now. I know how to pretend I don't see the faces people make. We've all gotten pretty good at that sort of thing: me, Mom and Dad, Via. Actually, I take that back: Via's not so good at it. She can get really annoyed when people do something rude. Like, for instance, one time in the playground some older kids made some noises [...] she just started yelling at the kids [...].

Via doesn't see me as ordinary. She says she does, but if I were ordinary, she wouldn't feel like she needs to protect me as much. And Mom and Dad don't see me as ordinary either. They see me as extraordinary. I think the only person in the world who realizes how ordinary I am is me.

2

What do you learn about the narrator (the character who is telling the story) in this extract? Write down at least two things about his personality and one thing about his looks.

3

How does his sense of identity differ from how other people see him?

4

Why do you think the writer chose to write this story as a **first-person narrative**? What effect does this have? Do you think it would be as powerful if it were written as a **third-person narrative**?

SPAG

5

Look carefully at the language in the extract. What effect does it have on how the reader feels about the character?

### Progress Check

Write another short paragraph to add to the extract. Try to use the same narrative voice and language style as the original.

Swap your work with a partner. Ask them to assess you on a scale of 1 to 3 (3 being the highest) on how well you:

- kept using the first-person narrative voice (e.g. the **pronouns** 'I', 'me', 'we')
- used the same **colloquial** informal style
- included some American English.

### Glossary

**adjective** word that describes a noun, e.g. *happy*, *blue*, *furious*

**first-person narrative** story told by a character, using the words 'I' and 'we'

**third-person narrative** story told by someone outside the story, using the words 'he', 'she', 'they'

**pronoun** a word used instead of a noun

**colloquial** suitable for conversation rather than formal speech or writing

