



## Part One

### Ordinary

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. Here's what I think: the only reason I'm not ordinary is that no one else sees me that way. 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. I don't even know what the noises were exactly because I didn't hear them myself, but Via heard and she just started yelling at the kids. That's the way she is. I'm not that way.

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.

My name is August, by the way. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.

### Why I Didn't Go to School

Next week I start fifth grade. Since I've never been to a real school before, I am pretty much totally and completely petrified. People think I haven't gone to school because of the way I look, but it's not that. It's because of all the surgeries

I've had. Twenty- seven since I was born. The bigger ones happened before I was even four years old, so I don't remember those. But I've had two or three surgeries every year since then (some big, some small), and because I'm little for my age, and I have some other medical mysteries that doctors never really figured out, I used to get sick a lot. That's why my parents decided it was better if I didn't go to school. I'm much stronger now, though. The last surgery I had was eight months ago, and I probably won't have to have any more for another couple of years.

Mom homeschools me. She used to be a children's-book illustrator. She draws really great fairies and mermaids. Her boy stuff isn't so hot, though. She once tried to draw me a Darth Vader, but it ended up looking like some weird mushroom- shaped robot. I haven't seen her draw anything in a long time. I think she's too busy taking care of me and Via.

I can't say I always wanted to go to school because that wouldn't be exactly true. What I wanted was to go to school, but only if I could be like every other kid going to school. Have lots of friends and hang out after school and stuff like that.

I have a few really good friends now. Christopher is my best friend, followed by Zachary and Alex. We've known each other since we were babies. And since they've always known me the way I am, they're used to me. When we were little, we used to have playdates all the time, but then Christopher moved to Bridgeport in Connecticut. That's more than an hour away from where I live in North River Heights, which is at the top tip of Manhattan. And Zachary and Alex started going to school. It's funny: even though Christopher's the one who moved far away, I still see him more than I see Zachary and Alex. They have all these new friends now. If we bump into each other on the street, they're still nice to me, though. They always say hello.

I have other friends, too, but not as good as Christopher and Zack and Alex were. For instance, Zack and Alex always invited me to their birthday parties when we were little, but Joel and Eamonn and Gabe never did. Emma invited me once, but I haven't seen her in a long time. And, of course, I always go to Christopher's birthday. Maybe I'm making too big a deal about birthday parties.

LI: To retrieve information from a text

Step 1

1. How old is he?
2. Name an ordinary thing that he does?
3. What would his one wish be?
4. Who in his family doesn't see him as ordinary?
5. What is his name?
6. Which grade is he going to be in when he starts school?
7. How many surgeries has he had since he was born?
8. When was the last surgery he had?
9. What did Mom's job used to be?
10. Who is his best friend?

LI: To retrieve information from a text

Step 2

In what way is the character

1. Ordinary \_\_\_\_\_
2. Extraordinary \_\_\_\_\_

Explain why Via is not so good at ignoring the faces people make.


Why hasn't he attended school yet? Give 2 reasons

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

What does his mum draw

1. Well \_\_\_\_\_
2. Not so well \_\_\_\_\_

Match the information about his friends

Emma
Christopher
Zachary
Gabe

Moved to Bridgeport
Has new friends now since starting school
Invited him to a birthday party once
Never invited him to birthday parties

LI: To retrieve information from a text

Step 3

Here are the answers to some retrieval questions. Can you come up with the question? Can you create 2 different questions involving the skill of retrieval that could have that answer?

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
	Via
	Because of all the surgeries. He's had 27 since he was born.
	He's used to how he looks by now.
	Next week
	His parents

## Deeper thinking questions

1. What is your impression about the relationship between August and his sister?
2. What conclusions can you draw about his character?
3. Can you relate to him in any ways?
4. Do you think that he is a strong person?