

**Character List**

-**Sara Shandler** (the author): Sara's voice is heard throughout the book. She shares her personal stories and introduces the girls’ writings that she chose to include. She is the navigator of the book, guiding the reader through the heartfelt stories of *real* adolescent girls.

-**Adolescent Girls**: Of the written works that were chosen, some girls included their names and some chose to remain anonymous, but they all shared the general area where they are from. These girls invite the reader into their lives, and let their heart and soul shine through their words, about difficult topics ranging from body image to feminism and everything in between.

**Review**

I would definitely recommend this

book to young adult females and

those who wish to understand more about adolescent girls. The girls that contributed to this book were given a chance to speak out about their experiences, both good and bad, and I can see other girls at that age relating to similar issues. The author wrote this book so that other girls out there wouldn't feel so alone about their feelings and I think her goal was accomplished. This is an incredibly authentic piece of literature that I believe all girls could benefit from reading, to possibly give them hope, help, and guidance through some potentially difficult times

ahead.

*~By: Tracy Richter*

**Ophelia Speaks:** Adolescent Girls Write about Their Search for Self

By: Sara Shandler

This is a book about *real* adolescent girls who truthfully write about their *real* problems. The author compiled written works, from teenage girls across the country, talking about the monumental issues they have had to face, including their body image, eating disorders, depression, friendship, family relationships, romantic relationships, and so much more. Each chapter in the book includes the author's own experience with these issues, followed by some of the personal writings from the girls who shared their stories with her. Girls everywhere may be able to relate to these issues, and in turn perhaps make them feel a little less alone.

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Tracy Richter

Reflection on Alternative Book Report for:

*Ophelia Speaks: Adolescent Girls Write about Their Search for Self*

1.) This project is a great way to assess students' understanding of the novel because numerous elements are required to be included on the bookmark. In addition to simply the title and the author of the novel, a student must include a summary, a character list with a description of the characters, and their own review of the book. In order to complete this task successfully students would need to have truly read the book and have a high level of understanding. A student could potentially copy off the back of the book to get the summary, but a teacher could easily tell if they did that by reading them. Their summaries should be original and comprehensively include the most important aspects of the book. The character list on the other hand is not something that a student could come up with, without reading the book, because not only do they have to include the names of the most important characters, but they have to give a brief description of them as well. I would imagine that would be very difficult to do without having read the book, especially if they do not give some crucial details about the characters. For example, the character's personality might change as the book is read or the challenges that they face might not occur until the end of the book, requiring them to read the entire novel. Another component that is included in this type of book report, that would require the student to use higher level thinking, would be the book review. This must be written from the students' point of view and include explanations as to *why* they would or would not recommend this book. This would need to be detailed and include some specifics of the novel in order to write a complete and thorough review. With all of these components, as well as the inclusion of pictures that appropriately work with the book, students would need to read a book in its entirety and use higher level thinking to be successful.

2.) I think this project is most appropriate to assess students understanding of this novel because I think it is a creative way for students to show their knowledge of the book through different facets. The bookmark has to be able to reflect the book in some way, otherwise it won’t make sense. For example choosing a picture of a donkey for *Ophelia Speaks* would not make any sense since it has nothing to do with the novel. My bookmark reflects the book well, in my opinion, because it shows *real* clipart images, of *real* teenage girls going through different emotions, which could easily portray the girls that wrote their stories in the book. Also, as I mentioned earlier, the students have to include, a summary, a character list, and a review of the book on their bookmark, all of which would be effective and efficient ways to assess their understanding of the book. For example, in my model, I included some details from the book that showed my understanding, like the specific issues the girls wrote about, the fact that the author wrote about each of the issues in the book before introducing the other girls’ written works, and I explained specifically why I would recommend this book to others. I think this project is a great way to assess students’ understanding because they have to include facts from the book, give their own opinions, and choose appropriate images in order to make a creative bookmark about the book they read. In addition, I liked making a bookmark for this particular book, because I could see a teenage girl actually using it for a bookmark, and every time they look at it, they could be reminded of the fact that other girls face some of the same issue they do and that they are not alone; it might give them a little hope during a rough patch in their life.

Tracy Richter

Reflection on Alternative Book Report: *Wonderstruck*

1. The alternate book report project that I chose to do for the book *Wonderstruck*, is a very unique way to assess students understanding of any novel. Students are required to really think about objects in the book that are critical to the story, or that are important to the character. Then they have to be able to understand why those objects are important to the story, and explain their answer in detail. I think a teacher would easily be able to figure out if a student did or did not read the book by looking at the objects the student chose to include. Putting random objects together to symbolize aspects of the book are not going to cut it if the objects truly do not reflect the importance of them in the book, and if the student cannot explain why they chose them. A student really has to read the details to be able to pick out important objects from the book, and explain why they are important. A thorough explanation, which would be attached to the chosen object/ model, with specific details from the text, would be necessary to determine a student’s understanding of the object and how it relates to the book.
2. This alternate book report project is perfect for the book *Wonderstruck*. Throughout the book, the main character, Ben, carries around a box full of objects that are important to him. Along the way he accumulates more objects, like the book *Wonderstruck*, that help led him to find his long-lost family and some new friends. Even at the end of the book, Rose, his grandmother, shows him around the replica that she made for a museum, where she hid important objects from her son, Danny’s (Ben’s father) life. This book is riddled with important objects, and this project was a perfect opportunity to highlight on some of the more important items that are in this book. This is a great way to assess a student’s understanding of this book, because they not only have to pick the most important items from the book, but they also have to be able to explain why those items were important to the story and to the main character, Ben.

My project is a good model, because I was able to include a model of the wooden box that Ben carries around with him throughout the book, that holds his most prized possessions. Inside the replica of the box, I included items that I believed to be very important to the story and to Ben’s life, such as the piece of ejecta stone, the turtle made out of seashells, and the book *Wonderstruck*. All of these objects, Ben actually kept in the box, which is what I was able to replicate as well, in my own model of Ben’s museum box. Along with each of the objects, I have included a small card that explains why each item was important to the story (cards are below). I give specific details from the text and explain where and how the objects come into play throughout the entire book. This was a perfect project to do for the book *Wonderstruck*, and I would also encourage students, to create their own museum box, like Ben did, to apply the story and what Ben learned, to their own lives.

*(All of the following cards accompanied items that replicated the items in the book, and were placed together in a wooden box)*

***Wonderstruck***

Ben finds this small blue book in his mother’s belongings. Inside the front page were words written in adult handwriting, which said, *for Danny - Love, M*. This ignited Ben’s curiosity about who these people could be and what their connection was to his mother. Inside the book it discusses how museums came to be, and what a curator does for museums. Ben ponders that perhaps we are all curators of our own life, collecting things that are important to us. When he finally meets Rose at the end of the book, he discovers that Danny was indeed his father and that *M* stood for Mom, leading him to the conclusion that Rose was actually his Grandmother. At the beginning of the book, Ben was sort of lost because of the death of his mother, but after he found the book *Wonderstruck,* it was his guide to being “found.” It unlocked clues that helped him find his way, in order to solve the mysteries of his life, and eventually he realized exactly where he was supposed to belong.

**Turtle**

A treasured item in Ben’s box is the turtle that was made out of glued together seashells. His mom gave him that turtle because it was an on-going joke with them, that Ben was a turtle. She had called him a turtle when he was little because he was shy, and that although he was shy, he should remember to “…stick your neck out…Speak up, be brave” (Selznick, 2011, p.26) When he sees replicas of turtles at the American Museum of Natural History, he is reminded of that connection with his mom, and says, “Look, Mom turtles!” but he knows he is only saying it to himself (Selznick, 2011, p.329). He carries the turtle with him throughout the book. At the end of the book, Rose shows him the replica of New York City that she made, and where she hid important items of her son, Danny’s, life under buildings. Ben places the turtle under the replica of the American Museum of Natural History, along with some pictures that Rose had placed there, that Ben drew for her at his father’s funeral, before he knew who she was, as a young child. I think this symbolized Ben coming out of his shell, and being brave, in order to find out where he truly belonged.

**Ejecta Stone**

This was a stone that Ben collected from his home at Gunflint Lake. It was created by a meteorite crash that happened nearly two billion years ago in Canada. This rock started his fascination with stars and outer space. He painted his room black and had glow-in-the-dark stars all over it, with the North Star above his bed. His mom told him that the North Star will always led him home. A replica of the meteorite that crashed near Gunflint Lake was on display at the American Museum of Natural History where Ben and Rose travel to at different times in history. When they see it, they discover that a meteorite is the same thing as a shooting star and they both make wishes on the meteorite. At the end of the book, Ben sits with Rose, his newly discovered Grandmother, and his new friend Jamie, and they look up at the stars together during the blackout. Ben remarks that he knows he belongs there, with them, at that moment. The final images in the book zoom into the night sky and stop at a huge drawing of the North Star. This signifies that Ben is no longer lost, and that he found his way home.

**Ben’s Box**

Ben’s box is one of his most prized possessions, which holds all of the items that he has collected overtime that are important to him. For example, items like his baby tooth, a little turtle made out of seashells that his mom had given to him, and the ejecta stone that started his love of stars and outer space. After he finds *Wonderstruck*, and reads about what curator’s do, he wonders if he is a curator and if his box is a museum box. Later, when he discovers the abandoned room called the Cabinet of Wonders, where curators have placed important items of history, he realizes that he has sort of created his own cabinet of wonders with his box. Furthermore he realizes that his room, his books, his house, and his box are all filled with items that he has collected and makes the discovery that perhaps, “we are all cabinets of wonders,” curating our own lives. His love of collecting items in his box is something he had in common with his dad, and treasures that connection with him. He carries this box with him throughout the entire book, and when he loses it at the museum, a boy named Jamie finds it, and returns it to him. Jamie becomes a close friend, and the box helped them find each other.