Content Page 1 (Self-Concept/Esteem & Perception)

**Self-concept**

The self-concepts Auggie focuses most on about himself relate to physical attributes. He often notes his small, “cauliflower-shaped” ears, drooped eyes, and “tortoise mouth”. He and his classmates also acknowledge his small stature. Auggie described himself as smart, and his opinion on this was unflappable even in the face of Julian’s doubts and snide remarks (Chbosky 28 - 30). In addition, Auggie was a self-proclaimed Star Wars nerd, although he began taking less pride in that fact after it became one of the subjects of Julian’s relentless bullying.

In the beginning of the novel, I believe Auggie also considered himself weak, but towards the end, he began to see his own strength and courage. Auggie also began the schoolyear extremely shy, frequently struggling to speak loud enough for anyone to hear, but he slowly came out of his shell as the year progressed, finding it easier and easier to express himself to his peers.

**Self-esteem**

At the start of the schoolyear, Auggie had very poor self-esteem, and it was only reinforced by the actions and reactions of his peers. His low self-esteem almost broke his friendship with Summer when Auggie was so dubious of her intent that he accused her of feigning their entire friendship. His self-worth was too low to see why someone like her would willingly want to be close to someone like him (Chbosky 125 - 126).

Auggie’s self-esteem, like most children and even many adults, is heavily influenced by his peers. In the beginning, although he made some friends and amicable acquaintances, he was still not truly accepted by the rest of the study body, and Auggie’s self-esteem suffered from these social rejections. As the schoolyear progressed, and as the sneers, taunts, and “plague” game subsided, Auggie’s self-esteem improved. His self-loathing remarks turned into self-deprecating jokes (Chbosky 209 - 210); panic attacks at the absence of his mother at a sleepover turned into confident nights away with no mother or Baboo to clutch and snuggle (Chbosky 250 - 256).

The attention from Summer, in addition to his reunion with Jack Will, helped Auggie find value in himself. By the end of fifth grade, bolstered by the support of his classmates, Auggie was able to proudly walk onstage to receive the Henry Ward Beecher medal and believe that he deserved it (Chbosky 306).

**Perception**

Drawing from the perception process, Auggie’s classmates immediately hone in on his appearance. Because children are still growing and learning how to socialize, Auggie is met with many cruel reactions.

Given the human nature to pick out differences – and often reject those differences – Auggie’s peers select Auggie’s clear deformities and organize that piece of him in several ways. First and foremost, they decide that he is ugly, and he is then categorized as a loser based on that factor. After these opinions are formed, his classmates interpret this information and adjust their behavior accordingly.

On these assumptions, Auggie is determined to be someone worthy of being picked on and someone unworthy of their friendship. It is such a collective agreement amongst his peers that it even unifies some together in a bid against Auggie, with games like the “Plague” finding children who may not have interacted before suddenly uniting.

Content Page 2 (Self-Disclosure & Image Management)

**Self-disclosure**

Auggie is, understandably, rather hesitant to put himself out there amongst his peers. His initial attempts at self-disclosure, such as revealing his love for Star Wars, is met with mixed results. As a result of Julian’s almost immediate rejection, Auggie seems weary of divulging more of himself to his classmates.

When he isn’t met with open hostility or rejection, Auggie is more willing to open up; one could even say that after a lifetime of peer isolation, he craves that self-disclosure. With the immediate acceptance from Summer, Auggie is much freer and willing to let her know and see who he truly is, something he reserves for only a select few, especially at the beginning of the schoolyear.

**Image Management**

Auggie’s impression management fluctuates between two main versions of himself: school-Auggie and home-Auggie.

School-Auggie is much quieter, and he almost retreats inward in a sense aside from his interactions with Summer and Jack Will. This is likely a result of social rejection and the fear of further social rejection. When his homage to Star Wars braid is mocked, Auggie is quick to part with it, adjusting his physical appearance in an attempt to avoid further jeers (Chbosky 43 - 58).

School-Auggie, especially as his confidence grows, does not want his parents lavishing him with kisses and affection in front of his peers, even though he would gladly accept them at home (Chbosky 293).

Home-Auggie is much more unguarded, vocal, and child-like. In-part, I believe, because his parents encourage and allow for it. Auggie does not really have to worry about his words or actions at home because they will not be met with the same negative reactions he fears from his peers. Auggie also seems to present himself more immaturely at times at home because it garners him the attention from his mother that he craves. He has even played the petulant child storming off during dinner just to get his mom to follow him and coax him out (Chbosky 217 - 220).

Content Page 3 (The Social Penetration Model)

**The Social Penetration Model**

The Social Penetration Model represents the stages and levels of communication within a given relationship. It is based on two factors: breadth and depth of information shared. The Social Penetration Model can also be depicted in layers with the outer layer offering little personal information, the middle layer broaching deeper topics, the inner layer stepping past the walls of vulnerability, and the core personality, one’s most honest self (Adler and Proctor 86 - 87).

**August and Jack Will**

Summer, like her name would suggest, was delightful and warm to Auggie from the beginning. Their relationship was far easier than Auggie and Jack Will’s relationship, which was trying and confusing for the both of them. For a reader, this also made the boys’ relationship a bit more interesting to follow. Their friendship had progression, regression, separation, and reconciliation.

**Their Friendship**

Their relationship began at the outer layer as they’re first introduced to each other shortly before the school year began. They exchanged few words that day, but their attitudes toward each other aired a potential for a deeper connection. When the schoolyear officially began, Jack stuck around Auggie, and in each class they shared, Auggie sought Jack out like a bastion of companionship. By late September, the pair had started moving toward the middle layer of the Social Penetration Model when they began earnestly discussing the topic of Auggie’s feelings regarding other kids’ disgust for him. The conversation even moved into a banter about Auggie’s appearance, something he wouldn’t share with just anyone (Chbosky 63 - 64).

By Halloween however, the relationship was forcibly shoved back to the outer layer with a few thoughtless, but no less caustic, words from Jack Will (Chbosky 77 - 78). Suddenly, Jack was no longer the person Auggie gravitated to, the classmate Auggie confided in, or the recipient of Auggie’s lopsided smile. Much to Jack’s confusion, Auggie avoided Jack and gave him nearly the same regard he would give a stranger. It took a hint from Summer for Jack to understand and issue a guilt-ridden apology to Auggie (Chbosky 152 - 167).

With the incident finally discussed, the boys quickly bounced back to their former relationship that had been teetering just along the edge of the middle layer of the Social Penetration Model. The pair discussed crushes, Jack’s feelings about the war with Julian, and the sensitive topic of the “Plague” game (Chbosky 175 - 179). Auggie even allowed Jack into his room, his safe escape, where Daisy and his plethora of Star Wars paraphernalia resided (Chbosky 180 - 183).

Because children are still developing their social skills and still trying to figure themselves – as well as the people around them – out, it’s understandable that their relationship does not move past the middle layer. While they may not have made it to the inner layers of the Social Penetration Model by the end of the novel, Auggie and Jack Will established a friendship built upon a considerable level of trust and a mutual desire to share with each other. In the beginning, Auggie seemed to orbit a still-uncertain Jack like the sun, but by the end, both boys felt a gravitational pull toward the other.