

Name: _____

Wonderboy

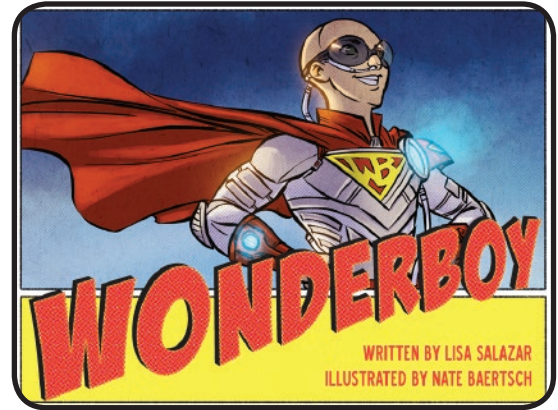
Lesson 125

Paired with Hannah and Sarah: Rockin' Any Challenge

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Wonderboy is a real-life superhero, who is strong, funny, and smart. He helps people in need, and, like any superhero, he fights bad guys. In fact, Wonderboy fought one of the meanest, toughest bad guys around when he was only seven years old.

And he won.

No way, you're thinking—how can that be? Maybe you're wondering how he did it or who the bad guy was.

You might be picturing a big, ugly villain with huge muscles or a scary-looking person with sharp teeth and bad breath. In reality though, the villain Wonderboy beat wasn't a person at all. The villain was a thing, and its name was cancer.

Cancer occurs when cells in the body grow too fast or in an unnatural way. Cancer cells don't die like normal cells do, and they don't keep to themselves. Instead, they invade other tissues and spread to other parts of the body, causing serious illness and even death.

Before Wonderboy got cancer, he was known as PJ Wilson. He loved to play sports, use his imagination, and joke around with his big brother and sisters.

Then one day he started getting terrible headaches that just wouldn't go away, no matter what he tried.

He went to the hospital with his mom, and within hours doctors discovered cancer in his brain. That same night, PJ was checked into the hospital so the doctors could help him immediately. He had six major surgeries in the next two weeks and almost died several times.

Fighting cancer is serious business, so to help PJ get through the treatments and recovery, his aunt made him a red cape. When he wore his cape, PJ became Wonderboy, and Wonderboy could do anything. He wore his cape

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to every surgery, and his trusty sidekicks—the doctors and nurses—wore capes too.

Even Wonderboy's dog became a superhero.

Wonderboy had special weapons to help him fight cancer. A cane helped him with his balance, and tubes helped him get important nutrients.

But his most powerful weapon was laughter, and he used this weapon well. Wonderboy would tell a great joke even when he was in awful pain. Because when he was making other people laugh, he always felt a little better too.

Since Wonderboy was always doing things to make other people laugh, his friends and family did unpredictable things to keep him laughing too. For example, when all of Wonderboy's hair fell out after several cancer treatments, his friends shaved the hair off their heads too, just so he wouldn't feel alone. Even his big sister shaved her head, and Wonderboy couldn't help but laugh at that.

After years of fighting, Wonderboy finally beat his cancer. But he didn't make it without getting a few battle wounds. Before he killed his cancer, Wonderboy lost his eyesight. Though he can still see faint and fuzzy images, he is legally blind in both eyes. With the same courage he used to fight off cancer, this hero learned how to navigate his world in the dark.

Now that Wonderboy is eleven years old, you might think that he'd retire from his superhero days, but no. PJ Wonderboy Wilson is right in the action, helping other kids combat cancer like he did.

Because he's blind, he now reads Braille—a special raised writing that you can read with your fingers. He makes and sells Braille bookmarks and then donates the money for cancer research. He even runs races to raise cancer awareness and raise money for cancer research. You might think it'd be scary to run a race blind, but not for Wonderboy.

Many people in the world are battling cancer, and Wonderboy is determined to help find some cures. He still deals with the effects of cancer every day, and he knows that his illness could come back. But with a laugh and a smile, Wonderboy continues to live his life like a true hero.