



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

Wonder Boy by Ross Willis

Wonder Boy by Ross Willis is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2026, 2027 and 2028, 2029 and 2030).

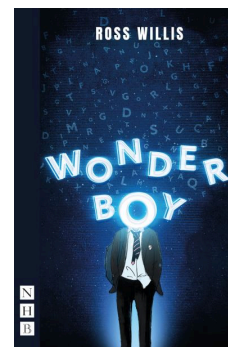


Image courtesy of
Nick Hern Books

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Wonder Boy* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. Warm Up Discussion

Guide students in recognising the feelings they might experience while public speaking. This could be done as a mind map or a think-pair-share. Encourage pupils to think about how it might feel to do this with a speech impediment.

2. Title Prediction

Give pupils the title of the play and ask them to predict:

- Who might “Wonder Boy” be?
- What might make him “wonderful”?
- What kind of story or situation might he face?

Click [here](#) to watch a video of an inspiring young person with a speech impediment. Clip courtesy of Youtube.



3. Imagination

Explain to pupils that the main character has a vivid and creative imagination and visualises the ceiling collapsing when he has to try to public speak. Encourage pupils to explore what public speaking looks like in their imagination. They could draw or describe an image which represents public speaking in their copy books.



2.



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidelines)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. The Language of Panic

In pairs, have pupils highlight and annotate where they see language which depicts Sonny's panic. They should note down how the language helps to communicate that feeling to the audience.

2. Step Inside

Divide the class into two groups: Team Sonny and Team Captain Chatter. Each group lists what their "character" might say, feel, or want in this scene.

For example: Team Sonny: wants to speak, be understood, feel calm.

Team Captain Chatter: wants to protect Sonny, control him, or prevent embarrassment. Have groups present a short 30-second role-play or mini-monologue that captures their character's side of the conflict.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Stage It

In small groups, allow pupils to choose a short section (10–12 lines) of the extract. Instruct them to plan a mini-performance, thinking about:

- How to show the real and imaginary worlds (movement, facial expression, sound).
- How to use props or symbolic gestures (the pillow, falling letters, collapsing ceiling).
- Perform for the class or share informally.

After watching, discuss with the class:

- Which performance showed the strongest contrast between inner and outer worlds? What theatrical techniques helped make it clear?

2. The Story Continued

Give pupils the prompt below and have them write an essay discussing what the extract says about fear and courage.

Prompt: *This scene shows how fear can feel overwhelming but also how people keep trying even when they are scared.*

3. Diary Entry

Guide pupils to write a short diary entry from Sonny's point of view, starting with:

"Today I had to speak in front of everyone..." Pupils should include how he felt before, during, and after the moment, and what Captain Chatter said in his mind.

Optionally, include some imagery or exaggeration like in the play.

4. Persuasive Writing

Provide your students with the prompt below and guide them in writing a persuasive response.

'Overcoming fear is our greatest strength.'