About the author
Andrew Mathews was born in Wales in 1948. He taught English for many years but he also wrote more than forty books for children and young people. Two of his books for teenagers are Writing in Martian and Seeing in Moonlight. He wrote this story for Penguin Readers.

Summary
Freckles is the story of a teenage girl, Susie, who lives in the shadow of her more beautiful friend Donna. Susie hates her freckles and is convinced that they make her unattractive.

Chapter 1: The chapter starts with her reminiscence about her days when she was very unhappy about her freckles. Her friend, Donna, is described. She’s pretty, and she goes out with a lot of boys. When she gets bored with someone, she ends her relationship with him and moves on to the next boy. One day Donna recognises a new boy, Jack, at their school. Donna decides to use Susie as a go-between to help her win his affections. Susie and Jack are in the same class for history, and Susie starts to talk with him after the lesson until Donna arrives. Jack blushes every time Susie sees him, and Susie thinks he’s shy. Donna gives Jack a big smile, which usually makes men fall for her, but it doesn’t work for Jack.

Chapter 2: Donna feels disgruntled because Jack doesn’t show any interest in her, and she orders Susie to find out what he likes. Susie has a long conversation with Jack, and finds him interesting. Things backfire for the plotting Donna; when she ends her relationship with her current boyfriend, Steve, to make way for Jack, Jack doesn’t seem interested in her. In fact he’s falling for Susie, with whom he has more in common; they both like writing poems, for example.

Chapter 3: Jack calls Susie and tells her he needs some advice; there’s a girl he likes but he finds it difficult to tell her that he likes her. Susie thinks Jack is talking about Donna. Susie hasn’t any confidence in herself, and she doesn’t consider it possible that the shy Jack could like her and not Donna. Susie is quite upset and blames everything on her freckles.

Chapter 4: Susie still believes that Jack will eventually succumb to Donna’s charms, and is astonished when he finally plucks up the courage to invite her, and not Donna, to the disco at school. Susie decides to go with Jack, even though it means jeopardising her friendship with the jealous Donna. Donna doesn’t speak to Susie anymore, but Susie hopes to be reconciled with Donna one day. Susie overcomes her complex about her freckles as Jack tells her he loves her freckles. Both Donna and Susie learn something important: a beautiful face isn’t everything, and the person behind it is more important.

Background and themes
Teenage anxieties: Freckles deals with two of the most common difficulties and anxieties suffered by many teenagers, namely self-consciousness and low self-esteem. The main character in the story, Susie, comes to terms with her own appearance and becomes independent from her more confident and dominating friend Donna. It is a very topical story, and reflects the anxieties felt by many teenagers, girls in particular, who find it hard to cope with the pressure from certain areas of the media, which imply they should look and act in a certain way.

Appearance vs. true beauty: The underlying moral messages are that what is on the inside is more important than what is on the outside, and that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This is borne out when Jack chooses Susie on the basis of shared likes and interests, and finds her freckles attractive.

Discussion activities
Chapter 1
Before reading
1 Prepare and predict: Have students read the Introduction and ask the following questions:
   a What kinds of problems does Susie have?
   b What does Donna look like?
   c What do boys like about Susie?
   d Who is the new boy at Susie’s school?
Now have students work in pairs to guess what happens in the story. Later in class pairs can share their ideas.
Freckles

2 Discuss: Put students into small groups. Have them talk about what kind of person is beautiful or handsome. They can describe the appearance, e.g. hair, eyes, nose, teeth, height, weight, etc. They could also choose some famous people they think are beautiful/handsome. After their discussion, ask students to write down their preference on a piece of paper individually. Ask them to keep it for later (Activity 23).

3 Discuss: Have students work in small groups. Ask them to brainstorm the following topics: What is a 'teenager'? What do teenagers like doing? What problems do teenagers have? When do you start and stop being a teenager?

After reading

4 Discuss: Put students into pairs or small groups. Have them ask and answer the following questions:
   Did/do you have a Big Teenage Problem? What was/is it?
   Did/do you go to a mixed (boys and girls) school?
   Did/do you have lunch at school?
   Did/do you spend a long time talking to friends on the phone?
   Are/were you like any of the three young people in the story?
   Why/why not?
   Later, ask pairs or groups to compare their answers in class.

5 Discuss: Put students into pairs. Ask them to think about the three main characters in the book. Have them ask and answer the following questions:
   a) Do you like Susie? Why/why not?
   b) Do you think Donna is a nice person? What kind of person is she? Why do you think so?
   c) Why do you think Donna is Susie’s best friend?
   d) Why do you think Jack blushes?
   e) Donna was alone with Jack for more than five minutes, but he didn’t ask her out. Why do you think he didn’t ask her?
   f) Why doesn’t Donna ask Jack questions herself? Donna says, ‘Oh, Susie! You don’t know anything about boys.’ What do you think she knows about boys? What do you know about boys?

6 Predict: Have a whole-class discussion by asking the following questions: Do you think Jack will be Donna’s new boyfriend? Why do you think so?

Chapter 2

Before reading

7 Write: Put students into pairs. Ask them to write descriptions of the three main characters in the book. Tell them to include some factual errors in each description. Then the students swap descriptions and try to find each other’s errors. Later ask pairs to share their descriptions with the rest of the class.

After reading

8 Discuss: Have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss the following questions:
   a) What does Susie think about Jack after their long conversation near the tennis courts?
   b) What does Jack think about Susie after he learns that Susie also writes poems?
   c) Why does Donna say ‘Now that’s interesting’? What is ‘that’? Why was her smile not pretty?
   d) Why doesn’t Donna want Jack to know that she likes him?
   e) Who likes who? Think about all of the three characters.

Later students can compare their answers in class.

9 Project: Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group one of the following scenes:
   Scene 1: In the Dining room. Conversation between Donna and Susie.
   Scene 2: Near the tennis courts. Conversation between Susie and Jack.
   Scene 3: In the classroom. Conversation between Donna and Susie.
   Scene 4: Next day, outside the English classroom. Conversation between Donna and Jack.
   Scene 5: On the way home. Conversation between Donna and Susie.

Have students work in groups to write a script for their scene. Make sure that they include stage directions, encouraging them to think about the actions for the actors to perform. Ask them to think about the characters’ feelings so that they can decide on the facial expressions, body language and voice quality. In groups students can decide who is going to be actors. Students who are not acting could be a director, or could work actively behind the scenes, such as preparation for props, stage set, sound effects, lighting, etc. Give students sufficient time to practise acting. When they are ready, ask groups to perform the scenes in sequence. While one group is performing, give the rest of the class a peer-evaluation sheet for each student, and encourage them to make some positive comments. Give each group the filled peer-evaluation sheet from other students, and have them read it afterwards.

10 Write: Give students the pictures from Chapter 2 without the captions and ask them to write new captions for each picture. Alternatively give them the original captions separately and ask them to match them to the correct pictures.

11 Discuss: Have students work with a partner. Ask them to list what Jack likes and what Susie likes. Then have them ask each other what they like. When they are ready, ask each student to tell the rest of the class what their partner likes.

Chapter 3

Before reading

12 Retell: Have students look at the pictures on pages 2, 4, 6, 9, 11 and 13. Ask them to think about what has happened in the story. Then put students into small groups, and assign each group one of the pictures. Have students take turns in groups to retell the story using their picture as a cue. Later, ask each group to retell the story to the class in sequence.
Teacher’s notes

LEVEL 2

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Teacher Support Programme

Freckles

After reading

13 Discuss: Have students look at the telephone conversation between Susie and Jack. Two of Jack’s lines are not complete: ‘Yes, I can. I said all that about my parents because – ’, and ‘Susie, I – ’. Have students think about what Jack is trying to say here. They can discuss in pairs or small groups first; then ask some students to share their ideas with the rest of the class.

14 Discuss: Put students into pairs and have them discuss the following questions:
   a Why do you think that Jack rang Susie?
   b Why did Susie think he called?
   c Why do you think Jack lied to Donna about not going to the disco?
   d Do you think Susie is happy about her friendship with Donna? Why/why not?
   e Why did Susie decide to do her homework at the end of the chapter?

15 Role play: Have students work in groups of three to act out the telephone conversation between Susie and Jack. Remind them what Jack was trying to do and what Susie was thinking. Student A is Jack, Student B is Susie and Student C is the person who holds up Susie’s thought bubbles. While Student A and B practise acting out the telephone dialogue, Student C makes Susie’s thought-bubble cards. When they are ready, ask groups to perform in front of the class. Give positive feedback.

16 Role play: To expand the previous activity (Activity 15), students could now make Jack’s thought bubbles as well. Have students discuss what Jack’s thoughts might be during this telephone conversation. Students could work in the same groups. Ask groups to perform again with both Susie’s thought bubbles and Jack’s thought bubbles (Student C can hold up all of the cards). Alternatively ask groups to compare their ideas for Jack’s thought bubbles in class.

17 Discuss: Put students into pairs or small groups. Have them discuss the following questions:
   a Do you think freckles are ugly?
   b Do you think being beautiful is more important than being a nice person? Why/why not?

Chapter 4

Before reading

18 Guess: Have students look at the chapter heading ‘Freckles are Great!’ Lead a whole-class discussion and have students think why suddenly Susie thinks ‘Freckles are Great’ after that terrible telephone conversation with Jack in Chapter 3. Ask them to guess what will happen in this chapter.

After reading

19 Discuss: Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss the following questions:
   a Did Jack choose the right girl? Why/why not?
   b Do you think Susie and Donna will make friends again? Why/why not?
   c Why do you think Donna is angry?
   d How did Susie’s opinion of freckles change at the end?

Later ask groups to share their opinions with the rest of the class.

20 Write: Have students work in pairs. Ask them to write a short dialogue about what they think happened between Jack and Susie at the disco. When they are ready, ask pairs to read out the dialogue they wrote. Alternatively ask them to submit the written dialogues and make a classroom display so that students can read what other students wrote.

Extra activities

21 Guess: Allocate students partners. Then ask students to guess whether the following sentences are true or false about their partners. When they have answered them they should go to the partner and check how many of their guesses are right by asking questions.
   a She / He thinks Donna is beautiful.
   b She / He thinks Susie is beautiful.
   c She / He thinks Jack is handsome.
   d She / He thinks teenagers shouldn’t have boyfriends or girlfriends.
   e She / He writes poems.
   f She / He likes cats.
   g She / He was shy on her / his first day at school.

22 Discuss and write: Ask students if they liked the ending of the story. Encourage them to give reasons why. Now put students into small groups. Ask them to think of an alternative ending of the story. Have them write it down on a piece of paper. When they are ready, have them exchange the paper so that students can read other students’ ideas for the different endings.

23 Discuss: In small groups have students discuss the following questions: Find out the meaning of the English saying ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.’ Do you agree? Why/why not? Then ask students to bring in the note they wrote in Activity 2. Have students read out their notes in class, or they can read them silently in the groups. Now ask students the same questions again. Have they changed their opinions?

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.