

AN ABUNDANCE OF JOHN GREEN

Meet **JOHN GREEN**



John Green is an award-winning, *New York Times*—bestselling author whose many accolades include the Printz Medal, a Printz Honor, and the Edgar Award. He has twice been a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. With his brother, Hank, John is one half of the Vlogbrothers, one of the most popular online video projects in the world. You can join John's 1.1 million followers on Twitter, or visit him online. John lives with his wife and son in Indianapolis, Indiana.

“The great and terrible beauty of the Internet now makes it possible for us to continue the strange conversation between reader and writer indefinitely.”—**John Green**

Here are some of the places you can catch John Green online:

The official John Green website:

<http://www.johngreenbooks.com/>

The Vlogbrothers video channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/vlogbrothers>

John's Tumblr:

<http://fishingboatproceeds.tumblr.com>

Follow John on Twitter:

<http://www.twitter.com/realjohngreen>

THE FAULT IN OUR STARS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Insightful, Bold, Irreverent, and Raw

Despite the tumor-shrinking medical miracle that has bought her a few years, Hazel has never been anything but terminal, her final chapter inscribed upon diagnosis. But when a gorgeous plot twist named Augustus Waters suddenly appears at Cancer Kid Support Group, Hazel's story is about to be completely rewritten.

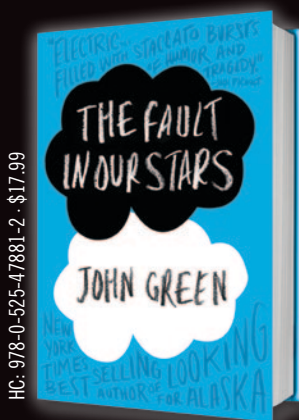
The Fault in Our Stars is award-winning author John Green's most ambitious and heartbreaking work yet, brilliantly exploring the funny, thrilling, and tragic business of being alive and in love.

★ "In its every aspect, this novel is a triumph."
— *Booklist*, starred review

★ "An achingly beautiful story about life and loss."
— *School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "Greens signature style shines."
— *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "[A]n extended meditation
on the big questions about life and death."
— *The Horn Book*, starred review



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- During a disagreement regarding Hazel's attendance at Support Group, her mother tells her, "Hazel, you deserve a life." Consider the irony of this statement. Why is Hazel so resistant to attending her Support Group? Though she doesn't acknowledge it, what might be some of the benefits of her attending?
- In what ways does Augustus's introduction to Hazel's world complicate matters for her? How does their relationship profoundly change her life?
- Augustus inquires about Hazel's background and tells her, "Don't tell me you're one of those people who becomes their disease." In what ways do Augustus, Hazel, and Isaac fight to keep cancer from defining who they are? How do they work to prevent it from consuming all aspects of them?
- Though they are intended to inspire and motivate, why does Augustus find humor in his family's posted "Encouragements"? What can readers glean about him based on his reaction?
- Though her all-time favorite book is *An Imperial Affliction*, Hazel shares that she doesn't like telling people about it because "there are books so special and rare and yours that advertising your affection feels like a betrayal." What do you believe she means by this statement? Do you agree? Have you ever had a personal connection with a work of art? If so, what was it about the work that "spoke" to you?
- Hazel shares that through his novel, Peter Van Houten is the only person who understands what it's like to be dying and not have died. What is it about his perspective that makes Hazel feel so connected to this author?
- Why does Hazel feel so desperate to find out what happens beyond the ending of *An Imperial Affliction*. What does this indicate about her need for understanding about what comes "after"?
- Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: Hazel and her parents and Augustus and his parents. To what extent are the relationships of these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?
- After hearing Augustus state that he fears oblivion, Hazel tells him, "...even if we survive the collapse of our sun, we will not survive forever." How does her pragmatic understanding of the frailty of humanity help her remain grounded?
- Considering Hazel's and Augustus's perspectives, in what ways is *The Fault in Our Stars* a story about things that have been lost? What does each of them find along the way?

WILL GRAYSON, WILL GRAYSON

ABOUT THE BOOK

Will Grayson, meet Will Grayson

In the suburbs of Chicago, two teens named *Will Grayson*—one gay, one straight—have lived their lives completely unaware of the other's existence. But that changes one fateful night when their worlds collide. Their lives begin to intertwine and each Will Grayson begins to question who he really is. Their discoveries take them in unexpected directions, building toward romantic turns-of-heart and the epic production of an oh-so-fabulous high school musical.

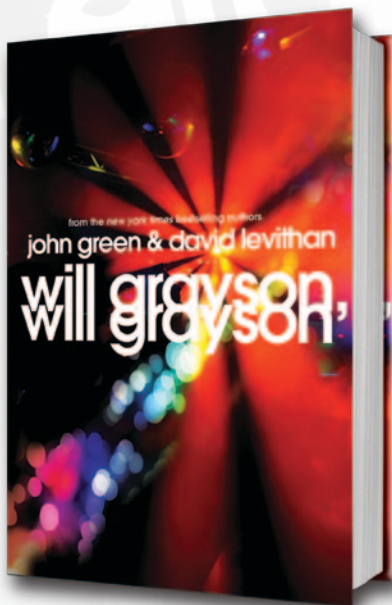
New York Times Bestseller

ALA Children's & Young Adult Stonewall Book Award Honor

ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults Book

ALA Rainbow Project Pick

“Funny, rude and original.”
—The *New York Times* Book Review



HC: 978-0-525-42158-0 • \$17.99

PB: 978-0-14-241847-5 • \$8.99

By John Green and David Levithan

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In what ways is Will Grayson's life similar to Will Grayson's? How are they different? How does the style of the odd vs even chapters work to help us understand both Will and Will as individuals? Do you think one has a significantly easier life?
- Will Grayson states, "You cannot possibly pick your friends, or else I never would have ended up with Tiny Copper." What is it about his relationship with Tiny that he finds so difficult? Consider your own friendships—have you ever had a friend that you felt required an extra effort on your part to remain friends?
- Will shares with readers that emotion is easy to resist "*if you follow two simple rules: 1. Don't care too much. 2. Shut up.*" What can readers infer about Will from this statement? Do you think this is sage advice?
- Describe Will's home life; using examples, share how his relationship with his mom shaped him as a person. Why does he see his mother as fragile? How does Will's relationship with his mother change and what does will discover about her?
- From your experience, do you think it's difficult for most people to reach out for help? Consider the characters in the novel; who do they turn to for assistance? To whom do you turn when you are in need?
- Why is Will's relationship with Issac so important to him? What does learning the truth about who Isaac really is force will to do?
- Beyond his size, what is it about Tiny's presence that makes Will feel not so alone? Why is it so important that Will befriends Tiny when he does?
- Why is Will and Will's final gift to Tiny so important? What does this act signify about the Will Graysons understanding of friendship? Have you ever gone to such great lengths to let a friend or loved one know what they mean to you?

PAPER TOWNS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Where. Is. Margo?

Quentin Jacobsen has spent a lifetime loving the magnificently adventurous Margo Roth Spiegelman from afar. So when she cracks open a window and climbs back into his life—dressed like a ninja and summoning him for an ingenious campaign of revenge—he follows.

After their all-nighter ends and a new day breaks, Q arrives at school to discover that Margo, always an enigma, has now become a mystery. But Q soon learns that there are clues—and they're for him. Urged down a disconnected path, the closer he gets, the less Q sees of the girl he thought he knew. With nothing left to guide him but a seemingly random collection of maps, books, online entries, and an annotated copy of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Q and his friends must find Margo and unpeel the ever-changing layers of meaning behind her “paper towns.”

New York Times Bestseller

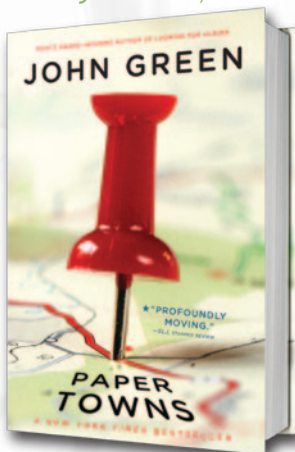
Edgar Award Winner

School Library Journal Best Book

★ “*Wonderfully witty.*”
—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “*Profoundly moving.*”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

HC: 978-0-525-47818-8 • \$17.99
PB: 978-0-14-241493-4 • \$9.99



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When Margo and Quentin are nine they make a horrible discovery, and respond in very different ways. Quentin says, “As I took those two steps back, Margo took two equally small and quiet steps forward.” Do these descriptions still apply to the characters when they reach high school? When the story ends? What changes?
- Describe Q’s best friends. Where do they fit into the caste system of Winter Park High? If you had to choose one of these characters as your best friend who would you pick and why?
- When Margo disappears, she’s always been known to leave “a bit of a bread crumb trail.” What clues does Margo leave for Quentin? How are these different from clues left previously?
- Discuss what Q finds in the abandoned mini-mall and how the book contributes both to the plot of the story and to what he ultimately learns about Margo and about himself.
- The definition of a “paper town” changes many times in the book. Describe the evolution of its meaning. How does it relate to the mystery? To the themes of the book?
- With which character’s version of the “real” Margo do you most agree?
- Q’s parents describe people as “mirrors” and “windows.” What does this mean? Do you agree with this metaphor?
- Q comes to this conclusion: “Margo was not a miracle. She was not an adventure. She was not a fine and precious thing. She was a girl.” Discuss.
- Discuss the last line of the book, how it relates to the rest of the story, and what it ultimately says about Margo and Q’s relationship.
- Do you think the characters Margo targets for revenge get what they deserve? Does Lacey deserve to be included?
- When Margo disappears after her outing with Q, it’s not the first time she’s seemingly vanished for a long period. Describe Margo’s other adventures and note any common threads between the trips. What makes her disappearance after her night with Q different from the others?
- Which philosophy of life do you most agree with: Margo’s Strings? Whitman’s Grass? Or Q’s Cracked Vessel? Why?

AN ABUNDANCE OF KATHERINES

ABOUT THE BOOK

19 Katherines and counting...

When it comes to relationships, Colin Singleton's type is girls named Katherine. And when it comes to girls named Katherine, Colin is always getting dumped. Nineteen times, to be exact. On a road trip miles from home, this anagram-happy, washed-up child prodigy has ten thousand dollars in his pocket, a bloodthirsty feral hog on his trail, and an overweight, Judge Judy-loving best friend riding shotgun—but no Katherines. Colin is on a mission to prove The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability, which he hopes will predict the future of any relationship, avenge Dumpees everywhere, and finally win him the girl. Love, friendship, and a dead Austro-Hungarian archduke add up to surprising and heart-changing conclusions in this ingeniously layered comic novel about reinventing oneself.

ALA Michael L. Printz Honor Book

ALA Best Book for Young Adults

***Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Finalist**

***Booklist* Editors' Choice**

***Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of the Year**

***Horn Book Fanfare* List selection**

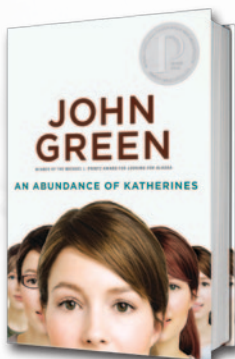
★ *"Fully fun, challengingly complex and entirely entertaining."*

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ *"Laugh-out-loud funny."*

—*The Horn Book*, starred review

HC: 978-0-525-47688-7 • \$16.99
PB: 978-0-14-241070-7 • \$8.99



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Colin spends most of the story devising a formula to predict romantic success. If it worked, would you use it? Why or why not? Visit sparksflyup.com to try the formula yourself!
- John Green uses footnotes throughout the book. How does this change the way you read the story? Did you interact with the text in a different way? How?
- *An Abundance of Katherines* is written in the third person. John Green's first book, *Looking for Alaska*, is written in the first person. How does the difference impact the book? Do you prefer one over the other? Why? Why do you think the author made the decision to try a third-person voice in his second book?
- What does Colin learn about storytelling? Why is this important? How does this change his understanding of his past and current relationships?
- Do you agree that Colin was always the dumpee? Do you think he was ever responsible for the breakup?
- What purpose does anagramming words serve for Colin? In what ways does this activity connect/isolate him from others?
- Throughout the novel, readers witness the complexities of the various relationships among the characters. Consider whose relationship seemed most similar to one of your own personal relationships. What about it reminded you of your experiences?
- Lindsey tells Colin, "How you matter is defined by the things that matter to you." Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not?
- After a moment of self-actualization, Hassan tells Colin, "I'm a not-doer." What does he mean by this assessment of himself? Why does he pledge that he will change? Consider passivity in others; are there times that this can prove to be hurtful or harmful? Offer some examples.
- While desperately trying to fix his Theorem, Colin cries, "Eureka. I figured something out. The future is unpredictable." Though most people would find his observation obvious, why does Colin's understanding of this fact prove to be so profound? In what ways does this discovery signify the evolution in Colin's understanding of the power of story?

LOOKING FOR ALASKA

ABOUT THE BOOK

Before and After.

Miles “Pudge” Halter is abandoning his safe—okay, boring—life. Fascinated by the last words of famous people, Pudge leaves for boarding school to seek what a dying Rabelais called the “Great Perhaps.”

Pudge becomes encircled by friends whose lives are everything but safe and boring. Their nucleus is razor-sharp, sexy, and self-destructive Alaska, who has perfected the arts of pranking and evading school rules. Pudge falls impossibly in love. When tragedy strikes the close-knit group, it is only in coming face-to-face with death that Pudge discovers the value of living and loving unconditionally.

ALA Michael L. Printz Award Winner

ALA Best Book for Young Adults

ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers

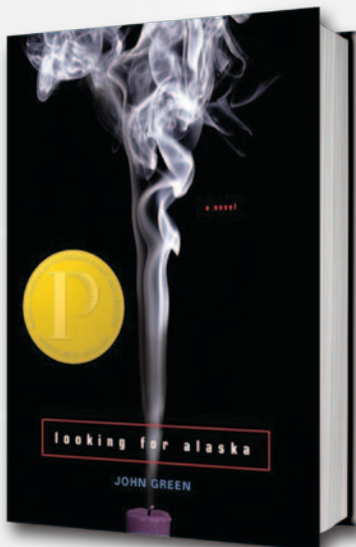
***Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Finalist**

***Booklist* Editors' Choice**

***Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of the Year**

***School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year**

HC: 978-0-525-47506-4 • \$16.99
PB: 978-0-14-240251-1 • \$8.99



SOME INTENTIONALLY VAGUE AND BROAD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BY MR. JOHN GREEN

- Is forgiveness universal? I mean, is forgiveness really available to all people, no matter the circumstances? Is it, for instance, possible for the dead to forgive the living, and for the living to forgive the dead?
- I would argue that both in fiction and in real life, teenage smoking is a symbolic action. What do you think it's intended to symbolize, and what does it actually end up symbolizing? To phrase this question differently: Why would anyone ever pay money in exchange for the opportunity to acquire lung cancer and/or emphysema?
- Do you like Alaska? Do you think it's important to like people you read about?
- By the end of this novel, Pudge has a lot to say about immortality and what the point of being alive is (if there is a point). To what extent do your thoughts on mortality shape your understanding of life's meaning?
- How would you answer the old man's final question for his students? What would your version of Pudge's essay look like?

- Discuss the book's unusual structure. Why do you suppose Green chose this format for telling his story? How else might he have structured the material?
- Miles tells the story in his own first-person voice. How might the book differ if it had been told in Alaska's voice or the Colonel's? Or in the voice of an omniscient narrator?
- Dr. Hyde says, "Everything that comes together falls apart." Do you think the author agrees? How is this Zen belief explored in the novel?
- Alaska loves these two lines from W. C. Auden: "You shall love your crooked neighbor / With your crooked heart." What do these lines mean to you and why do you think Alaska likes them so much?



AND NOW A WORD

Q: Your first book, *Looking for Alaska*, was published just five years after you graduated from college. Did you always plan on being a novelist, and what drew

A: I always liked writing and dreamt of being able to publish books, but I never intended to write for a living (and I still don't, really--I do, and enjoy, many other kinds of work). As for why I write for teenagers, I suppose it's because I find teenagers, both as readers and as characters, more interesting than I find adults. (Sorry, adults! Thank you for reading my books and everything, but, yeah, I just don't...like...care about you very much.) Teenagers are doing so much for the first time: falling in love, encountering mortality, experiencing the great and terrible burden of sovereignty, and asking the big existential questions about whether there is a point to being alive. Because all of this is so new and exciting, they're able to think about it (and I'm able to write about it) without ironic distance or self-consciousness that tends to accompany adulthood.

Q: You've published several successful works in a short amount of time. Tell us a bit about how you organize your writing schedule.

A: In retrospect, it happened in a relatively short period of time, but each of the books took three or four years, which seemed long at the time. The truth is, I'm not nearly as organized or prolific as I'd like to be. I try to write each morning between eight and noon, and then I spend my afternoons working on videos and other projects, but I delete the vast majority of what I write.

Q: From *Looking for Alaska* to *The Fault in Our Stars*, you don't shy away from young adult issues like drug use, emerging sexuality, conflicts with parents, depression. What kind of feedback do teens give you about that approach?

A: I've received more than ten thousand emails in the last six years from teenagers, and zero of them--actually and literally zero--have expressed any kind of concern or discomfort with the so-called "mature content" in my books. I think this is because contemporary teens are excellent critical readers--they've learned critical discernment not only in their English classes but from their countless encounters with multivalent and ambiguous messaging in advertising and television shows and their own interpersonal relationships. They assume (rightly)

FROM THE AUTHOR:

that novels are not manuals for how to live one's life, but instead attempts to reveal some true things through made-up stories.

Q: *The Fault in Our Stars* has a lot of very detailed information on what it's like to be a sick teenager and different types of cancer treatments. What kind of research did you do to learn about all that? Any big surprises/unexpected forks in the road during your research?

A: Well, cancer (and everything else) is treated fictitiously in the novel, so in many cases I made up treatments or embraced improbabilities that suited the story. That said, I did read a lot about cancer in the years I was working on *The Fault in Our Stars*. I also received lots of help from talking with people living with cancer and their families. I was also very fortunate to be able to call upon the expertise of my father-in-law, who is a surgical oncologist.

Q: In your author's note, you urge readers not to assume the *The Fault in Our Stars* is based on your own real-life experiences, and to appreciate it as fiction. Are those sorts of questions something you deal with a lot as a writer of fiction?

A: Many of the people reading *The Fault in Our Stars*, especially at first, will be aware that I was friends with Esther Earl, a teenager whose cancer was similar to the cancer Hazel has in the book. *The Fault in Our Stars* was profoundly shaped by Esther and my affection for her. Many of my readers will also know that I worked as a student chaplain at a children's hospital for five months shortly after I graduated from college, and that ever since I've been trying to write a novel about teens living with chronic illness. Many of the kids I met as a chaplain inspired pieces of this book, too. But it is still a novel, and it's very important to me that it be read as fiction. Readers do often ask me which parts of my books are taken from real life. I think it's natural to be curious about such things, particularly because readers see a lot of my life on Twitter and Tumblr and YouTube. But inside of a book, I've always felt like the writer's job is to disappear as much as humanly possible.

Q: What can you tell us about what you're working on next?

A: Oh, I have no idea. I've been working for a while on a story set in tunnels underneath Paris and Moscow, but who knows. Ask me in hopefully-less-than-four-years.

HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!

All you need is a little bit of organization and some friends who are as excited about the books they read as you are.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

The best way to find people to be in your reading group is to ask your friends.

Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with six to eight people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your reading group, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

Figure out when and where you want to meet.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's your group and so you get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

Decide how you will choose books and how the discussions will be run.

Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just all get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a reading group. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit

www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians.

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