

## *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green

by Hannah Miller and Jamie Walters

### About the Book:

*The Fault in Our Stars*, a novel by John Green, was first published in January 2012. This is his fourth solo novel. The book spent seven weeks on the New York Times best-seller list as well as many weeks as the number one seller on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com in June 2011 when the title was announced. The book made literary history when Green promised to sign every pre-order. John and his brother, Hank Green, already had a large internet following due to a series of YouTube videos called "Vlog Brothers". Fans of the "Vlog Brothers" call themselves nerdfighters (those who fight "world suck," not those who fight nerds) and were some of the early, but not the only, supporters of *The Fault in Our Stars*.

John Green said that the inspiration for this novel came from his time spent as a chaplain at a children's hospital and from a "nerdfighter" named Esther, who died from cancer in 2010.

Green said, "The characters came to me first. I worked as a student chaplain at a children's hospital about 12 years ago for five months. And during that time I wanted to, I started wanting to write about these kinds of young people and it just took a while."

(<http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=145903081>)

*The Fault in Our Stars* addresses issues of cancer, life, love and loss through the main characters, Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus "Gus" Waters. Both Hazel and Augustus are teenage cancer survivors and *The Fault in Our Stars* follows their young lives over a period of months.

**Length:** 313 pages

**Location:** Indianapolis, Indiana and Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Recommended Reading Age:** 15 & up (due to mature content)

### Characters

**Hazel Grace Lancaster:** The story's narrator. Hazel is a 16-year-old cancer survivor and an only child. She was diagnosed with Thyroid cancer at the age of 13. Thanks to a miracle drug, Hazel is able to live a relatively normal life, with the exception of the oxygen tank she must carry with her. Her favorite book is *An Imperial Affliction*, by Peter Van Houten.

**Augustus Waters:** Augustus is a charismatic, enigmatic 17-year-old cancer survivor. Before the cancer diagnosis that meant amputating part of his leg, Augustus was a talented basketball player. He has two older sisters. He and Hazel meet at a Cancer Survivors support group.

**Isaac:** Isaac is a teenage eye cancer survivor and Augustus' best friend. Isaac, Hazel and Augustus meet at Cancer support group and remain friends throughout the novel.

**Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster:** Hazel's parents

**Mr. and Mrs. Waters:** Augustus' parents

**Peter Van Houten:** The author of Hazel's favorite book, *An Imperial Affliction*. Van Houten lives in Amsterdam and struggles with alcoholism.

**Patrick:** Adult leader of the Cancer support group and cancer survivor.

### Synopsis (contains spoilers):

Teenage cancer survivors converge every Wednesday night in the stone-walled basement of an Episcopal church in Indianapolis. It is in this basement where Hazel Grace Lancaster—Thyroid metastasized in her lungs—meets Augustus Waters—Osteosarcoma resulting in the loss of a leg. Their friendship blossoms from the first night they meet. They bond over not just their respective cancer experiences, but also their choice in literature. Hazel gives Augustus a copy of her favorite book, *An Imperial Affliction* by Peter Van Houten, a book she has read probably a million times, a book completely devoid of zombies, storm troopers and blood, which happen to be the central characters of Augustus' favorite novel *The Price of Dawn*.

After reading *An Imperial Affliction*, Augustus writes to Van Houten. To the surprise of Hazel, who has done this hundreds of times previously, Van Houten writes back. It is precisely this correspondence that swings Hazel and Augustus into a tentative romance that takes them all the way to Amsterdam (chaperoned by Hazel's mom) to meet Peter Van Houten by a wish made through The Genie Foundation. Their time in Amsterdam proves to be very special, aside from the disappointing experience of meeting Van Houten. Upon their return home, Augustus' cancer returns.

Their time back home consists of visits to the hospital, a return to Support Group, G-tube emergencies and ultimately, hospice. The loss of Augustus Waters is devastating for Hazel Grace. At his funeral, she is surprised to see Van Houten in attendance and even more surprised to find that Augustus had been corresponding with him since their visit. Through this correspondence, Hazel discovers that Augustus asked Van Houten to write a eulogy for Hazel (as she had for him). He sent Van Houten his thoughts of Hazel and asked for him to rewrite them into something eloquent and flowing. Upon reading them, Van Houten had "nothing to add". Ultimately, Augustus' final words to Hazel are the best gift she could've been given.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Several important friendships, aside from Hazel Grace & Augustus, are developed throughout the text. How significant a role does the friendship between Isaac and Augustus play in their lives? What about Hazel and Kaitlyn? How does cancer play a role in developing or changing these friendships? (1 Samuel 20-- David & Jonathan's friendship)
2. Hazel's relationship with her parents is very important. How would you describe their relationship? Hazel's relationship with her mom? Her dad? How are her relationships different with each of her parents? How does their relationship change through the book?
3. Hazel says, "There is only one thing in this world (worse) s\*\*\*\*\*r than biting it from cancer when you're sixteen, and that's having a kid who bites it from cancer." (p8) How does this realization affect Hazel's relationship with her parents? What are some of her concerns for her parents? Are these fears alleviated later in the book? What do you think about their plans for "after"? (Ephesians 6:1, Proverbs 22:6)
4. How would you describe Gus' relationship with his parents? How does Gus' way of coping with cancer differ from his parents? (John 16:33)
5. What role does *An Imperial Affliction* and *The Price of Dawn* play for Hazel and Augustus? Do you have books that hold the same importance in your life? (John 1:1-8, Psalm 119:105)
6. Dealing with sickness, loss and grief are major themes throughout the text. How does Support Group help the process? How well do you think Hazel handles Augustus' relapse/death? (Romans 14:19, 2 Corinthians 4: 8-9, John 16:22)
7. While in Amsterdam, Augustus and Hazel discuss their beliefs of an afterlife. What do they share? How does their faith (or lack of faith) effect these beliefs? What do you believe? What does Scripture say? (John 11:17-26)
8. Augustus and Hazel share several intimate moments with one another throughout the text, especially while on their sojourn in Amsterdam. How did these events affect their relationship? Was it appropriate for them to share such moments? (Deuteronomy 5:18, 1 Corinthians 13:4-13)

