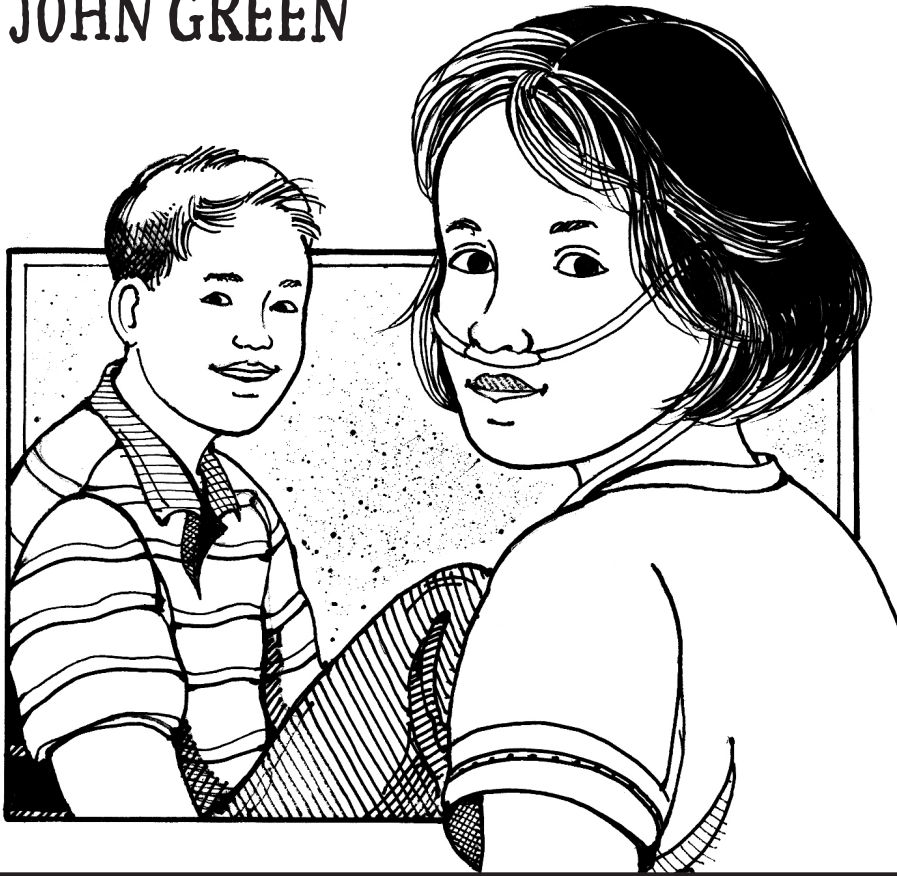


# Novel·Ties

## THE FAULT IN OUR STARS

JOHN GREEN



## A Study Guide

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### LEARNING LINKS

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## SYNOPSIS

*The Fault in Our Stars* is the tragic love story, told with poignant humor, of Hazel Grace Lancaster and Gus Waters, teens in Indianapolis, Indiana, who meet at a “Cancer Kids” Survival Group. Gus, a former basketball star, uses a prosthetic leg to take the place of one he has lost to cancer. Although his cancer is in remission, he has come to the group to support his friend Isaac, who has lost one eye to cancer and will soon lose the other. Hazel drags an oxygen tank with her, since her thyroid cancer has spread to her lungs.

Hazel and Gus are drawn to each other immediately. Gus invites Hazel to his house to watch the movie *V for Vendetta* with Natalie Portman. Watching the movie together, they build a friendship, which deepens as they talk about Hazel’s favorite book, *An Imperial Affliction*.

The many unanswered questions left by this book, which ends in the middle of a sentence, captivate Hazel. She has repeatedly written to the author, Peter Van Houten, but has never received an answer. Soon Gus, as fascinated with this unfinished story as Hazel, is able to track down Peter’s assistant Lidewij in Amsterdam and he shares her responses. Hazel now wants to go to Amsterdam to question the author about what happens to the characters in his book. Gus stages a Netherlands-themed picnic to reveal that he has not used his “Wish” granted to young cancer patients by a national organization, and he has arranged for them to travel together to Amsterdam to meet Peter Van Houten. Hazel’s mother will accompany them.

When they finally meet the author of *An Imperial Affliction*, they are disappointed to discover that he is a rude, angry, unfriendly drunk who will not answer their questions. They return to their hotel where they make love for the first and only time.

Upon their return to Indianapolis, Gus reveals to Hazel that his cancer has returned: a scan has confirmed this terminal diagnosis. At the support group, each of their friends delivers a eulogy at a mock funeral for Gus. Eight days of gruesome and terrifying decline later, Gus is dead.

At Gus’s funeral, Hazel is shocked to see Peter Van Houten. He reveals that he had kept in touch with Gus. He shares with Hazel that his daughter had died of cancer, inspiring him to create the character of Anna in *An Imperial Affliction*. Seeing Hazel in Amsterdam reminded him of the years that Anna didn’t have, which affected him profoundly.

The book ends as Isaac gives Hazel a letter that Gus wrote to Van Houten but never sent. In it he declares his love for Hazel. The book ends with the words “I do” which Green says comes from Shakespeare whose plays end in marriage or death; thus “I do.”

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Preview the book by reading the title, author's name, publisher's blurb, and critics' reviews on the covers of the book. What do you think the book will be about? Have you read anything else by John Green? Have you ever seen him on television or in person? Read the Author Information section on page four of this study guide and look on the internet to learn more about the life of the writer.
2. Look at the opening pages of the book. Do some research online to find out about Esther Earl. Why does John Green dedicate the book to her? Look at the author's note. What does he ask from the reader?
3. The title of the book is part of a quotation from Shakespeare's tragedy *Julius Caesar*.

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

What do you think the quotation might mean for a book about young adults with cancer?

4. Study the glossary and write in your own words what five of the words mean.
5. Describe your family. Are you an only child or do you have siblings? What is your position in your family? Do you have two adults living in your house? Do you have grandparents? How does your family structure affect your perception of the world?
6. Have you or has anyone in your family faced a serious medical problem? Have you read any books in which a character had a medical problem? Describe the problem. How has it affected your life or the character's life?
7. **Social Studies Connection:** Find maps of Indianapolis and Amsterdam so that you can locate the places where the action of the story occurs.
8. Part of the appeal of this novel is the humorous aspect of the story. The author uses several techniques of humor.
  - a. *Exaggeration*—stretching the truth; overstatement
  - b. *Irony*—stating or implying the opposite of what is expected
  - c. *Absurdity*—use of outrageous or preposterous statements
  - d. *Sarcasm*—a form of dry, verbal humor in which the speaker says the opposite of what is meant

As you read, identify the form of humor that the author is using in each instance. Determine why the author used humor in this book.

## CHAPTERS 1 – 3

**Vocabulary:** Draw a line from each word on the left to its definition on the right. Then use the numbered words to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- |                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. decrepit      | a. doubtful; equivocal        |
| 2. peril         | b. pretend                    |
| 3. strategy      | c. worldly; cosmopolitan      |
| 4. gait          | d. dilapidated; feeble        |
| 5. dubious       | e. exposure to injury; danger |
| 6. edible        | f. plan                       |
| 7. feign         | g. able to be eaten           |
| 8. sophisticated | h. manner of walking          |

.....

1. My little brother would \_\_\_\_\_ illness so that he might be able to stay home from school.
2. After years of neglect, the mansion on the hill appeared worn and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Marching in the parade, my \_\_\_\_\_ had to match that of the others in my line.
4. It is easy to confuse those wild mushrooms that are \_\_\_\_\_ with those that are poisonous.
5. Because of their well-planned \_\_\_\_\_, the generals believed they would win the battle.
6. As the rainstorm approached and mudslides were predicted, the residents feared that they and their houses were in \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Afraid that her illness would not be cured by a doctor, she turned to \_\_\_\_\_ alternative therapies.
8. Children who are brought up in the city seem more \_\_\_\_\_ than those who are brought up in the country.

**CLOZE ACTIVITY:**

The following passage has been taken from Chapter Fifteen. Read it through completely and then fill in each blank with a word that makes sense. Afterwards, you may compare your language with that of the author.

“Ma’am,” Augustus said, nodding toward her, “your daughter’s car has just been deservedly egged by a blind man. Please \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> the door and go back inside \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> we’ll be forced to call the \_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>3</sup> After wavering for a moment, Monica’s \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> closed the door and disappeared. Isaac \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> the last three eggs in quick \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> and Gus then guided him back \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> the car. “See, Isaac, if you \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> take—we’re coming to the curb \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup>—the feeling of legitimacy away from \_\_\_\_\_,<sup>10</sup> if you turn around so \_\_\_\_\_<sup>11</sup> feel like *they* are committing a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>12</sup> by watching—a few more steps— \_\_\_\_\_<sup>13</sup> cars get egged, they’ll be confused \_\_\_\_\_<sup>14</sup> scared and worried and they’ll just \_\_\_\_\_<sup>15</sup> to their—you’ll find the door \_\_\_\_\_<sup>16</sup> directly in front of you—quietly \_\_\_\_\_<sup>17</sup> lives.” Gus hurried around the front \_\_\_\_\_<sup>18</sup> the car and installed himself in \_\_\_\_\_<sup>19</sup> shotgun seat. The doors closed, and \_\_\_\_\_<sup>20</sup> roared off, driving for several hundred \_\_\_\_\_<sup>21</sup> before I realized I was headed \_\_\_\_\_<sup>22</sup> a dead-end street. I circled the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>23</sup> and raced back past Monica’s house.

I never took another picture of him.