

# JOHN GREEN'S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW OF ADOLESCENTS WITH CANCER

<sup>1</sup>M. JEBASELVI, <sup>2</sup>M.V. SIVAKUMAR

<sup>1</sup>PhD. Research Scholar, Department of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Guide & Supervisor, Department of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

## Abstract

This paper deals with the Psychological Struggle of young adults with cancer about 'THE FAULT IN OUR STARS' a contemporary young adult novel written by John Green. This title is inspired by the line "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings." These lines were said by nobleman Cassius to Brutus in Act 1, Scene 2 of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare. The title The Fault in Our Stars gives the impression that sometimes-bad stuff happens in life that can't be our fault and can't be avoided at any cost. Unbiased like Hazel and Augustus didn't do anything to root cause their cancer but they can't avoid or change the fact. They give us a beautiful message that they can still live life and make their own decisions despite the fault in their stars, even when they know the predictable fate that awaits them. This novel is John green's fourth solo novel and overall, the sixth novel was published on January 10, 2012. This novel is narrated by a 16-year-old girl named Hazel Grace Lancaster who suffers from thyroid cancer that has affected her lungs. She was forced to attend a cancer support group by her parents where she later meets and falls in love with Augustus Waters, a 17-year-old ex-basketball player who has a type of cancer that causes him to lose his leg and wear a prosthetic and also has a survival rate that is much higher than Hazel's death sentence. This novel has received critical praise for its humour, language, strong characters, themes and a new outlook on cancer and romance. This paper discusses the writer's sensitivity to bring out the sufferings caused by both cancer and psychological struggles in the novel about protagonists. This paper also focused more on Hazel and Augustus' psychological circumstances, their cancer illness, and their intense fear of life and death despite being raised in such a complex health issue. This paper gives an appeal to the sense of humour and courage of Hazel and Augustus who hides their pain to protect their families. This paper discusses how does the writer bring both tears and laughter through strong characters, Hazel and Augustus, in the novel. This paper discusses the main theme such as family, coming of age, life and death, being different, Religion and Philosophy. This paper discusses the writer's sensitivity to bring out the sufferings caused by both cancer and psychological struggles in the novel about protagonists. The paper addresses adolescents with health issues and how to be positive enough to live life at the present moment. Hence, this paper is entitled JOHN GREEN'S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW OF ADOLESCENTS WITH CANCER is much important to understand the psychological issues of an adolescent with health issues for better empowerment of youth.

**Keywords:** American literature, American fiction, young adult genre, adolescent issues and challenges, Anxiety and depression, Cancer in adolescents, life and death, reality, Religion and Philosophy.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence age is considered as most challenging years of life which is unique in their emotional, multiple physical and social changes that help teenagers to develop their personalities and quirks as they make effort to move around the turbulence, but what about the adolescence with serious illness who fights for the life every day or counting days to live. They are different from other adolescence with good physical health and mind. They are exposed to hospitals, medicines, and other medical procedures regularly leading to hurtadolescents' mental health as well as physical health. They eventually have negative thoughts on life and death at a young age. This paper discusses such adolescents with cancer and their mental health through strong characters Hazel and Augustus in the novel entitled as 'The Fault In Our Stars.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of this research are to recognize and understand the mental health of young adults with cancer such as Hazel and Augustus about John Green's novel 'The Fault In Our Stars. To help the researchers to appreciate the value of Young Adult Literature for further research; to find the issues and challenges faced by adolescence through Young Adult Literature; to explain Young Adult Literature as a source of research to know about the young adults in society; to creating awareness on the liberation of child's development in the modern period; to know about physical, mental and emotional growth of young adult; to know about how challenges in society affect the young adult personality development; to encourage the readers to comprehend the value of Young adult literature that reflects society.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is based on primary and secondary sources to expose the fact and attempted to extract the theme narrated by John Green's 'The Fault In Our Stars, a Young Adult Literary work. The scholar used printed articles, e-sources, magazines, printed books as secondary sources to enhance this research title. The researcher used methods like Analysing, narrative,

explanatory to write this research based on young adult literature.

## HYPOTHESIS

This research is acknowledged the mental health of adolescence with serious health illnesses like cancer, issues of Cancer and its challenges that are reflected in Young Adult Literature are true in the present scenario and which helps the elders, teachers and readers enable them to understand and try to implement positive measures to make the adolescence to overcome from illness. Giving positive encouragement to live against all odds.

## LIMITATIONS

This research paper is focused on two strong characters from John Green's novel 'The Fault In Our Stars and not analysing the entire Young Adult novel. The chosen characters for the research are Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters as both suffer from Cancer, their mental health is discussed and act as a mirror reflection of adolescents with cancer in modern society. This research includes psychological problems of adolescents belonging to cancer issues in America. However, this research is much more valid due to its theme which represents and to understand the psychological condition of some teenagers in America due to cancer.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Michael Green is a contemporary American author, multi-million worldwide bestseller and well-known YouTube content creator since 2007 under a channel named "vlogbrothers". John Green was born on August 24, 1977, to a couple named Mike and Sydney Green in Indianapolis, Indiana. His debut novel entitled Looking for Alaska has won the 2006 Printz Award. Several of his subsequent books have debuted at number one on The New York Times Best Seller list. After graduation, John Green devoted five months working as a student chaplain at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio where he got inspired to write such epic novel 'The Fault in Our Stars. The most popular novel of John Green is 'The Fault

in *Our Stars* which was later adapted to film under the same title, directed by Josh Boone and starring Ansel Elgort, Shailene Woodley, and Nat Wolff was released on June 6, 2014. In recent times a Hindi feature of the film adaptation of the novel, entitled *Dil Bechara*, starring Sushant Singh Rajput, Sanjana Sanghi, Saswata Chatterjee, Swastika Mukherjee, Saif Ali Khan, and directed by Mukesh Chhabra was released on July 24, 2020, on Disney+ Hotstar. Both book and its American and Indian film adaptation have gained number one box office and it was a commercial and critical success. His fiction has been acknowledged with many tributes, including a Printz Medal, a Printz Honour and an Edgar Award. John has twice been a finalist for the LA Times Book Prize and he was listed as one of The 100 Most Influential People in the World, in the following year another film based on Green's novel, *Paper Towns*, was released on July 24, 2015. *Turtles All the Way Down* is John Green's fifth solo novel and his seventh overall, published on October 10, 2017, by Dutton Books. Besides being a novelist, he is well known for his online content creation on YouTube. Along with his brother, Hank Green he launched the 'Vlogbrothers' channel on YouTube in 2007. Subsequently, John and Hank have launched events like Project for Awesome and VidCon. They also created 11 online series which comprises Crash Course, an academic channel teaching literature, history, science, and other topics. John Green also hosts the weekly comedy podcast named Dear Hank & John and therefore the monthly essay podcast entitled *The Anthropocene Reviewed*, both of which the brothers have gone on the road and performed live versions of it.

### **THE FAULT IN OUR STARS' PLOT**

This novel is perfect for readers who expect to laugh, cry and smile throughout with characters of John Green's *The Fault In Our Stars*. This novel is focused on Hazel Grace Lancaster, a 16-year-old teenager who has been diagnosed with lung cancer since she was 13-years-old, who attends a cancer support group under her parent's compulsion. At first, she was reluctant to go to the support group, later she was interested to go because of Augustus Waters who is charming and witty. Augustus Waters had osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer

that causes him to lose his leg and wear a prosthetic but has recently had the all-clear. Both Hazel and Augustus go on a wave of emotions, including love, sadness and romance, during the search for the author of their favourite book. They travel together to Amsterdam in quest of Peter Van Houten the writer of *An Imperial Affliction*. While on their trip Augustus breaks some heartbreaking news to Hazel that shatters their worlds to fall apart around them.

### **KNOW ABOUT HAZEL GRACE**

Hazel Grace is sixteen years old young girl with short brown hair and brown eyes who has been suffering from thyroid cancer since the age of thirteen. Her lungs are damaged so badly due to cancer resulting in the inability to breathe without an oxygen tank that is connected to her nostrils and carries long where ever she goes. She is very mature when compared with other adolescence of her age. She is more analytical, thoughtful and considerate about her actions in comparison with Kaitlyn. She longs to live a normal life of a 16-year-old teenager and tries her best but also, she struggles hard to imagine her parent's life without her or after her death. Hazel has a dramatically different approach to life than Augustus's, but both teens will learn a lot from each other in the progress of the novel.

### **HAZEL GRACE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CANCER**

Hazel's unequalled journey throughout the novel is truly complicated in many ways. Hazel grew physically weaker as the novel progressed. This can be explained by the scene where she uses the stairs at Support Group at the start of the novel and chooses the elevator near the end of the novel, as her physical condition worsens. The most important aspect of Hazel's journey revolves around her mystical and philosophical thoughts of death. For instance, she has thoughts about depression has been placed on the list of side effects of cancer but according to her depression is not a side effect of cancer instead depression is a side effect of dying. She is obsessed over her death and its impact on those who surround her like parents and friends. She has fear of getting close with anyone because her death will hurt them as she knows her death isn't far off. She believes herself like she is

a“grenade” that can burst at any time. Her biggest fear is about her mother because when Hazel was nearly dying, she earwigged her mother saying if Hazel dies, she won't be a mother anymore, and that thought has always stayed with Hazel.

“...and that I hope she never finds out that I did hear. She said, “I won't be a mom anymore”. It gutted me pretty badly.” (pg 116-117).

Hazel can usually adjust much better to an unpleasant truth than to the perception that her parents are upset and hiding something from her. If parents and adolescents do not talk openly, the opportunities for misunderstanding are high. An adolescent's imagination can run wild, and fears may arise or be exaggerated. She has wired self-comparison with fictional characters of “An Imperial Affliction” and her fear of death inspires Hazel's mission to determine the end of characters in that novel. She used to affirm that everything turns out alright for Anna's mother so that she can persuade herself that her parents will end up alright.

Hazel's perspective on life and death changes over time with her relationship with Augustus. She realizes the truth that he is the grenade when his cancer reappears but then she isn't sorry, she ends up falling in love with him, even though it was hurting her immensely when he dies. Instead of thinking negatively, she treasures and feels extremely thankful for the time they do have together. She stood beside him until his last breath. Finally, Hazel grows more spiritually using saying “I do” at the end of the novel stating that she will love Augustus as long as she lives and realizes that death is not the universal end as she believed before. She began to believe that relationships will continue even if people do not exist. The word “I do” represent the marriage which is symbolic that take place through the memory of Hazel.

“I do, Augustus. / I do.”(pg.313)

## CONCLUSION

The novel “The Fault in Our Stars” brings out the realities and baseless societal conventions in respect to cancer teens and their sufferings till death. This novel popularises the idea that battling cancer is a noble, heroic, and rewarding act, thus showcasing the realities of cancer teens

in the novel. According to Hazel, there's nothing noble about struggling to breathe and conscious of her death will hurt others, or anything heroic for Augustus in experiencing his leg amputated, or rewarding for Isaac about losing his eyes due to cancer. Any normal person just looks at them as kids or kids with cancer who were put in the situation of dealing with an unbearable and sometimes incurable illness. The most emotional example of cancer's reality is Augustus himself after his cancer returns. He weakens quickly, and Hazel witnesses all the disgrace and pain he suffers as a result. Instead of bringing out the best in person, cancer results in worse in them just like Augustus. It is Augustus in reality was suffering so much physically, terrified and pitiful while trying not to struggle for himself and others around him. Both Hazel and Augustus experience feelings of sadness, depression or sometimes overwhelmed over the situation they handle with. Hazel is being matured enough to understand and readily adjust to an unpleasant truth of life. However, an adolescent who have cancer often feel "different," socially isolated, and restricted in their activities. They may have complex issues and feel overprotected. They may experience regular fear and pain. When these emotional complications are not dealt with, they can lead to anxiety, sadness, withdrawal, rebelliousness, or no interest in living. Parents with such teens can learn to support their psychological needs just like Hazel's parents supported her to fulfil her dream or quest of Peter Van Houten the writer of An Imperial Affliction. The novel showcases the untrue and positive conventions about cancer teens which are so deep to deal with a painful subject.

## Reference

- [1] <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-the-fault-in-our-stars/#gsc.tab=0>
- [2] <https://writology.com/blog/the-fault-in-our-stars-book-review-example.html#:~:text=The%20Fault%20in%20Our%20Stars%20is%20a%20piece%20of%20young,love%20story%20and%20a%20drama.&text=The%20book%20tells%20the%20story,is%20dying%20of%20thyroid%20cancer.>
- [3] Essay Sauce, Book review essay: "The fault in our stars". Available from: <<https://www.essaysauce.com/literat>

- ure-essays/book-review-essay-the-fault-in-our-stars/> [Accessed 13-09-21].
- [4] <https://www.essaysauce.com/literature-essays/book-review-essay-the-fault-in-our-stars/>
- [5] <https://www.essaysauce.com/psychology-essays/essay-positive-psychology/>
- [6] <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/the-fault-in-our-stars/themes/page/2/>
- [7] <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/the-fault-in-our-stars/themes/>
- [8] <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/the-fault-in-our-stars/character/hazel-grace-lancaster/>
- [9] <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Children-with-Chronic-Illness-Dealing-with-Emotional-Problems-and-Depression.aspx#:~:text=They%20may%20have%20school%20problems,they%20are%20sad%20or%20depressed.>