



JOHN GREEN
An Abundance of Katherines

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 dumper? Do you think he was ever responsible for the breakup?

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JOHN GREEN
Looking for Alaska

Discussion Questions

- Discuss the book's unusual structure. Why do you suppose Green chose this strategy for telling this story? What does it add to the novel? How else could the material have been structured? Would the effect have been different?
- 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?
- Miles's teacher Dr. Hyde tells him to "be present." What does this mean?
- What do you think "The Great Perhaps" means?
- Alaska loves these two lines from the poet 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?
- Dr. Hyde says, "Everything that comes together falls apart." Do you agree?
- Was it necessary for Alaska to die?
- Has this novel changed the way you regard human suffering? And death?

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It began with the online phenomenon . . . Brotherhood 2.0

In 2007, John Green and his brother Hank decided to communicate with each other only through daily video blogs. Their yearlong experiment became wildly popular:

- More than 10 million views
- Over 21,000 subscribers to the YouTube channel (making it one of the most popular channels in YouTube history)
- Featured on NPR's Weekend All Things Considered, BBC Radio 4, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the front page of Digg.com

It continues with . . . nerdfighters.com

In 2008, John and Hank created a new social networking Web site for nerdfighters* to come together and post their own videos and messages. It receives between 20,000 and 40,000 hits a day, and thousands of videos have been posted by fans.

Visit www.nerdfighters.com to join the nerdfighting community!

* The fans of Brotherhood 2.0 call themselves nerdfighters. A tightknit extraordinarily dedicated community, the nerdfighters (who are made of awesome) have raised thousands of dollars for charities and political campaigns, taken over the discussed pages of YouTube, and written hundreds of letters to Merriam—lobbying for the inclusion of the word "nerdfighter" in the dictionary.



PAPER TOWNS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR NERDFIGHTERS

- Which character would most likely be a Nerdfighter? Defend your answer.
- Rate the level of worldsuck for Quentin chapter by chapter.
- Do you think the Spiegelmans belong in the "evil baby orphanage"? Does Chuck Parson?
- Which character, scene, and line are most made of awesome? Post your choices in the forum on nerdfighters.com.
- Make a list of what each character might put "on their heads."
- Choreograph a "happy dance" for your favorite *Paper Towns* character.
- Create a scavenger hunt based on the book.
- Create a vlog about the book and upload it to nerdfighters.com and/or YouTube.

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 book club 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 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your book club, 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.

This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. 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 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 book club. 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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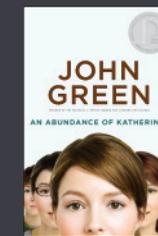
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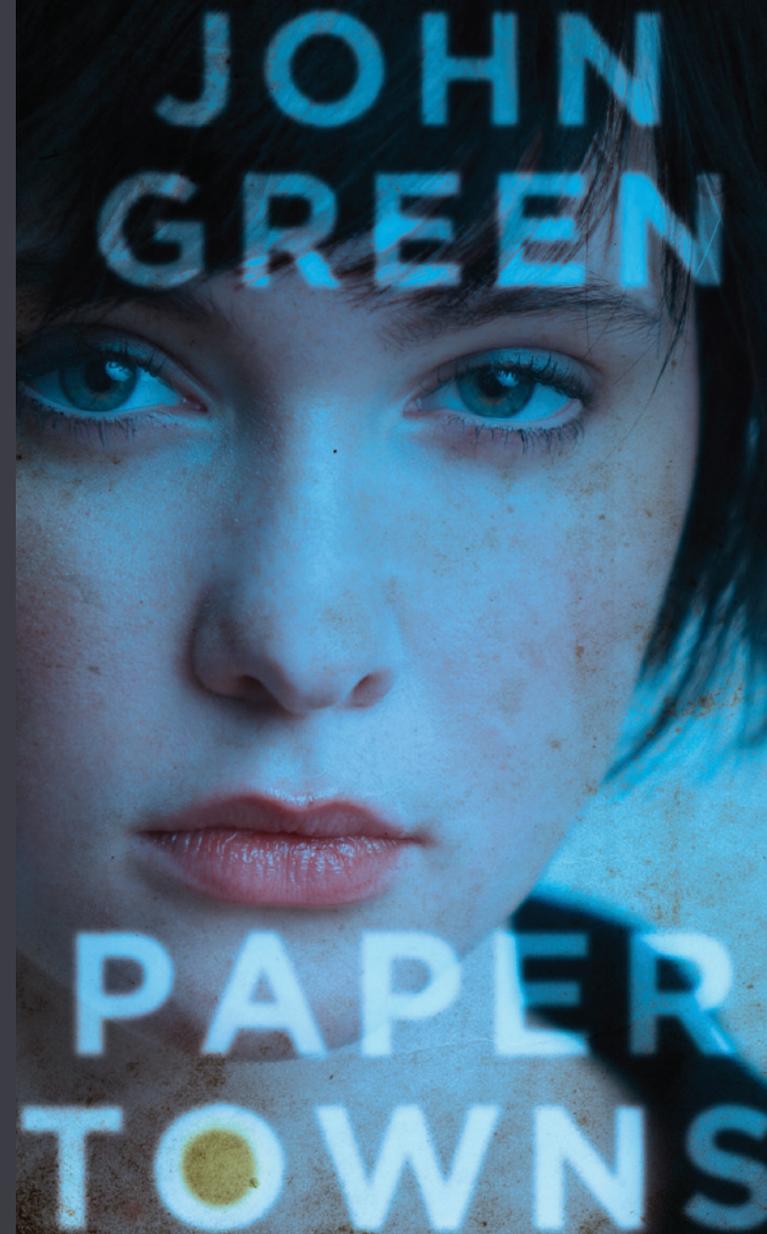


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DISCUSSION GUIDE

PRINTZ AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *LOOKING FOR ALASKA*



ABOUT THE BOOK



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.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOHN GREEN is the celebrated author of Printz-medalist *Looking for Alaska* and the Printz Honor Book *An Abundance of Katherines*. Both books have been finalists for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, received many starred reviews, and been placed on numerous state award lists. John’s work has been translated into eleven languages.

He has been a commentator on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” and reviewed books for publications, including *The New York Times* and *Booklist*. John was also one half (with his brother, Hank) of the enormously popular video project Brotherhood 2.0, which has been watched more than 10 million times. Although John grew up amid the subdivisions and theme parks of Orlando, he now lives with his wife, Sarah, in Indiana. You can visit him online at sparksflyup.com or at nerdfighters.com

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PAPER TOWNS

- 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” (p.5). 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? Why?
- How does Quentin struggle at times with his friendship with Ben? How does Q learn to accept Ben for who he is? How does this relate to Q’s changing understanding of Margo?
- Why do you think Margo picks Q as her accomplice on her campaign of revenge?
- 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?
- 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?
- Do you think Margo wants to be found? Do you think Margo wants to be found by Q?
- Why does Quentin begin to believe that Margo may have committed suicide? What clues make this seem like a viable solution to the mystery of her whereabouts?
- Describe Q’s tour of the various abandoned subdivisions he visits on his quest to find Margo. How are they different? How might these differences parallel the evolution of Q’s search?

- Discuss what Q finds in the abandoned minimall and how the book contributes both to the plot of the story and to what he ultimately learns about Margo and about himself.
- Discuss the road trip to find Margo. What are the most important events along the way? How does this adventure mirror the one Margo and Quentin had in the beginning of the book? Compare and contrast the two.
- Discuss the scene where Q finally finds Margo. How does her reaction to seeing her friends make you feel? Do you believe that she didn’t want Q to come after her?
- Why do you think Q makes the decision he does at the end of the book? Do you agree with his decision to turn down Margo’s invitation?
- 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?
- Do you think that Margo meant to give her friends a false impression of her true self?
- Q’s parents describe people as “mirrors” and “windows” (page 199). What does this mean? Do you agree with this metaphor?
- Q comes to this conclusion (p. 199): “Margo was not a miracle. She was not an adventure. She was not a fine and precious thing. She was a girl.” Discuss.
- The book is divided into three sections: The Strings; The Grass; and The Vessel. What is the connection between the sections/titles and the content within those sections? How do the sections/titles connect to the themes of the book?
- Which philosophy of life do you most agree with: Margo’s Strings? Whitman’s Grass? Or Q’s Cracked Vessel? Why?
- At different times, both Margo and Q use lines of poetry without considering the context of the whole poem. How do you think this changes the meaning?

- Q is reading *Moby Dick* in English class. How does it appear elsewhere in Q’s story?
- Q’s interpretation and understanding of Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” changes as the mystery progresses. What are the different phases of his understanding? Do you agree with his final conclusion about the poem’s meaning?
- The book opens with two epigraphs, a poem and a song. Why do you think the author chose these? Why do you think he chose to use them together?
- Another common term for a “paper town” is a “copyright trap.” Can you find examples of others? What are some other terms for copyright traps?
- 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.
- *Paper Towns* has two different covers. What does this symbolize to you? What does each version say about Margo? Do you think either one is “correct”?

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES FOR PAPER TOWNS

- Research the concept of paper towns. See if you can locate one (or more) in the area where you live. Find out its real story and then write a fictionalized version involving members of your school or town.
- Write an entry for Omnictionary about one of the major events or characters in the book.
- Radar says, “Coltrane’s playing is literally the most convincing proof of God’s existence I’ve ever come across” (p.112). What music would be this important to you? Create a playlist that could be listened to as you read *Paper Towns* or could be used as the soundtrack of the movie version.
- Create a trailer for *Paper Towns*. Use actors or voice-overs. Find real locations or create your own. Use graphic images or real life objects and people. When you’re finished, post it online.

