



## **GRIEF AND AFFECTION IN JOHN MICHAEL GREEN'S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The research is about grief and affection in John Michael Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*. The novel is seen as the representation of people who undergo grief but can cope with by getting affection from others. This is a library research and applies mimetic theory proposed by Abrams saying that it is the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe. However, literature as an art does not merely imitates the universe but it creates a new world that is taken from the real world. It means the story is reflects a real life through the literary work. The analysis is focused on grief and affection which represented by the characters Hazel Grace Lancaster, Augustus Waters, Isaac, Hazel's parents and Augustus' parents where they live their days with the fear of death, pain, and oblivion yet they try to figure out how to overcome their fear through affect each other. In conclusion, John Michael Green in his novel vividly portrays grief and affection.

Keywords: Grief, Affection, fear, Illness, disease.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

John Michael Green is an American author, YouTube content creator, vlogger, producer, and editor. He is Mike and Sydney Green's son who was born on August 24, 1977 in Indianapolis, Indiana. His younger brother was William Henry Hank Green II. Three weeks after he was born, his family moved to Michigan, then later Birmingham, Alabama, and finally to Orlando, Florida. He was curator at the Indianapolis Museum of Art before he started the web series, *The Art Assignment*. He loves football, and is a huge fan of Liverpool Football Club of the Premier League. He is a sponsor of English League One club AFC Wimbledon. Green has been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, and has extensively discussed his struggles with the disease on his YouTube channel. Nowadays, Green is well known as writer and youtuber as well (Peoplepill).

Green is best known in the literary world for his Young Adult novels. One of the interesting things about writing about teenagers for him is a lot of times they're experiencing grief for the first time. Childhood grief, in his opinion, is very

different from the way we grieve when we get older and teenagers are often experiencing that kind of grief for the first time and it's really difficult. Maybe it's partly because he went through it when he was a teenager and it's something he thinks a lot about. But it's really hard to figure out how to find meaning in life when we find out how hard it is to lose someone we love. He thinks that's one of the reasons he kept writing about that death because he thinks teenagers are often dealing with grief for the first time as kind of mature individuals and he's writing about it because he sees it a lot in my community (Green Web).

His works primarily focused on the experiences and feelings of real people in real situations. Using intellectual concepts and down to earth real language mixed with compassion and humor, his books have proved treats for a wide variety of his readers. Moreover, with his ambrosial and wistful writing style, he successfully creates certain experiences for his audiences. The recurring thematic strands exhibited in his writings involve the depiction of hope, courage, perseverance, challenges, and nature (Green).



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## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1. Clarification of Terms

The Fault in Our Stars is one of the most famous novels in the US and around the world nowadays. By writing this novel, Green attempts to turn down the stereotype that fighting the fatal disease of cancer is an epic impressive deed. Through a skillful use of metaphors, symbols and plenty of other huge equipment, he discusses how preventing most cancers influences the ordinary life of the patients and the lives of these round them. He portrays the injustice of the infection that plagues humans nowadays. He opts for displaying the actual suffering of the sufferers that's complete of tears, pains, and frustration rather than sugarcoating the reality (Peoplepill).

Grief means intense sorrow caused by loss of a loved one, especially by death and something that causes great unhappiness, a job, a limb, a life that involves processes and tasks at emotional (Dictionary). It is a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotion for people, regardless of whether their sadness stems from the loss of a loved one or from a terminal diagnosis they or someone they love have received. They might find themselves feeling numb and removed from daily life, unable to carry on with regular duties while saddled with their sense of loss. Individual experiences of grief vary and are influenced by the nature of the loss. Some examples of loss include the death of a loved one, the ending of an important relationship, job loss, loss through theft or the loss of independence through disability (wikipedia).

Meanwhile, affection means a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something feelings of love: a person's romantic feelings (Britannica Dictionary). It is a disposition or state of mind or body that is often associated with a feeling or type of love. It has given rise to a number of branches of philosophy and psychology concerning emotion, disease, influence, and state of being. Affection is popularly used to denote a feeling or type of love, amounting to more than goodwill or

friendship (Wikipedia).

### 2.2. Theory and Method

Since this research intends to reveal that the novel is the representation of people experience grief and affection, the analyses is seen through the mimetic theory. It is the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe. However, literature as an art does not merely imitates the universe but it creates a new world that is taken from the real world. It means the story is reflects a real life through the literary work (Abrams 9).

This is a library research, where all data are taken from the library through extensive reading and literary criticism. The data are collected from some libraries, especial University of Saint Thomas library, author's website, John Green, journals and library online. The Fault in Our Stars is treated as the primary source supported by data which are taken from internet that are relevant to the study. Secondary sources are taken from various books and other relevant sources from the internet. After all the secondary sources are collected, the analysis is done by selecting the most crucial episodes from the novel relating to grief and affection in the main characters. Then, the data are taken together to form a comprehensive and meaningful result for literary appreciation and interpretation.

## III. THE ANALYSIS

The Fault in Our Stars, a novel of 313 pages written by John Michael Green, is a story of a young teenage girl who has been diagnosed with lung cancer and attends a cancer support group which is at the beginning she initially refuses to join with. Because of her mother's support and persuasion, she finally joins the group but she has to use a portable oxygen cylinder to breathe properly wherever she goes. She meets a young man who suffers from cancer specifically osteosarcoma, a former basketball player and amputee and she later falls in love with him. Although he dies



soon after leaving a heartbroken girl, who realizes that even though they have limited time with each other, he gives her a forever within the numbered days. She goes to someplace with her mother and the young man to meet an old novelist, because she wants to ask something about the book he wrote. But when they meet him, they find out that, he is not a prolific writer, but a ruthless drunk who claims he cannot answer the questions they ask. At the end, she actually upset in everything that happened to his short love story but she still has parents where she gets affection.

### 3.1. Grief

Grief is a deep sadness caused by loss of a loved one, especially by death and something that causes great unhappiness, a job, a limb, a life that involves processes and tasks at emotional. The author shows the readers how grief is caused by the loss of health, a loved one and great unhappiness through the characters Hazel Grace Lancaster, Augustus Waters, Mrs. Lancaster, and Isaac. They all suffer and it makes them feel sad, lonely, and despair.

Green creates character Hazel Grace Lancaster as a representation of people who have suffered from cancer which can take their lives at any time. Hazel tries to keep her distance from the people she loves, so when she dies someday, the people she loves will not feel a deep loss because of her death. She was diagnosed with Stage 4 thyroid cancer and has considered herself a ticking time bomb ever since. Hazel knows that anything she does is insignificant in the grand scheme of the universe, so all she wants is to minimize the damage that her death will cause. Unlike others who faced a terminal illness, she wishes to tread lightly upon the earth rather than leave behind a legacy. Although she is not scared of dying, she worries that her parents will lost after she has gone. Their existence revolves around her illness, and she hates to think about what their daily lives will be reduced to when she is gone. Hazel says:

Late in the winter of my seventeenth year, my mother decided I was depressed, presumably because I rarely left the house, spent quite a lot of time in bed, read the same book over and over, ate infrequently, and devoted quite a bit of my abundant free time to thinking about death (3).

It is clear that Hazel has cancer which makes her think she will die. From beginning, she did not want to waste time explaining the situation because it makes her give up living. Cancer is not an ordinary disease but is very deadly and very excruciating. When someone has been diagnosed with cancer, there is very little chance of being cured. It is the form of grief described by the author in his novel. The author shows her disease through image where Hazel loses healthy limb becomes her hideous grief: the loss of her lung health. She says:

I had a surgery called radical neck dissection, ... Then radiation. Then they tried some chemo for my lung tumors. The tumors shrank, then grew. By then, I was fourteen. My lungs started to fill up with water. I was looking pretty dead, my hands and feet ballooned; my skin cracked; my lips were perpetually blue (24).

We can see how Hazel suffers a lot from the disease: she felt a painful operation when she was fourteen, moreover, her body is also getting worse. Teenagers usually play and even date at this age but she has to suffer and undeniable that she would probably die at very young age.

The author, furthermore creates Augustus Waters as character who also suffers from hideous grief. He was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, an aggressive bone cancer, and had his leg amputated as a result at his age of sixteen. After his leg was amputated, he went into remission. He says: "My name is Augustus



Waters, he said. I'm seventeen. I had a little touch of osteosarcoma a year and a half ago" (11). Green clears how cancer hurts people, like Augustus who feels such a deep pain when suffering from cancer and hopes that other people will not experience the same thing. Augustus who has the disease thinks that he has the privilege. He then says: "Cancer Perks are the little things cancer kids get that regular kinds don't: basketballs signed by sports heroes, free passes on late homework, unearned driver's licenses" (23). Augustus tells that there are some advantages of being a cancer survivor because other people will care more about him and it raises his feelings that other people also support him. He is one of the positive people who always takes the good side of being someone with cancer.

Grief is also shown by Mrs. Lancaster who tries to remain Hazel of her health. She is afraid of losing her daughter: Fear of her child healthy. She says: "You're not going to starve yourself to death just because Augustus died. You're going to eat dinner" (296). She worries about Hazel's health because Hazel does not care of her health anymore just because of Augustus' death.

The author then creates character Isaac, Hazel and August's mutual friend who facilitates their acquaintance at Support Group. He is cynical by nature, blinded by cancer, kicked to the curb by his girlfriend Monica, and often embodies skepticism and rage. It is worth noting that he shares his name with Biblical Isaac, who also was blind:

And it's looking like I have to get surgery in a couple weeks, after which I'll be blind. Not to complain or anything because I know a lot of us have it worse, but yeah, I mean, being blind does sort of suck (10).

He stays positive and alive although he has some fantastically improbable eye cancer. He is a true friend to both Hazel and Augustus, and seems like someone who does not easily give up, because when he

loses his eyesight from cancer, he still can tell another friends at the Support Group that there are many people who have worse condition than him.

### **3.2. Affection**

Affection is the expression of care, a feeling of liking and something feelings of love. It is a disposition or state of mind or body that is often associated with a feeling or type of love. The author represents characters to help each other to overcome the fear and general concern about grief that upcoming death which is about to unfold and impact their lives. Most of these characters help each other unknowingly but it does not take away the strong foundation of trauma in the story which author magnificently sets up.

Characters Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters are the portrait of people who give affection to each other. They have the same hobbies and preferences. They like reading, even frequently discussing about Peter van Houten's *An Imperial Affliction*. Augustus sends email to Peter only to know how the end of the story in that novel. Moreover, they both also exchange novel Hazel leave *An Imperial Affliction* to August and he gives her *Prince of Dawn*. We can see the following dialogue between Hazel and Augustus and it is a strong factor because it makes their conversation more intense than before. The similarity about their hobbies and preference are the factors that influence their affection.

Another form of affection is through reading poems. When people feel bored in doing something, one of the way how to make themselves better is reading. When they are on the plane, going to Amsterdam, Augustus asks Hazel to read him a poet. "Still perfect, he said read to me" (152). We can see how Augustus asks Hazel to read him a poet that can make their trip excited. Hazel actually feels nervous, but she convinces herself to make him happy and enjoy the trip.

Affection is also given by inviting



dinner: when they have dinner at Oranje restaurant for the first night in Amsterdam. One of the ways to forget the problems in our life: cancer pain, is going on a date with a partner and enjoy dinner. They share stories with each other and this is the first time August feeds Hazel:

Okay, I said and we clinked glasses. I took a sip. The tiny bubbles melted in my mouth and journeyed northward into my brain. Sweet. Crisp. Delicious. That is really good, I said. I've never drink champagne (163).

Hazel is really happy, enjoys dinner, and feels affection from Augustus by taking care of her while they have dinner together at restaurant. They even share stories to support each other. Green finally shows that affection fruits real love while. We can see how Hazel feels that she begins loving Augustus through the way he introduces her all things to make her realize that she is actually not alone when she finally knows Augustus. This kind of affection is given to Isaac through his girlfriend although just at the beginning of the story. His confidence in Augustus and Monica to carry him through the loss of his sight shows the way in which these young people depend on each other. Augustus' share reveals a lot about his character. He downplays his diagnosis, and will not say that he is there for support, he is there to give support. Isaac says: "Being blind does sort of such. My girlfriend helps. And friends like Augustus. He nodded toward the boy, who now had a name" (10). Green shows the readers about people who try to get affection through various ways so that they can be happy and forget pent-up pain. We can see in character Isaac who tries to relieve his pain when he broke up from his girlfriend because she still reaches Hazel and Augustus' affection.

Mrs. Lancaster, Hazel's mother affects Hazel by always giving moral support through suggesting Hazel to make friends and be a normal teenager. Although Hazel agrees to go not because she wants

to, but because it makes her parents happy but she keeps on giving her spirit: "Hazel, you're a teenager. You're not a little kid anymore. You need to make friends, get out of the house, and live your life" (7). Here, affection is given through the expression of care who wants Hazel to have the opportunity to be a normal teenager although Hazel knows she is not normal.

A mother will always support her children to make them happy as Hazel's mother does. She supports Hazel's love to Augustus and wants her to go to class, celebrates Hazel's birthday by grabs her childhood bear from the shelf and gives it for her birthday, and decides to call her friend Kaitlyn and go to the mall. We can see how Hazel's mother expresses her care to Hazel to make her feel better.

The author also shows affection between Augustus' parents, Augustus, and Hazel. The parents of the young people living with cancer react to the loss of their children in different ways. It is shown when they are having lunch at Augustus' house. Inviting Hazel to have lunch together at their house means that affection is the expression of care: material support. Augustus' Father says: "Everybody was so kind. Strong, too. In the darkest days, the Lord puts the best people into your life" (28). Moreover, they also give moral support to Augustus and Hazel by giving advice to them and tell some stories about the importance of being healthy.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The novel *The Fault in Our Stars* written by John Michael Green reflects human grief and affection. The author intends to represent people who suffer from deadly diseases but still have brevity to face life through characters' conditions in the novel. Moreover, the study delivers people to stand on the ground and be grateful in spite of sufferings in order to live a meaningful life, and makes it clear that there is always hope even when odds are against. It is clear that the main characters, Hazel and Augustus faces many hardships:



Augustus losing his leg, their friend Isaac losing his sight and Hazel struggling with her breathing but they stood against it with each other's support. Furthermore, affection through motivations and supports play important role in the lives of sick or grief people to be stronger to bear life. These can keep them going forward and make their lives easier in order to reach their goals. Besides, family and friends obviously strengths to get the needed supports.

In conclusion, the author through the novel motivates the readers to go through the difficult and hard times that they might encounter to help and focus on the bright side of life and optimistically think to give them the strength to overcome shortfalls, sufferings and hardships.

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