

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 11

Special Issue: 2

Month: March

Year: 2024

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

Impact Factor: 3.025

Received: 03.02.2024

Accepted: 12.03.2024

Published: 30.03.2024

Citation:

Elshina, J., and S. Sangeetha. "Examination of How Perception and Influence Impacts the Lives of Children with Chronic Illness in John Green's Novel *The Fault in Our Stars*." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 11, no. S2, 2024, pp. 23–25.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v11iS2-March.7501>

Examination of How Perception and Influence Impacts the Lives of Children with Chronic Illness in John Green's Novel *The Fault in Our Stars*

J. Elshina

*II MA English, Department of English
PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore*

Dr. S. Sangeetha

*Associate Professor, Department of English
PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore*

Abstract

*It is unacceptable to disregard fiction reading and writing as the caprices of a reality-deluded individual. Instead, it is an effective instrument for illuminating unsaid real-life incidents that are frequently disregarded despite existing as (non-fictional) facts in the world. Fiction gives these mute voices a platform for discourse that would otherwise have stayed as monologues in the dark. Illness narratives are one such effort to advocate on behalf of the voiceless. One such author who sheds light on the psychological struggles faced by young adults with chronic illnesses is John Green. His book *The Fault in Our Stars* gives a realistic picture of the struggles that children with chronic illnesses confront on a daily basis. Frequently, people pay little attention to how someone, particularly a young adult with a chronic disease, interprets everything that goes on around them and how that interpretation eventually affects their attitude and sense of insight about life. The article seeks to highlight the psychological aspect of how a person's lifestyle is directly impacted by the influence of particular individuals and shifts in perception.*

Keywords: Resilience, Illness Narratives, Growth Mindset, Existentialism.

Introduction

In the literary community, John Green's Young Adult novels are his most well-known works. Young adult fiction author John Green tells the tale of a 16-year-old girl who receives a cancer diagnosis in his book *The Fault in Our Stars*. The connection between Hazel and Augustus evolves during this book, which is a roller-coaster of emotions. She meets Augustus when she attends a support group. The book serves as motivation for young adults navigating a variety of challenges in the modern day, from defining their own identities and becoming independent to living with the intention of leaving a lasting legacy. Additionally, it instills in young people the value of living life to the fullest without sacrificing safety. The novel's protagonists stand for striking a balance between self-realization and leading a fulfilling existence. Because the novel's author, John Green, drew inspiration from real life, it is more accessible to readers of all ages and health

conditions and inspires them to embrace “the simpler pleasures of existence” in spite of obstacles that threaten to derail them (Green 21).

Barely Existing

Young people struggle to define their unique identities among peers who adhere to the herd mentality, despite the growing population and opportunity. The competitiveness to take over others progressively takes the place of the desire to explore one’s interests and attempt something novel. Hazel Grace Lancaster, the female lead in the book, lived her life with the sole goal of surviving as long as possible. When she joined the support group, she also entered a competition to outlive other cancer patients. She has a strong existentialist belief that life is predestined and that it is impossible for someone to “change the things I (she) can” (Green, 10). Augustus, who has a similar experience of surviving a near death experience, wanted to live his life in a way that he would not be forgotten by others. One story from the book describes Augustus’s decision to love Hazel despite his knowledge that she can pass away at any moment. Hazel is a girl whose only goal in life is to breathe. A youngster who experiences chronic sickness as a child is more likely to adopt Hazel’s perspective on life. They always build everything in their lives—either by themselves or by the people around them—around their condition. Rather than viewing Isaac and Monica as a typical teenage couple, like Augustus did, Hazel was worried about Monica. As she makes her way to Augustus’s house, she is reminded of her final hospital trip. Her “story” has always been about her cancer, and her interests have only been limited to reading. She even views other individuals who are similar to her only as sufferers. However, as Hazel points out, it is not just a side effect of dying; rather, the realities of having a chronic illness make daily living difficult and frequently prevent sick children from living their lives to the fullest.

A Little Love is all that was Needed

Hazel must have missed a lot of life’s experiences because she has always been preoccupied with her condition. The sporadic nature of the present and the future serve as a warning to exercise caution in how the host interacts with other people. Any additional connected attempts are hindered by the absence of a typical life that includes dating, attending school, and hanging out with friends. The air thickened when Hazel and her friend Kaitlyn were in the mall and Kaitlyn made a humorous comment, as friends do.

““Is it even possible to walk in these? I mean, I would just die” and then stopped short, looking at me as if to say I’m sorry, as if it were a crime to mention death to the dying.”

-(Green, 44)

These kinds of occurrences repeatedly reinforce the existence of interpersonal relationships in their subconscious. However, when particular people come into the lives of these unhappy adolescents, a breakthrough occurs. It could be the parents, a friend, a mentor or a stranger who turns out to be one’s boyfriend, like Augustus Waters. Rather than love at first sight, Augustus piqued Hazel’s curiosity. It was a support group that was always busy with people who constantly lived with their disease, “with everybody wanting to beat not only cancer itself, but also the other people in the room.” (Green, 5). Augustus was probably the first one who was not concerned about dying or disease but introduces himself with an assuring tone that gave the hope of living to a group of people engulfed in despair. He further introduces her to experiences that she had always shied away from like watching a movie at a friend’s home, going to the park, reckless teenage driving and most importantly the experience of love.

Life Changes a Turn for Good

All of the stories, from fairy tales to motion pictures that provide teenagers with the notion of a “happily ever after” do, so only once the characters’ troubles are resolved. However, the book “*The Fault in Our Stars*” extols the virtue of choosing calmness in the face of chaos. One’s mindset has a significant impact on how their life unfolds. A positive outlook on life is advocated by almost all ideologies and religions. However, remaining naive, careless, and upbeat will also not help your situation. Augustus is conscious of the difficulties in his own life and his surroundings even if he is making every effort to “live deliberately” (Henry David Thoreau). Rachel is not ready to let go of the anguish of losing the people she loves because she feels like a “grenade.” She so restricts her connections and leads a simple life. However, Augustus shows her that even a brief existence may have a profound influence on others. Hazel is an excellent reminder of how individuals were imbued with Augustus’ infectious zest for life, in the book or in real life. One has both psychological and physical limitations when unwell, making it difficult to maintain one’s interests and desires. But when there is a possibility to fulfill those, it plays a significant experience for the teenagers with chronic illness as it provides an opportunity for them to surpass their inabilities for the time being and provides the drive to undertake such experiences in future with confidence. Augustus learns that Hazel desires to speak to Peter Van Houten than anything else in the world. When he uses his own dying wish to fulfill her dreams, Hazel also fights together with him to not “let it kill me before it kills me” (Green, 121). A girl who has always been anticipated death now yearns to live. As the novel progresses, Hazel becomes the motivator to Augustus as his health declines. By the end of the novel the readers can learn that people can move on or rather live on with the memories of the passed ones with gratitude “for (their) little infinity” (Green, 260).

Conclusion

Life might prevent the children with chronic illnesses from living the best life that they yearn for. But it never stops them from being kind to others and spreading the happiness that they have always wanted to feel. Augustus was also a teenage boy who has been living with chronic illness, his prosthetic leg being a constant reminder of that. But he did not stay idle by accepting his fate and wallowing in self-pity. He rather chose to make the most of his life by helping people around him. Though his ultimate goal of impacting the world was short lived, he finally conceded to Hazel’s love as his ultimate goal. This again proves that a person need not always create a huge impact to be considered significant. But every little action a person undertakes with a growth mindset will contribute to some level of happiness in their life. That little gesture can be a treasure to the other person like Hazel who gained the zeal to live and her memory serves as an encouragement to all the children who were later benefitted by the social service her mother provided.

References

1. Green, John. *The Fault in Our Stars*. Penguin Books, 2012.
2. “John Green.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Jan. 2024, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Green.
3. Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Macmillan Collector’s Library, 2016.
4. Seifert, Christine. “The Case for Reading Fiction.” *Harvard Business Review*, 28 May 2020, hbr.org/2020/03/the-case-for-reading-fiction#:~:text=Recent%20research%20in%20neuroscience%20suggests,the%20root%20of%20the%20EQ.