

The Fault in Our Stars



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN GREEN

John Green was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. Immediately after his birth, Green's parents moved to Orlando, Florida. During his youth, he attended Indian Springs School, a boarding school near Birmingham, Alabama. Later, he attended Kenyon College where he graduated in 2000 with a double major in English and Religious Studies. After graduating from Kenyon, Green worked in a children's hospital while he enrolled in divinity school with the intention of becoming an Episcopal Priest. He never attended divinity school, however, because his experience working in the hospital with children suffering from life-threatening illnesses inspired him to become a writer. He lived in Chicago for several years, writing book reviews, writing for radio, and working in publishing. During this time he wrote his first novel, *Looking for Alaska* (2005) to immediate, and increasing, success. He followed that first novel with *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006), *Paper Towns* (2008), and *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012), which reached #1 on the New York Times bestseller list for children. Green currently lives in Indianapolis with his wife and two kids, where he continues to write, produce videos, and speak publicly about an array of topics.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

As a piece of young adult fiction that deals with illness, death and dying, *The Fault in Our Stars* joins a number of other books that deal with similar issues including, *Before I Die* by Jennie Downham, *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult, and *A Walk to Remember* by Nicholas Sparks. *The Fault in Our Stars* is about more than just dying of cancer—it's a story about coming of age. In this way, Green's novel can be placed among other classic coming of age novels, such as *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, and *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, as well as more recent coming of age novels, such as *The Perks of Being a Wall Flower* by Stephen Chbosky and *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Fault in Our Stars*
- **When Written:** 2002-2012
- **Where Written:** Indianapolis and Amsterdam
- **When Published:** 2012
- **Literary Period:** Postmodern
- **Genre:** Young Adult Fiction, Coming of Age

- **Setting:** Indianapolis, Indiana
- **Climax:** The meeting in Amsterdam with Van Houten
- **Antagonist:** Cancer
- **Point of View:** First Person narrative told from Hazel's point of view

EXTRA CREDIT

Dedication and Inspiration. Green's novel is dedicated to Esther Earl. Esther was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 12 and died in 2010, shortly after her 16th birthday. Green has said that Esther was a major inspiration for the novel. Esther's parents have since published a collection of Esther's writings called, "This Star Won't Go Out: The Life and Words of Esther Grace Earle."

The Silver Screen. *The Fault in Our Stars* is set to hit the big screen in the U.S. on June 6th, 2014. John Green spent time on set making video blogs that chronicle his artistic journey in making the film adaption of his novel. The film's trailer gained over 3 million views in less than 24 hours after it was released.



PLOT SUMMARY

Hazel Grace Lancaster is a seventeen-year-old living with cancer. At the request of her mother, who believes she is depressed, Hazel attends a cancer support group in the basement of a church. Hazel does not like the support group, but goes to make her mother happy. One day upon arriving at the support group, however, Hazel is delighted to see a handsome new boy in attendance. During the discussion, the attendees introduce themselves, and Hazel learns the boy's name is Augustus Waters. Augustus has lost one of his legs to a form of cancer called osteosarcoma, but his cancer is now in remission. He is there to support his friend, Isaac who has lost an eye to a rare form of eye cancer and now must get the other eye removed.

After the meeting, Augustus approaches Hazel and tells her she looks like Natalie Portman from *V for Vendetta*. Hazel does not believe him because she carries an oxygen tank and her cancer treatment has made her cheeks red and puffy, but they continue to flirt. Augustus asks her to come over to his house to watch the movie with him. Hazel agrees and after arriving at Augustus' house, he introduces her to his parents. Their house is loaded with sayings embroidered on different objects. While hanging out, Hazel tells Augustus that she has thyroid cancer that has spread to her lungs, but she has been spared some time through a cutting edge treatment that has not been effective with many other people. Before leaving, Hazel tells

him about a book she is obsessed with called *An Imperial Affliction*. She tells that the novel is about a young girl with cancer. She loves the book because of its honesty regarding the realities of dying. The novel ends midsentence, which Hazel thinks is genius, as it portrays the realities of death. She tells Augustus about her desire to contact the novel's author, Peter Van Houten, to find out what happens after the book ends. Augustus agrees to read *An Imperial Affliction* if Hazel will read his favorite book *The Price of Dawn*. Hazel tells Augustus they can talk again after she has finished *The Price of Dawn*.

After reading, *The Price of Dawn*, which is particularly violent, but somehow enjoyable, Hazel calls Augustus. He is consoling Isaac who was recently dumped by his girlfriend, Monica. Hazel visits and watches them play video games until Isaac suddenly breaks down and begins punching pillows. Eventually, Augustus tells him to break his basketball trophies. After Hazel leaves, she does not talk to Augustus for a week. When Augustus finally calls, they discuss *An Imperial Affliction*, and Augustus nonchalantly says that he has contacted Van Houten through his assistant, Lidewij Vliegenthart. Hazel cannot believe he was able to contact the reclusive author. Augustus shares their conversation and tells Hazel his email address. Hazel begins developing a list of questions to ask Van Houten, mostly dealing with the novel's sudden ending. She desperately wants to know what happens to the main character's family after she dies, as she believes it will provide some insight unto what will happen to her own family after she dies.

A few days after sending her email to Van Houten, he replies telling her that he can only answer her questions in person. His reply saddens Hazel, as she thinks she will never be able to make it to Amsterdam where Van Houten lives. Shortly after hearing from Van Houten, Augustus invites Hazel to join him for a picnic. As they venture out into the park and take a seat before a giant skeleton sculpture, Hazel begins to realize the picnic is strangely Dutch-themed, including the presence of the statue, which was created by a Dutch artist. During the picnic, Augustus reveals that he wants to use his "wish", a gift from the "Genie Foundation" (comparable to the Make a Wish Foundation), to take Hazel to Amsterdam. Hazel is ecstatic to hear this, but when Augustus reaches out to touch her face, she pulls away. She reveals that she is afraid to get close to people because she feels like a **grenade**—that her death will harm everyone close to her.

As Hazel contemplates what to do with Augustus' offer, she grows ill and is forced to go to the hospital. She ends up in the ICU for a few days. She later learns that Augustus stayed in the hospital the whole time; even though she would not let him in the room for fear he would see her in such a state. After Augustus shows her another letter from Van Houten, Hazel becomes determined to go to Amsterdam. Unfortunately, Hazel's parents and the team of doctors who care for her determine she is not able to travel such a long distance.

Eventually, however, her favorite doctor, Dr. Maria, convinces her parents to let her go.

Augustus, Hazel, and Hazel's mother, Mrs. Lancaster, fly to Amsterdam. After checking into their hotel, Hazel learns that Lidewij has made a reservation for Augustus and her at a fancy restaurant called Oranjee. During dinner, they talk about life and death and Augustus shares that he fears he will die without having done anything extraordinary. Hazel is offended by the idea that only extraordinary lives are meaningful. Augustus then tells Hazel about his ex-girlfriend who died of cancer. He laments the fact that people idealize kids who die of cancer, and explains that his ex's personality changed due to her brain cancer, making her progressively more vicious toward Augustus until she died.

The next day they visit Van Houten. Hazel is elated to finally get the answers she has been waiting for about the end of *An Imperial Affliction*. Her dreams are shattered, however, after they find out that Van Houten is a miserable, mean spirited alcoholic. He claims he cannot give Hazel the answers she seeks, and rants about his nihilistic views of life and death. Eventually he insults Hazel, telling her she is dependent upon pity and that she, as a cancer survivor, is a side effect of evolution. Hazel slaps a glass of scotch out of Van Houten's hand and leaves with Augustus. Lidewij accompanies them out, feeling sorry for the way Van Houten acted. Together, they visit the Anne Frank house. In the attic space of the Anne Frank house, August and Hazel kiss, and to Hazel's surprise the other visitors applaud the young couple. After leaving the Anne Frank house, they head back to the hotel. In Augustus' hotel room, Hazel tells Augustus that she loves him and they make love. The next day, Augustus confesses to Hazel that his cancer has returned and has spread throughout his body.

Upon returning to the United States, Augustus' condition continues to worsen. Hazel watches as Augustus changes from a confident, humorous, beautiful young man to a vulnerable, frightened, and decimated shell of his former self. Despite his condition, Hazel continues to love him, and begins calling him Gus instead of Augustus, as his parents do. Through the process of Augustus' decline, Hazel realizes that Augustus has become the grenade she feared she would be. In the final days before his passing, Augustus arranges a pre-funeral in the church basement where they met. Isaac and Hazel attend, and both deliver eulogies for Augustus. Hazel uses a line from *An Imperial Affliction*, which states that there are infinite numbers between zero and one, and an even larger infinity between zero and two. She follows this thought by stating that she is grateful for each little infinity she was able to spend with Augustus.

Eight days after the pre-funeral, Augustus dies. Augustus' mother contacts Hazel late one night to tell her the news, and her parents stay by her side that night. His funeral happens a few days later in the same church where the support group is held. Hazel is frustrated when the pastor's talk about Augustus

uses cancer clichés, saying how brave he was and what an inspiration he was to everyone. Just then she is startled by a voice that whispers the pastor's message is a bunch of "horse crap". She realizes it is Van Houten sitting behind her. The funeral continues and Hazel reads her eulogy, which is different than the one she read at his pre-funeral. She begins with a quote that hangs in Augustus' house: "Without pain, we couldn't know joy."

After the funeral, Van Houten asks Hazel and her parents for a ride. He explains that Augustus stayed in contact with him, and that he demanded Van Houten make up for ruining their trip. He attempts to reveal the fate of Anna's mother, but Hazel is uninterested—she has her answers to what happens after death, as she is living through it with Augustus' passing. A few days after the funeral, Hazel finds out from Isaac that Augustus was writing a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction* for her. As Hazel attempts to go to Augustus' house to find the writing, Van Houten, who is sitting in the back seat of the car, once again startles her. He claims he wants to apologize, and tell Hazel she reminds him of his daughter, Anna, who died of cancer when she was eight. Hazel tells Van Houten to get sober and continue writing.

Eventually, Hazel finds out that Augustus had torn the written pages out of his notebook and mailed them to Van Houten so he could use them to compose a eulogy about Hazel. Van Houten sends the pages back to Hazel. The novel concludes with Augustus' words. Hazel reads the letter, which states that getting hurt is inevitable, but we have a choice in who we allow to hurt us. His letter concludes by stating that he was happy with his choice, and he hopes Hazel likes her choice too. In the final line of the story, Hazel says she does.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Hazel Grace Lancaster — The novel's narrator and protagonist, Hazel is a 16-year-old girl living with a terminal form of thyroid cancer that has spread to her lungs. Because of her cancer she is forced to carry an oxygen tank. A precocious and conscientious girl, Hazel thinks deeply about her life and death, deciding to keep those around her at a distance because she believes her death will damage them. Through falling in love with Augustus, however, she develops a new perspective on life and death, and comes to terms with her impermanence and the effect it will have on others.

Augustus Waters — Hazel's boyfriend, Augustus is a seventeen-year-old who has lost his leg due to a form of bone cancer called, osteosarcoma. August falls for Hazel immediately, and is drawn to her after she comments in support group about dying. August, like Hazel, is concerned with life and death, but his concern stems from fading into oblivion after he

dies. Because of this fear, Augustus is obsessed with doing something heroic. Augustus is able to complete his heroic act through his relationship with Hazel, and in the end their relationship prevents him to fading into oblivion.

Isaac — is Hazel and Augustus' mutual friend. A rare form of eye cancer blinds Isaac, and his situation leads him to cynicism and anger. After being blinded, his girlfriend, Monica, leaves him, which is a devastating event in Isaac's life. His character shows the way in which typical coming of age experiences, like the end of a young relationship, is particularly difficult for the young characters living with cancer. Isaac's name also carries a religious connotation, as the biblical character Isaac also goes blind.

Mrs. Lancaster — Hazel's mother, Mrs. Lancaster is dedicated and loving. She exerts most of her energy caring for Hazel and learning everything she can about Hazel's cancer. Mrs. Lancaster wants her daughter to have a normal teenage life, but is also protective and at times overbearing. Hazel fears that her death will have a devastating effect on her mother, but is relieved once she finds out that her mother has been secretly studying to become a social worker.

Augustus's parents — Augustus' parents are kind and hopeful people. They find hope in the platitudinous sayings they have embroidered and hung all over their house and have trust in God. Hazel watches them cope with Augustus' death, which gives her hope that her family will survive her own passing. The family comes together after Augustus' dies, and although Hazel feels as if she is not fully a part of the family after Augustus passes, his father tells Hazel that he is glad she was part of Augustus' life, which means a lot to her.

Peter Van Houten — The author of *An Imperial Affliction*, a novel Hazel becomes obsessed with. Hazel and Augustus believe that Van Houten can give them insight into what will happen to their families after they succumb to their cancers. Upon meeting Van Houten, Hazel and August learn that he is a nihilistic and aggressive alcoholic who treats them with cruelty when they visit. In the end, it is revealed that Van Houten has lost a child from cancer, and has fallen into alcoholism since her passing. His interactions with Hazel seem to imply that he may find a way out of his alcoholism and to write again.

Dr. Maria — Hazel's primary cancer doctor, Dr. Maria works with Hazel and her family through her treatment. She is firm when she makes suggestions about Hazel's treatment, but she wants Hazel to experience her life despite her cancer. Eventually, after much deliberation, she convinces Hazel's parents to allow her to travel to Amsterdam.

Kaitlyn — Hazel's friend and schoolmate, Kaitlyn is the stereotypical teenage girl. She is obsessed with shopping, boys, and juicy gossip. Kaitlyn's presence in Hazel's life shows the way in which Hazel's cancer has separated her from the world of normal teenagers. Although they are good friends, Kaitlyn's

character highlights the way in which health challenges create a disconnection between those who are healthy and those who are sick.

Caroline Mathers —Augustus's former girlfriend, Caroline Mathers died from brain cancer. Although Caroline does not appear in the novel, Augustus tells Hazel about Caroline's decline and eventual passing. The details of her death shows the realities of cancer, working against the misrepresentation of those who are diagnosed with cancer as more heroic, spiritual, and noble than normal people. As she died, Caroline became selfish, impulsive, and cruel, showing the true and horrific nature of cancer.

Anna —The protagonist of *An Imperial Affliction*, which tells the story of Anna's passing from cancer. Hazel identifies with Anna's experience, and appreciates the honesty with which Anna talks about her illness. Hazel believes that by understanding Anna's experience and what happened to her family will provide insight into her own death and what will happen to her family afterward.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Mr. Lancaster — Hazel's father, Mr. Lancaster is constantly concerned about his daughter and often brought to tears over Hazel's condition. He does not research Hazel's condition in the way Hazel's mother does. Hazel feels guilty about the amount of time he spends working to pay for the expensive treatments.

Lidewij Vliegenthart —is a Dutch woman who works as an assistant for Van Houten. Lidewij initiates the connection between Hazel, Augustus and Van Houten, believing the connection will be good for Van Houten. Lidewij is a kind woman, and grows angry when Van Houten treats Hazel and Augustus with disdain.

Patrick —The facilitator of the support group where Hazel and Augustus meet, Patrick is an optimistic cancer survivor who cares deeply about the teenagers in the support group. Patrick has lost both of his testicles because of his cancer.

Monica — Isaac's girlfriend, who leaves him after he is blinded by his eye cancer.



COMING OF AGE

The Fault in Our Stars contains all of the traditional elements of a coming of age narrative. Centering on the experience of two teenage characters, Hazel and Augustus, the novel follows their passage from childhood into adulthood.

As typical of coming of age narratives, Hazel and Augustus begin to discover the adult world in all its complexity, they begin to experience their bodies and sexualities in new ways, and they rebel against and come to terms with society, family, rules, and religion. Their passage into adulthood, however, is complicated by the fact that they are living with and dying from cancer. Having cancer changes the way in which the characters of *The Fault in Our Stars* approach their passage into adulthood. They are constantly facing the fact of their own impermanence, which leads the characters to walk a line between moving into adulthood and holding onto their youth. Their youths were a time in which they were healthy, so they are afraid to let them go, and their passage into adulthood is threatened by their cancer, so the characters are determined to pass into adulthood before it is too late.

For both Hazel and Augustus, their cancer is paired with their passage toward adulthood, and the story unfolds as they grapple with coming of age in the face of their diagnoses. Hazel's diagnosis is determined three months after her first period, and Augustus receives his diagnosis and loses his leg just as he begins to think existentially about basketball, realizing his childhood love of the sport is fading. Their cancers make each of the difficult passages into adulthood even more complicated than usual, as they are fraught with meaning and nuances that healthy teenagers are never forced to confront. For example, they do not experience relationships, romantic or otherwise, in the same ways typical teenagers do because their futures are not promised, they don't get to experiment with alcohol and substances the way typical teenagers do, as their cancers have forced them to become acquainted with powerful painkillers from an early age, but most importantly, their relationship with their sick bodies makes this passage particularly challenging.

The passage into adulthood necessitates new relationships with one's body and sexuality, but the characters of *The Fault in Our Stars* are coming of age with bodies that are abnormal. Augustus is missing a leg, Hazel must carry an oxygen tanks and has poor lungs, and Isaac loses his eyes. Hazel and Augustus, however, find common ground based on their experiences with cancer, and develop a deep love for one another. Because they are both living with cancer, they are able to see past the deficits of the other's body, and their ability to see past the external (the oxygen tanks, puffy cheeks, and prosthetics) allows them to realize their sexuality, come to terms with their bodies, and lose their virginity to one another. Although their coming of age is not typical, Hazel and Augustus do experience a passage into physical, emotional, and mental maturity, surpassing that of



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

their peers. In this way, their cancer becomes a force that drives them to mature and develop deep understandings of life, death, love, and relationships that their healthy peers will not attain for many years to come.



LIFE AND DEATH

The young people in *The Fault in Our Stars* confront the issue of dying on a daily basis. Although the characters try to live by their support group mantra, "Living our best lives today", every action, relationship, and experience is cast in the shadow of their impending mortalities. The theme of life and death unfolds through Hazel's relationship with Augustus. It is no mistake that Hazel first forms a bond with Augustus through a dialog about death and oblivion during their support group. Both Hazel and Augustus are particularly sensitive when it comes to their own mortalities. They are forced to confront questions that most young people do not have to face, but their concerns revolve around common existential dilemmas, for example, how do you find meaning in life and death? How do you leave behind a legacy? How does one's death affect others? Is there an afterlife, and if not, what is there? Their development as characters occurs through the exploration of these questions.

Their personal concerns around death develop along different trajectories. Augustus is afraid of fading into oblivion after he dies, that his life will be meaningless, and nobody will remember him once he is gone. After bringing this fear up in the support group, Hazel responds by intellectualizing the fact of her impermanence. She states that everything will die, that there was a time before consciousness and there will be a time after it. Despite her intellectualization, however, she is still deeply conflicted around the issue of her own looming mortality. Unlike Augustus' self-centered fear of fading into oblivion, Hazel views her approaching death as an event that will severely damage those around her—like she is a grenade waiting to explode. She is primarily concerned with protecting those around her from the pain of her death. This concern causes her to distance herself from her peers and family, which limits her desire to do the things normal teenagers do. Her fear of hurting others through her passing leads to her obsession with the fictional novel, *An Imperial Affliction*. She identifies with the book because it presents an accurate portrayal of death and dying, but Hazel becomes obsessed by what happens after the novel's abrupt ending. Hazel longs to know the fate of the family in *An Imperial Affliction* after the main character passes, believing this knowledge will give her insight into the impact her death will have on her family.

Hazel and Augustus come to terms with their impermanence through their relationship. Augustus is able to realize his one act of heroism by sacrificing his wish from "The Genie Foundation" to take Hazel to Amsterdam. In a meta-textual sense, this act allows him to survive after death, as his story is

told in the novel and will continue being accessed by readers of *The Fault in Our Stars*. Within the text, however, his legacy lives on with Hazel and her parents. Hazel also develops new understandings of life and death through her relationship with Augustus. Through their relationship, she is able to step out of her isolation and live her life for the first time, even in the face of her impending death. When Augustus' cancer comes out of remission and he passes away, she is able to experience what it is like to lose someone you love and work through it, which allows her to come to terms with the fact that her family will be able to make it through her own death. Hazel also comes to understand that death is an event that allows us to value life. She demonstrates this understanding during Augustus' eulogy when she says, "without pain, we would not know joy," she understands that death is an event that allows us to live and love to the fullest. In the end, it becomes clear that life is defined by our relationships with others, and the importance and meaning of these relationships is demonstrated through the pain felt when a loved one dies.



FAMILY

The Fault in Our Stars not only explores the ways in which cancer affects those who are diagnosed, but also shows the ways in which their families and friends react to their diagnoses. The parents of the young people living with cancer react to the loss of their children in different ways. The reactions of Hazel's parents shows the way in which a cancer diagnosis places parents in a difficult situation as they attempt to parent a teenage child. They want her to be a normal teenage, which is why they recommend she go to the cancer support group and meet other young people, but at the same time, they are protective and overbearing. As they urge her to mature into an adult, they continue to cling to her youth, the time in which she was healthy, as shown by their continued goading that she sleep with "Bluie", her childhood teddy bear, and the celebration of her "half birthdays". Augustus' parents react differently, attempting to battle the cancer by staying positive. They plaster their house with platitudinous sayings that are a constant reminder for them to stay hopeful.

Both Hazel and Augustus find their parents annoying, but ultimately understand that their parents just love them and are coping with their situations to the best of their ability. Hazel, however, feels a great sense of guilt because of the way her condition affects her parents. She knows that her very existence causes her parents immense pain, stating that, "They might be glad to have me around, but I was the alpha and the omega of my parents' suffering". She also feels immense guilt over her parent's lack of money and the time they sacrifice to make sure she is safe and cared for. Hazel also fears that her death will tear the family apart. This fear is another factor in her obsession with the novel *An Imperial Affliction*. For Hazel, the novel's characters come to represent her own experience.

In *An Imperial Affliction*, the main character, a young girl named Anna dies because of her cancer. The novel ends suddenly with Anna's death, which leads Hazel to seek out answers about what happens to Anna's mother and her mother's partner, the tulip man, after the novel's end. She believes that gaining insight into Anna's experience will allow her to know what will happen to her parents after she passes.

Hazel and Augustus go to Amsterdam to find out what happens to Anna's parents after she dies, but their hopes are crushed after the novel's author, Peter Van Houten, drunkenly tells them that nothing exists after the novel ends. This answer becomes a great concern for Hazel, leading her to believe that after her own death, nothing, including her parents and family, will exist. This belief, however, is replaced by the end of the novel in several ways. First, Hazel experiences Augustus' death, and watches his family come together and work through it. Secondly, she learns that Peter Van Houten had written *An Imperial Affliction* about his own daughter who had died of cancer, suggesting that even though the novel ends with Anna's death, Van Houten has continued to exist, even though her death has pushed him over the edge into alcoholism and fierce resentment. Finally, Hazel learns that her mother is studying to become a cancer counselor for young people, which allows her to know that even after she dies, her mother will continue to love her through loving other children fated in the way she was, and that her parents will not falter in the way Peter Van Houten has.

BEING DIFFERENT



Although the teenagers of *The Fault in Our Stars* are in many ways normal teenagers who are obsessed with music, videogames, popular culture, and dating, they are constantly reminded that they are different than their healthy peers. Their physical differences—prosthetics, oxygen tanks, puffy cheeks—are glaring signifiers of their difference, but in a more subtle way, their illnesses often make other people feel uncomfortable and alienated, creating separations between those with the illness and those without it. This separation shows through while Hazel is shopping with her friend, Kaitlyn. While shopping, Kaitlyn nonchalantly says she would "die" if she had to walk in a pair of heels she has found on the shelf. She stops and looks as if she wants to apologize, as if it is wrong to mention death in front of the dying. Hazel is not offended by her comment, but the fact of her cancer makes Kaitlyn unable to talk in the way she would with a healthy peer. Later a young girl asks Hazel why she has to carry an oxygen tank. The little girl's mother is mortified by her daughter's question, but Hazel simply explains her situation to the girl, limiting the distance between them. This otherness is not just projected on those who are ill from those who are healthy. Often, people with cancer begin to define themselves based on their experience with cancer. This

self-definition through one's cancer is one that the sick characters fear, as shown through Augustus' question to Hazel whether she is, "One of those people who become their disease." While Hazel does not define herself by her cancer, she also works to break down cancer stereotypes, constantly pushing back against the clichés that make people dying of cancer different than normal people. She speaks to the way in which healthy people often hold ideas about those living with cancer that make them seem heroic or overtly tragic. The novel depicts those living with cancer in ways that limit such cancer. The depictions in the novel make the argument that the young people with cancer are not any more noble, valiant, or spiritual than other kids—they are just normal kids living with an illness. Augustus becomes a clear example of the reality of young people who are living with and dying from cancer. After his cancer reemerges, Augustus, the high-spirited, funny, confident, and attractive boy is reduced to a frail, terrified, and humiliated individual. The honesty with which Hazel depicts the end of his life does not allow his illness to place him in any special category of person, and therefore limits the difference between him and any other normal person who is dying.

Through their shared experience of being different, however, Augustus and Hazel form an unbreakable bond. They understand what it is like to be pitied, gawked at, showered with cancer perks ("make a wish" type gifts given to dying children), and just simply misunderstood. They quickly move past the thing that makes them different from others and begin to form bonds based on their identities beyond their illness, the appreciation of the other's intelligence, beauty, and personality. In this way, Hazel's narrative depicts the way in which difference can lead to companionship, but ultimately it is the person that exists beyond the illness—who is no different than anyone else—that allows them to develop a deep bond with one another. This perspective allows Hazel to limit the thing that causes their difference, and allows them to move closer to the normalcy that is denied by common misunderstanding that creates separation.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY



In facing the terrible realities of living with and dying from cancer, those affected—the teenagers, their families, and friends—are left looking for answers, meaning, and comfort for the situations they find themselves in. Many characters in the novel turn to religion to provide answers for their fates. This idea is established from the start of the novel as Hazel attends the support group, which is held in the basement of a church. The church is shaped like a cross and the room is positioned where Jesus' heart would have been during his crucifixion. Hazel, Isaac, and Augustus joke that the group takes place in the "Literal Heart of Jesus", but in a figurative sense, the position of the group alludes to the beliefs of some people—that the sick hold a

special place in Jesus' heart.

Religion provides easy answers for the affliction and provides a sense of hope that the fate of the characters is resting in the hands of some higher power. For many of the characters, however, including Hazel and Augustus, religion or God is not sufficient in explaining their situation. Hazel, August, and other characters turn toward different philosophical explanations to find meaning in their lives and deaths. These philosophical notions span from existentialism, as in Augustus' search for meaning in his life, to nihilism, as in the philosophical leanings of Peter Van Houten. It is along these philosophical lines that Hazel's character experiences the greatest transformation.

At the beginning of the novel, Hazel responds to Augustus' fear of oblivion by stating that everything will die, that there was a time before consciousness and there will be a time after it. She fears that her own death will only hurt others and that after she dies nothing of her will be left behind. Because of this fear, she turns to *An Imperial Affliction* in hopes of finding answers to her fears. She is seeking to understand what happens after the end of the novel, as she feels it will reveal something about what will happen to her after her life ends, answering the looming existential questions the burden her. Through her relationship with Augustus, however, her philosophical standpoint changes. She realizes that after death people live on through their relationships with their loved ones and the impacts they make on the lives of other people. In this way, the nihilistic philosophy she upholds at the beginning of the book transforms, and she develops a new philosophy about life and death that provides her some hope and comfort about her fate.

88

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



AUGUSTUS' CIGARETTES

When Augustus takes out a **cigarette** after support group and puts it in his mouth, Hazel is mortified by the thought of a cancer survivor actively partaking in an activity that is known to cause cancer. But Augustus' explains the cigarettes are a metaphor—he stays in close contact with the carcinogenic cigarettes, but never lights them, simply keeping them between his teeth. The ability to keep the cigarette in his mouth, but never light it stands as an act of control. Metaphorically, the cigarettes become a means through which Augustus gains a sense of control over his cancer. The cigarettes, however, become a source of control for more than just Augustus' cancer, as he uses them in different situations to feel control in light of a number of different fears. The presence of cigarettes diminishes as Augustus loses control over his cancer and slips toward his death at the end of the novel. When

Hazel finds Augustus at the gas station shortly before his passing attempting to buy cigarettes, he has lost control over his body because of his cancer—he no longer walks on his own, he is incontinent, and he has vomited on himself. His condition in conjunction with his attempt to buy cigarettes and ultimately failing suggests that he has finally succumb to his cancer, and there is no more controlling the outcome of his life.



WATER

Water becomes a symbol that alludes to the suffering Hazel experiences through out the novel.

Her cancer has caused her lungs to collect fluid, which makes it difficult for her to get around, and also forces her to carry an oxygen tank, which becomes an external marker of her difference from other healthy people around her. At one point in the novel, the fluid in her lungs almost kills her, placing her in ICU and almost preventing her trip to Amsterdam with Augustus. Several times in the novel, she explains her experience of having cancer to drowning. But this suffering that is symbolized by water also leads to personal growth, and in this way, the symbolic nature of water has multiple layers.



GRENADE

When Augustus is added to the picture, water's symbolic nature becomes nuanced. It is no coincidence that Augustus' last name is Waters. When Augustus dies, Hazel again describes the feeling of losing him in terms of being smashed by waves, but unable to drown. Through this experience, however, she comes to know the power of love, and is reassured that her family will survive through her own death. Water begins to represent the dual nature of suffering; that it is painful, but necessary for life. In his final letter to Van Houten Augustus describes the water in Hazel's lungs as, "a desert blessing, an ocean curse." Showing that water is both positive and negative depending on the circumstance. This idea also emerges in the setting of Amsterdam. The city, like Indianapolis where the bulk of the novel unfolds, is a canal city, and derives so much of its beauty from the water flowing through it. Yet Amsterdam is also constantly under the threat of rising waters. *The Fault in Our Stars'* epigraph, a line from the fictional novel within the story *An Imperial Affliction* describes water as "conjoiner rejoinder prisoner concealer revelator," depicting the way in which water's meaning shifts, and while it causes suffering it also leads to meaning and liberation.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *The Fault In Our Stars* published in

2014.

Chapter 1 Quotes

“ 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 thinking about death.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Mrs. Lancaster

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel's mother becomes worried about her daughter, who seems increasingly despondent as of late. Mrs. Lancaster urges Hazel, who has terminal cancer, to see a doctor about treatment, since depression can be a side effect of a cancer diagnosis. In this quote, Hazel refutes her mother's logic, saying that depression is actually a side effect of dying rather than of cancer.

This opening to the novel shows the reader how Hazel typically spends her time: resting, reading, and thinking about her own impending mortality. It does seem that she has depressive symptoms, which is understandable given her terminal cancer. This passage has a certain resigned, even sarcastic tone to it, suggesting that though Hazel's rumination on the topic of death is not exactly healthy for her mental state, her diagnosis is something she has accepted. It also shows that her parents are frequently concerned about her, and devote much of their time to caring for their daughter. We can also surmise that Hazel likely does not interact with many teenagers her age, since she rarely leaves the house for fun.

“ There is only one thing in this world shittier than biting it from cancer when you are sixteen, and that's having a kid who bites it from cancer.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

After attending the support group for several weeks, Hazel no longer wants to go since she does not find it helpful, but continues to attend according to her mother's wishes. In this quote, Hazel acknowledges that whatever she is going through, her parents are going through an equal amount of emotional pain, if not worse.

Throughout the novel, Hazel shows that she frequently does things not for her own sake, but for the wishes of her parents. Her parents' whole lives revolve around Hazel's medical care, and she is grateful for their love and attention. She considers her mother her best friend, and as much as she despises the support group, she is willing to put up with more sessions as long as it makes her mother happy. This shows that Hazel, despite thinking sometimes that she is a selfish teenager, is really very sensitive to her loved ones' emotions and needs, and is usually willing to put aside her desires to fulfill those of her parents.

“ There was a time before organisms experienced consciousness, and there will be a time after. And if the inevitability of human oblivion worries you, I encourage you to ignore it. God knows that's what everyone else does.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

In the support group one day, a boy tells the group that his greatest fear is oblivion: that no one will remember him after he is gone. In this quote, Hazel, who finds the anxiety around death and mortality to be exhausting, expresses her nihilistic views by pointing out that oblivion is not only likely, but certain.

While many people, like Augustus's parents, cope with hardships using religion and encouraging words, Hazel chooses the exact opposite: she chooses to believe that death and oblivion are inevitable. By embracing nihilism, and choosing not to believe in anything at all, Hazel imagines the worst possible outcome so she cannot be scared or disappointed by what is to come. Though this concept of total oblivion after death comforts her in its absolutism, it also leads to circular preoccupations where all she can do is read the same book and think about the same things as she, in her mind, hurtles mindlessly towards death. In this quote, she takes a bitter tone in asserting that most

people ignore their own oblivion--something that perhaps, she wishes she, too, could do.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

Augustus half smiled. “Because you’re beautiful. I enjoy looking at beautiful people, and I decided a while ago not to deny myself the simpler pleasures of existence...I mean, particularly given that, as you so deliciously pointed out, all of this will end in oblivion and everything.”

Related Characters: Augustus Waters, Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

Augustus, the boy who spoke of oblivion in the support group, approaches Hazel after the session and begins to flirt with her. In this quote, he tells Hazel that he is staring at her because he finds her beautiful.

Hazel, who does not regard herself as physically attractive due to low self-esteem and steroid-induced swelling from cancer treatments, would never assume that Augustus is staring at her because he finds her attractive. She assumes it's because he finds her to be an oddity, and prepares herself to be offended by his answers. As someone who does not spend a lot of time around teenage boys, she is shocked but allured by Augustus's sense of confidence and eloquence. His confidence and honesty shows Hazel that he has more experience in flirting than she does, but also that he is not afraid to tell her that he likes her on sight. Hazel, who spends most of her time with doting parents, is not used to being addressed and refuted like the way Augustus does in their first conversation. Though she is somewhat offended, she is more so intrigued, leading her to head to his house after the session.

Chapter 2 Quotes

“Cancer perks are the little things cancer kids get that regular kids don’t: basketballs signed by sports heroes, free passes on late homework, unearned drivers licenses, etc.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

Augustus is a horrible driver, and Hazel is shocked that he even has a license. Augustus says that he failed his test four times, but on the fifth, the instructor told him his driving was unpleasant, but not technically unsafe. Hazel, getting into the swing of Augustus's flirty banter, tells him his license is probably a cancer perk. In this quote, Hazel explains that "cancer perks" are ways in which kids with the disease get certain things in life due to their illness.

At this point in the novel, Hazel is much sicker than Augustus is, but "cancer perks" are something that they both share as teenagers with the disease. Augustus's driving is unsafe due to his difficulty driving with his left leg since he has a prosthetic right leg. Hazel, who takes an oxygen tank with her everywhere she goes, can commiserate with getting special treatment. Though the perks are nice, both Hazel and Augustus would agree that they would rather be healthy than get things they don't really deserve for free. Though Hazel still retains some friends from middle school, she has a hard time relating with them due to her situation, and finds comfort in being able to talk to Augustus about what it is like to be a teen with cancer.

“That’s exactly what we found with families at Memorial when we were in the thick of it with Gus’s treatment...Everybody was so kind. Strong, too. In the darkest days, the Lord puts the best people into your life.”

Related Characters: Augustus's parents (speaker), Augustus Waters

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel has dinner at Augustus's house after support group one day. His parents ask them how it went, and though both teenagers despise the group, they agree that the people there are "nice." In this quote, Augustus's father notes that people were very kind at Memorial, where Augustus was treated for his cancer. He also expresses his dependence on religion to see him and his family through their son's illness. Like many people suffering hardships (such as having an ill family member), Augustus's parents turn to religion to cope with their son's cancer diagnosis. Augustus, though not

religious himself, goes along with his parents' aphorisms and wishes to make them happy. This is similar to Hazel's wish to constantly please her parents, even when asked to do something she does not want to do. However, Augustus's preoccupation with oblivion and other nihilistic concepts show that he is not religious like his parents, and exhibits his wish to grow into his own person. Both Hazel and Augustus are at odds with their own beliefs, their parents' wishes, and the cancer that governs their day-to-day lives.

“ I liked my mom, but her perpetual nearness sometimes made me feel weirdly nervous. And I liked Kaitlyn, too. I really did. But three years removed from proper full-time schoolic exposure to my peers, I felt a certain unbridgeable distance between us.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Mrs. Lancaster, Kaitlyn

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 45

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel goes to the mall with her friend Kaitlyn, who attends the high school Hazel would have gone to if she did not have to leave school for cancer treatment. However, she cuts their time together short, claiming she is tired. In this quote, Hazel admits that while she loves her mother and her friends, their constant hovering sensitivity about her health makes her feel an "unbridgeable distance" between herself and others.

Unlike Augustus, whose only outward sign of cancer is a limp due to his prosthetic leg, Hazel's health is unmistakably poor: her hair is short due to recent chemo treatments, and she carts an oxygen tank with her everywhere she goes. Everyone she interacts with is constantly reminded of her fragile mortality, and treats her with much more delicacy than she wishes. Though Hazel is weak in body she is strong in nature, and she finds it hard to interact constantly with people who act like she will break at any moment. This is why she spends much of her time alone, reading the one book that she feels truly understands what she is going through.

“ Any attempts to feign normal social interactions were just depressing because it was so glaringly obvious that everyone I spoke to for the rest of my life would feel awkward and self-conscious around me, except maybe kids like Jackie who just didn't know any better.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

A little girl at the mall approaches Hazel and asks her what is in her nose. Though the girl's mother reproaches the girl for bothering Hazel, Hazel doesn't mind and lets the girl try on the cannulas. In this quote, Hazel feels depressed at how brazenly the little girl, Jackie, asks her about her medical gear, in a way that no teenager or adult would dare approach her illness.

Due to Hazel's medical gear, it makes it nearly impossible for friends, and even her own family members, to forget she is ill and treat her normally. This lack of basic social interaction pushes Hazel further and further away from her peers, and even her parents, and further into her world of books and circular thoughts about her own mortality. She and Augustus immediately hit it off because they both know what it is like to desperately want human interaction, but to feel constantly unsatisfied with the way they are treated due to their illness.

Chapter 4 Quotes

“ Cancer kids are essentially side effects of the relentless mutation that made the diversity of life on earth possible.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel reads *An Imperial Affliction* for the umpteenth time, and reflects on how closely it aligns with her personal philosophy. In this quote, the character Anna notes that children who have cancer--a disease where a person's cells multiply uncontrollably, impairing the functions of organs--are simply a "side effect" of the cell mutation that accounts for the diversity of life on earth.

Hazel has no tolerance for platitudes about cancer, which place the sick on a pedestal and laud them for being brave and heroic for fighting the disease. Hazel sees nothing heroic about her struggle, which consists of going through treatments that she and her parents hope will prolong her life--something anyone, brave or not, would go through. She appreciates the frankness of *An Imperial Affliction*, and feels

comfort in the notion that her illness is just a biological product of the nature of life on planet earth. Unlike people who turn to religion to reason why someone got an illness and how they will be cured of it, Hazel prefers to turn to cold, hard logic and reason to tell herself that her terminal illness is not fate, but rather a statistical expectation of science. Her cancer has nothing to do with who she is, but rather the basic biology of her body.

Chapter 5 Quotes

“Oh,” he said. “Caroline is no longer suffering from personhood.”
 “Oh,” I said.
 “Yeah,” he said.
 “I’m sorry,” I said. I’d known plenty of dead people, of course. But I’d never dated one. I couldn’t even imagine it, really.
 “Not your fault, Hazel Grace. We’re all just side effects, right?”
 “Barnacles on the container ship of consciousness,” I said, quoting A/I.

Related Characters: Augustus Waters, Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Caroline Mathers

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel asks Augustus about his ex-girlfriend, Caroline. In this quote, Augustus tells her that she is "no longer suffering from personhood," meaning that she died of cancer. Hazel is shocked at the notion of having had someone you dated die, and to cope with the awkwardness, they quote a book that they both now love, *An Imperial Affliction*.

Hazel's greatest fear as a terminal cancer patient is that her death will cause pain to the people she loves, namely her parents. Augustus brushes off any unintended pain Hazel might have caused by quoting A/I, which Hazel responds to with another quote. When Hazel begins to have feelings for Augustus, and it becomes clear that he is falling for her, her immediate thought is not to give in to what she wants, but rather to ensure that Augustus, who at the time appears to be healthier than she is, is not caused pain by losing another girlfriend to cancer. These are issues that most sixteen-and seventeen-year-olds don't have to deal with, but that Augustus and Hazel understand of each other in a way that no one else in their lives does.

Chapter 6 Quotes

“I’m like. Like. I’m like a grenade, Mom. I’m a grenade and at some point I’m going to blow up and I would like to minimize the casualties, Okay...I just want to stay away from people and read books and think and be with you guys because there is nothing I can do about hurting you; you’re too invested, so just please let me do that, okay?”

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Mrs. Lancaster

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

After realizing that she looks very similar to Augustus's deceased girlfriend Caroline, and seeing all of the condolence messages left on Caroline's Facebook wall, Hazel has a hard time interacting with her parents at dinner. Her mother accuses her of acting very "teenagery," and in this quote, Hazel tells her mom that she stays away from people because she is a "grenade" who could "blow up" (die) and unintentionally hurt those closest to her.

After seeing that Caroline looks very similar to her, Hazel resolves to not engage in a relationship with Augustus, and Hazel becomes angry when her mother suggests she's been "going on dates." Hazel consciously stays away from people her own age, and particularly shies away from romantic relationships, so that she does not hurt people who may become attached to a girl with terminal cancer. She doesn't mind remaining close to her parents, because she knows their pain is inevitable. Hazel's metaphor of being a "grenade" is something that will guide many of her personal decisions towards Augustus throughout the novel.

“You are not a grenade Hazel, not to us. Thinking about you dying makes us sad, Hazel, but you are not a grenade. You are amazing. You can’t know, sweetie, because you’ve never had a baby become a brilliant young reader with a side interest in horrible television shows, but the joy you bring us is so much greater than the sadness we feel about your illness.”

Related Characters: Mr. Lancaster (speaker), Hazel Grace Lancaster

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: **Page Number:** 103**Explanation and Analysis**

After Hazel's parents insinuate that she is dating Augustus, Hazel vehemently refutes this, stating that she is a "grenade" who could blow up (die) and hurt the people closest to her at any moment. In this quote, Hazel's father tells her that she is far from a grenade--she is the best part of his and Hazel's mother's life, and they wouldn't trade her for the world.

Much of Hazel's worry about hurting Augustus stems from the pain she can see she is putting her parents through. Similar to Hazel's reasoning for her vegetarianism--she wants to minimize the number of deaths she is responsible for--Hazel wants to minimize the number of people she hurts when she loses her battle to cancer. In this quote, her father tells her that she causes them much more joy than her cancer causes her (or them) pain. This is Hazel's first step towards understanding that depriving oneself of love in the hopes of mitigating pain is not worth the struggle, and that she deserves to live her life to the fullest, without worry about what will happen after she is gone.

Chapter 7 Quotes

 Mom and Dad left us alone, which felt awkward. I worked hard to meet his eyes, even though they were the kind of pretty that's hard to look at. "I missed you," Augustus said.

Related Characters: Augustus Waters, Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)**Related Themes:**  **Page Number:** 110**Explanation and Analysis**

Hazel is hospitalized due to a buildup of fluid in her lungs. While she is being treated, she is told that Augustus is waiting to see her, but she only wants to see her parents while she is so disheveled from her illness. In this quote, as she is being discharged, her parents leave her and Augustus alone to talk.

Though Hazel is determined to keep Augustus at an arm's distance, her attraction to his eyes and the awkwardness she feels alone with him points to the fact that she likes him as more than just a friend. Augustus, though respectful of

the distance that Hazel seeks to place between them, cannot help being totally honest with his feelings towards her, and tells her that he missed her while she was in the hospital. Still, determined that she will not hurt him anymore than she already will if she dies, Hazel insists that they remain just friends.

 Everyone in this tale has a rock-solid hamartia: hers, that she is so sick; yours, that you are so well. Were she better or you sicker, then the stars would not be so terribly crossed, but it is the nature of stars to cross, and never was Shakespeare more wrong than when he had Cassius note, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars/But in our selves."

Related Characters: Peter Van Houten (speaker), Augustus Waters, Hazel Grace Lancaster**Related Themes:**   **Page Number:** 111**Explanation and Analysis**

Augustus gives Hazel a letter that Van Houten sent, and she reads it when she gets home. In this letter, Van Houten replies to what appears to be a letter that Augustus wrote him, asking for advice on what to do with Hazel, whom he wants to date but who wants to keep him away to protect Augustus from her death. In this quote, Van Houten points out that perhaps Hazel is right to protect Augustus's feelings, since they both have hamartia (fatal flaws) due to their conflicting health prognoses. He then gives the title to the novel with a Shakespeare quote from *Julius Caesar*, in which Cassius notes that fault is not in fate, but in people.

Van Houten's flowery prose is a foreshadowing of the pretentiousness with which he will greet Hazel and Augustus in Amsterdam. Hazel is touched that Augustus wrote to her favorite author asking for love advice about her, and changes her mind about wanting to go to Amsterdam after reading it. This passage is particularly heartbreaking in the context of the novel because as it will soon turn out, Augustus is actually sicker than Hazel; they are still star-crossed lovers, but not for the reasons they first appeared to be. Augustus, unlike Hazel, Van Houten, and Cassius, *does* believe that there is some "fault in their stars," and that he and Hazel deserve to spend time together despite what their prognoses might say. But for the time being, he respects Hazel's wish to remain apart.

Chapter 8 Quotes

 It's not like I had some utterly poignant, well-lit memory of a healthy father pushing a healthy child and the child saying *higher higher higher* or some other metaphorically resonant moment. The swing set was just sitting there, abandoned, the two little swings hanging still and sad from a greyed plank of wood, the outline of the seats like a kid's drawing of a smile.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

After writing the letter to Van Houten, Hazel feels depressed about her circumstances. She goes into the backyard, where she sees the childhood swing set her father built for her. In this quote, Hazel notes how the sad old swing set serves to remind her of her younger, healthier days, which further depresses her.

Hazel's family has likely kept the swing set due to the fact that Hazel is no longer very active and they did not need to remove the set to make way for other outdoor activities as she grew into a teenager. No one goes on it anymore, and it reminds her of older, happier days when she was healthy and could play with her parents (although she doesn't have the kind of clichéd nostalgic memory that she feels like she should). Though Hazel tries to maintain a stiff upper lip about her terminal illness, there is something about this tangible memory of her healthier days that makes her mortality suddenly feel unbearable.

Amsterdam before other passengers because they need "a little extra help." In this quote, Hazel expresses that she feels exposed and vulnerable being watched by the other passengers due to the clear evidence of her illness.

Hazel often feels uncomfortable with her interactions with people who do not have cancer or who are outside of her family because they treat her as if she is a fragile invalid. She hates the feeling that the other passengers are feeling sorry for her and her mother, or that she is particularly brave just because there is physical evidence that she has a disease. More than anything, Hazel wants to live with her illness in peace, and the gawking, stares, and awkwardness from others turn her inward and cause her to isolate herself from most people her own age. It is this sense of isolation that both brings her closer to and pushes her away from Augustus: he understands what she is going through, but she doesn't want to pull him into her circle of sickness.

 You could glance at Augustus and never know he was sick, but I carried my disease with me on the outside, which is part of why I'd become such a homebody in the first place.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Augustus Waters

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 146

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel is embarrassed by the looks that she, her mother, and Augustus are cast as they are helped onto the airplane due to her oxygen tank. In this quote, Hazel thinks about the fact that someone could look at Augustus and surmise that he is any normal seventeen-year-old boy, but she is clearly ill. It is for this reason that she has retreated into herself and often stays at home.

Much of Hazel's dislike for living with cancer stems from the fact that people treat her differently due to her clear illness. If she was like Augustus, and had a cancer that no one could see, she would perhaps be more outgoing and be able to balance being a teenager and being a cancer patient much better. However, she cannot stand the pity in people's eyes and how fragile they seem to think she is. Though weak in body she has a strong spirit, which no one seems to notice--besides Augustus. It is only due to their immediate bond and shared understanding of living with cancer that she first begins to break out of her shell to get to know, and come to

Chapter 10 Quotes

 I could feel everyone watching us, wondering what was wrong with us, and whether it would kill us, and how heroic my mom must be, and everything else. That was the worst part about having cancer, sometimes: The physical evidence of disease separates you from other people.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Augustus Waters

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 144

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel and Augustus are allowed to board the plane to

love him.

“I’m in love with you,” he said quietly.
“Augustus,” I said.

“I am,” he said. He was staring at me, and I could see the corners of his eyes crinkling. “I’m in love with you, and I’m not in the business of denying myself the simple pleasures of saying true things. I’m in love with you, and I know that love is just a shout into the void, and that oblivion is inevitable, and that we’re all doomed and that there will come a day when all our labor has been returned to dust, and I know the sun will swallow the only earth we’ll ever have and I am in love with you.”

Related Characters: Augustus Waters (speaker), Hazel Grace Lancaster

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 153

Explanation and Analysis

After Mrs. Lancaster falls asleep on the flight to Amsterdam, Hazel and Augustus remain awake. Hazel reads and recites some poetry aloud to Augustus. Abruptly, he then tells her that he is in love with her, and that he doesn’t care about oblivion or future pain, but only cares about being with her.

In this quote, Augustus speaks as beautifully to Hazel as if he himself were reciting a poem. Though he is eloquent and confident, and frequently speaks in clever, flowery language, it is clear that he has thought about these words for a very long time. Though Hazel is preoccupied about how her potential death will affect Augustus, in this quote he tells her that he doesn’t care about any potential pain, since, according to their shared beliefs, everyone is doomed anyway. Since many of Hazel’s friends have fallen away since she left school, she is shocked at Augustus’s pursuit of her time and affection. At this point Hazel doesn’t know that Augustus has received a diagnosis of cancer even more grim than hers. Like Augustus once told Hazel when they first met, he wants to spend all his time absorbing beautiful things, and what he wants for his last few months alive is to spend them with Hazel.

Chapter 11 Quotes

It looked like an old painting, but real—everything achingly idyllic in the morning light—and I thought about how wonderfully strange it would be to live in a place where almost everything had been built by the dead.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel, Augustus, and Mrs. Lancaster marvel at the old-world beauty of Amsterdam when they arrive. In this quote, Hazel notes that everything feels as if it has come out of a painting, and thinks about how wonderful and strange it would be to live in a city “where almost everything had been built by the dead.”

Hazel and Augustus often wax poetic about the nature of dying and the nature of oblivion—Augustus fears being forgotten after death, and Hazel has come to accept it, saying that oblivion is an inevitable part of living and dying. Hazel is entranced by the idea that people who died long ago are still alive in the architecture and beauty that they created in Amsterdam. Here, Hazel realizes that memories of the dead can come in a lot of different ways, even if specific names and events are not remembered. It is this concept that will lead her to profess her own love to Augustus, since she now realizes that in its own way, their shared existence will be remembered.

Chapter 12 Quotes

Van Houten pursed his lips. “I regret that I cannot indulge your childish whims, but I refuse to pity you in the manner to which you are well accustomed.”

“I don’t want your pity,” I said.

“Like all sick children,” he answered dispassionately, “you say you don’t want pity but your very existence depends on it...sick children inevitably become arrested: You are fated to live out your days as the child you were before you were diagnosed, the child who believes there is life after a novel ends.”

Related Characters: Peter Van Houten, Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 192

Explanation and Analysis

When Hazel and Augustus finally greet Van Houten at his home, they are shocked and disappointed to see what a cruel man he is. He refuses to tell them what happens at the end of *An Imperial Affliction*, saying that it is ridiculous to think that an author knows what happens to characters

after the end of a novel. In return, Hazel refuses to believe that he doesn't know. In this quote, Van Houten nastily replies that Hazel's refusal is due to her stunted growth, which is caused by pity from her parents and others because of her status as a "cancer kid."

While Van Houten says a number of horribly offensive things to both Augustus and Hazel, this quote might be the worst. By refusing to indulge in what he dubs Hazel's "childish whims"--her desire to know what happens at the end of the book--and saying that she is the product of the very pity that keeps cancer kids alive, Van Houten is essentially saying that without pity Hazel would be dead, and by refusing to "indulge" in that pity, he is saying she doesn't deserve to live. He says that she will be an immature child until the day she dies--which he implies will be soon--and yet refuses to grant what he essentially brands to be her dying wish. This shows that Van Houten is not just a cruel man to Augustus and Hazel but also a pessimistic person who all but states he doesn't think it is worth spending the resources to keep children with cancer alive.

"You get to battle cancer," I said. "That's your battle. And you'll keep fighting," I told him.

"Some war," he said dismissively. "What am I at war with? My cancer. And what is my cancer? My cancer is me. The tumors are made of me. They're made of me as surely as my brain and my heart are made of me. It is a civil war, Hazel Grace, with a predetermined winner."

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster, Augustus Waters (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 216

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel and Augustus go back to Augustus's hotel room in Amsterdam after meeting Mrs. Lancaster at a cafe. There, Augustus reveals to Hazel that his cancer has returned, and has in fact metastasized throughout his body. In this quote, Hazel attempts to comfort Augustus by telling him he can fight it, but Augustus feels that he's already lost the battle.

Though Hazel is vehemently against the usual cancer platitudes, they are all she can think to repeat when Augustus tells her his cancer has returned. Throughout the whole time they have known each other, Hazel has always believed that she was the sicker one, and that she needed to keep Augustus at an arm's length to ensure that he wouldn't

get hurt if she died. Now, it seems that Augustus is the one who is suddenly sicker, and who cannot be consoled with any "encouragements." Hazel now has a taste of what her parents are going through, when they realize that their daughter is fighting a battle they cannot help her fight.

Chapter 20 Quotes

 I took a few breaths and went back to the page. "I can't talk about our love story, so I will talk about math. I am not a mathematician, but I know this: There are infinite numbers between 0 and 1. There's .1 and .12 and .112 and an infinite collection of others. Of course there is a bigger infinite set of numbers between 0 and 2, or between 0 and a million... There are days, many of them, when I resent the size of my unbounded set. I want more numbers than I'm likely to get, and God, I want more numbers for Augustus Waters than he got. But, Gus, my love, I cannot tell you how thankful I am for our little infinity. I wouldn't trade it for the world. You gave me a forever within the numbered days, and I'm grateful."

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker), Augustus Waters

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 260

Explanation and Analysis

On Augustus's "Last Good Day" shortly before he dies, he has Isaac and Hazel deliver him eulogies. In Hazel's speech here, she makes a play on "Zeno's paradox" that Van Houten rambled at them about, using it to tell Augustus that the short time they had together might as well have been an infinity.

As terminal cancer patients, Hazel and Augustus are constantly and acutely aware of how little time left they have on earth, compared to other people their own age. Though Hazel resisted Augustus' advances at first to ensure he avoided her as a "grenade," once they both decide their love is worth getting hurt over if one of them dies, they are able to enjoy their time together and glean comfort from the other person, particularly as Augustus's cancer rapidly progresses. Instead of being preoccupied by the quantitative time they have together, as many people are regarding their time on earth, they instead focus on savoring whatever time they do have, accepting that everything is relative.

Chapter 24 Quotes

 "Would you like to share a memory of Augustus with the group?"

"I wish I would just die, Patrick. Do you ever wish you would just die?"

"Yes," Patrick said, without his usual pause. "Yes, of course. So why don't you?"

I thought about it. My old stock answer was that I wanted to stay alive for my parents, because they would be all gutted and childless in the wake of me, and that was still true kind of, but that wasn't it, exactly. "I don't know."

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster, Patrick (speaker), Augustus Waters

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 294

Explanation and Analysis

When Hazel attends the support group after Augustus' death, she is asked to share a memory of Augustus, and tells the group leader that she wishes she would die. In response, he asks Hazel why she doesn't. In this quote, Hazel realizes that her previous reasons for staying alive--keeping her parents happy--have changed dramatically.

Before Hazel met Augustus, she mostly kept to herself, read, and hung out with her parents. She didn't really believe there was a purpose to her life, since she was destined to die young. Essentially, she was waiting to die, living only to make her parents happy and to avoid making too many others unhappy in the process. When she met Augustus, however, she saw the beauty of interpersonal relationships and began to appreciate the simple act of living itself. As seen by how stumped she is in response to Patrick's question, she is surprised by how much her outlook on life--and death--has changed.

Chapter 25 Quotes

 I missed the future...I would probably never again see the ocean from thirty thousand feet above, so far up that you can't make out the waves or any boats, so that the ocean is a great and endless monolith. I could imagine it. I could remember it. But I could never see it again, and it occurred to me that the voracious ambition of humans is never sated by dreams coming true, because there is always the thought that everything might be done better and again.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 305

Explanation and Analysis

As Hazel waits for Lidewij to respond about whether or not Augustus sent Van Houten drafts of a sequel before he died, Hazel thinks about all the things she will never do in life, thinking that she already "misses the future." However, she figures that this is only human, since humans always are fated to dream bigger than what they have experienced.

As Hazel begins to think of the permanence of Augustus's death, and all the things that he will not be able to do (like finish a sequel), she begins to think of all the things that she herself will never do, or never do again. However, she realizes that she is grateful for the experiences she has been able to have in her life, like seeing the ocean from an airplane, and realizes that these ambitions and wishes might have the same veracity even if she was healthy and able to do as she pleased. She feels more connected to human nature, a natural part of the cycle of life and death, and less like a "side effect" of mutation.

 You don't get to choose if you get hurt in this world, old man, but you do have some say in who hurts you. I like my choices. I hope she likes hers.

I do, Augustus.

I do.

Related Characters: Hazel Grace Lancaster, Augustus Waters (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 313

Explanation and Analysis

Hazel receives the letter Augustus wrote to Van Houten, in which he tells Van Houten that pain in life is unavoidable and that one of the best ways to be remembered is to leave scars in the form of love lost. In this quote, he writes that he likes his choices, and hopes that Hazel likes hers. In response, Hazel replies in her mind, "I do, Augustus. I do."

Though Hazel spent so much of the novel resisting her attraction to Augustus because she was afraid of hurting him, in this letter, Augustus writes brazenly that he was not afraid, or regretful, of hurting Hazel with his own death.

Though he was previously scared of oblivion, his love of Hazel made him realize that the love and pain she would continue to carry with her was his own small but important mark on the world. Through this realization, Hazel also comes to see that she should not feel guilty for being a "grenade," for as her parents tell her over and over again,

they value and love her presence much more than they are in pain over her cancer. By reading this letter, Hazel is able to have closure over her relationship with Augustus, which, though "star-crossed," was an important part of the universe, and not just a "shout into the void."



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

In the winter of Hazel Grace Lancaster's seventeenth year, her mother asks her to go to a cancer support group because she believes Hazel is depressed about her cancer diagnosis. Hazel explains that depression is not a side effect of cancer, but a side effect of dying. Hazel explains that she has been staying in the house, spending a lot of time in bed, reading the same book, titled, *An Imperial Affliction*, and spending her free time thinking about death.

Hazel explains that the support group meets every Wednesday in the basement of an Episcopal church shaped like a cross. The group meets in a room where the two boards of the cross would meet. The leader of the group, Patrick, mentions that the group meets in the heart of Jesus, and how the young people, as cancer survivors, hold a special place in Jesus' heart.

During the support, they sit in the "Circle of trust," and listen to Patrick tell his life story for the thousandth time, about the way his cancer had taken his testicles. Hazel speaks sarcastically about how Patrick tells the group he is grateful, although he has lost his wife, is addicted to videogames, is mostly friendless, and waiting for the "sword of Damocles" to fall down and end his life. After Patrick tells his story, the group goes around and introduces themselves: Name, age, and diagnosis. Then the group opens up for discussion. The only redeeming element of support group was a kid named Isaac. Isaac has lost an eye to cancer, and he has a glass eye in the place where the other eye had been removed. Isaac and Hazel connect during the support group, communicating through sighs and sarcasm as they listen to the others share.

After going to the support group for a few weeks, Hazel comes to dread going. One Wednesday during a twelve-hour America's Next Top Model marathon, Hazel attempts to get out of going to group. She argues with her mom. Mrs. Lancaster explains that she wants Hazel to make friends and be a normal teenager. Eventually, she agrees to go, not because she wants to, but because it makes her parents happy.

The novel begins with mention of Mrs. Lancaster's concern for Hazel, establishing the importance of family in the novel. Hazel's correction that depression is a side effect of dying shows that she is focused on her impending mortality. Unlike most teenagers, she stays in the house alone, thinking about dying, depicting the way in which cancer has denied her a normal teenage existence.



The support group meeting in a building the shape of a cross introduces the theme of religion. Patrick's mention of cancer patients having a special place in Jesus' heart speaks to one common view of young people living with cancer, but the reader finds out that this belief is often not sufficient for Hazel, who turns to philosophy to understand her illness.



Hazel, and many of the other characters, find the support group emotionally and intellectually inauthentic. They are facing death in a very real way, which makes the simple platitudes of the support group seem phony. The irony in Patrick's gratitude depicts this, and the "Sword of Damocles" reference suggests that even though he's in recovery, his death is imminent. Also, the fact that he has lost his testicles depicts the way in which the normal coming of age, which involves discovering one's sexual drives, is disrupted by cancer. Hazel and Isaac bond through their sarcasm, showing the way in which being different provides opportunities for connection.



Hazel's mother wants Hazel to have the opportunity to be a "normal teenager," but Hazel knows she is not "normal". She goes only to make her mother happy, which becomes a theme that continues through the novel.



When Hazel arrives at the support group, she notices a new attendee at the group staring at her as she gets a cup of lemonade. She looks away, suddenly aware of her oxygen tank, clothing, and puffy cheeks which are a side effect of her treatment. She takes a seat beside Isaac and admits to herself she thinks the boy is hot. The group starts, and Patrick leads the group in the serenity prayer, during which Hazel realizes the boy is still staring at her. She decides to stare back at him, and continues to stare until the boy looks away. She considers this a victory.

The young cancer survivors go around in a circle sharing about how they are doing. Isaac shares that he must go in for surgery and get his one remaining eye removed. He shares that his girlfriend, Monica, and his friend, Augustus are helping him through it. Other kids share around the circle until it gets to Augustus. He shares his full name is Augustus Waters, that he is seventeen, and had a “touch of osteosarcoma”, but is there to support Isaac.

The group continues with the attendees sharing their battles and victories. Hazel equates this part of group to a circle jerk of support. Eventually, Patrick asks Augustus what his fears are. Augustus reveals that he is afraid of oblivion. Hazel, who shares she is not typically one to speak up, responds by telling Augustus that everyone will die, that “there was a time before consciousness and there will be a time after.” She suggests Augustus ignore it like everyone else. She shares that she had learned this from Peter Van Houten, the author of *An Imperial Affliction*, who is the only person she’s ever heard of who a) understands what it’s like to be dying and b) hasn’t died.

At the end of the meeting, Patrick closes with a prayer in which he prays for all of the group’s attendees. At the end of the prayer he mentions the names of the group members who have died. Hazel keeps her eyes closed, thinking about the day her name will be added to the list of those who have died. At the end, Patrick recites the group’s mantra “Living our best life today.”

After the mantra, Augustus approaches Hazel and asks what her name is. Isaac arrives and tells them about his trip to the doctor earlier that day. He told the doctor he would rather be deaf than blind, but the doctor told him his cancer didn’t work that way. Isaac snidely tells them he thanked his doctor for telling him his eye cancer wouldn’t make him deaf. Hazel facetiously says the doctor sounds like a winner, and tells Isaac that she is going to get some eye cancer so she can make the doctors acquaintance.

This scene is typical of coming of age narratives—two young lovers see each other for the first time, yet Hazel’s awareness of her oxygen and body suggests how she sees cancer as a barrier to such normality. The stare-down during the prayer suggests that the young people are more interested in (or distracted by) their blooming sexualities than religion. The feeling of victory Hazel gets by winning the stare-down shows that she is excited by this kind of attention, and it is new to her.



Isaac’s 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. This foreshadows the heroism he wishes and strives for through the novel and his philosophies about life and death.



Hazel’s sarcasm depicts the way she feels about the group. As typical with teenagers, she is resistant to the idea of sharing in a group, but beyond that, she actually finds the clichés and platitudes in conflict with her own experiences. Her response to Augustus’ fear of oblivion tells the reader something about her philosophy, which she has based on *An Imperial Affliction*. Her views are nihilistic. She believes life has no meaning and leads to death with nothing afterward.



The names at the end of the prayer, and Hazel’s response to them shows that death is a reality for her. The presence of prayers and mantras at the end of the group shows how important religion and philosophy are to those who are dying.



Isaac’s interaction with the doctor shows the way in which these young people have learned to interact with doctors. In the book, there are good doctors and nurses and bad ones, but the characters become skeptical of them, especially those who don’t act kindly, compassionately, honestly, or with a little bit of humor. Hazel’s facetious response shows the way in which the characters connect through humor and use it to get through difficult situations.



After Isaac leaves to go meet his girlfriend Monica in the parking lot, Augustus turns to Hazel and says that they are “literally in the heart of Jesus”. Hazel jokes that it must be dangerous for Jesus to have cancer kids in his heart. Augustus stares at Hazel for a moment, shaking his head. When she asks what he is looking at, he says she is beautiful, and he likes looking at beautiful things. Augustus tells Hazel she looks like Natalie Portman in *V for Vendetta*. Hazel tells him she has never seen the movie. As they walk out, Augustus invites her to his house to watch it. She notices he is limping because his cancer took his leg, but he is confident nonetheless.

In the parking lot outside, Hazel is surprised that her mother is not there yet. She sees Isaac aggressively kissing Monica against the wall and pawing at her breast. In between kissing, they say “always” to one another, which Augustus explains is there way of saying they will always love one another. Hazel wonders if his hand on her breast feels good, and forgives Isaac for the public display on account of his going blind. Hazel and Augustus joke about them, Augustus stating that it is difficult to tell whether he is trying to arouse her or complete a breast exam.

Just then, Augustus pulls out a **cigarette** and places it in his mouth. Hazel is taken aback by the cigarette and angrily accuses Augustus of ruining his chances with her. She says that there is always a *hamartia* (a fatal flaw), and of course Augustus has to be one that gives money to companies that profit through giving people cancer. She tells Augustus that not being able to breathe sucks, and she begins walking away angrily. Just as she begins to walk away, she feels Augustus’ hand grab hers. Augustus says that **cigarettes** can only kill you if you light them, and he has never lit one. He explains that the cigarettes are a metaphor: you put the thing between your teeth, but you don’t give it the power to kill you. After explaining himself, Hazel agrees to go with him to his house.

CHAPTER 2

On the way to Augustus’ house, he drives horrifically because of his prosthetic leg. Hazel explains that she should have been nervous about going home with a boy, but she is too concerned about his driving to worry about anything else. Augustus explains that he failed his driving test four times, but eventually got his license. Hazel states the license was a “cancer perk”, that he technically should have failed the last test.

Hazel and Augustus’ comments show the way in which they find the group to be clichéd. They connect over humor, which establishes an interesting theme. The characters are often brought together by their illness, but quickly find other traits through which they connect. Augustus flirts with Hazel in a blatant way, showing that he has more experience than her and also attracted to her. She admires the fact that even though he has lost a leg, he is still confident.



Hazel’s surprise at her mother’s absence shows her mother’s overprotective tendencies. The awkward kissing and touching between Isaac and Monica indicates that these characters are still inexperienced when it comes to their sexualities. Their promise of “always” also speaks to their naiveté as young lovers, foreshadowing the looming outcome of their relationship.



Hazel’s response to Augustus’ cigarette shows the way in which she is insulted by the thought of a cancer survivor smoking. This response is interesting considering many young people are attracted to smoking when their peers do. Hazel, as someone living with cancer, knows the realities of smoking on a personal level, and this makes her different than many young people. Augustus’ explanation of the cigarette as a metaphor shows his desire for control. On the outside it appears he does have control, but the cigarettes also reveal his insecurities and fears of being out of control.



Augustus’ struggle with driving shows one of the many ways he is different than his peers. The mention of “cancer perks” is a place where Hazel and Augustus identify with one another, but also shows the way in which those with cancer are treated differently than their healthy peers.



Before arriving at Augustus' house, Hazel tells Augustus they make hand controls for people who don't have legs to drive with. Augustus says "someday", which makes Hazel wonder how he feels about the future. She states that there are a number of ways to gauge a cancer survivor's thoughts about the future. She asks him about school, explaining that parents pull children out of school if they think the child is going to die. Augustus explains that he is a sophomore, but has fallen behind a year. When he asks Hazel the same question, she considers lying, but tells him that her parents pulled her from school three years ago, but she is in community college now.

Hazel goes on to tell Augustus about her diagnosis and treatment. She was diagnosed at thirteen, just after she had her first menstruation. She was told it was incurable, but she went through surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. After all of this, her lungs filled with **water**, which she explains felt like drowning for months on end. She contracted pneumonia, and ended up in the hospital, but recovered from pneumonia. Finally, she was put on a treatment called Phalanxifor, which was ineffective in 70% of people, but worked for her. She shares it is unclear how much time the treatment bought her, but she paints the rosiest picture possible for Augustus.

They arrive at Augustus' house. Upon entering, Hazel notices that the house is laden with encouraging sayings embroidered into pillows and hung in frames on the wall. Augustus explains that his parents call them encouragements and that his parents keep them everywhere around the house.

Augustus' mom and dad are in the kitchen making enchiladas. Augustus introduces Hazel as Hazel Grace, but she quickly corrects him it is just Hazel. She notices that they call him Gus, and likes the idea of a person having two names. They ask about the support group, and Augustus drolly says it was "incredible." His parents then ask Hazel what she thought, and trying hard to give them the answer they want says, "most of the people are really nice." His dad agrees, saying, "in the darkest days, The Lord puts the best people into your life." Augustus quickly says that he needs some thread and a throw pillow because what his father said should be an "encouragement". Augustus quickly puts his arms around his father's neck and tells him he is just kidding, and that he really likes the sayings, but can't show it because he is a teenager.

Augustus' confidence in the future indicates to Hazel that he is not immediately concerned about death, but this "gauge" is proven to be inaccurate later in the book showing the way that life and death are unpredictable. Her thought about lying show the way in which unrelated things become indicators of one's health, and she does not want her health to get between her and Augustus.



It's symbolic that Hazel's cancer was diagnosed just after her first menstruation. Illness and coming of age are closely related in the novel. The water in Hazel's lungs is used in the literal sense in this passage, but in the novel comes to represent her suffering. Augustus' last name is Waters, drawing a connection between their relationship and cancer. The success of Hazel's treatment shows the way in which life and death are unpredictable, and this is not lost on Hazel. Yet she is careful to make herself look as healthy as possible for Augustus.



Augustus' parents deal with his cancer by focusing on positivity. This positivity has overtaken their entire house, their entire lives, as a way to cope with the difficulties of cancer. Yet they seem more for his parents than for Augustus.



The use of different names in this section introduces the idea of identity that is inherent in coming of age novels. Both Augustus and Hazel are working to define their identities in the larger world beyond their families. As teenagers, they are critical of the support group. Hazel tries to be nice, showing the way in which she cares about the feeling of his family, and the difference in the way she interacts with adults. Augustus' fathers' comment about the Lord suggests that they have turned to religion to cope with Augustus' cancer, which is common in the novel. Augustus, however, pushes back against his father's faith, which shows the way in which he is challenging his parents as he develops his own beliefs.



Augustus' parents ask Hazel if she will be staying for dinner. Hazel agrees, but tells them she doesn't eat meat. Augustus' parents tell her they will "vegetarianism" an enchilada for Hazel. Augustus asks Hazel whether animals are just too cute to eat. Hazel responds by saying she wants to minimize the number of deaths she is responsible for.

Before dinner Augustus shows Hazel the basement. A shelf runs the whole circumference of the basement, packed with basketball trophies. Augustus explains that he used to play basketball. He used to be pretty good, obsessed with mastering the midrange jump shot, but one day while in the gym shooting hoops from the foul line, he couldn't figure out why he was tossing a "spherical object through a toroidal object." He explains that the activity suddenly felt stupid. He then explains that the day of his existential dilemma around basketball was his last day with both legs, the day he was diagnosed with cancer.

As Hazel listens to Augustus talk, she explains that she is really into him. She asks whether he has siblings, and he tells her he has two older sisters who are married with their own children. Then Augustus asks Hazel what her story is. She begins telling him about her diagnosis, but he stops her short saying, "don't tell me you are one of those people who become their disease." She worries, for a moment, that she is one of those people. When Augustus prods her to tell him about herself, she says she likes reading. She tells him about her favorite book, *An Imperial Affliction*. She explains its importance in her life; that it fills her with a "weird evangelical zeal."

Augustus says he is going to read *An Imperial Affliction*. He grabs a book from his bookshelf titled *The Price of Dawn* and hands it to Hazel. Augustus tells Hazel it is based on his favorite video game. As he hands her the book, he grabs her hand. Augustus notes that her hand is cold, which Hazel blames on her lack of oxygen. They hold hands all the way to the stairs.

They watch *V for Vendetta*, which Hazel doesn't really like because it is a "boy movie", but agrees is great to make Augustus happy. Augustus' mother takes a seat beside her before she leaves and grabs a pillow with the saying, "without pain, how could we know joy?" She tells Hazel she loves the saying. Internally, Hazel believes it is an old argument for thinking about suffering that could easily be dismantled, but she replies to Augustus' mother by saying it is a lovely thought.

Hazel's desire to minimize death and suffering speaks to an inconsistency in her philosophy. Externally, she presents a nihilistic view of life, but at times she is very conscious not to hurt others. This idea of not causing harm becomes an important part of Hazel's character as the novel continues.



Like Hazel, Augustus' cancer arrives as he begins to experience his coming of age. His deep thought about basketball also shows us that Augustus is a deep thinker, which Hazel comes to admire about him.



Augustus' concern that Hazel defines herself by her cancer speaks to the way in which a cancer diagnosis can begin to shape an individual's identity. Hazel's cancer does impact the way that she exists in the world and relates to others, so she begins to worry that she has become her disease. Although this may be true at this point in the novel, this moment begins to show the change she experiences through the novel. The talk of *An Imperial Affliction* filling her with "evangelical zeal" suggests that Hazel turns to the novel's philosophy instead of religion to cope with her cancer.



Although Hazel and Augustus first connected through their shared experience with cancer, they quickly connect through other things like humor, pop culture, and literature. Their holding hands shows that they are quickly becoming attracted and comfortable with one another.



Hazel's interaction with Augustus' mother indicates that she cares about family and sympathizes with their suffering. Her philosophical leanings move her to feel the encouragement is trite, but she agrees that it is lovely to avoid hurting Augustus' mother.



Hazel drives Augustus car home. As they drive, she wonders what his prosthetic leg looks like. She doesn't want to care about it, but can't help wondering. She notes that illness repulses, and she suspects Augustus feels the same way about her oxygen tank. When they arrive at Hazel's house, she puts the car in park. Augustus turns the radio down and Hazel can only think about kissing him. He says it was a pleasure to make her acquaintance, and asks if he can see her again tomorrow. Hazel tells him to be patient and she will call him after she finishes the book he gave her.

CHAPTER 3

Hazel's mother wakes her up at 10am. She tells her mother that sleep fights cancer, and that she was up late reading the book Augustus had given her, which is particularly violent, but somehow enjoyable. Mrs. Lancaster says she knows that Hazel likes Augustus and she knew the support group would pay off. Finally, her mother says she has to go to class, gleefully adding that it is Hazel's thirty-third half birthday. Hazel's mother is thrilled about the occasion, but Hazel is not. Her mother grabs Hazel's childhood bear, Bluie, from the shelf and asks her what she wants to do to celebrate. She decides to call her friend Kaitlyn and go to the mall.

After class, Hazel's mother drives her to the mall. Before meeting Kaitlyn, she goes to the bookstore and purchases the two sequels to the *Price of Dawn*. As she waits in the food court for Kaitlyn, she sees two young kids playing on an indoor playground. They are climbing through a plastic tunnel, and Hazel thinks of Augustus' existential dilemma over basketball.

At 3:32 Kaitlyn shows up. She greets Hazel enthusiastically in a British accent, saying, "Darling...How are you?" She is wearing big sunglasses, and a coat that fits her body perfectly. She tells Hazel she wishes she still went to high school with her because the boys have become "downright edible." She asks Hazel about her health. Hazel tells her it's good, and wants to tell her about Augustus because she knows it will surprise Kaitlyn that anyone as disheveled as her could meet a boy, but she does not say anything.

Hazel's interest in Augustus' leg shows the way in which even though they both have cancer, they are still different than one another and their differences are still uncomfortable. Hazel's thoughts about kissing Augustus show her strong attraction to him and his desire to see her again show his attraction for her, but Hazel keeps the upper hand in the interaction by telling Augustus to be patient.



Hazel gets enjoyment from the book by knowing that it brings Augustus so much pleasure. Her mother is excited because Hazel is getting out and meeting people like a "normal teenager", but by handing her Bluie, her mother's desire for her to still be a child shows through. The celebration of Hazel's thirty-third birthday shows the way in which Hazel's impending death changes the way they think about her life. The brevity of her life drives her mother to celebrate it in shorter increments.



Hazel's interest in Augustus is shown when she buys the other two books, even though she admits it is not her style of literature. Because she is facing the immensity of her death, Hazel thinks about normal things, like children playing, in a deeply philosophical way. The kids in the tunnel, who are healthy, do not think about the meaning of their actions the way Augustus and Hazel do.



Kaitlyn is the epitome of a "normal teenager". She contrasts Hazel because she goes to high school, fits her clothes perfectly, and spends her time thinking about boys, not death. Commenting on the fact that Kaitlyn will be surprised she could attract a boy shows how Hazel's cancer has lowered her self-esteem.



Hazel and Kaitlyn then go shoe shopping. Kaitlyn is particularly picky about shoes, and Hazel notes that she is the only person she knows with toe-specific dysmorphia. Kaitlyn then grabs a pair of "strappy hooker shoes" and says, "Is it even possible to walk in these? I mean, I would just die—", she pauses then and looks at Hazel as if to say "sorry." Kaitlyn continues shopping while Hazel sits on one of the benches. She wants to read Augustus' book, but decides that would be rude. When Kaitlyn is done she suggests they go to another store, but Hazel says she is tired.

Hazel calls her mother and tells her to pick her up at six. She notes that her "perpetual nearness" makes her feel uncomfortable. Her relationship with Kaitlyn also makes her uncomfortable, like there is a distance between them. Hazel states that normal social interactions are just depressing because it is so obvious that others feel awkward and self-conscious around her.

Hazel finds a bench and sits down to read *The Price of Dawn*. The main character of the novel, Max Mayhem, is constantly killing enemies and saving good guys. By the end of the novel, Mayhem is shot seventeen times while trying to save a blond, American hostage. Hazel knows that the series, however, will go on because Mayhem's cohorts will continue his legacy. In the end, however, Mayhem lives.

As Hazel finishes the book, a young girl comes up to her and asks her what is in her nose. Hazel explains that it is called a cannula, which gives her oxygen to help her breathe. The little girl's mother swoops in, mortified by her daughter's questions. Hazel explains that it's alright for her to ask and offers the girl if she wants to try the cannula on. The girl tries the cannula on, and without it, Hazel feels the burden of her lungs. The girl thanks her and her mother takes her away.

CHAPTER 4

That night, Hazel gets into bed and begins reading *An Imperial Affliction*. She explains that the novel is about a girl named Anna who is dying from cancer. Hazel loves the book because it is not sentimental. Most cancer books involve a character starting a charity, or doing some other noble act while dying. Anna is honest about dying, claiming that "cancer kids" are just essentially side effects of the mutation of life on earth.

The awkwardness after Kaitlyn's comment shows how cancer and disease can make the healthy uncomfortable. Things they take for granted, like normal figures of speech, take on new meaning in light of Hazel's cancer, which comes between the two girls. Hazel's desire to read Augustus' book shows that her interest in him is taking on a more important role than her friendship with Kaitlyn.



Although Hazel's mother insists that she have normal teenage interactions, she is always right there, making Hazel uncomfortable and unable to realize her passage into maturity. In this passage, she clearly states that her health makes her different than others, and has a negative effect on their relationship.



Although it is not explicitly stated, the reason why Augustus likes these violent novels begins to become clear. Max Mayhem is an indestructible hero, and it later becomes clear that Augustus admires his strength and heroics and builds his philosophy of life off of heroic models like Mayhem.



Hazel's reaction to the girl shows that she is used to these kinds of interactions, and is not afraid to educate people about her cancer. The girl's mother's response, however, shows the way in which people are alienated and afraid of illness. Through the book, Hazel works to normalize the experience of illness.



Hazel identifies with *An Imperial Affliction* because it speaks to her experience honestly. She bemoans cancer clichés that make sick people's character seem different than healthy people, but *An Imperial Affliction* pushes back against clichés. She bases her philosophy of life on the ideas in the novel, which allows her to accept cancer as a basic side effect of life without any of the metaphorical resonances that are common in cancer narratives and harmful to those living with cancer.



In *An Imperial Affliction*, Anna's mother falls in love with a Dutch man, referred to as The Dutch Tulip Man. The Tulip Man has eccentric ideas about curing cancer, but Anna thinks he is a con artist. Just as Anna is about to start a crazy treatment, the book ends mid sentence. Hazel likes this ending, but wonders what happens to the characters that are left behind. She has tried to write Peter Van Houten about what happens after the novel ends, but Van Houten is a known recluse and has not responded.

As Hazel reads *An Imperial Affliction*, she wonders what Augustus had thought of it. She texts him, stating that *The Price of Dawn* had too many bodies and not enough adjectives. He asks her to call, so she does. When she asks Augustus if he likes it, he tells her he will withhold judgment, but is wondering about the Dutch Tulip Man and whether he is a con artist. Augustus asks when he can see Hazel again, and she tells him that they can see each other when he finishes the book. She knows she is flirting with him, which is new to her, but she enjoys it.

After school the next day, Hazel's mother picks her up and they see a movie together. During the movie, Augustus texts Hazel, saying, "Tell me my copy is missing the last twenty pages." He, like Hazel, begins to wonder what happens to Anna's mother and the Tulip Man after the book ends.

When Hazel gets home she calls Augustus. As they talk, she hears sobbing in the background. Augustus tells her that it is Isaac crying because Monica left him. He invites Hazel over to his place. At Augustus' house, Hazel finds Augustus and Isaac playing video games. Isaac is crying while he plays, refusing to look at Augustus or Hazel. In the game the two are running through a battlefield, firing machine guns at the enemies. Augustus asks Hazel to share any female advice she might have for Isaac. Hazel says his response is normal, to which Augustus replies, "Pain demands to be felt," a line from *An Imperial Affliction*.

As they play the game, they approach a schoolhouse full of children being taken hostage. Suddenly a **grenade** is thrown, and Augustus dives on it, sacrificing himself to save the children. Augustus is happy to have saved the children. Hazel reminds him that he has only temporarily saved them, but Augustus replies that all salvation is temporary. He bought the children a minute, which might lead to an hour, which might lead to a month or a year.

Hazel likes the ending of the novel because it rings true with her understanding of death and dying. By ending mid sentence the novel depicts the way death happens suddenly, leaving nothing behind are tied up. Her interest in what happens to Anna's family after she dies stems from Hazel's fear of what will happen to her family after she dies.



Hazel's interest in Augustus' impression of the book show that she cares what he thinks, revealing her blooming affection for him. Although she and Augustus met through their cancer—the thing that makes them different than their peers—they are beginning to connect through things beyond their illness, showing that even though they are sick, they are still normal teenagers.



Because Hazel's cancer alienates others, she finds companionship in her mother who works to understand her cancer. Again, their shared intrigue with *An Imperial Affliction* becomes the place where their relationship and experiences in the rest of the novel unfold.



When Monica leaves Isaac, he begins to experience a normal part of coming of age. Because of his cancer, however, this normal part of coming of age is particularly harmful. It is different for him than other young people. He knows that he will soon be blind, and is depending on Monica's support. And, it is implied, she is unable to cope with having to be such a support. Their understanding of pain, derived from *An Imperial Affliction*, is part of the philosophy they have developed to cope with life, death, and struggle.



Augustus lives vicariously through his video games. The game allows him to act heroically. His focus on heroism is connected to his desire to be remembered after death. His response to Hazel's comment about temporary salvation shows a difference in their philosophies. His response also alludes to his own salvation, which is temporary, and cut short later by the return of his cancer.



After they are through with the game, Isaac says that Monica dumped him because she didn't want to have to break up with him after he was blind. Isaac says she couldn't handle being with him. Hazel reminds Isaac that she doesn't have to "handle it" the same way that Isaac does. Isaac says that after she broke up with him he just kept saying "always" to her, which was their way of promising to always be together. That's what love is, Isaac says, keeping a promise. He reveals that he believes in real love, but Hazel is not sure she does.

Suddenly, Isaac begins hitting the gaming chair and beating Augustus' pillows. Augustus encourages him to lash out in anger. During Isaac's freak out, Augustus asks Hazel about *An Imperial Affliction*. Hazel reveals that Van Houten is living in Amsterdam, and she suspects he is writing a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction* that reveals what happens to the family after Anna's death. As she talks, Augustus approaches Isaac and tells him to stop beating the pillow and break something. Isaac grabs a trophy and holds it over his head. Augustus gives him permission to smash it. After the trophies have been smashed, Isaac sits down. Augustus asks him if he feels better. Isaac says no, and Augustus again says that pain demands to be felt.

CHAPTER 5

A week goes by without a call from Augustus. Hazel goes on with her life, visiting with Kaitlyn and her boyfriend, going to class, taking her medication. One night she sits down with her parents at the dinner table. Her parents are talking about an earthquake that hit Papua New Guinea. They had met in the Peace Corps there, so anything that happened in Papua New Guinea brings them back to a time when they were young. While they talk they do not even acknowledge Hazel.

While eating, Hazel feels out of breath, which reminds her that she has a PET scan scheduled in a couple of weeks. She realizes nothing is gained from worrying about the results at that moment, yet she can't help but worry, which she says is a side effect of dying.

After being excused from dinner, Hazel goes into the back yard to call Augustus. They talk about *An Imperial Affliction*, and how Augustus understands why it is so important to Hazel. He continues by saying that he feels cheated by the ending. Hazel defends the book by saying this it portrays death accurately by ending mid sentence. Augustus then coyly asks Hazel if Van Houten is really a recluse. She replies yes, that he has never replied to her letters. Augustus then begins to read an email that Van Houten sent to him. He tells her that he got in touch with Van Houten through his secretary Lidewij Vliegenthart.

Isaac learns an important lesson through his breakup with Monica about the realities of love and relationships in the adult world. The difference is that he is also dealing with his cancer, which is ultimately the force that came between them. His questions with regard to the nature of love are an essential part of coming of age.



These young people are feeling immense pain, which as Augustus mentions, "demands to be felt", and they are left trying to figure out how to express it. Unable to deal with the pain in a mature way, Isaac begins smashing things, showing the extent to which he is harmed, but also his lack of ability to cope with the loss. Augustus takes part in the catharsis of Isaac's destructive behavior by allowing him to smash the trophies. His lack of attachment to them shows he is moving away from that part of his childhood. During the scene, he is more interested in Hazel and *An Imperial Affliction*, showing the way his focus has changed as he matures.



Hazel becomes aware that her parents had a life before her, but now that she is sick they must put all of their energy into taking care of her. Hazel feels guilty about the amount of time her parents must spend caring for her, the way her impending death warps their life.



Hazel's health is a constant source of concern for her. She tries to focus on the moment, but the immensity of the thought of dying makes this a difficult task and takes her focus from living now and being happy like other kids.



Augustus and Hazel's differing reactions to the end of the novel show a disparity in their philosophy toward death and dying. Hazel accepts the ending as true to reality, but Augustus feels cheated as he looks for some meaning in Anna's death. Augustus, being the heroic type and go getter, contacts Van Houten, which begins a series of "heroic acts" he completes for Hazel, which give his life meaning after death.



Hazel tells Augustus to continue reading her the email. The email is sincere and warm, but full of philosophical musings about the function and meaning of art. He ponders whether there is a meaning to life or a meaning to being human. Van Houten's letter then goes on to tell that he will not be writing a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction*, as this venture would not benefit him or his readers. Augustus then gives hazel the email address.

Hazel spends the next two hours writing an email to Van Houten. She writes that she is a cancer survivor and that his book has a way of telling her what she is feeling before she can even feel it. Then she asks him to answer a few questions. She wants to know what happens to Anna's mom, whether she married the Dutch Tulip Man, whether she has another child, and whether she moves. She wants to know what happens to Anna's friends and pets.

After sending the email, Hazel calls Augustus back and they talk about *An Imperial Affliction* and *The Price of Dawn*. Augustus shares a quote from the beginning of the book that reads, "Say your life broke down. The last good kiss/you had was years ago." He then asks Hazel when she had her last kiss. The last kiss she'd had was pre-diagnosis, and had felt juvenile and sloppy. Augustus shares that his last kiss with Caroline Mathers, his ex-girlfriend who'd died of cancer. Hazel can't imagine losing someone you were in a relationship with, so she apologizes to Augustus. He says not to worry, that "we are all just side effects." Hazel responds by saying that people are "barnacles on the container ship of consciousness," quoting *An Imperial Affliction*.

They pause on the phone before hanging up. Augustus says, "okay," and Hazel echoes his "okay" with her own. They repeat the word once more each, and Augustus suggests that maybe "okay" can be their "always". Hazel says, "okay" and Augustus finally hangs up the phone.

Two weeks later, Van Houten has still not replied to Hazel's email. On Wednesday during class, Hazel gets a text from Augustus telling her that Isaac is officially NEC, which means no evidence of cancer. Unfortunately, however, he is completely blind.

Van Houten's musing about life, death, and art and meaning establish the ongoing philosophical tone of *The Fault in Our Stars*, dealing with the meaning of life, the meaning of art, and arts ability to authentically represent life.



Hazel seeks answers from Van Houten in an attempt to gain some insight into what will happen to her friends and family after she dies. She believes that Van Houten has the answers to these questions. This assumption shows her naiveté. She assumes that these answers exist in Van Houten and his art, which is later revealed to be false.



The fact that Hazel's last kiss was pre-diagnosis shows the way in which her cancer has gotten in the way of her normal development into adolescence and adulthood. She is unable to imagine what it was like for Augustus to lose Caroline because she has never experienced loss in this way. Interestingly, her own greatest fear is causing this kind of harm with her own death. They find a language and philosophy through which they are able to cope with this challenging reality through *An Imperial Affliction*.



Like Isaac and Monica, Hazel and Augustus find a word that works as a promise to always love one another. Although their fate is different than Isaac's and Monica's, they will eventually learn the way in which these kinds of promises are disrupted by the unpredictability of the adult world and life.



Isaac's situation is bitter sweet. Although he is free of cancer, it has come at the price of his sight, showing the way in which fighting cancer is not always valiant and inspirational; sometimes it is simply tragic.



Hazel goes to visit Isaac at the hospital. When she walks in she says hello, but Isaac mistakes her for Monica. He asks Hazel to come closer so he can examine her face with his hands, "and see deeper into [her] soul than a sighted person ever could." The nurse says he is joking, and Hazel quickly replies that she knows. Isaac tells Hazel that Monica has not even visited and it hurts. He reaches for the pain pump and hits the button sending a shot of narcotics into his arm. The nurse condescendingly tells him not to worry. She says the fourteen months he was with Monica was not that long in the scope of things. They joke about the characteristics of a good nurse, then Isaac becomes depressed again, saying this everyone deserves to experience true love, but he has been short changed by Monica. Then the medicine kicks in and he falls asleep.

Hazel goes down stairs to the gift shop and buys some flowers for Isaac. When she gets back upstairs, Isaac's mother has arrived and is holding his hand. She shares that she feel guilty for leaving him, but she had to pick up Isaac's brother from school. Hazel assures her that he did fine, and then she leaves.

The next morning Hazel wakes up and finds an email from Van Houten. In the email he tells Hazel he is unable to share what happens in writing because that would constitute a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction*. He does, however extend an offer to discuss what happens after the novel's end if Hazel is ever in Amsterdam. Hazel immediately knows that a trip to Amsterdam is out of the question. When she tells her mother about the letter and invitation to Amsterdam, her mother says they don't have the money. Mrs. Lancaster, knowing how important it is to her, offers to talk to her father about it, but Hazel tells her not to spend any money on it, knowing that she is the reason they have no money in the first place.

Hazel calls Augustus and reads him the letter. He asks if she has used her "wish" referring to an organization that gives one wish to dying kids called the Genie Foundation. She says that she used her wish, not knowing that the Phalanxifor bought her some time. Augustus gives her a hard time for using her wish to go to Disney Land, which he considers cliché. Hazel explains that she was thirteen.

By mistaking Hazel for Monica, Isaac's desire to see his ex is revealed. Like many characters in the book, he deals with his tragic situation through humor, asking to touch Hazel's face to see into her soul, playing off of the cliché of the intuitive blind man. The nurse's reaction to his pain over the loss of his relationship with Monica shows her lack of empathy, and lack of understanding of the way in which his cancer affects his ability to be normal. Although what the nurse says may be true based on her adult perspective, as a young person Isaac's loss is devastating.



Isaac's mother's guilt shows the way in which parents of kids with cancer go to great lengths to care for their children, but like any other parent, fall short.



Van Houten's refusal to share the ending in writing speaks to his philosophy about writing falling short when attempting to elucidate reality, and foreshadows the disappointment of their visit later in the novel. When Hazel brings it up to her mother, she feels guilty knowing that her illness is a financial burden on her family.



The young people with cancer in the novel are treated differently than healthy children, as shown by the "cancer perks" and "wishes" they receive. They know that these perks are given through a sense of pity. Augustus gives Hazel a hard time because Disney Land is an inauthentic experience that strays from their search for truth and meaning in their lives and deaths.



On Saturday, Hazel is with her mother at a farmers' market when her phone rings and Augustus tells her he is at her house. When Hazel gets home, she sees Augustus sitting on the front steps with a bouquet of orange tulips. He asks her if she wants to go on a picnic. Augustus and Mr. Lancaster begin talking about basketball and Hazel goes inside with her mother. Mrs. Lancaster asks Hazel if she wants to put the flowers in a vase, but Hazel wants to put them in her room because they are her flowers, not meant for everyone in the house.

When Hazel comes back from her room, her parents are talking to Augustus about his recovery from cancer. He tells them he has been NEC for 14 months. Mr. Lancaster tells Augustus that he should know that Hazel is still sick, and that she needs to take it easy. Hazel emerges and intercepts the conversation, and they leave.

Augustus drives because he wants their destination to be a surprise. As he jolts on the breaks, Hazel feels the tightness in her lungs and can't help but think of the PET scan she needs to get. As they approach their destination, Hazel thinks of the cemetery down the road. Augustus pulls out a **cigarette** and puts it in his mouth. Augustus cryptically asks what they are missing in Indianapolis. Hazel lists a number of things, finally landing on the fact that Indianapolis is missing culture. Just then, they arrive at a park behind the museums where a bunch of artists had made sculptures.

They sit before a large sculpture of a skeleton. There are kids climbing on it, jumping from bone to bone. Augustus tells Hazel it is called *Funky Bones*, created by Joep Van Leishout. Hazel notes that the name sounds Dutch. Augustus tells her it is as, just like the name on the jersey he is wearing. He produces an orange blanket, a pint of orange juice, and some sandwiches. Hazel asks what all of the orange is about, and Augustus replies that it's the national color of the Netherlands.

They eat their sandwiches, watching the kids play on the sculpture. Hazel begins to suspect that Augustus has something up his sleeve that involves Amsterdam, but she feels too awkward to ask him. Augustus tells Hazel that he loves the sculpture because its composition makes it irresistible for kids to play on. Eventually, Augustus begins a "soliloquy" about the shame of using one's "wish" on a theme park. He reveals that he never used his wish, and the Genies have agreed to send him and Hazel to Amsterdam.

Augustus hits it off with Hazel's parents, which is a big step in their relationship and part of a young man's experience when courting a young woman. Hazel's desire to keep the flowers for herself speaks to the way she feels about Augustus and the way that she wants their relationship to be mature and not involve her parents.



Mr. Lancaster's concern for Hazel shows that although she and Augustus are working toward a mature relationship, they have not completely entered that realm. Hazel's illness causes her father to feel immense concern for her, which leads to a sense of overprotection that inhibits her ability to live out a mature relationship with Augustus.



Even though she is going on a date with Augustus, Hazel can't help thinking about the PET scan which will determine if her cancer has returned, showing the way in which her illness interrupts her life. Augustus' cigarette shows that whatever he is planning for Hazel makes him nervous and in need of a feeling of control.



The children playing on the skeleton metaphorically speak to Hazel and Augustus' situation—they are still young, like the kids playing, yet they are constantly confronting the issue of death embodied by the skeleton. The Dutch themed picnic shows that Augustus has put a lot of thought into it, suggesting he really cares about Hazel's happiness.



Augustus' affection for the statue speaks to his philosophy about life and death, like the cigarettes and heroic video games he likes the act of confronting death. Subconsciously, Augustus' decision to bring Hazel to Amsterdam is his attempt to do something heroic for her, something that he will be remembered for.



Hazel is elated, but as Augustus reaches out to touch her face, her body tenses and she recoils. She tells him he really doesn't have to use his wish to take her to Amsterdam. Augustus tells her that he really does have to take her because she is his wish.

Although she doesn't know it, Hazel pulls away instinctively because she doesn't want her death to hurt Augustus. She feels like accepting is setting Augustus up to get hurt, but Augustus has more experience with death than Hazel because of his relationship with Caroline Mathers, so he knows on a deeper level what he is getting into.



CHAPTER 6

When Hazel gets home from the picnic, she explains that the Dutch themed date had led up to Augustus' proposal to take her to Amsterdam. Her mother says she can't—it's too much to accept from a stranger. Hazel says that Augustus is not a stranger, that he is easily her second best friend. When her mother asks if Kaitlyn is her first best friend, Hazel says that her mother is her first best friend. Her mother tells her she will have to check with Dr. Maria.

Dr. Maria says that the only way Hazel can go is if an adult goes with her. Hazel asks her mother to go, knowing that her mother is informed about her cancer more than her father, and even more than some oncologists. Her mother says that she couldn't because Hazels father would be too lonely, but Hazel assures her that he would love a few days with the house to himself.

Her mother is concerned that Augustus and Hazel are moving too quickly with their relationship, that Augustus is still a stranger to them and his offer is too much. Hazel, like a good teenager, then manipulates her mom to get what she wants (though like the best manipulators, she does it with the truth).



At home, Hazel goes upstairs to lie down. As she rests, she thinks about the picnic with Augustus, focusing on the moment he tried to touch her and she tensed up. Hazel realizes that she wants to kiss him, but she feels guilty because of the fact that he is taking her to Amsterdam, and that seems prostitutional; like she is kissing him in exchange for the trip. She then realizes that his gesture was not even sexual. She decides to call Kaitlyn for advice. Kaitlyn remembers him and goes on about how gorgeous he is and how Hazel would be crazy to turn down his advances. Kaitlyn tells Hazel about a boy that dumped her preemptively because he didn't see their relationship going anywhere. After hearing this, Hazel realizes that she pulled away from him because she was afraid to hurt him.

After hanging up with Kaitlyn, she goes online and looks up Caroline Mathers. She realizes that Caroline looks like her. Thousands of people had left condolences for Caroline after she died. She reads through some of the messages, which read that her friends miss her so much, that they were all wounded in her battle, and that they love her.

Once again, Hazel's health gets in the way of her ability to seize the opportunities other young people take for granted. Her mother's familiarity with her cancer shows how devoted Mrs. Lancaster is to her daughter, and her worry about Mr. Lancaster shows that she is concerned for the wellbeing of the entire family.



Hazel finally consciously realizes the reason she pulled away from Augustus is because she does not want to cause harm. She feels like she is using Augustus for the trip, and eventually she will just harm him. Because she does not have experience with love she cannot understand why Augustus would want to be with her, or love her, despite her health. Kaitlyn's advise helps Hazel, even though the stakes in Kaitlyn's breakup with her boyfriend are much lower than Hazel, who will likely have to leave Augustus because of her death.



Her parents call her down for dinner, and at the table Hazel begins feeling pain in her shoulder and head. She tries to focus on the moment, and reminds herself that imaging the cancer in different parts of her body would not change the reality of what was really going on inside of her.

Hazel's parents notice that something is not right with her and begin to ask if she is okay. Mr. Lancaster asks her if she is excited about Amsterdam, and she replies yes, but is too concerned with her health to engage with them. Hazel is short with them, and Mrs. Lancaster says she is acting very "teenagery". Hazel responds by saying that is what her mother has wanted. Her mother says they are happy she is becoming a teenager and going on dates, which Hazel refutes. When her mother again asks what is wrong, Hazel says she is like a **grenade**, and at some point she is going to blow up and harm those around her.

She goes into her room and tries to read, but she can hear her parents talking downstairs. She hears Mr. Lancaster say that her situation "kills him". She puts on some music to block out her parents and goes back to Caroline Mathers' tribute page. The comments on the page make Hazel worry that after she dies she will only be remembered for her heroic fight against cancer, not about the life she had lived. She also sees posts from Caroline's parents about how the brain tumor had changed Caroline's personality.

Hazel returns once again to the moment in the park with Augustus. She realizes that she tensed up because to be with him meant she would inevitably hurt him. As he reached out for her, she knew intuitively that she was committing a violent act against him, just because of the reality of her condition.

Hazel sends a text to Augustus apologizing because she can't kiss him. He texts back "okay" to which she responds with an "okay". He tells her to stop flirting with him. Augustus texts back moments later telling her that he understands. She pictures Augustus at her funeral, and texts "sorry".

Hazel attempts to calm herself by reminding herself that worrying won't help, but the reality of her situation makes being with her family in the moment difficult.



Hazel's health interferes with her ability to engage with her family. Her mother accuses her of acting "teenager" even though she has been telling Hazel to be a teenager. This moment shows the way in which her parents want her to mature, but also want to hold onto her youth—a time in which she was healthy. Hazel's metaphor of a grenade to describe herself in relation to others speaks to her belief that letting people get close to her will cause them harm.



Hazel is aware of the ways in which her health is hard on her parents and feels guilty about it. Like most teenagers, Hazel experiences existential dilemmas surrounding the meaning of her life, but her situation makes these musings particularly difficult because she is facing her impermanence in a very real way.



Because of her health, Hazel feels unable to engage in a normal relationship with Augustus. The very nature of her condition prevents her from partaking in this natural part of coming of age.



Because Augustus is a cancer survivor and someone who has been in a relationship with someone who has passed from cancer, he understands her concern. Their interaction with "okays", however, suggests that Augustus will continue to pursue Hazel, even though she is unable to see their relationship without thinking about her death.



Later, as Hazel tries to go to sleep her parents come into her room. Her mother grabs Bluie from the shelf and hands the stuffed animal to Hazel. They reassure her that she is not a **grenade**. Mr. Lancaster tells her that she is amazing, and that she can't understand the way they love her because she does not have children. He tells her that the joy she gives them is greater than the sadness of her cancer, and then jokingly says that if she brought them more trouble than joy they'd drop her off at the orphanage. After her parents leave, she cuddles up with Bluie and falls asleep until 4am when she awakens with an "apocalyptic pain fingering out from the unreachable center of [her] head."

CHAPTER 7

Hazel screams to awaken her parents. They burst into her room and rush her to the hospital. Hazel comforts herself by remembering that when the pain grows to be too much, the body shuts down. She tries to enter a space with no stimuli, a space she identifies with the moment before the Big Bang. She notes that cancer patients have an incredible amount of courage, but in that moment she would have rather died.

By handing Hazel her childhood stuffed animal, her mother attempts to hold onto a part of Hazel's youth. Her parents continue to support her, and her father tells her that she hasn't had the opportunity to love, so she can't understand the way they feel about her as a daughter. By using the word "apocalyptic" to describe her pain, Hazel suggests that she feels close to the end of her life.



Hazel wakes up alone in ICU. She hears a wailing cry in the hall, and notes that someone's kid had died. She calls the nurse who lets Mr. Lancaster and Mrs. Lancaster in. They hug and kiss her, assuring her that she does not have a brain tumor, but she was deprived of oxygen because her lungs were full of **water**. They had drained most of the fluid. Hazel notices the tube coming from her lung, and is not surprised by its presence. They tell Hazel that her PET scan had revealed that no new tumors had formed.

The nurse asks Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster to leave because they pose an infection risk. She feeds Hazel crushed ice and tells her she was out for a couple of days. Hazel praises God for good nurses. Before the nurse leaves she tells Hazel that Augustus has been in the waiting room since she entered the hospital. Mortified by the thought of Augustus having seen her in her current condition, she asks if he's been in the room. The nurse reassures her that only family is allowed in.

Although Hazel is inexperienced with many adult issues, such as love and life, she is very familiar with pain, as shown by her knowledge of how to cope with it. By attempting to enter a place before the big bang, she attempts to find a place before consciousness, which she earlier related to death. Even though she is courageous, with the pain she experiences, death would be an easier option.



Hazel has spent enough time in hospitals to know the wail of a parent who has lost a child. This wail has a metaphorical ring to it, as Hazel often thinks of her own death and the effect it will have on her parents. Water is introduced here as a metaphor for Hazel's suffering, although there are no new tumors, she still suffers because of her cancer.



Although Hazel's gratitude to God for good nurses may be a figure of speech, the fact that she mentions God in this instance suggests that she is not completely closed off to God and Religion, even though she prefers philosophical explanations for life and death. Hazel's worries about whether Augustus has seen her shows that even though she is severely ill, she is still preoccupied with normal adolescent concerns, especially regarding Augustus.



Over the next few days, the doctors keep a close eye on Hazel. One doctor comes in with a group of medical students, who practice taking Hazel's chest tube out, which causes her pain. She begins to think she is part of an existentialist experiment in delayed gratification. When Dr. Maria tells Hazel she can go home, Mrs. Lancaster pulls out a pair of clothes from her purse for Hazel to wear on the way home.

Before leaving the hospital, Augustus comes into the room to visit Hazel. Her parents leave, and Augustus sits beside her. He tells her that he missed her. Augustus attempts to grab Hazels hand, but she tells him no. She says that if they are going to be friends it can't be "like that". He then tells her that he has good and bad news. The bad news is that they can't go to Amsterdam until she is better, but the good news is that Van Houten has written another letter to them.

Hazel does not read it until she gets home. Sitting on her bed, she opens it. Van Houten writes about Hazel and Augustus' situation, noting that everyone in Augustus' story has a *hamartia* (a fatal flaw). He states that Shakespeare was wrong when he had Cassius note that "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars / But in ourselves." Van Houten goes on to cite Shakespeare's fifty-fifth sonnet, calling time a slut because she "screws everybody." Finally, he defends Hazel's decision to minimize the pain she inflicts upon others. After reading the letter, Hazel asks Mrs. Lancaster to check with Dr. Maria about whether she will still be able to travel to Amsterdam.

Hazel uses a philosophical explanation to conceptualize her situation, avoiding common religious explanations for suffering. The fact that Mrs. Lancaster has clothing ready for Hazel suggests that she is not only a caring mother, but also that she is experienced with these kinds of incidences.



Hazel's parents give Hazel and Augustus time to be alone, showing that they are accepting Hazel's relationship with Augustus and supporting her maturation into adulthood. Hazel's response to Augustus trying to grab her hand shows that the incident has only made her concern about hurting him worse.



Van Houten's letter challenges Shakespeare's notion that the outcomes of our lives are in our control. For Hazel and Augustus, there is no explanation for their situation and they have done nothing to cause the situation. This idea heightens the existential questions raised in the novel. Hazel and Augustus are searching for meaning in their situation. Van Houten, however, does agree with Shakespeare when it comes to time screwing people over, which reveals his nihilistic views. His agreeing with Hazel's desire not to harm others foreshadows the fact that Van Houten has been harmed by cancer in his own life.



CHAPTER 8

A couple of days later Hazel and her parents meet with her cancer team to talk about her cancer. Dr. Maria tells them that the Phalanxifor is working, but she is still having trouble with fluid in her lungs. Another doctor says that Phalanxifor only works for a short period of time before the tumors begin to grow again. Hazel asks if she can just get a lung transplant, but Dr. Maria tells her she is not a good candidate. Hazel notes that it is no use wasting good lungs on a hopeless case. Mr. Lancaster begins crying, which hurts Hazel. She knows that she is "the alpha and the omega of [her] parents' suffering."

During the cancer meeting, Hazel remembers a time just before the Phalanxifor began working. She was in the ICU and her mother was telling her it was alright to let go. She remembers hearing Mrs. Lancaster sobbing into Mr. Lancaster's chest, saying, "I won't be a mom anymore."

Like Isaac's eye surgery, which cures his cancer but leaves him blind, the news about Hazel's treatment is good, but will only buy her a bit of time. The hopelessness of her situation is heightened by Dr. Maria's comment about her being a bad candidate for a transplant. While facing the reality of her own prognosis, she also must deal with her parents' pain, which adds another level of stress to her life.



This experience leads to Hazel's obsessive fear of what will happen to her parents after she dies. Her mother's words lead her to An Imperial Affliction – she believes that if she can find out what happens to Anna's mother, she will have an idea of what will happen to her own mother.



Before the meeting ends, Hazel asks if she can still go to Amsterdam. One of the doctors laughs at the notion of her traveling, but Dr. Maria asks why she wouldn't be able to go. On the car ride home, her parents say she can't go unless her medical team can agree that it would be safe.

After dinner that night, Augustus calls. Hazel picks up and says, "bad news." She tells Augustus she can't go to Amsterdam. Augustus says that he should have taken her right after the picnic, and then maybe he would have gotten laid. Hazel laughs and says probably not, but who knows. He moans that he is going to die a virgin. Hazel asks if he is really a virgin. He tells her to grab a piece of paper and draw a circle on it. He then tells her to draw a small circle inside of the bigger circle. He says the big circle is for all virgins, and the small one is for seventeen-year-old guys with one leg. They begin talking about Van Houten's comment about the sluttiness of time. She feels like they enter an uncreated third space together while on the phone.

The next morning Hazel wakes up and begins writing a letter to Van Houten about how she will not be able to go to Amsterdam and if he would just share what happened to Anna's family, she would never tell a soul what he wrote. Afterward, she does not send the letter because she feels it is too pitiful.

After writing the letter Hazel goes into her backyard and calls Augustus. While the phone rings she looks at her old swing set and remembers her father building it and testing it before letting her on it. She thinks that she would give up all of the sick days she had left in her life for a few healthy ones. She tries to remind herself that she is living with cancer, not dying from it, but finds her self-talk stupid. Then Augustus calls her back.

Hazel tells Augustus she is crying because she wants to go to Amsterdam to find out what happens to the characters after *An Imperial Affliction* ends. She says that her life, the grey sky, and the swing set are depressing her. Augustus says he must see the "swing set of tears", so he comes over. When he arrives he sits on the yard beside Hazel and says he sees what she means about the swing set—it is depressing. He puts his arm around her and says that they need to do something about the depressing swing set.

Hazel's opportunities to do things normal teenagers not only rests in the hands of her parents, but also must be approved by a team of doctors.



Augustus, like Hazel, faces significant challenges when it comes to having the normal experiences that constitute a coming of age. Losing one's virginity is a particularly important and often stressful part of this process, but Hazel and Augustus are coming of age in bodies that are not healthy. The diagram creates a representation of how difficult this seems for Augustus. The uncreated third space is a realm in which Hazel has never been with a boy, but is able to access with Augustus. They meet there alone together without having to worry about their health.



Believing that she will not be able to go to Amsterdam, she decides to ask Van Houten again to write the end of the novel, showing just how important it is for her to know what happens to Anna's family.



The swing set arouses memories of herself when she was young and healthy, which was also a time when her health was not hurting her parents. She tries to convince herself to be positive, but in the reality of her situation, she finds it difficult.



Hazel's tears show how important it is for her to know the ending of *An Imperial Affliction*. Her impending mortality also brings meaning to many things that otherwise seem unimportant, the swing set and the grey sky, showing the way in which her health shapes her perception of the world. Augustus is able to identify with Hazel because he shares her experience of being a young person with cancer.



Hazel and Augustus go inside and post an add on a website where people give things away. They laugh together as they make up headlines. Hazel suggests, "Lonely, Vaguely Pedophilic Swing Set Seeks Butts of Small Children." Augustus tells her that he really appreciates her humor and intelligence, and says that she is "unprecedented." Finally they write the post and put it up on the website. Afterward, Hazel and Augustus go into the living room and Augustus reads *An Imperial Affliction* to her while she falls asleep.

When Hazel wakes up she finds a number of emails from people who want the swing set, and tells a man to come pick it up. Augustus asks Hazel if she wants to go to support group, but she passes. Before leaving Augustus gives her a kiss on the cheek. Hazel is shocked, but Augustus ensures her that it is just friendly. He then kisses Mrs. Lancaster on the cheek, and says, see it's just friendly.

Hazel takes another nap, and when she wakes up she finds a letter from Lidewij saying that their trip to Amsterdam was all set up. Hazel calls her mother into the room. Mrs. Lancaster appears wearing a towel, and says that she was just trying to take a bath for five minutes. Hazel asks her to call the Genies and tell them the trip is off. Her mother then reveals that the trip is still on, but she was going to wait until her father got home to tell her. Hazel is ecstatic, and texts Augustus. She is thrilled that if she can just stay alive for a week she will finally find out what happens after the end of *An Imperial Affliction*. She whispers to her lungs, "Keep your shit together."

CHAPTER 9

The day before leaving for Amsterdam, Hazel goes to support group for the first time since she met Augustus. She finds out that one of the group members had passed away. Another member had successfully completed radiation, and a third had "relapsed". Just then, Isaac enters, being led by his mother. Hazel says hi, and tells him about Amsterdam. Isaac says he knows all of the details because she is the only thing Augustus ever talks about.

Like Augustus and his trophies, Hazel takes a step toward coming of age by getting rid of a symbol of her childhood that makes her unhappy because it represents a time in which she was happy. By telling Hazel that he appreciates her intelligence and humor, Augustus makes it clear that he sees past her cancer to the real person she is.



Augustus finally makes some progress in becoming intimate with Hazel, which interestingly happens right after the swing set—a symbol of youth—is taken away. Hazel is shocked by the action because she has been attempting to keep him at a distance to prevent hurting him. Augustus plays it off by kissing Hazel's mother, but in this scene their relationship begins moving forward.



Answering the door in a towel shows the way in which Mrs. Lancaster is constantly taking care of Hazel and has little time for herself. Even though Hazel is thrilled by the news, she takes it with a grain of salt, as shown by telling her lungs to keep it together. Even though she is excited, she expects something to go wrong.



The outcomes of the different group members show the challenges and tragedies faced by these young people on a daily basis. It's only been a short time since Hazel went to the support group last, but a lot has happened among the members. Isaac's arrival with his mother shows his new dependence now that he is blind, and the loss of Monica. Hazel also gets another glimpse of how much Augustus cares for her here.



Patrick starts the group. Hazel zones out as they go around until one of the group members, Lida, says Hazel's name. She says that Hazel is such an inspiration to her because she just continues fighting her cancer. Hazel replies by saying that she would trade her strength for Lida's remission any day. After the group, Lida apologizes, and Hazel tells her it is really fine. Isaac invites Hazel over to his house as she walks him by the arm to the elevator. She feels sorry for him, which she hates, but can't help felling it.

They play a video game in which the characters are controlled by voice command. Isaac says that Augustus is tough to play with because he is completely suicidal when it comes to saving civilians in the game. As they play, Isaac's little brother comes in and imitates Isaac's voice, commanding his character to kill himself in the game. Isaac tells his brother he is going to kick his ass, so his brother runs off laughing. In the game, they come across a prisoner begging for his life. Isaac says that this is where Augustus always goes wrong by insisting on saving the prisoner. Isaac asks if Hazel wants to hook up with Augustus. She says its complicated, to which Isaac replies he understands that she does not want to "Monica" Augustus by leaving him. Hazel tells Isaac that what he did to Monica by going blind was not nice. Isaac defends himself by saying it wasn't his fault, but Hazel tells him it was not his fault, but it still wasn't nice.

Although Lida's comment is meant to commend Hazel, it works to set Hazel apart from other people. Hazel dislikes clichés about sick people being stronger or braver than healthy people, so she takes offense to Lida's compliment. Immediately afterward, however, she feels bad for Isaac, showing the way in which she sets herself apart from him.



When Augustus plays the game, it is more important to act bravely and save the hostages than win the game, speaking to his philosophy that heroics will allow him to live on after death. Isaac's brother finds Isaac's threats funny because he knows Isaac is unable to follow through with it. His brother's actions show the way in which family does not always think about the way their actions will affect their sick family members, yet at the same time this is an example of two kids teasing each other in a normal way. Hazel's joke about Isaac going blind on Monica nonetheless speaks to the way she perceives her own health in relation to Augustus. The fact that she is not in control of her health doesn't mean it won't hurt Augustus, and she believes it is her duty to protect him from that pain.



CHAPTER 10

Hazel and her mother are only able to bring one suitcase to Amsterdam, so they pack their clothes together in one. Hazel's parents had received the suitcase as a wedding present, and Hazel notes that it was supposed to be used to carry their things to exotic locales, but it mostly went to Daytona where Mr. Lancaster's company had a satellite office.

By noting that the suitcase was supposed to go with her parents to exotic destinations, Hazel's guilt over the impact she has had on her parent's life shows through. Also, the fact that it is only used for business trips shows that Hazel is also aware of the financial burden she is on her parents.



Mrs. Lancaster wakes Hazel up five thirty, even though the plane does not leave until noon. She spends all morning making sure that Hazel has everything she will need to make the trip. They eat dinner with Mr. Lancaster, even though Hazel is opposed to eating before dawn on the grounds that she is not a Russian peasant preparing for a long day in the fields. She argues that breakfast foods are unfairly labeled so, stating that they should be food to be eaten anytime of the day. Mrs. Lancaster tells her she has to pick her battles.

Mrs. Lancaster's planning before the trip not only shows her concern for Hazel, but also shows the amount of thought that goes into planning a trip with a sick child. Hazel's questioning of the breakfast food shows the way in which she thinks existentially about everything. This is not only because she is a teenager, but also because she is a teenager whose impending mortality makes her question the conventions in her life.



Before they drive to the airport, Mr. Lancaster begins crying and tells Hazel that he loves her and is proud of her. Hazel wonders what he is proud of. As they leave, Hazel sees that he is still crying and realizes that he must be thinking he might never see her again, which is a thought he must have every morning.

When Hazel and her mother arrive at Augustus' house, they get out of the car and go to the front door. Before they can knock, they hear someone crying inside. Hazel realizes it is Augustus, and Mrs. Lancaster immediately turns her back toward the car. Hazel texts Augustus, who texts back that he just can't figure out what to wear.

At the airport they go through security. Hazel chooses to go through the metal detector, as opposed to getting searched by hand, and takes her nubbins out and pushes her air tank to the side. She notes that walking through the metal detector was the first time in months she'd gone without her oxygen, and it feels good. She feels a freedom she hasn't felt in a long time. After walking through, however, she feels pain in her lungs and must sit down.

At the gate, Augustus notes that Mrs. Lancaster is a particularly punctual person. She tells Augustus that she isn't very busy, so that helps. Hazel chimes in saying that she is busy, and quickly realizes that most of her mother's time is spent taking care of her, and the rest of her time was spent helping her father who was clueless when it came to many things.

Augustus leaves to grab a burger. Before he leaves, Hazel notes that she is glad that he does not want scrambled eggs, which are the stereotypical breakfast food. While he is gone an airline attendant shows up with a fresh tank of oxygen for Hazel. She feels embarrassed as the attendant attaches the new tank, feeling like people are watching her. She texts Augustus, but he does not reply. She begins to worry that some "Amsterdam-ruining fate" like arrest, injury or mental breakdown has struck Augustus.

Just then the attendant announces that they will be boarding passengers who need "a little bit of extra help." Augustus returns just in time, rushing toward her with a McDonalds bag in his hand, saying that the line was super long. As they enter the plane, Hazel can feel everyone looking at them. She feels like they are wondering what is wrong with her, and if it will kill her. She notes that the evidence of her disease—the tank, the nubbins, Augustus' limp—separate them from healthy people.

Because Hazel has not experienced deep love, like the love one has for a child or significant other, she cannot understand why he is proud of her. In the end, however, she begins to sympathize with her father as she realizes that her health and unpromised future must be extremely difficult for him.



It is later revealed that Augustus is crying because he has received bad news about his health, but he does not want Hazel to know about it before her trip, so he lies to her about it. In a sense, he is diving on a grenade to save her special trip.



Walking through the metal detector allows Hazel to feel a sense of freedom that foreshadows the freedom she will later experience in Amsterdam. At the same time, she is quickly reminded of her limitations, which mirrors her larger situation—she strives for normalcy, but she will never again be healthy.



In this moment, Hazel realizes how much her work her mother puts into maintaining the family.



Hazel admires Augustus' decision to eat a burger as it shows their mutual refusal to think inside the box. The attendants arrival with the new tank makes Hazel the center of attention, highlighting the way that she is different than the other people in the waiting area. When Augustus is running late, Hazel assumes the worst—having cancer makes every moment potentially perilous.



Again, Hazel's cancer makes her feel gawked at and set apart from others, as a product of those others trying to make her life easier. Hazel's tank, nubbins, and Augustus' limp, serve as external markers of their difference from others watching. She projects her concerns around death onto the people watching.



Augustus takes the window seat, while Hazel sits in the middle with Mrs. Lancaster in the aisle. Augustus says that eggs are in some way sacred because they have a special time for their consumption. Hazel thinks it is ludicrous, telling Augustus that he is calling a fragile and rare thing beautiful just because it is fragile and rare. He admits that she is correct, and then admits that the line wasn't that long, he just didn't want to sit in a space where people were staring at them. Augustus says that he was not embarrassed, just mad that people stare, and he doesn't want to be mad in Amsterdam.

As the plane takes off, Augustus grabs the armrest and clenches his jaw. Hazel asks if he is scared to fly. Augustus tells her that he will let her know in a moment. She puts her hand on his while they take off. When they are in flight, Augustus excitedly looks out the window and says that nothing has ever looked like that before. Hazel finds his enthusiasm endearing and kisses him on the cheek, telling him that it was just friendly. In his moment of youthful joy, Hazel could not resist kissing him.

Hazel and Augustus stay awake while Mrs. Lancaster falls asleep. They admire the beauty of the sky as the sun sets. Augustus quotes a line from *An Imperial Affliction*, "The risen sun too bright in her losing eyes." Hazel notes that the sun is setting, but Augustus assures her that it is rising somewhere. He says that it would be awesome to fly in a plane so fast it could chase the sun around the earth. Hazel says she would live longer because of relativity.

They decide to watch 300, but the movie on Augustus' screen starts before Hazel's. She leans her head on his shoulder and watches the movie on her screen. Hazel is not interested in the movie, but enjoys the fact that Augustus gets such a kick out of it. When she tries to talk to him, he tells her to be quiet, later apologizing, stating that he was "awash in the nobility of sacrifice."

Hazel asks Augustus how many dead people he thinks there are. He happens to know the answer: there are 7 billion living people and 98 billion dead people. He reveals that he did some research on it a few years ago because he was wondering if everyone could be remembered. He says that if everyone remembered 14 dead people, everyone could be remembered, but humans are disorganized mourners, so they remember Shakespeare, but not the person who Sonnet fifty-five was about.

Metaphorically, by taking the middle seat, Hazel is between her adult life and love of Augustus, and her childhood embodied by her mother. Hazel's belief that eggs should not be considered special because of their fragility mirrors her belief that cancer kids should not be treated differently because of their cancer. By admitting that the line wasn't that long, Augustus reveals he is still self-conscious about his cancer, even though he always appears confident.



As they begin their trip, Augustus begins to show some vulnerability, which suggests he is opening up to Hazel and moving away from his confident facade. Happy to see this facade diminishing, Hazel kisses Augustus on the cheek—she is finally giving into her attraction to Augustus, despite her fear of being a grenade.



When Hazel's mother falls asleep, they spend a romantic moment together watching the sun set. Hazel's correction of Augustus' about the sun speaks to her belief on her situation—the sun is setting on her. But Augustus sees it another way, noting that it is rising elsewhere, a more hopeful view. This moment speaks to their differing philosophies, but their shared interest in existentialism.



The different starting times of their movie provide an opportunity for them to come closer to one another; an opportunity that Hazel seizes. This affection again shows that she is giving in to her love for Augustus. Augustus becomes entranced by the movie because of the heroics.



As an individual who has faced death in a very real way, Augustus has already spent time thinking about the question Hazel asks. His research is directly related to his fear of being forgotten after he dies, and his comment about Shakespeare rings with resentment over the fact that many people are simply forgotten.



Hazel asks if Augustus wants to read. Hazel is reading Allen Ginsburg's *Howl* for school, and Augustus asks her to read some of it out loud. Hazel says its not the kind of poem to read next to your sleeping mother since Allen Ginsburg did more drugs than she has, and the poem contains sodomy and angel dust. Finally she decides to recite *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock* from memory instead. When she finishes, Augustus tells her that he is in love with her. Hazel gets uncomfortable afterward, but Augustus says that he understands "love is a shout into the void" and that "oblivion is inevitable", but he is not going to deny the truth. Hazel feels something rising up inside of her, but she is unable to say it back.

CHAPTER 11

As the plane lands, Hazel looks out the window and notes that the Netherlands seems sunk into the ocean with little rectangles of green surrounded by **water**.

They take a cab into Amsterdam. Hazel notices the differences of Amsterdam compared to Indianapolis. The row houses lean precariously toward the **water** in the canal. There are bicycles, and coffee shops everywhere. She thinks about how wonderful it would be to live in a place where everything had been built by the dead. The cabbie notes that most people come to Amsterdam for the Red Light District, but he says that Amsterdam is not a city of sin, but one of freedom, and in freedom, most people find sin.

They get out at the Hotel Filosof. Hazel explains that the hotel rooms are named after Filosoofers (philosophers) and that she will be staying in a room named after Kierkegaard. Augustus will be staying in a room named after Heidegger. Hazel finds a basket full of presents from the Genies in her room, including an orange Holland t-shirt, wooden shoes, and chocolate.

Allen Ginsburg's poem *Howl* was written in resistance to the societal norms of post-war America. The subject matter is existential, which mirrors Hazel and Augustus' existential dilemmas. *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock* explores similar themes, but the fact that it is a "love song" makes it an appropriate choice for Hazel. The existential theme continues when he tells Hazel he loves her. Although there may only be oblivion after death, Augustus refuses to let this prevent him from loving Hazel now. Hazel is unable to say it back because she is still working through these ideas philosophically.



Amsterdam provides the perfect setting for the novel's climax. For Hazel, the water in her lungs is a source of suffering, but her suffering is a place where she develops a deep understanding of life. Amsterdam also becomes a place of pain and new understanding for Hazel.



Amsterdam's differences from America give Hazel new perspectives that match her existential musings. The building's precarious positions mirror Hazel and Augustus's own shaky life situations. Even in the wonder of it all, Hazel thinks about death, but her thoughts are not necessarily negative, as the dead have left behind the beauty of the city. By mentioning freedom, the cabbie alludes to the new kinds of freedom Hazel will experience there.



The hotel they stay in furthers the theme of existential philosophy. The rooms are named after philosophers that are known for the existential philosophies. The presents are just another cancer perk Hazel and Augustus receive because of their health, reminding them that they are there because they are different than normal kids.



Hazel decides to take a nap, but tells her mother to go enjoy the Vondelpark (a famous public park in Amsterdam) across from the hotel. She falls asleep, and wakes up a few hours later. She finds Mrs. Lancaster sitting in a chair across from the bed. Hazel asks her mother how the park was, but her mother reveals she didn't go. Hazel feels bad, but her mother tells her she will go out that evening while Hazel goes out to dinner with Augustus. Hazel is surprised that her mother is not coming to dinner. Her mother tells her that Van Houten has set up a dinner at a place called Oranjee in a fancy part of town. She tells Hazel the dinner will be very romantic.

Hazel notes that it might seem crazy that her mother would let her go out into a foreign city with her 16 year old boyfriend alone, but this freedom is a side effect of dying. She can't run, or dance, or eat certain things, but in the city of freedom, she is among the most liberated of its residents.

Hazel puts on a sundress and does her hair until she looks like mid-2000's Natalie Portman. Augustus arrives wearing a black suit with a blue shirt and a thin black tie. He tells Hazel she looks gorgeous. Hazel tries to talk, but can't get the words out of her mouth. Finally she says she feels underdressed. Mrs. Lancaster then tells Augustus he looks extremely handsome.

While they wait for the tram, Hazel asks Augustus if the suit is one that he wears to funerals. He says no, that the suit he wears to funerals isn't nearly as nice as the one he has on. An older man on the tram offers them his seat, and Hazel and Augustus watch out the window as the trees drop seeds that look like "miniature rose petals drained of color." The older gentleman tells them that it is spring in Amsterdam, and the trees "throw confetti to greet the spring."

When Hazel and Augustus arrive at the restaurant, the waitress greets them excitedly, calling them "Mr. and Mrs. Waters." The waitress gives them champagne, and they have a toast. Hazel looks out over the canal, noticing boats of all shapes and sizes floating on the **water**.

Hazel wants her mother to experience Amsterdam without being held back, but despite her permission to leave, her mother stays, showing her dedication to Hazel. Mrs. Lancaster's willingness to let Hazel go to dinner alone with Augustus suggests that she is allowing Hazel to engage in a mature relationship, and her comment about how romantic it will be lets Hazel know she supports her in this endeavor.



Hazel attributes her mother's decision to the fact that she has cancer. Because of her cancer and her mother's usual protectiveness, it seems like an incredible freedom to go out with Augustus. Although Hazel usually feels different, in Amsterdam, she is allowed to experience the freedom that everyone experiences, which makes her feel somewhat normal.



Hazel attempts to appear like Natalie Portman to impress Augustus, which also alludes to the scene where they first met. Hazel is so struck by Augustus appearance that she is unable to respond, showing that she is falling for him, but also that she is still innocent when it comes to dating.



Hazel's question about Augustus' suit shows just how acquainted with death they are. The images of the rose petals drained of color work as mixed metaphors. Roses are romantic, but these seeds are like rose petals drained of color, suggesting there is something dead about them. At the same time, they fall in celebration of spring, which is, symbolically, a symbol or rebirth.



As they enter the restaurant, they are treated like a married couple, suggesting that their relationship has reached a new level. Unlike Hazel's typical association between water and drowning, in this new place, the boats overcome the water by floating on top of it.



Another waiter arrives and takes their orders. He tells them that Champagne has been compared to “bottled stars” and when Augustus asks for another glass, the waiter says, yes, they have bottled all of the stars tonight. The trees continue dropping “confetti” and the waiter brushes one off of Hazel’s shoulder, frustrated. Augustus can’t understand how the beautiful falling seeds could perturb anyone. Hazel notes that people get used to beauty and it is no longer beautiful. Augustus tells her he has not gotten used to her beauty.

Hazel thanks Augustus for the trip, but immediately thinks that she doesn’t want to be a **grenade**. She immediately realizes that Augustus knows what he is getting into, and it was his choice. Augustus asks her to recite the line she recited on the airplane. She recites a different line about human voices waking the speaker of the poem, and then drowning.

Their food arrives and they are blown away by how good it is. As they eat, a boat moves past in the canal, and a blond woman raises her glass to them and shouts something in Dutch. Augustus shouts back that they don’t speak Dutch, so the lady yells in English, “The beautiful couple is beautiful.”

After dinner, Hazel notes how everything is perfect, but it doesn’t feel right. She knows that the trip and the dinner are “cancer perks”. After a while, Augustus tells Hazel the suit he is wearing is one that he had bought for his own funeral before his cancer went into remission.

Augustus asks Hazel if she believes in the afterlife. Hazel says that she doesn’t. Augustus responds by saying that he does with confidence. Hazel notes that she has always thought of heaven as an “intellectual disengagement”, but Augustus is smart, and he believes. Hazel asks him about his fear of oblivion, and he tells her that he fears “earthly oblivion”, that he won’t be able to do anything meaningful with his life to be remembered for. Hazel grows upset with his obsession with dying for something heroic. She tells him its mean to believe that the only lives that matter are the ones that are lived for something and die for something. After a moment, Augustus apologizes. She realizes in that moment, that Augustus is really in love with her, and that makes her like him more.

The reference to bottled stars connects to the title of the novel. In the title, the stars refer to their fate, but in Amsterdam, the stars have been bottled, suggesting that their fate has been subdued, at least for the moment. Because of their health and the perspective it gives them, Hazel and Augustus are able to see beauty where other people see ugliness, which connects to the reason why they are together in the first place—they can see past the other’s “defects”.



Hazel’s perspective of herself as a grenade begins to change as she realizes that Augustus has chosen to be with her. The line she recites, however, connects to the suffering of drowning, which suggests she is still preoccupied with causing pain. This line also foreshadows the pain she will later feel over Augustus.



Their experience in Amsterdam is vastly different than in the U.S. In Amsterdam, people do not stare at them for being different. Instead, they are celebrated for being beautiful.



Hazel is unable to see past the fact that the trip is a cancer perk, showing the difficulty she has seeing past her cancer. Also, the fact that Augustus is wearing his funeral suit to dinner shows the way in which death is always present for them, and also foreshadows Augustus’ impending death.



Hazel’s nihilistic philosophy of life and death make it difficult for her to believe in an afterlife. Her mind is opened, however, when Augustus reveals his fear of oblivion is based on being remembered on earth, which for him does not negate the idea of an afterlife. Hazel grows upset because she feels like Augustus thinks less of her for not leaving a mark on the world. When Augustus realizes he really hurt Hazel, he apologizes, which shows how much he cares about her feelings, and caring so much lets Hazel know he truly loves her.



After leaving the restaurant, Hazel and Augustus take a walk. They talk about *An Imperial Affliction*, and Hazel is surprised about how much thought Augustus has given the book. They sit on a bench by the canal and Hazel notes that Amsterdam is a city that should be under **water**, but they made it exist. She compares herself to Amsterdam, and thinks Dr. Maria thinks of her as a “half-drowned anomaly.”

Hazel asks Augustus about Caroline Mathers. Augustus puts a **cigarette** in his mouth and tells her he met her at the hospital during treatment. He says that you sound like a bastard if you don't romanticize the dead and make cancer patients sound heroic. He says that cancer kids are not any more special than regular kids; they are just dying. He tells her that Caroline's brain cancer changed her personality, causing her to laugh at his prosthetic, tell the same jokes about him over and over, have outbursts. He says he did not blame Caroline, but it was not easy. Hazel tells him that she does not want to do what Caroline did to him. He tells her not to worry, that it would be a privilege to have his heart broken by her.

CHAPTER 12

Hazel wakes up early the next morning too excited to meet Van Houten to go back to sleep. After breakfast she gets dressed to look like Anna from *An Imperial Affliction*, putting on a shirt with a screen print of Rene Magritte's painting of a pipe, titled, *Cecil n'est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe), which is referenced multiple times in *An Imperial affliction*. The shirt confuses Mrs. Lancaster. Hazel explains that all representations of a thing are inherently abstract.

Augustus arrives and they head to Van Houten's house. When they knock, they hear Van Houten yelling for Lidewij. He tells her that there are two apparitions at his door. Lidewij tells Van Houten that they are his fans coming to visit. Van Houten responds by telling her that she must make them leave—he left America, he says, to avoid Americans. He asks Lidewij to tell them that he'd intended his invitation to be read symbolically. Eventually, Van Houten opens the door and Hazel is immediately surprised by Van Houten's disheveled appearance.

In the living room, Hazel sees two trash bags behind the couch. Van Houten reveals that it is eighteen years worth of fan mail. Van Houten asks Lidewij for a drink of scotch and begins drinking. Hazel cuts right to the chase and brings up *An Imperial Affliction*. She tells Van Houten that his book brought her and Augustus together. Van Houten quickly notes that they aren't together.

Instead of simply connecting over their shared experience with cancer, Augustus and Hazel find connection through art. Amsterdam as a setting reflects Hazel's situation, which makes it the perfect place for the unfolding of the events to come.



By putting a cigarette in his mouth, Augustus shows that this is a difficult subject for him and an area in his life in which he is seeking control. His philosophy on cancer kids not being more special than anyone else mirrors Hazel's, and his stories about Caroline work against the clichés associated with cancer. Hazel fears she will do the same to Augustus, but he is aware of what he is in for, and his love for Hazel makes it worth the pain.



Hazel's shirt speaks to the theme of existential philosophy, which questions the true nature of things. In this chapter, Hazel will begin to realize the discrepancy between expectations and reality, and also between fiction and reality which are important elements of one's coming of age.



Haze and Augustus' expectations are immediately broken as they are greeted by the erratic, rude, and disheveled Van Houten. He calls them apparitions, which suggests they are not real, or worse, that they are ghosts (implying they are dead). By stating that his invitation was symbolic suggests that even the invitation was not what it had appeared to be, highlighting the ambiguity of an object's nature.



Van Houten is vastly different than Hazel had imagined based on the novel and his emails. They discover Van Houten is not only a recluse, but also the trash bags of mail show that he is a spiteful man who is fleeing reality. His comment about them not being together suggests that he does not have the capacity to recognize their relationship and love for one another.



Hazel asks Van Houten if he remembers the questions she'd asked in her email, which he doesn't. Suddenly, Van Houten brings up Zeno's Paradox of the tortoise, which suggests that some infinities are bigger than others. He quickly connects the theories to Swedish hip-hop. Augustus asks if Van Houten is playing some kind of prank on them, to which Van Houten replies that if they cannot deal with his cryptic babbling, his work is not for them. Hazel quickly turns the conversation back to *An Imperial Affliction*. Van Houten immediately goes back to Zeno's paradox. Hazel says she does not understand, and asks what happens after the end of *An Imperial Affliction*. Van Houten promptly tells her he disavows everything in the novel. He tells her that the characters in the novel are fictions, and that nothing happens to them after the novel ends. It's ridiculous, he says, to think that the author of a novel has any idea what happens to the characters after the novel's end.

Hazel pushes herself to her feet and refuses to believe Van Houten's explanation. Van Houten tells her that he cannot indulge her childish whims, and he will not pity her that way she wants him to. Hazel tells him she does not want his pity, but Van Houten ensures her that, like all sick children, her existence depends on pity. He continues by positing that all sick children are arrested in development and their parents pity this, even though they are just side effects of an evolutionary process—a failed experiment in mutation.

Lidewij begins crying and quits her job, but Hazel is not harmed. She reveals that she has spent plenty of time in hospital beds thinking of the most harmful ways to imagine her illness. Hazel steps up to Van Houten, calling him "douchpants", and demands to know what happens to Anna's mother. He tells her he can't tell her because he doesn't know. Something inside of Hazel wells up, and she smacks the glass of scotch from Van Houten's hand. Van Houten immediately asks for another drink. Hazel tells Van Houten that he promised to tell her, but he only asks her why she cares so much. Before the altercation can go any further, Augustus grabs Hazel's arm and leads her out.

On the walk back to the hotel, Augustus apologizes and tells her that he will write her an epilogue himself. He pulls Hazel into him and lets her cry into his shirt. Hazel feels guilty that she spent his wish on Van Houten, but Augustus reminds her that she spent it on being with him in Amsterdam. As they talk, Lidewij approaches them from behind.

In this scene, Van Houten's rambling seems completely insane, but the idea of Zeno's paradox comes back later in the novel, providing Hazel and Augustus a way to understand the time they spent together in a positive way. Although he does not provide the answer to the end of the novel, he does provide Hazel a way to imagine her relationship with Augustus. His statement about fiction is a shock to Hazel, but this shock is a part of her coming of age. She begins to enter the adult world where the line between fiction and reality becomes set firmly in place.



In this moment she begins to resist the difficult truth that Van Houten does not have the answers she wants. His comment about Hazel's desire for pity is particularly harmful because Hazel works hard to resist the clichés of cancer kids. Van Houten's comment about cancer kids being side effects shows the depth of his nihilistic philosophy.



As someone who has lived with cancer, Hazel has had plenty of time to develop her philosophy of illness, which does not coincide with Van Houten's. Van Houten, as someone who has never had cancer, is unable understand why Hazel is so adamant about wanting to know what happens.



Augustus attempts to cheer Hazel up by telling her he will write the epilogue himself, showing the way in which he attempts to be a hero, but he doesn't realize Hazel is not as upset about not getting the answers as she is about wasting his wish. By "wasting his wish" she feels like she has caused harm, which is one of her biggest fears.



When Lidewij catches up to Hazel and Augustus, they notice her mascara is running down her face. She invites them to the Anne Frank house. Augustus doesn't want to go, but Hazel insists, noting that she doesn't want to waste her last two days in Amsterdam by letting Van Houten ruin them.

As they drive, Lidewij apologizes, telling them that Van Houten is very sick. She says that she thought his meeting with Augustus and Hazel would help him. She tells them that Van Houten is rich because of a family fortune, but he is a disgrace to his family in America. Lidewij says that his circumstances have made him into an evil man.

Inside the Anne Frank House, Hazel struggles to climb the stairs, but perseveres, making it to the attic. As she makes her way up, she feels worried that she is holding everyone up below her. Hazel continues through the attic rooms, going up eighteen more steps because she feels she owes it to Anne Frank because she was dead and Hazel wasn't, and she wanted to see the world that Anne Frank had lived in for years.

She almost passes out, but finally arrives in the place where Anne Frank spent years hiding. Lidewij tells Hazel that the only member of the family who survived was Anne's father, Otto. Hazel thinks of Otto not being a father anymore after his children died. At the end of the hall, there is a book listing all of the names of the people from the Netherlands who had died in the Holocaust. Hazel is saddened by the fact that there are thousands of names, but nobody remembers those people the way they do Anne Frank. She resolves to pray for those who will not be remembered, noting that she does not need to believe in a "proper and omnipotent" God to pray.

Hazel goes with Augustus into a room with a video of Otto Frank playing in it. Augustus wonders if there are any Nazis still out there he could bring to justice. He says that he and Hazel should team up and fight injustices in the world. Hazel turns to Augustus and wants to kiss him. She thinks that Anne Frank would like the fact that two young broken people shared their love there. Hazel and Augustus begin to kiss. As she kisses him, she notes that she really likes her body, despite all of its imperfections. As they kiss, Hazel opens her eyes and realizes other tourists are there. She is afraid they will be insulted, but they all begin clapping, and shouting "Bravo!"

Hazel is determined not to let Van Houten to get to her, so she decides to go. This decision is her way of resisting what she feels a normal person with cancer would do.

Hazel's expectation of Van Houten as an author who would be kind, wise and insightful, was incorrect, mirroring the way in which expectations and clichés are often wrong. He, like Hazel and Augustus, is ill (emotionally) and his illness has also separated him from his family, connecting his situation to others in the novel.



Hazel feels a connection to Anne Frank as a young person whose life is being cut short. Her connection to Anne Frank, and the fact that she is still living makes her feel she owes it to Anne Frank to persevere up the stairs.



Hazel thinks about Otto not being a father anymore because she worries about her mother after she dies. Hazel identifies with all of the names that have been forgotten in the book because she feels the possibility of being forgotten. By pledging to pray for them, she attempts to counteract this. This is a philosophical change for Hazel, who has held a nihilistic philosophy up until this point.



Augustus' dream of bringing Nazis to justice reflects his desire to be remembered for doing something heroic. Hazel again connects herself to Anne Frank as a young woman who died early in life. Although the Anne Frank House is somber in nature, their kiss brings an element of youthful joy to the place, which is a reminder that during the time Anne Frank lived in the house there were happy moments, moments of love, too. And the crowd responds to the positivity Hazel and Augustus bring to the melancholy atmosphere.



When they arrive back at the hotel, they go to Augustus' room together. Before undressing, Augustus warns Hazel about the scar on his leg. She tells him to get over himself, and they crawl into bed together. They struggle to get comfortable with one another. Hazel's oxygen tube makes it difficult to get on top of him, and then her shirt gets tangled in it as Augustus attempts to take it off, but they laugh about it together. Finally Augustus takes off his pants and his leg. Hazel runs her hand down his thigh onto the stump. Then they make love.

Hazel notes that the experience was not what she'd thought it would be. It wasn't particularly painful or ecstatic. There were some problems with the condom, but beyond that it was slow, patient, and quiet. Afterward, Augustus falls asleep. Hazel writes him a love letter in which she draws a big circle and writes virgins in it. Then she places a little circle right on its edge with an arrow pointing at it, and writes, "17-year-old guys with one leg".

CHAPTER 13

The following day, Hazel, Mrs. Lancaster, and Augustus go to a café where Hazel and Augustus reenact their incident with Van Houten. Hazel notes that one has a choice in how a sad story is told, and they choose humor to tell this story. When Mrs. Lancaster asks what they did afterward they say they went to the Anne Frank house and then hung out at a café.

Mrs. Lancaster then leaves abruptly, saying that she is going to give them some time to talk. She tells Hazel she loves her three times and walks away. Hazel senses something is not right. Augustus motions toward the shadow of tree branches on the sidewalk, saying that it is a good metaphor—"the negative image of things blown together and then blown apart." He suggests they go to the hotel. Hazel asks if they have time, and Augustus replies, "if only." She asks what is wrong, but Augustus only nods in the direction of the hotel.

On the way to the hotel, Hazel thinks about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which states that as long as one's basic needs are not met, one can not even begin to think about social needs, security, art, or strive toward "self-actualization". Hazel believes that this hierarchy is misleading because according to the theory, she would be stuck at a lower level and not even able to think about social needs, relationships, security, philosophy, or art. But her relationship with Augustus seems to suggest otherwise. She thought Augustus could love her because he'd been sick, but it occurs to her that he might still be sick.

This scene is a major passage for both Hazel and Augustus in their coming of age. Augustus' concern over his scar shows that he is self-conscious, but Hazel's touching his scar is a gesture that tells him that she accepts him. Their first sexual encounter is complicated, but since they both understand the struggles of cancer, they laugh it off together. The moment is both realistic and romantic.



Part of coming of age is realizing the reality about the adult world. Hazel had built up her first sexual experience in her mind, but found out that it wasn't what she thought it would be. The love letter is Hazel's way of telling Augustus that she has accepted his love, and that being different does not prevent one from having normal experiences.



Hazel and Augustus choose to tell the Van Houten story in a humorous way to avoid ruining their memory of the trip, this idea however, connects to Hazel's telling of her story in *The Fault in Our Stars*. She has the ability to choose how to remember Augustus and their time together.



Hazel's mother's actions clue her into the fact that something is not right, and repetitively saying "I love you" to Hazel shows that she is concerned, but supportive of her having this adult conversation with Augustus without her. Augustus' mention of the shadows of things blown together then apart speaks metaphorically to their relationship, and the mention of things "blown apart" alludes to Hazel's grenade metaphor. This image foreshadows the news Augustus is about to reveal.



Hazel disagrees with Maslow's hierarchy based on her own experience. If a person needs their health and safety in order to think about love, art, or self-actualization, then how can Hazel think about all of these things regularly? This thought seems to come out of nowhere, but it foreshadows the fact that Augustus has been sick, yet he has been able to love Hazel.



When Augustus and Hazel get back to the hotel room, Augustus takes a seat in a chair and puts a **cigarette** in his mouth. He reveals to Hazel that just before they left he had a PET scan that revealed his cancer had returned and has spread through his body. Augustus clenches his teeth and Hazel knows that he is trying not to hurt Hazel by letting her see him cry.

As typical, Augustus puts a cigarette in his mouth in attempt to find control over the situation. In this scene the roles are reversed. Hazel is no longer the grenade in the situation. Augustus is suddenly the one who wants not to hurt or burden Hazel, as shown by his attempt not to cry.



Hazel moves over and places her head on Augustus' lap. He apologizes for not telling her. She is unable to be mad at him, and in that moment realizes that he is now the **grenade** in the relationship. She understands that it is foolish to try to save others from her death. She cannot stop loving him now. Augustus begins crying, and pulls Hazel into him tightly. He tells her he will fight it for her. He kisses her on the head, and she feels his chest deflate a little. Augustus then says, "I guess I had a hamartia after all."

Hazel realizes that the roles in the relationship have changed, and realizes that she was wrong to keep others from her because of her health. Having fallen in love with Augustus, she begins to understand that she can't and would not stop loving him because of his cancer. Augustus feels guilty about hurting her, and notes that he was the one with the hamartia, or fatal flaw, all along, suggesting that he also realizes the change in roles.



Hazel and August lay in bed for a while. He tells her that he stopped the chemo to go to Amsterdam with her, and his parents had been furious, which was why they were fighting the morning they left. Augustus then tells her he feels like he conned her into believing she was falling in love with a healthy person. Hazel tells him she would have done the same to him.

Augustus went against his parents wish to continue chemo, which shows the way that he is exerting his independence. Augustus feels guilty about his cancer, but Hazel understands being someone who has lived with cancer.



While laying in bed, Hazel asks Augustus if he is in pain. He says no, but says that he likes being alive, but he doesn't even get a battle. Hazel finds herself cheering him up with clichés, which she hates, but doesn't know what else to do. She tells Augustus that cancer is his battle. Augustus dismisses her encouragements, stating that the cancer is him, and it's a war he can not win. Hazel calls him Gus then, but doesn't have anything to say. After a moment Augustus says that if you go to the Rijksmuseum (an art museum in Amsterdam), you will not see one painting of a cancer kid because there is no glory in illness. Hazel then offers Augustus as an example of the way in which Maslow's theory is false. In the face of his own death, Augustus is contemplating art.

Being put in the position of someone who loves a person who is dying of cancer, she resorts to clichés, which she typically hates. This experience allows her to identify and sympathize with those people in her life, like her parents, who do the best they can to love and care about her, even though they don't always know how. Augustus begins to come to terms with the fact that his cancer is not heroic, and he may not be remembered by the world for a heroic feat. Hazel notes that Augustus' mention of the Rijksmuseum refutes Maslow's hierarchy, showing the way in which philosophy does not always represent reality.



CHAPTER 14

On the flight home, Augustus says he'd always thought it would be fun to live on a cloud, until his science teacher told him being that high up would kill him. He says that the teacher was a dream killer, that he took the magic out of the world. When the stewardess comes by they order champagne and have a toast. Eventually, Augustus tells Hazel everything Van Houten said was true. He immediately begins to feel pain in his chest, so Hazel helps him take his medication. Augustus then says that it was as if Van Houten was angry with them personally.

Mr. Lancaster is waiting for them when they get off the plane with a sign that says, "My beautiful family (and Gus)." Hazel hugs her father when she sees him, and he starts crying. When they get home, Hazel tells her father about Augustus' cancer returning, but he already knows. He tells her that he read an Imperial Affliction and found it to be a bit defeatist. Hazel says it is not defeatist, but honest. Mr. Lancaster refuses to accept her statement, noting that there is a difference between defeatism and honesty. He says that being a grown up doesn't mean one knows that to believe. Finally, he tells her he thinks the universe is biased toward consciousness and just wants to be noticed.

The next afternoon, Hazel goes to Augustus' house and tells them about Amsterdam while Augustus naps. Augustus' parents tell Hazel he is lucky to have been placed on a new cancer cocktail. Hazel notes that even talking about one of the drugs he is on makes her want to barf.

Isaac then arrives. His mother walks him in by the arm and sits him at the table. He asks where Augustus is. His parents say Augustus is sleeping, but from the other room they hear him say that he can still dominate Isaac at their favorite video game. Isaac goes in and asks how he is doing. Augustus says he is on a rollercoaster that only goes up. He tells Isaac that his body is riddled with cancer.

When the parents go downstairs, Isaac and Hazel sit upstairs with Augustus. Augustus asks how Monica is doing, and Isaac replies that he hasn't heard from her once. Isaac says that he doesn't have time for her anyways now that he is learning how to be a blind man. Augustus says that he can't believe Monica has not contacted Isaac. Then, he asks if Hazel has four dollars. She says she does, and they get up to leave. In that moment, Hazel realizes for once in her life she is the healthiest person in the room.

Augustus' story about the cloud depicts the way coming of age involves accepting the difficult realities of the world. Augustus' comment that Van Houten was right reflects how his attitude and philosophy has changed since telling Hazel about his cancer. His comment about Van Houten's anger at them personally foreshadows the fact that Van Houten has anger concerning cancer, which is later revealed when he shares he lost his daughter from cancer.



Mr. Lancaster's sign not only expresses his love for his family, but also that he has accepted Augustus as a member of their family. His experience with An Imperial Affliction is different than Hazel's because he does not have the lived experience of cancer. He, on the other hand, simply wants his daughter to live and be happy, so the defeatism of the novel does not speak to him. He does not believe that the universe is cruel, which is Van Houten's philosophy, but that it simply wants to be noticed.



Augustus' family is happy that he is on the new medication, but Hazel has experience with the cancer drugs and knows it is not easy to take them.



Although Augustus is sick, he still talks trash to Isaac, showing that his personality has not changed just because his cancer has returned. Augustus also uses dark humor to talk about his cancer, which is his way of coping with the reality of his impending death.



As a dedicated and loyal person, Augustus can't understand how Monica could leave Isaac. Hazel's realization shows the way in which the tables have turned. Through most of the book, she perceives herself as the sickest person in the room, but now she has experienced a shift in perception, and sees herself as healthy in relation to Isaac and Augustus.



They drive to the grocery store and buy a dozen eggs. Afterward, they drive to Monica's house. Augustus helps Isaac out of the car and leads him, toward Monica's green Pontiac Firebird. As they walk, they lean on each other "like praying hands". After a couple of misses, Isaac hits Monica's house and then the car with an egg. Afterward, he hits the trunk three times. Augustus tells Hazel to take a picture of them, which she does. Just as she snaps it, Monica's mother comes out and asks what's going on. Augustus tells her to go back inside or they will have to call the police.

CHAPTER 15

A few days after egging Monica's car, Hazel and her parents go to dinner at Augustus' house. Augustus and Hazel reminisce about the magical dining experience they had in Amsterdam. As the conversation goes around the table, Mr. Lancaster and Mrs. Lancaster finish each other's sentences, and Hazel and Augustus find themselves doing the same thing.

A week after the dinner, Augustus ends up in the emergency room with chest pains. Hazel notes that the hospital is not brightly colored or full of paintings like children's hospital where she was treated, but so sterile and functional instead. When Hazel finds Augustus' mother in the waiting room, she tells Hazel that Augustus heart is working too hard and he needs to scale back on activity. When Hazel asks to see him, his mother says they just need to be a family for the moment. Hazel sits in the waiting room anyways and looks through her pictures, noting that the picture from their picnic seems like it was taken forever ago.

Two weeks later, Hazel takes Augustus back to the park where they'd had their Dutch themed picnic. They bring a bottle of champagne that Augustus had been given as a gift by one of his doctors. Augustus tells Hazel that the last time he was there, he imagined himself as one of the kids playing on the sculpture, not he imagines himself as the skeleton. They sit there for a while and drink the champagne from Winnie-the-Pooh cups.

CHAPTER 16

Hazel explains a typical day with Augustus in the late stages of his cancer. She goes over to his house after he has eaten and puked his breakfast. He is no longer muscular and gorgeous, but he still smiles and smokes his unlit **cigarettes**, and his eyes are still alive.

Describing their bodies like praying hands suggests there is something sacred about the way Isaac and Augustus support one another through their struggles. Egging Monica's car is a way to get back at her for what she has done to Isaac by leaving him when he needed her most, and when Augustus tells Monica's mother they will call the police he implies that what Monica has done to Isaac is a worse crime than egging her car.



Now that Hazel and Augustus have reached a mature stage of their relationship, they set themselves apart from their parents as their own entity. The way they finish their sentences, like Hazel's parents do, affirms this.



The fact that their relationship has matured is reflected in the hospital. Hazel received her treatment at a children's hospital, which was colorful, but Augustus is in an emergency room at a regular hospital, which is sterile and functional, mirroring the adult world. Augustus' mother, however, does not recognize their mature relationship in the same way, as shown by her unwillingness to allow Hazel to see Augustus.



The bottle of champagne continues to show their relationship has matured, but at the same time, they are drinking out of Winnie-the-Pooh cups, showing that they are still somewhere between adolescence and adulthood. Augustus' comment about imagining himself as the skeleton shows the way his self-perception has changed since the cancer returned.



Although Augustus' body is failing, he maintains his personality, as shown though his smile and eyes. The cigarette suggests that he is continuing to struggle with the fear of his cancer.



Augustus tells Hazel he wants to write her a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction*, but he is too tired all of the time. Hazel says it is okay, he can just tell it to her. Hazel asks about Anna's mom, but Augustus says he hasn't figured it out yet. Hazel notices his parents are constantly staring at him. Augustus tells Hazel he wants to write a memoir so he will survive in the minds and hearts of "an adoring public". Hazel asks why he needs the minds and hearts of others when he has her heart.

After lunch, Hazel and Augustus go into the back yard. Augustus says he wishes he had Hazel's childhood swing set they'd given away. He says that his nostalgia is so strong he is missing a swing set he never used. Hazel says that nostalgia is a side effect of cancer, but Augustus corrects her and says it's a side effect of dying. He grabs her hand and says it is a good life.

When they go inside, Augustus takes his medication and zones out. His parents watch videos of him as a boy playing basketball. Augustus asks to go downstairs, and his parents bring him down there. Hazel and Augustus lay in bed together listening to music. Eventually they fall asleep in an "entanglement of tubes and bodies."

When Hazel and Augustus wake up, they play video games together. Hazel notes that she sucks at video games, which is actually a good thing because it gives Augustus the opportunity to die beautifully, take bullets for her, and sacrifice himself for a good cause. Eventually, Augustus' father comes down and calls Augustus upstairs for dinner. He and Hazel kiss under an encouragement that says, "friends are forever", and she goes home.

CHAPTER 17

One morning, a month after their trip to Amsterdam, Hazel visits Augustus. Augustus' parents tell her he is sleeping, so she makes her way into the basement and finds Augustus there, speaking a language of his own creation. He had wet the bed. Hazel calls for his parents to clean him up.

Augustus wants Hazel to have the answers about what will happen to her family after she dies, but he does not know the answer for the same reason as Hazel—they are still living. Augustus' parents constant stares show the depth of their sorrow and fear of losing him. Augustus is still attached to the idea of being remembered after death, but Hazel's change in perspective lets her see that he will live on through those who love him, and she feels like that is enough.



Augustus' desire to have the swing set back shows that now faced with death he longs for his childhood—when he was healthy. Augustus' comment about dying suggests that he knows he will not survive, but his comment while holding Hazel's hand shows that he doesn't regret the life he's lived.



Like Augustus, his parents long for a time when he was healthy as shown by the videos they watch. Augustus has become completely dependent on them. The description of H and A sleeping in an entanglement of tubes and bodies symbolizes how cancer is intertwined in their lives and relationship.



Through the video game, Hazel provides Augustus the opportunity to act heroically. The encouragement speaks to the idea that even after his death, Augustus will continue to live on through Hazel and their love and friendship will continue through her and his other friends.



Augustus' health has taken a drastic turn for the worse. The boy who was confident and beautiful is gone. Wetting his bed suggests the way in which his cancer is drawing him back from adulthood toward dependence and his loss of control.



When Augustus is awake and cleaned up, Hazel goes back into the basement and the play videogames. Augustus is so out of it that he can't play the game or do the fancy heroics he used to do while playing. He tells Hazel that he is beginning to understand the word "mortified." He notes that she used to call him Augustus, but now calls him Gus.

Augustus tells Hazel that he used to think his name would be in all of the newspapers when he died, that he was special and would have a story worth telling. Hazel says that he is special. Hazel tells Augustus that she doesn't care about who writes an obituary about her, she just wants him to write one. She tells him she knows about him, and that should be enough. Hazel grows frustrated and tells Augustus she just wants to be enough for him. She tells him that this is his life—he gets her and his family.

Augustus has lost the ability to live out his dream of being heroic, even in the video game. Using the word 'mortified' to signify his embarrassment connects it to death, as the root 'mort' in 'mortified' means death. By calling him Gus, Hazel unconsciously recognizes that he is no longer the Augustus that she knew.



CHAPTER 18

One night, Hazel wakes up to her phone ringing. She notices that it is 2:35am and she immediately thinks Augustus has died. She answers the phone and is relieved to hear Augustus' weak voice on the other end. He tells her he is at the gas station, and he has done something wrong with his G-tube and can't take his medication because of it. Hazel says she is calling nine-one-one, but Augustus tells her no. He begins crying. Hazel grabs her oxygen and leaves for the gas station.

As Hazel drives to the gas station she wonders why Augustus had gone there in the first place. She thinks maybe he is hallucinating because of his medication. When she arrives she finds Augustus sitting in the drivers seat covered in vomit. He shows her his stomach where the G-tube was attached. His stomach is red, warm, and it looks infected and she needs to call for help. Augustus tells her that he wanted to buy a pack of **cigarettes** because he lost his pack. He says he wanted to buy another pack on his own. Hazel apologizes and calls nine-one-one

Hazel refutes Augustus's philosophy that what is important in life is being remembered by a large number of people. Hazel believes that what is important is being remembered by the people who really love and know you. Her frustration comes from the fact that she does not feel like her love is enough for Augustus. Accepting that one's life may not be immensely important to a large number of people is a part of coming of age, and Augustus is confronting this fact.



Her fear before answering the phone shows the depth of her concern for Augustus. The fact that Augustus is stuck at the gas station and needs to call for help shows the extent to which he is unable to care for himself anymore. Although he wants and tries to do things on his own, his health makes it impossible. This helplessness contrasts a typical coming of age in which a person becomes more independent.



Augustus has gone from a strong, intelligent, and vivacious person, to a sick and helpless individual who arouses pity in Hazel. The fact that he wanted to buy cigarettes shows that he is attempting to feel control over his situation, but the fact that he failed to buy them shows that he has finally lost control.



While she waits for the ambulance, Hazel looks down at Augustus, noticing that a “desperate humiliated creature” had replaced the boy she had fallen in love with. Augustus begins crying and asks where his chance to be somebody’s Peter Van Houten, meaning he to create something that someone will remember him for. Hazel kneels down beside him and apologizes, telling him that she wishes life was like the movies, with good guys and bad guys, but cancer is not a bad guy, it just wants to be alive. She promises to get him his **cigarettes**. He asks her to read him something, so she recites William Carlos William’s *Red Wheelbarrow*. She adds lines to the poem for Augustus until the ambulance arrives.

CHAPTER 19

When Augustus comes home from the hospital a few days later he is in worse shape than ever. He is taking more pain medication and he must sleep upstairs in a hospital bed by the living room window. One day while Hazel is with him, he points to the laundry basket and tells her that he can see his “last shred of dignity” beside it.

The next day Hazel visits. She does not ring the doorbell, but walks right in to find Augustus’ family. Augustus’ sisters are there with their husbands and children. The kids want to know who Hazel is, and one of the boys says, “Gus has a girlfriend.” One of the boys points to her tank and asks why she has it. She tells them it helps her breathe. When she asks if Augustus is asleep, one of the children says, “no, he’s dying.”

When she enters the living room, she finds the family sitting with Augustus. His sisters hug Hazel. One of his sisters is sitting beside Augustus talking to him as if he were an infant. Hazel says, “What’s up, Augustus?” trying to model the appropriate way to talk to him.

After a while, Augustus wakes up and asks if they can go outside. His family kneels around him, barraging him with compliments and questions. When one of his sisters tells Augustus how smart he is, Hazel says that he’s not smart; he’s just good looking. They go back and forth, joking about Augustus’ looks and how he literally took Hazel’s breath away. Augustus’ dad eventually says enough joking, but immediately puts his arm around Hazel and kisses her head. He tells her that he thanks God every day for her.

Even in his dire situation, Augustus is still fixated on being remembered for something. Hazel apologizes because she is mature enough to realize that life doesn’t work that way. By realizing that life isn’t like the movies, full of brave warriors and dangerous battles, she suggests that cancer is not good or bad, but just a fact of life. This change of perception is continued when Hazel recites William Carlos William’s poem, which is known for its deep focus not on the heroic but the real world.



At this point, Augustus has lost all self-sufficiency. His comment about his dignity shows that he is aware of the loss.



By walking right in, Hazel shows that she has become an accepted part of the family. The kids descriptions of her point out both her difference and her status as Augustus’s girlfriend. The boy’s comment about Augustus dying suggests that in words he understands what’s happening, but for his young mind the reality of it is still an abstraction.



Augustus’ sister treats him differently now that he is sick. Hazel dislikes this action because it suggests that the illness makes him fundamentally different as a person, instead of him being the same person who happens to be sick.



The family continues to treat Augustus differently based on his cancer. Hazel pushes back by joking that Augustus is not good looking, showing the way in which it is alright to joke with a sick person. Augustus’ dad’s gesture shows Hazel that the family accepts her as one of their own. Augustus’ father’s faith in God has not been shaken by Augustus’ relapse. While Hazel doesn’t share his belief, she can share his love for his son and accept his love for her.



CHAPTER 20

Hazel states that one of the worst clichés about cancer is that every cancer kid gets “The Last Good Day”, where the sufferer finds herself in a moment of reprieve from the pain of cancer. She says that the hardest part of this cliché is that one can never know what day is the Last Good Day, as opposed to just another bearable day.

Hazel continues to push back against cancer clichés. She seems to think the cliché of “The Last Good Day” has some truth to it, but it doesn’t matter because one can never truly enjoy the last good day, because one never knows when it has arrived. This idea offers another existential conundrum Hazel confronts in the novel.



Hazel takes a day off from visiting Augustus because she is not feeling well herself. Augustus calls that day and asks Hazel to prepare a eulogy. He tells her he loves her and then hangs up. When Hazel tells her parents that she needs to go see Augustus that night, they tell her that they feel like they never see her anymore. Mr. Lancaster takes a hold of her wrist, which makes her feel like a two-year-old. She argues that Mrs. Lancaster was the one who didn't want her to be a homebody. She tells her mother that she doesn't need her like she used to. She tries to leave, but her father has her wrist. She notes that all she wants is an “old-fashion teenager walkout”, but she is unable to because she can’t breathe.

In the midst of worrying about Augustus, Hazel forgets about her own poor health and gets run down. Her parents also notice how much energy she is putting into caring for Augustus, so they try to get her to stay home. The scene that unfolds shows the struggle of a young person’s demand for independence, even though they are not completely ready yet. Her cancer gets in the way of this process, because she is unable to do the things normal teenagers can do, like storm out of the room.



Hazel eventually goes to her room and writes Augustus’ eulogy. She struggles to find the right words, and at 7:40 she realizes she will be late if she doesn’t leave. As she tries to leave, her father tells her she cannot leave without his permission. She tells him Augustus wanted her to write a eulogy, and when he is dead she will be home every night. After this, her father is quiet, and she leaves.

Again, Hazel’s health and situation with Augustus makes her coming of age different than a normal teenager’s. While a normal teenager’s parent might have been more authoritative in this situation, Hazel is leaving for a serious reason, and uses this as leverage to get her dad to comply.



At the church, Hazel waits for the elevator. When she reaches the bottom floor, she finds the support group chairs arranged as usual, but as she walks in she only sees Augustus, thin and sitting at the center of the circle of chairs in his wheelchair. Isaac is there, standing at the lectern. Augustus tells Hazel that he wanted to attend his own funeral, and asks her then if she will speak at his real funeral. He says he hopes he can attend his funeral as a ghost, but just in case wanted to have a pre-funeral.

Augustus’ desire to attend his own funeral resembles Hazel’s desire to know what happens at the end of *An Imperial Affliction*—he wants to know what will happen after he dies. Augustus is mostly concerned with the question of whether he will be remembered, and he believes listening to Isaac and Hazel’s eulogies will give him insight into whether he will be remembered.



Isaac begins his eulogy by saying that Augustus is a “self-aggrandizing bastard.” He notes how Augustus was constantly thinking metaphorically about everything in his life, and how he was so vain. He finishes by saying that even if scientists could give him his eyesight back, he wouldn’t want it because he’d have to see a world without Augustus, but then having made his rhetorical point, he would take the eyes because they would probably include x-ray vision to see through girls shirts. After he is finished, Augustus suggests not saying anything about seeing through girl’s shirts. Isaac notes that only Augustus would edit his own eulogy.

Even in the somber environment, Isaac uses humor to get through the pain of his eulogy. His comment about x-ray vision shows the way in which like a typical teenage boy he is still interested in girls, even though he is blind. The eulogy gives Augustus the opportunity to know how he will be remembered after death. Augustus’ personality continues to show through, despite his illness, which pushes back against the cancer clichés Hazel hates.



Then Hazel takes her turn at the lectern. She says that she will not share their love story because it should die with them. She turns to math, stating that there are infinite numbers between 0 and 1, and that there is an even larger set of infinite numbers between 0 and 2. She says she is thankful for each little infinity she was able to spend with Augustus.

The fact that Hazel wants to keep the love story to herself shows how special it is to her. Instead, she turns toward Van Houten's strange ramblings on Zeno's paradox to think about their relationship. By thinking about the infinities between two number, Hazel is able to make the most out of the time they have had together.



CHAPTER 21

Eight days after the pre-funeral Augustus dies. His mom calls Hazel at 3:30 am to tell her Augustus is gone. Her parents come in and hold her, and as they do, Hazel knows that they are terrified that they will experience her death soon too. She calls Isaac who curses God, and when she hangs up with him, she realizes there is no one else to call, and the only person she wants to talk to about Augustus' death is Augustus himself. Hazel notes that the last days they'd spent together were in recollection, but now the even the pleasure of remembering is gone because there is no one to remember with.

Hazel remembers the nurses in the hospital asking her to rate her pain on a scale of 1 to 10. One time when she was experiencing immense pain that could have been a ten, she held up nine fingers. Later the nurse told her she was a fighter because she called a ten a nine. She says that she was saving the ten, and that Augustus' death was it. She describes the pain as a waves tossing her against the rocks again and again, leaving her face up in the **water**, un-drowned.

Later, she calls Augustus' phone and lets it ring until it goes to voicemail. After the message begins recording, she listens to the silence wishing for the secret "third-space" she used to experience while talking to him. She goes on his wall page where people are already writing messages to him. The messages from healthy people frustrate her. One of the people who posted wrote, "I bet you are already playing ball in heaven." Hazel imagines Augustus' witty responses to the post, and notes that the posts say more about the people posting them than they do Augustus.

In the despair of having lost Augustus, Hazel can't help but think of her own death and the way it will impact her parents. Isaac curses God, which depicts his anger, but also reveals that he has a belief in God. Hazel begins to experience the loss of the person she loved. In this moment, she realizes she is losing more than just Augustus, but also all of the memories they shared.



Through her description of the pain as a 10 on the scale, Hazel reveals that losing Augustus is the worst pain she's ever experienced. Hazel uses the image of drowning to describe the pain she feels, continuing the symbol of water as it relates to Hazel's suffering. It also connects to Augustus' last name, Waters, because he has become the source of her greatest pain.



The silence as she wishes for their "third space" metaphorically represents the fact that Augustus is gone and the emptiness Hazel feels because of it. The messages frustrate her because healthy people are unable to understand what dying of cancer is really like. Hazel suggests people are posting for their own sake to feel better about themselves, rather than out of a true love or understanding of Augustus.



Augustus' parents call Hazel to tell her the funeral will be in five days. She doesn't want to go because she imagines the room full of people who didn't really know Augustus, but she knows she has to go. After the phone call she goes back to his wall and writes a post about the way in which Augustus had not died after a lengthy battle with cancer, but had died from a battle with human consciousness. She waits for people to respond, but nobody does. As she waits, she remembers Van Houten's letter, in which he states, "writing does not resurrect. It buries."

Hazel does not want the deep relationship she had with Augustus to be interfered with by people who didn't really know him as she did. Her post attempts to tell the truth about Augustus' life and death, but people are not interested in her philosophy, because they are more interested in assuaging their own pain than honoring Augustus. Van Houten's idea that writing buries returns to the idea that there is a difference between a representation of a thing and the actual thing. This idea reflects the reason why Hazel gets upset with the posts, which "bury" the real life Augustus lived.



CHAPTER 22

When Hazel arrives at the Literal Heart of Jesus Church for Augustus' funeral, she sits in back of the visitation room. She notices that there are about eighty chairs, but one third of them are empty. She watches people walk to his coffin, some cry, others just say something to him. Each person touches the coffin, too afraid to touch his body. Hazel notes that no one wants to touch the dead.

By waiting in the visitation room, Hazel reveals that she feels alienated at the funeral. The empty chairs suggest that even though Augustus wanted to be remembered and famous, he will never get that wish. The people touch the coffin, but are afraid to touch Augustus body. The fact of her own impending death makes Hazel notice this and adds to her sense of alienation.



When Augustus' parents notice Hazel, they shuffle over and both give her a big hug. She notices they both look old and tired. Augustus' mother tells Hazel that Augustus really loved her, which Hazel already knows. As she talks to them, she says it feels like stabbing and being stabbed. When Augustus' parents begin talking to Mrs. Lancaster and Mr. Lancaster, Hazel decides to go to Augustus' coffin.

Hazel notices the toll Augustus' death has taken on his parents, reminding her of her own fears for her parents after she dies. The stabbing pain stems from this idea, she is suffering due to Augustus' death, but she is also going to cause pain by her own death.



As she approaches the coffin, Hazel pulls the oxygen tube off and hands it to Mr. Lancaster. As she walks to the coffin, she tells her lungs quit complaining, that they are strong and can do this. When she sees Augustus, she notices that his hair is parted and his face plasticized, which he would have hated, but she knows it is "[her] lanky, beautiful Gus." He is wearing the same suit he wore to Oranjee.

By taking the cannula out, Hazel shows that she wants to see Augustus for the last time without the symbol of their illness between them, as their love was not based on their shared illness, but on the people who they are. The suit works to show that their love always existed in the duality between life and death.



Hazel kneels beside his coffin and places her hand on Augustus' chest. She says, "I love you present tense," and that it is okay that he has died, although she is not sure whether he can hear her. She opens her clutch purse and pulls out a pack of **cigarettes**. She then slips them into the coffin. She whispers to his body that he can light them; she won't mind.

By telling Augustus that she loves him "present tense," Hazel refuses to "bury him". She keeps the promise she made to Augustus at the gas station to get him cigarettes, but in a metaphorical sense, the cigarettes are a gesture to let Augustus know that he doesn't need to worry anymore.



When the funeral starts, the minister walks to the coffin and talks about how courageous Augustus was during his fight with cancer, and how his valiant battle had inspired everyone in the room. When the minister says, "in heaven, Augustus will finally be healed and whole," Hazel lets out a sigh of disgust.

Immediately afterward, she hears a voice behind her say, "what a load of horse crap, eh, Kid?" She turns to find Peter Van Houten sitting behind her. When the minister says it's time to pray, Hazel hears Van Houten say, "We gotta fake pray." Hazel tries to forget about Van Houten and pray for Augustus.

The minister then calls up Isaac to deliver his eulogy. In the eulogy, Isaac talks about a visit he received from Augustus in the hospital just after having his eye removed. When Augustus arrived, he said, "I have wonderful news! You are going to live a good and long life filled with great and terrible moments that you cannot even imagine yet!" After telling the story, Isaac is unable to go on, so he sits down.

After another one of Augustus' friends talks about how Augustus was a great basketball player and teammate, the minister calls Hazel up to speak. He says, "now we will hear a few words from Augustus' special friend, Hazel." His choice of words bothers Hazel, so when she gets up she tells the minister, "I was his girlfriend." She begins by reciting one of the encouragements that hangs in Augustus' house, "without pain, we couldn't know joy." She continues her Eulogy, spouting "bullshit encouragements" for the audience, as she has decided funerals are for the living.

When the speakers finish, the congregation says a prayer for Augustus. While they pray, Hazel remembers their conversations in Amsterdam when Augustus had told her that he didn't believe in mansions and harps in heaven, but he did believe in something with a capital S. Hazel can not quite convince herself that they will be together again. She knows that she will go on accumulating loves and losses, and Augustus will not. She realizes in that moment that Augustus has once and for all "been demoted from haunter to haunter."

They leave the church and head toward the cemetery to bury Augustus. Hazel tries to talk her way out of going; she doesn't want to see Augustus parents in pain, or her own parents knowing that they will bury her someday. Mrs. Lancaster, however, insists they go.

Hazel is disgusted by the minister's words because they posit that Augustus was not whole while living and that he is better off in heaven. Hazel does not believe in heaven, and knows how cancer clichés are harmful to those with cancer. Hazel is not excited to see Van Houten because of the way he treated them in Amsterdam, she would rather pray to something she doesn't believe in, than acknowledge Van Houten's presence.



Isaac's eulogy not only shows the way in which Augustus was a dedicated friend, but that he was a person who thought about life with a different perspective than most. He was excited for Isaac because he had the opportunity to experience life in new ways, which is how Augustus confronted his cancer and the loss of his leg.



Hazel wants it to be clear that she was his girlfriend because that's what they were. Cancer did not make their relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend somehow different or "special." Hazel uses one of the encouragements from Augustus' parents, and even though she thinks it is "bullshit," she has begun to see some truth in it. The pain that she experiences through Augustus' death allows her to develop new perspectives.



Although Augustus believed in something after death, Hazel does not believe in an afterlife or feel Augustus' presence in any way. Hazel is more concerned with whether life has meaning, and if so, what it means. By calling him the haunter, however, Hazel speaks to the fact that he will continue to haunt Hazel for the remainder of her life, living on in her memory.



Hazel wants to avoid facing the fact that her own death will damage her parents, so she resists going and seeing Augustus' parents in pain.



After the burial is over, Van Houten approaches Hazel and asks if he can hitch a ride out of the cemetery. Inside the car he introduces himself as "Novelist Emeritus and Semiprofessional Disappointer." Van Houten takes out a bottle of whiskey and takes a swig. He offers it to Mr. Lancaster, who refuses, and then hands it to Hazel to takes a swig, despite her mothers scolding.

Van Houten tells Hazel that he and Augustus corresponded after their trip. He says that Augustus demanded he come came to the funeral to make amends by telling Hazel what happens to Anna's mother after her death. He tells Hazel answer to her question is, "omnis cellula e cellula," explaining that every cell is born of a previous cell; life comes from life, and continues indefinitely. He asks her if she would like a further explanation, but says no. She calls him a pathetic alcoholic who just says fancy things to get people to feel bad for him. She tells him he is not the same man who wrote *An Imperial Affliction* and to get out of the car. As they drive away, Hazel feels bad for him.

After the funeral, Hazel goes home with her parents and eats dinner in bed. She sleeps for a while and then wakes up to brush her teeth. As she looks into the mirror, she realizes there are two kinds of adults: those who are miserable like Van Houten who look for something to hurt, and those like her parents who walk around "zombically" doing whatever they had to do to keep walking around. Neither is appealing to Hazel. She feels like she has already seen everything pure and good in the world and was beginning to suspect that the love she felt for Augustus could never last.

Mr. Lancaster knocks on the door and comes into the bathroom. He hugs Hazel and tells her that he is sorry Augustus died. He says that it was a privileged to love him. Hazel agrees with him. Mr. Lancaster then tells Hazel that Augustus death gives her an idea of how he feels about her as her father.

CHAPTER 23

A couple of days later, Hazel goes to Isaac's house. They play the voice commanded video game, navigating their characters through a pitch-dark labyrinth. They give ridiculous commands to the game, telling their characters to lick and hump the walls. Then Isaac says he dislikes living in a world without Augustus, to which the game replies, "I don't understand." Isaac replies, "Neither do I."

Hazel exerts her independence from her parents in this scene by taking a swig of the bottle. Van Houten's comment, and the fact that he has even shown up at the funeral, suggests he feels some remorse for his actions.



Though Van Houten has arrived to make amends by telling Hazel the end of *An Imperial Affliction*, she is no longer interested. She does not need to know the end of the novel, because Augustus' death has given her an experience with death that gives her insight into what will happen to her parents. Van Houten's explanation that life comes from life offers no insight about the meaning of life other than that it is meaningless. Hazel now feels bad for the man she once thought would know the answers to her questions, who would in a sense "save" her.



As Hazel looks into the mirror she has an existential awakening about the adult world—an awakening that is part of coming of age. Her understanding is nihilistic, stating that there is no joy in being an adult, which is undoubtedly based in her suffering from Augustus death. The loss of love is part of her experience in coming of age, and without any additional experience after losing love, she is left with a nihilistic view of life.



Mr. Lancaster suggests that now that Hazel has experienced love and the death of a loved one, she is able to understand how they feel about her, and how they will survive her death.



The pitch-dark labyrinth symbolically represents the situation in which Hazel and Isaac find themselves after Augustus' death. They are navigating through a difficult world in which they have little experience. The game's response to Isaac's comment shows the way in which they are unable to understand the loss they are experiencing.



They talk about Augustus for a while after putting the game down. Hazel remembers the first support group they attended together when Augustus shared his fear of oblivion. Hazel states that the problem is not suffering or oblivion, but the meaninglessness of it all, "the absolutely inhuman nihilism of suffering." She notes that each person just wants to be noticed by the universe.

Eventually, Isaac tells Hazel that Augustus really loved her and never stopped talking about her. He then asks if Hazel ever got the thing Augustus was writing for her. Hazel asks him what he is talking about, and he tells her Augustus was writing a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction*. Hazel immediately wants to know where Augustus kept the writing, but Isaac doesn't know. Hazel says that if there is still something of him floating around out there, she had to have it.

When Hazel gets into the car to drive to Augustus' house, she turns it on and hip-hop starts blaring from the speaker. Suddenly, Peter Van Houten begins rapping from the back seat. Hazel screams at him to get out of the car. He tells her he is there simply to apologize. He tells her he has an alcohol problem, and he is completely alone. He then tells Hazel she reminds him of Anna. He then asks if Hazel has ever heard of Antonietta Meo, a six-year-old girl who died of osteosarcoma. On her death bed she said, "Pain is like fabric: the stronger it is, the more it's worth." He tells Hazel that Antonietta may be the youngest non-martyr saint to be beatified by the Catholic Church. Van Houten begins crying then. He tells her that he had a daughter who died at eight years old, and she will never be beatified.

Hazel begins driving. She asks Van Houten if he was married. He tells her, that he was married, but the marriage ended before his daughter died. He tells her that grief does not change a person; it only reveals them. Hazel understands that *An Imperial Affliction* was Van Houten's attempt to give his daughter another life as a teenager. He tells Hazel that his daughter didn't understand what was happening to her, and he had to tell her she was dying. He promised her that he would see her in heaven, but twenty-two years had passed since then. Hazel tells him to go home, sober up, and write another book. After dropping him off, Hazel watches him in the rearview. He takes a bottle out and looks at it as if he will leave it on the sidewalk, but then takes a swig.

Hazel, unlike Augustus, is not concerned with being remembered after death or entering the afterlife, she is concerned with whether life has a meaning. Although she can understand her father's comment about the universe wanting to be noticed, she believes the universe has no concern with humans.



Because of Augustus' obsession with being remembered and leaving something behind after death, it makes sense that he would have written something for Hazel. Hazel knows she must have the writing because it is the last message she will receive from Augustus, and in a sense, provides a way for them to connect after his death.



The fact that Van Houten is there to apologize suggests that he does still have some humanity buried beneath his nihilism and alcoholism. It becomes clear that he is so bothered by Hazel because she reminds him of his own daughter, who died as a child from cancer. Van Houten is bitter because he knows that his daughter will not be remembered or recognized for her suffering. His pessimistic views are based on the resentment he feels toward the universe for taking her.



Van Houten does not give Hazel the ending of the novel because he is living out the ending as a drunk and bitter man. His negative views are based on his experience during his daughter's suffering and after her death. He promised her he would see her in heaven, but this is a promise he has not been able to fulfill and no longer believes is true. After Hazel tells him to sober up, Van Houten seems about to put it down, to perhaps find a new way forward, but then is unable to put the bottle down, showing that he will most likely continue in his suffering. Hazel stands in contrast to such defeated bitterness.



At Augustus' house, his parents are happy to see Hazel. Hazel is uncomfortable in the house. They sit down to eat, and Hazel wants Augustus' parents to comfort one another, but they do not even look at one another. His father says, "heaven needed another angel." Eventually his siblings show up and their kids begin to play. Hazel asks Augustus' parents if they know about any writing for her. They say they don't, but she can look in the basement.

Hazel goes into the basement and checks Augustus' computer. She doesn't find anything on the computer, so she checks the bookshelf. She finds *The Price of Dawn* on his nightstand and says out loud, "Spoiler alert: Mayhem survives," just in case Augustus can hear her. She crawls into his bed for a moment and takes in his smell. After going back upstairs, she asks his parents if he had a notebook, but his father says he didn't have time to write at the end, and all of the messages from him are coming from above now. He points to the ceiling when he says it, but Hazel does not feel his presence.

CHAPTER 24

Three days later, on the eleventh day AG (after Gus), Augustus' father calls Hazel. He leaves a voicemail telling Hazel he found a moleskin notebook in the magazine rack next to his hospital bed. Unfortunately, he says there is no writing in the book, but there are a few pages torn out. He says she is in their prayers, and the message ends.

Hazel tries to think of where he would leave the pages. She thinks maybe they are in the Literal Heart of Jesus, so she goes to support group early. She picks up Isaac and they listen to a band The Hectic Glow on the way to the group. Hazel realizes Augustus will never hear their new album. She looks everywhere in the Literal Heart of Jesus for the writing, but finds nothing.

When the group starts, Patrick asks Hazel if she would like to share anything about Augustus. She says she wishes she would just die, and asks Patrick if he ever feels that way. He says that sometimes he does, and asks Hazel why she doesn't die. Her stock answer was that she stayed alive because she didn't want to hurt her parents, but she realizes this answer isn't exactly true anymore. She says she doesn't know. She begins thinking about the universe wanting to be noticed, and that she owes a debt to it that she could only repay with her attention. She also realizes that she owes a debt to everyone who no longer gets to be a person, or who hasn't been born yet.

Augustus' family struggles after his death, as shown by the uncomfortable environment in the house and his parents' inability to look at one another. His father continues to turn to God and religion to cope with his loss.



When Hazel speaks out loud to Augustus, it shows that there is a sliver of doubt in her belief that there is no afterlife. She continues to look for a connection with Augustus when she crawls into his bed. His father has a belief that Augustus is in heaven and still able to communicate, but it is difficult for Hazel to accept this belief.



By saying A.G., Hazel suggests that Augustus' death has split her life into two time periods, before Augustus and after. This comment also connects Augustus' to Christ (modern timekeeping is split into before and after the birth of Christ), alluding to her expanding belief that just maybe Augustus' spirit still exists somewhere after his death.



Hazel and Isaac listen to the Hectic Glow, Augustus' favorite band, as a way to remember him and cope with his death. She realizes the permanence of his death as she realizes he will never hear the album.



As Hazel attempts to share in the group, she realizes that her stock answer is no longer sufficient, which suggests she is having a change of perception with regard to life and death. She begins to suspect that the meaning of life is to recognize the universe and remember and honor those who are no longer here or haven't been born yet. This moment shows a drastic shift in her philosophy, and the idea that living life may be the meaning of life.



When Hazel gets home from the support group she argues with her mother about eating. Mrs. Lancaster says she can't just stop eating because Augustus died. She tries to walk away, but her mother grabs her, telling her she needs to eat to stay healthy. Hazel lashes back, saying that she is not healthy, and she is dying. She tells her mother she is going to leave her alone in the world and there is nothing she can do about it. Her mother realizes that Hazel heard her say that to Mr. Lancaster in the hospital. She apologizes and tells Hazel that even when she dies she will still be her mother. She asks Hazel if she has stopped loving Augustus since he died. Hazel shakes her head no.

The conversation continues and Hazel tells them that she is worried that her parents will not have a life after she dies. Her mother tells her that she is studying to be a social worker; she wants to counsel families dealing with cancer. Hazel thinks it is a great idea. She begins crying, and thinks of Anna's mom. Later, while watching television as a family, Hazel asks if they will stay together after she dies. They swear to God they will stay together.

Hazel's mother just wants her to be healthy, but in the face of Augustus' death, Hazel can no longer ignore the fact that she is dying. Hazel reveals the way she feels about being a grenade to her parents. Mrs. Lancaster realizes that she made a mistake when she told Mr. Lancaster she would no longer be a mother after Hazel's death, but in that moment of grief she was speaking from a place of fear of losing her daughter. Now that Hazel has had an experience of love and loss, she is able to understand where her belief that she is a grenade is wrong.



Hazel's belief that she is a grenade, and also her belief that all adults are miserable is destroyed when her mother tells her that she is planning a life after Hazel dies. Her mother will find meaning and honor Hazel by working with kids living with cancer. This news provides the answer Hazel was looking for in *An Imperial Affliction*, and her parents promise to stay together confirms her belief.



CHAPTER 25

The next morning, Hazel wakes up in a panic because she had a dream in which she was without a boat and in the middle of a huge lake, surrounded by **water**. Her mother comes in with the phone, telling her Kaitlyn was on the other line. Kaitlyn apologizes to Hazel for her bad luck. Kaitlyn asks what it was like being in love with Augustus. Hazel tells her it was interesting. Hazel tells Kaitlyn he was not perfect. Kaitlyn asks if she has any letters from him. Hazel says no, but there may be some writing somewhere out there. When Hazel tells Kaitlyn about the missing pages, Kaitlyn suggests maybe they weren't written for her, but sent to Van Houten. Hazel tells Kaitlyn she is a genius, and hangs up.

She writes an email to Lidewij, asking her if any writing from Augustus had arrived. Lidewij writes back, telling Hazel that she will be going to Van Houten's house in the morning to look for the letter. She wonders why Augustus had written to Van Houten and not her before he died, but she figures he was asking Van Houten for a sequel. It makes sense to Hazel that he would use his terminality to make her dream come true.

Hazel's dream symbolically represents the way she feels about the loss of Augustus and the deterioration of her own health. Water is a symbol of her suffering, and the fact that there is no boat suggests that there is no escape from her suffering. When Hazel tells Kaitlyn that Augustus was not perfect, she avoids glorifying him because of his cancer, maintaining the fact that he was just a normal person—a normal person she loved—who happened to die of a common illness.



Because Augustus was so intent on leaving behind a legacy and being a hero, it makes sense to Hazel that he would use his cancer as a way to get Van Houten to write a sequel. He used his dying wish to get Hazel to Amsterdam, but because it didn't come off well, it makes sense that he would continue on his mission.



As Hazel waits for Lidewij to respond, she thinks about Amsterdam and misses the future she knew she would never have with Augustus. She realizes she will never see the ocean again from an airplane, and that the ambitions of all humans are never satisfied by dreams coming true, because there are always thoughts that if might have been better and is possible to do over.

While Hazel is pondering these ideas, Mrs. Lancaster comes into the room and tells her that it's Bastille Day. She pulls two French flags from behind her back and begins waving them. Her mother tells her that she has scheduled a picnic with her and Mr. Lancaster.

The day is beautiful, and Hazel and Mrs. Lancaster meet Mr. Lancaster at the park. They sit beside "the ruins", a rectangular model of Roman ruins in the middle of the field. Hazel notes that the model ruins have been neglected, and have sense become actual ruins. She notes that Augustus and Van Houten would have liked them. Hazel hears the screams of children playing, and notes they are learning to live in a world not made for them. Her father asks her if she misses playing. She tells him sometimes she does, but she is more focused on noticing every little thing. As she watches, she suddenly thinks, "who am I to say that these things are not forever?"

After lunch they go visit Augustus' grave. Hazel notes that she still doesn't feel like Augustus is present, but she takes a French flag and puts it in the ground at the foot of the grave. She thinks maybe passersby will think he was a member of the French Foreign Legion or some other heroic and important figure.

That evening, Lidewij emails Hazel. She tells Hazel that they found a letter from Augustus, and she convinced Van Houten to read it by saying that he owed it to his daughter to read a letter from another dead child. Van Houten told Lidewij to send it to Hazel; he had nothing to add. Lidewij scanned and attached the letter in the email.

Hazel begins to realize the permanence of Augustus death as she misses the future she will never have with him. She also realizes that her own death will prevent her from experiencing many things. Yet her cancer and the impending death she faces also gives her clear-eyed insight.



Her family continues to celebrate obscure holidays, viewing them (like Hazel's half birthdays) as an opportunity to celebrate with Hazel while she is still alive.



The ruins suggest that sometimes representations of reality can assume their own sense of reality, which mirrors the fact that An Imperial Affliction represents Van Houten's experience with his daughter's death. Her comment about the children suggests that she still believes the universe is indifferent to humans, but her dedication to noticing the universe provides some meaning to her life. Her comment at the end suggests that she is open to other possibilities with regard to life and the universe.



Hazel still does not feel any connection to Augustus in the afterlife, but she does put the flag in the ground in attempt to make him appear heroic, showing that his legacy is still important to her and she wants to be a part of sharing it while she is still alive.



By not having anything to add, Van Houten—who in the past has always had some pretentious and cryptic thing to say—suggests that Augustus has said everything he needs to say on his own in his letter. Van Houten's decision suggests he has had a change in perception about Augustus, Hazel, his daughter, and his resentment toward their cancer.



When Hazel opens the attachment, she realizes by Augustus' handwriting and the changing color of the ink that he had written it over the course of several days in varying degrees of consciousness. The letter is from Augustus to Van Houten. In the letter he asks Van Houten to help him write a eulogy for Hazel. He writes that everyone wants to leave a mark on the world, but what bothers him is that he will be another unremembered person. But the problem with leaving a mark is that the marks humans leave are scars. In an attempt to survive our own deaths, we cause wreckage.

Augustus then writes that Hazel is different; she does not care about being remembered. What's important is that she was loved deeply, and did little harm to other people. He thinks that Hazel is a hero because she notices things and pays attention to the universe. He reveals that he snuck into her room while she was in the hospital, and while there, he wished she would die before him so she wouldn't have to be harmed by knowing he was going to die, but his death had left a scar. He finishes by saying that you don't get to choose whether you get hurt in this world, but you do have some say in who you get hurt by. He says he is happy that he chose Hazel, and hopes that Hazel is happy too. The novel ends with her telling Augustus that she is happy with her choice.

The fact that he wrote the letter despite his health stands as a true heroic act. Van Houten did not feel the need to help Augustus write Hazel's eulogy, showing that he feels Augustus' words are sufficient in telling Hazel how he feels about her. Augustus' words suggest a change of heart during his death. He realizes that leaving a mark on the world out of vanity is actually a violent act, but some of these marks are unavoidable, and done out of love.

Hazel is different than Augustus, as she does not care about being remembered. Augustus begins to realize that being loved deeply is more important than being loved widely. He suggests that pain is unavoidable in life, but a scar left by loving someone deeply is warranted, and necessary. His wish to leave a mark on the world is fulfilled because he left a mark on Hazel that she will carry forward, allowing him to live on after death. Through Augustus' letter, Hazel is able to communicate with him after death and feel his presence, which is something she has been struggling with since his death. By telling him she is happy that he left a scar on her, shows that she recognizes the importance of pain in living life fully and her acceptance that those who love her will feel the same way about her as she does about Augustus.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Powers, Jacob. "The Fault in Our Stars." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 16 Apr 2014. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Powers, Jacob. "The Fault in Our Stars." *LitCharts* LLC, April 16, 2014. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-fault-in-our-stars>.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Fault in Our Stars* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Green, John. *The Fault in Our Stars*. Penguin Books. 2014.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Green, John. *The Fault in Our Stars*. New York: Penguin Books. 2014.