

THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF JOHN GREEN’S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS

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ABSTRACT

The painstaking struggle of Esther Earl, who was born August 3, 1994, and contracted a terminating illness in her childhood became the inspiration for John Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars* protagonist Hazel Grace Lancaster. The author made up some events and personages around real-life-based-character Hazel. This work has become world-class bestseller and occupied a special place from the hearts of millions of readers around the world. The main purpose of this article is to demonstrate implicit themes in this literary masterpiece. We conducted this study on library research method, gathering data from both academic and non-academic fields. The findings illustrated that there are at least seven themes manifested in this book. 1) Fate; 2) Accepting reality; 3) Love; 4) Courage to suffer; 5) Importance of dreams; 6) Obsessions; 7) Commitment. Finally, we drew the conclusion that being bound to die could not stop the personages from living, because life is not measured by the days they are alive, but by the days they are living their dreams.

Key words: Thyroid, Support Group, library research, grenade, osteosarcoma, eulogy

INTRODUCTION:

During the course of the literary evolution writers were inclined to write about different personages. In early periods the main characters were hero or heroines who possessed supernatural or inhuman strength and fought against the evil. In the middle ages, this trend was replaced by the knights who had the courage and did chivalrous deeds in the quest of love. As time goes by, in modern period, authors eventually chose ordinary people as their protagonists. Great American novelist John Green’s best seller *The Fault in Our Stars* was based on the true story of real life person. It is about an ordinary girl with extraordinary attitudes and debilitating disease. Ringdang Barta Fahrizky in his research *English- Indonesian Translation of Idiomatic Expressions in John Green’s The Fault in Our Stars* focused on the translation issues between those two given languages and described five strategies of translating idioms: 1) using idioms of similar in meaning and form; 2) using idioms similar in meaning but different in form; 3) paraphrasing; 4) omission; 5) literal translation. *The Romance Formula in John Green’s The Fault in Our Stars* by Novindia Nurathasari, the main discussed problems were: characteristic features of *The Fault in Our Stars* as romance popular fiction and the reflection of romance formula in it. However, there is little information about the themes. By this novel the author implicitly expresses numerous themes and subthemes that yet need to be analyzed. The aim of this article is to reveal them. The readers may

think it is about and tragic fate of lover, but, obviously, there are more than that which will be discussed further.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHOD

While analyzing *The Fault in Our Stars*, we adopted library research method in which we obtained the information not only from academic publication, but also from internet and book reviews. www.goodreads.com and www.sparknotes.com served as the collection of book reviews and interpretation respectively. In the second stage, out of all gathered data the themes are identified. Finally, the manifestation of those identified themes through intrinsic (characters, image, plot) and extrinsic (writer’s attitude and explanation) elements of the novel.

RESULTS

Having analyzed the novel, we come up with some results. Some hidden themes were:

- 1) Fate: no one was there to be blamed in the case of the personages of the novel. All were the doing of fate.
- 2) Accepting reality: At some point, those cancer patient would be defeated in the inglorious war against the illness, and everybody both they and their relatives had no choice but to accept that truth.
- 3) Love: Love brought them more pain increasing the number of injured people. However, it was the only way to leave “scars” behind.
- 4) Courage to suffer: The central characters were not more than just the teenagers, but their courage deserved praises. The outcome of their battle was clear. And suffering was inevitable also.
- 5) Importance of dreams: As still children, they have such dreams that none of the cancer thing could take away.
- 6) Obsessions: Their little obsession made their life more colorful. These obsessions brought them together as well.
- 7) Commitment: it is perhaps most touching thing in the novel. Although their life was full of sacrifices, the characters were still ready to commit what they had left for the sake of each other.

DISCUSSION

The central character Hazel Grace Lancaster was sixteen and contracted Thyroid at the age 12. She could not breathe properly without cannula. Because her “...lungs sucked at being lungs”.

The title of the novel was taken from one of the Shakespeare’s plays *Julius Caesar*:

Cassius: *“The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves”*

(Julius Caesar, Act I, Scene III, 140-141)

This phrase is from the speech of Cassius in order to convince Brutus that human’s fate is not something divine or written beforehand. It is the reflection and outcome of people’s desires. Brutus was striving to be the monarch thinking it was written in his star, but at the same time, struggling against his will. The reserve phenomenon happened in John Green’s novel. The Fault was exactly in the stars of the characters of this story. This attitude can be seen in Hazel’s comment after the death of her beloved Augustus:

“...We all live in the universe devoted to the creation, and eradication, of awareness. Augustus Waters did not die after a lengthy battle with cancer. He died after a lengthy battle with human consciousness, a victim – as you will be – of universe’s need to make and unmake all that is possible”.

And sometimes the choice is not yours but is fate’s.

Although most of the personages knew no one could guarantee them whether they would be alive the next morning or not, they had hope. In every meeting at the Support Group, as the opening they would make a circle and chant the prayer:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference”

Maybe, it is hard, but the characters were already aware of the dangers of their condition and that illness has already become a part of them. This acceptance not only applies to the cancer patients, but also their parents, as well.

“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”

They had nerves of steel and heart of gold. They also cried in silence, and laughed with their bound-to-die-children.

However, there was a pure, innocent and unconditional love towards friends, family and lovers. In these dark-clouds-covered-sky-days love served as an illuminator. This love gave the characters enough courage to fight and strong bound with people. It was what they left behind. Augustus wanted to attend his own funeral and to listen to eulogies of Isaac and Hazel. So he called them and asked to be present at the church with a couple of eulogies before the real one took place. Augustus’s best friend, Isaac, who had an eye cancer and gone blind described how much he

appreciation he had with denying the robotic eyes which some futuristic scientists would make for him, because the world without Augustus meant nothing for him.

The number of days he spent with his lover and the central character Hazel was metaphorically infinite. As time goes by everybody may forget them and their true love may die with them, still it was equal to forever.

Having an illness from early ages made the teenagers tough. Their battle was the matter of life and death. The worst part – the enemy was invisible and most likely to resurrect. However, their desire to live and the stamina to pain can outshine those of healthy adults. In other words, they were trained to be hurt. Cancer was a part of them and the pain was an inseparable company.

“Without Pain How Could We Know Joy”

This citation was an encouragement from Augustus house. As for Hazel, she consolidated herself with a quote from a made-up novel *An Imperial Infliction*:

“Pain Demands to be Felt”

However, it was not only about physical torture, but also about mental ones as well. They went through inglorious battle but the people behind were all wounded.

As it was mentioned earlier, the victims of the cancer were not only patients, but their family as well. Involuntarily watching their beloved ones suffer equally to them and knowing incurable scars they were going to left added up mental stain to cancer folks. Perhaps, this was the reason behind Hazel’s depression and the depression was side effect of dying. She felt as if she were a grenade which was bound to explode. She did not want to leave many casualties.

As many motivational books say, it is highly likely that the main purpose of life is to fulfill one’s dreams and nobody is exception. Both of the main characters were pursuing their education no matter what their situations were. Augustus Waters had been a good basketball player and possessed a collection of awards, medals and trophies. Having lost a limb in the battle with osteosarcoma he ended up being unable to play. Then he had another goal: making Hazel’s dreams come true because the world was not a wish granting factory. Here goes another theme – commitment. All cancer children had to be granted only one wish; Hazel used hers but not Augustus. Despite the recurrence of osteosarcoma, Augustus chose to go with Hazel to Amsterdam instead of treatment. Maybe he could have saved his life but he decided to save Hazel’s dreams.

Some little crazy obsessions that were mentioned as well served to add some colors to the miserable life of the personages. *An Imperial Infliction* – a made-up book by a made-up author Peter van Houten – was like Bible of Jamie Sullivan in *A Walk to Remember*. She was simply obsessed with that because it told another cancer story. She feels like the author of this book was

the only one who knew what the cancer was more than anyone, even cancer people themselves. And this little obsession was the main reason of the great chemistry between Hazel and Augustus.

CONCLUSION

Unsurprisingly this novel is about the death or at least a journey to death. Physical and mental sufferings: fluid draining from Hazel’s oxygen deprived lungs, going blind followed by break up in Isaac’s case and Augustus’s losing a limb and having medicine eventually leading him to incoherence were simply the companions of the characters. However, excruciating pain was inflicted by the death of the loved one. This pain was equal to ten out of ten, but nothing else was. Still Augustus was happy because the scar he left in Hazel was the only thing that mattered. It was a part of joy and Hazel carried this forever. As Augustus feared most, he did not come up to human oblivion. He was mostly inclined to heroic act. The cancer was the thing that impeded him from. That’s why he was afraid of oblivion. Hazel encouraged him to ignore it. There would come a time when there would be no one to remember anybody or anything they did. Today was their best day.

The teen’s dying from cancer had no justifiable reasons. The kids had no point in getting angry with anybody or anything. The enemy they were fighting with was made-up from their own cells. As the novel suggests the cancer was the side effect of evolution. By this the author tries to show that human is not the master of his own fate. This was implied in the title itself: The fault was in their stars but not in themselves. The life does not always live up people’s expectations. Isaac’s girlfriend breaks up although he was deadly in need of her; Augustus dies despite his burning desire and enthusiasm to live; Hazel’s death was impending and she had no choice but to accept this. The novel is full of harsh realities.

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