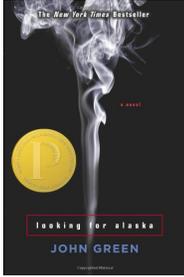


Books by the Stack



Looking for Alaska by John Green

Before. Miles “Pudge” Halter is done with his safe life at home. His whole life has been one big non-event, and his obsession with famous last words has only made him crave “the Great Perhaps” even more (Francois Rabelais, poet). He heads off to the sometimes crazy and anything-but-boring world of Culver Creek Boarding School, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young. The gorgeous, clever, funny, sexy, self-destructive, screwed up, and utterly fascinating Alaska Young.

Why you'll like it: Unexpected. Compelling. Sobering. Poignant.

About the Author: John Green is the New York Times bestselling author of *Looking for Alaska*, *An Abundance of Katherines*, *Paper Towns*, and *The Fault in Our Stars*. He is also the coauthor, with David Levithan, of *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*. He was 2006 recipient of the Michael L. Printz Award, a 2009 Edgar Award winner, and has twice been a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Green’s books have been published in more than a dozen languages.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is forgiveness universal? I mean, is forgiveness really available to all people, no matter the circumstances? Is it, for instance, possible for the dead to forgive the living, and for the living to forgive the dead?
2. I would argue that both in fiction and in real life, teenage smoking is a symbolic action. What do you think it’s intended to symbolize, and what does it actually end up symbolizing? To phrase this question differently: Why would anyone ever pay money in exchange for the opportunity to acquire lung cancer and/or emphysema?
3. Do you like Alaska? Do you think it’s important to like people you read about?
4. By the end of this novel, Pudge has a lot to say about immortality and what the point of being alive is (if there is a point).
5. To what extent do your thoughts on mortality shape your understanding of life’s meaning?
6. How would you answer the old man’s final question for his students? What would your version of Pudge’s essay look like?
7. Discuss the book’s unusual structure. Why do you suppose Green chose this format for telling his story? How else might he have structured the material?
8. Miles tells the story in his own first-person voice. How might the book differ if it had been told in Alaska’s voice or the Colonel’s? Or in the voice of an omniscient narrator?

9. Dr. Hyde says, "Everything that comes together falls apart." Do you think the author agrees? How is this Zen belief explored in the novel?
10. Alaska loves these two lines from W. C. Auden: "You shall love your crooked neighbor / With your crooked heart." What do these lines mean to you and why do you think Alaska likes them so much?

(Questions issued by teachervision.com)



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