

# 10 reasons why *The Fault In Our Stars* is likely the most important film of this generation:

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## **WARNING:**

***I cried five times while gathering quotes from the film to include in this review. Such is the power of writer John Green's words and story.***

***Also, if you haven't seen the movie or read the book, I recommend you skip #9.***

What do choruses of coos, sniffles, and sobs in a dark movie theater mean to you? If you're a movie producer, they might mean dollar signs. If you're an actor or director, they might mean a job well done. If you're a fan, they might mean movie magic. For me, they mean beauty and truth.

Before I saw *The Fault In Our Stars* at one of its first showings on opening night, I was sure I'd be disappointed. The Young Adult novel upon which the film is based is my second-favorite book (behind Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*). It seemed inevitable that the film would fail to adequately translate text to screen. I was wrong. I was blown away. The film is a triumph. I predict it will top box office receipts for 2014; teen girls will repeatedly return to theaters this summer, much as young audiences did for *Titanic*.

Here are 10 reasons why *The Fault In Our Stars* is likely the most important film of this generation:

## 1. The Audience:

Do teen and tween girls, the film's target demographic, appreciate anything so much as a good love story? To write an effective love story is a wondrous achievement. John Green has penned one for the ages. The concept might sound off-putting: two young cancer victims fall in love, and they face life, suffering and death with heroism and humor. But read the quotes included below for a sense of the power of Mr. Green's words.

Speaking of which: consider the book's audience, including these stats, as of 6/4/2014:

- Books sold: 10.7 million
- Number of languages: 46
- Consecutive weeks on the New York Times bestseller list: 78

In other words, the film has the benefit of a large, enthusiastic audience-in-waiting.

Now consider other potential viewers: victims of cancer; friends and family of same; and medical care workers who treat them.

Green, who once worked as a student chaplain at a children's hospital, ably captures some of the finer points of the subject matter:

Hazel: "The booklets and web sites always list depression as a side effect of cancer.

Depression's not a side effect of cancer. It's a side effect of dying. Which is what was happening to me."

Gus: "That's the thing about pain. It demands to be felt."

## 2. Depth:

Common wisdom has it that young people want fluff entertainment. Surely some of them do, at least sometimes, but most also want substance. The book version of *The Fault In Our Stars* has already proven this. It places a premium on meaningful explorations of life's most important questions: why do we suffer? how should we love? is there reason to hope for more than oblivion? It develops a theme of great importance: that we should be thankful for the little infinities that are our lives, no matter how few days they might number. The film also features

characters employing and discussing metaphor and symbolism, which is unusual and refreshing. Gus, for example, explains why he carries cigarettes and wields them symbolically, unlit:

“It’s a metaphor, see: You put the killing thing right between your teeth, but you don’t give it the power to do its killing.”

### **3. A blueprint for true love:**

Sadly, young people are not typically witness to the finest of role models. The dearth of those who will model for them true love in action is perhaps most tragic of all. *The Fault in Our Stars* breathes life into the character of Augustus Waters, a boy who treats his love, Hazel Grace, with utmost affection, support and respect. Even that he calls her by both her first and middle names is reflective of his reverence for the world and all the people in it. Young readers and viewers will surely never forget these characters. They will measure their future partners by them. This is a good thing. It means young people will expect more from one another. They will be less likely to settle for being denigrated and used. In the long term, this will be the film’s and book’s greatest legacy.

Hazel: “Sometimes people don’t understand the promises they’re making when they make them.”

Isaac: “Right, sure, but you keep the promise anyway. That’s what love is. Love is keeping the promise anyway.”

### **4. Humor:**

A story that elicits tears must also elicit laughs. Otherwise it will not be properly balanced, and the tears won’t be full. As light produces shadow and joy illuminates pain, so must a good tragedy marry humor and heart. I laughed throughout this film, more so than I do at most comedies. Such laughs are an essential element to the film’s roller coaster of emotions.

Isaac (who has gone blind from his cancer), at his best friend Gus’ pre-funeral: “But I will say this: when the scientists of the future show up at my house with robot eyes and they tell me to try them on, I will tell the scientists to piss off, because I don’t even want to see a world without

Augustus Waters. And then, of course, having made my rhetorical point, I will put my robot eyes on because, I mean... robot eyes!"

## **5. Wisdom:**

Rarely do mainstream Hollywood films embrace philosophy and wisdom. This Hollywood film does, and to wonderful, sobering effect. For example, when Hazel and Gus visit the Anne Frank house in Amsterdam, as part of the museum tour a girl's voice in the background reads some of Anne's words:

"At such moment's, I don't think about the misery but about the beauty that still remains... Try to recapture the happiness within yourself. Think of all the beauty in everything around you... and be happy."

## **6. Best love declaration monologue ever?**

I think so. What teen girl wouldn't want to hear the following? What *person* wouldn't want to hear the following?

Gus: "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."

## **7. The valuing of all lives, all individuals:**

In one key scene depicting Gus' pre-funeral, during which Hazel and Isaac give eulogies for Gus so that he can enjoy them while he's alive, we are presented with a striking image – a blind young man stands at a podium before a guy with one leg sitting in a wheelchair and beside him a young woman beset with an oxygen tank and cannula tubes in her nostrils. These are the main characters, and they are all heroes. How unusual is this, especially for Hollywood? And how encouraging that we can watch and laugh with and cry and root for such biologically imperfect perfect heroes?

Gus: "Apparently the world is not a wish-granting factory."

## 8. Poor attitude is the only real enemy:

Just as Hazel, Gus and Isaac bravely face their fates, the film's supporting characters are almost exclusively good, kind people. Only Hazel's idol, the author Peter Van Houten, who wrote her favorite book, her "bible," *An Imperial Affliction*, proves unsavory and less than heroic. His hopeless cynicism serves as a fitting foil to Gus' irrepressible enthusiasm and *joie de vivre*. Notably, Hazel's and Gus's parents are portrayed as caring and engaged, not as clueless. What a joy it is to behold movie parents doing a good job of parenting.

For example, upon returning from Amsterdam, Gus, Hazel and her mom descend an airport escalator and are greeted by the sight of Hazel's dad waiting for them among the livery drivers, holding a sign that instead of a last name reads:

"My Beautiful Family (and Gus)."

## 9. The acting:

Shailene Woodley, who recently starred in another YA page-to-screen blockbuster, *Divergent*, delivers an Oscar-caliber performance in *The Fault In Our Stars*. As a friend of mine said, her reaction shots alone could comprise an entire movie. Due to the film's YA roots, however, I think Academy voters will unfairly neglect to afford Woodley due consideration.

Relative unknown Ansel Elgort is likewise, and thankfully, perfect as Augustus Waters. He is the right mix of philosophical, cool, rebellious, good-hearted and hunky.

Also effective is Willem Dafoe in an amusing turn as the morose writer and would-be mentor Van Houten.

But Woodley is clearly the star here. And never does she shine more brightly than during Gus' funeral scene. Her eulogy will undoubtedly be read at countless actual funerals:

"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. Some infinities are bigger than other infinities. A writer we used to like taught us that. 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. You gave me a forever within the numbered days, and for that I am eternally grateful. I love you.”

Does it get any better than this?

#### **10. Lack of glamor:**

Woodley is a beautiful young lady. In this film, though, she is mostly sans makeup, with unkempt short hair and oxygen tubes up her nose. She is shown as plain most of the time, perhaps appearing most lovely in the film’s final image, when it becomes clear to us that she has adopted Gus’ perspective and at last sees clearly that, in Gus’ words:

“Life is good, Hazel Grace.”

The lack of glamor must help young viewers to identify with Hazel, making Gus’ entreaties all the more alluring:

Hazel: “Why are you looking at me like that?”

Gus: “Because you’re beautiful. I enjoy looking at beautiful people and I decided a while back not to deny myself the simpler pleasures of existence. Particularly given that, as you so astutely pointed out, we’re all gonna die pretty soon.”

Hazel: “I’m not beautiful.”

Hazel: “I’m just... I don’t know... unextraordinary.”

Gus: “I reject that out of hand.”

About *An Imperial Affliction*, the book Hazel most loves and she therefore lends to Gus, Gus says after reading:

“So I read it again. And I just kept feeling like... like it was a gift. Like you’d given me something important.”

This film is a gift. The many dollars it will earn point not to greed but to audience engagement, a response to beauty and truth, which is the point of art.



<http://www.midwestvguy.com/10-reasons-fault-stars-likely-important-film-generation/>