

A Q&A WITH AUTHORS JOHN GREEN AND DAVID LEVITHAN

DL: As you know, one of my best friends is named David Leventhal, and the confusion this causes was one of the impetuses (impeti?) for *WG, WG*. Have you had any particularly fierce run-ins with any other John Greens?

JG: Well, there's a John Green who is one of the most famous Bigfoot researchers in the world. (He is, in fact, often referred to as "one of the four horsemen of Sasquatchery.") Years ago I wrote a little piece for a magazine in which I casually mentioned that Bigfoot is, you know, fictitious. Well, John Green did not like that at all. He felt that I was besmirching the good name of Bigfoot-believin' John Greens everywhere.

So, David, when we started this book almost five years ago, we picked the name of the characters and the location where they'd meet. How soon after that did your Will Grayson and his story start to come together for you?

DL: I think it really kicked in for me the first time we read our chapters aloud to each other. Because his voice was so different from the one I was used to reading in. There is something very, very liberating about writing a very, very angry character.

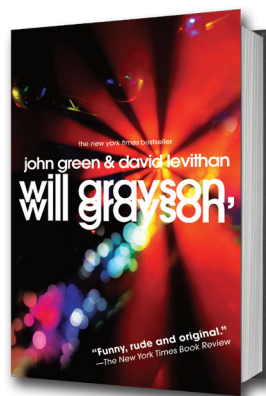
How about for you?

JG: Yeah, I remember when you were reading that chapter out loud, your voice sounded different than it ever had in all the years I've known you. It was surreal to hear the voice of this extraordinarily angry and sad (and hilariously funny) teenager coming out of you. For me, the story came together when I figured out that my Will Grayson would live in the shadow of this huge gay offensive lineman named Tiny Cooper.

DL: It's a good rule of thumb that any huge gay offensive lineman is going to steal the show. W. C. Fields refused to work with them.

JG: So tell me more about the process of collaborating with John Green?

DL: You know, I had all these great ideas, but he kept saying, "Isn't there a way to work Bigfoot into it?" and "I'm not sure Bigfoot would say that" and "That 'a Pope, a rabbi, and a sasquatch' joke isn't funny, David." Which is why I decided that you were the John Green for me. You, and your huge gay offensive lineman.



WILL GRAYSON, WILL GRAYSON

HC: 978-0-525-42158-0 • \$17.99

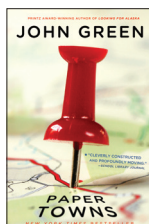
PB: 978-0-14-241847-5 • \$8.99

Ages 14 up • Grades 9 up

Meet Will Grayson and Will Grayson—two teens who meet accidentally and discover that a name isn't the only thing they share—both are at turning points in life and each is struggling to discover who he really is. On their path to discovery, they learn the value of relationships and the true meaning of friendship.

- An ALA Children's & Young Adult Stonewall Book Award Honor
- An ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults
- An ALA Rainbow Project Pick

ALSO AVAILABLE



Paper Towns

by John Green

HC: 978-0-525-47818-8 • \$17.99

PB: 978-0-14-241493-4 • \$9.99

Ages 14 up • Grades 9 up

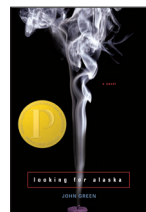
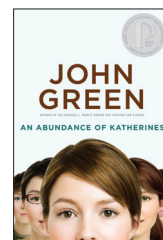
An Abundance of Katherines

by John Green

HC: 978-0-525-47688-7 • \$16.99

PB: 978-0-14-241070-7 • \$7.99

Ages 14 up • Grades 9 up



Looking for Alaska

by John Green

HC: 978-0-525-47506-4 • \$15.99

PB: 978-0-14-241221-3 • \$9.99

PB: 978-0-14-240251-1 • \$8.99

Ages 14 up • Grades 9 up

Marly's Ghost

by David Levithan and Brian Selznick

PB: 978-0-14-240912-1 • \$6.99

Ages 14 up • Grades 9 up



Dutton Books • Speak
Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group
www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians

This discussion guide has been provided by Penguin Young Readers Group for classroom, library, and book club use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.

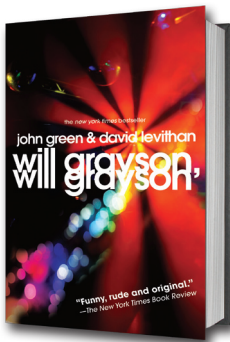
DISCUSSION GUIDE

the *new york times* bestseller

john green & david levithan will grayson,

"Funny, rude and original."
—The New York Times Book Review

ABOUT THE BOOK



In the suburbs of Chicago, two teens named Will Grayson—one gay, one straight—have lived their lives completely unaware of the other's existence. But that changes one fateful night when their worlds collide. Their lives begin to intertwine and each Will Grayson begins to question who he really is. Their discoveries take them in unexpected directions, building toward romantic turns-of-heart and the epic production of an oh-so-fabulous high school musical.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JOHN GREEN is the celebrated author of Printz medalist *Looking for Alaska*, Printz Honor Book *An Abundance of Katherines*, and Edgar Award winner *Paper Towns*. Green's books have been finalists for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, received multiple starred reviews, and been placed on numerous state award lists. He has been a commentator on NPR's "All Things Considered" and reviewed books for numerous publications, including *The New York Times* and *Booklist*. John is also the co-creator (with his brother, Hank) of the popular video blog *Brotherhood 2.0*, which has been watched more than 50 million times by Nerdfighter fans all over the globe. John Green lives in Indianapolis, Indiana. Visit him online at sparksflyup.com and nerdfighters.com.



DAVID LEVITHAN is an award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling author of many books for teens, including *Wide Awake* and *Love Is the Higher Law*. David's other collaborative work, with Rachel Cohn, includes *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*, *Naomi and Ely's No Kiss List*, and the new *Dash and Lily's Book of Dares*. *Boy Meets Boy* and *The Realm of Possibility* started as stories he wrote for his friends for Valentine's Day (something he's done for the past sixteen years) and turned themselves into teen novels. He is also an Editorial Director and Vice President at Scholastic, where he founded their Push imprint. David Levithan lives in New Jersey. Visit him online at davidlevithan.com.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

NOTE: Although both characters are named "Will Grayson," in this discussion guide, we have capitalized the name of the one from the odd chapters (Will Grayson) and have all lowercase letters for the one from the even chapters (will grayson).

- In what ways is Will Grayson's life similar to will grayson's? How are they different? How does the style of the odd vs even chapters work to help us understand both Will and will as individuals? Do you think one has a significantly easier life? Explain your answer.
- Consider Will and will's encounter at Frenchy's; how does this accidental meeting serve as a catalyst for change in each of their lives? Offer specific examples from the text to support your statements.
- Will Grayson states, "You cannot possibly pick your friends, or else I never would have ended up with Tiny Cooper." (p. 3) What is it about his relationship with Tiny that he finds so difficult? Do you think he's right to feel this way? Consider your own friendships—have you ever had a friend that you felt required an extra effort on your part to remain friends?
- Will Grayson chose to defend Tiny's right to play football regardless of his sexual orientation, but is later regretful of his decision. Why do you think he has changed his mind about coming to Tiny's defense? What does this tell readers about how Will approaches relationships in general?
- Will shares with readers that emotion is easy to resist "if you follow two simple rules: 1. Don't care too much. 2. Shut up." (p. 5) What can readers infer about Will from this statement? Do you think this is sage advice? Why or why not?
- Describe will's home life; using examples, share how his relationship with his mom shaped him as a person. Why does he see his mother as fragile? How does will's relationship with his mother change and what does will discover about her?
- From your experience, do you think it's difficult for most people to reach out for help? Consider the characters in the novel; who do they turn to for assistance? To whom do you turn when you are in need?
- Why is will's relationship with Isaac so important to him? What does learning the truth about who Isaac really is force will to do?
- Beyond his size, what is it about Tiny's presence that makes will feel not so alone? Why is it so important that will befriends Tiny when he does?
- Will shares, "I'm nothing but a bit character in the Tiny Cooper story, and there isn't a damn thing I can do about it except get jerked around until high school is over and I can finally escape his orbit, can finally stop being a moon of his fat planet." (p. 157) What makes Will so angry with Tiny? What about their relationship frustrates him the most? Is he right to feel this way?

- Discuss the significance of Tiny's musical production of *Hold Me Closer*; in what ways does sharing his personal experiences through this play allow Will and Tiny to evaluate their friendship? Predict how their relationship will evolve after the production.
- As Will grows more frustrated with Tiny's choices, he narrates, "And then I realize what I can do. The weapon I have. Rule 2: Shut up. I step past him and walk toward class." (p. 157) Why does Will think silence is the best way to punish Tiny? What does he ultimately hope to accomplish? Is he right in making this choice? Why or why not?
- Fear both motivates and incapacitates many of the characters in the novel. Consider how characters deal with their fears. Do they acknowledge their fears? Are they able to turn to others for help? Who are the people you seek out to assist you when you are afraid?
- Considering Will and will's perspective, in what ways is *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* a story about things that have been lost? What does each of them find along the way?
- Why is will and Will's final gift to Tiny so important? What does this act signify about the Will Graysons understanding of friendship? Have you ever gone to such great lengths to let a friend or loved one know what they mean to you? If so, what have you done to show your appreciation for them?

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

- Tiny's final musical production contains scenes that portray important events and relationships in his life. Have teens consider watershed events in their personal lives and create an original story to share as a live or filmed presentation with a trailer of the performance posted on Youtube.com or Teachertube.com. Have them write a script, a cast, choose costumes and props, and utilize the royalty free music library, Soundzabound (www.soundzabound.com), and presentation software programs. Consider organizing a "Night at the Movies" and invite students to come together to watch and share their trailers.
- Music is used throughout the novel as a way to connect the characters with each other and the world at large. Select a favorite character from *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* and create a CD with an original playlist which is representative of the experiences that character undergoes throughout the novel. Create original art for the jewel case and on the interior, and after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.
- Character Karaoke (AKA: Character Theme Songs): In small groups, have teens select any significant character from the novel. Based on what they know about the character from the chapters they've read, they should write original song lyrics to an existing song expressing the character's individual personality, actions, goals, etc.