

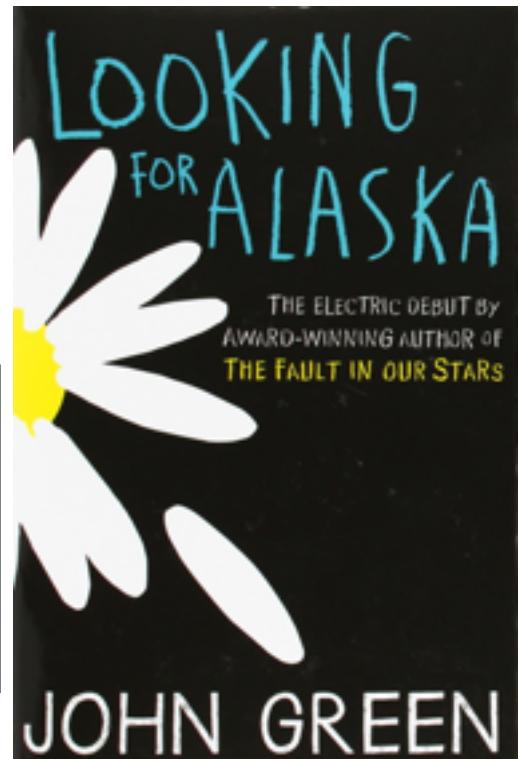
Student's full name: _____ Mark: _____

LOOKING FOR ALASKA

by John Green

The work will be handed in by 6th March. Answer to the questions on a paper apart, whether handwritten or typed, try and be neat with the layout as well as with grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Be as deep as you can, and do not write superficial answers.

The work will account for 15% of the end of term mark.



Discussion questions before reading

Looking for Alaska brings up many common events and themes that teenagers experience on a regular basis in their own lives. That said, you will have many different opinions as to how these themes and events play out in both characters' lives, and their own.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Teenagers think that they are invincible.
- Friends are more important than family.
- Teenagers' friends are always a bad influence.
- Things that happen to people as children can influence their lives forever.
- Trust is the most important part of friendship.
- Life is one endless struggle.
- It is impossible for boys and girls to "just be friends."

Activities and General Discussion based on the first half of the book: Before

1. What does the author's technique of dividing the book into Before and After rather than chapters add to the novel? How does it make you feel before you even begin to read? Why does the author use this technique?
2. The premise for Miles leaving his family is; 'I go to seek a Great Perhaps' (pg 11). What does this tell us about the attitude Miles has prior to going to Culver Creek? Is this the only reason he is going?
3. Does Miles' attitude mean he is more open to new experiences and friendship? He is almost instantly adopted by the Colonel, discuss how do you choose friends or how they choose you? Would you be friends with Alaska? Would she be friends with you?
4. By page 27 we learn that Alaska, like Miles, also knows some famous last words and her favourite is:
"He – that's Simon Bolivar – was shaken by the overwhelming revelation that the headlong race between his misfortunes and his dreams was at that moment reaching the finish line. The rest was darkness. 'Damn it,' he sighed. 'How will I ever get out of this labyrinth?'"Beautiful last words, but I didn't quite understand. "So what's the labyrinth?" I asked her."

What does you think the labyrinth is? And what is "the Great Perhaps" ?

5. In the first half of the book the reader gets to know the characters and their diversity. On page 109 Miles is dwelling on this and says 'If people were rain, I was drizzle and she (Alaska) was a hurricane.' List the characters and brainstorm words to describe them. What are some of the quotes that best reflect their personality, what would they write about themselves on a Facebook page?

Miles Halter "Pudge", Chip Martin " the Colonel", Alaska Young, Takumi Hikohito, Lara, Dr Hyde, Mr Starnes "The Eagle",

Activities and General Discussion Points Post Reading: After

6. Due to Green's unusual structure of grouping the book into Before and After and the subsequent countdown/up of days the reader is set for a grand climax or event. Discuss how the death of Alaska changes the other characters. Does it change how the other characters then understand the world?

7. In 136 days Miles life completely changes. Is our attitude important? If Alaska had a different attitude would she still be alive?

8. How did you feel after you found out Alaska had died? Did you miss her vibrant personality? Search YouTube for Liane Graham's song performance that she wrote as a response to Alaska. How did Alaska enrich the other characters lives?

9. What is suffering? Did Alaska suffer? Did her friends suffer after her death, or were they grieving? Is there a difference? Consider in this discussion Miles's quoting Buddha (pg 233): "suffering was caused by desire ... and the cessation of desire meant the cessation of suffering."

10. Was Alaska's death an accident? Or was it suicide? Debate this issue.

11. Could Alaska's friends have intervened to prevent her death?

Use the following quotes from Alaska to assist discussion:

"Y'all smoke to enjoy it. I smoke to die." (pg 57)

"I may die young", she said, but at least I'll die smart." (pg 66)

"Pudge, what you must understand about me is that I am a deeply unhappy person." (pg X)

and these from Miles:

"I thought: This would not be a bad way to go. I thought: Straight and fast. Maybe she just decided at the last second." (pg 253)

"I would never know her well enough to know her thoughts in those last minutes, would never know if she left us on purpose." (page 259)

12. Culver Creek has a lot of unofficial rules; "thou shall not rat", "thou shall play pranks", is there a certain honour or loyalty in obeying these rules? Was Alaska dishonourable or disloyal? Does she die with honour?

13. It is often said that teenagers think they are invincible and Miles (pg 126) also claims:
"The Great Perhaps was upon us and we were invincible. The plan had faults, but we did not".

Do teenagers feel indestructible? Is Alaska's risk taking behavior a way of dealing with the pressure of growing up?

14. What is a prank? Are they 'harmless fun'? What about the first prank of which Miles is the victim? Year 12's in Australia have traditional 'muck up' days at the end of the year. What are some of the memorable ones students have heard of, what makes a great prank? Why does the author include them in the book?
15. How does Miles final essay in response to Alaska's question make you feel? Is it an appropriate ending of the book? What do you think happens to Miles and the Colonel in the future? Reference may be made to this quote from the Colonel (pg 257) "After all this time, it still seems to me like straight and fast is the only way out – but I choose the labyrinth. The labyrinth blows, but I choose it."