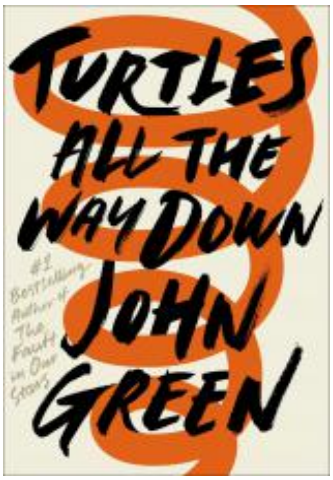
Turtles All the Way Down

by John Green



About the Book

Sixteen-year-old Aza never intended to pursue the mystery of fugitive billionaire Russell Pickett, but there?s a hundred-thousand-dollar reward at stake and her Best and Most Fearless Friend, Daisy, is eager to investigate. So together, they navigate the short distance and broad divides that separate them from Russell Pickett?s son, Davis.

Aza is trying. She is trying to be a good daughter, a good friend, a good student, and maybe even a good detective, while also living within the ever-tightening spiral of her own thoughts.

Discussion Guide

1. John Green?s depiction of Aza?s mental health is different from what is often seen in literature and other media. How does TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN change the way you think about mental health?

2. The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote, ?Green finds language to describe the indescribable.? What is the significance of having language to understand Aza?s experience? How does finding a vocabulary for the indescribable help people to connect?

3. Aza?s mental illness means it?s hard for her to see outside herself, which doesn?t always make her a good friend. How does that impact Daisy?

4. Was it a betrayal for Daisy to have created Ayala in her fan fiction as an outlet for her frustrations with Aza? Would Aza have been able to understand Daisy?s resentments if confronted with them directly?

5. Aza says, ?Of course, you pretend to be the author. You have to.... You think you?re the painter, but you?re the canvas.? As readers, we know Aza is narrating her own story. Once we start to tell our own stories, are we fictionalizing

ourselves?

6. Davis and Aza have both lost a parent. How have they each processed grief? How does that common experience impact their relationship?

7. Harold --- the car that once belonged to her father --- and her father?s phone hold a lot of emotional significance for Aza. Why does interacting with those objects make Aza feel close to him ?

8. Several characters in the novel process their emotions through fiction and poetry. If you were to use a quote from this novel to begin an essay about your life, which would it be and why? What other literary quotes particularly resonant for you?

9. Daisy tells Aza, ?Your privileges are just oxygen to you.? Money and privilege are central to the novel. How does economic status color each character?s experiences and decisions? Their understanding of themselves and others?

10. The last few paragraphs of TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN zoom out to reframe Aza?s time perspective of her own story. How does this shift change the way you think about Aza? How does it change the way you think about mental illness?

11. Daisy says, ?You pick your endings, and your beginnings. You get to pick the frame, you know? Maybe you don?t choose what?s in the picture, but you decide on the frame.? What does that mean to you?

12. The title, "Turtles All the Way Down," refers to a theory of the universe. Aza and Daisy interpret this idea in different ways. How do you interpret Daisy?s story?

Author Bio

John Green is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of LOOKING FOR ALASKA, AN ABUNDANCE OF KATHERINES, PAPER TOWNS, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN, THE ANTHROPOCENE REVIEWED and EVERYTHING IS TUBERCULOSIS. His latest novel, HOLLWOOD, ENDING, is his first for adults.

John?s books have won many prizes, including an Audie Award, an Edgar Award, the Michael L. Printz Medal, and a *Los Angeles* Book Prize. Green?s books have been published in more than 55 languages, and over 60 million copies are in print worldwide.

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