

Upon picking up the novel *Looking for Alaska* by John Green, the consequences that it held were outright life-changing. The magnitude of meaning that the words held inside the two hundred and twenty-one page book, impressed upon my life an entirely new view and attitude. This story about Alaska Young is inarguably brilliant. John Green brings to life a character that immortalizes in the soul and is ever present in the journey to find yourself in the great-perhaps. Throughout these pages we learn to love the Perhaps and accept the labyrinth within our heart. Through several key issues, this book has changed my outlook on life.

In the beginning of the story, Miles, a man not so cool, switches schools and gets thrown into a life of beautiful Alaska Young. In his time there, he learns more about himself and about life as a whole than in all the years at home. They party, they cause a ruckus, they love, and they share the meaning of life with everyone around them. Alaska Young is the ringleader of this chaos until one tragic morning.

Miles is fascinated by famous last words and Alaska teaches him the one of most impact; Simon Bolivar's "How will I ever get out of this labyrinth of suffering" (Green19). Weaved in and out of this book, both Miles and I have learned our way. In the after part of the book, Alaska leaves a note saying that the way out is "Straight and Fast", but we learn it is much more complicated than that. After her death their religion teacher poses that same question for their last writing assignment, "How will we ever get out of this labyrinth of suffering?" He explains that "Because everybody who has ever lost their way in life has felt the nagging insistence of that question. At some point we all look up and realize we are lost in a maze, and I don't want us to forget...even when the material we study seems boring, we're trying to understand how people have answered this

question and the question of... how different traditions have come to terms with... 'people's rotten lots in life'" (158). This quote in itself has a monumental effect on anyone willing to spend five minutes on it. I have lost someone very close to me and like everyone else, I have had my fair share of tough times, and quote shows that we all have pain; pain is universal and inescapable. We see, we read, we learn about everything and everyone and most do not make an impression so big that it alternates a life, but look at the totality of the people in the world and know that we are phenomenal. Alaska shows us that we can be anything and we can do the impossible because we are invincible. I now fully give my life to the notion that we need never be hopeless because we can never be irreparably broken and the part of us greater than the sum of our parts cannot begin and cannot end, and so it cannot fail.

We can see into the past, but we have no clue about our future, who we touch or influence, how we present ourselves to the world, and what true friendship extends to. Alaska tries to help us in her against-the-norm attitude. This book shaped my outlook on life and how I operate day to day. It taught me to view the unknown and hold nothing back. What if there is no tomorrow for me or what if there is no tomorrow for you? Should we hold back on good times and gently spoken words? One night upon drinking Alaska spilled her soul out to Miles, but toward the end, toward the real answers inside her heart, she said it was to be continued. Then she died and Miles was left with questions and hope and guilt that weighed him down so much, it broke his heart. I live my life with a little more feeling and a true heart. In reading this book, I departed from my small, self-sufficient world within this maze I called home to real friends and more-than-minor life.

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The key lessons that this book has taught me are to feel, to live, to love, to say, and to forgive. Learn to feel with the heart, the mind, and the soul and given the chance take that feeling and love. Love everyone and anyone that comes your way, because you will only come this way but once. Live life to the fullest because tomorrow is never certain and say what you need to say for that same reason. Last but not least, forgive. Forgive because it just might be the only way out of the labyrinth.