



Teenage friendship in the novel *Looking for Alaska* by John Green

Divya Bharathi R^{1*}, Dr. M. John Suganya²

Department of English

^{1*2} PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.

^{1*} divyabharath.r2000@gmail.com

^{2*} suganyajohn@gmail.com +919994924381

Abstract:

The article aims to explore the teenage friendship in the novel *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. The purpose of this paper is to find out what friendship is and how it changes a person's character drastically, both positively and negatively by using Social Learning Theory. This paper also explores about the childhood trauma, the fear, and a tremendous character shift by applying Attachment Theory. In 2006 this novel won the American Library Association's Michael Printz Award and was in the top 10 books for Young Adults In 2006. In a survey, to remove the novel from school and library as it was not suitable for the age group and it involves offensive language, drugs, alcohol and sexually explicit descriptions. This article also explores more about the main character Alaska and Miles, their ideologies, friendship, love and how Miles was affected and influenced by his friends.

Keywords:

Friendship, Social Learning Theory, Childhood trauma, Character shifts.

Introduction:

John Green is a popular name in American young adult literature. He is also an avid video blogger who has posted numerous instructional videos online. Among his work *The Fault in Our Stars* is considered as his outstanding work. John Green is realistic in nature and deeply cares about people. His writing depicts the emotions of actual people in actual circumstances. His preliminary aim became to grow to be an episcopal priest but, the time he spent among kids with terminal-illness inspired him to emerge as an author. Afterwards, he labored as a publishing assistant for booklist. John Green wrote numerous evaluations on literary fictions mainly regarding conjoined twins or religion of Islam. In 2005 his debut novel, *Looking for Alaska* was released, he was inspired by his personal experience at his school to write about young romance. The novel made in New York Time best seller list for children's book in 2012, 50 million copies were printed worldwide. A number subsequent film and television adaptations of his work followed the success of the 2014 version of *The Fault in Our Stars*, which debuted at number one box office and received positive reviews from both the public and the critics. Time magazine featured John Green in the same year.

Glimpse of the novel:

Miles, a sixteen-year-old boy plans to join Culver Creek Boarding School for his higher secondary education. His parents misunderstood his reason for changing his school. They thought he wanted to change his school because he does not have any friends in his current school but the actual reason is Miles wants to get

better exposure and have better life experience. He then moves to Alabama for his new school and develops friendship with his new roommate Chip Martin. Chip introduces Alaska a young, beautiful, smart girl with erratic emotions to Miles. Chip and Alaska educates Miles how their school functions. There exists a new group of rich kids called Weekday Warriors. Miles has fascination for this group. Besides, Chip and Alaska, Miles befriends Takumi, a Japanese and Lara, a Rumanian. Miles is much more drawn to Alaska and Alaska also sometimes becomes emotionally unstable. She claims that she has no home but refuses to explain why. Later, Miles and Alaska visit Chip's family during Christmas and notices that their friendship is way beyond just going to school. Mile's friendship with Alaska also grows stronger just as his love for her. Miles and Alaska almost had sex during a celebration that took place in Alaska's dorm but they were interrupted by a phone call. Alaska plays a game named, "Best day and Worst day" in which the students have to narrate their best and worst days. Alaska says that her worst day is the day when her mother died from a disease called Aneurysm. She was eight years old when her mother died. She feels guilty for not calling Police when her mother suffocates for breath. Her father blames her for not calling the police. Her mother died right in front of her. So, Alaska tells the class that she stills feels guilty and miserable about it. The next day, it is revealed that Alaska has died in a car crash. Miles and Chip feels guilty about her death because they are responsible for her. In order to understand what happened, they create a story of how things could have unfolded based on evidence from her death. Miles and Chip conclude that she most likely went home intending to visit her mother's grave but ended up dying in an accident. However, it remains a mystery whether her death is accident or suicide. Having learnt all that about Alaska's death, Miles and Chip decides to move on with their lives.

Friendship:

Friendship, a perfectly flawed relationship and the cherished memories in everyone's lives. Friends are probably everyone's top priority when people were in schools. This novel depicts the significant connection and loyalty between the characters Alaska, Miles and Chip. Many teenagers are looking for their own adventure and this book makes the reader realize that it could be found anywhere, even at some boarding school in Alabama. The teen years are a time of self – realization and Miles found himself through his friends Alaska and Chip. The Chip as always been there for Alaska, though Alaska as a mysterious character within her. Friendship of Chip, Miles and Takumi were very important to her. When Sara's Father didn't allow Chip to escort her because he is black, Alaska, Takumi and Miles noticed the sadness on Chips face and did a prank to stop weekday warriors who was going to escort Sara and Chip ends up escorting Sara and he was really happy and thankful. These risks that they do for their friends shows how much they value their friendship. "I came here looking for a great perhaps, for real friends and a more than minor life" (*Looking for Alaska*).

Character influence and character change in the novel *Looking for Alaska* by John Green

Miles Halter is the main character in *looking for Alaska* novel. As the main character, Miles was influenced by other characters in the novel. His first influence was his Father, who always been there for him. Based on the novel Miles parents were nice and cares about him, so automatically it gives a positive influence on Miles to become a good person who cares and loves his parents. Second was influence of Chip Martin, one of the main characters in the book. Chip provides stability for Miles and he listens to Chip's words, he is a smoker and definitely drinks too much. Chip changes Miles from a good person to a naughty person. Miles slowly unravels his innocence started to spend more time with Chip. Miles started to smoke and drink regularly in the campus. Miles who never drink and almost never smoke before, started to do everything after he met Chip, he made Miles to forget about the messages that he receives daily from his parents who forbid Miles to drink and smoke cigarette. Next, the main character Alaska, the whole story revolves around her. Alaska had a big role changing Miles into a naughty person, she was the one who introduces Miles to *vodka and ambrosia*. When Alaska and Miles spend time with each other Alaska made Miles enjoy drinking. Takumi, Chip, and Alaska, they almost never passed without drinking and smoking. She makes drinks as a new habit for Miles, she thought Miles that sex is interesting and she was constantly flirting with Miles, even though she as a boyfriend.

Social Learning Theory:

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) proposes a second risk mechanism for substance use. Such social influence models imply that for those in more intimate and supportive friendships with drug-using peers,

interactions with these friends may provide an environment that encourages drug use and is conducive to self-medication, particularly for adolescents who are susceptible to negative affect. When adolescent connections are more positively defined, they may be more prone to behave similarly to their friends. Indeed, the negative influence that peer modelling has on teenager risk for substance use may be exacerbated in environments of high levels of friendship support (Wills & Vaughan, 1989). Furthermore, social learning of specific usage habits might occur in these connections. Heavy adolescent drinking is partially influenced by both their own and their peers drinking habits (Hussong, 2003). Adolescents who self-medicate with drugs may be inspired, taught, and reinforced to do so by their drug-using friends. The usage of Social Learning Theory in the novel's character Miles was influenced by Alaska and Chip, in the starting of the novel Miles used to smoke and drink with there friends and later he started to smoke alone. Miles, did not go for thanksgiving holidays and stayed with Alaska in the drome this effects his parents and they were very hurt of the sudden character change in Miles. The novel shows that, Miles Halter who was silent, innocent and obedient will never be the same again.

Childhood Trauma - Attachment Theory:

The character Alaska Young is portrayed as a mysterious character in the novel. She carries herself as an extroverted person, witty, happy but deep down she is disturbed, worried and always heavy hearted and she is scared and always refuse to go home on holidays. Later, the novel explains that Alaska lost her mother when she was young, she died in front for her from cardiac arrest. She was too young to understand what happened, she was shocked and terrified and her father blamed Alaska for her mother's death. She was really feeling guilty and this traumatized her entire life. She never opens ups with any of her friends. "What you must understand about me is that I am deeply unhappy person" (*Looking for Alaska*). Authors in recent studies have proposed that trauma and related traumatic experiences within the family origin have important implications for parent-child relationships, and may disrupt normal attachment behavior in children. These studies have primarily examined previous trauma and long-term sequela of severe childhood and adolescent psychopathology from the perspective of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). The central premise of attachment theory is that the security of the early child-parent bond is reflected in the child's interpersonal relationships across the life span (Schneider, Tardif, & Atkinson, 2001). The observation of Alaska's character using attachment theory is, she was affected by the death of her mother and her father's words and she was feeling guilty and blamed herself, this past incident made her to drink, smoke and sell cigarettes to fellow students for pocket money. She even betrayed her friends and ratted on her fellow mates for the hostel warden The Eagle. In the end of the book, she dies in a car accident with over dose of alcohol content in her body. People in the Culver Creek Academy don't know whether it is an accident or suicide. "We are all going, I thought, and it applies to turtles and turtlenecks, Alaska the girl and Alaska the place, because nothing can last, not even the earth itself" (*Looking for Alaska*)

Conclusion:

Friendship is essential for everyone irrespective of their age. Every human being requires good companies to experience life to the fullest. It is indispensable for one's proper growth and development especially in teenage. During adolescence, one goes through a lot of emotional, physical, and mental changes. The importance of teenage friendship, character change and childhood trauma is explored in this article by applying Attachment Theory and Social Learning Theory.

References:

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*, Harpercollins,2005

<https://www.newportacademy.com/>.https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwivv7z_qen6AhXMcGwGHcaOAsgQFnoECD8QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffiles.eric.ed.gov%2Ffulltext%2FEJ861353.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0GNBgdmgXGoqasZK0qRBcPZhttps://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiPzftoen6AhUDleYKHVMBDg0QFnoECBEQAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fprevious.focusing.org%2Fpdf%2Fpersonality_change.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3Ut49q0ARoDWmLDhj2W5Rj