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Turtles all the way down book summary

SubscriptionNOK 349 / month Article written by Joshua Ehiosun C2 certified writer: 'Turtles All the Way Down' by John Green is a young adult fiction story that shows the bond of friendship and portrays the struggle of a young girl whose mental illness throws her into a battle for her existence. The book begins with Aza Holmes battling her thoughts at a school lunch and ends with her saying goodbye to someone she fell in love with. Spoiler-Free Summary 'Turtles All the Way Down' Begins with sixteen-year-old Aza Holmes sitting with her friends at her school cafeteria. She trails off in her mind as the idea of a sickness overwhelms her. As her friends continue discussing, Aza freaks out further and looks up symptoms of an illness. Her best friend, Daisy, notices, but when she asks what is wrong, Aza states all is fine. After school, Aza picks up Daisy. While switching through the radio, they talk about the bounty on Russell Pickett, a local billionaire CEO. Determined to get the money, Daisy convinces her friend to investigate with her as she learns Aza lives in the same vicinity as Russell. Aza and Daisy prepare for their investigation and cross into Russell's house, but they meet one of his employees. To cover themselves, Aza lies she was there to visit Daisy Pickett, her old friend, and Russell's son. The employee takes Aza to see Davis, and they have a small reunion. Riddled with guilt, Aza tells Davis that she and her friend were investigating his father. To her surprise, Davis gives her money in return for not telling the police whatever she found. As her relationship with Davis grows, Aza's obsessive-compulsive disorder worsens as anxiety riddles her. She lands in the hospital and later stays home after an incident. After healing from her injuries, Aza follows her friends to an art show and comes upon a grueling realization about Russell Pickett. She alerts Davis, who gives the information to the police. He later leaves for another state. Plot Summary Warning - This article contains important details and spoilers While with her friends at the school cafeteria, Aza's mind drifts away as she starts imagining scenarios of being sick with a bacteria called Clostridium difficile. Her best friend, Daisy Ramirez, draws her attention to their conversation. Mychal, one of her friends, tells Aza about Russell Pickette, the local billionaire, who was about to be arrested for fraud when he disappeared. Mychal tells the group there is a bounty of 100,000 dollars for information that could lead to Russell's whereabouts. Meanwhile, Aza's paranoia grows as she thinks about people who died from C. diff, even though they presented to the emergency room with mild symptoms. She puts her hands beneath the table and peels off the bandaid on her hands. She begins making herself bleed, thinking it will purge all the bacteria she has. Aza later leaves lunch and meets her mother, the maths teacher. After school, Aza and Daisy discuss Russell and the cash reward in Harold. They decide to investigate his disappearance for the prize money. On getting to Aza's house, Daisy changes into Ms. Holmes's clothes and fishes out a boat with which she and her friend row to Russell's estate. On reaching Russell's mansion, Aza gets to work by taking footage from a camera she knew Davis and his brother set up. However, while doing so, she hears a sound. To save themselves, Daisy tells Aza to act like she got lost. A man appears and asks what she is doing, and she says she is trying to see her long-time friend, Davis. The man introduces himself as Lyle and takes Aza and Daisy to Davis. On reaching Davis, Daisy lies that Aza had a crush on him when they were younger and wanted to check up on him. After leaving the Russell mansion, Daisy tells Aza that Russell had a pet tuatara whom he gave all his fortune to should he pass away. The next day, Aza arrives at school and meets Mychal, who asks to talk to her. Thinking he was going to ask her out, Aza rejects Mychal. However, she is embarrassed when he tells her he wants to ask Daisy out. Aza tells her friend about Mychal, and though Daisy tries avoiding him, she later sets up a double date with her, Aza, Mychal, and Davis. On the date, Aza confesses to Davis what she was doing, and he gives her the 100,000 so she does not disclose any information to the authorities. Davis's lawyer, Simon, meets Aza and Daisy and helps them set up an account where they can put the money. Though Simon advises the friends to spend wisely, Aza learns that Daisy has bought a new car and laptop with which she can write her fanfic. She tries cautioning her friend, but they have a slight argument. Aza meets Davis, and they share a kiss; this makes her paranoia worsen. She heads into a bathroom to wash her mouth. She meets his brother, Noah, and they talk about Russell. Aza and Davis keep meeting, an afters having a date together, she returns home and starts thinking about C. diff after reading Daisy's story. Her paranoia grows, and she heads into her bathroom, where she gulps down hand sanitizer to kill the bacteria she thinks are inside her. Aza meets Daisy the next day, and they have a heated argument because Aza feels Daisy wrote one of her characters, Ayala, after her. As they argue, Aza fails to notice a car in front of her, and she heads into a collision and passes out. Aza wakes up in the hospital, and when she learns she will be admitted for some days, she freaks out. While in the hospital, thoughts start overwhelming her mind concerning bacteria. She then stands up and gulps on the hand sanitizer near her. Her mother tries to stop her, but she takes another sip until she pukes. Aza is then kept in the hospital longer, and her shrink, Dr. Singh, visits to ensure she takes her drugs. After two weeks at home, Aza's mental health improves, and she returns to school. She learns from Daisy that Mychal is having some of his work shown at an underground art gallery inside an unfinished drainage system off of Pogue's Run. Aza realizes it was the same drainage Russell's company was supposed to complete. While in the gallery, Aza and her friend notice a weird stench and investigate. They suspect the smell is likely from the body of Russell, and Aza tells Davis of her finding. Davis gives the information to the authorities, and they find a body. The authorities find out it is Russell Pickette. As he had given his wealth to his pet Tuatara, Davis and his brother, Nioah, leave the mansion and head to Colorado. Aza eventually reveals she wrote the entire story after being hospitalized for being too sick. Join Book Analysis for Free! Exclusive to Members Get access now Home » John Green » Turtles All the Way Down » Summary Joshua is an undying lover of literary works. With a keen sense of humor and passion for coining vague ideas into state-of-the-art worded content, he ensures he puts everything he's got into making his work stand out. With his expertise in writing, Joshua works to scrutinize pieces of literature. In middle school, John Green wrote the quintessential YA diaries in which any friends and I indulged. Ferociously consuming his books and feeding our angst and inflating their egos through Margot Roth Spiegelman and Alaska Young, or piggybacking for the love of Hazel and Augustus, the announcement of an adaptation sent us straight to theaters to see our literary parasocial relationships on the big screen. "Turtles All the Way Down" is the newest page-to-screen translation of a John Green tale, directed by Hannah Marks and scripted by two "Love, Simon" co-writers Elizabeth Berger and Isaac Aptaker. With both the novel's publication and film's release taking place years after my entry to adulthood, the persistence of Green's youthful narrative charm was in question. But "Turtles All the Way Down" is the opposite of tired, certain to find an audience in its targeted teens and tweens and delight the minds and hearts of those who may suspect themselves too old for it. Aza (Isabella Merced) is a timid teen with OCD, habitually finding herself in intrusive thought spirals concerning infection and the human microbiome, feeling like an endless Russian doll of a person, unable to find herself in the layers. Juggling her mental health alongside the grief of her late father and the angst of feeling misunderstood by her hovering though well-intentioned mother (Judy Reyes), Aza often feels drowned in her own humanity. Her best friend Daisy (Cree) is the opposite of her in every way: outgoing, witty, and perpetually unbothered, at times to the point of recklessness. When a local billionaire goes on the run to avoid pending charges, Daisy convinces Aza to sneak onto his estate in search for clues, in the hopes of snagging \$100k worth of reward money for pertinent info. When caught by security, their saving grace from a call to the cops is that Aza knows the magnate's son, Davis (Felix Mallard), from a childhood summer spent at grief camp. This reunion prompts a swift change from a childhood crush to a budding romance. But as Aza desires closeness, the expected butterflyes of anxiety are metastasized by the oppressive influence of her OCD. "Turtles All the Way Down" is on the pulse of a very present sense of youth, one marked by discussions of mental health. Marks' direction and excellent sound design, which sets Aza's thought spirals to a soundtrack of pulsing static, places us effectively into her interiority. Neither the film nor Merced's highly emotive performance pities Aza or people like her in an othering way. The proximity we're given to her inner dialogue through Merced's narration, as well as the palpable, smile-inducing chemistry of Merced and Cree's Daisy root Aza so empathetically that we, with ease, can pinpoint our own anxieties, present and remembered, amidst her shallow breaths. However, her OCD and intrusive thoughts are not defining. Equally, the film's tenderness and humor are touching and exciting in the wealth of moments that are peripheral to lapses where she's trapped in her mind. It's also undeniably relatable. Aza and Daisy spend their days waxing sarcastic on their love lives, coupon-dining at Applebee's, and driving around habitually listening to the CD stuck in the player of Aza's car, Stankonia by Outkast (a sweet moment of them rapping to "Ms. Jackson" being just one highlight in the film's colorful soundtrack, which also boasts needle drops from LCD Soundsystem, Tame Impala, and Billie Eilish). The Davis-Aza relationship is responsible for a large amount of heartwarming, kick-your-feet sweetness, but Mallard's performance struggles to match Merced's authenticity. While a handful of their one-on-one moments and preciously awkward text convos may recall your first big crush, and others your dreams of what it could've been like (unless your high school sweetheart whisked you off on a private jet to Chicago, in which case, good for you), there's simply no match for the Aza-Daisy dynamic. Through all their ups and downs, the feeling of best friendship perseveres through the film's love, lust, and bacteria. Marks' "Turtles All the Way Down" shines with John Green's trademark whimsy. It's a charming, delightful YA romance that doesn't bind itself to the sole enjoyment of its target market. "Turtles All the Way Down" will find the youth identifying and everyone else remembering. On Max now. Many things weigh on Aza Holmes, the anxious protagonist of Hannah Marks' 'Turtles All the Way Down, but none more than the existence of bacteria. Thoughts of these microorganisms — the ease with which they can infiltrate a body and the chances of infection — plague her. She worries about a wound on her left middle finger, a slit in the skin she can't let heal. Picking at the sore relieves her obsessive thought spirals, but it also activates a new round of worries about contamination, disease and the impossibility of safety. Aza, played by Isabella Merced (Madame Web) has anxiety and OCD, conditions that make the already challenging experience of high school even more difficult. Turtles All the Way Down, which Marks (Don't Make Me Go) adapted from John Green's novel of the same name, is a mostly moving portrait of how one teenager navigates her mind's unruly terrain. The film follows Aza as she grieves the death of her father, reconnects with an old friend (Ginny & Georgia's Felix Mallard), and comes to terms with how her mental health struggles impact her relationship with her mother (Judy Reyes) and closest friend Daisy (an excellent Cree). The action in Turtles All the Way Down (screenplay by Elizabeth Berger and Isaac Aptaker) kicks off with news of a fugitive billionaire. Russell Pickett, a scientist facing federal charges, has been missing for days, and police are offering a \$100,000 reward for any information on his whereabouts. During one of their regular lunch dates at Applebee's, Aza's best friend Daisy, a boisterous and witty teen who works at a Chuck E. Cheese-coded venue and writes Star Wars fan fiction, plots a way to get the cash. She reminds her friend that they are not the kind of people who can afford to turn up their noses at money. (It's one of only a few moments where Turtles All the Way Down does more than gesture at deeper class politics.) Remembering that Aza spent a summer with Pickett's son, Davis (Mallard), at a retreat for grieving children (aka "sad camp"), Daisy urges her friend to rack her brain for useful memories about the family. When Aza recalls a random camera on the Picketts' property, the Indianapolis teens embark on an investigation. Despite Aza's namesake (her last name is Holmes), Turtles All the Way Down is only vaguely concerned with the instigating mystery. The brainy teenager quickly abandons her detective role after a member of Pickett's security team catches her and Daisy trespassing. He shuttles the pair to the mansion, where Davis and his younger brother Noah (Miles Ekhardt) live seemingly without any real adult supervision. (Their mother died years ago.) It only takes a few smiles and one longing look for Davis and Aza to rekindle their relationship. The pair hang out every day and their texts buzz with a familiar adolescent urgency and frequency. Aza wonders if she might be able to have a life that resembles, in her words, that of "normal people." But the obsessive thoughts never stay quiet for long enough. They hum in the background of her budding relationship with Davis, whose character struggles to escape the one-dimensionality of the Boy Next Door prototype. Mallard sheds the downbeat misanthropy of his character in Ginny & Georgia for a more sensitive and nurturing posture here, but despite the actor's best efforts and real chemistry with Merced, Davis is essentially a one-note character. We know he appreciates art and attends private school, but the emotional texture of his life falls comparatively flat to Aza's. This plagues the central love story, which, although quite tender at times, runs almost exclusively on a cursory kind of sweetness. Marks is more interested in Aza's interiority. When the director leans into the push and pull of Aza's diagnoses, she sheds the obligatory stiff direction of many young adult romances and taps into more experimental impulses. Fast cuts (editing by Andrea Bottigliero) and interstitials of mutating bacterial colonies clash with the cacophony of Aza's inner voices to reflect the teenager's claustrophobic reality. In these moments, Ian Hultquist's often brooding score feels most at home, complementing Season Kent's melancholic pop selections featuring artists like Bigg Piig and Billie Eilish. Merced's fine performance anchors the uneasy mood in a deeply empathetic character. Conversations between Aza and her psychiatrist (Poorna Jagannathan) help us better understand the push and pull of the teenager's condition. The resolute doctor urges Aza to take her medication, talk more about her father's death and take therapy seriously. But Aza is resistant and, at one point, confesses that the pills make her feel too subdued. These sessions give the teen's later attempts to cleanse herself by swallowing hand sanitizer a poignant desperation. Merced's performance hits its stride in these scenes, as well as when Aza navigates difficult confrontations with her mother and Daisy. A particularly challenging argument with the latter makes for some of the movie's most stirring moments. Merced and Cree's natural chemistry, affirmed early on through montages of their characters grooving to Outkast, draws us into this friendship and keeps us invested through the highs and lows. What a shame that we don't get to experience even more of Aza and Daisy, whose conversations capture many of the lessons Turtles All the Way Down has to offer. It's through this relationship — above all others — that Aza wakes up to the ways pining for a "normal" life has kept her from being present for her own. Table of Contents What is Turtles All the Way Down about? This book explores the life of Aza Holmes, a teenager grappling with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and anxiety. When a billionaire goes missing, Aza and her friend Daisy aim to find him, revealing themes of love, friendship, and mental health. Book Details Title: Turtles All the Way Down Author: John Green Pages: 290 Genres: Young Adult, Fiction, Contemporary, Mental Health, Romance Publish Date: October 10, 2017 Ratings: 3.89 (over 86,000 ratings) Synopsis of Turtles All the Way DownSetting the Stage "Turtles All the Way Down" is a poignant novel by John Green. It revolves around Aza Holmes, a teenage girl navigating life in Indianapolis while dealing with mental health issues. Aza's world is one where anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder shape her reality. In this novel, Aza's life takes a turn when her best friend, Daisy, insists they investigate the disappearance of Russell Pickett, a billionaire fugitive. A reward of \$100,000 is up for grabs, which motivates Daisy more than Aza. Ultimately, Aza's spiraling thoughts become both her greatest challenge and her lens to view the events around her. Aza's Inner Struggles Aza tries to fit in and be a good friend, daughter, and student. However, her mental health issues cloud her judgment and experiences. Her thoughts spiral out of control, leading her to struggle with everyday activities. John Green vividly portrays this "tightening spiral" of invasive thoughts that seems to suffocate her at times. This aspect of the novel provides a compelling insight into the life of someone combating mental illness. Despite these struggles, Aza's journey reflects her determination to connect with those around her. Throughout the book, readers witness Aza's grapple with her inner demons. One notable moment reveals her immense fear of social interactions, particularly regarding her budding feelings for Davis, the missing billionaire's son. In a heart-wrenching exploration, Aza often asks herself if she even deserves love or happiness. The way Green illustrates her mental labyrinth is raw and real, making it easy for readers to empathize with her plight. The Search for Connection While Aza focuses on trying to locate Davis's missing father, she uncovers deeper connections along the way. Her relationship with Davis highlights the harsh realities of mental illness juxtaposed with young love. Their conversations are filled with philosophical ponderings but also reflect genuine care. Aza's struggle with anxiety complicates her feelings for Davis and vice versa. Davis, who lives in the shadow of his father's wealth and disappearance, finds solace in Aza's understanding. Daisy, Aza's loyal friend, provides comic relief amidst emotional turbulence. However, their friendship faces tests, as Daisy's determination to find Russell sometimes overshadows Aza's needs. The complexity of friendship is central to the story, helping illustrate the fears and pressures young people often face. Daisy's motivations are understandable, but they often lead to friction and conflict. Aza's dependency on Daisy also shows the strains of friendship when navigating trauma together. Dissecting Themes of Mental Illness Green tackles mental illness with authenticity, making it a central character in Aza's narrative. The novel presents a powerful representation of what living with OCD and anxiety is like. Aza's reflections, such as "I am not my thoughts," delve into self-identity amid chaos. Readers witness her struggle to find balance even when it feels like everything is spiraling out of control. The book touches on themes of familial relationships and self-acceptance, offering insight into how mental health can strain connections. Aza's relationship with her mom is both a refuge and a point of frustration. Aza's mom tries to reach out, balancing the line between guidance and letting Aza navigate her own journey. As Aza unearths layers about herself and the people around her, the search for meaning becomes all the more significant. The conversations throughout the novel reveal humanity's complexities and the necessity of connection, foreshadowing a message of resilience against the backdrop of turmoil. Conclusions and Connections "Turtles All the Way Down" culminates in a narrative not just about a search for a missing person, but also a search for self. Aza's growth signifies an understanding that life continues amidst chaos. John Green's ability to present emotional and mental struggles paints a thoughtful narrative. The novel beautifully illustrates the importance of relationships in the face of personal battles. Green's poignant storytelling unveils life's layered struggles, showcasing that every individual carries their own weight. This book resonates deeply with many readers, particularly those familiar with anxiety and OCD. While the mystery plotline may not be the main focus, the exploration of love, friendship, and personal trials underscores its significance. "Turtles All the Way Down" is a raw and sincere examination of love and friendship, making it a must-read for anyone yearning for authentic representation and emotional depth. From here you can jump to the Spoilers section right away. Below you can search for another book summary: Alternative Book Cover How do you find this alternative cover we've created? Quotes "Your now is not your forever."—"John Green,Turtles All the Way Down "We never really talked much or even looked at each other, but it didn't matter because we were looking at the same sky together, which is maybe even more intimate than eye contact anyway. I mean, anybody can look at you. It's quite rare to find someone who sees the same world you see."—"John Green,Turtles All the Way Down "You're both the fire and the water that extinguishes it. You're the narrator, the protagonist, and the sidekick. You're the storyteller and the story told. You are somebody's something, but you are also your you."—"John Green,Turtles All the Way Down You want to give Turtles All the Way Down a try? Here you go! Characters Aza Holmes: The protagonist dealing with OCD and anxiety, she struggles to connect with others while her inner thoughts spiral out of control. Daisy Ramirez: Aza's best friend, adventurous and eager, she pushes Aza to investigate the missing billionaire. Davis Pickett: The son of the missing billionaire, he's grappling with his father's disappearance while developing a relationship with Aza. Russell Pickett: The missing billionaire whose disappearance triggers the investigation and affects multiple lives. Noah Pickett: Davis's younger brother, who deals with the fallout of his father's absence along with Aza and Daisy. Key Takeaways Mental Health Representation: The book addresses OCD and anxiety, conveying their challenges authentically. Complex Relationships: It explores friendships and familial bonds under pressure from mental illness. Coming-of-Age Themes: Aza's journey reflects the difficulties of identity, love, and self-acceptance. Intricate Writing: John Green's prose often delves into philosophical musings and introspections. Emphasis on Resilience: The characters demonstrate perseverance amid struggles, showcasing intrinsic strength. Spoilers Spoiler Alert! If you want to read the book, don't click "Show more" and spoil your experience. Here is a link for you to get the book. Aza's Relationship with Davis: They grow closer, but Aza's mental health issues strain their bond. The Twist with Russell Pickett: His disappearance leads to unsettling discoveries about wealth and privilege. Aza's Acceptance: Throughout the book, Aza learns to cope with her mental illness and finds a path forward. Ending Insight: While unresolved, the ending offers hope, reinforcing that healing is a journey, not a destination. Let us know what you think about this book and the summary in the comment section at the end of the page. FAQs about Turtles All the Way Down Turtles All the Way Down is primarily aimed at young adult readers, but its themes appeal to all ages. Yes, John Green, who has OCD, writes from personal experience, providing a genuine depiction of mental illness.It emphasizes the importance of support, understanding, and communication in friendships, especially when one struggles with mental health.Yes, Aza's romance with Davis is significant but treated with realism given her struggles with anxiety.The book is approximately 290 pages long, making it a suitable read for young adults and teens. Reviews For a deeper look into Turtles All the Way Down and its reception, check out our full review. Discover what readers are saying about the themes of love, resilience, and mental health. Are you looking for a nice read that perfectly fits your current mood? Here is a free book suggestion tool. It gives you suggestions based on your taste. Also a likelihood rating for each recommended book. Would you like to find the book you will love later or now? John Green is a renowned author known for capturing the essence of youth through his poignant themes. His earlier works include popular novels like The Fault in Our Stars and Looking for Alaska, cementing his impact on young adult literature. Are you looking for a nice read that perfectly fits your current mood? Here is a free book suggestion tool. It gives you suggestions based on your taste. Also a likelihood rating for each recommended book. Would you like to find the book you will love later or now? Conclusion We hope you found this synopsis of Turtles All the Way Down engaging. Summaries can give a glimpse, but the full experience awaits in the book itself. Want to explore deeper? Check out the link to buy Turtles All the Way Down here. DISCLAIMER: This book summary is meant as a summary and analysis and not a replacement for the original work. If you are the original author of any book on our website and want us to remove it, please contact us. Synopsis Turtles All the Way Down tackles anxiety through its 17-year-old protagonist, Aza Holmes. It's not easy being Aza, but she's trying... trying to be a good daughter, a good friend, and a good student, all while navigating an endless barrage of invasive, obsessive thoughts that she cannot control. When she reconnects with Davis, her childhood crush, Aza is confronted with fundamental questions about her potential for love, happiness, friendship, and hope. Director Hannah Marks Producer Wyck Godfrey, Marty Bowen, Isaac Klausner Screenwriter Elizabeth Berger, Isaac Aptaker Distributor Max Production Co New Line Cinema, Temple Hill Entertainment Rating PG-13 Genre Drama, Romance Original Language English Release Date (Streaming) May 2, 2024 Runtime 1h 51m