

SCRIPT COVERAGE SAMPLE

TITLE: *The Fault in Our Stars*

FORMAT: Screenplay

AUTHORS: Scott Neustadter &
Michael H. Weber

PAGES: 115

TIME: Present

LOCATION: Indianapolis & Amsterdam

GENRE: Drama/Comedy

ANALYST: Whitney Milam

LOG LINE: A sixteen-year-old girl with cancer sets out to meet the mysterious author of her favorite book and falls in love in the process.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Witty, precocious HAZEL GRACE LANCASTER (16) hasn't had much hope for the future since she was diagnosed with lung cancer at age twelve. But when she meets the gorgeous, charismatic AUGUSTUS WATERS (17) at a support group meeting, their friendship and eventual romance transform her life. As the two of them journey to Amsterdam and back again in pursuit of answers from the mysterious author of their favorite book, they must come to terms with their shared mortality when Augustus's own cancer returns.

SYNOPSIS:

HAZEL lies looking up at the stars as romantic scenes between an idealized version of her and a handsome boy we will soon know as AUGUSTUS flash onscreen. Hazel's voiceover informs us that there are two ways to tell stories: the sugarcoated version found in romance novels or movies, and the truth. This, we are told as the idyllic scenes fade into a bright hospital room, is the truth. We quickly discover that Hazel has been living with lung cancer since a miraculous treatment saved her life when she was twelve, and now her doctor and loving parents are concerned that she's depressed. They recommend that Hazel attend a teen cancer support group, and she does so with her typical dry humor. There, she's introduced to seventeen-year-old Augustus Waters (called 'Gus') who is accompanying his and Hazel's mutual friend ISAIAH to support group although his own cancer has been in remission for years.

Hazel is immediately intrigued by Gus's bold charm and convictions about living an extraordinary life. As the two of them discover they share some philosophical

common ground and begin to hang out outside of support group—their mutual attraction evident—she introduces him to her favorite book, “An Imperial Affliction” by PETER VAN HOUTEN (a well-known writer whom no one has heard from in years). Both of them become immersed in the world of the book, relating to its unique perspective on sickness and wondering about its unsolved mysteries, and Gus becomes determined to use his remaining Make-a-Wish Foundation wish to fly them both to Amsterdam in order to seek out answers from the elusive Mr. Van Houten himself.

The plan has a few underlying difficulties. For one, Hazel struggles with the knowledge that growing close to Gus will only make her inevitable death more destructive, and is conflicted about acting on their attraction. Gus seems to have some hidden tensions of his own as Hazel accidentally overhears an ominous shouting match between him and his parents. And finally, an intense relapse scare soon before they plan to leave ensures Hazel’s doctor strongly recommends against the trip, warning that she risks increased health problems by traveling. In spite of all this, their trip begins smoothly, with a dream-like date night in Amsterdam and a meeting arranged at Van Houten’s home. After the author turns out to be a rude, crushing, alcoholic disappointment, Hazel and Gus share a passionate night of ‘you-and-me-against-the-world’ love-making, but the next morning, he finally tells her his devastating secret: his cancer has returned, and his doctors have informed him that he doesn’t have long to live.

Upon returning to Indianapolis, Gus and Hazel’s roles are reversed as she stays strong and he grows increasingly weaker. The two of them approach the ramifications of Gus’s illness with insight and humor—even staging a fake funeral with Isaiah and Hazel reading out eulogies—but eventually Hazel gets the call that Gus has passed away. When Van Houten makes a surprise appearance at the funeral, he reveals the dark past that has embittered him—his teenage daughter, the inspiration for the main character of his book, died of cancer and reminds him of Hazel. He gives Hazel a letter and *Imperial Affliction* sequel that Gus left for her. As she reads it, revisiting memories of the two of them in the process, Gus’s voice brings closure new perspective on what makes life worth living.

COMMENTS:

Conceptually, *The Fault in Our Stars* may seem hard to sell: ‘teenagers with cancer’ is an inherently dark and somewhat overdone topic, and the emotional core of the story rests on the performance of a sixteen-year-old girl. However, the script’s masterful handling of its heavy subject matter is surprisingly funny and self-aware. Hazel’s story feels fresh and unique, and is ultimately heartbreaking without resorting to emotional manipulation or cliché. *The Fault in Our Stars* is a timeless, well-constructed story with the potential for enduring, broad appeal.

Hazel Grace Lancaster is a compelling protagonist, with a voice that's both charming and believable, and Augustus Waters is a strongly characterized, well-rounded counterpart. Their dynamic feels genuine, organic, and full of life, beautifully juxtaposing the awkwardness and tenderness of first love against the very adult concerns of children living with—and dying from—cancer. The heart of the story is Hazel's journey and emotional transformation, so the effectiveness of the film depends on finding a young actress capable of handling such a complex and demanding role.

Dialogue and humor are two of the script's biggest strengths. The many quick, witty exchanges between Hazel and Gus are an entertaining highlight, and some of their running jokes propel the story forward in unexpected and engaging ways. There is depth and subtext to their interactions, which remain riveting in both comedic and dramatic situations.

The plot itself builds to several surprising climaxes—in light of the inevitable tragic outcome of cancer, the reader is never certain which new twist or scare will turn deadly. It's important to note that the script's cancer elements never diminish the appeal of the romance at its center, but in fact only make it more moving in a tightly plotted blend of humor and tragedy.

The Fault in Our Stars comes with already-established mass appeal, as it's adapted from the recent #1 New York Times bestselling book by the wildly popular John Green. A *Fault in Our Stars* film adaptation would appeal to this existing audience of mostly teens and young adults, but also—like *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* or *Juno*—has the potential for even more widespread success.

RECOMMENDATION: CONSIDER