Chapter 1 Quotes:

1. *I went to Support Group for the same reason that I’d once allowed nurses with a mere eighteen months of graduate education to poison me with exotically named chemicals: I wanted to make my parents happy.* (1.28) What does this quote say about Hazel’s relationship with her parents? How is it similar to the relationship all teenagers have with their parents and how is it different considering Hazel’s medical condition? What does Hazel want for her parents? Does she get it at the end?

Chapter 2

2. *“Don’t tell me you’re one of those people who becomes their disease.”* (2.70) Who says this in the novel and why? Is it possible for someone who lives with a chronic or life threatening disease to separate oneself from that disease? Do Hazel, Augustus, and Isaac identify completely with cancer? Explain.

Chapter 3

3. *“But three years removed from proper full-time school and exposure to my peers, I felt a certain unbridgeable distance between us. I think my school friends wanted to help me through my cancer, but they eventually found out that they couldn’t.”* (3.61) Are Hazel's old friends to blame for this? Should healthy young people be expected to understand what their cancer friends are going through?

4. How has Hazel’s interaction with Kaitlyn changed over the years?

Chapter 4

5. *Cancer kids are essentially side effects of the relentless mutation that makes the diversity of life on earth possible.* (4.4) Instead of thinking of herself as an individual, Hazel finds it more comforting to think of herself as part of a big scheme in the universe. How does this affect the way she thinks about her identity?

Chapter 5

6. *“And okay, fair enough, but there is this unwritten contract between author and reader and I think not ending your book kind of violates that contract.”*

   “I don’t know,” I said, feeling defensive of Peter Van Houten. “That’s part of what I like about the book in some ways. It portrays death truthfully. You die in the middle of your life, in the middle of a sentence.”

   How is the interest of Hazel and August in *An Imperial Affliction* a symbol for their own lives and life in general? Why are they so concerned with learning how things end for the other characters in the novel? Why is it particularly difficult for Augustus to accept that life might end mid-sentence?
Chapter 6

7. "I'm a grenade," I said again. "I just want to stay away from people and read books and think" (6.72)

"You are not a grenade, not to us. Thinking about you dying makes us sad, Hazel, but you are not a grenade. You are amazing. You can't know, sweetie, because you've never had a baby become a brilliant young reader with a side interest in horrible television shows" (6.98)

Hazel’s all about not hurting other people—even when it hurts her. She wants to be as passive as possible in order to not be responsible for any pain. Is this courageous? Or just silly? What does her father’s response in the second quote say about her “plan” to spare them pain?

8. When Augustus dies, does Hazel see him as a grenade that destroyed her life?

Chapter 7

9. The only solution was to try to unmake the world, to make it black and silent and uninhabited again, to return to the moment before the Big Bang, in the beginning when there was the Word, and to live in that vacuous space alone with the Word. (7.3)

When does Hazel think this? How well do you think this works in terms of regulating pain? Do you think she thinks these big thoughts because she's contemplating her mortality? Or is she just a deep kid through and through?

Chapter 8

10. Dr. Maria shrugged. "It would increase some risks," she acknowledged, but then turned to me and said, "But it's your life." (8.20) Is it really Hazel's life? How much control does she have over her own existence? Do little choices like this make her feel more in control?

11. I tried to tell myself that it could be worse, that the world was not a wish-granting factory, that I was living with cancer not dying of it, that I mustn't let it kill me before it kills me (8.41)

Hazel doesn’t want to let cancer rule her life. And we have to say, once she meets Augustus, she does a pretty good job of letting go and making things happen.

Chapter 11

12. "If you don't live a life in service of a greater good, you've gotta at least die a death in service of a greater good, you know? And I fear that I won't get either a life or a death that means anything." (11.97) Augustus feels like he has a responsibility to make something of himself before he dies—for the sake of the universe. That's a lot of pressure. Comment on his feelings. Do you agree? What “responsibility” do you feel you have? What should people strive to do with their lives before they die?

13. Augustus is always convinced that he's going to have some heroic moment in his life—does it happen?

Chapter 21

14. Augustus Waters died eight days after his prefuneral, at Memorial, in the ICU, when the cancer, which was made of him, finally stopped his heart, which was also made of him. (21.1) Hazel and Augustus spent a lot of time contemplating their mortality. But was Hazel prepared for this moment?