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Paper Towns

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Green, John. *Paper Towns*. New York: Dutton Books, 2008. PZ7.G8233Pap 2008.

“I mean, just so you know, it’s not that I am oh-so-upset about Jason. Or Becca. Or even Lacey, although I actually liked her. But it was the last string. It was a lame string, for sure, but it was the one I had left, and every paper girl needs at least one string, right?”— page 58

Quentin Jacobsen and Margo Roth Spiegelman have been neighbors since the age of two. Although they sometimes played together while growing up and Quentin has certainly developed a fascination with Margo over the years, the two do not socialize much in high school. And that is why, one night near the end of their senior year, Quentin is surprised to see Margo climbing through his bedroom window.

If high school rumors are to be believed, Margo is constantly searching for excitement. According to gossip she spent three days training on the trapeze with the circus, she wheedled her way backstage at a concert before ultimately turning down the bassist of the band, and she learned to play guitar from a stranger in Mississippi. The night Margo crawls through Quentin’s window is no different: she convinces him to accompany her on an eleven-part adventure across the city of Orlando.

Initially, Quentin is nervous about assisting with Margo’s plans but he soon begins to enjoy the exploits; at the end of the night, he goes to bed hopeful that the shared adventure may transform his friendship with Margo. When Margo misses school the next day, Quentin isn’t worried; everyone knows that she disappears sometimes. But when Margo misses school again the next day, and is absent the day after that, he does become concerned. Then Quentin finds the first clue – a clue Margo must have left for him.

John Green, author of *The Fault in Our Stars*, creates in *Paper Towns* an ordinary friendship – the kind that has slowly become more of an acquaintanceship – and through it shows that an idea is never exactly like that which it represents, especially when what it represents is another person. Margo is archetypically self-centered and unattainable; Quentin is archetypically nerdy, uptight, and in love with a self-centered and unattainable girl. But through the careful deconstruction of Quentin, Margo, and a few of their friends, *Paper Towns* underscores the difficulty of truly knowing oneself as well as the inability to genuinely know another and reveals how lives can be entwined and interlaced in beautiful, unusual, and often painful ways.