



# An Abundance of Katherines

by John Green

## Supplies

- Paper
- Pens
- Nametags
- Butcher paper or white board
- Markers
- *A Missing Piece* by Shel Silverstein

## Entering Activities/Options

### 10 – 30 minutes

- 1. Nametag Anagram:** (5 minutes) An anagram is a word or phrase or name formed by rearranging letters of another word. Create as many anagrams as you can of your name. Choose one and put it on your name tag with your real name underneath the anagram.
- 2. Interviews:** (5 minutes) In partners, have students answer similar questions to the four questions Hollis asks Colin, Hassan, and Lindsay to use as interview questions:
  - “Where would you live if you could live anywhere?”<sup>1</sup>
  - What would you do for a living if you could do anything?
  - Why did you family/ancestors move to (name of your town or church)?
  - What is special about (name of your town or church)?
- 3. A Missing Piece:** (10 minutes) The book, *A Missing Piece*, is referenced many times. Read *A Missing Piece* by Shel Silverstein. Ask the following questions:
  - When Colin and his father first read and discuss the book together, Colin’s dad thinks, “The prodigy could read but he could not see?”<sup>2</sup> What does his father mean by this? Do you feel that this statement sets us up to understand that Colin will struggle to become a genius?
  - “Do you sometimes feel like a circle missing a piece?”<sup>3</sup> How?
  - Later in the book Colin says, “I don’t think your missing pieces ever fit inside you again once they go missing.”<sup>4</sup> What does he mean by this?

1 Green, John. *An Abundance of Katherines*. (United States: The Penguin Group (USA) Inc, 2006), 27. (New York: Gallery Books, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc. 1999). 101.  
2 Green. 19.  
3 Green. 19.  
4 Green. 201.

4. **Tell a Story/Imagine a Situation:** (10 minutes) Have students break into groups of five to ten people per group. Assign each group one of the following words: abundance, prodigy, genius, relationships. With their group, have students create as many anagrams from the word as possible. Then, have students “Imagine a Situation”<sup>5</sup> like Colin and Katherine do in the book, where they use an anagram and the original word to tell a story. Assign one person in each group to start. They should create a beginning of the situation and share a sentence or two. The next person in the group adds on to the story, and so on, until the story is complete.

## Book Discussion

### 30 – 45 minutes

- What is the difference between prodigy and genius? “*Prodigies learn; geniuses do.*”<sup>6</sup> Why doesn’t Colin consider himself a genius?
- Repeatedly, Colin says or thinks, “I want to matter.”<sup>7</sup> What does he mean by this? In what ways does Colin try to matter? Do you ever feel that way? When Colin joins Lindsay in the cave, Lindsay says, “How you matter is defined by the things that matter to you. You matter as much as the things that matter to you do. And I got so backwards, trying to make myself matter to him. All this time, there were real things to care about: real, good people who care about me, and this place.”<sup>8</sup> Do you feel as if this statement is true? Have you ever tried to matter to others, and therefore, ignored what really matters? Share.
- Why does Colin think girls should always make the first move? (“... *they are, on the whole, less likely to be rejected than guys, and that way, girls never get kissed unless they want to be kissed.*”<sup>9</sup>) Do you agree or disagree with this theory? Why?
- Why did Colin and Hassan feel the need to go on the pig hunt? What were they trying to prove? Why did Lindsay teach Colin to hunt? How was Colin feeling? (page 159) Was hunting pigs so hard? What did Colin and Hassan actually do? (page 161) Is the pig hunt a symbol for anything else? What? What did Colin and Hassan find? (page 159)
- Colin thinks, “Hassan takes so little seriously.”<sup>10</sup> How is this a defining characteristic of Hassan? How does it help him cope with situations like catching his girlfriend cheating on him?

5 Green. 39.

6 Green. 10.

7 Green. 11.

8 Green. 200-201.

9 Green. 76.

10 Green. 173.

- *Dingleberries* was the code word between Colin and Hassan when one of them didn't want to hear what the other had to say. Why did Hassan put a "blanket dingleberries"<sup>11</sup> on psychoanalysis? What was he really upset about?
- This story is about two boys coming of age, and discovering how to do something with their lives. What events take place throughout the book to help them decide to do something? Which of Hassan's behaviors does he recognize were ways of "not-doing?"<sup>12</sup> What is his first act of doing?
- What do you think Colin, Hassan, and Lindsey hoped to find in Memphis? What did they find instead? How do you think this revelation helped each of their relationships? (page 190) Why did Colin feel this was "a secret best kept"<sup>13</sup>?
- Colin and Lindsay both admit they know who is buried in Franz Ferdinand's tomb. Why do you think Lindsay's grandfather insisted on it? Was he doing it to be remembered? How do you want to be remembered? How can you ensure that you are remembered by others? What do you think the quote on the tombstone, "*Lie lightly upon him earth, tho' he laid many a heavy burden upon thee,*"<sup>14</sup> means?
- Lindsey insinuates that stories are like constellations. How? How is Colin like a constellation? (page 202) Why is it so important to record our stories? ("*. . . because they'll tell stories that time has swallowed up or distorted.*"<sup>15</sup>) How else can we continue to share important events that take place around us?
- Through pages 203–209, you read a description of each of the Katherines. What moral of the story does Colin provide after sharing his story of each Katherine? (page 209) What really happened with Katherine III? What did Colin remember? How was it different from the truth? Why do you think Colin suppressed the memory?
- Lindsey and Colin think the people "you really like" are "the people you can think out loud in front of. The people who've been in your secret hiding places. The people you bite your thumb in front of."<sup>16</sup> Do you have relationships or friends that you can do this with? Do you feel this is an accurate statement about true friendships? Why or why not? Do you have relationships with people who aren't like this? What holds you back from sharing your true self with them?
- The last spoken words in this book are "We could just keep going."<sup>17</sup> What realization had Colin experienced, along with the other characters, that affirm that it is okay to keep going, to keep evolving, to keep changing?

11 Green. 186.

12 Green. 196.

13 Green. 195.

14 Green. 49.

15 Green. 202.

16 Green. 208.

17 Green. 215.

## Faith Factor

### 20 – 30 minutes

Throughout the book, Colin and Hassan discuss faith. Hassan is a Muslim. Colin is an Atheist. How does faith play into their relationship and who they are?

- Colin says to Hassan, “How very odd, to believe God gave you life, and yet not think that life asks more of you than watching TV.”<sup>18</sup> What do you think God asks of us? Read Genesis 12:2–3. What does this scripture say God expects of us?
- Hassan says, “I don’t think God gives a shit if we have a dog or if a woman wears shorts. I think He gives a shit about whether you’re a good person.”<sup>19</sup> What do you think God cares about? Read Matthew 22:35–40. Does this scripture verify what Hassan thinks God cares about? What you think God cares about?
- Colin asks Hassan to pray quieter, and says, “Shouldn’t God be able to hear you even if you whisper?”<sup>20</sup> What do you think about this question? Does how we pray matter to God?
- Colin used the Golden Rule to justify telling Lindsey about TOC cheating on her. Though the Golden Rule is not called *The Golden Rule* in the Bible, in Matthew 7:12, we find a similar statement. Read Matthew 7:12. Does this always apply? If not, share an example of when it does not apply?
- Hassan’s response, “The whole world is turned upside down. I love it. It’s like we’re in a snow globe and God decided he wanted to see a blizzard so he shook us all the fug up.”<sup>21</sup> How do you feel about this statement about God? Do you believe that God shakes things up sometimes? Why or why not?
- Ask students to work in pairs to create a prayer that Hassan and Colin might write based on the events that took place in Gutshot and based on their beliefs about God. Share the prayers with the group.

## Closing Prayer

### 1 minute

*God, help us to remember what matters most, loving You, loving neighbor, and loving ourselves. Help us to live our lives in a way that matters. Amen.*

Written by: Shannon Guse Edited by: Gina Yeager-Buckley

18 Green. 33.  
19 Green. 87.  
20 Green. 115.  
21 Green. 166.