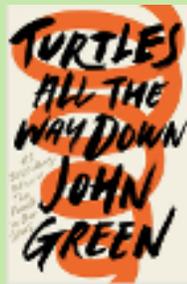




## Literature: John Green

**John Green (1977 - )** is a skilled author well known for his bestselling novels *Looking for Alaska*, *An Abundance of Katherines*, *Paper Towns*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, and *Turtles All the Way Down*. He is also the co-creator of the YouTube channel *Crash Course* which aims to educate people on a variety of subjects. In 2000, Green graduated from Kenyon College with a double major in English and religious studies. Green is the 2006 recipient of the Michael L. Printz Award, and a 2009 Edgar Award winner. Green also has obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). He weaves this aspect of his life into his semi-autobiographical novel *Turtles All the Way Down* to illustrate the struggles that people with mental illness can face. The novel is centered around Aza Holmes who is 16 years old and, similarly to Green himself, has OCD. She often feels paralyzed by her spiraling of intrusive thoughts which severely restrict her ability to function. Aza has an obsession over a callus on her finger and compulsively treats it in order to cope with her anxiety. Throughout the story, her life is disrupted by her pervasive ruminations over various deadly bacteria, to the point where she drinks hand sanitizer in an attempt to rid her own body of any pathogens. The story itself details Aza's search for Russell Pickett, a billionaire who has gone missing. During her investigation, Aza develops a romantic relationship with Pickett's son, Davis. Their relationship is hindered, however, by Aza's anxiety. By the end of the novel, Aza finds Russell Pickett as well as how to accept herself and see herself outside of her anxious thoughts and actions. In *Turtles All the Way Down*, Green portrays one individual's experience living with mental illness, coping with it, and ultimately overcoming it. He also shares the message that mental illness is not just a struggle for the individuals who have it, but also for those who care about them. I highly recommend reading this book or any of John Green's other novels! Explore more about John Green's work here: <https://www.johngreenbooks.com/>



\*by **Chloe Cheung**

## Literature



**Sabrina Benaim (1987-)** is one of the most viewed slam poets of all time, a writer, and a performance artist. Born in Toronto, Canada, she later ended up on the championship-winning 2014 Toronto Poetry Slam Team and was a coach in 2016. Benaim first went viral for her reading of "Explaining My Depression to My Mother" on the Button Poetry youtube channel, a popular slam poetry organization, which captured her struggles with mental illness in a heart wrenching and yet uplifting way. The way she speaks about her mental illness in her poetry, with honesty, hope, and a little bit of humor, has

captivated listeners all over the world who relate to her challenges and find motivation in her messages. After she began gaining attention, Benaim went on to tour live shows in places like the UK and Canada and write for reputable groups like the ESPNW and the Government of Canada. She represented Toronto at the Women Of The World Poetry Slam in 2015, since one of her core goals with her poetry is to spread her message of "women helping women", in addition to breaking down the stigma around mental illness. She published her debut poetry collection "Depression & Other Magic Tricks" in 2017 that delves into the themes of mental health, love, and family. As fellow slam poet Andrea Gibson puts, "I read this book on a day I couldn't get out of bed and it made me feel like I had a friend in the world...Simply put, this book disappears loneliness." Benaim hasn't had an easy journey, and the poetry she wrote to capture her pain in words not only helped her find purpose, but so many others who have read or listened to her poetry who are struggling with their own minds and hearts. Listen to the poem that launched her on this path at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqu4ezLQEUA>.

\*by **Angeni Lieben**

## Athletics



**Naomi Osaka** is one of the premier women's tennis players in the world today known for using her competition and platform to advocate for mental health and social justice. She broke the barrier of stigma surrounding mental health and sports when she dropped out of Wimbledon to protect her mental health. The relentless scrutiny that athletes face took a heavy toll on her psyche. After she was threatened with fines and disqualification from competition for refusing to participate in press conferences due to mental health,

she called out the press and coordinators of competitions for not respecting the mental health of athletes. She was the first to speak out on the world stage about athlete's mental health and opened the doors to more honest conversation regarding mental health and athletics before the Tokyo Olympics.

\* by **Maia Drasin**

## Trivia



What is the color of the ribbon representing mental health awareness?

*The answer green!*

# Opinion

By Samantha Lee

We've all heard it before: break the stigma. Yet, as much as we love to throw around this trite phrase, very few people actually follow through. By calling yourself bipolar, OCD, or schizophrenic, you, individually, are helping perpetuate the myth that mental illnesses are something to be downplayed. By using suicide as the punchline in a joke or equating PTSD to an embarrassing moment, you, blatantly and inarguably, are harming anyone who is actually struggling with their mental health.

I wasn't surprised when one of my friends jokingly called someone "so OCD." I know that she is a good person and so attributed it to ignorance and decided to try to teach her about how Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is an actual condition, not an adjective to be trivialized or down-played by using it as slang for "neat". I was surprised, though, when she cattily responded "I don't care." I was even more shocked when everyone else in the class laughed along with her. Because what no one in that room knew is that I was trying very hard at that moment not to plummet into my own OCD spiral. Hearing everyone in that room proclaim how little they recognize my and anyone else's struggles with OCD had a detrimental effect on my mental state. It set me back, and caused me my brain to go into overdrive and perform more compulsions than usual. It made me temporarily question what the point was in resisting if, as everyone had suggested, OCD wasn't truly a real issue. Without the support that I am very lucky to have or in a more extreme case of OCD, a comment like that could have been enough for someone to kill themselves (and I am not in anyway being melodramatic when I say that).

I wrote one of my UC essays about my struggles with mental health and "breaking the stigma." The people in my life suggested that maybe this wasn't the best idea and quite honestly, this made me very angry. It's true that they were just trying to look out for my best interests when suggesting that colleges wouldn't want someone who presents as "fragile" but the thing that people don't realize is that everyone battling some form of anxiety, or depression, or mood disorder is incredibly strong and resilient. It takes extra energy everyday not to give up and we, as decent human beings, are responsible for supporting them in their struggles and not tearing them down.

I know that it can be uncomfortable for us to evaluate ourselves and reflect upon how we may be negatively impacting those around us but it is much, much worse to say and change nothing. You never know what someone is going through and you never know how what you say will affect them. There is this idea ingrained in American culture that we are each responsible for our own state of mind. I challenge everyone to question this, and, instead, take responsibility for their words which may be harming those around them.

## Science

**Dorothea Dix (1802- 1887)** spearheaded the reform of asylums and the treatment of mentally ill individuals early in American history. Dix herself had a hard childhood in Maine as she was neglected by her parents and most likely had depression. But Dix kept her compassion and resolve and grew to be a schoolteacher and a proficient writer. Thanks to her reputation and status, Dix was able to mingle with the top intellectuals of the period, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, who later convinced her to take a trip to Europe when she hit rock bottom in her physical and mental health. There, Dix met asylum and prison reformers and first dedicated herself to the cause. In the 1840s back at her home in Massachusetts, Dix began investigating the appalling treatment of the mentally ill, who were often degraded and abused for their behaviors. She had traveled more than 10,000 miles and visited hundreds of facilities, from hospitals to jails, by 1845. Dix wrote a famous memorial to the state of Massachusetts exposing her disturbing observations and lobbied politicians to pass legislation regulating psychiatric treatment. Dix advocated for "moral treatment", a model first developed by French psychiatrist Philippe Pinel that was already being implemented in hospitals such as York Retreat in England. The simple and yet revolutionary idea of this treatment was to treat patients with kindness and dignity, including implementing recreation time, check-in conversations, and spacious living conditions. Dix's efforts led to the founding



and expansion of more than 30 hospitals dedicated to providing this sort of treatment. Fast-forwarding into the future, scientists and healthcare professionals today know far more about the various mental illnesses that people deal with and methods to manage them, from lithium medicine for Bipolar Disorder to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. While the way mentally ill people are treated today may be an improvement in leaps and bounds from the 19th century, there is still a lot more research and work that needs to be done to fully understand the range of mental disorders people might experience and to develop the most effective and safe treatment plans for them. However, at the core of all of this science is the belief Dix first instilled in America that mentally ill individuals deserve the best care possible so that they can live their lives to their fullest, however that may look like for them.

\*By Angeni Lieben

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