

# **An Abundance of Katherines Study Guide**

**An Abundance of Katherines by John Green (author)**

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# Contents

<a href="#">An Abundance of Katherines Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 and 2.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 3 and 4.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5 and 6.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 and 8.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9 and 10.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 and 12.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13 and 14.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 15 and 16.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 17 and 18.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 19 and Epilogue.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>



# Plot Summary

An Abundance of Katherines is a novel by award-winning author John Green. In this novel, Colin Singleton is a prodigy and genius who just graduated from high school. Colin was just dumped by his nineteenth girlfriend in a row and all of his girlfriends have the name of Katherine - all spelled the same way. After Katherine the XIX dumps Colin, Colin's best friend, Hassan, comes to Colin's room to convince him that he needs to take a road trip to clear his mind and have an adventure. While it takes some convincing on Hassan's part, Colin finally agrees to go on the road trip. Once the boys convince both of their parents to let them go for the summer, they hit the road in Colin's car, which they call The Hearse. One of Colin's favorite pastimes is to anagram, which is to rearrange letters to create new words, sentences and phrases. Another pastime Colin commits to while on the summer roadtrip is a theorem that predicts how long two people will stay in a relationship, as well as who will be the Dumper and who will be the Dumpee. Colin plans to use his past relationships with the nineteen Katherines to see if the theorem works.

While Colin and Hassan are on the highway, Colin sees an exit, which brags that it has the grave of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which is the body responsible for starting World War I. Colin and Hassan take the exit and find themselves in Gutshot, TN. The tour of the grave is behind a convenient store, where the girl behind the counter, Lindsey Lee Wells is their tour guide. After the tour, the boys return to the convenient store where they meet Lindsey's mother, Hollis. Hollis's family owns the factory in town that has been running since the early twentieth century. When Hollis meets Colin and Hassan, she invites them to her house for dinner. While having dinner, Hollis offers the boys a summer job to gather stories from the factory workers and townspeople. She also offers them room and board at her home.

As the boys meet with the factory workers and townspeople, they learn what a special town Gutshot truly is, even though it is completely different from Chicago, where the boys live. While working their summer job, Colin continues to work on the theorem. Hassan continues to work on his people skills, which eventually lands him one of the prettiest girls in town, Katrina. Even though Lindsey is dating one of the most popular boys in town, the former high school quarterback, who is also a Colin, Colin Singleton and Lindsey grow closer as the summer continues. Lindsey even helps Colin figure out that his theorem may work if he includes more variables in the equation.

In the end, Colin, Hassan, and Lindsey all learn about coming of age. They learn about what the future holds for each of them, about the importance of friendship, and about how friendships often turn into romantic relationships.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

When the novel opens, the main character, Colin Singleton is taking a bath. Colin has just been dumped by his nineteenth girlfriend. And, all of his girlfriends have had the name Katherine. When Colin comes out of his bathroom, his mom and dad are sitting on his bed. His dad says that Katherine the 19th called his dad's cell phone. Colin's dad says that Katherine, he and Colin's mom are all worried about him. Colin runs to the bathroom to throw up and spends the next 14 hours alone in his room reading and rereading his yearbook over and over.

In Chapter 2, Colin's friend, Hassan, bursts into Colin's room. When Colin tells Hassan that Katherine the XIX dumped him, Hassan tells Colin to snap out of it. Colin tells Hassan his biggest fear is that he will never use his prodigy status to become a genius because Colin says that the difference between a prodigy and genius is that geniuses "do."

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The fact that Colin keeps dating girls with the name of Katherine suggests that he is attracting the same type of girl. Each girl ends the relationship and so the act of continuing to date Katherines symbolizes Colin's way of trying to get the relationship right this time around.

Hassan insinuates that part of Colin's problem is that he doesn't believe in God. Hassan keeps insisting that if Colin has faith then it leads to a resolution of some of the problems that Colin believes he has. At the end of the chapter, Hassan grabs Colin to take him to do something about his state of mind, which foreshadows how Colin and Hassan will figure out why the Katherines keep breaking up with Colin when it seems that Colin has so much to offer.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In Chapter 3, Hassan proposes to Colin's parents that he and Colin take a road trip for the summer. After getting permission from Colin's parents to take the trip, the boys drive to Hassan's house to convince his parents to allow him to go with Colin. Hassan's parents consent after some convincing from Colin and Hassan. The boys hit the open road, destination unknown. Colin remembers when he was 25-months-old, he started reading on his own. When his parents enrolled him in pre-school, the school said they were not equipped for geniuses so his parents sent Colin to see a psychologist at the University of Chicago. Colin starts school a year ahead of other kids his age. As Colin goes through his first few years of school, he excels in his studies but not socially with the other children.

In Chapter 4, Colin pulls into a rest stop in Kentucky to get some sleep. When Hassan wakes up, he asks Colin for some toothpaste. After brushing his teeth, Hassan prays. Colin and Hassan sit at a picnic table at the rest area and Colin remembers when he first met Hassan in the tenth grade. Colin can relate every one of his thoughts or what he sees to Katherine the XIX.

## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Colin and Hassan use Colin's depression as a reason to allow the boys to take the road trip with Colin's parents. They have to use a different angle to convince Hassan's father, which is they are going to find jobs so they can learn the value of money and other lessons. Colin uses driving as a distraction from thinking about his recent breakup, but ironically, at the same time uses how much he misses Katherine XIX to keep him awake and focused on the road as he drives and Hassan sleeps. Ironically, Colin is a genius, but he is lacking in common sense. For example, he can read the story about the tortoise and the hare, but he does not see the underlying meaning of the story. In another twist of irony, Colin is a genius but he is not socially advanced, so when he starts school, the other kids do not like him, bully him and think he is strange. The end of the chapter foreshadows Colin becoming involved with his first Katherine, which is in the third grade.

Hassan is a symbol of reality for Colin. While Colin thinks of happenings in very stoic and intellectual terms, Hassan reveals the realistic side of what Colin is saying. For example, when Colin starts to go off on an intellectual tangent, Hassan cuts Colin off before he can go there.



# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In Chapter 5, Hassan is driving as the boys leave Kentucky and continue to head south. They decide to exit the highway at the exit where they can see the grave of Archduke Franz Ferdinand—the corpse that started World War I. The boys are in Tennessee. Colin calls his mom to tell her where they are and to see if "anyone," meaning Katherine called for him. The boys arrive where the Archduke tour is and it is a convenient store. The clerk behind the counter is their tour guide. As Hassan and Colin are following the tour guide behind the convenient store, Colin trips and falls, hitting his head on a rock. The tour guide, take off her t-shirt, applies pressure to the wound, says she is a paramedic in training. She leaves the two boys and says she'll return in eight minutes. While Colin is on the ground waiting for the tour guide to return, he thinks to the night of his graduation, which is when Katherine XIX broke up with him.

In Chapter 6, the tour guide returns with a first aid kit and cleans up the wound on Colin's head. While the tour guide was gone, Colin sketches in a small notebook with a pencil he carries on him that he can predict who will date each other and how long the relationship will last. Colin remembers when he was in third grade that his tutor had a daughter named Katherine, which would become Katherine I after she asks Colin if he wants to be her boyfriend.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

It's a twist of irony that there is an exit to see the grave of Archduke Franz Ferdinand because Colin was thinking about the Archduke earlier in the book. Hassan is a symbol of what is normal conversation for the average person, so that Colin knows what is appropriate to talk about and what makes people look at him as if there is something wrong with him. Colin relates his inability to see what the future holds with his nearsightedness. While Colin is only 17, he believes that he is past the prime in his life because most prodigies peak at 12 or 13. This thought process reinforces that Colin does not see what is in front of him, the life out there he has left to experience, because he is so focused on his lack of living up to being a prodigy.

When the tour guide sees K-19 in Colin's notebook, she asks what it represents. Colin explains that he has dated 19 girls and they are all named Katherine. Ironically, the tour guide says she has dated only one boy and his name is Colin. Katherine I sets the stage for the next 18 Katherines that will come after her.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In Chapter 7, the tour guide leads the boys to the grave of the Archduke and tells the story about his death. When the group returns to the store, the store clerk's mom is there. The mom, Hollis, recognizes Colin from the gameshow he won the previous year. Hollis invites the boys over for dinner. While the boys wait in the living room, Hollis and her daughter, Lindsey, fix dinner in the kitchen. Colin decides to sneak off to a room in the house to work on his formula, The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability. Hollis offers Colin and Hassan jobs for the summer working at the factory her family owns, which manufactures tampon strings. Hollis offers them \$500 each a week and room and board. Later, Katherine checks on Colin in his room and they have a conversation about popularity.

In Chapter 8, the next morning, Colin wakes to the crowing of a rooster before dawn. After getting ready and eating breakfast, Hollis comes downstairs to tell them what their jobs will be for the summer. They will be interviewing the residents of Gutshot, so Hollis can put together a history of the town. Lindsey is working on the project with them also, so she takes them to old man Starnes's house first. Colin recalls his first date with Katherine the IXI at a coffee shop, followed by watching a movie about prodigies in her basement.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Colin relates to the Archduke One, because the Archduke was nerdy and Colin is nerdy. Two, the Archduke married for love and love with Katherines seems to be an obsession for Colin. Third, the Archduke dies from a gunshot and Colin feels as if he has a hole, or a missing piece in him, because Katherine is now gone. Winning the gameshow did not make Colin famous in Chicago, but ironically he is recognized in a small country town in Tennessee. It seems as if Lindsey and Colin have more in common than originally thought. There is a foreshadowing that a relationship may emerge between the two as the summer unfolds.

Even though Colin is a genius, he is starting to learn the differences of everyday things, such as urban and rural living. Colin finds a symbol of Katherine the XIX in almost everything he sees, hears or even smells. For example, when the trio enters Starnes's house to interview him, the smell reminds Colin of Katherine the IXI's basement, when she loved him. The chapter ends foreshadowing the first kiss between Colin and Katherine IXI is that night in her basement and the start of their relationship.



# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Colin, Hassan, and Lindsey interview Starnes. Starnes says he has lived his whole life in Gutshot. He also says he was the longest working employee at the factory. He worked there 60 years and when he retired, they named the break room after him. When the interview ends, Colin and Hassan drop Lindsey off at the convenient store, where her boyfriend Colin is working. The boys try to kill a couple of hours, but go to the convenient store early. Hassan fakes an asthma attack so they can all go back to Hollis's house 40 minutes early. Colin calls his parents to tell them the truth about staying with and working for Hollis and they give him permission to stay. When Colin goes to find Hassan, he overhears a conversation between Hassan and Lindsey about Colin. Colin enters to see Hassan and Lindsey watching poker on a big screen TV. Then Hassan and Lindsey play pool, while Colin works on the theorem for two more Katherines.

In Chapter 10, the boys wake the following morning to find a note from Hollis. She wants them to ask only four questions during their interview and to head to the factory to meet with the workers there. Zeke, the plant manager, is their first interview. Lindsey leaves after Zeke's interview to spend the day with her boyfriend at the store. Hassan and Colin interview 26 more employees at the plant throughout the day. When the boys leave, Colin makes Hassan pull off on the side of the road so he can call Katherine the XIX. Hassan drives away, leaving Colin in the field where he walks to get reception. He gets Katherine's voice mail and leaves her a message. As Colin walks back toward the road, his cell phone rings. It's Katherine. They talk for a few minutes, but she says they shouldn't talk until she gets back from teaching at summer camp and Colin begs her to listen to the voice mail he left for her. When they hang up, Colin cries for the first time since the break up. Hassan comes back with Lindsey to pick Colin up. Colin continues to cry while Lindsey tries to sooth him. When they get home, Colin works on his theorem, but when it doesn't work out for the next few Katherines, he decides to burn his theorem notebook. When Colin goes to Lindsey to ask for matches or a lighter, she refuses to allow him to burn it and convinces Colin to let her hold on to the notebook for a few days.

## Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Starnes infers that Gutshot got its name from the illegal boxing matches the town was known for in the 1940s. As Colin listens to what Hassan is telling Lindsey, Colin realizes for the first time in his life that his life is a repeating circle. His road trip and working on the theorem are the first two things he is doing in his life that will break the circle. For the first time, Colin also realizes what the missing piece is that he feels inside; it's that he simply wants to matter. Colin also realizes that Lindsey is a symbol of irony because she seems like a tough person on the outside, but on the inside she is really a wimp.





Ironically, the majority of the people the boys interview say they would choose to live in Gutshot if they could choose to live anywhere in the world. In another twist of irony, the final employee the boys interview is Katherine Layne. Even though her name is Katherine, Colin finds no attraction to her because he is still hung up on Katherine XIX. Colin cries in the field for what was and what could have been with Katherine XIX.



# Chapters 11 and 12

## Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In Chapter 11, while Hassan and Lindsey "go cruising" on the fifth day in Gutshot, Colin stays home to read. When Hassan returns from hanging out with Lindsey and her friends, Hassan tells Colin he shared a beer with Lindsey. Hassan also tells Colin they have plans to spend the weekend in the woods to hunt pigs.

In Chapter 12, a week later, Colin wakes to the rooster and Hassan's morning prayers. Hassan says he isn't going to work today because Thursday is when Hollis goes in to the factory. Hollis also drives to the warehouse in Memphis after visiting the factory, just to check on everything. Hollis tells Colin that they'll be interviewing the people at the old folk's home today. As Lindsey and Colin drive to the old folk's home, Lindsey tells Colin she looked over his notebook and she thinks she knows how to fix the theorem. After an hour of working on the theorem in the parking lot, Colin and Lindsey go into the nursing home to interview some of the residents.

## Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Books symbolize an escape for Colin. Colin forgets about everything that is going on in his life when he is reading. Reading allows him to stop thinking about Katherine and how much he misses her.

Colin sees any kind of action or statement that demoralizes or separates him as being dumped. For example, when Colin says that Hassan cannot make him go hunting and Hassan agrees, Colin sees this as rejection. A study of prodigies and geniuses finds that these brilliant people are not any more likely to make a significant contribution to the world than people with normal IQ levels. In essence, ironically, there is no correlation between IQ levels and how successful people become.

After the kids at school find out Colin is on a TV gameshow in his junior year, someone tells Colin that the prettiest girl in school, Marie has a crush on him. He asks Marie out on a date, but in a twist of fate, Katherine I is waiting for Colin at his house to ask him to tutor her in French. Colin and Katherine I start hanging out again, which foreshadows an older version relationship of their third grade, three-minute relationship.

Ironically, Lindsey, who is not good at math, tells Colin that he not considering enough variables to prove the theorem correct. By the time the two reach the parking lot of the old folk's home, they come up with five variables that need to go into the equation. Colin works on the theorem for an hour in the car and believes it brings him closer to proving the theorem. When one of the old women tells Lindsey that Hollis is selling some land on the hill, Lindsey's attitude changes as if the land has some significance to Lindsey.



# Chapters 13 and 14

## Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Colin continues to work on his theorem. The theorem works for 17 out of the 19 Katherines. Hassan comes in from cruising with Lindsey and her friends to admit to Colin that he kissed Katrina. Colin and Hassan fight because Hassan says Colin is selfish and self-centered. Hassan and Colin make up the following day. That night, Hassan goes on a date with Katrina and Lindsey tells Hollis she is taking Colin out to dinner. Colin works on the theorem and figures out Katherine Xix. He still cannot use the theorem on Katherine III. When Lindsey takes Colin to dinner, she also teaches him how to shoot a shotgun so he won't embarrass everyone when they go hunting.

In Chapter 14, Lindsey takes Colin to a secret cave she goes to that is on the land Hollis is planning to sell. Colin and Lindsey drink from a jar of moonshine Lindsey has in the cave. They leave the cave to drive home. When they walk in the door, they overhear a phone conversation Hollis is having with Roy about disposing trash. After Lindsey goes to her room, Colin sneaks into Hassan's room and the boys talk about what happened with them and each of the girls, but Colin leaves out the secret cave.

## Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Even though the road trip is to make Colin more normal, ironically, it is Hassan that is becoming more normal. Colin realizes and admits the only reason he got mad about Hassan becoming more normal is Colin's fear of being left behind, abandoned, dumped. Colin learns that when you are "normal," you do things with your friends even if you don't want to do them, so he agrees to go hunting with the group the following weekend. Lindsey foreshadows that something is going on because Hollis would never sell the piece of land she owns on the hill for someone to build cookie cutter houses.

The cave is something Lindsey has never shared with anyone else, so her sharing it with Colin is a symbol of the bond they are forming. Colin and Lindsey sit in the dark cave, which symbolizes their invisibility to each other. While they are "invisible," Lindsey reveals that she is like a chameleon. She changes her voice, her actions and what she says, according to the people she is with, instead of just being herself. The fact that she is revealing this to Colin further indicates the bond they are forming, especially when they almost kiss. Hollis telling Roy to dispose of the trash in a field they own indicates they are burying something hazardous. When she mentions they can't afford to dispose of it legally, it indicates the plant might be having money problems.



# Chapters 15 and 16

## Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Colin prepares for the pig hunt by reading and researching information on hunting the wild hogs. The morning of the hunt, they wake up at 4:30 and meet the others at the lodge. Colin and Hassan head out on the hunt with Lindsey's Colin's father. When they find a pig trail, Colin's father starts walking fast and the boys can't keep up so they tell him to go on without them. While Hassan and Colin are talking, a feral pig rushes them. Colin tries to shoot it but misses and hits a hornet's nest instead. The feral pig does run away from the gunshot, however. The boys get stung by the hornets and then use the chewing tobacco their guide left with them to cover the stings, which they learned from interviewing one of the plant employees. The boys lose their way but keep walking until they see an abandoned house that Colin recognizes is near the graveyard where they visited the Archduke's grave. When the boys walk through the cemetery, they see Katrina, Hassan's girlfriend, naked and having sex with someone in the graveyard.

In Chapter 16, Hassan screams to Katrina that he is breaking up with her and laughs as they continue to walk through the graveyard to the convenient store. The guy having sex with Katrina is Lindsey's boyfriend, Colin. Lindsey's boyfriend threatens Hassan and Colin if they tell Lindsey and Colin promises not to tell. While Lindsey's boyfriend and Katrina are confessing to Hassan and Colin, Hassan turns on the recorder they've been using for interviews. When Lindsey and her boyfriend's other two friends meet up with them, Hassan plays the recording for Lindsey. Lindsey's boyfriend goes after Lindsey, so Hassan and Colin try to defend her. Even one of Colin's friends joins in the fight to free Lindsey, but Lindsey's boyfriend ends up beating up Colin, Hassan and his friend.

## Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Ironically, the next few days continue as if nothing ever happened between Colin and Lindsey. When resting on the hunt, Colin thinks about the theorem and how ironic it is that the least important of the Katherines, Katherine III, is the one messing up the completion of the theorem. In another twist, Colin calls Katherine III to ask her some questions to make sure he has her information correct in solving the theorem. This is when Colin finds out he dumped Katherine III, which is why the theorem doesn't appear to work on her. In reality, the theorem works because it produces the results as if Colin dumped Katherine III, and he did dump her.

When Colin wakes up after Lindsey's boyfriend beats him up, he is grasping the headstone of the Archduke. Colin anagrams the letters on the headstone, which seems to lead Colin to an understanding.



# Chapters 17 and 18

## Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

In Chapter 17, when the boys wake up the next morning, which is their 22nd day in Gutshot, they evaluate each other's wounds from the fight the night before. When Colin and Hassan see Lindsey at the breakfast table, she tells them she doesn't want to talk about what happened. They see a note from Hollis telling them whom to interview today, which is Ms. Mabel, who lives in a nursing home on the other side of town. Ms. Mabel is old and seems to have some memory problems, so when the interview ends, Lindsey leaves crying and goes into the bathroom. The three return home and Colin finishes the theorem. Colin goes down to the game room, where he finds Lindsey and Hassan to tell them he finished the theorem. Hassan also tells Colin he enrolled in two college courses for the next semester.

In Chapter 18, on Thursday morning, Colin wakes to Lindsey jumping on his bed. She tells them they are taking a road trip to Memphis to spy on Hollis at the warehouse. When the three arrive at what is the warehouse address, they find an empty parking lot and an empty receptionist desk inside. They see a bulldozer and a man operating it behind the building. They confirm he is Roy and they find him burying boxes of tampon strings in the hole in the ground. Hollis shows up and tells Lindsey that the textile factory only has one client and they are only buying one-quarter of the product. Rather than fire the workers, Hollis is burying the excess strings and is trying to find a way to make money before the end of five years, when her money will run out from keeping the factory open and the town of Gutshot in operation.

## Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

The lessons that Hassan and Colin have learned during their time in Gutshot have completely changed their outlook on life. Hassan has finally agreed to go to college, just as his parents want him to. In addition, Colin has learned to come out of his shell, be more of a normal person and learn how to interact socially with others. Contrary to his belief, Colin is not always a Dumpee, and therefore does not have to live his life as if he is one.

For the first time, Colin realizes that he doesn't want Katherine the XIX back. Roy infers that there is a reason why he is burying the tampon strings but that Lindsey needs to hear it from Hollis, which foreshadows Lindsey finally learning the secret her mother is holding back from her. Hollis inspires Hassan to start being a doer so that he can give back to the world.



# Chapter 19 and Epilogue

## Chapter 19 and Epilogue Summary

In Chapter 19, when Hassan and Colin get home, Hollis tells them Lindsey is spending the night at her friend Janet's house. Colin tells Hollis he is going camping and goes to find Lindsey in her secret cave. He tells Lindsey that he figured out that her great grandfather is buried in the Archduke's grave, which his name anagrammed. Lindsey admit she knows and now realizes the tour idea was her mom's way of raising money. Colin tells Lindsey the stories of all of the Katherines. Colin and Lindsey kiss and then drive back to Hollis's house.

Colin comes downstairs the next morning to find Hassan reviewing profit and loss statements that Hollis taught him how to evaluate. Hassan asks Colin if he and Lindsey hooked up the previous night. Colin says he plucked his and Lindsey's relationship into the theorem and that it says that Lindsey dumps him in four days. The boys go to breakfast at Hardees and Lindsey goes to visit Ms. Mabel at the nursing home. On the fourth day when the theorem predicts Lindsey dumps Colin, Colin wakes to a note from Lindsey dumping him, but at the end she says she is just kidding.

## Chapter 19 and Epilogue Analysis

Colin infers from "spending the night at Janet's house" that Lindsey is camping out in the secret cave, so he drives to find her. Lindsey and Colin both realize that you cannot look to someone or something else for your happiness. Happiness is something that you have to find within. In addition, you create your own happiness, so waiting for someone else to make you happy is just a waste of time and energy.

Colin infers that he and Lindsey hooked up by smiling in response to Hassan's question. When the theorem proves wrong about Lindsey and Colin, Colin works hard on the theorem so it will work. It's a twist of irony because Colin wants the relationship to work with Lindsey, but he also wants his theorem to work as well. Colin finally realizes that it is not the past that defines who he is, but the future. The future stretches out before him, allowing him to create the life he wants to have as genius, prodigy, or otherwise.



# Characters

## Colin Singleton

Colin Singleton is a senior in high school. He has a habit of dating girls named Katherine. When the novel opens, Colin was dumped by his nineteenth Katherine. While Colin is a genius at school, reading and educational aspects of his life, he is not successful in simple human interaction. As an only child and a genius at that, Colin's parents have devoted their life on focusing in on Colin's intelligence, but have neglected to focus much of an effort at all on his social interactions with other children his age.

Colin uses his genius status to create a theorem that predicts if a couple should be together. If the couple should be together, the theorem will also determine how long the couple will stay together and which of the two will dump the other one in the relationship. Initially, Colin creates the theorem to get answers as to why all of his girlfriends always dump him. Since Colin is a very logical person, he is seeking a logical explanation for a very illogical aspect of life - human relationships.

By the time the novel ends, Colin has learned about common social interaction. He learns how to joke around with his friends and people that he meets. He also learns how to tell a story that people want to listen to, learn from and enjoy. Colin learns that there is more in life than being a genius; that you also have to learn how to be a human being and have an impact on others, just as much as others have an impact on his own life.

## Hassan Harbish

Hassan is Colin's best friend. Hassan is one year ahead of Colin in school, but took a year off before going to college. Hassan has acceptance to Loyola University in Chicago. Colin believes that because Hassan has not enrolled in classes for the upcoming college semester because Hassan may be delaying college for another year.

Hassan is from a Muslim country, but the novel never clearly states from which country Hassan hails. Hassan spends the majority of his school years in the U.S. being home schooled. This is until Hassan enrolls at the same school where Colin goes to school. The boys meet on the first day of school. Hassan explains to Colin that Colin is strange after Colin tries to tell a story in class that fails. From this point on, the boys are not only best friends, but Hassan becomes Colin's barometer of what is and what is not "normal."

While Hassan is a learning tool for Colin, Colin also teaches Hassan many things along the way. One of the things Colin keeps trying to convince Hassan to do is to enroll in college classes. After the boys take their road trip, Colin is not the only one that faces his fears and moves on to the next step in his life. Hassan also realizes that it is time to grow up and it is time to take the next step in his life by enrolling in his college courses.



## Keith Carter

Keith Carter is Colin's tutor. Colin nicknames him Krazy Keith. Keith starts as Colin's tutor when Colin is in third grade. Colin goes to school for three hours per day and then spends the rest of the school day with Keith in Keith's office. Keith has a wife and a daughter. Keith's daughter is about eight months older than Colin and her name is Katherine.

## Lindsey Lee Wells

Lindsey Lee Wells is the 17-year-old girl that Colin and Hassan meet when they stop to see the grave of the Archduke. She works behind the counter of the convenient store, but she is also the tour guide to the grave. Lindsey is also a paramedic in training, so she fixes Colin's head wound when he falls on the way to see the grave. Lindsey has a boyfriend whose name is Colin.

## Hollis Wells

Hollis Wells is Lindsey's mother. Hollis recognizes Colin as the boy who won a gameshow the previous year and invites Hassan and Colin home for dinner. While they are having dinner, Hollis offers the boys a summer job at her family's tampon string manufacturing plant, in addition to free room and board.

## Katherine I

Katherine I is Colin's first girlfriend. Katherine I is the daughter of Colin's tutor, Keith. They meet and become boyfriend and girlfriend in third grade. The relationship lasts for three minutes before Katherine I breaks up with Colin.

## Katherine III

Katherine III is the Katherine that Colin dated when he was in fourth grade. She is the only Katherine that does not seem to comply with the theorem. After calling Katherine III, Colin realizes that he dumped her rather than the other way around, so in fact, the theorem does work.

## Mrs. Singleton

Mrs. Singleton is Colin's mother. She is a French teacher at the prestigious Kalman School. Mrs. Singleton thinks Colin is a prodigy and a genius, but she is also very overprotective of him.





## **Mr. Singleton**

Mr. Singleton is a professor at Northwestern University. He teaches sociology. Mr. Singleton played an instrumental role in working with Colin from the time he started reading until the present in helping him hone in on being a genius and a prodigy.

## **Mr. Harbish**

Mr. Harbish is Hassan's father. Hassan's father wants Hassan to stop delaying his acceptance into Loyola University in Chicago, which Hassan has delayed for a year after graduating from high school a year ahead of Colin. Mr. Harbish only agrees to allow Hassan to go on the road trip because the boys agree to get summer jobs.



# Objects/Places

## Satan's Hearse

Satan's Hearse is the nickname of Colin's car. The car is a big, grey Oldsmobile and the car that the boys take on their road trip.

## Gutshot, TN

Gutshot, TN is the town where the boys go to see the grave of the Archduke. It is where they meet Lindsey Wells and her mother Hollis. Gutshot ends up being the final destination of their road trip because Hollis offers them jobs and room and board for the summer. Gutshot is home to the manufacturing plant of tampon strings. Lindsey's great grandfather started the factory in the early 1900s, and it is where the boys will work for the summer.

## The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability

The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability is a theorem Colin creates on his theory that the world is made up of two kinds of people: dumpers and dumpees. Colin plans to work on the theorem to predict whether or not two people will get together, and if they do, how long the relationship will last. Colin bases the theorem on each of his relationships with each Katherine, starting in third grade with Katherine I.

## Grave of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand is what sparked World War I. When Hassan and Colin are driving in Tennessee, Colin sees an exit for the grave of the Archduke, so the boys pull off to take the tour. Toward the end of the novel, Colin anagrams the letters of the Archduke's name on the gravestone to determine it is really the grave of Lindsey Lee Wells great grandfather. Hollis made up the fact that it is the Archduke so they can sell tour tickets and raise money.

## The Pink Mansion

The Pink Mansion is the house where Hollis and Lindsey live. It is also the house where Hassan and Colin have rooms for the summer. The boys name it The Pink Mansion because it is painted pink.



## Hardees

Hardees is one of the only restaurants in Gutshot. Colin and Hassan eat there when they first exit to visit the grave of the Archduke. They eat there often throughout the novel as well.

## Taco Hell

Taco Hell is the nickname Lindsey gives to Taco Bell, which is another one of the other restaurants in Gutshot. Hassan takes Katrina out to eat there on their first date. Lindsey takes Colin out to eat there on the same night as Hassan and Katrina's date to get him out of the house.

## Cave

Lindsey has a secret cave on some of the land that Hollis owns. Lindsey keeps some pillows, a sleeping bag, flashlight and a jar of moonshine in the cave. The cave is a secret refuge for Lindsey that nobody knows about. The only person Lindsey tells about the cave and the only person she takes there is Colin Singleton.

## Factory

The factory is the primary place for people that live in Gutshot to work. The factory manufactures tampon strings. Originally, the factory manufactured other items, when it was started by Lindsey's great grandfather in the early part of the 20th century. Hollis runs the factory now, but Lindsey finds out that the factory is not making money anymore. Even though it isn't making money, Hollis has been keeping the factory running so that the people that depend on the factory for work and to pay their pensions are not let down.

## Memphis

Memphis is where the factory headquarters is for the tampon factory. Lindsey, Hassan and Colin make a road trip to Memphis to uncover the secret that Hollis is hiding about the factory.



# Themes

## Friendship

Hassan and Colin are best friends. When Hassan sees that Colin is depressed after being dumped by Katherine XIX, Hassan suggests the road trip to get his mind off everything. Colin sees Hassan as his barometer of normalcy. While Colin tends to strike up conversations on topics that people do not have an interest in, Colin looks to Hassan to keep Colin on topics of interest. Hassan is different in his own ways, which is what makes the friendship between the boys work. Hassan first meets Colin after being home schooled for most of his life. Hassan is also overweight and Arabic, which sets him apart from most of the kids at the school. When Hassan and Colin meet Lindsey, she has her own set of friends. Even though Lindsey seems part of the in-crowd, she grows close with both Hassan and Colin, sharing things with them she doesn't even share with her boyfriend.

There are few true friendships in this book. The only true friendships that exist are between Hassan, Colin and Lindsey. Even the friends of Lindsey's boyfriend turn on "The Other Colin" when Lindsey finds out he has been cheating on her with her friend Katrina. In this book, there is an appearance of friendship. However, friendship plays an important role in the novel because it is the friendship with Hassan that gets Colin over Katherine XIX. The friendship between Lindsey and Colin is the basis which eventually leads to a romantic relationship.

## Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as a relationship breaking up. In some way, each of the characters learn lessons about growing up and dealing with responsibilities in life, and how to do this against the adverse affects life. Colin deals a lot with his feelings of always being the dumpee in his relationships with all of the Katherines. He learns, however, how to overcome his depression and to move on with life, his friendships and a new relationship while living and working in Gutshot. Colin learns how to express his feelings and how to have a semi-normal conversation after being in Gutshot for less than a month.

Hassan experiences having a girlfriend for the first time when he starts to date Katrina. Hassan also experiences his first kiss with Katrina while living and working in Gutshot. In the end, Hassan also learns what it is like to be dumped by a girlfriend and the value of hard work and applying himself, which leads to Hassan finally enrolling in college.

Lindsey comes of age when she realizes that popularity is not everything. She learns that being honest with yourself and being able to live with your own decisions is more important than what others think of you. This becomes especially clear to Lindsey when

she finds out that her mother has been using her own money to take care of the factory workers rather than shut the factory down.

## Culture

Another primary theme is the lifestyle or the culture of the residents that live in Gutshot, Tennessee. Since Hassan and Colin come from the Chicago area, they are used to the culture of the Midwest rather than Southern traditions. In addition, Hassan is Arabic, which is a completely different culture than any of the other teens his age in the novel.

The residents of Gutshot are somewhat isolated from the outside world. Many of the residents, including Lindsey, think that there is nothing better waiting for them out in the world. In fact, some of the residents that have been outside of Gutshot typically return to it because it is what they know and where they feel the most comfortable. Even Colin finds solace and answers to his angst in Gutshot.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is in the first-person point of view of the main character, Colin Singleton. Colin is a prodigy, genius and high school graduate that is recently dumped by his girlfriend. Colin tells the story of his journey to finding an answer as to why he is dumped continuously by girls named Katherine as it unfolds.

The point of view of this novel is an intimate point of view that allows a reader to connect closely with the main character. The reader cares what happens to the narrator. The point of view also allows the author to inject his own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the main character without having to move out of character or interrupt the flow of the narration. For these reasons, the point of view works well with this novel and the author's writing style.

## Setting

The novel is set primarily in the town on Gutshot, Tennessee. The setting of this novel is important because the small town takes the main characters into a world into which they are not accustomed, allowing them to experience new things and find answers to various rites of passage. The main characters of the novel are teenagers, soon to be adults. For this reason, the setting of the novel has a strong impact on the characters because they learn important life lessons as they make the transformation from high school students to college students and working adults.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the road trip is a major motivator to the characters. However, as events unfold in Gutshot, coming of age and life lessons continuously leaks into the consciousness of the characters. Even though the primary plot of the novel focuses on Colin's relationships with the Katherines, the reader soon realizes that it is fear of the new and unknown that has motivated most all the characters in the novel.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is casual, modern, and not formal. The language seems to be from the late nineties or the early 2000s, when the novel is set. The language is educated, strong and descriptive enough that it creates a flow that leaves the reader impressed with the words as much as the plot when the novel ends.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate to the characters in the novel and the education level of the writer. The novel is not in love with its own words, but it is descriptive enough that the reader finds enjoyment in the words as well as the plot. The language is not difficult to understand, however, and everything

is clear in its context. For this reason, the language of the novel fits well with the plot of the novel.

## **Structure**

The novel has nineteen chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter is ten to twenty pages long. The chapters tell the story in exposition and dialogue. The author also injects his own voice in several chapters, giving his opinion of the events surrounding the setting of the novel as well as the actions taking place within the plot.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Colin in the hours following his girlfriend, Katherine XIX, breaking up with him, and how his friendship with Hassan gets him through the end of the relationship. One subplot follows the coming of age of each of the characters in the novel, primarily the main characters of Colin, Hassan, and Lindsey. Another subplot follows the cultural differences between Americans and Arabics as well as mid-westerners and southerners. All these plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



## Quotes

"We're very concerned. And stunned. What happened?" (Chapter 1, p. 5).

"Get up. Kafir, you have a very complicated problem with a very simple solution" (Chapter 2, p. 11).

"You shouldn't have unreasonable expectations. Children like Colin process information very quickly. They show a remarkable ability to focus on tasks. But he's no more likely to win a Nobel Prize than any other reasonably intelligent child" (Chapter 3, p. 18).

"Look, this is my ninth day at a school in my entire life, and yet somehow I have already grasped what you can and cannot say. And you cannot say anything about your own sphincter" (Chapter 4, p. 23).

"You don't need a girlfriend, Colin. You need a robot who says nothing but 'I love you'" (Chapter 5, p. 40).

"Right. Because relationships are so predictable, right? Well, I'm finding a way to predict them. Take any two people, and even if they've never met each other, the formula will show who's going to break up with whom if they ever date, and approximately how long the relationship will last" (Chapter 6, p. 43).

"Well, I think you're cool, and I want you to think I'm cool, and that's all popular is" (Chapter 7, p. 68).

"I'm good with codes and stuff. And I'm good at, like, linguistic tricks like anagramming. That's my favorite thing, really. I can anagram anything" (Chapter 8, p. 78).

"I just want to do something that matters. Or be something that matters. I just want to matter" (Chapter 9, p. 94).

"You can burn it, but not tonight. I want it for a couple days" (Chapter 10, p. 108).

"You should go, keep them out of trouble" (Chapter 11, p. 109).

"Look how they're all loving on little Lindsey. We all raised that girl up. I used to see her once a week or more—we knew her when she was a baby and we knew her when you





couldn't tell her from a boy and we knew her when she had blue hair...Son, if there's one thing I know, it's that there's some people in this world who you can just love and love no matter what" (Chapter 12, p. 126).

"I don't really know how. How do you just stop being terrified of getting left behind and ending up by yourself forever and not meaning anything to the world?" (Chapter 13, p. 132).

"If you could make your Theorem work, you could predict how it would go. No more than ever, you have to finish" (Chapter 14, p. 154).

"You're a Dumper and I'm making out with a ridiculously hot girl. 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" (Chap. 15, p. 165).

"This is some fugging snow globe of a day" (Chapter 16, p. 173).

"Well, the real test is if it can predict the arc of a relationship" (Chapter 17, p. 189).

"It's not made up. A generation from now there might not be a factory and I want your kids and their kids to know what it was like, what we were like. And I liked them. I thought they'd be good for you. The world ain't going to stay like you imagined it, sweetheart" (Chapter 18, p. 194).

"That's who you really like. The people you can think out loud in front of" (Chapter 19, p. 208).

"I figured something out. The future is unpredictable" (Epilogue, p. 213).



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Colin Singleton? Why does he travel to Gutshot, Tennessee? What does he visit upon his arrival? Why? What does Colin recall about his childhood? What is the most important moment in Colin's life? Why is this important? How does it change Colin's life?

Discuss the relationship between Hassan and Colin. Are they friends? Is their competition in their relationship? How does Hassan feel about Colin? How does Colin feel about Gene? Why does Colin think he is in competition with Hassan? What does he do about it? What happens to Colin? Does Hassan tell Colin the truth? Explain.

How does Colin prove his theorem? What does this mean for his future? How does Colin react emotionally to this change in his life? Why does Colin allow Lindsey to help him prove the theorem? What causes Colin to break free of the Katherines? How did Colin really feel about the Katherines? Was it a conscious or subconscious choice to always date girls with the name and spelling of Katherine.

Who is Hassan? Why does he attempt to help Colin get over Katherine IXI? Why does Hassan think a road trip will help the situation? Why does Hassan want to go on the road trip? What does Hassan learn from his time in Gutshot? How does the reader know this?

Who is Lindsey? Why does she change her personality, depending on whom she is talking to or hanging out with? Where does she go to get away from it all? Why does she share her secret spot with Colin? What does Lindsey teach Colin about life? What does Lindsey learn is her mother's secret? How does Lindsey find out about Hollis's secret? How does Lindsey react to Hollis's secret? Why does Lindsey want to help Colin with his theorem? Is Lindsey the one ultimately responsible for solving the theorem, or is it Colin?

Why does Colin invent a new theorem? What is it? What is unique about it? What does this say about Colin's character? Why does Hollis use her own money to keep the factory open? What is the purpose of this? What does this say about Hollis? Why does Lindsey's view point of her mom and life change when she uncovers Hollis's secret?

Discuss the people and culture of Gutshot. How does the town and residents have an impact on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them? Does Gutshot have anything to do with Colin's actions? What impact does it have on Hassan's actions? How does Lindsey learn from her own town and mom as the novel unfolds?