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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

Everything is Tuberculosis by John Green

Summary

Tuberculosis has been entwined with humanity for millennia. Once romanticized as a malady of poets, today tuberculosis is a disease of poverty that walks the trails of injustice and inequity we blazed for it.

In 2019, John Green met Henry, a young tuberculosis patient at Lakka Government Hospital in Sierra Leone while traveling with Partners in Health. John became fast friends with Henry, a boy with spindly legs and a big, goofy smile. In the years since that first visit to Lakka, Green has become a vocal and dynamic advocate for increased access to treatment and wider awareness of the healthcare inequities that allow this curable, treatable infectious disease to also be the deadliest, killing 1.5 million people every year.

In *Everything is Tuberculosis*, John tells Henry's story, woven through with the scientific and social histories of how tuberculosis has shaped our world and how our choices will shape the future of tuberculosis.

Discussion Questions

1. The title suggests tuberculosis is more than a disease -- it's interwoven with society, history, and inequality. In what ways did the book illustrate this point?
2. John Green met Henry in Sierra Leone, and his narrative anchors the book. What moments in Henry's journey impacted you most -- and why?
3. The book connects TB to urban migration, fashion, even historical events. Was there a surprising or eye-opening historical link that stood out to you?
4. Green charts TB's transformation -- from a romantic "poetic" disease to a signifier of poverty. How did that evolution strike you?
5. Compare John's access to medication with Henry's struggles in Sierra Leone. How did that highlight global health inequities?

6. Green's advocacy -- including pressuring pharma companies and UN engagement -- demonstrates personal impact. Did these efforts inspire you? How?
7. With effective treatments available since the 1950s, Green argues that TB deaths are chosen through neglect. How does that shape your view on accountability and collective action?
8. Despite grim statistics -- 1.3 million annual deaths -- Green maintains hope. What gave you the most reason to feel optimistic?
9. "TB anywhere is a threat everywhere" is a theme. Did the book change how you view global health as a shared responsibility?
10. Green blends data, history, and individual stories. What storytelling elements helped you connect personally to TB's impact?
11. Were there lines that hit home -- either in grief, amazement, or inspiration? (E.g., Green on TB as "a quiet force throughout human history")
12. After reading this, what personal or community steps do you feel motivated to explore -- whether awareness, donations, or advocacy?

Summary from GoodReads.com
Discussion questions from ChatGPT