



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Paper Towns

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 13–18

Grades: 8–12

Reading Level: 8th–10th grade

Lexile Measure: 850L

Guided Reading Level: Z

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 70

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, geography, identity, and social studies.

Synopsis of Book

In *Paper Towns*, John Green explores the themes of identity, perception, and the complexities of growing up. The story follows Quentin "Q" Jacobsen, a high school senior in Orlando, Florida, who is infatuated with his mysterious neighbor, Margo Roth Spiegelman. After a night of adventurous revenge pranks, Margo disappears, leaving behind clues that Q and his friends try to decipher. As they trace her steps through paper towns—fake cities on maps and symbolic places in life—they question what it means to truly know someone. The novel ultimately encourages readers to look beyond surface-level assumptions and work to understand others with empathy and authenticity.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity
- Justice

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting its various layers.
2. Explore how the settings in *Paper Towns* reflect the themes of identity and perception. Use the map to discuss how locations such as Jefferson Park, the abandoned strip mall, and Agloe serve as metaphors for the characters' emotional states and personal growth.
3. Have students use Canva for Education ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a visual travel log or digital scrapbook that follows the characters' road trip to Agloe. Include reflections, photos, and maps that connect geographic locations with major plot points, character insights, and key symbols.
4. Use YoTeach! ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to host a virtual discussion where students anonymously share their thoughts on how Margo's disappearance challenges Q's assumptions. Focus the conversation on the contrast between who people are and how they are perceived.
5. Use Google Earth ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or Google My Maps ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a layered map showing the difference between real and imagined places in the novel. Ask students to add quotes from the book to each map point and

explain how it contributes to the theme of illusion versus reality.

6. Use the [Reading Trek map](#) to trace Q's journey. Then analyze how each stop along the way reveals more about his relationship

with Margo and his own character development. Encourage students to reflect on how physical spaces influence emotional discovery.

Extension Activities:

1. Watch John Green discuss the inspiration behind *Paper Towns* in his Ted Talk, [Paper towns and why learning is awesome](#). Have students reflect on how his personal experiences shaped the novel's themes of identity, perception, and coming of age.
2. Invite students to create their own paper town by designing a fictional place on Google My Maps ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or on paper. Ask them to describe what the town represents emotionally or symbolically and have them write a short narrative explaining its significance.
3. Explore the history of Agloe, New York, using online articles or short videos. (You can start with this [NPR article](#) or [this video from John Green](#).) Discuss how a fictional location eventually became "real" and relate this to the novel's commentary on how people and places can be misrepresented or misunderstood.
4. Use Canva for Education ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to design a digital travel journal from Q's perspective. Write entries from each stop on his road trip that include visuals, reflections, and imagined conversations with his friends or Margo.
5. Create [blackout poetry](#) using photocopied pages from *Paper Towns*. Encourage students to isolate key words or phrases that represent Q's emotional journey or Margo's elusive personality, then decorate the remaining space with symbolic illustrations.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [John Green's website](#)
- [Vlogbrothers YouTube Channel](#)
- [LitCharts - Paper Towns Study Guide](#)
- [Course Hero - Paper Towns Literature Study Guide](#)