

## Vlogbrothers and the Vade Mecum: Guiding Young Readers' Participation in Civic Culture

Best-selling Indianapolis novelist John Green, with his brother Hank, created the Vlogbrothers YouTube channel in 2007. Their online exchanges attracted a following of those who enjoyed young adult novels and nerdy, off-beat humor. Over time, the community of readers and viewers came to be one invested not just in literature but in civic and civil culture. The guidance for that participation in civic culture and community improvement is a thread that runs through both Vlogbrothers videos and the novels. In this essay, I argue that the novels of John Green represent more than engaging and skillful narratives; the actions and viewpoints of his characters offer ideas about how to live and conduct oneself in contemporary society. *The Fault in Our Stars*, for example, opposes the life philosophies of Augustus Waters, who aspires to great and memorable actions that resonate broadly, while Hazel Grace Lancaster, who argues that the most important impact a person has is on his or her immediate circle. Other novels, like *Paper Towns*, call for us to understand one another's humanity, regardless of the image a person projects or appearances. Nerdfighter's mantra of "Don't forget to be awesome," a call to be kind and do well in the world, also embodies these tenets. Further documents, like John Green's "Imagine Others Complexly" essay that has been suggested for inclusion in Wikipedia's civility essays, and Hank Green's "How to Vote" videos, encourage readers and viewers to carry their actions and attitudes from page and screen into the world. Together, these videos, essays, and novels form a vade mecum or guide to living in the world.