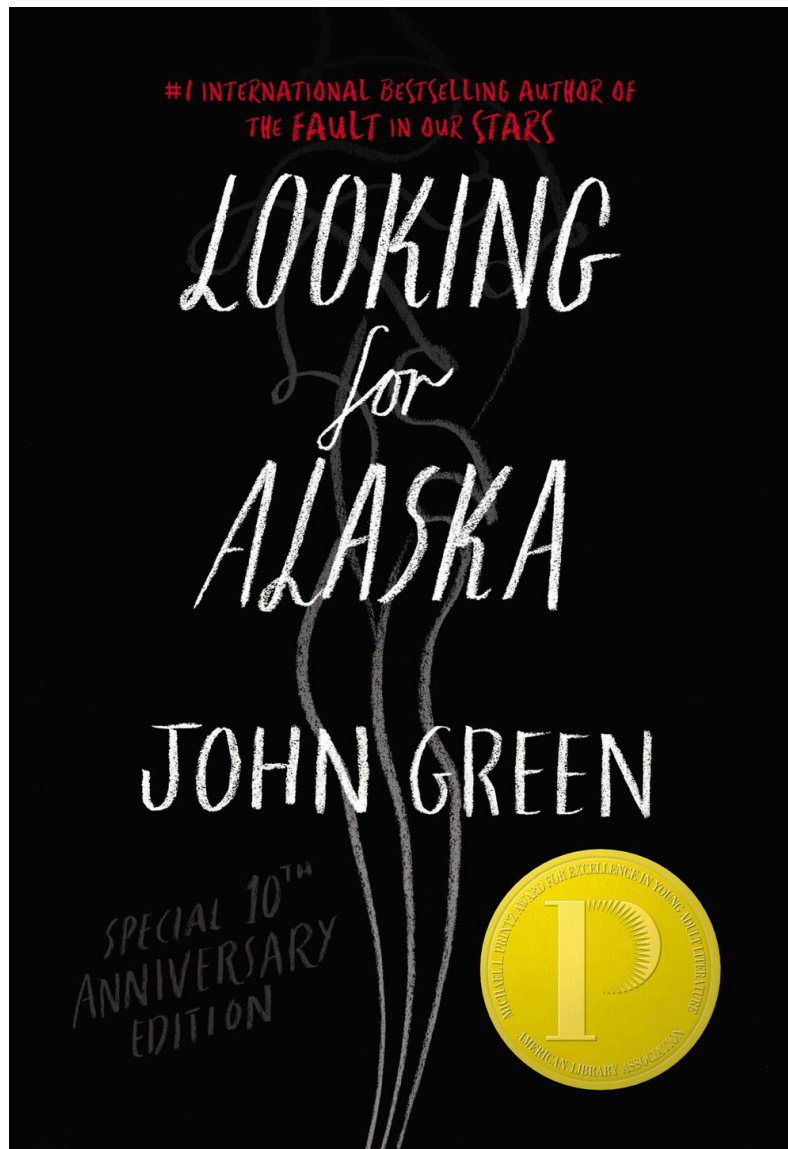


Kyle Tseng
ENGL 112B
Dr Warner
October 21, 2024

Looking for Alaska

By John Green



Website and source: <https://www.johngreenbooks.com/books>

About the author: John Green is an American author, youtuber, and philanthropist. He went to school in Kenyon College and the University of Chicago Divinity School. Green

and his brother Hank worked closely together to create youtube series and vlogs. Green himself is known for many books including *Looking for Alaska*, *The fault in our stars*, *paper towns*, and many more. He's won numerous awards namely the Printz Award and Edgar Award.

Summary: Miles decides to attend a boarding school called Culver Creek because he wants change in his life, seeking the "Great Perhaps". There he meets his roommate, The Colonel, along with his friends Alaska and Takumi. All of them have a special trait, Miles remembers people's last words, The colonel memorizes facts about other countries and also capitals, Alaska quotes books and poetry, and Takumi raps. Miles has a crush on Alaska and this plays a part in their dynamic and the events that unfold. The story mainly follows the group as they do illegal things like smoking and drinking as well as a bunch of pranks on the "weekday warriors" who are the rich kids of the school while building relationships between one another. The first half of the book takes place in the "before" and the back half of the book focuses on the "after" of a certain event that changes everything. The book takes a serious shift after the event and everyone is left reflecting on themselves and their future.

Quotes:

1. "So this guy, François Rabelais. He was this poet. And his last words were 'I go to seek a Great Perhaps.' That's why I'm going. So I don't have to wait until I die to start seeking a Great Perhaps"(5).

This is the quote that jumpstarts Miles' journey towards finding his own meaning. This is the reason that Miles chooses to leave public school and instead go to Culver Creek. Miles is on the search for something that he is missing in his life even if he doesn't know what it is yet. He wants to go search for it rather than waiting for it to come to him.

2. "I wanted so badly to lie down next to her on the couch, to wrap my arms around her and sleep... But I lacked the courage and she had a boyfriend and I was gawky and she was gorgeous and I was hopelessly boring and she was endlessly fascinating. So I

walked back to my room and collapsed on the bottom bunk, thinking that if people were rain, I was drizzle and she was a hurricane.”(88)

This is a scene that takes place between Miles and Alaska at night. He’s in love with Alaska despite her impulsive, confusing nature. Green contrasts the positions of the characters with the use of repetition. He starts by using the words I and she back and forth creating more and more distance between the two characters. At the end Miles calls himself a drizzle and Alaska a hurricane. This is partly showing how different they are but also partly speaking on how crazy and reckless Alaska is, lost in her own emotions.

3. “Imagining the future is a kind of nostalgia. (...) You spend your whole life stuck in the labyrinth, thinking about how you'll escape it one day, and how awesome it will be, and imagining that future keeps you going, but you never do it. You just use the future to escape the present”(54).

The idea of escaping the labyrinth comes from Simon Bolivar’s last words and is brought up many times throughout the book. Alaska feels like she is trapped in the labyrinth which contrasts Miles' more optimistic view through his searching of the great perhaps. One is searching for a way out of the pain while the other is searching for happiness and belonging.

Classroom Use: I would use this book in a classroom setting as part of a unit to discuss death and suicide. This book along with some poetry or short stories would be a good way to explore death as well as transitioning into the search for meaning. The age range would be high school starting from 10th grade. The central question Alaska asks, wondering how to escape the labyrinth could be an excellent essay prompt similar to how it is used in the book. Asking students how to not only escape the labyrinth but also how to find their own meaning. Another idea could be looking at the last words of famous figures or authors students like and sharing that throughout the classroom.

Why give this book to teens: Teens would really be able to enjoy this book because it's easy to read, builds a lot of anticipation and has a meaningful message. There are some teens that engage in drinking, smoking, or other illegal substances which can be really dangerous. You never know when someone might drunk drive and pass away or overdose on something. The book also goes into searching for meaning

How it fits in *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning* chapter 4-8

Chapter 5: Books about facing Death and Loss

This story perfectly demonstrates the concept of death and loss. At first nobody can believe that Alaska died. They are all distraught and blaming themselves. The characters cope with the death by finding out how she died. Although it takes a while they eventually do come to a reasonable assumption and are more or less at peace. During this time the remainder of the group grows closer and learns to deal with the loss. In the end Miles has fully accepted it and is ready to move forward continuing to search for his meaning.

Quantitative Analysis

Word count: 64,033

Page Count: 221

Lexile: 850L

AR: 5.8, AR points 11

Dale-Chall: 7-8

Flesch Kincaid: Grade level 8, suitable for grades 9-12

Qualitative Analysis

Structure

The story is in first-person, so we are inside the mind of Miles seeing his thoughts and feelings.

There are no chapters in this book. It is instead set as X amount of days before or after Alaska's death.

The story is set in one timeline. We do see with the days before that something is going to happen but we find that out just as Miles does.

Green uses a clear split in the middle of the novel changing from the “before” to the “after”.

Levels of meaning

The novel tackles head on the meaning of life and what people search for. Every character in the novel is trying to find their own definition and their own way.

On the surface it's a simple unrequited love story but if you closely examine the characters they all have their own personal struggles that they try and hide. The lives of these teens are far from perfect and they are just trying their best.

Language conventionality and clarity

The language in the novel is very simple and easy to understand.

- The novel does deal with death

Knowledge Demands

There are instances where other countries or famous people are talked about. Although the knowledge of these people is not required it could help in having your own understanding of their last words.

Knowledge of emotional tendencies of people in distress would also really help to understand Miles, the colonel and most importantly Alaska.