Tutorial 1.1

Using Google Books as a Concordance When Analyzing Literature

Google offers a variety of tools for registered users. For example, although Google Books can be used without a Google account, registered users have access to the MyLibrary feature, in which they can save any titles they specify and can create specific lists of titles. The following tutorial uses Google Books as an anonymous user.

1. Go to Google and select books from the bread crumb menu circled in orange in Figure 1, below. Bread crumbs, as in the tale of Hansel and Gretel, leave a trail for users to follow and are usually words horizontally arranged across the top of a page. They are circled below in yellow:

![Google Books as a Concordance When Analyzing Literature](image-url)
2. Type the title of the book in the search box when it appears.

3. Select the book from the results listed. Here, I searched for *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. I will choose the first title in the results pictured in Figure 2, below:

4. Type the word you want to trace in the book’s search box, shown circled in Figure 3, below. In this example, I am searching for the word *smoke*:
Working with students, I might use this novel to connect the journey pattern: journey to adulthood, journey of friendship, or personal journeys. Imagine I have discussed symbols and motifs. Students recognize the snuffed out candle on the front cover and wonder if the smoke symbolizes life’s end or the transitory nature of life. We could also investigate smoke as rebellion as a symbol of freedom. Fire as Promethean gift, both life giving, freeing yet dangerous if we examine the novel through an archetypal lens.

5. Scan the results of the word smoke found in the book. In the example pictured below in Figure 4, smoke appears twenty-six times in John Green’s novel. Notice the portion of the bread crumbs menu circled in red; results are shown in order of
relevance but can be shown in page number order:

6. Click the page link written as “Page >>” in blue (in Figure 4, above) to read the context surrounding the target word. In Google Books, some books are more accessible than others, and the availability of pages varies from book to book. Books are also formatted differently; some previews include page numbers, but as you can see in Figure 4, the preview for Looking for Alaska does not.

7. Navigate through the page examples that Google Books provides. There are two ways to review the examples: Either click the page link as mentioned above or follow the blue hash marks in the right scroll bar (circled in red below in Figure 5). Hover the
cursor over the hash mark for a snippet view of the target word in context:

If I were using this text to model the process for students (who know I am a Nerdfighter and huge Green brothers fan), I might introduce critical lenses from Tim Gillespie’s Doing Literary Criticism (2010). We could analyze Looking for Alaska through the lens of biographical criticism, analyzing Green’s choice of character names (his wife’s name is Sara, circled above in green, and his brother’s name is Hank, also circled in green) or how his own experience at a boarding school influenced and provided ideas for the setting of the novel.

8. Repeat the search steps with additional target words or phrases. If you are logged in as a registered user, save the book to your Google Books library.