



OCTOBER 12, 2023 SUBMISSION

Request for School Board Reconsideration of Library Media Materials

Author: John Green

Title: Looking For Alaska

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (December 28, 2006)

Request initiated by: October 12, 2023

Telephone:

Address:

City:

Zip:

1. To what in the book/material do you object: (Please be specific; cite pages, frames of films, dialogues, etc.)?

- X Sexually Excounters
- X Bullying and Suicide
- X Offensive language (see list at end)
- X Drug and Alcohol Use
- X Use of Pornography / Hiring a Male Stripper
- X Depression

See attached references.

2. Where did you first learn of this item?

I first heard about this book when I was doing research about issues in the Manatee County schools. I was looking for opportunities to help improve the school culture and academics. I reviewed a number of the books that were on the lists of books being banned by school districts throughout Florida and in other states. I was horrified to see the inappropriate materials that are

being made available to students – **our** students.

I decided to become involved with the School Board Elections as a starting point. The candidates in the 2022 Manatee County School Board Elections had platforms that promised to address some of these shortcomings. I also attended some meetings with the Media Committee as they were grappling with the legislative changes that were being made in Florida, waiting for guidance on how to address challenges of some of the books that we had flagged. At these meetings I found out that materials in the Library are violating Florida Law with regard to the protection of the students from pornographic sexual materials. In addition, I take issue with books that promote immorality, drug abuse, sexual confusion, suicide, anti-America sentiments, racism, activism etc.

I am not challenging the freedom to read but wish to ensure that young people not be subject to topics that are not appropriate for their level of maturity or mental health. Public libraries and book stores are available for adults to access whatever materials that they may choose. Our schools should take the high road when it comes to our young people.

Oh -- Just a reminder, the district policy:

- Require book selections to be free of pornography and prohibited materials harmful to minors, suited to student needs, and appropriate for the grade level and age group;
- Require consultation of reputable, professionally recognized sources and school community stakeholders for each selection;
- Provide for library media center collections based on reader interest, support of state academic standards and aligned curriculum, and the academic needs of students and faculty; and
- Provide for the regular removal or discontinuance of books based on factors specified in the bill, including those removed because of an objection by a parent or resident of the county.

3. Have you read the book in its entirety?

No I have only read excerpts and selections.

Book Summary

Looking for Alaska tells the story of Miles “Pudge” Halter, a high school junior who divides his life into time before and time after a life-changing event that the reader will not discover until later in the novel.

Miles plans to attend the Culver Creek boarding school for his junior year of high school. Although his parents worry that Miles wants to attend the school because he does not have friends at his current school, Miles reveals that he is actually influenced by the last words of the poet François Rabelais about “seeking the Great Perhaps.” He moves to Birmingham, Alabama to attend Culver Creek and becomes friends with his roommate, Chip “The Colonel” Martin. Chip teaches Miles about the social structure of the school. He explains that the wealthy students that go home to their parents’ mansions every weekend (the “Weekday Warriors”) do not get along with his friend group.

Chip introduces Miles to his friend Alaska, and Miles is quickly enamored by her. While Miles is obsessed with people’s final words and wants to seek François Rabelais’s “Great Perhaps,” Alaska enjoys books and wants to know the nature of “the labyrinth of suffering” that Simón Bolívar evoked in his final words.

The Weekday Warriors sneak into Chip and Miles’s dorm on Miles’s first night and throw Miles into the lake with his limbs bound by tape. Chip and Miles discover that this action was taken in retaliation for Chip supposedly ratting out their friends—a couple named Marya and Paul—and getting them expelled the

previous year. Miles, Chip, Alaska, and another friend, Takumi, begin planning a revenge prank. Miles becomes part of their friend group and starts smoking cigarettes. The four of them get caught smoking and Alaska and Chip cover for Miles and Takumi, demonstrating to Miles that you cover for your friends instead of ratting them out.

Miles settles into his new school and does well in his classes because he spends so much time studying. Alaska decides she will find Miles a girlfriend, and eventually introduces him to a Romanian student named Lara. Miles embarrasses himself on the first group date at a basketball game with Alaska, Alaska's boyfriend Jake, Chip, Chip's girlfriend Sara, Takumi, and Lara. Miles is hit by a basketball, gets concussed, and then vomits on Lara. Afterward, Miles tries to talk to Alaska, but is confused when Alaska becomes moody and short with him for no apparent reason.

The Weekday Warriors target Alaska with a prank, reminding Chip and Alaska they need to work on their own revenge prank. Takumi reveals to Miles that it was actually Alaska who ratted out the couple who were expelled the previous year. Takumi warns Miles that he cannot rat anyone else out if he gets caught carrying out the revenge prank. Miles is still infatuated with Alaska and asks his parents to let him stay at school over Thanksgiving break so he can be with her. Although he knows she has a boyfriend, Miles wants to be with Alaska. They ultimately spend Thanksgiving Day with Chip and his mom.

Lara joins Alaska, Chip, Takumi, and Miles as they execute their revenge prank on the Weekday Warriors. They set off fireworks and put dye in the Weekday Warriors' hair products. They also get on the computer of the Dean (whom they call "the Eagle") to send bad grade reports to the parents of the Weekday Warriors. The five of them spend the remainder of the night and weekend camping and hiding in a barn on campus as their alibi is that they were all off campus. They play a drinking game and Alaska reveals that, as a child, she saw her mom die of an aneurysm and did not call an ambulance because she thought her mom was just sleeping. When they quit playing the drinking game, Miles kisses Lara. He asks if she wants to be his girlfriend and she says yes.

Miles spends time with Lara despite not having much to talk about, but they are physically intimate. He leaves Lara to spend time with Alaska and Chip in his room, watching them as they get drunk. Alaska dares Miles to make out with her. He does and she tells him it is to be continued in the future. They all go to sleep. Chip and Miles are startled awake later by Alaska frantically telling them she needs to leave because she had forgotten something. They provide a distraction for the Eagle so she can get in her car and drive away unnoticed.

The Eagle calls an assembly to announce to the student body that Alaska has died. Miles asks what happened and is informed that she drove straight into a police cruiser with its lights and sirens on, likely due to driving while intoxicated. Both Chip and Miles feel responsible for her death because they helped her drive away when they knew she was drunk. They mourn in different ways and attend Alaska's funeral.

Miles and Chip go through Alaska's room to see if there is anything they want to keep. They find a note she wrote in one of her books that said "straight and fast" was the way out of the labyrinth of suffering. This revelation makes Chip and Miles think she may have killed herself. Chip is eager to investigate her death and Miles reluctantly agrees to help.

Religion class becomes more important to Miles after Alaska's death because its subject matter becomes more real. Chip and Miles vent their anger to each other that so many people who did not know Alaska like they did are mourning her death. Chip leads their investigation into Alaska's death.

Chip and Miles interview the police officer who saw Alaska crash. Their interview supports their belief that she killed herself, so they research suicide warning signs. They do not remember Alaska exhibiting many

of the warning signs and continue their investigation. Meanwhile, Miles avoids Lara. Takumi questions Miles about whether he is still dating Lara, and Takumi demands that Chip and Miles tell him about what they have been doing. They agree to tell him about their investigation in the future.

Chip plans to see if Alaska might have been unable to swerve because of how drunk she was. He and Miles steal a breathalyzer from the Eagle and Chip drinks enough alcohol to match Alaska's blood alcohol level at her time of death. He believes she would have been able to swerve, so he plans to call Jake, Alaska's boyfriend, as a final effort. Miles is against calling Jake, but Chip does it anyway. They learn that Alaska told Jake that she would call him later, which further confuses the question of whether she killed herself or not.

Chip and Miles do not know what to investigate next, so they turn their attention to planning a prank in memory of Alaska. Chip pulls out plans Alaska had made for a prank, and Chip and Miles recruit other juniors at the school to execute it. They hire a male stripper, posing as a psychologist, to give a presentation at a Speaker's Day event at their school. He delivers a speech about subverting the patriarchal paradigm and performs in front of the whole student body.

Later in the year, Takumi points out to Chip and Miles that the date of Alaska's death coincides with the date of the story Alaska shared with them about her mother's death when they played a drinking game in the barn. The boys realize she must have forgotten the anniversary of her mother's death and was driving to her grave to deliver flowers. Although they still feel guilty for helping her drive away drunk, and they do not know for sure whether it was an accident or suicide, they feel like they now have the closure they needed.

"Straight and fast" was Alaska's way out of the labyrinth of suffering, but Miles decides to choose the labyrinth over an escape. Miles feels more confident about seeking the Great Perhaps, despite the grief he experienced by loving and losing Alaska.

4. Is there any additional information you would like us to consider in our evaluation? What would you like the final outcome to be for this library media item or items?

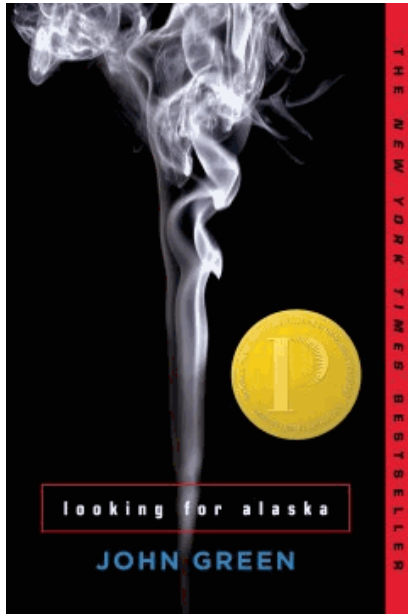
The book paints a picture of teens (high school junior) that gives the impression that smoking, drinking, drugs, pornography and casual sex are fun normal everyday behaviors. This sets a low standard for young people and may introduce idea that these things are acceptable. With all of the angst that this generation is experiencing to have an ending that culminates in the suspected suicide of one the characters is not a good outcome to promote. Words and ideas have power. This book has a negative message. It is interesting to note that the book is available in Sugg Middle School – so it could be checked out by someone as young as 11 or 12? I find that appalling!

Remove from all Manatee School District Schools and Media Centers and disallow future purchases– see below.

Bay Shore High School (4)
Lakewood Ranch High School
Parrish High School
Southeast High School Media Center (3)
Manatee High School (2)
Braden River High School
Palmetto High School
Sugg Middle School

February 15, 2023

LOOKING FOR ALASKA



Young Adult

By John Green

ISBN: 0-525-47506-0

0-525-47506-0

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual nudity and sexual activities; moderate profanity use; alcohol use; and gender ideologies.



3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page 30

...I'm in the middle of a sentence about analogies or something and like a hawk he reaches down and he **honks my boob. HONK.** A much-too-firm, two- to three- second HONK. And the first thing I thought was Okay, how do I extricate this claw from my boob before it leaves permanent marks?..."

"...She got her boob honked over the summer." She walked over to me with her hand extended, then made a quick move downward at the last moment and pulled down my shorts.

Page 32

"Don't grab my boob." The Colonel gave an obligatory laugh, then asked, "Want a smoke?" I never smoked a cigarette, but when in Rome...

Page 38

"...But there is so much to do: cigarettes to smoke, sex to have, swings to swing on..."

Page 44

Lying naked in bed together ("genital contact" being offense #1), already drunk (#2), they were smoking a joint (#3) when the Eagle burst in on them.

Page 45

...I spent the night surfing the Web (no porn, I swear)...

Page 81

"He loves weed like Alaska loves sex," the Colonel said. "This is a man who once constructed a bong using only the barrel of an air rifle, a ripe pear, and an eight- by-ten glossy photograph of Anna Kournikova. Not the brightest gem in the jewelry shop, but you've got to admire is single-minded dedication to drug abuse."

Page 90

Since we only have four layers of clothes from doing it, I took the opportunity to introduce myself.

Page 92

"Studies show that marijuana is better for your health than those cigarettes," Hank said.

Page 103

"...You thought she was quietly discussing precalc, when she was clearly talking about having hot sex with you..."

Page 104

"She has great breasts,"...

..."DO NOT OBJECTIFY WOMEN'S BODIES!" Alaska shouted.

Now he looked up, "Sorry. Perky breasts."

"That's not any better!"

"Sure it is," he said. "Great is a judgement on a woman's body. Perky is merely an observation. They are perky. I mean, Christ."

Page 105

She jumped onto him and wrapped her legs around him (God forbid anyone ever does that to me, I thought. I'll fall over). I'd heard Alaska talk about kissing, but I'd never seen her kiss until then: As he

held her by her waist, she leaned forward, her pouty lips parted, her head just slightly tilted, and enveloped his mouth with such passion that I felt I should look away but couldn't.

Page 107

"Did I tell you that Jake is hung like a horse and a beautiful, sensual lover?"

Page 108

"I don't know if this is the best time to tell you this," the Colonel shouted at the Beast, "but Takumi here hooked up with your girlfriend just before the game."

Page 113

"...How will stabbing one another in the back help women to rise above patriarchal oppression?!"

Page 128

I woke up half an hour later, when she sat down on my bed, her butt against my hip. Her underwear, her jeans, the comforter, my corduroys, and my boxers between us, I thought. Five layers, and yet I felt it, the nervous warmth of touching- a pale reflection of the fireworks of one mouth on another, but a reflection nonetheless.

Page 130

...and scooted up to put her head in my lap. My corduroys. My boxers. Two layers. I could feel the warmth of her cheek on my thigh.

There are times when it is appropriate, even preferable, to get an erection when someone's face is in close proximity to your penis.

This was not one of those times.

So I stopped thinking about the layers and the warmth, muted the TV, and focused on Decapitation.

Page 137

"He's just happy most everyone's gone. He's probably masturbating for the first time in a month."

Page 139

Her hand above my knee, the palm flat and soft against my jeans and her index finger making slow, lazy circles that crept toward the inside of my thigh, and with one layer between us, God I wanted her.

...And I steeled myself to say them as I stared up at the starriest night, convinced myself that she felt it, too, that her hand so alive and vivid against my leg was more than playful, and fuck Lara and fuck Jake because I do,...

Page 143

"Don't look at my ass," she said, and so I looked at her ass, spreading out wide from her thin waist.

Page 145

"...Sex is pretty fun...."

..."You're hopeless. Wanna go porn hunting?"

"Huh?"

"We can't love our neighbors till we know how crooked their hearts are. Don't you like porn?" she asked, smiling.

"Um," I answered. The truth was that I hadn't seen much porn, but the idea of looking at porn with Alaska had a certain appeal.

Page 146

I was stunned by how many people had booze. Even the Weekday Warriors, who got to go home every weekend, had beer and liquor stashed everywhere from toilet tanks to the bottoms of dirty-clothes hampers.

"God, I could have ratted out anyone," Alaska said softly as she unearthed a forty-ounce bottle of Magnum malt liquor from Longwell Chase's closet.

...She stared at it, then pulled out the King James Bible, and there- a purple bottle of Maui Wowie wine cooler..

And we found plenty of porn magazines haphazardly stuffed in between mattresses and box springs. It turns out that Hank Walsten did like something other than basketball and pot: he liked Jugs. But we didn't find a movie until Room 32,...

..."The Bitches of Madison County. Well. Ain't that just delightful."

We ran with it to the TV room, closed the blinds, locked the door, and watched the movie. It opened with a woman standing on a bridge with her legs spread while a guy knelt in front of her, giving her oral sex.

...A woman crouched on her hands and knees while a guy knelt behind her. She kept saying "Give it to me" and moaning, and though her eyes, brown and blank, betrayed her lack of interest, I couldn't help but take mental notes.

Hands on her shoulders, I noted. Fast, but not too fast or it's going to be over, fast. Keep your grunting to a minimum.

As if reading my mind, she said, "God, Pudge. Never do it that hard. That would hurt. That looks like torture. And all she can do is just sit there and take it? This is not a man and a woman. It's a penis and a vagina. What's erotic about that? Where's the kissing?"

"Given their position, I don't think they can kiss right now," I noted.

"That's my point. Just by virtue of how they're doing it, it's objectification. He can't even see her face!

This is what can happen to women, Pudge..." ..."Look me in the eye and tell me this doesn't turn you one, Pudge."

I couldn't. She laughed. It was fine, she said. Healthy.

Page 151

"...All I remember is that she had a lot of sex."

"I know. She's my hero," Alaska said without a trace of irony.

Page 155

She said that it was sexist to leave the cooking to women, but better to have good sexist food than crappy boy-prepared food.

Page 158

"COOSA LIQUORS' entire business model is built around selling cigarettes to minor alcohol to adults."

...headed to the aforementioned Coosa Liquors.

..."Which is great, if all you need is cigarettes. But we need booze. And they card for booze. And my ID blows. But I'll flirt my way through."

...Alaska went in alone and walked out the door five minutes later weighed down by two paper bags filled with contraband: three cartons of cigarettes, five bottles of wine, and a fifth of vodka for the Colonel.

Page 162

"Don't you know who you love, Pudge? You love the girl who makes you laugh and shows you porn and drinks wine with you. You don't love the crazy, sullen bitch."

Page 167

"French, Feel, Finger, Fuck. It's like you skipped third grade," Alaska said.

Page 186

I wanted to like booze more than I actually did (which is more or less the precise opposite of how I felt about Alaska). But that night, the booze felt great, as the warmth of the wine in my stomach spread through my body. I didn't like feeling stupid or out of control, but I liked the way it made everything (laughing, crying, peeing in front of your friends) easier. Why did we drink? For me, it was just fun, particularly since we were risking expulsion.

Page 188

"...and neither are the countless bitches that call me lover."
..."Oh shit did you just diss the feminine gender/I'll pummel your ass and stick you in a blender..."
..."...objectify women and it's fuckin' on..."

Page 191

"We are all going to puke if we just drink. So we'll slow it down with a drinking game. Best Day/Worst Day."
..."...The best storyteller doesn't have to drink. Then everybody tells the story of their worst day, and the best storyteller doesn't have to drink..."

Page 204

Soon we were entirely out of our sleeping bags, making out quietly. She lay on top of me, and I held her small waist in my hands. I could feel her breasts against my chest, and she moved slowly on top of me, her legs straddling me. "You feel nice," she said.

Page 210

"Have you ever gotten a blow job?"
..."I've just never given one," she answered, her little voice dripping with seductiveness. It was so brazen. I thought I would explode. I never thought. I mean, from Alaska, hearing that stuff was one thing. But to hear her sweet little Romanian voice go so sexy all of the sudden... "No," I said. "I never have." "Think it would be fun?" DO I!?!?!?!?! "Um. Yeah. I mean, you don't have to." "I think I want to," she said, and we kissed a little, and then. And then with me sitting watching The Brady Bunch, watching Marcia Marcia Marcia up to her Brady antics, Lara unbuttoned my pants and pulled my boxers down a little and pulled out my penis. "Wow," she said. "What?" She looked up at me, but didn't move, her face nanometers away from my penis. "It's weird."
"What do you mean weird?" "Just big, I guess." I could live with that kind of weird. And then she wrapped her hand around it and put it into her mouth. And waited. We were both very still. She did not move a muscle in her body, and I did not move a muscle in mine. I knew that at this point something else was supposed to happen, but I wasn't quite sure what. She stayed still. I could feel her nervous breath. For minutes . . . she lay there, stock-still with my penis in her mouth, and I sat there, waiting. And then she took it out of her mouth and looked up at me quizzically. "Should I do something?" "Um. I don't know," I said. Everything I'd learned from watching porn with Alaska suddenly exited my brain. I thought maybe she should move her head up and down, but wouldn't that choke her? So I just stayed quiet. "Should I, like, bite?" "Don't bite! I mean, I don't think. I think---I mean, that felt good. That was nice. I don't know if there's something else." "I mean, you didn't---" "Um. Maybe we should ask Alaska." So we went to her room and asked Alaska. She laughed and laughed. Sitting on her bed, she laughed until she cried. She walked into the bathroom, returned with a tube of toothpaste, and showed us. In detail. Never have I so wanted to be Crest Complete.
Lara and I went back to her room, where she did exactly what Alaska told her to do, and I did exactly what Alaska said I would do, which was die a hundred little ecstatic deaths, my fists clenched, my body shaking. It was my first orgasm with a girl, and afterward, I was embarrassed and nervous, and so, clearly, was Lara, who finally broke the silence by asking, "So, want to do some homework?"

Page 217

"Can't make out. Too drunk."

..."Hook up with me."

So I did.

It was that quick. I laughed, looked nervous, and she leaned in and tilted her head to the side, and were kissing. Zero layers between us. Our tongues dancing back and forth in each other's mouth until there was no her mouth and my mouth but only our mouths intertwined. She tasted like cigarettes and Mountain Dew and wine and Chapstick. Her hand came to my face and I felt her soft fingers tracing the line of my jaw. We lay down as we kissed, she on top of me, and I began to move beneath her. I pulled away for a moment, to say, "What is going on here?" and she put one finger to her lips and we kissed again. A hand grabbed one of mine and she placed it on her stomach. I moved slowly on top of her and felt her arching her back fluidly beneath me.

I pulled away again. "What about Lara? Jake?" Again, she sshed me. "Less tongue, more lips," she said, and I tried my best. I thought the tongue was the whole point, but she was the expert.

...She moved my hand from her waist to her breast, and I felt cautiously, my fingers moving slowly under her shirt but over her bra, tracing the outline of her breasts and cupping one in my hand, squeezing softly. "You're good at that," she whispered. Her lips never left mine as she spoke. We moved together, my body between her legs.

"This is so fun," she whispered, "but I'm so sleepy. To be continued?" She kissed me for another moment, my mouth straining to stay near hers, and then she moved from beneath me, placed her head on my chest, and fell asleep instantly. We didn't have sex. We never got naked. I never touched her bare breast, and her hands never got lower than my waist.

Page 233

She was warm and soft against my skin, my tongue in her mouth, and she was laughing, trying to teach me, make me better...

Page 236

An hour after the Colonel left, resident stoner Hank Walsten dropped by to offer me some weed, which I graciously turned down.

Page 238

I am sleeping, and Alaska flies into the room. She is naked, and intact. Her breasts, which I felt only very briefly and in the dark, are luminously full as they hung down from her body. She hovers inches above me, her breath warm and sweet against my face like a breeze passing through tall grass.

..."I'm so naked," she says, and laughs. "How did I get so naked?"

Page 290

"Is this what you told Lara in the TV room? Because, see, Pudge, they only call it a blow job."

Page 335

"The way young people speak about on another's bodies says a great deal about our society. In today's world, boys are much more likely to objectify girl's bodies than the other way around. Boys will say amongst themselves that so-and-so has a nice rack, while girls will more likely say that a boy is cute, a term that describes both physical and emotional characteristics. This has the effect of turning girls into mere objects, while boys are seen by girls as whole people-"

..."You're so hot! I wish you'd shut up and take off your clothes."
..."what we have here is a very interesting case study- a female objectifying me, a male. It's so unusual that I can only assume you're making an attempt at humor." ..."I'm not kidding! Take off your clothes."

Profanity Count

Ass 13 Bitch 10 Fuck 24 Piss 19 Shit 29

Generated by BookLooks.org 