

Anaphora as a main literary device in looking for alaska

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Logic & Logos Appeals

Green begins his argument with the illuminating aphorism “Text is meaningless without context,” and continues to deconstruct the rationale behind the challenging and banning of novels in general. “[W]hat usually happens with *Looking for Alaska* is that a parent chose one particular page of the novel to an administrator and then the book gets banned without anyone who objects to it having read more than that one particular page” (0: 52). His frustration is fueled by the administrator’s unwillingness to question the challenger’s motives and look deeper within the novel for context.

Green then does what many administrators will not; he goes through the controversial passage in question himself and hunts for context. Through doing so, he reveals to his audience that the novel—while it does contain sexual elements—actually sends a message about love and intimacy through these passages rather than including the sexual scenes for the sake of providing erotic fiction.

The scene in question involves a very awkward and ultimately failed attempt at oral sex, which is described in very cold and clinical language—in fact, the entire passage contains only one adjective: “nervous.” And then, in the book’s next scene, two characters have a much more sensually described and passionate but much less sexually explicit interaction (1: 06). . . . So, in context, the novel is arguing really in a rather pointed way that emotionally intimate kissing can be a whole lot more fulfilling than emotionally empty oral sex (1: 36).

Green here is arguing that just because a book contains sexual activity, it does not mean it necessarily has have an arousing intent. Sexuality—as well as offensive language, for that matter—is merely a tool used by an author to convey a specific message. He also uses direct quotes from the controversial passage to overtly indicate his point—that the sexual scenes are not meant to be arousing. In *Looking for Alaska*, the “offensive language” is used to create a realistic depiction of teenagers in an environment lacking adult supervision, and the “sexually explicit descriptions,” as aforementioned, are used to send a positive message about love and emotional relationships.

Shortly following, Green sets about to further deconstruct the arguments against his book by comparing *Looking for Alaska* to other examples of young adult novels. It is at this point where he briefly assumes the same comedic persona from the beginning once again, in an effort to use his humorous comparisons to make the opposing arguments all the more absurd.

Teenagers are critically engaged and thoughtful readers. They do not read *Looking for Alaska* and think “I should go have some aggressively unerotic oral sex.” And they also don’t read *The Outsiders* and think “I should join a gang!” or read *Divergent* and think, “I should jump onto moving trains!” So far as I can tell, that kind of narrow, prescriptive reading seems only to happen inside the offices of school superintendents (1: 46).

This argument uses anaphora as well as an appeal to logos to effectively nullify the claims of those who challenge his book; since a teenage reader

would never be so foolish to think the things Green lists here, it would be equally foolish to remove his novel from schools because of the change his message might be misinterpreted. He repeats the same concept of a ridiculous scenario with a different book, each time increasing the level of absurdity until it becomes laughable and makes his opponents seem quite foolish indeed.