

Lesson 5.3: Methods for verifying a quotation



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- *Using Google Books to verify a quotation*

This is lesson 5.3 and we're going to talk about another method for validating things when you want to check on their credibility or where the authority was or where they came from. One of the techniques is to use double quotes as a way to get particular strings and we looked at that a little bit in the last lesson but now I want to check on the quotes in a different way. Because often what we want to do is to verify that a quote came from a particular person, because as you probably know there are lots of misattributed quotations. I'm going to show you a specific technique using Google Books that lets you get in a little bit more deeply into this topic.

5.3 Using quotes to verify a quote

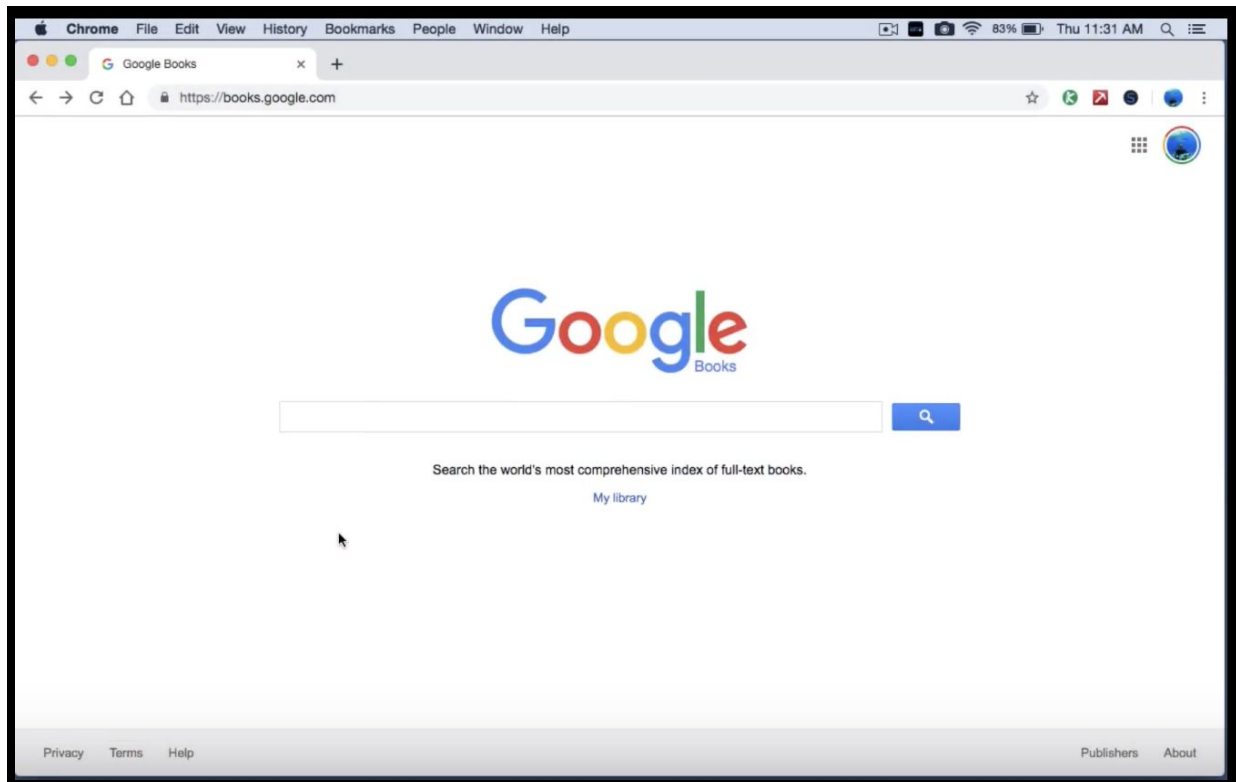


“Elementary, my dear Watson.”

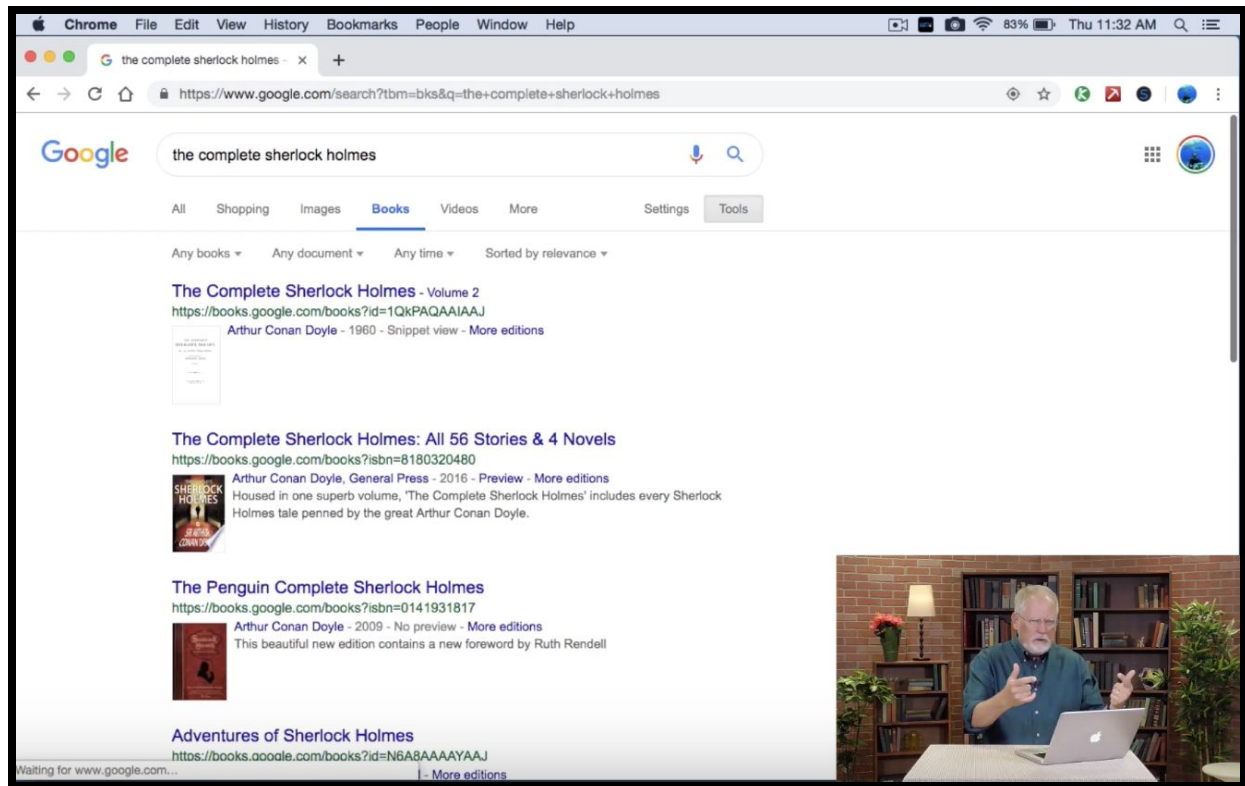
-- did Sherlock Holmes ever say this in the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle?

We all know Sherlock Holmes and we all know that his catchphrase is ‘elementary, my dear Watson.’ Question is how do know if he really said that? How would you find out? Let's do a search for this and think for just a second how would you search for this clearly. What you want to do is to search through the original source material of the Sherlock Holmes stories. You also want to think, well what are the Sherlock Holmes stories? Because as you probably know there

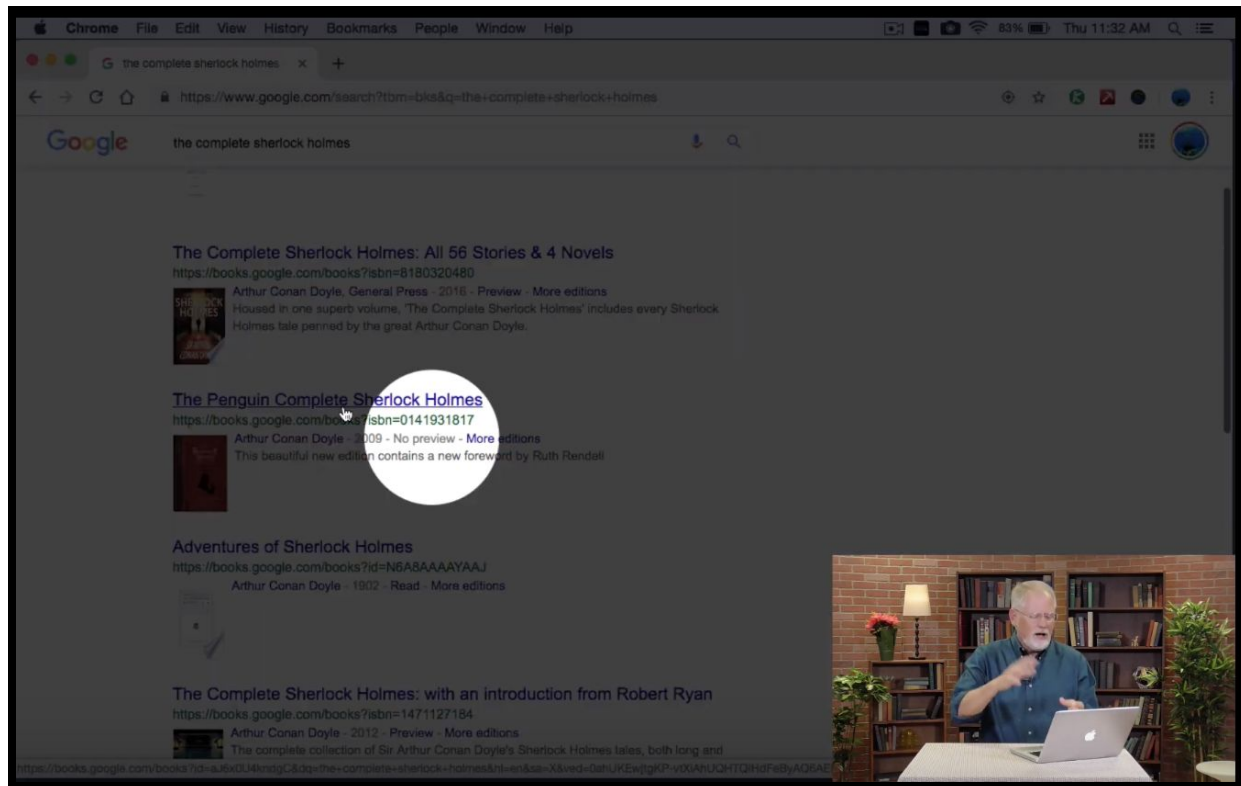
was the original set of stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Since he concluded that, lots of other stuff has come out, there were multiple novels or multiple additional stories attributed to Doyle that were written by other people. So let's just look at for example the canonical first set of a dozen stories and see if Sherlock ever said that. So here's how you do it, in this case what I'm going to use is Google Books.



Now Google Books as you probably know is a collection of all the books that Google has scanned over time. There are several million of them in the repository. So what we can do when we want to search for all the Sherlock Holmes quotations is a search for the collected works of or the complete edition or something like that. So in this case I'm going to search for [the complete Sherlock Holmes] like that.



You can try different versions of this but basically what I'm going to do is now I've got lots and lots of books including different versions of this, that and the other thing. One thing to know, however, is that Google Books has different kinds of copyright restrictions. Some of these books you can't actually read, so for example, this one right here has no preview, it's in copyright; the author or the copyright holder has said you can't show that.



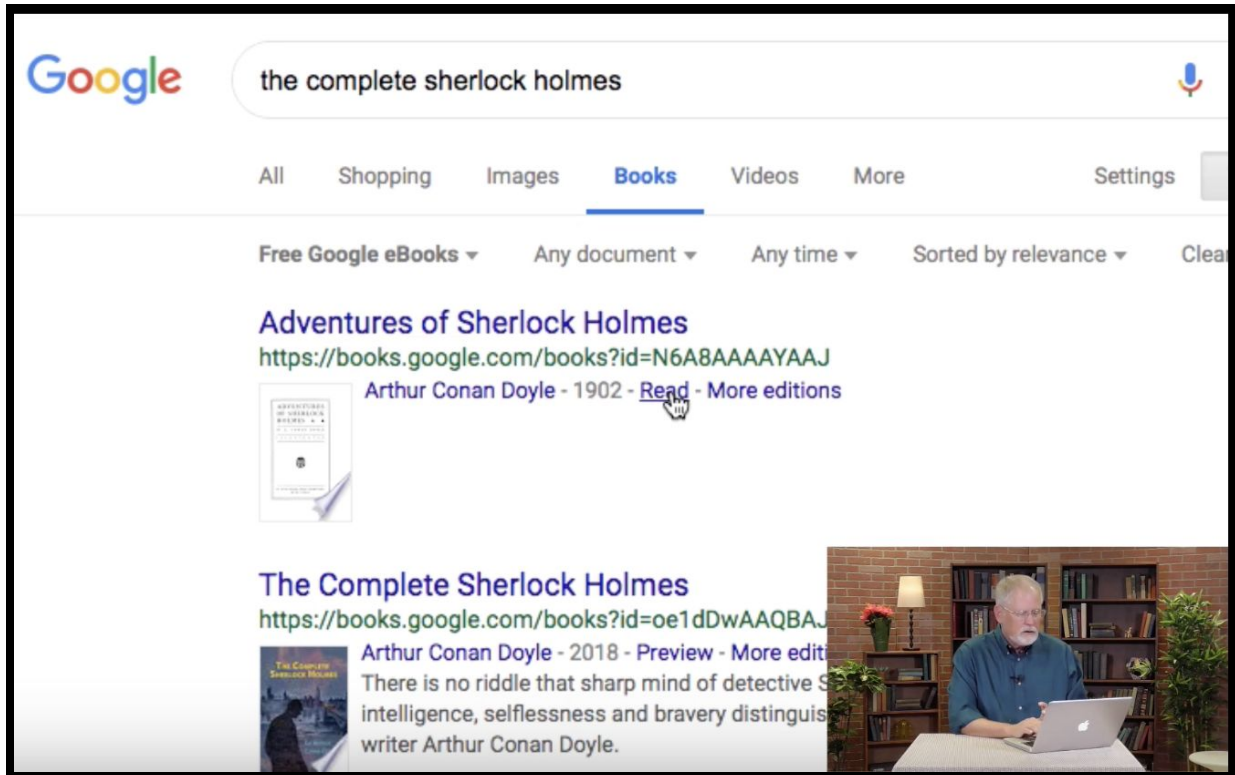
That's fine so what we want to do is find versions of the collected works that we can search that we can read.

5.3 Using Google Books to verify a quote

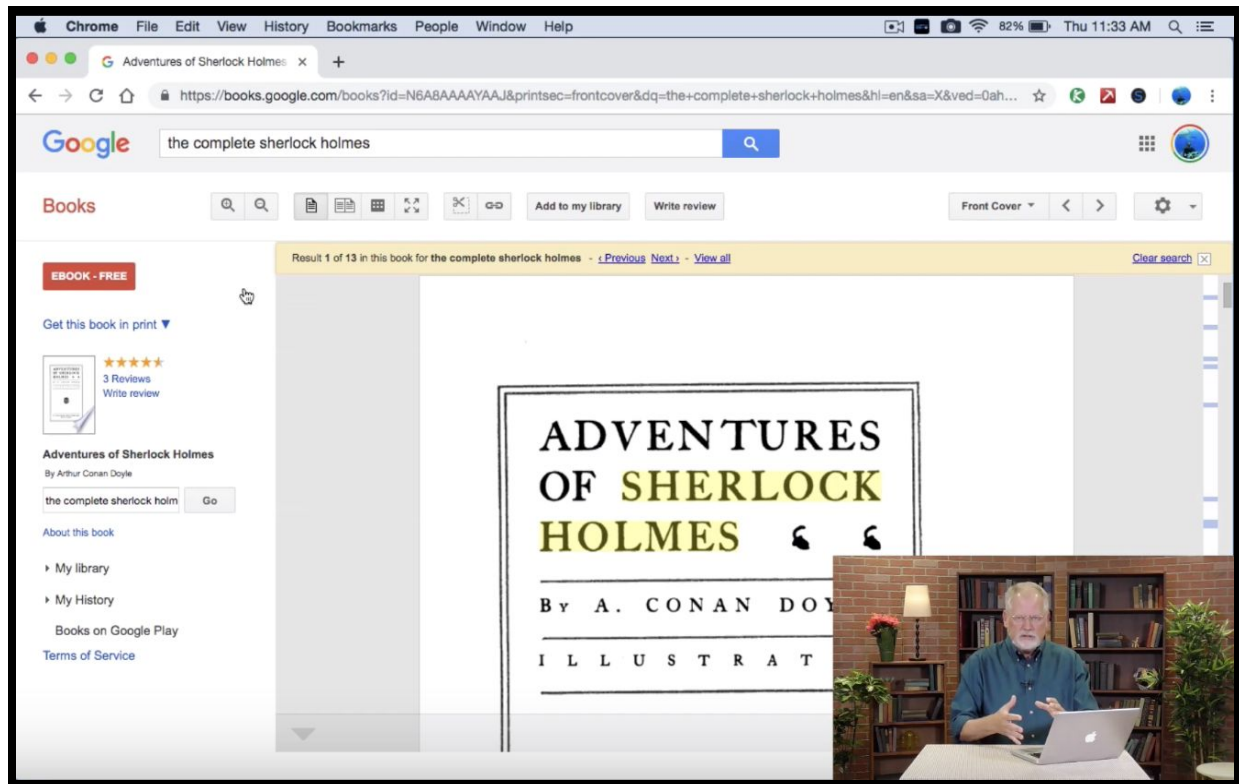


The screenshot shows the Google Books search results for "the complete sherlock holmes". The search bar at the top contains the text "the complete sherlock holmes". Below the search bar, the "Books" tab is selected and highlighted with a red box. A dropdown menu is open under "Any books", with "Free Google eBooks" selected and highlighted with a red box. A yellow callout box on the right says: "Go to Books and select Free Google eBooks from the pull down menu. This allows you to see and search the full-text". Below the dropdown, the first result is "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" by Conan Doyle - 1904. The second result is "The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes" by Arthur Conan Doyle - 2009 - No preview. A red arrow points to the text "No preview". A yellow callout box on the right says: "No preview means that the work is either not digitized or the copyright holder does not want to display the content." The "Read" button is visible for the first result.

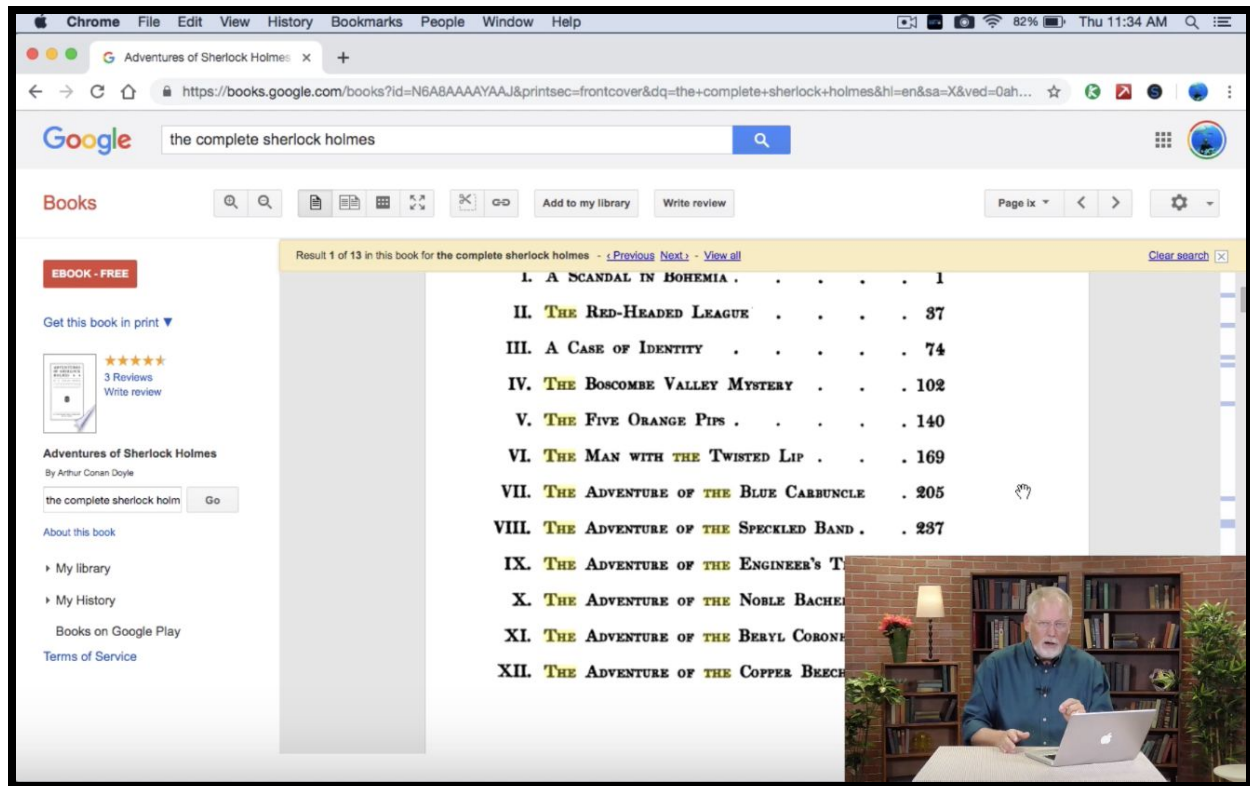
You do that by coming up here to *any books*. This is an option it gives you to filter for different versions of these books so I can click here to see only books in preview, books about Sherlock Holmes that are possible to download and in this case free Google eBooks lets me see all the books that I can see in full view which is what I want because I want to search all their text. So let's try that, I click there and see the very first one here The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes it's in complete view. That's what this means right here that's what *Read* means.



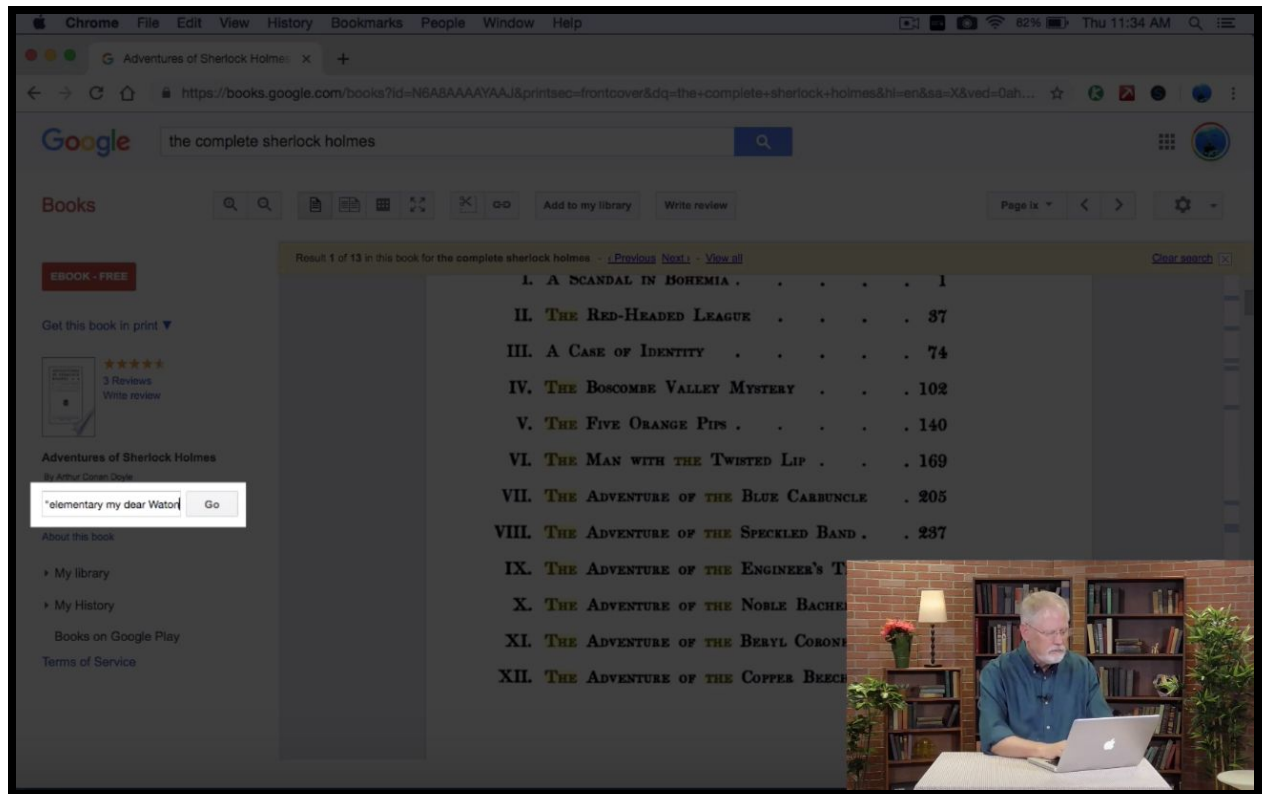
So, I'm going to just click through to that and now what you'll see is the text of that book and as you see over here it goes on and on and on and on.



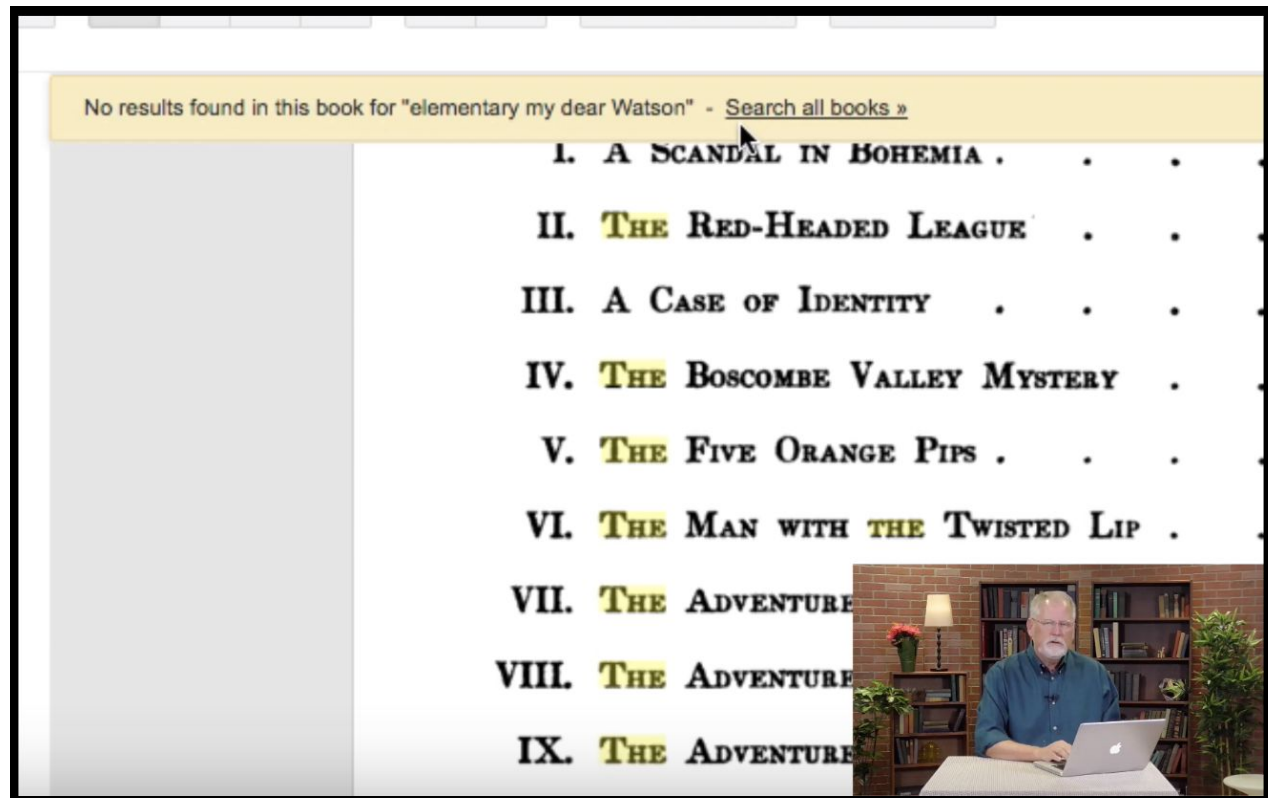
In particular, what I want to see is the table of contents and there they are the first 12 stories so this is in some sense the canonical Sherlock Holmes stories.



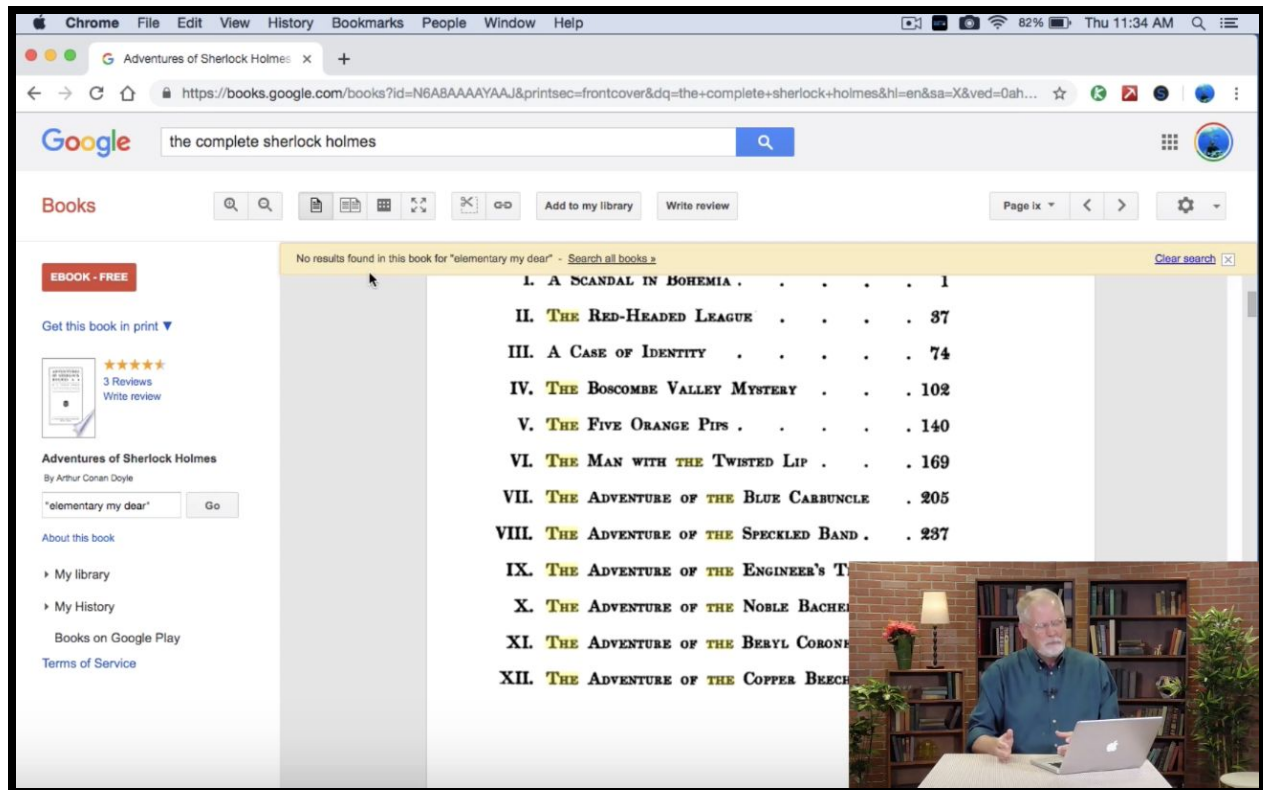
Now, I want to search for 'elementary my dear Watson'; the way you do that is by using this search inside of the book. I'm going to say 'elementary my dear Watson' like that so that's the phrase right.



So, now if I say go, hmm notice that up here? It says no results found in this book for 'elementary my dear Watson.'



That's odd, so maybe, maybe I misspelled, maybe I got the phrase wrong so I'm going to try 'elementary my dear.' Maybe it's an attribution from that, so I search for that it says no results found in this book.



See what this is saying, here you've actually proven the negative. We were able to search through the collected works of Sherlock Holmes, or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle about Sherlock Holmes and discovered that that phrase is never uttered anywhere in those books, anywhere in the canonical collection. You can do this with other kinds of collected works, you can verify for example the collected works of say Charles Darwin or name your favorite author. So this property that people have of creating collections, creating entire sets of books which are complete and intact is incredibly useful thing for verifying quotations.

The other thing you can do is to search for phrase finder or quote investigator or these different services, these different collections of people who do research on just quotations. How would you find that? Google it. You do one more search and search for something like quote checking, phrase verification, something like that and there you'll find that there are these websites that do nothing but verify quotations like this or dis-verify them in this case. Go ahead now go to the next activity and see if you could verify some of your own quotations.