Front Matter and Other Material Elements
We often think of books as texts, but books are also artifactual objects. Every book object tells the story of its makers and handlers, of how its author was perceived and marketed, and of what its audience wanted and was willing to pay for. A book can even tell the story of its own existence, and some books bring us in touch with the lives of the people who owned and handled them. If we ask it the right questions, an artifactual book can lead to many paths of inquiry and research. Below is a guide for using an individual copy of a book as a starting point for your writing and research.

Examine your book and identify as many of the following elements as you can find. Note that not every element will appear in every book.

Author:
Title:
Place of publication:
Publisher:
Printer:
Illustrator/designer (cover images):
Illustrator(s) (interior images):
Ownership marks:

Marks and other evidence of use:

Catalog Searching
Look your book up in the online catalog, using the title, author, and date of publication: http://search.lib.unc.edu/. Click on the title, and then click "Full Record." Examine the catalog record to see whether you can identify any of the above missing information.
Authorship
How does your book represent its author? How does it sell his or her work? How does it construct an authorial persona through images, design, and text? Does this persona match how you perceive the author today?

Production
Who influenced the making of this book? Was the author still alive when it was published? Who was the publisher and what kinds of other books did they publish? Can you identify any individuals associated with the publisher?

Illustration
Who created the illustrations or cover design for your book? Can you find any evidence that the artist worked with the author? Did the artist create illustrations for other books? Or other visual media? How do these compare with the illustrations in your book?
Edition
Are there other editions of your book? If you can find one at UNC, analyze the two how your edition differs in terms of design, size, intended audience, authorial persona, etc.

Audience
Examine the paratext (any text other than the main text) for clues to who the intended audience for your book was? Also, consider the size, weight, and design features of your book. In what setting was your book meant to be read, and by whom?

Provenance
Does your book show signs of use? Wear and tear? Marginalia? Bookplates or signatures of former owners? What can you determine about who owned this book and how it was treated by its reader(s)?