



Reaction, Resource, Possibility

READALIKE STRATEGIES

GOAL: To create a strategy for compiling Readalike lists for Authors, Titles, Mood, Style, and prominent Appeal like Character, Setting, Tone, and Pace using our understanding of and the language of Appeal.

Differences Between Readalikes and Other Lists:

- **Genre Lists are not Readalikes**

The titles and authors on Genre lists meet the criteria of the Genre definition.

Examples:

Historical Fiction books that were written previous to the author's lifetime meet a Genre definition for an Historical, but the titles may be set in different time periods or countries, or they may be well- or cursorily-researched, or a title may have time-travel elements (Gabaldon's *The Outlander*) but the reader considers it primarily an Historical.

Romance Fiction contains a satisfactory happily-ever-after ending after a conflict in the relationship of the two main Characters. These titles could take place in a variety of time periods or be a contemporary, or even have time-travel and/or vampires in them. The story could have a lot of spicy sex or very little physical touching.

Often a reader that likes **Suspense** will try anything with that fast-paced, page-turning effect (adrenaline) – whether it has an historical context, code-breaking, or financial manipulation in the plot.

- **Sure-Bet Lists Are Not Readalikes**

My definition of a Sure-Bet is a title that transcends Genre and has an array of Appeal elements that are all done very well in concert with one another. Each title on a Sure-Bet list is unique and requires Readalike matches that emphasize certain elements/Appeal of that particular title. However, what all Sure-Bets have in common is that they appeal to Mainstream readers because of the chemistry of their combination Appeal, even when they contain prominent Genre characteristics. Often these titles are great for discussion and appeal across generations or usual personal reading interests (gender, sexual orientation, race).

Examples:

Anthony Doerr's *All the Light You Cannot See* is a good example of a Sure-Bet because even though it is a "long" book (531p), readers perceive it as a quick read because of the combination of CH development, Setting elements, Style shifts, variety in Tone, memorable language, compelling Story Line, and building up of Pace. At least 6 Appeal factors (CH/FAME/STYLE/STORY LINE/TONE/PACE).

Popular books that stay on the **Best-Seller** lists for a long time like Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, and Stockett's *The Help* are very unusual phenomenon because of the variety of audiences that read them. Again, the combination of Story Line, CH, Frame, Style, and Tone marries together. More contemporary examples of this are Rebecca Yarro's *Fourth Wing*, Bonnie Garmus's *Lessons in Chemistry*, and Delia Owens' *When the Crawdads Sing*.

A **Sure-Bet** may transcend Genre expectations for some readers but will not be for Everyone. Someone who cannot imagine dragons as viable Characters will not be a candidate for Yarro's book/series no matter how well Appeal mixes. However, it will become Mainstream because of the publicity and buzz, perhaps hooking people who want the Romance and the Adventure and can live with the Fantasy elements to get it. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* is a good example of a book/series that became extremely popular, was a best-seller, and often was not liked by everyone who picked it up to read it but still stayed in the popular dialogue for a long time and still holds our interest historically.

- **Readalikes are lists that target a specific reader, using Appeal language to describe why they may enjoy reading them.**

- **Define your audience:** Which reader or readers are you responding to? Is age important? Reading or educational level? Writing quality?

- **Define the book or author by the Appeal factors:**

Review the Appeal: What appeal defines this title? This author?

Rank the Appeal by importance to the probable reader.

Define their Appeal relationship.

In most cases, more than one main Appeal will be important. In some cases, the **combination** of one or more Appeal factors is **the crucial element**.

- **Is the Genre/type important?**

Is it a Genre-blend? Romantasy! Horrormance! Cli-Fi! Memoir!

Genre is often a good place to begin because so many resources group titles and authors in Genres and Sub-genre. However, **do not** fall into the Genre trap.

Genre is about readers' expectations but it is only one of the many prongs of your analysis. Some Mystery readers read this Genre because they want to solve the puzzle, and others just want a compelling journey with an old friend (series).

- **What is important about what the author does not do?**

No Dialogue? Lots of white space? Needs a good editor?

- **Read reviews and summaries** of the title and author for uses of descriptive language.

- **Borrow** from the Web, electronic resources like *NoveList*, and Genre text resources; however, always point to the sources and make the annotations your own.

- **Collaborate.** Talk to readers, colleagues. The more feedback you receive the more precise and/or flexible the list becomes as you define it for the audience.

- Each title/author will have a finite number of **TRUE** matches.

These **TRUE** matches will be the easy suggestions; the other titles will need clarification.



- **Write a brief annotation** of your own to emphasize the Appeal.
Simply listing three in order of importance will help define what should be on the Readalike list. Then create a brief, compound sentence.
The Title/Author Annotation makes the connection for the reader.
- **A new Heading** is a clue to the reader that a change from the previous titles is occurring and acts in lieu of an annotation.
Sometimes the Readalike list can be broken into multiple lists—especially for bookmarks.

NOTE: Many of my examples are not contemporary titles; however, they are titles/authors that are still read and referred to by our readers. They also sit in the lesser trafficked stacks (our deep backbench) and sometimes require a librarian or a display to rejuvenate their profile in the collection. Most of you will be familiar with these titles/authors, and if you are not, you should at least be able to note they still may have value to your readers. Sometimes these titles become Classics: For instance, Toni Morrison may now be deceased but almost all of her works live beyond her and are circulating and being read and/or discussed.

Example:

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is a good example of a multiple-themed Readalike because its Appeal covers a variety of themes and Appeal combinations—Pace is the foremost Appeal but paired with Religious Conspiracy, The Divine Feminine, Art & Historical Mysteries, and/or just Thriller lovers who thirst for non-stop action, a commanding protagonist, and stunning and detailed settings. My Readalike list has several headings, and the primary Appeal is underlined and is the main annotation that follows the title: *If You Liked the Da Vinci Code...* I use the headings as Thematic divisions:

Religious Conspiracy: Berry, Steve. *The Templar Legacy*; Mosse, Kate. *Labyrinth*

The Divine Feminine: Tarr, Judith. *White Mare's Daughter*; Wood, Barbara. *The Prophetess*

Art & Historical Mysteries: Neville, Katherine. *The Eight*; Pears, Iain. *The Raphael Affair*

Thrillers for Every Taste: Reich, Christopher—financial; Fasman, Jon. *The Geographer's Library*

How can I loop this into a more contemporary popular title? Danielle Trussoni's *The Puzzle Master* (2023) (*Puzzle Box* [10/2024]) combines the Religious Conspiracy and the Code aspect well with current technology, an intriguing Plot, compelling CH, and atmospheric Settings. If a reader wanted more like this, I would go back to *The Da Vinci Code* for inspiration on other suggestions.

- Once you have done the work—**periodically reassess** the currency of the list—add new titles, delete those that are no longer available, etc.
- **Make these lists available** to your staff as resources—use a Google Doc share, etc.



AUTHOR READALIKES

- **Start with authors that have an overwhelming popularity in order to hone your skills**—there will be more resources already out there and their reviews will reference other authors for you to explore.
 - Choose Best-Seller listees and authors that write popular series, who always generate Hold requests (many demanding multiple copies for your collection), and who are saturating the airwaves, *TikTok*, etc.
 - New authors being prominently touted by online or national book discussions like *Reese's Book Club* or have a more local presence are very good candidates for Readalikes since the hold requests build quickly and having an alternate suggestion is good customer service.
- **Find** a catalog summary, a review, a list, or do a *NoveList* search and analyze the authors/titles they suggest: Look for the link to Appeal (World War II, strong female, Romance, etc.) and find other authors/titles that are not on the list that you judge worthy of being a Readalike.
 - Is it working for readers because it is quickly paced? Has good procedural/spycraft details? Meta-references and allusions to literature, music, art? etc.
- Make your own Appeal list and look for other books that have at least two to three of those elements.
 - Is this book part of a series? Does this author consistently re-visit these Appeal elements? Are the Settings different but other Appeal remains the same? etc.
- **Try to begin with three Author Readalikes, and explain why in your annotation.**
 - Use others' suggestions—but make the connections to Appeal and elucidate those connections. I prefer to start with a series 1st book if applicable.
- Either list the Author with categories if the author writes more than one Genre/Style OR
Only zero into one Genre or Aspect if you feel it is more effective. It may not matter.
 - James Patterson co-writes gentle relationship stories, thrillers, procedurals, and nonfiction.
- Often, authors/titles on Readalike lists and the author you are matching can become a compelling argument to read each other, allowing the reader to discover older writers, backlisted titles that are always on the shelf, and sometimes, forgotten Classics.
- Mix it up—add other parts of the collection: Nonfiction, different audiences (Children, YA), Formats (audio/streaming) when appropriate and to add depth to the Readalike.



Examples:

*If you liked James Michener's Epics with multiple time periods and characters that showcase the history; novels that are educational and entertaining, then try: Edward Rutherfurd, Frank Delaney, Janet Dailey's *The Great Alone*, Ken Follett's *The Pillars of the Earth*, Leon Uris's *Trinity*, William Martin, Barbara Wood's *Blessing Stone*, and Nancy Zaroulis's *Massachusetts*. I include the title with an author when I want to make the distinction that not all the author's works may meet the criteria. The list also includes a brief one-line annotation for each author or author/title. I have underlined the Appeal summation. **Contemporary Hook:** Rutherfurd is still publishing; Verghese's *Covenant of Water* (2023) has that sweeping historical overview, enchanting CHs, and indelible setting and thematic complexity. Paul Harding is also an author in the same vein (*This Other Eden* 2024) whose stories are often shorter.*

*If you like Janet Evanovich try...hilarious, sexy, caper-like adventures that are really about the relationships in a suburban setting: Tori Carrington's *Sofie Metropolis*; Lisa Lutz's *The Spellman Files*; Sarah Strohmeier's *Bubbles Unbound*. **Contemporary Hook:** Ellie Cosimano's *Finlay Donovan is Killing it* (2021); Jesse Q. Sutanto's *Dial A for Aunties* (2021); Gigi Pandian's *Under Lock and Skelton Key* (2022).*

SHARING READALIKES with the READER

LISTEN

Respond to what the reader is telling you.

Ignore the fact that you have a great list you just created unless it fits the reader.

LABEL

Mark the books on the list MOST like what the reader has requested.

Suggest where to start on the list.

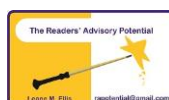
Add that the audio is particularly good on this title, etc.

LEAD

Take the reader to the books.

Leave the lists out on displays and at service desks, and link to your websites/blogs.

When possible, connect Web lists to the catalog.



AUTHOR CHOICE ASSIGNMENT: Note that your Choice assignment has three (3) parts for each Readalike module and departs from previous Choice assignments:

1.) Please choose one or more titles from an Author from either the suggested list on this next page, or one that you choose yourself after clearing it with Leane.

2.) Claim your Choice Author as soon as possible with Leane because we are trying to avoid duplicating Authors.

3.) Provide at least one to three (1-3) Readalikes for that Author based on the Appeal of the book you read as well as write a brief review on our blog under Submit Choice Titles above.

Some authors listed have bibliographies in a variety of Genres/Styles so pick one Genre/Style if that is the case. This Readalike Strategy sheet will be shared on Google Group and on our blog.

Why is the Author on this list? No matter what the budget, the library will buy at least one copy of this author's newest title.

Margaret Atwood	Elly Griffiths	Laura Lippman	Nora Roberts
Fredrik Bachman	John Grisham	Emily St. John Mandel	Rainbow Rowell
David Baldacci	Jasmine Guillory	George R.R. Martin	Riley Sager
Elizabeth Berg	Kristin Hannah	James McBride	John Scalzi
Chris Bohjalian	Rachel Hawkins	Alexander McCall Smith	Lisa Scottoline
C.J. Box	Elin Hilderbrand	Sivia Moreno-Garcia	Lisa See
Geraldine Brooks	Helen Hoang	Liane Moriarty	Daniel Silva
Lee Child	Colleen Hoover	JoJo Moyes	Zadie Smith
Alyssa Cole	Anthony Horowitz	Patrick Ness	Nancy Springer
Michael Connelly	Eloisa James	Richard Osman	Danielle Steel
Fiona Davis	Iris Johansen	Ann Patchett	Elizabeth Strout
Anthony Doerr	Stephen Graham Jones	James Patterson	Donna Tartt
Lucy Foley	Stephen King	Louise Penny	Amor Towles
Tana French	Barbara Kingsolver	Nathaniel Philbrick	Paul Tremblay
Neil Gaiman	T.J. Klune	Jodi Picoult	Ruth Ware
Emily Giffin	Mark Kurlansky	Jason Reynolds	Colson Whitehead
John Green	Erik Larson	Rick Riordan	Simon Winchester