

Defining Your Target Readers

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(Some of the ideas and examples used in this summary were borrowed and modified from the following Reedsy course: <https://blog.reedsy.com/learning/courses/marketing/how-to-find-your-target-readers>)

No matter how good your book is, it's not for everyone. Even the best books in the world are liked by only some people. Other people don't like them at all. No matter what, your book will appeal to some people but not others.

You need to know *who* your book will appeal to. You need to know and understand your *target audience*. Why? Two reasons:

1. Defining your target audience will help you write your books.
2. Defining your target audience will help you make your books visible to those who will want to read them. No one will ever read your work unless they can see it.

*IMPORTANT: This summary is written based on the assumption that you want to **sell** your books. If you only want to write for the fun of writing, or if you only want to give away a few books to friends and family, these principles may or may not apply.*

Step 1: It starts with YOU

This might seem counterintuitive. After all, we're trying to define the people who will like your books, not YOU, right? Wrong. Your books *are* you. Your "author platform" is just as much about you as it is about your books.

Author marketing is about forming relationships with readers. People buy books from authors they know, like, and *trust*. You might be able to sell *one* book to a reader, but you won't sell more than one unless they trust you as an author.

You must be able to answer these questions:

- Why are YOU the best person to write your book?
- What compels YOU to write the stories you write?
- What is unique about YOU as an author?

Understanding these things will help you form a relationship with your readers (through your email newsletter list, through social media, in person, etc.).

Remember, every successful author has an "author platform," which is all about his/her brand. Your brand is YOU and your BOOKS.

Take a moment to write out your answers to the three questions above.

Step 2: Understand your BOOK

The other half of your platform/brand is your book(s). In order to understand your readers, you need to understand what kind of book you are writing or have written.

Genre:

It is crucial to identify and be able to explain your book's genre (and subgenre, and sub-subgenre). Why? Readers are drawn to certain genres because they like the conventions of those genres. They expect to encounter those conventions when they read a book.

IMPORTANT: Most genres have fans that can be *defined by existing data*. For example, a bit of research will reveal that the majority of romance readers are between 30 and 54, and that more than a third of them buy more than one romance book per month (many read several per week).

I did a Google search for “demographics of science fiction readers” and quickly found more information than I needed. For example, “*science fiction readers account for about 20% of the US population, are wealthier than the average, are about 57 percent male and tend to reduce their reading volume between the ages of 45-65. Also—no surprise—SF readers are people who read a lot.*”

This, of course, is just the tip of the iceberg.

You must be able to answer these questions:

- What is your book's genre?
- What is your book's subgenre?
- What are some of the genre conventions your readers expect?
- What are some of the demographic characteristics of the readers of your genre?

Competition:

Knowing your genre makes it very to identify a variety of books in the same genre (the competition). Simply go to the top-selling books in your subgenre on Amazon and look carefully at the other books.

You must be able to answer these questions:

- Why do you think readers choose these top selling books in your genre?
- How does your book compare to the top sellers in your genre?
- Why would a reader choose *your* book instead of these other books?

Step 3: Find comparable titles (comps) for your book

Now it's time to dig a little deeper into those other books in your subgenre to find *comps* (books that are very similar to yours). Finding your comps is crucial for finding your shared readers.

Go to Amazon (or Goodreads) and find books that are similar to yours. This begins with your subgenre, of course, but then find books within that subgenre that are *very* similar to yours. The more similar, the better. These are your comps.

Now look at the “Also Boughts” (on Amazon) or the “Recommendations” (on Goodreads) to find more. Try to find *five to ten* good comps.

Get to know these authors. Look at their book product pages on Amazon—their book covers, their book descriptions, some of their reviews, their Amazon Author Page. Go to each author's website and dig around. Sign up for their email lists (almost all authors have an email newsletter). Check out their Facebook (or other social media) pages, and perhaps follow them.

Understanding these other authors will help you in *many ways*, but for this topic it will help you define your *readers*.

Step 4: Create a READER PROFILE

Many authors like to create a detailed reader profile, as it helps them to visualize their ideal reader. Basically, you create a *reader profile* in the same way you create a *character profile*, except that you use everything you have so far learned about your target audience.

Define all the important details, such as age, gender, ethnicity, profession, where they live, family and children details, hobbies, favorite books, favorite movies, political affiliation, fears, goals and desires, a few of their secrets, and more. And go ahead and give this reader a name.

Use one of the many available character profile sheets if you want to, like the one you can download here: <https://blog.reedsy.com/character-profile>

This ideal reader is now who you will keep in mind as you write your book, as you write your email newsletters, Facebook posts, tweets, Amazon book descriptions... everything!

Example: I think many of my readers (and therefore my *ideal reader avatar*) is fascinated by animals and nature in general (all of my books feature strange creatures, wilderness survival, wondrous landscapes, etc.). So, my email newsletters focus on those topics, and my book descriptions make those elements clear). I also post animal-related content on Facebook.

Example: If you think your readers are prolific readers of romance books, you could include links to your favorite romance books and authors (these other books are not really your competition... there are plenty of readers out there for all authors to help each other). You can also suggest romance books on Facebook and in Goodreads. This is a great way to build *trust* with your readers.

Step 5: Get out there in front of your audience

Now that you know your target audience, you can more easily make yourself visible to these readers.

- Find genre-specific *blogs* and submit guest posts.
- Find appropriate *podcasts* and ask to be interviewed (like Jason's [Sample Chapter Podcast](#)).
- Find genre-specific *Facebook groups* (or other social media) and join in on the discussions (without being pushy or salesy, of course).
- Find genre-specific *Bookfunnel giveaways* and submit your *reader magnet* to be included.

Step 6: Build relationships with your email subscriber list

This is *by far* your most important tool as an author. This is how you stay connected with your readers, allowing you to build that essential long-term relationship that turns casual readers into real fans.

Your newsletter subscribers ARE your targeted audience. Why? Because they would unsubscribe if they were not interested in what you offer them. Every newsletter you send is packed with the stuff you know they like. How do you know what they like? Well, see steps 1-5 above!

What's really cool is that your email newsletter allows you to continually refine your definition of your target audience. Here's how:

- You can include surveys, asking your subscribers what they like and don't like. Are they offended by cuss words in the books they read? Do they listen to audiobooks? Do they like characters who have a smartass sense of humor? Do they like an element of romance mixed in with an adventure story? And so on.

- You can learn more about your audience by reading their replies to your newsletters. I get at least 25 replies to each newsletter. I read and reply to all of them, and I learn from all of them. Readers love to tell you what they particularly like in your newsletters and books.
- You can build an *Advance Reviewer Group* from your subscribers. These “elite” readers will tell you (in detail) what they love most and what they like least in your books, allowing you to gradually modify your writing to better appeal to your targeted audience.

Step 6: Now give your readers what they want!

You now understand the genre of your book, you have a list of comparative titles, you are familiar with other authors in your subgenre, you have a solid mental picture of your ideal reader, and you have started making connections to your target audience. It’s time to start giving your readers what *you* know they want!

- Establish your email newsletter and start growing your audience by giving them content they love! You will gradually get your newsletter content “dialed in” to what your readers love to read.
- Give your readers *short stories* and other content they love (in your newsletters, with Bookfunnel giveaways, etc.)
- These are the core elements of book marketing. The result is that you know what your readers want, you know where to find them, and your readers will now be eagerly ready to buy your book!