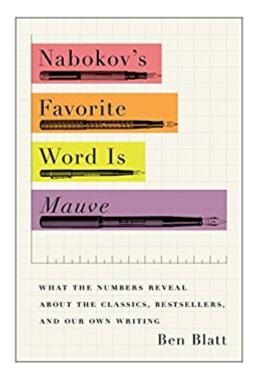The book was found

Nabokov's Favorite Word Is Mauve: What The Numbers Reveal About The Classics, Bestsellers, And Our Own Writing

Synopsis

What are our favorite authorsÃ¢â¬â„¢ favorite words? Which bestselling writer uses the most clichÃƒÂ©s? How can we judge a book by its cover? Data meets literature in this playful and informative look at our favorite authors and their masterpieces. Ã¢â¬Å"A literary detective story: fast-paced, thought-provoking, and intriguing.Ã¢â¬Â¢ Ã¢â¬â¢Brian Christian, coauthor of Algorithms to Live ByThereÃ¢â¬â„¢s a famous piece of writing adviceÃ¢â¬â¢offered by Ernest Hemingway, Stephen King, and myriad writers in betweenÃ¢â¬â¢not to use -ly adverbs like Ã¢â¬Å"quicklyÃ¢â¬Â¢ or Ã¢â¬Å"fitfully.Ã¢â¬Â¢ It sounds like solid advice, but can we actually test it? If we were to count all the -ly adverbs these authors used in their careers, do they follow their own advice compared to other celebrated authors? WhatÃ¢â¬â„¢s more, do great books in generalÃ¢â¬â¢the classics and the bestsellersÃ¢â¬â¢share this trait? In NabokovÃ¢â¬â„¢s Favorite Word Is Mauve, statistician and journalist Ben Blatt brings big data to the literary canon, exploring the wealth of fun findings that remain hidden in the works of the worldÃ¢â¬â„¢s greatest writers. He assembles a database of thousands of books and hundreds of millions of words, and starts asking the questions that have intrigued curious word nerds and book lovers for generations: What are our favorite authorsÃ¢â¬â„¢ favorite words? Do men and women write differently? Are bestsellers getting dumber over time? Which bestselling writer uses the most clichÃƒÂ©s? What makes a great opening sentence? How can we judge a book by its cover? And which writerly advice is worth following or ignoring? Blatt draws upon existing analysis techniques and invents some of his own. All of his investigations and experiments are original, conducted himself, and no math knowledge is needed to understand the results. Blatt breaks his findings down into lucid, humorous language and clear and compelling visuals. This eye-opening book will provide you with a new appreciation for your favorite authors and a fresh perspective on your own writing, illuminating both the patterns that hold great prose together and the brilliant flourishes that make it unforgettable.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å"A hell of a lot of fun Ã¢â ¬Â| There's something cheeky in the way Blatt throws genre best-sellers into his statistical blender alongside literary lions and hits puree, looking for patterns of style shared by, say, James Joyce and James Patterson.Ã¢â ¬Â•
Ã¢â ¬â •NPRÃ¢â ¬Å"EnlighteningÃ¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Wall Street JournalÃ¢â ¬Å"BrilliantÃ¢â ¬Â•
Ã¢â ¬â •The Boston GlobeÃ¢â ¬Å"Nate Silver-esque number crunching meets the canon in this quirky, arresting deconstruction of literature's greatest hits.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •O, The Oprah Magazine Ã¢â ¬Å"Fascinating Ã¢â ¬Â| the book had me humming with pleasure.Ã¢â ¬Â•
Ã¢â ¬â •The Sunday TimesÃ¢â ¬Å"A super fun book for lit nerds Ã¢â ¬Â| [a] wonderful addition to any book-loversÃ¢â ¬â„¢ TBR pile.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Literary Hub, One of the Lit HubÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Ã¢â ¬Å"Best Books About BooksÃ¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬Å"Terrific. I recommend it heartily.Ã¢â ¬Â•
Ã¢â ¬â •ForbesÃ¢â ¬Å"Blatt doesn't just shine a light on writing, he lets in a whole new area of the electromagnetic spectrum. Ã¢â ¬Â| [Blatt] has achieved something impressive with this book. I've read a lot of books about words, but none like this.Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â| Anyone interested in literature or becoming a better writer will find something to like here.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Mark Peters, Dog Eared blogÃ¢â ¬Å"This is really the most delicious kind of rabbit hole ... If youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re a writer, you wonÃ¢â ¬â„¢t be able to resist it. If you know a writer, give this as a gift and find yourself adored. Ã¢â ¬Â| It can be dipped into like a squirrelÃ¢â ¬â„¢s nut hoard, enjoyed a quickÃ Â nibble at a time,Ã Â or dived into headfirst, one fascinating tidbit leading to the next to the next to the next. Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly, Shelf Talker columnÃ¢â ¬Å"Book-lovers will delight in NabokovÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Favorite Word Is Mauve ... accessible, entertaining, and enlightening.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •BustleÃ¢â ¬Å"Delivers a statistical study of literature in the vein ofÃ Â Freakonomics Ã¢â ¬Â| [Blatt] approaches the subject with the right mix of humor, hand-holding and literary love Ã¢â ¬Â| yield[s] insights which would be impossible to recognize on their own.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Paste MagazineÃ¢â ¬Å"Lively Ã¢â ¬Â| worthwhile Ã¢â ¬Â| Read this book thoughtfully. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fun. And, I think,Ã Â the shape of some very interesting things to come.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Times (London)Ã¢â ¬Å"Blatt's new book reveals surprising

literary secrets Ã¢â ¬Â¦ and unexpected anomalies in classic works ranging from James Joyce and Jane Austen to Chuck Palahniuk and E.L. James.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Entertainment WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å"Blatt takes a by-the-numbers look at literary classics and finds some fascinating patterns Ã¢â ¬Â¦ makes a strong argument.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Smithsonian.com Ã¢â ¬Å"Illuminating entertainment Ã¢â ¬Â¦ Literary criticism by the numbers.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus ReviewsÃ¢â ¬Å"Amiable and intelligent Ã¢â ¬Â¦ literature enthusiasts will enjoy the hypotheses [Blatt] poses and his imaginative methods.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å"A statistician uses curiosity and big data to uncover answers to persistent literary questions. Ã¢â ¬Â¦ The result is a lighthearted numerical examination of words that is informative, surprising and funny.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Shelf AwarenessÃ¢â ¬Å"[A] fun and interesting book Ã¢â ¬Â¦ his breezy and engaging volume fulfills its promise to provide the reader with an appreciation or deeper understanding of an author or favorite writer Ã¢â ¬Â¦ and alerts the writer to the trends, patterns and uses of grammar, vocabulary and punctuation in oneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s own writing.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •New RomanticistÃ¢â ¬Å"What fun this is! Ben BlattÃ¢â ¬â„¢s charming book applies numerical know-how to questions of literary style, teasing out insights about cliffhangers, adverbs, and whether Americans write Ã¢â ¬Ëœmore loudlyÃ¢â ¬â„¢ than the British. (Spoiler: WE DO!!!)Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Jordan Ellenberg, author of How Not to Be WrongÃ¢â ¬Å"It was statisticians, rather than historians, who cracked the centuries-old mystery of the Federalist PapersÃ¢â ¬â •and they did it with mere paper and pencil. Operating in the same investigative spiritÃ¢â ¬â •and with the benefit of vastly more powerful toolsÃ¢â ¬â •Ben Blatt probes the literary canon for unexpected revelations and insights. The result is a literary detective story: fast-paced, thought-provoking, and intriguing.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Brian Christian, co-author of Algorithms to Live ByÃ¢â ¬Å"Ben BlattÃ¢â ¬â„¢s delightful book gives us an original big data perspective on great writersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ work. Its humor, insights, and statistical displays are fasciÃ Â- nating to behold, even as it helps us develop our own writing.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Carl N. Morris, Professor Emeritus of Statistics, Harvard University

Ben Blatt is a former staff writer for Slate and The Harvard Lampoon who has taken his fun approach to data journalism to topics such as Seinfeld, mapmaking, The Beatles, and Jeopardy! He is the author of NabokovÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Favorite Word Is Mauve and, with Eric Brewster, the coauthor of I DonÃ¢â ¬â„¢t Care if We Never Get Back, which follows the duoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s quest to go on the mathematically optimal baseball road trip, traveling 20,000 miles to a game in all thirty ballparks in thirty days without planes. BlattÃ¢â ¬â„¢s work has also been published in The Wall Street Journal,

The Boston Globe, and Deadspin.

I absolutely loved this book! Data meets literature and the results will surprise you. This book had me laughing out loud—both in hysterics and delight. There is so much fun information presented and the idea to examine literature this way is innovate and exciting. I loved the inspiration behind the book—the famous Federalist papers/author dispute—and how it guided the concept. This book would make a great read for a book club or a classroom setting—it brings up countless discussions and new angles of looking at the books we know and love (or think we know!). For the solo reader, this book is full of exciting bits of data that has the potential to blow your mind.Perhaps I am biased because lit analysis was my major in college. I devour books on the subject though I'm frustrated with the lack of selection, diversity, and the overall lack of excitement on the subject matter. This book was one of the most thrilling books I have read in the genre. I can say that people with an interest in comparative literature or analysis should really get a kick out of this book. But with that being said, I think just about any book or statistics enthusiast can enjoy this read. The material is not wordy, dull, or complicated. The author does a great job of presenting the data without reaching for absurd conclusions. The information is interesting, fascinating, and even humorous, but is laid out in a very reader-friendly way. I read it in one sitting on a Saturday afternoon and was left wanting more.I had very little to say about this book in a negative way. I wish it were longer. And my least favorite chapter was the one about author names vs. title names vs. co-authors.Though statistics were involved, it didn't really seem to match the rest of the concepts. Overall it was a nearly faultless read. I may have caught a typo on page 70 when Richard Bachman was referenced (wrong author).I would love to see a sequel to this book. Please do Shakespeare (did he write them all? Did he really change writing styles so drastically between James I and Elizabeth I to the point that scholars believe he was actually several writers?)! The Bible! It would be neat to see which parts of the Bible had one author behind it and if it followed a certain time line. I would love to know what the most common noun was in the Bible (or Shakespeare). And Beowulf—I wish there was something to compare that piece to. Are any of the stories in One Thousand and One Nights written by the same authors? Did Thomas Paine write Common Sense? Any way we can compare The String of Pearls to writers of the same time period (I would love to know who invented Sweeney Todd)? Did Beatrice Sparks write Go Ask Alice? What about the O: A Presidential Novel? Goodness I could really go on.Read this book! Highly recommended!

As an undergraduate in the 1960s I learned about a statistical technique called "discriminant function analysis." As a graduate student I learned to apply it in classification (systematics). The method is basically quite simple. You have a sample of X and a sample of Y and are confident of the classification. You are presented with an unclassified sample and want to know if it is X or Y (or intermediate--perhaps hybrid). You measure a lot of characters for all the X and Y specimens and characterize their distributions. You then measure those characters for your unknowns and compare the result to your Xs and Ys. Voila! A classification. Like so much of statistics, the method goes back to Sir Ronald A. Fisher.The subject of "stylometry"--the quantitative description and analysis of literary style--goes back to one Wincenty Lutoslawski, who coined the word in the title of his book "Principes de Stylometrie" in 1890. Stylometry is basically the application of discriminant techniques to writing. It was used sporadically and idiosyncratically, usually focusing in on uses of rare words or phraseology in attempts to resolve cases of unknown or disputed authorship. This book, "Nabokov's Favorite Word is Mauve," by Ben Blatt, is a delightfully readable exposition of the method, but it seems to suggest it originated with Mosteller and Wallace's famous (in the trade) analysis of 12 disputed essays from the Federalist Papers, published in 1963. It never even hints at any antecedents to their work.Six years after Mosteller and Wallace, a literary scholar named Warren B. Austin published "A computer-aided technique for stylistic discrimination: the authorship of Greene's 'Groatsworth of Wit.'" This represented a significant methodological advance and was even noted by William F. Buckley on his "Firing Line" TV show as demonstrating a breakthrough in humanistic scholarship. Warren B. Austin was my prospective father-in-law, and I married his daughter Adrienne the same year "A computer-aided technique..." appeared (1969). Although a practicing biologist, I have followed the fortunes of stylometry ever since and was naturally attracted to Blatt's book. (I recently reviewed in the "Quarterly Review of Biology" a book on converging analytical methods in biology and Biblical scholarship: "The Erotic Life of Texts.") Blatt focuses primarily on recent writers of fiction and their stylistic and linguistic quirks. He did his own computer-aided research on an enormous database. I'm not at all sure of the literary importance of many of his findings, but they are fun to read and mostly presented in easily-understood graphical form. Not unsurprisingly--for Vonnegut fans (I'm one since 1963)--he identifies Kurt Vonnegut as the world champion of anaphora (look it up!). Not surprisingly for a lot of us geezers, he quantitatively demonstrates that popular fiction -- and political speechifying, including the State of the Union address -- has undergone a nearly monotonic "dumbing down" in recent decades. All in all a fascinating read, but I really wish the author had been a bit more forthcoming about where the methods came from.

I like this book a lot. As an avid writer and reader myself, I will say that a lot of the findings don't strike me as particularly unusual upon reflection. However, because we often don't think about what we're reading in the way this book is investigating, it's nice to see it all organized and laid out in such a clean way. In short, once we're told that authors do "x" thing(s), we go "ah ha!" Blatt's writing is clear and easy to read, with a touch of humor and helpful charts/graphics. I got through this book pretty quickly. If you have the sort of 50/50 brain that likes qualitative and quantitative writing, I'd recommend picking this one up.

I never knew I would be so interested in what other authors are writing. This is almost a 'how to' guide for seeing what writing styles are most popular. There are certain words that established authors use vs a novice. It was fascinating how they broke down parts of speech for hundreds (if not thousands) of authors. I would highly recommend this to anyone who enjoys writing and statistics.

I loved it while I was reading it. It was completely enjoyable. But then I put it down for a day or two and forgot it ever existed it until just now (months later). It's full of fascinating little tidbits, but apparently it doesn't make a lasting impression. I should go finish reading it.

Nabokov's Favorite Word Is Mauve: What the Numbers Reveal About the Classics, Bestsellers, and Our Own Writing Warriors Word Scramble: Word Scramble Games - Word Search, Word Puzzles And Word Scrambles (Word Games, Brain Games, Word Search, Word Search Games, Word ... Scramble, Word Scrabble, Unscramble Word) Word Search For Adult 100 Puzzles Book Volume1: Word Search Book Word Find Puzzles Large Print Game (Word Search Book For Adult 1) Lolita - The Story of a Cover Girl: Vladimir Nabokov's Novel in Art and Design Our Favorite Halloween Recipes Cookbook: Jack-O-Lanterns, Hayrides and a Big Harvest Moon...It Must Be Halloween! Find Tasty Treats That Aren't Tricky ... Tips too! (Our Favorite Recipes Collection) Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov's Little Girl All Over Again Our Favorite Road Trip Recipes (Our Favorite Recipes Collection) Prep Expert ACT Writing: Perfect-Score Students Reveal How To Ace ACT Writing God the What?: What Our Metaphors for God Reveal about Our Beliefs in God The Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions About God 100 Locals in Rome: Reveal their favorite restaurants, coffee bars, and secret spots Tom Clancy (Three #1 Bestsellers in One Collection: The Cardinal Of The Kremlin, Clear and Present Danger, The Sum Of All Fears) The Official Scrabble Brand Word-Finder: The Ultimate Playing Companion to America's

Favorite Word Game 40 Sheet Music Bestsellers -- Christian Hits: Piano/Vocal/Guitar 20 Sheet Music Bestsellers: Christian Hits: Easy Piano 1950s - Decade by Decade: Ten Years of Popular Sheet Music Bestsellers Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy (Bestsellers) Once Upon A Bride: 6 Captivating Historical Romances from 6 Beloved Bestsellers 40 Sheet Music Bestsellers Christmas Hits PVG Writing Mastery: How to Master the Art of Writing & Write 3,000 Words Per Day - Overcoming Writer's Block (Make Money Online, Copywriting, Erotica Writing, ... Writing Mastery, How to Write a Book)