



eReviews

By Cheryl LaGuardia

NOVELIST PLUS

EBSCO Publishing, ebSCOhost.com/novelist/default.php?id=3

CONTENT NovelList Plus is an upgrade to NovelList, EBSCO's classic readers' advisory file. It is a component of NovelList Complete, EBSCO's multichannel delivery system involving a library's catalog, website, and email. The Plus database describes both fiction and nonfiction titles, with sections for teens, older kids (ages nine through 12), and younger kids (up to age eight). The file includes such enhanced features as Grab and Go Book Lists (books on a range of reading levels in a variety of interests), 300-plus Recommended Reads (reading lists for teens and kids), Book Discussion Guides (with Q&As and suggestions for further reading), 1,850-plus searchable Award Lists,

ON THE WEB

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Feature Articles, and Curricular Connection articles on a variety of topics. Plus also contains more than 185,000 book cover images and approximately 36,000 First Chapter excerpts.

USABILITY The Home screen has a top toolbar with buttons at left for Home, Authors, Series, Subjects/Appeals, and More (such as Author Read Alikes), and buttons at right for My NovelList (your account for storing information in folders), Help, and Feedback. Below the toolbar is a linked Home illustration (of a reader in the crook of a tree), a Basic Search box for searching All, Author, Title, or Series, and a link to How To Use NovelList (which leads to a screenful of training materials). Below the Basic Search box are links to Advanced Search, Search History, and Preferences (to adjust settings, displays, and output preferences). The screen real estate below the Search section is divided into three parts: at left, a toggle box for Recommended Reading Listing for Fiction and Non-Fiction, at center, a spotlight area highlighting best sellers and their readalikes, and at right, a list of NovelList resources: Author Read-alikes, Book Discussion Guides, NovelList Feature Articles, Award Winners, Readers'

Advisory Toolbox, and Teaching with Books.

I immediately, and predictably, got into big trouble with this file. My fault entirely. The only fault of NovelList Plus is its very nature: I spent hours with this file in utter, rapt fascination. I may be tipping my hand early in the review, but it's enthralling (read: riveting, gripping, engrossing, and so much more). I started innocently enough with a Basic Author search for Robert B. Parker. I got a screenful of information in about one second, including a spot-on description of Parker's writing, Book Appeal Terms and Writing Style (Hardboiled Fiction, Mystery Stories, Fast-paced, Atmospheric, Witty, Suspenseful, etc.), a list of Books by This Author (with sorting and viewing options readily available), Series by This Author (the Spenser novels, the Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch novels, the Jesse Stone mysteries, and the Sunny Randall mysteries), More About This Author (a page full of info, including pertinent websites), and Lists & Articles (with pointers to superb Author Read-Alike Essays liberally sprinkled with links to works cited). Now do you see how I was happily lost for hours?

Next I tried a Basic Author search for Ellen Glasgow and got a list of her books, including a collection of essays I'd never come across before. At screen right a couple new sections appeared: NovelList Also Recommends (with three recommendations) and Search for More (by Genre, Subject, or Location). I chose to search on Glasgow as a Subject, which turned up several biographies of her as well as autobiographical pieces.

Figuring I'd stump the system, I then tried a search for a book I remembered reading as a child titled *Song of Years*. But there it was, by Bess Streeter Aldrich. I never knew Aldrich had written a series (but I do now—the Abbie Deal series). Then I glanced at the NovelList Also Recommends column and saw the name Susan Sontag. Susan Sontag as a readalike for Bess Streeter Aldrich? Can it be that NovelList Plus has erred? No—the link leads to Sontag's book list, which includes her historical romance/love story, *The Volcano Lover*.

To try the Recommended Reads Lists, I went into the Teens level and chose Suspense under Mysteries and Thrillers, where I found *Chasing the Bear*, a "young Spenser novel" that I somehow missed



(I'll be going back to plumb further the Parker section once I finish this review). Then I went into the Older Kids level, and under Humor: Laugh Out Loud, found *Regarding the Fountain: A Tale, in Letters, of Liars and Leaks*, which looks so good I'm going to seek it out and read it.

In the nonfiction Recommended Reads, I went into the Younger Kids level and browsed through the Holiday section to find New Year's Day Around the World, a list of books about New Year celebrations in various cultures. Lovely. In the Teens level under nonfiction, I found a list of biography and memoir graphic novels, a subgenre I didn't know existed. It included *Fallout: J. Robert Oppenheimer, Leo Szilard, and the Political Science of the Atomic Bomb* as well as the classic *Maus: a Survivor's Tale*.

PRICING Pricing is based on a variety of factors including population served, FTE, existing EBSCO databases, consortium agreements, and/or buying groups. The range runs \$1,795–\$50,000 per year for a single institution; ranges for consortia and online institutions may vary. EBSCO Publishing recommends calling for a customized quotation.

BOTTOM LINE For content, this file is a 15; its scope and quality are nonpareil. In design and delivery, it's easily a 12. The lower end of the price range is reasonable; the higher end is extremely discomfiting. So I can give this an overall 10 in good conscience. Highly recommended for public and school libraries and for bibliophiles the world over. I sincerely hope EBSCO makes this as accessible as possible to the libraries, and readers, who need it.

To request a free trial go to www.ebscohost.com/request-information/novelist-plus

Cheryl LaGuardia is the Research Librarian for the Widener Library at Harvard University and author of Becoming a Library Teacher (Neal-Schuman, 2000). Readers and producers can contact her at claguard@fas.harvard.edu