

# Results of a Single Blind Literary Taste Test

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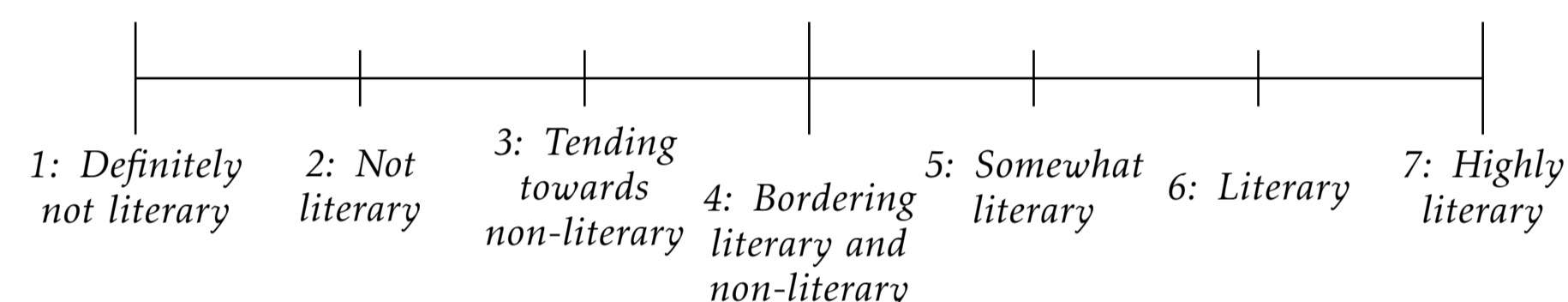


## Previous work: Reader Survey

401 books, 14k participants

Author - title:

- Jessica Durlacher - The hero
- Charles den Tex - Password



Cf. Koolen et al (2020). *Literary quality in the eye of the Dutch reader*. *Poetics*.



Photo: Nguyen Dang Hoang Nhu on Unsplash

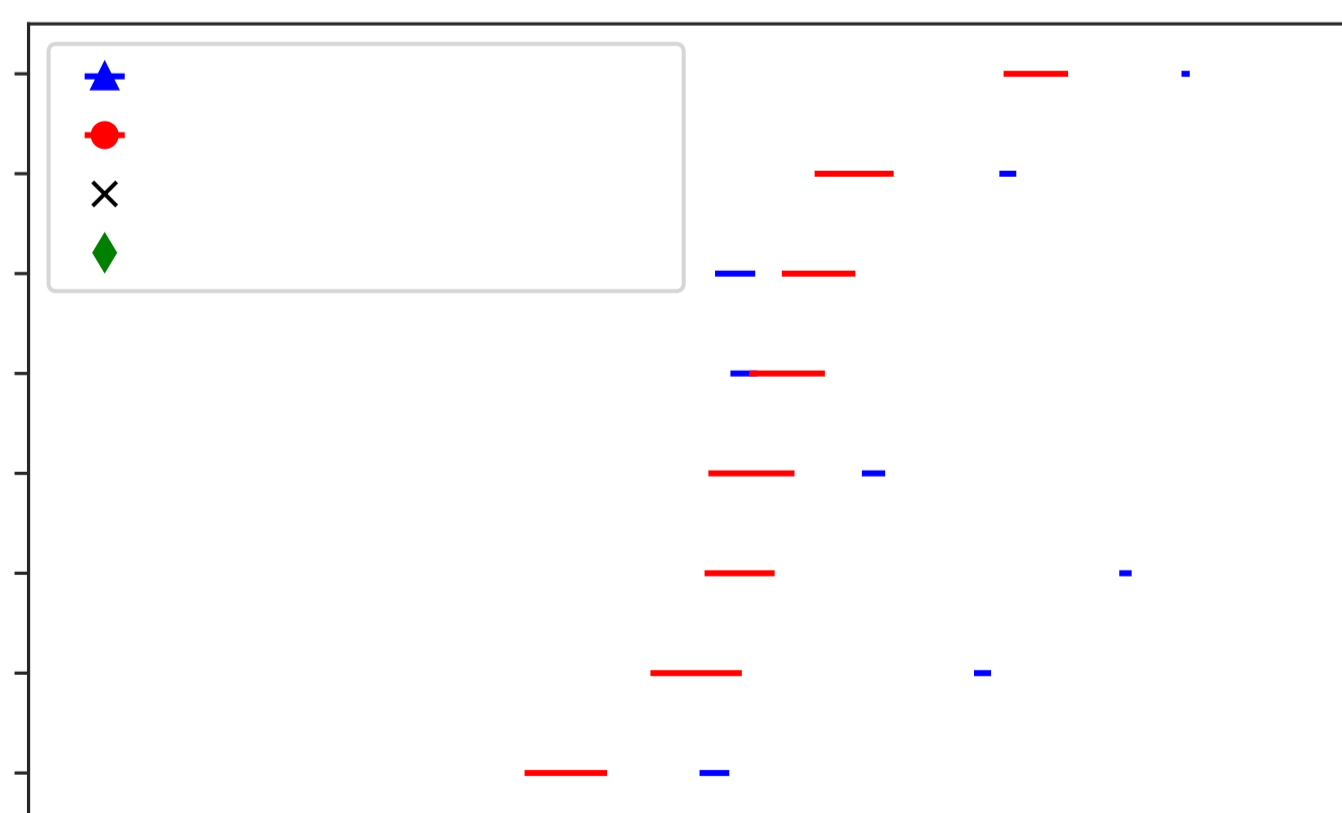
## This paper: Questionnaire

8 books, 48 participants

Anonymized fragments of 250 words (showing excerpts):

- "By his choice for my mother you could see he was a survivor, a pragmatic who followed his instinct [...]"
- "He watched eyes and posture, he listened to a voice's tone, to its breath and the silence. [...]"

## Results: questionnaire vs survey and ML



Cf. van Cranenburgh & Bod (EACL 2017). *A data-oriented model of literary language*.  
van Cranenburgh et al (2019). *Vector space explorations of literary language*. *Language Resources and Evaluation*

## Takeaways

- participants appear to pass the test: moderate to strong correlations of questionnaire ratings with survey ratings
- differences may be due to blind questionnaire avoiding gender and genre bias
- rating short fragments is hard for untrained participants; machine learning is trained, and may pick up on implicit biases
- participants agree on criteria (e.g., word usage), agree on salience of phrases, but sometimes disagree on how literary they are.

Code & data: <https://github.com/andreascv/litquest/>

## Corr. survey vs. questionnaire

