

Adult Reading Roundtable Genre Study
Relationship Fiction: Issue Oriented
June 6, 2024

Issue-oriented:

- Is not a theme; it's an appeal factor
- Often features controversial issues
- Does not always have a hopeful or happy ending
- Can cross genres
- Often good for book clubs—discuss the choices the characters make, plenty to talk about with controversial issues, encourages readers to consider what they would do

Authors to know: Jodi Picoult, JoJo Moyes, Kimberly Lawson Roby, Barbara Delinsky, Lianne Moriarty

What we read:

The Rest of her Life by Laura Moriarty: mother/daughter relationship; mother deals with effects of traumatic incident on daughter's life, care about the characters, ending is somewhat hopeful

The Startup Wife by Tahmima Anam: main character navigates being an Asian woman in the tech field, brains behind her husband's success, starts out idealistic, dark side of start-up culture; racism, gender inequality, cautionary tale, thought-provoking. Read alike for *The Circle* by David Eggers

Queenie by Candice Carty-Williams: advertised as a *Bridget Jones* read-alike, but not really; somewhat similar tone but not as light; likable main character, trauma, racism and micro-aggressions, domestic violence, questionable life choices, contemporary London setting, trigger warnings. Read alike for *Maame* by Jessica George

How to Walk Away by Katherine Center: plane crash survivor, survivor's guilt, depression, exaggerated characters, major romantic element, not as heavy as others in this category but heavier than a traditional romance.

One Month of You by Suzanne Ewart: main character has serious illness and doesn't want to form attachments, spends a month with a man, character driven, big romantic element, hopeful-ish ending, minimal romance on the page. Similar to *Me Before You* by JoJo Moyes or *Inside the O'Briens* by Lisa Genova

A Good Neighborhood by Therese Ann Fowler: a misunderstanding leads to a death, racism, white privilege, environmental issues, many unlikeable, flawed characters, sad ending, intense, uncomfortable, sticks with you, a lot to discuss. See also *Mary Beth Keane* or *Celeste Ng*

Family Family by Laurie Frankel: teen pregnancy, adoption, trauma of adoption, easy read, light-hearted, uplifting, what makes a family, love, lots to discuss, hits you over the head with the issue of adoption, heavy-handed, overly dramatic.

Me Before You by JoJo Moyes: draws you in, too light for such a heavy topic, somewhat like Bridget Jones, unsatisfying ending, idea that disability makes life not worth living, ableist. Try Happiness Falls by Angie Kim

Our Best Intentions by Vibhuti Jain: white teen stabbed by black teen and witnessed by Indian-American teen, black teen is later found dead, question of what really happened, seemed like it would be a mystery but focus is on the relationship of the Indian-American girl and her father, absent mother, racial issues, privilege, crime, assimilation, somewhat hopeful ending. Not a very exciting or compelling story. Who am I giving this to? Try Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng

We Are the Light by Matthew Quick: mass shooting at a theater, story is told from POV of a surviving spouse in the form of letters to his therapist. Grief, trauma, moving on, troubled teen, abuse, shooting, has an element of a thriller but less focused on crime and more focused on moving on afterwards