



# Your Ideal Reader

## Story Overview

### The Story Arc

In 1920s Basutoland, a young boy named Tiki has his idyllic life shattered when his father is murdered by a ruthless ivory hunter, Baas Nine. Enslaved and suffering from amnesia after a brutal blow to the head, Tiki is renamed Penrose and spends decades in servitude. A chance escape lands him in the care of Adeline Boyder, a compassionate white woman in apartheid-era South Africa, where he finds a new family but must live as a "ghost," constantly hiding from a regime that would imprison him. Penrose's journey is a quiet, lifelong battle to reclaim his identity and find his place in a world determined to erase him.

### Tone & Atmosphere

*Finding Penrose* is a deeply moving and poignant historical narrative that contrasts the warmth of human connection with the brutality of systemic injustice. The story opens with the vibrant, earthy atmosphere of a Basotho village before plunging into the harsh, sun-baked cruelty of the Transvaal veld under apartheid. The second half of the book shifts to the humid, complex world of suburban Durban, creating a tone of precarious hope. It is a story of quiet dignity, profound loss, and the enduring power of found family, told with an undercurrent of sorrow and resilience.

### Narrative Outline

- Tiki, a young boy in Basutoland, prepares for his manhood ceremony with his father, Baba, a skilled tracker.
- During Tiki's first hunt, they witness ivory hunters led by Baas Nine slaughter an elephant herd. Baba confronts them and is murdered.
- Tiki is captured, beaten, and suffers amnesia. Renamed Penrose, he is forced into decades of slave labour on Baas Nine's farm.
- Following Baas Nine's death, Penrose escapes by hiding in the pickup truck of Adeline "Miss Ad" Boyder, a kind but struggling single mother.
- Penrose earns his place in Miss Ad's family by saving her daughter from a snake and becomes a beloved father figure, yet he must live in the shadows, constantly threatened by South Africa's Pass Laws.
- After decades of living as a "ghost," Penrose is caught in a riot where an explosion triggers the full return of his memory.
- With the apartheid laws finally beginning to crumble, Penrose, now an old man, is able to obtain his official identity documents, finally finding peace and a true sense of belonging before his passing.

## Your Ideal Reader

To connect your book with the readers who need it most, it's crucial to understand their world. This section creates a vivid, actionable profile of the person who is waiting for your book. This is more than a demographic; it's an empathetic portrait of their inner world, designed to help you connect with them on a deeper level.



**Persona:** *The Empathetic Historian*

**Age:** 45-65

**Profession:** Teacher, Librarian, Nurse, or retired professional.

**Core Identity:** A thoughtful, well-read individual who believes that understanding history is key to understanding humanity.

**Daily Stresses:** The noise of modern political discourse, feeling disconnected from deeper historical contexts, worrying about social injustice in the world.

**Unwind Rituals:** Reading literary book club selections, watching historical dramas and documentaries (e.g., *The Crown*, Ken Burns documentaries), visiting museums.

**Media Habits:** Reads authors like **Abraham Verghese** and **Yaa Gyasi**. Listens to NPR and BBC podcasts. Is an active member of Goodreads.

**Book Discovery:** Relies on recommendations from trusted sources like The New York Times Book Review, book club picks, or staff recommendations at her local independent bookstore.

### Secondary Audiences

- **Social Justice Advocates (25-40):** A younger audience passionate about understanding the roots of systemic racism and injustice. They are drawn to the book's powerful depiction of apartheid's human cost and Penrose's quiet resistance.
- **Readers of Biographical and Family Sagas (All Ages):** This group is drawn to true stories and narratives that span decades. The author's personal connection to the story, revealed in the notes, will be a significant draw for them.

### Reader Pains & Desires

Eleanor feels that headline news often lacks the human depth needed to truly understand the world. She is tired of shallow narratives and craves stories that are both educational and deeply moving. She desires to connect with the past on an emotional level, to bear witness to individual lives caught in the great sweep of history, and to be reminded of the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity.

## ♥ Potential Dealbreakers

The raw, unsentimental brutality of the first act—the elephant slaughter and Baba's murder—is intense. While this reader is not afraid of difficult subject matter, the abruptness and violence could be jarring without proper framing. **Strategic Framing:** Marketing materials (back cover copy, online descriptions) must signal the story's unflinching look at historical trauma from the outset. Use phrases like, "A harrowing, yet ultimately hopeful journey," or "Begins with a brutal act of violence that shapes a lifetime." This prepares the reader for the difficult scenes, framing them not as gratuitous, but as the necessary catalyst for Penrose's profound story of survival.

## Promise to the Reader

The most important question for market success is: does the manuscript deliver a satisfying experience for its ideal reader? This audit looks at where it aligns with audience expectations and where a final, strategic polish could make it even more compelling.

## ✨ Points of Resonance

The emotional core of this novel—the found-family relationship between Penrose and the Boyder family—is its greatest strength and will resonate profoundly with Your Ideal Reader, "Eleanor." This dynamic, built over decades of shared life, loyalty, and quiet affection, provides a powerful and hopeful counterpoint to the systemic cruelty of the outside world. The quiet dignity with which Penrose navigates his life, holding onto his integrity despite the loss of his memory, is an incredibly compelling character arc that delivers a deeply satisfying emotional payoff.

## ⚡ Potential Friction

The manuscript's structure is split into two distinct halves: Penrose's traumatic early life and his later life with the Boyders. While narratively necessary, the sharp tonal shift and the large time jump after his capture could feel disjointed. A reader deeply invested in the world of Basutoland might feel a sense of whiplash when suddenly thrust into the world of suburban Durban decades later.

## 📝 A Polishing Note

The two halves of Penrose's life are beautifully rendered, but the connection between them could be strengthened with a subtle, recurring motif. You already have a powerful one: **the bracelet**. Consider weaving in one or two more brief, introspective moments where Penrose, during his time with Miss Ad, touches the bracelet and experiences a fleeting, sensory flash—a scent of woodsmoke, the sound of a drum, the color of a blanket—that he can't place. This would act as a "golden thread" connecting his two lives, reminding the reader of the mystery of his past and heightening the emotional impact of his eventual memory recovery, making the final discovery feel even more earned.

## Your Publishing Options

### For Traditional Publishing

Your goal is to secure a literary agent who specializes in historical or literary fiction. The manuscript's powerful human story and unique historical context make it a strong contender for book club-focused imprints. To build your submission package, your most critical sections are [Traditional Publishing Path](#), [Your Pitch Toolkit](#) (especially the [Synopsis](#) and [Query Letter Template](#)), and the [Querying Action Plan](#).

### For Self-Publishing

Your goal is to connect directly with a dedicated readership of historical fiction fans. Your author's note and personal connection to the story are powerful marketing tools. To build your audience and launch plan, your top priorities are the sections on [Self-Publishing Path](#), [Media Outreach Strategy](#) (pitching to history podcasts and blogs), [Reader Magnets](#), and the [First 7 Days Engagement Plan](#).



# Positioning Your Story

## Shelf Placement & Genre Fit

Historical Fiction

Biographical Fiction / Family Saga

Tertiary: Literary Fiction

### Current Trends

The historical fiction market continues to be robust, with a strong reader appetite for stories that illuminate underrepresented histories and perspectives. There is a particular interest in narratives that explore the human impact of major historical events (like apartheid) through a personal, character-driven lens, rather than a purely political one.

### Your Niche

Your manuscript fits perfectly into this trend. It offers a unique and intimate window into the lived experience of apartheid, a topic many readers may know about abstractly but have not experienced through such a personal story. The primary challenge is ensuring the book is positioned not just as a "story about apartheid," but as a universal story of identity, family, and resilience that happens to be set within that context.

### Reader-Genre Fit

Your ideal reader, "Eleanor," actively seeks out this type of fiction. She is drawn to historical settings but connects with universal human themes. The blend of a sweeping historical backdrop with the intimate, decade-spanning story of one man's life is exactly the kind of rich, immersive experience she looks for in a book.



### Your Place in the Market

*Finding Penrose* is a powerful work of historical fiction poised to appeal to the large and discerning book club market. It fits alongside novels that explore the human cost of systemic injustice and the power of found family. Its primary audience is readers of literary and historical fiction who seek emotionally resonant stories with a strong sense of time and place. A key strength of the book is its **deeply personal and authentic voice, grounded in the author's own family history, which gives it a layer of truth and emotional weight that cannot be fabricated.**

## Comp Titles & Positioning Notes

Positioning your book is about showing agents and readers where it belongs on their shelf. The following 'comparative titles,' or 'comps,' are recent, successful books that can be used to signal your story's genre, tone, and potential audience.

### *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese

This is a strong literary comp. Like Verghese's novel, *Finding Penrose* is an epic, multi-generational story set against a specific, richly-drawn cultural backdrop, focusing on themes of family, loss, and medicine (in your case, the healing power of belonging).

**Strategic Use:** Use this to signal to agents that your book has literary depth, a sweeping scope, and will appeal to readers who enjoy immersive, character-driven historical sagas.

### *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

This comp highlights the central dynamic of your book's second half. Like *The Help*, your story explores the complex, deeply loving, yet socially fraught relationship between a black man and the white family he serves and becomes a part of, all within a racially segregated society.

**Strategic Use:** This positions your book for a broad commercial and book club audience, emphasizing the powerful "found family" theme and its exploration of racial dynamics on a personal level.

### *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi

Use this to speak to the book's historical weight. Both novels trace the devastating impact of historical trauma (slavery and apartheid) on individual lives and families across decades.

**Strategic Use:** This comp signals that your book is not a light read, but a serious and important work of historical fiction that grapples with the long-term legacy of injustice.

### *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett

This comp is excellent for highlighting the theme of identity. Both stories feature protagonists who, for different reasons, live lives disconnected from their origins, exploring questions of what it means to belong and whether one can escape their past.

**Strategic Use:** This tells an agent your book engages with complex themes of identity, memory, and passing, giving it a contemporary literary relevance.

### *The Good Doctor* (TV Show)

This non-book comp is useful for pitching Penrose's unique way of seeing the world. Like Dr. Shaun Murphy, Penrose possesses a different kind of wisdom—born of his unique life experience

and trauma—that allows him to see truths that others miss, often expressed in proverbs and observations that are both simple and profound.

**Strategic Use:** This helps to quickly communicate Penrose's unique character voice and his role as a "wise fool" or quiet observer who offers profound insights.



### A Note on What to Avoid

Avoid using overly political or academic texts about apartheid. Your book's strength is its human story, not its political analysis. Also avoid comps that are primarily thrillers; while there is tension, the core of *Finding Penrose* is character and emotion. Using a book like *Cry, the Beloved Country* is tempting, but it's too old to be an effective modern comp; agents want to know where your book fits in *today's* market.

**Strategic Use:** Focusing on contemporary historical and literary fiction that deals with similar themes of family, identity, and social justice will show agents you understand your book's specific place on the shelf.

## Pitching Your Protagonists & Principles

When you pitch your book, you're also pitching your characters. Agents and editors need to quickly grasp their appeal and see their place in the market. This section gives you the language to position your protagonists for their audience.

### 1 Tiki Penrose Matsile: The Ghost Who Became a Cornerstone

**The Archetype:** A figure of immense resilience and quiet dignity who survives the theft of his identity and becomes the moral compass for a family that is not his by blood, but by heart.

**The Pitch:** Position Penrose as an unforgettable literary hero whose journey speaks to the universal human search for identity. Emphasize the profound irony of his life: a man made "invisible" by a violent act and a racist state, who becomes the person who truly *sees* everyone around him. His arc is compelling not because he fights back with anger, but because he endures with love, wisdom, and an unbreakable spirit.

#### Character Comps:

Use **Solomon Northup** from *12 Years a Slave* to highlight the core narrative of a free man brutally stolen into a life of servitude and his struggle to hold onto his identity against all odds.

Use **Aibileen Clark** from *The Help* to emphasize his role as a quiet, wise, and loving caregiver who becomes the emotional anchor of a white family, navigating a world of racial injustice with profound grace.

### 2 Adeline "Miss Ad" Boyder: The Accidental Matriarch

**The Archetype:** A fiercely loyal and pragmatic woman who, despite her own struggles, builds a family based on love rather than convention, defiantly creating a pocket of decency in an indecent world.

**The Pitch:** Miss Ad is the heart of the book's found family theme. Pitch her as a flawed but deeply admirable character who represents the quiet resistance of ordinary people. She isn't a political activist, but her simple, unwavering act of loving Penrose as family is a radical act of defiance in apartheid South Africa. Her sharp wit and deep compassion make her a character readers will adore and root for.

#### Character Comps:

Use **Marilla Cuthbert** from *Anne of Green Gables* to signal her role as a stern-on-the-outside, soft-on-the-inside matriarch who unexpectedly takes in an outsider and finds her own life enriched in ways she never imagined.

Use **Leigh Anne Tuohy** from *The Blind Side* to emphasize her fierce, protective nature and her willingness to defy social conventions to protect and nurture a member of her chosen family.



# Naming for Impact

The right names and titles act as powerful marketing tools, setting reader expectations and making your story more memorable. Here are a few suggestions to consider:

## Title Brainstorm

Your current title, *Finding Penrose*, is poignant and speaks to the book's core emotional journey. It's a strong choice. However, for a commercial market that often favors more evocative or sweeping titles, here are some alternatives that highlight different aspects of the story.

***The Zebra's Footprints*:** This title is highly evocative and symbolic, drawing from Penrose's own profound observation. It signals a literary and thought-provoking read and would create immediate intrigue.

***The Man from the Mountains*:** This title emphasizes Penrose's mysterious origins and his epic journey. It has a classic, saga-like feel that would appeal to readers of historical fiction.

***A Borrowed Life*:** This title leans into the central conflict of Penrose's stolen identity and his precarious existence with the Boyders. It's a powerful, emotionally charged title that immediately communicates the high stakes.

***The Elephant's Memory*:** This title uses a powerful animal metaphor to hint at both the trauma of the past (the elephant slaughter) and the long, slow return of Penrose's own memory.

## Chapter Naming

The manuscript currently uses numbered chapters with occasional section breaks like "Stolen Dreams" and "A Borrowed Life." To create a more unified and evocative structure, consider using these thematic titles for larger "Parts" of the book, and then adding a simple location and date stamp below each chapter number. For example:

Part One: Stolen Dreams

Chapter 1 (Basutoland, 1922)

Chapter 15 (Johannesburg, 1950)

Part Two: A Borrowed Life

Chapter 25 (Durban, 1988) This would help ground the reader in the story's timeline and epic scope.

## Evocative Names

**Acknowledge:** You have given the antagonist the name "Baas Nine," which is a chillingly effective and memorable name derived directly from his physical characteristic. It perfectly captures his dehumanizing worldview.

**Identify:** The secondary antagonist, "Stringbean," is descriptive but feels slightly less menacing and more cartoonish compared to the cold threat of "Nine." His name describes his appearance rather than his nature.

**Recommend:** A name like "**Caleb**" (which you later use for the replacement tracker) could be repurposed for this character. Or, a sharper, more guttural name like "**Kriek**" (Afrikaans for 'cricket', but sounds harsh) could convey his wiry, unpleasant nature without feeling like a caricature, making the threat he poses feel more real and dangerous.



# Book Cover

## Crafting Your Cover Brief

A book cover is your single most important marketing asset. It must signal the genre, mood, and core promise of your story in a single glance. This section provides the strategic direction needed to create a cover that is both beautiful and effective.

### 📖 Market Comp Analysis

#### Literary & Historical Fiction

Current covers in this space often use evocative, symbolic imagery rather than literal scenes. They aim to create a mood and signal a story of substance and emotional depth.

**Symbolic Object on an Atmospheric Background:** A single, meaningful object (a piece of clothing, a letter, a tree) is often set against a textured or painterly landscape, hinting at the story's core themes.

**Silhouetted Figures in a Landscape:** Covers frequently feature one or two figures, often seen from behind or in silhouette, looking out over a vast, historically significant landscape (a field, a city skyline, the ocean). This suggests an epic journey.

**Rich, Earthy Color Palettes with a Single Pop of Color:** Covers often use muted, sophisticated palettes of ochre, sepia, and deep blues, with a single, striking color (like a red blanket or a yellow flower) to draw the eye.

### 🎨 Art Direction Briefs

#### 1 The Seanamarena Blanket

**Core Idea:** This concept focuses on the lost heritage and the promise of return. It is symbolic, poignant, and visually striking. The cover should evoke a sense of deep history, cultural identity, and the quiet weight of memory.

##### Key Elements:

The central image is a traditional Basotho Seanamarena blanket, its iconic maize pattern clearly visible, draped over a simple, rustic wooden stool.

Resting on the blanket is a single, aged beaded bracelet.

The background is a soft-focus, painterly texture that suggests the red earth of Basutoland or the interior of a simple hut.

A single, dramatic shaft of light illuminates the blanket and bracelet.

##### Mood & Palette:

**Mood:** Nostalgic, poignant, hopeful, dignified.

**Palette:** The deep reds, blacks, and golds of the blanket, set against earthy tones of ochre and dark brown.

## 2 The Two Footprints

**Core Idea:** This concept is a visual metaphor for the book's central theme of racial inequality and shared humanity. It is minimalist, powerful, and thought-provoking, immediately signaling a story of social and emotional depth.

### Key Elements:

The main focus is a close-up shot of two sets of footprints walking side-by-side in wet, red-orange sand or dust.

One set of footprints is from a bare foot. The other is from a formal, polished leather shoe.

The lighting is that of a low, late-afternoon sun, creating long, dramatic shadows from the footprints.

The background is a simple, blurred expanse of the beach or veld.

### Mood & Palette:

**Mood:** Contemplative, profound, stark, hopeful.

**Palette:** A simple, powerful palette dominated by the rich terracotta/orange of the sand, the deep black of the shadows, and the blue of the distant, blurred sea or sky.

## Cover Concepts

### Footprints in the Dust



Professional book cover illustration focusing on a textured, sun-baked African landscape of red earth. Two sets of footprints are pressed into the dust, moving from the bottom of the frame toward the horizon. One set of footprints is from a man's bare feet. The other set is from a woman's polished, heeled shoes. The low afternoon sun casts long, dramatic shadows from the footprints. In the far distance, the hazy purple silhouette of a mountain range is visible.

### The Fading Blanket



Professional book cover illustration of a traditional Basotho Seanamarena blanket draped over a simple, rustic wooden fence post. The blanket is slightly faded and weathered. On the fence post, next to the blanket, rests a single, old, handmade beaded bracelet. The background is a soft-focus, vast African savannah at sunset, with a lone, iconic acacia tree silhouetted against the vibrant orange and red sky.

### The View from the Garden



Professional book cover illustration showing the silhouette of an older man from behind. He stands in a lush, green, sub-tropical garden, looking out past the garden fence. In the far distance, across a hazy city, a majestic mountain range looms against the horizon at dawn. The morning mist partially obscures the view, making the mountains seem dreamlike and distant.



# Traditional Publishing

## Traditional Publishing Path

Your manuscript has significant potential in the traditional market, particularly with literary imprints that publish book club fiction and powerful historical narratives. Your unique authorial connection to the story is a powerful asset in this path.

### The Querying Playbook

- 1 Research:** Use the resources below to build a list of 15-20 literary agents who represent Historical Fiction, Literary Fiction, or Family Sagas. Prioritize agents who have represented books exploring themes of social justice, identity, or have a connection to African or Commonwealth literature.
- 2 Refine Your Query Package:** Your query package consists of three core documents: your query letter, your synopsis, and the first 5-10 pages of your manuscript. Use the assets within the [Your Pitch Toolkit](#) section—specifically the [Query Letter Template](#) and [Synopsis](#)—to craft these crucial submission materials. Mentioning your personal connection in the author bio is essential.
- 3 Submit in Batches:** Don't send your query to all agents at once. Send it to a first batch of 5-7 agents. Given the emotional weight of your opening, feedback on the initial pages will be very telling.
- 4 Track Your Submissions:** Use a spreadsheet or one of the tools below to keep track of which agents you've queried and when. Note their response times and any feedback you receive.

### Resources

- **Publishers Marketplace:** The industry standard for researching agents, editors, and recent book deals. Look for deals in the "Historical Fiction" and "Literary Fiction" categories.
- **QueryTracker:** A database and tool for tracking your queries and finding agents who represent authors like Yaa Gyasi or Abraham Verghese.
- **Aevitas Creative Management, Curtis Brown, Janklow & Nesbit:** These are examples of major literary agencies with strong lists in literary and historical fiction. Research specific agents within these agencies.

# Your Pitch Toolkit

## ? Premise

A single, "**what if**" question that encapsulates your book's core concept.

*What if a man's identity was stolen from him as a boy, and he had to spend a lifetime as a ghost in apartheid South Africa, building a new family while the memories of his first one were just out of reach?*

## 📌 Logline

A one-sentence sales hook that concisely presents the protagonist, their goal, and the primary conflict.

*After his father is murdered and his memory is stolen by a brutal ivory hunter, a young Mosotho boy must navigate decades of servitude and the perils of apartheid South Africa to reclaim his name and the meaning of home.*

## 🏃 Elevator Pitch

A brief, 3-4 sentence paragraph that expands on the **Logline**, useful for pitching in person or in the opening of an email.

*Tiki Penrose Matsile's childhood ends the day he watches his father die at the hands of ivory hunters. Beaten and left with amnesia, he is enslaved for decades on a remote farm. A chance escape leads him to the home of a compassionate white family, where he finds love and belonging but must live as an "illegal" ghost under the constant threat of apartheid's brutal laws, all while the fragmented memories of his true identity fight to resurface.*

## 📖 Back Cover Copy

The 100-150 word reader-facing description for a book's sales page or back cover, designed to intrigue a potential reader without revealing major spoilers.

*In the mountains of 1920s Basutoland, Tiki Penrose Matsile's world is one of family, tradition, and the wisdom of the earth. But that world is shattered when his father, a tracker of legendary skill, is murdered by white hunters. Stolen, enslaved, and stripped of his memory by a brutal act of violence, Tiki becomes "Penrose," a man with no past, living a borrowed life on a cruel farm.*

*Decades later, a daring escape brings him into the home of Adeline Boyder, a spirited single mother in apartheid-era South Africa. In her chaotic, loving household, he finds an unexpected sanctuary and becomes the family's quiet cornerstone. Yet, his safety is an illusion. Without papers, he is a ghost, one wrong step away from prison or worse. As Penrose builds a new life, the ghosts of his past—a fallen elephant, a father's promise, a forgotten*



*sister—begin to whisper, forcing him on one final, dangerous journey to find the man he was always meant to be.*

## Synopsis

The synopsis is one of the most challenging documents for an author to write, but it's a vital part of any submission package. It proves to an agent that you have a complete, structured story with a clear ending. Your synopsis should be approximately 500 words, written in the third person, and must spoil every major plot point.

*In 1922 Basutoland, twelve-year-old TIKI PENROSE MATSILE lives an idyllic life with his father, BABA, a renowned tracker, his mother, and his little sister, Lindiwe. As Tiki prepares for his Lebollo (manhood ceremony), he joins his father and cousin TAU on his first hunt. Their path crosses with that of BAAS NINE, a brutal ivory hunter who has previously used Baba for tracking. They witness Nine and his men slaughter a herd of elephants, including the matriarch, MAMA TLOU. When Baba confronts the hunters to stop the carnage, he is shot and murdered. Tiki is captured, and during a struggle, is knocked unconscious by a rifle butt. He awakens with amnesia, tied to Nine's wagon.*

*Renamed "Penrose," he is forced into decades of slave labor as a goat herder on Nine's farm in the Transvaal. He endures a brutal life under Nine and his cruel wife, GRIET, his only friend being JOSEF, another farmhand who is Nine's illegitimate son. In 1950, Nine is fatally gored by an elephant during a hunt. Griet refuses to take him to a hospital, instead tormenting him on his deathbed before he dies. Fearing Griet's escalating cruelty, Penrose escapes by hiding in the pickup truck of ADELINE "MISS AD" BOYDER, a compassionate white woman from Johannesburg who had gotten lost with her friend LUC.*

*Penrose is discovered at Miss Ad's home. He proves his worth by saving her daughter, MERLE, from a deadly puff adder. He bargains to work as a gardener in exchange for room and board, forming a deep, familial bond with Miss Ad and her three children, MERLE, DELISE, and VICTOR. For decades, he becomes a beloved father figure and the quiet center of their family, moving with them to Durban. However, he lives as a "ghost," constantly at risk of arrest under South Africa's oppressive Pass Laws, as he has no identity documents. He is perpetually threatened by neighbors, particularly the resentful maid HAPPINESS and the prejudiced MRS. BROWN. He forms a quiet, protective friendship with Mrs. Brown's son, SHANE, who becomes a policeman.*

*The threat escalates when Mrs. Brown, aware of his illegal status, threatens to report him. Penrose decides the only way to protect the Boyder family is to turn himself in. On his way to the police station, he is swept up in a violent anti-apartheid riot. He sees Shane caught in the chaos near a police car that is about to be firebombed. Penrose screams a warning, and pushes Shane out of the way just as the car explodes. The blast throws Penrose against a tree, and the severe head trauma triggers the complete return of his memories. He finally remembers his family, his village, and the murder of his father.*

*In the aftermath, with the government beginning to abolish the Pass Laws, Miss Ad helps Penrose apply for his official identity. With his full name and place of birth, Home Office clerk CAROL (Mrs. Brown's daughter) finds his original birth certificate. At 78 years old, Penrose Tiki Matsile is legally recognized for the first time since his childhood. The story concludes with his family throwing him his first birthday party. Months later, Penrose passes away peacefully in his sleep, having found his home and his identity. His funeral unites his black friends and his white adopted family, a testament to the life of love and loyalty he built.*

## Manuscript Hooks

Sometimes the most effective marketing copy is already in your book. These short, memorable lines, or **Manuscript Hooks**, can be used in social media graphics, as opening hooks in reviews, or as teasers in your newsletter. They are effective because they are authentic to the story's voice.

### The Zebra's Footprints

*Baas, it is only that black or white, the footprints they leave in the dust are the same.*

**Why it works:** This is the book's central thesis in one beautiful, profound line. It's philosophical, memorable, and perfectly encapsulates the theme of shared humanity. It's ideal for literary marketing.

### The Nature of Hunger

*You don't know what hunger is, Merle! Hunger is when the goats are gone and the well is dry and you are licking the skins of potatoes just to stay alive. A sandwich is a small price for peace.*

**Why it works:** This line is raw, powerful, and instantly communicates the depth of Penrose's past trauma and his hard-won wisdom. It shows the stakes and the character's profound perspective.

### A Father's Promise

*You have the heart of a giant. A big and brave heart in a man is more important than anything else.*

**Why it works:** This quote from Baba establishes the book's moral foundation and the legacy Penrose carries, even when he can't remember its source. It promises a story about inner strength and integrity.

### The Borrowed Life

*Your very existence here is an act of courage.*

**Why it works:** This line, spoken by Miss Ad, validates Penrose's quiet struggle and frames his life not as one of passivity, but of active, daily bravery. It speaks directly to the story's core emotional truth.

## Query Letter Template

Think of this not as a summary, but as a sales pitch. It must be professional, concise (under 400 words), and tailored to the manuscript's specific genre and market position. The subject line is the first thing an agent sees; it must be clear and conform to industry standards to ensure your email is opened and taken seriously.

**Subject:** Query: FINDING PENROSE (Historical Fiction)

Dear [Agent Name],

*I am writing to seek representation for my [Word Count]-word historical novel, FINDING PENROSE. Based on the true story of the man who helped raise me, this novel will appeal to the vast readership of book club fiction who embraced works like Abraham Verghese's The Covenant of Water for its epic scope and Kathryn Stockett's The Help for its intimate exploration of love across racial divides.*

*After his father is murdered by a ruthless ivory hunter in 1920s Basutoland, twelve-year-old Tiki Matsile is captured, enslaved, and beaten so severely he loses his memory. Renamed Penrose, he spends decades as a goat herder until a chance escape lands him in the chaotic but loving home of Adeline Boyder, a white single mother in apartheid-era South Africa. There, he finds a new family, but must live as an undocumented "ghost," perpetually hiding from a regime that would imprison him. As the years pass, Penrose becomes the family's quiet cornerstone, yet the fragmented memories of a forgotten life—a mountain range, a fallen elephant, a beaded bracelet—begin to surface, forcing a final, dangerous confrontation with the past.*

*As the granddaughter of Adeline "Miss Ad" Boyder, I grew up with Penrose as a grandfather figure. This story was born from a desire to honor the man who was a cornerstone of my childhood, blending family memory with the reclaimed history of the era to ensure his "zebra footprints" are never forgotten.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration. Per your submission guidelines, I have pasted the first [Number] pages of the manuscript below.*

*Sincerely,*

[Your Name]

# Querying Action Plan

## Plan

Querying is a marathon, not a sprint. This actionable, week-by-week plan is designed to help you strategically approach literary agents and manage your submission process for the best possible results.

### Prep (Before Week 1)

- Finalize and professionally proofread your manuscript.
- Use the [Query Letter Template](#) and [Synopsis](#) sections to prepare these crucial documents. Your author's note is a key asset; ensure it's polished.
- Format the first 5-10 pages of your manuscript as a separate document, ready for submission.

### Week 1: Research and Personalize

- Using the [Resources](#) from the [Traditional Publishing Path](#), build a focused list of 15-20 literary agents who represent Historical Fiction or literary Family Sagas.
- Research each agent's specific interests. Look for those who mention an interest in book club fiction, social justice themes, or underrepresented histories.
- Personalize the opening of your query letter for your top 5-7 agents. Mention why your book is a good fit for their list, perhaps referencing a title from your [Comp Titles & Positioning Notes](#) that they represent.

### Week 2: The First Wave

- Send your personalized queries to the first batch of 5-7 agents, following their submission guidelines exactly.
- Create a tracking spreadsheet (or use [QueryTracker](#)) to log submissions, dates, and responses. This is your command center.

### Week 3: Analyze and Prepare

- Review any feedback received. If you have a high number of rejections with no requests for the manuscript, take a hard look at your query package—especially the hook in your query letter and the power of the first five pages.
- While you wait for responses, research and prepare your next batch of 5-7 queries.

### Week 4: The Second Wave & Platform Building

- Send out your second batch of queries.
- Check agent guidelines on nudging. If their stated response time has passed, a polite follow-up is acceptable.

- Begin to build a subtle, professional author presence online. Use the ideas from [Social Media Post Ideas](#) to post about themes related to your book (family, memory, South African history), but avoid a hard sell. This is the first step toward [Building Your Author Platform](#).



# Self-Publishing

## Self-Publishing Path

For a successful self-publishing launch, you act as the publisher. This gives you complete creative control but also requires managing the entire process from start to finish. For a story this personal and powerful, connecting directly with readers is a significant advantage.

### The Launch Playbook

- 1 Production:** This is the phase where you turn your manuscript into a professional product. It involves hiring a freelance editor for a final copyedit and proofread, commissioning a cover designer (you can use the briefs in this report as a starting point), and formatting the interior of your book for ebook and print.
- 2 Distribution:** This is how you make your book available for sale. You'll upload your formatted book files, cover, and book description (use the [Back Cover Copy](#)) to a distributor like Amazon KDP.
- 3 Marketing:** This is an ongoing process that starts *before* you launch. Your author's note is a huge asset here. It involves using social media, your email list, and targeted advertising to build awareness and find readers who connect with stories of resilience and history. The [Keywords & Hashtags to Get Found](#), [Short-Form Video Strategy](#), and [Media Outreach Strategy](#) sections are your blueprint for this phase.



### Key Platforms

- **Amazon KDP:** The largest marketplace for ebooks and print-on-demand. It's essential to be on this platform to reach the widest audience.
- **IngramSpark:** Use this for "wide" distribution. It can get your print book into a larger variety of online stores and makes it orderable for physical bookstores and libraries.
- **BookBub:** This is a powerful advertising and discovery platform. Securing a "Featured Deal" can lead to massive sales and visibility once your book is launched.



### Resources

- **Vellum:** The industry-standard software for formatting beautiful, professional-looking book interiors.
- **Publisher Rocket:** A powerful tool for researching profitable Amazon keywords and categories for historical and biographical fiction.
- **Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi):** An organization offering trusted advice, resources, and community for self-publishing authors.

# Media Outreach Strategy

Marketing helps readers find your book, but Public Relations (PR) helps the media find your story. A strong media presence can build credibility and drive significant awareness. Based on your manuscript's core themes and your personal connection, here are the most promising media verticals to target.

## Book Review & Literary Media

- **The Angle:** Position the book as a powerful, necessary work of historical fiction that offers an intimate, humanizing perspective on the apartheid era. Emphasize that it is based on a true story from the author's family, giving it unique weight and authenticity.
- **Examples:** Traditional outlets like *Kirkus Reviews* and *Publishers Weekly*; online literary hubs like *LitHub*, *Electric Literature*, and *Book Riot*; and prominent bookstagrammers who focus on historical and literary fiction.

## History & Cultural Media

- **The Angle:** Pitch a story not about the book, but about the "invisible citizens" of apartheid South Africa. Frame Penrose's story as a case study in the quiet survival of millions who lived "under the radar." Your author's note is your key asset for this pitch.
- **Examples:** History-focused magazines like *Smithsonian Magazine* or *History Today*; podcasts like *Dan Carlin's Hardcore History* (for a deep dive) or *Throughline* (NPR); and South African news outlets like *Daily Maverick* or *Mail & Guardian*.

## Human Interest & Family-Focused Media

- **The Angle:** Focus on the universal story of "found family" and loyalty. Pitch a feel-good (yet deeply emotional) story about the man who became a grandfather to a family, defying the racial laws of his time through simple love and dedication. This angle is perfect for broadcast.
- **Examples:** Television segments on programs like *CBS Sunday Morning*; online outlets like *Reader's Digest* or *Good Housekeeping*; podcasts focused on storytelling and family, like *The Moth Radio Hour* or *Modern Love*.

## Sample Media Pitch (Template for a history podcast host)

**Subject:** Pitch: The Invisible Citizens of Apartheid

Hi [Podcast Host Name],

Your recent episode on [Relevant Topic] was fascinating. It brought to mind a hidden aspect of South African history that is central to my new novel, *Finding Penrose*. While the world knows about the Pass Laws, the story of the millions who lived for decades as "invisible citizens"—without papers, off the grid, and in constant danger—is largely untold.



*My book is based on the true story of Penrose Matsile, the man who helped raise me, who lived this reality. I would love to talk with you not just about my book, but about this wider historical phenomenon. We could explore how people survived, the quiet acts of defiance by employers, and what it meant for millions to finally receive their legal identity in the late 1980s.*

*Would you be open to exploring this topic for an upcoming episode?*

*Best,*

*Paula Sheridan*

## Where to Find Them

Your ideal readers are already out there, gathered in communities that align with your book's themes and aesthetics. This section identifies the specific digital spaces where you can find and authentically connect with them, moving beyond broad platforms to pinpoint the exact niches where your book will be most welcome.

### Goodreads

**Why here:** The #1 site for dedicated readers. High-trust recommendations via lists, groups, and reviews are crucial for literary and historical fiction.

**Examples:** Lists like *Best Historical Fiction*, *Stories of Africa*, *Book Club Reads for 2024*; Groups like *Historical Fictionistas*, *Around the World in 80 Books*, *The Book Club*.

### Facebook Groups

**Why here:** Dedicated, discussion-based communities for sustained engagement with an older, highly engaged demographic.

**Examples:** *The Historical Fiction Company Reading Group*, *We Love Historical Fiction*, *Literary Book Club*, *Readers of South African Fiction*.

### Instagram

**Why here:** Visually driven, excellent for sharing historical photos, cover art, and quotes. The "author's journey" aspect is very powerful here.

**Examples:** *#HistoricalFiction*, *#BookClub*, *#SouthAfricanHistory*, *#Apartheid*; influencer types: book reviewers focused on literary fiction, history buffs, accounts dedicated to old photographs.

### Podcasts

**Why here:** Your ideal reader is an active listener. Being a guest on a podcast is a powerful way to share your story and Penrose's legacy in a long-form, intimate format.

**Examples:** *History Extra Podcast*, *The History of South Africa Podcast*, *New Books in Historical Fiction*, literary interview shows like *First Draft with Mitzi Rapkin*.

### Reddit

**Why here:** Niche communities with deep, thoughtful discussions. A great place to engage with super-readers of the genre.

**Examples:** *r/HistoricalFiction*, *r/books*, *r/BookClub*, *r/SouthAfrica*.

## Reader Magnets

The foundation of a modern author's career is a direct connection with your readers, and the best way to build that is an email list. A "Reader Magnet" is a free, high-value piece of digital content offered in exchange for an email address, giving potential fans a compelling reason to subscribe. Here are several ideas drawn directly from your manuscript's world.

### Expanded Author's Note & Family Photos

A beautifully designed PDF featuring an extended version of your author's note, sharing more personal anecdotes about Penrose and your grandmother, accompanied by scanned family photographs of them. This is your most powerful and unique magnet.

### Penrose's Proverbs: A Collection of Wisdom

A short, elegantly designed eBook collecting the wise proverbs and sayings Penrose shares throughout the book (e.g., "Teeth do not see poverty," "The earth has a long memory").

### A Map of Penrose's Journey

A custom-illustrated map that traces Penrose's journey from his village in Basutoland (Lesotho), to the farm in the Transvaal, to Johannesburg, and finally to Durban.

### Deleted Scene: A Conversation Between Miss Ad and Luc

A short, exclusive scene showing Miss Ad and Luc discussing the risks and moral obligations of sheltering Penrose in the early days, offering deeper insight into their characters.

### The Real History Behind the Story: A Research Companion

A PDF guide with links to articles, documentaries, and books about the history of Basutoland, the ivory trade in the 1920s, and the Pass Laws in South Africa, for readers who want to learn more.

### Printable Art of the "Zebra Footprints" Quote

A high-resolution digital download of a piece of hand-lettered art featuring Penrose's powerful line: "Black or white, the footprints they leave in the dust are the same."

# Keywords & Hashtags to Get Found

Helping the right readers find your book is one of the most important parts of marketing. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) isn't just for websites; it's how platforms like Amazon and TikTok decide who to show your book to. Here's a strategy to make your book more discoverable.

## Core Keywords

These are the terms readers are typing into search bars.

- *Broad Genre*: Historical Fiction, Biographical Fiction, Literary Fiction, Family Saga, Book Club Fiction
- *Setting & Era*: Apartheid South Africa, 1950s Johannesburg, Basutoland, African historical fiction
- *Niche Tropes & Themes*: Found Family, Based on a True Story, Overcoming Adversity, Social Justice Fiction, Stolen Identity
- *Specific Elements*: Books about apartheid, South African history, story of resilience

## Hashtag Tiers

Use a mix of these on platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

- **High-Traffic (1M+ posts)** #BookTok #HistoricalFiction #BookClub #FamilySaga #SouthAfrica
- **Niche (10k-500k posts)** #ApartheidHistory #AfricanHistory #BasedOnATrueStory #LiteraryFiction #FoundFamily
- **Unique to Your Book** #FindingPenrose #PenroseMatsile #ZebraFootprints

## Where to Use Them

- **Amazon KDP** In the 7 backend keyword slots when you upload your book. This is critical for discoverability.
- **Social Media Bios** Include "Historical Fiction Author" or "Author of *Finding Penrose*" in your bio.
- **Your Website/Blog** In the titles and body of any articles you write about the book's themes or your research.
- **Social Media Captions** Weave them naturally into your posts and use the hashtags at the end.

## Social Media Post Ideas

The key to effective social media is to stop thinking about promotion and start thinking about storytelling. This section breaks down three of your manuscript's marketable moments into a multi-platform campaign, providing platform-specific ideas to spark conversation and generate excitement.

### The Escape in the Truck

#### X (Twitter):

*You're escaping a life of servitude. You hide in the back of a stranger's pickup. They discover you. What's the first thing you say to convince them not to turn you in?*  
#WritingPrompt #HistoricalFiction #FindingPenrose

#### Instagram:

**Visual:** A moody, vintage-style photo of the back of a dusty, old 1950s pickup truck, seen through a hedge.

*Sometimes the most terrifying leap of faith is climbing into the dark. For Penrose, this truck wasn't just a vehicle; it was a choice between a familiar hell and an unknown future.*  
#BasedOnATrueStory #HistoricalFiction #ApartheidHistory

#### Facebook:

*My book, Finding Penrose, is based on a true story. The moment Penrose escaped the farm by hiding in my grandmother's truck is a pivotal one. It makes me wonder: what's the biggest leap of faith you've ever taken in your own life? Let's share our stories.*

#### LinkedIn:

*The 'inciting incident' that launches Act II of a story must be a conscious choice by the protagonist. In my novel, the protagonist's decision to hide in a stranger's truck, rather than simply run into the bush, represents his first active step toward a new life, making the subsequent discovery more impactful. #WritingCraft #Storytelling*

### The "Zebra Footprints" Moment

#### X (Twitter):

*A line from my novel that has stayed with me: "It is only that black or white, the footprints they leave in the dust are the same." A simple truth for a complicated world.*  
#FindingPenrose #Wisdom #Humanity

#### Instagram:

**Visual:** A beautiful, high-contrast photo of two sets of footprints (one bare, one shod) in red sand or dust.

*The sand doesn't know the difference. It takes the shape of a man, not the color of his skin. From my novel, Finding Penrose, a story about the lines we draw and the bonds that erase*

them. #LiteraryFiction #BookQuotes #SharedHumanity

#### Facebook:

*One of the most powerful moments for me in writing Finding Penrose was capturing his simple, profound wisdom. The idea that our footprints are the same in the dust is something I carry with me. What's a piece of simple wisdom from a book or a person that has profoundly affected you?*

#### LinkedIn:

*In character development, a protagonist's core philosophy can be powerfully revealed through a single, memorable line of dialogue. This "thesis statement" not only defines the character but also encapsulates the novel's central theme, providing a powerful anchor for readers and marketing efforts. #CharacterDevelopment #AuthorLife*

### The Final ID Papers

#### X (Twitter):

*Imagine living 78 years without a birth certificate, an ID, a legal name. Then, one day, someone hands you a piece of paper that says you exist. What does that feel like? This is the heart of #FindingPenrose.*

#### Instagram:

**Visual:** A close-up shot of an older Black man's weathered hands holding a vintage-style, official-looking document. The text is blurred, but the feeling of significance is clear.

*After a lifetime of being a ghost, he was finally seen. A story of resilience, identity, and the profound moment of being found. Based on the true story of Penrose Matsile.  
#FindingPenrose #TrueStory #TriumphOfTheHumanSpirit*

#### Facebook:

*As an author, getting to write the scene where Penrose finally receives his ID papers was one of the most emotional experiences of my life. This wasn't just fiction; it was rectifying a historical wrong on the page. It's a reminder of how much we take for granted.*

#### LinkedIn:

*A story's resolution must satisfy the core question asked in the inciting incident. For a protagonist whose identity was stolen, the climax isn't a battle, but the bureaucratic act of reclaiming his name. This demonstrates how a quiet moment can deliver a powerful, emotionally resonant payoff. #Publishing #LiteraryFiction*

## Short-Form Video Strategy

For a book with a strong visual and emotional identity, short-form video is a powerful tool for finding your audience. Your strategy should focus on creating immersive, bite-sized stories that evoke the core feeling of the book. As most videos are very short, each concept below is designed to tell a complete story through visuals and audio alone, using one or two powerful shots to make a significant impact.

### 1 The Promise

#### Visual Sequence & Voiceover:

**Scene 1:** A cinematic, slow-motion shot of a Black man's weathered hand gently placing a single, handmade beaded bracelet on the wrist of a younger white woman. The shot is tight, focusing only on their hands and the bracelet against the backdrop of a warm, sunlit garden.

**Voiceover:** (A deep, gentle male voice, like Penrose's) "Your skin is your blanket of honor. Wear it proudly."

**Scene 2:** A quick, final shot of their hands clasped together for a brief, powerful moment.

**Voiceover:** (A warm, female voice, like Miss Ad's) "Promise me this. Be proud of who you are."

**Audio Direction:** A soft, poignant instrumental score (like a gentle piano or acoustic guitar) that swells slightly at the end. The voiceovers should be delivered with deep emotion.

**Strategic Goal:** To capture the book's core theme of found family and mutual love, and to hint at the profound, cross-racial bond at its heart.

### 2 A Borrowed Life

#### Visual Sequence & Voiceover:

**Scene 1:** A gritty, shaky point-of-view shot. The camera peers through a small tear in a dusty canvas tarp in the back of a moving truck. Outside, a sun-bleached African landscape rushes by.

**Voiceover:** (A compelling, storyteller's voice) "He escaped a life of slavery..."

**Scene 2:** A jarring cut to a quiet, domestic scene. A Black man's hands are carefully peeling a potato over a kitchen sink in a warm, 1950s-style kitchen. A child's laughter is heard faintly in the background.

**Voiceover:** "...by hiding in a stranger's life. But in apartheid South Africa, there was nowhere to run."

**Audio Direction:** A tense, understated musical score that builds throughout the first scene and abruptly cuts to the sound of domestic life (a ticking clock, distant chatter) in the second.

**Strategic Goal:** To hook viewers with the story's thrilling inciting incident and immediately establish the high-stakes premise of his precarious new life.

### 3 The Footprints

#### Visual Sequence & Voiceover:

**Scene 1:** A single, beautiful slow-motion shot of two pairs of feet walking side-by-side on a wet, sandy beach. One pair of feet is bare and Black. The other pair belongs to a white child wearing small sandals. The camera is low, focusing on their footprints being left in the sand, which are identical in shape and color.

**Voiceover:** (A child's innocent voice) "Pennie, why do people build fences?"

**Voiceover:** (Penrose's deep, calm voice) "Because they forget... to look at the ground."

**Audio Direction:** The only sound is the gentle wash of ocean waves and the dialogue. The final line should have a touch of reverb to give it weight.

**Strategic Goal:** To communicate the book's central, profound philosophical message in a visually striking and emotionally resonant way.



# First 7 Days Engagement Plan

[Plan](#)

A successful book launch is about building momentum from day one. This practical, day-by-day checklist is designed to help you activate your key assets and build immediate engagement with your target audience in the crucial first week.

## Prep (Before Day 1)

- Finalize your most powerful [Reader Magnets](#) offer: the **"Expanded Author's Note & Family Photos."** Set up a simple email capture page for it using a service like MailerLite or ConvertKit.
- Prepare 3 core visuals: a mockup of the cover (using a concept from [Cover Concepts](#)), a historical photo of the real Penrose and Adeline, and a quote card graphic from [Manuscript Hooks](#).

## Day 1: Plant the Flag & Share the Heart

- Post the historical photo of Penrose and your grandmother on *Instagram* and *Facebook*. In the caption, tell the short, heartfelt story of why you wrote the book. Use hashtags from [Keywords & Hashtags to Get Found](#). This is your authenticity anchor.
- Pin that post to the top of your Facebook page and make it a highlight on Instagram.

## Day 2: Find Your People

- Join 2-3 of the *Facebook Groups* identified in [Where to Find Them](#) (e.g., *We Love Historical Fiction*). Post a thoughtful introduction, asking for recommendations for books about South Africa, and mentioning your personal interest in the topic. Do NOT link to your book yet.
- On *Goodreads*, add the book to relevant lists like "Books Based on a True Story" or "Historical Fiction set in Africa."

## Day 3: Offer the Gift

- Share the landing page for your **"Expanded Author's Note & Family Photos"** reader magnet on all platforms. Frame it as a gift: "For those who want to see the real people behind the story, I've put together some family photos and extra memories."
- DM 3-5 micro-influencers from [Where to Find Them](#) (e.g., literary fiction reviewers). Offer them the reader magnet and a digital ARC, emphasizing the unique true-story angle.

## Day 4: Deepen the Theme

- Post a short video based on the **"The Footprints"** concept from [Short-Form Video Strategy](#) to *TikTok* and *Instagram Reels*. The simple, powerful visual will stop the scroll.
- In a relevant subreddit like *r/HistoricalFiction*, start a discussion: "What's a piece of 'hidden history' you learned from a novel?"

### Day 5: The "Why" Post

- Create an Instagram carousel: 1) A striking quote card from [Manuscript Hooks](#). 2) A picture of you. 3) A caption that expands on your personal "why" for writing this story, tying into the themes of family and justice.
- Send out your first email to your new subscribers, personally thanking them for joining and delivering the reader magnet.

### Day 6: Media & Community

- Outreach to 3 history or literary podcasts from your [Media Outreach Strategy](#) list using the tailored pitch.
- Go live on Instagram or Facebook for a 15-minute "Ask Me Anything" about your family story and the process of writing the book.

### Day 7: Review and Amplify

- Analyze your metrics. Which post got the most engagement? Where did the most email sign-ups come from?
- Create and schedule next week's content based on what resonated most. If the historical photos performed well, plan to share another. If the video did well, create another one.



# Your Author Career

## Your Book's Legacy

Five years from now, *Finding Penrose* could become more than a book; it could be a touchstone for readers searching for a deeper, more human understanding of history and the enduring power of love in the face of injustice.

### Cultural Impact

The book has the potential to become a staple of book clubs and even high school and university reading lists for its accessible yet profound exploration of apartheid. It could spark conversations about "quiet resistance" and the role of ordinary individuals in challenging systemic injustice. The phrase "**zebra footprints**" could become a beautiful and widely understood metaphor for the intertwined nature of humanity, regardless of race.

### Community Impact

A community could form around the book's core message of found family and loyalty. Online, the **#FindingPenrose** hashtag could be a place where readers share stories of the "Penroses" in their own lives—the unexpected mentors and family members who shaped them. It could also become a hub for discussions on South African history and reconciliation.

### Author Impact

This book establishes you, Paula Sheridan, not just as a novelist, but as a keeper of a vital family legacy. You will be positioned as an authentic and compassionate voice on themes of **resilience, identity, and the healing power of storytelling**. This powerful foundation allows you to write other stories—fiction or non-fiction—that explore similar themes, building a loyal audience that trusts your heart and your perspective.

## Your Book's Next Chapter

A successful book can be the start of a long-term career. Your manuscript contains several threads that could be expanded into future projects, deepening your connection with readers and building a lasting author brand. Here are a few potential paths forward.

### 1 The Prequel Novella:

#### *Baba's Hunt*

A powerful novella that delves into the life of Baba, Penrose's father. The story could explore his own coming-of-age, his deep knowledge of the land, and his earlier, tense encounters with Baas Nine, culminating in the days leading up to the fateful hunt. This would give readers a deeper appreciation for the man whose wisdom echoes throughout the main novel.

### 2 The Companion Book (Non-Fiction):

#### *The Boyders of Johannesburg: A Family Memoir*

Expanding on your Author's Note and the "Truth vs. Fiction" archive, this non-fiction work would tell the full story of your grandmother, Adeline. It could be a memoir about her life, her spirit, and the reality of raising a family in Johannesburg during that tumultuous era, with Penrose's story woven throughout from her perspective.

### 3 The Spinoff Story:

#### *Themba's Law*

A contemporary novel following Themba Matiwane, the young man Penrose helped escape to the Transkei. The story could follow his journey to becoming a human rights lawyer in post-apartheid South Africa, as he takes on a difficult case that forces him to confront the lingering ghosts of the past. Penrose would exist as a powerful memory and guiding influence in his life.

### 4 The Next Thematic Novel:

#### *The Gardener of District Six*

A new, standalone historical novel inspired by the themes of *Finding Penrose*. It could tell the story of another "invisible" citizen—perhaps an elderly woman who tends a secret rooftop garden in Cape Town's District Six before the forced removals, exploring themes of community, displacement, and holding onto beauty in the face of erasure.

# Building Your Author Platform

## Your Author Brand

This book solidifies your brand as an author who tells **powerful stories of resilience, found family, and the quiet dignity of the human spirit against the backdrop of historical injustice.**

Readers will come to you for narratives that are not only deeply researched and historically rich, but are also infused with profound heart and a personal, authentic voice.

## Your Newsletter: The Foundation of Your Career

Social media is rented land; your email list is the home you own. It is your most powerful and reliable channel for connecting with the people who are moved by your work. Building this list is the single most important long-term marketing activity you can do. Here is your playbook to get started:

- 1 Step 1: Choose Your Magnet.** Of the ideas in the [Reader Magnets](#) section, the **"Expanded Author's Note & Family Photos"** is by far your most powerful and unique offering. It leverages the true story behind the novel and creates an immediate, personal connection.
- 2 Step 2: Build Your Gift.** Create a beautiful, multi-page PDF using a tool like Canva. Include the extended note, high-quality scans of family photos of Penrose and Adeline, and perhaps a short introduction from you about what these people meant to you. This transforms a simple document into a precious historical artifact for your readers.
- 3 Step 3: Set Up Your Welcome Mat.** Promote this reader magnet everywhere. Put the link in your social media bios, mention it at the end of podcasts or interviews, and include a clear call-to-action in the back of your book. Every piece of content you create should gently guide interested readers to this high-value, heartfelt gift.

## Premium Content Ideas

For your superfans, consider:

**A "Truth vs. Fiction" Digital Archive** A paid, password-protected section of your website where you share deeper research, more family photos, and detailed annotations on which parts of the novel were drawn directly from memory and which were creatively imagined.

**A Limited Edition Hardcover** A Kickstarter campaign for a special collector's edition featuring a custom cover, signed bookplates, and a bound-in facsimile of Penrose's "Going to the police" letter.

**An Online Workshop** A paid workshop on "Writing from Family History," where you guide other writers on how to ethically and powerfully turn their own family stories into compelling narratives.



# The Bottom Line

## The Bottom Line

This report provides a strategic analysis of your book's market position. *Finding Penrose* is a work of significant emotional and historical power. Its greatest strength lies in its authenticity and its profound human heart, which allows it to transcend the specifics of its setting and speak to universal themes of identity, love, and resilience. To succeed in a competitive literary market, the key is to connect this deeply personal story with the specific readers who are actively searching for exactly this kind of meaningful, character-driven narrative.

This simplifies your entire marketing plan into three core actions:

### Know Your Ideal Reader

Focus every piece of outreach on "Eleanor," the Empathetic Historian. She doesn't want a political treatise; she wants to be moved by a human story that illuminates the past. Every post, email, and interview should answer her core desire: to feel the weight of history through the beat of a single, resilient heart.

### Find Their Communities

Go to the places where Eleanor discusses the books she loves. Engage thoughtfully in historical fiction Facebook groups, on Goodreads lists for book club picks, and with literary podcasters. Your personal connection to the story is your key to opening these doors; lead with the heart of Penrose's legacy.

### Own the Connection

Build your long-term career by creating a direct line to your readers. Offering a precious [Reader Magnet](#) like the **"Expanded Author's Note & Family Photos"** is more than a marketing tactic; it's an act of generosity that invites readers into your family's history and turns them into loyal fans for life.

A powerful first step is to put all three of these pillars into action. Your immediate goal should be to **create your "Expanded Author's Note & Family Photos" PDF and use it as a heartfelt offering to connect with 3-5 history-focused podcasters or book club influencers.** This strategy focuses your energy on building authentic relationships around the true story that is your book's greatest asset, which is the cornerstone of a meaningful and successful author career.