

Reading Poetry in the Age of *milk and honey*: A computational text & reader response analysis of Rupi Kaur's poetry

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Projection Description:

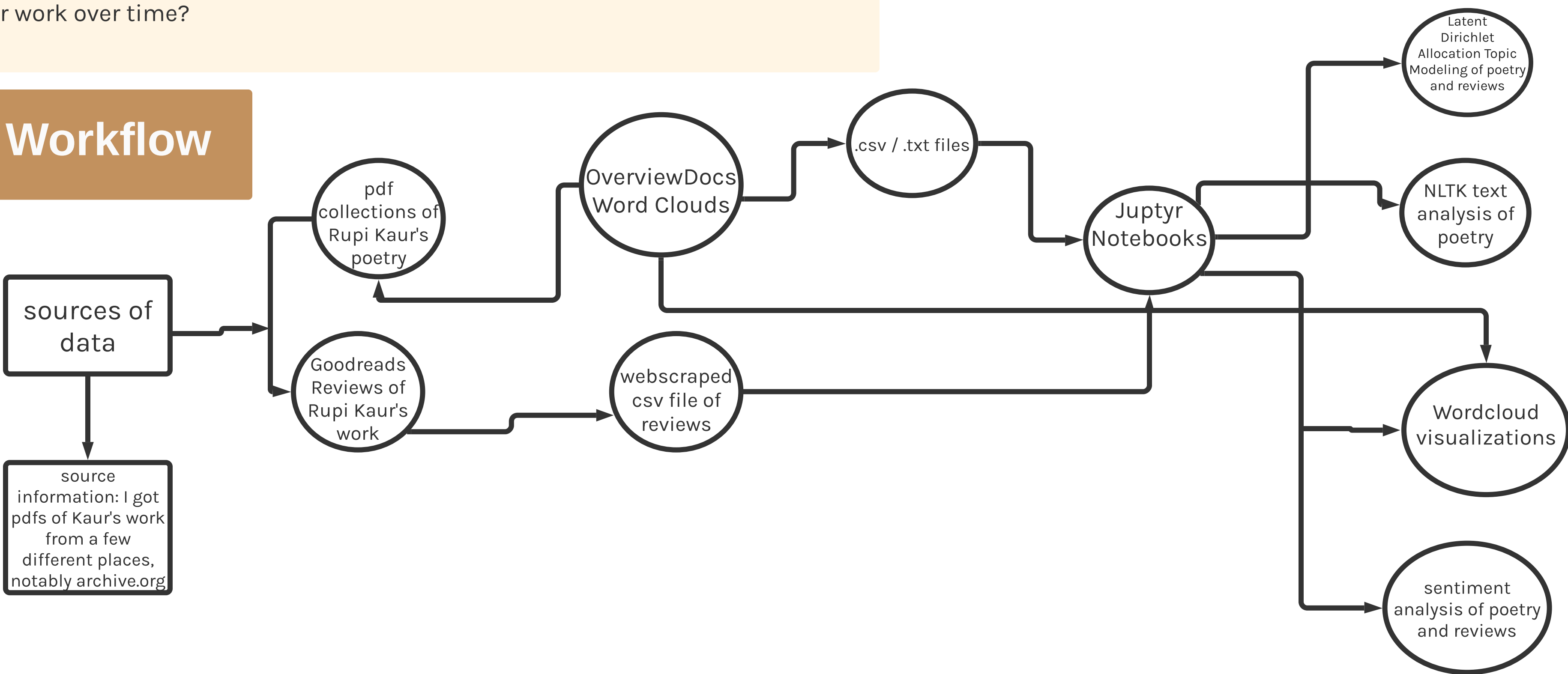
In recent years, poetry sales have increased dramatically, notably after 2014 when *milk and honey*, a poetry collection by Rupi Kaur, hit the shelves and the internet. The goal of this project is to understand what makes Kaur's poetry so popular.

To do so, I am going to be taking a distant reading approach to Kaur's three collections: *milk and honey* (2014), *the sun and her flowers* (2017), and *homebody* (2020). This poster is part of a larger investigation to understand what draws contemporary audiences to poets and their work. The rest of the investigation will focus primarily on community reaction quantified by reviews of Kaur's work on sites like Goodreads and Amazon.

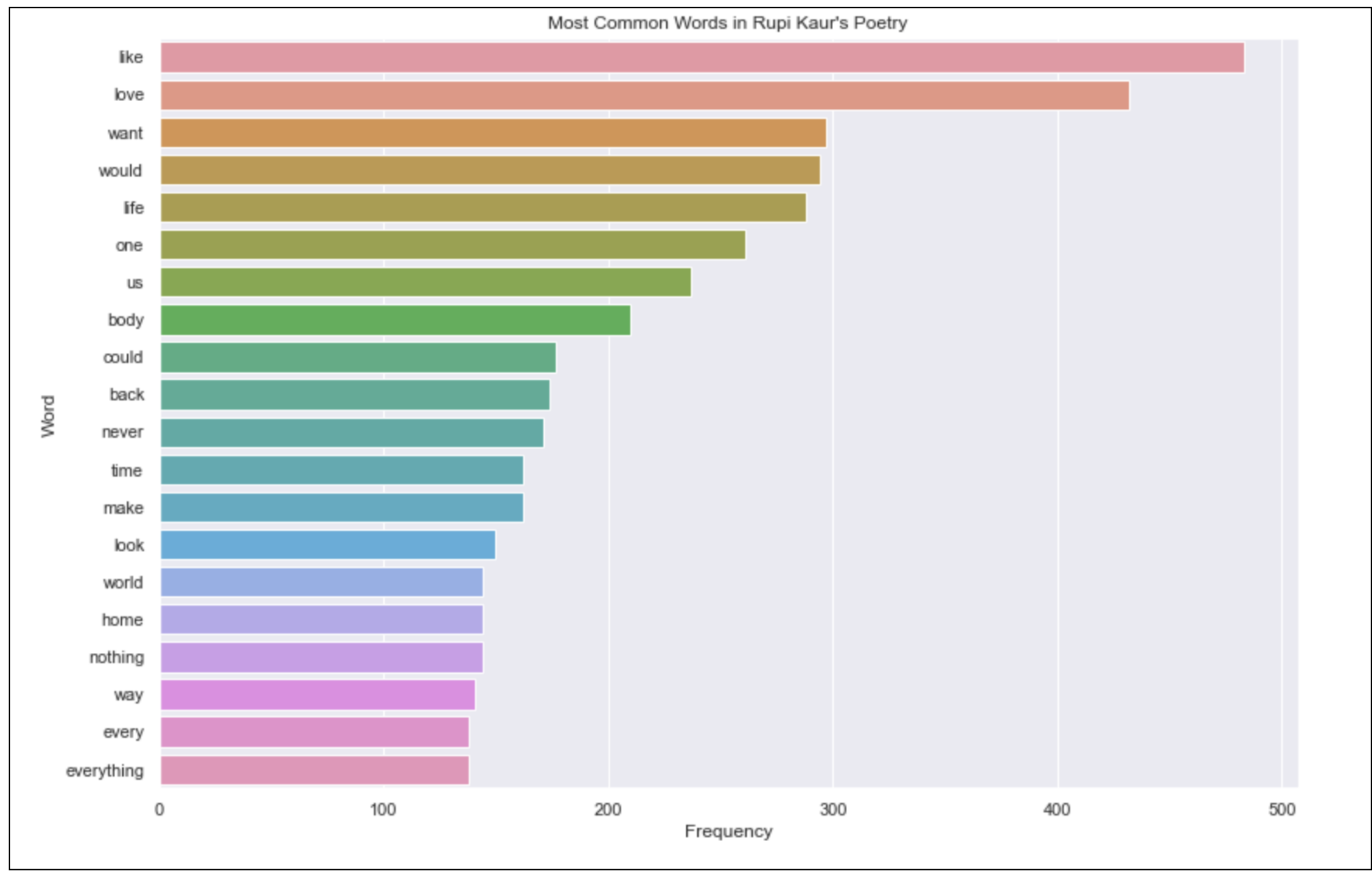
Guiding Questions:

1. What are the most popular themes and defining features in Rupi Kaur's poetry?
2. How have online 'book community' (specifically Goodreads users) responded to her work over time?

Workflow



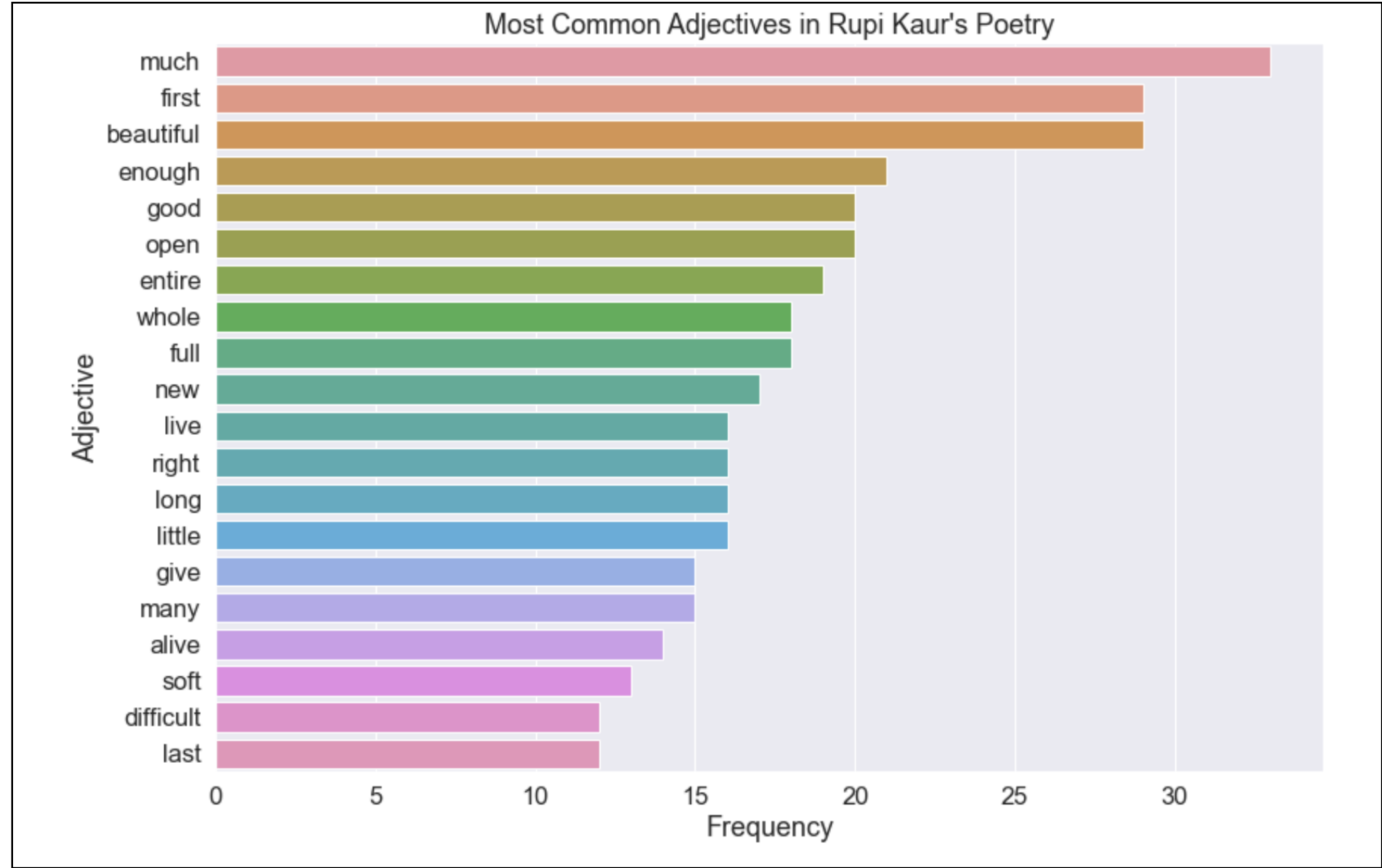
Parts of Speech Analysis



Uh ohs!

As you can see, some of these words aren't adjectives or probably aren't being used as adjectives like 'live' and 'give.' NLTK isn't perfect, but even from this initial tokenization and tagging, we can identify key descriptors that Rupi uses. We will likely run into more 'uh ohs' as we go along

ADJECTIVES

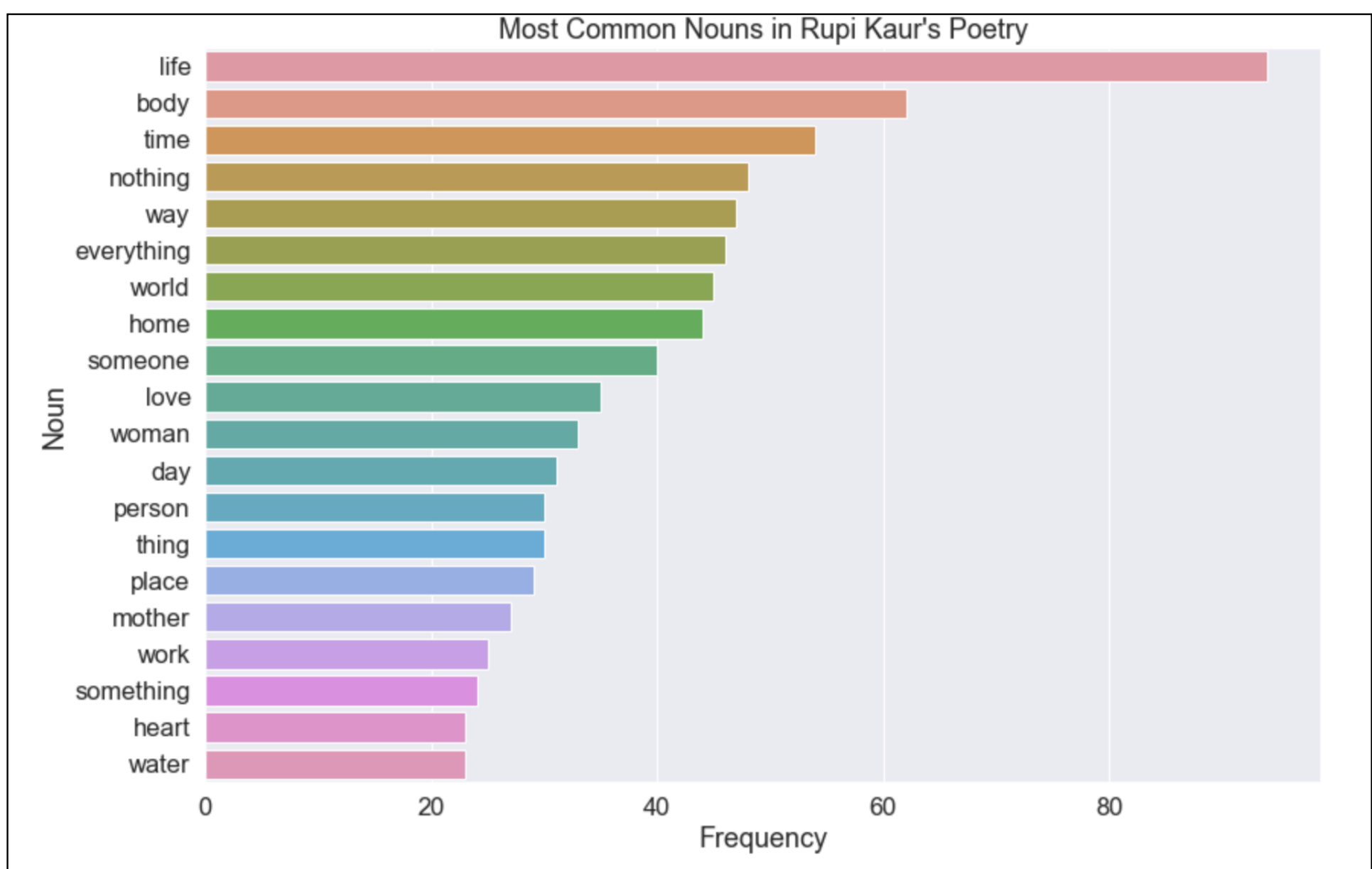


What can adjectives tell us?

I will be running Kaur's work through a sentiment analysis later on to see how 'positive' or 'negative' her work scores, but from this graph alone, it is interesting to see how positive these words seem to be. In particular, 'first' and 'beautiful' stand out.

Perhaps this indicates that Kaur's work has a lot to do with first experiences, indicating to an extent that her content may relate to coming of age experiences. The word 'beautiful' could indicate a lot of things but does seem to promote the aesthetic value of subjects or objects within her work even if we don't know the exact context the adjective is being used in.

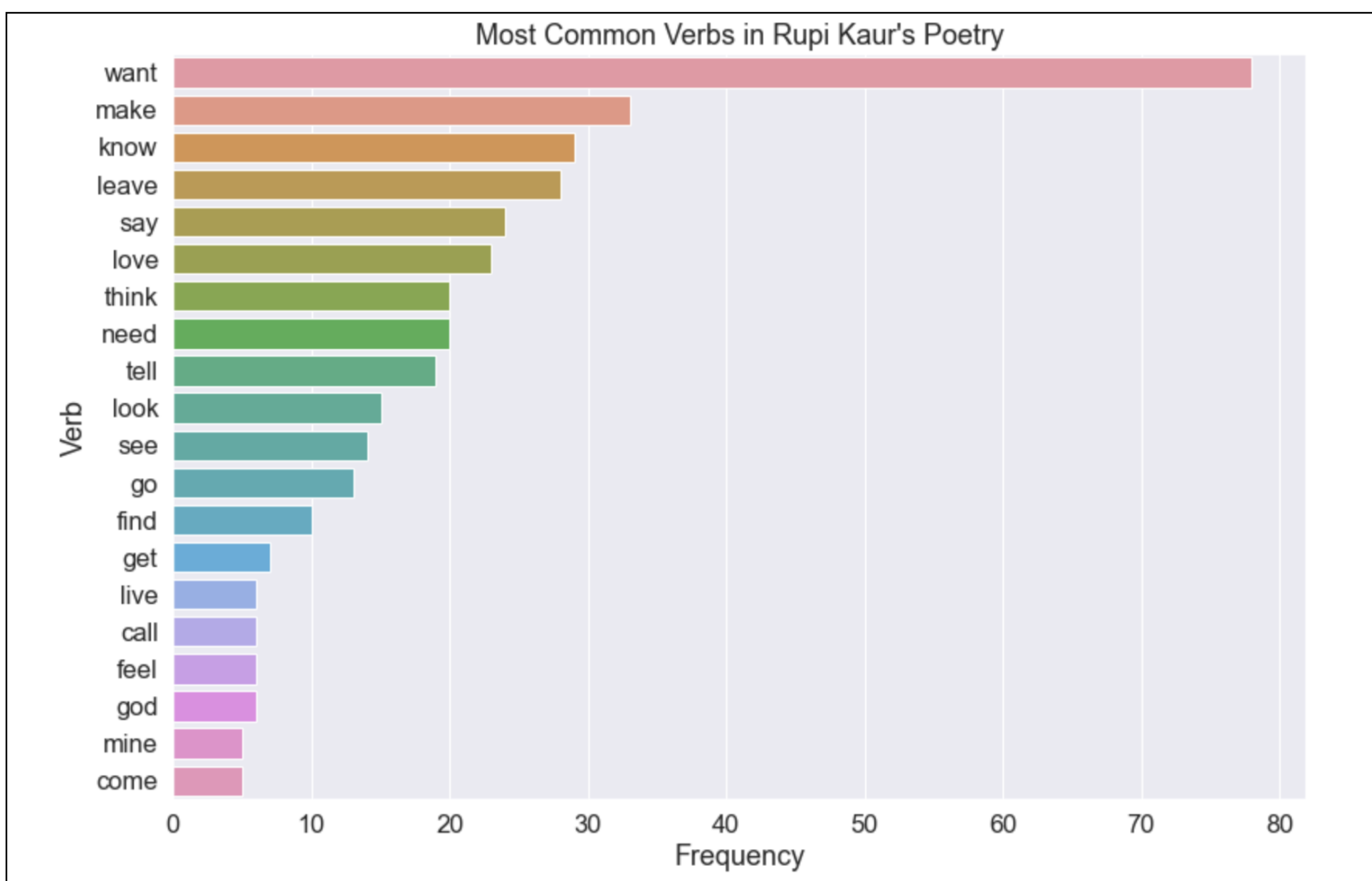
NOUNS



What can nouns tell us?

Again, it is staggering to see just how much 'life' and 'body' outstand all the rest of nouns in Kaur's work. Of course, we should keep in mind that one of her works is titled 'homebody,' but still it is clear from the data that 'the body' is of huge importance. That both 'woman' and 'women' show up in the top 20 words indicate that Kaur is perhaps discussing themes of the body specific to womanhood.

VERBS



What can verbs tell us?

Verbs and verb phrases are the action words of texts. They can tell us a lot about context of a sentence.

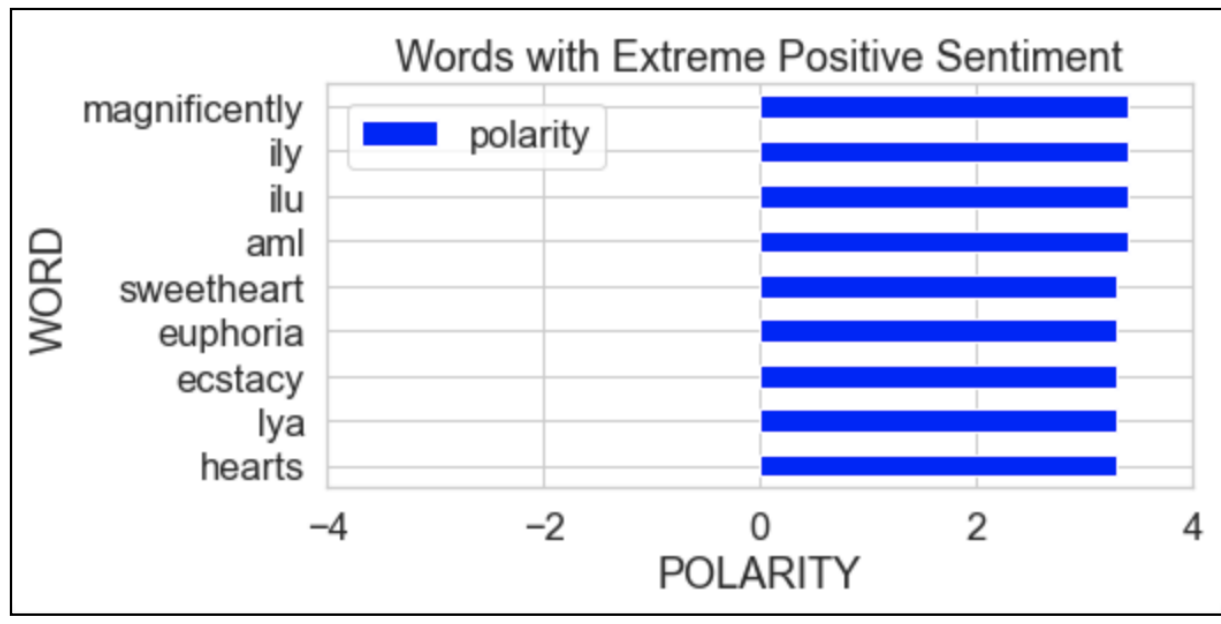
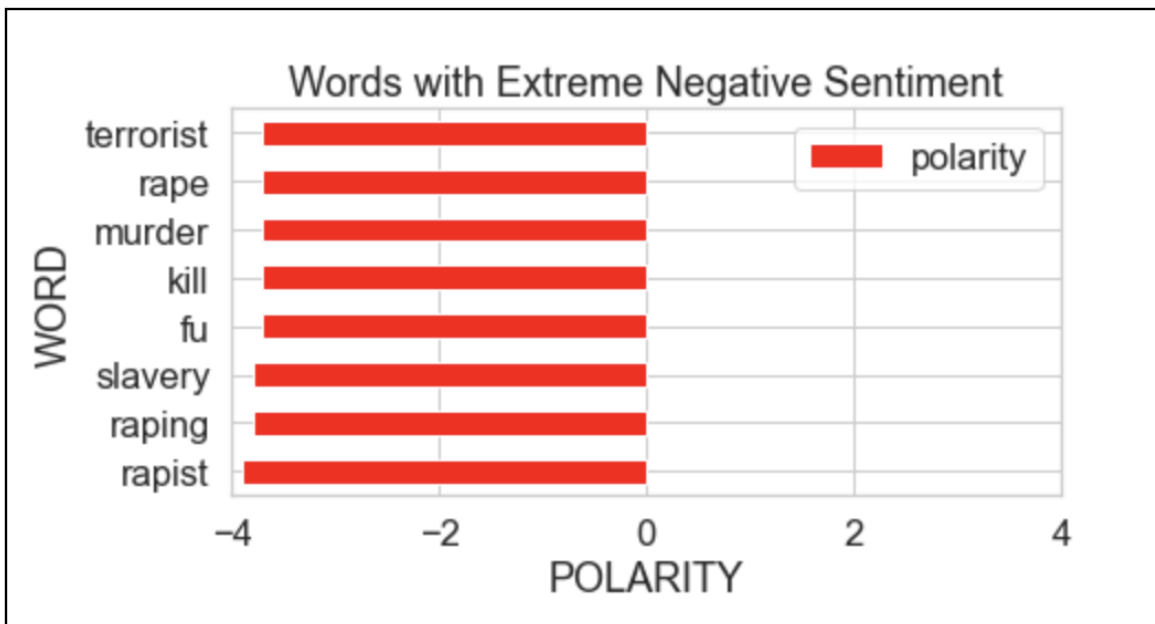
Analyzing parts of speech is a very common activity when taking a close reading approach to literature. Yet, this distant reading allows us to clearly state, at least statistically, which words and parts of speech Kaur engages with more than any others.

That she uses 'want,' 'make,' and 'love' strengthens my ongoing reading that Kaur's work is interseted in themes of desire, creation, and love. Adding our noun frequency results, we might say that these actions are related to specific themes around womanhood..

(I don't know why it picked up 'god' as a verb phrase, but I do find it a bit fun)
(mcmeeel is the name of Kaur's publisher...NLTK isn't perfect)

VADER SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

VADER ranks 7,000 words in its lexicon on a scale to extemly negative to extemly positive



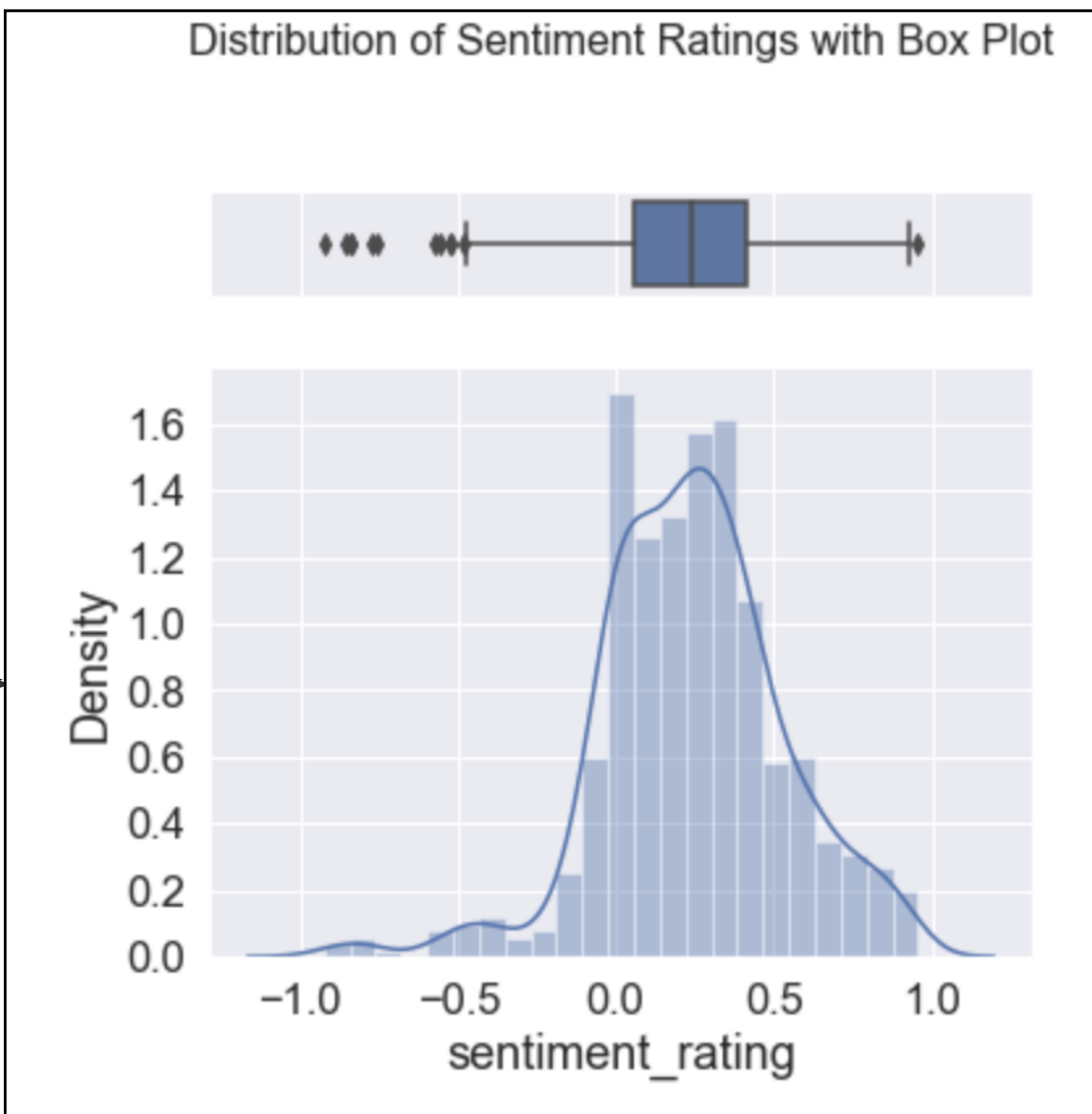
Sentiment rating of Rupi Kaur's poetry:

All works rank fairly positive, although Homebody, her most recent collection is relatively more negatively rated than the first two books



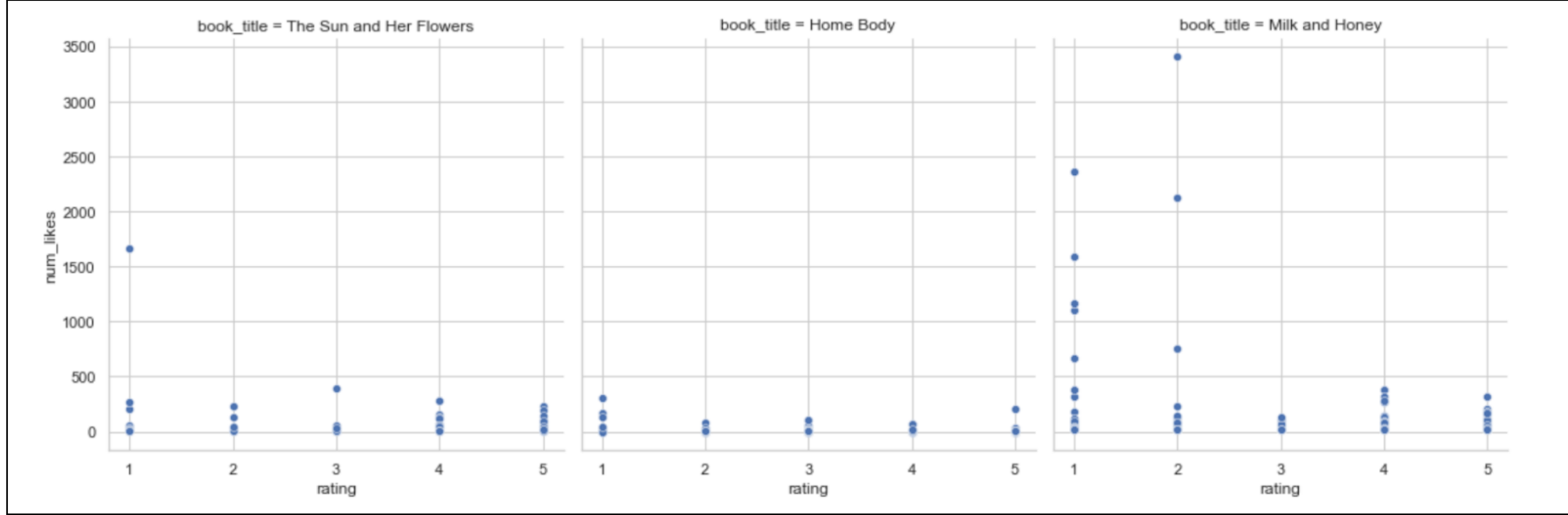
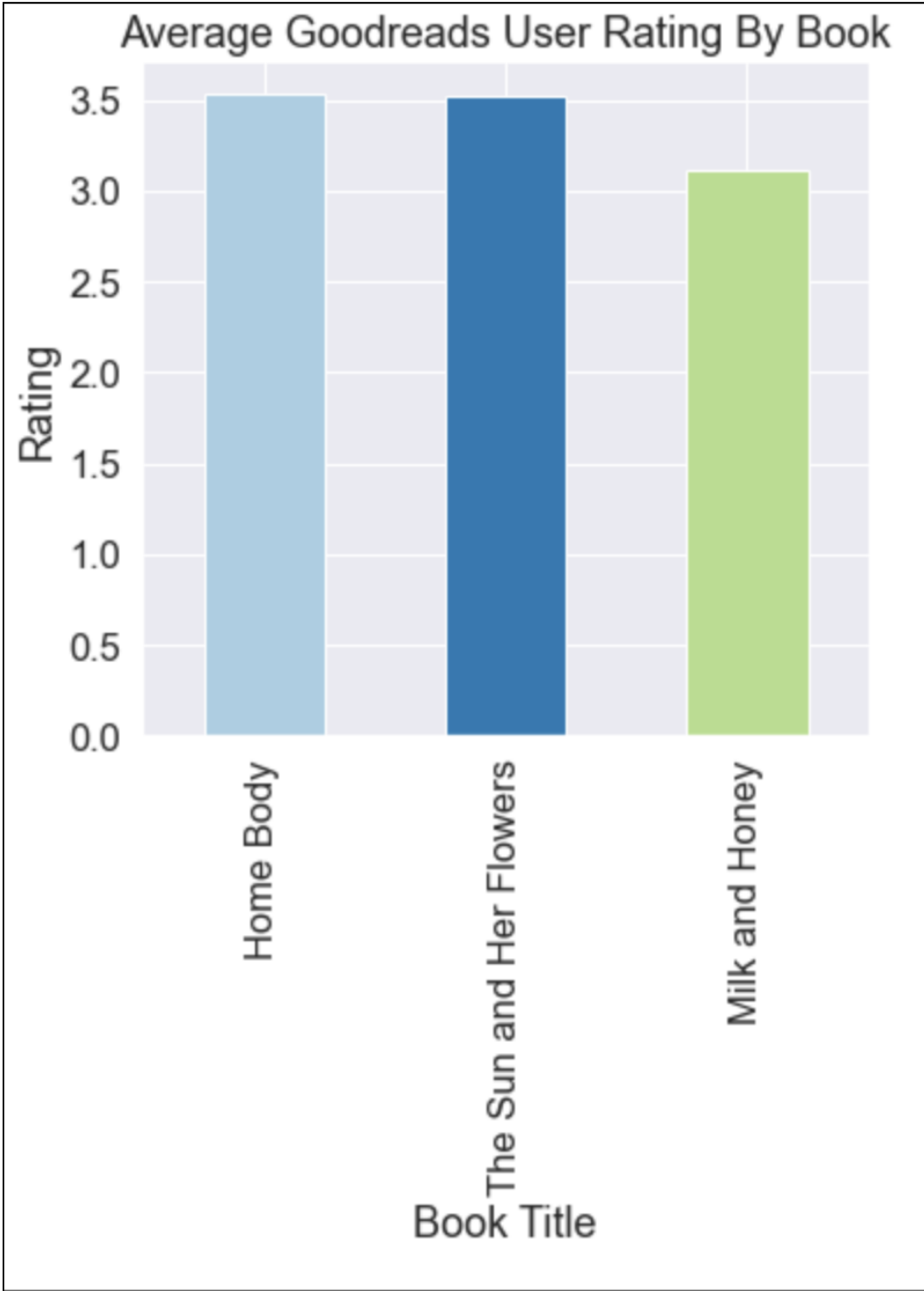
Sentiment rating of Goodreads reviews:

All works rank fairly positive



Average rating by book:

All works appear to have a relatively high rating



Complications:

Here, we see that in reality, thousands of users are liking low ratings, which means that despite the relatively high rating averages for each book, community response might not be as positive as we might intally assume

Conclusions

- > Rupi Kaur's poetry has a pretty uniform parts of speech construction.
- > Rupi's poetry deals with themes of desire, the body and its parts, and womanhood
- > Her work is relatively positive, although her most recent work is significantly more negatively scored
- > Overall review sentiment is positive
- > Rupi Kaur's poetry has a high average rating
- > The number of likes that each rating and review skews the data to be more negative overall
- Other takeaways**
- .Data can only tell us so much without context
- >Literary analysis can benefit from a hybrid of both close and distant reading approaches

Sources & References:

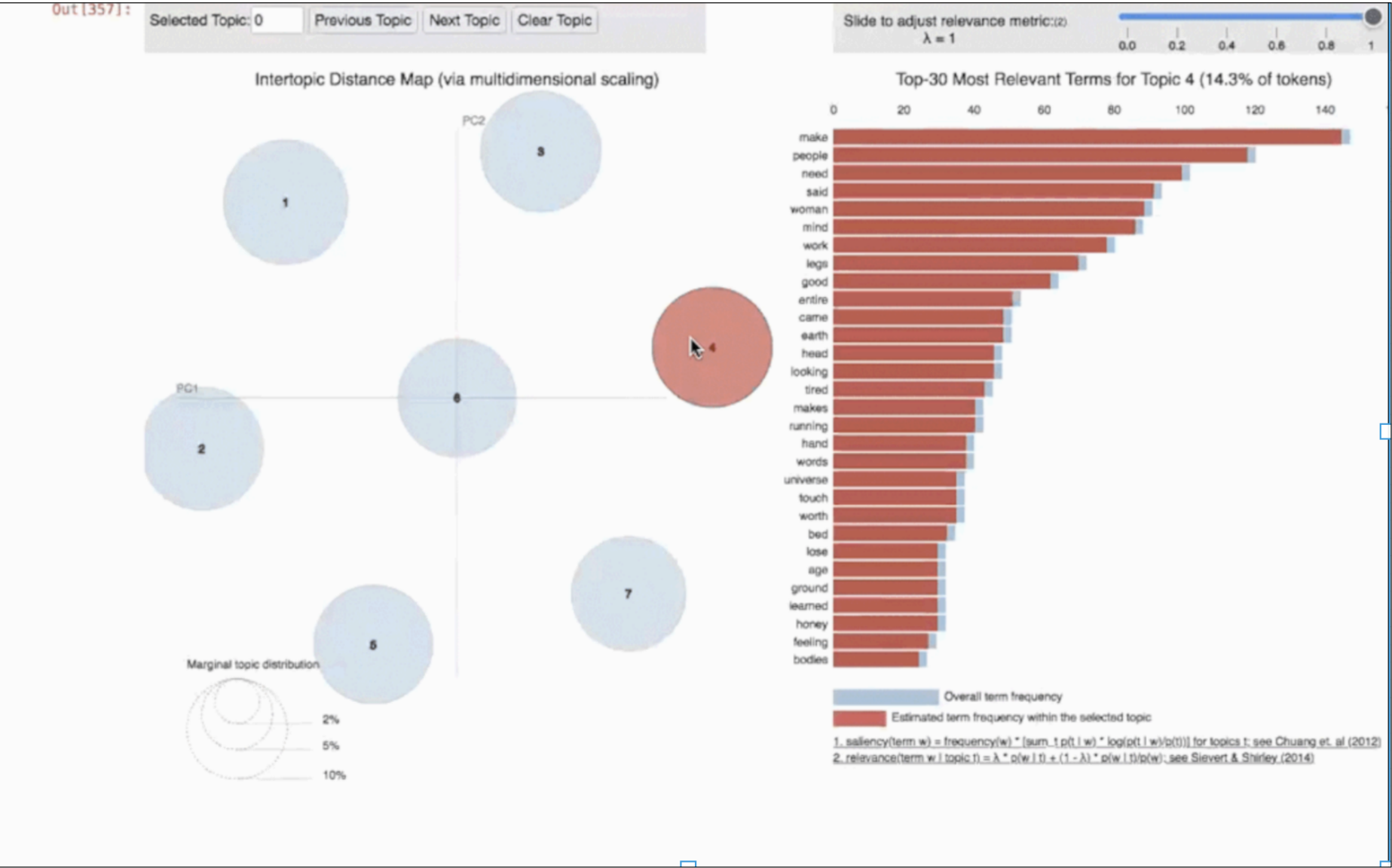
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<https://pypi.org/project/twitter-scraper/>

LDA Topic Modeling

LDA Topic Model of Rupi Kaur's Poetry

Generated Topics:

- Topic #1:
love, honey, think, know, life, want, lot, make, enjoyed, healing, makes, times, maybe, loving, tell, trauma, sense, idea, appreciate, sex
- Topic #2:
rupi, writing, people, time, things, written, liked, little, review, going, short, author, world, experience, parts, important, sections, sexual, best, come
- Topic #3:
read, felt, poem, work, topics, sun, thing, better, feminism, actually, powerful, feeling, depression, relationships, end, line, woman, story, art, anxiety
- Topic #4:
poetry, book, feel, heart, loved, home, flowers, thought, personal, rest, stars, themes, sure, recommend, especially, left, touched, comes, relatable, beauty
- Topic #5:
like, kaur, did, women, style, need, kind, que, feels, illustrations, definitely, page, person, feelings, bit, pieces, long, issues, emotions, lines
- Topic #6:
just, collection, really, milk, reading, body, beautiful, good, does, kaurs, abuse, self, new, thoughts, look, raw, pages, deep, quite, pretty
- Topic #7:
poems, words, way, books, say, mind, different, write, favorite, enjoy, section, ones, simple, honest, great, bad, fan, second, poet, simply



What can these topics tell us?What can these topics tell us?

The topics pulled from the model reveal a bit more to us about the text. To particular interest to me is the number of body parts that show up in the different topics. Topic 5, in particular, shows 'hands' and 'eyes' to be some of the most relevant terms. Although not within the scope of this project, I would be interested to see how bodies are fragmented in other works of poetry.

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rupi, writing, people, time, things, written, liked, little, review, going, short, author, world, experience, parts, important, sections, sexual, best, come
- Topic #3:
read, felt, poem, work, topics, sun, thing, better, feminism, actually, powerful, feeling, depression, relationships, end, line, woman, story, art, anxiety
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While the 'top' listed words aren't super useful, the overall topics are more helpful to us. Key words like 'appreciate,' 'favorite,' 'powerful,' 'sexual' tell us some more about how people felt. Of course we still don't have full context. It's easy to see some words like this and assume positive context. However, these words could also be in the context of reviews that are written 'I didn't appreciate' or 'Not my favorite'