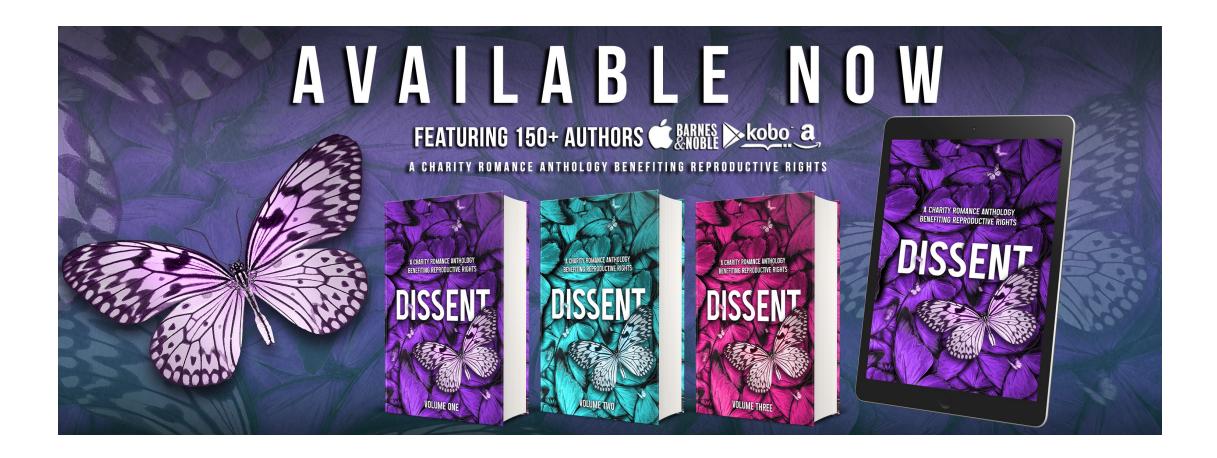


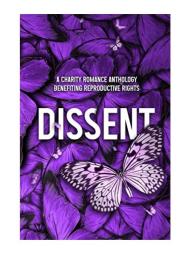
#### WRITING LOVE STORIES THAT SHINE



- Anthology featuring over 150 romance authors to benefit reproductive rights
- Released September 6, 2022. Available in eBook and paperback
- Organized by Brooke Cumberland (of Kennedy Fox), Brighton Walsh, and Nicole French, all USA Today bestsellers. I'm privileged to have a story in it!
- www.romancedissents.com, https://geni.us/Dissent

#### In Just Two Days... this is the power of romance!

- Thousands of dollars raised!
- #106 in the entire U.S. Amazon store
- #1 in U.S. fiction anthologies
- #1 in U.S. short story anthologies
- #1 in romance collections and anthologies
- #28 in the entire Canada Amazon store
- #1 in 2 subcategories in the Canada store
- #35 in the entire Australia Amazon store
- #1 & #2 in 2 Australian subcategories





Kindle Price:

**\$9.99** 

- #1 & #2 in multiple Amazon categories in Germany, Brazil, Spain, France, Italy, and the UK
- #8 on the Apple romance bestseller charts
- #26 on the Barnes & Noble romance bestseller list

#### You Might Want to Write Romance If...

- You believe in celebrating women's power, love-conquers-all, and the magic of happy endings
- You want access to a community of loyal, avid readers in a genre that dominates a large share of the industry
- You're considering indie publishing
- You want to be part of a supportive, activist-minded community of writers





# What Makes a Book a Romance Novel?

- The love story is central to the plot. There may be subplots, but the focus is the love arc.
- Your main characters (H1 & H2) are meant to be together, but internal and external obstacles are keeping them apart
- During your story, they fight to realize that they're "it" for each other & to surmount whatever's between them and committing to their one, true love
- It must end in a happily-ever-after (HEA) or happilyfor-now (HFN)
- Typically 65k-80k words (varies by subgenre)

The DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROMANCE AND WOMEN'S FICTION



#### How the <u>Women's Fiction</u> <u>Writers' Association</u> Defines Women's Fiction

"Our stories may include romance, or they may not. They can be contemporary or historical and have magical, mystery, thriller, or other elements. Whereas the driving force of a romance novel is a love story, a mystery's is the exposure of an event, a thriller's is a fear-inducing chase or escape, etc., the driving force of *women's fiction* is the protagonist's journey toward a more fulfilled self."

#### What Makes a Book "Women's Fiction"?

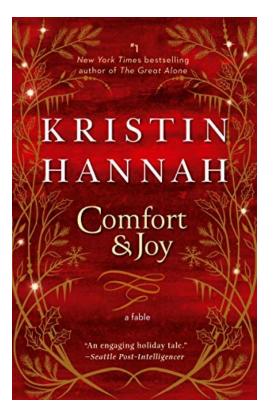
- Typical length: Approximately 100K words
- A woman's emotional journey is at the heart of the story
- There may or may not be a romantic element to the story, but if there is, the story still works without it
- If there is a love story, it doesn't necessarily end in a happily-ever-after (though it's often hopeful). The point is for the main character to grow and change, regardless of what that means for her romantic arc.
- Though it may include an element of magical realism, it typically doesn't tap into the fantastical, except in the case of paranormal women's fiction (new genre as of 2020)

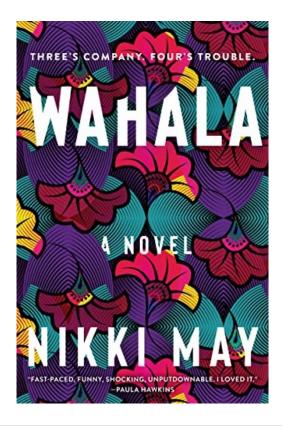


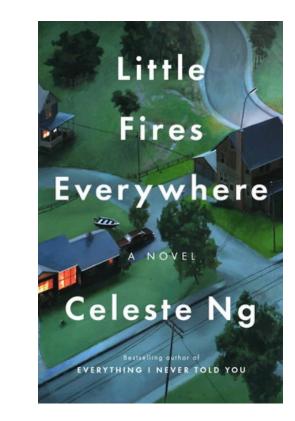
Why Some People Don't Like the Term "Women's Fiction"

- It can sound frivolous, as if issues of interest to women are separate from those of interest to men
- It presupposes a clear gender binary
- It's a label more frequently used for marketing and behind-the-scenes categorization than for front-end sales (how many bookstores with a women's fiction section have you seen?)
- In some cases, it operates on the assumption that women's fiction must, by necessity, be focused on traditional realms such as family, marriage, or emotional relationships









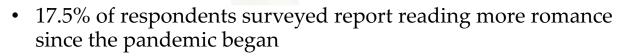
#### Positioning Women's Fiction in the Market

- Women's fiction is defined as being *marketed toward* women rather than *written by* women
- It's not usually part of a series (unlike many romance novels)
- It is important to know whether your novel is romance or women's fiction before pitching agents and editors

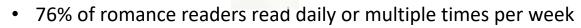
#### Romance by the Numbers

- 82% of romance readers are female, 18% are male
- Average romance reader: 35-39 years old (\*this is changing!)

*Source:* <u>The Romance Book Buyer 2017: A Study by NPD Book for</u> <u>Romance Writers of America</u>



Source: Book Riot's 2021 Pandemic Reading Habits Survey



*Source: Farah Mullick, senior director of global series marketing at Harlequin, Shelf Awareness* 



#### More Numbers (sorry!)

• Sales of romance books increased 33% industry-wide in the first half of 2022

Source: NPD Bookscan via Publishers Weekly



• Romance was among the top adult growth categories in 2021, grossing more than \$480 million and selling almost 50 million books

Source: NPD Bookscan via The Writers' Room



• Penguin Random House's romance sales were up 50% in 2021

Source: Penguin Random House: The Year in Books

#### BUT

• Only 11.90% of romance novels published in 2021 were written by BIPOC authors

Source: The State of Racial Diversity in Romance Publishing Report



"Contemporary romance's unicorn: the elusive marriage of deeply brainy and delightfully escapist."—New York Times bestselling author CHRISTINA LAUREN

Hypothesis

sove

A Novel

#### The Times, They are A Changin': BookTok and #Bookstagram

- Gen Z is heavily driving the romance market right now
- This means younger readers, dipping to age 18 (as compared to the #s we saw in the 2017 survey)
- Colleen Hoover, Emily Henry, Ali Hazelwood, and others all shot to superstardom in part because of Booktok
- Especially during the pandemic, romantic comedies with illustrated covers have taken off, appealing to younger set
- BookTok in particular is heavily driving sales right now, with millions of views for its most popular titles
- Barnes & Noble has a BookTok table for trending titles
- According to BookScan, sales for authors with viral titles on TikTok are over \$12.5 million

TM Rank	Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN	Pub Date	Format	List Price	BISAC Level 2
1	Where the Crawdads Sing	Delia Owens	Penguin Group USA	9780735219106	2021-03-30	ТР	\$18.00	Fiction/Literary
2	It Ends With Us	Colleen Hoover	Simon & Schuster	9781501110368	2016-08-02	ТР	\$16.99	Fiction/Romance
3	Verity	Colleen Hoover	Hachette Book Group	9781538724736	2021-10-26	ТР	\$16.99	Fiction/Thrillers
4	Ugly Love	Colleen Hoover	Simon & Schuster	9781476753188	2014-08-05	ТР	\$16.99	Fiction/Romance
5	The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo	Taylor Jenkins Reid	Simon & Schuster	9781501161933	2018-05-29	тр	\$17.00	Fiction/Contemporary Women
6	Reminders of Him	Colleen Hoover	Brilliance	9781542025607	2022-01-18	ТР	\$15.95	Fiction/Romance
7	November 9	Colleen Hoover	Simon & Schuster	97815011 <mark>1034</mark> 4	2015-11-10	ТР	\$16.99	Fiction/Romance
8	It's Not Summer Without You	Jenny Han	Simon & Schuster	9781416995562	2011-04-05	тр	\$11.99	Young Adult Fiction/Social Themes
9	The 6:20 Man	David Baldacci	Hachette Book Group	9781538719848	2022-07-12	нс	\$29.00	Fiction/Thrillers
10	Book Lovers	Emily Henry	Penguin Group USA	9780593334836	2022-05-03	тр	\$17.00	Fiction/Romance

July 2022

Sales Rank

NPD Book Scan

# The Importance of Diversity

- Vital to have BIPOC & LGBTQIA+ representation in the world of romance and women's fiction
- Delve more deeply: <u>Fifty shades of white: the long fight against racism in</u> <u>romance novels</u>
- Not all romance novels feature a M/F love story. There's also M/M, F/F stories, as well as stories w/bi, trans and asexual protagonists
- Some romance novels feature polyamorous relationships
- Examples of LGBTQIA+ romance novels:
  - Red, White, and Royal Blue, Casey McQuiston
  - The Lady's Guide to Celestial Mechanics, Olivia Waite
  - American Dreamer, Adriene Herrera
  - A Prince on Paper, Alyssa Cole
  - Tell Me How You Really Feel, Aminah Mae Safi
  - *Cemetery Boys,* Aiden Thomas
  - In My Dreams (Aces in Love), Elin Annalise

"Books might be the first time an ace person sees themselves represented and goes, 'I'm not broken' ...

"I feel like I have Ace goggles: I can tell which hyped romances are good, & which are just hyped because of steamy smut. That's fine too but too dull for me!"

-SE Anderson, author of the *Starstruck* Saga and Aix Marks the Spot "Asexuality is not celibacy! The most common misrepresentation I see...is that ace people choose to be celibate. It's not the same thing...

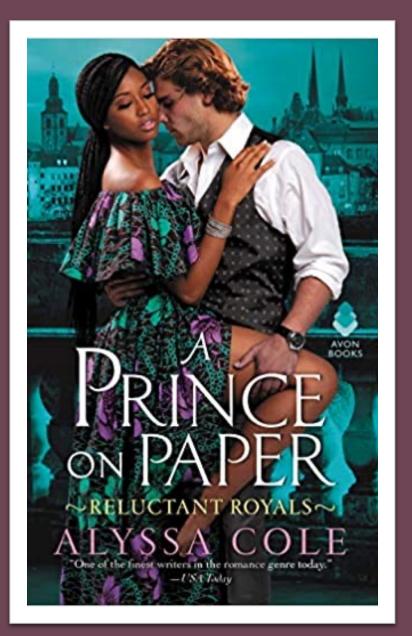
"Also, you can be ace and still have sex. Not all ace spec folk are sex repulsed. Asexuality is just about whether you experience sexual attraction."

- Madeline Dyer, editor of the forthcoming YA anthology *Being Ace* & author of ace romance as Elin Annalise

#### Creating a Nuanced, Well-Rounded World

- Even if your protagonist is a White, cis woman, let the world around her reflect the diversity we see every day
- If it doesn't, make sure there's a good reason
- Don't include "token" characters for the sake of having them on-page
- Think carefully about how you choose to portray people whose lived experience differs from yours
- Consider hiring sensitivity readers if need be
- <u>Understanding Diversity: Avoiding Harmful</u> <u>Depictions in Your Writing</u>, presented by the Women's Fiction Writers Association (WFWA)



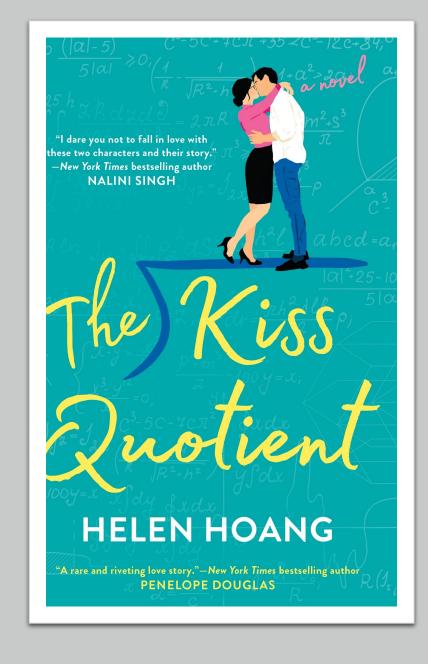


## Romance Subgenres: Contemporary

- Takes place in a realistic (non-paranormal), modern setting
- Can include workplace romances, LGBTQIA+, sports romances, and romantic comedies (romcoms)
- Examples include:
  - By a Thread, Lucy Score
  - Red, White, and Royal Blue, Casey McQuiston
  - A Prince on Paper, Alyssa Cole
  - People We Meet on Vacation, Emily Henry
  - In My Dreams (Aces in Love), Elin Annalise
  - The Boyfriend Project, Farrah Rochon

# Single-Title Romance

- May be series or stand-alone
- Longer romances (65-85K); often, publishing imprints are specific about desired length
- Series isn't numbered, as is the case with category romance
- Not always rapid release (though many romance authors release multiple books per year, especially if they are self/indie published)





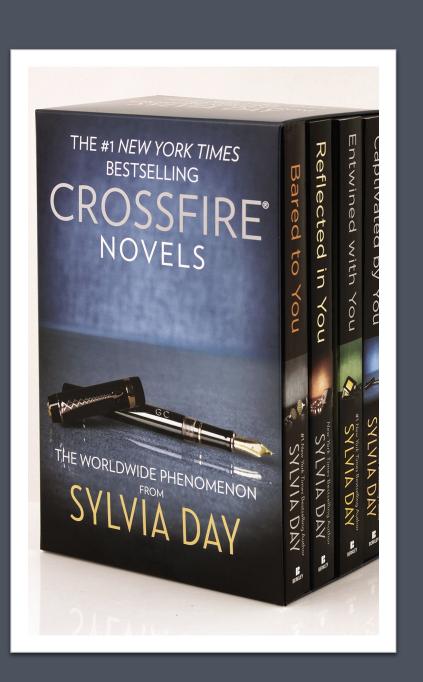
# Category Romance

- A numbered series of romances released under a specific publisher's imprint at a pre-determined, regular time
- Rapid-release (e.g., multiple titles per month)
- Generally shorter (around 55K words)
- Multiple authors may write these books under the name of a single series
- Books may be rotated off shelves every month or so to make room for new ones
- Example: Harlequin DARE

#### Romance Subgenres: Historical & Regency

- Historical romances generally take place before 1950
- Can be set in any country or time period
- Regency romances: set in England's Regency period
- Examples of regency romances include:
  - The Duke and I, Julia Quinn (the basis for Bridgerton)
  - Unveiled, Courtney Milan
- Examples of historical romances include:
  - *Outlander,* Diana Gabaldon (this one's a bit tricky, because it also has paranormal elements)
  - Wild Rain, Beverly Jenkins



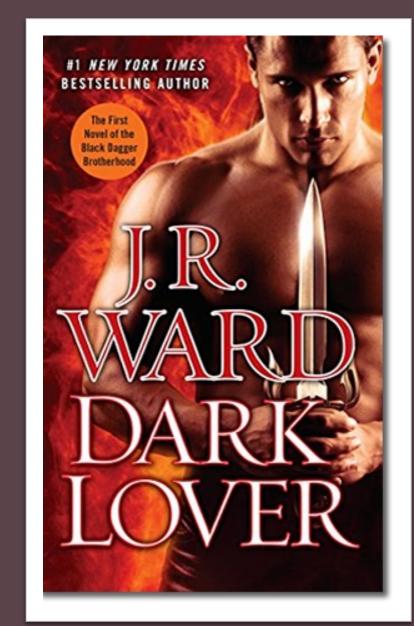


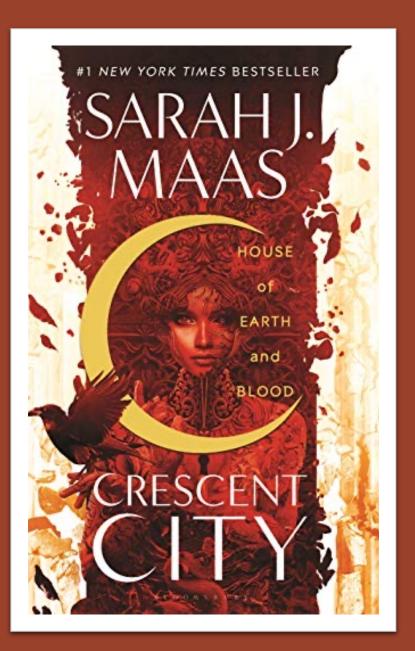
#### Romance Subgenres: Erotic

- Lots of "on-screen" sex
- Sexual acts described explicitly
- Characters' emotional journey tied to their sexual journey
- Examples of erotic romances include:
  - The Crossfire series, Sylvia Day
  - Guarding Temptation, Talia Hibbert
  - Addicted, Zane
  - Pleasure, Eric Jerome Dickey
  - The Deep End, Kristen Ashley

#### Romance Subgenres: Paranormal

- Love story with paranormal elements
- Set in our world but with key differences (werewolves, vampires, witches)
- Examples include:
  - Dark Lover, J.R. Ward
  - Succubus Blues, Richelle Meade
  - *The Care and Feeding of Stray Vampires,* Molly Harper
  - The Leopard King, Anne Aguirre



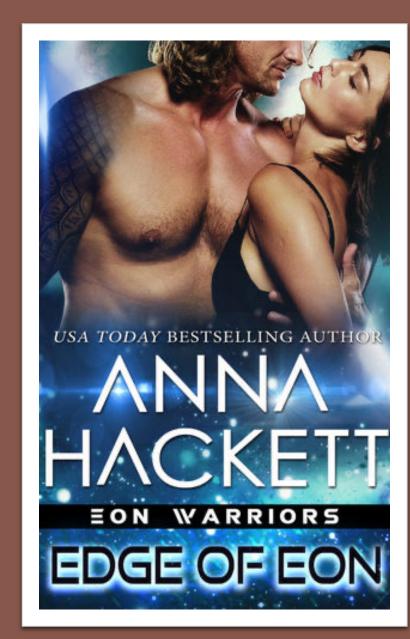


### Romance Subgenres: Fantasy

- Set in a world that is not our own
- Magic system in place
- Supernatural creatures (dragons, etc.) may exist
- Examples include:
  - Empire of Sand, Tasha Suri
  - House of Earth and Blood, Sarah J. Maas

#### Romance Subgenres: Sci-Fi

- Usually, a futuristic setting
- May take place in our world or on another planet
- Typically includes advanced technology
- Aliens/supernatural creature may exist
- Examples include:
  - Edge of Eon, Anna Hackett
  - Finders Keepers, Linnea Sinclair



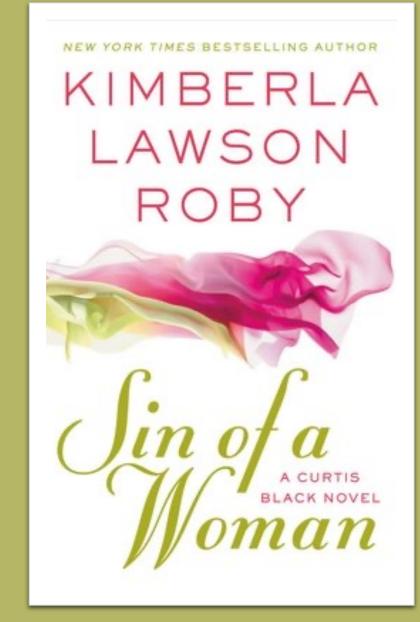
# THE "1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

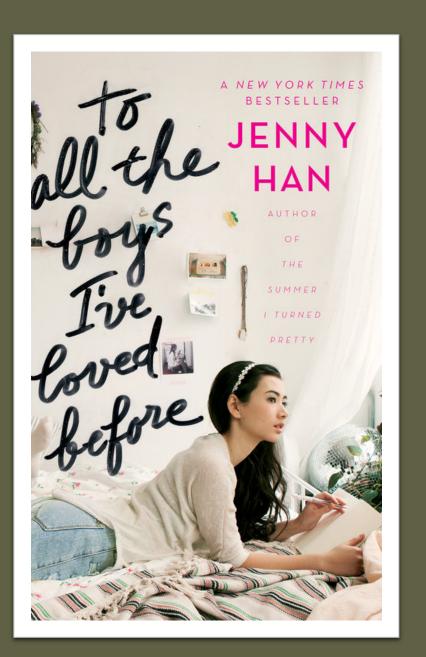
#### Romance Subgenres: Romantic Suspense

- Braids together two genres: romance and suspense
- Love story includes elements of mystery, thriller, or suspense
- These are usually secondary to the love arc
- Examples include:
  - Black Hills, Nora Roberts
  - *Deception,* Selena Montgomery (the pen name of Stacey Abrams)

#### Romance Subgenres: Inspirational/Spiritual

- Faith and/or spirituality is an important part of the story
- May span multiple genres (this is more of a market thana genre). Can be contemporary, historical, suspense, etc.
- Features a great deal of emotional intimacy/connection between characters
- Sex tends to be closed-door or "sweet," without too many details. Language is usually "clean."
- Examples include:
  - *Sin of a Woman,* Kimberla Lawson Roby
  - A Reckless Love, Beth White





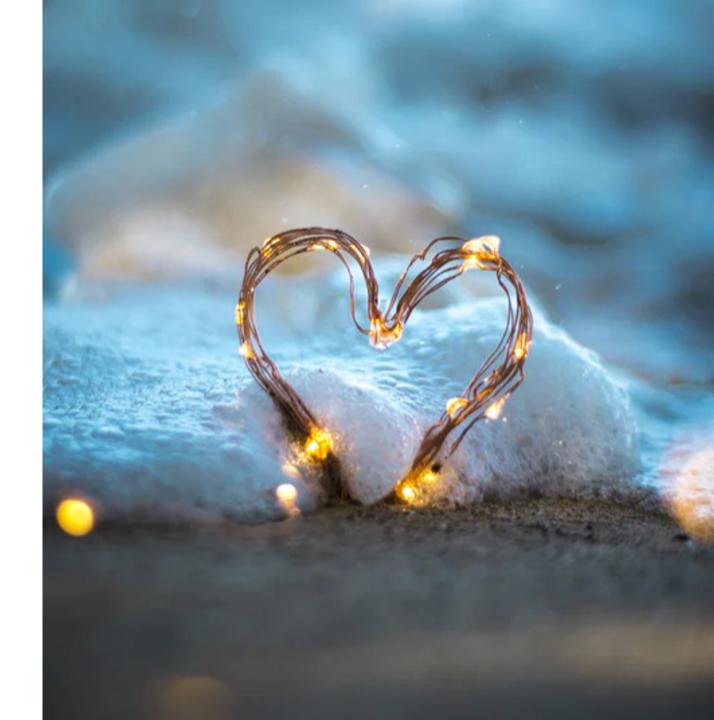
## Romance Subgenres: Young Adult

- Like "inspy" romance, more of a market than a genre
- YA romance may be contemporary, sci-fi, paranormal, fantasy, romantic suspense, etc.
- MCs are usually ages 14-18 (16 is the sweet spot)
- Above 18 and younger than 29=New Adult
- Sex is not explicit & consent is emphasized
- Examples include:
  - From Blood and Ash, Jennifer Armentrout
  - To All the Boys I've Loved Before, Jenny Han
  - Leah on the Offbeat, Becky Albertalli

#### Your Decoder Ring: Terms to Know

- HEA & HFN
- Mary/Gary Sue
- <u>Alpha</u>/alphahole/ alpha<u>roll</u> hero
- <u>Cinnamon</u> <u>roll/Beta hero</u>
- Heat level
- Slow burn
- Bodice ripper
- BookTok/ Bookstagram

- Romancelandia
- Trope
- Catnip
- Meet cute
- F/F, M/M
- Book boyfriend
- Insta-love/lust
- Insta-click/buy
- ARC
- Comps
- Indie vs. trad



#### Some Common Romantic Tropes

- Friends/enemies to lovers
- Accidental pregnancy
- Forced proximity
- Second chance romance
- Soulmates
- Forbidden love
- Fake relationship
- Workplace romance
- Slow burn

- H1/H2 returns to a small town after life in the big city
- Opposites attract
- Love triangle
- Alpha hero/heroine
- Billionaire
- Marriage of convenience
- Grumpy vs. sunshine





#### Don't Forget About Consent

"Consent in romance specifically is two (or more) people agreeing to be physically intimate with each other at every step. Body language and enthusiasm can be consent. Explicit consent is agreeing with words. Ideally, both are involved."

-Nikki DeMarco, <u>What Does Consent Look Like in</u> <u>Romance Novels Today?</u>

- Especially important when writing YA
- But also important, even when heroes are "alphaholes," to show they aren't forcing their partners to do anything against their will
- It's Still Complicated: Romance Publishing
- <u>The Romance Novelist's Guide to Hot Consent</u>

#### Heat Level (sometimes known as clean/sweet/spicy)

- Clean: Handholding/kissing (usually only in YA)
- Sweet: Sex likely happens, but off-screen or fade to black. We may see moments leading up to or morning after.
- Sensual: Sex happens on-screen, but no explicit language is used. Focus is often on emotions & characters are usually in love.
- Steamy: Sex happens on-screen, described in detail, and is central to the characters' braided arc. Characters may move from "having sex" to "making love" over the course of the book.
- Erotic: Lots of sex happens on-screen, described explicitly. Often, the characters' transformative journey to happily-ever-after occurs through sex and consummation.



#### How Not to Win the Bad Sex Award (sex/intimacy as a plot device)

- Believe it or not, the <u>Bad Sex in Fiction Award</u> is a real thing. Don't let this be you.
- Here are some tips that will save you from this terrible fate.
  - Sex scenes should never be gratuitous—as in, *They haven't had sex in a while! Insert scene here!*
  - They should always help the reader learn something new about your characters'/advance the development of the plot
  - They should utilize all five senses—not just touch and sight
  - They shouldn't read like an anatomy lesson or a recounting of the arrangement of limbs
  - Avoid cliched language (heaving, throbbing, etc.)
  - Make sure the heat level is in line with the subgenre of romance you're writing
- For more tips, check out Diana Gabaldon's <u>*How To Write Sex</u></u> <u><i>Scenes*</u>, originally published in *Chatelaine*</u>



# Writing Characters Readers Will Love: Romance

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- When you write romance, you don't just have one protagonist, as is the case in many novels. You have at least two: H1 and H2.
- Both H1 and H2 must have a complete character arc—from what the author Gwen Hayes calls "hole-hearted to whole-hearted."
- Your characters don't have to be perfect. In fact, they shouldn't be! They should be people we can relate to—after all, we're going to be spending a lot of time with them.
- They should also have back stories and an essential wound that they just can't get past. They each have an Important Reason that they can't fall in love—especially with each other.
- It's your job as the author to make us buy into that reason—and then put your poor characters in situations where they must confront their deepest wounds...and ultimately, find love.

#### Common Hero Characteristics in Romancelandia

- In Romancelandia, there are some stereotypical male heroes: the guy who's rough-edged on the outside but hides a heart of gold; the arrogant CEO playboy who's never found love; the bad boy who's always in trouble.
- <u>Alphas, Alphaholes, Betas, and Cinnamon</u> <u>Rolls</u>
- Make your hero your own. Give him a history that resonates with the reader, complete with the wound that means he can't find love. Make us sympathetic toward him. Let him be vulnerable.
- And remember—his (unwilling) character change is driven by his love for the other hero/heroine.





#### Things to Remember About Your Heroine (*if you have one*)

- When you're writing M/F romance, don't let your heroine be eclipsed by your hero! She should be a full human being in her own right, with her own back story, essential wound, and goals.
- She should be relatable but also strong—not perfect, but someone we want to hang out with and root for over the course of your story.
- Make sure you know her arc just as well as the hero's—what are her goals when the story begins? What mistake or misbelief must she correct over the course of the story to heal, fall in love, and become the best version of herself?

# Writing Characters Readers Will Love: Women's Fiction

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- When you write women's fiction, you need to be focused on your character's emotional journey
- Who is she at the beginning of your story, and what's missing from her life? What's been holding her back, and why?
- What's the important lesson she needs to learn by the end of the story to become the strongest, best, most fulfilled version of herself?
- What deep-seated wound or flaw must she confront? Hint: the lesson she needs to learn should be the opposite of that flaw. Example: If she's historically depended on others to make decisions, then by the end of the book, she should gain the strength she needs to make up her own mind.

# POV in Romance Å Women's Fiction

- When you write romance, you don't just have one protagonist, as is the case in many novels. You have at least two: H1 and H2.
- Both H1 and H2 are on a journey from Gwen Hayes's "hole-hearted to whole-hearted" and must have a complete arc
- Because of this, many romances are written in 3rd person close/limited, dual POV. **But they don't** have to be! They can be in single POV.
- In dual POV, chapters usually alternate between H1 & H2
- Having dual POV allows readers to know things that H1 or H2 doesn't know (such as what one might be keeping from the other), which ups the tension & conflict (true of 1<sup>st</sup> person or 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- In WF, you MUST have the woman's POV (though other POVs can also be included).



## Key Internal Questions

- What is your protagonist's **internal goal**—what will it mean to them to achieve their external goal? How do they think this will affect how they see themselves?
- Are they right, or are their internal and external goals at odds?
- What specific long-standing **fear** will your character's goal force them to face?
- What does your character **need**—rather than what they want? Whatever it is (to trust others; to take risks), this should be what they struggle with and ultimately resolve.
- In romance, this happens during their journey toward committed love. They *need* to realize the other MC is the one for them—and surmount their deepest fear to make that dream come true.

# The Magic of Conflicting Goals

- Without conflict, readers wouldn't stay up until 3 AM, turning the pages to see what happens next.
- So, make sure your MCs external goals conflict with each other in some way.
- In romance, maybe your heroine's goal is to run a little chocolate shop, exerting her independence after escaping an abusive, controlling relationship. But your hero's goal is to prove himself to his father by taking over the family corporation—which would put your heroine's chocolate shop out of business. Presto—conflict!
- In WF, maybe what society, family, or colleagues expect from your MC differs from what she wants for herself. Maybe her mother wants her to keep a certain secret, but unless she brings that secret to light, she can't achieve the goal she's always dreamed of. She loves her mom and doesn't want to hurt her...but she's got her own desires, too. How can she balance her love for her mother with her own wants and needs...especially if she's been brought up to always put family first?

## Romancing the Conflict

- Yes, your characters' romantic entanglement is at the center of your romance novel...but it shouldn't be ALL that drives the novel!
- You have to have a subplot, and that subplot needs to have tension of its own, requiring resolution
- Emily Henry's *Book Lovers*: Will the protagonist's sister be able to save the failing bookstore?
- Sylvia Day's *Crossfire:* Will the protagonist's abusive former stepbrother return to threaten her life once more?
- Lucy Score's *Things We Never Got Over:* Will the bad guys succeed in recovering the mysterious information they're after? Whose lives will they destroy along the way?



### Conflict vs. Tension

**"Conflict** is a force that stands between your characters and what they want most. **Tension** is the feeling of anticipation surrounding what will happen next."

--Angela Ackerman, co-author of *The Conflict Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Obstacles, Adversaries, and Inner Struggles* 

From <u>Want to Build Tension? Encourage</u> <u>the Reader to Ask Questions</u>



#### The Secret of Secondary Characters

- Many romance novels are part of a series readers love returning to the same world, visiting familiar people and places.
- Create a strong group of secondary characters who you introduce in earlier books (e.g., your H1s two brothers; your H2s three sisters). Plant seeds that you'll water in future books. These characters will be your main love interests later in the series.
- Bonus: your MCs from Book 1 will be there on the sidelines, so we'll have a sneak peek into how things turned out for them.



#### The Secret of Secondary Characters, Continued

- If you're writing women's fiction, secondary characters are equally important!
- Your protagonist doesn't exist in a vacuum. Her behavior, thoughts, and choices are influenced by those around her: friends, family, co-workers, or love interests.
- It's tempting to just focus on your main character's journey, but to flesh out the world you've created and make it seem 3D, you need to give us a sense of the other folks she interacts with (from the guy who serves her coffee at the drive-thru every morning, if that's an important part of her day, to her best friends).





#### Setting as Character

- In romance novels, setting is crucial
- Sets atmosphere and mood
- Small town romance very different tone than big city romance
- Setting closely linked to subgenre
- In historical romances, setting plays a huge role in the dynamic between characters
- In fantasy, sci-fi, or paranormal romance, a lot of world-building to create setting
- If writing series, readers will revisit your setting again and again; details!
- Consider sketching map of world, creating Pinterest board, pinning up pics



## Romancing the Plot

- Many novels utilize a three-act structure
- While there are some elements of romance novels that follow the same pattern, others are unique to the genre
- Whether you're a plotter or a discovery writer/pantser, it's important to be familiar with genre conventions
- Gwen Hayes, author of the fabulous *Romancing the Beat*, breaks romance novels' plots into the following four acts:
  - Setup (to about 20-25%)
  - Falling in love (next 25%)
  - Retreating from love
  - Fighting for (and winning) love



## What Do I Mean by 'Beats'?

- This way of thinking about novel-writing is lifted from the film industry, where screenwriters must hit particular 'beats,' or elements of the plot, by certain points in the movie
- These 'beats' are organic, natural reflections of how most stories are structured—and what viewers come to expect
- The plotting bible Save the Cat, by Blake Snyder, was originally intended for screenwriting. Author Jessica Brody did an excellent job of adapting it in Save the Cat: Writes a Novel.
- Author Gwen Hayes takes this concept and applies it to the romance genre in *Romancing the Beat*. You can get her free beat sheet <u>here</u>.

# HANE A CRUSH ON YOU

#### Writing the Meet-Cute

- This is the all-important moment when your characters are on-page together for the first time. Make it count!
- Should reflect the tone/mood of your book
- In a second-chance romance, this is the scene when your characters reunite after having been apart
- In a "friends to lovers" romance, this is the scene where something changes for them
- Meet-cutes can:
  - Not actually be 'cute'
  - Be one-sided
  - Be awkward for one/both characters
  - Involve instant, mutual physical attraction
  - Involve instant, mutual dislike

# Beware the Info Dump

- Your H1 and H2 will have important back stories that inform the story you're telling us right now—but you decided to start your story here for a reason!
- Work details from their past in as relevant, connecting them with emotions and what they're experiencing on-page. Don't overuse flashbacks that take away from the main action.
- Check out Tiffany Martin's <u>Weaving</u> <u>Flashbacks Seamlessly Into Story</u>





#### Drafting or Revising? Ask Yourself...

- Are you clear on your characters' external goals? What's missing from their lives when the book begins?
- What are your characters' deepest needs (that only H1/H2 can fulfill)?
- What are their core misbeliefs & greatest flaws that they must overcome?
- Why is love off the table, especially with H1/H2?
- Why can't they just walk away from each other? (Hayes calls this 'adhesion')
- How do their feelings for each other develop over time? How do they go one step forward, two steps back?
- What happens to confirm each of their worst fears/core misbeliefs? How and why do they hit rock bottom (black moment)?
- How do they realize they need to be with H1/H2, and how do they fight to win them back (grand gesture)?
- At the end of the novel, how have they changed and become "whole-hearted"? This should reflect the opposite of their core misbelief & greatest flaws.

# The Romance Arc, In Sum

- I'm living my life, content with or resigned to the fact that I'll never find love.
- I meet the person I'm destined to be with, but for what seems like a Very Good Reason at the Time, I'm convinced we can't be together.
- I can't seem to get away from you. And the more I spend time with you, the more I like you. Oh no. I *like* you. Now what do I do?
- We're spending time together and the world hasn't ended yet. I like you more and more. In fact, I'm starting to feel the inklings of another four-letter word that starts with L—not that I'd ever tell *you*.
- Actually, things are working out great. Better than I ever dreamed of. I feel—dare I say it—happy.
- Scratch that. Everything is exactly as awful as I always imagined it to be. Love is a cruel trick engineered by sadists. I'm better off alone.
- Oh no. I screwed up. You're the one for me, and I—what have I done?
- I will get you back, if it's the last thing I do. I will grovel and plead. Picture me as Lloyd Dobler in *Say Anything*, under your window with a boom box. Against all odds, you took me back. This is the best moment of my life. So happy togetherrrrr!

## The Revision Process

- Revision is a crucial part of every writer's process
- Some writers choose to edit as they write. Others write messy first drafts, with the knowledge they'll be doing major cleanup on the back end.
- Either way, once your book is complete, you will need to revise it. This will likely include both "macro" and "micro" revisions. For example:
  - Check for sagging plot, character inconsistencies and development, continuity errors, consistency of tone
  - Consider structure/tension/scene-level goals
  - Read through/<u>listen to</u> the book carefully, looking for typos and repetition
  - Check your word count against your goal. Figure out how much/where you need to cut/expand
  - Search your ms. for crutch words like "just" or "seems" as well as redundant language

# The Revision Process

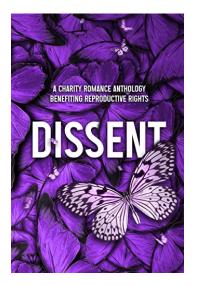
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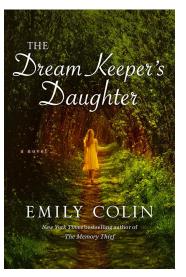
- Once your manuscript is as strong as you can make it on your own, get it in the hands of beta readers and critique partners
- These folks should be people who read the genre you write. They should be positioned to tell you if your manuscript is out of step with that genre as well as to critique elements of the writing/story.
- Once you've considered the feedback from your BR/CPs, if you are new to the publishing process or are considering becoming an indie/self-published author, you may want to hire an editor
- This person can do developmental edits (setting, plot, character, pacing) or copyedits (grammatical errors, fact checking, style consistencies)
- In the meantime, <u>if you are choosing the traditional</u> <u>publishing route (with or without an agent)</u> you can be working on your query, synopsis, and pitch



## Resources

- <u>Romancing the Beat</u>, by Gwen Hayes
- <u>Story Genius</u>, by Lisa Cron
- <u>The Artful Edit</u>, by Susan Bell
- One Stop for Writers
- <u>The Writers Helping Writers Thesaurus Collection</u> (*The Emotional Thesaurus, The Conflict Thesaurus,* etc.)
- "The Writing Gals" Facebook Group and <u>2022 Online</u> <u>Conference</u> (Oct. 5-8)
- Mindy Klasky's <u>list of romance tropes</u>
- <u>What Romance Novels Can Teach Us About Attraction</u>





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