



Getting up to Speed in...Romance

Here's what Romance is:

In Romances the plot revolves around the love relationship and the inevitable happy ending. The genre encompasses a wide range of books — from historical to contemporary and futuristic, from gentle to racy, from paranormal to realistic — but no matter what the setting, all else is secondary to the love story. Authors draw readers in and allow them to participate in the process, from that first kiss through myriad difficulties and disputes to the ultimate resolution.

Here's what happens in a Romance novel:

Romances follow a romantic relationship from its beginnings through to a satisfactory conclusion, while exploring the misunderstandings that threaten to scuttle the relationship along the way. The first kiss always awakens unexpected passions in both hero and heroine and sets the stage for a happy ending.

Here's why people like Romance:

Since the primary appeal of Romances is to the emotions, it's often hard for readers to articulate exactly why they like them. Readers feel an emotional link with the protagonists and are invested in the satisfactory outcome of their story. Characters may be stereotypes — bright, independent but not necessarily beautiful heroines pitted against strong, dangerous heroes — but readers expect this and find satisfaction as the heroine always brings the hero to his senses and his knees. Romances read quickly; a reader can put her book down, pick it up later, and fall back into the story immediately. Authors may experiment with characters, settings, and story lines, but the happy ending is sacrosanct. Readers don't want surprises at the end.

Here are key titles to read:

- *Bet Me* by best-selling author Jennifer Crusie provides the perfect introduction to sexy Contemporary Romances filled with interesting characters, humor, and witty dialogue.
- *The Grand Sophy* spotlights the best of Georgette Heyer's classy and classic Regency Romances — a spirited heroine, delightful dialogue, and romantic entanglements, set against a fascinating social, cultural, and historical background.
- *Outlander* by Diana Gabaldon was not the first Time Travel Romance, but it set the standard after its publication in 1991.
- In *Almost Heaven*, Judith McNaught delivers a passionate, historical, once-in-a-lifetime Romance featuring a vulnerable heroine and a "bad boy" hero.
- *Born in Fire* stands out among Nora Roberts's many fine Contemporary Romances. Glass-blowing, the international art world, and a wild Irish setting form the backdrop for this first in a trilogy.



Here are key authors to know:

- **Suzanne Brockmann** adds an element of Adventure and sometimes Suspense to her popular Contemporary Military Romances. Her *Troubleshooters* series about U.S. Navy SEAL Team Sixteen provides the romantic leads for action-packed and adventurous stories of true love. *The Unsung Hero* is the first of the series.
- **Sherrilyn Kenyon** is the hottest author in Romance's hottest subgenre, Paranormal Romance. Her doctorate in history and knowledge of ancient Greece provide the background material for the creation of her universe, where were-beasts flourish and humor vies with more deadly emotions. Start with *Fantasy Lover*, the first in her popular *Dark-Hunter* series.
- **Susan Elizabeth Phillips** is the reigning queen of Contemporary Romantic Comedy. Appealing characters, witty dialogue, interesting backgrounds — many featuring the Chicago Stars football team — and amusing antics make these irresistible. *Natural Born Charmer* explores difficult family issues as the Stars quarterback unexpectedly discovers romance.
- **Julia Quinn** writes engaging Regency-era Romances rich in humor, appealing characters, and family relationships. She is best known for her series featuring the eight members of the Bridgerton Family. Start with the first of these racy romps, *The Duke and I*.
- **Nora Roberts** remains the benchmark for the Romance genre. Whether writing Contemporary, Paranormal, or Futuristic Police Procedurals, she satisfies with her classy heroines, strong and sexy heroes, interesting background details, and strong extended family relationships. Her storytelling skills make her a popular choice with a wide range of readers. Her recent *In the Garden* trilogy combines strong love stories and ghosts.

Here's how to talk with Romance fans:

- You have about 5 seconds to make a connection with these elusive readers. Let them know right away that you HAVE read a romance and that you understand why they enjoy the genre. (And make certain you have!)
- One of the most important and difficult pieces of information to discover is how much sex the reader desires — or will tolerate. Offer a range of titles from "sweet" to "racy" and let the reader choose. Don't assume; let the reader tell you.
- Readers often prefer to read only contemporary, historical, or paranormal backgrounds. However, if the characters or tone are similar, they may be willing to try something outside of their comfort zone.

A few more tips:

- Romances are published primarily in paperback, so libraries need to purchase and catalog this format. Reviews appear in the major library reviewing sources.
- A recent survey confirmed that 26.4% of all books sold are Romances. They outsell all other fiction genres. Providing them for readers supports an enormous audience.
- Generally speaking, there are no series of Romance novels that feature the same hero and heroine. Rather, authors create series that feature novels linked through characters or settings, with the hero and heroine of one story appearing as secondary characters in later stories. This gives a real sense of family, an important theme for readers.



- Romantic themes and conventions appear in almost every genre — Science Fiction, Fantasy, Thrillers, Suspense, Romantic Suspense, Gentle Reads, Mystery, and Women's Lives and Relationships. Readers from any of those genres who appreciate the romantic aspect, may also enjoy Romances. And Romance readers will find many authors to sample in diverse genres.
- A few great sources for notable books include: the *RITA Awards*, the *Romantic Times Reviewers' Choice Awards* and the *Library Journal Best Romance Books*.

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