

# Romance Fiction

Every romance novel has two main elements: a story that focuses on the romantic relationship between the heroine and hero, and a happy or happily optimistic, emotionally satisfying ending. Once a book has these two main elements, it can be set in a variety of locations, a range of different time periods, and have any number of different plot elements and still be a romance. These different settings and plot characteristics create the different subgenres within the romance genre.

## Romance Subgenres

### Contemporary

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Contemporary romance is the largest of the romance subgenres and feature stories set in the present. This subgenre includes both category/series romances and single title romances. Settings, length, and sensuality levels can vary widely.

**Category/Series** – These are romance lines in which the stories conform to a specific pattern set by the publisher. Series romances are usually numbered and the publisher provides guidelines for length, sensuality level, etc. Harlequin and Silhouette are currently the two major publishers of category and series romances.

**Single-Title** – Non-category contemporaries can include anything from traditional romances to books that are more mainstream women's fiction.

*Authors: Catherine Anderson, Judith Arnold, Elizabeth Bevarly, Jennifer Crusie, Jude Devereux, Kathleen Eagle, Barbara Freethy, Rachel Gibson, Jennifer Greene, Shirley Hailstock, Sandra Kitt, Kathleen Korbel, Cathie Linz, Debbie Macomber, Susan Elizabeth Phillips, Francis Ray, Nora Roberts, Deborah Smith, LaVyrle Spencer, Kelley St. John*

### Historical

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Historical romance is a mix of historical fiction and romance. The amount of historical detail included in the story can vary from a richly detailed setting to that where history is more of a backdrop to the plot, but the romantic relationship between the hero and heroine is always the focus of the story. The level of sensuality in historical romances can vary from sweet to steamy. Historical romances can be set anytime in the past, but must be set at least 50 years before the book itself was written. Currently, Medieval, Regency, and 19th century Western America are popular settings.

*Authors: Mary Balogh, Jo Beverley, Elizabeth Boyle, Connie Brockway, Liz Carlyle, Loretta Chase, Catherine Coulter, Christina Dodd, Suzanne Enoch, Julie Garwood, Roberta Gellis, Eloisa James, Laura Kinsale, Lisa Kleypas, Betina Krahn, Jill Marie Landis, Stephanie Laurens, Johanna Lindsey, Judith McNaught, Teresa Medeiros, Linda Lael Miller, Maggie Osborne, Mary Jo Putney, Amanda Quick, Bertrice Small, Jodi Thomas, Kathleen Woodiwiss*

### Regency

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Traditional Regencies are a subgenre of their own. The setting is frequently between 1811-1820 (the actual dates of the British Regency when Prince George ruled the country in the place of King George III), but traditional Regencies can be set anytime between 1800 – 1830. Traditional Regencies frequently feature British upper-class society and are generally light in tone. The focus is on wit and language, period detail, and the social status of the era. Most traditional Regencies are sweet.

*Authors: Mary Balogh, Jo Beverley, Marion Chesney, Diane Farr, Karen Harbaugh, Candice Hern, Georgette Heyer, Carla Kelly, Lynn Kerstan, Amanda McCabe, Barbara Metzger, Sophia Nash, Evelyn Richardson, Regina Scott, Rhonda Woodward*

## Romantic Suspense and Gothics

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In both these subgenres, mystery and suspense are blended with romance. Romantic Suspense blends elements of the romance and mystery and suspense genre, is most often set in contemporary times, and can take place anywhere. Gothics also have a mix of romance and suspense or mystery, are usually set in the past, and almost always take place in an isolated location such as an estate, castle, etc.

*Authors: Cherry Adair, Suzanne Brockmann, Sandra Brown, Shannon K. Butcher, Catherine Coulter, Eileen Dreyer, Tess Gerritsen, Heather Graham, Victoria Holt, Linda Howard, Jayne Ann Krentz, Merline Lovelace, Elizabeth Lowell, Catherine Mann, Barbara Michaels, Carla Neggers, Karen Robards, Nora Roberts, Karen Rose, Mary Stewart, Phyllis Whitney*

## Paranormal

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Can include paranormal, fantasy, futuristic, or time travel elements. Paranormal romances often blend romance with horror. Fantasy romances blend romance with fantasy. Futuristic romances blend romance with science fiction.

*Authors: Shana Abe, Jayne Castle, Janet Chapman, Kresley Cole, Christine Feehan, Diana Gabaldon, Susan Grant, Lori Handeland, Sherrilyn Kenyon, Susan Krinard, Lynn Kurland, Marjorie M. Liu, Katie MacAlister, Karen Marie Moning, Robin D. Owens, J. D. Robb, Stephanie Rowe, Gena Showalter, Christina Skye, J.R. Ward*

## Inspirational

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In this subgenre, faith, usually a conservative Christian faith, plays an important role in one or more of the character's lives. The spiritual growth of the two main characters and their romantic relationship is often blended together in the story. Inspirational romances are almost always sweet.

*Authors: Judy Baer, Shelley Bates, Lori Copeland, Robin Jones Gunn, Robin Lee Hatcher, Dee Henderson, Liz Curtis Higgs, Janet Oke, Catherine Palmer, Beth Patillo, Francine Rivers, Deborah Raney*

# Chick Lit and Women's Fiction

Chick Lit and Women's Fiction are really fiction genres in their own right and not subgenres of romance fiction, but they do share some common elements and readers. The main difference between Chick Lit and Women's Fiction and Romance is that in a romance novel, the focus of the story is on the romantic relationship between the two main characters. In a Chick Lit or Women's Fiction novel, a romantic relationship is just one of the many different relationships in the protagonist's life. The protagonist in a Chick Lit novel is usually in their 20s – 30s and the book focuses on her relationships with their friends, family, co-workers, etc. The Chick Lit protagonist is looking for "Mr. Right Now" and not necessarily "Mr. Right." In Women's Fiction, the protagonist is usually in her 30s, 40s, or 50s, and the story focuses on her relationships with family, friends, etc. There can be a romantic relationship in the Women's Fiction protagonist's life but it is not the center of the story.

*Authors: Barbara Taylor Bradford, Hester Browne, Meg Cabot, Robyn Carr, Barbara Delinsky, Patricia Gaffney, Kristin Hannah, Beth Kendrick, Sophie Kinsella, Carole Matthews, Mary Alice Monroe, Jane Porter, Luanne Rice, Emilie Richards, Barbara Samuel, Danielle Steel, Susan Wiggs*