

BARTON

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Dare to Know

In addition to the recognized sub-genre, romance fiction can be comprised of several informal subsets:

Contemporary Romance

A subset in which stories are generally set after the 1970s. These stories reflect the conventions of more modern time periods. A trope steadily growing in popularity focuses on a relationship between a humble heroine and a wealthy and/or powerful lover with a few character flaws. There is often an aspect of a “Cinderella story,” and the woman is usually of a lower socioeconomic class than the man.

Common Elements

True love in the workplace
Empowered heroines

Love affairs with billionaires
Modern problems and themes

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Act Like It</i> (2020) by Lucy Parker
<i>All the Boys I've Loved Before</i> (2014) by Jenny Han
<i>Always There</i> (2018) by Tiara Inserto
<i>Anna and the French Kiss</i> (2010) by Stephanie Perkins
<i>Between a Rock and a Hot Mess</i> (2016) by Phyllis Bourne
<i>Calling Her Bluff</i> (2015) by Kaia Danielle
<i>The Chocolate Kiss</i> (2013) by Laura Florand

<i>Deadly Sexy</i> (2007) by Beverly Jenkins
<i>Emergency Contact</i> (2018) by Mary H. K. Choi
<i>Fifty Shades of Grey</i> (2011) by E. L. James
<i>Hate to Want You</i> (2017) by Alisha Rai
<i>The Kiss Quotient</i> (2018) by Helen Hoang
<i>Something About You</i> (2010) by Julie James
<i>The Wedding Date</i> (2018) by Jasmine Guillory

Fantasy Romance

A subset that combines **fantasy fiction** and **romance fiction**. These stories are set in a fantastical world that contains magic and/or magic creatures, yet romance remains the core element. The term is normally reserved for high fantasy with a strong romantic plot, although elements of dark fantasy or low fantasy are sometimes used. The subset often features adventures and common tropes such as time travel or superhuman abilities.

Common Elements

Medieval societies
Royalty
Politics
Female warrior characters
Romance

Sex
Magic
Betrayal
Cruelty

Modern Literary Examples

<i>The Awakening</i> (2020) by Nora Roberts
<i>The Bird and the Sword</i> (2016) by Amy Harmon
<i>Dragon Bound</i> (2011) by Thea Harrison
<i>From Blood and Ash</i> (2020) by Jennifer Armentrout
<i>A Heart of Blood and Ashes</i> (2020) by Milla Vane
<i>A Knight in Shining Armor</i> (1989) by Jude Deveraux

<i>Lord of the Fading Lands</i> (2010) by C. L. Wilson
<i>Nightchaser</i> (2019) by Amanda Bouchet
<i>Radiance</i> (2015) by Grace Draven
<i>The Revelation of Light and Dark</i> (2021) by Sawyer Bennett
<i>Rhapsodic</i> (2022) by Laura Thalassa
<i>Throne of Glass</i> (2012) by Sarah J. Maas
<i>White Stag</i> (2019) by Kara Barbieri

Historical Romance

A subset that combines **historical fiction** and **romance fiction**. These stories center on a developing love story between two, often fictional, characters, set against the backdrop of real-life historical events, typically occurring fifty years before the time of publication. Many stories in this subset are set amongst real historical events, within the context of the time period, offering a parallel viewpoint to famous historical characters. The writing process rests, in part, on attention to detail and the accurate portrayal of the era. Authors who research the customs, culture, clothing, and rules of courtship of the relevant historic period are able to present their stories with more depth and realism. However, the romantic relationship between the protagonists is the central focus of the story. This subset has also been known as “bodice rippers,” famed for the female protagonists wearing corsets. Beatrice Heron-Maxwell’s *The Queen Regent* (1903), Georgette Heyer’s *The Black Moth* (1921), and Jean Plaidy’s *The King’s Pleasure* (1949) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Romantic love
Authentic historical era
Novelistic fiction
Historical values and social mores
Relationships across socio-economic statuses

Liaisons within feuding families
Strong and handsome alpha males
Independent and strong-willed female protagonists
Era-appropriate dialogue

Modern Literary Examples

<i>The Beast of Beswick</i> (2019) by Amalie Howard	<i>A Night to Surrender</i> (2011) by Tessa Dare
<i>The Bronze Horseman</i> (2001) by Paullina Simons	<i>Not the Duke's Darling</i> (2018) by Elizabeth Hoyt
<i>Bringing Down the Duke</i> (201) by Evie Dunmore	<i>Romancing the Duke</i> (2014) by Tessa Dare
<i>Butterfly Swords</i> (2010) by Jeannie Lin	<i>Runaway Heiress</i> (2018) by Syrie James
<i>Cold-Hearted Rake</i> (2015) by Lisa Kleypas	<i>Scot Under the Covers</i> (2020) by Suzanne Enoch
<i>Dark Fires</i> (1975) by Rosemary Rogers	<i>Secrets of a Wedding Night</i> (2012) by Valerie Bowman
<i>Duchess By Deception</i> (2019) by Marie Force	<i>A Sense of Duty</i> (1999) by Sheelagh Kelly
<i>Duke of My Heart</i> (2016) by Kelly Bowen	<i>Something Like Love</i> (2000) by Beverly Jenkins
<i>An Extraordinary Union</i> (2017) by Alyssa Cole	<i>Tempt Me with Diamonds</i> (2019) by Jane Feather
<i>Fires of Winter</i> (1980) by Johanna Lindsey	<i>Ten Kisses to Scandal</i> (2018) by Vivienne Lorret
<i>The Flame and the Flower</i> (1972) by Kathleen Woodliss	<i>What a Pirate Desires</i> (2008) by Michelle Beattie
<i>Her Secret Desire</i> (2012) by C. J. Archer	<i>What the Wind Knows</i> (2019) by Amy Harmon
<i>Lady of Fire</i> (1987) by Anita Mills	<i>The Winter Mantle</i> (2003) by Elizabeth Chadwick
<i>Lost Prince</i> (2012) by Selden Edwards	
<i>The Miracle at St. Bruno's</i> (1972) by Philippa Carr	
<i>My Fake Rake</i> (2019) by Eva Leigh	

Holiday Romance

A subset that combines elements of **Christmas fiction** or **Hanukkah fiction** with **romance fiction**. These stories depict lovers meeting or uniting during the Christmas or Hanukkah season. Common tropes are family, restoring past heartache, and returning to holiday traditions experienced in childhood.

Common Elements

Hometowns	Mistletoe kisses
Past relationships rekindled	Smell of gingerbread
Snowfall	

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Baby, It's Cold Outside</i> (2014) by Jennifer Probst et al.	<i>Christmas in Peachtree Bluff</i> (2021) by Kristy Woodson Harvey
	<i>Duke, Actually</i> (2021) by Jenny Holiday

<i>In a Holiday</i> (2020) by Christina Lauren
<i>Royal Holiday</i> (2019) by Jasmine Guillory
<i>Meet Me in London</i> (2021) by Georgia Toffolo
<i>Moonlight Over Manhattan</i> (2017) by Sarah Morgan

<i>Twelve Dates of Christmas</i> (2020) by Jenny Bayliss
<i>Unwrapping Her Perfect Match</i> (2014) by Kat Latham
<i>The Wish</i> (2021) by Nicholas Sparks

Inspirational Romance

A subset that combines **religious fiction** (or **Christian fiction**) with **romance fiction**. These stories focus on religious or spiritual connections as an important component of a romantic relationship. In these novels, couples embark on a spiritual journey that is an inherent part of their lifestyles, connection, decision-making, and romance. These novels can be set within any religious context or belief system. For examples, stories in which both hero and heroine are devout Christians reflect this particular worldview. Plots often focus on external conflict, romance, and the faith journey. Inspirational romance usually does not include gratuitous violence or profanity. These novels are typically focused on a chaste courtship and avoid positive depictions of premarital sex. Amish love stories, affectionately called “bonnet rippers,” are known for their tenderness and depictions of a simpler way of life.

Common Elements

Faith-based romance
Spiritual aspects of love
Giving and receiving love
Flawed but redeemable characters
Repentance

Resolving feelings of guilt
Morality
Forgiveness
Honesty
Fidelity

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Five Days in Skye</i> (2013) by Carla Laureano
<i>How to Catch a Prince</i> (2015) by Rachel Hauck
<i>Love Comes Softly</i> (1979) by Janette Oke
<i>A Love Like Ours</i> (2015) by Becky Wade
<i>Julie</i> (1984) by Catherine Marshall

<i>Married 'til Monday</i> (2015) by Denise Hunter
<i>A Noble Groom</i> (2013) by Jody Hedlund
<i>Pieces of Forever</i> (2022) by Valerie M. Bodden
<i>You Don't Know Me</i> (2012) by Susan May Warren

Military Romance

A subset that combines **war fiction** or **action and adventure fiction** with **romance fiction**. These novels feature active duty or former military personnel and usually include some action and/or suspense. The subset also includes stories that are set during campaigns, on military bases, or

aboard naval vessels. Edward S. Brooks's *A Soldier Lover* (1898), A. E. Mason's *Four Feathers* (1902), C. S. Forester's *The African Queen* (1940), H. E. Bates's *Fair Stood the Wind for France* (1944), and Ernest Hemingway's *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Action
Duty

Conflicting loyalties and obligations

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Bane</i> (2015) by Brenda Jackson
<i>Deadly Descent</i> (2014) by Kaylea Cross
<i>Dear Aaron</i> (2017) by Mariana Zapata
<i>The Grunt</i> (2011) by Latrivia S. Nelson
<i>I Am Justice</i> (2018) by Diana Munoz Stewart
<i>Navy Wife</i> (1988) by Debbie Macomber
<i>The Night is Mine</i> (2021) by M. L. Buchman

<i>True Devotion</i> (2000) by Dee Henderson
<i>The Dangerous Billionaire</i> (2017) by Jackie Ashenden
<i>The Unsung Hero</i> (2000) by Suzanne Brockman
<i>The War Within</i> (2014) by Yolanda Wallace

Paranormal Romance

A subset that combines **paranormal fiction** and **romance fiction**. There is usually, although not always, a romance between a human and an otherworldly character, such as a vampire, werewolf, demon, shapeshifter, angel, ghost, witch, or other entity. Naturally, romance is a key focus of the plot. This subset can also include settings that might be considered **fantasy fiction** or **science fiction** in nature, or depict any world with extraordinary or magical elements.

Common Elements

Vampires
Fairies
Werewolves
Angels
Demons
Witches
Zombies

Ghosts
Psychics
Love triangles
Supernatural love interest
Sex
Female protagonist

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Amber Smoke</i> (2015) by Kristin Cast
<i>Dark Prince</i> (2011) by Christine Feehan
<i>Dark Lover</i> (2005) by J. R. Ward

<i>A Discovery of Witches</i> (2019) by Deborah E. Harkness
<i>Fallen</i> (2009) by Lauren Kate

<i>First Grave on the Right</i> (2011) by Darynda Jones
<i>Halfway to the Grave</i> (2007) by Jeaniene Frost
<i>The Kiss Curse</i> (2022) by Erin Sterling

<i>Pleasure Unbound</i> (2008) by Larissa Ione
<i>Providence</i> (2018) by Caroline Kepnes
<i>Shiver</i> (2009) by Maggie Stiefvater
<i>Twilight</i> (2005) by Stephanie Meyer
<i>Warm Bodies</i> (2011) by Isaac Marion

Romantic Comedy

A subset that combines **romance fiction** with **humorous fiction**. These stories depict the lighter side of romance, as the couple finds the journey to true love can be challenging yet hilarious. Plots typically involve likeable characters who either seem meant for each other or are complete opposites that share an unwanted attraction. Regardless, they are kept apart by circumstances that complicate their potential or ongoing relationship. The protagonists may banter with one another, or bicker and fight, but the happy ending is inevitable. There is often the theme of lovers who have to overcome emotional obstacles, strangers who belong together, or childhood sweethearts who reunite after heartbreak and loss.

Common Elements

Dating
Break-ups
Fate
Marriage
Adorable, quirky characters
Initial clash of personalities
Mismatches
Light and heartwarming tone

Grand romantic gestures
Chance encounters (“meet-cute”)
Awkward social interactions
Embarrassing situations
Comical misunderstandings
Mistaken identities
Love triangles
Second chances

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Bet Me</i> (2004) by Jennifer Crusie
<i>Can You Keep a Secret?</i> (2004) by Sophie Kinsella
<i>The Helpline</i> (2019) by Katherine Collette
<i>If Kisses Cured Cancer</i> (2022) by T. S. Hawken
<i>The Likely Resolution of Oliver Clock</i> (2020) by Jane Riley
<i>Love and Other Puzzles</i> (2022) by Kimberly Allsopp
<i>One Night on the Island</i> (2022) by Josie Silver
<i>Our Tiny, Useless Hearts</i> (2016) by Toni Jordan

<i>Perfection</i> (2011) by R. L. Mathewson
<i>The Portable Veblen</i> (2016) by Elizabeth McKenzie
<i>Someone I Used to Know</i> (2021) by Paige Toon
<i>Star-Crossed</i> (2019) by Minnie Darke
<i>The Summer Job</i> (2021) by Lizzy Dent
<i>The Travel Auction</i> (2012) by Mark David Green
<i>The Trivia Man</i> (2015) by Deborah O’Brien
<i>The Unhoneymooners</i> (2019) by Christina Lauren
<i>Wallbanger</i> (2012) by Alice Clayton

Science Fiction Romance

A subset that combines **science fiction** and **romance fiction**. These novels can involve any of the variations of the science fiction genre, although the love story is most prominent. The key for authors is to find the right balance between the genres' elements, and ensure these components are well-developed and contribute to the narrative. Characters should possess depth and unique personalities, with relatable struggles that engage the reader emotionally. Rather than the “happily ever after” ending common to romance fiction, science fiction romance can conclude in a variety of ways, including universal destruction, the high-flying lovers being parted forever, or the antagonists proving victorious. These novels depict epic events and grand settings that occur in the future, the past, the present, through time travel, in an alternate timeline, or on Earth or in intergalactic space. Scenarios might explore the limits of the human mind. In many cases, there is a romantic relationship between humans and beings not of this world or time. There are also common tropes that are shared with science fiction, such as technological innovation that enhances the plot, space exploration, and living on other worlds.

One variation is the depiction of a character who travels through time to the past or the future where he or she encounters their love interest. A recurring theme is the conflict of falling in love and making the decision to stay in the alternate time or return to the era from which the protagonist came.

Common Elements

Development and progression of romantic relationships	Integration of science fiction themes
Characterization and emotional depth	Strong world building
Futuristic or technologically advanced settings	Genre-defying endings

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Beautiful Wreck</i> (2014) by Larissa Brown	<i>Opposite of Always</i> (2019) by Justin A. Reynolds
<i>Deal with the Devil</i> (2020) by Kit Rocha	<i>The Silver Metal Lover</i> (1981) by Tanith Lee
<i>Fluency</i> (2014) by Jennifer Foehner Wells	<i>Stolen Time</i> (2019) by Danielle Rollins
<i>Keir</i> (2015) by Pippa Jay	<i>Sweet Starfire</i> (1986) by Jayne Ann Krantz
<i>The Kindred</i> (2022) by Alechia Dow	
<i>Machinations</i> (2020) by Hayley Stone	
<i>Neon Gods</i> (2019) by Katee Robert	

Sports Romance

A subset that combines **sports fiction** and **romance fiction**. In these stories, romance is the primary theme, but the sports element sustains the overall plot. The subset usually depicts one or both of the lovers being involved with sports, including baseball, football, basketball, hockey, auto racing, or figure skating. Much of the romantic interaction takes place during practicing or

performing this sport, and there are often elements of action combined with romance. There are typically themes of teamwork, competition, and physical challenges.

Common Elements

Highly successful and talented characters
Protagonists passionate about their sports
Navigating the demands of high-profile careers while maintaining romantic relationships

Celebrities, with huge fan followings
Drama and conflict, with intense emotional connections
Characters with strong sense of discipline and work ethic

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Blitzing Emily</i> (2014) by Julie Brannagh
<i>Can't Stand the Heat</i> (2013) by Shelly Ellis
<i>The Deal</i> (2022) by Elle Kennedy
<i>The Devil in Denim</i> (2014) by Melanie Scott
<i>Double Play</i> (2009) by Jill Shalvis
<i>Flat-Out Sexy</i> (2008) by Erin McCarthy
<i>Game Play</i> (2015) by Lynda Aicher
<i>Game On</i> (2013) by Tracy Solheim
<i>The Hook Up</i> (2015) by Kristen Callihan
<i>It Had to Be You</i> (1994) by Susan Elizabeth Phillips

<i>Knowing the Score</i> (2021) by Kat Latham
<i>One Night with a Quarterback</i> (2014) by Jeanette Murray
<i>Out of the Penalty Box</i> (2018) by Genevive Chambers
<i>Overnight Sensation</i> (2019) by Sarina Bowen
<i>Pairing Off</i> (2016) by Elizabeth Harmon
<i>The Perfect Play</i> (2011) by Jaci Burton
<i>Rock Hard</i> (2015) by Nalini Singh
<i>Simply Irresistible</i> (2007) by Rachel Gibson

Western Romance

A subset that combines **Western fiction** and **romance fiction**. These stories incorporate the themes common to love stories while being set in the Wild West, or the modern West, and often feature a cowboy or cowgirl as a central character. However, the tropes, themes, and styles of Westerns are important to the overall narrative. Historical western romance contains common tropes such as a wagon train journey, a bank robbery, a land war, a cattle drive, a saloon brawl, or a gunfight. Contemporary western romance novels are generally set near small towns with ranches, farms, rodeos, and honky-tonks present. The protagonist often drives a pickup truck in addition to riding a horse. These novels are typically presented from a female character's point of view, and emphasize her motivations, aspirations, and journey.

Common Elements

Vividly described landscapes
Cattle ranches
Attractive cowboys
Masculine bull riders

Rugged and protective gunfighters
Strong and independent heroines
Dastardly outlaws and bandits
Mail order brides

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Comanche Moon</i> (2008) by Catherine Anderson
<i>Denim and Diamonds</i> (1989) by Debbie Macomber
<i>Gamblin' Man</i> (2021) by R. O. Lane
<i>Graham</i> (2020) by Katharine E. Hamilton
<i>A Lady of the West</i> (1990) by Linda Howard
<i>A Long Way to Go</i> (2012) by June Bryan Belfie
<i>Mail Order Mix-Up</i> (2018) by Cynthia Woolf
<i>Never Enough</i> (2019) by Kelly Elliott
<i>Only His</i> (1991) by Elizabeth Lowell
<i>Old Dog</i> (2021) by Ron Schwab

<i>Prince Charming</i> (1994) by Julie Garwood
<i>Raveled Ends of Sky</i> (1998) by Linda Sandifer
<i>Second Chance at Sunflower Ranch/Small Town Charm</i> (2021) by Carolyn Brown
<i>The Second Chance Rancher</i> (2019) by Kate Pearce
<i>The Texan's Wager</i> (2002) by Jodi Thomas
<i>Texas Glory</i> (2018) by Lorraine Heath
<i>Texas True</i> (2014) by Janet Dailey
<i>Where the Lost Wander</i> (2020) by Amy Harmon
<i>Where the Wind Blows</i> (2009) by Caroline Fyffe