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Dare to Know

Romance Comics

Comics that primarily depict romantic love.

A broad genre in which stories focus on the relationship and romantic love between two main characters, although love triangles are sometimes present. Rooted in artistic and narrative realism, these plots typically depict lovers overcoming adversity to find one another, and stories end in a satisfying “happily ever after” conclusion. Following World War II, superhero comics that invariably focused on conflict were temporarily considered passé. Part of a genre trend that encompassed true confession magazines, radio soap operas, and newspaper comic strips, romance comics proved popular from 1947 through the 1970s. By 1950, over twenty comic book publishers were producing at least one romance title each, and the genre accounted for more than one-fifth of the market. However, this success led to an oversaturation. Additionally, the genre was sharply criticized for its content in 1954, and, following the implementation of the Comics Code Authority, publishers self-censored by releasing safer stories that focused on happy marriages and homelife. They could not compete with romance novels and television soap operas, and most titles were canceled by the mid-1950s. In the 1960s, creators began integrating social issues and feminist ideas into surviving romance comics. Whether this socially conscious inclination dealt the genre a death blow is in dispute, but romance comics series were more or less non-existent by the end of the 1970s. Fawcett Publications/Charlton Comics’ *Romantic Story* (1934-1943), *Sweethearts* (1948-1973), and *Romantic Secrets* (1949-1953); Joe Simon and Jack Kirby’s *Young Romance* (1947-1975) and *Young Love* (1949-1956); Timely Comics/Atlas Comics/Marvel Comics’ *My Romance* (1948-1962), *Love Romances* (1948-1963), *My Love* (1949-1950), *Our Love* (1949-1950), *Love Adventures* (1949-1952), and *Love Tales* (1949-1957); Fox Feature Syndicate’s *My Life: True Stories in Pictures* (1948-1950); Quality Comics/DC Comics’ *Heart Throbs* (1949-1972); and DC Comics’ *Secret Hearts* (1949-1971), *Girls’ Love Stories* (1949-1973), *Girls’ Romances* (1950-1971), and *Falling in Love* (1955-1973) are early examples.

Common Elements

Dating
Being swept away by a kiss
Marriage
Domestic bliss

Jealousy
Betrayal
Heartbreak
Divorce
Amusing banter

Emotional moments
Tears of joy
Bad boys
Celebrities

Graphic Novel Examples

The Collected Strangers in Paradise
(1996) by Terry Moore

Fresh Romance (2016) by Janelle Asselin

<i>Love and Capes Volume 1</i> (2008) by Thom Zahler
<i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> (2021) by Cavan Scott and José María Beroy
<i>Pride & Prejudice</i> (2009) by Jane Austen, Nancy Butler, and Hugo Petrus

<i>Sweet Time</i> (2020) by Pixin Weng
<i>Truer Than True Romance: Classic Love Stories Retold</i> (2001) by Jeanne Martinet
<i>Twisted Romance</i> (2018) by Alex de Campi

