

Regency Romance
Paranormal Romance
Inspirational Romance

Every Romance Novel has those two main elements we talked about earlier: a story that focuses on the romantic relationship between the hero and heroine, and a happily optimistic, emotionally satisfying ending. Once a book has these two components, it can be set in a variety of locations, a range of different time periods, and have any number of different plots and still be considered a Romance. These different settings and plot characteristics create the different subgenres within Romance Fiction.

Contemporary Romance

By its very definition, a Contemporary Romance is set in the present day, but the book itself can take place anywhere in the world, from a small town in America to a glamorous foreign locale. Contemporary Romances can be humorous and sexy, such as *Bet Me* (2004) by Jennifer Crusie or *It Had to Be You* (1994) by Susan Elizabeth Phillips, or emotionally intense and compelling, such as *This Time Forever* (1992) by Kathleen Eagle. Contemporary Romances are the largest subgenre of Romance Fiction because so many series Romances are Contemporary Romances too. Series Romances (sometimes referred to as Category Romances) are Romance lines in which the stories conform to a specific pattern set by a publisher such as Harlequin. Series Romances are usually numbered and the publisher provides guidelines in terms of the length of the story, sensuality level, etc. Harlequin is currently the leading publisher of Series Romance Fiction in the world.

Anderson, Catherine. *Phantom Waltz*. Signet, 2007. 432p. 9780451220684. Bethany Coulter, confined to a wheelchair, is broken in body and soul, but rancher Ryan McKendrick is determined that she'll learn to love him. (Second book in the *Coulter Family Series*.)

Bevarly, Elizabeth. *Fast and Loose*. Berkley, 2008. 304p. 9780425220856. Celebrity thoroughbred trainer Cole Early needs a place to stay during the Kentucky Derby, and for the right price, artist Lulu Flannery might be willing to rent out her bungalow. (First book in the *Kentucky Derby Trilogy*.)

Must Read

★ **Crusie, Jennifer.** *Bet Me*. St. Martin's, 2004. 448p. 9780312303464. When Minerva Dobbs overhears her exboyfriend betting Calvin Morrisey that he can't bed Min in a month, Min decides to turn the tables on them both by flirting with Cal and then dumping him. It won a RITA Award.

Gibson, Rachel. *Any Man of Mine*. Avon, 2011. 373p. 9780061579110. Two years after they impulsively got married in Las Vegas, hockey star Sam LeClaire turns up in Seattle hoping he can just pick up where things left off with his wife Autumn Haven.

Greene, Jennifer. *Blame It on Cupid*. Mira, 2009. 384p. 9780778303565. Merry's best friend dies, and Merry inherits her daughter, 11-year-old Charlene. But Merry knows partying, not parenting, and the only person she can turn to for advice is her neighbor Jack MacKinnon, a single dad.

★ **Higgins, Kristin.** *Too Good to Be True*. HQN, 2009. 379p. 9780373775156. After her ex-fiancé starts dating her younger sister, Grace Emerson invents a new man for herself only to discover her fictional boyfriend is starting to sound a lot like her new neighbor Callahan O'Shea. It won the RITA Award.

Kitt, Sandra. *Adam and Eva*. Silhouette, 2006. 256p. 9780373285570. Eva Duncan goes to the Virgin Islands for six weeks looking for rest and relaxation, but finds instead newly divorced dad, Adam Maxwell, and his 10-year-old daughter, Diane.

Linz, Cathie. *Mad, Bad, and Blonde*. Berkley, 2010. 300p. 9780425233405. When librarian Faith West is stood up at the altar, she decides to take her Mediterranean honeymoon by herself. Then she meets dreamy Caine Hunter, the ideal man in every way . . . except he's a spy for her father's business competitor.

Mallery, Susan. *Tempting*. HQN, 2007. 384p. 9780373772100. Dani Buchanan's search for her biological father leads her to Senator Mark Canfield, a candidate for U.S. President. But Mark's adopted son, Alex, the senator's devoted, right-hand man, has his suspicions about this spunky woman who claims to be his father's daughter. (Third book in *The Buchanans Series*.)

Must Read

★ **Phillips, Susan Elizabeth.** *Nobody's Baby but Mine*. Avon, 1997. 384p. 9780380782345. Genius Jane Darling, physics professor, wishes for a baby, but wants to make sure her child will have "normal" intelligence and not be the social pariah she was. What better way to assure this than to mate with a "dumb jock?" Star quarterback Cal Bonner seems to fit the bill, but unbeknownst to Jane, underneath that helmet is an amazing brain. (Third book in the *Chicago Stars Series*.) Conventional publishing wisdom dictated that sports figures couldn't sell Romances, but Susan Elizabeth Phillips proved this wrong by not only creating football heroes to die for in her *Chicago Stars Series*, but also an irresistible golf player as well in *Lady Be Good!*

Ray, Francis. *It Had to Be You*. St. Martin's, 2010. 304p. 9780312365073. Classical violinist Laurel Raineau needs a record producer, and Zachary Alright Wilder wants it to be him. He just doesn't know how to get Laurel to trust him when he's built his business on hip-hop and rap. (Fourth book in the *Grayson Friends Series*.)

Ridgway, Christie. *Crush on You*. Berkley Sensation, 2010. 304p. 9780425235133. Alessandra Baci has a new challenge—to save her family's Napa Valley vineyard. But Alessandra's plans to fix up a historical cottage as a wedding chapel and market their wine as wedding wine requires a bit of help from her new neighbor, Penn Bennett. (First book in the *Three Kisses Trilogy*.)

Roberts, Nora. *Happy Ever After*. Berkley, 2010. 368p. 9780425236758. Now that her business partners and best friends have found true love, wedding planner Parker "Legs" Brown is the only unattached member of the group. Then her brother's friend, hunky mechanic, former stuntman Malcolm Kavanaugh unexpectedly kisses her after he fixes her tire. (Fourth book in the *Bride Quartet*.) Nora is known as the "Queen of Romance" for a reason: her last 25 titles have hit number one on the *New York Times* bestseller lists and she recently published her 200th Romance novel (*The Witness*) in 2012.

🕸 **Shalvis, Jill.** *Simply Irresistible*. Warner Forever, 2010. 336p. 9780446571616. Maddie Moore is surprised to discover Jax Cullen, the contractor she has hired to renovate her hotel, is the same man she ran off the road on the way into Lucky Harbor. (First book in the *Lucky Harbor Series*.) It won the RITA Award.

Thompson, Vicki Lewis. *Talk Nerdy to Me*. St. Martin's, 2006. 368p. 9780312939076. Charlie Shepherd finds out that his neighbor, fashion model Eve Dupree, is as brainy as she is beautiful.

Wiggs, Susan. *Table for Five*. Mira, 2005. 400p. 9780778313823. When their parents are killed, Lily Robinson inherits the three Hollway children. The father's half-brother, ex-golfer Sean Maguire, just about ready to start a comeback tour, is named as guardian in an old will, and since neither he nor Lily will give up guardianship, they're forced to form a family. Wiggs got her start writing historical Romances, but she has since switched things up by writing both contemporary Romances and women's fiction novels.

Romantic Suspense

In the Romantic Suspense and Gothic subgenre, writers blend elements from the Romance genre with those from the Mystery/Suspense subgenres into one compelling story line. While the amount of Suspense versus Romance can vary from book to book, the ideal blend is a 50/50 split between the genres, such as that found in Daphne du Maurier's classic *ebbecca* (1938). Both Romantic Suspense novels and Gothic novels focus on fusing danger and desire into one plot, with the main difference between the two being time period and setting. Romantic Suspense novels almost always take place in the present day and can be set anywhere in the world. The incomparable Mary Stewart is an excellent example of this, having used Greece as a setting in *My Brother Michael* (1959), France in *Madam, Will You Talk?* (1954), England in *The Ivy Tree* (1961), and Austria in *Airs above the Ground* (1965). Gothic Romances are usually set in the past (most frequently the late 19th century) and take place in an isolated location such as a castle or remote estate. Victoria Holt, called the "Queen of the Gothics," was known for this, having used such settings in many of her novels including *Mistress of Mellyn* (1960), *Bride of Pendorrac* (1963), and *The Shivering Sands* (1969), all quintessential examples of the classic Gothic Romance.

Adair, Cherry. *White Heat*. Ballantine Books, 2007. 336p. 9780345476449. Art restoration expert Emily Greene finds herself reunited with her old lover Max Aries, when Max's father, Daniel, is found dead. (Second book in the *Black Rose Trilogy*.)