

What Makes a Good Romantic Novel?

Any romantic novel will, in its most basic form, play out the story of a relationship; depicting the trials and tribulations along the way to an eventual 'happy ever after'. But this on its own is not enough to qualify a book to be a good romantic novel.

Firstly, the characterisation must be well thought out and believable. The reader must be convinced that the individuals within the romantic situation would actually be attracted to each other. This doesn't mean that they have to be similar characters, as of course, opposites do attract. They just have to have something believable that connects them and allows them to be romantically involved.

Secondly, there needs to be a storyline other than the developing romance. There has to be something else in the novel that provides the reader with suspense and intrigue. Generally, romantic novels do end predictably, with the main characters falling madly in love.

Therefore there needs to be something else within the story to make the reader want to keep reading to the very last page. An example could be; a secret that only one character knows.... will they ever share it? There could be a crime storyline running alongside the romance or another twist that enhances the story to be something more than just a story about love.

Thirdly, the novel should provide the reader with a certain amount of escapism. As such the elements of romance, love, lust, and sex need to be exaggerated slightly. Some or indeed all of these elements need to be represented in such a way that the reader is taken away from their everyday experiences of romance, love, lust and sex.

Finally, the time and context within which the novel is set can really enhance a romantic novel. The setting of the story is very important and the direction of the romance can often be influenced by the era or the situation the story is set in. For example a romance novel set within the context of a war, will allow for the conflict of the war to be mirrored in the conflicts within the relationship, thus giving the novel an extra depth.

In order to write a good romantic novel therefore, the four key points to consider are:

- Characterisation
- An alternative storyline
- Escapism
- Setting

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