

# All About Romance (Writing)

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With  
Tina Radcliffe



# The Facts



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During the Great Recession in 2008 and 2009, sales for most every consumer item you can think of declined—except for romance novels. Those sales went up.

In difficult times, people need a pick-me-up. Romance novels provide the distraction and balm people crave when the world seems to be falling apart—or, in this case, when the whole concept of “togetherness” has become more complicated than a love triangle.-**Forbes Magazine -During Tough Times, Romance Novel Sales Are Set To Soar- May 8, 2020** <https://bit.ly/2ZSjnSk>

**One out of every two mass-market fiction paperbacks sold in the US are romance titles.-Nielsen**

**Among the most popular genres of 2018 were romance and suspense/thrillers, with unit sales surpassing nine million and ten million respectively. –Statista**

# What Makes a Novel a Romance?

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From *Romance Writers of America*: Two basic elements comprise every romance novel: a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending.

**A Central Love Story:** The main plot centers around individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work. A writer can include as many subplots as he/she wants as long as the love story is the main focus of the novel.

**An Emotionally Satisfying and Optimistic Ending:** In a romance, the lovers who risk and struggle for each other and their relationship are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love



# Romance Reader Facts

- Female: 82%
- Male: 18%
- Average age of the romance reader: 35–39 years old
- Ethnicity: 73% White/Caucasian, 12% Black/African American, 7% Latino/Hispanic, and 4% Asian/Asian American.
- Sexual orientation: 86% heterosexual or straight; 9% bisexual, pansexual, or other bi+ identity; 2% gay or lesbian.
- Most frequent readers are younger, with half of frequent and very frequent readers aged 34 and below.
- 92% of survey respondents are print readers; 64% are e-book readers; 35% are audiobook users.
- Tablets and smartphones are the most-used devices to read e-books.
- Half of romance readers read romantic suspense, followed by erotic and historical as the most popular genres.
- Younger readers read more young adult, erotic, and paranormal romance and less contemporary romance than older readers.

# Subgenres

Long Contemporary  
Short Contemporary  
Short Historical  
Long Historical  
Regency Romance  
Erotic  
Fantasy  
Paranormal  
Speculative Fiction  
Women's Fiction  
Inspirational Romance  
Young Adult  
New Adult  
Romantic Suspense

And....

Upmarket Fiction- a book that has a literary feel with commercial appeal.

Romantic Comedy (chick lit reborn?)

Magical Realism-is a style of fiction that paints a realistic view of the modern world while also adding magical elements

Split or Dual Timelines

Urban Fantasy-fantasy set in the city

Space Operas-Space opera is a subgenre of science fiction that emphasizes space warfare, melodramatic adventure, interplanetary battles, chivalric romance, and risk-taking

Speculative Fiction-involves some degree of speculation-fiction where the "laws" of that world (explicit or implied) are different than ours.



# Types of Books

**Series or "category" romances:** books issued under a common imprint/series name that are usually numbered sequentially and released at regular intervals, usually monthly, with the same number of releases each time. These books are most commonly published by Harlequin.

Harlequin Series: (12 series imprints-no agent required)  
Love Inspired-Love Inspired Suspense-Heartwarming-Romance-  
Historical-Special Edition-Desire-Dare-Intrigue-Presents-Medical  
Romance

**Single-title romances:** longer romances released individually and not as part of a numbered series.



# Formats

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## Digital First

**Mass Market** -is a small, usually non-illustrated, and less-expensive bookbinding format. The customary **size** is 6.75" tall x 4.25" wide,.

**Trade-** a slightly larger, higher-quality softcover version of a book. 5 3/8 in × 8 1/2 in

## Hardcover

**New Mass Max or MMP MAX-** (introduced by Harlequin and Kensington)-4.75 by 7-inch format –all the qualities of Trade but not quite as large.

**True Large Print-** Trade size large print with a font of 13.5 for easier reading



# Size Matters

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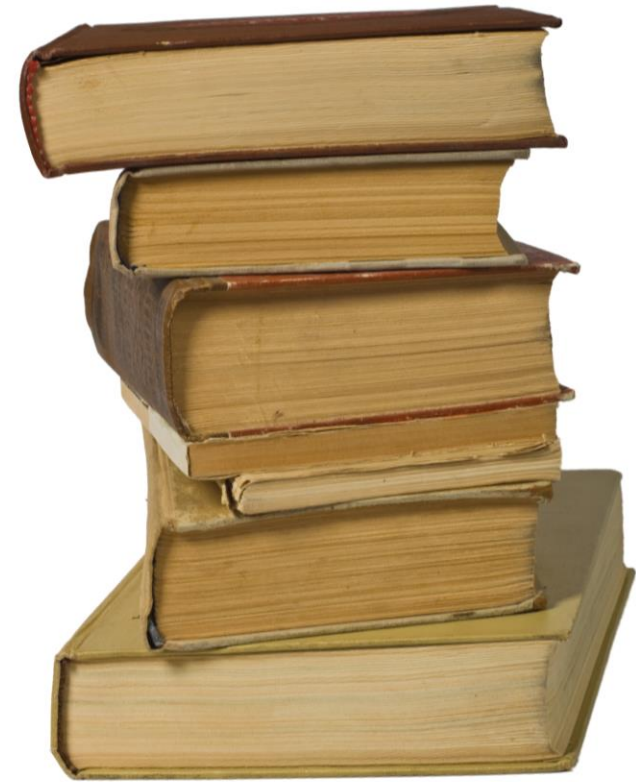
Novella-20-40k

Short Contemporary-50-60k

Long Contemporary-70-90k

Short Historical-70-90k

Long Historical-100+ depends on the publisher





### Three Act Structure With Michael Hauge's Six Stage Overlay

**NOVELLA**  
20,000-25,000 words  
80-100 pages  
10-12 pages per chapter

**SHORT CONTEMP**  
50,000-60,000 words  
200-240 pages  
18-20 pages per chapter

**LONG CONTEMP**  
70,000-80,000 words  
280-320 pages  
18-20 pages per chapter

**SHORT HIST. / MAINST.**  
90,000-100,000 words  
360-400 pages  
18-20 pages per chapter

**LONG HIST. / MAINST.**  
108,000-120,000 words  
432-480 pages  
18-20 pages per chapter

0%		10%		25%				50%				75%				90-99%		100%						
ACT I				ACT II								ACT III												
Stage I Setup		Stage II New Situation			Stage III Progress				Stage IV Complications & Higher Stakes				Stage V Final Push			Stage VI Aftermath								
Turning Point #1 Opportunity		Turning Point #2 Change of Plans			Turning Point #3 Point of No Return				Turning Point #4 Major Set Back				Turning Point #5 Climax											
Prologue & Chapter 1		Chapter 2		Chapter 3		Chapter 4		Chapter 5		Chapter 6		Chapter 7		Chapter 8 & Epilogue										
Pro. & Ch.1		Ch. 2	Ch. 3	Ch. 4	Ch. 5	Ch. 6	Ch. 7	Ch. 8	Ch. 9	Ch. 10	Ch. 11	Ch. 12 & Epi.												
P & 1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16 & E								
P & 1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20 & E				
P & 1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24 & E



# Who's Your Daddy

## The BIG 5

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- The Big Five have 80% of the Market Share
- Penguin Random House -37% of the market with 250 imprints and Publishing Houses including Waterbrook Multnomah and Crown Publishing.
- HarperCollins-17.5% Owned by Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate News Corp., HarperCollins has around fifty imprints. Newscorp also owns Fox Entertainment and 21st Century Fox. HarperCollins imprints include Harlequin, Zondervan, Thomas Nelson and HarperCollins Christian.
- Simon & Schuster -11.7% Currently for sale by Viacom. Imprints include Pocket, Howard Books, Atria, Fireside and Touchstone.
- Hachette – 9% A division of the second-largest trade & education publisher in the world. Imprints include Faithwords, Little, Brown and Co., Grand Central and Center Street Books
- Macmillan-5% Includes: Henry Holt, St. Martin's Press, First Second Books, Pan Books, Pronoun



# Smaller Independent Publishers

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- Sourcebooks
- Soho Press
- Kensington
- Tyndale
- Baker Books (Bethany/Revell)
- Barbour Publishing
- Amazon Publishing-15 Imprints
- Hallmark
- Entangled Publishing

These presses use a traditional publishing model with advances, royalties.

Note that Kensington does have a digital first imprint.

Digital first imprints usually do not pay advances but pay higher royalties.



# Small Press or Indie Press

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- Anaiah Press
- Bookouture
- WildRose Press
- Carina Press-Harlequin's digital first press
- Iron Stream Media-(Lighthouse Publishing, Smitten Historical Romance, Bling!, Firefly Southern Fiction...)
- Boroughts Publishing Group
- Vinspire
- Belle Books
- Tule
- A small press is a publisher with annual sales below a certain level. The terms "small press", "indie publisher", and "independent press" are often used interchangeably, with "independent press" defined as publishers that are not part of large conglomerates or multinational corporations.-Wikipedia
- No advance
- Higher royalty (25-50%)
- Authors play bigger role in production
- More help with career development and publicity
- May be digital first

# Self-Publishing ?

## Legit Resources I can recommend!

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Joanna Penn- The Creative Penn. Newsletter. <https://bit.ly/2Mfxlpb>

Chris Fox- Six Figure Author Write Faster, Write Smarter <https://bit.ly/3cpn5FK>

David Gaughran- Let's Get Digital & Let's Get Visible <https://bit.ly/2Ap7lVT>

Alli-Alliance of Independent Authors <https://bit.ly/3chViXI>

Reedsy.com <https://reedsy.com/>

BookBub Partners Blog <https://bit.ly/3diAh0l>

Mark Dawson- Self-Publishing Formula Courses <https://bit.ly/2XgcYyo>

## Support Groups:

Marie Force's Author Support Network on Facebook <https://bit.ly/2Xi4Hdp>

20BooksTo50K® on Facebook <https://bit.ly/2MfXwfG>





# Traditional Publishing Resources

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- Bookends Literary YouTube <http://bit.ly/2MUib7i>
- Nathan Bransford <https://bit.ly/36LxM3X>
- Jane Friedman <https://bit.ly/2Ap7Fnz>
- All The Kissing <https://bit.ly/3chDOdR>
- Writers in the Storm <https://bit.ly/3ccCAk8>
- Romance Writers of America <https://www.rwa.org/>



# Plots and Tropes

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- **Story** is a narrative tale. This happened, then this happened, then this happened.
- **Plot** is the cause and effect sequence of the narrative tale. It has been said that there are a finite number of plots. Some theorists suggest seven basic plots, others nine. (Check out Ronald Tobias-20 Master Plots and How to Build Them)
- **Tropes** are reoccurring literary plot devices. Reoccurring as in, used over and over again, so as to become familiar to the reader and the writer as a trope. If I say "secret baby," you nod, because you know the trope.
- **Hooks** are not tropes-they are not plot either. They are a topic that delivers a particular emotional or entertainment experiences. (cowboy, Amish, rancher, princess, baby)



# Classic Romance Tropes

1. Two Dogs. One Bone
2. Star-Crossed Lovers
3. Friends to Lovers
4. Forbidden Love
5. Secret Baby
6. Fish out of Water
7. Reunited Lovers
8. Opposites
9. May/December
10. Ugly Duckling
11. Amnesia
12. Marriage of Convenience
13. Secret
14. Sudden Baby
15. Jeopardy
16. Love Triangle
17. Wounded Hero/Heroine
18. Forced Close Proximity
19. Sacrifice-aka-Giving up Something for Love.



# External & Internal Conflict

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Both of your protagonists must have an internal and external:

Goal-What

Motivation-Why

Conflict –What's standing in the way

In a romance the two characters have shared goals and opposing values or opposing goals and shared values.

What's keeping these two from connecting?

- **Resources for Plotting**

**Goal, Motivation and Conflict:** The Building Blocks of Good Fiction by Debra Dixon (Amazon) Kindle Version

**Michael Hague-The Hero's Two Journeys**

<https://bit.ly/2TUB5Ri> or on Udemy

Screenwriting & Storytelling Blueprint: Hero's Two Journeys <https://bit.ly/2ZUa18G>

**Never pay full price. Find a coupon online.**



# You Finished the Book!

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- Where does your book sit on the bookshelf?
- Write a log line or elevator pitch.
- Write a blurb.
- Write a synopsis.
- Know your comparables.
- Find a publisher and or agent.
- Fine-tune that query letter.



NOW WHAT?

# Romance Publishers Who Don't Require an Agent

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- Carina Press
- Harlequin Category/Series Romances
- Entangled Publishing
- Tule
- Sourcebooks Casablanca
- Kensington
- Bookouture
- Wildrose Press
- Belle Books



# Where to find Editors & Agents

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- In the acknowledgments of your favorite books.
- Follow them on Twitter
- #MSW Twitter Hashtag and Manuscript Wish list <http://mswishlist.com/>
- Query Tracker and Query Tracker Blog <https://querytracker.blogspot.com/>
- Agent Query <https://www.agentquery.com/>
- Publishers Market Place <https://www.publishersmarketplace.com>

# Publishers Market Place

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## **Newsletters:**

Publishers Lunch Deluxe (industry news; business days)

Lunch Deluxe Weekly (last week's deals; Mondays)

Daily Deals (each day's reported deals; business days)

## **Search Options:**

Who represents who.

Deals

Agents

Editors

Authors

## **What it tells you**

Market trends

Agent sales

What others are doing and making

What to expect

What kind of loglines agents and editors write

Comparables



# Deal Memo Examples

## **May 29, 2020 - SOPHIE GO'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB, by Roselle Lim**

*Fiction: Women's/Romance*

Roselle Lim's SOPHIE GO'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB, pitched as **MATCHMAKERS FOR BEGINNERS** meets *The Farewell*, in which a novice matchmaker returns to her hometown of Toronto and faces the nearly impossible task of finding love for seven 70-something Chinese bachelors, to [Cindy Hwang](#) at [Berkley](#), in an **exclusive submission**, in a two-book deal, by [Jenny Bent](#) at [The Bent Agency](#) (world). Film: Mary Pender-Coplan at UTA

## **May 29, 2020 - LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF SECRETS, by Karen Booth**

*Fiction: Women's/Romance*

Karen Booth's LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF SECRETS, a trilogy in which an infamous diary's contents are anonymously leaked, threatening to undermine several powerful families and leading to unexpected romantic couplings, to [Patience Bloom](#) at [Harlequin](#) Desire, in a **nice deal, in a three-book deal**, by [Melissa Jeglinski](#) at [The Knight Agency](#).

## **May 27, 2020 - E.J. Mellow**

*Digital: Fiction: Women's/Romance*

E.J. Mellow's The Mousai series, a dark fantasy series following the adventures of sisters with powerful magical gifts who are tasked with protecting a mysterious hidden kingdom that contains and regulates all of the black market trading and dark magic that would otherwise run rampant throughout their realm, to [Lauren Plude](#) at [Montlake Romance](#), in a two-book deal, by [Aimee Ashcraft](#) at [Brower Literary](#) (world).



# Deal Memo Examples

## **May 26, 2020 - WITCH PLEASE and QUEEN WITCH, by Ann Aguirre**

*Fiction: Women's/Romance*

Ann Aguirre's WITCH PLEASE and QUEEN WITCH, pitched as Practical Magic for the 21st century; a feminist magical rom-com series featuring tech-savvy witches finding their own way in the world, to [Christa Desir](#) at [Sourcebooks](#), in a two-book deal, by [Lucienne Diver](#) at [The Knight Agency](#) (world).

## **May 26, 2020 - Nichole Severn**

*Fiction: Women's/Romance*

Nichole Severn's untitled book, part of a new "mindhunters" psychological thriller multi-author series, to [Denise Zaza](#) at [Harlequin](#) Intrigue, for publication in July 2021, by [Jill Marsal](#) at [Marsal Lyon Literary Agency](#).

## **May 26, 2020 - WRONG NUMBER, by Laura Brown**

*Digital: Fiction: Women's/Romance*

#OwnVoices author Laura Brown's WRONG NUMBER, about a woman who moves to a new state in hopes of learning a coveted rugelach recipe; when she finds herself flirting with a wrong number texter, she accidentally reveals the plan, only to find out he's her new boss's son, to [Meghan Farrell](#) at [Tule](#), for publication in 2021, by [Lynnette Novak](#) at [The Seymour Agency](#).



# Twitter Pitches & Contests



**Writer's Inside Edition** tracks them in the monthly issue: subscribe here: <http://bit.ly/2KIBMzU>

“A twit pitch is a variation of an elevator pitch, but with the constraint being the 140 character limit imposed by Twitter instead of the time spent in an elevator.

Resources:

The 35-word and Twitter Pitch Simplified-

<https://bit.ly/2Z9iHaJ>

How To Craft The Picture-Perfect Twitter Pitch -

<https://bit.ly/3bEZRuA>

Query Connection-to refine your pitch

<https://bit.ly/3cDTwB7>

When Everly Raven discovers a body inside a chalet on her family's ski resort, the blame falls on her. Racing to evade the target on her back, she's forced to work with her ex, Isaac, to clear her name. Can they stay alive long enough to find the real killer? #PitMad #RS

Upcoming Twitter Pitches:

**#PitMad Any unagented writer is welcome to pitch. All genres/categories are welcomed. #PitMad occurs quarterly. The next date is June 4, 2020 (8AM – 8PM EDT) More info here: <https://pitchwars.org/pitmad/>**

# Thank you!

Email me for a PDF of this workshop-[contact@tinaradcliffe.com](mailto:contact@tinaradcliffe.com)

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**Free Zoom Workshop**  
**June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1pm Arizona time.**

**Using a Kanban Board to Boost Your Creativity**  
**Hosted by Tina Radcliffe, and presented by**  
**Romantic Suspense author Sherri Shackelford.**

**Email Tina to register.**

**Using a Kanban Board  
to Increase Productivity  
with  
Sherri Shackelford**



**June 6th,  
1pm PST/  
4pm EST**

**VIA ZOOM**

**Sign up today!**

**A Free Event**