

YOUR FICTION HANDBOOK



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the FICTIONARY HANDBOOK

You've seen people casually dropping terms like "romantasy" and "cozy paranormal mystery" and "dark academia" and nodded along, pretending you totally get it.

(We've all been there. No shame.)

But here's the thing: Understanding these subgenres isn't about being in some secret club. It's about knowing *exactly what readers are looking for* so you can give it to them, and make a living doing it.

This guide breaks down each subgenre in plain English.

Think of this as your secret weapon for writing to market without the guesswork.

Ready? Let's go!

Kate Riley

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each subgenre breakdown includes:

WHAT IT IS: The actual definition (not the confusing one from Wikipedia)

READER EXPECTATIONS: What readers show up for (miss these and they'll be mad)

ESSENTIAL THEMES: The bigger-picture stuff that runs through these stories

TOP TRENDING TROPES: The specific story beats readers are obsessed with right now

THE VIBES: Because sometimes you just need to feel it

WRITE IT WHEN: How to know if this is YOUR genre

Fictionary

Billionaire Romance

Contemporary romance where the hero (sometimes heroine) is obscenely wealthy.

Think CEOs, tech moguls, heirs to empires, self-made billionaires.

The wealth creates both the fantasy and the conflict.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Wealthy MMC** - Not just rich, **RICH** rich
- **Power imbalance** - Usually he's powerful, she's not (initially)
- **Luxury lifestyle porn** - Private jets, penthouse apartments, designer everything
- **Alpha male hero** - Used to getting what he wants
- **Cinderella elements** - Often features class difference
- **High spice level** - Usually explicit
- **HEA** - She gets the guy and the lifestyle

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Love transcending class differences
- Money can't buy happiness (but love can)
- Power and vulnerability
- Trust despite inequality
- Breaking down walls

THE VIBES

Fifty Shades, Gossip Girl, Crazy Rich Asians vibes. Private jets, rooftop bars, "money is no object" romance.

Fantasy of being swept off your feet by someone powerful and rich who only has eyes for you.

Billions Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Boss/Employee** - Secretary, assistant, or employee falls for CEO
- **Fake Relationship** - Hired to pretend, catches real feelings
- **Marriage of Convenience** - Business arrangement becomes real
- **Enemies to Lovers** - Rival companies or forced business partnership
- **Cinderella Story** - Poor girl catches billionaire's eye
- **Grumpy Billionaire + Sunshine Heroine** - He's closed off, she breaks through
- **Protector/Savior** - He rescues her from financial trouble
- **Playboy Reforms** - Serial dater finally finds "the one"
- **Secret Identity** - She doesn't know he's loaded at first

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write aspirational fantasy.
- You love the power dynamic and class difference tension.
- You want to describe luxury lifestyles and alpha males who get what they want (except when it comes to her heart—that he has to earn).

Cozy Fantasy

Fantasy without the high-stakes "save the world" plot.

Instead, it's about characters living their lives in a magical world, often running a business, building relationships, and dealing with everyday problems—that happen to involve magic.

This is VERY different from epic fantasy. No chosen ones. No dark lords. Just... life, but magical.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Low stakes:** No world-ending threats; problems are personal and manageable
- **Slice-of-life storytelling:** Day-to-day activities in a magical setting
- **Found family/community:** Relationships are central
- **Cozy profession in magical world:** Running a magical café, potion shop, etc.
- **Gentle, warm tone:** Comforting, not anxiety-inducing
- **Happy ending:** Everything works out; characters find belonging
- **Cottagecore aesthetics:** Often has that "cozy countryside" vibe

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Belonging and finding your place
- Everyday magic and wonder
- Community over conflict
- Simple pleasures elevated by magic
- Healing and growth

THE VIBES

Like if *The Hobbit* was just about running the Green Dragon Inn and never went on that quest. Or if *Howl's Moving Castle* focused entirely on the hat shop.

Warm, gentle, magical without being dangerous.

Cozy Fantasy

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Magical Coffee Shop/Bakery** - Cozy business in a fantasy world
- **Starting Over in New Magical Town** - Fish out of water finding home
- **Found Family** - Creating your chosen family in the magical community
- **Romance Subplot** - Sweet, slow-burn, not the main focus
- **No Big Bad** - Conflict is personal, not apocalyptic
- **Magical Creatures as Friends** - Dragons running deliveries, talking cats, friendly spirits
- **Cottagecore Aesthetics** - Gardens, tea, simple living with magical twist
- **Rival Turned Friend** - Gentle competition leads to friendship

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love fantasy worldbuilding but hate high-stakes combat.
- You want magic to be comforting, not terrifying.
- You'd rather write about magical tea shops than epic battles.

Cozy Mystery

A mystery where the murder happens off-page, the violence is minimal, and the amateur sleuth is more likely to solve crimes over tea than in a dark alley.

Think Agatha Christie vibes but in modern small towns with quirky characters.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Amateur sleuth:** Not a cop or professional detective; usually has a "cozy" profession
- **Small-town setting:** Where everyone knows everyone's business
- **Violence off-page:** No gore, no graphic descriptions
- **Lighthearted tone:** Despite the murder, the vibe is gentle
- **Community focus:** Relationships and community matter as much as solving the crime
- **Happy resolution:** Justice is served, order is restored
- **Series potential:** Readers want to return to this world/characters

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Justice prevails
- Community bonds and friendship
- Small-town quirks and charm
- Everyday people being heroes

THE VIBES

Murder most polite!

Tea, cats, small-town gossip, quirky characters, and solving crimes between running your charming small business.

Cozy Mystery

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Hobby-Themed Sleuthing** - Baker, bookshop owner, librarian, craft store owner solves crimes
- **Pet Sidekick** - Usually a cat, sometimes a dog, occasionally something weird
- **Romantic Subplot** - Slow-burn romance with local detective/love interest
- **Closed Circle Mystery** - Limited suspects who all knew each other
- **Body Found in Cozy Location** - In the bookshop, at the baking competition, during the craft fair
- **Nosy Neighbor/Friend Network** - Gossip is actually useful
- **Recipe/Craft Instructions Included** - Readers love the bonus content
- **Seasonal/Holiday Setting** - Christmas mysteries, Halloween mysteries, etc.

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love puzzles but hate gore
- You want recurring characters readers will love like friends.
- You'd rather write about baking competitions than serial killers.

Cozy Paranormal Mystery

Take *everything* from Cozy Mystery, then add ghosts, witches, psychic powers, or other supernatural elements.

The mystery still happens in a small town with an amateur sleuth, but now magic is real and sometimes helpful for solving crimes.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **All the cozy mystery rules PLUS magic:** still gentle, still small-town, but supernatural
- **Magic is normalized:** The town knows about magic (or it's a magical community)
- **Magical sleuth or abilities:** Protagonist might be a witch, psychic, or able to talk to ghosts
- **Supernatural elements help solve the crime:** But it's not the only solution
- **Whimsical tone:** More "Practical Magic" than "The Exorcist"
- **Still no graphic violence:** The cozy rules still apply

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Embracing what makes you different
- Magic as part of daily life
- Community of magical misfits
- Using gifts for good

THE VIBES

All the cozy comfort of regular cozy mysteries, but with crystal balls, spell books, and ghosts who are surprisingly helpful.

Think: *Halloweentown* meets *Murder, She Wrote*.

Cozy Paranormal Mystery

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Witch Who Runs a Shop** - Tea shop, bookshop, potion shop, bakery with magical goods
- **Talks to Ghosts/Victim** - Gets clues from beyond the grave
- **Magical Familiar** - The cat isn't just a pet; it's a magical companion
- **Hidden Magical Community** - Secret witch town, magical neighborhood, or everyone has abilities
- **Reluctant Psychic** - Didn't ask for these powers but using them anyway
- **Magic Goes Wrong** - Spell backfires, potion causes chaos, leads to clues
- **Magical Competition/Event** - Witch bake-off, psychic fair, supernatural festival
- **Romance with Non-Magical Local** - Or another magical being

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love cozy mysteries but also want to play with magic.
- You want whimsy and wonder along with your whodunit.
- You think supernatural powers would make investigating way more interesting.

Dark Academia

Stories set in elite academic institutions (usually universities or boarding schools) that explore intellectual pursuits, obsession with knowledge, and the dark underbelly of scholarly life.

Think: Gothic vibes, secret societies, morally gray characters, and an aesthetic that's all dark wood libraries and vintage fashion.

Can be contemporary or historical. Often includes mystery, thriller, or literary fiction elements.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Academic setting:** University, boarding school, research institution
- **Intellectual characters:** Obsessed with knowledge, literature, classics, art
- **Dark/Gothic atmosphere:** Moody, atmospheric, slightly ominous
- **Morally ambiguous characters:** Not clearly good or bad
- **Secret societies or exclusive groups:** Hidden knowledge, elite circles
- **Classical references:** Literature, art, philosophy, ancient languages
- **Aesthetic focus:** The LOOK matters (dark libraries, vintage clothing, autumn vibes)

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Knowledge and its corrupting influence
- Ambition and obsession
- Elite privilege and exclusion
- Dangerous pursuit of forbidden knowledge

THE VIBES

Dead Poets Society gone wrong, Gothic literature come to life.

Dark libraries, Latin quotes, morally questionable choices in the name of knowledge, and an aesthetic you could post on Pinterest.

Dark Academia

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Secret Society** - Exclusive groups with dark secrets or rituals
- **Obsessive Study Rivals** - Academic competition turned dangerous
- **Murder at the University** - Death with intellectual mystery elements
- **Forbidden Knowledge** - Pursuing something scholars shouldn't
- **Toxic Friendship Group** - The squad that's maybe... too intense
- **Teacher/Mentor with Secrets** - The professor knows more than they're saying
- **Ancient Text/Artifact** - Discovery that changes everything
- **Unreliable Narrator** - Can't trust what you're being told
- **Tragic Romance** - Love that doesn't end well

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love academia and intellectual pursuits but want the dark, dangerous side.
- You're obsessed with the aesthetic.
- You want to explore how far people will go for knowledge and belonging.

Epic Fantasy

Large-scale fantasy with complex worldbuilding, multiple storylines, magic systems, and often "save the world" stakes.

Think: *Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, Wheel of Time.* Usually series with large casts and intricate plots.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Complex worldbuilding** - Detailed magic systems, cultures, geography
- **Multiple POV characters** - Various storylines interweave
- **High stakes** - World-ending threats, kingdoms at war
- **Good vs. evil (often gray)** - Moral complexity
- **Magic system with rules** - Consistent, logical magic
- **Series format** - Story spans multiple books
- **Maps and appendices welcome** - Readers love reference materials
- **Slower pacing acceptable** - Worldbuilding takes time

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Good vs. evil (or gray morality)
- Chosen ones and prophecies
- Sacrifice for greater good
- Political intrigue
- Power and corruption

THE VIBES

Sweeping landscapes, detailed maps, complex magic, morally gray characters, political maneuvering, and battles for the fate of the world.

Think: *hours of immersive reading, rich worldbuilding you can get lost in.*

Epic Fantasy

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Chosen One/Prophesied Hero** - Destiny calls ordinary person
- **Quest to Save the World** - Journey with high stakes
- **Magic School/Training** - Learning powers
- **Political Intrigue** - Court politics, throne games
- **Ancient Evil Returns** - Dark lord awakens
- **Found Family Band** - Diverse group united by quest
- **Magical Artifacts** - Powerful objects sought
- **Multiple Kingdoms/Races** - Elves, dwarves, humans, etc.
- **Mentor Dies** - Training ends, hero must continue alone

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love complex worldbuilding.
- You can juggle multiple storylines and POVs.
- You're in this for the long haul (series commitment).

NOTE

Epic fantasy is a huge investment since the books are so much longer than other genres. Readers expect payoff for their time.

Gothic Romance

Romance with Gothic elements: dark atmosphere, mysterious settings (often old estates or castles), secrets, and a brooding hero.

Think: *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (, or modern takes on that atmospheric, slightly creepy romantic vibe.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Gothic atmosphere** - Dark, moody, mysterious
- **Old estate/mansion setting** - Often isolated, full of secrets
- **Brooding, mysterious hero** - Dark past, secretive
- **Female protagonist uncovering secrets** - Often investigates the mystery
- **Supernatural hints possible** - Or just atmospheric eeriness
- **Romance despite darkness** - Love amid mystery/danger
- **Historical or contemporary** - Works in both
- **HEA but maybe bittersweet** - Not always sunshine endings

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Secrets and their consequences
- Past haunting present
- Isolation and loneliness
- Forbidden knowledge
- edemption and revelation

THE VIBES

Dark and stormy nights, candlelit corridors, secrets behind locked doors, brooding men in old manors, and romance that's equal parts attraction and unease.

Think: atmospheric, Victorian Gothic vibes even in modern settings.

Gothic Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Mysterious Employer** - She works for brooding lord/master
- **Secrets in the House** - Old estate holds dark history
- **Mad Wife in the Attic** - Literal or figurative
- **Forbidden Love** - Dark family secrets keep them apart
- **Isolated Setting** - Cut off from outside world
- **Ghostly Presence** - Real ghost or just atmosphere
- **Heroine in Danger** - Mystery threatens her
- **Brooding Byronic Hero** - Dark, tortured, magnetic
- **Inheritance Brings Her** - Arrives to claim estate, discovers secrets

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love atmospheric writing and dark romance.
- You want mystery blended with romance.
- You're drawn to old estates, secrets, and brooding heroes.

Historical Fiction

Fiction set in a historical period, focusing on the era, events, or historical figures. NOT primarily romance (though can include it).

The history is the point—exploring what life was like, how events unfolded, or fictional characters navigating real historical contexts.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Period details** - Clothing, language, social norms, daily life
- **Historical events or context** - Real history shapes the story
- **May include real historical figures** - *Or entirely fictional characters*
- **Immersive setting** - Transports reader to the time period
- **Educational element** - Readers often learn real history
- **Various tones** - Can be literary, dramatic, adventurous
- **Not always HEA** - More realistic endings

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Social change and upheaval
- Survival in different eras
- Human nature across time
- War, politics, revolution
- How people lived and loved

THE VIBES

Time machine in book form. Rich historical detail, real events come alive, characters navigating different eras.

Think: *Pillars of the Earth, All the Light We Cannot See, The Nightingale.*

Historical Fiction

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **WWII Stories** – Always popular, various perspectives
- **Victorian Era** – Social change, industrialization
- **American Historical** – Civil War, frontier, various periods
- **Tudor/Medieval England** – Royalty, intrigue, religious conflict
- **Immigrant Stories** – Coming to America, cultural identity
- **Based on True Story** – Historical figures or events
- **Dual Timeline** – Past and present interweave
- **Hidden Figures** – Untold historical stories
- **Social Justice Historical** – Marginalized voices from history

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You're passionate about a historical period.
- You love research and period details.
- You want to explore history through character-driven stories.

Holiday Romance

Romance centered around a specific holiday (usually Christmas, but can be any holiday).

The holiday setting creates the magic, timing, and often the conflict. These are feel-good stories tied to seasonal vibes.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Holiday setting is essential** - Not just backdrop; the holiday matters
- **Seasonal magic/cheer** - Embraces holiday spirit
- **Fast timeline** - Often happens over holiday season
- **Small-town or family setting** - Community and family are key
- **Feel-good tone** - Warm, uplifting, hopeful
- **Holiday traditions** - Baking, decorating, events, etc.
- **HEA by the holiday** - Romance resolves by Christmas morning, etc.

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Magic of the season
- Family and belonging
- Finding home
- Love as the best gift
- Second chances (common theme)

THE VIBES

Every Hallmark Christmas movie ever, but better.

Think: snow, twinkling lights, hot cocoa, cozy sweaters, family gatherings, and falling in love while the world is covered in holiday magic.

Holiday Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Return Home for the Holidays** - Facing the past, finding love
- **Fake Date to Holiday Event** - Pretend partner for family gathering
- **Holiday Business** - Christmas tree farm, bakery, etc. brings them together
- **Snowed In** - Forced proximity in a cabin/small town
- **Grinch Needs Holiday Magic** - Cynic learns to love the season (and someone special)
- **Holiday Event Coordinator** - Planning the perfect event, finding perfect love
- **Childhood Friends at Holiday** - Reunite during holidays, see each other differently
- **City Person Discovers Small-Town Holiday** - Culture clash leads to romance
- **Holiday Miracle** - Something magical about the season helps love bloom

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You're a holiday person who wants to bottle that seasonal magic.
- You love feel-good stories with guaranteed happy endings.
- You want readers to feel warm and fuzzy.

Mafia Romance

Dark romance subgenre where the MMC is involved in organized crime (mafia, mob, cartel, etc.). High stakes, dangerous men, forbidden love, and lots of moral grayness.

This is dark romance with a specific criminal setting.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Criminal MMC:** He's in the mafia/mob/organized crime
- **Dangerous world:** Real violence, real stakes (though often off-page)
- **Possessive hero:** "She's mine and I'll kill anyone who touches her"
- **Forbidden love:** Often crosses family/faction lines
- **Loyalty themes:** Family, honor, codes of conduct
- **High spice level:** Usually explicit
- **HEA despite the danger:** Love conquers even the mob

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Loyalty and betrayal
- Power and control
- Family obligation vs. personal desire
- Dangerous love
- Honor among thieves

THE VIBES

Dangerous men in expensive suits, loyalty that kills, forbidden love that's worth dying for.

Think: *The Godfather meets romantic obsession, dark and possessive but somehow swoon-worthy.*

Mafia Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Return to Hometown** - Left for the city, came back for reasons
- **City Person Moves to Small Town** - Fish out of water finds love
- **Grumpy Local + Sunshine Newcomer** - He's been hurt, she's optimistic
- **Childhood Friends to Lovers** - Grew up together, finally see each other differently
- **Rival Businesses** - Competing bookshops/cafés/etc. create tension
- **Single Parent Finding Love** - Kids bring them together
- **Second Chance Romance** - High school sweethearts reunite
- **Forced Proximity** - Sharing a building, working together, etc.
- **Meddling Town Matchmakers** - The whole town ships them

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want dark romance with a specific crime aesthetic.
- You love morally gray heroes who are ruthless except for their one weakness (the heroine).
- You're comfortable with violence and high-stakes danger.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Always include content warnings on your Amazon book page.

Mid-Life Paranormal

Paranormal stories featuring women over 40 dealing with supernatural elements AND midlife challenges.

Think: discovering you're a witch at 45 while navigating divorce, empty nest, and hot flashes. It's paranormal meets women's fiction.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **40+ protagonist** - Midlife and beyond
- **Supernatural discovery/awakening** - Powers emerge or intensify with age
- **Midlife issues acknowledged** - Divorce, kids leaving, aging parents, menopause, career changes
- **Humor about aging** - Self-aware, often funny about getting older
- **Romance optional but welcome** - Can have romance but not required
- **Found family/community** - Building new support systems
- **Empowerment arc** - Coming into power (literal and metaphorical)

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Power emerging with age
- Aging as gaining, not losing
- Embracing who you really are
- You're never too old for magic (or adventure)

THE VIBES

Practical Magic meets **Fried Green Tomatoes** meets "I'm too old for this shit (but I'm doing it anyway)."

Empowering, funny, magical, and unapologetically about older women being badass.

Mid-Life Paranormal

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Powers Emerge at Midlife** - Magic awakens during menopause or life change
- **Divorced Witch Starting Over** - Single again, discovering powers
- **Empty Nester Discovers Destiny** - Kids gone, adventure begins
- **Inheriting Magic** - Gets powers/responsibilities from family member
- **Midlife Chosen One** - Turns out SHE'S the one prophecy was about
- **Supernatural Menopause** - Hot flashes? Nope, fire magic.
- **Grumpy Older Heroine** - Done with everyone's BS, now has powers
- **Late Bloomer Protagonist** - Better late than never
- **Coven of Midlife Women** - Found family of powerful women

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write paranormal but for an older demographic.
- You're tired of 20-year-old chosen ones.
- You believe women get better with age, especially with magic involved.

Military Romance

Contemporary romance featuring military personnel (active duty, veterans, or military-adjacent characters).

High stakes, honor codes, long-distance challenges, and heroes with PTSD or service-related trauma are common.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Military protagonist(s)** - Active duty, veteran, or military contractor
- **Accurate military details** - Readers notice inaccuracies
- **Deployment/separation** - Distance and danger create tension
- **Brotherhood/sisterhood** - Military bonds run *deep*
- **PTSD/trauma handling** - Respectfully portrayed
- **Alpha heroes common** - Leadership, protectiveness, discipline
- **Patriotism and duty** - Honor and service matter
- **HEA** - Despite challenges, love wins

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Duty vs. personal life
- PTSD and healing
- Brotherhood and loyalty
- Sacrifice and service
- Finding home after war

THE VIBES

Honor, courage, commitment, and love strong enough to survive deployments.

Think: *dog tags, uniforms, homecoming reunions, and alpha heroes with soft hearts for their person.*

Military Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Soldier Returns Home** - Reuniting after deployment
- **Friends to Lovers** - Military buddies' sister, childhood friend
- **Protector Hero** - Saves heroine, falls for her
- **Long-Distance Romance** - Deployment tests relationship
- **Pen Pals to Lovers** - Letters during deployment
- **Enemies to Lovers (Military Edition)** - Rival units or opposing views
- **Wounded Warrior** - Physical or emotional healing through love
- **Secret Relationship** - Against regs or complicated
- **Military Spouse** - Her POV during his deployment

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You respect military service and want to honor it.
- You're willing to research military life accurately.
- You want to write protective, disciplined heroes with emotional depth.

NOTE

Do your research. Military romance readers are often military-connected and will call out inaccuracies.

Monster Romance

Romance between a human and a non-human creature (monster). Goes beyond traditional paranormal (vampires/werewolves) to include orcs, minotaurs, aliens, tentacle creatures, gargoyles, dragons, etc.

Often features unique anatomy and explicit content.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Non-human MMC usually** - The monster is the love interest
- **Explicit content common** - Often very spicy with unique anatomy
- **Size difference often** - Monster is typically larger
- **Fated mates popular** - Biological imperative to mate
- **Human FMC common** - Though not always
- **Worldbuilding for monster species** - Biology, culture, society
- **Consent is key** - Despite unusual pairing
- **HEA required** - Love wins despite differences

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Beauty and the beast dynamic
- Love beyond appearance
- Breaking prejudices
- Interspecies connection
- Finding where you belong

THE VIBES

*Beauty and the Beast energy but make it **VERY** adult.*

Includes orcs, minotaurs, aliens with tentacles, dragon shifters, and any creature you can imagine. Unapologetically niche and explicit.

Monster Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Beauty and the Beast Retelling** - Classic dynamic
- **Fated Mates (Monster Edition)** - Destined pairing
- **Stranded with Monster** - Forced proximity
- **Monster Saves Human** - Protective instinct
- **Forbidden Love** - Species shouldn't mix
- **Monster Slave/Captive** - Power dynamic reversal
- **Breeding/Primal Instincts** - Biological imperatives
- **Touch-Starved Monster** - First gentle touch in ages
- **Human Offered as Sacrifice** - Instead of death, finds love

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write paranormal romance but MORE unusual.
- You're comfortable with explicit content and creative anatomy.
- Your readers are on Kindle Unlimited and know exactly what they want.

Motorcycle Club (MC) Romance

Dark-ish romance set in the world of motorcycle clubs (often outlaw MCs).

Brotherhood, loyalty codes, danger, and alpha bikers who live by their own rules. Similar to mafia romance but with leather and bikes.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **MC setting** - Club culture, brotherhood, territory
- **Alpha biker hero** - Tattooed, dominant, loyal to club
- **Club comes first (until her)** - Loyalty conflict
- **Danger and violence** - Club rivalries, illegal activities (often off-page)
- **Old lady/property culture** - MC-specific relationship dynamics
- **Found family** - Club as brotherhood
- **High spice level** - Usually explicit

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Brotherhood and loyalty
- Outlaw lifestyle / Rebellion
- Protecting what's yours
- Redemption through love
- Honor among outlaws

THE VIBES

Sons of Anarchy meets romance.

Leather, motorcycles, brotherhood, bar fights, and dangerous men who are fiercely loyal to their club and their woman.

Motorcycle Club (MC) Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **President's Daughter** – Forbidden romance with club member
- **Claiming His Old Lady** – Making her his officially
- **Rival Clubs** – Romeo and Juliet but with motorcycles
- **Protecting Her** – Danger brings them together
- **Good Girl + Bad Boy Biker** – Opposites attract
- **Club Betrayal** – Loyalty tested
- **Single Mom Needs Protection** – He becomes protector
- **Enemies to Lovers (Club Edition)** – Rival club members
- **Kidnapping Plot** – Takes her for club reasons, falls for her

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want dark romance with specific subculture.
- You love alpha heroes and brotherhood dynamics.
- Your readers enjoy outlaw romance with found family vibes.

NOTE

Usually needs content warnings (violence, possessive behavior, criminal activity).

Omegaverse Romance

A paranormal romance subgenre with a specific social hierarchy: Alphas (dominant), Betas (middle), and Omegas (rare, can bear children regardless of gender).

Features biological imperatives, "heat" cycles, scent-marking, and often mpreg (male pregnancy). Has very specific worldbuilding rules.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Alpha/Beta/Omega hierarchy** - Social structure based on designation
- **Biological imperatives** - Heats, ruts, scenting, bonding
- **Fated mates common** - True mates/bonded pairs
- **Explicit content** - High spice level
- **Mpreg possible** - Male Omegas can get pregnant
- **Pack/clan dynamics** - Social structures matter
- **Worldbuilding consistency** - Readers know the rules and expect them followed
- **Content warnings needed** - Can include dubcon during heats

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Biology vs. choice
- Fighting or accepting destiny
- Protecting mates
- Social hierarchy challenges
- Pack/family loyalty

THE VIBES

Very specific kink/trope with dedicated readers who KNOW the rules. Primal, biological, possessive, and not for everyone.

Think: ABO dynamics taken seriously with full worldbuilding.

Omegaverse Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Rejected Omega** - Omega rejected by pack/alpha, finds true mate
- **Alpha Who Doesn't Want to Bond** - Resisting biological imperative
- **Omega in Heat** - Vulnerable state, protective alpha
- **True Mates** - Scent recognition, instant connection
- **Pack Politics** - Hierarchy, leadership, territory
- **Rare Omega** - Omegas are scarce, highly valued
- **Alpha/Alpha Pairing** - Two alphas defying conventions
- **Forced Bonding** - Circumstances force bond/mating
- **Reverse Harem Omegaverse** - Omega with multiple alpha mates

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write in an established subgenre with specific rules.
- Your readers are on AO3 or KU.
- You're comfortable with explicit content and non-traditional relationship dynamics.

NOTE

Research thoroughly before writing. Omegaverse readers have **HIGH** expectations for consistency.

Paranormal Rom-Com

Paranormal romance meets romantic comedy. Supernatural elements (witches, vampires, shifters, etc.) but with humor, light tone, and comedic situations.

Think: Buffy the Vampire Slayer's lighter episodes or Practical Magic vibes.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Paranormal elements** - Magic, supernatural beings
- **Humor is essential** - Funny situations, witty banter
- **Light tone** - Even with danger, it's not dark
- **Romance is central** - Paranormal setting, romance plot
- **Quirky characters** - Endearing weirdness
- **Found family often** - Friend groups, covens, packs
- **HEA required** - Happy ending guaranteed
- **Fast-paced and fun** - Keeps energy up

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Embracing your weirdness
- Being different is good
- Love despite supernatural complications
- Magic makes life more interesting (and funny)

THE VIBES

What We Do in the Shadows meets rom-com. Funny, magical, romantic chaos.

Think: witches running coffee shops, vampires with day jobs, and werewolves dealing with modern life problems (plus full moons).

Paranormal Rom-Com

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Witch Who Can't Control Powers** - Comedy of errors with magic
- **Human Discovers Supernatural World** - Fish out of water humor
- **Mismatched Supernatural Partners** - Vampire + werewolf, natural enemies
- **Magical Mishaps** - Spells gone wrong, potion disasters
- **Grumpy Supernatural + Sunshine Human** - Personality clash
- **Fake Dating (Supernatural Edition)** - Pretend mates for supernatural reasons
- **Supernatural Workplace** - Office comedy but with magic
- **Prophecy Misinterpreted** - Cosmic joke on the characters
- **Enemies to Lovers (Funny)** - More banter than brooding

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want paranormal without the darkness.
- You love shifters, vampires and otherworldly creatures.
- You love supernatural elements but prefer laughs over angst.

Paranormal Romance

Romance with supernatural beings or paranormal elements. Vampires, werewolves, shifters, demons, angels, psychics. If it goes bump in the night and falls in love, it's paranormal romance.

The romance is the main plot, but the paranormal worldbuilding is essential.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Supernatural hero/heroine (or both)** - At least one character is paranormal
- **Romance is central** - Not urban fantasy with romance subplot
- **Paranormal worldbuilding** - Rules about how the supernatural works
- **Fated mates common** - Paranormal romances love this trope
- **Series potential** - Usually part of a world with multiple couples
- **Spice level varies** - Can be sweet to scorching
- **HEA required** - Romance genre rules apply

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Accepting what makes you different
- Finding your mate/true love
- Human vs. supernatural dynamics
- Pack/clan/coven loyalty
- Immortality and loss

THE VIBES

Twilight, True Blood, Black Dagger Brotherhood energy. Dangerous supernatural beings who are deadly to everyone except the one they love.

Usually possessive, always intense, and the sex is probably going to be... enhanced by supernatural elements.

Paranormal Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Fated Mates** - Destined to be together (super common in paranormal)
- **Alpha/Dominant Shifter** - Possessive werewolf/bear/dragon shifter
- **Vampire Romance** - Immortal + mortal complications
- **Pack Dynamics** - Werewolf hierarchy and relationships
- **Human Discovers Paranormal World** - Ordinary person learns the truth
- **Rejected Mate** - Fighting destiny creates angst
- **Enemies to Lovers** - Rival supernatural species
- **Claiming/Marking** - Paranormal version of commitment
- **True Mate Recognition** - Instant knowing they're meant to be

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want romance with supernatural elements.
- You love the idea of fated mates and primal attraction.
- You want to write alpha males who are literally alpha males (or other supernatural beings with similar vibes).

Psychological Thrillers

Thriller focused on the psychological state of characters rather than action. Mind games, unreliable narrators, twisty plots, and exploring the dark corners of the human psyche.

Think: Gone Girl, The Girl on the Train, The Woman in the Window.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Psychological focus** - Character's mental state is key
- **Unreliable narrator often** - Can't trust what you're being told
- **Twists and reveals** - Nothing is as it seems
- **Slow-burn tension** - Dread builds throughout
- **Character-driven** - Less action, more psychological
- **Domestic settings common** - Horror in familiar places
- **Dark themes** - Mental illness, obsession, manipulation
- **Mind-bending ending** - Twist that recontextualizes everything

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Perception vs. reality
- Obsession and control
- Secrets and lies
- Gaslighting and manipulation
- Secret families, false identities, etc

THE VIBES

Creeping dread, paranoia, questioning reality, and that "I need to know what happens" compulsion.

Think: *staying up late to finish, jaw-dropping twists, and wanting to immediately re-read with new knowledge.*

Psychological Thrillers

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Unreliable Narrator** - Protagonist you can't trust
- **Gaslight Victim** - Someone making them doubt reality
- **Obsessive Stalker** - One character fixated on another
- **Memory Gaps** - Missing time, unreliable memories
- **Secret Past** - Hidden history comes to light
- **Domestic Noir** - Darkness in seemingly normal life
- Everyone's a Suspect - **Trust no one**
- **Psychological Breakdown** - Watching character unravel
- **Twist Ending** - Everything you thought was wrong

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love psychological complexity over action.
- You love books with unreliable narrators and twists.
- You want readers second-guessing everything.

Pulp Adventure Books

Fast-paced, action-heavy adventure stories in the tradition of classic pulp magazines (1920s-1950s style).

Think: *Indiana Jones, Doc Savage, The Shadow*. High adventure, larger-than-life heroes, exotic locations, and non-stop action. Can be historical or retro-styled contemporary.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Fast pacing** - Action-packed, constantly moving
- **Hero on a quest/mission** - Clear goal and obstacles
- **Exotic or dangerous locations** - Jungle temples, lost cities, foreign locales
- **Over-the-top action** - Fights, chases, narrow escapes
- **Clear good vs. evil** - Villains are villainous
- **Serialized feel** - Episodic, cliffhangers
- **Retro aesthetic often** - 1920s-1950s vibe even if modern
- **Less character depth, more action** - Plot-driven over introspective

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Good vs. evil
- Adventure and discovery
- Treasure/artifact hunting
- Exotic locales and danger
- Heroism and courage

THE VIBES

Saturday morning serial adventures, Indiana Jones, The Mummy, retro adventure with modern writing.

Think: *fedoras, treasure maps, ancient curses, and heroes who punch first, ask questions later.*

Pulp Adventure Books

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Treasure Hunt** - Quest for lost artifact or treasure
- **Race Against Villains** - Both sides after same goal
- **Exotic Location** - Jungle, desert, lost civilization
- **Damsel Joins Adventure** - Female character becomes partner
- **Ancient Mystery** - Solving historical puzzles
- **Larger-Than-Life Villain** - Megalomaniac or crime lord
- **Secret Society** - Hidden organization good or evil
- **Narrow Escapes** - Constant life-or-death situations
- **Fisticuffs and Shootouts** - Old-school action sequences

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write pure adventure without heavy introspection.
- You love action sequences and exotic settings.
- You want that retro pulp magazine energy in book form.

Regency Romance

Historical romance set during the British Regency period (roughly 1811-1820, though often extended to early 1800s).

Think: balls, ton society, dukes, debutantes, and strict social rules. Popularized by Georgette Heyer and Julia Quinn (Bridgerton).

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Regency England setting** - London season, country estates
- **Historical accuracy (mostly)** - Details matter to readers
- **Ton society rules** - Social hierarchy, marriage mart, scandal
- **Class distinctions** - Titles, wealth, social standing crucial
- **Witty banter** - Clever dialogue is essential
- **Marriage plot** - Usually ends in engagement or marriage
- **Propriety vs. passion** - Tension between rules and desire

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Social expectations vs. personal desire
- Marriage as business vs. love match
- Reputation and scandal
- Class and privilege
- Women's limited choices

THE VIBES

Bridgerton, Pride and Prejudice, elegant ballrooms, witty repartee, stolen kisses in gardens, and the marriage mart.

Think: *empire waists, dance cards, and scandalous waltzes.*

Regency Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Enemies to Lovers** - Sparring at balls, witty banter
- **Marriage of Convenience** - Arrangement becomes love
- **Fake Engagement/Courtship** - Pretending leads to real feelings
- **Rake Reformed by Love** - Notorious rogue meets his match
- **Wallflower Blooms** - Overlooked woman catches hero's eye
- **Duke/Earl/Viscount Hero** - Titled gentleman (duke is most popular)
- **Forbidden Love** - Class difference, family feud
- **Second Chance** - Separated years ago, reunite
- **Forced Proximity** - House party, traveling together

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love historical detail and social intrigue.
- You excel at witty dialogue.
- Your readers want escapism to elegant historical settings with romance.

NOTE

Regency readers are PARTICULAR. Research the period well.

Reverse Harem Romance

One female protagonist, multiple male love interests, and she doesn't have to choose.

They ALL end up together (or at least multiple partners stay together). Popular in paranormal, fantasy, and contemporary settings.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **One FMC, 3+ MMCs** - Usually 3-5 male love interests
- **No choosing required** - Polyamorous ending
- **All partners accept the arrangement** - No jealousy wars (or resolved quickly)
- **High spice level usually** - Multiple partners = multiple scenes
- **Strong FMC** - She can handle multiple alpha personalities
- **Found family vibes** - The group becomes a unit
- **Series format common** - Building relationships takes time

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Love doesn't require choosing
- Polyamory as valid
- Found family and loyalty
- Female empowerment
- Overcoming jealousy together

THE VIBES

More is more.

Multiple love interests, multiple relationship dynamics, lots of spice, and zero apologies for wanting it all.

Also called "Why Choose" romance.

Reverse Harem Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Fated Mates (Multiple)** - Destined for all of them
- **Academy/School Setting** - Training together builds bonds
- **Pack Dynamics** - Alpha shifters sharing mate
- **Different Supernatural Species** - Vampire + werewolf + fae all love her
- **Rejected by All, Accepted by All** - Group journey
- **Mission/Quest Bonds Them** - Forced proximity with multiple
- **Protectors** - They all guard/protect her
- **Opposites in the Group** - Grumpy + sunshine + bad boy + nerd combo
- **Shared Destiny** - They need each other to fulfill prophecy

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You don't want to choose between love interests either.
- You want to write polyamorous relationships.
- Your readers are on Kindle Unlimited and binge series.

Romantasy

Romance + Fantasy = Romantasy. It's a love story that happens to involve magic, fae courts, dragons, or other fantasy elements.

The romance is **NOT** a subplot: it's front and center, but so is the fantasy world.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **The romance is central:** This isn't "there's a love interest in my epic fantasy." The romantic relationship is a main plotline.
- **Happy ending for the couple:** Or at least happy-for-now. Romantasy readers will riot if their ship doesn't sail.
- **Fantasy world building:** Magic systems, political intrigue, different realms—give them a world to escape into.
- **Spice level varies:** Can be sweet or steam-your-glasses-up explicit (know your audience!)
- **Series potential:** Most romantasy is told across multiple books.

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Power and vulnerability
- Forbidden love conquering all obstacles
- Destiny vs. free will
- Finding belonging/home

THE VIBES

Epic fantasy meets butterfly-inducing romance. Elaborate world maps, morally gray love interests, sexual tension you could cut with a sword, and magic that makes everything more dramatic.

THINK:

If you can't tell whether the book is shelved in Romance or Fantasy, it's probably romantasy.

Romantasy

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Fated Mates:** They're destined, but at least one is fighting it (hello, tension!)
- **Enemies to Lovers:** Preferably from rival magical kingdoms or courts
- **Chosen One + Protector:** he's destined for greatness, he's sworn to guard her (and trying not to fall)
- **Forced Proximity:** One bed, one horse, one magical quest where they can't escape each other
- **Touch Her and Die:** Overprotective magic man loses his mind when she's threatened
- **Shadow Daddy:** Morally gray, brooding, probably has wings or can shift into something deadly
- **Political Intrigue:** Court politics, rival kingdoms, power plays
- **Magic Academy Setting:** Especially with dark academia vibes

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to explore the darker side of desire and power dynamics.
- You're okay with controversy and content warnings.
- You want to write anti-heroes readers will defend to the death.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Always include content warnings.

Dark romance readers want to know what they're getting into.

EXAMPLE

This book includes scenes and topics that could be triggering, including: xyz

Reader discretion is advised.

Romantic Comedy (Rom-com)

Romance that makes you laugh. The relationship is central, but so is the humor. These are light, fun, often quirky stories where the journey to love is as entertaining as the destination.

Think: Nancy Meyers movies in book form.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Humor is essential** - Witty dialogue, funny situations, comedic timing
- **Light tone** - Even serious moments are handled with levity
- **Quirky characters** - Endearing weirdness, not just "perfect" people
- **Misunderstandings** - Comedy of errors is common
- **Meet-cute** - Memorable, often funny first meeting
- **Banter** - Snappy dialogue and verbal sparring
- **Happy ending** - HEA with a smile
- **Fast pacing** - Moves quickly, keeps energy up

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Love finding you when you least expect it
- Being yourself is enough
- Laughter as connection
- Life doesn't have to be perfect to be good

THE VIBES

You've Got Mail, When Harry Met Sally, Bridget Jones energy.

Witty, warm, makes you laugh out loud while also giving you the warm fuzzies.

Life is messy but love makes it better.

Romantic Comedy (Rom-com)

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Enemies to Lovers** - Banter-heavy, lots of verbal sparring
- **Fake Dating** - Pretend relationship for comedic reasons
- **Friends to Lovers** - Slowly realizing feelings while being hilarious
- **Opposites Attract** - Type A + chaos goblin
- **Mistaken Identity** - Comedy gold
- **Workplace Romance** - Office hijinks and professional awkwardness
- **Wedding Chaos** - Fake dates to weddings, runaway brides, etc.
- **Roommates** - Forced proximity with comedic tension
- **Makeover/Transformation** - She's All That vibes

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want readers to laugh AND swoon.
- You're naturally funny and want that in your writing.
- You prefer light and uplifting over dark and angsty.

Sci-Fi Romance

Romance set in a science fiction world. Can be space opera, dystopian, cyberpunk, time travel, or any sci-fi setting, but the romance is central to the plot.

Think: space pirates falling in love, alien warriors finding mates, dystopian rebels in love.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Sci-fi worldbuilding** - Space, future Earth, alternate reality, technology
- **Romance is main plot** - Not sci-fi with romance subplot
- **Often features aliens** - Alien/human romance very popular
- **High stakes** - Survival, war, dystopian threats
- **Strong heroines common** - Capable, often warriors or survivors
- **Fated mates popular** - Especially in alien romance
- **Spice level varies** - Can be sweet to very explicit

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Love across species/worlds
- Survival and adaptation
- Trust despite differences
- Finding home in strange places
- Chosen family in space

THE VIBES

Star Wars meets romance, Guardians of the Galaxy energy, or Star Trek with more kissing.

Space adventures, alien cultures, futuristic technology, and love that crosses galaxies.

Sci-Fi Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **lien Abduction** - Taken by aliens, falls for one
- **Fated Mates (Alien Edition)** - Biology determines compatibility
- **Space Pirate Romance** - Outlaws in space
- **Cyborg/Android Falls in Love** - Learning humanity through love
- **Stranded Together** - Crashed on planet, forced proximity
- **Enemy Alien Becomes Lover** - Captor/captive dynamic
- **Human in Alien World** - Fish out of water finds mate
- **Gladiator/Warrior Romance** - Alien fighting pits or arenas
- **Mail-Order Bride (Space Edition)** - Earth women to alien planets

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love sci-fi worldbuilding and romance.
- You want to explore "what if" scenarios with relationships.
- Your readers love both spaceships and swoon.

Second Chance Romance

Romance between two people who used to be together (or almost together) and get another shot at love.

They have history, baggage, and unresolved feelings. This trope can appear in any subgenre but works as its own category.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Established history** - They knew each other before, often intimately
- **Past hurt/breakup** - Something went wrong the first time
- **Growth required** - Both characters have changed
- **Tension from history** - Unresolved feelings create conflict
- **Forgiveness arc** - Working through past pain
- **Second chance earned** - Not automatic; they have to work for it
- **HEA feels more meaningful** - Because they almost lost it

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Growth and change
- Forgiveness and healing
- Learning from mistakes
- Some loves deserve another chance
- Becoming who you needed to be

THE VIBES

Bittersweet nostalgia meets hope. The ache of "what if" combined with the possibility of "what now."

Think: *One Day, The Notebook (the reunion part), or any story where love gets a do-over.*

Second Chance Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **High School Sweethearts Reunite** - Years later, both changed
- **Right Person, Wrong Time** - They weren't ready before
- **Return to Hometown** - Coming back means facing the past
- **One Who Got Away** - They never forgot each other
- **Divorce/Separated Couple** - Finding their way back
- **Almost-Lovers** - They had chemistry but never acted on it before
- **Childhood Friends** - Lost touch, reconnect as adults
- **Band/Team Reunion** - Forced proximity brings them together again
- **Wedding Brings Them Together** - Mutual friend's wedding creates reunion

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love emotional depth and history between characters.
- You want to explore how people change and grow.
- You believe in second chances and redemption.

Small Town Romance

Contemporary romance set in a small town (usually fictional) where everyone knows everyone, community matters, and the local coffee shop is basically a character.

These stories often feature someone returning home or moving to a small town and finding love.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Small-town setting:** Population under 10,000, everyone knows everyone
- **Community as character:** The town itself matters
- **Local business/profession:** Bakery, bookshop, farm, veterinary clinic, etc.
- **Slower pace:** Matches small-town life
- **Found family vibes:** Community becomes family
- **Happy ending:** HEA is mandatory
- **Series potential:** Each book features different couple in same town

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Home and belonging
- Community over individualism
- Healing from past hurts
- Simple life's value
- Starting over

THE VIBES

Hallmark movies but with better writing and actual chemistry.

Think: *autumn leaves, local festivals, everybody knowing your business (but in a mostly sweet way), and love blooming over coffee at the town's only café.*

Small Town Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Return to Hometown** - Left for the city, came back for reasons
- **City Person Moves to Small Town** - Fish out of water finds love
- **Grumpy Local + Sunshine Newcomer** - He's been hurt, she's optimistic
- **Childhood Friends to Lovers** - Grew up together, finally see each other differently
- **Rival Businesses** - Competing bookshops/cafés/etc. create tension
- **Single Parent Finding Love** - Kids bring them together
- **Second Chance Romance** - High school sweethearts reunite
- **Forced Proximity** - Sharing a building, working together, etc.
- **Meddling Town Matchmakers** - The whole town ships them

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You're tired of big-city settings.
- You want community and warmth in your romance.
- You love the idea that a whole town is rooting for the couple.

Sports Romance

Contemporary romance where at least one protagonist is an athlete (professional or college level).

The sport creates the setting, conflict, and often the character dynamics. Can be any sport but hockey, football, and baseball dominate.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Athlete protagonist** - Usually MMC, sometimes FMC
- **Sports setting** - Games, practices, team dynamics matter
- **Team as family** - Teammate friendships and brotherhood
- **High stakes career** - Injuries, trades, career pressure
- **Physical hero** - Athletic, fit, often cocky
- **Locker room talk** - Banter, pranks, masculine energy
- **Spice level high** - Athletes are physical people
- **HEA** - Romance wins despite career demands

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Balancing love and career ambition
- Teamwork and loyalty
- Public vs. private life
- Proving yourself
- Found family through team

THE VIBES

Friday Night Lights meets romance.

Locker room banter, athletic prowess, team bonding, victory celebrations, and cocky athletes who fall hard when they finally meet "the one."

Sports Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Teammate's Sister** - Forbidden because of bro code
- **Enemies to Lovers** - Rival teams or players
- **Fake Dating** - For publicity or to ward off rumors
- **Grumpy Captain + Sunshine FMC** - Team leader who's all business
- **Second Chance Romance** - High school sweethearts reunite when he goes pro
- **Single Dad Athlete** - Balancing fatherhood and career
- **Off-Limits Romance** - Coach's daughter, team owner's daughter, etc.
- **Injury/Comeback Story** - Finding love during recovery
- **Rookie/Veteran Dynamic** - Age gap or mentor relationship

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love sports and want to combine it with romance.
- You want to write physical, confident heroes.
- You enjoy team dynamics and found family alongside the central romance.

Sweet Romance

Romance with little to no sexual content. Focuses on emotional connection, courtship, and relationship building without explicit scenes.

Can be any subgenre (contemporary, historical, suspense, etc.) but "clean."

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **No explicit sex** - Fade to black or closed door
- **No graphic violence** - If present at all
- **Minimal profanity** - Clean language
- **Emotional focus** - Building connection and love
- **Courtship focus** - The journey to commitment
- **Traditional values often** - Though not always
- **HEA required** - Always a happy ending
- **All ages appropriate** - Teens to grandparents can read

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Emotional intimacy over physical
- Courtship and dating
- Faith (sometimes, not always)
- Respect and honor
- Building trust and friendship

THE VIBES

Hallmark movies, sweet and wholesome, feel-good romance without the steam.

Think: *hand-holding is exciting, first kisses matter, and love is shown through actions and words.*

Sweet Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Friends to Lovers** - Slow build on existing friendship
- **Small-Town Romance** - Community-centered stories
- **Second Chance** - Rekindling old love
- **Opposites Attract** - Personality differences create tension
- **Fake Dating** - Pretend relationship becomes real
- **Marriage of Convenience** - Practical arrangement turns romantic
- **Grumpy/Sunshine** - Personality contrast
- **Reunion Romance** - Coming home, reconnecting
- **Mistaken Identity** - Misunderstandings create comedy

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write romance without explicit content.
- Your audience includes readers who prefer clean content for personal or religious reasons.
- You love emotional connection over physical.

NOTE

"Sweet" and "inspirational" aren't always the same. Inspirational usually includes faith elements; sweet just means clean content.

Urban Fantasy

Fantasy set in a city (urban environment) where magic exists alongside modern life. The protagonist is usually dealing with supernatural threats, politics, or mysteries.

Romance can be present but is NOT the main plot (that's paranormal romance). Think: detective/warrior navigating magical underbelly of the city.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Urban setting** - City environment, modern world
- **Magic is real but hidden (usually)** - Secret supernatural world
- **Action-oriented** - Fighting, investigating, solving magical problems
- **Strong protagonist** - Often a detective, bounty hunter, mercenary, or someone with combat skills
- **Series potential** - World-building supports multiple books
- **Romance is subplot** - Can have romantic elements but plot comes first
- **Dark tone often** - Gritty, not fluffy

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Power and responsibility
- Justice (often vigilante style)
- Corruption in magical society
- Navigating two worlds (mundane and magical)

THE VIBES

Dresden Files, Kate Daniels, Mercy Thompson energy.

Urban grit meets magic, leather jackets and swords, dive bars with supernatural clientele, and saving the city from magical threats every Tuesday.

Urban Fantasy

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Magic Detective/Investigator** - Solving supernatural crimes
- **Bounty Hunter for Hire** - Tracking supernatural beings
- **Hidden Magical Society** - Supernatural community in the city
- **Chosen One Reluctantly** - Has powers/destiny they didn't ask for
- **Magical Politics** - Vampire courts, werewolf packs, fae enclaves in cities
- **Magic User for Hire** - Mercenary, consultant, problem-solver
- **Supernatural Police Force** - Law enforcement but magical
- **Human in Supernatural World** - Navigating magic without powers
- **Prophecy/Apocalypse Looming** - Stakes are world-ending

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want fantasy in a modern setting.
- You prefer action and investigation over romance.
- You love worldbuilding that blends magic with contemporary life.

Western Romance

Romance set in the American West (historical or contemporary).

Cowboys, ranches, small towns, and that rugged frontier spirit. Can be historical (1800s) or modern-day ranching communities.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Western setting** - Ranch, small western town, rural America
- **Cowboy/rancher hero** - *Or cowgirl heroine*
- **Rural lifestyle details** - Ranching, rodeo, horses, land
- **Community matters** - Small-town dynamics
- **Traditional values often** - Family, hard work, loyalty
- **Strong, capable characters** - Survival skills, resilience
- **Can be contemporary or historical - Both popular**

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Land and legacy
- Hard work and perseverance
- Family loyalty
- Small-town values
- Redemption and second chances

THE VIBES

Wrangler jeans, pickup trucks, wide-open spaces, line dancing, and strong, silent types who show love through actions.

Think: *Heartland, Yellowstone, or classic Western novels with romance.*

Western Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **City Girl + Cowboy** - Fish out of water romance
- **Enemies to Lovers (Ranch Edition)** - Rival ranches or family feuds
- **Marriage of Convenience** - For land, for appearance, for survival
- **Return to Ranch** - Coming home after years away
- **Single Dad Rancher** - Cowboy with kids
- **Cowboy Protector** - Saving her from danger/bad situation
- **Rodeo Romance** - Competition circuit brings them together
- **Fake Relationship** - Pretend dating at the town dance
- **Second Chance** - High school sweethearts reunite

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You love the western aesthetic and lifestyle.
- You want to write about land, legacy, and rugged characters.
- Your readers like traditional romance with rural settings.

Women's Contemporary Fiction

Fiction about women's lives, relationships, and personal journeys. Not romance-centered (though romance can be present).

Focuses on a woman's emotional growth, family dynamics, friendships, and life challenges.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Female protagonist(s)** - Her journey is the point
- **Emotional depth** - Character-driven, introspective
- **Realistic life issues** - Career, family, relationships, identity
- **Multiple relationships matter** - Not just romance; friendships, family, self
- **Contemporary setting** - Modern-day problems and solutions
- **Hopeful or bittersweet ending** - Not always HEA, but growth/resolution
- **Relatable struggles** - Readers see themselves in the story

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Self-discovery and reinvention
- Female friendship and solidarity
- Second chances at life (not just love)
- Finding your voice
- Becoming who you're meant to be

THE VIBES

Oprah's Book Club, book club wines nights, "I saw myself in this character," crying on the train.

Think: Where the Crawdads Sing, Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine, The Nightingale.

Women's Contemporary Fiction

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Starting Over** - Divorce, job loss, empty nest, moving to new city
- **Friendship Saves Everything** - Female friend groups as anchor
- **Messy Family Dynamics** - Complicated mothers, sisters, daughters
- **Career vs. Personal Life** - Work struggles and ambition
- **Secrets Revealed** - Family secrets that change everything
- **Generational Story** - Mother/daughter or grandmother/mother/daughter narratives
- **Finding Yourself After Loss** - Death, divorce, or life change catalyst
- **The One Who Got Away (life, not just love)** - Missed opportunities revisited
- **Small Moments Matter** - Beauty in ordinary life

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to explore women's interior lives and relationships beyond romance.
- You're interested in emotional complexity and real-world issues.
- You want readers to feel seen and understood.

Young Adult Contemporary Romance

Love stories for and about teenagers, set in the real world (no magic, no dystopia).

These are the stories about first love, figuring out who you are, and navigating the chaos of being a teen.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Teen protagonists:** High school age, dealing with teen issues
- **Realistic setting:** Contemporary world, real problems
- **Age-appropriate romance:** Sweet to moderately steamy, no explicit content
- **Emotional authenticity:** Real teen emotions and experiences
- **Happy or hopeful ending:** HEA or strong HFN
- **Friend group dynamics:** Friends matter as much as romance
- **Diversity and representation:** LGBTQ+ stories, diverse characters

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- First love and heartbreak
- Identity and self-acceptance
- Family dynamics (good and bad)
- Mental health awareness
- Finding your voice

THE VIBES

John Hughes movies but updated for Gen Z.

Think: *prom drama, first kisses, friend group chaos, family issues, and that feeling that this love might actually be forever (even though you're 17).*

Young Adult Contemporary Romance

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Best Friends to Lovers** - The friend who was there all along
- **Enemies to Lovers** - High school rivals who catch feelings
- **New Kid in School** - Fresh start, new possibilities
- **Summer Romance** - Love with an expiration date
- **Fake Dating** - For prom, to make someone jealous, etc.
- **Second Chance Romance** - Childhood friends reconnect
- **Opposite Worlds Collide** - Jock + nerd, popular + outcast, etc.
- **Road Trip** - Finding yourself and love on the journey
- **LGBTQ+ Coming Out Stories** - Finding love while finding yourself

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to write romance without fantasy elements.
- You remember the intensity of teenage feelings.
- You want to explore first love, identity, and all the messy, beautiful chaos of being young.

Young Adult Fantasy

Fantasy specifically for teen readers (but let's be real, adults read it too).

Features teen protagonists, coming-of-age themes, and fantasy worldbuilding.

The romance, magic, and stakes are all calibrated for a YA audience.

READER EXPECTATIONS

- **Teen protagonists:** Usually 15–18 years old
- **Coming-of-age themes:** Identity, first love, finding your place
- **Age-appropriate content:** Romance can be sweet to moderately steamy, but not explicit
- **Fast pacing:** YA moves quickly
- **Hope and growth:** Even in dark stories, there's hope
- **Strong voice:** Teen voice feels authentic
- **Found family:** Friendship groups are crucial

ESSENTIAL THEMES

- Identity and self-discovery
- First love and heartbreak
- Rebellion against authority
- Finding where you belong
- Friendship as survival

THE VIBES

All the magic and adventure, but make it emotionally intense in that specifically teenage way.

First love feels like the end of the world because at that age, it kind of does.

Young Adult Fantasy

TOP TROPES THAT READERS LOVE

- **Chosen One** - Ordinary teen discovers they're special
- **Magic Academy** - Learning powers while dealing with teen drama
- **Tournament/Competition** - Magical trials or deadly games
- **Forbidden Romance** - Love across faction/class/species lines
- **Found Family Squad** - The friend group that becomes everything
- **Secret Royal/Heritage** - Discovers they're actually important
- **Training Montage** - Learning to use powers
- **Love Triangle** - Still popular in YA despite what people say
- **Overthrowing Corrupt Authority** - Teen rebellion with magic

IT'S FOR YOU IF:

- You want to capture that intense, everything-matters-so-much feeling of being a teenager.
- You love fantasy but want cleaner content and younger protagonists.
- You remember what it felt like when everything was new.

Other Resources

Enjoyed this handbook? Here are some of my other offers and resources that are designed to help you on your A.I. writing journey.

SECRET AUTHORS

My entire six-figure A.I writing system in one full-featured video course. Includes my rapid release strategy, easy editing with A.I and more.

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

- [Fiction Stack](#)
- [Story Loot Packs](#)
- [AI Fiction Writers Group](#)
- [Hybrid Profits \(Free\)](#)
- [Book in a Day Workshop](#)

JOIN THE CLUB

I created a Facebook group dedicated to A.I writers.

Ask questions, learn new strategies and stay connected.

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN](#)

NEED TO REACH ME?

If you have any questions about this handbook or simply want to reach out, please use the help desk or my dedicated support email.

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