Genres for the Emotions

Gentle Reads, Horror, Romance, Women’s Lives and Relationships

This workshop is presented and funded by the Massachusetts Library System (MLS).

Appeal Characteristics

• Tone—from terrifying to romantic to comfortable to provocative
• Tone, its effect on reader mood, and characters are more important than action
• Descriptive, adjective-rich language

Horror

• Nightmare tone evokes fear in reader
• Monsters and other supernatural/paranormal elements
• Graphic violence, profanity, explicit sex often enhance impact of story
• Descriptive language
• Haunted, shattered protagonists
• Unexpected attacks jolt reader
• Horror can be beaten down but not destroyed
• Menace can’t be explained rationally
Horrific, not Horror

• Not Horror
  • Paranormal
  • Serial Killers
  • Supernatural
  • Thrillers

Just because there’s a Zombie...

• Horror

• Not Horror

Horror Classics
Stephen King
- King of Horror
- Sympathetic but haunted protagonists
- Nightmare situations
- Often violence and profanity (more gruesome as Richard Bachman)
- Also good short stories
- Storyteller par excellence

Ramsey Campbell
- Psychological Horror
- Disturbing, unsettling novels
- Supernatural events
- Deranged characters
- Lyrical writing
- Often erotic and violent
- Crossover with Literary Fiction and Psychological Suspense

Joe Hill
- Stephen King’s son
- Moody, atmospheric, menacing
- Vulnerable characters
- Colorful language
- Graphic Violence
- Short stories and novels
- Graphic Novel series
Brian Keene
- Explicit violence, sex, profanity
- Fast-paced
- Vivid characterizations
- Chilling, menacing, haunting
- Crossover with Thrillers and Suspense

Jonathan Maberry
- Novels, short stories, nonfiction, graphic novels
- Menacing atmosphere
- Fast pace
- Humor
- Gore
- Crossover with Thrillers and Suspense

Crossover
- Literary Fiction
- Adrenaline
- Fantasy
- Paranormal Romance
- Historical Fiction
- Mystery
- Nonfiction
Ultimate Crossover

- Dean R. Koontz
  - Horror
  - Fantasy
  - Adrenaline
  - Science Fiction

- Seth Grahame-Smith
  - Classics
  - Humor
  - Horror
  - Sometimes History

Trends

- Not as popular as it has been. Horror archetypes in many other genres.
- Popularity of short stories
- Paperback originals
- Graphic Novels
- Television and Movies

More Horror Trends

- Comic Horror
- Not just Halloween but year-round
Authors to Watch

- Michael Kortya
- Adam L. G. Nevill
- Dave Zeltserman
- David Wong

Horror on the Web

Becky Spratford maintains an up-to-date list of Horror resources (and blogs) on her blog, RA for All: Horror

Horror Writers Association

Horror Awards

- Shirley Jackson Awards
- Bram Stoker Awards
- RUSA’s Reading List
Gentle Reads

- Nostalgic
- Timeless
- Peaceful
- Multi-generational is common
- Uncomplicated but NOT unsophisticated
- No
  - Sex
  - Violence
  - Profanity
- Not only Christian Fiction

“Feel-good” Best Sellers

Gentle Read Classics

- Miss Read
- Catherine Marshall
- Paul Gallico
- Jan Karon
Sarah Addison Allen
- Lyrical, evocative prose
- Heartwarming tone
- Family-centered
- Touch of magic/magical realism
- Charming tales of sympathetic heroines and secrets

Jennifer Chiaverini
- Heartwarming
- Quilting
- Family and friendship
- Mostly contemporary with an occasional historical for backstory
- Conversational prose

Alexander McCall Smith
- Gentle mysteries
- Delve into human nature
- Carefully drawn setting
- Vivid characterizations
- Fascinating cultural and social details
Nicholas Sparks

- Sentimental, poignant, sometimes tragic stories of love lost and found
- Gentle approach to issues
- Leisurably paced but dialogue-rich
- Romantic tone

Adriana Trigiani

- Charming and amusing family stories
- Romantic tone
- Humorous slices of life
- Crossover with women’s fiction
- Pushes gentleness boundaries
- Complementary nonfiction

Crossover

- Historical fiction
- Inspirational fiction and nonfiction
- Literary Fiction
More Crossover

- Cozy Mysteries
- Gentle Romances
- Personal & family histories, bios, memoirs
- Women’s Lives and Relationships

Trends

- Edgier—harder to find
- Paranormal elements
- Remains more popular with readers than with publishers

Authors to Watch

- Patrick Taylor
- Keep an eye out for authors with one title
  - William H. Kuhn
  - Mary Ann Shaffer
  - Helen Simonson
  - Rachel Joyce
Gentle Reads Resources and Awards

- No genre-specific resources or awards
  - Watch for lists compiled by libraries
  - Check Fiction_L for lists
  - Follow lists on Goodreads, LibraryThing, etc.

Women’s Lives and Relationships

- Intimate look into lives—emotional pull and a sympathetic link with reader
- Characters and authors are primarily women
- Themes of concern to women: generations of family, relationships, career, women taking charge of lives
- Conflicts from juggling work and home
- Unusual styles with diaries, IMs, etc.

Women’s Lives Classics?

- Margaret Mitchell?
- Danielle Steel?
- Jane Austen
- Charlotte Brontë
- Edith Wharton
- Willa Cather
Chick Lit

Mom Lit/Hen Lit
30-40-something

Empty Nesters
40-50 something
50s-60s and up

Elizabeth Berg
- Gentle, comfortable, family-centered stories
- Lyrical prose
- Difficult topics addressed with care and humor
- Often bittersweet
- Chicago settings

Sophie Kinsella/Madeleine Wickham
- Chick Lit and Women’s Fiction
- More lighthearted as Kinsella; more issues as Wickham
- Sympathetic, engaging characters
- Upbeat tone
- Witty, romantic page-turners
**Jodi Picoult**
- Provocative, issue-oriented novels
- Sympathetic characters in extremis
- Disturbing and intriguing
- Intelligent, serious dramas raising difficult questions
- Also teen and graphic novel titles

**Sapphire**
- Tough but compassionate
- Edgy, urban environment
- Strong women in difficult situations
- Intelligent, disturbing, provocative
- Lyrical prose

**Jennifer Weiner**
- Thoughtful but humorous
- Snappy dialogue
- Feisty heroines
- Imaginative story lines
- Compelling tales of mothers and career women
Crossover with Romance and Gentle Reads

Historical

Urban Fiction Crossover
Memoirs and NF

Trends

Multicultural and International
Paranormal

Authors to Watch

• J. Courtney Sullivan
• Jojo Moyes
• Laura Moriarty
• Marisa de los Santos

Women’s Lives on the Web

• No genre-specific resources
  – Watch for lists compiled by libraries
  – Check Fiction_L, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc., for lists
  – Follow lists on Goodreads, LibraryThing, etc.
Women’s Lives Awards

• RUSA’s Reading List
• Rita Award for Novel with Strong Romantic Elements

Romances

• Focus on love relationship between two main characters
• Stereotypical hero and heroine
• Predictably happy ending
• Stories draw readers in, we participate in the romance

Romantic, Not Romance
More Appeal

• Interesting frames
• Books you can pick up and put down without losing the story line.
• Characteristic language—rich in adjectives

Romance publishing

• Primarily paperback
• $1.44 billion dollar business
• Comparison genres: Mysteries $728 million, Relig/Insp $718 million, SF/Fantasy $590 million, Classics and Literary Fiction $471 million.
• Largest share of consumer book market

Subgenres

• Contemporary
• Paranormal
• Historical, including Regency
• Inspirational
• GLBTQ
• Ethnic/multi-cultural
• Erotic
• Category
Romance Classics

Nora Roberts

- From category to paperback and hardcover
- 3-4 books series
- Contemporary
- Smart dialog
- Passionate, resourceful heroines
- Strong, empathetic heroes

Mary Kay Andrews

- Contemporary Romances, Southern settings
- Cooking, and antiques frame novels
- Breezy style, laugh-out-loud situations and dialog
- Sassy heroines
Sherrilyn Kenyon
• Paranormal romances
• Steamy
• Humorous
• Crossover with Fantasy
• Mythology, magic, sex, and vampire
• Manga titles

Mary Balogh
• Multiple Regency and Historical titles
• Addresses issues
• Wit and sometimes outrageous humor
• Sensual
• Details of fashion, social mores, culture
• Sympathetic characterizations
• Linked novels/series

Beverly Lewis
• Christian—Amish romances in Pennsylvania & Ohio
• Gentle reads
• Hot trend
• Issues: relationship to “English” and church controversies
• Heartwarming and timeless
Crossover

Trends

Erotic Romance
Trends, cont.

- Graphic Novels
- Ebooks

Multi-cultural and Alternative Lifestyle Romances

Romance Authors to Watch
- Kristen Callihan
- Susanna Kearsley
- Kristan Higgins
- Meredith Duran
Romance on the Web

- All about romance
- Romance Novelists Association (British)
- The Romance Reader
- Romance Reviews Today
- Romance Writers of America
- Romantic Times
- Smart Bitches, Trashy Books

Romance Awards

- RT Reviewers’ Choice Awards
- RITA Awards (Romance Writers of America)
- Best of the year in *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and *Publisher’s Weekly*
- RUSA’s Reading List