

Why Read Romance?

By Blair Bancroft

Important note: *“Why Read Romance” is intended for **Men** as well as Women.*
(Hey there, yes, I mean you! Don’t let your eyes glaze over at the word “Romance.”)

Surprise! More people read Romance than all other types of fiction rolled together.
Romance is Big Business. So let’s take a minute to figure out why.

First of all, whoever said “Love makes the world go round” wasn’t lying. Real Women aren’t afraid to admit it, while so-called Real Men are generally terrified of it. Real Women Read Romance because that prized quality called “Heart” lies at the basis of every relationship. We want it, we seek it, we grasp it. We hang on for dear life. For the world would be a cold, dark place without Love.

Admittedly, women’s approach to Love could be likened to a rifle. Men . . . well, maybe a shotgun comes closer to the mark. Women like to read about Love. Men would rather do it, thank you very much. Nonetheless, the emotions on both sides of the gender gap are powerful. I would suggest, gentlemen, that most of you could learn something from Reading Romance.

Does Love work for everyone? Does it stay new-minted, bright and shiny, dazzling in its intensity?

Probably not. But for many, new love settles into a stronger, more lasting emotion, into warmth, companionship, and respect that lasts a lifetime. Yet women fortunate enough to be part of that kind of relationship still enjoy the nostalgia of reading about those precious first moments, those early days when love was uncertain, agonizing, or downright disastrous. Or when it was a sea of fresh discoveries, exquisite torture of the

senses.

And for the rest—those who lost their loves through death, divorce, or desertion? For them, Reading Romance is even more essential. For it tells us there's Hope. Love lives. And can come again. Even if we experience it through paper heroines and heroes, and/or some highly intriguing cyber ones as well.

There's a XXX Video store not far from my house. For months, as I drove past, its sign read: "Get your Romance here." Well, gentlemen, if that's your idea of Romance, run, do not walk, to the nearest bookstore and buy a *Real* Romance. A book with a heroine as spunky as the hero. A book about a widow with a small baby whose idea of the perfect romantic gesture is a single red rose and a man willing to pay for a babysitter. A book about a marriage of convenience in which both husband and wife must struggle to find Love on barren ground. A book with laughs or constant action from cover to cover, except that somewhere in there two people are learning they were meant for each other.

Squirming, are you, gentlemen? Real Men Don't Read Romance, right? Well, maybe you should. You might learn a thing or two if you look up from Surfing the Net or ESPN or that bloody thriller you think is the only thing Mr. Macho Man reads.

A Few More Thoughts on Romance

For some reason—probably the eons-long domination of writing by Men, all the so-called Great Romances are tragedies. (As in Romeo & Juliet, Arthur & Guinevere, Tristan & Isolde, not to mention a couple of contemporary novels, mislabeled "romance" and also written by—oh, horrors—men!). But, finally, in the last two decades, women have begun to write the stories *they* want to read. And now there are thousands of books about men and women who tore through the conventions binding them, surmounted their difficulties, even their personal tragedies, to come out on the other side ready to do what had to be done to find the right person to share their life with. To do what had to be done to make a marriage work.

These are the people we should praise. Forget Romeo & Juliet, who mismanaged things badly and never made it out of their teens. It's Jane and Joe Schmo who **survived**. And raised their children to be able to love and be loved, as well. Jane and Joe who paid the Mortgage and Dental Bills. Taxes. College. The next generation's Weddings . . .

No Wonder poor Jane wants to put her feet up and settle down with a good Romance! Yes, sometimes we all need reminding of those first bright days of love when Joe wasn't quite so devoted to golfing, fishing or couch potatoing. We open a book . . . and there before us is that marvelous Regency gentleman with his impeccable manners . . . or the dashing and untamed Scottish chieftain (so what if he's wearing a kilt even when it was forbidden in his particular century). We sigh over that pillar of rugged individualism, the American cowboy. (John Wayne types, guys, I promise you.) And the hunky cops and daring men of Special Forces portrayed in contemporary romance. The lawyers, doctors, firemen, and businessmen as well.

So, yes, Romance lives. And If a few more men crossed over and read Romance, as women read (and write) Mystery, Suspense, and Thrillers, the world might be a better place. Come on, guys! Put a little Romance in your life. (I guarantee the men in my books get equal time. Well, almost.)

As for the women who say they never read Romance—ah, ladies, you have no idea what you're missing. Pull up a chair, sit down, relax, and try on a Romance. Who knows, a good Romance just might inspire Mellow where it would do the most good.

Maybe you're wondering what I might write that could possibly tempt you toward—ssh-sh, whisper, whisper, whisper—*Reading a Romance*. So here it is:

I write about war and serial killers, international trafficking in women and children. Even my squeaky clean Regencies contain tales of treasure and courtesans, untimely death,

mystery, kidnapping, divided families, and revenge. I may be a wimp, but I don't write wimpy books. And, oh yes, I write about people who find Love, often in very strange places. And, yes, all my books have happy endings. So take the Blair Bancroft challenge. READ A ROMANCE. (It doesn't have to be mine, but that would be nice. ☺)

Get out there and read!

Enjoy Romance Today!