

A Romance Readers' Advisory Interview Cheatsheet

(When Love Hurts: Taking the Pain out of Romance Readers' Advisory)

Some things to keep in mind:

- *As with all RA, find out what appeal factors are most important to your reader:* place, time, plotting, author, characterization, plot type (modern fairy tales, gentle reads, suspense with a paranormal twist).
- *Some readers may be looking to identify with characters* (for example, ethnicity, personal issues, class, or sexual orientation).
- *Readers may also look for books that typify a different appeal factor outside of setting, time, and place.* Some readers like humor or gentle reads or reworked fairy tales and are willing to pursue that taste with complete disregard to standard subgenre breakdowns.
- *Some readers are loyal to a subgenre and don't especially care who's writing.* For example, they know what to expect with a Regency romance, because they have gotten familiar with the time and place through their reading and find that knowledge along with the dance of manners and wit comforting.
- *Other readers are loyal to a specific writer* and will follow that writer through whatever time period she writes in because they enjoy her style or characterization. It's another reason to stay aware of an author's various pseudonyms.
- *Keep in mind popular settings as angles to try with RA.* Popular settings with romance readers (as born out by polls) include: "exotic settings," Colonial America, the American West (time period unspecified), historical England, historical Scotland, and Medieval (location unspecified).

- ***Pay attention to your body language during the RA interview.*** Your discomfort with or even disdain for the genre can be communicated more easily than you might think. Not walking them to the romance section when you'd walk another patron to the mysteries, slight eye rolls when looking at covers, or a certain tone to the voice all register on some level.
- ***Covers, ah the romance covers.*** A lot of romance readers are uncomfortable with the classic show of cleavage (male and female) that graces so many romance covers. Whether or not they acknowledge or even consciously recognize their cover preferences, try to pay attention because it can impact your RA success.

Broaching the sex question

You will have to broach the sex question. Romances aren't all about sex, but it tends to be part of the relationship territory. A reader who enjoys Barbara Cartland, Barbara Michaels, or Georgette Heyer may be horrified when reading authors like Chritina Dodd, Christine Feehan, or Carly Philips.

The key is to find language that you're comfortable with when pursuing this part of the RA interview. But remember you're *almost* always making your patron more comfortable as well. Everyone appreciates a little tactful encoding.

For less sex try using words such as: sweet, innocent, and traditional;
gentle reads

For romances that contain more physical intimacy, try using words such as : spicy, sensual, or steamy.

Finally, remember:

It's about what's important to the reader.
Be respectful.
Be friendly.
Don't be afraid to ask for help from coworkers.