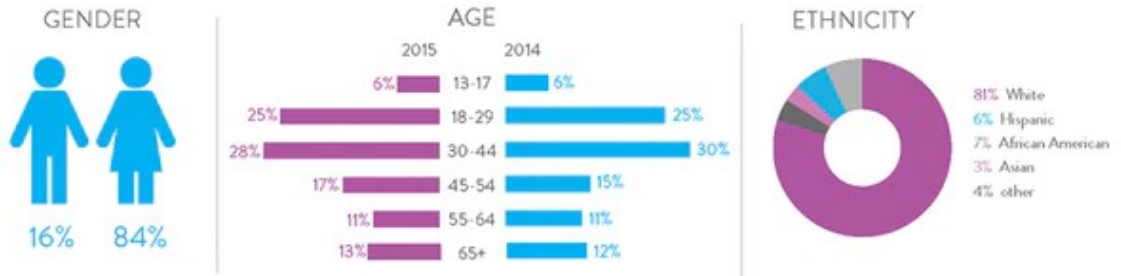
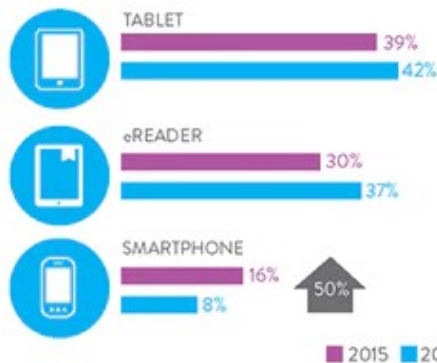


ROMANCE READERS BY THE NUMBERS

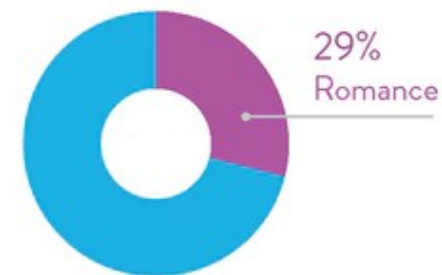
Romance Novels



DEVICES USED TO READ ROMANCE EBOOKS



ROMANCE SHARE OF FICTION 2015 (ALL FORMATS)



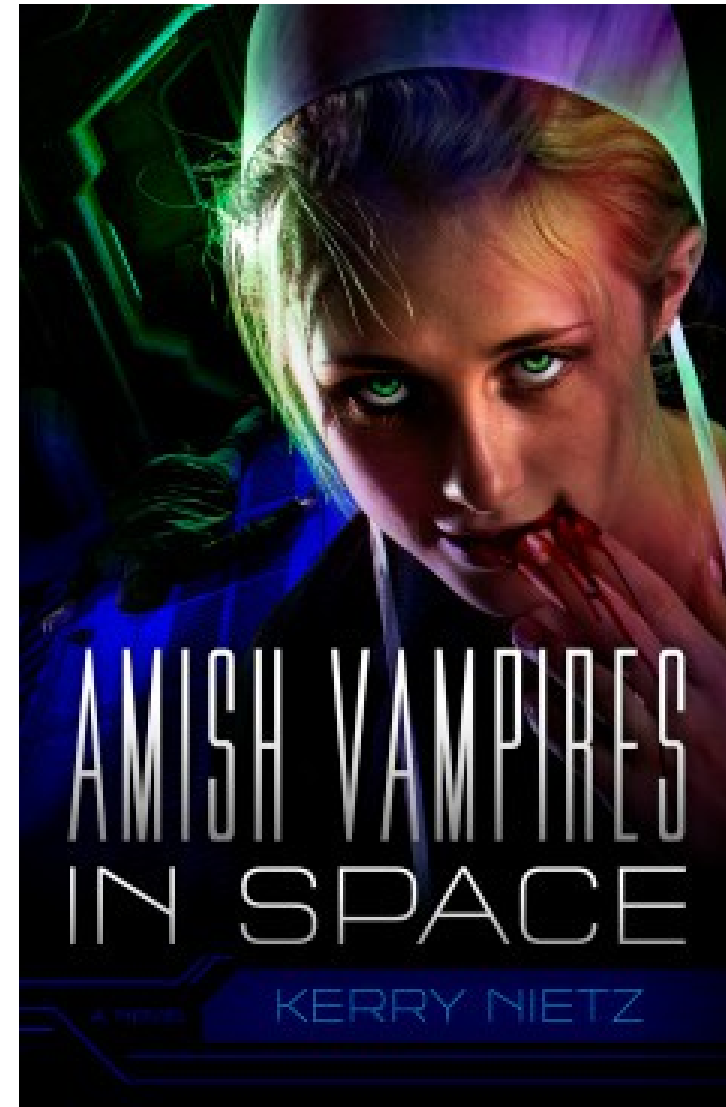
Dispelling Romance Novel Myths

- Tell me something about romance novels ...
 - Even if it's just an uninformed stereotype



We joke, but ...

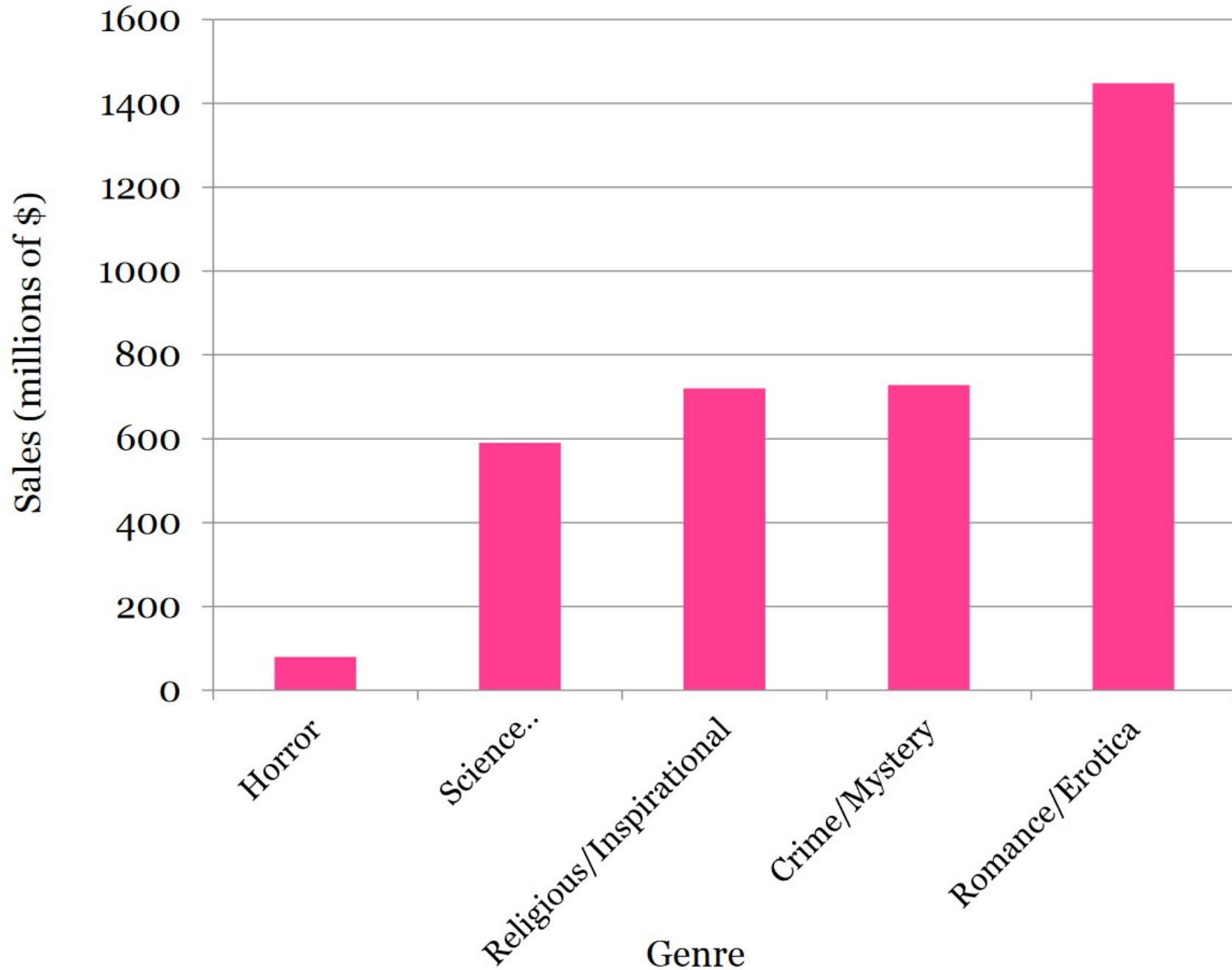
- As of 2022, e-book sales account for 60% of total romance unit sales
 - And this doesn't include web serials, etc.
- It is easier than ever to appeal to, or participate in, niche markets!
- The romance market grows
 - Revealing cultural values



Why Should We Care?

- In 2022, romances were **33% of all mass-market paperbacks sold**
 - **Most popular genre** in modern literature
 - Printed romance novels increased by 36% since 2021
 - Sales for romance novels reached 47 million units in 2021, including print and digital formats
 - Also Europe & Australia, over 90 languages, etc.
- Romantic fiction generates over **\$1.438 billion in sales**
 - 64 million people claimed to read at least one
 - 16% male, 50-50 married/single, 42% BA/BS
 - 28/190 world countries have GDP < \$1.2 billion

Book Sales by Genre



2020 Most Lucrative Genres

- All Books Sales (Electronic and Paper):
 - Romance/Erotica - \$1.44 billion
 - Crime/Mystery - \$ 728.2 million
 - Religious/Inspirational - \$ 720 million
 - Science Fiction/Fantasy - \$ 590.2 million
 - Horror - \$ 79.6 million
- Top 3 Kindle Categories By Sales:
 - Romance -> Contemporary
 - Literature & Fiction -> Contemporary Fiction -> Women
 - Romance -> New Adult & College

On The Street

- “Romance novels do better here than any other genre,” says Anna Mickelsen of the Springfield City Library in Springfield, Mass in 2013. “Romance makes up 35% of our more-than-5,000-item collection but accounts for over 43% of the circulation. On average, romance paperbacks circulate more than eight times, while items in other genres circulate fewer than six. The cost of romance novels is generally less than [the cost of novels from] many of the other genres, and with high circulations this results in a better return overall on the library's investment.”

What Are We Talking About?

- According to the Romance Writers of America, the main plot of a **romance novel** must revolve around the two people as they develop romantic **love** for each other and work to build a **relationship** together. Furthermore, a romance novel must have an "**emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending.**"
- Nora Roberts claims "The books are about the celebration of falling in love and emotion and commitment, and all of those things we really want."

Freedom?

- Modulo societal taboos, almost anything can appear in a romance novel.
 - Castles, domestic violence, science fiction, disabilities, children, religion, date rape, medicine, suspense, exotic locales, chaste kisses, etc.
- So let's do a brief **history** and **taxonomy** of romance novels and occasionally use them as a lens for studying society

Ancient History

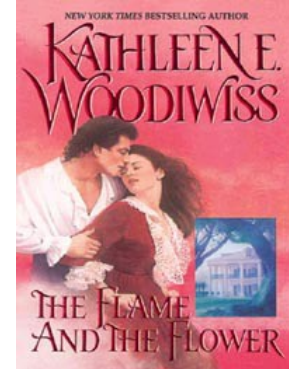
- 1740: Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded by Samuel Richardson
 - First popular novel based on heroine's perspective
- 1813: Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
 - Often critically considered “the best romance novel ever written”
 - Reinforces stereotype that women must marry?
- 1847: Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
 - Orphaned heroine, gothic elements, Elizabethan drama, “demonstrated the flexibility of the romance novel form”

History

- 1919: The Sheik by E.M. Hull
 - Popular, movie with Valentino, hero kidnaps heroine and wins her affection through “forceful action”
 - One of the first to introduce the rape fantasy [Regis 2003]. Publishers believed that readers would only accept premarital sex in the context of rape. In this novel and those that followed, the rape was depicted as more of a fantasy; the heroine is rarely if ever shown experiencing terror, stress, or trauma as a result.
- 1921+: Many by Georgette Heyer
 - Set during English Regency Period (1811-1820)
 - Used setting as a plot device: characters would have modern day sensibilities (e.g., marrying for love) and would be marked as eccentric

Pre-Modern Era

- 1930+: Mills and Boon hardback romances
 - UK Company, sold in weekly two-penny libraries
- 1957: Harlequin sells M&B books in America
 - Had a “decency code”
 - cf. Hays Production Code in US Cinema, 1934-1968: replaced in modern era by MPAA ratings
 - Intimacy limited to chaste kisses between protagonists
- 1971: Harlequin purchases Mills & Boon
 - Chose to sell books “where the women are”: supermarkets, drug stores, etc.



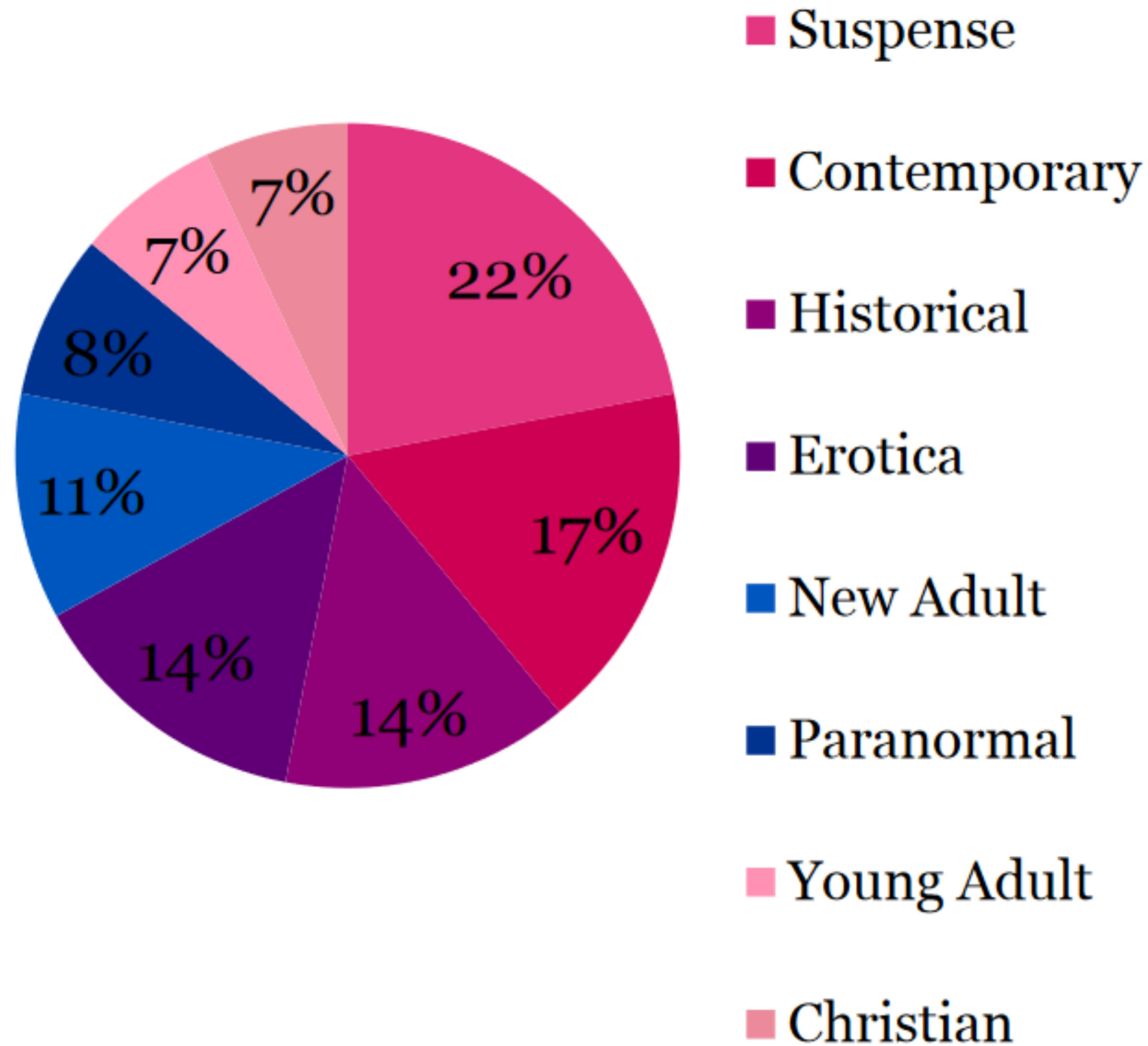
The Modern Era

- 1972: The Flame and the Flower by Kathleen Woodiwiss (Avon publishers)
 - First romance novel “to [follow] the principles into the bedroom”; first to be published directly in paperback; was distributed in drug stores; went on to sell 2.35 million copies
- By 1975 Avon's 4 romances sold 8 million combined copies
- By 1976 over 150 historical romance novels were published selling over 40 million copies

Two Types Of Romance

- **Category Romances** (series romances)
 - Short: 200 pages; 55,000 words; multiple books in a line published each month
 - “pare the story down to its essentials. Subplots and minor characters are eliminated or relegated ...”
 - Wide distribution, staying on shelves until sold out or until next month's titles arrive
- **Single-Title Romances**
 - Longer: 350-400 pages, 1/year, remain on shelves
 - Not always stand-alone, often Author-driven

Romantic Subgenres



Social Mores: Romance Novels 1980s

- 1980: WSJ refers to “**bodice-rippers**” as “publishing's answer to the Big Mac: they are juicy, cheap, predictable, and devoured in stupifying quantities by legions of loyal fans”
- Contemporary romances: weak females falling in love with alpha males
- Historical romances: heroines active in the plot, but “passive in relationships with heroes”
- All genres: heroines 16-21 virgins, heroes ~30 not, all are beautiful

The Sun Also Rises And Falls

- 1975: Harlequin purchases a romance novel that takes place in America with American morals
 - In the late 70's they rejected Nora Roberts because “they already had their American writer”
- 1980: The Tawny Gold Man by Amii Lorin
 - First to waive the virgin heroine requirement
 - By 1983, sales of that line totaled \$30 million
 - Similar lines soon had 90-100% monthly sellout rates
- 1984: Market Saturation (40% sellout rates)
 - “dampening effect of the high level of redundancy associated with series romances was evident in the decreased number of titles being read per month”

Social Changes

- 1983: lesbian heroine
- 1984: overweight, middle-aged hero
- 1987: ugly hero, heroine searching for birth mother
- Late 1980's: heroines in more male-dominated jobs
- 1990's: self-employed heroines, 30-40 year old women, sensitive men
 - Later: single parenthood, adoption, abuse
 - Taboos: terrorism, warfare, masculine sports
- 2000's+: “chick lit”, dystopian, paranormal, ...

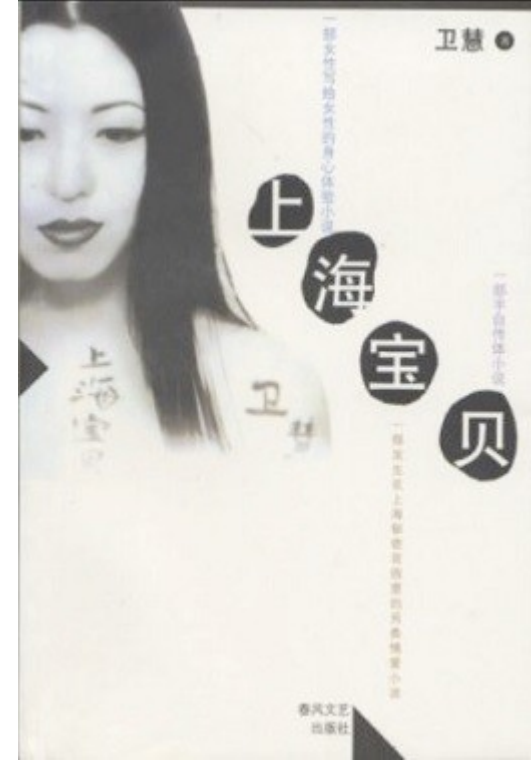
More Recent Examples

- 2005: Twilight by Stephenie Meyer
 - Paranormal, blank slate, Mormon
 - Sold 120 million copies by 2011
- 2007: Magic Bites by Ilona Andrews
 - Indicative YA urban fantasy romance
 - Strong female lead, sarcastic and quippy, etc.
- 2011: Fifty Shades of Grey by E L James
 - Sold 125 million copies by 2015
 - Twilight fan fiction



Cultural Mores

- 1999: Shanghai Baby (上海宝贝) by Wei Hui
 - Semi-autobiographical heroine: 25-year novelist trying to publish explicit short stories
 - Also features a morphine addiction, an affair, a love triangle with a German man
 - Banned in China for being decadent



AO3's Hugo Award win is a long time coming for the fanfiction community

What an honor for Archive of Our Own means to those who championed it

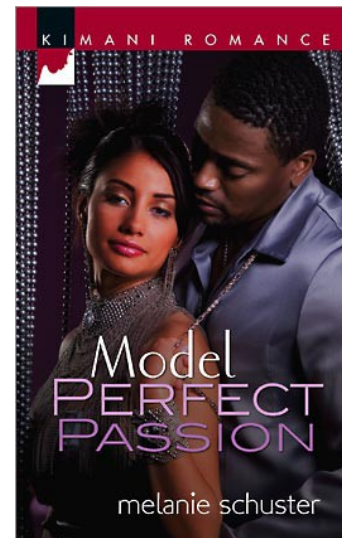
By [Petra Radulovic](#) | [@Pet_rana](#) | Updated Aug 19, 2019, 9:35am EDT

2010+

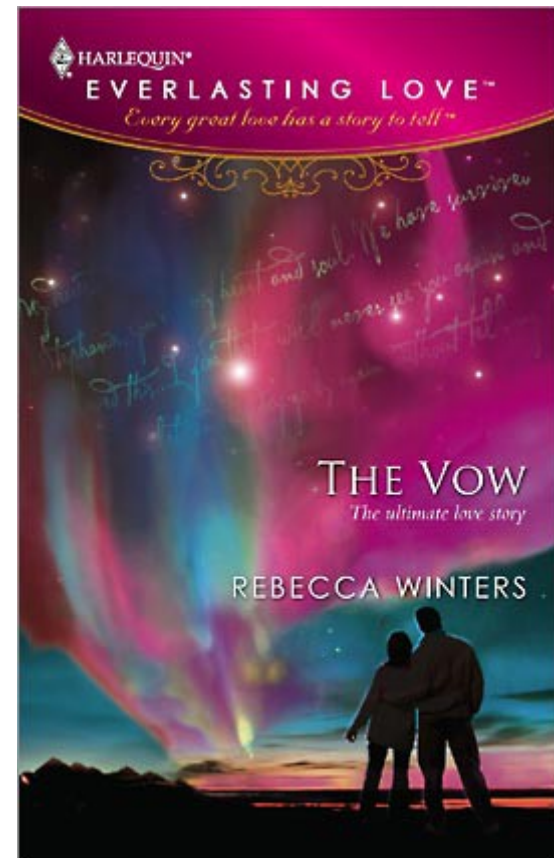
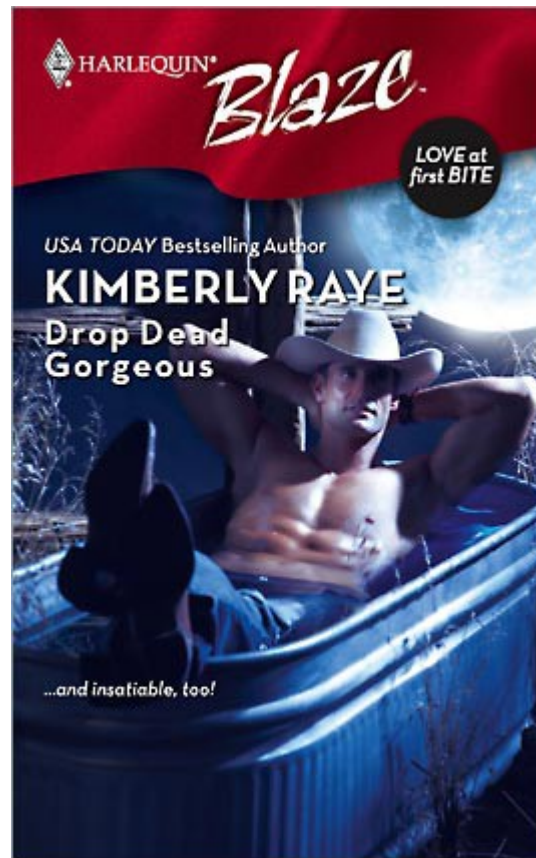
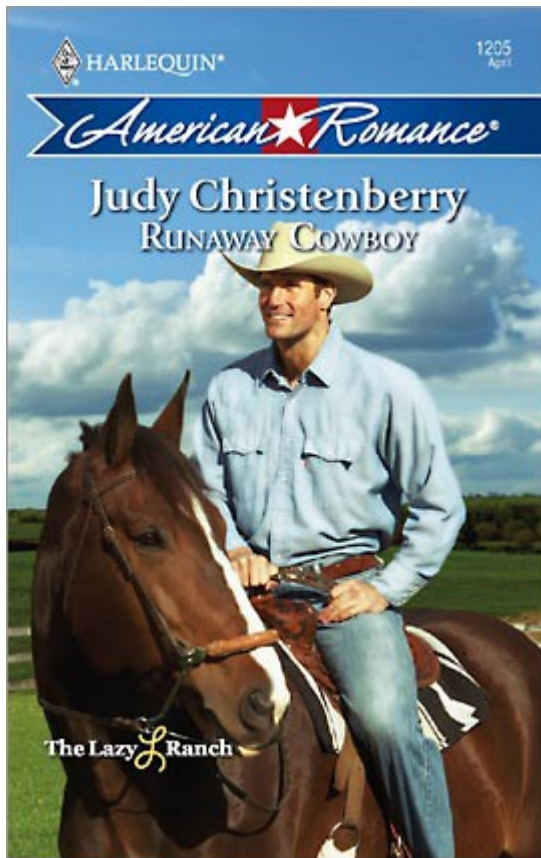
- Fan Fiction and Transformative Works
 - Fanfiction.net - 12M users
 - Archive Of Our Own - 6M users in 2023
 - 4.7M works in Aug 2019 → 11M in May 2023
- Web Serial Novels (webfiction, online novel)
 - cf. serial novels of 19th century (e.g., Dickens)
 - Particularly big in Asia (esp. Japan, China)
- Easier to try out writing in established setting

Demographics

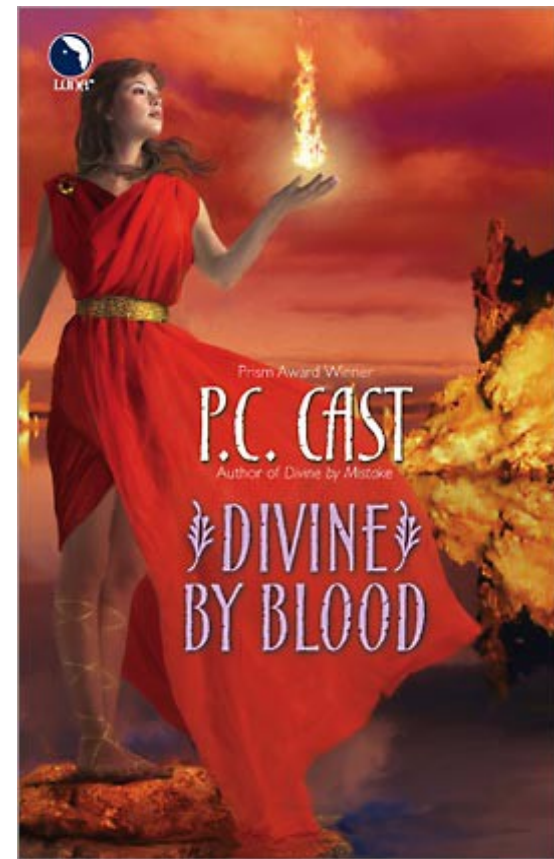
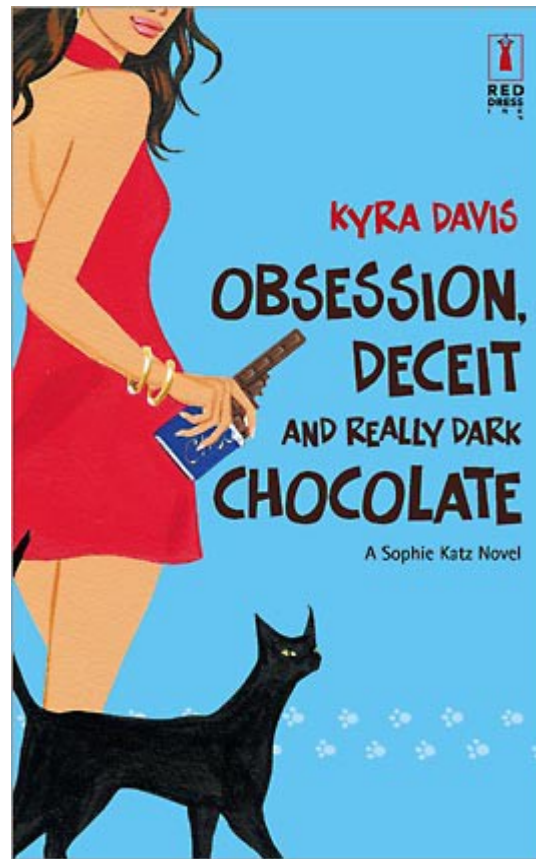
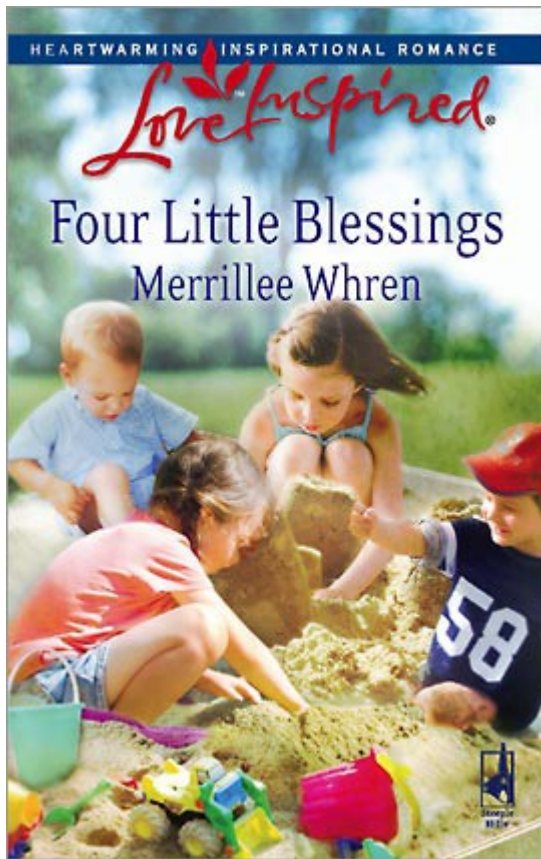
- In 2021, 92.2% of romance novels were written by white authors, 7.8% written by BIPOC authors
- 2021 readership is more balanced:
 - 73% of romance readers are white/caucasian
 - 12% are African-American
 - 7% are Latino/Hispanic
 - 4% are Asian/Asian American



Category Romance In Pictures



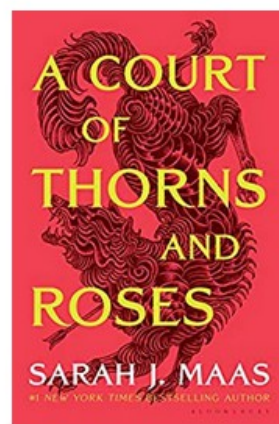
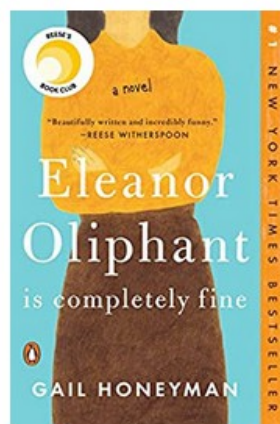
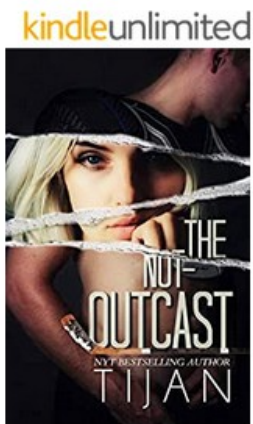
Category Romance In Pictures



Category Romance (Popular)

- Amazon Romance eBooks

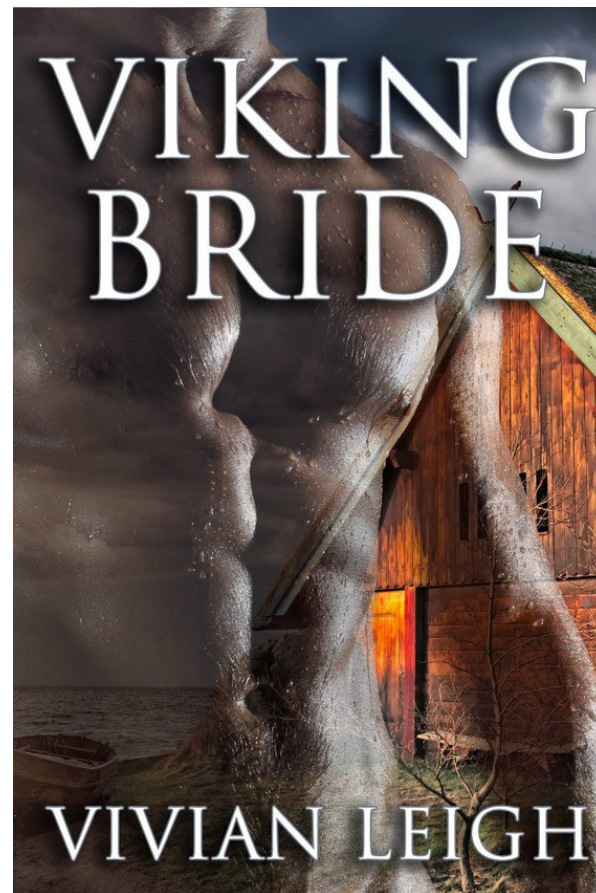
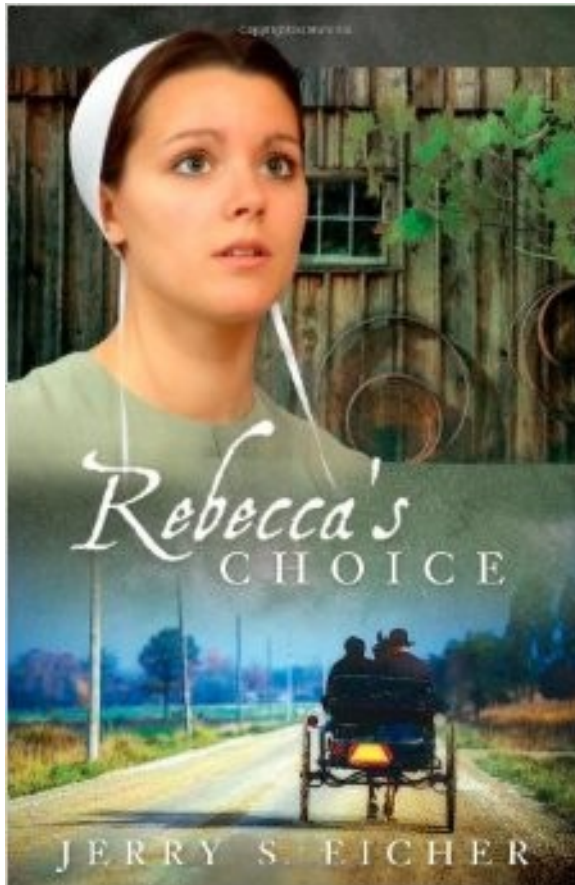
Best sellers



- Mix and match:

Dad Next Door, High School Bad Boy, Humorous and Quirky, Military, Paranormal, Sports

Category Romance (Niche)



Computing About Romance?

- Iwana et al.'s Judging a Book by its Cover (2017) uses a deep convolutional neural network to predict the genre of a book based on its cover image.
- 25% Top-1 accuracy
- 137,788 unique book cover images in 32 categories

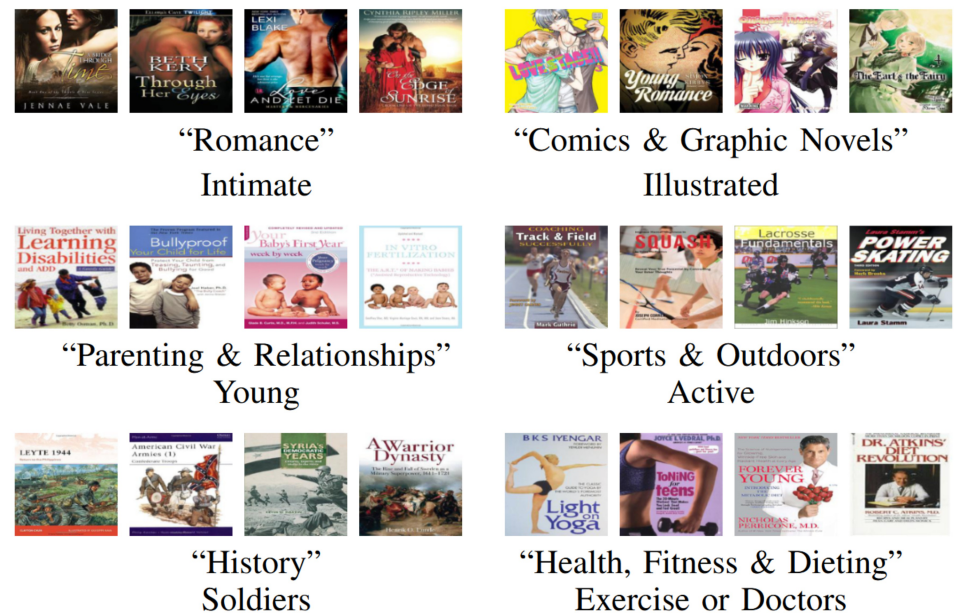
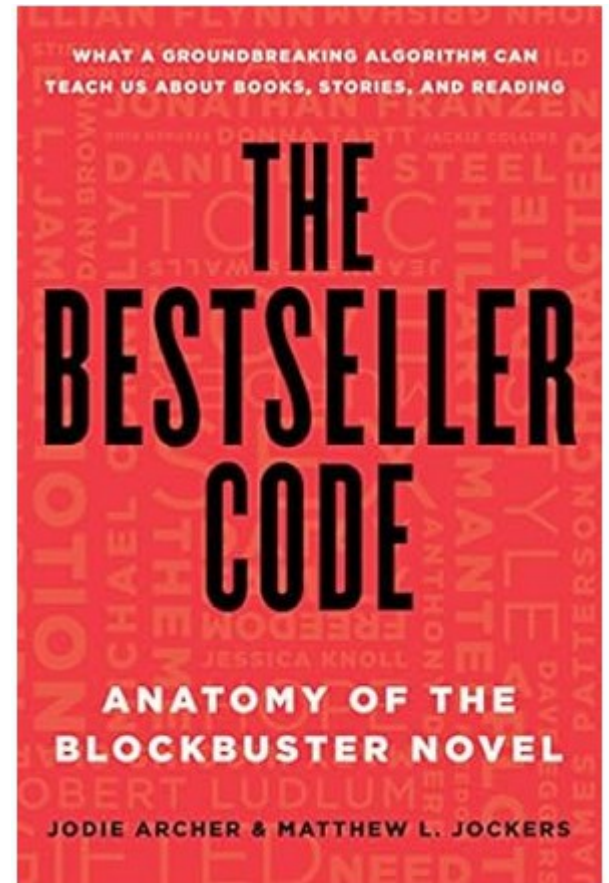


Fig. 6: Correctly classified book covers that feature different aspects of humans.

Patterns of Values?

- Jodie Archer, Stanford PhD work
 - 2016, right before BERT
- Analyzed the text of ~20K modern novels
 - Not just romance
- 80% accurate at predicting a best-seller using 2,800 features
 - (Uses the full text, which is rarely available)



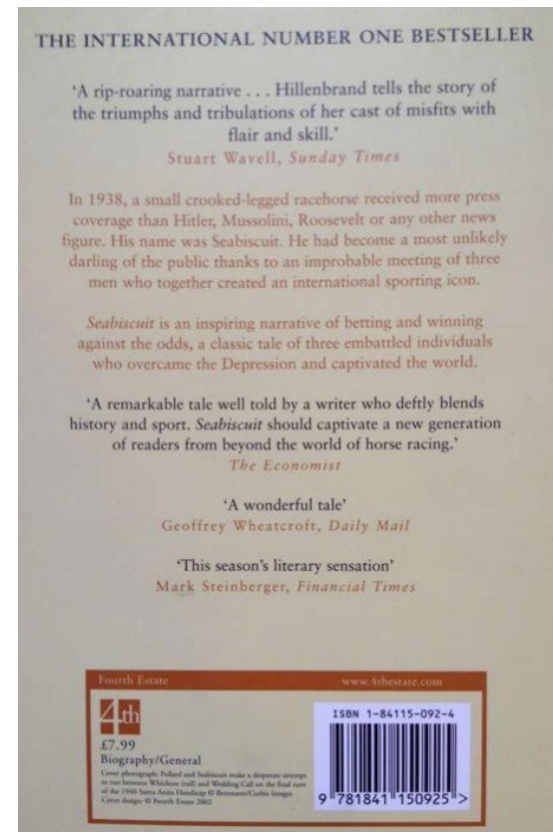
What do we want?

- **30% of text should focus on one or two themes**
- Main topic has universal appeal, e.g., “shared intimacy”
- Next topic should introduce a threat, e.g., “shared intimacy and vampires”
- **Best-sellers use:**
 - More contractions
 - More doing verbs
 - Ellipses for unfinished thoughts
 - Fewer exclamations, colons, semicolons
 - More periods
 - Fewer adjectives, shorter sentences
 - Silent dialogue tags

“This is me, Ana. All of me...and **I’m** all yours. What **do** I have to do to **make** you **realize** that? To **make** you see that I want you any way I can get you? That I love you.”
- Fifty Shades of Grey

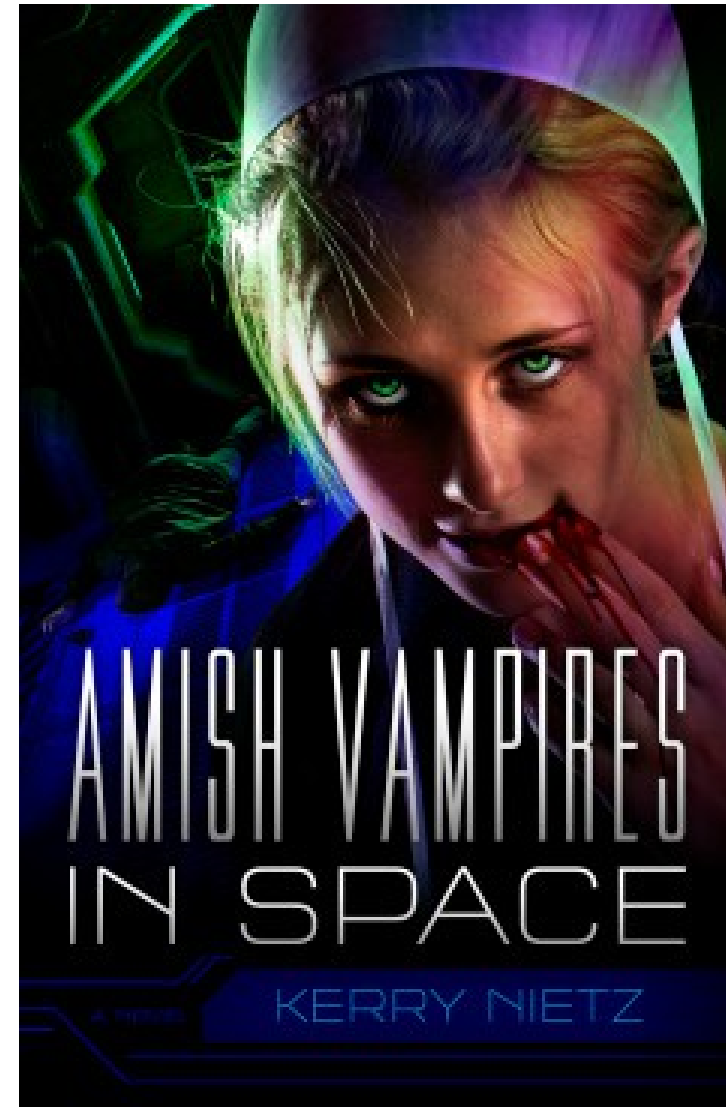
Recent AI: 2022 Study

- Dr. Kinga Dobolyi, CS professor at George Washington, used BERT to predict book popularity (= average rating 4+ or not)
- Using just the title:
 - 63% accuracy (stddev 4%)
- Using the back cover:
 - 68% accuracy (stddev 4%)



We joke, but ...

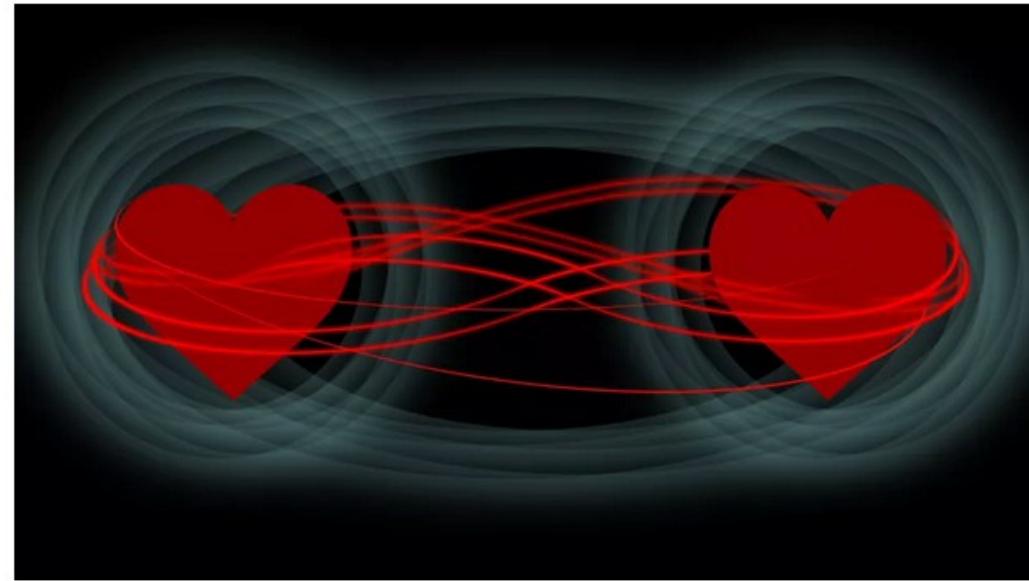
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Conclusion

Quantum Entanglement: Love on a Subatomic Scale

By Jesse Emspak February 14, 2016



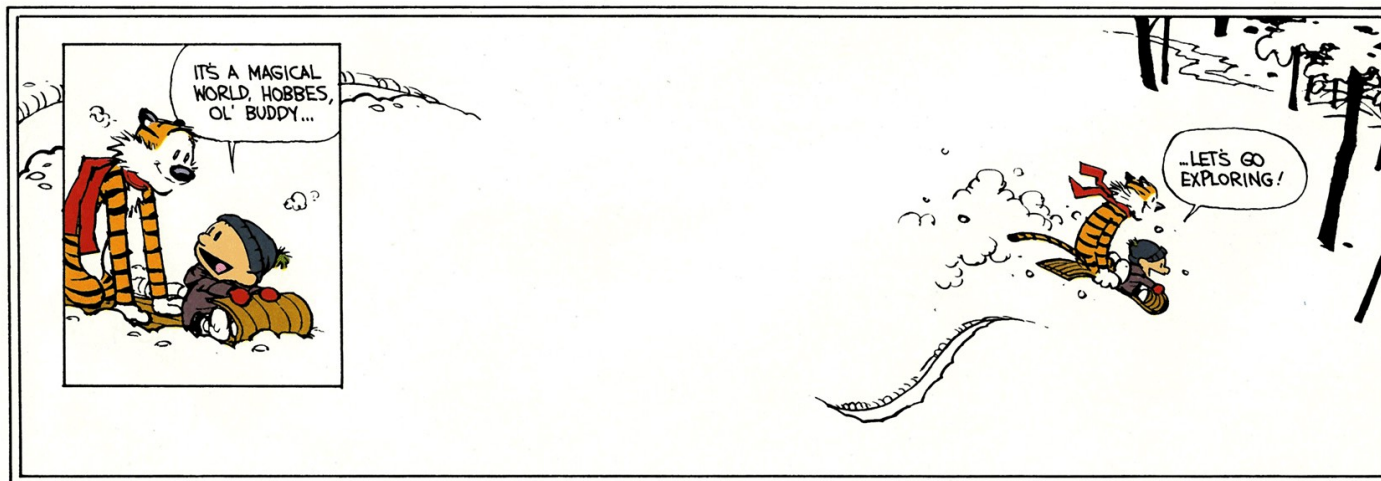
Technology used to study the "love" between entangled particles is also being used in research to improve deep-space communications.
(Image: © NASA/JPL-Caltech)

When talking about love and romance, people often bring up unseen and mystical connections.

Such connections exist in the subatomic world as well, thanks to a bizarre and counterintuitive phenomenon called [quantum entanglement](#).

The basic idea of quantum entanglement is that two particles can be intimately linked to each other even if separated by billions of light-years of space; a

I hope you enjoyed this class and learned something from it. I did (Fall 2024).



Life

Weimer recommends that you take classes on **philosophy** until you've covered epistemology, free will, logic, the philosophy of science, and “what it is like to be a bat”. Take **cognitive psychology** classes until you've covered perception and the Flynn effect. Take **speech** or **rhetoric** classes until you've covered persuasion. Take **anthropology** as well as **gender studies** classes until you've covered Mead and Freeman and you have a better feel for which behaviors are socially constructed and which may be essential. Take classes in **statistics** until you can avoid being fooled. Take classes in **religion** or **ethics** until you've covered the relationship between unhappiness and unrealized desires. Take classes in **physics** until you can explain how a microphone, radio and speaker all work. Take classes on **government** until you have an opinion about the feasibility of legislating morality. Take classes on **history** until you are not condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past.