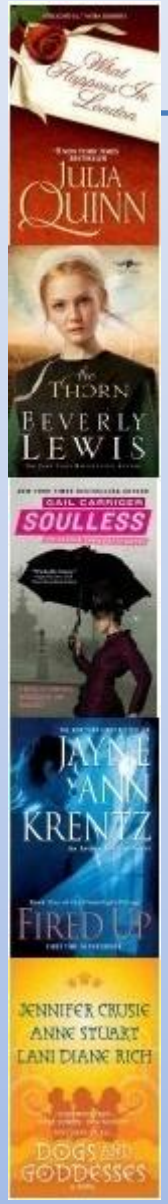
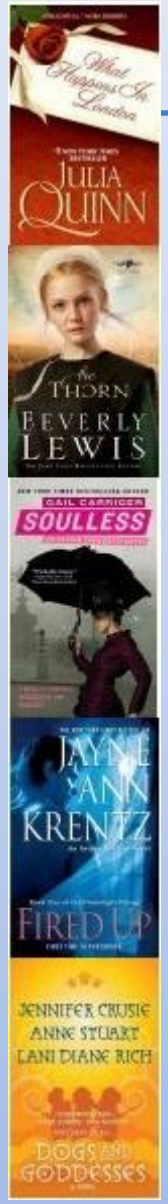


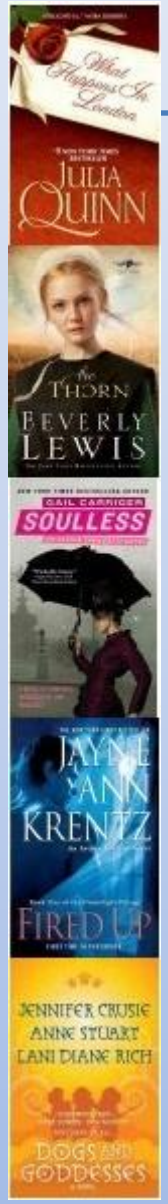
From 49 Shades of Discomfort to Fearless Romance Readers Advisory



Quiz

Romance fiction worldwide generated $_____ in sales in 2011, capturing the largest share of the U.S. consumer market at 14.3%.

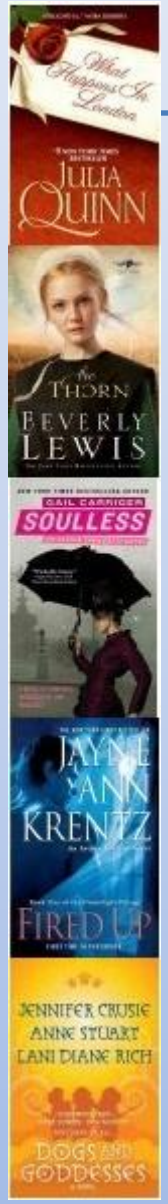
1.368 Billion



Quiz

In 2008, _____million people read at least one romance novel, with the core of the romance fiction market remaining at 29 million regular readers.

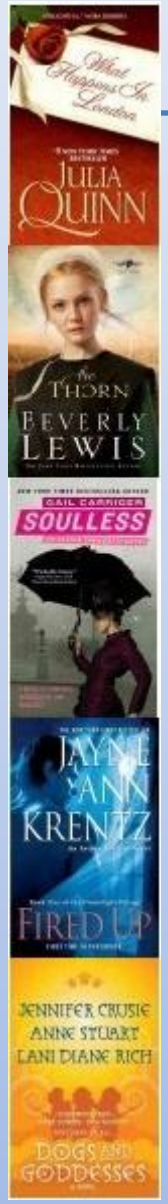
74.8 million



Quiz

The fundamental general appeal of the romance novel, like that of all genre fiction, is to our basic human desire and need for _____.

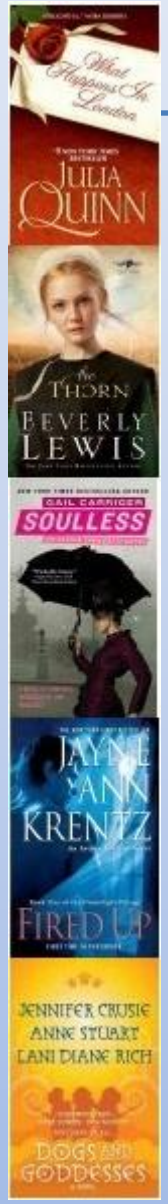
escape



Quiz

Name some common criticisms of romance novels.

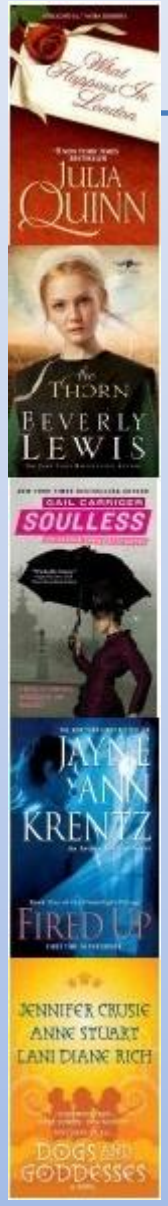
Not realistic.
All the same; formulaic.
Quick, easy reads.



Quiz

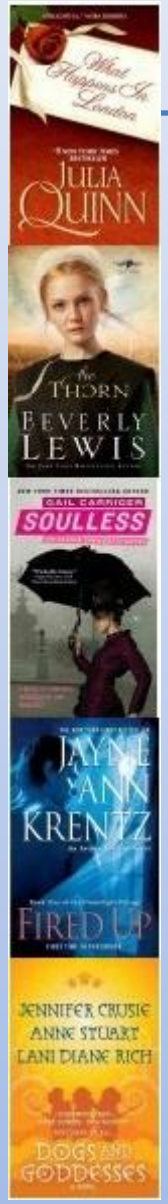
What **percentage** of romance readers are likely to follow an author they like into a new subgenre? _____%.

70%



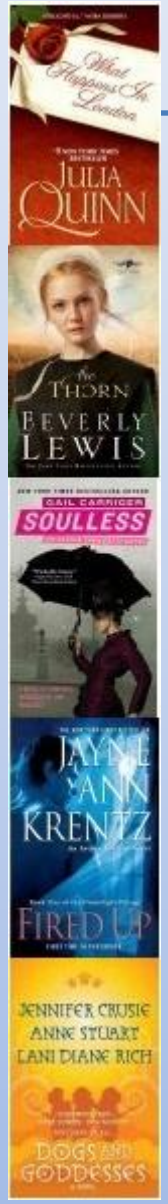
Nancy Schutz
nschutz@trl.org
Training Coordinator
Timberland Regional Library

Kim Storbeck
kstorbeck@trl.org
Collection Development
Timberland Regional Library



Purpose:

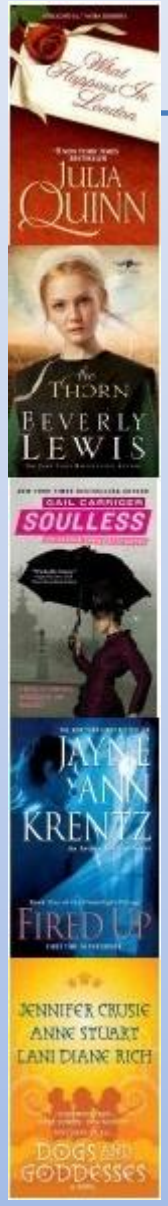
To give you a better appreciation of the romance genre and its readers and better equip you to provide readers' advisory assistance.



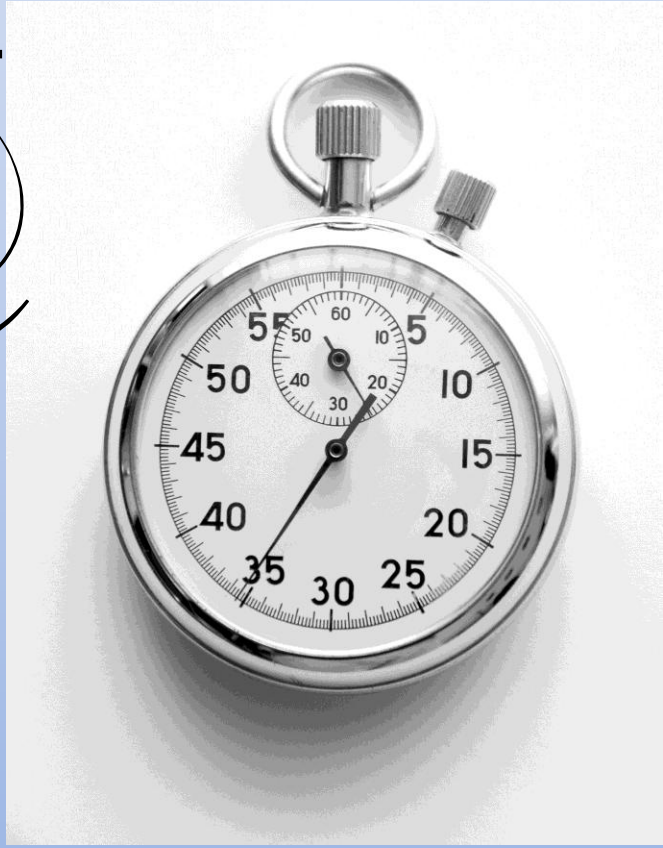
1. Understand the range of romance novels and what the reader wants in a book.

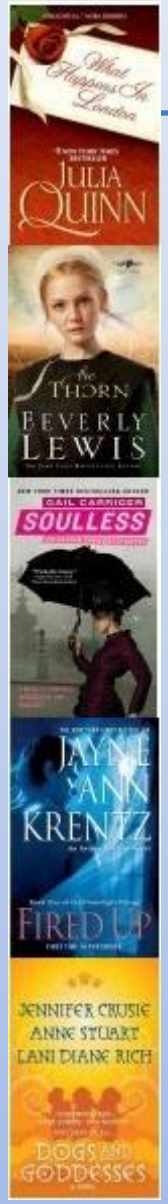
2. Increase your comfort level when helping romance readers.

3. Realize the importance of your attitude towards the genre and how that impacts the readers' advisory conversation.



You have **only 5 seconds** to make that connection with the reader…

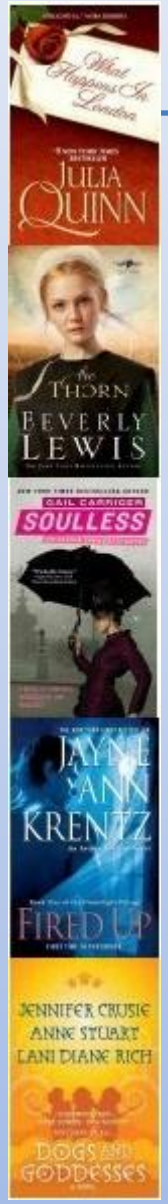




What is a romance book?

Romance books share these characteristics:

Love story
Commitment
Emotionally Engaging
Predictable
Female Empowerment
Monogamy



What's the Appeal?

Traditional appeals:

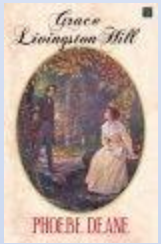
- Story
- Character
- Setting/Frame
- Language

The appeal of Romance is more closely aligned with the <u>*characteristics*</u> of the genre.

Some romantic history

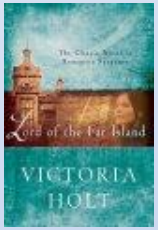
1740
Novel

1800's
Historical
Romances



1900's
Romances
(Grace Livingston Hill)

1960's
Brooding Castles
(Victoria Holt,
Phyllis Whitney, Barbara Michaels)



1980's
Diversity
(Multicultural,
Alternate Reality)

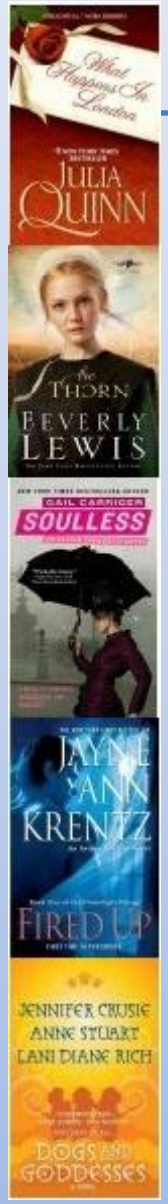
1700's
Gothic
Romances

1813
Price &
Prejudice

1938
Rebecca

1970's
Historical
Romance
"Explosion"

<u>Today</u>
More Titles, More Authors,
More SubGenres, More Genre
Blending, More Hardbacks



Who Reads Romances?

A lot of people. A lot of people who do NOT fit any stereotype.

- Range in age from adolescents to seniors.

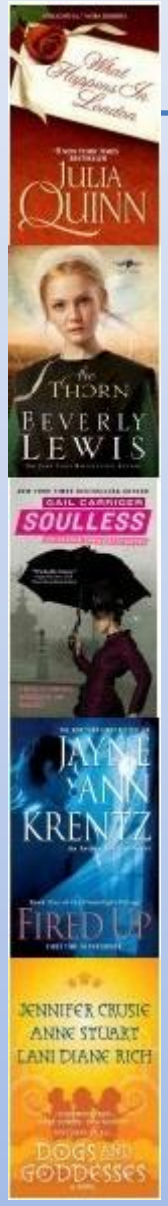
- Heart of romance readership is women ages 31-49.

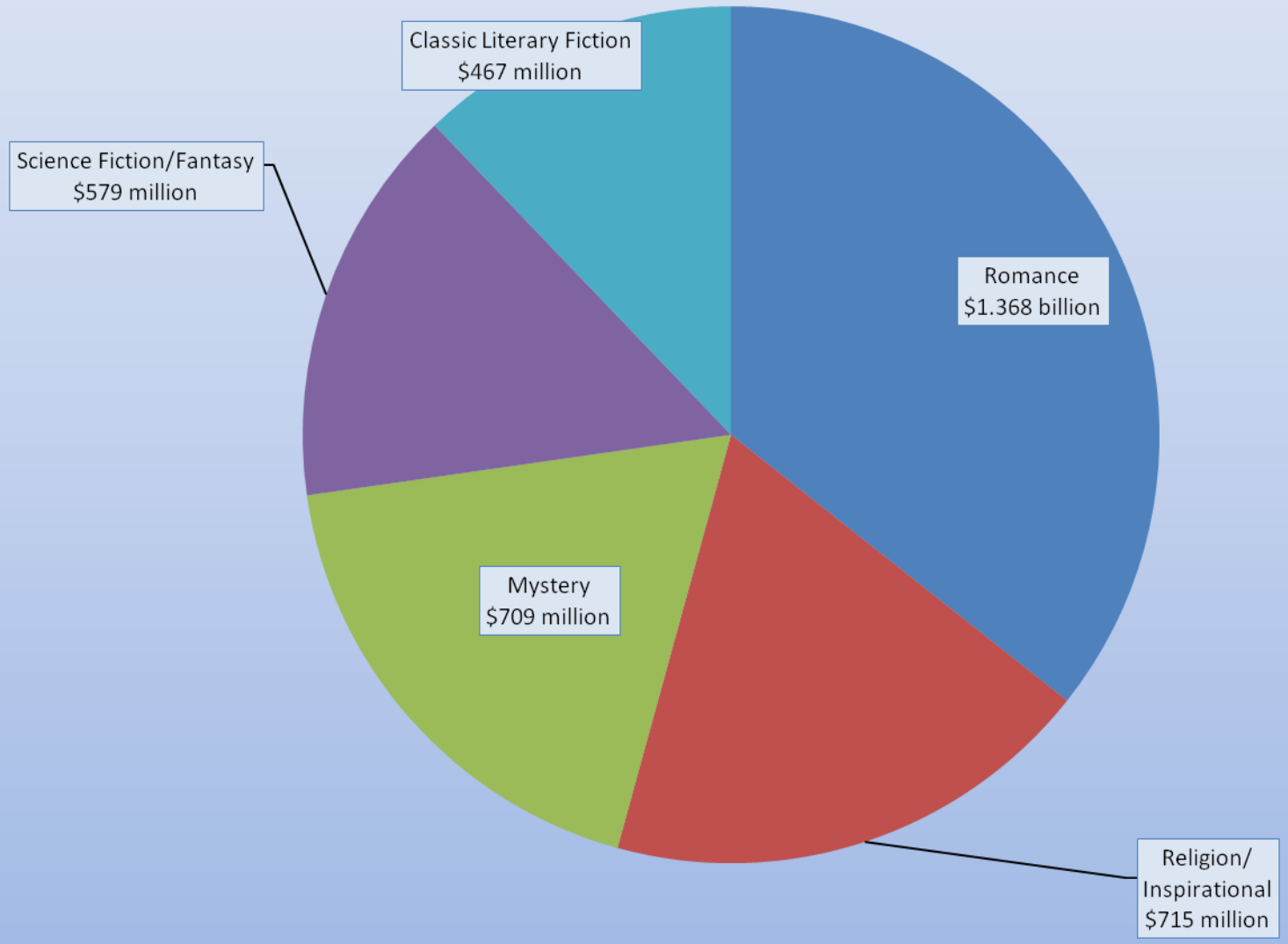
Women make up 90.5 percent of the romance readership, men make up 9.5 %.

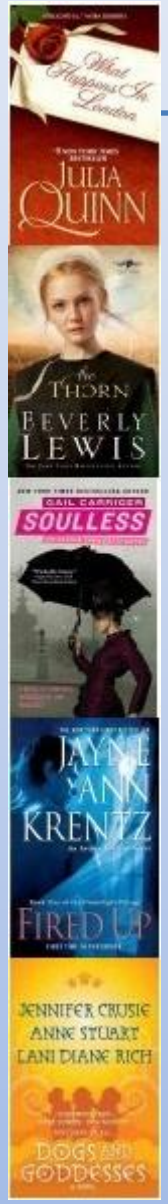
  - 79% currently involved with a man.
  - 66% own their own home.
  - 51% work outside the home.
  - 42% have a Bachelors degree or higher.

- Once romance readers start with the genre, they seem to stick with it.

Popularity of Romance Fiction
2011 Genre Sales Comparison

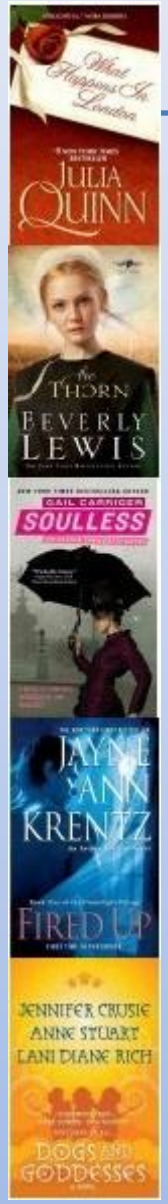




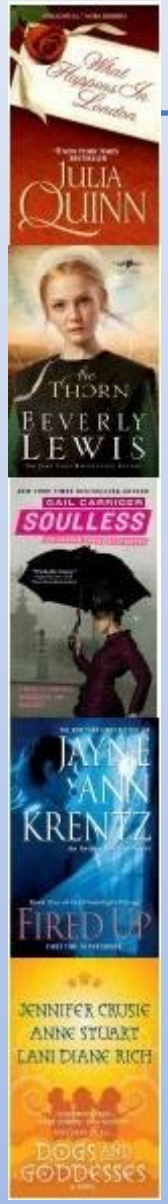


Criticisms of the Genre

- They're all the same / Formulaic
- They dis-empower women
- They all end happily
- Reading them is a form of escape
- They're not literary enough
- Readers/Authors are uneducated
- It's all about sex
- They're emotional



Can you judge a book by its cover?



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Is this book:

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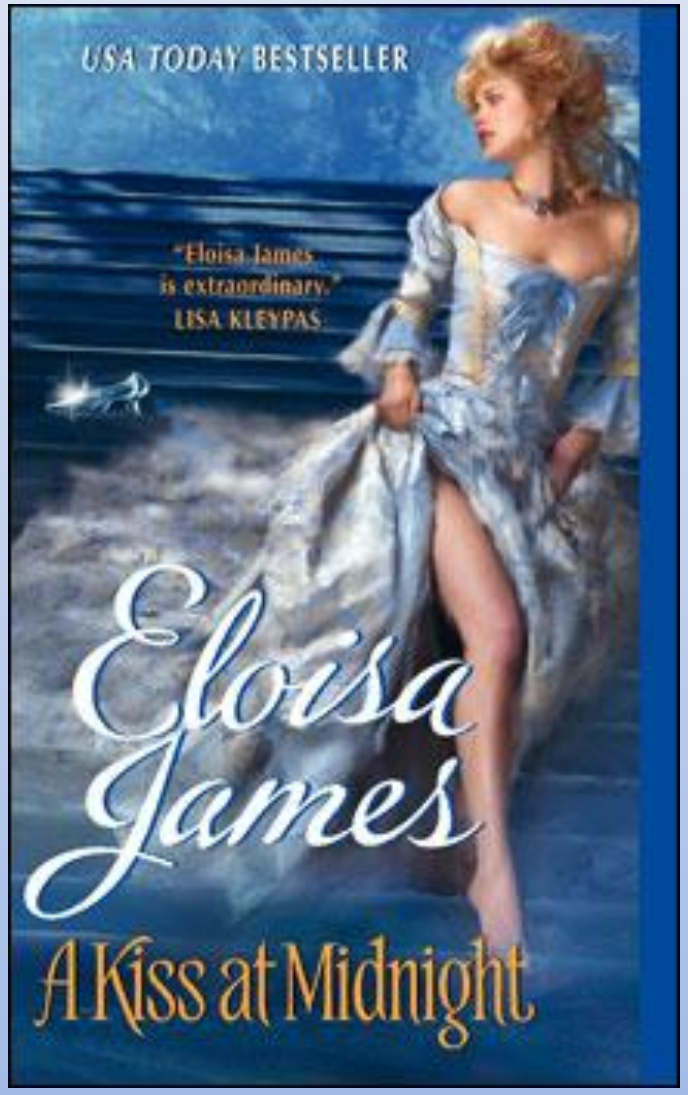
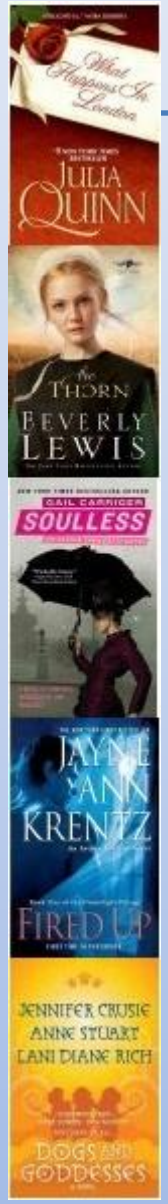
2. Historical
3. Inspirational
4. Paranormal
5. Romantic Suspense





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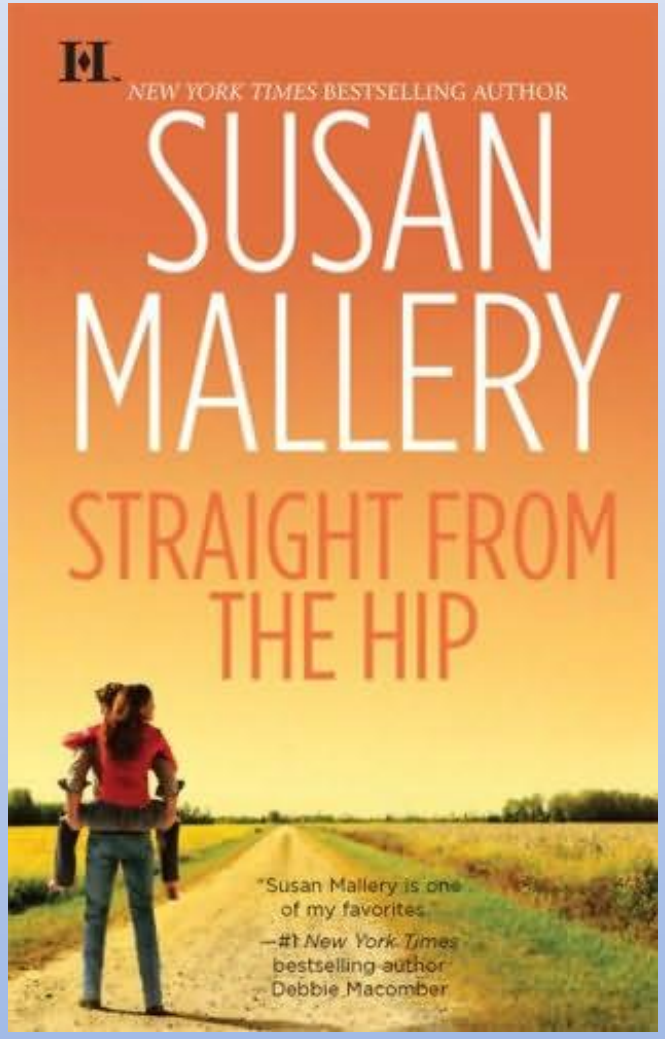

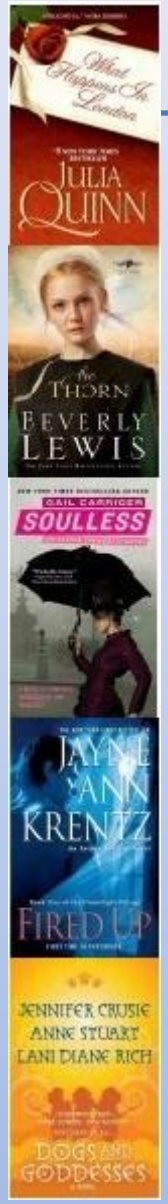

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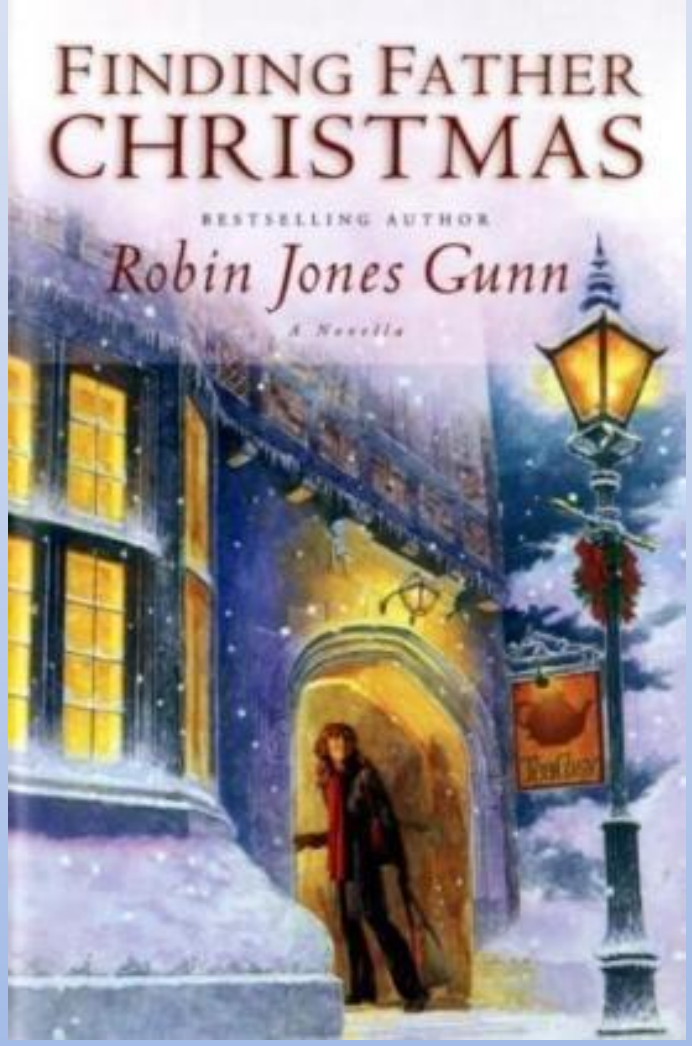

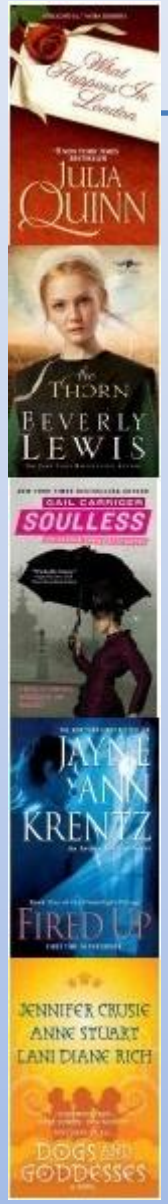

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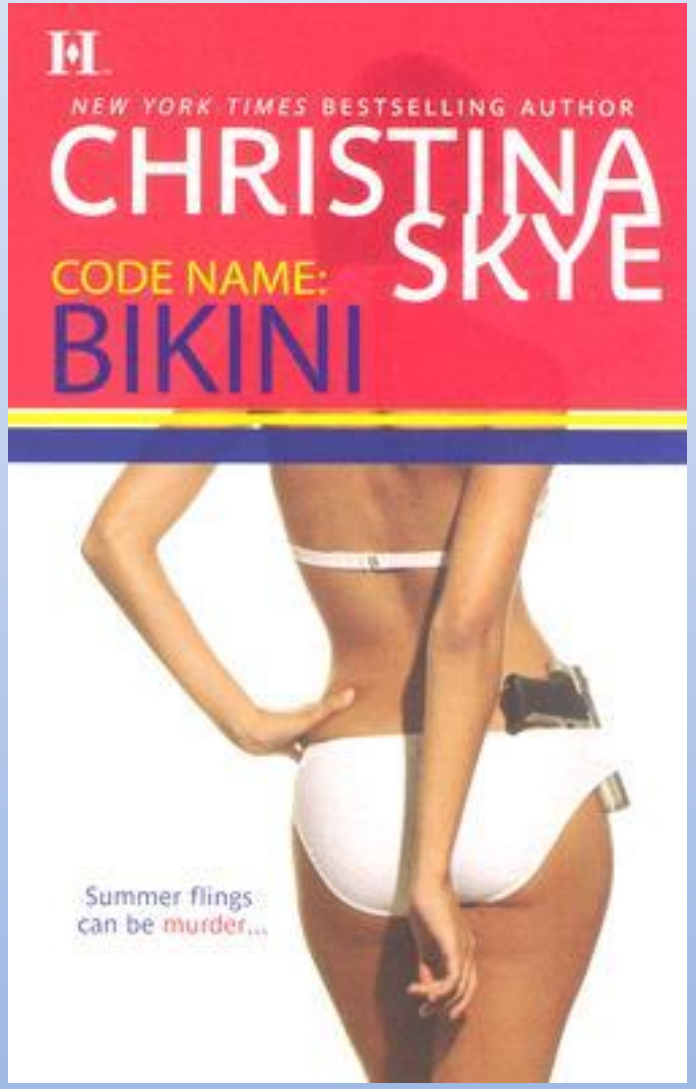

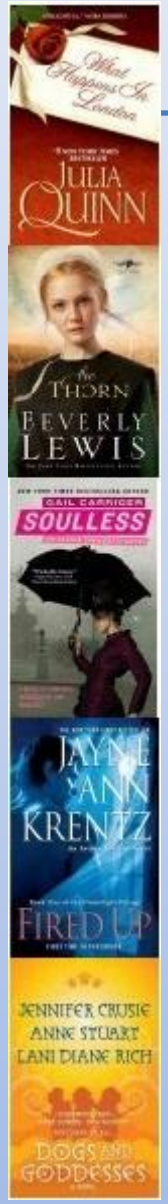

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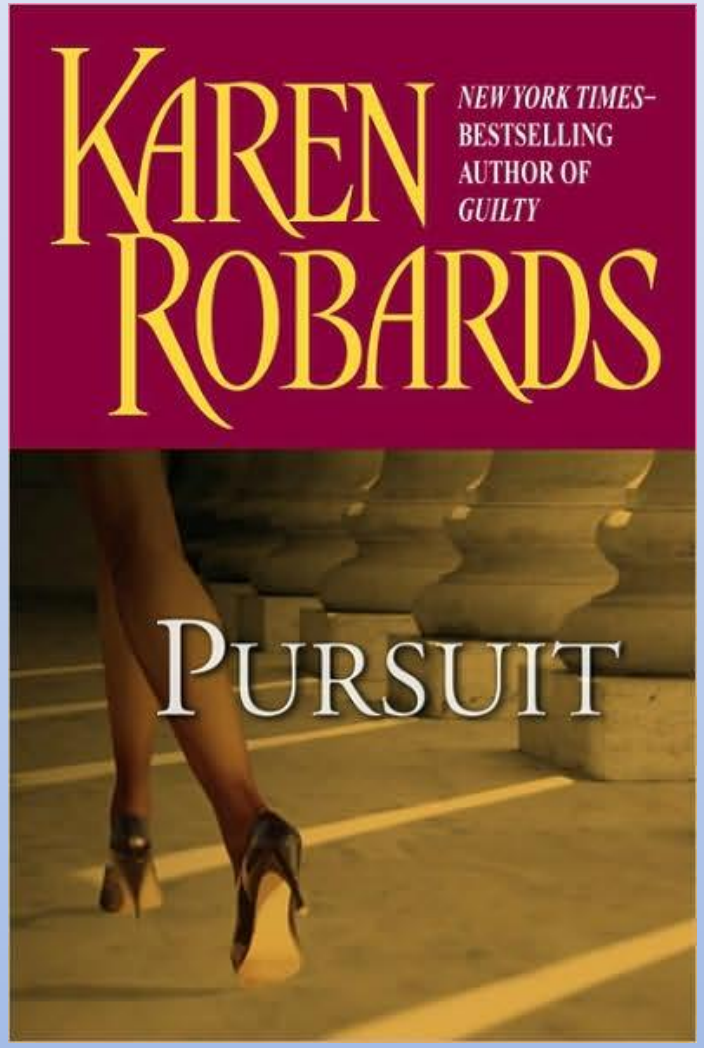

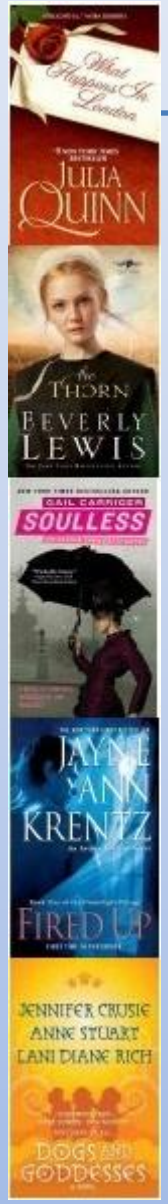

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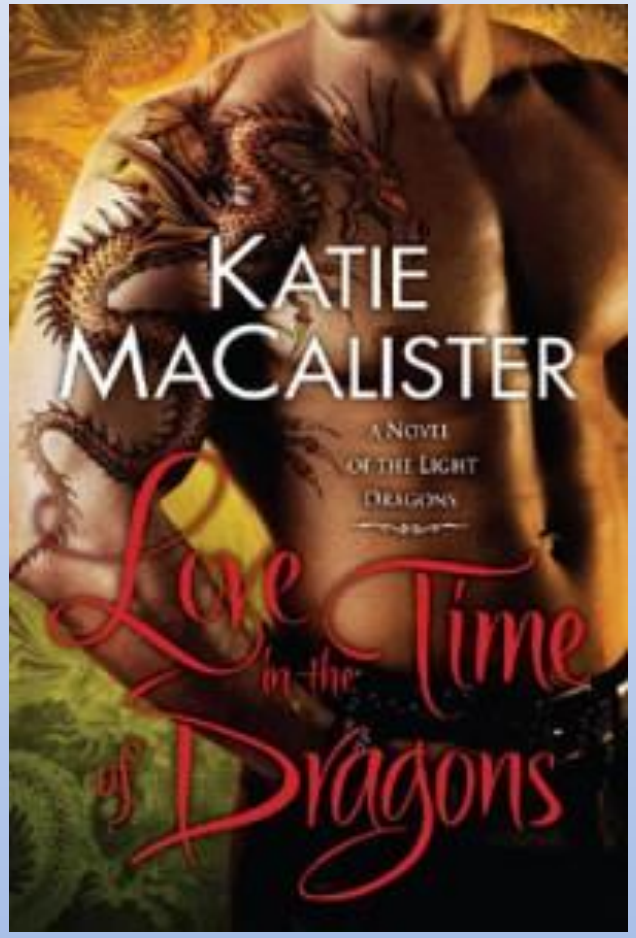

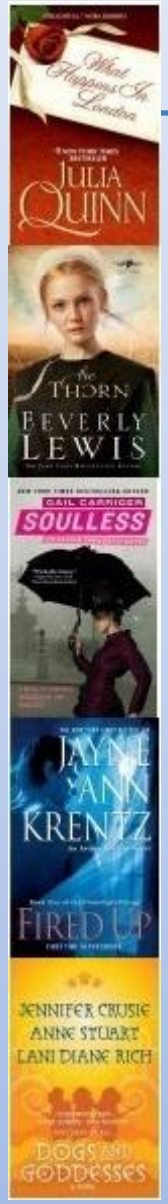

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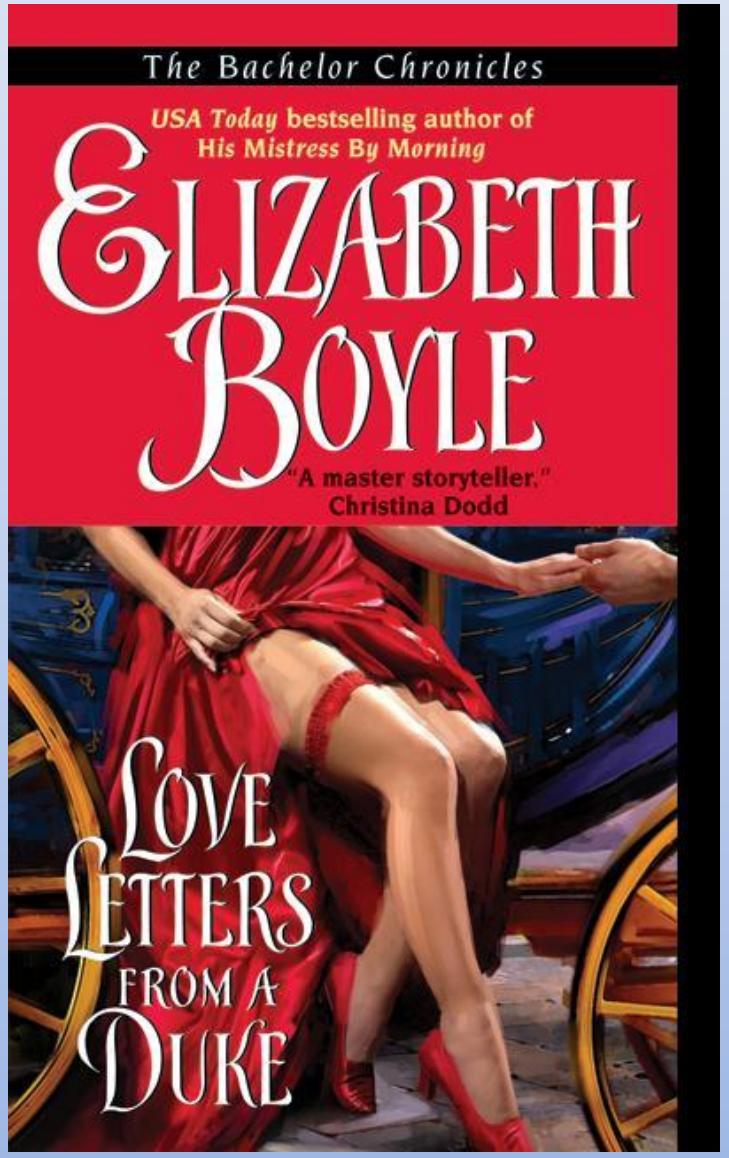

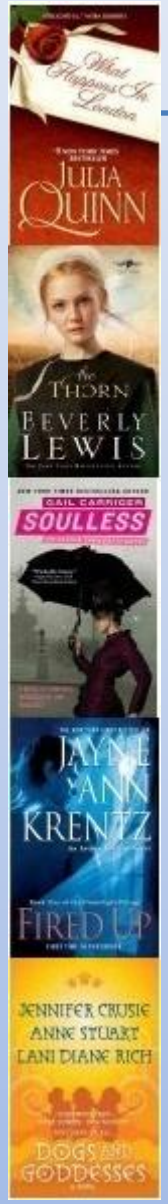

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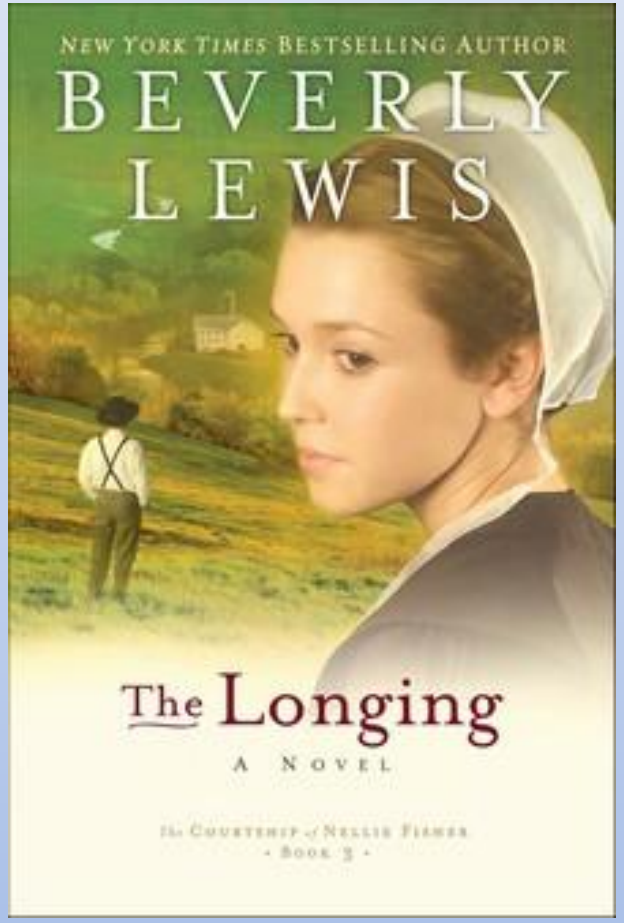

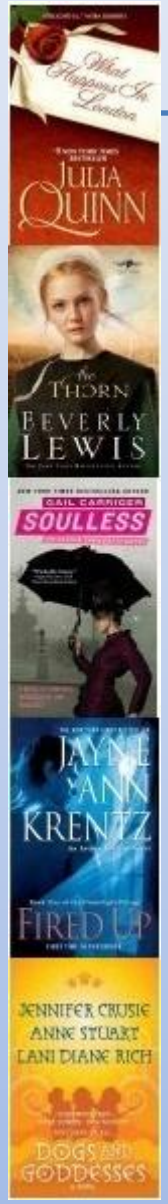

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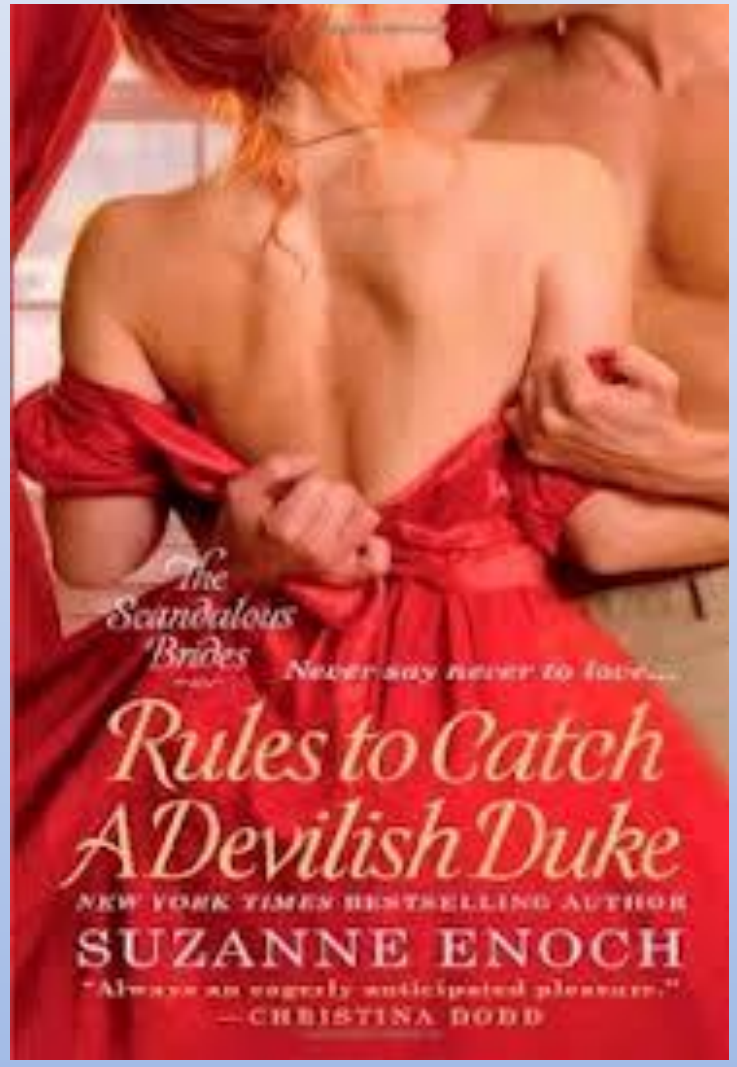

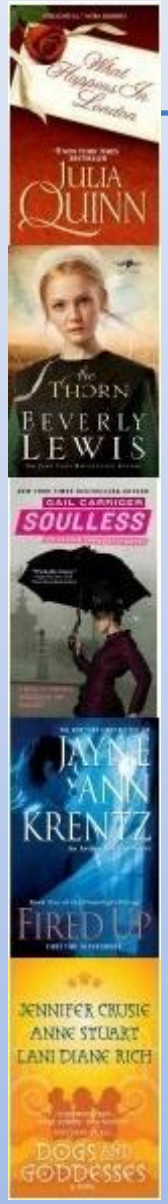

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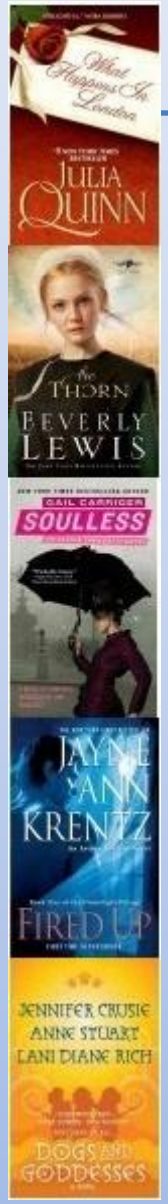

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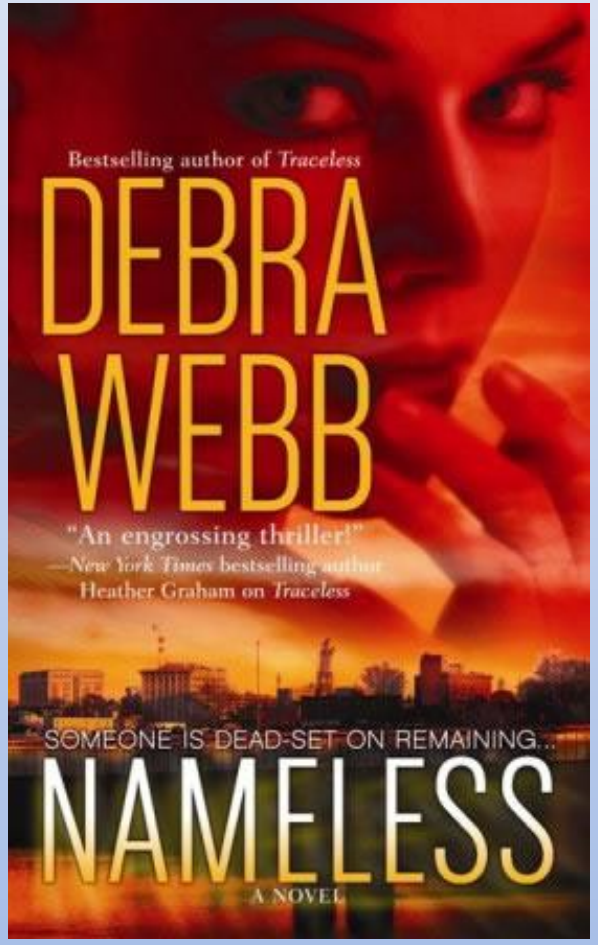

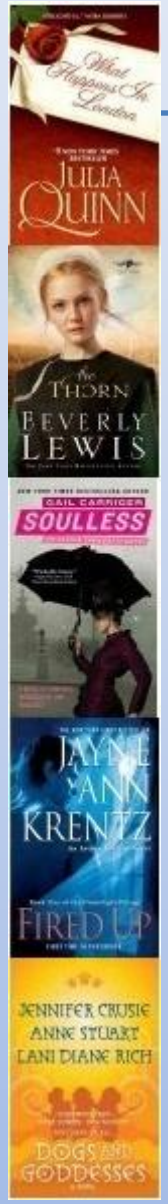

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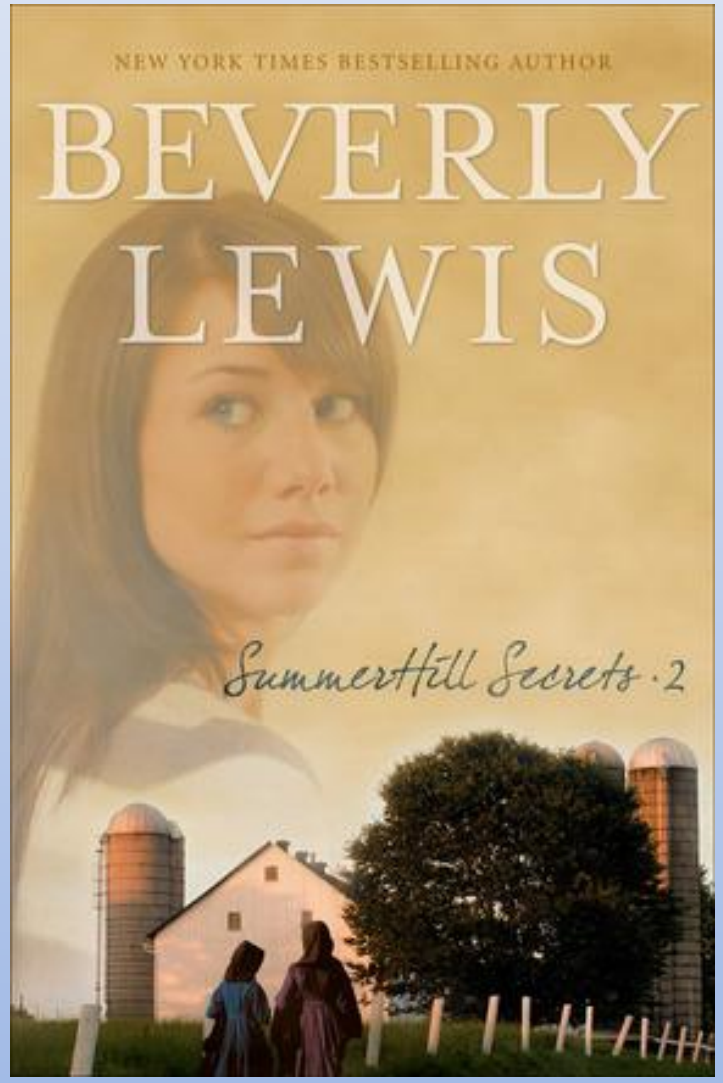

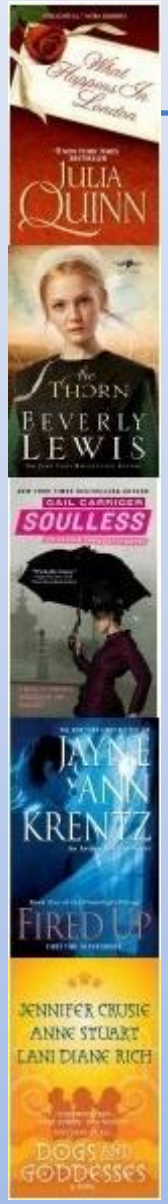

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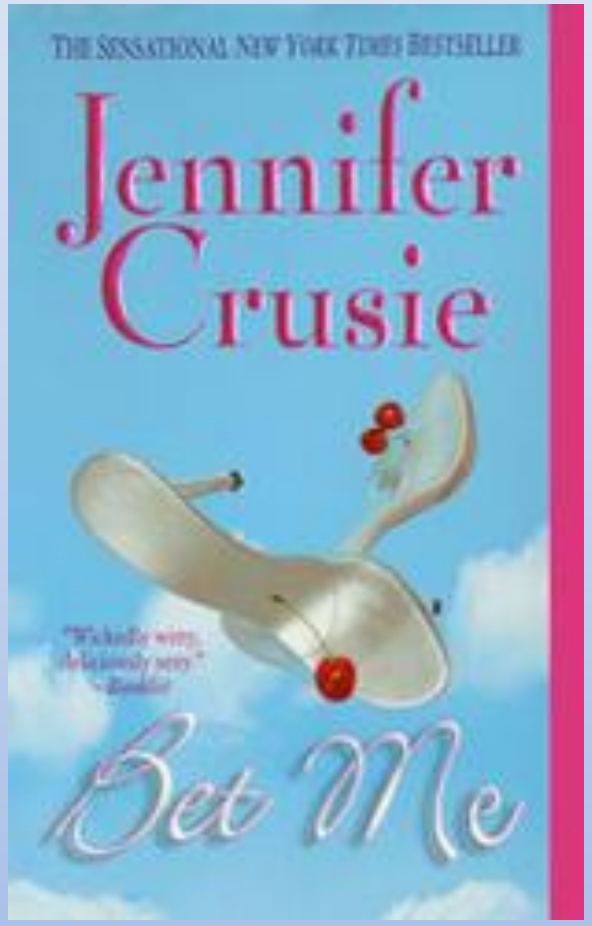

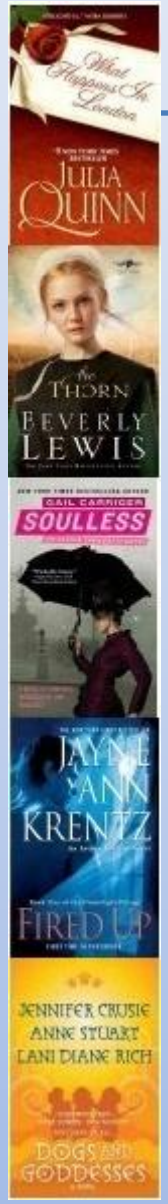

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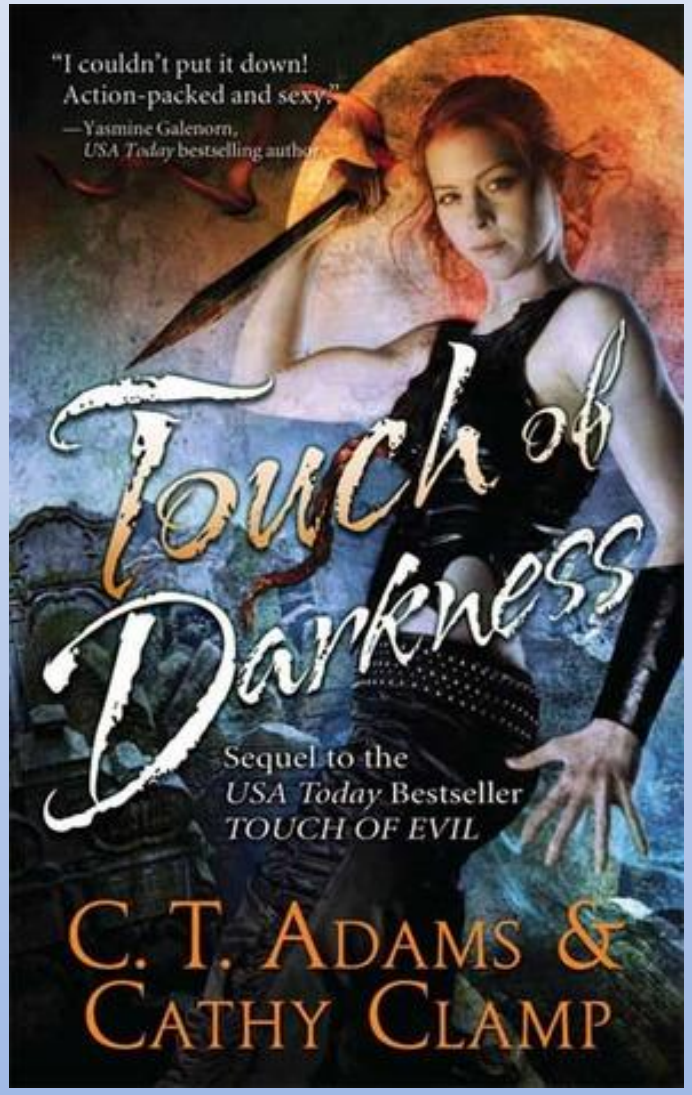
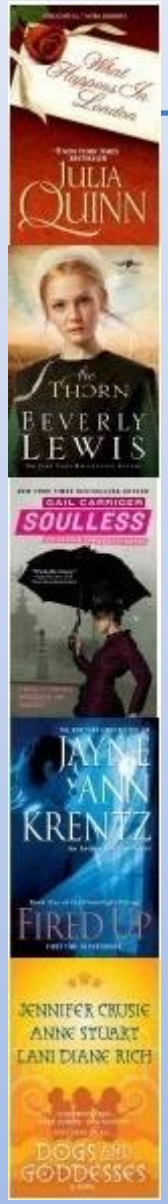
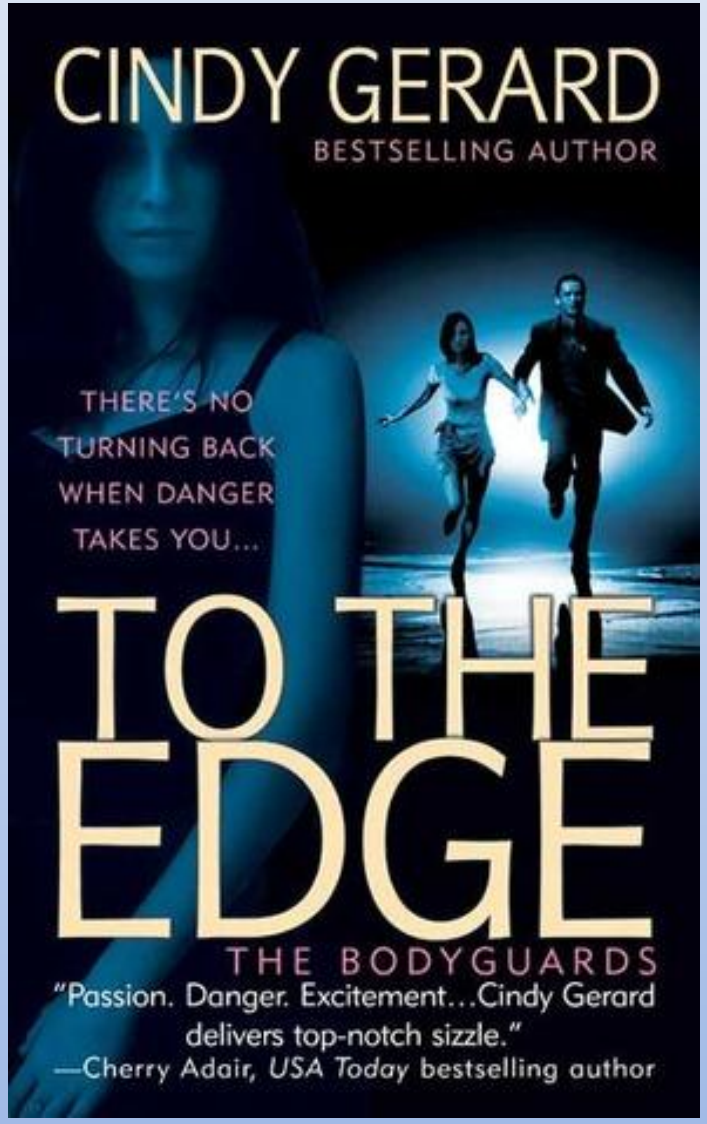


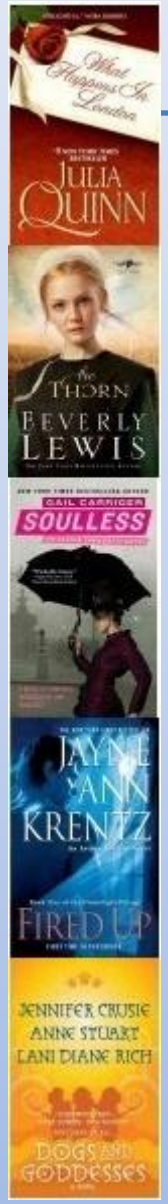


You <u>Can</u> Judge a Book By Its Cover

Is this book:

- Contemporary
- Historical
- Inspirational
- Paranormal
- Romantic Suspense





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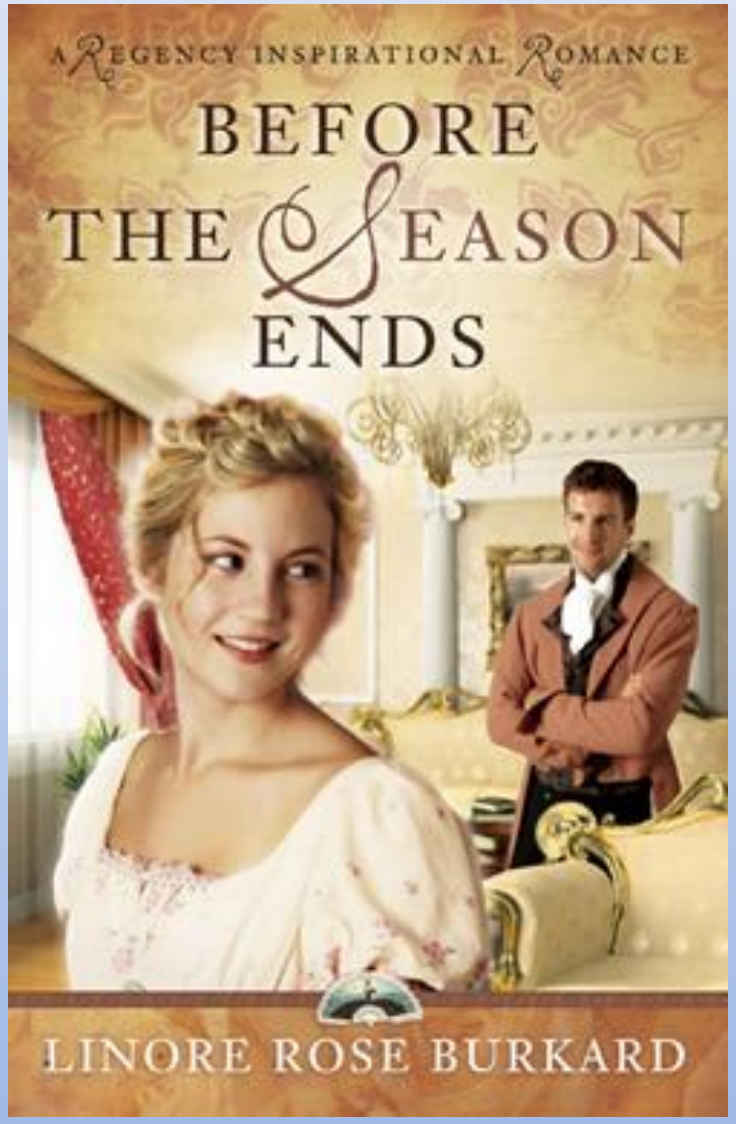
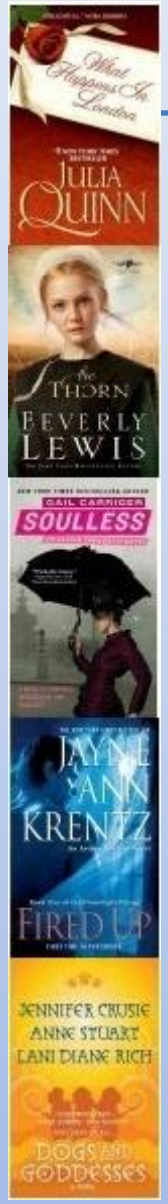


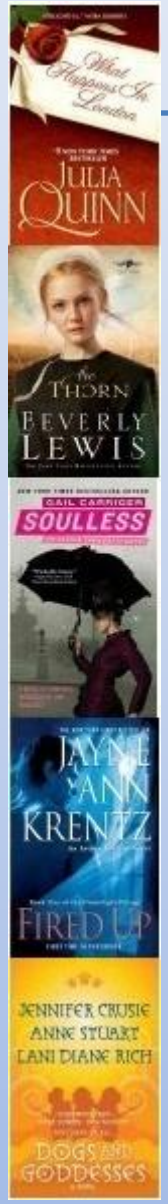


Romance Book Formats

Single titles

Series or linked titles

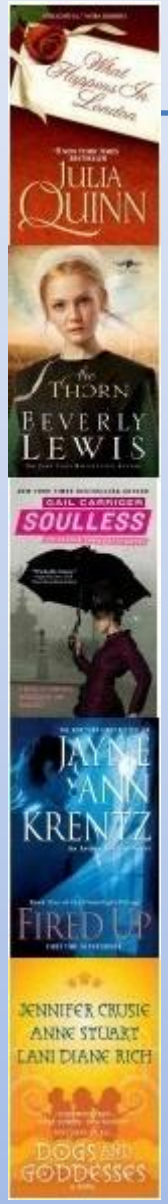
Category (Harlequin type)



Contemporary Romances

Time period set after 1945

Any location and plot elements



Historical Romances

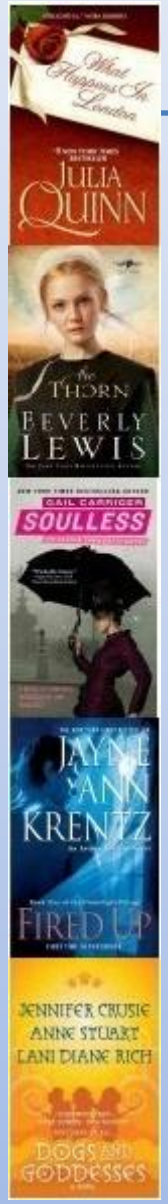
Time period prior to 1945

Old West, Medieval, Victorian (1837-1901)

Regency – 1811-1820

Traditional Regency: Correct social mores, witty dialogue, innocent

Historical Regency: Same time period, but tend to be more explicit, protagonists at odds with accepted social mores

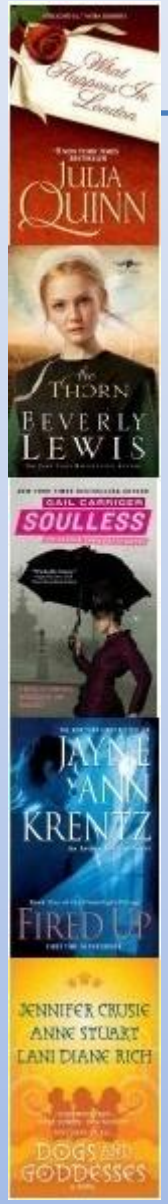


Inspirational Romances

Religious or spiritual beliefs are a major part of the romantic relationship

Locations and plot elements vary widely

Contemporary & Historical

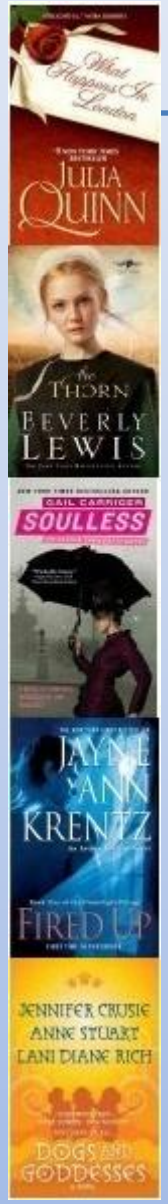


Paranormal Romances

Huge subgenre

Anything with paranormal elements: Vampires, demons, werewolves, ghosts, psychic abilities, witches, time travel, steampunk, etc.

Contemporary, historical



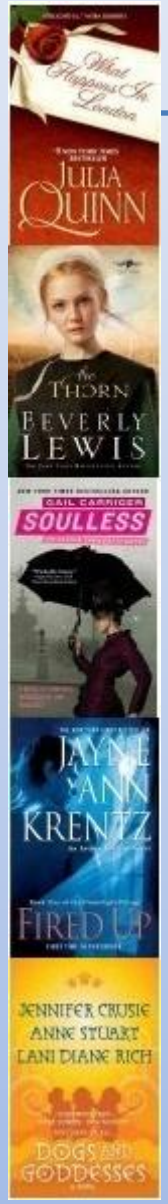
Romantic Suspense

Suspense, mystery, thriller elements

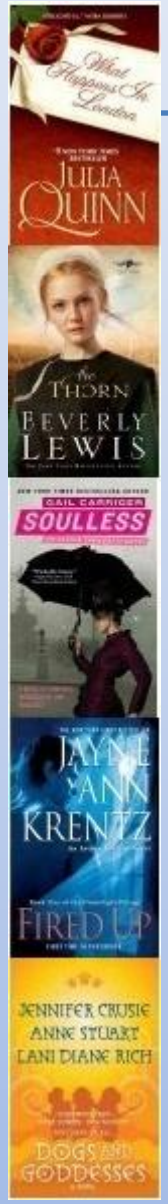
Traditional: Romance with an element of danger.

Contemporary: Edgy, graphic descriptions of violence, explicit sex & language.

You need to know what your reader wants – do they want Phyllis Whitney or Iris Johansen?

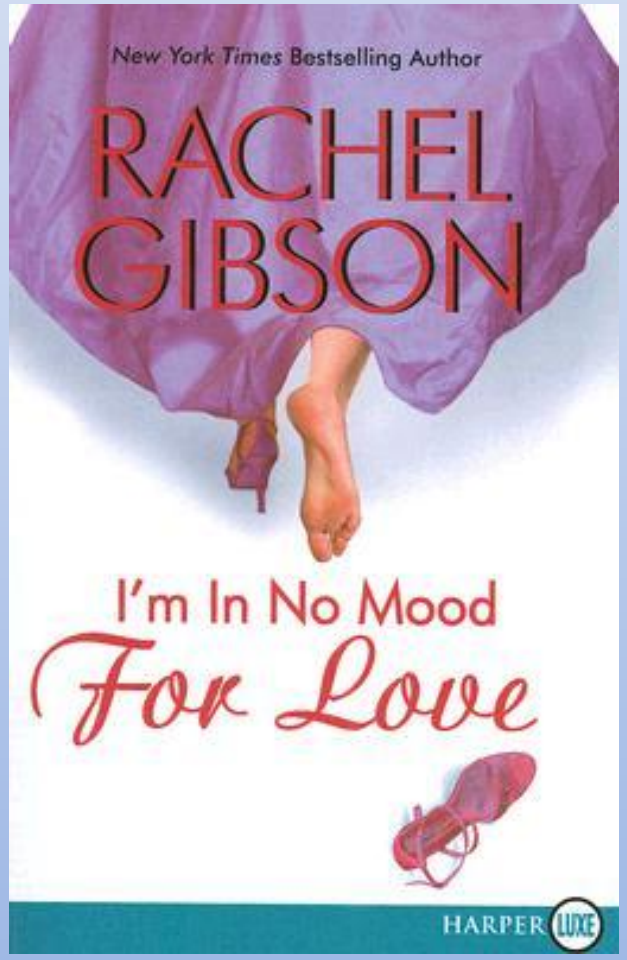


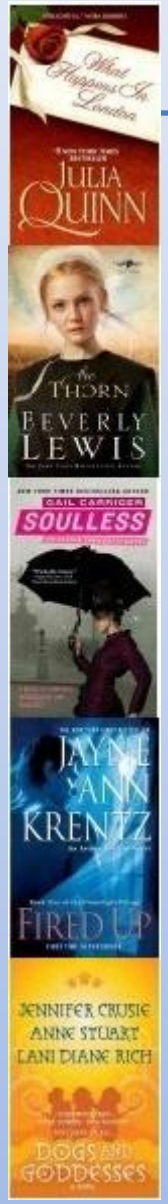
First lines are telling!



First lines are telling!

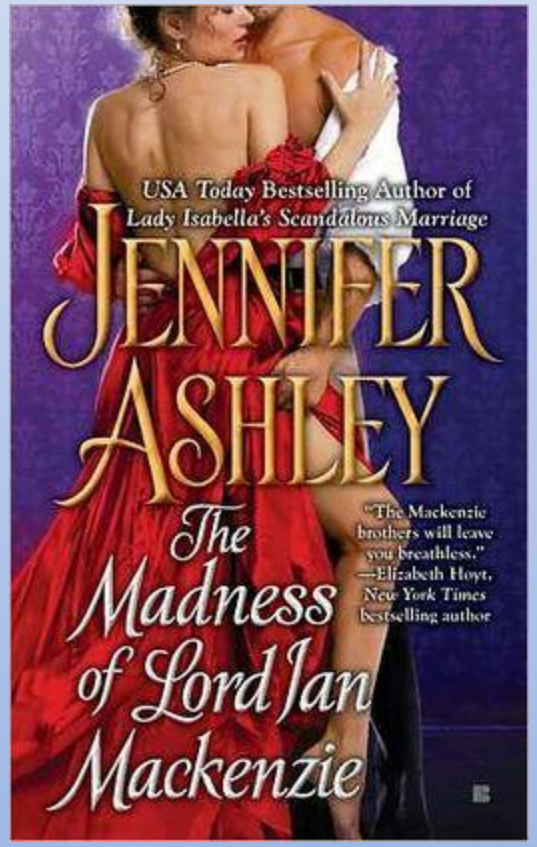
"The first time Clare Wingate found herself in a strange bed, she'd been twenty-one, the victim of a bad breakup and too many Jell-O shooters."

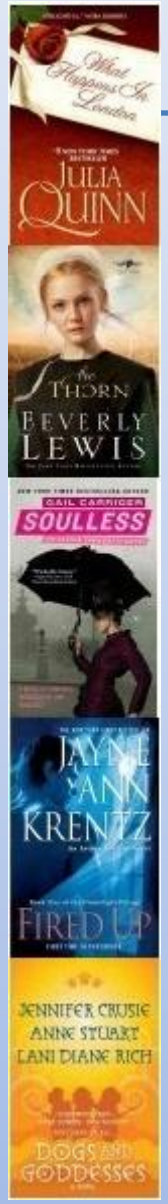




First lines are telling!

"*"I find that a Ming bowl is like a woman's breast*," Sir Lyndon Math said to Ian MacKenzie, who held the bowl in question between his fingertips. "*The swelling curve, the creamy pallor. Don't you agree?"*"





The Readers' Advisory Conversation

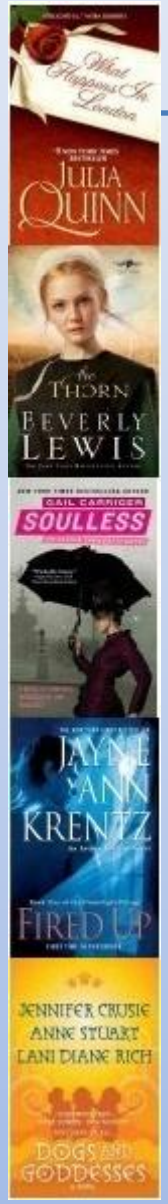
Remember the importance of your attitude!

Three things we need to find out:

1. What does the reader mean by a romance?

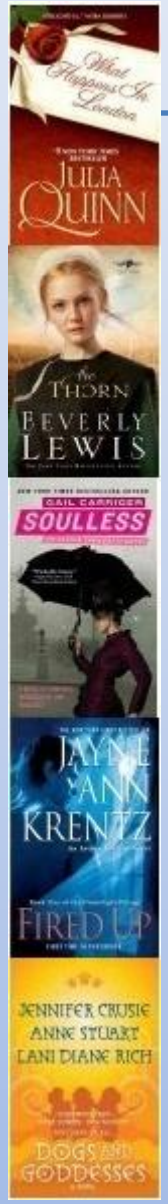
2. Does the reader want a book from a particular time period or location? Which subgenre?

3. What can the reader tolerate as it relates to descriptions of intimacy? Find words/terminology that you are comfortable using: "gentle," "innocent," "tender," "PG"; or, for more explicit books ,– "racy," "spicy," "hot," steamy.



Making You & Your Library Romance Friendly

- Buy romances!
- Read a romance!
- Keep an eye out for trends and news in romance publishing.
- Displays - Passive Readers' Advisory
  - Large or small traditional displays.
  - Face-outs on fiction shelves.



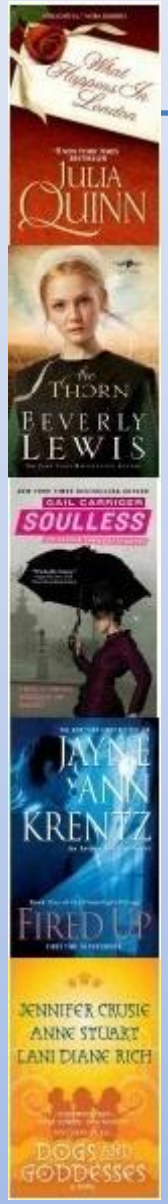
Making You & Your Library Romance Friendly

•Create bookmarks – leave on display for passive readers' advisory or even place in books.

•Create your own binder and encourage staff to keep it updated!

•Romance programs with local romance authors. The Romance Writers of America has a speaker's bureau who can hook you up with romance writers in your area.

•Staff Training

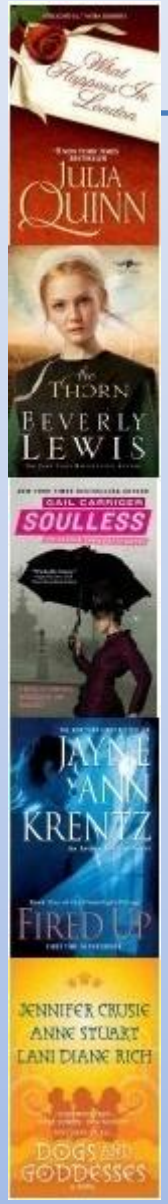


Resources

Books: ***The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*** (Saricks) and **Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre** *(Ramsdell)*

Websites: **Good Reads**, **Smart Bitches, Trashy Books**, **Rakehell: Where Regency Lives**

Your romance readers (patrons and co-workers)



The End…

Any questions????

Thank you!