

Put the W in Womance!

Contrary to popular belief, there isn't a formula for writing Romance!

Commercial fiction of all types makes a promise:

Mystery – Solve the case

Thriller – Catch the villain

Fantasy – Complete the conquest

Romance – Happy ending with hero and heroine in love and committed to each other

Getting there can happen in countless ways, as individual as each author.

There are various plot models to follow – The basic Five Stage Structure, Three Acts, The Hero's Journey, but for the sake of this article, I will use the **W** plot.

THE ROMANCE STORY PARADIGM using the popular movie **The Proposal**

SPOILER ALERT!

The beginning – h/h meet – the inciting incident

Super editor Margaret is being threatened with deportation to Canada and won't be able to come back for one year, which means she'll lose her job – the job she lives for since she has no other life.

Lead up to plot point I – i.e. call to action – She bamboozles her assistant, Andrew, into marrying her. Andrew has dreams of becoming an author, and has taken this job as a foot in the door. He seizes the moment and asks her to publish his book. She won't so he makes sure she'll make him an editor if he goes along with her ruse. She agrees. He makes a completely phony statement to convince the publishers - "We are two people who weren't supposed to fall in love..." This is a foreshadowing statement.

He takes her home to Alaska for his Gammy's birthday. Margaret realizes Andrew comes from money, has a family that loves him, and isn't the person she has pegged him to be. His family throws a party in honor of their fake engagement. They annoy and humiliate each other as often as possible. They realize they need to quit bickering and act like they're in love in order to pull this off.

Plot point I - They kiss and feel something. The story question arises: Will Margaret and Andrews be able to pull this off?

Moving up toward the first peak of the W – The H&H get to know each other and many problems arise. They have to share a bedroom, though he gallantly sleeps on the floor. They bond singing a silly song together. She gets to know his family. He sees her

dancing and singing a crazy song and calls her a freak! They kinda sorta begin to like each other.

The Stakes get higher when they run into each other naked.

Peak of W - Middle of the book –A monkey wrench gets thrown into the mix. Often a love scene can bring on this point of no return, bonding the H/H to each other. But there isn't a love scene in The Proposal.

Midpoint (Peak of W) Andrew's family forces them to marry right then on that weekend. Margaret gets swept up with the preparations and with his family. She tries on his Gammy's wedding dress. Being an orphan since the age of fifteen, she has forgotten what it is like to have a family.

Here's where the monkey wrench gets thrown in: she feels guilty about her manipulating plan. Confused and upset by the surfacing of her long forgotten conscience, she takes off in his boat, falling overboard, and she almost drowns. Andrew rescues her and comforts her. She feels cared for and it shakes her up even more.

Traditionally, in the second half of the book the heroine must deal with the fact that she has feelings for the hero. Romances are all about emotion, emotion, emotion. Don't be afraid to delve deeply into the issues of loving someone who, by all outward signs, is the worst person in the world for you.

Sliding down that W peak – first there is that rosy glow, some reflection, the future looks bright! In order to keep your reader's interest, you must have conflict and tension at every turn of the page.

Plot point II -- The immigration officer shows up, and Andrew's father makes a deal to get him off the hook. BUT Andrew doesn't accept the deal and tells Margaret he really wants to marry her. This genuine, heroic and sacrificial gesture changes Margaret's heart.

Crisis (The black moment) the last W peak – Margaret can't go through with the wedding. She confesses in front of everyone that it is all a sham, takes full responsibility, and runs out.

First waylaid by his family, then by Gammy's fake heart attack, then finding a note left to him by Margaret telling him what a wonderful writer he is, and that she will make sure his book gets published before she leaves the company, Andrew chases her to the airport to confront her about her sudden change of heart.

The screws tighten - Margaret flies off, Andrew stands watching her, and realizes he really has fallen in love with her.

Climax – A day or two has passed. Andrew shows up in New York where Margaret is clearing out her office. In front of everyone, he asks her to marry him. She confesses she is more comfortable in life alone. He won't let her take the easy way out. She's willing to take the chance.

Anti-climax – They kiss in front of everyone.

The story is brought full circle when she accepts his honest and heartfelt proposal.

Here is where the Romance promise comes into play: The heroine reaches the end of the story on higher ground than where she first started, and she has found her soul mate along the way.

Though there is a structured process by which all good stories are told, each story is as individual as the hero and heroine's personalities. I reiterate – there isn't a formula for writing romance.

A well-written romance will clutch your heart, make you laugh or cry (hopefully both) and leave you with a good feeling. That feeling is called hope, and hope is a hot commodity these days!