

Hooking Readers by the Heartstrings



Presented by Lynn West
Editor in Chief
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1. WHAT MAKES PEOPLE READ ROMANCE?

- a. Enjoyment
 - i. Emotion – Do they love or hate elements of the story?
 - ii. Emotion – Do events in the story make them cry or smile?
- b. Investment
 - i. Emotion – Are they determined or satisfied to see the romance succeed?
 - ii. Emotion – Are they thrilled or vengeful about the romance's progression?
- c. Interest
 - i. Emotion – Are they curious or appalled about plot elements that affect the romance?
 - ii. Emotion – Are they intrigued or challenged by roadblocks to the romance's fulfillment?

2. WHAT PRIMARY ELEMENTS OF A STORY CAN HOOK READERS WITH EMOTION?

- a. Character
 - i. Can they relate to the characters and feel their desires?
 - ii. Do they root for the characters in their quest for love?
 - iii. Do they fall in love with the characters?
- b. Plot

- i. Do they feel the pressures of the plot upon the characters?
 - ii. Do they feel compelled to get to the resolution?
 - iii. Do they anticipate fulfillment at the end?
- c. Back story
 - i. Does it create feelings of endearment or protection?
 - ii. Does it build desire or anticipation?
 - iii. Does it raise questions or provide answers?

3. WHAT ENHANCES EMOTIONS IN A STORY?

- a. Do story elements appeal to the senses?
 - i. Sight
 - ii. Sound
 - iii. Smell
 - iv. Taste
 - v. Touch
- b. Do certain scenes hit readers in the gut?
 - i. A character exposing raw emotions.
 - ii. A painful challenge to the romance.
 - iii. A character coming to personal conclusions.
- c. Do character interactions create that warmth and buzz a reader craves?
 - i. Does the romance build from beginning to end?
 - ii. Is the heat level appropriate to the story?
 - iii. Does success in overcoming challenges create euphoria?

4. HOW DO I HELP AN AUTHOR HOOK READERS BY THE HEARTSTRINGS?

- a. Share raw feedback about what emotions they invoke in me.
 - i. Point out possible negative or positive reader responses.
 - ii. Describe how emotions may or may not progress logically.
 - iii. Point out elements that fall flat when I'm reading.
- b. Suggest where emotions need to be intensified.
 - i. Character thoughts, actions, and reactions (*aka Feeeeeeelings... nothing more than feeeeeeelings...*)
 - ii. Twists and turns in a romantic plotline (*aka I can't make you love me...*)

- iii. Show me the effects of the romance on the characters (*aka Can't fight this feeling anymore...*)
- c. Give specific examples.
 - i. Character-appropriate word choice in dialogue and narrative.
 - ii. Narrative progression of the romance's effect on characters.
 - iii. Influence of the setting on the characters and plot.

5. WHAT'S YOUR DESIRED RESULT?

- a. Entertainment
 - i. Readers come back because they had a good time.
 - ii. Readers associate my name with an enjoyable read.
 - iii. Readers buy more books.
- b. Recognition
 - i. Readers post strong reviews.
 - ii. Readers nominate me for awards.
 - iii. Readers buy more books.
- c. Trust
 - i. Readers trust I will give them a satisfying read.
 - ii. Readers trust I won't disappoint them.
 - iii. Readers trust me when I pull on their heartstrings.

Lynn West, Editor in Chief

Lynn West is one of the founders of Dreamspinner Press and was one of the first two editors employed by the press in January 2007. She was named Editor in Chief in January 2009. She has edited the work of a few hundred authors over the years, including work by highly popular best-selling gay romance authors Mary Calmes, Andrew Grey, and Damon Suede.

Before and during the early years of Dreamspinner, Lynn worked as a professional editor in fiction, nonfiction, journalism, and technical writing, and was a public relations professional, a newspaper designer, and an award-winning print journalist before that, thus racking up more than twenty years of publishing experience as of January 2017. She holds a bachelor's degree in modern languages and a master's degree in management, as well as a variety of advanced educational and training certifications in writing, editing, and targeted project management.

All that boring stuff aside, Lynn's love of reading and writing comes thanks to a dissolute youth spent devouring Science Fiction Book Club tomes from her dad's bookshelves and trips to the used bookstore with her mother to buy grocery sacks of category romances. Her nickname is the Wicked Witch West, though her flying monkeys (staff) insist that "wicked" is a good thing in gay romance. She puts that wickedness to work while reading submissions along with reviewing edits.

Lynn is currently most interested in quirky, attention-grabbing, fun gay romances with super happy endings for Dreamspinner's contemporary category romance line, Dreamspun Desires. This line is open to submissions from the general public (www.dreamspinnerpress.com/submissions). She's also interested in talking to authors one-on-one about romantic suspense of all kinds, from cozy mysteries to romantic thrillers; non-romance gay genre fiction for the DSP Publications imprint (www.dsppublications.com); and contemporary gay romance with happy endings in general, though cowboys, sheikhs, and rogues with a heart of gold are her personal favorites.



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