

A Spoonful of Subplot Sugar: Adding Romance to Your Story



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Goals & Objectives

1. Why: Reasons for Romantic Subplot
2. Who: Create the Perfect Mate
3. What: What to do when you Woo
4. Where: The Rule of Baseball
5. How: How to sprinkle it in
6. Bad Romance



The *Romance* Test



Dramatic Question- question posed at the beginning of the book that drives the reader through the book to find the answer

- Is the question based around:
 - how two people are going to fall in love?
 - an external adventure and romance is just something that hinders or impacts that adventure?
 - A totally separate plot that is completely unrelated to any romantic entanglement at all?





The *Romance* Test: Answers



- If the answer is how two people are going to fall in love-
 - Congrats! You are writing a **Romance Novel**
- If the answer is how an external adventure will play out and romance is just something that gets in the way -
 - Then you have a **Romantic Subplot**
- If the answer is completely unrelated to any romantic entanglement at all-
 - Then you just have a **dirty mind**, OR the opportunity to use romance as a way to impact the story

Examples



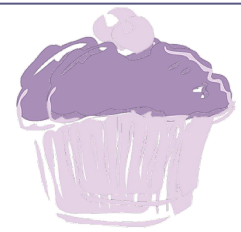


Reason for the *Romantic* subplot

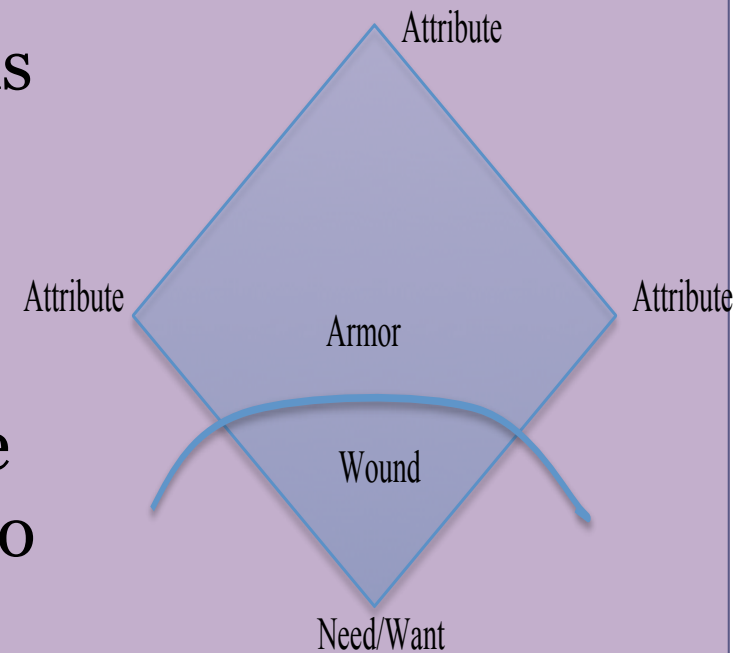


- Impacts the plot- aiding/hindering the main story
 - ✦ Romantic interest is FBI agent who has intel
- Reveals character development
 - ✦ Shows that MC is changing/growing by aiding/hindering
- Breaks tension of the driving story
 - ✦ Creates pockets of breathing room from main story- KISSING!
- Draws attention to a theme in the story
 - ✦ Perhaps the society doesn't think these two should be together?
- **USE ROMANCE WITH INTENTION!!!**
 - ✦ If readers feel you have just thrown it in, they will wonder what else you have just thrown in.

Create the Perfect Mate



- We need to know them as individuals to appreciate them as a couple
- First, Define MC's biggest need/want that they hide
- Then, Romantic Lead will be the only one who sees them as a hero
 - Automatic tension between the two
 - Requires only one of them to change



LOVE AT FIRST SITE: NOT A THING



- **Believability**
 - Need to see reasoning behind it
 - Would these two actually be in the room together at all to fall in love?
- **Obstacles**
 - Real and relevant because LIFE has obstacles
- **Bonders**
 - Shared values, experiences, hobbies, background, culture
- **Love at first conversation, MAYBE**





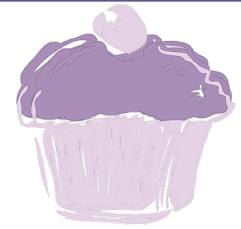
Wooing 101



Key Romantic Scenes

- Not all inclusive of how to build a romance
- Need to happen on page to satisfy a natural progression
- When you do it out of order, it disrupts
 - Disrupt with intention to draw attention
- Does not have to be all puppies and rainbows, but will still progress
 - Wuthering Heights, Romeo and Juliet

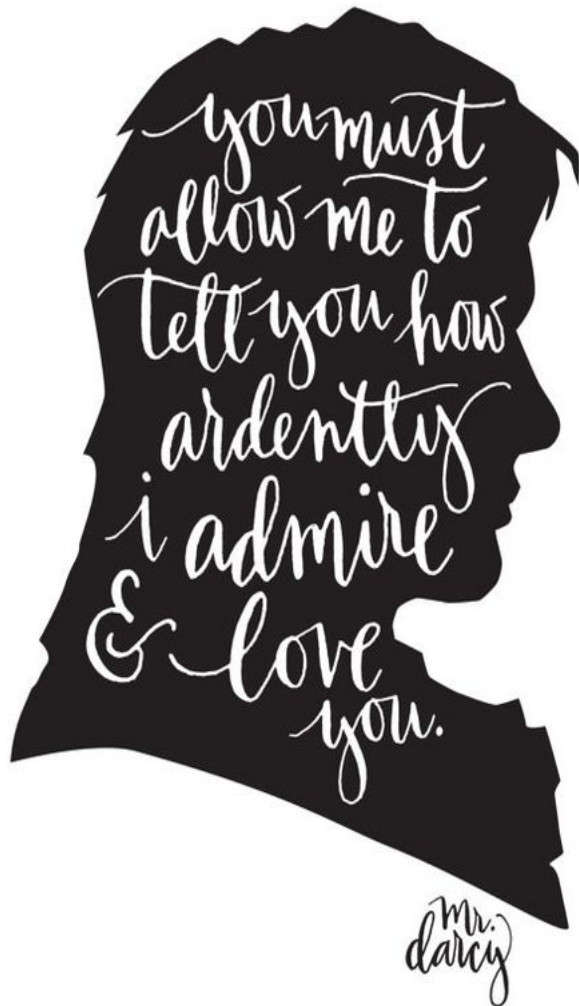
Wooing 101



- **The Meet-** introduction/re-introduction of two characters
 - Readers need to know are our love birds exist as two separate characters and where they are in their story.
- **The Spark-** how are these two are connected, share, bonded together
 - Established these people share more than just a physical attraction, but a deeper connection
- **The Barrier**
 - Establish why these two **CAN'T/SHOULDN'T/AREN'T** together (Why are they single?)
 - All stories need conflict or they are not stories



Wooing 101



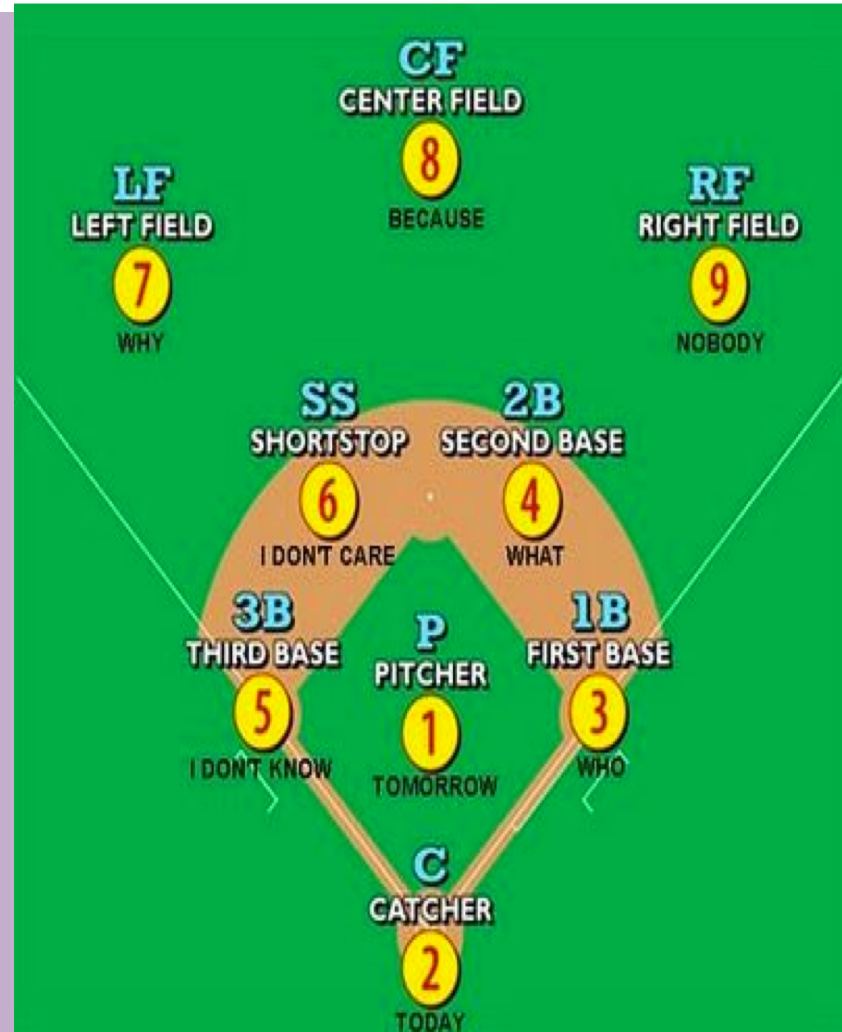
- Emotional Commitment
 - Confession after emotional turmoil usually caused by the Barrier
 - Examine the effects of confession before or after intimacy
- Final Act for Love
 - On-page ACTION/CHOICE
 - Choice that shows they are different/better/stronger b/c of LOVE
 - ✦ Don't have to choose the girl but choose to be stronger because of the girl



The *Basics* of Baseball



- The progression of human intimacy
 - Phases we let another human into our physical space
 - Some argue 4, some 12
- When this order is not followed, it changes the relationship and the effect of the action
 - USE WITH INTENTION



Progression of physical intimacy



FRIEND ZONE

1. Aware of presence
2. Eye to Eye
3. Verbal Contact
4. Hand to hand
5. Arm to Shoulder
6. Arm to Waist

LOVER ZONE

7. Mouth to Mouth
8. Hand to Head
9. Hand to body
10. Mouth to chest
11. Hand to genitals
12. Genitals to Genitals

How to sprinkle in a subplot



**TIME TO GET YOUR HANDS
DIRTY!**





Story Structure

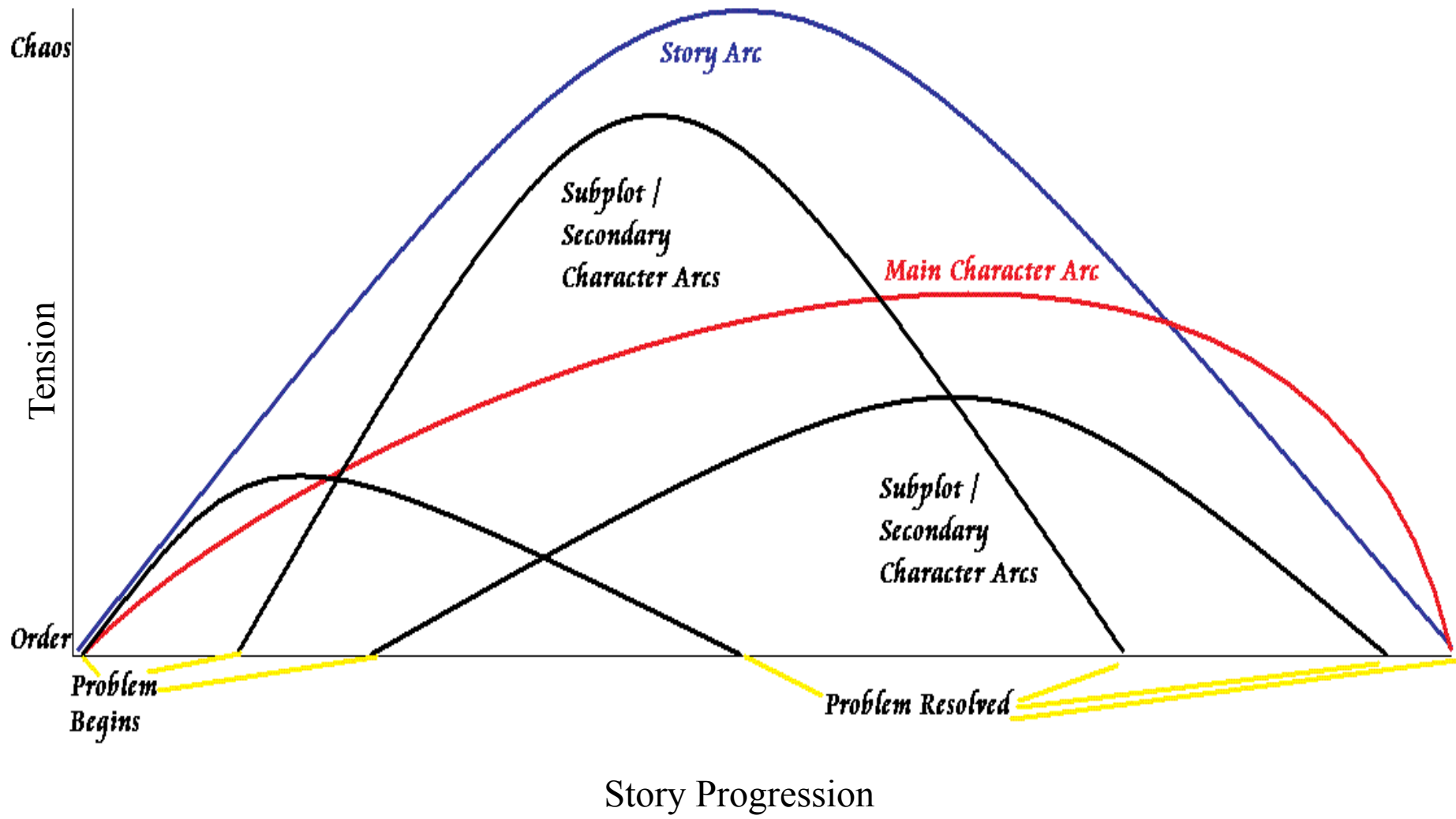


1. MAIN plot- external struggle between protagonist and antagonistic force

2. MAIN Character Arc- Internal struggles of your hero- could manifest at different times for your story

3. Subplot about external world/plot (external world of hero)

4. Subplot that identifies theme/value and conflict surrounding that value/theme

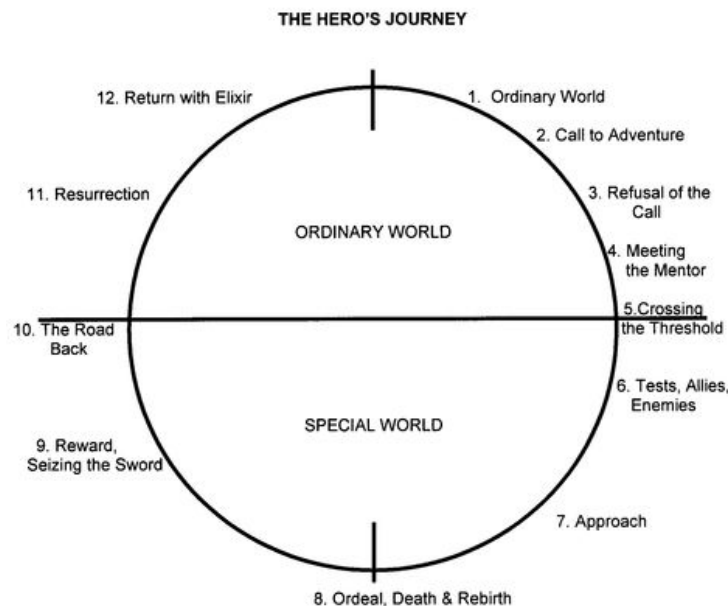


Plot Points- Action!



Hero's Journey steps

- Need all 12 to show the change of the hero



Subplots- Number of points vary

- Beginning
- Middle
- End

STORY

1. Introduction
2. *Incident*
3. STAKES
4. Event
5. Resolution



Know Your Story *Turning* Points



- MAIN EXTERNAL- Create the first 'story' all the way through in plot points



- MAIN INTERNAL-Create your internal subplot all the way through in plot points.



- SUB #1- Romance



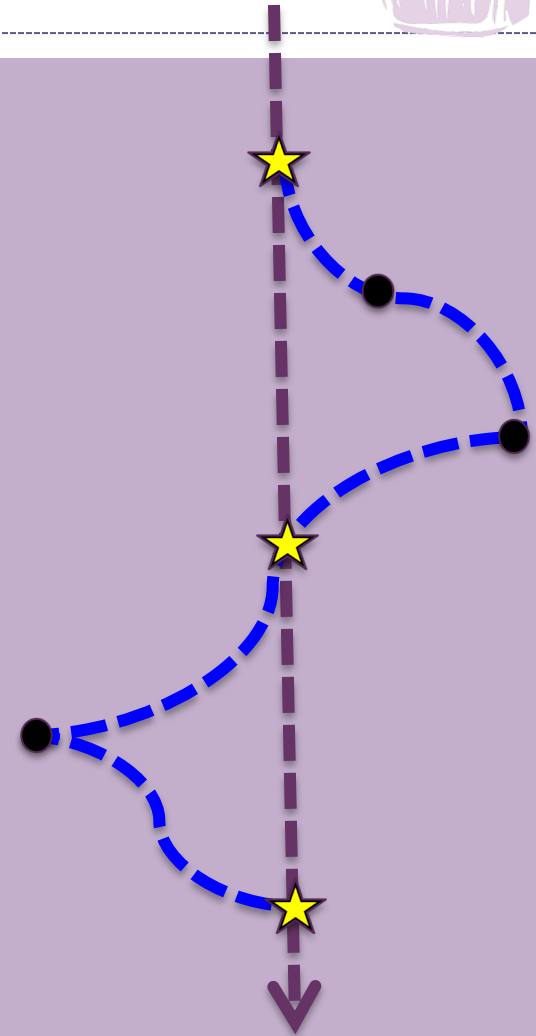
- SUB #2



How to weave in *Romance*

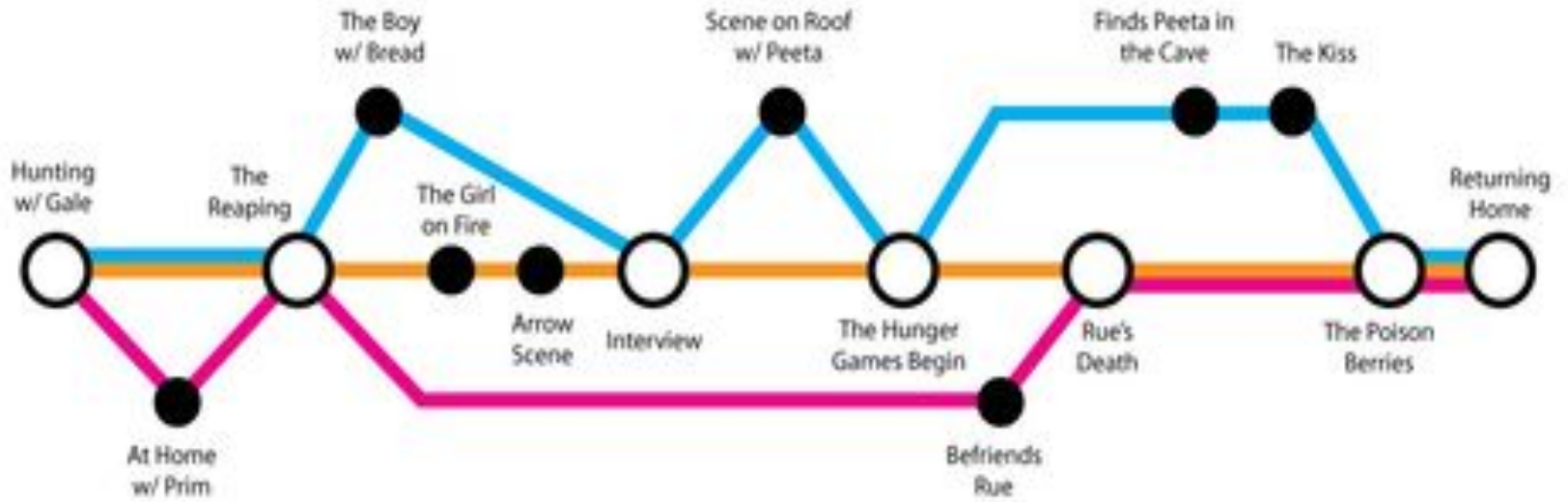


- Know when your romance might intersect with your main plot
 - Romantic Subplots IMPACT the main plot, so sometimes it's the same turning point for the character arc
 - Can use the happy parts of a romance to be the rewards for the Main Plot
 - Can use the sucky parts of a romance to enhance the sucky part of the Main Plot
 - ✦ Double punch!





Not all points will intersect but some will



MDQ: Will Katniss survive the Hunger Games?



LDQ: Will Katniss be able to protect her family?



Begin to weave in *Romance*



- Start writing your main plot before you begin subplots
 - Let the readers know what the REAL story is before you mention another story to pay attention to
- Then drop in your first thread of the new story
 - Thread, hint, first glance, first snide comment- *The Meet*

How to *weave*



- Vary the pacing of the scenes
 - If you have a romantic subplot, then weave it in after a dramatic turning point in the main plot.
 - Think about when the kissing happens in movies—after the big explosions.
- Look for pressure moments where your MC is vulnerable
 - Have the RL poke or push (first half)
 - Have the RL sooth, confide, mirror (second half)



Bad *Romance*



- **Avoid the Token Romance**
 - When a romance is thrown in because there are two people in the same location
 - “existing only because the audience expects the hero to have a healthy love life”
- **Avoid loin driven madness**
 - When a romance breaks progression of intimacy with no ramifications to relationship or story
- **TEST: If you can take it out- take it out.**

Quick fixes

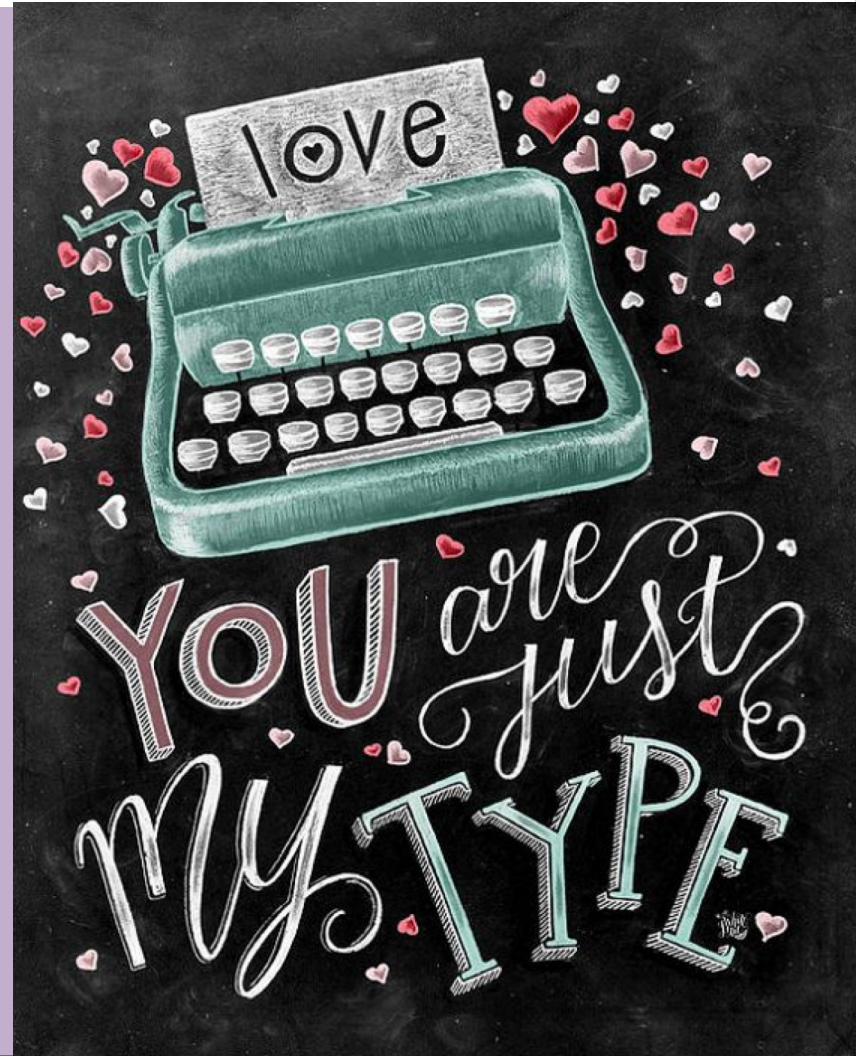


- **The Double Link or Character Merge**
 - Force the Romantic Lead to participate in the external plot
 - Create dual links between Romantic Lead and Hero
- **Archetype assignment**
 - Find a function of the potential Romantic Lead in the story
- **Character arc for Romantic Lead- GMC**
 - If a strong romantic element, have the Romantic Lead have their own off-page arc
- **Thematic representation**

Lessons on *Love*



- Don't underestimate the power of a romantic subplot
- Romance can go bad very fast
- Needs to be the perfect person for you MC and needs to impact the overall story





References



- Intimate Behaviour: A Zoologist's Classic Study of Human Intimacy - by Desmond Morris
- Writing Screenplays That Sell by Michael Hauge
- <http://tvtropes.org/>
- You've Got a Book in You- Elizabeth Sims
- The Anatomy of Story- John Truby
- Scene and Structure- Jack Bickham
- Pinterest- lots of Pinterest

More of Amanda Arista



- The Writer's Path at SMU- See the handout

Make it Bigger:
Brainstorming

Make it Woven:
Subplots

Summer
Workshops

Make it Shine:
Voice

Make it Again:
Writing Analysis

Presentation and Contact!



- Amanda Arista
- Amandaarista.com
- @pantherista

