

A Non-Writer's or Beginning Writer's Dictionary

Revised 10/28/08

AAR	Association of Author Representatives; the professional organization of literary agents; members are required to abide by a predetermined code of ethics
Advance	the amount paid to the author by a publisher for the book; this is usually paid in pre-determined increments as specified by the author's contract and is payment against assumed royalties earned via the sale of the book; for a more indepth discussion of advances, royalties, etc, I suggest looking at Kristin Nelson's Agenting 101 blogs
Agent	a professional who represents authors; agents try to sell their clients books to appropriate editors and publishers and negotiate contracts for a percentage of said clients advance and royalties (usually 15% for domestic rights, 20% for foreign rights); they vary in their approach in terms of editing their client's work, the extent of their interaction between client and editor, etc;
ARC	Advanced Reader Copy - Books handed out to sellers, reviewers, etc. to help create buzz before the publication's actual release
Archetype	a perfect example, most often referring to character
Brand Name / Branding	a marketing term that refers to an author creating a recognizable "image" that irrevocably links her/his books with her/his name; say "Nora Roberts", for example, and a reader will automatically know what kind of book to expect; successful branding is why authors often choose pseudonyms when genre-jumping
Category	a "line" of books distributed by a publisher at set intervals; different lines vary in terms of page count and content, but each book within the same line follows the same requirements; examples of category lines include Nocture, Harlequin Superromance, Blaze, Intrigue, etc.; they tend to be shorter books published at monthly or bimonthly intervals
Character Arc	the growth of the character throughout the novel; what your character learns or how s/he changes
CP	Critique Partner; someone who reads your work and holds you accountable for the crap it sometimes is
D&A (Delivery & Acceptance)	contractual term; the delivery and acceptance of a manuscript by the publisher from the writer; usually a payment schedule for an advance
Dark [insert genre]	a more somber form of that genre; the tension and conflicts tend to be more intense, the language harsher or more somber, and the settings more gothic
Deep POV	a Point of View that's firmly entrenched in a character, revealing thoughts and emotions beyond superficial observations; see "POV"
Dynamic Character	a character that changes during the course of the story
Editor	someone who acquires books for publishing houses; they not only edit the material they've acquired, but recommend to the company what manuscripts they should purchase

E-Query	a query sent via e-mail; see "Query"
External Plot	the plot that exists outside the characters; these are physical events, goals, motivations, and conflicts that transpire to keep the story moving forward; the limitations the outside world sets on the characters
Foreign Rights	publishing rights given to publishing houses of other countries
Form Letter	a pre-written letter sent in response to queries; all authors become acquainted with rejection form letters
Full	a completed, full manuscript, usually referred to when an agent or editor "requests a full"
General Fiction	any fiction not genre; sometimes may be used instead of "literary fiction" though they are not necessarily the same
Genre [Fiction]	fiction that fits a "mold" or "type" and follows an expected pattern; this includes romance, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, suspense/thriller, etc.
Genre-Jumping	when an author switches from writing one type of genre to another; or when an author includes another genre in her/his set repertoire; for example, when a contemporary romance writer publishes a science fiction romance
GH	Golden Heart; the highest award for an unpublished manuscript given by RWA
GMC	Goal, Motivation, and Conflict; the driving factor(s) of characters; also the name of a popular "how to" writer's guide; this acronym is often used with the three being considered a single item or used interchangeably; ie "I need to work on my hero's GMC."
HEA	Happily Ever After; often used in the romance world as a noun to refer to the requisite happy ending
H/H	Hero/Heroine, usually used when discussing the H/H relationship
Hook	usually one or two lines that boils down the basic premise of your book in such a way that piques interest; for example, "When Anna accepts a job at Chambers & Co., she expects her biggest problems to include rush hour traffic and expense reports. That is, until the mysterious Damon appears and reveals a secret about her past that puts both their futures in jeopardy."
HQ	Harlequin; a well-known publisher of romance
Intern	can work for either an editor or an agent; usually the first person to read through a query and decide whether to pass it on to her boss (The Rejector is a good example of an intern's blog.)
Internal Plot	the plot that exists inside the characters; these include the goals, motivations, and conflicts that exist within the characters' minds; the limitations the characters set on themselves
Light [insert genre]	a more light-hearted form of that genre; the tension and conflict tend to be less intense, the language tends to be softer and more lilting, and the setting tends to be less somber

Literary Fiction	"serious" fiction (though the caveat is under contention by genre writers); this tends to be general fiction that takes on more introspective content and uses "higher" vocabulary (ie bigger words); many classics are considered literary fiction
Mass-Market	a traditional genre paperback
MC	Main Character
MS/MSS	manuscript; an unpublished (usually complete) work of book-length fiction
Pantser	someone who writes a story with no set plot in mind; they tend to have an idea and to sit and write and see where the story and/or characters take them; they tend to make it up as they go along
Partial	part of a completed manuscript, usually the first few pages or chapters as requested by an editor or agent
Pitch	a verbal query; this is usually done at conferences, where editors and agents allow for brief appointments (usually 3-5 minutes) in which a writer gets to "pitch" her story to try and generate interest and a request to see the material
Plotter	someone who writes the plot or outline of the story before writing anything of the actual manuscript; they predetermine everything that will happen, and usually have the book mapped out by chapters or scenes
POD	Print-On-Demand; books that are printed on an as-needed-basis only
POV	Point of View; which character the story is coming from; this may shift, in romance especially the POV tends to shift between the hero and heroine; who's head the reader is in; most romance is written in third person POV (he said/she thought/they did, etc.), but may be first person (I said, I did, I thought, etc.)
PRO	A RWA term; an author who is not yet published but is actively seeking either agent representation and/or publication
Protag/Antag	Protagonist/Antagonist; protagonists are the sympathetic characters driving the story (the hero and/or heroine), the antagonists are the ones trying to prevent the story (a villain or ex-lover, etc.)
Pub/Pubbed/Pub'd	published author
Purple [Prose]	verbose, flowery, overwrought language
Query	a 1-2 page letter a writer sends to an agent or editor to try and generate interest in the story; the basic format is a paragraph of story introduction, a paragraph of more in-depth explanation of the story, and a paragraph of the writer's pertinent bio information and thank you; the information about the story is recommended to be written in a manner similar to that a person would expect to find on back cover copy (what you'd read on the back of a book)
Rejection / Rejection Letter	a letter from an agent or editor decline representation/publication of a book
Reprints	a previously published book that is put back on the market or essentially re-published

Romcom/Rom-Com	Romantic Comedy
Royalties	monies received by an author based on the sales numbers of a published book after the author has earned back the advance; for a more indepth discussion of advances, royalties, etc, I suggest looking at Kristin Nelson's Agenting 101 blogs
RWA	Romance Writers of America; an association of writers, agents, editors, and anyone else involved in the romance publishing industry
SASE	Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope
Secondary Character	in a romance, any character other than a hero/heroine; for all genres, a character that supports and/or hinders the main character(s)
Sell-Through	the number of books sold as opposed to the number of books that had been shipped; a higher sell-through rate influences reprints as well as future publishing contracts
Series	a collection of books that follows the same characters throughout a connected storyline
Single-Title	Any romance not a part of a category line. These may or may not be a part of a loose series (Vicki Lewis Thompson's "Nerd" series, for example), a true series (J.D. Robbs "Death" series), or individual books that stand alone and have limited to no association with previous works by the same author; these also tend to be longer, with a word count ranging between 80,000 to 100,000 words or more
Slush Pile	the stack of unsolicited queries an agent or editor has to go through
Snail Mail	mail sent via USPS
Static Character	a character that does not change or develop during the course of a story; secondary characters may often be static characters
Sub Rights	Subsidiary Rights - The rights associated with a completed work of fiction, and includes foreign rights, secondary printing rights, audio rights, film rights, etc.
Subgenre	A genre within a genre; subgenres are the branches from the trunk of a large genre such as romance. Examples include those listed below as well as any mix of these.

Contemporary a romance that takes place after WWII

Erotica a romance that focuses mostly on the sexual aspects of the relationship; the evolution of character through sex; by one definition, a romance in which the characters have sex and then fall in love

Historical a romance that takes place before WWII

Inspirational essentially contains two equal "romances", that between the two characters and that between one or more of the characters and God

Paranormal a romance that contains supernatural elements, usually in the characters, but stays within the same basic world that we live in

Regency a specific type of historical novel that takes place between the years 1800 - 1840 (approximately); refers to the Regency period of Britain

Romantic Elements a novel with a strong romance, but in which the romance is a secondary plot

Romantic Suspense a romance that has a strong secondary mystery or suspense plot interwoven throughout

Romantica a romance similar to erotica, but in which the romance is more emphasized than sex; by one definition, a romance in which the characters fall in love and then have sex

SF/F Science-Fiction/Fantasy; a romance that exists within another world and which contains a different set of rules for that world with an explanation based on technology, magic, or a combination of the two

YA a romance geared for readers ages 13-17 and involving characters usually of the same age

Subplot a secondary plot that exists alongside the main plot; in a romance, this is any plot not involving the growing relationship between the hero/heroine

Subsidiaries all other rights associated with the publication of a book other than the actual publication; ie, all other rights associated with the work such as film rights, foreign rights, audio rights, etc, that is not associated with the primary rights of publication

Synopsis usually one or two pages, it's a basic description of the book written in the same tone and voices as the book itself; a "sneak peek" of the book itself that includes beginning, middle, and ending of a story's main plot

TBR "To Be Read"; refers to the pile of books an avid reader has purchased or borrowed but not yet been able to read

"The Call" The phone call received from an author by either a.) an agent wishing to represent that author or b.) an agent or editor calling to tell the author that her work has been sold

Trade a trade paperback; larger than a "mass market" paperback, but smaller than a hard cover

Unpub/Unpubbed/Unpub'd Unpublished; an author who has not yet been published professionally; also often referred to as "Pre-Published"

Vanity Press a press who publishes a book at the author's expense (either in full or in part)

Voice the distinct style of a writer as found in the writing itself; the natural tone, cadence, rhythm, etc. of a writer

WIP Work-In-Progress; the manuscript an author is currently writing and/or editing