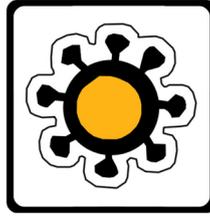


ANKARA PRESS



A New Kind of Romance

Submission Guidelines

About us

Ankara Press is devoted to publishing easy-to-read, purse-size romantic fiction titles with African settings, storylines and characters. We believe that one way to get people reading is to introduce them to short, snazzy, fast-paced stories about the life they live or yearn to live. The stories will be engaging, and above all, they will allow women to see the best version of themselves in text. These purse-novellas will be issued at regular monthly intervals. They will start out life as an electronic and mobile book, before they finally go into print.

Women of all ages have always enjoyed romance. They ask for it in their movies, in their music, from their lovers and in their books. But in Africa, they have had to find it in the pages of Western romances series like Mills and Boon, Silhouette and other Harlequin titles. It is time for the continent's rising consumer class to have access to romances that reflect the complexity of their modern lives.

Our reader

She is young, single and confident with some money in her purse and time to read. She is (or wants to be) financially independent, ambitious and interested in challenging boundaries and going beyond expectations. She enjoys fashion, Nollywood films, contemporary African pop music from across the continent and she wants to see herself reflected in what she consumes in her leisure time. You'll find her reading magazines and websites such as Genevieve, TW, True Love, Bella Naija, and watching soaps like Generation, Tinsel, Isidingo and Tyler Perry Hollywood romantic comedies.

What we are looking for

We are looking for strong, original voices to write romance novels for the African and Diaspora market which could be stand alone or in series (but with preference for series). We don't want stories that simply recreate traditional romances. Often, these rely on dangerous notions of male dominance, control and manipulation that have done great harm to women all over the world. Many women tolerate abusive situations because they wrongly believe that this is what romance should look like.

We are looking for a new kind of romance. One in which the thrill of fantasy is alive but realized in a healthier, more grounded reality and gives women the tools to shape their own destinies. We

want stories in which strong, capable female characters meet handsome, charming men who are secure in their identities and respectful of a woman's choices. We are also keen to publish stories that explore same-sex relationships.

We would be particularly delighted to receive more submissions from male writers.

We would like to read manuscripts in which the male characters are **not** businessmen, lawyers or financiers, but have alternative careers. And they do not have to be wealthy!

The novels should be between 35,000 – 45,000 words long (they should not exceed this word limit) and should be divided into about 10-15 chapters.

Characters

Heroine

The main character should be an African woman between 20-30 years old who can come from any social class, but who because of her intelligence, ambition and hard work has a bright future ahead of her. She must be realistic - with both good and bad qualities - but not so complex that the reader won't be able to relate to her. The heroine should be wholesome, likeable, assertive and ambitious, without being ruthless. Her career or business is important to her and is central to her identity. Whilst she wants to share her life with someone, she should not be shown to be helpless, or wholly dependent on anyone, least of all a man. Even when she finds herself in situations beyond her control, she should always have an optimistic and proactive attitude.

Character is key to a romance, so be very clear on the personality and perspectives of your heroine from the start. You must know the core elements of your heroine's personality (e.g. ambitious and assertive) and show how those particular traits manifest themselves in your heroine (e.g. show how the heroine ensures a promotion during the novel, or sets up her own business). Detail is also important in creating a three dimensional character. Think of more specific, individual traits that make your heroine stand out e.g. habits, phrases she uses often, her accent, a favourite film or song, which could play a role in the plot. Give us a descriptive insight into what she looks like.

Hero

The heroine's love interest should preferably be an African man, but not limited to him. He is attractive (although he doesn't need to be drop-dead gorgeous!) and successful in his own field. However, he doesn't need to be powerful, of high status or wealthy. Alternative careers such as the arts and in skilled labour (mechanics, carpenters, taxi drivers, plumbers etc.) should be explored and are encouraged. He should be sensitive, attentive, emotionally expressive and realistic without conforming to the romantic hero stereotype (i.e. domineering, arrogant, and dismissive).

He and the heroine should have a genuine connection beyond physical attraction. They should have something in common. While they may have differences, which may be the source of the story's conflict, they should remain respectful of each other. More importantly, they should be

passionate about their desire for each other and everything else they do. The hero should not dominate or dictate to the heroine (and if he does, she must be shown to resist him), and stereotyped relationship patterns and roles (e.g. the heroine as submissive and domestic, the hero as macho and ambitious with a successful career) should be challenged.

Plot

The plot should be fast-paced and entertaining. It should focus on the development of a central romantic relationship while the heroine struggles to realize her ambitions from the very beginning. Don't dwell too much on her trials and tribulations, rather frame them in terms of how she relates to the people in her life. In other words, no sob stories!

Whilst plots need enough action to keep the reader interested, avoid melodrama or too many plot strands. The main action should really focus on the hero and heroine, and how they relate to one another, with external events used as a device to create tension, conflict and connection between them.

No matter what else goes on, the novels should end on a positive note. Major plot threads should be resolved. The heroine should be or about to be in a promising love relationship by the end, but not by giving up her ambitions or her values.

Key aspects of plot:

1. **Character:** Heroine and Hero (or Heroine/Heroine, or Hero/Hero – for same-sex romances) – a romance is defined by these characters and the relationship between them. If they, and the ups and downs of their relationship, aren't driving the plot, it's not a romance.
2. **Desire:** from the beginning there should be a spark between the two protagonists – they are irresistibly attracted to each other. Don't wait till chapter 3 or 4 before this is made known!
3. **Connection:** The desire between the two main characters should not just be physical, but based on shared interests, respect and (the promise of) love and sexual passion.
4. **Conflict:** Readers will lose interest unless there are obstacles to the romance's blossoming. Conflict creates both action and suspense, keeping the reader hooked as they want to find out how it will eventually be resolved. It also makes the characters more believable (romance is never easy!) and the relationship more satisfying at the end. There are two types of conflict:

- **Internal conflict (or underlying conflict):** this is conflict caused by the character flaws and complexities of the hero and heroine. This builds throughout the novel, and creates doubts and uncertainties about the hero and heroine's compatibility (though their attraction and underlying connection are always present). Examples of internal conflict: attitudes, personality, worldviews, feelings due to past relationships or life experiences.

- **External conflict (or apparent conflict):** this is conflict due to outside circumstances and social pressures. This conflict is not caused by the hero and heroine but it is manifested

in unexpected events or inconvenient interventions by outsiders. It can be introduced by minor characters (e.g. family disapproving) or in events such as a disastrous party. Examples of external conflict: disapproving family or friends, an interfering ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, a problem at work.

5. Intimacy: in spite of conflict, the hero and heroine must open up to each other and form a close connection. This can be intensely physical, but it should also be emotional.
6. Resolution: This is where everything comes together. All the conflicts must be tied up and resolved, and it must be clear that there are no more obstructions to the hero and heroine's happy future together. If it is going to be a series, then you should leave a cliff-hanger or something that suggests that there's more to come.

Note: Authors are advised to keep sub-plots to a minimum. Interesting minor characters are welcome (who could become major character in the next story), but they should not dominate the story.

Chapter Outline:

Romances follow a format, and below is an outline of how a romance should progress. This does not have to be followed exactly, but the shape of a romance should always look more or less like the outline.

Chapter 1

Openings are key to a romance – this is where you should introduce the heroine and set the scene. We should get an idea of the heroine's feelings on romance and what her life is like (e.g. hint at her relationship past, show what her social life is like, introduce her career etc.). The opening needs to draw the reader in, so it should involve some action right from the beginning (whether it's a party the heroine doesn't want to go to, a disaster at work or the exciting start of a holiday). Introduce the hero as soon as possible. Make it clear that there is a spark between him and the heroine, but that the road to romance won't be smooth...

Chapter 2

This is where you further develop the heroine's character, and if the hero hasn't been introduced yet, he must meet the heroine in this chapter. Start to set up the plot, sowing the seeds of conflict between the hero and heroine (this should be largely internal conflict, relating to character, but can also be caused by outside circumstance). Make sure it is firmly established that the heroine is a strong, independent woman with her own career, friends and opinions.

Chapter 3 – 4

This is where you should start to show more about the hero's character. Character differences between hero and heroine should become clearer, creating more conflict (or suggestion of future conflict). The different worlds of the hero and heroine should start to collide (e.g. they bump into each other at work or in a social situation, they realise they have a mutual friend or they

meet family members). The relationship starts to develop, but in a way that involves tension and unfulfilled desire.

Chapter 5 - 7

This is right at the heart of the novel, so things should be reaching a peak to move the relationship forward and keep the readers' attention. The chemistry between the hero and heroine should be intense and overwhelming (even though there are still conflicts), and they should seem to be on the way to being together. Introduce some intimacy, but keep the tension between them alive.

Chapters 8 – 10

A significant event should happen here, something that creates an obstacle to the relationship (e.g. a misunderstanding which affects the trust between them, a past girlfriend/boyfriend is introduced and creates jealousy, a character flaw such as reluctance to commit could cause them to become distant). All the underlying issues throughout reach a peak. This should appear to unravel all the progress that their relationship was making, but the undeniable chemistry and connection between them (established throughout the novel) will make it clear that this is not quite the end.

Chapter 11

The heroine (and hero) struggle to come to terms with the sense that their relationship cannot be continued. They reflect on their differences (separately) and either appear to try to move on or try to persuade the other that they should be together. In spite of the difficulties they still think about each other and want to be together, but their differences or the circumstances of their relationship seem too great an obstacle to overcome.

Chapter 12

The heroine and hero finally come together, either due to character development (e.g. they stop fearing commitment, are no longer jealous) or because they overcome external circumstances (e.g. the hero/heroine no longer has to move abroad). This is where all the conflicts that were present during the novel are ironed out, and the reader is left in no doubt that the hero and heroine will live happily ever after.

Setting

The novels should be set in an urban environment. Although the rural area can also be a feature, the heroine and hero must be decidedly urbanites. They can feature international locales, but a real (not fictionalised) African city should be where the primary story takes place. The story should reflect contemporary speech patterns and expressions without being pretentious or too localised.

Point of View

The novels should be written in the third person, preferably from the point of view of the heroine (although we are keen to encourage male writers, who may prefer to write from the hero's viewpoint). Other points of view may be employed to add depth and insight to the narrative, but should be used sparingly.

Active vs. Passive Voice.

Write in an active voice. In other words, show, don't tell. This enlivens your writing and prevents it from being dragged down by unnecessary distance between reader and character. Too much telling in your narrative creates this distance. For example:

She realised she'd let the man she loved slip away. She had to find a way to get him back

'She realise' acts as a filter. It indicates the author *telling* the reader the character's thoughts.

So this becomes:

The man she loved had slipped away. She had to find a way to get him back.

Without 'she realised' we get straight into the character's perspective, and directly to the action.

Other words to look out for and get rid of (unless without them the meaning is lost) are: thought, wondered, considered, hoped, realised.

Terms

1. Before submitting your full manuscript, you must be prepared to give us world and digital (e-book and m-books) rights. Your manuscript must be original to you and previously unpublished.
2. The manuscript will be acquired by Ankara Press, an imprint of Cassava Republic Press.
3. Remuneration is based on 8% royalty fee on net receipts of print and 25% net on digital rights paid annually.
4. Although we welcome stand-alone stories, we actively encourage writers to explore stories that can be developed into series.
5. The book will start out life as an e-book and/or m-book and the print edition will only be published 6 months after the first electronic edition has been published and proved successful in the market.
6. In the first year of the imprint, Nigeria will be the first focal market for our marketing effort as our research shows that it has the biggest audience potential on the continent.
7. A few months after launch in Nigeria, this will be followed by promotional activities

elsewhere in Africa, including South Africa, and then the Diaspora.

8. We are always looking for writers who have more than one book in them and can even produce series.
9. Our aim is to also produce our romance books as audio books through paid-for downloads.

What to do next?

Email a **one-page synopsis** outlining the characters and the plot of the novel and attach the **first 3 chapters** of your story as a Word document. Also include three possible titles for the book aside from the one you have. Be sure to pay attention to punctuation, spelling and grammar before submitting your sample. If your first three chapters do not conform to the formula outlined above, we are likely to reject it.

Please include your name (aliases and pen names will only be considered once the manuscript has been accepted), the title of the book, your phone number and email address on a separate cover page. Your name or identity must not appear on the manuscript itself. Please include the title of the manuscript and page numbers at the top of each page.

Submissions which do not conform to the guidelines above will not be accepted.

Please email your submission to: submissions@ankarapress.com

There is no limit to how many or how often submissions can be made. Please note all rights sold will include world, all languages, print, electronic, film, audio and digital rights.

If your sample is selected, you will be contacted and asked to submit a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the novel and/or the full novel. If that is satisfactory, you will be asked to sign a legal contract and submit a completed manuscript within three to four months. So please indicate your availability to start writing with your response.

If you have an existing work you want to adapt, please send a synopsis along with a chapter of the work as your submission.

Where to find inspiration and reading suggestions:

Read Romance. Romance is genre fiction, and the best way to understand the genre you want to write is to read as much of the genre as possible. This will make you familiar with the romance format, as well as stopping you from retreating to clichés, as you'll recognise what's been done already. You could even start a romance book club, which would be a good way to find out directly from readers what makes a romance successful.

Sites with romance reviews, writing tips:

<http://smartbitchestrashybooks.com/>

<http://www.onceuponaromance.net/writingtips.htm>

<http://www.writing-world.com/romance/index.shtml>

<http://www.romancewriters.co.za/writing.html>

<http://www.mynewhitmanwrites.com/>

<http://romance.fictionfactor.com/>

Romance retailers:

<http://www.nollybooks.co.za/>

<http://www.kwela.com/Books/11586>

<http://www.millsandboon.co.uk/onlineReads.asp>

Get to know your reader, and the type of character she's likely to relate to, by engaging with the things she likes: magazines such as Genevieve, TW, True Love, Bella Naija, Linda Ikeji, Heart and Soul, and soaps like Generation, Tinsel, Isidingo and Hollywood romantic comedy. Keep up to date with contemporary African women's popular entertainment and style, and use what you see and read to give your novel authentic detail.

Interview with the Publisher:

Finally, we encourage prospective authors to read this interview by the publisher of Ankara Press to get a sense of the thinking behind the imprint:

<http://africanwords.com/2015/01/16/ankara-press-qa-with-publisher-bibi-bakare-yusuf/>