

## CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE: SHORT NOVELS

**Definition:** Contemporary Romance is a modern (set within the past 25 years) love story in which the main characters overcome differences or challenges to achieve and/or sustain a romantic relationship. The love story must be the main focus of the novel, and it must have a happy or hopeful ending. This category is distinguished by novels whose main plot focuses on the obstacles a new couple faces to get together or the threats an existing couple must overcome to stay together. Sequels, series, and standalone novels in which the main plot centers on issues such as children, illness, career upheavals, etc., are eligible only when these issues significantly threaten the romantic relationship (i.e., sufficient to consider it the main plot). Entries in this category should be 40,000 to 74,999 words in length.

**Judging Guideline:** This category includes novels in which the main characters fall in love, as well as other romantic plots in which characters already may have fallen in love (e.g., a sequel or series based on a story in which the characters fell in love in an earlier book; a standalone story of an established couple experiencing difficulties in their romantic relationship). These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, or other content about women or sapphically aligned nonbinary people who are romantically and/or sexually attracted to women or sapphically aligned nonbinary people.

### Evaluation Items:

Using a 10-point scale where “1” means you “Totally Disagree” and “10” means you “Totally Agree,” please indicate how much you disagree or agree that each of the following statements describes this GOLDIE entry.

- Thinking back on the GOLDIE entry you are about to judge, what were your overall impressions, positive and/or negative?

Using a 10-point scale where “1” means you “Totally Disagree” and “10” means you “Totally Agree,” please indicate how much you disagree or agree that each of the following statements describes this GOLDIE entry.

- The opening of this novel draws readers into the story and makes them want to read further.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- The premise of this novel does not depend too heavily on implausible coincidence or far-fetched circumstances that are inappropriate for this type of book.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- This novel has enough conflict—that is, obstacles standing in the way of characters achieving their goals—to keep readers interested.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. The plot of this novel is free of holes and logical inconsistencies—dropped story lines, puzzling disappearance of characters, underdeveloped or contrived story elements, actions leading to illogical consequences, etc.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. This novel is appropriately paced. The story moves along smoothly without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7. By the end of the novel, the author(s) has reasonably resolved all important plots, subplots, and character conflicts other than those clearly intended to remain unresolved.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8. This novel features compelling, three-dimensional main characters with credible strengths and flaws.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9. Secondary and/or minor characters are appropriately developed and do not detract from the main characters or plot.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

10. The characters in this novel are portrayed in a believable way—dialogue is reflective of age and social class, actions are consistent with personalities, career levels are age-appropriate, backstories help deepen reader understanding, etc.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11. This novel has engaging, natural-sounding dialogue that brings the characters to life.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

12. This novel is written in an engaging style. The story flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structure and length; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the novel; etc.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

13. This novel is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, unnecessary repetition, paragraph structures that don't make sense, and confusing or missing dialogue tags that make it difficult to know who is speaking.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

14. Point of view is clear. The novel does not jump unnecessarily from the "head" of one character to another within a given scene or describe things a given character can't possibly know, see, hear, or feel. Point-of-view transitions within a scene, if any, are clearly signaled to the reader.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

15. This novel has an effective balance between "showing" what happens (via actions, dialogue, and/or vivid details from a given character's point of view) and "telling" what happens (via explanations and summary).

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

16. This novel has a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of the story.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

17. This novel has elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, a distinct voice, enjoyable confusion, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

18. This novel includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women or sapphic individuals.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

19. Characters of various races, classes, cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, physical or mental abilities, etc., portrayed in this novel are presented in ways that avoid offensive stereotypes.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

20. This novel depicts a love that is so special, it is clear by the end of the book that this couple belongs together.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

21. It is believable that the two characters in this novel would be attracted to each other, despite any differences in personality, education, status, or values.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

22. This story is driven primarily by a romantic plot—i.e., a plot that centers on the challenges a couple must overcome to be together or to stay together.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

23. This novel contains a compelling romantic relationship featuring two characters who exhibit—through realistic interactions—emotional and physical chemistry with each other.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

24. In this novel, the challenges that must be overcome are sufficiently complex, as opposed to overblown minor obstacles or simple misunderstandings that might be resolved easily with a brief conversation.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

25. This novel has an emotionally satisfying ending for the couple, one in which they are happy and/or hopeful because they face their future together. A couple need not be in a fully committed relationship by the end of the book, but they both should feel happy where they are.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

26. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Contemporary Romance: Short Novels** category.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

27. Please summarize your overall thoughts about this book. Constructive criticisms, if any, would be especially helpful. An edited version of your insights and those of other judges—absent any identification—may be shared with the author(s).