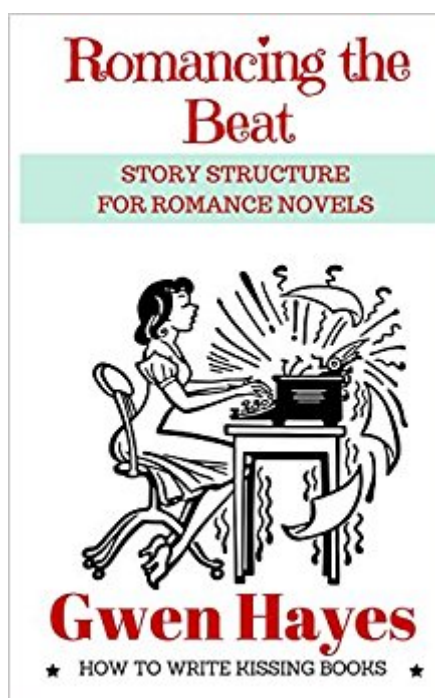


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# Romancing The Beat: Story Structure For Romance Novels (How To Write Kissing Books Book 1)



## Synopsis

What makes a romance novel a romance? How do you write a kissing book? Writing a well-structured romance isn't the same as writing any other genre—something the popular novel and screenwriting guides don't address. The romance arc is made up of its own story beats, and the external plot and theme need to be braided to the romance arc—not the other way around. Told in conversational (and often irreverent) prose, *Romancing the Beat* can be read like you are sitting down to coffee with romance editor and author Gwen Hayes while she explains story structure. The way she does with her clients. Some of whom are regular inhabitants of the New York Times and USA Today bestseller lists. *Romancing the Beat* is a recipe, not a rigid system. The beats don't care if you plot or outline before you write, or if you pants your way through the drafts and do a "beat check" when you're revising. Pantsers and plotters are both welcome. So sit down, grab a cuppa, and let's talk about kissing books.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This little book is exactly what I've been wishing for! For several years, I've been a fan of Blake Snyder's *\_Save the Cat\_* and his "beat sheet." However, *StC* was written for screenwriters, and some of its beats don't easily translate to novels. In this book, Gwen Hayes lays out a four-act structure and a fresh set of story beats that are specific to the romance genre. The book is concise, engaging, and useful for any subgenre. I appreciated that Hayes doesn't tailor her advice to market trends, or make assumptions about gender, sexuality, or heat level. Romance is romance. This book isn't concerned with chiseled abs or stormy eyes\*; it's about the bones of writing a compelling relationship. I know I'll be keeping this one on my shelf and recommending it often.\*Not that there's anything wrong with chiseled abs or stormy eyes. Big fan of both.

This was incredibly helpful for me, an author who sometimes struggles with plot, and really struggles with much conventional wisdom about it (the phrase "character arc" makes me break out in hives). Gwen Hayes has a system that makes far more sense to me, while allowing for greater creativity. This is a short book, but I loved that about it. I don't have time to spend an entire week or two reading a book about craft. I'm better off reading this (which took me about an hour, and I'm not the fastest reader) and then putting concepts into practice. This book is also concise--Gwen does not opine about her talents and supreme wisdom, she shares it simply and quickly. I'm so appreciative of that. I started writing a new book this week and I plan to use Gwen's "beats" as she calls them, just to make sure I'm hitting every note I need to hit, rather than asking myself in revisions, "Oh, shoot. Did I forget to redeem the hero?" I know I will be referring to this over and over again, especially since it's a fun and enjoyable read. Not dry and dull like many books on writing. Highly recommend!

First things first. Tessa Dare recommends this. She writes WONDERFUL, fresh, funny historical romances, esp. her Spindle Cove series and imo the perfect debut, *Goddess of the Hunt*. So that's that. (But she wrote those before this came out, so she was a natural from the get-go. Maybe a grocery list is all she needs.) In sum, this is an organized to-do list for those who already know what they're doing. If, like me, you are not Tessa Dare but dearly wish you were, you might want some more help than offered here. For what it's worth I found this too short, sketchy and narrowly formulaic to be really helpful. As a checklist, it's useful; as an exploration of what makes a romance

hum along, maybe not so much. The author translates the 22-step outline of John Truby for story into the romance genre alone but I think there are even more helpful resources, if that's what you're looking for. I also made a mistake ordering paperback. Kindle is the right format. It's not a keeper. There's a 20-step outline on p.22. The good thing and the bad thing is, once you get the gist of this, you've got it all. Each following section describes in a paragraph or two a point in the main outline. There are do's and don't's scattered here and there, such as don't dump background info into the story like an airplane drops blue toilet gunk in midair. (Too much can kill a guy in a convertible or your novel.) Point taken. But for me, it's just okay. I don't doubt the author knows what she's doing, I just wished she'd put more on the page. Leigh Michaels, *On Writing Romance*, provides more explanation of the romance elements and their variations, so more than one formula. It's excellent on structure, character arcs, developing romance and obstacles. There's more there there: more examples, more clarity, more help. Romance-focused how-to's aside, *Take off Your Pants!* by L. Hawker is very step by step help for building a story outline, and I find her focus on character arc (not plot) compelling, her articulation of the connections between character traits and outcomes laser sharp and meaningful. (In romance, what's more fundamental than the H/h's character arcs from not in love to in love, anyway?) I'm halfway through and it's helped me edit my next project already. Not a long book, but there's more to her guidance than a handy checklist. Also L. Weiland, *Structuring Your Novel*. Her explanation is blindingly clear and useful. Though not tailored for romance, she uses *Pride and Prejudice* among others to illustrate structure, plot development, etc., so compelling romance fits into the three-act structure outlined. The key thing is, she breaks down the parts of a scene with more in-depth explanation of each element and how they work together to propel the characters and the story forward. For a beginner hoping to understand the dynamics of a romantic story better, that was more helpful to me. (Not that I'll ever write a good romance. But I am trying.) But to recap, Tessa Dare says this is great.

This book is a how to outline/ plot book for romance writers. It combines the wisdom of Blake Snyder's "Save the Cat" book and outlining method with a romance twist. The book was short, sweet, and simple, and I found it quite helpful. The author shows you how to write romance novels using four phases, with five "beats" or elements to make sure to include in each phase. I made an Excel spreadsheet with one tab for each phase, to be used in plotting my story. The book is essentially what I already knew from Save the Cat concepts except that it kind of drags them out longer for the push- and- pull of a romance book, and the focus on the two characters and their romance instead of the external arc/story. The author's tone is light and humorous. The one thing I

disliked about the book was that there weren't many examples given (whereas Save the Cat is full of examples the whole way through.) The author does give a sample outline of one of her own romance novels at the end, but I think it would be more helpful broken down throughout the book as she shows the individual beats and how they turned out with her own outline/story. Overall I liked this book. It was a quick read, quite helpful to have in my repository of outlining/plotting books, and I'd recommend it to any aspiring or current romance writer.

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