

"I WOULD NEVER READ THAT TRASH!"

(Converting resistant customers)

by Stephanie Bond

Being the good romance bookseller that you are, you've probably experienced a time or two when you've approached a customer with the idea of trying a romance novel only to be confronted with a sneer and dialogue akin to, "I'd never read that trashy stuff!" And since you have the good manners of a person who loves to read romance, you refrain from saying what's on the tip of your tongue. After all, those of us in possession of a sure-fire cure for whatever ails a person are obligated to spread the good news, to educate and to convert. So here are some lines to try the next time you're facing off with a non-believer.

Customer: "I would never read that trash."

You: "Romance novels can be sensual, but many of them are also funny or deal with serious issues, or have great mysteries intertwined with the romance. Here's one you might like."

Customer: "Oh, I read those things when I was a teenager and my mother bought them."

You: "You should try one now—these aren't the romance novels your mother used to read. Here's one I highly recommend."

Customer: "Aren't those the sappy books where the forty-year-old guardian seduces his nineteen-year-old ward?"

You: "How long has it been since you've read a romance novel? The story lines are really very contemporary. Even the historical romances feature heroines with contemporary sensibilities. Take this book, for instance."

Customer: "I prefer literature to romance."

You: "Jane Austen proved that literature can be romantic. *Sense & Sensibility* is one of my personal favorites. You might like this European saga set in the 1700's."

Customer: "Those books are all written on a formula."

You: "If you mean they all have a happy ending, then yes. But romance novels are no more formulaic than mysteries where the murder is always solved. Here's a romance written by a local author that's getting rave reviews."

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Customer: "I'd be embarrassed to be seen reading a book at my desk with a pirate on the cover."

You: "I understand. But here's an excellent romance novel with a more modest cover. And if you like, I'll give you a discount on a paperback carrier to give you more privacy."

Customer: "I'm not interested in reading about people bed-hopping."

You: "In most romance novels, the main characters are monogamous once they meet each other. Here's one I read the other day that made me laugh *and* cry."

Customer: "I don't have time to read."

You: "No one has as much time as they used to, but I read instead of watching TV or surfing the Net. They make me feel good. And I keep a romance novel in my purse for when I'm waiting in lines. In fact, I read this one in just a few hours."

Customer: "I don't like *those* kinds of books."

You: "Give this one a try—if you don't enjoy it, bring it back and I'll give you full credit toward another selection."

Remember the way you felt the last time you read a romance novel that made you sigh? If you give that kind of awakening, that kind of gift to a customer, you'll have her hooked for life. And she'll thank you with her pocketbook. ~**SBond**