

## ROMANTIC BLEND

**Definition:** Novels in this category include two interwoven plot lines—a significant romance and a complex storyline involving elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events. For GCLS purposes, **romance** is defined as a love story in which the main characters overcome differences or challenges to achieve and/or sustain a romantic relationship. **Suspense** often includes a mystery, crime, chase, or search with imminent personal and/or social peril. **Intrigue** often includes puzzles, covert identities, and/or corporate or geopolitical spy craft with both immediate and long-term consequences. **Adventure** often focuses on an unexpected physical trial where nature is the antagonist, or a purposeful quest for achievement where failure holds physical or psychological consequences for the protagonist(s). **Dramatic events** often are central to stories of activism and protests; legal, medical, or courtroom dramas; power struggles between opposing political, family or corporate players; and/or other externally inspired plots.

Focus may shift throughout the novel from the romance to elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events and back again. Culmination of storylines in these novels must achieve an emotionally satisfying romance and resolve issues of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events. More than one of these elements may combine as they blend with the romantic arc. Entries must have a minimum of 40,000 words to qualify for judging.

**Judging Guideline:** Judging in this category should not give undue weight to either the romance or the suspense/intrigue/adventure/dramatic events but consider both storylines together. The romance must have a happy or hopeful ending. 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

This category is not to be confused with Mystery/Thriller/Crime (where a mystery, thriller, and/or crime constitutes the novel's main plot line) or General Fiction (where romance with a happy or hopeful ending does not constitute a significant plot line).

### Evaluation Items:

1. 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.

2. 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

3. 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

4. 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 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. 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 skillfully blends its two interwoven plot lines—a significant romance and a complex storyline of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events—into a unified, pleasing whole.

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

21. 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

22. It is believable that the two characters in this novel would be romantically 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

23. Details relevant to the suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events of this novel are skillfully blended throughout the book's plot, dialogue, and other character interactions.

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

24. This novel contains sufficient suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events to keep readers keenly interested in finding out what happens next.

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

25. This novel has an emotionally satisfying romantic ending for the couple, one that is happy and/or hopeful. 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. The author(s) resolves issues related to the suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events in this novel in a satisfying way.

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

27. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Romantic Blend** category.

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

28. 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).