

Unit 4:

Romantic Comedies



A Warm up

1. Watch three couples meet on film. Which meeting do you think is the most romantic?



2. Can you think of a movie with a more romantic first meeting?

B Vocabulary**1. Match the words with their definitions.**

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| a) obstacle | <input type="checkbox"/> funny |
| b) counterparts | <input type="checkbox"/> people (or things) that have the same job or purpose |
| c) amusing | <input type="checkbox"/> kinds |
| d) criticize | <input type="checkbox"/> main |
| e) initially | <input type="checkbox"/> clumsy; not smooth |
| f) principal | <input type="checkbox"/> something that makes it difficult to do something |
| g) awkward | <input type="checkbox"/> at first; in the beginning |
| h) variations | <input type="checkbox"/> to express disapproval of someone or something |

C Discussion

1. What's your favourite romantic movie?
2. Do you ever watch rom-coms at the theater, or only on TV/DVD?
3. Do you think rom-coms are too predictable or unoriginal?
4. Do you think rom-coms are realistic?

Rom-com conventions:

- The “Meet Cute” and “Grand Gesture”
- Mismatched lovers or “forbidden love”
- (usually) happy endings
- Storyline: boy meets girl – boy gets girl – boy loses girl – boy gets girl back
- female rom-com actors are often more popular/famous than male counterparts

D While Reading

Complete the following exercises while reading the article on the next page.

1. Fill in the blanks with the words from the vocabulary exercise.

Meet Cutes and Grand Gestures



Romantic comedy films, also known as "rom-coms", are films with light-hearted, humorous plots, based on the romantic idea that true love can overcome any _____. They always have happy endings. *Annie Hall* (1977) and *Pretty Woman* (1990) are considered by many critics to be the most successful movies in this sub-genre, but the basic format of a romantic comedy film can be found in early Shakespeare plays.

Two conventions of the rom-com are the "**meet cute**" and the "**grand gesture**".

Often the male and female character "meet cute" in an _____ or embarrassing way. They then fall in love but split up due to an argument or other problem. Finally the couple gets back together. This happens after one of them makes some big effort (sometimes called the "grand gesture") to find the other person and declare their love.

Sometimes after splitting up, the couple will meet by chance. Then (often in a funny or _____ way) they declare their love for each other and the film ends happily.

Sometimes the two characters will "hook-up", then must face challenges to their relationship.

Sometimes they hesitate to become romantically involved because they _____ do not like each other (*Bridget Jones's Diary* 2001, *When Harry Met Sally* 1989), because one of them already has a partner (*Four Weddings and a*

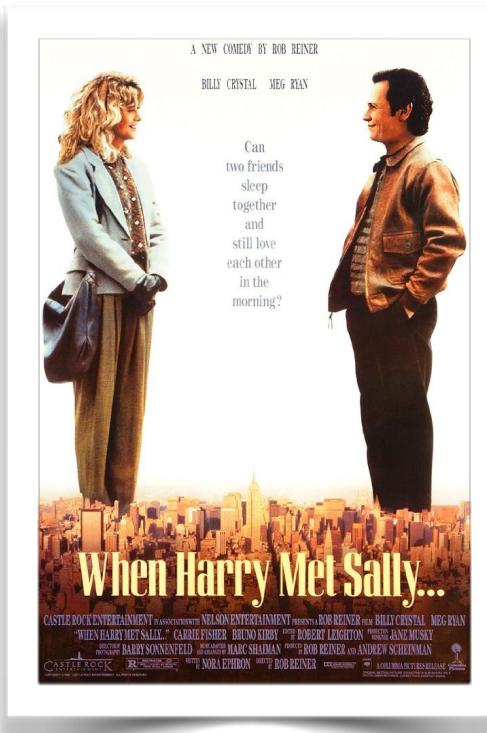
Funeral 1994), or because of social pressures (*Pretty in Pink* 1986). However, the screenwriters leave clues that suggest that the characters would actually be a good love match. The ending of a romantic comedy does not have to involve marriage; it is meant to show the importance of love in its characters' lives, even if they separate in the end, like in *Roman Holiday* (1953).

There are many _____ of this basic plot. Sometimes, instead of the two lead characters ending up in each other's arms, another love match will be made between one of the _____ characters and a secondary character, such as in *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997).

Often women have smaller roles than their male _____ in the film industry, but rom-coms seem to be an exception. The actresses Julia Roberts (*Notting Hill* 2002), Meg Ryan (*Sleepless in Seattle* 1989) Sandra Bullock (*The Proposal* 2009) and Jennifer Aniston (*The Break-Up* 2006) are all known as "rom-com darlings" and Nancy Meyers

(*Something's Gotta Give* 2003) is one of the most successful directors of the sub-genre.

People often _____ rom-com movies because their plots are usually predictable and unoriginal. This may be true, but they continue to be an important part of the film industry.



E Check Your Understanding

Answer the questions about the article.

1. What romantic idea are most rom-coms based on?
2. What happens in a “grand gesture”?
3. What are some reasons that rom-com characters initially hesitate to date each other?
4. What does the term “rom-com darling” mean?
5. Why are rom-coms often criticised?

F Iconic Scene

1. Watch the following scene from the rom-com *When Harry Met Sally* (1989).

In this final scene of the movie, a man (Harry) has decided to tell his longtime best friend Sally that he loves her.

H: Harry, S: Sally

H: I've been doing a lot of thinking, and the thing is... I love you.

S: What?!

H: I love you.

S: How do you expect me to respond to this?

H: How about you love me too?

S: How about I'm leaving?

H: Doesn't what I said mean anything to you?

S: I'm sorry Harry. I know it's New Year's Eve, I know you're feeling lonely, but you can't just show up here, tell me you love me, and expect that to make everything alright. It doesn't work this way.

H: How does it work?

S: I don't know, but not this way.

H: How about this way: I love that you get cold when it's 70 degrees out. I love that it takes you an hour and a half to order a sandwich. I love that you get a little crinkle up on your nose when you're looking at me like I'm nuts. i

love that when I spend a day with you I can still smell your perfume on my clothes. I love that you are the last person I want to talk to before I go to sleep at night. And it's not because I'm lonely, and it's not because it's New Year's Eve. I came here tonight because when you realise you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible.

S: You see? That is just like you Harry - you say things like that and you make it impossible for me to hate you! And I hate you Harry; I really hate you.

H: What does this song mean? My whole life I don't know what this song means. “Should old acquaintance be forgot”. Does this mean we should forget old acquaintances, or does it mean that if we happen to forget them we should remember them?... which is impossible because we've already forgot.

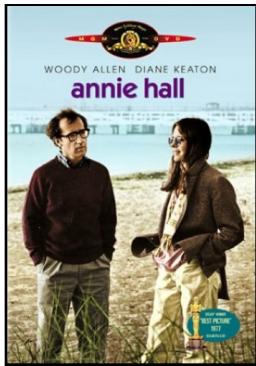
S: Well, maybe it just means that we should remember that we forgot them, or something...anyway, it's about old friends.

2. Ask a partner the following questions.

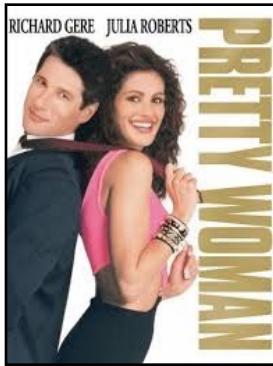
1. What kind of camera shots were used in the filming of this scene?
2. Was the scene funny or not? Why do you think so?
3. Is this scene typical of a rom-com? Why do you think so?

G Movie poster - synopsis match

1. Have you seen any of the “must-see” rom-coms listed below? Which ones?



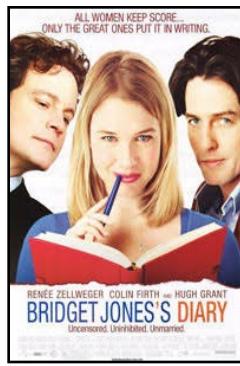
1977
Woody Allen



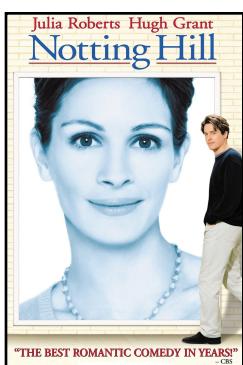
1990
Gary Marshall



1989
Rob Reiner



2001
Sharon Maguire



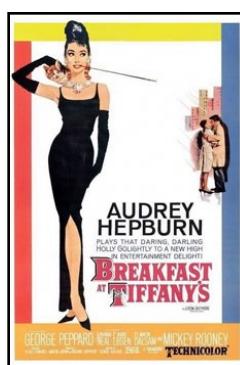
1999
Roger Michell



year
director



2003
Richard Curtis



1961
Blake Edwards

2. Match the one line synopses with the movie posters above.

1. A rich businessman meets a prostitute with a heart of gold.
2. A neurotic New York comedian falls in love with the ditzy Annie Hall.
3. A man and a woman have known each other for years, but they fear sex would ruin the friendship.
4. A British woman tries to find love and keeps a personal diary of her life.
5. The life of a simple bookshop owner changes when he meets the most famous film star in the world.
6. A man's life changes when his wife asks him for a divorce. He tries to rediscover his manhood with the help of a new young friend,
7. A young, materialistic woman becomes interested in a young man who has moved into her apartment building.
8. Eight very different couples deal with their love lives in various interrelated tales all set just before Christmas.