

## Why boomer romance?

Melanie Ann Schaeffer thinks the world could do with more women over 40 in romance novels. A graduate of Seton Hill University's Writing Popular Fiction MFA program, Schaeffer believes the baby boomer generation brings unique perspective and rich life experience to romance. She explains to Laurie Kahn, executive producer of the Popular Romance Project, why she chose to start writing romance.

### A conversation with Melanie Ann Schaeffer

#### What is boomer romance?

**Melanie Ann Schaeffer:** My take on baby boomer romance is that it's not just a matter of age. I believe it was called "Lady Lit" and "Hen Lit" in the past, and baby boomer women aren't really into terms like "Lady Lit" and "Hen Lit" because I think we feel pretty young at heart, you know. 60 is the new 50, 50 is the new 40. At least, that's what I'm living by.

So anyhow, my take on baby boomer romance is that your protagonists are in the baby boomer generation, leading edge or trailing edge, and they have had some experiences in life that have been more than challenging. These experiences maybe were roadblocks, turns in the road, some of them self-imposed, that created an issue, but the baby boomers got by it. Somehow, we managed to get through it. And now, we're looking at life with more days in back of us than we

have ahead of us, and so it's time to be happy, it's time to make your decisions wisely. And when you have a young protagonist, a 30-something protagonist, that character hasn't had the opportunity of experience [...]

[...] So, that's why I got into baby boomers. Plus, I enjoy cultural references when I'm reading. I think baby boomers share a collective unconscious with their characters in baby boomer romance. They can do it by music, they can do it by current events that occurred, you know, "Where were you when Kennedy died?" Any of those things. Uh, clothing. Some of it we'd hope to forget, some of it we wish we could still fit into. So that's my take on baby boomer romance, you know, right? Identifying with characters who have come through life, who've faced the real world, and are moving on and finding out "What exactly do I want now, at this stage of my life?" Sometimes that's really difficult.

What age groups have you seen represented in romance? How do authors use age and life experience to shape their characters?

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