

## Narrative and/of Heterosexual Desire in YA Romance

In *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, Catherine Belsey explores the way that the concepts of desire are culturally-bound, situated in the specific cultural-historical moment and constructed and reconstructed by cultural objects; this counters the conventional understanding of desire as a “natural” and “universal” phenomenon, which relies on a mind/body binary that puts culture in opposition to and in search of mastery over desire. It is through the texts of a culture, particularly the romances, Belsey argues, that we can see how desire gets constructed. Similarly, Karen Coats writes: “The only way we come to make sense of the world is through the stories we are told. They pattern the world we have fallen into, effectively replacing its terrors and inconsistencies with structured images that assure us of its manageability. And in the process of structuring the world, stories structure us as beings in that world” (1). If this is the case, it is important that we investigate the ways contemporary YA romances construct desire for adolescent readers. Thus, I begin this investigation, which leads me, first, to contend that sexuality does not encompass the whole of desire; second, to demonstrate the relationship between narrative structure and desire; and, third, to therefore take a narrative theory approach grounded in a feminist methodology to examine three romance novels that demonstrate different narrative positions. I ultimately argue that the relationship between the narrator and the reader created in YA romances is part of the quest for fulfillment of desire embedded in YA romance novels, a quest which is ultimately incapable of satisfying the hunger for intimacy.