

Modern Stories: It Must Be Love: Terms and Conditions

1. This Competition is being organised by Headline Publishing Group Limited (the 'Publisher'), Carmelite House, 50 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0DZ.

2. This Competition is for the chance to win the following prizes (the 'Prizes'):

a) The winner of the first prize (the 'Winner') will receive:

- i. £1,000 prize money;
- ii. a place on Curtis Brown Creative's three-month online [Writing Your Novel](#) course (worth £1900);
- iii. 2 x one-hour online editorial sessions with a Headline Eternal editor;
- iv. 1 x one-hour introductory meeting with a literary agent; and
- v. a hamper of Headline romance books (the 'First Prize').

b) The 2 (two) runners up (the 'Runners Up') will each receive:

- i. 1 x a one-hour online editorial session with a Headline Eternal editor;
- ii. 1 x one-hour introductory meeting with a literary agent;
- iii. a hamper of Headline romance books; and
- iv. a place on one of Curtis Brown Creative's [five/six-week online courses](#) (worth up to £230)

2. The Prizes will be awarded to the entrants who submit the best Proposals (as defined below in Clause 6) for an original English-language romance fiction novel, judged against the Judging Criteria (as described in Clause 4 below), and who meet the Entry Criteria (as described in Clause 5 below).

3. Each entry will be judged on how well it fits the following criteria (the 'Judging Criteria'). The Judging Criteria are as follows:

- i. A commercial romance fiction novel, which has a compelling plot, convincing characters and well-written dialogue; and
- ii. Written in an accessible way that is likely to appeal to and be enjoyed by a wide readership.

4. In order to be eligible for the Competition, entrants must meet the following criteria (the 'Entry Criteria'). This Competition is only open to those who are from Black, Asian, mixed heritage and/or multiple ethnic backgrounds. Entrants must be aged 18 or over, resident in the United Kingdom and must not have an agent or have had any work of fiction previously published by a publisher in whole or in part in any format or be under a contract to have their work of fiction published. The Competition is not open to employees of the Publisher or Hachette UK Limited, Curtis Brown Creative, their families, or to anyone professionally connected to the Competition or connected to the judges either themselves or through their families.
5. Entrants to the Competition are required to submit a proposal for a novel that meets the Judging Criteria and consists of (i) the first 5,000 words of the novel, (ii) a synopsis of the full plot of the novel of no more than 600 words (including an outline of the book's themes and details of the main characters and their journey through the book). The Proposal must be in English and must be in a legible font and font size.
6. Proposals must be submitted via the Competition landing page [<https://www.thefuturebookshelf.co.uk/tfb-blog/2026/01/28/modern-stories-it-must-be-love-2026/>]. Entries may only be submitted between 12:01am GMT on 12th February 2026 and 11.59pm BST on 14th April 2026. Any entries received outside these specified times and dates and any entries that do not meet the requirements of these Terms and Conditions will not be eligible for entry to the Competition.
7. A longlist of up to 16 (sixteen) Proposals (the 'Longlisted Proposals') will be chosen from entries received in accordance with these Terms and Conditions by employees of Hachette UK Limited (for the Publisher) and Curtis Brown Creative. The Longlisted Proposals will be submitted to a panel of judges comprising Soraya Bouazzaoui (Editor at Headline Eternal/Author), Abby Parsons (Senior Courses Manager/Editor at Curtis Brown Creative), Maame Blue (Tutor at Curtis Brown Creative/Author), Caden Armstrong (Founder of Book Lovers Bookshop), Amy Beecham (Books Editor at Stylist), and Rufaro Faith Mazarura (Author), (together the 'Judges'). The Judges will

select a shortlist of up to 6 (six) Proposals (the 'Shortlisted Proposals'). The Winner and Runners Up will then be selected by the Judges from the Shortlisted Proposals. The Judges' decision is final.

8. The Winner will be offered the First Prize. The Runners Up will be offered the Runners-Up Prizes.
9. If no or insufficient suitable entries that meet the Judging Criteria set out above can be found, the Publisher reserves the right to (i) not select any Longlisted or Shortlisted Proposals; (ii) not select a Winner or Runners Up from the Shortlisted Proposals and/or (iii) select fewer Longlisted or Shortlisted Proposals.
10. By submitting their Proposal, the entrant undertakes and warrants that the Proposal consists of their own original work and will not infringe the intellectual property rights of anyone. If a third party's material is used, such as lyrics of a song, the entrant will secure the necessary permission and will provide it to the Publisher on request. The entrant further warrants that the Proposal will not contain any material which is defamatory, private or confidential or which is unlawful in any way. Any entry in breach of this Clause will be disqualified from being considered for the Competition at any stage.
11. The longlist and shortlist will be announced on The Future Bookshelf, the Publisher and Curtis Brown Creative websites on approximately 26th May 2026 and 7th July 2026 respectively. The Winner and the Runners Up will be announced approximately 3rd September 2026. The Winner and Runners Up will be informed in advance by email. Shortlisted names, including the names of the Winners and Runners Up, may also be publicised in other media or on social media sites.
12. An entrant may only submit one entry. Further entries will be disqualified. Entries will not be accepted via agents, third parties or in bulk.

13. The Publisher is not responsible for contacting or responding to entrants who provide unclear or incomplete information or for entries that are lost, misdirected, delayed or destroyed.
14. Following the announcement of the Winner and Runners Up, the Publisher will contact the Winner and Runners Up to arrange the Prizes. Dates for the Curtis Brown Creative writing courses will be subject to availability. The Winner and the Runners Up agree to read and comply with any terms and conditions supplied by Curtis Brown Creative in connection with the Prize. Any course element of a Prize must be booked/redeemed within 12 months of the announcement of the Winners or Runners-Up.
15. No costs or expenses will be met by the Publisher in connection with the Prizes. For details of any costs and expenses included as part of the Prize as supplied by Curtis Brown Creative, or for any questions about the Curtis Brown Creative courses, please refer to the relevant page(s) of Curtis Brown Creative's website <https://www.curtisbrowncreative.co.uk/>. Neither the Publisher nor any other member of the Hachette group of companies makes any warranty or claim in respect of the Curtis Brown Creative courses or accepts any liability whether in contract, tort (including negligence) or otherwise howsoever in respect of them.
16. The Publisher reserves the right to (i) cancel the Competition; (ii) alter the details of the Prizes or judging panels and/or (iii) alter any other details of the Competition without notice but the Publisher will try to avoid creating any undue disappointment. No cash alternative or other alternatives to the Prizes will be provided.
17. Any personal data submitted by entrants, including their names and email addresses (the 'Information'), will be used by the Publisher (as the data controller) for the purposes of this Competition, including without limitation for the purpose of judging the entries and arranging the Prizes, in accordance with these Terms and Conditions and in accordance with Publisher's Privacy Notice which can be found [here](#). The Information will be deleted within six months of the announcement of the Winner.

18. No purchase is necessary to enter the Competition.

19. By entering the Competition, each entrant agrees to be bound by these Terms and Conditions.

20. These Terms and Conditions and any disputes or claims (including non-contractual disputes or claims) arising out of these Terms and Conditions shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of England, whose courts shall have exclusive jurisdiction.