**Conventions of the Romantic Comedy Film**

Themes

* Films are light-hearted, humorous, and centered on romantic ideals where love is able to conquer all.
* Romantic union is destined or due to fate.
* “True Love” is the prevailing underlying theme

Narrative

Basic Plot Formula (contrived):

1. Man and woman are unsatisfied in life
2. Meet-cute
3. Happy together
4. Part ways due to argument, misunderstanding, or obstacle
5. Independently transform and overcome their internal obstacles
6. Ultimately reunite to declare their love

Characters

* Leading Man (Romantic Lead):

Handsome, with boyish charm, likeable, witty, smart, a little lost in life and doesn’t quite know what he wants/needs, a bachelor in need of a good woman

* Leading Lady (Romantic Lead):

Beautiful, relatable, independent, plucky, unconventional, unlucky in love, lonely, convincing, and down-to-earth

* Man’s best friend/buddy: adds humor, less attractive than Leading Man, goofy/dorky, loyal
* Woman’s best friend/confidant: adds humor, less attractive than Leading Lady, kind, good listener, smart, loyal, spunky
* Older Mentor: teacher, parent, or boss of main characters that offer support and wisdom.

Setting

* Usually in large urban cities such as London or New York in modern day.
* Often set around Christmas time or Valentine’s Day (holidays), which friends and family would naturally get together – or, set in the summer at a wedding or a family reunion

Cinematography, Lighting, Music

* Uses continuity editing to draw attention away from the camera – very smooth editing creating seamless transitions
* Happy tone using natural and bright lighting. Lighting may darken a bit to reflect the character’s negative mood, but that doesn’t last long.
* Usually uses only well-known pop songs as the soundtrack

Cultural Connections

* Romantic Comedies both inform and reflect current social values
* Rom-coms are rarely cinematically well-made films – they are seen as cheap pulp
* Called “chick-flicks,” they aren’t taken very seriously

Why are Romantic Comedies so Popular

* The combination of hope and humor packaged in an escapist fantasy is appealing to the target audience (primarily single heterosexual women in their 20s-30s)
* Traditional dating traditions and values surrounding romantic love are affirmed, which is comforting to many as society progresses quickly
* They are light and don’t require much thought; they have easy plots to follow and the happy endings are predictable – all of which is relaxing and escapist entertainment.
* They reaffirm deeply held beliefs in Western culture surrounding love at first sight, the concept of soul mates, idealization of your “perfect” partner, and how love conquers all.
* Audiences identify with aspects of what the characters are experiencing and are in the phase of life where they are looking for a long-term romantic partner.