

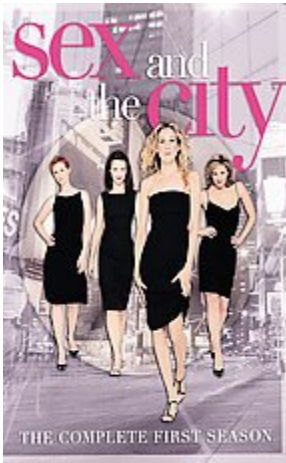
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Chick Lit Picks Up Where Sex Left Off

"Am I just completely out of touch?"



Stephanie Brail asks this question after a visit to Barnes & Noble, where she was frustrated by a book display baiting fans of *The Devil Wears Prada*. Stephanie's post, titled [Literary Fashion Madness](#) is up now at [Fem Speak](#).

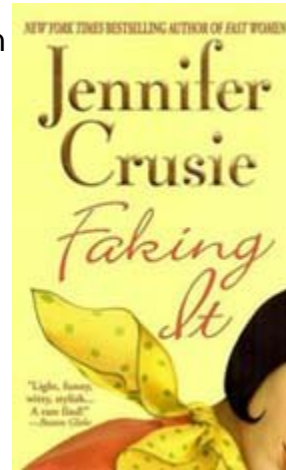
"...it seems that the cool fictional book for women these days involves New York City nightlife, fashion, designer shoes, and other shallow pursuits of so-called high society."

It sounds a lot like the rebirth of *Sex and the City* if you ask me. Women across the nation cried into their brownies when *Sex* went off the air forever, leaving a gaping hole in the HBO lineup. My guess is *Sex* fans have worn out their DVDs and are turning to literature to fill the void left by Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda.

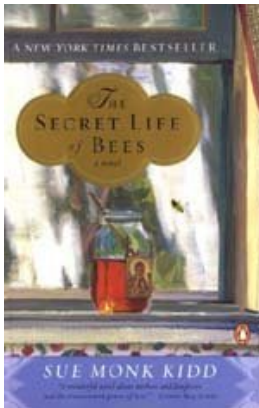
As a huge fan of literature in general, I don't have a problem with these titles, but I can understand why some women would. I see them as light and modern twists of the tried and tired tales of Cinderella, Belle, and Snow White. In chic-lit, the heroine faces a series of obstacles, which prevent her from hooking up with some dashing urban executive (also known as the Prince Charming of the 21st century) whom she hates to love. On the last page, our heroine can always be found sauntering off into the sunset with her prince on one arm and a designer handbag on the other. This puts a new twist on traditional fairy tales: now she gets a prince and a load of money!

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My literary mind is not above enjoying a little chic-lit every now and then. I've dabbled in Nora Roberts; lately it's been Jennifer Crusie. But these authors have a tendency to reinforce the old notion that in order to be successful, we've got to land a man. And not just any man, we've got to land the *it-man*. Oh and we also need a hugely successful career and a vast fortune. While these are wonderful fantasies, they aren't exactly the stuff of real life.



In fact, contrasted against feminist writers such as Toni Morrison, Isabel Allende, and Margaret Atwood, the modern fairy tales ala *Sex and the City* leave a lot to be desired. It's difficult for a New York socialite drinking her way up the corporate ladder and ending up in bed with the CEO to come out looking like a hero when she's up against victims of domestic abuse, paternal dictatorships, and rape survivors.



In college, I was hammered with fodder from the global literary canon. I read and then discussed everything from Beowulf to Harry Potter. I took a class on Women Writers and for a while, I refused to read any of the glitter girl novels. I also refused to read novels that didn't have a female protagonist. But in the end, I realized that sometimes I need a little comic relief, or even a modern day fairy tale. For me, the critical factor is balance. In case you need to balance out your chic-lit reading list with something a little more literary, check out some of these female-friendly titles:

- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd
- *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell
- *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver
- *Here on Earth* by Alice Hoffman
- *White Oleander* by Janet Fitch
- *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

Or, stick with the glittery titles that those *Sex and the City* fans hunger for. There's nothing wrong with dreaming.