

WELCOME TO LINDA'S TEA ROOM



When I was writing my first draft of what would become my debut novel, *The Disharmony of Silence*, I will admit I never thought of genre. I was new to writing and all I wanted was to get the story down. I knew what I liked to read and that's what I set out to write. Then, someone asked what genre I was writing and, caught off-guard, I said literary. Why not? It sounded good. Though as I learned a little more, I realized my book, though character driven, was not literary. Yes, we do get in to my protagonist's head, yet the story is not introspective, a word that describes literary fiction. So what was I writing? There is a little mystery in the novel centered around a unique cameo and a painting, Carolyn, my protagonist, is determined to find out who the artist is and why she painted the exact same cameo that is in her mother's jewelry box. But that's figured out half-way through the novel, so I couldn't call it a mystery. As far as historical fiction, which I love to read, even though part of the story is set in the early 1920s, the entire book is not. Therefore, I don't think it fits that description either, although some reviewers now do – and I'm happy with that. And then, I realized many books that I loved reading were considered Women's Fiction and I had my genre figured out. So, what is women's fiction? I'm often asked that, especially by men who think it "girly" literature, or written only by women. Not so!

Women's Fiction can be Romance. It can be Historical or Contemporary. It might even be Dystopian. The one specific aspect that places a novel in the Women's Fiction genre is that ***"the plot is driven by the main character's emotional journey,"*** as stated on the Women's Fiction Writers Association website.

Now let's take this one step further. Not only is my novel considered Women's Fiction, it is classified as Upmarket Women's Fiction, as are so many other wonderful books which you can find on the Women's Fiction Writers Association shelf in Goodreads. A friend of mine uses the term "upmarket" for anything posh. A five-star restaurant would be upmarket—Burger King, downmarket. Though there are people who certainly enjoy dining at a Michelin rated eatery who still crave a Whopper with its special sauce dripping from a sesame seed bun. Whatever your personal definition of upmarket, be it for restaurants,

department stores or even hotels, I now ask: What is Upmarket Fiction? Does it mean it will only be sold at Neiman Marcus and other high-end stores and never be on the shelves of a library or neighbor indie bookstore? Not at all! Upmarket novels are filled with themes and topics ripe for book club discussion and are sometimes called Book Club Fiction, which in my opinion is a term a great deal easier to understand.

Here is a sampling of Upmarket Women's Fiction, some of my favorites, new and old.

The Lost Girls of Devon by Barbara O'Neal, The Last Bathing Beauty by Amy Sue Nathan, A Fall of Marigolds by Susan Meissner, The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood by Rebecca Wells,

