

Toss Out Male Tropes!

Men are More than Black & White

Part 1: Market Analysis and Introduction

JP Robinson & Gregg Bridgeman

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Disclaimer

Generally speaking, generalizations are generally correct.

In these classes, we will speak in generalizations to communicate general ideas. We recognize that there are *exceptions* and that generalizations often break down when speaking of specific cases.

The statement, “All twelve-years-olds are bad drivers!” is a generalization. It is generally true. “My twelve-year-old child is a better driver than anyone I know,” is specific, and may be specifically true as an exception to the generalization.

Agenda: What we’ll cover

Why write for a male audience

How to create a knockout male character

Capturing the male mentality

What do male & female readers want?

Raw numbers

First, let’s take a look at why men matter. Of course, men are just as important as women, but I mean this in a marketing sense.

Why cater to men?

- Men matter
- Increasing number of male readers
- Men are more likely to read about strong male characters
- Boys need role models
- YA markets create lifelong customers
- Risk losing them to secular writers

While Christian literature, especially fiction, has been overwhelmingly geared toward female readers, it’s critical that Christian authors create literature that can be enjoyed by men as well as women in order to maximize impact, increase marketability, and share much-needed spiritual messages. While many readers are women, ongoing data trends reveal that the number of male readers is increasing. Unless Christian authors cater to boys and men—as well as women—we risk losing them to secular authors.

As schools and other organizations try to bridge the literacy gap between male and female students, authors are presented with a unique opportunity that can create lifelong customers.

A closer look

Summary: With findings similar to Statista, the data from Pew Research indicates that almost 70% of men read at least 1 book in that given year.

How can YOU create a knock-out male personality?

By implementing the above strategies, authors can dramatically increase the likelihood that men, as well as women, will enjoy their books. Keep in mind that realism is at the heart of the 21st century reader mindset. Even fantasy must have a strong degree of realism to be believable. The above strategies can help female authors write across their gender.

Remember, strong men aren't threats—they're actually what you *want* to encourage. A strong man is not an abuser of women or a thug. A strong man sticks by his spiritual/natural principles, takes his responsibilities seriously, and leads by example.

Do this:

Model off real people in your life/historical characters

Make them human (fears/struggles/flaws)

Write men as they are, not as you (women) would like them to be

Respectable w/strong spiritual foundation by end of book

Immerse us in action

DON'T do this:

Create weak men/saved by a woman.

Create cardboard characters

Belittle men/vent

Create overly macho men

Men who think/act like women

Make guys overly romantic

Strong men aren't threats.

Strong men aren't threats. They are the examples that will get your sons off the couch and into the places where they can really make a positive difference. —JP Robinson

Think like a Man

Not only are men and women fundamentally different—they perceive situations differently. We are hardwired to interact with our environment in ways that complement each other. These differences need to be reflected in an author's writing.

When I'm writing male characters, descriptions tend to be blander and dialogue less verbose.

Gregg will go into more detail about this in Part 2.

He became more aware of every single thing around him, and the world slowed so that seconds felt like minutes in the hormone-induced state known as time dilation. Yet, his mind felt like it had kicked into overdrive, and his thoughts came a thousand times faster. He acted. He reacted. He dodged, aimed, fired, and moved forward under covering fire. Pure muscle memory dropped empty magazines and replaced them with fully loaded ones. Expertly placed single shots took out two enemy combatants as he and his team advanced on the platoon of Chukwumereije soldiers.

—Hallee Bridgeman, *One Heartbeat from Love* (upcoming from Revell)

CONTRAST: How would this scene sound if written from a woman's POV?

NOTES:

Work out | Send flowers | Buy cologne | Repeat

Avoid the romantic hulk syndrome ☺ Not all guys are muscle-strapped, nor do they all wear great cologne.

Romance is great and both men and women need it to varying degrees. But constantly depicting the hero as a jaw-dropping hulk with ice-blue eyes is about as tasteful to a male reader as a figure-eight heroine is to a female reader. In both cases, you run the risk of having some eye-roll moments—especially as these depictions have become overdone and disconnect the reader from the story.

Sex on his mind

- How do men view sex?
- What should authors include/exclude?

Without slipping into marriage counseling mode, suffice it to say that most men view sex as a need. Because it is a real and pressing issue in our society, sex can/should be addressed depending on the plot and author's purpose. Authors should carefully consider their audience, publisher's wishes, and their personal reputation when deciding to include/exclude sex. Sex should always be based on biblical principles: i.e., between a married husband and wife unless the author's purpose is to show the consequences against rebelling against God's plan.

Avoid graphic description if a sex scene is necessary. This includes scenes of sexual abuse and/or rape. You can get your point across without the vivid details.

Realistically speaking . . .

How do you write men?

Authors (male and female) tend to fall into one of the above extremes (angelic or demonic) with the secular world often pushing toward the latter. The truth is, you want to write men in the middle (as real men). We're not perfect creatures but, then again, neither are women. We're all here to work together to proclaim Christ. In that regard, it's important that authors maintain a balance when writing about men and their sexuality.

Demons

- Men as oversexed
- Men as predators/objectifiers/rapists

Angels

- Men as asexual creatures
- Thoughts/desires

Real

- How we function
- Thoughts/desires/strength of the relationship (balance)

Race & Christian literature

I'm starting off this segment with a personal story. And it's one that I don't like to tell.

JPR: STORY—my first encounter with American police.

Does Race Exist?

The big questions are the ones on the slide and they're questions that only you can answer. Some authors avoid including characters of other races because they a.) don't want to get criticized for misrepresenting a race or b.) don't see the need to diversify their character list.

And, in all honesty, both are valid points. I can say as a Black author that I have a lot of empathy for non-minority authors who are sometimes treated unfairly in my opinion. But, IF it suits your plot, why not diversify your character list? Now, I'm not saying to make King George III Black or to put dregs on Shakespeare. ☺ You have to consider what's in *your* heart and what the historical record entails.

But you can set the groundwork for successfully incorporating minority characters by answering these three questions above. And, perhaps, you'll find that writing ethnic characters is something you really enjoy.

How does the WORLD see race?

How does GOD see race?

How do *YOU* see race? What message of race do you want your READER to see?

How does the WORLD see race?

The world invented race by theorizing that five races evolved from different kinds of monkeys via polygenesis.

- Caucasoid
- Mongoloid
- Capoid
- Congoid (formerly Negroid)
- Australoid

How does GOD see race?

And Jesus answered and said to them, “... **But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ...**”—Mark 10:5a-6a

He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth...—Acts 17:26a

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.—Galatians 3:28

God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.—Acts 10:34-35

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?—Malachi 2:10

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.—Colossians 3:11

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.—Genesis 1:27

And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’—Revelation 5:9-10

For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.—Deuteronomy 10:17

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.—Romans 10:12-13

And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.’—Acts 10:28

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.—John 13:34

How do YOU see race? What message of race do you want your READER to see?

Using Hallee Bridgeman's novel "Valerie's Verdict" as an example where the hero is a white man and the heroine is a black woman.

"As an author of many multicultural novels, I believe "race" is a secular construct based on social class designed to divide humanity.

I seek to celebrate individuals and honor different family cultures.

I want my readers to celebrate each character as an individual, and not be distracted by the secular race myth."

—Hallee Bridgeman, Author & Speaker

By InD'tale Magazine · ★★★★★ · March 14, 2020 "Valerie's Verdict" is a heart-wrenching novel that covers immensely difficult concepts in a beautiful and hopeful way.

By Julie G · ★★★★★ · Excellent-Such a good story that deals with several "issues" of today. Racism, domestic violence, walking away from God when things are hard. Hallee Bridgeman deals with each issue well. She confronts the horror and reality and gives a Biblical response which while true, can be hard to hear. Nevertheless, it's truth. As a white mama of African American children, I am beginning to understand and unpack the issues of race and diversity in a mixed race family. She handled this with sensitivity without preaching.

By Kimmie · ★★★★★ · WOW. This book... I loved Hallee Bridgeman's approach to the topics she presented in this book! Not many people have the gift of writing realistically about domestic abuse and racial tension in one book. Hallee Bridgeman did a great job without being political about it. She told it like it is.

Michael R · ★★★★★ · Hallee Bridgeman is one of the few authors I've read who actually takes the time to let her Christian beliefs show through the story. So many Christian authors write like they're trying to not offend non-Christians. The characters in this story have real problems that they have to learn to work through in a Christ like manner.

Classic Male Race Tropes

These are some common (unconscious) misconceptions of which to be aware. Many times, authors draw on personal experience or what the media has portrayed. This can be dangerous and opens you up for a lot of unnecessary criticism in a hostile (online) world.

These are some common (unconscious) misconceptions of which to be aware.

Minorities are non-existent

- Minorities don't factor into stories.

Sports, Violence, Menial Roles

- Minorities either dominate the basketball court or the ghetto. Minorities fulfill menial roles in terms of work or social status.

Sex & Girls

- Our mission in life is to get a girl pregnant.

Ramp up the reader appeal

The best books are the ones that SHOW a message. We've all heard the adage show don't tell and this is especially true when you're trying to ramp up the reader appeal of the men in your manuscript. Create scenes that show the above. It's important to note that he doesn't have to be this perfect guy, especially at the beginning of your novel. But as your story grows, the character should grow with it. Let me give you an example—Malcolm Steele

Mindset/dialogue:

Make him a REALISTIC role model & Problem-solvers

Scene-illustrate:

Respected by others/leadership qualities & Kindness/ positive traits

Interpersonal scenes:

Character growth & Positive interactions with others

Case in point

Northshire Heritage series

Malcolm Steele starts his journey as a character that no one could respect—not even me, his creator. But it's the journey from a profligate, wealthy, party-boy to a Christian soldier who leads his family amid a global conflict that fascinated *Pub Weekly* and other reviewers. The point is, your character doesn't have to show MANY of these positive traits we've discussed in the beginning/early stages of your book. But, by that final chapter, we should see a solid character that appeals to us.

Let me add a caveat. Your character should show seeds of being a problem solver, a role model etc. all along. You don't want to have inconsistent characterization and confuse your readers. But bring him along a journey of self-discovery, rites of passage, a conversion to Christ that allows him to demonstrate his true potential.

What do men want?

Here's a summary of what men want. I've surveyed male readers and other authors such as Lisa Carter, Ronnie Kendig, and Dan Walsh for their opinions as well.

- Immediate problem immersion
- Respect/relatable characters
- Guys who show wisdom/experience
- Show-ers/Do-ers not talkers
- Masculine men (reasonable aggression / clearly defined masculinity)
- Guys with flaws but a measure of self-confidence
- Real. Very real. Not idealistic at all.

HE and SHE differ greatly

Men and women are DIFFERENT despite what the secular world proclaims

Men and women have different biology and different biological needs

Men and women perceive problems differently

Men and women perceive relationships differently

Men and women THINK differently

Men and women SPEAK differently

HE and SHE validate themselves differently

SHE tends to measure HER self-worth by the quality of HER **relationships**.

HE tends to measure HIS self-worth by HIS **accomplishments**.

SHE tends to focus on intangibles like **emotions** and **perceptions** because **relationships** are paramount.

HE has important sounding Job Titles, and displays Awards, Certificates, Ribbons, Badges because **accomplishments** are paramount.

God commands us

to LOVE

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

—Eph. 5:21 (KJV)

to RESPECT

...and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

—Eph. 5:33 (KJV)

Wrap it up

- Men matter so cater to male readers
- Men want realistic, strong (but flawed) male characters
- Remain authentic to gender but suitable to the plot
- With strong male characters, books written with a female audience in mind *can* still appeal to male readers

Biographies and Contact Info

JP Robinson Biography:

JP Robinson is a full-time author of historical and political fiction. He is also a PA-certified teacher with fifteen years of experience in marketing and education. Publishers Weekly and other industry leaders have praised his high-adrenaline novels. Bilingual in French and pursuing his master's degree in Education, JP frequently speaks at writers conferences and to church groups across the nation. He has been happily married for over fifteen years to his high school sweetheart.

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Gregg Bridgeman Biography:

Gregg Bridgeman is the Editor-in-Chief at Olivia Kimbrell Press. He is husband to best-selling Christian author Hallee Bridgeman and parent to three. He continues to proudly serve in the US Armed Forces and has done so in either an active or reserve capacity for more than twenty years as an Airborne and Air Assault qualified paratrooper, earning a Bronze Star for his service. Most importantly, he was ordained in October of 2001 after surrendering his life to Christ decades earlier.

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