

**THE
FIFTY SHADES OF GREY
PHENOMENON**

**Compiled by
Campbell M Gold**

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(2012)

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Introduction

Erika Leonard, birth name Erika Mitchell (born 1963), is better known by her pseudonym, E L James, and is the successful British author of the "Fifty Shades" Trilogy.

Published free online, Fifty Shades of Grey began its meteoric rise to bestseller status surrounded by a passionate peer group of fans and writers, predominantly female, who are not merely consumers of literature, but are remixing and co-producing it.

As publishers search for new popular content, such ebook-producing and consuming groups are key sources of material.

The Setting

Fifty Shades of Grey is set largely in Seattle, and is the first part of a trilogy that explores the relationship between a college graduate, Anastasia Steele, and a young business magnate, Christian Grey. The book has explicitly erotic scenes which include elements of bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism (BDSM).



E L James, author of Fifty Shades of Grey, an ebook originally based on characters from Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series.

Photograph: Ken McKay / Rex Features

The Inspiration

The trilogy was inspired by, and developed from, a Twilight fan fiction originally titled "Master of the Universe", which was published as episodes on fan-fiction websites under James' pen name, "Snowqueen's Icedragon".

The plot featured characters named after Stephenie Meyer's Twilight characters - Edward Cullen and Bella Swan. However, following comments concerning the sexual nature of the material, James removed the story from the fan-fiction websites and exclusively published it on her own website - www.FiftyShades.com. When asked about the series, Stephenie Meyer said, "that's really not my genre, not my thing... Good on her--she's doing well. That's great!"

Later, James rewrote "Master of the Universe" as an original piece, with the principal characters renamed Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele, and removed it from her website prior to publication.

The re-developed version of "Master of the Universe" was a trilogy, with the first part, "Fifty Shades of Grey" being released in May 2011 as an e-book and a print-on-demand paperback by The Writers' Coffee Shop - a virtual publisher based in Australia. The second part, "Fifty Shades Darker", was released in September 2011; and, the third part, "Fifty Shades Freed", was released in January 2012.

The Writers' Coffee Shop, as with many print-on-demand publishers, relied on book blogs for early publicity; however, sales were dramatically boosted by the extensive word-of-mouth recommendation.

The book's erotic nature and popularity among married women over thirty led it to being dubbed "Mommy Porn" by some United States news agencies, and the book has also been popular among teenage girls and college women.

Viral Marketing

In January 2012, with the release of the third part, "Fifty Shades Freed", news networks in the United States began to report on the trilogy as an example of "viral marketing and of the rise in popularity of female erotica". They attributed the trilogy's success to the popularity of e-reading devices and the ready availability of downloadable books.

Vintage Books - 2012

Because of the public interest in the series, the publishing rights to the trilogy were acquired by Vintage Books, and a revised edition was released in April 2012.

Amazon UK announced, on 01 August 2012, that it had sold more copies of "Fifty Shades of Grey" than it had the entire Harry Potter series combined, making E L James its best-selling author, surpassing J K Rowling.

About Me - E L James

On her website, E L James describes herself as:

I'm a former TV executive, wife and mother-of-two based in the leafy suburbs of West London. Since January 2012 my life has taken an extraordinary turn with the runaway success of the Fifty Shades Trilogy. From an early age I had always dreamt of writing stories that readers would fall in love with – and my dreams have come true, thanks to you guys. Now that life seems to have settled down a little, I want to crack on and write my next novel – another adult, provocative romance. I do hope you will enjoy that too.

Thank you for all your support. It has meant the world to me. If any one were to ask me for my thoughts about this whole experience, I would say: life is not a dress rehearsal – seize the day and follow your dreams. I wish you the best of luck.

EL November 2012

<http://www.eljamesauthor.com/about-me/>

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