

# The Fanfiction Phenomenon

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## About

The Fanfiction Phenomenon is an introductory blog to fanfiction. This blog, run by Jenny, Julia and Sofia, is a project for the SLM program at Linköping University.

## Social media

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## What is Fanfiction?

### **Fanfiction**

*noun*

noun: **fanfiction**

1. fiction written by a fan of, and featuring characters from, a particular TV series, film, etc.

Fanfiction is in short, the word most often used to describe a literary work – usually published on the internet – made by fans for a specific creative work that already exists i.e a fanfiction could be a creative work building on the characters and world from a tv-show, a literary work, a movie among many other creative formats. Fanfiction is made by fans, for fans.

// Jenny, Julia & Sofia.

## Why Fanfiction?

Fanfiction has been around for a long time, but it's kind of always been – like most parts of fandom – hidden away from the general public. In recent years, it seems to be more “acceptable” to be open about one's interests that previously were seen as “nerdy” or “uncool” or even – God forbid – “weird”. People, especially on the internet, seem to be more open about writing and reading fanfiction, and there are even published authors who don't shy away from their past in fanfiction writing. However, the stigma around it is still present, and a lot of people have preconceived notions about fanfiction and the people who enjoy it. Questions regarding plagiarism and originality are constantly brought up by those who are unfamiliar with it. Although these questions aren't entirely unreasonable, they tend to overlook the actual work that is put into these stories. And there are so many things that could explain why a person dedicates their time to fanfiction, whether it be writing or reading it.

First of all, it's fun. Just like any other type of literature (or any storytelling medium), fanfiction provides entertainment. Stories can have exciting plots, compelling characters, and bring up interesting or thought-provoking subjects and themes. Fanfiction doesn't have to be deep (and most of it probably isn't), but even the silliest of stories might have something more to it. Then again, just because a fanfiction isn't the “pinnacle of literature” doesn't mean that it isn't as valid as more serious ones. For many people, fanfiction is their preferred choice of escapism. Since it's written by fans, it can also easily fix whatever is thought to be “wrong” with the canon, and it's most definitely not an exaggeration to say that there's something out there for everyone. If you're lucky, your fandom has exactly the story that you would want to read – but if it doesn't, why not try and write it yourself?

One of the best characteristics of fanfiction is its openness. While it may seem like there are a lot of unspoken rules to follow, the writing part in itself isn't very restrictive. Fanfiction authors have a lot of room to play around with their stories, and they're not as inclined to strictly stick to specific genres or forms like they might be in traditional published literature. Sure, grammar and correct language are still important, and so is cohesion, but in terms of form or content, there's not actually a set of rules that an author must follow in order for their work to be considered fanfiction. This means that the possibilities for storytelling are endless. Fanfiction can bring out some of the most creative and innovative ideas from an author, since they don't have to follow any conventions and are free to explore and experiment as much as they want to.

Another big and important aspect of fanfiction is its social function. In many ways, fanfiction is about taking part in a community that revolves around the same object of interest and the passion that you all have for a specific piece of work or content. Fans write stories to share with other fans and in return they receive feedback and appreciation in form of comments. Readers who leave comments do not only provide the author with validation for their work but also encouragement and motivation to continue writing. Additionally, readers are – in some cases – able to shape a story since their feedback is immediate and the author might take their opinions and reactions into consideration while writing the next chapter. Collaborations, writing events with established themes and rules, and dedicating stories as “gifts” to specific people are other things you can do as an author within a fandom's fanfiction community. Just like other subsections of a fandom, fanfiction can also bring together people and create friendships between different authors as well as between authors and readers through their love for the same stories.

To get better at something, you need practice, and this rings true for fanfiction as well. Even though the criteria of what “good” fanfiction looks like aren't unanimous among fans, it's pretty safe to say

that the majority agrees with the sentiment that the more you write, the better you will get at it. Just like any other type of writing, fanfiction can help improve an author's language skills, e.g., grammar, vocabulary, dialogue, story components like plot, etc. On AO3 you can also post translations of someone else's story (as long as you've got permission to do so, of course), which means that you could read the same work in two different languages. Furthermore, the experience and techniques that an author gains from writing fanfiction can be immensely useful if they also want to try and write original works.

The subject of representation is continuously brought up when talking about media. When it comes to fanfiction, people can find representation in stories that they might not see elsewhere. This is of course not only restricted to topics such as sexuality and gender, but other minorities as well. Authors can explore characters' identities far beyond what is shown in the source material (like turning a small side character into a fleshed out main character), or apply other identities to them (which is sometimes referred to as a "headcanon", e.g., an idea that a fan has come up with and that – generally – isn't supported by the source material's canon). Fanfiction is most often character driven, and multiple versions of one single character can co-exist within a fandom due to all the different interpretations that the authors have of said character.

All in all, fanfiction can bring out some incredible stories from authors and give readers the entertainment and escapism that they seek. The characters or the world might not be their own, but the stories themselves are – and shouldn't that be valid enough? Fanfiction authors don't write for profit, anyway. It's all made by fans for other fans; that's the whole point of it. And there are so many reasons why people enjoy fanfiction, why they can spend hours upon hours reading it, and there are certainly more than the ones mentioned here. So rather than asking the question "why?", perhaps it's better to ask, "why not?"

// Jenny

## Where to Start?

There are numerous online pages where one can read fanfiction, but the two sites I would personally recommend that you start with are: fanfiction.net, and Archive of Our Own (or, as it is affectionately known by its members, ao3). Why? Because these two sites, in my opinion, carry the largest databases and the most worthwhile reads. Ao3 is widely considered the site with the highest quality fics, as well as being known for having the best system for sorting and storing them. Fanfiction.net, on the other hand, is a bit more of a mixed bag, with a lot of hidden gems, but probably just as many (or more) lower-quality fics that you will have to sift through in order to get to those gems. The reason why I'm still recommending ffc.net is that there are fics on there that are well worth the read, and that have not yet been transferred by the authors to ao3.

Now then, on to the specifics of each site.

\*Obs! At the very end of this post there will be a list of terms that may be helpful to know.

### Ao3

The first thing you need to know about Archive of Our Own, is that you need an invitation to become a member, and in order to get that invitation you need to sign up to a waiting list, so do that as soon as possible! Having an account is ideal, because although the majority of the fics on the site can be read without a membership (which is free, btw!), some are closed to non-members, and it is only by having an account that you'll be able to save the fics that you have read (and eventually post your own!).

The second thing you need to know about Archive of Our Own is how to use the site's search function, i.e. how to find the fics that you want by narrowing down the search. Here's a quick step-by-step guide of the basics to get you started:

1. Enter the site, either by searching "ao3" or "Archive of Our Own" on Google and finding the site url through there, or by typing in the url directly: [archiveofourown.org](https://archiveofourown.org).
2. Hover your mouse over the "Search" menu on the top-left corner. It will list places to search, and to search the site's fanfiction database you need to select "Works".



3. This will take you to the main search-engine of the site. Here you can search for fics using a lot of different parameters, like the fandom you want to read about, the works' word count, relationships, ships etc. The place I'd recommend you start is with either the first "free search" box called "Any Field" or with the box called "Fandoms". The first box will search any text on the site to match what you are looking for, for example "time travel" could be a thing to search here. (For this box it is helpful to know about different tropes for each fandom, but it absolutely isn't necessary).

Work Search

Work Search People Search Bookmark Search

Tag Search

Work Info

Search

Any Field ?

Title

Author/Artist

Date ?

Completion status

All works

Complete works only

Works in progress only

Crossovers ?

Include crossovers

Exclude crossovers

Only crossovers

Single Chapter

Word Count ?

The second box is pretty self-explanatory. This is where you search for whatever fandom (book, book series, movie, tv series etc.) that you're interested in reading about. If you want your search to show you purely that fandom without any crossovers (i.e. cross-world stories containing elements of more

than one fandom), then make sure to click the box called "Exclude crossovers".

From here on out the rest are just extra parameters to narrow down your search. You can choose a category of story (ff (female female), fm (female male), gen, mm (male male), or multi) depending on what kind of pairing you want to see in the story. Gen stands for general and love not being the main part of the story (if it is included at all), while multi stands for someone in the story having multiple partners.

Work Tags ?

Fandoms

Rating

Warnings

Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Graphic Depictions Of Violence

Major Character Death

No Archive Warnings Apply

Rape/Non-Con

Underage

Categories

F/F

F/M

Gen

M/M

Multi



















Other

4. So what do you do once you've found a fic you like? Well, three things. One, you read it. Two, for the love of GOD (and assuming that you have an account already), you bookmark it. And three, you leave kudos. What are kudos, you may ask? Well they're like the instagram heart, a way to "like" the story, that will be available at the bottom of every chapter (though note that you are generally only able to give kudos once for every work). There is also an optional fourth step, that I really enjoy – you download it to your device. It's very easy – at the top of every chapter of every story there will be a download button. Once you click it you are given several formatting options. My personal favourites is epub, which works great with iphone devices and which can be downloaded onto books, but feel free to experiment to find which format you like best.
5. The final thing to know is that you can (and should!) comment if you like an author's work. Most authors really appreciate it and may even take the time to respond, but even if they don't, it's a really nice way of showing your appreciation to people who write for free, often hoping to gain experience.

## Fanfiction.net

Sporting a slightly more out-dated design, as well as stricter parameters for posting, fanfiction.net is nevertheless the second-best site out there, in my opinion, and is also fairly easy to use and understand. The basics are:

1. You need to create an account. Unlike on ao3, this can be done instantly, no waiting list necessary. (However, if you do not create one, you will still be able to have access to all stories on this site, another difference to note).
2. As soon as you access the site, you will be greeted by two lists of different stories; "regular" fanfics and "crossovers". These will, in turn, be divided into the kind of media the fanfics are based on.

Regular	Crossover
 Anime	 Anime
 Books	 Books
 Cartoons	 Cartoons
 Comics	 Comics
 Games	 Games
 Misc	 Misc
 Movies	 Movies
 Plays	 Plays
 TV	 TV

If you press on one of these, for example the media type "books" under the "regular" column, you will be taken to a list of the most popular series being written about in descending order.

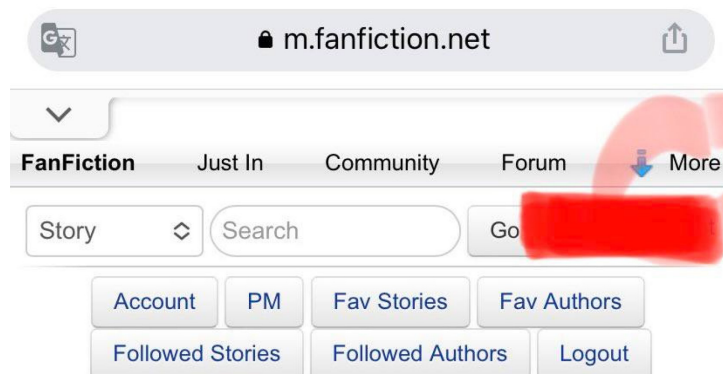
m.fanfiction.net

Top 200

Harry Potter	840K
Twilight	222K
Percy Jackson and the Olympians	79.5K
Lord of the Rings	58.0K
Hunger Games	46.2K
Warriors	26.9K
Mortal Instruments	17.6K
Maximum Ride	17.1K
Hobbit	12.9K
Phantom of the Opera	12.8K
Chronicles of Narnia	12.7K
Gossip Girl	10.3K
Outsiders	9.8K
A song of Ice and Fire	9.7K
Vampire Academy	8.6K
Divergent Trilogy	8.4K

If you press on one of these you will be greeted by a long list of the most recent chapters to be posted for this fandom.

(If you want to see a list of the most recent chapters posted for ANY fandom you can click the "Just In" button at the top of the site). You can also, by pressing on the "more" tab at the top right (on your phone) search for more specific stories, titles, authors, communities (more or this later) or forums.



3. However, the most common way of finding fics on fanfiction.net probably isn't any of the ways mentioned above – the true "heart" of fanfiction.net is its "communities" i.e. its member-made lists grouping fics of the same theme, feeling or pairing together. You access these by pressing the "Community" tag at the top of the page (see: pic above), then once again selecting the media type that the fics you are looking for are based on (for example "books" or "games") and then choose a specific book, series, manga or game etc. from there. These communities can then be sorted by followers, stories, create date or by other parameters. Alternatively, (and this is my preferred method of use), you can google the kind of story you want to read, and you'll more often than not be directed to a fanfiction.net community that fits those parameters). This method allows you to search more freely, and kind of mimics ao3's "any field" search method.
4. Once you've found a story you like you can (assuming that you have an account) "follow" and "favourite" (a.k.a bookmark) both the story and the author. You can do this at the very end of every chapter (if you're on your phone; on your ipad, for example, this function will be at the top of the page, as well).



5. Finally, you can comment on every chapter separately (but only once, unlike on ao3), either anonymously or through your account. If you do so through your account then the author is able to respond to you, so do check your inbox from time to time if this is the method that you choose to use.

### Some terms to know

Crossover = a fic that is inspired by or features characters or places from SEVERAL universes/works of fiction.



Gen = General, stands for no pairing, or the pairing not being the main focus of the story.

Kudos = hearts/likes (only relates to ao3).

Hiatus = the author is taking a break.

Canon = The story that is accepted as the original work or adheres to the original work.

AU = Alternate universe, non-canon universe.

Headcanon = Non-canon personal ideas by a fan.

Slash = Same sex pairings.

OC = Original character.

OOC = Out of character (the character does not behave like in Canon).

SI = Self Insert fic (a fic where the author or aspects of the author is the work's main character).

Dead dove: Do Not Eat = Tag or warning on AO3 used to indicate that a fanwork contains tropes or elements that may be deemed morally reprehensible without explicitly condemning the sensitive aspects.

// Sofia

## Fanfiction and its Connection to Published Authors

Fanfiction has, at this point, been a longstanding tradition for the internet to take part in, whether the subjects of said fanfiction are real or not. But fanfiction has changed platforms a few times over the years and to tell you about the authors that we know have their roots from fanfiction I will have to start from the 2000s, when the biggest site for fanfiction today, known as Archive of Our Own, was still in its early stages. The 2000s was the peak for another site online, called fanfiction.net, and which just started to gain popularity. Fandoms such as Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings were two of the more popular fandoms to write about.

It's the year 2000, and the first fanfiction in a trilogy known as The Draco Trilogy has just been published. It quickly amassed a slew of readers eagerly awaiting the next chapter and next books for some. And then, two books in, the books were suddenly taken down from fanfiction.net due to allegations of plagiarism. These allegations were not made due to copyright infringement on the original Harry Potter books but were instead due to the author allegedly copying and plagiarising other fantasy books in her own works. However, that was just two of the books from the trilogy, and so one may wonder about what happened to the trilogy next. Well, as the works were taken down from fanfiction.net, they were moved to an archive site called FictionAlley. The books had suddenly found a new place and the author found that her works were reaching new heights in terms of popularity and success. The writer behind the fanfiction works is today, to most, known as Cassandra Claire. Claire is most famous for her works in The Mortal Instruments and the universe the series belong to; the series was first published in 2013. The Mortal Instruments series is classified as YA fantasy and has a few deeply rooted ideas and characters that can be seen in her earlier fanfiction works. In fact, some on the internet have pointed out that the first books written in her big universe seemed to be rooted in The Draco Trilogy. This seemed to be due to the similarities the main couple and characters, Clary and Jace have to her characters in The Draco Trilogy. The fanfiction works took place in the same universe as the books, and yet were so very different from the source material. The trilogy focused heavily on a love square which eventually ended with the pairings of Draco/Ginny and Hermione/Harry from the Harry Potter books.

Fast forward a few years, at least ten and you would be remiss in thinking that Cassandra Claire was the only author with roots in fanfiction. The next big thing after Twilight for that same audience was now a collection of books from the author E.L James. To the surprise of many, those who hadn't known that fanfiction was a thing, that same book series was fanfiction from the start. The fanfiction works in question were originally written for Stephanie Meyer's trilogy Twilight. In Fifty Shades, the character that is now Christian Grey was Edward Cullen and the character of Anastasia Steele was, of course, Bella Swan in its fanfiction counterpart. The book was the next big thing that seemed to draw many more to the vast universes and works of fanfiction. The books written by James had gone on to become big movies, but one should never forget the books' humble origins; fanfiction was where it started, again. The fanfictions have been taken down from fanfiction.net as not many publishers want their authors to have a published fanfiction work. But, since it is the internet, we are talking about the original works can be found if you look hard enough and indeed, the books, however dissimilar from the actual Twilight trilogy, it is far more like its fanfiction counterpart than one would first think. The fanfiction itself and later the book, is about Anastasia Steele meeting Christian Grey, the mysterious CEO of his company, and starting a relationship which spans through six books with its ups and downs. One thing to note if you ever want to read this though, is that it's basically spicy the whole way through. And yet, Fifty Shades was not the last work that turned from fanfiction after they were published. In fact, I know of one more notable work that has been published.

The Love Hypothesis by Ali Hazelwood is a New Adult contemporary romance taking place at a university, in which the main character, Olive, must fake a relationship with a man Dr. Carlsen, a professor in the same major that Olive is now a PhD student in. The book has taken the world of readers by storm and has been known as originally being fanfiction from the beginning. It was never a secret by the author, instead, she revels in it, in fact she's proud of her original fanfiction. Even the cover of the book spoils what fandom the fanfiction belonged to if you look close enough. Hazelwood wrote the book as a Reylo fanfiction, which is the most popular "ship name" (relationship name) for the relationship of Kylo Ren and Rey from the new Star Wars trilogy. This book is itself like the fanfiction it originated from, but Hazelwood has added characters and scenes that weren't in the fanfiction version and while they do want to somewhat distance themselves from the fanfiction version, it also pays homage to the original version. Hazelwood has never hidden the fact that the book was a fanfiction from the beginning and yet, it does just fine on its own. In fact, it was one of TikTok's Booktok side of the app's favourite books in 2021. It has occasionally popped up in a favourite book list of 2021 on TikTok and other sites, like Goodreads made for readers to be able to review the books they have read and keep track of them at the same time. SPOILERS! It ends with the two getting together, for real this time. I promise, no angst here. well, a little angst in the middle, but you know how it is with romance, there's always a setback before it gets better.

Several authors, most likely more than I know of, have their roots in fanfiction. It is often how many authors start to write. There are authors that never want to be connected to their fanfiction works and it seems to me, analysing these three different authors that fanfiction seems to be on an upwards turn for how it is perceived. Fanfiction has many times been seen as a negative thing, something one should be ashamed of as an author and it seems obvious to me that there has been a demand for any author with their roots in fanfiction to take them down, and never to mention them again due to the standing fanfiction seemed to have at the time. And while The Love Hypothesis' original work has been taken down, at the request of publishers Ali Hazelwood herself has never shied away from her roots. She has mentioned them in several interviews and her seemingly unashamed of her fanfiction works might be a sign that the public's perception of fanfiction is slowly starting to change.

// Julia