

# The Fanfiction Craze

## By Kristen Shifflett



Image via [piotrek](#)

Have you ever loved a storyline from your favorite novel, movie, TV show, video game, anime or manga, or cartoon so much but wished the author had gone another way in the story line? Or enjoyed the characters so much but wanted to spin the story's canonical universe in a completely different direction? If you love writing and exploring a fandom, fan fiction is a rapidly growing genre for creative expression. Fan fiction (also commonly known or abbreviated as fanfiction, fanfic, or fic) are fictional works created by unpaid writers. It is work based off other original works or their own

original work. Fan fiction authors don't write for financial gain, they do it because they love the fandom and want to express their creativity within the fandom's canonical universe. In our digital age, fan fiction has progressed and grown into a phenomenon. Fan fiction writers publish their works online on a variety of websites or forums such as [FanFiction.net](#), [Archive of Our Own](#) (AO3), [LiveJournal](#), [Tumblr](#), other various websites dedicated to fan fiction for different fandom's, or even on apps like [Wattpad](#).

Writing is a tough process; especially attempting to create original work. It's unbelievably difficult to write something and put it online for the world's perusal. Earl Horlyk, a reporter for [Sioux City Journal](#) (2014) found that many fan fiction writers like Morningside college students Megan Bailey and Elizabeth Planck are fans and writers of fan fiction and use it as a tool "for constructive criticism" in order to improve her writing. Fan fiction has a difficult relationship within the literary publishing world due to dissenting opinions about the legitimacy, legality, and ethicality of fan fiction writing. Authors hold a copyright, a form of intellectual property, a legal right to exclusivity over their original work and some authors feel fan fiction violates that right. Authors of fanfiction aren't explicitly required to include '[disclaimers](#)', a statement that says they don't own the fandom in which they are writing, in their story but it doesn't legally protect an author from being sued for copyright infringement. According to a [Time article](#) about

fan fiction, "the legal argument against fan fiction isn't actually very strong...But in practice, a fan-fiction writer who receives a cease-and-desist letter has almost no choice but to comply."

Some notable dissenters of fan fiction are famous authors such as George R.R. Martin, Anne Rice, Ursula K. Le Guin and Diana Gabaldon. Diana Gabaldon, author of popular "Outlander" series, is quoted in a [Wall Street Journal article](#) saying that fan fiction is "stealing an audience that doesn't belong to them." Orson Scott Card, author of the popular science fiction novel "Ender's Game" said in 2004 on his website, "[The time to write fan fiction is 'never,'](#)" and "[to write fiction](#) using my characters is morally identical to moving into my house without invitation and throwing out my family." However, Jim Hines, a published science fiction author, disagrees with Mr. Card and says "Writing good fanfic is just as challenging as writing good anything else."

Fan fiction writers do find difficulty in the publishing world despite literary publisher's realizations that fan fiction "is a huge potential market—one stocked with both prolific authors and enthusiastic readers." According to a [recent article in Wired magazine](#), independent publisher Big Bang press is taking advantage of the fan fiction phenomena and recruiting fan fiction writers. Morgan Davies, Big Bang Press's editor-in-chief, said "We want to take people who have been writing a lot of fan fiction and honing their writing talent, but who are interested in writing original stuff and clearly have the talent and ability to do so." However, it's clear that fan fiction is an increasingly popular phenomenon and it is possible to succeed as a fan fiction writer. Some authors who started out as fan fiction writers have become successful published writers, notably [E.L. James](#), author of "Fifty Shades of Grey" started out writing "Twilight" fan fiction, Cassandra Clare, author of the "Mortal Instruments" series, and Meg Cabot. Some authors enjoy it as a side project like Naomi Novik, author of the "Temeraire" series and Neil Gaiman. As of 2012, Orson Scott Card has modified his stance against fanfiction when he stated in a [Wall Street Journal article](#) that, "Every piece of fan fiction is an ad for my book. What kind of idiot would I be to want that to disappear?" Even J.K. Rowling, author of the popular "Harry Potter" series has had copyright infringement issues but despite that maintains her support for fanfiction. In a [BBC News article](#), Rowling stated she is "flattered people wanted to write their own stories" based on her series. "Harry Potter" is one of the most popular fandom's on the Internet with over 679,000 fan fics on FanFiction.net, over 54,000 on AO3, and with fan fiction on numerous other websites specifically devoted to the "Harry Potter" fandom ([list](#) of most popular fandom's on FanFiction.net).

Some fan fiction writers have modest to [huge fan bases](#) of dedicated readers numbering from 100 to 20,000 for a single fanfic. A recent [Wall Street Journal article](#) about the fan fiction phenomenon highlighted fan fiction writer Randi Flanagan who has written 15 stories about "Twilight" some of which are as long as novels. She has over 1,500 readers subscribing to her stories. Amazon was noted in the [New York Times](#) for pushing boundaries by launching a publishing platform called Kindle Worlds which will "allow fans to digitally publish...stories inspired by their favorite books, movies, television shows, and comics..." and compensate authors with a "standard royalty rate [of] 35 percent of the net revenue for works of at least 10,000 words, and 20 percent for short stories of 5,000 to 10,000 words." According to a [New York Times article](#), "Wattpad is a leader in this new storytelling environment, with more than 2 million writers producing 100,000 pieces of material a day for 20 million readers on an intricate international social network." [FanFiction.net](#) has over 6.6 million stories with nearly 3 million registered users. As of [2013](#), AO3 has over 500,000 works with over 100,000 users. With numbers like these is it any wonder that fan fiction is a persisting phenomenon?

As a frequent reader of fanfiction, it's admirable that we have amateur writers exploring the fandom's universe and honing their craft, but one glaring negative aspect of fanfiction is the oftentimes poor quality, bad grammar, spelling, plot, continuity and/or flow issues. However, there are some legitimately great writers writing fanfiction and it's definitely possible to become successful writing fanfiction. With the volume of fan fiction on the Internet, trolling through for interesting and well-written stories can be akin to searching for a needle in a haystack sometimes but when you find those gems that work can become just as precious as the original fandom.

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