

What is Fanfiction and Where to Find It: Definitions and Fan Archives

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Abstract: A listing of some of the commonly used terminology in fanfiction archives as well as a brief annotated bibliography of several fanfiction archives.

Have you ever finished a book and wondered what happened next? Ever had a TV show end on you before it was finished leaving you speculating on the conclusion? Ever find yourself sitting there wondering what if?

Well you are not alone. For years people of all age, sex and nationality have been answering these questions and more via fanfiction. Fanfiction can be used as a way to answer the unanswered questions left after you put down a book or finish a movie. It can expand upon what already exists. Fanfiction has many forms and the common denominator between them is that it is written by fans for fans as a way to get more out of the source material.

When one decides to turn to fanfiction in order to continue their experience with the material, the first thing they need to know is some of the common terms used in reference to different stories. Knowing the terminology is a great way to start narrowing down a search.

The definitions found below are a mix of dictionary definitions and definitions that are written by fanfiction writers and readers. Because the fanfiction community has created their own meanings and usages behind the different terms they use, dictionary definitions are not necessarily accurate. Furthermore, within different fandoms there is a slight variation of the lingo they use. The ones listed below are the more common terms used across all fandoms.

Definitions

Fanfiction

Stories involving popular fictional characters that are written by fans and often posted on the Internet — called also *fanfic*, or *fic* (Merriam-Webster)

Fiction written by fans of a TV series, movie, etc., using existing characters and situations to develop new plots. (Dictionary.com)

Fiction, usually fantasy or science fiction, written by a fan rather than a professional author, *esp.* that based on already-existing characters from a television series, book, film, etc.; (also) a piece of such writing. (OED online)

Canon: The official source material upon which fanfiction can be based. When the source is available in both book and movie format, it is common to refer to the “movieverse” if a story is written solely off the movie.

Fandom: The activities, canon, characters, fanfiction, and fans of a particular show, movie, book, or other thing. Everything that happens involving the *Twilight* fans is the *Twilight* fandom. This is also used as a synonym for "universe", meaning the world in which a show, movie, or book takes place.

Crossover: Sometimes seen as "Xover," it is a story where characters from one canon interact and exist in another canon's world or with another canon's characters. Examples of crossovers include stories such as: "Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons" where the characters from *Rise of the Guardians*, *Brave*, *Tangled*, and *How to Train Your Dragon* share a plot.

Big Bang: When authors sign up to have a complete story (usually 50-70 thousand words) by a certain date. Artists then illustrate them. Sometimes they can be themed.

Shipping: Fans often refer to a romantic pairing of characters as a "ship" (short for "relationship"). Individuals in favour of two particular characters pairing up are referred to as "shippers." Different fandoms tend to have different ways of referring to their ships. For example: mashing together names of the people they are shipping, adding a slash or an "x" between the characters' names, or writing their initials together. A relationship between Draco and Hermione might be expressed as: Dramione, DracoxHermione, DMHG, DM/HG, or DMxHG.

AR or AU: Alternate Reality or Alternate Universe. A story that makes major changes to the canonical storyline or premise, such as killing off a major character, changing characters' motives or alliances, annulling major events or changing the setting. Using the acronym AR or AU means that the world is the same, but some canon facts are different

AT: Alternate Timeline. It is a story that makes major changes to the canonical storyline or premise, such as killing off a major character, changing characters' motives or alliances, annulling major events or changing the setting. AT stories are fanfictions that take place in another time than the canon (e.g. in Ancient Greece, when the canon is in present time), or is changing the time line itself.

Crack!fic: Fics that do not follow the general rules of writing. They are usually totally humorous and vary from the canon. A crack!fic may also refer to an unlikely or rare pairing ("crack pairing").

Drabble: A one-shot (a single chapter story) that is typically one hundred words in length.

Non-con: Short for "non-consensual," it is an indication that the fic's plot will incorporate rape or sexual assault.

Dub-con: Dubious Consent. In which sexual interactions between characters while may not be seen as rape, but whether a character was willing is questionable, for example, if a character is under the influence of mind altering substances.

EWE: "Epilogue? What Epilogue?" It tends to refer specifically to the Harry Potter fandom, signalling that the author has not taken the epilogue from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* into account when writing their story.

Fluff: A genre in which the story is devoid of angst and takes on a mood of light-hearted romance.

Slash: A subgenre of romance fanfiction referring to homosexual relationships. The term slash tends to be used more with male pairings. Lesbian relationships are often referred to as "femslash" or "femmeslash."

H/C: Hurt/Comfort. A plot framework in which one character in a particular ship experiences pain (physical or emotional) and the other character offers comfort.

MPreg: Short for "male pregnancy," it is a term referring to stories in which men become pregnant.

OC: Original Character. A character created by the author of the fanfiction, as opposed to one already existing in canon. Other breakdowns include: OFC - An original female character, and OMC - An original male character.

Smut: Smut refers to sexual acts that take place in a fic. It could be a sex scene, a story with is sexually suggestive and promiscuous behaviour, or adult/sexual themes. Smut has anything and everything to do with sex. Within the Smut and Romance headings: "Lemon" generally refers to more graphic descriptions of sexual activities while "Lime" refers to sexual themes, like sexual innuendos, but sexual acts are not explicitly described.

PWP: Plot? What Plot?/Porn Without Plot. PWP is used to indicate or imply that a fanfiction story contains little or no plot, but instead focuses on sexual scenes.

OTP: One True Pairing. This term is used by authors and fans to indicate that they believe the characters in question are meant to be together. The pairing can be canonical or can be purely imagination, for example John Watson/Sherlock Holmes. Similarly, "OT3" refers to One True Threesome.

Beta: A beta, or beta reader, in this context is another way of saying editor. It is the person or people who edit a story before it goes out to the public. Not all authors have betas.