

# Fandoms provide havens and outlets for passionate fans

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When people think about fangirls/boys, they tend to picture crazed fanatics who stalk out actors, staple posters to their ceilings and harm themselves over their devotion. But these fans and their communities — commonly referred to as “fandoms” — are much more than this stereotype. Fandoms aren’t just the homes of the obsessed, they’re also spaces where people can connect, bond and create over a common interest.

It all starts when a person sits down to check out a book, television show, band, comic, movie, anime, etc. While some people would enjoy the media and put it back on the shelf or turn off the TV once it’s over, there are those who go further. Usually this leads to the Internet, where the person

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finds out information about the media. This is when many people stumble upon Tumblr.

Tumblr is a microblogging website, mainly run by hipsters and fandoms. The fandom side of Tumblr is where many people begin their initiation from a casual fan to a “fangirl/boy.” The way the people of Tumblr can relate to the waves of emotion that the certain media causes one to feel, unlike most friends in real life, is the real bait for devoted fans. While your family may not care if the band *My Chemical Romance* broke up two years ago, fans on Tumblr will stay up to commiserate over the loss.

Like much of social media, once a fan finds a Tumblr blog dedicated to their fandom, they find it hard to put their phone down, so they continue scrolling through the night. This prolonged exposure to fandom blogs leaves fans wanting more of the media that they’ve grown attached to, which in turn transforms the research from being a casual fan into a frenzy to lay hands on anything to do with the fandom.

Tumblr gives users the ability to share links to media. Some people on Tumblr are writers who pen fanfiction. Some are artists who create fanart. And some are technologically savvy enough to make

fanvids or GIFs (which are animated images) from the original medium.

Some people think fandoms are a waste of time, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Many people who are part of fandoms are incredibly creative people. Writing fanfiction, making fanart and creating fanvids helps these artists explore the media they’re participating in, and it also helps them develop as artists. Sometimes these forms of art can lead to original works, like “*Fifty Shades of Grey*.”

... OK, so that might not be the best example, but there are others. Mark Gatiss, a writer for “*Doctor Who*” and “*Sherlock*” on BBC, had written fanfiction for the original “*Doctor Who*” series and “*Sherlock Holmes*” when he was younger. Even Meg Cabot, the author of “*The Princess Diaries*” series, wrote “*Star*

*Wars*” fanfiction as a young girl, and now she’s a professional writer of original works.

And not only can participation in fandoms lead to some great art, it also provides a haven for people who can be very misunderstood. Before Tumblr, devoted fans of different media were often picked on, derided and bullied, especially if they were in high school.

Today, with the help of the Internet, fans have found people like themselves. They’ve come to see that they’re not alone in their devotion, and that having an obsession isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Not to mention, it’s helped a lot of people realize that everyone has the capacity to get passionate about a lot of things.

Now a working member of a fandom, a fan will come

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across some new vocabulary. At first, it may appear confusing, as it looks as if fandoms are part of the Navy, what with talk of canons and boats, but once they learn the words, a fan may find the lexicon slipping into everyday conversation.

The first term learned in fandoms, is "canon." In non-fandom terms, canon usually describes a general law or rule. In the fandom world, it means something that has happened in the real world or the world of the fandom. For example, if the fandom is for a TV show, things that happened on

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the show are canon. If the fandom is for a book, things that happen in the book and details announced by the author are also canon.

The most popular term, which has now found its way into everyday language, is "ship." Short for "relationship," ship is a romantic couple a fan wishes were together. Some ships have combined names of the characters. Popular examples of these ships include: Percabeth (Percy and Annabeth

from the Percy Jackson series), Harry and Ginny (from "Harry Potter") or Rose and the 10th Doctor (from "Doctor Who"). A certain type of ship, called an OTP, short for "one true pairing," describes a fan's favorite ship.

Then there's "alternate universe," which is used to describe events that take place in a completely different universe from canon. For example, putting "Hunger Games" characters in the modern world or changing

the gender of "Doctor Who" characters (also known as genderbending). Anything that takes place in an alternate universe — or AU — is usually done in fanfiction or fanart.

In the end, there are many facets to fandoms. A fan may discover a new talent, like painting, video editing or costume designing, which results in new ideas ruling over their thoughts at school or work. New friendships are made, and some fans learn to live with their newfound obsession, while others wish they could live in their fandoms.

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