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The Internet World of Fan Fiction

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THE INTERNET WORLD OF FAN FICTION

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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ABSTRACT

THE INTERNET WORLD OF FAN FICTION

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Major Director: Dr. Elizabeth Hodges, Associate Professor, Department of English

Fan fiction, the most popular creative outlet for fans, allows the amateur writer an opportunity to be published and receive immediate feedback from peers. As educators, we can learn from the fan communities as they participate in online activities, especially fan fiction. Students are more likely to embrace entertaining and creative assignments. And since much of the world is linked to the Internet in one way or another, we can allow students an opportunity to not only improve their writing skills, but also enhance their knowledge of the Internet and its capabilities.

My study included online interviews with fan fiction writers and readers as well as the examination of fan fiction texts and websites. By exploring this relatively unknown genre of writing and reading, I believe teachers of composition can use fan fiction to their advantage by encouraging students to write creatively using subject matter that interests them in some way.

Chapter 1: Introduction and History

Mediocre writers borrow; great writers steal.

~ T. S. Eliot

When I was in junior high school, I spent many summer days in the public library reading the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries. My neighbor and best friend, Lisa, and I were quite obsessed with these junior detectives. We could often be seen riding our bicycles around the neighborhood “investigating” crimes and searching for missing objects. And most nights, before going to bed, Lisa would write up an adventure for us to act out the next day. Such behavior, even if it is not scripted in writing, is not uncommon for most children and young adults. Nowadays, children most likely make up their own Harry Potter adventures and act them out.

Essentially, what my friend Lisa was writing was fan fiction or fanfic. Fanfic is a genre of stories, poetry, novels, songs and various other works written by fans in a display of amateur creative writing that features already established characters from movies, television shows, books, singing groups, and other areas of popular culture, placing them in new situations or adventures or even elaborating on adventures original to characters’ creators themselves. One could say that fan fiction is creative writing within an already existing context. These writers are creating fanfics because of a great interest in something. As educators, I believe we can channel that interest and encourage

students to write creatively by incorporating fan fiction in the classroom. We have an opportunity to assist in developing the writing skills of our students by allowing them an academic outlet for something in which they already show interest.

In order to better understand the nature of fan fiction, one must first understand the notion of fandom. “Fandom,” as defined by the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, is where “keen aficionados of any phenomenon such as authors, hobbies, ideologies, genres or fashions can collectively manifest as fandom. Fans typically are interested in even minor details of the object of their fandom; this is what differentiates them from those with only casual interest.” *Wikipedia* also describes the “First Fandom” as existing in the early 1900’s leading up to the first World Science Fiction Convention held on July 4, 1939. Some theorize, however, that fan fiction may find its origins dating back to 1421. Englishman John Lydgate completed his epic poem titled “The Siege of Thebes,” written as a continuation of Chaucer’s “The Canterbury Tales.” According to “SuperCat,” a writer on the website “Fanfic Symposium,” Lydgate uses “typical fan stuff – Chaucer’s tales are long, Lydgate’s are longer; Chaucer uses one astrological reference in his introduction, Lydgate packs in seventeen.” Also noted by SuperCat, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, first published in 1813, has the greatest number of uncommissioned sequels, including *Old Friends and New Fancies*, by Sybil G. Brinton (1913); *The Ladies!*, by E. Barrington (1922); and *Teverton Hall*, by Jane Gillespie (1984).

Most involved in fandoms today acknowledge that fandoms came about through the fan communities related to science fiction films, novels, and television shows. The most well-known fandoms to date are *Star Trek* fandoms. Believe it or not, the original

Star Trek was only on the air for three seasons, yet its popularity and fan following would provoke creators to produce ten films, an animated series and a number of spin-off television shows related to the original theme, and various writers to publish more than 400 novels based on the series. According to “Destina,” who writes for the website “Fan Fiction Primer,” it was *Star Trek* fans who popularized fan fiction as a means of dealing with the cancellation of their show.

Members of *Star Trek* communities have been passing around fanzines (magazines directed toward a particular fan group), newsletters, and stories for years, and have held *Star Trek* fan conventions where fans can often meet celebrities associated with the show. Members of fandoms show their loyalty and appreciation for their subject matter in many ways. Some fans render drawings of favorite characters. Some fans compose poetry or song lyrics pertaining to the subject. Other fans write fan fiction.

Fandoms can exist within other fandoms. A member of a *Star Trek* fandom would also be considered a member of the Science Fiction fandom. And within the *Star Trek* fandom, a member can be a fan of another fan’s writing or artwork.

“Most fans take their first steps along the road to fandom before they have ever heard of the word, of the community it represents,” comments Camille Bacon-Smith (7). “The road begins with their television sets, movie theaters, bookshops, where the choices they make will ultimately lead to their identities in the community they will enter.” Bacon-Smith’s book, *Enterprising Women*, details a woman’s world of fandom. She believes that women involved in fandoms feel stronger in those communities than they do outside of them. These women become known for their contributions to their fan societies

and are admired and respected for what they provide and share with that fandom. Bacon-Smith believes,

For most, fandom is where they go when the garden club or the people at the office don't understand their pre-occupation with the ideas of *Star Trek* or their need to write, draw, talk, and fantasize about stakes higher than the spots of stemware. Smart women, dreamers, artists of all political persuasions can come here in peace and acceptance – as can the lonely, the shy, the battered, the frightened, and the just plain weary. In fiction, the women of the fan community construct a safe discourse with which to explore the dangerous subject of their own lives. (203)

Bacon-Smith explains the path of a fandom member as follows: first, the member chooses a genre, Science Fiction, for example; second, she chooses a medium, television, for example; third, she decides on a product, *Star Trek*, for example; fourth, she becomes involved in an activity, such as receiving a fanzine. Members of fandoms usually do not officially join anything, but they become involved at levels on which they feel most comfortable and can find whatever it might be they are looking for. Fandom members are not limited to any one category of a fandom. A member of the *Star Trek* fandom may also be a member of a Stephen King fandom. Being a member of a fandom is a label one applies to oneself and others who are involved in fan activities that make up a community of fans who share a similar interest.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, fan communities expanded in number and popularity paralleling advances in computer technology and the introduction of the World Wide Web. Some of the first online fandoms used “usenet groups.” Unlike the Internet sites used today, these usenet groups were used to electronically disseminate information relevant to a particular fandom – convention dates and details, upcoming episode information, fan fiction, and fan comments. Usenet information was presented mostly as

text-only documents, no colorful graphics, no photos, nothing but the information, plain and simple. In an article titled “The Times They Are A’Changing,” by K.S. Langley and published on the FanFiction Symposium website, he explains how he used to communicate with fellow fans before technology became the means. “Long distance fan-to-fan communication was achieved by letter writing,” Langley explains. “By hand. Manual typewriters gave way to electric models, then word processors, then personal computers – with Internet and email access.” Langley contends that the impact of technology on personal communication between fans has been a positive growth, while the impact of technology on group communication has been both positive and negative. For example, while the ease and speed of the Internet make it possible for more participants to engage in a forum discussion, those not as familiar with the technology can easily get left behind trying to join the discussion as it is ending. On a positive note, the Internet provides fans with a multitude of locations for finding information and fellow fans. Search engines on the web, such as “Google,” “Dogpile,” or “Alta Vista,” can quickly locate a subject of interest. With so many choices, however, the fan may not know which websites to trust or believe. Langley also believes the impact of technology has had both a positive and negative impact on fan fiction as a product of fan group communication. Positively, it has allowed many writers an opportunity to try their hand at writing and receiving immediate feedback for their efforts. Negatively, because it is so easy to post fan fiction on the Internet, Langley believes the product has suffered. “While Internet fans love their fan fiction as much as fans ever did, they don’t *value* it in the same way earlier fans did,” he asserts. Some websites, such as Reallybadfanfiction.com,

exist that host fan fiction considered substandard by fan preferences and unwritten criteria. In my experience as a reader of fan fiction, I have come across some exceptional writing. Just the same, I have encountered some less than par writing. Nonetheless, without discrimination, the Internet provides an opportunity for all ranges of amateur writers to display their work for others to read.

Today, with the greater accessibility to the Internet and the increased range of electronic formats available, a member of a fandom has a number of choices in pursuing his interest. One of those choices is to find a website or websites that focus on a given interest. Many television shows, for example, have authorized websites containing information pertaining to the show, the actors, the characters and the episodes. J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, not only has an official website, one authorized by her and maintained by her, <www.jkrowling.com>, but has thousands of other unauthorized, unofficial fan-created websites dedicated to her and her work. This leads to a second way of discovering more about a fandom – fan-created websites. At the time of the initial start-up of the World Wide Web, developing and maintaining a website was left to professional web designers. Website templates now exist to allow even the most amateur web creator a chance to display his own interests on his own site. Many of these fan sites contain not only information relevant to a fandom, such as press releases, convention information and perhaps cast and character biographies, but also examples of fan-created products such as fan fiction and fan art.

For example, on the website known as the “Harry Potter Fan Zone,” fans are updated on the latest news pertaining to the Harry Potter novels and movies. They can

browse through background information about the series, learn more about the author, and download video and audio clips as well as photographs. And they can read fan fiction. Another form of such adulation for the subject of their fandom is fan art. Fan art is just that – art created by fans. Below are two pieces displayed on the Harry Potter Fan Zone website showing the range of art that has been created:



Figure 1



Figure 2

As can be seen by the drastic difference in these images, fans choose to express themselves differently in their art.

A perhaps lesser-known option for participating in an online fandom is finding a user group on the Yahoo.com website. Yahoo hosts many list groups. Simply by going to the Yahoo homepage, <www.yahoo.com>, and selecting the “Groups” icon, you are directed to a search page which enables you to search by category or by keyword or even start a new group. Many of these groups not only discuss the particular subject of their fandom, but they also share fan fiction and other fan products here.

The appearance of today's Yahoo list groups is probably the closest to the usenet groups of the past. Though it is possible for members to include photographs and other graphics in posts or entries, most simply contain text only. Once a member of the group, you are able to view and respond to messages posted by other members. If someone posts something of particular interest to you, you can simply click on the reply button and type a response. Once sent, your post is now in the message list and could receive potential replies. To become a member of a Yahoo group, you must join that group. In joining, you are providing the group moderator (whoever monitors that particular group messages), with basic information about yourself. Often, you are asked to write a brief explanation of why you want to join the group. Because of your brief explanation, the moderators are then able to see if you are a member of any other Yahoo group, evaluate your reason for wanting to join their group, and can approve or deny your participation in their group. Below is a screenshot of the main webpage for the Yahoo user groups.

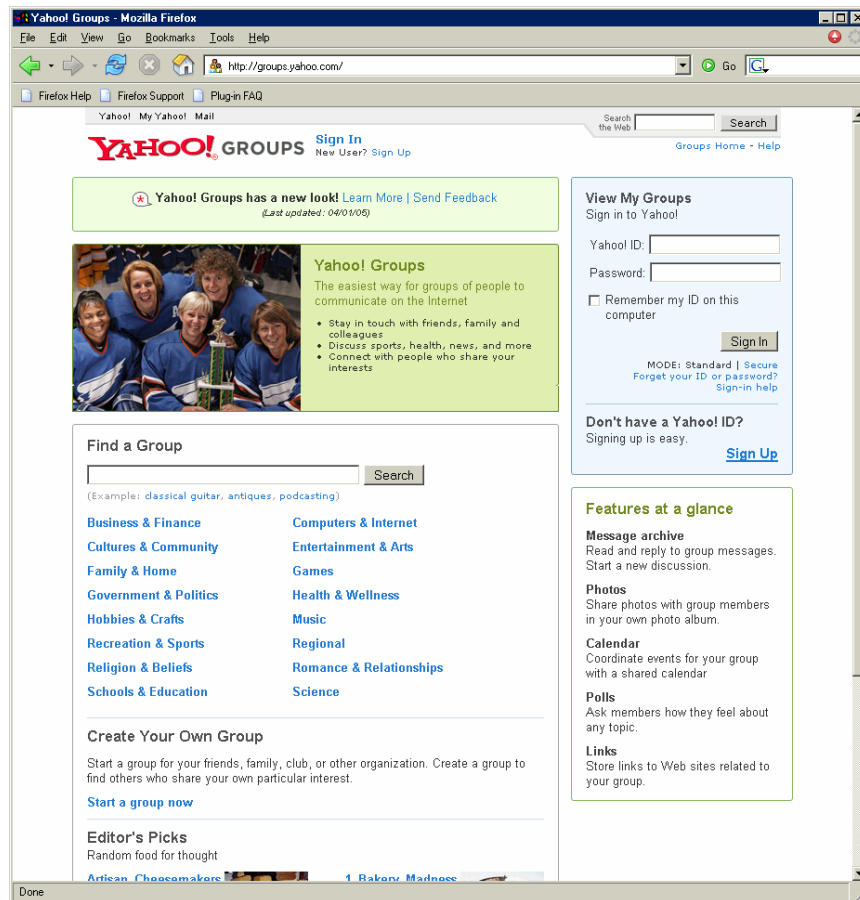


Figure 3

Many fan-created sites and some official sites include “forums” as a part of the site. These forums are a way for members of a fandom to voice opinions, communicate with other fans, learn of news and information pertaining to their fandom as well as the subject of their admiration, and share fan fiction, poetry, and art with each other. In order to actively participate in a forum, you must, as with the list groups, register first, which is very simple. In most cases, all that is needed is an e-mail address, a user name and a password. Forums are made up of “threads,” topics or ideas, pieces of news, or possibly fan fiction stories offered by registered forum members. Forum members can then post entries in existing threads or start their own threads. Like the Yahoo groups, these forums

are usually monitored by moderators who have the authority to remove or close a thread should they feel it is offensive in nature or unrelated to the forum.

Forums are one way for fans to display fan fiction. Another method is to include the fan fiction stories in a section of a particular website. For example, on a particular unofficial website dedicated to a movie, one of the options on the home page would be “Fan Fiction,” offering links to stories about that particular movie written by fans and submitted to the website for display. There are also websites maintained that only host fan fiction. The largest and one of the longest-running sites is <www.fanfiction.net>. This site shows a number of different categories of fan fiction, consisting of books, movies, television shows and cartoons, and contains thousands of stories written about subjects ranging from William Shakespeare’s sonnets to comic book characters to video game characters. “Fanfiction.net has more than 10,000 additions to Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* series,” writes Jon Casimir in a 2002 article published in the online version of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. “Two hundred fans have written new stories with Shakespearean characters. Five hundred have come up with new Bible verses,” he continues. “Oh yes, and three people have added their own chapters to Anne Frank’s diary.”

In an online article published on the *USA Today* website in February of 2003, writer Whitney Matheson shared her first experience with fan fiction. “I can’t say I blame fans for taking writing duties into their own hands,” she explains. Matheson found four reasons an author would want to write fan fiction: one reason would be to put characters “in a completely wacky, unexpected situation;” the second reason is to “add a pinch of

sex;” the third is to further develop a favorite character; and the fourth reason is because “some fans are just tired of waiting for the inevitable.” Matheson is definitely a supporter of fan fiction, believing that as long as fan fiction writers are properly labeling their work as fan fiction and they are not making a profit from it, original creators of the work should be flattered by the gesture. “It’s encouraging to see pop culture inspiring creative activity,” she asserts, “and, for all we know, today’s fan fiction writers will attempt an original story or screenplay tomorrow.”

Chapter 2: Categories of Fan Fiction

Like published fiction, fan fiction falls into certain categories – romance, drama, horror, comedy, etc. But fan fiction has even more categories than mainstream fiction.

“Slash” fiction, as described by *Wikipedia*, is fan fiction that depicts heterosexual main characters in homosexual relationships. The name comes from the use of the slash (/) character when describing a story, for example, “Joey/Chandler.” First appearing in the 1970s *Star Trek* fanzines, “Kirk/Spock” is thought to be the first example of slash fiction.



Figure 4

Within fan fiction communities and fandoms, the exact definition of slash fan fiction varies. The strictest definition allows for pairings between male characters only. The term “femmeslash” or “femslash” has been used to describe lesbian fan fiction.

Recently, however, some television shows and series have been featuring gay and lesbian characters, and when fan fiction is written about these couples, by common definition, it is not considered slash fiction since the characters are already homosexual. However, this leaves such same-sex stories without a label; they end up being categorized as slash mostly for convenience.

Slash has sub-categories distinguishing the nature of the content of some fan fiction. A fanfic described as a “no lemon” would be a story in which the same-sex pairing shows not much more than friendship. Thus, “lemon” would describe a story in which the same-sex pairing that explicitly displays adult activity. Some slash fandoms have used “lime” to describe the lesbian equivalent. The website “Writer’s University,” <www.writersu.net>, offers another term to this list of distinguishing terms: “citrus” refers to both lime and lemon stories.

Ratings much like the ones used in the motion picture industry (G, PG, PG-13, R or NC-17) are applied to most slash fan fiction. Generally, readers are warned of the nature of the content in a fanfic and are given a rating to follow based on that content. Anyone complaining about a detailed, graphic sexual encounter in a fanfic has very little ground to stand on when he was warned of the possibility of that encounter by the author. The most controversial of slash fan fiction is that involving underage characters or real people. Obviously, no one has to read anything if he doesn’t want to, since some of these stories can be distasteful. Most websites, including Fanfiction.net have banned such stories.

In his book *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins asserts that slash is “a projection of female sexual fantasies, desires, and experiences onto the male bodies of the series characters” (191). He claims to know only a few male writers of slash fan fiction and just a slightly larger number of male readers of slash. “Indeed,” he states, “several times when I ordered slash zines, the editors wrote notes explaining that they have few male readers and assuring me that I can receive a refund if I am offended” (191). Jenkins is correct that the majority of slash fan fiction writers are women, and there are many theories as to why they dominate this sub-genre of fan fiction. Bacon-Smith believes that heterosexual women tend to write slash fanfics because they are attracted to and love men and can write about loving them both physically and emotionally (241). Writing slash fiction is sexually exciting to many of these writers. Writing about two male characters as an intimate couple allows these women authors a few liberties with the subject matter. By not incorporating a female character to develop a sexual relationship with the male character, the author cannot be accused of creating a “Mary Sue” character, which I’ll define shortly. Also, the author may not want to use an established female character because in her eyes and in her story, no female character would be ideal for the male character of whom she is so endeared. Most women who write slash fan fiction cannot imagine a woman as a heroine and so the strong, male character is the point of the story, but these authors still need the emotional, intimate relationships. They crave the romance. And because they feel their own lives are less than good enough to be related to these male characters, they inject facets of their own personalities or traits into another male character and develop the relationship. Leslie Fish, a long-standing *Star Trek* fan fiction

writer, commented to Bacon-Smith about the attraction slash material held for women, “Well, on the one hand [there is] the general attraction of gay men for women. It’s the only way we can even – [in] fantasy – we can be the one and have the other” (238). Fish elaborates on her theory, “Our culture so thoroughly denigrates the personalities of women that women can’t imagine themselves as heroic characters unless they imagine themselves as male” (240).

According to Jenkins, “As [one slash writer] explains, ‘Most women in fandom have longstanding female relationships. . . . If we want to see strong female-female relationships, all we have to do is look in our own lives. To us that’s mundane. . . . Slash is something way out there – a total fantasy. Not many of us know men who incorporate this ideal bonding into their relationships and that’s what we want to see” (205).

Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander, editors of *Theorizing Fandom*, believe that slash portrays the alternative for a series’ protagonists. Typically, there are no main female characters; the characters have no long-standing relationships with women; no one is ideal for either male character; and usually, there are two main males, partners, projecting subliminal sex appeal. Harris and Alexander contend that lesbians write male-to-male slash for two reasons: one, it’s something they won’t experience in real life (sex with men); and two, it’s a way for them to position men in their world where the women are dominant and in control. Another reason they believe women write slash fan fiction is because the authors are writing about the strength of women, moving away from seeing men as the center of everything – allowing them to be just men as women celebrate their own strengths and power.

“Mary Sue” fan fiction is a category “featuring an original character who is an idealized stand-in for the author and/or reader” (Wikipedia). “The term is not a compliment.” Most times the Mary Sue character is near perfect in every way. Stereotypically female, she is stronger, nicer, more attractive, and more intelligent than the established characters. She wins their admiration; she wins their love and typically upstages the setting’s protagonists in every way. Wikipedia lists some of the typical traits of Mary Sues: has unique abilities, has distinctive physical features, has a name based on that of her author, possesses 21st-century attitudes in a setting where these are unheard of, and is centrally involved in every part of the story. “The term Mary Sue is often said to have originated from a *Star Trek* fanfiction bearing the first original Mary Sue (with that same name),” claims Wikipedia.

A writer on the website Fan Fiction Primer, Destina offers the following description of a Mary Sue character:

She stands in for the author and performs every heroic feat known to fandom, often outdoing the main characters of the story. She is beautiful, fit, wise, and incredibly intuitive. She is either the best friend, lover, or unrequited love of the most handsome and desirable male character. She often has psychic or supernatural powers, which she uses in the most predictable and boring ways. She is introduced without preamble, has not a single weakness or flaw, and can kick the butt of the most powerful person in the story. In short, she’s annoying and clichéd.

Many beginning fan fiction writers incorporate a Mary Sue character to make their writing more familiar to them. They might also believe that by veering from the

established cast of characters and introducing a new character, they are exempt from the criticism they might receive because they've done something new and different.

When a member of a fandom is feeling musically inclined, she may want to write a song about her favorite character. These creations are known as "filk songs." The word filk is said to have originated with Lee Jacobs. In the 1950s, Jacobs was writing an article for the Spectator Amateur Press Society titled "The Influence of Science Fiction on Modern American Filk Music." He meant to use the word "folk" and misspelled it. The article was never published, but Jacobs sent it to friends. According to "Filking 101: The Folk Music of Science Fiction" posted on the website Filk.com, there is no real explanation why the typo caught on, but the term was incorporated into the Science Fiction fandom vocabulary and has been used in reference to Science Fiction songs to this day.

There are a few examples of mainstream filk songs such as "Rocket Man," by Elton John, which is based on a Ray Bradbury story, and "Star Trekkin'" by the Firm. Most filk music today, however, is circulated through Internet fandoms and fan conventions. "Filk songs have stayed close to their folk songs origin," according to Filk.com. "Filk music tends to have a folky sound; the preferred instrument remains the acoustic guitar. The music remains a blend of new-words-to-a-familiar-tune and completely original songs."

For example, below are some of the lyrics to a computer-related filk song written by Ed Halley in March of 2001. It is sung to the tune of "Every Move You Make," by The Police.

Every file you take,
 Every scan you make,
 Every net you quake,
 Every song you play, I'll be watching you.

Every single day,
 Every word you say,
 Every game you play,
 Every night you stay, I'll be watching you.

Oh, can't you see?
 Those songs ain't free,
 How can poor artists
 Give every song you play?

One of the most prolific filk song writers found in the Science Fiction realm is Leslie Fish. “When I got my first guitar at 16, I'd already been into folk music,” she explains in an autobiographical letter posted online only on the website for *Prometheus Music*. Leslie, who has a bachelor's degree in English Composition from the University of Michigan, refers to herself as a starving artist. “I'm a professional folksinger, specializing in ‘filk,’ which doesn't have a very large audience and doesn't pay very well, as you can imagine,” she told me in an e-mail interview. “And I'm also a professional writer, specializing in Science-Fiction/Fantasy, which doesn't pay well, either.”

Leslie first discovered fan fiction while in college after watching rerun episodes of *Star Trek*. She learned about fanzines through a *Star Trek* Welcommittee. A Welcommitte is a group of people in a particular fandom designated to introduce newcomers to that fandom. She began writing filk songs, however, long before she wrote fan fiction. Her first filk song was “Fellowship Going South” in response to *Lord of the Rings*. Leslie has composed nearly 300 filk songs and is still writing them today. Leslie

writes original music and lyrics. She does not follow the path of many folk song writers who merely change the words of a mainstream song to fit the fandom.

Why is slash fiction such a popular sub-genre of fan fiction and why has it blossomed on the Internet? Not long ago, if you were to go to a Barnes & Noble bookstore and look at the Gay and Lesbian section of fiction books, not much could be found compared to the rest of the fiction available. One reason for the popularity of slash is because of anonymity. In the early years of fan fiction, before technology became the primary medium for displaying fanfics, members of fandoms used their real identities. In a lot of cases, they had to in order to receive newsletters and register for conventions and correspond with other fans. The Internet has allowed people to take on new and sometimes multiple identities through anonymity. They can hide behind an e-mail address, a screen name, a pseudonym for every forum, for every fandom.

There are many websites on the Internet that offer guidance to parents and teachers for keeping children and young adults safe on the web. One important piece of advice many sites emphasize is that children should be repeatedly told not to give their real name to anyone through the Internet. Anonymity and pseudonyms are greatly encouraged. Adults use pseudonyms to hide their true identities as well. As safe as we would all think the Internet might be, credit card and identity theft occur more often than we probably know. Also, some adults may feel embarrassed to belong to a fandom; they may fear the reactions of friends, family or co-workers and therefore hide behind anonymity.

So how safe do fan fiction writers feel the Internet is? I asked participants in my study to rate the safety of the Internet based on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the safest). “If I had to rate the internet, I would give it a safety rating of 5,” replied Kansas. “I would rate it right in the middle because if you try, you can be relatively safe, but if you don’t – you can really be out there.” Kansas works for a public university library and realizes how exposed a person can be on the Internet. She takes lengths to conceal her identity whenever possible.

Fay gives the Internet and its users more credit than Kansas by rating the safety at 9. “Posting writing on sites . . . is pretty safe because the only thing that you need to input is your email address,” she states. “If you really wanted to, you could create a whole new email account just for those sites.” Basically, Fay finds the Internet to be quite safe as long as she is able to create a new identity and remain anonymous. Danny also feels the Internet is primarily a safe place. He would rate the safety level at 10 for posting on fansites. Susan gives the safety level a rating of 7 saying, “Posting online is never going to be safe, which I guess is why a lot of people don’t use their real name or their whole name when posting it.”

“I think I would rate the safety level of the internet, I’d rate it a 6,” claims Demi. “I’m very careful about sharing personal information.” She uses two different e-mail addresses – one created specifically for fan fiction use and communicating with fandom members and one for communicating with friends and family she knows.

Chapter 3: The Fan Fiction Forum

One afternoon in February 2003, I was watching television, and as I flipped through the channels, I settled on MTV, the music television station. There was a new group singing and I was intrigued by their sound. After watching for a bit, I discovered the name of the group was *t.A.T.u.* So I did what a lot of people do in this day and age; I went to the Internet to learn more and found websites dedicated to the singers. This was a new group – two Russian teenagers, 17 and 18 years old, trying to make their way up the charts in America. On some of the websites, fans were sharing thoughts, opinions and information about the group in a forum setting. I started to follow one website in particular – www.tatu.us. The website was very informative, included photos of the girls, news about concerts and appearances, links to more information, fan club information and at the top of the list, the forum.

TATU Forum

Chat TATU

News TATU by Addicted

TATU Euro Concerts

TATU.US Updates

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11/11/2004 After long break t.A.T.u performed in Wembley , UK !
Details are Here
Author: Philja

7/28/2004 Contratulations you are browsing new Tatu.us web server
If you see this message that mean you are on New tatu.us Web server and you can post new messages to Forum.
Author: Philja

5/7/2004 Tatu.us New Layout
a_designs is proposing new layout for tatu.us web site. Check it out here and comment it or vote here
Author: Philja

5/6/2004 Tatu.us Forum is Restored as of May 3, 2004 !
Yes the Forum is restored - Up and Running and Only two Days of Data was lost. Thanks Laurenz, Yulia_r0xx and especially Travis (k1n3t1k) who really saved Forum by making weekly backups for tatu.us Forum and who spent this night sleepless in order to upload back online the 400 MB file. Also Thanks to Everybody who stayed with us on Temporary Forum.
Author: Philja

5/5/2004 tatu.us Forum was destroyed by TATU ANTI-Fans 'script kiddies' !
The Bad 'script kiddies' found security hole in tatu.us web site and took advantage of it by deleting completely the Tatu.us Forum.
Author: Philja

4/13/2004 Attention all t.A.T.u. fanatics!!!
How much do you love t.A.T.u.?
Enough to make a t.A.T.u. music video?
Well here's your chance to do just that!
CLion wants to turn your idea into a t.A.T.u. "Fan Music Video."
The most creative and original concept submitted will be used in the making of a music video. Submitters will in addition be offered a walk-on role in the video, to be shot this summer, on location in Historic

Figure 5

The forum page is divided into categories: *Forum*, *Tatu*, *Off Topic*, and *Creativity*. Within each category are sub-categories. Below is a screenshot of the forum page on the tatu.us website.

The screenshot shows the Tatu Forum Index page in Mozilla Firefox. The page is titled "Tatu Forum Forum Index" and has a "View unanswered posts" link. The content is organized into several sections, each with a table of forum categories and sub-categories. The tables have columns for Forum, Topics, Posts, and Last Post.

:: IForum ::			
Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
Announcements **Important** Announcements and Rules.	14	347	Sun Mar 27, 2005 7:47 am cloudchiisan →
Tatu.us Questions about the forum, ideas, suggestions.	164	2693	Thu Apr 07, 2005 12:56 pm Marala →

:: Tatu ::			
Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
Tatu News Discuss Tatu News here	723	30064	Sun Apr 10, 2005 9:39 pm Degrassj →
General Tatu Talk about the group in general.	985	35631	Sun Apr 10, 2005 7:27 pm maru.ec →
Tatu Music Talk about Tatu's music, lyrics etc.	493	7639	Sun Apr 10, 2005 7:19 pm Tas →
Tatu Sites Advertize your tatu site here.	182	1100	Sun Apr 10, 2005 10:56 am Yulieisthebest →
Local TATU Clubs Unite in Local Tatu Clubs Here	102	5206	Sun Apr 10, 2005 9:33 pm Ruivella →

:: Off Topic ::			
Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
Off Topic Talk about all that other stuff the other sections don't cover.	1235	49445	Sun Apr 10, 2005 9:01 pm Sunista →
Entertainment Talk about games, music, TV etc.	1025	20885	Sun Apr 10, 2005 8:40 pm HalfPastMidnight937 →
Relationships Talk about partners, seek advice, share experiences, flirt and generally discuss topics concerning relationships	392	15970	Sat Apr 09, 2005 11:50 am LynnieThePooh →
Mindlessness Chat, quizzes, spam and other senseless posts	81	11680	Sun Apr 10, 2005 9:52 pm Vicky.T →

:: Creativity ::			
Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
Tatu Writing Writing about Tatu goes here	792	55635	Sun Apr 10, 2005 5:55 pm Mutante →
Tatu Visual Art Post your drawings and pictures of the singers	282	3400	Sun Apr 10, 2005 2:04 pm Tatu →

Figure 6

For example, a sub-category of *Tatu* is *Tatu News*. Here forum members discuss news or articles, sometimes gossip, pertaining to the group. A sub-category of *Off Topic* is *Relationships*. In this section, forum members “Talk about partners, seek advice, share experiences, flirt and generally discuss topics concerning relationships,” as described on the website. In the *Creativity* category, one of the sub-categories is *Tatu Visual Art*. Forum members create pictures and drawings of the singers and post them in this forum for others to see. Here is an example of such artwork:

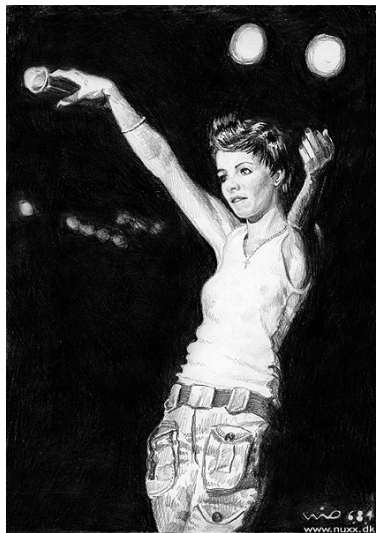


Figure 7

The sub-category that first caught my attention when I explored this website was in the *Creativity* category: *Tatu Writing*. My curiosity peaked as I browsed this section. It seemed that fans of the group were using the personas of the two singers and writing stories about them, fictional stories – writing I would learn was called fan fiction. I began to read some of the stories, some finished, some underway posted a chapter at a time.

LENATHE PHOTOGRAPH**YULIA**FANFIC**
Goto page 1, 2, 3 ... 11, 12, 13 Next

NEW TOPIC POST REPLY Tatu Forum Forum Index -> Tatu Writing

View previous topic :: View next topic


Author	Message
<p>~Saffron~</p>  <p>Gender: ?</p> <p>Rank: t.A.T.u.Fanatic</p> <p>Joined: 27 Sep 2003</p> <p>Posts: 717</p>	<p>Post subject: LENA**THE PHOTOGRAPH**YULIA**FANFIC</p> <p>I have always been fascinated with the true story of the AFGHAN GIRL since I read about it in National Geographic a couple of years ago. I thought it would make a great Lena/Yulia fanfic with a couple of twists of course. If you'd like to read the real story, that this fanfic is loosely based upon log onto www.nationalgeographic.com and search for afghan girl--it's a great story</p> <p>And so we begin at the begining which is called</p> <p>CHAPTER 1</p> <p>Lena Katina filled her coffee cup and sat down at the kitchen table. She looked at the pile of papers and manila envelopes that were spread out before her; these last personal effects her mother had left in storage before she died. Lena had just retrieved them that day and was now in the process</p>

Figure 8

As can be seen in the example above, each story had its own “thread,” where the author would make an initial post and introduce her fanfic. Within each thread on the forum, a writer would post and readers of the threads would reply, most times offering praise, sometimes asking questions of the writer or offering constructive criticism. I felt as though I had stumbled on a secret world when in reality I had entered the very large and very public world of fan fiction.

For a few months, I was what is considered a “lurker” in the fan fiction world. I would roam from thread to thread reading fan fiction and reader responses. I never responded though. Nonetheless, I was obsessed with reading fan fiction on this forum. I would check the site in the morning to see if anyone had posted an update during the night. I would look again on my lunch break at work. And then again, when I was home from work the first thing I would do is check the website for updates. Many people will admit to being obsessed with fan fiction. I believe one of the reasons for this kind of “addiction” is because most of the time, the readers are at the mercy of the writers. Most writers only post one “chapter” or section of their story at a time so it’s virtually impossible to know what might happen next. As a reader, you are not able to “flip ahead” and see what’s coming as you could in a published book. Until a writer posts more of his story, his readers are left in limbo just waiting for that next bit. I was an obsessed reader. And I was quite content with my position as a lurker on the forum. I just wanted to read without responding. I would soon find that I needed to register on the forum and become an active member, thanks to a research assignment in class.

In September of 2003, I was taking a graduate English course at Virginia Commonwealth University in *Ethnographic Methods for the Study of Writing*. As a requirement for the course, I had to research something to do with uses of writing. I chose to focus on the fan fiction forum of *t.A.T.u.*, the musical group I had become so interested in months prior. I decided to concentrate my study on a comparison between the writing forum members were doing for school and the writing they were doing pertaining to fan fiction. I read many fanfics on the *t.A.T.u.* forum hoping to find an eclectic base of writers. In order to contact these writers, I had to register on the forum. I was asked to select a screen name by which I would be known to other forum members. I chose the name “Bennett;” it’s my dog’s name. I was asked for an e-mail address so that other forum members could contact me privately. And I was asked for other biographical information – location, occupation, hobbies and interests. Once I was registered, I was able to send special “Private Messages” (PMs) to forum members. This is not an option for lurkers. I sent PMs to a few writers on the forum to find participants for my research. My ethnographic study was a wonderful experience that left me wanting to learn more. While contacting possible participants on the *t.A.T.u.* forum, I also found writers who I had been following through their threads that didn’t participate, but shared some insight into the world of fan fiction I had become so engrossed with.

One of the first writers I followed on this particular forum went by the pseudonym “Saffron.” I wanted to use her in my ethnographic study because I found her writing to be so detailed, so descriptive, so emotional. I would follow her threads and keep up with her stories daily. She had quite a following on the forum, her own “fans” of her fan fiction.

In an e-mail interview, I asked Saffron how she felt about her readers. She replied,

My readers are phenomenal! They are mostly in the ranges of age twelve to twenty five, so their feedback varies in their capabilities and command of the written word. The younger ones reply with a few words of their vernacular, which is very sweet to read. The older ones are harder critics. They know my characters better than I do and let me know if I am veering off track. They also let me know when I have written something they especially like and then I try to expound on that. I have a relationship with every single reader and answer each one individually. It does take a lot of time to do that but my feeling is that if someone has taken the time to read my work and comment on it, I will take the time to answer.

I was able to witness this interaction first hand. Saffron was a very popular writer on the *tatu* forum. This type of writer/reader response seemed ideal for this situation. She would post a chapter of a story, her fans would respond to it typically with rave reviews, and she would in turn respond to her fans individually. Many writers post a note of general “thanks” to their readers rather than take the time to answer each one. Saffron takes great pride in her writing and is extremely appreciative of the feedback she receives.

Some of her most memorable feedback was in response to an uber-fic she had written placing the women from *t.A.T.u.* in the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland during WWII. “It was a very dark piece and while you got to know the characters, some of them did not survive in the end,” she explained. One of her readers responded privately to Saffron explaining that she was Jewish and that many of her ancestors died in concentration camps. The reader was deeply moved by Saffron’s story, and the two still communicate today. Another reader was so enchanted by the fanfic that she “drew a scene from one of the chapters and sent it to me,” Saffron told me. “It was one of the most touching moments I have had, as this young girl allowed me to view and critique her art work.”

Saffron, who is an avid reader, has been a writer of sorts for most of her life. When she was younger, she would write stories about the characters from the children's television show *Sesame Street*. She began publishing fan fiction on the Internet once she encountered it through the *t.A.T.u.* forum. Once she had read some of the fanfics posted, she realized she could produce quality writing, post it and receive almost immediate feedback. That feedback and her relationship with her readers led her to publish more than ten novel-length fanfics in response to the group *t.A.T.u.* She continues to write today, but has developed original characters and is hoping to be published one day.

Chapter 4: The Fan Fiction Writer

The fan fiction writer is anyone, anywhere. He is your neighbor, your cousin, your best friend and the girl who just took your order at McDonalds™. He is a small-business owner. He is a teacher at your child's school. He is me, your aunt in Ohio who works for a dentist, the police officer you saw ticketing a speeder the other day. She's the newscaster on your local television station and the man who operates the camera for that show. He is you.

The website <www.fanfiction.net> is one of the largest host websites of fan fiction. The World Wide Web was created in 1992. At this time, the Internet as we know it today did not yet exist. The WWW was quite difficult to navigate. Early usenet groups were very popular with fandoms. Once fan fiction was brought online, however, many different websites were established to host various kinds of fan fiction. In October of 1998, Fanfiction.Net appeared on-line and remains one of the most popular fan fiction websites today. Below is a screenshot from Fanfiction.Net showing the page where the fanfics for books are listed. The number in parentheses after the name of the book or authors indicates the number of stories about that particular subject. For example, as of March 2005, there were 182,789 Harry Potter stories posted. J.K. Rowlings characters and settings have inspired an enormous amount of fan fiction. Harry Potter fan fiction is extremely popular among pre-teens.

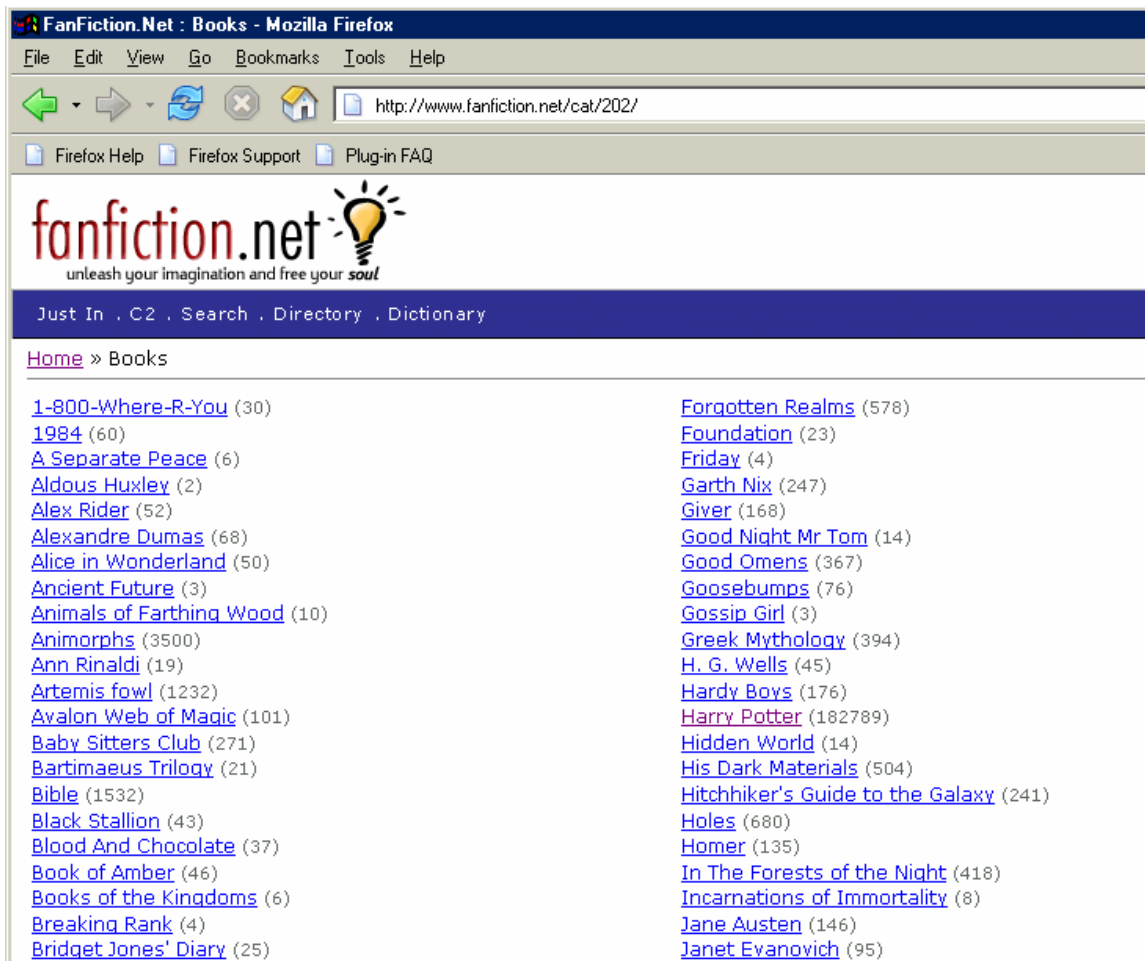


Figure 9

Fanfiction.Net hosts eight fan fiction categories: Anime (colorful, stylish Japanese animation), Cartoon, Game, Movie, Book, Misc., Comic, and TV Show.

In order to look more closely at just a minute piece of the Internet world of fan fiction, I have focused on fan fiction based on the television show *Friends*, which aired on NBC for ten seasons. *Friends* depicts the lives of six main characters: Monica Geller, a chef and sister of Ross Geller; Ross, a paleontologist; Chandler Bing, Ross's college roommate; Joey Tribbiani, an actor and Chandler's roommate; Phoebe Buffay, a masseuse; and Rachel Green, Monica's best friend from high school. These six friends

laugh, love and live their lives in Manhattan. At this time, there are more than 2,300 stories posted in the *Friends* category.

Here is an example of fan fiction written by “Danny.”

Achilles Heel

“Rachel.” Ross pleaded through the locked bedroom door. “You can’t hide in your room forever. You’ve missed work the last three days and you’re going to lose your job if you keep this up.”

“I don’t care.” Said the dispirited voice through the door. “Just leave me alone.”

Ross started to knock on the door again but was interrupted by Chandler. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you. The last one who tried that got this.” He held up a dangling shirt sleeve, miming a lost hand.

Ross ignored him. “Rachel, honey. At least talk to me.”

“Why? So you can rub it in? You once said it best. I’m only a waitress. That’s all I’ll ever be good for.” There was a muffled sob.

“Ross,” Said Chandler. “I’m sure five out of five doctors would not recommend following that line with anything coherent.”

Ross glared at him. “Rachel, I love you. I want to help you, but I can’t if you shut me out.”

There was no answer. After a long pause, Ross suddenly whirled and slammed his fist against the door frame. His face set in a rigid mask, he strode towards the door.

“Where you going, buddy?”

“I’m going to see Rachel’s dad and mom. This crap is going to end.”

At random, I chose four members of this fandom to participate in my study. I registered as a member of Fanfic.net and browsed through the list of writers of *Friends*

fan fiction. As I scanned the names, I selected one to see how much fan fiction he or she had written and how much feedback he or she had received. If a writer only had one story listed, I went on to another. If a writer had a few stories and a number of reviews by readers of each story, I chose that writer. Once I had a list of eight or ten writers, I contacted them through an e-mail introducing myself and my interest in wanting them to participate in my research. I also chose three prolific fan fiction writers from a website dedicated to *Friends* and its fandom called “Crazy for Friends.” Below is a screenshot of the webpage for that site which features the show *Friends*. Notice in the top left corner of the page “fan fiction” is listed. When the link to fan fiction is selected, story links by more than 120 authors appear. Though follow-up questions may have been directed toward each individual, each participant was given the same initial questionnaire to answer, which asked questions about his introduction to fan fiction and why he participates in this fandom.



Figure 10

One of the questions I asked of the participants in my study was “What do you think makes a good fan fiction?” Nearly all who responded emphasize the importance of fan fiction authors staying true to the characters. The participants in my research agree that fan fiction authors should keep their depiction of these six television characters aligned with behavior and personality that was established by the show. Danny, a 60-

year-old with a Doctorate in Physical Chemistry said, “Fan fiction that does not keep characterization, bores me.” He believes that good fan fiction is the result of the writer staying true to the characterizations and at the same time, allowing the characters to escape that scope occasionally. Likewise, Natalie, an 18-year-old from Santiago, Chile, believes that making the characters “real” is a must for good, well-written fan fiction. “It is very important . . . that the characters seem somehow close to what they really are on television,” she explains. “If I read *Friends* fan fiction, it’s mostly because I’m looking to see something happening to the *Friends* characters, not to just any character anyone can make up.” Kansas, who has a bachelor’s degree in social work, takes the notion of adhering to character personas one step further by stating, “I like to read (and write) stories that could happen when the director yells ‘cut’ or when the author puts down her pen. I like ‘missing scene’ stories the best – i.e. when a character mentions something that happened but we didn’t ‘see’ it, I love fics that flesh that out.”

A great deal of the fan fiction written about *Friends* has followed the development of the characters and their relationships. One of the most common pairings of characters in fan fiction is that of Monica Gellar and Chandler Bing. On the show, Chandler was introduced as the former college roommate and best friend of Ross Gellar, Monica’s brother. Over the seasons, Chandler and Monica became friends, dated and eventually married. In the show’s finale, they were bringing home their two adopted children. *Friends* fan fiction writers echoed or continued the show’s portrayal of these two by making them a popular pairing in their works. Natalie not only writes fan fiction exploring this relationship between Monica and Chandler, but also created a website

dedicated to the fictional couple titled “Chandler & Monica – Could they BE Any Cuter?” She has even written a story about the two for a school assignment. “I had to write a story (any story), and I used the characters from the show,” she explained. Though she didn’t share the story with any of her classmates, she was pleased to discover that her teacher liked what she had done.

A number of fanfic writers have also used fan fiction in educational settings. At the University of Chicago, Danny shared some of his *Star Trek* fan fiction with a young writers group. “For the most part, it was received with a positive and encouraging attitude,” he explained. Fay, an 18-year-old student, wrote a story based on the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* from one character’s point of view as a high school assignment in which she was instructed to write about a certain aspect of that book that interested her. She chose to write from the point of view of the character Arthur “Boo” Radley. “I believed that Boo Radley was just misunderstood,” she explains. “I also do not think my teacher knew what fan fiction was, or at least she didn’t know there was a term to it.”

Fay comments, “Fan fiction is a way to start ideas flowing because someone has already thought of something to write about and all you have to do is expand that idea. I used (fan fiction) to help myself in writing because I was not always very idea creative but by reading and modifying someone else’s work, ideas come from your own mind.”

Quite often, fan fiction writers find their inspiration to write in the work of other fan fiction writers. “After reading some stories that people have based off books or other things, I get ideas on things to write,” Fay claims. “Those ideas could either be fan fiction or original.” And reading fan fiction is what inspired Natalie to write in the first place. “I

read Chandler and Monica stories, mostly romance, some drama,” she explains. “It inspired me because it made me want to make up my own stories, seeing how good their stories were made me want to create my own.” Danny is sometimes inspired by fan fiction to write his own work “only when I find that the idea the other author puts out makes me think of lots of alternatives that could be better expressed.”

Not all fan fiction writers are inspired by their peers, however. Tom, a 33-year-old with a bachelor’s degree in business administration, has written more than seventy *Friends* fan fiction stories. “What inspired me was to provide a reader with well written, character-driven fan fiction,” he explained. Eighteen-year-old college student Demi has not been motivated to write fan fiction based on reading other’s works. She states, “No, the idea to write my own fanfic was there from the very beginning. If anything, the amazing stuff I read out there has made me quite leery of posting anything of my own.”

While the motivation behind fan fiction is one most of us can likely understand, we might well ask why fan fiction writers post their stories on the Internet. The desire to publish – to go public with one’s work – is not limited to those writers who have developed more traditional writing careers. Most people have a natural desire to have a voice and use it regarding matters important to them. And they usually want feedback. By posting stories on the Internet, they can receive immediate feedback from readers of their work. Some sites have a forum setting in which writers and readers can converse and comment on each other’s work. On the Fanfiction.net website, readers who wish to comment submit a review of a particular story or chapter. Fan fiction writers have many

different reactions to the feedback they receive. Some are encouraged by positive comments or possible suggestions from their readers, while some disregard it altogether.

“Feedback is always wonderful, except for ‘flames,’” believes Kansas. “Flames are rude remarks that have no bearing on the story whatsoever.” She is always appreciative of positive feedback and constructive criticism. “It’s wonderful when someone will point out both your strengths and weaknesses in a review post . . . constructive criticism is the type of review that writers crave,” she claims. Danny answers the question, what do writers do with feedback? with a question of his own by asking, “If you can’t take feedback then you have no business writing because how could you improve if you didn’t get it and use it?” He has always appreciated his readers taking the time to make suggestions or point out spelling errors. He feels that his stories are improved if errors are not there to distract the readers. When he receives such feedback, he is always quick to reply and acknowledge his reader’s comments in an appreciative manner.

Many writers would agree with Danny that getting constructive feedback can help a writer to improve his work. However, in extreme cases, a reader’s feedback to a writer can put off a writer from posting his work. “In one or two *Friends* fanfic reviews . . . some harsh words did discourage me,” said Cliff. “It’s one reason I no longer write that sort of fan fiction.” But harshness can override constructive comments because it’s unnecessary almost always and so loud. “Feedback is a wonderful thing to receive,” explains Fay. “Some of the feedback I get really moves me because people admit to going through things that I’ve written about.” Demi finds feedback to be somewhat of a

reward for her efforts. “I was incredibly nervous about posting my fic,” she said, “ and I was thrilled that there were at least a few people who liked it.” Fay talks about the “addictive-ness that is fan fiction. It’s addictive in that it can’t get old. You can always find new ways to [re]write a certain passage that you may not like. I’m addicted to it because I’m able to slip into another world and create my own adventures through fan fiction.”

I know many people who read fan fiction every day. A friend once told me that she reads fan fiction every night before falling asleep. If she doesn’t, she has a restless night. Kansas is a beta reader so she reads fan fiction every day for a different reason. Beta readers are fan fiction editors in that they critique a story for an author by examining the grammar, spelling, characterizations, plot, similarities to canon, and language. The term was borrowed from the gaming industry, according to Shannon, who published an article on the website *Working Stiffs*. Game designers would come up with a new game and build the software. “Alpha testing” is what designers referred to when others in the gaming industry tested the new game. Before the games were released to mainstream distributors, a second testing was done on them called “beta testing.” Not all fan fiction writers choose to utilize a beta reader. But when Kansas reads a fanfic, she’s reading it more in the role of an editor than a reader doing so for pleasure since she is a beta reader. Danny still receives much of his fan fiction in digest form. He subscribes to *Star Trek* fan fiction newsletters published and sent out on a weekly basis. And for at least three hours every day, Demi reads fan fiction from the fandoms of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Harry Potter*, *The West Wing*, and *Friends*. Since Susan is a freshman in college, she doesn’t

really have much time for “fun” reading, but on breaks when she’s away from school, she reads fan fiction. And both Natalie and Fay try to read fanfics every day.

While these fan fiction writers, and readers, read their fair share of fanfics, they are certainly not averse to reading more traditional novels. “My favorite type of book is actually nonfiction, as I get my fiction fix from fanfic,” claims Kansas. “I read a lot of memoirs (especially Holocaust), and archaeology, paranormal, and comparative religion books.” Many of the other participants spend much of their spare time reading non-Internet published works: newspapers, magazines, books; especially the college students who read required textbooks.

Aside from Danny, who has experienced the transition of fan fiction from printed form to electronic form, most writers believe that fan fiction would not exist, or at least it wouldn’t be as popular as it is, without the Internet. “I don’t think I would have even thought of fanfic if there were no Internet,” Demi asserts. “While watching/reading something, I might have idly thought, ‘Wow, I wish they would have continued this scene’ or ‘Hmm, I wish this character would have done something differently,’ but I never would have sat down and wrote it out.”

According to Fay, “Without the Internet, my fan writing would basically be non-existent. [And] without fan fiction, I would be writing tons of creative writing, though I probably wouldn’t share half of what I wrote with anyone.”

Susan’s thinking is that “Without the motivation of posting [fan fiction] online, it would be more likely to seem like a waste of time.”

Nearly all of the participants in my research admit to being ardent readers of non-Internet sources, yet they continue to read fan fiction. I believe one main reason for this is because of the accessibility of fan fiction. When the World Wide Web was first introduced on home computers, the Internet-browsing process was painstakingly inconsistent and inconvenient. Internet connection was established only through a dial-up phone line which was quite often interrupted by call waiting. Downloading capabilities and memory restrictions on computers slowed Internet browsers, and most users just weren't familiar enough with navigating on the web to find whatever it was they might be looking for. Today's web users, however, have such a command of the Internet and its use, that so many homes and schools are connected to the web through direct-connect cable and phone lines making the speed of navigation on the Internet a common occurrence.

Fan fiction readers today can search the Internet using any number of search engines and find just what they are looking for. Once the reader finds his website of desire, he can save it to his list of favorite websites. On any given day at any given time, the reader can turn on his computer, open the Internet browser and load a favorite web page within minutes, something unheard of when the world wide web was first introduced. Some fan fiction websites include a separate electronic format of the fanfics called an "e-book." This is a file that can be downloaded onto a handheld personal computers such as Palm Pilots. E-books are especially convenient for students who are already carrying books and have a source of entertainment at their fingertips without strapping on an extra book.

Chapter 5: Case Studies

Kansas

Kansas is a 24-year-old woman with a bachelor's degree in social work. She first heard of fan fiction in 1998, her first year in college. After reading fanfics online for a few months, she decided to write a story. She has since written fan fiction based on the television shows *X Files* and *Friends*, and the Harry Potter character from J.K. Rowling's novels. She is also a "beta" reader for writers affiliated with a Harry Potter website, which means she essentially proofreads and makes suggestions to other fan fiction writers. "Good fan fiction is made when an author is true to the characters and their world," she told me in an e-mail interview. And that's something Kansas adheres to in her own *Friends* fan fiction. Though she has only written seven fanfics in response to the show, she has kept the characters in her stories true to the personas developed by the creators of *Friends*. Her favorite couple on the show is Monica and Chandler – often fans of this pairing refer to themselves as "Mondler" fans. She wrote her first *Friends* fanfic for a contest held by a *Friends* fan website and said, "from then on out I've been hooked."

One of the stories Kansas wrote in response to the episode titled "The One After 'I Do,'" takes place at the wedding reception for Chandler and Monica. The story, "Barefootin'," was written from Monica's point of view and describes what the character is feeling as she realizes she now has a husband and has had the wedding of her dreams.

The original episode, which aired September 21, 2001, shows Monica, Phoebe and Rachel in the restroom where they have just discovered that Rachel is pregnant. Prior to the wedding, Chandler had taken dance lessons so he would be able to dance with his new bride and not feel foolish and clumsy. Joey is trying desperately to get the attention of a director friend of Chandler's mother. And Ross is flirting with one of Monica's co-workers who attended the reception.

Kansas begins her story with Monica's thoughts as she left Rachel and Phoebe in the restroom.

Monica exited the bathroom where she had just found out that one of her best friends was going to have a baby. She had a few happy tears drying on her cheeks, but she was sure no one else in the room was as radiant as she was at that moment. Not only had she married the man of her dreams, she was happy, healthy, and about to be the "aunt" (even if she wasn't blood related to it) of Rachel's child. The music was still going, a slow sweet song was playing and a few couples swayed together on the dance floor. She caught site [sic] of Joey following Chandler's Mother's date around, hoping for the audition that he probably wouldn't get. She rolled her eyes good-naturedly and began scanning the room for her husband.

Her *husband*. Wow. She, Monica Geller, had a husband. Well, Monica Bing was her name now, actually...Monica wrinkled her nose. Maybe she'd have to rethink the "Bing" part...but she'd think about that later. Right now, she just wanted to bask in her happiness with her husband.

Using the setting established by the episode, Kansas stayed with Monica's thoughts throughout her story taking the dancing scene between the newlyweds one step further and ending with what would most likely be true to the character's thoughts pertaining to the prospect.

The band-leader, noticing that the bride and groom were back on the dance floor began playing another slow song, and Monica rested her head against Chandler's

shoulder, marveling at the difference his lack of shoes and his 6 weeks of dance training made. She thought of mentioning it, but imagining a joke about his father and dancing lessons she decided against it. Instead, she just allowed herself to move around the dance floor with her husband—*her husband!*—and savor the moment.

Tomorrow there would be worries—she'd no longer be a bride, and Rachel would still be pregnant—father unknown. But, right now, tonight, in her bare feet, Monica Geller was dancing with her husband.

She had been right earlier. No one was as radiant as she.

In another story Kansas titled “Some Things Are More Important,” she depicts a scene that could have taken place as part of the original episode titled “The One With the Truth About London.” In the episode which aired February 22, 2001, Chandler learns that his first intimate encounter with his future wife only happened because Joey was unavailable to Monica who was intoxicated and just looking for a night of meaningless sex. She figured since Joey was so promiscuous, that he wouldn't mind having sex with her. Once Chandler learns the truth, he is certainly upset as is shown through this remark to Monica. Below are the lines from the televised episode:

Monica: It's not a big deal!

Chandler: Of course it's a big deal! You wanted to hook up with Batman, and instead you ended up with Robin! (gets out of the apartment)

Kansas' story depicts a possible conversation between Monica and Chandler discussing the incident.

“Chandler,” she began, “you were never ‘runner up’ to me.”

Feeling some of the hurt return to him from before his conversation with Joey, Chandler couldn't help but answer back, “Yes, I was. But it's not so bad. ‘If for any reason Joey is unable to perform his duties I will be able to take over in his stead...’ ” He said, mimicking the speech heard by runner's up the world over.

He gestured between himself and Monica, “Well, will you look at how that turned out?”

Monica nodded, “Okay, maybe I deserve that, and, you’re right, Chandler. You were my second choice that night.”

Chandler’s face went pale at those words, even after his previous sarcastic comments, and Monica sighed, rubbing her thumb back and forth across his hand, wondering how to explain her actions to him.

“I went to your room looking for Joey. I thought that if I slept with him that I could just lose myself in the night and then not have to think about it later. I was thinking that Joey had slept with so many women that one more wouldn’t really matter!”

Kansas tries to give a behind-the-scenes look at what these two might have discussed in order to come to terms with their situation. Staying true to the characters, she has Chandler attempting to add humor to the situation in making his speech about being Joey’s second in the situation.

One of the reviewers of this story on the Fanfiction.net website remarked, “You really managed to capture the two of them in a lovely way. Chandler’s still sarcastic, and Monica’s really sweet. You did a great job with this one.” And Kansas relies on the feedback she receives in order to better develop her writing. “The best types of feedback are constructive criticism and encouragement,” she said. “It’s wonderful when someone will point out both your strengths and weaknesses in a review post.” Not all feedback is positive, however. Sometimes a fan fiction writer will receive what is known as a “flame.” These are comments made to criticize the author without making any reference to the story. Kansas recalls one flame in particular that was rather upsetting. “On one Harry Potter story someone left a flame stating that I must remember to write for ‘the intelligent’ reader and stated that my story was drivel,” she said. Nonetheless, she is

thankful for the feedback she receives and believes her stories are “generally well accepted and enjoyed.” As far as the future of her *Friends* fan fiction writing and fanfics in response to the show in general, Kansas has intentions of continuing. “I currently have three stories in my head that I would like to write,” she said. “Inevitably, *Friends* fanfic will continue to slow down until it’s almost at a dead crawl. After awhile it’ll probably end and we’ll all just keep moving on to the next fandom that catches our attentions.”

Danny

Danny is a 60-year-old man with a Ph.D. in physical chemistry. He has written seventeen *Friends* fan fiction stories that are displayed on the website “Crazy For Friends.” Danny is not new to the fan fiction scene, however. In an e-mail interview with him, Danny told me he became familiar with the concept as a student at the University of Maryland where he encountered fanfics written by “trekkies,” members of the *Star Trek* fandom. These stories were distributed among fans in order to share a common admiration for the show and its characters. “We had to be careful not to take money for them,” he said, “as this would be unlawful use of a copyrighted property especially after a couple of lawsuits were threatened by the network that owned the rights.”

To this day, Danny receives *Star Trek* fan fiction in digest form as well as from the Internet. And he believes that the stories have improved over the years with the involvement of the Internet. “There is constant feedback from the readers and if you don’t get the characters right, they really let you know about it,” he remarked. “I think this has greatly improved the quality of the fan writing. You don’t get invited to post your stuff or see it at hundreds of websites like mine is if you get it wrong.”

But even without the Internet, Danny would still be writing fan fiction and working harder to get his work published. “I think I would be doing as much as before there was an Internet,” he said. “I like to write. I think the Internet has made it more accessible to people and has caused a flowering of interest and writings.”

Danny began writing *Friends* fan fiction because he “wanted to show that there were other ways of interpreting some of the TV stories and that the results did have consequences that we did not see on TV.” Much of what Danny writes in some way references aired episodes of *Friends*. His story lines are his in that he is true to the characters and their relationships with each other but includes new characters and settings to make his fanfics original. He is able to convey the general humor of the show in his dialog. For example, in his story “Two’s Company – Three’s a Party,” he shows the back-and-forth banter of roommates Chandler and Joey that fans of the show are accustomed to.

“Are they still in there?” Joey gestured towards Rachel’s closed bedroom door.

Chandler nodded, his mouth stuffed with some of Monica’s latest brownies.

“How long have those two been at it this time? Two, three hours?”

Chandler swallowed and got out. “They were at it when I came in.”

“God, they’re insatiable.” Joey grinned as the sound of giggling reached them from behind the closed door.

“I bet you don’t even know what that word means.”

“I do so. It means - means not satiable.”

“And what does satiable mean?”

“The opposite of insatiable.”

Chandler rolled his eyes. “Let me guess. You had a brain transplant from Phoebe.”

Rachel opened the door and stuck her head out. “Will you guys keep it down. We can’t concentrate in here.” She shut the door.

“Animals.” Chandler said. Joey grinned. The giggling sounds got louder.

The apartment door swung open and Ross entered. “Hi, guys. What’s up?”

Joey and Chandler stared at him. On seeing their expressions, he looked down at himself. “Is something wrong? Did I forget something?”

Rachel opened the door. “Oh there you are, sweetheart. You were late so the girls and I started without you.”

“I’ll be there in a second, honey.” Ross placed his coat on the chair while Joey and Chandler exchanged looks.

“Uh, Ross, other girls?” Chandler asked.

“Sure. Rachel and I couldn’t get it done alone so they’re helping out.”

Joey and Chandler exchanged looks before Joey said. “What’re friends for.”

Chandler sighed. “I wish I had friends like that.”

Rachel opened the door again. “Are you coming, Ross? We can’t finish without you.”

“I’m coming.” He shrugged. “Why they need me, is beyond me. They never like the variations I choose.”

“I’ve had that problem a lot.” Chandler turned to Joey. “Haven’t you?”

Joey smiled. “Nope.”

Ross dropped his coat on the chair. “Well, then if you’re such a big expert maybe you should join us.” He didn’t even see they’re shocked looks.

“Join you?” Joey finally managed to get out. Chandler’s eyes were bulging.

“Sure, I’m just no good at deciding on color combinations for the baby’s room and clothing. So Phoebe and Julie’s friend Judy came over to help out.”

In another fanfic titled “Bobby’s Back In Town,” Danny very accurately portrays the character Phoebe and her lack of common sense. The *Friends* episode Danny wrote in response to was one in which Monica’s boyfriend Bobby quit drinking and was no longer

“Fun Bobby,” a nickname everyone used for him, but was now quite boring. Monica feigned a drinking problem in order to end her relationship with Bobby not wanting him to be around anyone with a drinking problem.

“Hello, Monica” A familiar voice said.

She opened her eyes and stared. It was hard to see the figure against the setting sun, but she knew that voice. “Bobby?”

“Yeah, it’s me.” He stepped over into the shade of the tree. “It’s been a while, hasn’t it?”

“Yes.” She said cautiously. The last thing she wanted to do was to hear another boring, one-sided conversation on trying to find a hammer in the Village after hours. He didn’t say anything but his eyes took in every detail and she felt herself blushing under his direct gaze. To break the moment she asked. “What’ve you been up to lately?” She hoped this would not be a mistake and encourage him to be as boring as he’d been the last time.

He smiled slightly. “Keeping busy. I think I’m finally getting my problem under control.”

Which one? She wondered. The drinking or the boring conversations? Out loud she said. “I’m glad to hear that.”

“How about yours?” His eyes sought hers with a deep concern.

“My problem?” Then she remembered that she’d started drinking to be able to stand how boring he’d become and then she’d allowed him to think that she had a problem too so that she could painlessly break off their relationship. She found she couldn’t tell him this. “I got over it.”

“You’re lucky. I’m glad you made me aware of my drinking problem, but I can’t take credit for the internal strength that you showed in overcoming yours. Last winter I almost started drinking again. I remember that I was sitting in a bar down in Saint Louis, staring at a full glass counting the bubbles. Do You know how many bubbles form on the sides of a glass in an hour? Let me tell you it’s lots. They just keep creeping up and down the sides.”

Monica shook her head. Same old Bobby. How was she going to break this off?

Bobby shook himself. "Sorry. I seem to slip back in to bad habits so easily. I know how boring all this sounds. As I was saying I was sitting there wondering whether I would drink it or not. Fortunately, I met a very kind man who'd had a similar problem, a Mister Hemmingway. He introduced me to the AA and they helped me a lot."

"AA?" It was Phoebe who'd come up behind them. "What does the American Auto Club have to do with drinking problems? I know they oppose drinking while driving."

Bobby turned and smiled at her. "Hello, Phobes. Alcoholics Anonymous and not the triple A. I've been a member for five months now. In fact I was just heading home to clean up for a meeting tonight." He looked back at Monica. "Even if you think you have your drinking problem under control, it might help if you went sometime. The support they give is tremendous."

Phoebe looked with concern at Monica. "Gee, Mon. I didn't know you had a drinking problem."

"That's because I took care of it." She winked at Phoebe and then made motions to tell her to drop the subject. They were ignored.

Phoebe shook her head. "The way you got yourself plastered after Ross had his latest baby, I'm not sure it's under control, Mon."

If looks could kill, then Phoebe was sliced, diced and marinated.

Bobby said earnestly. "I'd consider it a personal favor if you'd come tonight, Monica. They can really help you."

Monica shook her head, trying to put the right amount of sincerity behind her lie. "I'm afraid I'm going to be busy tonight."

"But Mon, you were just complaining to me this morning that you had nothing to do tonight. Maybe your problem is causing you to forget things. Gee, it sounds like you'd better go."

No. Monica thought. Slicing and dicing was too nice. She should be pureed in a blender.

"Good. Then, I'll pick you up in an hour and we can get something to eat before the meeting." Bobby strode off down the street.

Monica glared at her friend. "Thanks." She snarled.

“That’s what friends are for, Mon. To help us with our problems. Gee, when did you start drinking any way?”

“Starting right now.” Monica stormed off down the street and Phoebe had to hurry to catch up with her. As luck would have it they missed the J-street bus and had to wait nearly half an hour.

In this excerpt from Danny’s fanfic, he has portrayed that Monica still finds the “sober” Bobby to be boring and has no intention of reuniting with him. But thanks to the denseness of her friend Phoebe, she’s talked into spending time with Bobby. Later in the story, Chandler would bring seven cases of empty, collector beer bottles over to Monica’s apartment just as Bobby is about to arrive. She carries a case of the bottles to the hallway in an effort to put them in the trash, and at this time, Bobby shows up. Ironically, he decides it’s not a good idea for him to spend time with her because she apparently still has a problem.

In Danny’s fanfic titled, “From Julie’s Point of View,” he shows remarkable depth by writing from a woman’s perspective. From the show’s plot where Ross realizes he still wants to be with Rachel and will have to end his relationship with Julie, Danny’s story shows the reader what Julie might have been thinking and might have written in her journal about the situation.

Thursday November 9th

Today was very strange and I have this feeling that something is wrong but I can’t put my finger on what it is. Ross was all enthused about going to get the cat and then we were going to look at apartments. However between the time I went to get the car and he came down, he changed; he acted like someone had slugged him in the head with a sandbag.

All the way to the shelter he never said more than one word and that is unlike the bubbly Ross that I have come to love. At the shelter he couldn’t decide on any of

the animals even though I was extremely taken by a little tortoise shell with long hair. We finally left without getting the cat which mewed piteously. Again he said no more than one or two words and wouldn't meet my eyes.

Saturday November 11th

No it's not just a feeling. Something is horribly wrong. It's like a wall has fallen between us.

Ross has not returned my calls. It is like I don't exist for him. I tried to see him but he wasn't in. His friend Chandler said he didn't know where he'd gone. Monica was no help either. I did see Rachel as she went down the elevator and she gave me a grin that left me feeling cold. What has happened to Ross?

Wednesday November 15th

I finally decided to take things into my own hands. I went to the little cafe where Ross and his friends go. Ross acted shocked and his friends tried to act as if nothing were wrong, but I knew better even though I kept that stupid grin on my face. The way Rachel sat close to us it was if she were moving towards Ross like a knife. I could hardly concentrate on the song that Phoebe sang for us. It sounded like she tried to put my name in it. It just reinforced my feelings of foreboding. I told Ross we had to talk. He promised we would and soon.

Saturday November 18th

I have made no entry for three days. It is only now that I feel I can gain catharsis by writing. I am alone and my heart is dead. Ross left me for that little bitch Rachel. I can finally say it. He left me. He left me after pledging undying love. Now everything makes a horrible kind of sense - Rachel's actions towards me and the coolness of his friends whom I had been told were so wonderful.

I regret none of things I said to Ross or the crockery I threw at him. The bastard deserved it all. He used me and I told him he had. You don't pledge your love to someone and then when someone else becomes available dump them like the remains of a cold meal. I still feel used and soiled.

He told me that in time I would get over the pain and that he was sorry but he couldn't help how he felt. My reply hurt him when I coldly asked him how he'd felt the night his wife told him she was leaving him for another woman? When he didn't reply I told him "congratulations, you bastard, you have now hurt someone else as much as you were hurt." That was when I turned my back and wouldn't listen to his explanations anymore.

Danny has an excellent grasp of the comedic nature of the show as well as the emotional ties the characters have to each other. He is able to place the characters in situations where their established personalities can be seen. He remarks about his ability to do this by describing what he thinks makes a good fan fiction story: “Stories that capture the essence of the characters and how they react and puts them in situations that require them to act like they do on the shows but in more extreme manners.”

He will continue to write fan fiction whenever he feels inspired, but he realistically understands that fan fiction is most likely not the way for him to be a published writer. “I have had some dreams,” he said. “Who doesn’t? I hope some day to be well published but it may not happen and that is realistic.”

Melissa Good

How far can a fan fiction writer go with their work? Melissa “Missy” Good is one person who can answer that question. Weeks after she had watched an episode of *Xena: Warrior Princess* in 1997, Missy tried her hand at writing a story about the characters of the show. *Xena* was a show about a woman warrior trying to overcome her dark past by saving innocents in order to redeem herself. The series ran from September of 1995 to June of 2001. The show focused on two main characters – Xena, the warrior princess, and her traveling companion and best friend, Gabrielle, a struggling bard who eventually becomes a warrior herself.

“I had an idea for a story, and I started writing my first *Xena* story,” she stated in a 2001 interview in *Whoosh!* magazine, an online only journal of popular culture and fan culture studies. “That was the first extensive writing I’d done in the fiction realm.”

Missy works for Electronic Data Systems (EDS), a provider of broad portfolios of business and technology solutions, where she is involved with technical support service. Writing fan fiction became for her a form of enjoyment and relaxation. She began with writing *Xena* stories, and eventually moved into the realm of *uber fiction*, with her characters. “Über” is a German word meaning “above.” Writers of *Xena* fan fiction adopted the term (and dropped the umlaut) to classify stories about prototypes of the show’s main characters where they were placed in a different time period or setting. According to the website “Through the Looking Glass,” these writers were originally inspired to write uber fan fiction by the television episode “The Xena Scrolls,” which

featured the characters descendants depicted in the year 1942. The explanation continues, “Since then the term has broadened to refer to fan fiction of any genre [sic], in which the main characters are translated into a different setting than normal.”

Missy began to apply her practical knowledge of computer systems and technical support in conjunction with her admiration for the show *Xena* to her uber fiction. She developed stories about two characters, Dar and Kerry, who would be considered modern-day Xena and Gabrielle, relating her background and residence to them. Dar and Kerry live in Miami, where Missy is from, and work for ILS (similar to EDS), a technology solutions company. Her first story about these two, actually booklength, is called *Tropical Storm*, which was published in 1999 by Justice House Publishing, a publisher of fiction books written “for women who love women,” according to their website slogan. She has had four other books in this series published by Justice House as well. After *Tropical Storm* was published, she was approached by Ladyhawk Productions, an independent film company dedicated to the development and production of commercially viable female-driven film, television and Internet projects. The film has not yet been produced, however, due to financial constraints.

With the help of a friend, Missy developed a preliminary website to display her fan fiction writing where eventually realized she had a rather large fan base of her own. Dubbed the “Merpups,” a play on one of Missy’s nicknames, “Merwolf,” her fans discuss her stories on the website forum, www.merwolf.com/merpups, and some have had the pleasure of meeting Missy at various *Xena* conventions.



Figure 11

"I had no idea the whole fan thing was going on," she told Tammye Nash, a writer for the Dallas Voice online newspaper for the Gay and Lesbian community in Dallas. "I was just

writing the story, posting the updates as I went along. Then the guy hosting my website told me he had to stop hosting it. It was getting too many hits, and he couldn't handle the traffic." At that point, Missy purchased her own Internet domain and another friend, Carol Stephens, helps her maintain this site, www.merwolf.com.

As Missy became more recognized as a *Xena* fan fiction writer, she was invited to and attended many such conventions held by the show and supporters of the show. At these conventions most often, some of the actors, writers and producers from the show appeared to sign autographs and meet fans. Missy became a sort of celebrity at *Xena* conventions. Through one particular *Xena* fan convention, Missy met Steve Sears, a former executive producer of the show. Apparently Steve had read some of Missy's fan fiction once he stopped working on the show. He also stayed in close contact with Rob Tapert, the then executive producer and co-creator of *Xena*. Rob had mentioned to Steve that he was interested in having a fan work on a script for the show, and Steve immediately thought of Missy and contacted her to see if she was interested and to give her a phone number for Rob. "I was at work minding my own business one morning when I got a voicemail [message] from Steven," she told David Nossom in an interview for the *Xena: Warrior Princess Magazine*. "He asked me if I was still a fan of the show and if I still watched it. Then he asked if I'd like to write an episode!"

The notion of involving a fan in the writing of a script for a popular television show is not something contemplated by many in the industry. John Ordovery, editor of Pocket Books' *Star Trek* novelization series, remarked in an article titled "Out of Character," published on the Entertainment Weekly Internet supplement, "We get tons of

terrible stuff. Fan writing is not the farm team for legit novels, and should be abandoned at once by anyone who wants to be a pro writer of any kind.”

In this case, however, both the fan and the producers of *Xena* were fortunate enough to find each other and work well together. Missy made contact with Rob, was sent instructions and sample scripts to look at, and within weeks of the initial phone call, began writing an episode for *Xena*. At one point during the procedure, after a number of drafts had been passed back and forth, Rob gave Missy a compliment she highly regarded. “Thank you for not making me look like a schmuck,” he told her. It seems Rob was unsure that Missy would be able to deliver an exceptional script and when he realized her talent, was extremely pleased. The episode she wrote, titled “Legacy,” aired in October of 2000. She would go on to write scripts for two other episodes for *Xena*.

“Television is all about structure – getting the bits in the right place at the right time to tell the whole story in the least possible words and motions,” Missy explained in an interview posted on the website Newsguy.com about the difference between writing her scripts and writing her fan fiction. “Once I understood that, I realized when I started actually writing the dialog and action itself, it wasn’t that different at all.”

In the same interview, Missy salutes the Internet world of fan fiction by acknowledging that the prospect for anyone to publish their writing online exists. “If someone wants to immerse themselves in learning or even just writing for fun, the opportunity is there,” she said. “The neat thing about posting stories on the Internet, is that you can get a response from people in a very real time way.”

Sheryl-Lee Kerr asked Missy in an interview for the online “Australian Xena Information Page” if she thought writing for television helped her as a writer now. Missy replied, “I think it’s changed my writing style to be more linear, more story based and visual, but it’s hard to say.” She emphasized her writing technique when she told Newsguy.com, “I don’t write stories, I describe them. Because what I’m doing is describing mental movies that are going on in my head, complete with voices, sounds, smells, and everything. So, when I write Gabrielle speaking, I’m just transcribing what I hear the character saying.”

Chapter 6: *To Kill A Mockingbird* Text Analysis

In high schools and junior high schools across the United States, a certain novel is taught in many English classes – Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird* (*Mockingbird*). I remember reading it when I was in eighth grade. The assignments I did pertaining to the novel were quite routine, however, answering questions about the chapters, identifying characters or plot ideas, nothing really creative. Some students, it seems, might be interested in taking their interpretations of the novel a step further. They have written fan fiction about it.

There are more than one hundred fan fiction stories posted in response to the novel *Mockingbird* on Fanfiction.net. Some of the writers state that they had written their stories for a school assignment. I have selected four *Mockingbird* fan fiction stories from this website to examine. Two of the stories are written from the point of view of Arthur (Boo) Radley’s character. Both were written as assignments for an English class, according to the authors.

The first story, titled “Boo Radley,” written by “Lynn” (not her real name), begins with the writer’s notion of what might have occurred before Boo Radley was locked up in his parents’ house. Lynn tells of Boo’s antics with his friends who get into some trouble with the law. While his friends are punished by the system, Boo’s father makes arrangements to handle his punishment. At this point in the story, Boo’s inner monologue picks up with notions from Lee’s novel. Boo tells of how he was angry with his father

and decided to stab him in the leg with a pair of scissors. He elaborates on that incident relating the probable prison time he would have had for doing such a thing.

One day, I was bored, so I got my scissors and started to cut up The Maycomb Tribune. I still hadn't thought of any thing to do to get revenge until he entered the living room. I'm going to stab him. It's the perfect way to hurt him. True, it wouldn't kill him or torture him like he's done to me but it shall do. Once he got close to me, I turned and jabbed the scissors into his leg. I pulled them out and wiped them clean on my pants. My mother starting screaming and ran outside, yelling her son's a murder and is going to kill us all. I didn't kill anyone and I wasn't planning on it either.

The author continues from Boo's point of view by showing how he watched some children through the window of his house. These children would be the main characters of Lee's novel – Jem and Scout Finch and their friend Dill. Boo talks about placing “treasures” in a knothole in a tree that he knew they would pass by.

For the first time of my life, I didn't want to leave this house and move to another country. I wanted to stay here and watch these children and their little actions at contacting me. I wonder how long it would be before grant they [sic] wish that is if I desire. One night, as I was walking by my house I saw a knothole in one of the two oak trees. This is the perfect way to contact those kids. I dug through my pants pocket, searching for something to stick in there. I came across a piece of chewing gum. I doubt they would find it but it's worth a try. I stuck it in there and walked away. I promised myself that I would watch it during the day for one of them to get it.

The author took events as they occurred in *Mockingbird* and gives the fan fiction readers a look into the mind of a misunderstood man. As I was reading this story, I could see the images as they appeared in my mind while reading *Mockingbird* and believe that had there been a “camera” on the Boo Radley character, this is what he may have been doing or thinking.

Lynn shows excellent depth of a character we don't really get to know in Lee's novel. She describes the details laid out in the novel as seen from another set of eyes. For example, in one part of the novel, the children, Jem, Scout, and Dill, are rolling Scout in an old tire. Jem takes advantage of the situation and intends on getting retribution for Scout embarrassing him in front of Dill. Lee's portrayal of the scene is told in the voice of Scout Finch. This is Lee's passage:

The tire bumped on gravel, skeetered across the road, crashed into a barrier and popped me like a cork onto pavement. Dizzy and nauseated, I lay on the cement and shook my head still, pounded my ears to silence, and heard Jem's voice: "Scout, get away from there, come on!" I raised my head and stared at the Radley Place steps in front of me. I froze. "Come on, Scout, don't just lie there!" Jem was screaming. "Get up, cant'cha?" I got to my feet, trembling as I thawed. "Get the tire!" Jem hollered. "Bring it with you! Ain't you got any sense at all?"

In Lynn's version, we see the same scene played out only this time through the watchful eyes of Boo Radley.

The tire goes flying straight towards my house. I guess the boy didn't mean to push it that hard cause he started to run after it and tried to stop it but it didn't work. The tire hit a barrier in front of the house and once it stopped moving, the girl dizzily crawled out of it and lay on the cement. The boy was shouting at her to get out of the yard, calling her Scout. I started to laugh. I couldn't help it. It was just too funny not to laugh. I now know the name of the girl, Scout. I wonder, is that her real name or just a nickname? The older boy yells at her for not getting the tire and he runs in himself to grab the tire.

Lynn actually uses much of the same terminology as Lee in her story – "barrier," "dizzily," "lay on the cement." While her concept is unique in that we're seeing this event from an outsider's point of view, her language choice is rather unoriginal as she borrows words and phrases from Harper Lee.

In another fan fiction story told from the point of view of Boo Radley, “Debbie” (not her real name) made an assumption about the character that is not implied in Lee’s novel. In her fanfic, “Song of the Mockingbird,” she portrays Boo as someone who looks at the neighboring children as his own children. In the following passage, Debbie shows the reader what Boo might have been thinking as he realized that he was trapped in his own home and watched the neighboring children and their summer antics.

However, it is from this jail that I learn from friendship. A strange sort of friendship, to be sure, but it is more than I have ever expected from life. I have found my children. Of course they were not my own, that is, not of my creation. They are the children of Mr. Finch, the town’s lawyer and they have no mother. I do not know why this is so, nor what their names are, and I dare not ask Nathan. They are young, a sister and her elder brother. I marvel at their energy, their innocence, and their freedom. There is an inherent quality about them that sets them apart from the many other children of the town. Vibrant, daring, and intelligent; they are everything and have everything that has been stripped from me through years of captivity. Like a molting bird, I have lost the ability to fly. But I will do everything in my power to prevent these young ones from suffering my fate. I don’t know how, though, because they fear me. They fear me.

Debbie’s portrayal of Boo differs from Lynn’s in that she doesn’t just describe events from Boo’s point of view as Lynn does, rather she explores more deeply the feeling and emotions Boo might have experienced as he witnessed events and imagined the children were his own.

I have perfected my plan to making my children happy. It is simple enough. During the night I quietly go out into the yard and place a little gift, a trinket of something in the gaping knothole of the old oak for the children to find whenever they pass under the tree’s shadow. Little things, like chewing gum, a spelling medal I had won as a child, and a broken old watch. Not much, perhaps, but I could not give anything more. Each time I peek out of the window and see their faces light up with the joy of discovery I become joyful myself. But, I rejoice quietly, so Nathan cannot hear me and know my dream. If he knew, he would destroy it.

The best present I ever left them, I think, were the portraits of them I had carved in soap with a pair of scissors. I remember when I used those same scissors to take a jab at father's knee. I never understood why my mother had been so distressed when I had done that. After all, father hadn't been wearing his nicest pants that day.
But my children are happy. Nothing else matters.

Both authors stayed very true to the events and descriptions found in *Mockingbird* drawing from Lee's established literary world. Debbie shows a real depth in her portrayal of a relatively unknown character as she gives Boo Radley notions of longing for children of his own.

Another author, "Lucy" (not her real name), chose a less-popular character from Lee's novel to show point of view. She wrote her story, "Chapter 18 – Mayella's Point of View," in response to the courtroom scene at the trial of Tom Robinson. Lucy uses the dialog from *Mockingbird* word-for-word, but fills in the gaps with Mayella's inner-dialog instead of Scout's narration. This is a creative approach to this particular chapter of Lee's novel; however, I believe Lucy should have better depicted Mayella as she appears in the book. Her thoughts appear in proper English, correct grammar, better vocabulary – most likely not how Lee's character might have been thinking. For example, Lucy writes:

. . . I choked on my own words. I couldn't look up. I'd kept my head down the entire time, it was no time to bring it up then. I was asked what happened after that, and I explained . . . Throughout my entire rehearsed monologue I was in tears, but they were real. They weren't from the pain from a memory of what never happened, but from the stress of being put into a situation like this.

The voice Lucy gave Mayella in her mind during this scene clearly do not represent how the character Lee created would be talking to herself. Her writing itself is

quite good, however, her grasp of the character whose point of view she was trying to portray lacks in comprehending the Mayella of *Mockingbird*.

“Ashley” (not her real name) wrote a fan fiction piece titled “TKAM An Alternative Ending.” While staying somewhat true to the events laid out by Lee, Ashley delves deeper into the relationship of Scout with her Aunt Alexandra. As far as her “alternate” ending, I believe she has a good idea in that she has Boo Radley shot and killed by accident. Heck Tate, the sheriff shot Boo thinking he was trying to harm the Finch children rather than save them from Bob Ewell. Ashley received one review from a reader on this story, which included the advice, “It was good, but I think you should have used more of your original ideas.” In a way, I agree with this review. One of the defining aspects of fan fiction is that the writer uses established characters and settings. Using the same situations depicted in the source material and elaborating a bit seem to stray from what’s expected of a good fanfic.

Though much of the fan fiction I read in response to *Mockingbird* was elementary, the idea that two of the writers I chose wrote their stories for a school assignment and felt confident enough to post them on the Internet tells me that these particular students took pride in writing the stories they wrote and would most likely embrace the assignment again given the opportunity.

Chapter 7: Educational Implications

If there's a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.

~ Toni Morrison

If fan fiction can be considered entertainment, a creative hobby, it might be an interest of educators to capitalize on its value. A typical student has a favorite book, a television show he never misses, a movie that he watches over and over again. As teachers of Composition, we should be able to appreciate these interests and utilize them to entice students to be more creative. Fan fiction could be an ideal way of reaching a student who may feel he has nothing to add to the classroom, that he does not possess an ability to write well.

Most of the time when I mention fan fiction to people, the first question I hear is, “What is fan fiction?” Once I explain the notion of fan fiction (and, if a connection to the Internet is convenient, I show them the Fanfic.net website), most people seem fascinated by it and want to know more. While talking to a co-worker one afternoon, I mentioned my research pertaining to fan fiction. With this co-worker, George, the situation was different. George is a teacher at a private school in Richmond, Virginia. His students range from grades three to eight. When he first heard about fan fiction, he was soon thinking about the potential such an activity could hold for his students. “It immediately

struck me as an exercise that would interest students, while encouraging them to write and think,” he told me.

Initially, George’s students were hesitant to embrace the concept. As he explained the activity in more detail, however, “their excitement increased rapidly.” The first time George used fan fiction in the classroom was with a group of 12 seventh-grade girls. “In a fifty minute period, almost half of the students used all the time available and all of the students were excited to share with their classmates what story they were writing on,” he observed. I asked George if he thought any of his students would approach writing as a non-academic activity based on the experience they had in his class. “Yes!” he emphatically replied. “Several of my seventh grade students wrote on the movie *13 Going On Thirty* and they all asked to have this activity again.”

George spoke with a number of his colleagues about fan fiction, none having heard of it. “The computer teacher was very interested in the activity,” he told me. “We plan to use this activity with grades five through eight as both part of their Values instruction and Typing instruction.” George spent some time browsing the Fanfic.net website and decided that some of the material on the site is not appropriate for most of his students. So he and the computer teacher intend to start a website for the school where students can post their stories to share with classmates. “Also, our librarian is interested in doing similar work with students with books they have read,” he elaborated. “She sees students doing their own writing based on popular books found in the school library and all of these works could be placed on our website.”

The thing about writers that people don't realize is that a lot of what they do is play.

~ Margaret Atwood

Other educators are welcoming the potential of the use of fan fiction in an academic environment as well. “Our decision to explore fanfiction writing further was related to our twin desires to understand youth culture better and to make school literacy instruction more responsive to learners’ needs,” said Kelly Chandler-Olcott and Donna Mahar in their article titled “Adolescents’ anime-inspired ‘fanfictions’: an exploration of multiliteracies.” The two were introduced to fan fiction when they discovered a group of students in Mahar’s middle school English classroom gathered around a printer inspecting a document they found near it. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar learned from two of Mahar’s students that fan fiction is basically “an insider text form best appreciated by readers familiar with the source material.” Through their discussions with these two students, Chandler-Olcott and Mahar were pleasantly rewarded by finding that the students feel such a sense of pride and ownership in their writing. In fact, the two focus students admitted to Chandler-Olcott and Mahar that their personal fan fiction writing was more important to them than their writing for classes. They believed it to be a higher quality product. One of the girls remarked that her school assignments were “the essay part of my writing,” and she confessed that she spends more time writing her fanfics than she does working on school projects.

Besides embracing and fostering a student's desire to write creatively, teachers can incorporate the use of fan fiction in the classroom for other reasons. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar found that when brought together on a writing project, students could learn from each other not only by constructive feedback on their work, but in technological ways, as well. For example, one of their students had been sending fan fiction to a friend not as an attached word processing file but as a large e-mail message. This student learned from another student how to create a separate document for creating and editing her work, and then attaching that document to an e-mail. Also, by sharing fan fiction stories with classmates, students can learn to use the feedback initiatives they've learned from responding to fan fiction on the Internet. A fifteen-year-old boy may have the confidence to anonymously reply to a fanfic posting on a website, but is he able to provide the same reply, adulating or suggesting, to a classmate? Fan fiction writing allows a student a confidence level not previously experienced because with fan fiction, he is, in his eyes, the expert. He knows the subject matter and cares enough about it to give it the respect and dedication he feels it deserves.

If a story is in you, it has got to come out.

~ William Faulkner

These students are writing, not because they *have* to, but because they *want* to. So why shouldn't teachers take advantage of a student's enthusiasm for writing and apply it to an academic situation? They should. An example of a use of fan fiction in the classroom could utilize classic works taught in English classes. For example, a ninth

grade English class has just read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The teacher reads the play along with his students assuming they understand the work. But how is the instructor sure that his class fully understands what they've read? One possible way of gaining this insight is through the use of fan fiction. When these students are asked to write a fan fiction based on *Romeo and Juliet*, the instructor will be able to gauge the students' knowledge of text and meaning. One student may use Romeo and Juliet as characters, for instance, but place them in a 21st century college campus setting, an uber-Shakespeare fanfic. So long as the characters are kept true to Shakespeare's intent, the teacher can understand his student's comprehension level. Another student may use Shakespeare's Verona as a setting and Romeo and Juliet as characters, but the student and a few of his friends become first hand witnesses to the tale as a part of the story in a sort of "Mary Sue" rendition. He adds himself as a character in the classic saga and may put a twist on the ending. This is another way an instructor can see just how well a student understands what he's read.

At the same time, the teacher is able to see examples of his students' creative writing abilities. He can observe their use of proper grammar and sentence structure. And, hopefully, the students can feel more involved in their reading of such works. Just knowing they are writing alongside a great author such as William Shakespeare could boost a young mind to excel in areas never imagined. In support of this theory, Donna Alvermann and Margaret Hagood, in their article "Fandom and critical media literacy," state, "Teachers must realize that critical media literacy practices recognize both students' pleasures and their critiques of the texts, but these practices also remain bound

to a pedagogy of responsibility whereby teachers must negotiate these malleable yet influential spaces so that no voice is privileged over any other.”

“The study of fan fiction is a fascinating area,” says Sue Hazlett in “Filling in the Gaps: Fans and Fan Fiction on the Internet,” her unpublished article. “It touches on many areas that have been the focus of conventional studies, such as gender issues, group formation and maintenance, computer-mediated communication, and identity. However, the friendliness and openness of the people writing fan fiction make it a gratifying and rewarding subject for academic research.”

As educators, I believe once we learn more about this phenomenon and its participants, we will find more ways to effectively incorporate fan fiction in teaching Composition. We can build a more conducive environment for encouraging young minds to think creatively and artistically. And maybe the more exposure fan fiction gets, the more people will be able to appreciate its writers.

Fan fiction is not a passing phase; it’s a growing entity. Writers of all ages, social status, and education levels are participating in fandoms through the Internet. From a communication world that was once folktales passed from generation to generation to a world of newsletters and pen pals, fan fiction has adapted to advances in technology and held steady through the surge of the Internet thanks to the tales of amateur writers everywhere.

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APPENDIX 1

ADVERTISEMENT TO PARTICIPANTS:

Can I ask you a question? Normally, I don't post on fan fiction forums. I usually stay quiet and just read the stories. I'm interested in your writing. The reason I'm contacting you, is that I'm a graduate student in English and I'm doing an MA thesis project on fan fiction. Would you be willing to participate in my study? You can respond under your forum name or choose a pseudonym. In my thesis, I will assign you a pseudonym—or you may choose your own—so that your anonymity is protected as is more or less required for academic research projects involving case studies. I will be asking you, as a writer who has granted me permissions, the same sorts of questions I will be asking other writers who agree to participate regarding their reading and writing habits and preferences on and off the Internet.

I will provide you with more information about myself and my project as you require. As stated above, should you choose to participate, you will be referred to only by your pseudonym or screen name, so your identity will not be revealed.

Please let me know if you'd like to be a part of this project. My goal is to introduce the phenomenon of fan fiction to the members of the English discipline.

Thanks for your time!

Melissa Herzing, MA Candidate
Writing and Rhetoric
Department of English
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA 23284-2005

Dr. Elizabeth Hodges, Thesis Director
Principal Investigator
ehodges@vcu.edu
804-828-8530

NOTE: I am not allowed to survey or interview minors or incarcerated individuals.

APPENDIX 2A

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: Exploring the Internet World of Fan Fiction

VCU IRB NO.: 04099

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the study staff to explain any words that you do not clearly understand. Feel free to think about the study or discuss the study with family or friends before making your decision.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to explore the internet world of fan fiction. The research will take place beginning in Fall 2004 and ending in Summer 2005. The results from this study will be reported in a written thesis and an oral defense in a university setting. Data from the project will not be made public in any way that identifies individual participants. Should the results of this study be accepted for publication, all participants will be contacted again for permission to publish.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are either a writer of fan fiction or a reader of fan fiction.

Description of the Study and Your Involvement:

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form after you have had all your questions answered and understand what will happen to you.

In this study you will be asked to (1) express your opinions about fan fiction as a writer and/or a reader; (2) answer questions pertaining to your own reading and writing habits; (3) express your thoughts about the possible use of fan fiction as a part of a Composition classroom tool. You may use an internet screenname if anonymity is desired. You will be asked to read and return completed questionnaires with as much detail as possible within a determined timeframe.

Risks and Discomforts:

There are no known harms associated with your participation in this research. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

Confidentiality:

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by Virginia Commonwealth University.

What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

Questions

In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, contact:

Melissa Herzing
herzingmj@vcu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research Subjects Protection
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 111
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA 23219
Telephone: 804-828-0868
Fax: 804-827-1448

APPENDIX 2B

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date
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Witness Signature (Required)	Date
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Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
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Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
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Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Catalina Millas	Catalina M.	December 5th, 2004
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

Witness Signature (Required)	Date
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Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
---	------

Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
--	------

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Ethan Guertin	Ethan Guertin	December 5, 2004
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

Witness Signature (Required)	Date
---------------------------------------	------

Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
---	------

Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
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Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Erica Turner	E. Turner	9/12/04
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

_____	Date
Witness Signature (Required)	

_____	Date
Signature of person conducting informed consent	

_____	Date
Investigator signature (if different from above)	

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Maura Scott	<i>Maura Scott</i>	Jan. 26, 2005
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

<i>Tifa Barron</i>	Jan. 26, 2005
Witness Signature (Required)	Date

Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
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Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
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Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Rumidha	Rumidha	12/5/04
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

_____	_____
Witness Signature (Required)	Date

_____	_____
Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date

_____	_____
Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Amanda Williams	Amanda Williams	12-8-04
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

_____	Date
Witness Signature (Required)	

_____	Date
Signature of person conducting informed consent	

_____	Date
Investigator signature (if different from above)	

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Christine G. Starkweather	Christine G. Starkweather	February 14, 2005
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

_____	Date
Witness Signature (Required)	

_____	Date
Signature of person conducting informed consent	

_____	Date
Investigator signature (if different from above)	

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Theo Papakonstantinou	TP	12/6/04
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

Witness Signature (Required)	Date
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Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
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Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
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Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Eugene Carver	Eugene Carver	December 5, 2004
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

_____	Date
Witness Signature (Required)	

_____	Date
Signature of person conducting informed consent	

_____	Date
Investigator signature (if different from above)	

Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

George Cosmo	George Cosmo	April 7, 2005
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

Witness Signature (Required)	Date
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Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
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Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
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Consent:

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study and that I am an adult of at least 18 years of age and not currently incarcerated in a justice facility.

Leslie Fish	Leslie Fish	March 22, 2005
Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date

Witness Signature (Required)	Date
---------------------------------------	------

Signature of person conducting informed consent	Date
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Investigator signature (if different from above)	Date
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APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Please answer the following questions as completely as you see fit. Those starred are questions for which answers are required. Once I receive your answers, I may have a few follow-up questions for you. Please send your responses to me as soon as possible. Thank you for taking the time to participate. Please feel free to ask me any questions you have in response to this questionnaire.

*Age:

*Gender:

Grade level or last grade completed:

How did you hear about fan fiction:

What made you want to write one:

How long have you been writing fan fiction:

What makes you want to keep writing:

Why do you post fan fiction on the internet:

What other writing have you done besides fan fiction:

What have you had published in a non-electronic form:

What specific fan fiction do you most like to read:

Least:

How often do you read fan fiction:

What do you read other than fan fiction:

How much and how often do you read anything other than fan fiction:

Has reading fan fiction inspired you to try to write fan fiction:

What do you think makes a good fan fiction:

Did you ever use any type of fan fiction in any kind of school setting:

What is the future of your fan fiction writing:

Do you see fan fiction as a way to “springboard” into possibly publishing your writing:

APPENDIX 4

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

Below are potential follow-up questions I may ask participants.

1. What do you like to read recreationally?
2. Would you have ever considered using a fan fiction for a school assignment?
Why or why not?
3. How do your fan fiction ideas come to you? What is your inspiration?
4. When do you do your writing? Do you set aside a specific time for fan fiction?
5. What's the best feedback you received? The worst?
6. Do you remember your first feedback?
7. Does feedback help or hinder you? Why?
8. Do you know about fan fiction copyright laws?
9. Do you use a "beta" reader? Why or why not?
10. Do you edit or rework your stories a lot?
11. What is your overall opinion of fan fiction? Why do you think so many writers choose to write fan fiction for the internet rather than try to publish short stories?
12. How do your fan fiction ideas come to you? What is your inspiration?

APPENDIX 5

American Anthropological Association statement of ethics

A. Preamble.

Educational researchers conduct research within a broad array of settings and institutions, including schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, and prisons. It is of paramount importance that educational researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of their research populations and also the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs. Educational researchers should be especially careful in working with children and other vulnerable populations. These standards are intended to reinforce and strengthen already existing standards enforced by institutional review boards and other professional associations.

B. Standards.

1. Participants, or their guardians, in a research study have the right to be informed about the likely risks involved in the research and of potential consequences for participants, and to give their informed consent before participating in research. Educational researchers should communicate the aims of the investigation as well as possible to informants and participants (and their guardians), and appropriate representatives of institutions, and keep them updated about any significant changes in the research program.
2. Honesty should characterize the relationship between researchers and participants and appropriate institutional representatives. Deception is discouraged; it should be used only when clearly necessary for scientific studies, and should then be minimized. After the study the researcher should explain to the participants and institutional representatives the reasons for the deception.
3. Educational researchers should be sensitive to any locally established institutional policies or guidelines for conducting research.
4. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, unless otherwise constrained by their official capacities or roles.
5. Educational researchers should exercise caution to ensure that there is no exploitation for personal gain of research populations or of institutional settings of research. Educational researchers should not use their influence over subordinates, students, or others to compel them to participate in research.

6. Researchers have a responsibility to be mindful of cultural, religious, gender, and other significant differences within the research population in the planning, conduct, and reporting of their research.
7. Researchers should carefully consider and minimize the use of research techniques that might have negative social consequences, for example, experimental interventions that might deprive students of important parts of the standard curriculum.
8. Educational researchers should be sensitive to the integrity of ongoing institutional activities and alert appropriate institutional representatives of possible disturbances in such activities which may result from the conduct of the research.
9. Educational researchers should communicate their findings and the practical significance of their research in clear, straightforward, and appropriate language to relevant research populations, institutional representatives, and other stakeholders.
10. Informants and participants have a right to remain anonymous. This right should be respected when no clear understanding to the contrary has been reached. Researchers are responsible for taking appropriate precautions to protect the confidentiality of both participants and data. Those being studied should be made aware of the capacities of the various data-gathering technologies to be used in the investigation so that they can make an informed decision about their participation. It should also be made clear to informants and participants that despite every effort made to preserve it, anonymity may be compromised. Secondary researchers should respect and maintain the anonymity established by primary researchers.

APPENDIX 6

Fan fiction samples

By Natalie

Here is my new series. I hope you like it. All you have to know is that Chandler doesn't know the gang, but he did meet Ross and Monica on thanksgiving. Everything else will explain itself as the story goes on. Email me with any comments, feedback, etc... Now, on with the 'fic.

Things Change, People Change

Chapter 1: The Past

Monica, Rachel, Ross and Phoebe were at Central Perk, where they usually hang out everyday after work. Ross was telling a, according to him, fascinating story about dinosaurs that he heard that day at work. They were all listening, or so he thought, when his story was interrupted when Joey entered to the coffee house with a friend in tow. Monica was reading a magazine, so she didn't look up when he entered.

"Hey Guys" Joey said, his friend standing next to him looking nervous "I want to introduce you guys to someone"

"Joey" Ross spoke up "I was telling a story here, would you mind if I finish it first?"

Joey, almost sure of what the story was about, looked at the rest "Lets say what they want. Guys, would you rather listen to Ross or me?"

They all agreed to listen to Joey, after all, meeting someone new was always more interesting than listening to Ross talking about dinosaurs.

"Fine!" Ross said "But you'll never get the chance to hear it again!"

"So, who's your new friend, Joey?" Rachel asked, ignoring Ross's last comment.

"Well, I met him at this audition, he was there helping the director with some dialogues and we started talking, so we became friends"

"So, I guess that guy standing next to you, who looks really nervous, is your friend?"

Joey looked at his friend and laughed "Relax, Chandler!" He turned his attention back to everyone else "Guys, this is my friend, Chandler Bing"

They all looked at him and said various hello's. Monica looked really nervous and immediately turned her attention back to the magazine. Rachel looked at her and quietly asked her "He... he isn't the Chandler Bing we know, right?" Monica nodded and Rachel gasped.

Ross looked at him for a while and then got up from the couch "Chandler? Is that really you?" Joey only looked confused and Chandler smiled.

"Ross!" He said "I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure"

Ross smiled "Well, it is me!" He hugged Chandler "What's up, man? Long time no see"

Chandler nodded "That's right"

Joey looked at Ross then back at Chandler "You guys know each other?"

Ross and Chandler nodded at the same time "Yeah, we were roommates a long time ago, back in college"

"Cool!" Joey said "Well, let me introduce you to everyone else... This is Phoebe"

"Hey"

"And Rachel..."

"Hi" She said bitterly.

"And Monica, Ross's little sister"

Monica looked up at him.

"Hello" She said. Then looked back at the magazine she was reading.

Chandler looked a little bit uncomfortable and there was a silence between them. Then Ross spoke up again "Well, sit down man and tell us what you have been up to"

Chandler was about to start talking when Phoebe interrupted "You will, but after my show, I don't like when people talk while I'm singing" She got up from the couch and went to the 'stage'.

"Hello everyone" She said, while getting comfortable on her seat "We will start with my most popular song and then I'll introduce you guys to my new song"

As she started to sing her 'famous' song, Smelly Cat, everyone listened carefully but Monica. Her mind wandered back to her school times.

By Tom

Tom actually writes his stories in sort of a script format including where commercial breaks would appear.

MONICA & CHANDLER'S (The Next Morning. Rachel is asleep on the couch. Chandler and Monica emerge from their bedroom)

Monica: I wonder what she's gonna feel like this morning?

Chandler: Not good.

Monica: (picks up bucket) Oh gross, did she have to eat pizza last night? (Monica goes to the bathroom)

Chandler: It could have been worse, she could've had corn.

(Rachel wakes up and sprints to the bathroom)

Monica: (emerges from the bathroom) You think she could've waited until I left.

Chandler: No, I think that stuff is on a one way ticket.

(Rachel emerges from the bathroom)

Monica: How do you feel honey?

Rachel: Better. (pause) No I don't. (Rachel sprints back to the bathroom)

Chandler: Nothing like calling God on the porcelain telephone.

Opening Credits

MONICA & CHANDLER'S (Continuation from before. Chandler and Monica are eating breakfast at the table. Rachel is lying on the couch with a cloth on her face)

Chandler: Hey Rach, do you want some of this greasy bacon?

Monica: Chandler, you know she's missing a lung. I doubt she wants to eat.

Rachel: Very funny guys.

Monica: Rach, what made you get so drunk last night?

Rachel: I don't remember. I just remember drinking that whole bottle of Captain Morgan.

Chandler: Ah yes, the curse of Captain Morgan.

(Ross enters)

Ross: Hey Monica, are you guys still going to dinner with Rebecca and I tonight.

Monica: Yup, we'll meet you there at 7:30.

Ross: (notices Rachel) My God Rach, you look like hell. What happened to you?

Chandler: She lost a sword fight with Captain Morgan.

Ross: (to Rachel) Hungover huh.

Rachel: Very.

Ross: Alright, I gotta go. (to Monica and Chandler) I'll see you guys tonight.

Chandler: We're going to dinner with them tonight?

Monica: Yes, I told you about it yesterday.

Chandler: No you didn't.

Monica: Yes, I did.

Chandler: No, you didn't

(Monica glares at Chandler)

Chandler: Ok, you did. (to himself) You so did not.

Monica: What?

Chandler: I said I love you.

Monica: I thought so.

APPENDIX 7

Complete Q&A of Kansas and Danny

Kansas

*Age: 24

*Gender: Female

Grade level or last grade completed: Completed college, BA in Social Work

How did you hear about fan fiction: I first heard of fanfiction in the fall of 1998, when I entered my freshman year of college and had access to the Internet for the first time. I was a fanatic for the television show, The X-Files, so I went online to look for references to the show. I ran across something called The Gossamer Archives which was an archive of XF fanfic and I was instantly hooked. 2 years before I entered college (before I had ever heard of fanfic) a friend and I thought we were being very inventive by writing an XF story.

What made you want to write one: I wanted to write a fanfic after having read them for several months. I realized that I wasn't a bad writer (I was at least as good as some of the lesser written fics I had read) and decided to post my own story. I have always, since I was a child, put myself to sleep at night by making up stories and/or situations. I used a cast of characters I had made up, or I would use characters from TV, books, or movies. It seemed a natural progression to take these stories I was making up in my head and write them down.

How long have you been writing fan fiction: Almost 6 years. I have written fanfic for 3 different genres...X-Files, Harry Potter, and Friends.

What makes you want to keep writing: I want to keep writing as I still make up stories in my head to put myself to bed. I also love to read other stories and I enjoy writing.

Why do you post fan fiction on the internet: I love the Internet because there are people who are willing to read stories and offer their opinions and advice for better writing. I've met a lot of great people online. Plus, in real life (RL) a lot of people tend to look down on the idea of "fanfic" or even if you are too interested in a TV show or book series. I'm

fascinated with the idea of “What would the character do once the camera stops rolling?” Some people find that obsessive, or weird.

What other writing have you done besides fan fiction: I’ve written a screen-play with my husband (who produces low budget direct to video movies) and I’m about ready to begin writing another one.

What have you had published in a non-electronic form: I haven’t had anything published, per se. My husband did film a script I wrote, but the film hasn’t been put on the market.

What specific fan fiction do you most like to read: I like to read X-Files, Harry Potter and Friends fanfic the best. *Least:* I like reading CSI and X-Men fanfic the least. I love the show/comic book, but I find the fanfic set in those “universes” to be the least appealing. That may have to do with the lack of scientific knowledge one would need to write convincing fics in the CSI universe, and the lack of art that I’m used to seeing with X-Men stories.

How often do you read fan fiction: At least once everyday. I am a “beta” (proofreader) on www.checkmated.com, a Harry Potter fanfiction website. I’m pretty much online there everyday working with other authors.

What do you read other than fan fiction: I read quite often. My favorite type of book is actually nonfiction, as I get my fiction fix from fanfic. I read a lot of memoirs (especially Holocaust), and archaeology, paranormal, and comparative religion books.

How much and how often do you read anything other than fan fiction: I would say that I read books at least every other day or so. Fanfic is generally much shorter than an actual novel, so it’s easier to slip into the day.

Has reading fan fiction inspired you to try to write fan fiction: Well, I had written a fanfic before I even knew what it was, but I would say that I was inspired to write due to what I was reading, yes.

What do you think makes a good fan fiction: Good fanfiction is made when an author is true to the characters and their world. I like to read (and write) stories that could happen when the director yells “cut” or when the author puts down her pen. I like “missing scene” stories the best...i.e. when a character mentions something that happened but we didn’t “see” it, I love fics that flesh that out. Grammar helps to make a story great, too. I do not like to see “netspeak” in fanfic and I dislike author’s notes in the body of a story. Good fanfic is often found on sites other than www.fanfiction.net. There is no beta-reading service at that site, therefore a lot of the stories are full of grammar problems, netspeak, and author’s notes. Not only that, but often the subject matter is questionable (i.e. incest, bestiality, rape, suicide, etc.). It’s unfortunate that so much of this occurs in fanfic. There may be some situations or stories that call for mature content matter, but

it's amazing how much of this mature content is on ff.net. In fact, the owners of the site recently (within the past year) disallowed NC-17 fanfics from their site. I post on ff.net for my Friends fanfic (as there are very few Friends fanfic sites on the web) but my other work is posted on X-Files and Harry Potter fansite archives.

Did you ever use any type of fan fiction in any kind of school setting: No, but I would have if the opportunity ever arose.

What is the future of your fan fiction writing: I will continue writing and reading as long as fanfic is out there and as long as there are characters that I'm interested in seeing more of.

Do you see fan fiction as a way to "springboard" into possibly publishing your writing: Not particularly. You have to remember that writing fanfic is basically against the law. Several authors have threatened lawsuits against those who use their characters, even though no money is exchanging hands. And I can see their point, but at the same time, I believe that one would be flattered that an entire internet community loves your creation so much as to write fiction about them. I suppose that writing the fanfic (and getting the proofreading help from others) could help a future writing career in terms of experience. I did know of one XF fanfic writer who got a novel deal by changing a bit from one of his XF stories and submitting it to a publishing company. So, it's possible, but not probable, in my opinion.

Danny

**Age:* 60

**Gender:* M

Grade level or last grade completed: Doctorate in Physical Chemistry

How did you hear about fan fiction: I have been a reader of fan fiction long before there was an internet.

What made you want to write one: Concern over how some of the characters and the situations were being handled. I particularly wanted to show that there were other ways of interpreting some of the TV stories and that the results did have consequences that we did not see on TV. It also gave me a way to express these frustrations.

How long have you been writing fan fiction: About 15 years.

What makes you want to keep writing: I enjoy it. I have always enjoyed writing and creating and this is the ultimate act of creation and it seems to please lots of people. I get a few negative comments but most are highly positive and they want more. So it feeds my ego too.

Why do you post fan fiction on the internet: Because it is quickly accessible by a mass audience of fans who want to hear more about their favorite characters.

What other writing have you done besides fan fiction: Short stories, novels, dissertations, scientific papers in chemistry and astronomy. I have also written technical reports.

What have you had published in a non-electronic form: Several short stories and scientific papers. in chemistry and Astronomy.

What specific fan fiction do you most like to read: I read Star Trek FF, Frasier FF, Sherlock Holmes FF, Friends FF *Least:* Happy Days, Dallas, etc. (This is very hard to answer as if I don't read it at all does that make it least or me unaware of it?)

How often do you read fan fiction: Sometimes every day. As an average, about once a month as I get it in a digest form.

What do you read other than fan fiction: Fantasy, Sword and Sorcery, Science fiction, westerns, historicals, comics such as Ultimate Spider-man, Amazing Spider-man, Thunderbolts, and Avengers; Analog, Asimos, Astounding Fantasy, Alternative History novels by people like Harry Turtledove and M Stirling.

How much and how often do you read anything other than fan fiction:

Almost 99 percent of my reading is other than fan fiction. I am an omnivour when it comes to reading. I read books or comic books about 4 hours a day.

Has reading fan fiction inspired you to try to write fan fiction: Sometimes. Only when I find that the idea the other author puts out makes me think of lots of alternatives that could be better expressed.

What do you think makes a good fan fiction: Stories that capture the essence of the characters and how they react and puts them in situations that require them to act like they do on the shows but in more extreme manners. FF that does not keep characterization, bores me.

Did you ever use any type of fan fiction in any kind of school setting:

I used it at the University of Chicago in a discussion group.

What is the future of your fan fiction writing: It depends on what inspiration hits me. I have some ideas that I would like to put out there, but it all depends on my health and other factors.

Do you see fan fiction as a way to “springboard” into possibly publishing your writing: I have had some dreams that way. Who doesn't, but I realistically know that none of the syndicated shows will take from a writer without an agent. I learn from it and try to improve my own writing. When the FF goes well, I write other things and submit them. I hope some day to be well published but it may not happen and that is realistic.

APPENDIX 8

Glossary

Beta Reader – A person who critiques a story for an author. The critique normally examines the following parts of a piece: grammar, spelling, characterizations, plot, similarities to canon, and language

Conventions – Organized gatherings of fans held at regular intervals throughout the year. Media fans have a calendar of conventions, and also meet at the established science fiction conventions.

Crossover – A story that incorporates characters, settings and other elements from more than one fandom.

Disclaimer – A statement at the beginning of the story which informs the reader that borrowed characters/scenarios and settings were not created by the writer, but were used and manipulated.

Fan language (Fannish) – Many fan words are acronyms, distortions of standard English, or standard English words used with specific meanings in the fan community.

Fandom – All fan activities connected to a book, comic book, movie, television show or video game.

Fanon – A belief in a fandom that is widely believed to be true though there may be little canon evidence to support the belief.

Fanzine – An amateur, nonprofit publication focused on the dissemination of written information, fiction, poetry, or commentary about favorite book, television, movie, role-playing, or computer gaming products.

Filk – Lyrics relating to a fandom which are made up to the tune of previously recorded songs.

Filksong – Fannish term for a science fiction folksong.

Feedback – Giving or receiving opinions and constructive criticism.

Flame – Feedback that is intended to insult or demean the author.

Letterzine – A fanzine devoted almost exclusively to letters between fans, the letterzine may have some news about upcoming productions or events, or an occasional review as well as the letters.

Mary Sue – A character that may be loosely based on the author. The character often is perfect and has a tendency to save the day. The story may focus around canon characters and their relationship to the character.

Slash – Homoerotic fiction using the characters from the source products. The term is derived from the symbol, /, used to separate the names or initials of the two or more characters involved in a sexual-romantic relationship.

Source Product – Television series, movies, books, and other commercially produced fictional narratives from which fans draw characters, settings, and some plots that serve as the sources of their own art and literature.

Spoilers – Details which give away the plot of an episode or movie. If used in a story, the author is advised to warn his readers.

Trekker – The fan community's name for a *Star Trek* fan.

Trekkie – The term for a *Star Trek* fan most often used by news media, often with the connotation of silly, infantile behavior. Considered a derogatory term in the fan community.

VITA

Melissa Jean Herzing was born on July 17, 1968, in St. Marys, Pennsylvania. She graduated from St. Marys Area High School, St. Marys, Pennsylvania, in 1986. She received her Bachelor of Arts in journalism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, in 1990. A year later in 1991, she received a Master of Arts in English from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Melissa has completed her graduate work at Virginia Commonwealth University to earn her second master's degree in English focusing on writing and rhetoric. She plans to teach in Northeastern Pennsylvania.