

Fanfiction: fun for readers or unfair to original writers?

In fanfiction, also known as fanfic, writers borrow characters and concepts from books, films, and TV shows, and write alternative storylines. We asked four people for their take on this growing form of storytelling.

A Lin

People are often curious about how I got started, but it was really quite simple. I read the last chapter of a novel and I hated the ending! Not only was it a bad ending to the story, the characters seemed to have lost their original personality. So I set about writing my own ending, just for fun. It was when I found that other fans were as dissatisfied as me with the same book, that I decided to make my version available online. It was an instant hit, with some fans saying my work was more credible and enjoyable. Now I'm a regular fanfic writer with thousands of readers worldwide. Having their comments helps me shape what happens next and keeps me going. It's that ongoing interaction that distinguishes fanfiction from other forms of writing.

B Jake

I started out of love for the characters in my favourite books. It wasn't because I thought I could do better than the original author; I just wanted to see what would happen to their characters in different situations. I was by no means an overnight success, but over time my fan base grew. What I didn't realise was that I was developing as a writer and growing in confidence. Then a publisher got in touch to see if I had any ideas for an original work. I did and I'm now in my fifth year as a professional writer. Many professional writers query the fairness of their work being copied. All I can say is, my sales haven't suffered. And once a story is out in the world, it's really owned by the readers, so I can't control it.

C Nicole

Personally, fanfiction wouldn't be my reading of choice, but I don't have any moral problem with it. If it keeps people reading and brings them enjoyment, so much the better. Professionally, it isn't something we have as part of our list, but we do keep a close eye on the main fanfiction sites, just to see which genre is most popular and who are the up-and-coming writers. There's a surprising amount of talent out there, although some professionals prefer not to admit it. Fanfiction is often seen as second best, as if the writers are just imitators of 'real' authors. I don't see it like that. They may not have invented the characters, but the narratives are all their own work. The fans also take the writing very seriously and give brutally honest feedback. So fanfiction can be an excellent training ground.

D Simon

Having made a name for myself as a successful science fiction writer, I was horrified when my characters started appearing all over the online story site Wattpad. I

contacted my publisher to see if we could get all the stories related to my work taken down. They can't take any action unless the writers receive an income from their stories. Some say I should be flattered, but my objection is about who owns the work. Writers need to have professional respect for each other and not just take what they want from another person's creativity. Just because fanfiction has a huge audience doesn't make it right. Most of these writers remain anonymous on Wattpad, which seems to indicate they're less than proud of what they do.

**Read the article about fanfiction quickly and answer the questions.
Then click on show answers to see if you were right.**

1 Which of the four people have written fanfiction?

LIN JAKE NICOLE SIMON

2 Which two people write for a living?

LIN JAKE NICOLE SIMON

3 Who has the most negative opinion of fanfiction?

LIN JAKE NICOLE SIMON

Read the article again. Match the questions (1–10) with the people (A–D).

Which person ...

1 wasn't immediately popular with readers?

2 says that fanfiction can't be justified by the number of readers?

3 uses fanfiction sites as a way of finding what readers like?

4 involves their fans in the writing process?

5 doesn't agree that fanfiction writers are inferior?

Match the highlighted phrases in the sentences (1–8) with the

definitions (A–H).

1 We asked four people for their **take on** this growing form of storytelling.

2 I **set about** writing my own ending.

3 Having their comments **keeps me going**.

4 I **was by no means** an overnight success.

5 We **keep a close eye on** the main fanfiction sites.

6 We want to see who are the **up-and-coming** writers.

7 Fanfiction is often **seen as second best**.

8 I've **made a name for myself** as a successful science fiction writer.

A observe carefully

B likely to succeed

C become well known and popular

D thought of as less good

E opinion of

F achievement didn't come quickly or easily

G helps me continue

H started