FANFICTION WORKBOOK

Eleanor Rose
“You just sit down and write. There’s no other way to do it. You can sit down and read books about how to write better, write faster, but unless you sit down, use your grit, and just do it, it doesn’t matter. All the prep work without the work itself turns you into a pretentious snob. Just start typing.

In fact, go write right now. Just two sentences.

That’s all it takes.”

-Eleanor Rose
WELCOME
TO THE
FANFICTION
WORKBOOK

“THERE ARE NO
LAWS FOR THE
NOVEL. THERE
NEVER HAVE
BEEN, NOR CAN
THERE EVER BE.”
Hello!

My name is Eleanor Rose, and I run a Channel where I write and narrate fanfiction for kids 11-14. I didn’t think it would grow so much, but I now have over 20,000 Subscribers and counting. I don’t claim to be an expert, but I have five hundred videos on that channel with an audience who inspires to become a better writer.

With that said, this workbook is for them. For you! For anyone who wants to be a better writer. It’s aimed at those who write fanfiction, but designed for any writer to hone their skills. If you look to the right, you’ll see the first activity! Yay!

There are various activities scattered throughout, in addition to tips and explanations to write better, whether it’s about getting ideas, focusing, grammar, or acquiring an audience.

Thank you so much for downloading this workbook, regardless of if you’re a subscriber or not. I hope you find it useful.

Happy writing!

-Eleanor Rose
So what’s the difference between writing original fiction and fanfiction?

Answer: Not a lot!

Okay, that’s a lie. I just lied to you.
Rule #1 when going through this workbook:
Always be skeptical.
Always.

I may give you advice that you don’t agree with, and that’s okay! People have different styles, tastes, and experiences. That’s what makes writing, and reading, so fun! It can be frustrating at times when you write an experience of yours into a work and someone comments on it in a rage, calling it ‘unrealistic’ or ‘invalid’ due to their own experiences, but once another pair of eyes reads what you wrote, it’s not yours anymore. It can be tough to accept at first, but that’s reality.

So what is this anyway? A book of me rambling to you while you’re bored? I hope not. If you are bored, then I’m glad you’re here. The earlier you learn that improving skills in your downtime helps you in the long run, the better off you’ll be. This is a guide, and I use that term loosely, to writing fanfiction, crafted out of my research and experience.

One of the beautiful things about fanfiction, especially once compared to traditional publishing, is that you can publish without experience. Pairs of eyeballs that are not your own will read it and, hopefully, comment on it. It’s a double-edged sword because while you can get positive feedback in real time, motivating you to put out another chapter, you can also get negative feedback strong enough to make you stop writing altogether before you ever finish a project. It can be hard, but as your talent grows you’ll learn to roll your eyes when the negativity is a child with a keyboard and when to internalize the criticism to help you improve, not wither.

I make this sound scary, but if you’re able to write with proper characterization and grammar you’ll find that such comments are few and far between. If you think writing is scary, I’m sorry- and I’ll help you change your attitude if you work with me.

Let’s press onward, together.
Choose your Characters!
Throughout this workbook we will do several exercises together, but I want to keep one character in mind the entire time. As this is fanfiction, take your favorite character(s) from whatever show, movie, or book you want to write about, and write them below. It’s cool if you’re going to use original characters too. If you’re going to write a romantic story, then you can make those characters a couple! I’ll be writing about Marinette Dupain-Cheng developing a relationship with Nino Lahiffe from the children’s television show Miraculous Ladybug, but I want it to be platonic!.

Let’s map out the beginning!

Who is your fanfiction about?

________________________________________________________________________

What do you want your character to do? (Circle all plot elements)

- Flirt
- Develop a skill
- Overcome a trial
- Fail
- Fall in love
- Compete
- Strengthen a friendship

There are, of course, many more parts and goals of a story, but I’ve listed some of the most recurring ones above. You can list some more, if you’d like, below. Don’t worry if you don’t have an idea as to what to write yet. I’m just trying to get you to think of what type of story you’d like to tell. Writing is easier when you like what you’re writing about!
Why is Fanfiction ‘easier’ to write than traditional projects?

I’ve spent the last few months reading blog posts and books published on fanfiction. Yes, you read that right. People have written books about fanfiction, especially since 50 Shades of Gray, a twilight fanfiction, gained popularity. If that weren’t surprising enough, Fanfiction has made enough of an impact to be a required course in several college English programs. Berklee and Princeton University, two distinguished schools, offer it in their curriculum and Anne Jamison of University of Utah even published a book on the development of fanfiction over the years and what it means to modern day pop culture.

So why do people turn to writing fanfiction? Why don’t they write for their own characters and potentially make money?

The answer is simple. Love.

From the author’s perspective, they tend to already love the characters, instantly making it easier to write and leaving little prep work to do before they start a story. They love them so much that canonical events are no longer enough for them or they think to themselves ‘what if’ and set to work transforming that love into words.

From the reader’s perspective, they already love the characters so the author doesn’t need to spend time drabbling on, trying to frame the story in a certain light so people will care about their original characters. They’re also a pre-existing fanbase, so the author has people who want to read their work before they even know they exist.

That term, love, encompasses a broad range of meanings, doesn’t it?

THINKING TIME!

What made you start reading fanfiction? Why do you continue to read fanfiction? What about fanfiction makes you want to write some yourself?
A stark difference between traditional publishing and fanfiction is how stories get sorted into genres.


Traditional publishing sorts stories into plotlines and target audience. A quick look at Archive of Our Own and Fanfiction.net shows that fanfiction, hereafter referred to as fic, is categorized differently. Instead of sorting by plot, fic gets sorted by feelings. When a well-seasoned fanfiction reader looks for something to read, the first thing they do is look for an emotion they want to feel. Fluff. Angst. Hurt/Comfort. But what do those mean?

Let’s break it down:

Fluff -- The stuff that makes you squeal. Think of coffee shops and bookstores, first kisses and snowy moonlight dates. When you read one of these you have to control yourself in public otherwise every stranger you make eye contact will wonder why your grin is bigger than your face. To quote Despicable Me, “It’s so fluffy I’m going to die!” Plot advancement isn’t usually the biggest selling point of Fluff fics.

Angst -- Emotional- and sometimes physical- torture of characters. Everything seems to go wrong for them. About to take down the villain? Think again! Now that character’s worse off than she started. Angst often inspires the reader to say ‘But why is this happening to her??’ and groan when something goes wrong. The writing may dabble along problematic borders.

Hurt/Comfort -- Also called hurt-to-comfort. The greatest unspoken ‘rule’ of hurt/comfort is that the end results must be greater than the trial the character went through. This genre squeezes the reader’s heart in pain and angst in the beginning and leaves them feeling warm, comforted, and ‘fluffy’ by the endgame. This can be for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the ‘hurt’ comes from unrequited love, and the ‘comfort’ comes from the first kiss. Or, on a more extreme level, the ‘hurt’ is an abusive relationship with one person and the ‘comfort’ is the protagonist getting out of that relationship and ending up with someone who makes him feel like he’s doing better than he ever was.

**There are various ways to define these genres, and each reader has a slightly different way to describe them. Not everyone may agree with the above descriptions.**

There’s something magical about seeing favorite characters in a modern day fantasy, and while many people groan at seeing cute hallmark-esque stories on television over the holidays with the same boy-meets-girl plotlines, fic readers kill for it. Why, you might ask? Because, as discussed before, the readers already love the characters, and they love seeing the characters in familiar situations, which brings us to rule #2 of this workbook.

Don’t be afraid to be unoriginal.

I know the ghosts of your literature teachers past just gasped and made a pact to haunt me, but let me just say it one more time, a little louder for those in the back.

Don’t be afraid to be unoriginal.

Now that I’ve said that, I must specify: Don’t plagiarize. That’s not cool, even in the fanfiction world. When I say ‘be unoriginal’ I mean write as many cheezy, over-the-top sappy love stories as you want, not ‘copy-and-paste someone else’s story.’
So what are these ‘overused’ tropes and why should you write with them, anyway?

I’ll get to the what and why in a moment, but first I feel the need to define three common words: Canon, Headcanon, and AU.

Canon: Things that happened in the (real) story. For example. In the Harry Potter series, Hermione Granger is smart. Hermione is smart, in canon.

Headcanon: Something that wasn’t shown in the (real) story, but the real story doesn’t disprove your theory. For example, the Harry Potter series doesn’t say Hermione Granger doesn’t become vegetarian after she graduates from Hogwarts. There’s nothing that can disprove that theory, so in the writers head, Hermione is a vegetarian in canon. AKA Headcanon.

AU: Short for Alternate Universe. There are a couple of different types of AUs. We’re going to look at two different kinds: Dismissing canon, and dismissing setting.

Dismissing Canon: If I write and AU where Hermione Granger is vegetarian from the very start of the ‘Harry Potter’ series, it’s creating an AU to dismiss a specific part of what’s canon. The entire story can focus on her time at Hogwarts, but it’s still an AU because I rewrote part of the canon.

Dismissing Setting: If I took Hermione Granger and put her in a cafe in Paris, I would be disregarding setting, and that’s okay! Instead of her falling in love with Ronald Weasley like she did in the Harry Potter book series, I could instead write a fluffy story about Ron accidentally spilling hot tea on her and taking her out to a bookstore as an apology. That’s a cute story idea, right? And it’s set in an alternate universe! Yay!

I hope those explanations made sense to you. Tropes in Fanfiction are so overused that us readers (and writers) can make jokes (as seen on the next page).

All this talk about genres and tropes brings us to our next writing activity! Let’s go!
FANFICTION AU

college    fake    band

dating    coffee    soul

swap      shop      mates

amnesia    high    sports

BINGO

I’ve actually sold the above image on t-shirts and stickers through my redbubble store
#ShamelessSelfPromotion @ www.redbubble.com/people/EleanorRoseYT
You already know what character you’re going to write about, so let’s take the next step! How do you want your reader to feel? Choose one that we’ve already talked about to make it easier.

Fluff       Angst       Hurt/Comfort

Now let’s choose a trope! For the sake of this workbook, let’s make it an AU. You can write a canon/headcanon story a different time! I know there’s a giant Bingo board on the other page, but I’ll list the most common tropes below for you to choose from!

College - The main characters/cast are in college
Fake Dating - The main characters have to pretend to date for some reason.
Band - The main Characters start/are in a band together
Gender Swap - Same characters, but as the opposite gender
Coffee Shop - Usually a fluff, fall-in-love-at-a-coffee-shop story.
Amnesia - Main character doesn’t remember love interest or vice-versa
High School - Main Characters are in a modern-day high school
Sports - Main characters are on a sports team together.
Soulmates - Can be fluff or angst depending on the setting, but the MCs are soulmates!

Now that you’ve picked out your feels and trope, write down your story in two sentences or less! I’ll go first: Marinette and Nino meet at a coffee shop years after graduating high school. A fluffy oneshot story about Marinette reconnecting and strengthening an old friendship.

Okay? Your turn!
Drabble it up!

Before I get into grammar and mechanics, which I know many of you are curious about, let’s talk about drabbles. When someone says ‘Here’s a drabble’ they usually mean one of two things: An outline of a story via bullet points, or an extremely short story of 100-300 words. Not all writing needs to be plotted out, but it helps when you know where you’re going! Below is my drabble. Take the next page to make your own, and don’t worry about having too many details!

- Marinette goes to a coffee shop for a scone
- She hears a familiar voice behind her and turns around
- It’s Nino!
- They get a table together
- Nino talks about his DJ business
- Marinette reminisces about his mix from the graduation party years ago.
- They exchange current phone numbers and part ways
- Marinette feels happy she ran into Nino again

I know it doesn’t look like much, but the drabble above is more than enough for a fulfilling, fluffy story, despite it being about a platonic relationship. There are so many more details to add, but a drabble is just that: a drabble. I could abandon the idea here, or turn it into a story!

Take the next page, your character, genre, and trope and plot out your own story, drabble form!
So now you’ve, hopefully, plotted out a drabble. You know what you want your characters to go through. You know how you want your reader to feel. You know what the storyline is. Now all that’s left is to write the dialogue!

...But how?

How do grammar and mechanics work in the English language?

Perhaps English isn’t your first language. Maybe your English teachers haven’t told you about editing modern-day dialogue. That’s okay. We’re about to learn, together! Dialogue is different than peer-edited papers, after all. Who cares about MLA or Chicago-style citations when we’re writing fiction?

Let’s start off easy by defining a dialogue tag.

You probably already know what they are. Said, yelled, shouted- those are all dialogue tags. Take the following dialogue and circle the dialogue tags. Ready? Go!

“It’s been forever, Nino!” Marinette exclaimed.

“Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said.

Did you get them? Both ‘Marinette exclaimed’ and ‘he said’ are dialogue tags. Simple, right? You can also omit dialogue tags after introducing the speakers. Your readers are smart. Trust them! Watch:

“It’s been forever, Nino!” Marinette exclaimed.

“Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said.

“What are you doing back in Paris?”

“I just got off a world tour, actually, and Alya misses me.”

Marinette smiled at his response, knowing his wife would appreciate him coming home and spending time with her. Even after ten years of marriage, they were still madly in love with each other.

See that? Not every line has a dialogue tag, but you still know who’s talking! Awesome!
Now then, onto punctuation.

Punctuation goes inside the quotation.

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Did you catch that? Punctuation goes inside the quotation. Look:

Correct: “It’s been forever, Nino!” Marinette exclaimed.
Incorrect: “It’s been forever, Nino”! Marinette exclaimed.
Incorrect: “It’s been forever, Nino” Marinette exclaimed.

But what punctuation goes inside the quotation, anyway? This is where it gets a little tricky, but I think you can do it.

If the sentence is complete and should end with a period but there’s a dialogue tag, turn it into a comma.

Wait, what? What does that mean?
Let’s take a line from earlier:

“Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said.

We already know that the dialogue tag, so let’s remove it for the sake of this exercise. That leaves us with this:

Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here.

It’s a complete sentence that can stand on its own! Yay! But because there’s a dialogue tag you need to swap out the period for a comma. There isn’t enough room in this workbook to go into a lot of detail, but I’ll add activities so you can get the hang of it on your own. Here are a few examples:

“Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said.

“I don’t think this is such a good idea,” she sighed.

“I refuse to go down that corridor,” Mark stated.

Are you getting the hang of this? Good, because I’m about to add in exclamation points.
So what if it’s a complete sentence, but it should end with an exclamation point or a question mark?

You keep them! Watch:

Correct: “Do you want to go to the movie theater?” she asked.
Correct: “Let’s go see a movie!” she said.
Incorrect: “Let’s go see a movie,” she said!

Boom, easy! Try the following activity on your own before I move onto capitalizations and actions in dialogue.

**ACTIVITY TIME!** Fill in the blanks!
The answers are available at the bottom!

“I don’t think we should go down here__” I said.

“What’s wrong__” Andrew asked.

“Something just doesn’t feel right__”

“Okay. We can turn back if you want__”

That wasn’t too hard, was it? Now let’s move on to capitalization!

A pronoun is either he, she, or they, and replaces the character’s name. If the pronoun is used in a dialogue tag, you don’t capitalize the first letter. If the pronoun is used, but not in a dialogue tag and is at the beginning of a sentence, you capitalize it. Watch!

Correct: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said.
Incorrect: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” He said.

Correct: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here.” He shifted uncomfortably.
Incorrect: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he shifted uncomfortably.

The last example is wrong because ‘He shifted uncomfortably’ isn’t a dialogue tag.
What happens if you have a dialogue tag and an extra action? Let’s take a look!

Correct: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said, shifting uncomfortably, “But let’s grab a table.”
Incorrect: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said, shifting uncomfortably. “But let’s grab a table.”
Incorrect: “Yeah, I didn’t think I’d run into you here.” He said, shifting uncomfortably. “But let’s grab a table.”

If there’s an extra action combined with a dialouge tag in between speech, put it between commas and move on.

If the action is not combined with a dialogue tag or there isn’t follow up speech, use a period.

Watch this! All of the following are correct!

• “I didn’t think I’d run into you here.” He shifted uncomfortably.
• “I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said. “But let’s grab a table.”
• “I didn’t think I’d run into you here,” he said, shifting uncomfortably, “But let’s grab a table.”
• “I didn’t think I’d run into you here.” He shifted uncomfortably. “Let’s grab a table.”

Now it’s your turn!

ACTIVITY TIME! Fill in the blanks!
The answers are available at the bottom!

“Can we go yet?” I asked, waiting for her to grab a drink.

She sighed and glanced over. “Please,” she said, pressing the refill button, “Ten seconds.”

“Fine,” I set my meal down on the counter. “But I get to choose the music in the car.”

There! That wasn’t too hard, was it? You got the basics! Yay! That brings us to the last section of this workbook: Where to find an audience. Don’t worry, you don’t have to share your writing if you don’t want to, but it’s nice to get feedback from readers!
Where do I post Fanfiction?

While writing is a recreational activity, most people write so others can read their words. But how do you share your fanfiction with an online audience?

There are three websites I’d like to recommend, starting with my preferred.

Archive of Our Own

Why is ‘Archive of Our Own’ (also referred to as Ao3) my number one? Because they’re meant specifically for fanfiction authors, and they have a legal team to protect your fic. As little as ten years ago Anne Rice was suing fans for drabbles as small as three hundred words in the Vampire Chronicles fandom. Those were dark times, but also what inspired the start of Ao3. I don't need to worry about money grabbers like Anne Rice because Ao3 will fight for me when push comes to shove. In addition, the site is much more user-friendly, the tags and age-rating system are great, and the interaction between fans and writers is much better than other sites I’ve used.

Wattpad

Wattpad is the ‘indie-writer’ hub of the internet, holding everything from drabbles, to fanfiction, to original, unedited novels. It’s a great platform to start out on, but it’s not aimed at fanfiction like Ao3 is, and the commenting culture isn't as well-developed as it is on Ao3. The interface is also user-friendly.

Fanfiction.net

FF.net is almost a relic at this point, although I’m sure a lot will fight me on that. I don’t use it, as I’ve never cared for the interface, but hey! Fanfiction is literally in the title of the sight. It doesn’t get more specific than that!

Obviously I have a bias, but here’s the sitch: Wattpad will get you more views, but Ao3 will get you a better, and usually nice/more responsive, target audience.

Post at your own risk, but have fun!
What have we learned?

Well, gang, what have we learned? Let's review what we talked about:

- Why Fanfiction is written and read
- Genres in fanfiction
- Tropes in fanfiction
- Drabbles
- Basic dialogue grammar
- Where to post/find an audience

That's it!
That's the tools you need to start you own. Sure, I could write a book hundreds of pages long with more information, but this twenty-page book is all you need to start. If I wasn’t able to teach you anything, then you weren’t the target audience! Good for you, you’ve probably written some stuff on your own in the past! Yay!

A special thank you goes out to the beta readers of this workbook. Thank you for being on-call last minute!

- Deliah
- Madeline C.
- Rainbow World

And this crazy little side project wouldn’t have taken off without the support of my fanfiction channel on YouTube. While the idea of it growing was nice, I didn’t actually expect it to get to where it is now.

Thank you for your continued support, and I hope 2018 is better than your 2017.

-Eleanor Rose