## *Fangirl*

## By Rainbow Rowell

## Louisiana Teen Readers’ Choice Nominee 2016

**Grade 9-12**

Submitted by Erin Orr Ragsdale, Graduate Student

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**Title:** *Fangirl*

**Author:** Rainbow Rowell

**Publisher:** St. Martin’s Griffin

**Pages:** 438 pages

**SUMMARY**

Cath is embarking on her first year of college. She is being thrust into the world, separated from her father and from Wren, her twin sister and best friend. At first, her only comfort is her love of fanfiction, especially fanfiction written for the wildly popular *Simon Snow* series; she and her sister have been fans since childhood, and Cath still spends a great deal of time writing about the series online, where she has a large base of readers. As her freshman year passes, Cath allows herself to branch out and, in doing so, learns a great deal about herself. An initially uncomfortable relationship with her assigned roommate becomes friendship, and she builds independence by handling tough family situations on her own. Most unexpected of all, she finds romance. By the end of the term, she experiences a great deal of personal growth, forms and strengthens relationships, and realizes that she is much more than she ever thought she could be.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Rainbow Rowell is an American author of both young adult and adult fiction. She lives in Nebraska with her husband and two sons. In 2013, Rowell wrote *Fangirl* and another young adult novel, *Eleanor & Park.* Both of these books have been well-received and enjoyed significant popularity.

Bibliographical information taken from the author’s website at

<http://rainbowrowell.com/blog/about/>

Accessed January 27, 2015

**AWARDS**

YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2014

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

<http://rainbowrowell.com/blog/>

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*Attachments* (2011)

*Eleanor & Park* (2013)

*Landline* (2014)

# RELATED TITLES

*Anna and the French Kiss* byStephanie Perkins

*If I Stay: A Novel* byGayle Forman

*Winger* byAndrew Smith

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Art**

Fan art is closely related to fanfiction. Ask students to compare the two and to consider the ways in which fan artists can fairly use their works, paying particular attention to pages 122-125 and pages 261-263 of *Fangirl* in their arguments. Also ask students to create a work of fan art or share an idea or design for one.

**Language Arts:**

* Introduce students to fanfiction and the basic concepts of writing fanfiction. Students will have the opportunity to create their own stories based on books of their choosing. A complete lesson plan can be found at <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/activities-projects/writing-fanfiction-30647.html?main-tab=1#tabs>.
* After reading the book, ask students to write a letter to one of the characters in the novel, to be delivered at any specific point of the plot: in Chapter 1, after the conclusion of the story, when Cath is waiting in the hospital, etc. Students’ letters should be personal in nature, containing encouragement and advice, thoughts of a relatable situation, or explanations of the way a character's experience has affected them. Alternatively, ask students to write two letters, one after reading the first few chapters and a second after finishing the book.

**Social Studies:**

* Students will listen to a podcast describing the struggles teens face after high school. The podcast describes several recent young adult fiction titles that cover issues such as going to college, going into the military, going to juvenile detention, as well as others. Students will listen to the podcast, be provided a list of the books discussed in the podcast, and then go to the library to choose one of the books for reading and study. The podcast can be accessed at <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/podcast-episodes/life-after-high-school-31112.html>.
* Students will have the opportunity to research and learn about the unique relationships of twins. They will locate and analyze scientific studies that have been performed with different types of twins as participants. Students will construct argumentative essays on nature versus nurture, keeping a comparison of Cath and Wren in mind and providing evidence from their in-class research to support their arguments.

**Technology**

* Create a class forum. Ask students to perform research and discuss the concept of fanfiction. They might also write their own short works of fanfiction and create posts about their characters and the settings of their stories. Students will then have the opportunity to respond to each other’s stories in the forum. A free website for hosting and managing this service can be accessed at [www.todaysmeet.com](http://www.todaysmeet.com)
* As demonstrated by Cath’s marathon reading of *The Outsiders* in Chapter 15, Levi learns best aurally. As a class or in pairs, ask students to listen to passages of *Fangirl* read aloud and to discuss any differences from the experience of reading printed text. Ask them to research audiobooks, aural learning, or learning styles in general to find evidence supporting or explaining their experiences.

**Vocabulary:**

Guffaw

Veneer

Peripheral

Melancholy

Dementia

Snarky

Misanthropic

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. At the beginning of the novel, it is said that "real life was something happening in [Cath's] peripheral vision.” Do you agree? What is meant by ‘real life’ in this context, and who sets this standard in the book?
2. Did the fanfiction used in this book help or hinder the plot? Did it distract from or complement the story? In your response, explain your reasoning for your answer, and provide evidence from the text to support it.
3. Explain how Cath changes throughout the story. Describe specific events in the story that cause these changes in her character.
4. Analyze the themes presented in this story. What are the main themes? Describe each one, providing evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. Does Cath use fanfiction as an escape from reality? Does this help or hurt her throughout the story? How? Explain what might have been different if Cath had decided to abandon writing fanfiction.

Additional discussion questions may be found at <http://www.hotkeyblog.com/february-book-club-discussion-fangirl-by-rainbow-rowell/>.

**RELATED WEBSITES**

**Unleashing Readers**

<http://www.unleashingreaders.com/?p=2156>

This website provides additional discussion questions, classroom connections for the book, and ideas for pairing other books with *Fangirl*.

**The Daily Dot**

<http://www.dailydot.com/society/how-to-speak-fangirl/>

A comprehensive guide on how to understand the different types of fanfiction, as well as descriptions of the different types of fanfiction that are currently popular.

**Fan Girl Therapy**

<http://fangirltherapy.com/fangirl-dictionary/>

A website with terms and definitions commonly used in fanfiction.

**Like in the Sky**

<http://rainbowrowell.tumblr.com/>

The official Tumblr of Rainbow Rowell, the author of *Fangirl*.

**Hunger Games Lessons**

<http://www.hungergameslessons.com/2014/04/popular-books-for-teens.html>

This website provides an up to date list of books that are popular among teens in the classroom.

There is also a place on the site for teachers to comment on the current most popular books among their students.