

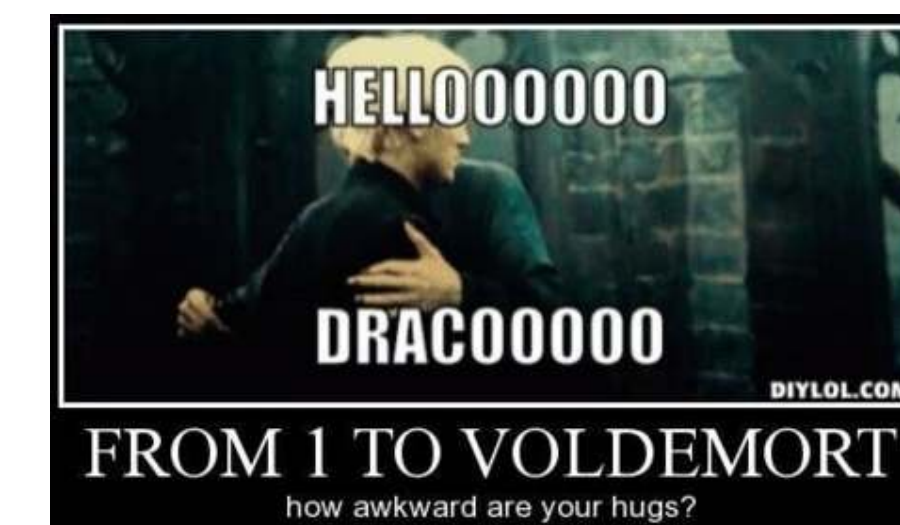
# Book Culture

(What Happens When Books Go Viral)

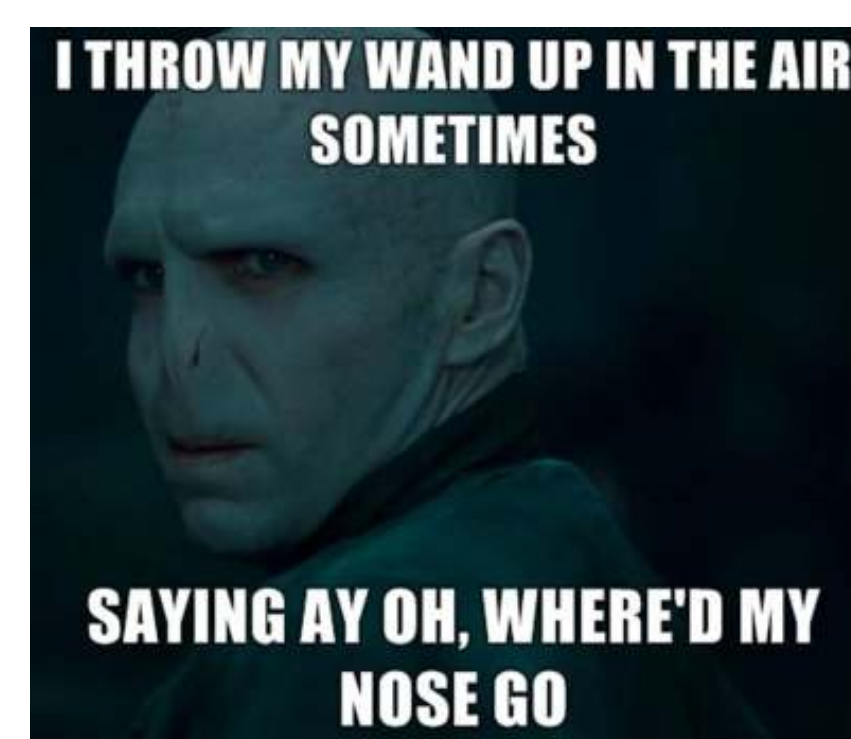
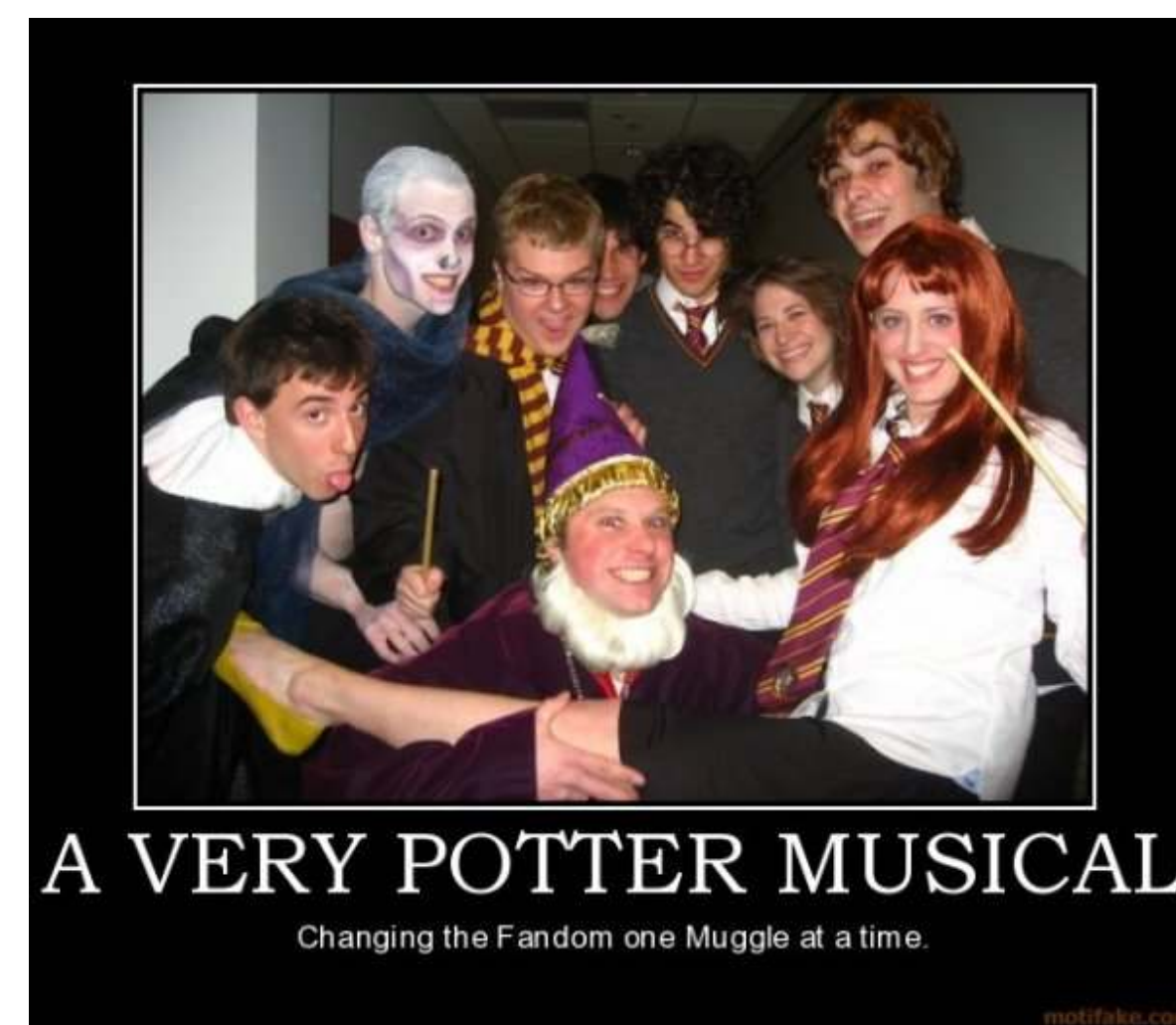
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## Harry Potter



Readers today don't get the same kind of face-to-face interaction with other readers that they used to. The rise of Amazon and the demise of brick-and-mortar bookstores has removed the interaction between booksellers and their customers. The slow death of public libraries has removed the interaction between librarians and patrons. The disappearance of book review sections from major newspapers has diluted the dialogue of book reviewers.

However, while libraries and bookstores are becoming less common, online book havens are flourishing. In the past three years, Goodreads, a social book cataloging website, has quadrupled its web traffic. FanFiction.Net, the internet's most popular fan fiction archive site, has more than a million stories posted in its "Books" section. Hashtags like #FridayReads and #LitChat lead to lively literary discussions on the microblogging site Twitter. **While traditional models of literary discussion may be dwindling, new models are taking their place.**

The internet is largely responsible for this. In his book *The Art of Immersion*, Frank Rose calls the internet "a chameleon." "It is the first medium that can act like all media," says Rose. "It can be text, or audio, or video, or all of the above. It is nonlinear." The audience can dive as deeply into a story as they want, through layers of narrative and background information and history. **Audiences are no longer passive; the roles of content provider and content consumer are not as distinctly separate as they once were.**

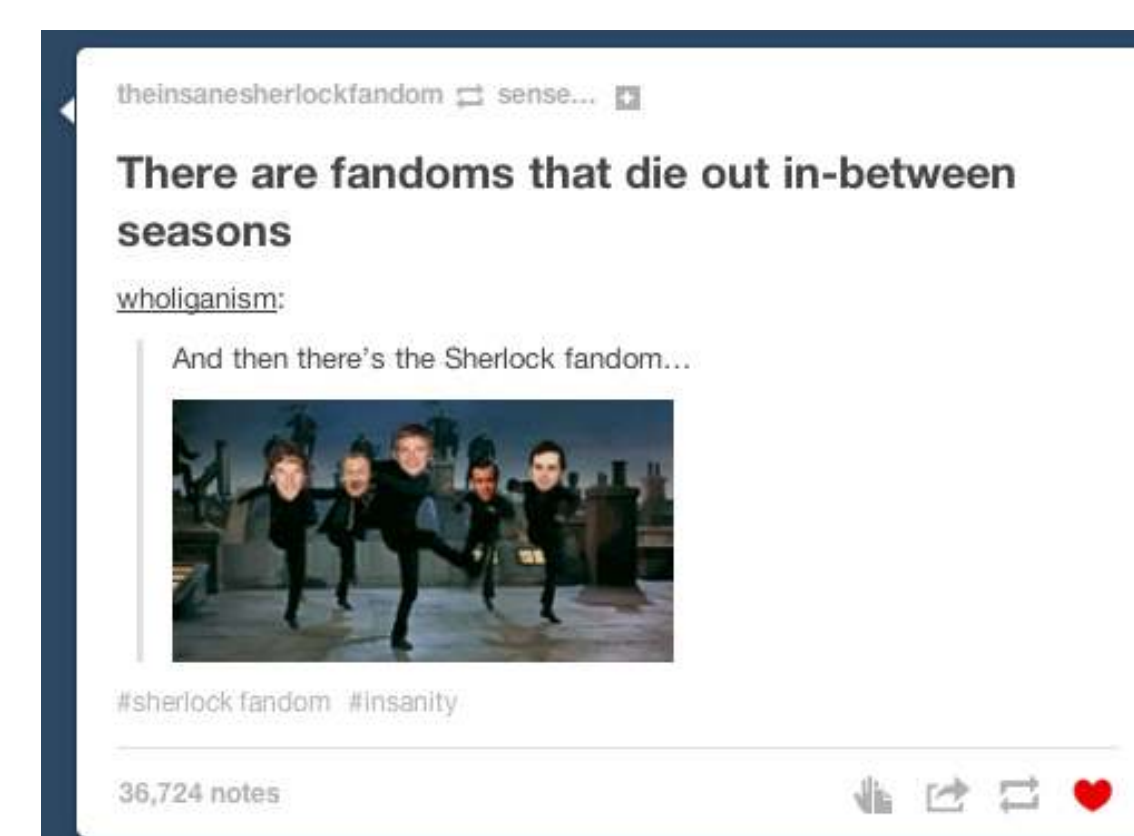
**As the Harry Potter series grew in popularity and reach, the books were no longer enough for fans ravenous for more information.** While official, producer-endorsed content was limited, the armies of "Potterheads" (as Harry Potter fans came to be called) had a production power that was, for all intents and purposes, limitless. To continue to engage in the series, many of them turned to the internet. Fan-run websites like MuggleNet.com and The-Leaky-Cauldron.org began popping up all over the place, offering Harry Potter related news, discussion boards, trivia quizzes, fan art, and more. A glance at the front page features reveals how absorbed the fans are in this universe – a walkthrough of a home fully decorated to look like the Gryffindor common room, a picture of a fan proudly displaying their new Hogwarts tattoo sleeve, an announcement for the filming of a Marauders' era fan film. **The Harry Potter section of FanFiction.net is by far the most popular of any section, with 675, 000 individual stories.** The closest runner up, Twilight, has only 215,000.

## Jane Austen



"Nestling in the middle of my Jane Austen goody bag is a black lace thong." So begins Deborah Yaffe's article on attending the JASNA, or **Jane Austen Society of North America**, annual general meeting.

JASNA's yearly meeting is part literary conference, part 18th-century ball and banquet. Fans can attend workshops, lectures, tours, or a themed Regency Ball complete with period costumes, music, and dancing. Yaffe calls it "ComicCon for Jane Austen fans," and the comparison is apt. You're as likely to overhear an academic discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* from a feminist perspective as you are to hear a squealing fangirl testify to Mr. Darcy's hotness. The thong from Yaffe's goody bag came with a card reading "Call me! XoXo, Willoughby," a note from the philandering rogue of Austen's "Sense and Sensibility," and that captures the playful spirit of JASNA's general meetings.



# tumblr.



The holy trinity of **Tumblr** fandoms consists of **Doctor Who, Sherlock, and Supernatural**. These three television shows have some of the most dedicated, prolific, and populous fan bases on Tumblr. Many of these fandoms contain overlap; Fans of all three shows refer to themselves as "SuperWhoLock" fans. These online communities produce far more content than is contained in the shows themselves. Sherlock, a BBC contemporary adaptation of the famous detective stories, has produced only nine episodes since 2010. Each episode is approximately 90 minutes long, resulting in less than 14 hours of total content. Despite this, the Sherlock tag is a flourishing collection of gifs, art, and fan fiction. A post to #Sherlock can easily accumulate thousands of notes in a matter of hours. Each of the three seasons had a three year gap between release dates; The Sherlock Tumblr community remind extremely active during these long hiatuses, and even turned the wait into something of a joke.