

# FAN FICTION CLASSIFICATION THROUGH ADDITIONAL TAGS

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Fan fiction is a type of fan activity where fans of a specific medium, such as television shows, movies, books, sports, musicals, etc., write their own original stories about the characters or settings.

Though fan fiction (or fic) can be dated to back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it became popularized during the 1960s alongside the TV series *Star Trek*. Fan communities and fandoms have continued since then writing fan fiction, sharing through zines and conventions. But with the invention of the internet and sharing communities with email list serves, forums, and blogging sites, fic became widely accessible and fandoms grew in size. Websites were created specifically for self-publication of fic, such as [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net), [www.wattpad.com](http://www.wattpad.com), and most recently, [www.archiveofourown.org](http://www.archiveofourown.org)

During the fall of my junior year abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland, I studied oral culture within a Scottish context. One of the most interesting topics about Scottish oral culture was folklore and storytelling, and namely how these different stories, fairytales, myths, and legends were classified. Using both Vladimir Propp's Morphology, listing 31 common functions of folklore and the Aarne-Thompson Type-Index, I began correlating the various classifications of folklore to how fics on the website [www.archiveofourown.org](http://www.archiveofourown.org) (AO3) were classified.

Using my own experiences in fandom as a basis, I looked at how fan fiction in the MTV *Teen Wolf* fandom was classified by looking at their additional tags on AO3. It's extensive tagging system is innovative in that it includes not only system tags, but also the author's own free-form tags in which they can list their fics however they please.

# Discoveries

At the time of data compilation on 22 July 2014, there were a total of 44,492 total MTV *Teen Wolf* fics on AO3. In order to narrow down what fics I was specifically looking at, I looked at the Top 50 Fics of all time by Number of Hits, Top 50 of all time by Number of Kudos (which are the same thing as likes or favorites), and Top 30 Fics most recent fics with more than 1000 kudos (dating from 31 July 2014). Looking at these 130 fics, I came up with 18 specific tag types:

1. **Genre:** Alternate Universe, Romance, Fluff, Deviances from Canon
2. **Emotion:** Angst, Jealousy, Anger
3. **Trigger Warnings:** Oppressive Actions, Violence, Murder
4. **Content Warnings:** General warnings outside of triggers
5. **Metacommentary:** Authors own commentary, often colloquial
6. **Supernatural Elements:** Werewolves, Witches, Magic
7. **Character Types:** Characters listed with specific descriptors
8. **Sex Acts** or acts with sexual intent
9. **Relationship/Character Dynamics:** Interpersonal relationship descriptors
10. **Writing Style:** Structural difference, i.e. epistolary, recipes
11. **Tropes:** Common concepts with which audiences are familiar
12. **Actions:** Non-sexual
13. **Holidays**
14. **Objects:** Mostly physical, but can include abstractions like names or text messages
15. **Places:** Cities, Countries, etc.
16. **Time:** Specific within a certain time frame, i.e. Senior Year, or Post Season 2
17. **Relationship:** Specific pairings not listed in designated pairings section
18. **Collection:** Part of a specific Collection or Universe, or name of fic (often noted in Collections section, but must be listed in addition tags)

In total, we see that the top four tag types are:

1. Relationship/Character Dynamics
2. Sex Acts
3. Character Types
4. Genre

While the percentages of these tag types vary depending on which data set they belong to, they all have the highest percentages in their respective categories. It is unclear if these tags are more for the reader or for the writer, but it shows that fandom places importance on what interpersonal relationship dynamics occur in the fic, what genre we are reading, what sex acts occur (this tag can even be seen as a subset of trigger warnings), and how the author writes the characters. It must be noted that this data is only representative of the MTV *Teen Wolf* fandom, but is often reflected in the fics of other fandoms popular on [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com), such as *Supernatural*, *Doctor Who*, *Sherlock*, and One Direction. Fandoms with smaller presences or no presence on online blogging sites do not use tags as extensively.

**This research was also presented at the MetaFandom Unconference at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Canada from the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> of September, 2014.**

Tag	Top 50 by Hits (799 total)	Top 50 by Kudos (465 total)	Top 30 >1000 Kudos (440 total)	Total (1704)
Genre	82, 10.2%	72, 15.5%	48, 10.9%	202, 11.85%
Emotions	64, 8%	35, 7.5%	30, 6.8%	129, 7.57%
Trigger Warnings	68, 8.5%	38, 8%	17, 3.9%	123, 7.22%
Content Warnings	0, 0%	0, 0%	1, 0.2%	1, 0.06%
Metacommentary	78, 9.8%	35, 7.5%	39, 6.5%	152, 8.92%
Supernatural Elements	37, 4.6%	15, 3.2%	16, 3.6%	68, 3.99%
Character Types	83, 10.4%	50, 10.8%	88, 20%	221, 12.97%
Sex Acts	124, 15.5%	68, 14.6%	35, 8%	227, 13.32%
Relationship/Character Dynamics	140, 17.5%	75, 16.1%	72, 16.3%	287, 16.84%
Writing Style	9, 1.1%	9, 1.9%	9, 2%	27, 1.58%
Tropes	30, 3.75%	22, 4.7%	12, 2.7%	64, 3.76%
Actions (non-sexual)	57, 7.1%	26, 5.6%	32, 7.2%	115, 6.75%
Holidays	2, 0.25%	4, 0.86%	0, 0%	6, 0.35%
Objects	16, 2%	12, 2.6%	16, 3.6%	44, 2.58%
Places	2, 0.25%	2, 0.43%	9, 2%	13, 0.76%
Time	2, 0.25%	0, 0%	3, 0.68%	5, 0.29%
Relationship	5, 0.6%	0, 0%	10, 2.2%	15, 0.88%
Collection	0, 0%	2, 0.43%	3, 0.68%	5, 0.29%