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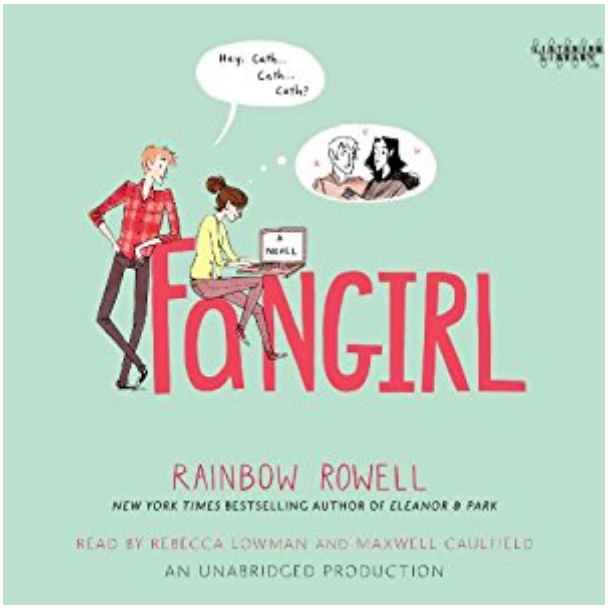
Fangirl



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Synopsis

In Rainbow Rowell's Fangirl, Cath is a Simon Snow fan. Okay, the whole world is a Simon Snow fan, but for Cath, being a fan is her life - and she's really good at it. She and her twin sister, Wren, ensconced themselves in the Simon Snow Series when they were just kids; it's what got them through their mother leaving.Reading. Rereading. Hanging out in Simon Snow forums, writing Simon Snow fan fiction, dressing up like the characters for every movie premiere.Cath's sister has mostly grown away from fandom, but Cath can't let go. She doesn't want to.Now that they're going to college, Wren has told Cath she doesn't want to be roommates. Cath is on her own, completely outside of her comfort zone. She's got a surly roommate with a charming, always-around boyfriend, a fiction-writing professor who thinks fan fiction is the end of the civilized world, a handsome classmate who only wants to talk about words...And she can't stop worrying about her dad, who's loving and fragile and has never really been alone.For Cath, the question is: Can she do this? Can she make it without Wren holding her hand? Is she ready to start living her own life? Writing her own stories? Open her heart to someone? Or will she just go on living inside somebody else's fiction?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So, you're burnt out on the New Adult genre.You've read 30.5 books this year about fictional girls having the same college experience, like they are in some sort of perverted episode of the Twilight Zone. They have all been raped, abused, or raised by wealthy parents who do not care about them and keep them from the one they love, but its ok because after one roll in the hay with the reformed bad boy, these girls have life figured out. They get over their past, they stand up to their parents,

they pass the test and save the day.And you’re just over it.Yeah? Me too.And that is probably why I loved Fangirl and Cath so much. Because her college experience did not read like a Teen Harlequin novel. It read like my life."Look at you. You’ve got your s*** together, you’re not scared of anything. I’m scared of everything. And I’m crazy. Like maybe you think I’m a little crazy, but I only ever let people see the tip of my crazy iceberg. Underneath this veneer of slightly crazy and mildly socially retarded, I’m a complete disaster." -- Cath, to her roomate RaeganI loved that the angst in it was so subtle and yet I kept having these little electric waves of emotion roll through my chest on Cath’s behalf: as she’s navigating her classes... as she feels betrayed when her identical twin doesn’t want to be her roommate and finds a new best friend... as she’s struggling to feel comfortable in her own dorm room because she’s living with a fairly intimidating (yet ultimately awesome) upperclassman named Reagan... as she reluctantly begins to interact with other people and learns the hard way that some can be trusted and some are just using you to get ahead... as she falls in love for the first time. All of the tension in this book felt authentic and not overdone, not over-the-top, and yet left my heart a little bruised. Because this is the angst that real people experience their freshman year of college, and I saw myself in it.With that being said, I’m not kidding when I tell you Cath is the opposite of the typical NA heroine. She’s awkward and has a bad case of social anxiety and is more firmly planted in her internet reality than actual reality; but she is also endearing and smart and Rainbow Rowell helps us understand her.I’ve never written fanfiction, or read fanfiction, or even really been aware that fanfiction existed, but the point of the book was not to make me a fanfiction groupie. The point was to show the journey of one girl’s first year in college, and that girl happened to be an incredibly talented writer of fanfiction. Cath writes slash fiction about Simon & Baz, who are the main characters in a Harry Potterish series, and there is quite a bit of talk about her fanfic throughout the book. Even though I can’t identify with that personally, it didn’t turn me off like I expected it to. Throughout the course of the book it even grew on me because Cath was growing on me, and I cared about her. Also, her roommate was there for comic relief and to say the things that most of us would be thinking if we were actually interacting with Cath.Quotes from her roommate Reagan:"What do you mean when you write them? No, you know what? Nevermind. I don’t want to know. It’s already hard enough to make eye contact with you.""You’re just so helpless sometimes. It’s like watching a kitten with its head trapped in a Kleenex box."Cath is sometimes frustrating because you want to rush her, to force her to make the right decisions and to stop pushing people away. But that’s why this is a coming-of-age tale and not a romance, although the love story in it gave me a true case of "the feels." It was well done, sweetly and slowly built, and even though it wasn’t totally believable (he was almost too perfect) I was rooting for both of them. My cheeks hurt

from smiling during their interactions and when it finally happened I felt a little giddy.If you’re looking for a steamy romance with a first-person POV, this isn’t your book. It’s extremely chaste. But if you love character-driven stories with humor, realistic dialogue, and a sweet love story, this is one of my favorites from 2013. This is truly the story of a girl who is coming of age, who is a young adult--someone on "adulthood probation."I loved tagging along for her journey.**Just a side note: If you’re not loving the fan fiction parts, you can skim them or skip them without getting lost in the story. I did that a few times and it was no big deal, although that is what kept me from giving it five stars.**

The book description was intriguing, but I was not prepared for how much I would love reading Fangirl. It is one of those rare stories that just made me smile, when I wasn’t marveling at how well the author gets it.Cath is starting college at the University of Nebraska, but she’s not your typical freshman. She’s nerdy and awkward and comes with bucketloads of social anxiety, and she’d much rather stay in her dorm room writing fanfiction than get drunk at a frat party. She’s always depended on her twin sister for her social life, but Wren wants to have the hard-partying college experience and has refused to room with Cath, who gets stuck with an intimidating older student. Many of the elements here are common to coming-of-age stories--there’s first love and family drama--but Fangirl is also about writing, and being a fan, and it encapsulates the experience of being a social misfit in college. Or at least, one experience of it: having a lot in common with Cath, I had to reconcile myself early on to the fact that there are differences (major differences) between her freshman experience and mine--but those are details; on an emotional level I found this story to be real and true.This is a character-driven book, so I’ll start with the characters. Cath is fantastically-realized, quirky, and fun, and there’s so much that I love about Rowell’s portrayal of her, but here’s the most important thing: it’s okay to be like Cath. Cath has a lot going for her--she’s smart, witty, loyal and caring--and growing up means growing in her own direction, learning to handle new relationships and thrive in a new environment, not changing who she is. Cath doesn’t get a makeover or become a wild child or give up fanfiction. She’s a nerd, without having to be either the genius type or a super-sexy babe. And she’s completely believable; even where I would have had the opposite reaction, her feelings and behavior always rang true to her character.But the other characters are great too, wholly authentic and often endearing. The book is largely driven by dialogue, and while Rowell’s prose is nothing special, the dialogue sparkles. It brings the characters to life and it’s often humorous, but it’s also so exactly the way people talk to one another, I think I’ve had some of these conversations. The romance is genuinely sweet, with characters who seem like a good fit for one another, and I loved that Cath’s hangups about physical affection don’t just disappear once she’s in a relationship;

it’s something she has to work on.Then too, the book is a celebration of the intense relationships we develop with fictional characters and worlds. Cath is a fan of Simon Snow, a stand-in for Harry Potter: and she’s a big-name fan, with thousands of people following her writing. I loved the way Cath’s writing is treated: it’s taken seriously, as a major aspect of her life and a talent to be proud of--even by her writing professor, a novelist herself, who sees Cath’s potential but can’t stand the thought of fanfiction. (They have multiple conversations about this, as the professor becomes something of a mentor for Cath. I’m telling you, this book is nerd heaven!) My biggest criticism of the book is that it could have just referred to Harry Potter by name and been less campy; this might have caused problems with the inclusion of snippets from the "Simon Snow" books and a few lengthy chunks of Cath’s fanfiction, but these are largely extraneous to the story anyway. However, Rowell does a great job with the fanfiction excerpts, which are polished while still sounding like something an 18-year-old girl would write.In the end, there are so many scenes and little moments in this book that struck a chord with me. I love that Cath attends a big state university--there are so few novels set in college, and most of them seem to be about people quoting poetry at one another at small liberal arts colleges; I loved reading about the kind of school I attended, with a huge campus, where people work part-time and aren’t necessarily academically-oriented. I loved Cath’s realization that she comes from a mostly rural state where her experience growing up in Omaha isn’t the norm; I had that too. And the clashing assumptions about sex between Cath and her roommate. And Cath’s arguing with her boyfriend about whether or not his chivalry is respectful. And her heightened awareness of her safety on campus at night (even though physical danger is not a part of this story): I too have dialed 911 on my cell phone just in case. I could go on, but you get the picture.Fangirl isn’t great literature, but it’s a fun, funny and true-to-life story of an experience I haven’t seen fictionalized before, and for that I love it. Recommended to anyone who’s been weird in college, or anyone who sees that in their future. I wish I could have read it when I was 17.

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