

Q&A with Rainbow Rowell

Fan fiction friendly

by Leah Rhyne



Provided

Rainbow Rowell's latest novel, *Fangirl*, released Sept. 10 to rave reviews, the follow-up to her New York Times bestseller *Eleanor & Park*. Rowell is now headed to Charleston to take part in YALLFest.

City Paper: Rainbow Rowell -- either you came up with a fantastic pen name, or you have really, really cool parents. Regardless, what's it like to be a Rainbow?

Rainbow Rowell: It is my given name. My mother wanted to give us all unusual names. My siblings are Forest, Jade, Haven and Jerry. (Jerry got stuck with the weird name.) I've never loved "Rainbow" -- because it's such a goofy word, like I was named by a first-grader. People usually assume I chose it, which makes them wonder what's wrong with me. But I do like having an unusual name. I like being the only Rainbow in the room. I feel like having such a different name made me more comfortable being different when I was growing up. More comfortable being myself.

CP: *Fangirl* sounds like such a sweet and eye-opening journey. We in my house are huge fans of Star Wars, Harry Potter, Doctor Who, you name it. Was this story in any way autobiographical? And are you a super-fan for anyone or anything?

RR: Well, I've always been fannish. If I like something, I probably love it, and if I love it, I can't get enough. Star Wars is the first thing I really went crazy for. It's the thing that brought my best friend and I together in grade school. I was caught up in Star Wars, seriously caught up, for almost twenty years. Since the Internet has become such a huge part of fandom, I've been really into Harry Potter and BBC's Sherlock. That's where I got the idea for *Fangirl*: I started thinking about what my life as a teenager would have been like if I'd had access to a global fan community -- to fan fiction, especially.

Cath, the main character, is a lot like me. She's fannish. She's a writer. She's afraid to leave home. But she's carved out a place for herself in online fandom. She's practically famous there.

CP: Who is one other writer attending YALLFest with whom you'd like to sit down and have a chat?

RR: Oh, tough question. I'm going to say Leigh Bardugo. Because she's one of the funniest people I've ever met. And she lives in Los Angeles, so I never get to see her.

CP: What's the coolest piece of fan mail/email/interaction you've received to date?

RR: Even tougher question! I have met some amazing people through my books. But the thing that's really blown my mind is the fan art. The idea that people have been inspired by my books to make their own art -- it's so overwhelming and wonderful! I've become good friends with Simini Blocker, an illustrator who's done beautiful paintings inspired by my books. (You can see some of them here [<http://siminiblocker.tumblr.com/search/rainbow+rowell>]). Now I'm a fan of hers.

CP: When you were a kid, what was your all-time favorite book? What book takes that position now?

RR: My favorite picture book was *Sam, Bangs and Moonshine* by Evaline Ness. Then I really loved *Little Men* by Louisa May Alcott. Now I think of "favorite" as more of a shelf than a one-book designation. My favorites shelf has *Neverwhere*, *Adrian Mole*, *Tender Morsels*,

The World According to Garp, Rachel's Holiday, Outlander ... It's a pretty big shelf.

Tags: Rainbow Rowell, fangirl, yallfest
