

# Spin Offs Spin Offs

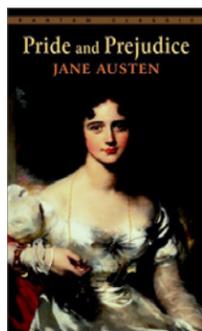
“Wicked”, the wildly successful musical, is one example. So is “Laverne and Shirley”, the song “Eat It” by Weird Al Yankovich, and a new series about Saul, the slimy attorney from “Breaking Bad”.



Spinoffs exist in every corner of popular culture, including television, movies, literature and

even business. *Merriam-Webster* calls a spinoff “something useful that results from work done to produce something else”. While what’s considered useful is up for debate (think Bravo TV’s “Real Housewives” franchise, or the fact that the novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* originated as a nod to the book, *Twilight*), the idea that if one is good, more can only be better generates new creative content every day.

Not all spinoffs reflect recent culture. Consider Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*: Fascination with Mr. Darcy as ideal love interest – at once remote, rich, principled, worldly and faithful – has spawned its own industry. There are prequels and sequels in film and in print, some set in the same time period as the book while others transport the story to the present day. There’s even a series of *Pride and Prejudice* comics. The recent book *Longbourn*, by Jo Baker, tells stories through the eyes of the Bennett family’s staff, while in the film “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies”, Mr. Darcy maintains



heartthrob status as a zombie hunter roaming the English countryside.

Even the popular Bridget Jones series has at its heart Mark Darcy, though Helen Fielding, the author, recently set off fireworks and enraged loyal readers when she announced that her Mr. Darcy dies in the upcoming third novel.

Amazon recently launched **Kindle Worlds**, a platform where devotees of specific movies, comics, TV shows, books, music and games (“Grand Theft Auto”, anyone?) can share their fan fiction. With licenses for content as diverse as “Gossip Girl” (the TV show) and *Shadow Man* (a comic book series from Valiant Comics) already secured, fans are free to earn royalties off of their favorite works, should creative inspiration strike from adoration.



While direct copying and plagiarism are obviously illegal, these types of fan fiction and related works avoid copyright infringement under fair use protections. Think Weird Al and his deep catalog of parody songs. (Funny aside: Sir Paul McCartney, an admitted Yankovich fan, reportedly turned down a request to record “Chicken Pot Pie”, a parody of McCartney’s “Live and Let Die”, not because he was offended or thought it in bad taste, but because McCartney is a vegetarian and he felt it would send the wrong message.)

Imitation really *is* the sincerest form of flattery.

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## mutterhood's TV Spin Off Hall of Fame

### All in the Family

- “Maude”
- “Good Times”
- “The Jeffersons”
- “Checking In”
- “Archie Bunker’s Place”
- “Gloria”
- “704 Hauser”

### Law & Order

- “Law & Order: Special Victims Unit”
- “Law & Order: Criminal Intent”
- “Crime & Punishment”
- “Law & Order: Trial by Jury”
- “Conviction”
- “Deadline”

### Happy Days

- “Laverne and Shirley”
- “Mork and Mindy”
- “Joanie Loves Chachi”

## What is Fan Fiction Anyway?

Fan Fiction is a relatively new genre, where fans of an original work write their own stories about characters and settings from that work. Mostly read by other fans, these stories assume knowledge – almost a scary level of it – of the original work.

What began in 1970 as a one-day comic book convention in San Diego, Calif., Comic-Con International, as it’s known today, has grown beyond the wildest dreams of even the most hard-core fans to become the premier comic book and popular arts convention in the world.

*Justice League* and “Star Trek” fans might have put Comic-Con on the map with their colorful, meticulously detailed costumes, but each year Comic-Con is the hottest ticket in several of cities around the country.

Comic-Con International in San Diego, the premier event on the CCI calendar, consistently sells out at 130,000 people, with New York hot on its heels. Regional conventions, or cons as they’re called, sell out in days, with new cons in Newark, N.J. and Grand Rapids, Mich., in the works.



Comic-Con features comics creators, authors of science fiction and fantasy, TV and movie stars, and directors all under one convention center roof. Autograph sessions bust at the seams, while collectors and publishers vie for space in the exhibition halls. Recently, the original focus on comic and science fiction has grown to include graphic novels, an emerging genre with its own fan base.

The draw for fans at these cons is direct access to the stars, illustrators and rare books that make the genre come to life. Where else can a fan of *Wolverine* rub elbows with Hugh Jackman, or a “Star Wars” obsessive walk around as Chewbacca? Seeing Superman, Batman and Captain Kirk up close never gets old, and if you’re lucky you might meet the Black Widow herself, Scarlet Johansson, or shake hands with a zombie from “The Walking Dead”.