

Experiences as a Teen in Quarantine: Tumblr, Archive Of Our Own, and other Social Media Platforms Discovered During COVID-19

Online social media platforms have been my largest source of entertainment and interaction throughout social distancing. I've always been decently artistic and involved in writing fanfiction, but over quarantine, I had the time to get really good at these things.

72% of participants in a survey responded that they felt their social media use went up during COVID-19. I definitely felt that as well; both as someone posting content and as someone noticing the number of people who are viewing my content.

Here are three of the new social media platforms I discovered, and my lived experiences on them during the last 8 months.

1. Archive of Our Own (Shortened to Ao3)

This site might not be extremely well known, but many of you have at least heard of fanfiction*. Ao3 is one of the most popular sites for reading and posting fanfiction. I started reading a lot of fanfiction for a few fandoms (My Hero Academia, Assassination Classroom, and Harry Potter, for those of you who are curious). After exhausting these fandoms, reading every good story I could find, I decided to write my own. I started writing and posting a few of them. But while there was always an initial excitement of a new idea, about 5000 to 10000 words in, I tended to lose interest and give up.

But after a few tries, I finally started a story I felt proud of. Writing it was exciting, and I updated it nearly three times a week initially. It slowly but steadily gained popularity. I ended up getting hundreds of comments, and thousands of views. This is all something I wouldn't have been able to do if I didn't have all this time due to quarantine, and I wouldn't have nearly as many people who were reading it out of boredom.

This leads into the next social media site I got involved in.

2. Tumblr.

Tumblr was something I'd halfheartedly tried to use and get famous on when I was 12, but that failed miserably. This time though, I had a reason to use it. I would see a lot of meta-analysis within the fandom—creating theories, discovering themes and working to go deep into the characters and plot in order to get a better understanding of a manga or anime. I saw a few very popular Tumblr users do this, and decided to give writing analysis a shot.

My first one only got 60 likes or so, but I kept trying. I came up with a clever idea of linking my tumblr analysis posts to my popular fanfiction. That increased my blog traffic. Even though I never got popular, I did end up getting over 100 likes on some of my posts, which was a win for me—especially because I had to essentially start from nothing and build up my popularity on my own.

I also got into digital art and posted some of my art on this Tumblr. My art certainly was not very popular, but I put it out there for people to see and I'm glad I did so.

3. Reddit

I got into this site just for fun, and to pass the time. I never became a popular user on this site, but I definitely got more involved in debates and got to see more viewpoints through this site. Being able to choose what subreddits to follow helped me, so I would only have to see topics that I chose to view.

Overall, using these not so commonly talked about social media sites helped me in several ways throughout quarantine. Mostly because it put no stress or pressure on me. Most of my social media sites focused on hobbies like anime, manga, fanfiction and art. Constantly being bombarded by the ongoing controversies and problems of the world isn't going to help anyone.

Actually putting myself out there, posting my original work, and connecting to others with similar interests online benefited me more than just sitting around and watching the news would have. Overall, I've become more confident with my fiction writing, analysis skills, and art skills during these 8 months than I would have if quarantine didn't happen.

*Fiction written by a fan of, and featuring characters from, a particular TV series, movie, etc.