



# Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture (Studies in Culture and Communication)

By Henry Jenkins

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## Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture (Studies in Culture and Communication) By Henry Jenkins

"Get a life" William Shatner told *Star Trek* fans. Yet, as *Textual Poachers* argues, fans already have a "life," a complex subculture which draws its resources from commercial culture while also reworking them to serve alternative interests. Rejecting stereotypes of fans as cultural dupes, social misfits, and mindless consumers, Jenkins represents media fans as active producers and skilled manipulators of program meanings, as nomadic poachers constructing their own culture from borrowed materials, as an alternative social community defined through its cultural preferences and consumption practices.

Written from an insider's perspective and providing vivid examples from fan artifacts, *Textual Poachers* offers an ethnographic account of the media fan community, its interpretive strategies, its social institutions and cultural practices, and its troubled relationship to the mass media and consumer capitalism.

Drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau, Jenkins shows how fans of *Star Trek*, *Blake's 7*, *The Professionals*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Alien Nation*, *Twin Peaks*, and other popular programs exploit these cultural materials as the basis for their stories, songs, videos, and social interactions.

Addressing both academics and fans, Jenkins builds a powerful case for the richness of fan culture as a popular response to the mass media and as a challenge to the producers' attempts to regulate textual meanings. *Textual Poachers* guides readers through difficult questions about popular consumption, genre, gender, sexuality, and interpretation, documenting practices and processes which test and challenge basic assumptions of contemporary media theory.

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#### Review

Drawing on a rich theoretical background with sources ranging from feminist literary criticism to cultural anthropology, [Jenkins] applies and adapts Michel de Certeau's model of poaching, in which an audience appropriates a text for itself. Taking a stand against the stereotypical portrayal of fans as obsessive nerds who are out of touch with reality, he demonstrates that fans are pro-active constructors of an alternative culture using elements poached and reworked from the popular media.

*—Journal of Popular Culture*

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#### About the Author

**Henry Jenkins** is Assistant Professor of Literature at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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