**Textual Poaching**

The term “textual poaching” was first developed by the French scholar Michel de Certeau in *The Practise of Everyday Life (1984)* and later developed by Henry Jenkins in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture (1992).* De Certeau argues that audiences are not passive consumers but instead active interpreters. This follows Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model of communication (1980) where each person will create their own meaning from the same text, depending on their situation and unique background. *The Practice of Everyday Life* discusses how people individualise mass culture by interpreting texts beyond the dominant meaning which has been decided by the elite (academics, teachers, authors etc.) who monopolise the readings. De Certeau links audience members to poachers by describing how they, “move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it for themselves.” (1984)

This ‘poaching’ is a resistance strategy for the individual, however it is inherently weak compared to the dominant culture and will generally be an act, like poaching, which is pushed underground. Jenkins’ book then takes the active audience theory and applies it to fan cultures which ‘poach’ from their beloved text to create new texts such as fan fiction, filk (folk songs) and manuals/dictionaries to ‘fill-out’ further details not originally explained in the text. Jenkins’ extension of the term ‘poaching’ discusses how a fan can simultaneously interpret a text through both the dominant and oppositional reading, allowing readers to stick as closely to the ‘canon’ (official rules and principles put forward in the original text) as they wish. Poaching blurs the line between producer and consumer by giving the reader power to produce their own work based upon their own interpretation. It also offers a form of escapism from reality through the sub cultures and fan communities created.

**Henry Jenkins argues that “fans form part of a participatory culture in which audiences are active and create participants in a text”**

**Research task: How do fans ‘participate’ actively and ‘creatively’? Are there examples of ‘textual poaching’?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fansite/Contribution**  **/Activity** | **How does it actively/creatively participate? Have elements of ‘textual poaching’?** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |