

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

From a Religious Studies perspective, audiences form their own **interpretive communities** (Stanley Fish). These communities — Reddit threads, YouTube channels, fan essays — become spaces where myth is reinterpreted and ritualized.

Examples of “popular religion” in fandom:

- ✓ Theories about Azor Ahai resemble scriptural exegesis
- ✓ Fan debates about the morality of Melisandre reflect ethical reasoning
- ✓ Watching episodes becomes a communal ritual
- ✓ Fans create symbolic art, pilgrimages to filming locations, fanfiction

Fans treat the series like scripture — **discussed, debated, interpreted, and emotionally invested in**. This demonstrates that popular culture functions as a **religious site**, fulfilling roles similar to traditional religious practice:

- forming community
- constructing meaning
- negotiating morality
- generating myth