

# MASTEROPPGAVE

## Learner Perspectives on Aspects of Power in George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*

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## Abstract

One of the central aims of the *Core Curriculum* for the Norwegian educational system is to prepare young people to become responsible and conscientious members of a democratic society. Focusing on power and power relationships in schools may provide the youth with the tools to discover subtle manipulation and to maintain their integrity. Based on data from focus group interviews and questionnaires, this thesis examines how a group of students in upper secondary school relate to the power structures and power relationships in the TV-series *Game of Thrones* which is based on the fantasy book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George Martin, with the ultimate purpose of seeing if this series has potential for teaching youngsters about power. The thesis indicates that although the students recognise many examples of use of power, they still overlook or fail to identify the more subtle aspects. Furthermore the thesis indicates that through being sensitised to the topic, the students may become more aware of the use of power both in their own lives and in what they watch. It further suggests that focusing on literature and films about troubling topics may make it easier to bring in the *Core Curriculum* in combination with the other subjects for a more holistic approach to teaching.

**Keywords:** Fantasy, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, *Game of Thrones*, George R. R. Martin, popular literature and film, popular culture, power, power relations, power structures, democratic society, troubling literature and film, *The Core Curriculum*, holistic teaching, extensive reading.

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## 1. Introduction

Since I became an adult, there are not many books that have caused me to stay awake until 03:30 – on a school night. George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* did, simply because I could not leave his fantasy world, Westeros. Similarly, my 15 year-old nephew, who like any other teenager likes to sleep in, was up early every morning this summer, pouring over his book, ever since he decided to read *A Game of Thrones (AGOT)* in his vacation. One of my participants admitted to having taken the book along everywhere – also on a hiking trip far up in the mountains. When I talked to students to find participants for a study about the series, the response was overwhelmingly positive: As it turns out the participants even agreed to come to school on a Saturday, despite the fact that some had to face a car ride of 100 kilometres and a ferry as well.

So what is it about this series? Take some dashing handsome knights clad in war garb, power struggles that include numerous tactics and motivations, old families fighting each other for a throne, a bit of magic that includes dragons, strange priestesses and a giant wall that protects people from horrors lurking in the northern darkness – and of course, love. Martin seems to have found the perfect recipe for creating deep fascination, and the producers have managed to cook up a successful TV-series based on his intriguing story.

Since 2011 a growing number of fans have been able to watch the TV-adaptation of George R. R. Martin's book series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The TV-series from Home Box Office Inc. (HBO), produced by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, is called *Game of Thrones*, a title which is inspired by the first book in the series; *A Game of Thrones* from 1996. The first season was released in 2011. Season three was released in March 2013 and deals with a little over half of the third novel. As an indication of its popularity, Carol Pincher comments in an article on the website *Forbes*, "HBO's *Game of Thrones* was the most pirated show on television in 2012" (Pincher 1). This is further expanded on by *CNNMoney* reporter Chris Isidore: "Piracy tracker TorrentFreak says that more than 1 million viewers downloaded the episode in the first day after it aired. At one point, more than 163.000 people were simultaneously sharing a single torrent – a new record" (Isidore 1). Thus it is perhaps not surprising, that the TV-series has won several awards, of which only a few will be mentioned here: two Emmys in 2011, six Emmys in 2012, in addition to a Golden Globe and the Television Critics Association Award for Program of the Year in 2012. For 2013, the series received two Emmys, and was nominated for 16 (Emmys).

The TV-series may be popular, but so are the books, and Anthony Debarros on the website *USA Today*, discloses that Martin's series occupy six of the places on the list of the top 100 bestselling novels in the USA (1). At this stage, autumn 2013, Martin has finished five volumes of a planned seven-book series, and is currently writing on the sixth novel. The popularity of the work has gone global as well: so far the series has been translated into 40 languages (Salter 1). According to an interview in *Entertainment Weekly*, Martin has shared the main details of the last two books of the series with HBO, and it is rumoured that the TV-series may be released before the publication of the seventh volume (Hibberd 1).

As stated by the Norwegian curriculum for the subject English, the learners are supposed to meet both popular culture and classical culture. This aspect is reflected both in the competence aims of the subject and in the selections of texts found in the text books for English in upper secondary school. Popular literature thus seems already to be integrated in the teaching of English, but little seems to have been written about the combination of popular literature and the national *Core Curriculum* in the Norwegian educational context. An internet search on the topic has rendered no result. This may be because there is little focus on the implementation of the *Core Curriculum* in the different subjects, I can only answer for myself and my colleagues; the *Core Curriculum* is only mentioned rarely now, whereas 17 years ago, when I first entered school as a teacher, I remember that this term was heard rather often. Has the *Core Curriculum* been forgotten in upper secondary school? My thesis does not attempt to answer this question, but rather will show how it is possible to use popular and troubling literature and film to bring the *Core Curriculum* back into the classroom.

### **1.1. Motivation for Working with this Series**

With the incredible popularity of the series, and the topic power relations in mind, it seems relevant to question the impact the series has on the readers and viewers. How much do they actually notice about the game being played out in front of them?

I knew that many of the students in my school were fascinated by the series and it was actually one of the students who first recommended the books to me in 2011. Though many of them expressed their fascination for the plot and characters, none of them mentioned power specifically. I wondered if this had anything to do with age and experience. I anticipated that the younger they were the less aware they would be of the subtle messages. Were they capable of recognising attempts at manipulation, either on the screen or in real life?



This is why I wanted to research the effect of the series on upper secondary school students, as firstly because they are probably among the youngest watchers and readers of the series and secondly since I had easy access to this group in my job as teacher. Since I could not look into everything of interest, I decided on what made the strongest impression on me and also what I considered they would know little about in the first place. I could have explored aspects of gender in the series, but this had already been done. Additionally, Norway is celebrating the hundredth anniversary of women's suffrage this year; the students had of course heard a lot about this and were most likely already tired of the topic, boys as well as girls. Lastly, since I am devoted to the idea of holistic teaching, or teaching which acknowledges more than one subject at a time, I wanted to focus on a topic I knew could be found in the curriculum of other subjects. I wanted something that would be relevant beyond the subject English. Power was therefore a relevant choice.

As a further motivation, *Game of Thrones (GOT)* is interesting to me as a teacher, exactly because it is popular. The series provides so many students with the same frame of reference, just like the character Harry Potter: the books and films now serve as a common reference that may be used in situations in which you need an example that many students may relate to. However, the novels that still seem to own the strongest ground in the classroom, are classics and literature that is considered quality literature by scholars, rather than those novels that students are pouring over in their spare time, like Martin's series *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the TV-series *Game of Thrones*.

Research that recognises the importance of the pleasures of reading has become more common over the years, and so the view of what kind of literature one should select for the students has been challenged. In *The Power of Reading*, Stephen Krashen presents research that shows the positive effect on vocabulary and reading rate that reading popular literature has, as compared to the reading of assigned literature (52). In addition, Krashen refers to how the students in the study were prejudiced towards assigned reading, anticipating that it would be boring, yet they were avid readers in their spare time. Bringing the already preferred literature into the classroom may be one way of working with popular literature and still be able to evade the aspect of assigned reading.

Taking this into account, it is obvious that there has been a move towards acknowledging popular culture as useful to the teaching of English. Nevertheless, what seems to have been overlooked in the Norwegian context is the combination of popular culture and the national

*Core Curriculum*: Can popular culture be exploited to better integrate the *Core Curriculum* in the teaching of English?

Martin's books and the HBO TV-series are really more than just a bit of "fantasy". The focus of the series seems to be on power relationships and intrigues, how to relate to other people, and on the motivation and ambitions of individuals. Many of the signals and symbols of power are hidden. You have a feeling of who is more powerful, but you may not have given the reason or background for this power careful thought. In consequence, since these books and the series are so popular, I think that they influence the students a lot more than other books or series would, in terms of racism, gender roles, human rights and how we generally relate to other people.

Michel Foucault argued in *The History of Sexuality*, that power is everywhere and it comes from everywhere (93). Later Foucault specified that power is "a way in which some act on others" (340), which means it is a part of all our relationships to other human beings. For this reason we have a natural responsibility to ensure that when we do act, we do so according to a certain set of moral guidelines or values acceptable to ourselves and those around us. This aspect is recognised by Immanuel Kant in his categorical imperative (64-65). Kant contradicts the self-indulgent advice given to the Prince in Niccolò Machiavelli's work, *The Prince* from 1513, here crudely summed up: if you have to choose, it is better and safer for a ruler to be feared than loved (73) and that one should not worry too much about morality, as long as one maintains political power (78).

This is why I have decided to focus on some of the hidden messages or the power structures in *GOT* hoping that the students will develop awareness of such influence, and that through using literature and film, the students can become better at disclosing these power structures in their own lives. After all, they are on the threshold of adult life, and will have discovered that power relationships have changed in comparison to when they were younger. It is essential to know when you are being manipulated, and to know that when people treat you a certain way it does not necessarily have anything to do with you personally, it may equally well be that you are just a pawn in a game, useful to an end.

The motivation for my thesis is as follows: In addition to increasing my students' awareness of power struggles and power relationships, and thus making them pilots in their own lives, I consider it as one of my tasks as teacher to inspire the students to read on their own, and

outside school. To achieve this, students must be subjected to a variety of genres and topics, since it is difficult to tell what will trigger a student's interest.

## **1.2. The Purpose of the Study**

With this study I wish to find out how students relate to the aspect of power in the book-and TV-series *A Song of Ice and Fire/Game of Thrones*. Reading the first book, I was immediately struck with the way power is a part of all the relationships between the characters and how a character that is powerful in one relationship is subjected to power in another. I am curious about how students in upper secondary school, relate to this topic, if they have read and experienced the books and watched the series in the same way as I have, given that I am their senior by twenty years. I would like to investigate how the students relate to the presentation of power in the series, which aspects of power they find easiest to disclose and if they see parallels to the use of power in real life. Furthermore I would like to know to which degree they think watching the series has made them more aware of power structures in their own lives. Finally I wish to know the students' attitudes to using popular and troubling literature and film, like *GOT* in the classroom, and whether they think dealing with such texts has improved their command of the English language.

### **1.2.1. Research Questions**

How do upper secondary school students experience and relate to power relationships and power structures in the TV-series *Game of Thrones* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin, and how do they relate to the use of popular literature or film about troubling topics, in the classroom? A further question that I hoped to answer was whether popular culture may be used to achieve a more holistic approach to teaching and language learning.

## **1.3. Educational Relevance of the Study**

This study researches the effect of popular culture on learners in upper secondary school, and its potential in the classroom, but since the main subject of my study relates to power, and power as such is not a specific aim in the curriculum of English, it is necessary to point out the study's educational relevance – on several levels. For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the Norwegian system a brief presentation of these documents follows in the next paragraph.

The following documents must serve as the backdrop of all teaching in Norwegian classrooms: Firstly, this includes *The Act Relating to Primary and Secondary Education in Norway (The Education Act)*, which regulates both primary and secondary education in Norway. It was revised in 1998, and effectuated in 1999 (Norwegian Government 1). Secondly, *The Core Curriculum* of 1993 specifies and presents the general aims of education, focusing in particular on values, and the cultural and educational basis of primary and secondary education. Thirdly, and in addition to these regulating documents, there is a curriculum specific to each subject, relating to the aims and purposes of that subject's teaching. For English as an obligatory subject, covering grades 1 to 11,<sup>1</sup> there is a compiled curriculum. There are also additional curriculums for English as an elective programme subject in grades 12 and 13 of general studies.

### 1.3.1. The Education Act

It is evident, that if you analyse the use of power and how people relate to each other through power, you will necessarily have to touch upon many of the aspects mentioned in *The Education Act*. This act is the governing document for all the curricula in Norwegian primary, secondary and adult education and it specifies that:

Education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights. (...) They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking. The pupils and apprentices shall develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can master their lives and can take part in working life and society. (...) The pupils and apprentices shall learn to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness. (Norwegian Government 5)

One of my central principles as a teacher, is the idea that what goes on in the classroom should leave the students more capable of managing a future adult life. This is also what lies at the heart of this study. *GOT* portrays several incidents which challenge the values and principles of democracy, but in addition, there are clear examples of democratic values. This dualism calls for interesting discussions. Furthermore, I aim at the teaching of topics which

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<sup>1</sup> English is an obligatory subject in upper secondary school, but only for one year – grade 11 in general studies. It runs over two years, year 11 and 12, in vocational studies. The curriculum for vocational studies is slightly altered to reflect a vocational perspective.

are relevant on several levels and for several subjects besides English. A brief look at the curriculums of other subjects, like social science, religion and history, discloses that a discussion relating to power has clear relevance. This is one of the benefits of working with literature; one may choose texts that are relevant beyond the specific work and which may be drawn upon in other subjects. This attitude to teaching is recommended in the *Core Curriculum*, which will be dealt with in the following paragraph.

### **1.3.2. Relevance in the *Core Curriculum***

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training presents the following ambitious goal in the introduction of the *Core Curriculum for Primary, Secondary and Adult Education* in Norway:

The aim of education is to furnish children, young people and adults with the tools they need to face the tasks of life and surmount its challenges together with others. Education shall provide learners with the capability to take charge of themselves and their lives, as well as with the vigor and will to stand by others. (5)

My study clearly ties in with these intentions: the idea is that through their participation in the interview, the students will acquire such tools as are referred to here – in this case relating to power use. Since power is an element in all relationships and at all levels and Michel Foucault even goes so far as to say that “[a]society without power relations can only be an abstraction” (The Subject 343), the awareness caused by participation in the study may prove very useful to the individual. It may among other things help them resist being made the tools of others.

It is further pointed out in the introduction, that education “must accustom them [the learners] to taking responsibility – to assess the effects of their actions on others and evaluate them in terms of ethical principles (5). This study also aims at raising the students’ consciousness about how they exercise their own power in given situations – especially considering the use of others as a means to an end. The same idea is reflected in Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative on moral actions (64-65).

It is also worth mentioning that the *Core Curriculum* recognises the need for a holistic approach to education: “[s]chooling shall provide a multi-faceted and all-round general education” (25). This is hard to achieve if teachers do not consider the wider perspective referred to in the *Core Curriculum*. It is perfectly possible to teach according to the curriculum of a specific subject, with a set of blinkers on, which causes you to focus entirely

on your own perspective. Knowing how easy it is to delve into your subject and favourite topics, I fear that many of the important aims in the *Core Curriculum* may easily remain untouched. Thus, the idea that the multi-faceted, comprehensive education is a “precondition for the evolution of the whole personality and for developing manifold interpersonal relationships” (25) may be at risk of being overlooked in schools. This point is expanded on in the claim that education should give students “concrete knowledge about the human being, society and nature which can provide a broad outlook and perspective” (25). In creating awareness and letting students reflect on both popular culture and power as an element of human relationships, this study attempts to supply the participants with some of this knowledge, hoping that “a more integrated understanding can emerge” (26).

The *Core Curriculum* further focuses on equality and democracy as important values in education. These values, and values in general for that matter, are particularly relevant in connection with the topic of power:

Education should be based on the view that all persons are created equal and that human dignity is inviolable. It should confirm the belief that everyone is unique; that each can nourish his own growth and that individual distinctions enrich and enliven our world. Education should foster equality between the sexes and solidarity among groups and across borders. It should portray and prove knowledge as a creative and versatile force, vigorous both for personal development and for humane social relations. (7-8)

Though it is not within the direct and specific scope of my study, the concept of equality was constantly referred to in the participants’ discussions, both directly and indirectly. Whenever power is in play, equality will be an issue, be it in terms of gender, slavery, racism, disability or class. The awareness of the interdependency of these two, power and equality, will hopefully lead to personal development for the participants.

The *Core Curriculum* maintains that education should aim at creating individuals who are morally responsible by implementing the ideals and values of society:

Education shall contribute to the building of character that gives individuals the strength to take command of their own lives, take on duties for their society, and take heed of the living environment. When greater knowledge gives greater power, more stress must be placed on the responsibility that accompanies this power. The choices to

be made must be based on awareness of consequences and connections, but also guided by probing against values. (9, 40)

If I relate this excerpt to my study, it is obvious that the values mentioned above will be central in the discussion about acceptable use of power, as well as whenever the participants comment on power use, be it when they approve, condone or reject it. If you have discussed one person's unacceptable power use, this consciousness may cause you to think twice about how **you** exercise your own power. Thus the use of literature and film to show the use of power may be an efficient means of fulfilling this goal in the *Core Curriculum*.

In short, "education must be dedicated to the personal qualities we wish to develop and not solely to subject matter" (32). This way we may help students develop into socially and morally responsible adults who may be less likely to serve as pawns in games set up by others or turn others into pawns. The *Core Curriculum* suggests a key to this: "to create an environment that provides ample opportunities for children and young people to evolve social responsibility and practical capability for their future roles as adults" (32). Literature and film offer good opportunities for this.

### **1.3.3. Relevance in the Curriculum of English**

In addition to the relevance in both the *Education Act* and the *Core Curriculum*, this study is clearly relevant for the subject English, as is shown in the main objective in *English programme subject in programmes for specializing in general studies*: "The programme subject's broad approach to culture and society in the English-speaking world shall develop one's skills in critical analysis and reflection" (1). This is exactly what the participants are going to do when they reflect on the power structures and power relationships they see expressed in *GOT*.

The course *English Literature and Culture* is only available to seniors in Norwegian upper secondary school, which is why I have singled it out among the other curricula of English, as I consider *GOT* more appropriate for senior students than the two other levels in upper secondary school study. There are several reasons for this: Firstly because of the length of the novels, secondly, this is due to a relatively difficult vocabulary in the novels and thirdly because of the content. Both the novels and TV-series include extensive brutality and several troubling issues. Incest and various types of abuse are included, and torture and brutal murders, as well as a display of racism, intolerance and suppression. Some of the scenes are

also rather frightening. Though the TV-series has been given a 15 year rating in Norway, it may still be difficult to relate to for a young reader or audience.

There are three competence aims in particular within the main subject area *Culture and Literature* that I find relevant in connection with my thesis:

- interpret a representative selection of texts from literary-historical periods in English literature, from the Renaissance up to the present time
- Interpret literary texts and other cultural expressions from a cultural-historical and social perspective
- analyse and assess a film and a selection of other artistic forms of expression within English-language culture. (5)

All three competence aims deal with literature, film and other cultural expressions, and how to understand them. My study ties in well with the aims above, both in terms of literature and film, as the students will reflect on and discuss what they have seen and read. Further relevance is found in the introduction to the main subject area *Culture, Society and Literature*, which describes the subject as one that “deals with key issues related to literature and culture in the English-speaking world, including literary texts and other artistic means of expression, such as visual art, theatre, music and architecture from various time periods and different parts of the world. It is about the relationship between text, culture and society.” With this specification in mind, I will argue that my study is highly relevant by educational standards. It employs an immensely popular book and TV-series by an American author and an American television network focusing on a topic that is highly relevant in human relations generally, and it may lead to a better understanding of today’s society as well past events.

In addition, it goes without saying that when you read English and watch and hear English being spoken, several of the aims relating to *communication* are met. These aims are not specified in the curriculum for *English Literature and Culture*, which is why I will not list them here, as they are considered as basic aims. Most of the communication aims at this level are connected to active use of the language, and watching and reading relate to a more passive aspect of communication, which is found in the specific aims at lower levels. One aim, however, using “suitable language, appropriate to the situation, in oral and written genres”, is highly relevant here. Since the society which is presented in the series is one in which hierarchy is essential, there are many examples of how the characters adjust their language and their style to befit the situation and person before them. If one can assume that most of the



films that the students usually watch are set in modern times, hierarchy and subordination will perhaps not be reflected as strongly in these films and the viewer will perhaps miss them altogether. In *GOT* these are highlighted, and may be used to teach students about different stylistic levels.

#### **1.4. The Novels and TV-Series**

The books and TV-series that serve as the focus of this paper are the HBO TV-series *Game of Thrones* and the books in the series written by George R. R. Martin entitled *A Song of Ice and Fire (ASOIF)*. The series comprises five volumes to date, all first published by Bantam Books. Since I would have to juggle at least three different titles, I have decided to refer to both the books and television series as *GOT*, since the point of my paper is not to distinguish between these, but to hear the students' opinion of them. I will therefore use the abbreviation *GOT* when speaking generally, but will indicate specific book titles or episode numbers when necessary. The respondents in my study mainly focus on the first two seasons of the television series, from 2011 and 2012, which are based on the first two books, *A Game of Thrones (1996)* and *A Clash of Kings (1999)*, but at the time of the interview, season three had already started and had run for three episodes, thus some aspects of book three, *A Storm of Swords (2000)*, are also discussed. The series is produced by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, and the first episode was aired in 2011. So far, only the first two books and half of the third have been adapted for TV, consisting of 10 episodes, each lasting 50 minutes.

For the benefit of the reader unfamiliar with *GOT*, a brief introduction to the plot, setting and characters, is necessary. The full plot summaries from the first three novels are accessible to the reader in appendix 2. These are the novels that have been adapted at this stage and that are relevant for my thesis. Moreover, I have decided to only include the plot for the novels, not the TV-series, since the plot of the TV-series sometimes deviates from that of the novels. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that the plot is very complex, in that the perspective switches constantly between several of the major characters in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person limited point of view. Note that central details are sometimes excluded in the plot summaries, but will be mentioned when necessary in the discussion. Furthermore, I have included an overview of the major characters and their respective houses in appendix 1. This is a scanned copy from a booklet which was included in the DVD box by HBO containing seasons one and two.

### 1.4.1. The Setting and Background

In the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Martin has created a quite realistic fantasy world that in many respects mirrors the feudal structures of Europe in medieval times, also in terms of its violence and barbarism. This is not coincidental: In interviews, Martin has named the War of the Roses and historical fiction in general as sources of inspiration, in addition to J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy, *Lord of the Rings*:

My inspiration has grown, not only from Tolkien, but also from history and historical fiction. I tried to blend some of the tropes and traditions of fantasy with those of historical fiction, while doing this. If you read about the real Middle Ages, as I do all the time, it was a brutal time for everybody – for men, women and children. Children weren't sentimentalized, the way they are today. They were frequently made to work, from a very early age. They were taken into battle. Boys became pages and squires (...) You're not at home, being protected. It was a different age with a different mind-set. I did want to reflect that. (Martin, qtd. in Radish 8)

The main events of the plot are set in the geographical area Westeros, which is best described as seven smaller kingdoms, each represented by a house and a warden, under the rule of one King in the capital King's Landing. Shaped like a peninsula, this continent is surrounded by water in every direction but north, where a giant garrisoned wall separates Westeros from a land of ice, and the free people called *Wildlings*. The group of men guarding this wall is called the Night's Watch. Rumour and history tell of horrible and unnatural creatures behind the Wall; *The Others* or *wights*. These are dead people or animals that have been hidden under the ice for centuries, but are reappearing as the temperature falls. Other extraordinary and fantastical creatures in the novels are dragons, which were believed to be extinct, *direwolves*, which are particularly large wolves, and giants, and mammoths. A further unusual characteristic of this universe is the length of seasons, which may stretch unchanged for years resulting in summers or winters that may last for a decade.

### 1.4.2. Central Characters

One of the most important families in Westeros is the Baratheons. King Robert gained the throne that rules all of Westeros after a conflict which ended when the previous king, Mad King Aerys Targaryen was assassinated in a coup. Robert is self-indulgent, notoriously

unfaithful and a heavy drinker. He has two younger brothers: Stannis, who is rigidly just and correct to a fault, and Renley, who is charismatic, flamboyant and popular.

The Lannisters are another influential family, not only because of their immense wealth, but also since Robert is married to Cersei Lannister, mother of the three heirs to the throne; Joffrey, Tommen and Myrcella. Cersei's father, Tywin Lannister, controls his family, which additionally consists of Cersei's twin Jamie, who is in the King's Guard, and their younger brother, the satirical and highly intelligent Tyrion. He is the disgrace of the family, and disliked on account of being a dwarf and because his birth caused his mother's death. Jamie and Cersei are lovers, and although Cersei is disgusted by Tyrion, Jamie loves him.

The Stark family is the moral compass of the first novel, and consists of King Robert's close friend, Eddard (Ned) Stark, Ned's wife Catelyn, and their five children, Robb, Sansa, Arya, Bran and Rickon, as well as Ned's bastard son Jon Snow. All six Stark children have a direwolf, to whom they have a special bond and connection. Eddard Stark's ward, Theon Greyjoy of the Iron Islands is also worth mentioning. At the age of 10 he was sent by King Robert to live with the Starks as an answer to his father's rebellion against the throne. He has been raised as Eddard's son. At King's Landing Varys and Littlefinger/Peter Baelish are important and influential characters, as both are members of the Westerosi government, *The Small Council*.

The plot sometimes takes us outside Westeros, to the other parts of Martin's world. Central characters here are the siblings Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen who would have been killed alongside their father, the Mad King, but who escaped and have been exiled ever since. Viserys is planning to win the throne back, claiming it is his birth right. There are of course other important characters in the series besides those mentioned here, and when necessary they will be dealt with in the relevant context in which they appear.

### **1.4.3. Tolkien vs. Martin**

Given Martin's fascination with J. R. R. Tolkien, it is relevant to include a few reflections on the similarities and differences between the two. There is magic in both, and both are set in worlds with medieval characteristics, but Tolkien's world is as a whole more polarised, perhaps because it mirrors his time, right after WWII: Things are to a large extent either black or white, people are generally either good or bad, whereas Martin portrays a world in which close to nothing is black or white. As in real life, the characters we meet have more than one

side to them. The character with whom we sympathise in one episode or chapter may have been the villain earlier. Typical of today's society in which the Internet has made it possible for everyone's voice to be heard, the series and the novels in particular, constantly switch perspectives thereby forcing the reader or viewer to reconsider her previous attitudes and assumptions. The antagonist is never just a scoundrel; each character has many facets and thus comes across as more human than the characters of Tolkien's universe.

This again shows the potential of the books and series in teaching us about life, because life is not the easy "either or" of Tolkien's universe, it is much more complex than that. This series mirrors the *Zeitgeist* – post modernism – where most answers are debatable.

### **1.5. The Structure of the Thesis**

In the following I begin by briefly presenting relevant theory on extensive reading, troubling literature and the fantasy genre as a back drop for *GOT* before I turn to theory on power in general and a presentation of power in the book *Organizational Power Politics* by Gilbert W. Fairholm. Secondly, I describe my research methodology: my study consists of three parts. I have used a pre-interview questionnaire to sensitise the participants to the topic of power in general and in *GOT* (appendix 4). I designed and carried out two focus group interviews with a total of seven students in upper secondary school in a small community in northern Norway in a pilot study where I attempt to find some preliminary answers to my research questions. For an English translation of the transcripts, see appendices 5 and 6. Subsequently, I carried out a post-interview questionnaire to learn about the effect of the interview on the participants, available in appendix 7. Thirdly, I present and analyse the results of the interview: I discuss to what degree the students are able to disclose the use of power, what they think about the use of *GOT* in the classroom, and their attitudes toward popular literature. In the concluding section of my thesis I discuss the implications of these findings for the subject English in upper secondary school in Norway, and I suggest the potential for further research.

## **2. Literature Review**

Film and literature may give the teacher golden opportunities when it comes to achieving an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to teaching English in upper secondary school, covering both specific aims of the *English Subject Curriculum* and the *Core Curriculum*. When the

participants of my study discuss the use of power in *GOT*, they will necessarily consider democratic values and equality, both how these values are considered an essential part of the society, and also how they are internalised and manifested in the individual. This potential explains why I have chosen the books and television series as the basis for my study.

In Section 2.1, I begin with a brief introduction on the effects of extensive reading, which is of course a motivating factor for this study in relation to language learning. Secondly, in Section 2.2, I discuss troubling literature as a category, before outlining a number of relevant points on the fantasy genre in Section 2.3, as both the books and the television series fall into these categories. Section 2.4 presents theories on power, limited to the context of both the study and the literature and the film. I have resolved to focus on power as the main theme in the books and films, and more specifically power relationships, power structures and on how power is used, as these aspects affect all the character relationships in *GOT*. This connects directly to the *Core Curriculum*. I am, however, focusing on the sociological, not the financial or structural aspects of power. Other relevant topics like equality and gender issues will be dealt with as well, but not looked at separately.

## **2.1. Extensive Reading and Popular Culture**

The idea for this thesis was conceived in early 2012, when one of my students recommended that I read a book he had enjoyed very much. This novel was Martin's *A Game of Thrones*. In a short period of time he had devoured all the hitherto published volumes of the series, which means he read extensively. Several studies have been carried out on the effect of extensive reading on English as a Second Language (ESL). This is also the topic of Stephen Krashen's paper "Free Voluntary Reading: New Research, Applications, and Controversies", which was presented at the Regional Language Centre (RELC) Conference in Singapore, in April 2004. Though the educational situations and programmes described in the paper may not be familiar or entirely applicable for the Norwegian educational system, the main ideas are still relevant. In his paper, Krashen observes that several recent studies indicate that "those who do more recreational reading show better development in reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary" (1), and that "light reading is a bridge to heavier reading" (5). This is highly relevant for the Norwegian national curriculum for the subject English and its communication aim, at all levels, as the focus on basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, are highlighted in the newly revised curriculum that was valid from August 2013. This aspect is in addition reflected in EU's policy of "Lifelong Learning" from 2006 (Decision 4).

In his paper, Krashen draws attention to what he calls *sheltered popular literature*. As is implied by the term “popular” this is a type of literature class where the focus is not the classics which normally dominate in the classroom, but “literature that second language students will find interesting and comprehensible” (4). Again, this fits well with book series like *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which undoubtedly is both popular, and judging by my students’ comments, very interesting. Krashen also stresses that this literature should be approached in a serious manner, just like the classics; “as a means of understanding the human condition, gaining insight into ethics, metaphysics and culture” (4). This reflects the aim of my study.

If I further expand the term to refer to popular **culture**, like film, both the books and TV-series offer many areas of life to reflect on. Ebony Utley argues that “[r]adio, television, film, and the other products of media culture provide materials out of which individuals in contemporary media and consumer societies forge their very identities, including sense of self, notion [sic] of what it means to be male or female, and how people experience class, ethnicity and race, sexuality, age, nationality, and other markers of identity” (5). Considering this statement, there is reason to believe that popular culture is highly influential, given that young people are so endlessly more exposed to it than to the classics. Popular culture may serve teachers well in teaching the students English and keeping the *Core Curriculum* in mind for their personal development.

Moreover, Krashen states that the reading of popular literature may inform the students of what is available, and may spur them to get into the habit of reading (4). This is in particular true of book series, as once you have started it may be difficult to stop. Many of my students up through the years have explained how they have started reading a series in English because some way into the series they had caught up with the translator and they could not wait for the translated version to be finished. In their impatience they turned to the English version.

In another vein, Krashen claims that what he calls “narrow reading” is more efficient for a second language learner, than is “broad reading”. Narrow reading refers to the reading of series of books by the same author, books about the same topic, or books of the same genre (4), like fantasy books. This is also relevant for Martin’s books, and many of the participants in my study have read a lot of the same fantasy series. Krashen claims that “[n]arrow reading will be more interesting, because it is restricted to what the reader really wants to read. It will be more comprehensible, because the reader will already have a great deal of background knowledge, and will gain more background knowledge by reading” (4). This point is

confirmed by the participants in my study. What may additionally happen with a series like *GOT* is that some of the participants are so fascinated by the television series that they cannot wait for the next season to be produced and consequently will turn to the books to find out what happens next. Therefore the TV-series may serve as a gateway to reading literature, and extensive reading at that, given the length of the novels.

Krashen outlines how it can be stimulating for the students to participate in teacher-student conferences where the books they read are discussed (6). This is exactly what my focus group is going to be: a discussion group, though the teacher is reduced to moderator, and the questions are limited to aspects of power.

One of Krashen's points is that light reading gives the reader the tools to understand more demanding texts (5). This is interesting, because many of my former students have told me of their surprise and in many cases despair, when they discovered how much of their course literature in university or college was in English, also when their subject had little to do with languages. One student even had to have her lectures about nutrition in English, as the lecturer could not speak Norwegian. The students who were only taking the obligatory English course in upper secondary school, and thus completed their education in English after the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, or at 16 years of age, were considerably troubled by this English curriculum. It took them a long time to get through their reading, as they not only had to struggle with the field specific terminology of their subject, the rest of the language was to a large degree inaccessible as well. If one considers that extensive reading is easier to achieve outside the classroom due to the lack of time for many such long projects, teachers can at least manage one thing: to serve the learners literary snacks, which may inspire them to read extensively on their own. If we want our learners to become extensive readers, it is important to ask what makes literature worth reading to youngsters. There is reason to look to the novels the students read for pleasure in this pursuit.

## **2.2. Troubling Literature**

As teachers, we read literature with our students which may sometimes touch issues that are challenging for some of the students, exactly because they identify with what they read. According to the article "Ethical Dilemmas in Teaching Problem Literature", Suzanne Reid and Sharon Stringer regard troubling literature as any literature that deals with sensitive topics, especially in connection with Young Adult (YA) literature (1). YA literature originally referred to literature for readers between the ages of 12 and 19, but in recent years this term

has expanded to include readers between the ages of 10 and 25 (Cart 1). Reid and Stringer discuss the “psychological impact of troubling YA literature on adolescent readers in the Classroom” (1), thus the relevance to my study is evident. What is more, Reid and Stringer suggest that literature may help students by letting them “mentally rehearse possibly volatile situations by providing well-written literature about adolescent problems” (2).

The question is if *GOT* may be defined as YA literature. In my opinion it crosses the boundaries between YA literature and literature for adult readers, since the challenges and situations the many different major characters experience, relate to typical children- and teen-problems as well as problems adults may recognise and identify with. This is also reflected in the variable age of fans of both the books and TV-series.

In relation to selecting books for the classroom, Reid and Stringer acknowledge that it may be a good idea to give different books to different students: “Teachers recognize the differences among students and can provide individuals with appropriate literature without recommending the same text to others” (2). In this respect, letting an entire class read *A Game of Thrones* may not be such a brilliant idea. Reid and Stringer further argue that whilst it is important for teachers to know their students, it is equally important to know the literature well: The teacher must have read what she brings into the classroom herself, to be prepared for her own and her students’ reactions. As they note, “[m]ore than most professionals, teachers’ relationships with each student differ, and every teacher must know him or herself well enough to accurately judge his or her responses to problematic subjects” (4). In relation to *GOT*, it is important to select parts consciously, both extracts from the novels and the scenes from the TV-series, since “[l]iterature is powerful, and we must use that power with care” (Reid and Stringer 4). In the series there are so many challenging aspects that it is reasonable to anticipate that the series will touch the students personally at some level.

Reid and Stringer also point to the importance of selecting literature that communicates hope in the end because, as they say: “we feel that adolescents, without the buffer of long-term varied experiences, do run a greater risk of despair than adults” (3). This is one of the reasons why I would hesitate to use the novel with an entire class: It is troubling to the extreme, with questionable presentations of both race and gender. Moreover, the book is part of a series and in addition to constantly letting major, and very likable characters perish or disappear, there really are many puzzles and few answers, even as late as book five. This may be very little reassuring to a sensitive student and also frustrating. Furthermore, Martin’s series includes



adult characters with very adult feelings, which may alienate young teenagers, and the language is at times rather archaic, since it reflects a society that would to some extent mirror a medieval Earth. I have met and talked with 45- year olds and 15-year olds alike who have been equally fascinated by what they have seen or read, and upon being asked the question if the books are for adults or youth, they all seemed to find it difficult to choose. By carefully selecting sections and scenes to use in class, it is possible to exploit the potential that lies in *GOT*: As film and literature that matters in our lives and that may help us to understand ourselves and others better.

### **2.3. Fantasy – a Brief Introduction to the Genre**

In the opening of his chapter about fantasy, Matthew O. Grenby points out how difficult it is to define the genre fantasy, as it “can incorporate the serious and the comic, the scary and the whimsical, the moral and the archaic” (144). Furthermore, it may represent aspects that are far away from the reader’s reality, yet also mirror elements that are similar.

Martin’s *GOT* is classified as fantasy, for a number of reasons; it takes place in an imaginary world, it includes unearthly fantastical creatures and people with paranormal powers, to name a few. Grenby further divides fantasy into two categories. It may be either “‘high’— taking place in alternative worlds – or ‘low’ – set in the world we know. Or it can combine the two.” (144). In my opinion one could argue that *GOT* belongs to both categories, although not in the way J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter books do, with parallel universes. Shelby A. Wolf compares high fantasy with science fiction in that it creates a different world: “high fantasy as stories centred on struggles between good and evil, where entire imaginary worlds are created in rich detail with fully developed characters” (52-53). This is what Martin’s universe feels like to the reader: it resembles our world in medieval times, but it is the spiced up version. Good and evil are central, but not in the polarised manner of J. R. R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth, where it is very plain to see who is on which side. The use of many perspectives in Martin’s books, and the insight this gives the reader has the effect of complicating the question of good and evil.

Another aspect of fantasy is the inclusion of magic or unusual or mythical creatures. Grenby describes this side of the genre: “Fantasy literature depicts things which are contrary to prevailing ideas of reality, rather than which are incontestably supernatural or impossible” (145). Yes, there are dragons and walking dead people, yes a winter may last for a decade, and there are sorcerers and priestesses who can murder people from a distance by sacrificing

blood on a fire. However, these elements are not the main focus; they are complementary to the way the characters live their lives and how they relate to challenges and to one another.

In a similar vein, Grenby argues that fantasy is a genre in which realism and the fantastical may coexist:

What seems particularly misguided is to regard fantasy and realism as mutually exclusive categories. It is surely not the case that all literature can be placed somewhere on a scale with pure fantasy at one end, and pure mimesis (the representation of reality) at the other, so that to increase the level of fantasy is to diminish the level of reality (or vice versa). (146)

As pointed out above, *GOT* has elements of fantasy, but the focus is not on these fantastical elements, but rather on the characters, their relationships, actions, and their motives. *GOT* is not a parallel world to ours – it is something entirely different, yet you are left with an impression that people are people.

Grenby points to another central characteristic of high fantasy: its tendency towards structure, hierarchy and figures of authority, like Aslan in C. S. Lewis's books about Narnia, and Professor Dumbledore in Harry Potter's world (157). In *GOT*, however there is not one authority, but many, which also contributes to the sense of realism, at least in a modern, western, egalitarian perspective. Grenby further contends that in high fantasy "most authors are careful to ensure that their protagonists (and thereby their readers) always know exactly what they are doing in the fantasy world" (158). The characters have a purpose. While this may be true of some of the characters in *GOT*, it is not necessarily clear to the reader – or at least not immediately. Given the multiple perspectives, the reader may not understand the motive or plan that governs a character's action until at a much later stage when the author gives the reader insight into the character's thoughts. Thus the reader may feel very confused for longer periods, and sometimes it appears that the characters do not quite know what they are doing either. This confusion is mostly not related to the strangeness of the created world – instead it relates to the characters' inner lives and emotional turmoil. This very much resembles life as it is – we do not always know what to do or even why we think or react as we do, and we certainly often have reason to question other people's actions! This mystery may be regarded as part of the charm of the novels, and part of what makes them so intriguing, and it is perhaps more evident in the novels than in the TV-series, where the character's thoughts are not as easily accessible.

Grenby claims that the genre is “very well suited to consideration of questions of identity” (164). Though this is perhaps more true of novels like the Harry Potter books, in which a character travels from our world into another, many of the characters in *GOT* come of age in the novel, and have to rise to challenges that contribute to defining who they are. Several of the characters are very young and the fact that they have to relate to many difficulties that arise may be enough to define the books in the category *bildungsroman*, or *educational novels*. According to John Peck and Martin Coyle, these are “novels which start with the main character as a child and then present the child’s growth and development toward adulthood” (122). Now since this is a series, the development is slow, but it is nevertheless there, and most characters are subjected to challenges that would require that they grow up very quickly. In *GOT*, Jon Snow develops from a young boy who practices with a bow and arrow in the court yard, to being elected Commander of the Nights’ Watch through the course of five books, and his brother Robb is proclaimed king of the North. The stories of these young characters are partly why I consider the novel appropriate for both young adults and adults.

In conclusion, Grenby refers to how the fantasy genre has appealed to adults because of its didactical potential: “the genre (...) can so easily be adapted to provide lessons of all kinds, moral, political, practical and psychological” (166). Although this would be to stretch the definition a little, *GOT* is admittedly a work in which many lessons about life and humans may be learnt – be it about love, justice, honour or power.

The fact that *GOT* belongs both to the category troubling literature and to the fantasy genre, may make it particularly appropriate for use in school. The series brings up several disturbing topics in a rather realistic manner, but because this is fantasy, it may take the edge off the difficult aspects for the sensitive reader. This is one of the absolute benefits of literature: it may serve as a buffer and make it possible to discuss on neutral grounds something which is simultaneously deeply personal. This way you may give the learner a possibility to discuss his or her problems, **and** how to handle such problems without the risk of unsolicited exposure on the learner’s part.

## 2.4. Power

Since this thesis researches what a group of Norwegian students have to say about power in *GOT*, it is necessary to look at some definitions of the term. It is also necessary to establish some limitations as to the meaning of power in this connection: The focus of this thesis is on the power in a sociological and psychological perspective, not a structural perspective.

Moreover, the scope is mostly restricted to relationships between characters or people. Still, the societal structures are important, since they to a large degree determine the relationships between the characters.

In his essay “The Subject and Power” Michel Foucault claims that “A society without power relations can only be an abstraction” (343). This means that power is everywhere- in all relationships between people, and at all levels in society. Foucault further defines power as “a set of actions on possible actions; (...) it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action (341). Foucault expands on the issue by stating that “[p]ower exists only as exercised by some on others” (331). This means that power does not exist as an entity except in relation to people. Power is not something you actually have or can save up. It exists here and in the now, and it determines how we act in relation to others.

Foucault distinguishes between power relationships and relationships of violence. He claims that a relationship of power “is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future” (340). He points out that there is always a possibility to **choose** how to act in a power relationship, there is always an element of freedom. A relationship of violence, however “acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities” (Foucault 340).

Based on this it seems relevant to state that power is present in everything we do and in all our relationships. Every time we interact with another person, there is power involved. We use power to get our way, and to make others do as we wish even when they do not want to in the first place. Dennis Wrong equates power to social interaction: “People exercise mutual influence and control over one another’s behaviour in social interaction – in fact, that is what we *mean* by social interaction. Power relations are asymmetrical in that the power holder exercises greater control over the power subject than the reverse” (1). This may initially sound exclusively negative, but power use is not necessarily wrong or bad. It may be neutral, and it may be used for something good, like empowering others and making them feel important. Consequently, it all depends on **why** power is used and **how** power is used. With all these aspects, it is difficult to agree on one clear definition of power.

### **2.4.1. Power in *GOT***

*GOT* is centred on a major power struggle, from halfway into book one when the king is murdered. There are many candidates who would like to try for the throne in the seven kingdoms of Westeros, and so far the conflict has only escalated and is influencing characters at all levels. The setting of the series is one similar to a feudal hierarchy. Everywhere except among the Wildlings beyond the wall, the organisational power structures are relatively clear, and omnipresent, as well as predominantly patriarchal. We may not necessarily recognise the organisations or cooperatives from a modern perspective, but there are still individuals working together towards common goals. Moreover, the hierarchy is obvious in the family, where the husband and father enjoys subordination from the rest of the family members, but this is also true of most of the other contexts. In some situations, subordination is absolute, and disobedience will result in punishment.

### **2.4.2. Gilbert Fairholm's Theory of Organisational Power**

I have resolved to use Gilbert Fairholm's *Organizational Power Politics* in the designing of the pre-interview questionnaire and the interview guideline, as well as in the information that given to the students on understanding power. This work is the main source of theory related to power in my thesis, and therefore it is necessary to give an introduction to some of Fairholm's ideas. The book focuses on power in organisations, so I will start by focusing on this element before I will turn more specific aspects of power.

In the introduction to his book, Fairholm presents the correlation between organisation and power: "The organization is a social grouping of at least two people involved in some common enterprise with accepted goals, methods, and structure. The organizational construct is in every respect one of power. We cannot consider organization apart from the idea of power" (xx1). With respect to *GOT*, an organisation may be represented by a big household or the King's court, or it might be reflected in the campaign of gaining or securing the throne for a king, getting back a hostage, overthrowing a king, securing peace through a marriage, or getting a whole people across the sea. Much the same goes on between the people with such a goal, as goes on in organisations in general.

Since Kings have lords supporting them, and great lords in turn have lesser lords supporting them, they all putatively work towards a common goal of securing and maintaining peace. This will in some respect be similar to our world and the world our learners enter when they

leave upper secondary school to go study and later find a job. They will find themselves part of an organisation in which they play a role. They are already members of several organisational structures, but they may not yet be fully aware of this, or the small role they play is not important enough to make them see this. Thus, using *GOT* to awaken the learners' consciousness about hierarchy and power structures and how they work may be more relevant than it seems at first glance. Even if *GOT* is set in a medieval past in a strange world in which mythical creatures like dragons and krakens have a place, its strongest focus is still people in general and the way people relate to each other.

### 2.4.3. Gilbert Fairholm's Definition of Power

Fairholm acknowledges that there are very many definitions of *power*, suggesting that power takes on many shapes:

There is little agreement about what power is, where or when the individual gets it, or how it is used successfully. It is clear that individual personality, as well as control over material and psychological resources, is part of power use. What is also clear is that power is pervasive, interesting, somewhat frightening, and central to success in operating in organizational settings. (4)

It is further observed by Fairholm that "all members of an organization participate in power use", and that "[n]o one is powerless, even if it is only the power to withhold talent or energy" (38-39). This implies that even the weakest person does have some power, although it may be very difficult to see this at first sight and without considering the fact specifically. There is a lot of power in defiance, as was registered by both Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

For an overview of power, Fairholm has presented the following list, which adds to the definition above:

#### **Power...**

- involves planned action, not random action
- is a way to get a desired result, to get your way
- is measured and compared in terms of how successful it was;
- happens in relationships where **one** is somehow dependent on the **other**
- is shown through use, not possession; you cannot have power without using it
- is situational; what is efficient in one situation or with one person may not be a success in another situation or with another person

- is based on disagreement or opposition; it is only used when people disagree in the first place. If they agree, power use is not necessary (5)

#### 2.4.4. Bases of power

It may sometimes be difficult to see or understand why some people have more power than others, and additionally, where this power comes from. Fairholm claims that in power relationships, there is power transfer:

The relative power of the participants must be different – one participant must perceive him or herself to be relatively more dominant than the other – otherwise there would be no point in employing energy in power behaviour. In this situation, one person consents and in that consent transfers power to the other, making that individual relatively more dominant in that situation. (6)

This power is based on several aspects, and the following offers a suggestion of five different bases of power (Fairholm 23):

**Reward power:** is based on the power user's ability to give rewards or benefits to the target of the power. This reward may simply be recognition, through a smile, or praise.

**Coercive power:** is based on the power user's ability to punish the target. This knowledge will influence the target to comply, since compliance seems to be the only option.

**Expert power:** is based on the special ability and knowledge the power user possesses and which the target would like to have or use.

**Referent power:** is based on the target's wish to be identified or associated with the power user

**Legitimate power:** is based on the target's feeling that the power user is entitled to be leader. This type of power is often related to organisation or to a pre-existing system of power.

#### 2.4.5. A Basic Impact Power Model

Fairholm has made a table (12) which shows the different forms of power and with how much impact these forms of power are exercised. The top shows forms that imply using great, direct force, whereas the ones at the bottom generally require little use of force to sway the target.

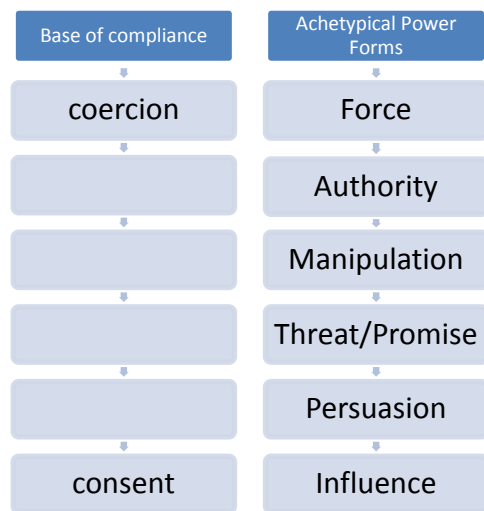


Table 1. “A Basic Impact Power Model”

The table illustrates how power comes in different forms, the most clear power use, **force**, may include violence and severe pressure, whereas the use of **influence** is perhaps not noticed at all by the target. This may relate to situations in which the power users employ their charm to **influence** the target in favour of a suggestion, or play on the target’s weak sides by telling him or her what they wish to hear, and thus making them soften to the suggestion. When we change our minds because we have been convinced it is the right and logical thing to do, this is called voluntary **consent**, which means giving in willingly.

#### 2.4.6. The Power Impact Process

The power impact process is referred to by Fairholm as “the mechanism by which power is activated and made useful in effecting the power holder’s world” (13). Any of the six given forms of power that are listed in the previous paragraph may be applied in this process. As stated by Fairholm, the basis or source of this power basically lies in two aspects; position or personality. Position provides us with resources beyond our personality, which may make it easier to assert control over others; it makes both reward and punishment available to us and gives us occasion to distribute them according to our wishes. In addition, our place in the hierarchy will determine whether we have control over information, group values, or ideas of “correct behaviour”. This again may render us considerable control over others, even as far as to the emotive aspects, like uncertainty, hope and optimism. As pointed out by Fairholm: “People in superior status positions often have the right to prescribe behavior patterns for others in the group” (13). This is evident, even among groups of teenagers.

The other basis of power named by Fairholm is personality. He argues that we “allow people who can provide us with affection, recognition, time and attention to exercise power over us”



(14). These people can give us a feeling of belonging, of being loved, or they may satisfy our need for sympathy. In short they can reward us, through as little as a smile. However, just as they can provide us with pleasant emotions, they may equally well punish us by rejecting us, or avoiding us. This may again make us compliant, because we want to win the recognition back. These are, very sketchily explained, some ways in which power works.

#### 2.4.7. Forms of Power

Below, Fairholm's model of the six different forms of power (16-21) has been explained and organised in a table for an easier overview:

Forms	About	Examples / explanation
<b>Force:</b>	Use of physical or biological force to get a desired result or prevent a result. Easy to see when it is used and very efficient—people often respond quickly. The most direct form is violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restrain freedom</li> <li>• cause pain</li> <li>• take life</li> </ul>
<b>Threat/ Promise</b>	Causes the target to obey because they want something, or to avoid problems and pain. Similar to force, but the target still has a real choice: The choice is decided by how much he wants to avoid the threat, or how badly he wants what is promised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Do this or else...” (threat)</li> <li>• “Do this and you will get ...” (promise)</li> </ul>
<b>Authority</b>	The source of power comes from agreement in the group on who is the leader. It may be based on charisma, on personality and on special skills. Easy to see when it is used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shown through <b>orders</b> given</li> <li>• Often logical and following rules</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Manipulation</b>	The power use is hidden and therefore difficult to fight or disclose. The power user hides the real intent and influences the target's behaviour indirectly. The target does not react because he does not know what is going on, and may even feel he has freedom and choice. Often used in combination with another form, like persuasion or influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlling information sources available to the target</li> <li>• Manipulate the surroundings of the target (The upbeat music in McDonald's is designed to make us eat quickly and leave fast)</li> <li>• Undermine someone's position, reputation or honour (e.g. lying about them)</li> </ul>
<b>Persuasion</b>	Is argument. The target weighs for or against (no threat other than logic!). This is a give-and- take form, based on dialogue, negotiating, on arguments in specific situations. It depends on the resources held: strong talkers will be better at persuasion, as will experts. A democratic form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using arguments and logic to win someone over.</li> <li>• Could start out like this: You should wear a woollen sweater because...</li> <li>• In the end the target will often think the result is the best</li> </ul>
<b>Influence</b>	Affecting others' behaviour without threatening or manipulating them. The intentions are clear, and not hidden. Shows respect for others and is based on common values, ideals and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following orders out of admiration or love for someone, or out of agreement with the values that lie behind the orders.</li> <li>• Behaving well to be liked</li> </ul>

### 2.4.8. Power Tactics

The type of power tactics we choose to apply is closely connected to the type of relationship we have to the person we try to exercise our power on. If you are superior or subordinate to the target, or you are peers, this will decide what tactic you will attempt to use, as experience has told you what will be more effective. We typically use the power tactics that are available to us, and according to Fairholm, subordinate power users tend to use power which relates to personality, rather than material (86). He further expands: “subordinate power users rely less on threat and authoritative forms, and more on persuasion, manipulation and influence forms” (86). When peers use power over each other, they tend to rely on more indirect forms, like manipulation, influence or sometimes subtle threats, whilst typically refraining from persuasion or authoritative forms of power use (101). Superior power users, however, tend to have more tactics available to them since they risk less than subordinates and peers do when they use power. They will typically base their tactics less on personality, letting the hierarchy work for them or base the power use on their ability to reward or punish. This may also be combined with power tactics like force and authority (117).

Below follows a list of tactics used when exercising power, as identified by Fairholm (59):

- **Deciding what will be discussed;** relates to controlling the agenda
- **Keeping communication unclear;** what is said may be understood in several ways, making it difficult to go against it
- **Using your charisma;** means using the respect and feelings others have for your character traits in order to affect their decisions
- **Forming coalitions;** means securing allies
- **Teaching/developing others** to do things (e.g. an assistant!) and thereby increasing our own power because we have access to an extra resource
- **Using outside experts;** means we do not have to get involved directly to get a result
- **Building a favourable image of ourselves;** means making ourselves look good/smart/powerful etc. in the eyes of others
- **Placing others in debt** to us so they will do as we like
- **Organisational placement** Placing our allies in central positions and our opponents out on the side line
- **Quid pro quo/Negotiating trade-offs;** I will scratch your back if you...
- **Rationalization;** changing the reality (lie or leave out details) to fit your plans
- **Distributing/giving resources** to people in ways that will give us more power
- **Rewarding or punishing people** to win their support
- **Using a surrogate/ someone else** to carry out the job because they are more popular and/or will be more successful your way, or they will be unpopular and not you

- **Training and orienting** Transmitting knowledge, skills, values, or specific behaviours to others to instil our goals, values, philosophy, or desired behaviours in them

#### 2.4.9. Reasons for Power Use

Though it is firmly established that everyone uses power, it may not be so easily established what motivates the power use. Why do people use power? There are many reasons why, everything from the fun of it to the fact that it helps define you as an individual. Some people see power as a way to get what they want, and to others it is just enjoyable to see what power can do. Some reasons, as identified by Fairholm (66), are listed below:

1. to receive help
2. to get benefits from the target of power
3. to help make the targets perform better
4. to cause change to happen
5. for the fun of it
6. to meet ego needs (related to feelings)

#### 2.4.10. Result of Power Use and its Success Factors

Fairholm recognises that “[t]he goal of our power use is the realization of desired changes in the behavior, attitudes, or characteristics of others or groups. [...] In short we use power when we require a choice” (67), and he continues: “power use is possible in any circumstance and by any person”(68). In comparison, all the characters in *GOT* engage in power exchange, even characters who seemingly have everything taken away from them show that they still have a choice upon which to act. This is what Foucault upholds as a criterion of power relationships: “Power is exerted only over free subjects, and only insofar they are ‘free’” (The Subject 342). However – whether or not these characters are successful in their power use is another question.

Fairholm has identified important factors which he considers paramount to successful power use, some of which I will present here: **Discretion** is noted as a factor for success, since having an audience may cause people to react upon other impulses than those intended by the power user. Likewise, **centrality** is important, since being close to where the hub of power and action is, will often rub off and influence other’s perception of the individual. Related to this point is being well-connected or having **status with supervisors**; being on good terms with someone higher up in the system than yourself, may cause you to seem more powerful.

Another element is **exchange**, indicating that power is a type of social exchange where both parties seem to have something to trade. Success is then related to the quality and scarcity of your resource and how much the target of the power use wants the resource. **Conformance to group norms** is also a concept that affects power use: when someone “personifies the group norms, it will make others associate and identify with this person, which again may increase his or her success as power user” (69). Furthermore, some people are natural authority figures. This means they are often automatically accepted by others as powerful, and this acceptance by others as credible persons of authority is referred to as **legitimacy**. In a similar vein, when people are held in high esteem by others, this contributes to increasing their power positions. This is referred to as **personal status**. Finally, it is suggested that **personal characteristics** are important factors for how successful a person is when using power. The personal qualities may be “commitment, high energy, interest, skill and attractiveness” (Fairholm 68-69).

#### **2.4.11. Compliance to Power Use**

The aim of all power use is compliance from the target, or in Fairholm’s words: “Compliance is achieving the result intended from our use of power” (15). This compliance may be divided in two forms; voluntary compliance, known as consent, and forced compliance, also known as coercion. The former happens when we have considered our options carefully and decided that we will give in because it is logical to us or it feels right to do so. The choice is made willingly: “consent implies unforced respect for the idea or the personality of the individual asking us to comply. It is evoked out of our willingness to be guided by the actions and words of another person because we admire, respect, or are attracted to that person or his or her ideas” (15). We agree to the other’s wish because we want to, or as is the case in a democracy, in respect for the system which allows us to elect the individuals we wish to govern us.

Quite contrary to this, coercion happens when someone has threatened us into compliance. Coercion is described by Fairholm as “the ability to force another to behave in desired ways” (15). Coercion in its extremity is violence or naked force (15), but threats of violence still count as coercion, even when violence is not used. At the core of coercion lies the target’s feeling of having no alternative solutions or choices to make.

#### **2.4.12. Limitations and Resistance to Power Use**

Personal characteristics like attractiveness or charisma give more power. As do height, intelligence, the place we hold in the hierarchy, our social and financial status, the size of the group and what task it is facing (Fairholm 66-67). This indicates that already before you have started interacting, the power structures are in place, and that people are, perhaps subconsciously, aware of these structures.

However, the question is if everyone is equally easy to win over. The answer to this question is obvious, even to small children: they show that they **know** this when they consciously ask one parent and not the other when they want something. This tactic is related to the individual's resistance to other people's use of power (Fairholm 67). The resistance may come from either being unable to do as the other wants you to, or from being unwilling to do so. If you ask someone to perform a task they lack the skills or resources to achieve, then no matter how much power you apply, the result will not be as you wish, even if the other should want to comply. It might also be that the other does not wish to comply, and will consciously resist the power tactic, even when he or she is capable of complying. Fairholm has identified four different ways of resisting the use of power:

- a) using a countervailing power tactic; b) striving to destroy or limit the base or bases of power we control; c) seeking to wrest power bases held by us from us; and d) trying to disengage from the relationship, thereby destroying not only our power, but the underlying relationship itself. (67)

This reaction will then force us to increase the use of power in order to succeed. It is evident that the further down on the scale of power use (table 1) you start, the more you have to go by, but if you start at the top, there is not much more you can do in terms of increasing the use of power.

### **2.5. Domination Techniques**

Domination techniques were made popularly known in the late 1970s by Professor of social psychology Berit Ås, and are described in detail in her book from 1981, *Women of the World - A Liberation Handbook*. Here Ås pointed to a set of five master suppression techniques, or domination techniques which she considered were contributing in particular to the continued suppression of women, but which are generally used by people or groups of power. Most of these techniques aim at making the target(s) feel inferior and less important, as it is easier to

dominate someone who already feels small and insignificant than someone who thinks of themselves as your peer or even superior (42).

In a time in which feminism was particularly strong in Norway as well as in other parts of the western world, Ås wanted to create awareness by exposing these techniques, their intention and their origin. She argues that most power groups have access to these five techniques, and they are typically used by someone stronger, or powerful on someone weaker. Given the fact that power shifts in different settings and relationships, most people have both **used** domination techniques and been exposed to them (43). The five techniques are:

- making invisible
- ridiculing
- Withholding information
- Double punishment (or damned if you do or damned if you do not)
- heaping blame and putting to shame (43-64)

Ås states that by naming the techniques you also diminish their power, and in a similar vein the Norwegian *Centre for Gender Equality*, claims that these techniques lose their power when we become aware of them (1). Making our students conscious of such tactics is an important part of preparing them for adulthood.

## 2.6. The Glass Ceiling Theory

Although the focus of this thesis is not gender roles specifically, The Glass Ceiling Theory seems particularly important to mention, since the setting of *GOT* displays a certain medieval hierarchy and most female characters are in subordinate positions. The Glass Ceiling Theory is a metaphor which dates back to 1984 and describes “an invisible barrier to women being promoted beyond middle management” (Ryan and Haslam 1). These barriers may relate to attitudes to women and to ideas that women lack the relevant skills, although on paper they clearly have them. They also refer to biases that indicate that men are better leaders than women on grounds of their gender. Basically it comes down to prejudice and stereotypes, perhaps first and foremost identified as the roles we expect women to fill: “It appears to be a trend in common knowledge that women are first of all linked to their family and the people surrounding them, and secondly to their professions” (Zamfirache 3). These then seem mutually exclusive: you cannot be the perfect mother AND the perfect boss.

In her book *Gender, Power and Organisation: A Psychological Perspective*, Paula Nicolson claims that “[t]o be successful in a career, a woman would have to negotiate her way around the dominant social expectations that accompany the female sex: principally that motherhood and its associated responsibilities should be paramount and other considerations subordinate” (33). It is interesting to see what happens when Daenerys steps out of the fire with her three dragons: she instantly receives the title “Mother of Dragons”. Even when she so clearly has broken all expectations people still try to pin motherhood on her and **she** seems to take on that role as well.

### **3. Methodology and Research Design**

This research project is designed using qualitative methods for collecting data, which according to Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner aim to present and provide understanding from the perspective of the respondent (1) instead of generalising. They further specify that it “tries to answer the questions: ‘What is unique about this individual, group, situation or issue? Why?’(...) The focus is on the individual’s own or unique response” (1).

#### **This study consists of a survey in three parts:**

1. Pre-interview questionnaire about power in general and in *GOT* (appendix 4)
2. Two focus group interviews with students in upper secondary school. The interview guide, which consists of the questions for the interview, is found in appendix 10, whereas the interview transcripts are found in appendices 5 and 6.
3. Post-interview questionnaire, which is available in appendix 7.

The results from both questionnaires have been compiled in two summaries, respectively (appendix 8 and appendix 9). Based on the findings in the questionnaires and the transcripts from the focus group interviews, an analysis was carried out. This analysis is found in section 4, Findings and Analysis. I will start by giving a presentation of the main methods of data collection, which is a survey in the shape of questionnaires and focus group interviews.

#### **3.1. Surveys**

According to Sandra Lee McKay, surveys are studies in which the researcher elicits data using either an interview or written questionnaires (35), and she further points out that they: “are a particularly effective way for teachers to find out more about the background, habits and preferences of their students” (35-36). I have chosen both methods mentioned above,

interviews and written questionnaires, for the purpose of finding out more about how the participants relate to power in *GOT*, and what they think about using popular and troubling literature and film, and more specifically *GOT*, in the classroom.

### 3.1.1. Written Survey/ Questionnaire

I used anonymous questionnaires, both before and after the interview (appendices 4 and 7). The main aim of the post- interview questionnaire was to research the effect of the study on the students, whereas the purpose of the pre-interview questionnaire was threefold: Firstly I wanted to sensitise the students to the topic; power. Secondly I wanted to be able to compare with what was said in the interview, as one of the problems with a focus group is that some interviewees are more prone to speak than others. Thirdly I wished to see if it was necessary to add, omit or revise questions in the interview guide, based on the answers in the questionnaire. Some of the questions were the same in both interview guide and questionnaire. However, the main purpose of the pre-interview questionnaire was to tune them in on the topic so that they would have more to talk about in the interview.

Both questionnaires are predominantly qualitative, thus a clear majority of the questions were open-ended, but required only short answers. As stated by McKay, open-ended questions are questions that the respondent may give his own answers to, not just select from alternatives, and close-ended questions have given answers you have to choose from (37). In the questionnaires in my study, some were simple yes or no questions. Additionally, I have included two ranking questions (McKay 38), which are classified as close-ended questions in the pre-interview questionnaire: one in which the students were to rank whom among the persons on a list they found had most power, and the other asked them to rank the characters in *GOT*, they regarded as most powerful in the series, also from a ready list. Due to these last two questions there is reason to state that this is a questionnaire with both quantitative and a qualitative elements. The quantitative aspect is not reflected in this thesis, as the questions were asked to start a reflective process in the students rather than to elicit data for analysis.

The questionnaire could easily be answered in 30 minutes. It was tried out on a colleague, so this does not really count as piloting, but it showed that the questionnaire was within the ideal time frame. In hindsight however, I realise that I should have tested it on other students as well, especially to control whether any questions were difficult, ambiguous or superfluous.



### 3.1.2. Focus Group Interview

To collect further data from the students I chose to use a focus group interview, which according to Fatemeh Rabiee has as its ultimate aim to “understand, and explain, the meanings, beliefs and cultures that influence group members”(1). As this study explores what a group of students think about power in *GOT*, this seems a highly suitable method for eliciting that information. Furthermore, McKay points out that the “advantage of interviews is that they allow the researcher to study individual teachers and students in much greater depth than written surveys” (McKay 17). Since I wanted to find out how much the students could tell me about *GOT* and power and troubling literature and film, I considered a focus group as the preferable method, compared to individual interviews.

A focus group is described by Sue Wilkinson as “a way of collecting qualitative data, which – essentially – involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), ‘focused’ around a particular topic or a set of issues” (177). In terms of organisation, a focus group should comprise six to eight participants (McKay 53), and the interview should ideally be held within a timeframe of two hours (Grudens-Shuck et al. 3). The researcher often takes the role of moderator, focusing on making the discussion go smoothly and encouraging participation from all members of the group (Wilkinson 177). Another characteristic of the informal conversational group interview is that “the interviewer may be very responsive to the individual respondents and deal with topics as they arise in the conversation” (McKay 51). This enables the moderator some control of the turns the conversation will naturally make.

The decision to do a focus group interview was based on the wish to elicit as much information as possible from the students with the assumption that they would inspire each other and perhaps reflect more than they would in an individual interview. The pressure each of the members would feel to answer is also reduced here, which may take the edge off the situation; should any of the participants not be able to or wish to answer, this would feel less awkward than in an individual interview. Carrying through seven individual interviews would have taken considerably longer time, and consequently I considered a focus group as the wisest choice.

The disadvantage of a focus group is of course that with many participants, each participant has fewer opportunities to speak their mind. In addition, some may dominate the conversation and others hardly contribute at all. In this respect, where I ran the risk of a relatively large

group of seven participants, the division into two groups, though coincidental, was actually an advantage, because it offered a possibility to see the differences in answers according to gender more clearly than would have been the case with seven participants in one group. I will come back to this both in the Findings and Analysis section and in the Conclusion.

### **3.2. Participants**

The study involves seven upper secondary students in a small community in northern Norway. Ten students were invited, most of them were students of general studies, some were vocational students and one is in supplementary studies qualifying for higher education. Of the ten students who were invited, six accepted the invitation. In addition, one student was recruited when I informed another student. He immediately showed great interest, but was not among those I was first tipped about as being interested in *GOT*. This may have to do with the fact that he is in supplementary studies, and only in school for certain subjects. That left me with seven students altogether for the interview. The boys are over represented in the group, as it consists of five boys and two girls. For all but one I asked students who were older than 18 years to avoid having to ask for their parents' consent with regard to participation.

All of the students are 18 or 19 years old, except one, who is 17, and all of the students come from the local area. Some have grown up together and have been class mates since they started school. This should allow for a feeling of relative familiarity, which may ease the tension. I am aware, however that the opposite may be the case as there are students from different classes and tension may occur exactly because of that.

I considered making a public announcement of the study to which students could apply, but as a focus group interview requires a certain number of participants, and I needed to make sure I had a group that I could trust would show up, I decided against this. Instead I approached the students in person. Moreover, I wanted to avoid having to turn anyone down because of the recommended group size for focus group interviews. This has to do with the fact that the school is so small that everyone knows everybody else. Being rejected as participant is worse than not being invited in the first place.

The students were chosen for the study with two specific criteria in mind; that they had either read or watched the series *GOT*, and that both genders would be represented. I realise that my method of recruiting students may have caused me to miss students who could have contributed well to the group, but I still consider the method of selection a good one for my

purpose. The selection is nevertheless too small to be able to draw any wide conclusions on the subject. It merely serves as an indication of what students may think.

### **3.3. Materials**

The most central material included in the study are the two questionnaires, one before (appendix 4) and one after (appendix 7) the interview, the transcripts of the recorded interviews (appendices 5 and 6), and the interview guide (appendix 10) in addition to the four scenes from the DVD of the series. The participants also received information about the study in the Participant Debriefing Form (appendix 11), which includes the purpose of the study, the research questions and information about how the study would be carried out. A template for the initial contact meeting with each student is included in appendix 12. This was not handed out, but shows what the students were told about the study in the initial conversation. The material further included a study consent form (appendix 13), and a hand-out about power (appendix 3). A list of domination techniques (appendix 14) was handed out at the interview, and the girls were additionally given an overview of the houses and characters of the series, since they could not remember the names of the characters (appendix 1).

There is no personal data form available, mostly because I wish to protect the anonymity of the participants. More detailed information would nevertheless not be relevant to the purpose of my study, or for the sake of further research, as I will return to in the section about Reliability in the Conclusion. Apart from the questionnaires, and the interview guide, which were written and presented in Norwegian, all materials were written in English, and adapted through glossary and explanations when it seemed necessary. The reason why these were not presented in Norwegian is because I assessed their ability to read English as sufficient. The feedback from the participants told me that the information in general was easy to understand, but that some of the details about power were a little difficult.

### **3.4. Data Collection /Procedures**

Having read McKay's *Researching Second Language Classrooms* (2006), I made some unwise choices, given that I am writing for a Norwegian institution and this was an American author writing about American conditions. I will come back to this later in this section.

### 3.4.1. Before the Interview

Prior to carrying out the research, I asked the headmaster of the school for permission to invite students to participate in my study. I then approached the students. All the invitees were informed about the study based on the template (appendix 12). There was no joint meeting for all invitees, however some days after the initial conversation all ten invitees were given the participant debriefing form and the consent form. Most of the invited students were immediately positive and agreed to participate, a few wanted to give it some thought. I set a final date for the signing of the consent form. Seven students signed, and the one student who was not yet 18 had acquired his parent's signature as well.

Once the consent forms were obtained, a presentation of the project was sent to Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) for approval. I also informed NSD that I had received the consent forms from the students. This proved to be a problem, as the contact should not have taken place before I had contacted NSD and had their approval for my study. Thus, my choice of handbook, turned out to be unwise, as it provided me with the wrong recipe according to Norwegian procedures. This probably prolonged the process and caused me to have to wait for close to eight weeks for the reply from SND.

The project was eventually approved, but this gave me a rather difficult start, since the approval came only a few days before Easter, which meant a further delay. In addition, all, except one of the students were seniors, which made it very important to carry through the interview as soon as possible after Easter. This is because during the month of May, seniors in Norwegian schools are very busy with celebrations and exams<sup>2</sup> and have little time for other activities. However, as soon as I had the approval, the pre-interview questionnaire (appendix 4) and some additional information about power (appendix 3) were handed out to the seven participants who had agreed to be part of the study. The students were asked to answer the questions very briefly, as there were relatively many of them. They were also told to skip what they could or did not wish to answer, but remember to mark these questions through a sign or letter, to distinguish them from questions that had been overlooked. Meanwhile, season three of *GOT* had started, so the students had watched the new episodes and they were

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<sup>2</sup> The senior students in Norway celebrate the end of 13 years of schooling between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup>, also called "russetid". This includes wearing special uniforms, carrying out organised and spontaneous pranks in and outside school and consuming a considerable amount of alcohol. There are late nights on school nights as well as weekends, and this may be a challenge for teachers, as the exams begin directly after 17<sup>th</sup> May and the school year does not end until a month later.

very excited. Two of the participants did not hand in the questionnaire before the interview. The compiled answers are found in appendix 8.

### **3.4.2. The Interview with the Boys' Group**

We agreed to arrange the interview immediately after Easter, when the students were back in school again. The date was set to 27 April, which was a Saturday, to stress the fact that this was not school work. Consequently, two of the participants forgot, and both of them were girls, which resulted in an all boy group. Waiting for the girls was no option either, as the boys were on a tight time schedule and had a ferry to catch. It was decided to go through with the interview without the girls.

I chose to record the interview and supplement with notes, as I wanted to make certain I could trust the result was not coloured too much by my formulations. This also made it easier for me to be attentive as moderator. It would have been very difficult to both take notes and ask questions as well, and many good points would necessarily have been lost, given that there were so many participants in one group. With the recording I felt certain I would have enough material to work with and that the actual language used by the participants was available to me (McKay 55). There is always the risk that the participants will be disturbed by a recorder, but the reliability of the findings is nevertheless more at risk if the notes from the interview first have to be interpreted and then written down.

The recording took place in one of the classrooms in school, and the recorder was in plain view on the conference table. The first ten minutes were set off for introduction, clarification and ground rules for the interview (appendix 15). Some of the participants in the boys' group were perpetually afraid of spoilers because two of the participants had already read all or most of the books. Usually it was sufficient to ask them to cover their ears for some seconds, but at one point it was necessary to let three of the boys take a quick break whilst the other two delved into the discussion of relevant examples. The responsibility was felt heavily by those participants who had read the books since they did not want to ruin anything for the others.

I generally asked the questions from the interview guide (appendix 10) without directing questions at a particular participant, so that the participants could volunteer answers. In some cases, however I asked direct questions, since some participants were more outspoken than others. There were also follow-up questions that were not in the guide, but which were necessary for clarification.

The interview included the viewing of four scenes from the television series, of which each lasted no more than three minutes. This caused the interview to last for two hours and 15 minutes, which according to Grudens-Shuck et al. is a little more than is advisable in a focus group interview (3). The last part of the interview was carried out with some time pressure due to the ferry schedule, but since most of the last questions also appear on the post-interview questionnaire, this did not cause too many problems.

### **3.4.3. The Interview with the Girls**

The intention had been to carry out one interview with all seven participants present, and a second interview would not have been organised if two of the **boys** had missed the appointment. However, with the gender perspective lost, I conferred with my supervisor and the girls, to see if a second interview was an option. The girls wanted very much to participate in an interview and we agreed to meet on May 1<sup>st</sup>, a bank holiday, at the same venue.

This means I have carried through two gender specific interviews, and though this was entirely coincidental, it still complicates matters, and even though I attempted to make both interviews as similar as possible, as will be seen in the transcripts (appendices 5 and 6), it is simply not possible to run two identical interviews. Additionally, the girls' interview lasted for a little longer than the boys', given the absence of time pressure towards the end. Other than that, the same questions were asked and the same scenes were shown, and everything was done in the same order, with two exceptions: The order in which the scenes were watched and discussed was coincidentally not the same in both groups, and I provided the girls with an overview of the characters (appendix 1), since unlike the boys, they had problems remembering names. I will come back to this in the Findings and Analysis section.

### **3.4.4. After the Interview**

About two weeks after the interviews, I handed out the post-interview questionnaire (appendix 7), which was answered by all students except one. A compilation of the answers to these questions is available to the reader, in appendix 9.

## **3.5. Analysis**

As noted above, my study consists of three parts; a questionnaire given before the interview, the focus group interview and a post-interview questionnaire. Before I begin relating how I have analysed the collected data, it is necessary to return to the purpose of the data collection.

The study wished to find the answers to the following questions: How do the students relate to the aspect of power in *GOT*? What do they think about the use of troubling literature and film in the classroom, and more specifically what do they think about *GOT* in this context? In addition, though not specifically stated in my original research questions, I wished to research how *GOT* and the study had influenced their view of power, and their language. This section presents how I analysed the results in relation to the purpose, and I will start by presenting how the data from the questionnaires was analysed.

### **3.5.1. Analysing Data Elicited from the Questionnaires**

Some of the questions in the first questionnaire were the same as in the interview guide, which opened for a comparison, and which I could have referred to in the interview, if all participants had handed them in. This was not the case, however, as only five of the seven participants handed in the answers. The answers to the questions in the first questionnaire have been gathered in a list of bullet points under a heading consisting of the relevant question, for an easier overview (appendix 8). The answers are organised in the same order in which they occurred in the questionnaire. The last and penultimate questions on the form were questions about ranking. These findings are organised in two matrices, found in appendix 16, which show the rank the students have given characters and persons. The results are also discussed in the findings section. The manner in which these answers are organised shows the reader whether there is consensus or dissent among the participants. Although the result in the first questionnaire is not the focus of attention in my report, it may be interesting to see if there is any correlation between the same or related questions in the interview and questionnaire. The result of the pre-interview questionnaire is discussed in a paragraph in section 4, Findings and Discussion. The post-interview questionnaire is compiled, according to the same structure as the first, with bullet points under the relevant question, and is found in appendix 9. Similarly this result is discussed in section 4 under a separate headline.

### **3.5.2. Analysing Data from the Interviews**

The study involving the two interviews is based on a number of pre-set questions, called the interview guide (appendix 10). A digital recorder was used to record the interviews, and then the files were burnt on CDs, but not saved on a computer as planned. It was necessary to listen to the recording several times in order to decipher everything that was said, and identify the speakers for the transcript. Once the transcript was made, it was translated into English and the participants' names were changed. The transcript is between verbatim and word-for

word transcription, with fillers and other sounds included when relevant, but the translation is closer to an edited transcript. I have left out longer parts of sentences that do not make sense i.e. because the speaker is searching for words. This is done because I have not analysed the interaction and linguistic aspect of the interview, which is the focus of conversational analysis of data. This study focuses on content, rather than interaction specifically, so I have only made note of some of the laughter which occurred during the interview, simply because there was so much of it and if I were to include it all, it would have had a disrupting effect on the transcript. The transcripts of the interviews are found in appendices 5 and 6.

I have analysed the data from the interviews using *content analysis*, which according to Wilkinson “produces a summary or overview of the data set as a whole” (182). Furthermore, I have focused on the result in the group as such, noting the answers provided by the group, not the individuals. However, even though the focus was not on the individual participants, the analysis is structured by gender since there was so obviously a difference. Additionally, since they were already separate groups, these patterns were easily detected. This way of analysing data is called *cross-case analysis*, as it is organised by topic, or in this case, by the topic raised in the different questions, rather than individual answers (McKay 57). I asked the girls’ permission, and they gave their approval for organising the findings according to gender, when this was relevant. This permission was necessary, since it becomes very obvious who the speaker is when there are just two participants in one group. This is also the case if one looks to the transcription of the interview: some of the answers given by the girls in this study are not easily made anonymous.

It is worth mentioning that I have not used everything which was collected in the data. I have mainly used those answers that were relevant to my research questions, and when the participants sometimes strayed off track, I have not discussed this in my findings, unless to state a point.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

I have resolved to organise the findings into two sections; the focus group interviews and the post-interview questionnaire. The pre-interview questionnaire will be mentioned only when relevant and in connection with the other sections. To secure a better overview of the findings, the questions are presented as separate headlines within the different parts of both sections. In



the transcripts (appendices 5 and 6), the questions appear in bold types. This makes it easier for the reader to track the discussion.

The first section, which presents the interviews, has further been divided into five parts, in which the first two relate to questions about power in general and in *GOT*. These questions occur in the same order for both groups of students. Part three of section one is focusing on the use of power in *GOT*, whereas part four is devoted to the four selected scenes. Here the participants comment on the use of power in the episode and in the series in general. The fifth part is dedicated to what the students say about the forms of power use found in *GOT*, and in the sixth and final part of section one, I will present the participants' views on using popular literature and film, and more specifically, *GOT* in the classroom.

The second section presents the findings from the post-interview questionnaire. The decision to not deal with the pre-interview questionnaire specifically is related both to the fact that only five of seven students handed in their answers here and to the fact that the primary purpose of this questionnaire was to sensitise the students to the topic. I have used the answers from the questionnaire, when this was relevant, since many of the questions in this questionnaire were the same as those in the interview guide.

Six participants answered the post-interview questionnaire, and since this questionnaire dealt with other aspects than those in the interview guide, it has been dealt with separately. One of the students answered the questionnaire in English. I have used this student's answers as they appeared, for the others I have translated them into English. Both questionnaires have been summed up and included in appendices 8 and 9.

## **4.1. Section 1 – Focus Group Interview**

### **4.1.1. Part 1 - General Questions about Power**

This part presents the findings from the first part of the interview, in which general questions were asked about power to sensitise the students to the upcoming discussion of power in *GOT*. The questions are found in the interview guide (appendix 10).

#### ***1. How do you understand the concept of power?***

One boy commented on how there is a lot of power in physical control of others, as the king has an army he can send anywhere he likes, whereas another participant gave this answer to what he thinks about the concept of power; "A fellow has power if he can make someone else

do something he does not really want to.” This is close to what Dennis Wrong says about asymmetrical power relations (1). Another participant then defined power as having influence over others, pointing to how money is often associated with power, since it is so easy to gain power through money, whereas one participant reflected on how people in high or important positions may influence others and thus have power. One boy concluded that money is the easiest path to power, since you can simply pay people to do what you want, and if you pay enough, people are often willing to do even very peculiar things. The group of boys had a strong focus on money compared with the girls. The girls agreed that power and influence are interlinked, but also focused on the ability to make decisions, change or influence others’ decisions. Influence seems to be a common denominator here. In this the students agree with both Foucault (The Subject 341) and Fairholm (5).

## ***2. Would you say that power is attractive?***

It seemed this question was somewhat ambiguous. Everybody agreed that power is attractive, but I ultimately meant to ask if a person with power is attractive simply through this inherent power, whereas the participants seemed to have considered the other end – that people are attracted to the idea of gaining power. This relates to Fairholm’s point regarding centrality as a success factor for power use (68). I see that I should have phrased the question differently here, as it is ambiguous. One participant said this about power: “When you have power you also have a great responsibility. When many people want that responsibility, power is attractive. You wish to be part of the decision making. But it also comes with clearly negative aspects.”

The question was then specified asking if power makes people attractive, whereupon one participant answered that it depends, because although politicians may be powerful, many are very unattractive, even repulsive, and that furthermore, it is the power, not the person which is attractive. This was then contradicted by one of the other participants, who argued that the persons are associated with the power. In conclusion, it was suggested by one participant, that people want to come closer to those in power, because this allows them to influence decisions that are made: “You may whisper into his or her ear and influence the decisions that are made”. This reflects what Fairholm writes about the basis of power: position gives power and the closer you are to the centre of power, the more powerful you are (23).

### ***3. Where or what does power come from?/What makes someone powerful?***

The boys had a discussion closely related to *GOT* about how the system decides who has power in a society. The feudal system of the Middle Ages was mentioned, and this is very relevant for the setting of the series, which seems to resemble England in that period of history. Great Britain and the aristocracy were also brought up, acknowledging that similar to the situation in *GOT*, some people are born to wealth and power and that some people still will show more respect to a lord or a duke than to a regular person. One participant concluded that “the aspect of money today, is actually quite similar to the hierarchy of the feudal system. The richer you are, the higher up in the system you will be”. This was agreed upon by several participants. In addition to this, one of the participants recognised knowledge as a potential basis for power, stating that through knowledge it is possible to work one’s way up to a higher position which will give one more influence and thus power. This idea resonates with the concept of meritocracy, as opposed to aristocracy, and it also relates to what Fairholm says about expert power, which is based on special ability or knowledge (23).

The discussion in the girls’ group took a different turn than with the boys, focusing more on relationships and personal characteristics than on political or organisational systems. One of the girls promptly said: “Other people make you powerful! (...) I could say that I have a lot of power, but if no one agrees with me, I will not get very far”. This was also pointed out by one of the boys, though rather late in the discussion of this question. He made a reference to *GOT*; “They say it: power is where the people think the power is”. One of the girls reflected a little more on what gives someone power: “It may be anything, it may be family ties, economy, it may be social status”. This was further supplemented by both girls with the words *charisma, intelligence and looks* as factors that determine power. This shows that both boys and girls agree largely on what gives someone power, but they seem to highlight different aspects. What they point out ties in well with Fairholm’s views of power based on personality, and of display of charisma as power tactic (23, 59), as well as the idea of legitimate power: We must be accepted as leaders to be effective in our position (69).

### ***4. What makes someone subordinate to someone more powerful?***

The participants here agreed that you may be born into subordination, in e.g. the caste system which is still operating in parts of the world today. One of the boys suggested that “What makes a person subject to another’s power may be that one has access to a resource the other wants, or that you need that person to accomplish what you wish. Then they will have a certain power over you, because they can refuse to do it”. One girl pointed out that “[i]t is the

opposite of what we said before (about what makes someone powerful). The person either is unwilling to take the power position, or it may also be that people just do not listen to that person". Both girls agreed on this, and concluded that this may be a question of will, and of personality. This point was not mentioned by the boys, who again focused more on the system. The girls' reference to personality relates to what is said about authority and power; some people are just natural leaders, and are often perceived as such from an early age. The power is then intrinsically linked to their personality. This also means that there will be people who do not have this aspect to their personality, and who will have to try different methods to achieve the same power (Fairholm 69).

***5. Do you know the term domination techniques? Do you recognise the examples listed in the hand-out?***

Domination techniques were made popularly known, in Norway, by Professor Berit Ås in the late 1970s (43-64). All participants, boys and girls instantaneously answered that they had heard of this term, which is perhaps not so surprising: There have been many cases of official power struggle in political organisations in Norway the last couple of years, in which the leaders have had their style of leadership thoroughly scrutinised and debated in the press. One participant pointed out that the Romans showed a conscious notion of this in their *divide and conquer* strategy. In connection with this a list was handed out, containing the five main techniques that Ås presented in her book, with some added specifications as a basis for discussion (appendix 14). I then told the participants to comment on their own experience with the techniques, whether they had been subjected to them, used them or seen them used by others. Upon seeing the list one participant said that "I think most people have done some of the things on the list". The techniques were then dealt with one by one, which is also how they will be presented.

The first technique in question was *making invisible*. A little embarrassed, judging by the laughter, all the participants agreed to having witnessed the technique being used, used it themselves, and to having been subjected to it by others. What is interesting to note is that both girls and boys claimed that this is a technique more often used by women than men. They also commented that the effect of such a technique is that the individual feels inferior and insignificant, and further, that there is little to be done about it. As one participant laconically said: "You may of course point it out, but the question is whether it makes it any better."

*Ridiculing* others was the next technique the groups were asked to discuss. Here one participant immediately recognised that this was exactly what they had poked fun at in one of the sketches in their *russerevy*,<sup>3</sup> where they parodied local politicians. One participant pointed out that this technique is often used a little subtly, and often in politics, whereas another commented that “(...) ridicule has a much greater effect in larger forums, since others have a tendency of joining in”. One participant disclosed that this technique, although not one that has been frequently used, is mostly applied on those that are level with you to create a distance and rise above them through ridicule. In conclusion they stated that if you try to do something about it the result is often more of the same ridicule.

The technique *withholding information* was not immediately identified by either group. One participant incredulously asked: “Is **that** a domination technique”? Another participant a little hesitantly, commented that “When I think about withholding information, I think mostly about politics and such; the Cold War. But it has happened that messages have not been passed on and that one has not received sufficient information”. Upon being asked if this seemed consciously done, the participant replied, that once it was, but that this is perhaps more common in important matters. One of the girls noted that for girls this may be related to intimacy and confidentiality on a personal level: Who is in and who is not is often shown through who you tell your secrets to. It is perhaps not surprising that this technique is not so well known to the groups, as this will be more relevant in adult life and in the work place. Likewise, the technique *double punishment* was not immediately recognised by all participants, especially the girls denied having experienced this. One participant still pointed out that this may be related to parents and children, though this was not expanded on.

Then it was clearly easier to relate to the following technique: *heaping blame* or *putting to shame*, or in other words: making the other feel guilty. This was immediately branded as an efficient and well-known technique, frequently used and experienced by both groups. One boy commented that by making someone feel guilty, it is very easy to make them do something they did not wish to do in the first place. He exemplified: “I would very much like to be picked up from the bus, and the like, but then ‘No, don’t you worry, I can walk...’ That one is a classic!”. This confession earned many nods and a few laughs from the other participants.

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<sup>3</sup> The upper secondary school graduates in Norway have a long standing tradition of making a satirical revue, in which local affairs and people are parodied.

The interview then proceeded to more specified techniques, the first of which were *pirating proposals*. Here the boys had problems coming up with very relevant examples, but one participant compared this to having told a joke too softly and then his friend repeated it loudly and received all the credit. One of the girls had also experienced this to a certain degree, and concluded that it felt very annoying, but that it was difficult to actually do something about: “I felt it was kind of childish to say: ‘Hey, that was my idea!’ ”. It is perhaps not so strange that this technique is unfamiliar, as these examples are closely connected to adult life in the work place. It is however relevant to bring them up, as this adult life will soon be the reality they have to relate to, and they will be better off if they are a little prepared for it. They will have received “the tools they need to face the tasks of life and surmount its challenges with others”, which is so clearly stated as important in the *Core Curriculum* (5).

The next technique specified is related to the above mentioned *ridicule; insulting and underrating*. One of the girls suggested that this is a technique more often used by males, and she was supported by her co-participant: “Yes, the boys are perhaps more obvious when they use these domination techniques, whereas with girls, it is more below the surface”. This opinion was partly confirmed in the boys’ answers about what can make someone feel insignificant and belittled: “You may dominate through your knowledge, like this: “Oh, my God, don’t you know even that!” It was then concluded that if someone feels insecure, they are more easily influenced. This consequence is also confirmed by Ås (42).

Following this they discussed *interruptions* as a domination technique. One of the participants saw the connection to political life, and more specifically to the American Congress and the filibuster tactic: “If someone does not like your proposal, they may interrupt you all the time so that you do not get to the point, and thereby you do not get to present the proposal.” The girls were more focused on the emotional effect of the technique: “It somehow works the same way as *making invisible*; you feel that what you have to say is of little consequence”. Both girls had experienced this and also claimed that it was clearly done on purpose.

*Using difficult language* to dominate others was the last technique that was discussed. All participants claimed familiarity with this technique, and one even admitted: “I have used it many times, often to show that I am a little smarter, or superior. You somehow sound more important when you use a difficult word”. Upon being asked if it was done consciously, this answer was given: “Yes! Usually I just talk without considering so much what I say, but in some situations I need to assert myself and then I may use a more difficult vocabulary and

terms that are not so common”. Another participant stated that this could be done to keep someone from understanding what you are talking about, particularly younger siblings when you are with friends. Furthermore, one of the boys commented that this technique works very well in combination with other techniques, such as *insulting* or *underrating* someone: “If you use difficult words, people will necessarily feel stupid and just sit there and: ‘All right, then’”. As a final remark, one participant admitted this technique has its challenges as far as success goes: “It rather depends on the word you use. You have to be careful that you know what the words mean, if not things can go quite badly!”

Many of the domination techniques were well known among the participants, and the groups agreed on the fact that there are gender differences in the use of domination techniques: It is their impression that men use *ridicule* more often than do women, and that the domination technique preferred by women is *making invisible*. Some techniques were not known at all, which may simply be because some of the techniques relate to situations at the workplace and in professional organisations unfamiliar to people who are this young.

#### **4.1.2. Part 2 - Power in *GOT***

The focus of these questions is on the first three books/seasons of *GOT*, but only including the first four episodes of season three, as this was as far as the TV-series had run at the time of the interview. All participants were asked to answer on this basis, but it became evident at some points that this was not so easy. As power relationships have a tendency to change quickly in *GOT*, it was difficult to avoid disclosing future incidents when they were so relevant to the present situation in the TV-series. Some of these questions had been asked in the questionnaire, and although some participants failed to hand in the questionnaire before the interview, everyone had read through it and all had started answering. Two participants had not completed the form at the time of the interview.

#### **6. Who do you think of as powerful in *GOT*? and 7. What makes them powerful?**

The answers from the post-interview questionnaire (appendix 4) suggested that Joffrey is considered to be the most powerful character. A grid of this ranking is found in appendix 16 and this shows that among the top three most powerful characters, Joffrey is listed four times, twice as often as the three next most powerful –Tyrrion, Tywin, Cersei – who are all mentioned twice and belong to the powerful Lannister family. This result is perhaps not so surprising, given that Joffrey inherits the throne when his father dies towards the end of book one / season one. The table below shows the characters in the chronological order in which

they were mentioned by the participants in the interview. The original idea was to compare this with the character ranking of the pre-interview questionnaire, but since this was not handed in by all the participants, the comparison is less relevant.

<b>Powerful characters mentioned in chronological order by the girls</b>	<b>Powerful characters mentioned in chronological order by the boys</b>
Joffrey	Joffrey
Varys	Tywin
Daenerys	Daenerys
Tywin	Tyrion
Eddard Stark	Cersei
Margaery and grandmother	Robb
Tyrion	Varys
Cersei	Littlefinger
Katelyn Stark	

Table 2. Overview of the most powerful characters, as indicated by the participants.

When discussing powerful characters, the girls had some problems keeping the names apart, so they were given an overview of the major houses (appendix 1). This was not needed in the boys' group, as they had no problems recalling the names, even of minor characters. If we look to what the participants say about this in the interview, both groups typically first name Joffrey. I will start with the girls' reflections: One girl pointed out that this is perhaps because the power represented by Joffrey is very obvious since it is visible. This is further expanded on: "He is only powerful because of his title, and... that he can act in a brutal way, so there is fear. There is nothing to stop him, and that gives him a lot of power". The other female participant then adds that his exertion of power is very efficient, but this again makes him vulnerable, because he makes many enemies, who can threaten his position. They also questioned how long he is going to last in power, as many people would not put up with it. It is interesting that the girls should mention fear, as the power represented by Joffrey is what Fairholm refers to as *coercive power*, which is based on the ability to punish the target of the power use (23). This type of power in combination with his position as king, obviously gives Joffrey much obvious power over the other characters.

Varys was also mentioned in second place by the girls: "When I think of power, I immediately think of the *Master of Whispers*, Varys, because he has so much influence". This character very typically uses manipulation, mostly through withholding and providing information. One may assume this is what the girls mean by stating that he is influential. Daenerys was mentioned thirdly, but they agreed that she has no real power yet, there is rather a promise in the fact that she has something the others do not have and which they crave: the



dragons. “She is someone the other people with power should look out for!”, concluded one of the girls. Additionally, the girls consider Daenerys powerful because of her strong will and they find that she develops her power in an interesting manner: “When she bought a large army [of slaves], she gave all the soldiers a choice, and this makes them respect her more, they like her better”. This point was expanded on: “They see her as a sort of saviour, someone who has saved them, and they are indebted to her”.

Here it is relevant to mention what Daenerys’s brother Viserys only notices right before he is killed by Khal Drogo: The scene shows a ceremony, and Viserys sees the adoration with which his sister is treated by the Dothraki after she has eaten a horse’s heart. When he incredulously has to admit to himself that the Dothraki love her, he is also forced to realise that **he** has never had that attention from anyone. There is no power tactic at play here, instead it hints at Daenerys’s future *legitimate power* (Fairholm 23); she is accepted as a leader figure, even if at this point, she is still just a young girl, she has no dragons and her position relies entirely on her status as Khaleesi, wife of the Khal. This potential is clearly recognised by the girls.

The girls next mentioned Tywin, first on the grounds that he is Joffrey’s grandfather, and may influence him a lot. Furthermore, he is powerful through his office as Hand of the King<sup>4</sup> and they acknowledge that he has much experience with power. One girl also added: “He has an enormous influence on his children, who again have powerful children. He is above them and may organise everything. His power also lies in his wealth”.

When it was pointed out that they could mention people who used to have power, but had lost it, the girls brought up Eddard Stark: “He used to be powerful, at least where he was. Because he was respected and well-liked, it gives him a sort of power”. Though they do not use the terms, the girls have identified what Fairholm refers to as *referent* and *legitimate power*. The former refers to how people often wish to be liked by a leader figure, whereas the latter refers to natural leaders, and other peoples’ automatic acceptance of them as leaders (23). Eddard Stark is presented as a character with such qualities in *GOT*.

The girls also commented on Margaery, Joffrey’s new fiancé: “She may not have very much power, but you get the impression that she will get it, since she understands how she can manipulate Joffrey. Through that she may gain a lot of power”. This promise of power is similar to what the girls noted about Daenerys, both characters are relevant in terms of

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<sup>4</sup> The king’s chief advisor

*referent power*, whereas *legitimate power* stays latent in them for a while. The girls are perhaps thinking of when Margaery disclosed her ambitions in episode five, season 2: She was asked by Lord Baelish if she wished to be a queen, whereupon she answered: “No. I want to be **The Queen!**” (The Ghost of Harrenhall).

The same potential is noted in Tyrion, who was described by one of the girls like this: “I do not consider him powerful as such, but he has the potential of being powerful. He is very good at bribing people, and he has a lot of knowledge, and where many are very direct and more brutal in exercising their power, he compensates for his weaknesses by being very smart”. It was then concluded that he could have had more power if he was not suppressed so much on account of being a dwarf. According to Fairholm, attractiveness and height affects one’s power positively (65, 69), and vice versa, which consequently will limit Tyrion’s access to power, as he has much working against him, especially after he is maimed in battle.

Finally, the girls considered Cersei as a powerful character, who manipulates Joffrey, but agreed that Margaery challenges Cersei’s position in that respect. One of the girls found Cersei’s power somewhat difficult to discern, and suggested this is because she is a woman. They pointed out that she is queen, but the king has the real power, and as his wife, she must stay in the background. To gain power she must try to influence the men around her, and more specifically those she knows will be more easily swayed. Moreover, they concluded that “she may not always be heard, but she has the chance to speak”. One girl compared Cersei to other female characters: “I think that, apart from Daenerys, who is more of a warrior, Cersei is a little tougher than the other women, more clear”. When asked to specify, she compared Cersei to Katelyn Stark, who is described as one who “does not use herself as a person of power” and that has a quiet power: “She says what she wants, but she is more humble and more respectful of those in power. For example when Robb becomes King of the North, even though he is her son and she therefore has quite a lot of power over him, she immediately gives **him** power”. It is interesting that the girls first suggest that Cersei’s power is difficult to recognise due to her gender when they are themselves women, and then they comment that her power use is clear. What does this mean? This is one of the situations in which a follow-up interview would have been very useful.

The boys also started with Joffrey, but perhaps thinking like the girls, that his power is so obvious, went straight for the next powerful character; Tywin Lannister. This is on grounds that he has it all: “he is the richest man in Westeros”, he is Joffrey’s grandfather, and Hand of

the King. Since he is rather sly, eloquent and an experienced commander, he may more easily influence Joffrey. This resonates with what the girls pointed out, and collectively both groups have identified many of the bases of power (Fairholm 23) that are available to Tywin Lannister: there is example of *legitimate power*, and they point to his *expert power*, as the seasoned warrior. But his power is also based on the ability to punish, and reward, so this means both *coercive* and *reward power*, which they do not mention, perhaps because Tywin Lannister's threats and rewards are usually rather subtle, and thus not so easily discovered?

The most powerful houses were also mentioned in more general terms because they are expressive of the hierarchy of Westeros, and the families of these houses are just below the king. Daenerys was touched upon on account of her dragons and considerable army, and then three of two boys covered their ears, whilst the other two discussed how Tyrion Lannister came to lose much of his power: "He had power, (...) but it changed after they cut off his nose (...) and then he lost the power he had when he was Hand". This refers to the battle in which Tyrion suffers a blow to the face by an axe. In the books his nose is severed, whereas in the TV-series, he keeps his nose, but his face is badly scarred. This contributes to a further reduction of his power position (Fairholm 68-69).

Next, Cersei was named because of her influence on Joffrey. The boys did not consider Eddard Stark as powerful, even in hindsight, which is strange, given his position as close friend of King Robert and the King's Hand. Instead, one of the boys looked to his young son, Robb Stark: "He is also powerful, I mean, he is King of the North, since they have split the country". Littlefinger was eventually mentioned "because he knows everything that goes on, and when you know what is going on and you know everyone's dirty secrets, you have a lot of influence". Littlefinger's financial skills were also added as a factor, making him an example of *expert power* (Fairholm 23). Last, the boys included Varys, and this comment was given on the two last characters: "Both have gained their position through skills", as opposed to being born to a high position, and "both are in the *Small Council*."<sup>5</sup>

It appears that both groups were in relative agreement as to who are the powerful characters in *GOT*, but not necessarily as to what makes them powerful. I will not put too much emphasis on the order in which the characters were mentioned, rather it is interesting to see who is on the list and not. The girls mentioned four women, the boys only two, Daenerys and Cersei,

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<sup>5</sup> The Small Council is the government in Westeros and consists of six seats. The members, who are the King's advisors, are all appointed by the king. The Hand of the King leads the council in the king's absence.

who were also mentioned by the girls. The boys included Littlefinger, whereas the girls left him out to the benefit of Margaery and her grandmother. After this the girls were offered the chance of hearing what the boys had answered. Upon learning that Lord Baelish/Littlefinger was on the boys' list, they seemed surprised, but acknowledged that "he has spies and follows everything that happens closely". The girls additionally mentioned Eddard Stark, who was not listed by the boys even though his name was specifically mentioned in one of the follow up questions. Instead they named Eddard's son Robb, who was not included by the girls. Could there be an emotive aspect at work that makes it difficult to regard Eddard as having been powerful, because he is now dead? A follow-up question here would perhaps have given me the answer to this question.

It is likewise interesting to see that although both groups thought of Daenerys as powerful, the boys almost exclusively looked to the concrete factors; dragons and army, whereas the girls also commented on her personality and relationships to others as part of the basis for her power, like they did when dealing with the general questions. This may both be because the girls identify more with a female character, or because girls and boys are impressed by different things. It seems as if the boys have a stronger focus on systems, and material possessions rather than personality traits, which clearly are preferred by the girls. These gender differences are intriguing, but with so few participants it is difficult to draw any valid conclusions about differences in views on power. A larger study might confirm this gender difference.

### ***8. Which characters do not have power in GOT?***

The girls focused almost exclusively on the female perspective in this question, and immediately answered: "Sansa, because she does not have such a strong character or personality and she is not willing to do anything to gain power. Perhaps she accepts that someone is above her and that someone has more power than her and then she lets things pass". Another followed up with a comment on the two very different sisters of the Stark family: "It is interesting to compare Sansa and Arya. Both are little girls, but Sansa is very soft and feminine and it does not seem like she particularly wants power. She wants to find a husband and yes, live happily. Arya, on the other hand, wants things to happen, (...) but she is hindered by the fact that she is little and a girl." In conclusion, one of the girls said that "all the women, except Daenerys, are subordinate. (...) To get their way they have to sneak about". This was then commented: "They are pawns in a game", but as the discussion

proceeded, they reached the conclusion that this is the case for all the children in the series: Boys as well as girls, are subject to this since they are forced to marry for political or financial reasons, giving them the status of “pawns in a game”.

It is very interesting to note that later in the interview the students contradict what they have said about subordination, when they point out that all the major female characters, except Daenerys, are born to a certain power position. This may mean that they see Daenerys as a character with **real** power, not power that is necessarily attributed to social status, but which relates to her person as such, in combination with position (Fairholm 68-69). It may be that their perception of Daenerys is overshadowed by her strong personality so that they do not recognise the other factors that contribute to her power: she is born into an aristocratic family, though the power has been lost, she marries a powerful Dothraki leader, but loses her position when he dies, she then gains new power when quite magically her dragons hatch and she is found to be fire proof. Thus she never really goes without power, as the loss of one position or resource is instantly replaced by a new one.

The boys' group opened the discussion of non-powerful characters by stating that those who do not belong to a specific house, like regular farmers and soldiers, are at the bottom of society: “The Lannisters constantly tortured soldiers from the north just for fun, I don't think anyone would do that to a Lannister”. This shows the harshness of the society depicted in *GOT*. There is civil war in the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros and the means by which the characters fight, is similar to those of the Middle Ages. The participants only mention these acts of violence at surface level, no comments are mentioned as to the ethics of the incidents, but this may be because they were not asked about this specifically.

Furthermore the boys agreed that wealthy and powerful people were treated better, even in war because of their value as hostages. More specifically, they named Janos Slynt as a character with little power, and one who was manipulated. Though he was made leader of the King's Guards in the capital King's Landing, he was to be thoroughly disappointed: “He thought he came to power, but he was just used by everyone, really, by Tyrion, Littlefinger, everyone, so he really did not have much power at all”. Looking to Fairholm and legitimacy in power relations, Slynt's power was not considered legitimate by others, and he additionally lacked most of the other characteristics of a successful powerful person (68-69).

Next, the boys looked to Sansa: “She is being abused and if she says or does anything wrong, she is punished for it.” Another added that “she is just traded in for something new”, referring

to how the engagement to Joffrey is broken off and she is replaced by Margaery, which leaves her in a position where she cannot do anything. In a further comment, it was stated that Sansa is a captive, a hostage, since her family is now in conflict with the throne: “She is valuable, but has no power. She is just an object to trade”. She has become a resource contributing to the basis of someone else’s power (Fairholm 23).

The boys then called attention to the men in the Night’s Watch at the Wall who are considered to be of no significance and thus are ignored by everyone. It was suggested that this has to do with their background, as many are thieves and thugs who have been recruited from prison. The slaves in the east were also briefly mentioned, since they have no rights. The keeping of hostages, slavery and the treatment of Sansa all open for ethical discussion, but this never was pointed out by the boys. I see now that follow-up questions on the ethical aspects of the novel might have been highly relevant here, in addition to the questions in part five about using *GOT* in the classroom.

Comparing the boys’ group to the girls’ group shows that both think of Sansa as powerless, which is not surprising, as this is made very obvious both in the series and in the book. Looking to what Fairholm says about the basis of power, it is plain to see that Sansa does not have any of the five characteristics of power (23); she cannot give rewards, nor punishment, she has no special skills, she is a traitor’s daughter and thus not a person to associate with, nor does she have an enviable position at court. Typically, this character has very few options other than disengaging from the relationship to Joffrey (Fairholm 67) in order to reduce the power he has over her. This is not easily done, however, since she has to do this secretly and hide the fact from Joffrey.

If we turn to both the *Education Act* and the *Core Curriculum*, equality is stressed as a clear aim of education, and especially in terms of gender (5, 7-8). It is obvious that because she is a girl, Sansa has very few options other than compliance, and furthermore that her dignity is constantly violated, in particular by Joffrey. You may easily connect example this to power theory; Sansa has little to offer, other than her person, and thus has little to put into the bargain in a power struggle (Fairholm 23). This opens for interesting discussion on the issue.

### **9. Give examples of situations and relationships where power switches.**

Here I will begin with the boys’ group. As with previous questions, it was necessary to warn against spoilers, and the frustration was expressed rather immediately by those who had read the novels and had a head start: “It is what the entire series is about! (...) That is – how they

change their positions, and to be able to give any clear examples, you have to include the last book as well!” This led to the covering of ears by all the remaining participants, except one. The remaining discussion of this question was then carried out by just two participants, but shortly afterwards it was necessary to let the three boys leave the room entirely for a short break, whilst the other two were left to discuss the question in detail.

First, Tyrion was mentioned: “He has been on a constant roller coaster, because no one likes him, but he has managed to gain power all the time anyway, since he has a lot of knowledge and such.” Next Robb was mentioned, since he was murdered, and Daenerys, who is also described as riding a roller coaster by one participant; “She sieges a lot of cities, receives a lot of praise, and when she has a bit of challenge, everyone is against her”. It is further pointed out that her power is more personal, which is interesting, as this is exactly what the girls focused on earlier: “It is more about her person, and of course the fact that she has dragons. And this is a cool concept if you look at power in the series, because this is something the others do not have. It is a totally different instrument of power. It is like having an extremely massive army”. One boy added to much agreement: “It is basically like having nuclear weapons in the Middle Ages!” The boys make an interesting observation here; Daenerys has access to an impressive and much envied and feared resource, which strongly contributes to her personal power. This hints at power based on threat, because just imagine what she might do with those dragons (Fairholm 12, 19)!

Next, the two boys turned their focus on the dead kings in the series, Renly, Robb and Stannis: They all experience that their power is unstable. Following this, the boys delved into a discussion about the character Theon Greyjoy: “[H]e has a certain position under Robb, when he becomes king, but he makes a choice because he thinks he will have more power if he goes to his father and rebels against Robb, but that does not happen...” This is then further commented by another participant: “They have a different philosophy down there [on the Iron Islands]; you have to deserve your power, it is not enough to be born into it. You have to fight for it”. In other words; the power must be legitimate (Fairholm 23). At this point the rest of the group was asked to return from their exile, and unfortunately these three were not asked to comment on the question when they re-entered the room. Many good points may thus have been lost here.

The girls focused first on how the power relationship had changed between Khal Drogo, Daenerys, and her brother Viserys: “The first thing I think about is when Daenerys and Khal

Drogo marry. In their marriage it is easy to see that her power position changes a lot, both how it develops in relation to the people, that is how she gained outward power but also how she eventually gained power over him”. This was followed up by the other girl: “There is Viserys. He first thought that he had a lot of power; that he was the *Dragonborn*<sup>6</sup> [sic] and then he died when they poured molten gold over him. This makes **her** the *Dragonborn* [sic], and gives **her** a lot of power”. This is a clear example of coercive power vs. legitimate power (23).

Next the girls discussed Eddard Stark, who was executed for treason by Joffrey after having discovered that Joffrey is not the rightful heir to the throne: “I think that perhaps he lost a little power when he was going to be the King’s Hand, because he had more enemies then, or people who wanted his position or wished him gone, since he is seen as a threat. So he gets power, but is also incredibly vulnerable.” His death is the ultimate loss of power, and in that moment, the power relationship develops into what Foucault calls a relationship of violence, in which the target has no options (The Subject 340).

Furthermore, the girls turned their attention to Jamie Lannister: “He was quite powerful first, but now he is down and out.” They relate this to the fact that as a prisoner he has lost this freedom, and to the fact that his sword hand is severed at the wrist by his captors. Both losses are essential to how they see his power; it is based on his physical ability to fight. This scene actually caused one girl to want to change the way she had ranked the characters in the pre-interview questionnaire. This shows how quickly power shifts when the circumstances change; Jamie lost his personal status, and since much of his power was bound to this, he lost of that as well (Fairholm 68-69).

The girls were then told who the boys had focused on in their interview, and upon hearing the name Theon Greyjoy, they immediately responded: “Yes, he is on a bit of a roller coaster, is he not?” They attributed this to several factors; his identity conflict after having spent ten years as a hostage with the Stark family, and that he was made to believe he had more power than was actually the case. “He bites off a bit more than he can chew, because you need a proper basis for your power, and he did not have that”. They then turned to his behaviour after he had taken Winterfell:<sup>7</sup> “[H]is identity conflict is very obvious, because he is at Winterfell and wishes to have the respect of the people there, but then he tries to do things the *Iron way*

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<sup>6</sup> Here the participant may have mixed past gaming experiences with *GOT*, as the word “dragonborn” is found in the game *Skyrim*. Daenerys is referred to as Daenerys Stormborn.

<sup>7</sup> Seat of the Stark family



(...) and this is an unfortunate mix”. In addition to this, it is clear that he lacks legitimate power (Fairholm 23).

It seems the two groups do not have entirely similar ideas of who has lost power, but this may first and foremost be a result of not having given everyone in the group the chance to say something on this issue. I regrettably forgot to ask the three boys who were out on a break out of fear of spoilers. Both of the remaining two boys had read most of the books in the series, and they thus knew more about how the power relationships in the series were developing. The girls were in the same situation as the three boys, they knew only what they had learnt from the series and perhaps they focused differently because of this.

#### **4.1.3. Part 3 - The Use of Power in *GOT***

This section deals with the student’s opinions about how and to what purpose the characters in the series use power. It additionally points to the students’ observations of what seems to motivate this use of power.

##### ***10. Give examples of how power is used to achieve different ends in *GOT*.***

The boys’ first observation was how Joffrey placed the heads of his decapitated enemies on spikes on the city wall to discourage and frighten his opponents. Though they do not say it specifically, their tone of voice makes it clear that they regard this as unacceptable. Furthermore, the boys identified Varys and Littlefinger as characters who have fingers in every pie, and one participant specified that “Littlefinger has so many different ways of gaining power. He has all that information about people, through his network of spies, and then he owns a brothel, which probably secures him some deals, and he is good with money. He has it all well in hand”. In a similar vein, they referred to how Tyrion tries to gain respect through his family name, and through his eloquence, and that he has several other methods and techniques in stock.

Upon being asked about Theon Greyjoy and power use, the boys compared him to Joffrey, since he had the farm boys killed and their corpses displayed: “He pretended to kill [Bran and Rickon Stark] to demoralise people. (...) This is fright or shock tactics”. Here they also pointed out that threatening people may not actually lead anywhere, as you have played your last card and that you may often only recognise your own preferred methods. Consequently, if you only use threats, you are not likely to disclose manipulation so easily. The character

Theon Greyjoy is subjected to manipulation from several characters, and he falls for it. In his own power use, he relies on threats first, and when this proves unsuccessful, he tries to use authority, which he lacks, before he resorts to force, which is in the top scale of Fairholm's table of Basic Impact Power Model (12). None of his attempts really get him any closer to real power, as they fail to give him what he wants: respect. It is interesting to register that Theon refrains from using manipulation. This could mean that he is unfamiliar with more subtle tactics, and this could be the reason why he is so easily manipulated by others.

The boys' group agreed that Cersei uses manipulation, that she plays on sex and that she adjusts herself to the environment to achieve her aims, though they offered no examples beyond pointing it out. If one looks to theory, Cersei very typically form coalitions by negotiating trade-offs (Fairholm 59), but this is not pointed out by the group. This is characteristic for the group's answers to this question: They did not move beyond giving examples. The ethical side of power use is left untouched, though they signal their attitudes to the different examples rather clearly. The aspect is touched upon in part five of section one but I wish I had asked this question directly, since this will be an important issue to address in a potential classroom project about the series.

The boys were asked specifically about Arya Stark, who was described by one participant as "very charismatic and always in the company of someone". If we look to what Fairholm writes about factors for successful power use – one of the characteristics of powerful people very often is charisma, that they have a likable personality (29). The participants then acknowledged that after Arya had helped three prisoners escape a fire, she suddenly gained a lot of power through the services of the criminal Jaqen H'ghar. Although she did not demand anything in return, he said he owed her his life and his services included the murder of three people of her choice. Despite the grim ethical implications here, this is undoubtedly an empowering aspect for such a small girl in a world in which women are subordinate!

When commenting on Arya's mother, Katelyn Stark, the boys recognised that in relation to Jon Snow, whom she does not like, she uses the domination technique *making invisible*. They further pointed out that in the scene at the tavern, when Tyrion is captured, she uses the sense of loyalty and duty she knows the banner men must have to the House of Stark to make them do as she wants. Katelyn Stark's method, though not specifically mentioned by the group, is influence, followed by persuasion. This is typically a power tactic used by someone at the lower end of the power scale (Fairholm 12). In addition, Katelyn Stark has *legitimacy* in the

group, because of her position in a powerful house which notably has high moral standards. When such power use works, the target consents freely, and with a conviction that this is the right thing to do (Fairholm 69).

The girls started by discussing how both Sansa and Eddard Stark were deceived when Eddard was coerced into confessing on the grounds that he would be pardoned. When he was executed nevertheless, they saw it as a direct result of Joffrey's use of power: "He got to show her [Sansa] how powerful he is: he is so powerful he can even murder her father". Though they do not say it plainly, the girls have noticed how Joffrey makes use of force and violence to subdue others and make the targets comply. If we compare with Katelyn Stark in the paragraph above, this is at the other end of the scale presented by Fairholm (12). Joffrey does perhaps not expect Sansa to comply in the given situation, but he has shown her what may be the consequence if she does not comply in the future.

When looking into Daenerys's use of power, the girls point out that "she actually has two very different sides; she is either very masterful and strong, stating clearly that 'I have dragons, I have something you do not!', and she may say horrible things like 'I will burn down all your cities if you do not do as I say!', but she also gets her way when she gives her soldiers the choice [to stay with her or leave]". This was added to by the other girl: "She shows a lot of respect for the people who follow her (...) and therefore she manages to keep them, they are more loyal, when they get something in return". The girls acknowledged that since she is a woman she has to be courageous, and prove that she can handle responsibility: "She has to show it more than many of the men have to". This is not unlike what many women have reported from the workplace; they have to compensate for being women, even if they are as well qualified as any man. This particular perspective is not recognised by the boys, but may easily be connected to the Glass Ceiling theory, which refers to the metaphor indicating that there is a limit to how high a woman can rise in corporate life, and that no matter how skilled and suitable a woman is for a job she will have to struggle hard to prove herself (Ryan and Haslam 1), should she be so lucky as to get it in the first place.

The conversation then turned to Tyrion Lannister. The girls concluded that he often uses persuasion to get his way: "He promises money and bribes people to make them his friends. Another character, Varys, is described like this by one girl: "He is so influential, and he knows a lot, he knows things, he is not insecure, and has a lot of confidence". In response to this, the other girl added that it is difficult to know where his loyalty lies, that he just seems to

play a little to get what he wants: “It was Eddard Stark who asked: ‘whom do you really serve?’ And then he just answered that he served the realm”. This is admittedly one of the more mysterious and oblique characters in the series, and it is perhaps not surprising that the girls are not able to pin point exactly what Varys does and why. Tyrion Lannister’s use of power, however, is easier to understand; finding allies is an important part of power play, and relates to what Fairholm says about *forming coalitions* and *using outside experts* to increase your own power (59).

The girls pointed out that Cersei uses her authority over Joffrey, since she is his mother, and that she seems to use her position in the family extensively. In addition they commented on how she treats Sansa when she is still engaged to Joffrey: “She showed her a lot of superficial love and care, saying ‘Little dove.’ and ‘You are so beautiful, this will be wonderful.’, and ‘I will take good care of you but you must remember to show that you are worthy of Joffrey’ by doing this or that.” In a theoretical perspective, Cersei here uses many power tactics; she controls and administers both reward and punishment, and through her position and beauty, she is an ideal to the young, impressionable girl (Fairholm 23). Cersei uses her charisma and by distributing her resources, i.e. offering gifts of beautiful clothes and sweets, she places Sansa in a position of debt (Fairholm 59).

The girls further observed that with Joffrey, “[a]ll is force. He inflicts pain, he kills people, in a way he is very totalitarian”, and they concluded that he constantly asserts himself by stepping on others through coercive power use (Fairholm 23). In comparing the two groups’ answers, it seems like the girls again focus on relationships, and that they seem to highlight the ethical aspect more than is the case with the boys’ group, but that the participants generally observe the same things.

### **11. Give examples of what the characters try to “sell” in GOT**

To aid the students I listed relevant examples as a point of departure for their discussion: money, influence, freedom, sex, luxury, knowledge/information, love, protection, rank/position, honour, peace, safety.

The boys quickly pointed to the situation when Littlefinger is trying to bring Sansa home: “When he says that if they just wait for the right moment, she will get home safely, he is trying to sell safety”. Cersei, they commented, sells herself rather a lot, to the old king, to the Kettleblacks, to her cousin Lancel. They did not elaborate on what she tries to achieve with this, but it is obvious to the viewers that she offers sex for the services these men can offer.

She let Lancel serve her husband, the king, stronger wine than usual when he was out on a dangerous hunt. As a result he missed the wild boar, and was consequently fatally impaled on its tusks. This again inspires a question: how many effective alternatives do women in the series have if they wish to exercise power or be influential? Fairholm states that what gives a person power is position and personality (Fairholm 13-14). Cersei apparently has both, but her power is also limited because of her position, since there are certain options that are not suitable for a queen.

Next the boys mentioned Janos Slynt as an example of how people may be bought through promises of position or influence. This refers to *reward power* (Fairholm 23) – which is our ability to reward others, and the power that this inevitably gives us. Slynt was made captain of the guards and promised a castle and money, but eventually had nothing. Furthermore, Varys is dubbed “information broker” by one of the participants, because of the way he trades information for information or services. Through this he performs the power tactic *forming coalitions* (Fairholm 59). One participant called attention to the companies of mercenaries, who sell protection and military force, and last they discussed how Jon Snow trades freedom and the prospect of romantic love for a lifelong commitment to the black, enticed by the honour, fellowship and brotherhood it offers. This example of a *quid pro quo* tactic (Fairholm 59) does not give him exactly what he was hoping for, but the boys conclude that he seeks exchange because like Sansa, “he has a twisted idea of reality” and does not fit in where he is.

The girls first mentioned Daenerys, since what she sells is very obvious; her dragons. They simultaneously referred to one specific episode where she deceives and conquers the leaders of a city: Instead of literally selling the dragons as agreed upon, she orders the dragons to attack them. Next, they commented on the typical Lannister power tactic; when they want something, they offer money, luxury and protection to the less fortunate, because they can afford it, for example, when Tyrion is on trial and pays the mercenary Bronn to be his champion. Then the girls discussed Sir Barristan Selmy, once leader of the Gold Cloaks, or the King’s Guard: “He was fired. The position was meant to be for life, and he was offered a castle and wealth, but did not want it. He wanted to be that leader, and then he went to Daenerys and saved her life, right? He made himself worthy of her trust and this gives them a close bond which in turn gives him a certain power”. This point actually relates more to power loss and gain, than what he has to offer, but it includes a point about being offered something and then refusing it, though the girls did not comment on this specifically. Finally,

the girls mentioned Varys as an example of someone who trades information; if he is to help, he wants information and secrets in return.

In contrast to the boys, the girls could not remember the minor character Janos Slynt, so this man who was mentioned several times in different settings by the boys, obviously made little impression on the girls. Generally speaking, the aspect of selling positions to people of ambition is not highlighted by the girls, and in their discussion they rarely touch upon position. The girls also mentioned other characters and situations than the boys. Varys is actually the only character mentioned by both groups. It seems relevant to pose the question why this is the case. Do girls and boys, men and women adhere to different ideas of hierarchy?

### ***12. What in the other /the target is exploited to achieve this end?***

This question has to do with individual weaknesses or characteristics which may be exploited by those engaging in a power struggle. For a more efficient discussion the following list of examples was added to the question: pride/honour, sense of justice, lust/desire, anger/temperament, vanity, ambition, fear, lack of knowledge/information, vindictiveness, grief, love, curiosity, inferiority complex.

The first aspect which was discussed in the boys' group, dealt with honour. One of the participants initially stated that honour seems to be more important in the north than in the south. This was then commented on by another participant: "That is because we have such a strong impression of Ned (Eddard Stark) and he is known by everyone as a man of honour", and this again was followed up with a reference to the scene in which Katelyn Stark captures Tyrion in the tavern: "I do not think a Lannister would have entered the tavern and said: 'You owe this to the crown!', they would have just said 'We will give you money.', but Stark could just go in there and say: 'You are bound to me.'. It seems they are more bound by honour". It was added that since she is a woman, the banner men felt obliged to protect her. Jason Slynt was again mentioned as an example of a man whose ambition is exploited. The boys argued that Eddard Stark is taken advantage of exactly because of his sense of honour – he does not understand the rotten game of the others: "It is not his area of expertise", as one participant stated, and thus he is easily deceived. It seems here that Katelyn Stark relies on the system to give her the necessary legitimate power (Fairholm 23) to make the banner men comply.

The girls opened by discussing how Sansa is exploited: "Sansa is very vain, and has always dreamed of being like a lady from the south, so she is an easy victim of her own vanity. (...)

She wants beautiful dresses, to be a ‘housewife’, but I do not think she cares beyond that, and this makes her an easy victim”. It is further commented that even if her ambitions are rather small, she is an important piece in the puzzle. Next they discussed how Joffrey is blinded, by his wish to stay in power and to maintain his honour. According to the girls, he makes many dangerous decisions and this in turn gives him many enemies. His wish to maintain power by all means also makes it easy for Cersei to manipulate him.

### ***13. Give examples of how people in position control the behaviour of others.***

This question apparently was difficult to answer, but eventually, one participant in the boys’ group answered how this is true of the slaves in the series. The discussion then immediately proceeded to Joffrey and Sansa: “Sansa does what Joffrey wants, so as to not be hurt by him”. Her actions and behaviour are clearly governed by fear of what Joffrey may do to her. Next, Tyrion’s mercenary man Bronn, is mentioned, but the boys conclude that Tyrion’s power over Bronn is limited to what Bronn agrees to do for money. Bronn’s unruly behaviour and disdain is not within that control, even if Tyrion openly disapproves. Clearly, the relationship between the two is of a nature that Bronn cannot be prevailed upon to comply unless he sees good reasons for it, and Tyrion on the other hand, either does not see it as purposeful or he is not interested in, using enough force to **make** Bronn comply. This means that the use of power in the power relationship is at the lower end of Fairholm’s scale (12), and the result of such exertion of power is always compliance, not coercion.

The girls initially felt that they had already talked about this in connection with other questions, but added that manipulation is central: “You may control other people’s behaviour by showing them a goal to work towards, or by simply playing on their fears. You may make people more aggressive by triggering certain feelings, but you may also make people comply if you promise them things. Daenerys often threatens people, for instance”. The other participant then added that in addition, Daenerys promises freedom and justice: “**When** I become great, not if, **when** I sit on the throne, you will live well too”. This shows a character with several options and types of power tactics available to her.

### ***14. What motives and values lie behind the different types of power use?***

Theon Greyjoy’s use of power was immediately described as “direct” by one of the participants in the boys’ group. “He just threatens and fights, and this is the way of the Ironborn – a bit like the Vikings!”. Upon being asked about Theon’s motive, the boys answered: “What he really wants is, to gain his father’s favour”. This is further connected to

his taking of Winterfell, which obviously has symbolic significance due to the fact that he has spent ten years there as hostage: “He must show that he is not loyal to the Starks”. To fully illustrate this point, the boys then brought up two episodes which they related to his need to prove himself: one in which Theon, home for the first time in ten years, is humiliated by his father for dressing too nicely, and the other when his crew left him standing on the dock, unable to get onto the ship he was meant to be captain of. Theon’s use of power was ultimately related to feelings, to meet ego needs, not ambition as such (Fairholm 66).

Similarly, the boys recognised Daenerys’s motive as a very clear one: She wants to become the ruler of Westeros, an idea she has from her deceased brother: she considers it her birth right. Next the boys discussed Joffrey, and they all agreed that most of the time he uses threats, violence and force to exercise his power. He frightens people. The suggested motive for his actions is that “[h]e does not have much else, since he is so young” and “he is afraid of losing his power”. It is strange then that Sansa is the one who really has to suffer, as she should represent no threat. Here the boys suggested that Joffrey may feel suppressed by his mother and takes it out on Sansa, or that there is a Freudian aspect involved, without explaining this in further detail. Perhaps the comment was inspired by the incestuous relationship between Joffrey’s mother and uncle, of which he is the result? Lastly it was even suggested by one participant that Joffrey may be a sadist. The reason for Joffrey’s power use is thus twofold; to meet ego needs and for the fun of it (Fairholm 66). One of the boys commented this: “He is presented more like a sadist in the series than in the books, I think. In the books I think he seems more ignorant than mean”, which another concluded must be a decision made by the producers to create sharper contrasts between the characters and thus “better” TV.

In the girls’ group, the first focus was yet again on Daenerys. It was suggested that justice is a driving force, that “since her family used to be so powerful, it is justice, she is meant to have power. (...) It is her right, and that is perhaps her motivation; that she is born to be powerful”. She may feel that she has legitimate power (Fairholm 23). The other participant then added that this is also the case for Renly Baratheon, who aspires to be king even though his older brother is the rightful heir, and she specifies: “those who are joining in the fight over the throne, all feel they have something unique to bring to the table”. To this she added that Robb Stark seems different in this respect, although he participates in the war: “I get the impression that he wants to put an end to the madness. He wants justice and not just plain butchering. His actions are based on careful consideration. He never wishes to hurt anyone”.



**15. Give examples in which charisma is used as a tool to exercise power.**

One of the boys promptly answered “That must be Renly! He is like the dream king; extremely good-looking, young and ambitious.” Another participant immediately followed up by pointing to Renly’s flamboyant Rainbow Guard, and that he is a favourite with the people. Furthermore, Tyrion is referred to as charismatic, which is evident in the number of people he manages to persuade to do his bidding in the course of the series. Robb Stark is described as “a good old leader, in that he inspires people”, and he is a younger version of his father, Eddard Stark. Since Eddard was a man of honour, this obviously rubs off on his son. This charisma makes people wish to comply, which is in accordance with what Fairholm writes about the power impact model. A charismatic leader may have very dedicated followers, who will comply just to maintain the close bond with their leader (Fairholm 14).

The girls pointed out that Tyrion has to use charisma, since he does not have much else to offer, as is the case with Daenerys: “Most of the other women are born into a power position, but she has to take her position back, and then she has to rely on charisma and her personality”. In this discussion, the girls only mentioned Tyrion and Daenerys, arguing that both use their charisma, since at times there is little else at their disposal. This is interesting, as the boys seem to have a different focus: the use of charisma in addition to an already established power position. Fairholm describes this as a natural part of the basis of power (23).

**16. Give examples of situations in which characters give others power or resources to enable them to exercise power.**

This was clearly a difficult question to answer, as the boys made numerous suggestions, but few of these actually answered the question. In the end they pointed to when Tyrion gives Bronn the position as commander of the Gold Cloaks, which obviously gives him a position of power. The girls, struggled equally here, but they mentioned Katelyn Stark; even though she is Robb’s mother and he is just a young boy, “she immediately shows her subordination to him, and that gives him power”. It is interesting to note that none of them mentioned the fact that Tyrion is given the position as Hand of the King by his own father, to keep Cersei and Joffrey in check, which very clearly recognises Tyrion’s abilities and knowledge. These are examples of power based on ability to reward the target (Fairholm 23). The books and TV-series offer numerous examples where characters rise to positions in which they have more power than before, few of which are reported by the participants, perhaps because this belongs to a more quiet expression of power.

**17. Give examples of power that is used for a good purpose.**

The boys had difficulties with this question as well, and trying to ask questions to goad them on the right track did not prove a success until I specifically mentioned Daenerys and her strong interest in slaves: “Yes, she freed 8000 slaves in the last episode!”, said one of the boys, but then another commented laconically that she still killed all the others, which leaves us with the ethical question of how good the purpose really is. The girls agreed that behind Robb’s actions there are good intentions: he wants justice and to put an end to the bloodshed. One of the girls reflected on the mystery surrounding Varys: “I could say Varys, but then it is hard to tell. (...) He seems to single out people, and he saves many by sharing information with them”. Upon being asked about Daenerys and her sieges, they stated that “she often takes care of the weakest, and this is solely out of kindness, she gains nothing from it, at least not immediately”. The fact that the girls found the last two questions easier to answer than the boys, offers an interesting puzzle. Could it be that the girls find it easier to see beyond the actual result of the use of power?

**18. What is acceptable power use? Who are representatives of this?**

This is answered by one of the boys: “In *GOT*, it seems as though everything that leads to the Greater Good, is acceptable”. He is then met with the relevant question from one of his co-participants: “What then, is the Greater Good?”, which in turn he answers through another question: “Yes, what if the road [towards the goal] is a little too dark?”. This is clearly a comment on the ethical side of power use, but none of the boys made further remarks on this aspect. Rather they all seemed to agree with the critical hint that was offered, and apparently felt no need to elaborate, but this is clearly not quite in line with Kant’s Categorical Imperative (64-65). Instead the boys then collectively pointed to Eddard Stark as a representative of acceptable power use, and one participant made this comment about Tyrion: “I would not say that Tyrion has done anything super bad, either. He is a little arrogant sometimes, but he does not hurt anyone who does not deserve it”.

Upon being asked about Stannis, the boys answered that he also adheres to the idea of the Greater Good, and although they do not say it specifically, their tone of voice implies that they do not think this is acceptable. Stannis is further described as a man who always keeps his word: “He cut off Davos’ fingers because he was a smuggler, even though he saved his entire fleet.” Again, the tone of voice used by the participant disclosed a negative attitude to such behaviour, and the example is expanded on by one of the others: “There is one such character in almost every fantasy series; one that follows every rule”. When asked if he

considered this acceptable, he answered: “In the books, many think this is unacceptable, it is considered callous, and these characters never really succeed”. They apparently found it easier to say what is not acceptable than what is acceptable power use, which may of course be because there are more examples of the former in the series, and because it is usually easier to note what is a violation than what is not.

Turning to the girls, the first response to the question about acceptable power use was “I immediately think of Robb, who is only trying to make the best out of any situation, and to avoid getting people hurt”. This was agreed to by the other participant: “when someone does get hurt, it is only because there is no other way out. There are others who harm people only because they want to better their own position”. In rash conclusion, they stated that the entire Stark family uses power like this, but when asked if this counts for Arya as well, one participant pointed out that “she has a temper, and she likes to fight, but I still think her intentions are good. When she exercises her power, it is more for the sake of justice, and to protect herself and her friends”. In a further comment it is admitted that Arya is only 11 and that extremity often comes with young age, and that she may be a little blinded by her wish for revenge.

When looking at the results here, it is striking to see that characters, like Katelyn Stark, who use logic and common sense to persuade others, are not mentioned by the participants. Is this because their use of power is indirect, and thus less obvious, and will such indirect power use not be perceived as use of power by the participants? It could also be that the use of logic is not considered as power use by the participants, because in this tactic the target has a clear choice (Fairholm 20).

#### **4.1.4. Part 4 - Commenting on the Use of Power in Scenes from the Series**

This part of the interview deals with a selection of four scenes from the series, which the participants were asked to comment upon in terms of power use and tactics. They were asked in advance, to make a note of the following: *Who has power? Why do they have power? How do they use their power? Who gives in? Why do they give in?* Questions 18 and 19 from the interview guide (appendix 10), were asked only when the participants did not mention these aspects in their discussion. These questions relate to efficiency in the use of power and to powerlessness in characters.

***Scene one – Varys and Eddard Stark, of Episode nine “Baelor”***

The first scene is from season one, episode nine, and shows Eddard Stark in his prison cell, when he receives a visit from Varys. He is kept in a dark cell, deprived of food and drink, and he is worried about his young daughters (Baelor).

One boy commented on Varys use of power when he comes to see Eddard Stark: “He first said something about “for the realm”. First, he said that, [Eddard] should do the right thing for the realm. He wanted peace. The next thing he did was to try to talk to him about losing his life if he does not say those things. And the last thing he tries is to threaten his daughter. That is what eventually works”. Here one participant commented that it seems as if everyone has something they are afraid of losing and this is what all the others will use against them.

The boys acknowledged that Eddard Stark tried to do the right thing to save his daughter’s life; “[It is] not for himself, but for the family”. This is his motivation. To the question of what motivates Varys to exercise his power, one of the boys said that Varys wants peace and suggested that this is because peace gives stability. Though he is a captive, the group agreed that Eddard does have some power in this situation: “He has the chance to influence through not giving in”. This is further commented on by another participant: “Everything relies on his choice, so he is actually the one with the power, I think”. This is agreed to by the other participants, even if he does comply in the end. One may of course discuss if a person does have a choice when given the two options here, and this is exactly what Foucault says about power struggles: that one can only exercise power over free people; that is people who have several choices they may resort to. There must be a real choice involved (The Subject 342), and the choice Eddard felt he had because he did not fear death, and thus could refuse compliancy, disappeared the moment Varys mentioned Eddard’s daughter.

The girls noticed more or less the same aspects as the boys here, although they elaborated a little more on the power relationship between the two characters:

It is obvious in the beginning, that Varys has more power than Ned, who is chained, whilst Varys is free. Just the fact that he comes to visit and does him a favour gives [Varys] a little power. He also has information about what is going on outside the prison cell, and he has a solution to offer. But Eddard is not interested in this offer, he says that he does not want to participate in the game.(...) Varys offers him life, but it will be a life without honour, and Ned is not interested in that.(...) Things turn when Varys brings in Sansa.

The girls acknowledged that Varys, like Tyrion, makes use of many different methods to exert his power: “Both are a little sly; they try different methods, push several buttons before they find the right one”, and they concluded that Eddard eventually gives in because of Sansa. It is worth noticing that for the girls, this was the third scene, not the first as was the case for the boys. They first watched Tyrion in the forest, which may be the reason why they thought to mention Tyrion and his power use in comparison to Varys.

### ***Scene two Tyrion, Bronn and Shagga, Episode eight “The Pointy End”***

The second scene is from season one, episode eighth, “The pointy End”, which is directed by Daniel Minahan. The scene shows Tyrion and Bronn as they are approached by wild tribes in the forest of Arryn. These tribes are rumoured to be fierce and savage, and in an earlier scene, Tyrion and parts of his company narrowly survive an attack by similar tribes. The main characters here are Tyrion, Bronn and the tribal chief Shagga (The Pointy End).

The boys quickly commented that Tyrion is very manipulative in this scene, which is described in the following quote: “First he played a lot on humour to try to get off the hook, and maybe a little on what we have mentioned before, money: that [the Lannisters] are very rich, and perhaps to mock them, he says that [the tribes] are so poor they have nothing.”. One participant then added that Tyrion questions their courage and honour by claiming that they run and hide every time someone rides through the woods. Additionally, one boy stated that Shagga used “physical power by hitting Tyrion in the face with his axe to frighten him, and that he used ridicule by letting the remark fall: “The halfman can dance for the children”.

One of the boys mentioned how Tyrion uses knowledge and rumours to his own benefit, which is clearly also the basis of Varys’s power. It was further observed that there is a similarity in the way Tyrion and Varys exercise their power, trying out different methods to find out what will work in the end, which is interestingly the same comment that was made by the girls after they had watched both scenes. It seems it was easier to recognise once they had seen a similar strategy acted out before and discussed this, which again indicates that teaching students about power may produce a similar effect.

The girls observed more or less the same, and in addition focused on the fact that the power shifted:

Initially it is Shagga and his horde who are in power, since they have weapons, but then Tyrion begins to talk, making promises (...), and says what he can give them.

Shagga says no to this, and then Tyrion starts using domination techniques; first he says that they may fight sheep as long as the sheep do not fight back, and that he can ‘shit better weapons’. He says ‘Shagga, son of...’, uses his full name, which in a way shows respect. And then he begins talking in a manner that makes [the tribes] identify with him, because he wants to give them the valley. Since the lords have always spat on them, and the same lords want to see Tyrion dead, they have the same enemy.

Though he is in a very difficult and dangerous situation, it is evident that Tyrion does not appear a humbled subordinate. This is the meeting of two peers, which relates well to what Fairholm writes about the type of power tactics preferred by peers: “peers rely most on “indirect or subtle forms and use interventions that show manipulation, threat or influence forms of power” (101).

One girl also reflected on the power relationship between Tyrion and Bronn: “First Bronn has power, before they see who their enemy is, because he has physical power. Then Tyrion takes over using his domination techniques.(...) These methods seem to be new to them. They are used to the physical power – the simple and obvious power”. Both groups agree that Shagga is the one who gives in because of Tyrion’s skills. This obviously relates to the fact that different situations require different tactics, but Tyrion clearly makes use of persuasion, as he understands that trying to fight their way out of the problem will have fatal consequences.

### ***Scene three: Robb and Greatjon Umber, Episode eighth, “The Pointy End”***

This scene from season two shows the first war council in which Robb has called his banner men to march South because of the arrest of his father. Central characters are Robb Stark, Greatjon Umber, Theon Grejoy and the direwolf Grey Wind. Greatjon challenges Robb’s authority because he wants a proper, honourable place in the battle order. When Umber threatens Robb, the direwolf eventually attacks and bites the former (The Pointy End).

The first comment made by the boys’ group was on the type of power use: “At the end [Robb] plays on honour again, by referring to the breaking of promises, of going against your lord”. One participant added that there was physical power use as well, and another argued that “it was strictly speaking carried out by a well-trained wolf!” This fits with the idea of having a useful assistant; using a surrogate (Fairholm 59) to do the job for you. The boys also identified threat as a technique, shown in this quote: “He (Robb) said he could just go and do as he pleased, but he would eventually come after him”. Another participant added that Robb called him an “oath breaker”. It was mentioned how the seasoned and experience warrior

ridiculed and underrated Robb for being young and inexperienced: “He said he was so green he pissed grass”.

Upon being asked who has the strongest authority in the scene, the group agreed this was Robb: “at least after the wolf took the fingers! He showed that he had power.” One participant added: “Well, Greatjon yelled – like a gorilla!”. This was further expanded on: It seemed like Robb knew that he was in control (...) and he was quite calm, whereas the other one, (...) he just yelled and shouted to be extreme. Perhaps to cause fear?”. The boys all agreed that the one who yells has less power. Though they did not specify why, neither was the question asked, but it was implied that this was due to lack of self-control.

The girls similarly concluded that Robb is the one with power in the end, that Greatjon gives in. Like the boys, they identified threat as a method, and concluded that both men make use of it: “[Greatjon] wanted a position and said he would march off with his men, and that is somehow a threat, because Robb would lose an essential part of his army. Then Robb makes a threat, and his threat is perhaps worse”. Next, the direwolf was mentioned as a means of showing physical authority through violence. Since Robb has trained the wolf and has a mental bond to it, this is highly relevant, and the girls agreed that the wolf functioned as an extension of Robb’s power. In an additional comment, the girls looked at body language: “he stood up when he wanted to assert his power, and then the other responded by doing the same. They answered each other like this all the time, so it was very much like a fight.”

Like the boys they also identified Greatjon’s ridicule when he calls Robb green, and they even compared this to how Cersei calls Sansa “little dove”. In a final remark about the scene, one of the girls pointed out that once Greatjon realised that he had lost, he made things easier for himself by laughing at it: “Things could have ended very differently if he did not make that joke!” In theory, this applies to influence as power, in which you offer the other options to choose from. The idea is that the other will choose rightly and consent out of respect, not because he feels pressured or threatened (Fairholm 12). Robb offered Greatjon a choice, a way out of the situation that would not force Robb to punish him, despite the domination techniques the older man had applied earlier.

#### ***Scene four: Joffrey’s Name Day, Season two, Episode one “The North Remembers”***

The scene occurs in the episode “The North Remembers” and takes place in the court yard at King’s Landing on Joffrey’s name day. Joffrey tortures and humiliates Sir Dontos who is not entirely sober when he shows up for the tournament. Provoked by this, Joffrey has ordered the

execution of Sir Dontos, but Sansa speaks up for the knight, claiming it is bad luck to kill someone on your name day. She is supported in this by the Hound. Then Tyrion enters, unexpectedly, as he has been given the position as Hand of the King by Tywin. This is unknown to Joffrey (The North Remembers).

The first question was about the use of power. The boys' group quickly established that Joffrey made use of physical power, but that he had someone else carry it out for him: "It was still Joffrey", they concluded. Next the boys mentioned Sansa, who shows some power when she manipulates Joffrey, in cooperation with the Hound. They also concluded that Joffrey is too arrogant to notice this, and that when the Hound supports Sansa, it works because he has more physical power than Joffrey: "Joffrey immediately questions what Sansa says, but complies when she is supported by someone with more physical power than himself". Furthermore, they commented on how the Hound is the one who carries out all the physical abuse ordered by Joffrey. This is what Fairholm refers to as using a surrogate (59) to exercise power in your place.

The boys then proceeded to discuss Tyrion's use of domination techniques, both directed at the Hound and Joffrey: "He generally cares very little about what Joffrey does, and is not afraid of him. Instead he ridicules him and sometimes he even hits him." It is additionally recognised that Tyrion withholds information about his presence from Joffrey, "even if Joffrey is the king". They identified that he ridicules the Hound directly, and that indirectly he ridicules Joffrey as well: "Sansa's father was declared a traitor by the king, and then he just goes against that by offering Sansa his condolences." One participant then pointed out how the use of humour is one of Tyrion's strongest traits. Many people see him as ridiculous, since he is a dwarf, and this is also commented on by another participant who acknowledged that this is a good defence mechanism; making his weakness his strength.

To the question of Sansa's role in the scene, the boys answered that she uses her knowledge of Joffrey's sadistic tendencies when she suggests making Sir Dontos a court jester as an alternative to execution. She influences Joffrey by telling him what he wants to hear (Fairholm 12). Moreover, they pointed out that Margaery does the same in season three: she constantly manipulates him because she has understood what triggers him. The use of the adjective "sadistic" shows that even though their focus is not on the ethical aspect, the boys obviously have reflected on the issue.



The group next discussed who is more powerful in the scene, and agreed that this is definitely Tyrion: “he uses many domination techniques and he generally seems to be most powerful”. One of the participants added: “In this scene it actually seems as if Joffrey has very little power, because the orders he gives, which were to demonstrate his power, like executing Sir Dontos, are not carried through.” They further recognised how the power Joffrey initially had, disappeared when Tyrion entered: “Tyrion always had Joffrey on the defensive. He made Joffrey answer questions, and as soon as Joffrey started asking questions, Tyrion just left. That way he has more authority than Joffrey”. Upon the question whether the answer would have been the same if the scene had been shorter, they responded: “I would have said that Joffrey was the most powerful, because he got to give orders, and say something, especially if you had stopped the scene before Sansa said anything”.

The girls’ group first stated that “watching other people suffer seems to appeal a lot to Joffrey”. This description of Joffrey shows that the girls have identified his unethical behaviour, without discussing this in detail. They also recognised that Sansa tells Joffrey what he wants to hear to have her way and save Sir Dontos: “He wants to hear that he is smart and intelligent and all that, so she tries to hint a little (...) ‘yes you are so intelligent to see that he is just a fool, and he deserves a slow death’. When Joffrey hears that he is intelligent, he is a lot easier to sway”.

There is agreement that power relations vary in this scene. They point out that Joffrey does have power in the beginning of the scene, but when Tyrion enters he just “says what he wants, and does what he wants and Joffrey cannot do anything about it”. Like the boys, they further comment that both Joffrey and Tyrion ridicule the Hound and call him “Dog”, whereas the Hound supports Sansa when she speaks up for Sir Dontos, and thereby adds to her power. In addition, they see that “Joffrey is very condescending to Sansa all the time, but she manages to manipulate him, so she has a little power – when she wants to”.

The girls commented on how Tyrion uses domination techniques on Joffrey: “Tyrion says he has a job to do, that he does not have the time to celebrate, because he has duties, and that makes him sound more important than Joffrey”, and they pointed out that Tyrion comments in a sarcastic tone that Joffrey does a good job ruling the realm, and that Tyrion indicates that Joffrey is a coward since he was not on the battlefield like a king should be. These are examples of insulting and underrating others. When Tyrion does not tell Joffrey why he has

come to King's Landing, the girls recognised this is as another domination technique: withholding information.

The girls' group also reflected on how Tyrion dominates Joffrey by dividing his attention between Joffrey, Joffrey's siblings and Sansa: "He gives everyone else attention as well. He is not just focused on Joffrey, 'Your grace', etc.... He also compliments the younger siblings and Sansa". Like the boys, the girls stated that the condolences Tyrion offers Sansa, contribute to undermining Joffrey's position. "Tyrion is very condescending when he points out that Joffrey should have shown compassion and understanding". This is commented as a factor that empowers Sansa. Likewise, one of the girls stated that everyone is a pawn who either reduces or increases power in others and that "when Tyrion gives Joffrey's siblings attention, this partly reduces Joffrey's power".

Extending the discussion to the purpose of power use, the girls commented how Sansa's aim is to save someone, so her intentions are good, and they further reflect on the fact that she initially was naïve: "she has grown up in a good family, and has perhaps not seen much evil. She may not have understood before now, that people may have evil intentions". In conclusion it was added that since her father was so unjustly executed she seems to have become more conscious of justice as a concept.

#### **4.1.5. Part 5 - The Forms of Power Used in *GOT***

This section deals with questions about different forms of power and power tactics in the series. The questions are presented in the order in which they were dealt with in the interview.

##### ***21. Give examples of characters that make use of force to achieve an end***

Since this section followed directly after the discussion about the scenes, one participant in the boys' group immediately answered "Joffrey". It was then necessary to specify that the questions in this section are not restricted to the scenes. The same participant then added Robb and Theon, and one of the other boys supplied that this goes for most of the kings; they use force to get their way. A third participant elaborated a little more, stating that this counts for those people with the most authority, and that it seems like power grows with your ability to force others to do something. This was further commented: "The kings have high positions, so they do not need to use more subtle ways. They can make it simple". This is confirmed by Fairholm: such power users may make the hierarchy work for them (117).

In comparison it was recognised that Theon lacked this authority: “When he had taken Winterfell and was standing there giving a speech, [his men] knocked him over the head because they were tired of listening to him.(...) It seemed as though his companions only shared his plan for a while and then they just wanted to leave”. It is interesting to note that the girls pointed to the same earlier in the interview: his power is false. He lacks what Fairholm refers to as legitimate power (69). The boys did not comment on Robb’s use of power specifically, but the reference to the direwolf had already been made in an earlier question.

The girls argued that Daenerys and Joffrey are the two characters who most clearly use force, though mostly they do not exercise this power directly, instead “they decide who will exercise the power”: Daenerys uses her dragons and her soldiers, and Joffrey uses the Hound and his other guards as tools to intimidate others. One of the girls pointed out that Joffrey is presented like a coward since he is afraid to fight in the war and he does not carry out the hitting himself. This relates to the power tactic which Fairholm calls *using a surrogate* (79). This tactic is often used because the person in power wishes to avoid making himself unpopular. In this case, Joffrey had been told by his mother that hitting girls is not worthy of a king, and so he lets others do the hitting for him. In addition, the girls mentioned Theon and how his power is “false”, and concluded that once you use force, the result very often cannot be changed or redeemed, like in the case of executions. The group clearly agrees, and they seem to focus on major characters, not minor characters.

## ***22. Give examples of situations in which characters act out of fear of aggression and retaliation from powerful characters.***

Interestingly, the boys only named female characters in this question, starting with Sansa and her fear of Joffrey, in particular. They also mentioned Arya, without explaining why. Next the group pointed to how Daenerys originally obeys her brother Viserys, because of the way he frightens her: “You don’t want to wake the dragon”. This is typical of coercive power; compliance is brought on by threats (Fairholm 23). Furthermore, the boys’ group mentioned Cersei by referring to the situation in the tavern, when King Robert hits her. She is immediately silenced, which offers another example of coercion – this time through direct force (Fairholm 12). Finally, the discussion turned to Gilly, who wants to save her baby boy from being murdered by her incestuous father; Caster kills all sons that are born by his daughters/wives, ensuring that he is the only male in his household. This is an example of the most horrid use of force and violence, and the women live in a terror regime (Fairholm 12).

The girls shared the boys' opinion of Sansa, stating that she is terrified of Joffrey, without pointing to specific actions to illustrate this. Next they turned their focus on a male character: They pointed out that if Joffrey fears someone, he very quickly strikes and has them removed before they become real threats. The girls identified this as a case of paranoia, concluding that: "He actually fears everyone. If they show any sign of not supporting him they must immediately be eliminated, and that is really the biggest sign of fear".

### ***23. Give examples of the use of threats and/ or promises to gain control or power.***

Here the boys' group mentioned Tyrion first: From his prison cell, he bribes the turnkey Mord to pass messages, later he pays Bronn to fight for him, and he promises the tribes in the forest land, gold and weapons if they will release him. In connection with this, one participant stated that "[m]oney is yet again in focus". In a similar vein, they argued that to bend Eddard Stark's will, Varys threatens to target his family, and finally they pointed out that Robb has to promise to marry Frey's daughter in order to be allowed to cross the bridge with his army. The girls pointed to how Varys often offers a solution to problems by trading information, but did not elaborate beyond this – perhaps because they did reflect on this in earlier questions. These are examples of quid pro quo, or negotiating trade-offs (Fairholm 159).

### ***24./25./26. Users and targets of manipulation***

The participants were asked to give examples of manipulation and to identify who are easy targets for such power use, and why this is the case. I also wanted to know if the targets learn that they were manipulated at a later point. These three questions were dealt with as one in the interview and will be presented as such here. To make it easier for the participants, some examples of different types of manipulation were listed. These are available in the Interview Guide (appendix 10). Still, the various types of manipulation were difficult to point out, so the answers are centred on manipulation in general and on the characters involved. Disclosing manipulation is admittedly difficult in real life as well, so the result is not unexpected.

One of the participants in the boys' group mentioned a scene in which Cersei and two of her guards threaten Littlefinger: "That's when she says: 'Knowledge isn't power – power is power!'". The boys agreed that besides Cersei, the characters who most frequently manipulate others are Varys, Littlefinger and Tyrion, or as one participant commented: "those characters who are a little more subtle". When asked about which characters they consider are easy victims of manipulation, they immediately named Janos Slynt, who, in the words of one participant "is not entitled a position of authority, and when you want a lot of power and fast,

it is easy to be influenced by that". Next they pointed to Theon Greyjoy, and the lack of support he experiences from his family. This was further commented: "It is easy to be influenced when you only have things you wish for, but do not consider if you have anything to lose". Another boy then added that Theon thinks that it is his birth right to be a leader, but that he has never considered if he really deserves it, or if he is able to". This obviously is in clear contrast to his very able sister, and the rest of his people and family manipulate him and undermine his authority. Again - the character lacks legitimate power, and in this specific environment, that is the most important prerequisite to power (Fairholm 68).

The girls agreed that Tyrion is very good at manipulating others. They pointed out how he uses both his title and his family, and when that does not work, he may use flattery, either directed at the person or at persons surrounding the one he wishes to manipulate, like in the name day scene. It is also mentioned how Sansa flatters Joffrey, to make him do as she wishes, but that the flattery may be rather acidic without his noticing; "he does not really see the context, he only hears the words 'you' and 'intelligent' and that does it for him".

The girls considered Varys and Littlefinger good representatives of manipulation as a power tactic, referring to how they both give and withhold information: "It seems like they compete a little. They are actually quite similar, using the same methods". Last, the girls described Cersei as manipulative, especially in the way she treats Sansa: "Because she is kind to Sansa, somehow, but simultaneously she is giving Sansa the feeling that she does not deserve it, that she must make herself worthy, and that Sansa really is an inferior". They additionally argued that in season one, when Cersei demands that Sansa's direwolf be killed, she manipulates a lot of people to get her way.

The girls considered Joffrey as an easy victim for manipulation, given that he is power hungry and blind: "He has only one intention and is blind to the rest!" As a contrast, the girls maintained that Cersei must be very difficult to manipulate, exactly because she is not as single-minded as Joffrey: "There is so much she wants to achieve, that she has to be observant of everything all the time". The girls seemed generally better at discovering manipulation than the boys did.

### ***27. Give examples of the use of persuasion to gain power***

The boys named Tyrion, since he persuades most people to do things for him. Tywin was suggested: "He has a lot of power, but he does not really have to use it. Everybody knows that he has it, so he does not have to do anything". This type of power, which is referred to as

“authority” by Fairholm, is present when a leader is accepted as such by a group of people (17). Furthermore, Tywin is very clearly a part of a system, an organisation, as head of the Lannister family, so he is given legitimate power and authority simply by his position.

Here the girls referred to Tyrion, Littlefinger and Varys, but found it hard to come up with concrete examples. They commented that Varys is very indirect, that he hints, and they stated that he may provide people with solutions, like in the prison cell scene: “There is a problem and then a consequence, and then he tells them what they must do to avoid that consequence”.

#### **4.1.6. Part 6 - The Use of Troubling Literature or Film in the Classroom**

This section deals with the students’ views on the use of troubling literature or troubling films in the classroom. As has already been described in the theory section, the adjective “troubling” here refers to literature and film that deal with difficult topics, or topics that may be personally challenging for the individual. This may be literature about crime, substance addiction, sexuality, prejudice, violence, death, abuse, mental problems, and ethical dilemmas in general.

To be able to present a fuller picture and to avoid repetitions in this section, I have decided to combine the results from the pre-interview questionnaire with the answers from the interview when this is relevant, since many of the same comments are made in both. A compilation of the answers from the questionnaire is available in appendix 8.

#### ***28. Do you consider A Game of Thrones a good choice to read in full class?***

The participants offered many arguments for using the novel *AGOT* in the classroom, both in the questionnaire and in the interview. Several participants mentioned that there are good possibilities for interesting discussions on moral dilemmas: “The benefit is that there is so much to look into, so much that may be discussed (...). There are incredibly many examples of different situations and moral dilemmas that one can deal with”. In the same vein, one participant added that “though this is fantasy, the incidents and situations are still relevant”. This may be attributed to the assortment of believable and round characters in the series, and the universal challenges experienced by the characters. Relational conflicts and moral qualms are always relevant. What is more, the harsh society which is depicted in the series, offers many examples in which human rights are violated, and although these may not be a part of our daily lives, this is the reality for people across the world. Solidarity and compassion with the suffering of others is a clear aim of our education (Norwegian Government 5).

In addition it was pointed out that there are multiple points of view, often telling the same story but from a different perspective, which will give insight into more than just one side of an issue. One participant concluded that “this may lead to increased insight and understanding”, which relates to what Reid and Stringer point to: literature and film may give youth the chance of “rehearsing possible volatile situations” (2). Finally, several participants mentioned that –if read in English – the reading may have a positive influence on the reader’s language and vocabulary, here in the words of one the participant: “if you are reading it in English, you will increase your vocabulary and language a lot”. This is also confirmed by Krashen (Free Voluntary Reading 5).

The arguments against using the novel *A Game of Thrones* are as plentiful as the arguments for. Some of the negative comments relate to its length, “It is heavy reading – and long”, which admittedly is true, since each book consists of 600 or more pages. One participant pointed out that it is a problem that you cannot read just one book, but that you have to read them all, and in support of this, another participant who had not read the books, made a comparison to the TV-series: “If they are anything like the series, then everything is interrelated and after the first season you are left with very little. Even some episodes into season three I do not know very much!” Though he clearly has a point, this again may be an incentive for further reading. If you can get a student hooked on a book series, this is your best chance of assuring extensive reading!

Other objections are connected to the content matter of the series. Here one participant made the comment that “there are many very strong forces at work, relating to psychological and physical violence”. This is supported by several participants: though none of them feel repulsed, they acknowledge that it may be repulsive to others due to the sex and violence. Finally, the language is described as a potential challenge: “There are very many words that are unfamiliar and if one does not understand the basics, which actually can be quite complicated; it will be very difficult with all the new [words]”.

The statement “[t]his series may be repulsive to some students, but it is modern and cool”, shows the duplicity of the work and the dilemma of the teacher who considers using it in the classroom. In this respect, Reid and Stringer point out that “literature is powerful, and we must use this power with care” (4). I would like to extend this to apply to films and TV as well, as it is necessary to consider carefully what to use in a group of students, regardless of the media.

With this in mind, it is interesting to see what advice the students offer: To the question whom it would be most relevant for, the participants answered first and foremost upper secondary school students, and preferably senior students because of the length, the troubling issues and the difficulty of the language. One participant suggested that if the entire book is to be read, the students should be allowed to choose their own approach when working with it, since the books are so extensive. In the interview I suggested if one option could be to read an excerpt, perhaps a chapter and look at topic like power. The response to this was positive: “I think that would be a really good idea, because then one could choose to focus on certain aspects and dilemmas”. This was clearly supported: “Yes, if the students are intrigued, they could read it in their spare time”. It is worth adding here that several of the participants, all boys, disclosed that they do not like being told what to read and dread being faced with compulsory reading of specific novels: “If I had gone to the library to find a book, I might have found *AGOT*, but if anyone had said ‘You have to read this!’, I probably would have said ‘No...don’t want to.’”. This, in combination with the length, makes the boys conclude that this is a book one should be allowed to **choose** to read. This point is not mentioned by the girls, but the chance is that if they had been part of the same interview as the boys, they may have supported this view.

***29. Would you recommend watching episodes from Game of Thrones in a full class? What reasons are there for and against this?***

The boys’ spontaneous response to this question was “Of course we would want that! It is fun!” One very positive participant even proclaimed: “I cannot see **anything** negative about this”. Though a little more balanced, the girls are also clearly in favour of using the series: “I think fantasy is cool”, said one girl, and she further argued that one episode should be OK, even for those who are not particularly fond of the genre. This is a good point, as the people who like or do not like fantasy often belong to clearly separate groups, but this is also one of the positive features of *GOT*; the fantasy element does not overshadow the human aspect. The characters come across as real people with real problems one can relate to. In addition, one of the girls addressed the troubling side of *GOT*: “If we would recommend it or not? I say: go ahead! ...Because the fact that there are such strong impressions and images, may be good, because it forces you to think, and it leads to a reaction, either positive or negative”. This is of course where the rub is: the potential negative reactions. We want literature and film to matter and to be relevant, but not to the degree that it may cause problems for individuals.



Further positive arguments for using the series in teaching refer to the potential for discussions, and one participant specifies: “If you wish to show how power is distributed, *GOT* is a very good tool.” This point is shared by others as well. Language is another aspect, and one participant wrote in the questionnaire that you may show how language is used differently in the series. There are beyond doubt many ways of focusing on language in the series, both relating to differences in style and vocabulary. Adding to this, I will quote a participant whom I think shows understanding for the principles that govern a teachers’ choice of material: “I think this depends a lot on the teacher. If the teacher manages to connect the series to central aims in the curriculum, and if the result is increased interest in the subject, I would give the start signal!”

The participants are of course biased in the first place, as they are all fans of *GOT*, but when asked if there are any negative implications, they show a balanced attitude. The participants recognised that fantasy is a genre that does not appeal to everyone: “[T]hey cannot relate to it and do not find it exciting. It may easily be regarded as boring”. Furthermore, they acknowledge that “there are strong scenes of violence, moral dilemmas”, which may be difficult to handle for some individuals. The discussion below relates to the brutality of the series:

- Dan: It is good, but as I said in the previous question; it may be repulsive to some.
- Roy: It is 18+, is it not?
- Ingrid: No, 15!
- Roy: Really?
- (Incredulous laughter and mumbling)
- Roy: Seriously?
- Dan: This **is** Norway!
- Karl: Have to put one of those disclaimers on it: ‘Should anyone feel uncomfortable at the sight of rolling heads, they must leave the room’!
- (Laughter)
- Ingrid: So you think it should be rated 18, or? Is that what you think?
- Roy: Yes. (Laughter)

Oskar: We are quite liberal in Norway, if you compare with the rest of the world. This is the case with blood, but first and foremost sex. It is rated 18 in the USA because of the sex scenes.

Ingrid: But not because of the rolling heads?

Oskar: Oh, no!

(Laughter)

This shows that the participants, despite their own positive attitudes to the series, recognise that the series may be controversial and that it should be used with care in the classroom. One participant made the following suggestion: “Actually, the students could be allowed a part in the decision making, whether to use it or not. I think the majority would say yes, because it is a popular series. So even if fantasy perhaps is rather special, *GOT* has managed to capture people’s interest”.

### ***30. Popular culture and quality- is GOT good enough for the classroom?***

Since many scholars claim that popular literature or popular culture should not be used in the classroom due to its poor or disputable quality, I wanted to ask the participants’ opinion on the issue. This question, here rephrased for fluency, caused quite a stir among the boys, as the participants were aggravated by the elitist attitude: “If *GOT* is not good enough, they can just go to...!” A little more calmly, one participant brought in other examples of fantasy literature, this one a classic: “I read somewhere that they compared *Lord of the Rings* to *GOT* and they found *GOT* so much better, because *Lord of the Rings* is fantasy with an aspect of drama, whilst *GOT* is drama with an aspect of fantasy, so it is a lot more relevant”. This was supported by another of the boys when he pointed out: “It brings up many topical issues!” This may be confirmed, as in the series there are examples of criminal acts like murder, torture, as well as various types of abuse and neglect, in addition to the regular challenges of life, such as love and yearning, the tribulations of adolescence, obligation and loyalty, lies and deception and the gnawing effect of a guilty conscience. This is by no means a complete list, but it offers some of the issues that are found in the series.

The girls were a little less provoked, but one participant very relevantly pointed out: “I think this is completely wrong. Why should we not reflect more on something we are more exposed to, that constantly surrounds us? Why should we not contemplate what we are watching?” She was supported by the other participant who ventured into the aspect of quality: “[M]uch of popular literature is popular for a reason; many people like it, and it catches on. So actually, it should be natural to study this literature, but then again, popular literature may be a little

simple, and perhaps a little shallow, so it might be more difficult to work with it". In a last note on this point, one girl offered an example of how important themes may be found in popular literature: "It may also be that many of the classics have incredibly many deep meanings, but popular literature may also have that if you only take the time to really look for it. In *Harry Potter*, you may actually draw a parallel to WW2 and the Holocaust". I think this proves an important point; that consumers of popular literature are not necessarily as uncritical as some critics may assume.

What is interesting to note here is the gender difference in the answers: the boys are less nuanced in their approach to the criticism, but considerably more provoked by the question. The girls do not categorically reject the criticism, even if they do not necessarily agree with it. This might be due to the fact that both girls are keen readers of a variety of genres, and among the boys there are some who read a lot, and others who do not. Having read a lot could make it easier to identify differences in quality, as it is likely that among the books they have read there will be literature of both categories; popular books and classics.

Literature is read in classrooms across the world, and is widely accepted as a means of teaching students both about culture and life in general, as well as teaching them about themselves. However, the novels that still mostly dominate in the classroom are classics and literature that is regarded as quality literature by scholars, rather than those novels that students are pouring over in their spare time, like Martin's series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. These are books that are mainly read for pleasure, not for an educational purpose, but would it be so wrong to bring these novels and films into the classroom?

There are several reasons why this **could** be a bad idea: First and foremost because it is just that: pleasure reading, and students may object to the idea, thinking the teacher will spoil the fun. Another valid reason for focusing on the classics may be that schools may offer students an insight into classical literature which they may otherwise not gain on their own initiative. Some may argue that popular literature is of poorer quality and that schools should rather develop the learner's taste in literature to help them recognise and appreciate great literature. There may even be a fear that popular literature may make the students spoilt, so that they will not have the patience to struggle with the classics.

I do not think that there is an either/ or here. Quite the contrary, I am convinced that bringing popular literature, and their adaptations into films into our classrooms, may even inspire the students to read the classics, as often they will see that modern literature has drawn inspiration

from art that was created several hundred years ago. This relates to Krashen's idea of creating a "bridge to heavier reading" (Free Voluntary Reading 5). Thus, instead of being a threat to the reading and appreciation of classical literature, popular literature and film may actually serve as a catalyst for reading in general, for great discussions on the creation of art, and on the general aspects of life and humanity. If you choose literature with troubling topics, you even have an opportunity to address important issues that really matter in the lives of the students. As pointed out by John H. Bushman, "[i]t would seem that the classical literature (the canon) of which most, if not all, was written for the educated adult community, does not provide the answers that young people are seeking" (1). Furthermore, Utley points to how popular culture has an important role to play when young people are forming their identities and learning to become participants in the adult world:

Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not. They dramatize and legitimate the powers that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their place or face powerful forces of repression. (...) Media culture is also a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy, which contributes to teaching individuals how to behave and what to think, feel, fear, and desire – and what not to. The media fare forms of pedagogy that teach people how to be men and women. (5)

Popular literature and film about troubling topics may thus be successfully exploited in teaching the students important tools that will enable them to handle their lives at present and in the future.

### ***31. How has GOT influenced your relationship to English?***

This question was originally meant for those participants who had read the books, but some of the other participants stated in the interview that watching the series has caused **their** vocabulary to expand as well. It was further pointed out by a participant, that one may learn new terms and words through watching the series, but that for her, the effect would have been better if she had also read the books. One girl pointed out that reading the series clearly had influenced her language, but that she felt challenged by Martin's language, as he sometimes makes up words, and it was difficult to keep these apart from the rest of the unfamiliar words.

If I compare this to the answers given in the post-interview questionnaire (appendix 9), four respondents stated that the series has had a positive effect on their vocabulary. One added: "My vocabulary was all right from before, but everything that one reads will help to expand

your vocabulary”. The participant confirms Krashen’s point that free voluntary reading enhances the reader’s vocabulary (Free Voluntary Reading 5). Two answered that they read faster as a result of this series and one stated that he or she reads more. To the question whether they considered reading the novels now that they had seen the series, three respondents gave a positive response. The number of respondents is obviously too small to make any general conclusion as to the effect of the books on the students’ language, but with a conscious approach to either TV-series or books in the classroom, this should be a different matter. One cannot expect students to make vocabulary drills for themselves or to sit down to interpret sections whilst enjoying a good read on their own!

#### **4.2. Section 2 – The Post-Interview Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consists of five short questions (appendix 7), but in my presentation of the answers, I have combined questions one and two and three and four, and instead of listing the questions as was done in the interview, I have made a summary of the answers for a more cohesive presentation in this section. One participant did not answer this questionnaire.

The questionnaire proved that participation in the interview has changed the way all of the respondents relate to power in *GOT*, but not necessarily their view of the characters. They look for power when watching, and notice how power is used, but one student stressed: “I have the same impression of the characters even if I notice their techniques”. One participant gives a detailed answer which shows her newly achieved awareness:

My participation in the interview has absolutely changed a lot in terms of how I view the characters and power relations in *GOT*. Now, after the interview, I am a lot more conscious of what power is and I can see a lot more clearly when it is applied, and in which ways. I notice more often how characters influence their own positions, and those of others’, through body language, words and actions. I also understand characters better by noticing these aspects, because I can see where their strengths and weaknesses are”.

This is exactly what I tried to achieve; in making the students aware of some of the rules of the power game, I was hoping to make them better at recognising the use of power in real life as well as in literature and film. This perspective is reflected in the next paragraph.

The answers to the question about power and everyday life confirm that the respondents have become better at recognising power use among people around them: “I notice a lot faster if

someone is trying to manipulate others, and I notice much faster who has real power in a group of people”. This is further commented on in detail by another respondent:

I have gained an increased consciousness of the use of power in general. If I am following a discussion, either on TV, on the radio, or in my own living room, I now notice how the different people both win and lose in all sorts of power struggles. What this participation has done for me is to increase my consciousness a lot and it has triggered my interest. Reflecting on the use of power and power relationships has inspired me, because now I see and understand new aspects and sides to the people around me. In the future, I will continue to reflect on and notice power and power use.

But has this new awareness changed anything in how the respondents relate to people around them? The answers to the last question reveal that this is not the case, for any of the respondents. Most participants simply answered “No”, but one respondent elaborated a little more: “Not really. There and then, during the interview, I thought about where my position was in the system of my class and in the group of people I hang with outside school. But it is rather when I am reading a book or watching a series, when I am associating with someone else that I think about who has power and such. In my daily life I don’t think about it much”. This indicates that the result of the participation is an increased awareness that lies at the backs of their minds, without disturbing their relationships to other people.

## 5. Conclusion

This study set out to answer the two main research questions:

- 1) How do upper secondary school students experience and relate to power relationships and power structures in the TV-series *Game of Thrones* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin?
- 2) How do these students relate to the use of popular literature or films about troubling topics, in the classroom?

In addition I wished to find out if popular culture could be used to achieve a more holistic approach to teaching and language learning.

Analysing the results from two questionnaires and two interviews with seven upper secondary school students, I have found that the participants are quite conscious of the power relations

and power structures in *GOT*, but that they still seem to have blind spots, especially in relation to the more subtle methods and power tactics. Neither are they explicitly critical to what they point out in most cases. This may be attributed to the fact that they were not asked explicitly to comment on these aspects, and they may therefore have considered them irrelevant.

This is a pilot study with the additional intention of finding out if, from a student perspective, literature and films like *GOT* may be suitable for use in the classroom. The study shows that the participants are positive to the use of popular literature and film about troubling topics, in the classroom, mainly because it offers many opportunities for meaningful discussions, all the while the topics are introduced to them through a form and media which is appealing and intriguing in the first place. Often it is the other way around: the work only becomes interesting after a thorough discussion which opens up the work for the student, and the process may be tough and tiring. However, the students also remark that the use of such books and films requires careful thought on the teacher's behalf. Below is a summary of the major findings of this study, organised in sections under separate headlines:

## **5.1. Summary of Findings**

### **5.1.1. Power in General and in *GOT***

The participants of this study have a clear idea of what power is, and where it comes from, and in general terms they see it as the ability to influence others. In this the participants agree with definitions offered both by Foucault (*The Subject* 341) and Wrong (1). When it comes to the tools and preconditions of power, the boys seem to focus on money, material aspects, knowledge and skills, and position in the hierarchy. Again, this is a notion shared by Fairholm, who argues that it is impossible to consider organisation without looking to power. In this connection, the girls seem to stress personal characteristics and relationships with others above the material aspects and position, recognising that power comes from what others think of you. This is clearly what Wrong points out when he relates power to social interaction (1).

In relation to domination techniques, the study found that all participants were familiar with some of these techniques, and the two groups agreed more or less on which of these that were unfamiliar. This could be because the examples were related to the workplace or organisations, of which they have little experience. However, they are on the threshold of

adult life, and will soon enough meet these aspects. Knowing about them might thus be useful. The groups also shared opinions about which techniques were preferred by which gender. Their agreement indicates that there may be gender differences in the use of domination techniques; suggesting that males are more direct and tend to use ridicule, whereas females tend to attempt to make the other invisible.

A further result of this study shows that in terms of power in *GOT*, the participants agree largely on which characters are more powerful. The more coercive power the character displays, the higher up he or she appears on the list of powerful characters (Fairholm 12, 23). The girls additionally seemed to focus on the potential for power which a character has, not necessarily the power they have at present, whereas the boys looked to the present situation, and seemed unable to consider deceased characters as powerful, even when they were asked consider the situation in the past. A similar difference is reflected in the question about how power switches; the boys mentioned those who had lost their lives first, or those who suddenly gained something, whereas the girls focused on the changes in relationships.

In deciding what makes someone subordinate, the boys tended to focus on the lack of position, such as being born into subordination, in combination with a personality that does not seek power. This relates to what Fairholm says about power: it is shown through use, not possession (5). The girls agreed with the boys, but again stressed personality over position. In general it seems as if the two groups agree as to which characters are powerful, but not what gives them this power. This opens for interesting discussions on how social systems may give, restore or restrain the power of the individual.

In terms of the motivations behind power use, the study has shown that the participants clearly see beyond the actions of several characters, though most of the examples provided by both groups were related to the motive “meeting ego needs” (Fairholm 66). This could be because many of the motives for power use in the series are difficult to discover even if you have read Martin’s books. The constantly switching perspectives and multiple story lines add to this difficulty, especially in the novels, as you may read about a situation from the perspective of the victim of power use, and may have to wait several chapters for the perspective of the power user. Even then you may not be told much about it because that would reveal parts of the plot that Martin has wished to keep secret until later. This last aspect



is true of the TV-series as well, and thus it is not surprising that one of the boys expressed confusion about how the plot will develop and where things were going.

The study also found that both groups considered Tyrion as a charismatic character and further, that he uses this as a tool. He is admittedly presented with much wit and a devious charm, both in the books and the TV-series, so this is not surprising. The actor Peter Dinklage has been nominated thrice for his role as the *GOT* character Tyrion Lannister, securing one Emmy in 2011 for supporting actor in a drama series (Peter Dinklage). Tyrion Lannister is often mentioned as the favourite character among fans of *GOT*.

In the discussion about power based on access to resources, both groups provided many examples, but the examples were different, with one shared exception: information. Again, the boys focused on position, whereas the girls rather looked to concrete resources like money and luxury and to closeness and bonding between characters. It is interesting that the boys focus to such a degree on structural power and hierarchy, since this does not seem to be considered very important by the girls.

Some of the questions dealt with the use of power in a clearly positive manner, such as empowering others and acceptable power use. The boys' group had problems providing examples of characters that empower others, whereas the girls, quickly named several characters. In the question about acceptable power use, the groups more or less agreed that the Starks are good people who act morally. However, none of the groups mentioned the use of logic as an example of this power use, which is power use that offers the subject a real choice of action (Fairholm 20), and thus must be conceived as positive. This may be a difficult tactic to discover, because offering facts may not strike them as the use of power.

### **5.1.2. The Scenes and Power Use in *GOT***

This part asked the participants to disclose power use and power relationships as they were presented in the scenes. The groups mentioned many of the same points and apparently discovered the same tactics, but where the boys only focused on action and result, the girls also commented on how the relationships developed, and seemed to hold legitimate power above the other bases of power (Fairholm 23). Moreover, the participants disclosed that they have a good overview of different types of power use in *GOT*, perhaps aided by the hand-outs and pre-interview questionnaire. Both groups found many examples of characters that use fear

to control others, but did not elaborate, and both groups mentioned Sansa as an example of a character who acts out of fear. This is not surprising, since Sansa is one of the main characters and in a very difficult position. The series focuses on this situation, and makes use of Sansa to highlight the personality and power use of other characters, like Joffrey. It is neither surprising that the girls noted that Joffrey, despite his position, constantly acts out of fear. This means they have recognised that position does not necessarily procure a feeling of having power, even if the boys seem to agree that position is an essential cause of power. The girls additionally mentioned gender challenges, which is a topic entirely left out by the boys here, but which is present in other parts of the interview.

What is more, the boys stated that honour is a quality which is often exploited to gain power over others, as with the Starks, whereas the girls here pointed to vanity as a factor, both in relation to Sansa and Joffrey. Sansa is easily won over at first because of her fascination for beauty, high society and fancy dresses. Joffrey, however, seems to fall for flattery directed at his own person. These two characters are played by others because of their vanity. Furthermore, the girls pointed to Daenerys and her use of threats and promises to turn people and make them to do her bidding.

The study also discloses that some types of power were difficult to detect for the participants. None of the groups were able to point to persuasion or the use of logic as a tactic, perhaps because they did not regard this as power use? Similarly, both groups found it difficult to point to how powerful characters control other characters' behaviour in the series. The boys eventually mentioned the relationship between Tyrion and Bronn as an example of this, but they further commented that there is a clear limitation to the power Tyrion has over Bronn. This part showed that when they are guided by questions they are able to see nuances and thus they register how different context may change power relationships.

### **5.1.3. *GOT* and Troubling Literature and Culture in the Classroom**

One of the major findings of this study relates to the use of the series in the classroom. Here the groups pointed out that there are many good reasons for reading the novel *A Game of Thrones* in a class, and that it may lead to increased understanding and insight due to the many moral dilemmas and troubling topics. This is a point supported by Reid and Stringer: “the basic motivation for most education is that knowledge empowers” (1). In spite of their positive attitudes, the participants also addressed potential drawbacks to using the series as obligatory work: the book is long, the language difficult, and you have to read the entire series

to really enjoy it. In addition, assigned reading is often not welcomed by students per se. They wish to be able to choose for themselves. Reading excerpts, however, was a warmly greeted suggestion. This is somewhat surprising, given the comment made by one participant; that it is necessary to read it all, or watch all the episodes to understand what goes on.

Furthermore, the groups argued for the use of the TV-series *GOT*, because it is enjoyable and because you can easily see how power works, but this recommendation came with a warning: it may not be palatable to everyone. The participants especially pointed to scenes that may leave a strong impression, and warned against making it obligatory to watch for this reason.

To the question whether one should use popular culture in the classroom, the answer was overwhelmingly positive, and the participants provided many good reasons for this view. In particular, the girls focused on how strongly this culture influences youth, whereas the boys were perhaps more provoked by the idea that popular culture is not considered good enough since they enjoy it so much themselves. When faced with popular culture and film that the students have read and watched for pleasure, the motivation for working with the material may be very strong, but it may also be that the students fear that school will ruin their pleasure by dissecting their favourite books or films. This should be possible to avoid by following the students' advice here and letting the choice of text or film be optional.

From a teacher's point of view, I do not consider Martin's novels highly relevant books for joint reading projects in their entirety for several reasons: the extensive length, the fantasy genre, and the raw approach to troubling topics, to mention some aspects. Neither is it convenient to watch an entire series in a school project, much for the same reasons. Nonetheless, there will always be students who **do** read these books, and who have watched the series and for them, *GOT* may serve as reference when reading other texts, or watching films, and in dealing with topics like power, gender and racism. Additionally, these books are very versatile, blending in other genres, even poems, fairy tales and songs. This may be exploited by teachers in their approach to classical literature.

#### **5.1.4. Influence on the Participants**

As part of this study, I wished to know how the series and participating in this study had influenced them. The groups considered that the series, regardless of whether they had read it or just watched it, has had a positive effect on their vocabulary, though this is perhaps difficult to verify without having tested it specifically. Furthermore, the participation has

changed the way the participants view the characters, and it has influenced their consciousness of power. It has not, however, had much influence on their relationship to others. I am personally pleased with this result, as the aim was to increase their awareness, not complicate, or meddle with, their personal relationships.

## **5.2. Limitations of the Study**

A number of limitations need to be considered, as there are several problematic aspects related to method and process in this study. The following section deals with some of these elements.

### **5.2.1. Criticism of Method and Result**

Firstly, I might not have asked the two groups the same follow-up questions because they answered differently in the first place and there were only two girls, as opposed to five participants in the boys' group. Secondly, I provided the girls with a list of characters because the girls had problems remembering names, whereas the boys did not. This may have changed whom the girls mentioned or they may have mentioned some characters that they would not have remembered if they had to speak from memory. Thirdly, I told the girls at one point what the boys had answered, but only after they seemed to have exhausted themselves on the topic. Upon learning what the boys' group had answered, they added to their initial response. There is reason to believe that without this input their answers would have been less nuanced.

The reliability of the study is made very much more complicated by the coincidental separation into two gender specific interviews. Due to a gender bias, I may have asked the boys more questions than the girls. Naturally, the boys would first take the male perspective, and then be encouraged to consider the female perspective, whereas I may not have asked the girls to take the male perspective, causing them to focus solely on the female aspect. Moreover, it is relevant to think that because I am a woman, I immediately perceived the girls' answers as true or right, and I did not ask questions more adherent to a male mind-set because the answers from the girls harmonised with my own world picture. The boys however, probably received questions whenever I was expecting a different answer from them. Thus the boys may actually have touched upon more aspects than the girls both because of my follow-up questions and because they outnumbered the girls in the first place. Had the interviewer been male, the result may have been reversed. This difference is especially evident in the question about what gives a person power: the boys were focused on the

system, but through my questions, they eventually ended up pointing to relational and personal features as well. The girls were not asked about the system, and did not mention this either.

Yet another problem relates to my role as moderator in the interview: Listening through the recordings makes two factors clear: I boldly stated that as moderator I was not to interfere and be a part of the discussion, which I then broke with much pathos. I also fear that in some situations, I very much took on the role as teacher, since my preferred method in the classroom so much resembles the talk round the table of this interview. Thus at times, I committed the crime as interviewer of interrupting the participants, I did not let the participants finish, or else I finished for them, summing up their reflections and potentially killed all the other thoughts they must have harboured on the issue. These are all typical teacher hazards.

### **5.2.2. Power Relationships**

In the case of power relationships, there is a clear problem related to my role as teacher in the eyes of these participants: Six of the seven participants had at one point been my students and three of them were my students at the time of the interview. This may of course have influenced greatly how they answered, regardless of how strongly I emphasised that this was not school work. Both the initial talks and the interviews took place in the school building, and the participants may thus have entered the interview as students rather than participants. In addition, their answers may have been coloured by the hand-outs I gave them (appendices 3 and 11). There is reason to believe that my dual role as teacher and researcher may have caused them to perceive these hand-outs as keys rather than resources. Some answers, especially in the more general parts hint at this. Nevertheless, I still regard the hand-outs as vital to the success of the interview, as they would have sensitised the students to the topic and thus made them better equipped for the interview.

To mitigate the power relationship between us, I did several things to minimise the bias: I carefully explained to the students the purpose of the study, and this was repeated several times during the process before, during and after the interview (McKay 55). The participants were informed about how the information would be dealt with and that answering questions was voluntary. I sometimes addressed the participants directly, but I hope that the participants were not intimidated by these questions. Still I cannot be absolutely certain that the answers are honest and a complete reflection of the students' collective views, since there is group

dynamics at work as well. There may be other power relationships present in the participant group, which are unknown to me and which may influence the process and their willingness to speak freely. Although the participants seemed comfortable enough, this is difficult to tell.

In the process of interpreting the material I have had to consider all of the above mentioned factors. In this respect, *symptomatic reading* is relevant, which refers to a type of reading which takes into account both “the participants’ relationship to the topic being discussed and the social context of the interview” (McKay 55). I cannot rule out that some students gave “clever” answers they thought I would like to hear. Therefore, the participants may say their vocabulary has expanded, because they consider this the “right” answer, one that would please me, or cause me to think they are clever, not because it is necessarily true.

A further complication occurred in the boys’ group: some of the participants were perpetually afraid of spoilers because two of the participants had already read all or most of the books. At one point this made it necessary to let three of the boys leave the room whilst the other two delved into the discussion of how power changes in the series. At other times it was enough to ask the boys to cover their ears for some seconds. The responsibility was felt heavily by those participants who had read the books: they did not want to ruin anything for the others which is recognised in the frustrated exclamation: “All I can think of are spoilers! ... It is a mine field!”. It is relevant to think that these participants could have said more than they actually did out of courtesy to the other participants.

### 5.2.3. Reliability

Given all the implications above, it is prudent to question the reliability of the study. In qualitative research, “ [a] researcher may achieve credibility or internal validity by carefully recording and analysing all of the data gathered and presenting it in a fair and unbiased manner”(McKay 13). *Triangulation* is one way of achieving this (McKay 13): I used both interview and questionnaire and could thus to some extent compare the answers given since I had more than one source of data. I very carefully recorded the interview and also made relevant notes during the interview. This provided me with more answers from some of the less outspoken participants.

*Internal reliability* “relates to the extent to which someone else analysing the same data would come up with the same result” (McKay 12). I will argue that this is the case in my study, though the fact that the transcripts have been translated from Norwegian into English offers

the possibility of misinterpretation. This is in particular true of idiomatic expressions and puns that are not always transferable across languages. Some meaning may therefore be lost in translation, but in general this should not affect the result to a large extent. Whether there is *external reliability*, however, is another question, as this “deals with whether or not another researcher, undertaking a similar study, would come to the same result” (McKay 12-13). I consider this highly unlikely, as the result will depend to a large extent on the backgrounds of the students, be it their personal backgrounds, their social backgrounds, and everything which builds personality. It is the students’ personal reflections that have been investigated, not a neutral phenomenon, and given that the students had only watched parts of season 3, it will be difficult to copy **this** feature in a new group.

#### 5.2.4. Validity

The *internal validity* of a study refers to “the extent to which the findings of one study may be generalized to a wider population” (McKay 12). Although this may be true of some aspects of the study, like the popularity of the series and the effects of reading, the entire point of the study is to show what a defined group of students thinks about power in *GOT*. This may be similar to what others think, but it may equally well not be, even though there seems to be consensus in this particular group of students.

When it comes to the *transferability* or *external validity* in qualitative research, which is defined by McKay as “the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied to other contexts” (13), my study does not meet the requirements. McKay specifies how researchers need to provide a “complete description of the participants and context of the research so that the readers can determine to what extent the findings may be applicable to other contexts” (13). This means very carefully describing both the context of the research and the participants. The context is already described in the methodology section, but for the sake of anonymity, information about participants has been restricted to a minimum. The group is described in general terms, in terms of age, gender, school and whether they have read the books or just watched the series. There is additional information found between the lines in the questionnaire summaries (appendices 8 and 9), and in the transcripts (appendices 5 and 6), but the answers are meant to be impossible to attribute to the different participants. Any added information about the participants, would have further jeopardised their anonymity. It will nevertheless be impossible to copy this group both on the individual level and as far as group dynamics go, thus further information would be of limited use.

When considering the liabilities of a study listed in McKay (13), there are several problems connected to *transferability*: The selection of participants was carried out among a small group of students, and the researcher knew them from before, as their teacher. The interview took place in school, all of which may further have contributed to upholding the roles as teacher and students, not researcher and participants. An additional problem with *transferability* is the fact that these students have only seen two seasons and four episodes of season three, because that was how many episodes had been aired at the time. Consequently, it will be difficult to find a group at a later time, in which the participants have the same background and knowledge of the series. This group would necessarily have to arrive at different conclusions about power since that is one of the strong characteristics of the series; the power balance shifts fast.

### 5.2.5. Dependability

*Dependability* relates to “the degree to which the results reported in the study can be trusted or are reliable” (McKay 14). This means providing details about procedure, which are available in the methodology section, and it requires that you catalogue your findings in a manner that makes it easy to review the data. In this case, both the transcripts are in the appendix, and there is an overview of the answers from the questionnaires as well. The “rich description of the students involved” (McKay 14) is nevertheless impossible, as is discussed above. All the other steps that were taken to carry out this study are clearly presented in the method chapter, and the necessary material is among the appendix which should make it possible to carry through the same research with a different group.

### 5.2.6. Generalizability

The *generalizability* of qualitative studies is naturally a little more difficult than in quantitative research (McKay 14), since in a focus group interview, the number of participants is very small. In addition, the researcher has less control of the data collection, since one of the points of a focus group interview is to make the participants talk as freely as possible whilst staying on the topic. The researcher is moderator, not a part of the discussion, and the aim is to find out what the members of **a certain** group think about a certain issue. Thus the findings will be true of this group, but that does not mean it will be true of other groups. It may be true, however, and this may be tested if someone was to carry out the study on their own.



By supporting the findings with theory, one may reach an *analytic generalisation*, described by McKay in the following quote: “When local conditions are not controlled and structured, as in most qualitative research, the readers themselves must determine to what extent the findings are applicable and transferable to other contexts” (15). As far as gender goes, it is obviously not possible to conclude based on the data elicited from just two individuals, but it is possible to conclude based on **this** group of students. In fact, if there is one generalising aspect worth mentioning, it will be the advice given by these students about the choices we are confronted with as teachers: to select material for our students, which is both intriguing enough to catch their attention and simultaneously may teach them something important.

### 5.3. Further Potential of the Study

The research has inspired many questions for further research, some of which will be shared in this section. An expansion of this study through two sets of interviews, one before and one after would have indicated if the level of reflection on the issue of power had developed. A more balanced gender aspect would have been preferable, but given the scope of this paper and the fact that, due to logistic challenges, participants had to be recruited from a relatively small local school, this was difficult. For someone with a larger stock of students, however, this should be easier to achieve. There is reason to believe that in time, the series will be more widely known, than was the case at the time of this study. Consequently, a larger number of students should thus be available for a study.

Likewise, it would have been interesting to expand the research with a survey about how and to what extent teachers of English implement the *Core Curriculum* in their teaching. My assumption, which is based on personal experience and conversations with other teachers, is that the *Core Curriculum* is only rarely brought up in pedagogical discussions. Many teachers in upper secondary school seem fiercely preoccupied with their own subjects and instead of considering what they may gain from cross-curricular cooperation they appear more worried about losing lessons in their own classes. This does not mean that a holistic process is not there, but I do not think the *Core Curriculum* holds a very prominent place in upper secondary school anymore. When teachers cooperate, I assume that this cooperation takes place because of common aims in their different subjects, not because they have looked to the *Core Curriculum*. This would have been interesting to look into in a different study, especially in terms of literature and other cultural expressions.

A final suggestion involves a practical study on holistic teaching in a class of senior students in upper secondary school. Since the national *Core Curriculum* was introduced in 1993, it may seem as if this document has gradually received a weakened position in school. The *Core Curriculum* is not tested or evaluated, like other curricula, and may have become the occupant of office room drawers, rather than a living document. It seems unable to compete with the curriculum of the other subjects. Such a study could be carried out as a project centred on a topic like power through the use of popular culture, and in combination with other subjects, like sociology, religion and history.

#### **5.4. Educational Implication**

I already assumed, before the interview, that the students would have a lot to say as I know from teaching for 17 years, that they amaze me time and again by their very mature reflections. Nevertheless, I still wanted to see to what extent they were able to reflect, and I partly also wanted to draw attention to and contradict the idea that young people do not reflect on such issues or are incapable of it because of their young age. In comparison, I think I was a lot more naïve at the age of 18.

I hope the participants will experience that they have benefitted from participating in this study, in that they have become more conscious of how power works, conscious of how they use their own power, and perhaps they will not be so easily manipulated in the future. If this is the case, which it seems to be judging from the answers from both the questionnaires and the interview, then this study ultimately shows how the subject English may be used as a means to meet both culture and language aims and the aims of the *Core Curriculum* as well.

Through interviews and questionnaires I have studied how a group of young upper secondary school students relate to questions about power, *GOT*, and to the use of popular culture on troubling topics in the classroom. Though popular culture may not have the strongest foothold in Norwegian classrooms, is it right to uphold this bias in favour of the classics when popular culture is exactly the kind of culture which is mostly consumed by our students?

I will argue that popular culture should be given a heightened status exactly because of its influence on our youth, and thus be made useful to us in our teaching. This is even pointed out by the group of students I have interviewed for the study: the fact that so many watch and discuss this is a strong argument for its position in the classroom — and in no other subject is this as relevant as it is for English, as most of the popular culture consumed by youth today is

produced in an English-speaking context. The challenge, however, is obviously the risk we run of ruining the students' favourite literature through analysis. There is a fine balance between enhancing the joy of reading by enabling the students to see beyond the surface of what they read, and plucking it to pieces.

Nevertheless, through these methods, the interview and questionnaires, I can draw two very clear conclusions: the participants heartily welcome popular culture into their classrooms, and they are rather conscious of the use of power, once they have been asked to look into the matter. Several of the students admitted to not having given this a thought before, but were still surprisingly good at seeing when and to what purpose power was used in *GOT*.

This makes me suppose that the use of power is registered subconsciously and will determine how we act and behave around each other, but that the game itself is not consciously reflected on or even registered in our daily lives. Neither do I think that it is common to reflect on what gives someone power. It is perhaps easier to notice when **we** exercise power over **others**, when we plan how we are going to achieve something, or when we very clearly are subjected to someone else's extensive power use. It seems like the more subtle types of power use are easily overlooked.

This is where popular culture enters the picture, because if we look to the *Core Curriculum*, which has as its ultimate aim to educate a whole and complete human, and teach youth about democracy and equality, a series like *GOT* may serve as a valuable tool. The series may be used to show students how power may be exercised in a morally sound manner, and also how the students can avoid being manipulated and exploited by others. Not all students are highly motivated for *Hamlet* or *Animal Farm*, but a popular series like *GOT* could be an invaluable resource for a teacher who struggles to make the classroom a place which matters. Popular culture may even contribute to reading fluency and to the widening of perspectives, and may, in the long run, actually make the classics more palatable to unmotivated students. If I am to believe the participants of my study, popular culture is a goldmine ready to be explored.

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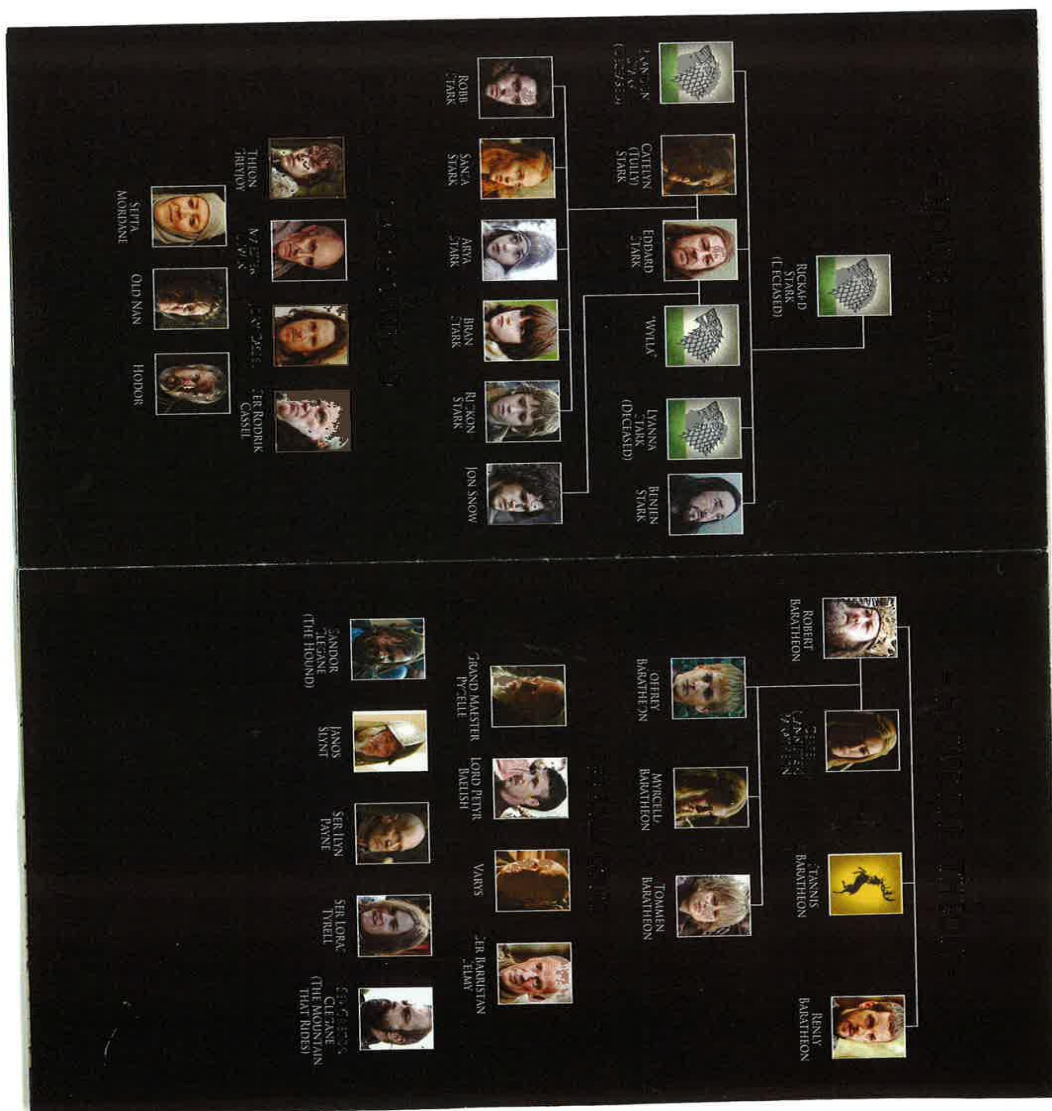
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Characters and Houses in GOT





## **Appendix 2            Plot Summary of the three First Novels**

### **A Plot summary of *A Game of Thrones***

As the title of the first book and the television series indicates, much of the plot revolves around power games and manipulation; a number of powerful men and women vie for power, using a myriad of methods and strategies.

There are three main storylines in the first book, which was published by Bantam Books in 1996. The first book opens with and centres to a large degree on the Starks. The northern family is scattered after Eddard is given the position of Hand to the king and told to come to King's Landing. His predecessor, Jon Arryn had recently and suddenly died. Jon goes further north to "take the black" like his uncle Benjen, which means he will dedicate his life and service to the Nights Watch at the Wall dividing Westeros from the frozen north. Here he befriends Samwell Tarly, a cowardly but intelligent son of a noble house. Eddard and the two girls go south, and he is now the King's closest counsellor and second in command. Katelyn stays at their seat, Winterfell with the remaining boys; Robb, Rickon and Bran, the latter is unconscious in bed after a fall from a window when the king and his family visited. This was no accident: Bran was pushed by Jamie Lannister because he saw Jamie and Cersei together. This is confirmed when a man later tries to kill Bran in his sleep. The incestuous relationship between Jamie and Cersei is treason, and what Bran has witnessed puts his life under threat.

In King's Landing, Arya starts taking fencing lessons, and Sansa is introduced to the court as Joffrey's fiancée, whilst Eddard starts investigating the death of Jon Arryn, who was married to Catelyn Stark's sister Lysa. Lysa thinks her husband was murdered. Eddard discovers that this is true, and also why: He had found evidence that Robert Baratheon is not the father of Cersei's three children. They are Jamie's, which makes Stannis Baratheon the rightful heir. Meanwhile, Catelyn leaves Winterfell to Robb and goes to King's Landing to talk to Eddard about her suspicions. In her absence, Bran wakes up from his coma but has lost the use of his legs. Robert Baratheon is then conveniently killed in a hunting accident, and Eddard offers Cersei the chance to escape with the children before he tells the council about the paternity issue. Instead, she acts quickly: Eddard is imprisoned, and Joffrey is proclaimed king. Sansa is kept in custody at court, and quite openly abused by Joffrey, who shows growing sadistic traits. Then Joffrey executes Eddard despite having promised to be merciful if Eddard wrongly confessed to treason. Arya, however, has managed to dodge the guards when they came to arrest the Starks, and escapes the capital with a northerner named Yoren.

Upon hearing about his father imprisonment, Robb leaves Winterfell under the command of his brother Bran, and takes an army south to the aid of his family. Surprisingly he wins several battles and captures Jamie Lannister. Catelyn, on her way back north again, coincidentally meets Tyrion, has him captured, and brings him to her sister Lysa in the Eyrie, since she suspects Tyrion was involved in the attack on Bran. Here Tyrion narrowly escapes execution when he chooses trial by combat, and has a mercenary, Bronn, fight for him. Together they win the support of a group of mountain clansmen, and set off to join his father in the war. Tywin orders Tyrion to go to King's Landing and take control over the menacing Joffrey as the King's hand in Tywin's stead. Then Renly announces that he is the rightful king of Westeros, and Robb is proclaimed King of the north by his men. Success comes with a price, though, to get across the river at the Twins, Robb had to promise to marry Frey's daughter, as the Freys control the bridge.

In the far north, a new King is on the rise behind the Wall, and Benjen Stark disappears on an expedition behind the wall. The men of the Night's Watch have had several reports about wights, and finally one of their own men, who were brought in dead, attacks the Lord Commander in his sleep. Jon is awoken by his direwolf, and manages to save the Commander's life. Following this a large group from the Night's Watch goes beyond the wall to find out how strong the new wildling king, Mance Rayder really is. Simultaneously letters are sent to ask powerful houses in Westeros for money and help to man the Wall.

In the East, Viserys wants an army to be able to win the throne back, and he trades his very young sister Daenerys as a bride to the Dothraki chief Khal Drogo in return for a promise of soldiers. The Dothraki are known as fierce warriors and are a nomadic people relying heavily on horses. Daenerys is given three beautiful, but petrified dragon eggs as a wedding present. Her marriage to the Khal is very difficult at first, as the Dothraki are an unsentimental and brutal people. Eventually, however, she gains both respect and love from Khal Drogo and his people, and when Daenerys becomes pregnant, her position increases in power. This irritates Viserys', and his growing impatience with the Dothraki, causes him to insult Khal Drogo so badly that the latter kills him – with molten gold.

There are several attempts to murder Daenerys, all ordered from Westeros, and Khal Drogo agrees to invade Westeros. This plan is put on hold when Khal Drogo is hurt in a fight with a rivalling tribe. The wound seems a trifle, but is infected and he falls into a coma. To save him, Daenerys visits a witch, with the result that she loses both her unborn child and her husband.

Most of her tribe now abandons her. In anger she burns the witch on Drogo's funeral pyre, and goes into the flames with her dragon eggs. When the flames have died she is unscathed and the three eggs have hatched. She now has three baby dragons, the first to be known for 160 years, and she is hailed as "The Mother of Dragons" by her remaining people.

### **Plot summary of *A Clash of Kings***

*A Clash of Kings* is the second book in the series and was first published in 1998 by HarperCollins. As implied by the title, this book focuses on the civil war in Westeros, and as with book one, we also follow Daenerys and what happens at the Wall and beyond it.

The civil war rages on, Robb is victorious, and House Greyjoy of the Iron Islands joins in the fight when Baelong Greyjoy declares himself king of the Iron Islands. Theon is sent by Robb to make allies with his father, but this fails and Theon decides to prove himself and his loyalty to the Iron Islands and attacks Winterfell, where Bran has been left in charge. When Bran and Rickon flee with the two Reeds children, the Stable boy Hodor and a wildling woman, Asha, Theon captures and murders two peasant boys to pass them off as Rickon and Bran to further prove himself. Later, Roose Bolton attacks and puts Winterfell to the torch, and Theon is taken captive.

Catelyn Stark knows nothing of what is happening at Winterfell, and travels south to offer Renly Baratheon an alliance, but instead witnesses how a strange shadow kills Renley. She flees with the other witness, warrior-maid Brienne of Tarth. The same shadow, procured by the red priestess Melisandre, is used to kill other supporters of Renley, and thus Stannis secures their allegiance. When she returns to Robb and Riverrun, her childhood home, she questions the captured Jamie Lannister.

Meanwhile, Tyrion acts as Hand of the King, Joffrey, and works to secure the loyalty and alliance to House Tyrell by offering Margaery Joffrey's hand in marriage, and Dorne by promising Myrcella to Prince Dorian Martells' son Trystan.

Arya, passing as the boy "Arry", is on her way north with Yoren of the Night watch. He has fetched prisoners from the capital to join the Watch at the Wall. When they are attacked, Arya and some friends escape, but they are later captured by the enemy army and put to work at Harrenhall, a ruined castle. Arya helps three prisoners escape with her, and one of them Jaqen H'ghar, also at Harrenhall, now claims he owes her three lives. By his help, she and her friends escape again.

Stannis's host attacks King's Landing, from both land and sea, but Tyrion has prepared well. An underwater chain traps Stannis's fleet in the harbour and the ships are attacked and obliterated with *wild fire*, a fluid procured by alchemists and best compared to napalm. In the absence of any other willing leader, Tyrion rides out in front of the army to meet Stannis's men. They manage to beat back Stannis, but Tyrion is severely wounded.

In the North, we follow the group from the Night's Watch which is progressing north looking for news of Mance Rayder. They visit Craster, an informer and a hard man who weds and beds his own daughters. Jon discovers that Craster kills any infant boy born, which explains why there are only girls and women in Craster's house. One of Craster's daughters, Gilly confides in Jon and Samwell Tarly that she wishes to leave. She is pregnant and afraid. Later the Night's Watch proceed to a stronghold called *The Fist of the First Men*. Jon and a seasoned tracker Qhorin Halfhand are sent on a reconnaissance mission to look for wildlings. They are discovered, and Jon is ordered by Qhorin to infiltrate the wildlings and learn as much as possible about them. To prove his allegiance he must kill Qhorin.

In the East Daenerys travels west towards Westeros with the exiled ser Jorah Mormont and what little is left of her army and followers. Many are lost when they cross the desert the Red Waste and when they eventually reach the city Qarth, they are almost turned away at the threshold. They are only allowed entrance because the Qartians are fascinated by her dragons. She does not manage to win their support for her quest; to lend her ships to go to Westeros. Instead, they attempt to assassinate Daenerys and steal her dragons. She is saved by two men, Strong Belvas and an old warrior named Arstan Whitebeard. These two convince Daenerys to go to with them on their ship back to the Free Cities and Pentos.

### **Plot summary of A Storm of Swords**

*A Storm of Swords* is the third book in the series, and was first published in 2000 by Bantam Books. It won several awards, and was nominated for one of the most prestigious awards for the genres science fiction and fantasy, The Hugo Award. It lost to J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Due to its length, *A Storm of Swords* was split in two parts for the paperback version, and it is the basis of two full seasons in the TV-Series. This means so far, the series has only covered the first half of book three. For this reason I will give a plot summary of only half of the novel.

In this novel, the War of Five Kings continues. Catelyn secretly releases Jamie Lannister in order to let Brienne of Tarth take him to King's Landing and exchange him for the two Stark daughters. Brienne and Jamie are captured by mercenaries supporting the Starks and to amuse themselves, the mercenaries sever Jamie's sword hand at the wrist. The captives are then taken to Harrenhall, which is now under the control of the Starks. Jamie is then released by Roose Bolton, whereas Brienne is kept for ransom, something which makes Jamie doubt Bolton's loyalty to the Starks. He leaves, but comes back for Brienne and together they travel towards King's Landing.

Robb is victorious, but violates his promise to wed Frey's daughter when he falls in love with, and secretly marries, Jeyne Westerling. His plan to return north to take back Winterfell is impossible without access to the bridge at the Twins, which is now denied them by the proud Freys due to the broken promise. When Robb's Uncle and Catelyn's brother Edmure Tully is going to marry another of Frey's daughters to restore good relations, the wedding proves to be a trap. The Freys attack the Starks, killing both Robb, and Catelyn, and capturing Edmure.

Arya takes a ship to get to Braavos, as Jaqen H'ghar has told her she can come to learn his secrets there. Whereas Davos, the ex-smuggler and loyal servant of Stannis is washed ashore after the attack on King's Landing. Saved by sailors he is brought back to Stannis's seat at the island Dragonstone where he is made Stannis's Hand. Melisandre, the red priestess, sacrifices some of Stannis's blood in a fire ceremony, and Stannis names three persons he wants dead: Robb, Baelon Greyjoy and Joffrey. Stannis also receives a disturbing letter from the Night's Watch at the Wall, pleading for help, and he decides to travel north by ship.

At King's Landing, Joffrey agrees to break off his engagement with Sansa and to marry Margaery instead. Sansa is then surprisingly married to Tyrion, on Tywin's order. Contrary to what Sansa fears, Tyrion treats her gently, realising what she must have been through. Tyrion is made master of Coin, replacing Littlefinger who is given Harrenhall as thanks for his services. Littlefinger officially travels to the Eyrie to woo Lysa who harbours an old crush for him from when they were teenagers. His plan is to win Lysa's support for Joffrey and to marry her.

Right after they have been told the news of Robb's murder, and about the death of Baelon Greyjoy's fatal fall off a cliff, the wedding is held between Joffrey and Margaery, but the celebration ends quickly when Joffrey dies from poisoning. All three men named by Stannis are now dead. Tyrion is arrested on suspicion of murder, and since Sansa is smuggled out of

the castle that same evening, as was planned some time before the wedding, she is also a suspect. Sansa is taken by Peter Baelish to the Eyrie to her aunt, who is mentally unstable; she tries to kill her out of jealousy for Peter.

Jamie and Brienne reach King's Landing, find Tommen on the throne and the general situation is otherwise very unstable. Brienne is imprisoned, but later released by Jamie, and asked to fulfil his promise to Catelyn Stark: to bring home Sansa and Arya. Jamie also helps Tyrion escape and reveals that Tyrion's first love was not a prostitute, as the father had claimed. The love was real. This deception enrages Tyrion so badly that he goes to kill his father before he flees King's Landing with the help of Varys.

Up north, the Night Watch on the Fist of the First Men are attacked by a horde of wights. Regular weapons are useless on wights, but Samwell Tarly finds a knife of dragonglass and manages to kill one. The Night's Watch suffer severe losses and retreat to Craster's Keep. There they regroup, but in a sudden mutiny, the Lord Commander is killed. Sam and Craster's daughter Gilly escape with her new-born son, whom she fears Craster will murder. In the snow and wind they make for the Wall.

Jon Snow has managed to convince the wildling king Mance Rayder that he has deserted the Night's Watch, just like once Rayder did. He learns much about the life on the other side of the Wall. Eventually he is sent on a mission to scale the Wall and attack Castle Black with a group of wildlings in order to open the gates and let the wildlings through. Instead, Jon flees back to Castle Black to warn against the attack. The Castle is badly undermanned, but they manage to fend off the first attack under Jon's command. The remaining wildling army, counting 40.000, attacks the Wall from the outside. Janos Slynt is sent from King's Landing to serve as the new Commander in place of the one who was killed at Craster's Keep. He dislikes Jon and sends him to talk to Mance Rayder, hoping he will be killed. As Jon speaks to Rayder, Stannis arrives with his army, capturing and imprisoning Rayder. Jon is then chosen as the new Commander of the Night's Watch by his "black" brothers.

In the East, Daenerys reaches Pentos by sea, and hears of slavery, which is illegal in Westeros. Daenerys buys the services of 8000 Unsullied, eunuchs trained as warriors from they were small children, and intensely loyal. She offers them their freedom, which they reject, sets the rest of the slaves free and lets her dragons burn the slave owners of Astapor. She does the same in Yunkai, but the lords of Meeren are harder to crack, and even a siege does not prevail. When Daenerys discovers two traitors among her men, Ser Jorah and Arstan, she

puts them both to the test. To prove their loyalty, they both sneak into Meeren through the sewer and win the city for her. In spite of the successful quest, Jorah is banished from the camp as she still cannot trust him; until they reached Qarth, he sold news about her to King's Landing. This deception is too difficult to forgive. Arstan, who really is Ser Barristan the Bold, and former Captain of the King's Guard, is allowed to stay due to the nature of his deception: before he disclosed his identity, he had wanted to make certain she was not as mentally unstable as her father, the Mad King was, under whom he had once served. She decides to stay and rule Meeren to avoid leaving her kingdom in the lurch, like she had done with Astapor and Meeren, and to practice being queen.

As this summary demonstrates, the plot is extremely complicated and involves a huge cast of characters. What these characters have in common is their struggle to gain or maintain power, and the corruption and brutality that accompany their machinations.

### Appendix 3      Participant Hand out about Power

This hand out on power is intended to support you in your discussion and make you aware of different types of power and ways of exercising power. You are not meant to close read it and remember it, only to read through the text for a better understanding and reference.

#### Defining power:

Power is present in all we do and in all our relationships. Every time we interact with another person, there is power involved. We use power to get our way, and to make others do as we wish even when they do not want to in the first place. This may initially sound exclusively negative. However, power use is not necessarily wrong or bad, it may be neutral, and it may be used for something good, like empowering others and making them feel important. Consequently, it all depends on **why** power is used and **how** power is used. With all these aspects, it is difficult to agree on one clear definition of power. Here is what Gilbert Fairholm has said about defining power:

There is little agreement about what power is, where or when the individual gets it, or how it is used successfully. It is clear that individual personality, as well as control over material and psychological resources, is part of power use. What is also clear is that power is pervasive<sup>8</sup>, interesting, somewhat frightening, and central to success in operating in organizational settings<sup>9</sup> (2009, p. 4).

Fairholm also made the following list, a little re-phrased for an easier understanding:

#### Power...

- involves planned action, not random action
- is a way to get a desired result, to get your way
- is measured and compared in terms of how successful it was; if you manage to win a whole group over you have much power, if you only manage to convince two of the 15, you have less power.
- happens in relationships where **one** is somehow dependent on the **other**
- is shown through use, not possession; you cannot have power without using it
- is situational; what is efficient in one situation or with one person may not be a success in another situation or with another person

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<sup>8</sup> Gjennomtrengende, altså som har kraft til å skape endring

<sup>9</sup> For å ha suksess i en organisasjon – her menes alt som er eller ligner en organisasjon, en gruppe mennesker som jobber sammen mot et eller flere felles mål.



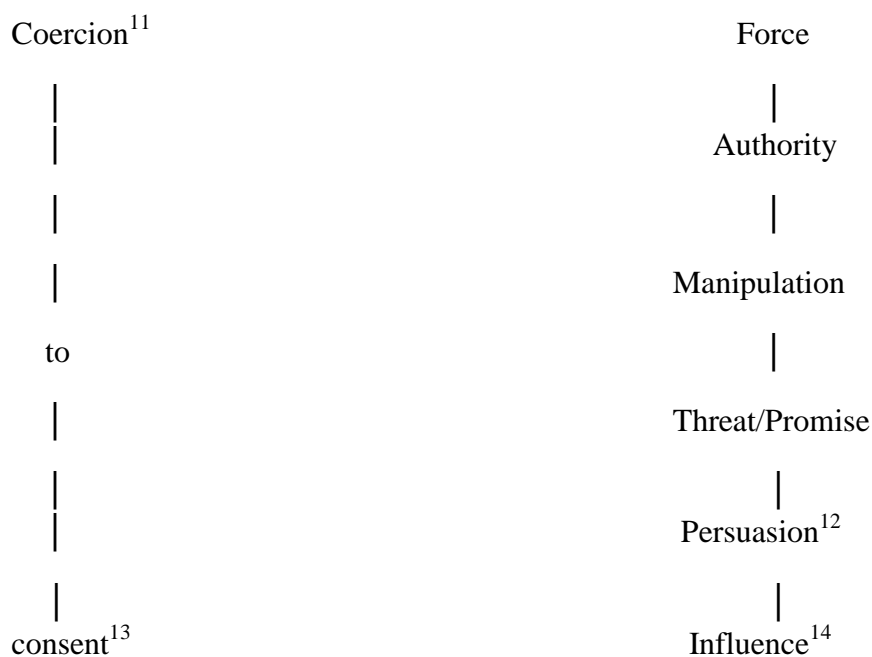
- is based on disagreement or opposition; it is only used when people disagree in the first place. If they agree, power use is not necessary (2009, p. 5)

### Types of power:

Fairholm has made a table (2009, p. 12) which shows the different types of power and what these types of power are based on (from using much (top) to using a little force (bottom))

“A basic Impact Power Model”

BASE OF COMPLIANCE<sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ ARCHETYPICAL POWER FORMS



So, here we see that power comes in different forms, the most clear power use, **force**, may include violence and severe pressure, whereas the use of **influence** is perhaps not noticed at all. Suddenly you find that you have said yes to something you originally did not want to, or that goes slightly against your principles, but you cannot say specifically what caused you to change your mind. Most likely someone used their charm on you to **influence** you in favour of their suggestion. This is also power use. Sometimes we change our mind because we have been convinced it is the right and logical thing to do. This is called voluntary **consent**, which means giving in willingly. You can probably list a number of situations in which you have tried to influence and convince your parents to let you do something they have said no to. In

<sup>10</sup> Å gi etter for andres maktutøvelse

<sup>11</sup> Å presse noen til å gjøre som du vil

<sup>12</sup> Overtale noen

<sup>13</sup> Å være enig

<sup>14</sup> Påvirke noen

the process you probably tried several of these! In short, we use power on others and they use power on us.

### Forms of power:

I have arranged the six different forms from Fairholm's model (2009, pp.16-21) into a table:

Forms	About	Examples / explanation
<b>Force:</b>	Use of physical or biological force to get a desired result or prevent a result. Very efficient – people often respond quickly and let us control their behaviour. Easy to see when it is used. The most direct form: violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cause pain</li> <li>• restrain freedom (like house arrest)</li> <li>• take life</li> <li>• Put a lot of pressure on someone</li> </ul>
<b>Threat/ promise</b>	Happens when someone obeys because they want to avoid problems and pain. Similar to force, but the target still has a real choice. What he does is decided by how much he wants to avoid the threat, or how badly he wants what is promised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Do this or else...” (threat)</li> <li>• “Do this and you will get ...” (promise)</li> </ul>
<b>Authority</b>	The source of power comes from agreement in the group on who is the boss. It may be based on charisma, on personality and on special skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shown through <b>orders</b> given</li> <li>• Often logical and following rules</li> <li>• Easy to see when it is used.</li> </ul>
<b>Manipulation</b>	Not so easily seen – the power use is hidden and therefore it is difficult to fight it. The key is to hide the real intent and to influence the person's behaviour indirectly. The target does not react because he does not know what is going on, and may even feel he has freedom and choice. Often used in combination with another form, like persuasion or influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlling information sources available to the target</li> <li>• Manipulate the surroundings of the target (Like the upbeat music in McDonald's designed to make us eat our meal quickly and leave fast)</li> <li>• Undermine someone's position, reputation or honour (e.g. lying about them)</li> </ul>
<b>Persuasion</b>	Is argument. The target weighs for or against (no threat other than logic!). This is a give-and-take form, based on dialogue, negotiating, on arguments in specific situations. It depends on the resources held: strong talkers will be better at persuasions, as will experts. A democratic form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using arguments and logic to win someone over.</li> <li>• Could start out like this: You should wear a woollen sweater because...</li> <li>• In the end the target will often think the result is the best</li> </ul>
<b>Influence</b>	Affecting others' behaviour without threatening or manipulating. Your intentions are clear, not hidden. Shows respect for others and is based on common values, ideals and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following orders because you admire or love someone, or agree with the values that lie behind the orders.</li> <li>• Behaving well so that someone will like you</li> </ul>

## List of some power tactics:

Below follows a list of tactics used when exercising power, as identified by Fairholm (2009, p. 59):

- **Deciding what will be discussed;** controlling the agenda
- **Keeping communication unclear;** what is said may be understood in many ways and thus it is difficult to go against it
- **Using your charisma** means using the respect and feelings others have for your character traits to affect their decisions
- **Forming coalitions;** means securing allies
- **Teaching/developing others** to do things (assistant!) and thereby increasing our own power.
- **Using outside experts;** means we do not have to get involved directly to get a result
- **Building a favourable image of ourselves;** means making ourselves look good/smart/powerful etc. in the eyes of others
- **Placing others in debt** to us so they will do as we like.
- **Organisational placement** Placing our allies in central positions and our opponents out on the side line
- **Quid pro quo/Negotiating trade-offs;** I will scratch your back if you...
- **Rationalization;** changing the reality (lie or leave out details) to fit your plans
- **Distributing/giving resources** to people in ways that will give us more power
- **Rewarding or punishing people** to win their support
- **Using a surrogate/ someone else** to carry out the job because they are more popular and/or will be more successful your way, or they will be unpopular and not you.
- **Training and orienting** Transmitting knowledge, skills, values, or specific behaviours to others to instil our goals, values, philosophy, or desired behaviours in them.

## Reasons for power use

Why do people use power? There are many reasons why, everything from the fun of it to the fact that it helps define you as an individual. Some people see power as a way to get what they want, and to others it is just enjoyable to see what power can do. Here are some reasons identified by Fairholm (2009, p 66):

7. to receive help
8. to get benefits (fordeler) from the target of power
9. to help making the target's perform better
10. to cause change to happen
11. for the fun of it
12. to meet ego needs (related to feelings)

Works cited:

Fairholm, Gilbert. *Organizational Power Politics: Tactics in Organizational Leadership*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009. Print.

## Appendix 4 Pre-Interview Questionnaire

*These questions are **not** meant to be answered in a very personal manner, with examples that could identify you. Answer the questions briefly. If there are questions that you cannot or do not wish to answer, you may just skip them, but mark the question through a dash or a symbol, so that I know that the question has not been overlooked or forgotten. The answers in this questionnaire are first and foremost to prepare you for the interview, but they will also give me an insight into your thoughts on the topic. The answers may be used in my report, but if so, will not be traceable to you. You may answer the questions in Norwegian or English, as you please.*

### Personal experiences and reflections

1. Have you ever experienced feeling powerless?
2. Was this due to what someone else did or said or through your own feelings/thoughts?
3. What could you have done to change the positions?
4. What could have changed the positions?
5. Have you ever felt that you were in a position in which you had power over others?
6. What do you think caused this feeling?
7. Did anything or anyone empower you?
8. Have you ever empowered anyone else? If so, what did you do?

### Power in general

9. Give examples of situations in which power is exercised
10. Name some ways in which power is used.
11. Give examples of situations in which power struggle is an issue
12. Who has more power in society today? Suggest some reasons for this.
13. Who has less power in society? Suggest some reasons for this.
14. What determines who has power?
15. What may cause loss of power?
16. What ways are there to gain power?
17. What ways are there to give others power?
18. Mention some character traits you think are typical for powerful people
19. Which character traits will make you feel less powerful?

### Ranking people or characters according to power

20. Rank the following in order, from most powerful (1) to least powerful (15):  
*Girl 8 \* woman 36 \* beautiful woman 29 \* man 30 \* teacher \* police officer \* shop keeper \* boy 5 \* man in wheelchair \* a cleaner \* a vicar \* taxi driver \* President Obama \* Michelle Obama \* an 80-year-old man.*
21. Which of the following characters from *a Game of Thrones / a Song of Ice and Fire*, are more powerful, in your opinion? Rank from most powerful (1) to least powerful (20)  
*Lord Eddard Stark \* Tyrion Lannister \* Sansa Stark \* Cersei \* Joffrey \* Arya Stark \* Samwell\* Jon Snow \* Jamie Lannister \* Littlefinger \* Brienne of Tarth \* The Hound \* Robb Stark\* Gilly\* Lady Catelyn Stark\* Tywin Lannister \* Shae\* Varys\* Daenerys Targaryen\* Theon Greyjoy\*.*

**How have you been influenced by the series?**

22. How much and what do you read in your spare time
23. Hvis du bare har sett serien, planlegger du å lese bøkene?
24. Do you study English in school this school year?
25. How has watching/ reading the series influenced your relationship to the English language, or in case you study English; the subject?
26. How has your language been influenced by the series?
  - a) Do you read faster?
  - b) Do you read more?
  - c) Has your vocabulary expanded?
  - d) If you study English in school, have your spoken and/or written English improved?

**The Use of Literature and Films about Troubling Topics in the Classroom**

27. Do you consider it right or wrong to use *A Game of Thrones* as obligatory reading in an entire class or group? Give reasons for and against using this novel.
28. Do you consider it right or wrong to make watching one or several episodes from the TV-series *Game of Thrones* obligatory for an entire class or group? Give reasons for and against using this series
29. Do you have any experience in reading problem literature/ watching problem movies in an entire class? If so, what is your opinion of this?
30. In your opinion, what reasons speak for selecting problem literature/film in school?
31. What reasons speak against using such literature or film?
32. Are there any topics or forms you think should be avoided? Which and why?

## Appendix 5 Transcribed Interview, Group 1

Ingrid: OK, now let us begin. I have already talked to you about how this will be carried out in Norwegian, because it is easier for you. So, you have been invited to a focus group interview on *Game of Thrones (GOT)*. I will talk about the purpose of the project, but first I will say something about my role here, because as you can see, there is a recorder in the middle of the table, and the reason for that is, that I will have to record what you say and then transcribe it, that is write it down, and then make it anonymous, so that the report will not say who said what, but rather that a person said that. You will also be allowed to read through the parts where you are quoted, should you want to, before I hand it in. And when the report is handed in, and I have been through a hearing, I will delete and destroy all recordings and anything that may identify you. The paper is due on 1 September and then there will be a hearing shortly after that. So I will possibly be done with everything within 1 November... This is the date I have set for the completion of the project.

It is important to point out that all the material, all the data that I gather, that is the recorded interview, the transcript and the finished interview will be destructed when I am done with the project. If I am going to keep it for longer I have to apply for that. What will be available after this date is what is published, which is my thesis, and before I submit my thesis you will have the chance to look through the parts that deal with your contribution. You get the chance to give your approval. You did sign a consent form, but that also says you can back out whenever you wish to. About the recording, it is important that you speak clearly and also that you lean a little closer to the table when you speak, because it will make it easier to hear what is on the tape afterwards. Now I am just going to check if this thing is recording – and it does! And now I have been speaking for about two minutes - about close to nothing!

Yes, you have received some hand-outs about the project, and in addition you have been given the agenda, and a set of questions. There are very many questions there, but do not despair; I do not think I will ask them all, but they will help me steer the conversation a little.

The purpose of this project is to research to “what degree a number of students in upper secondary school are conscious of the use of power, power relations and power structures as they are expressed in the book and TV-series *Game of Thrones/A Song of Ice and Fire* by George Martin, and how they reflect on the topic”. Now I am reading from the report for Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, that is SND, which is where you must apply for permit to go through with a project. I had to apply because I am gathering data for my project by recording what you say. In addition I write: “Furthermore I wish to discover what the students think about how to choose literature and film for the classroom”. This last part was not shared with you specifically when I first informed you about the project, but has been added afterwards. The aspect is nevertheless reflected in the questionnaire you answered before this interview. Well, most of you have answered it, at least! So, is *GOT* suitable to use in the classroom. Is it OK? The research question is like this: “How do upper secondary school students experience and relate to power relationships and power structures in the TV-series *GOT* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* and how do they relate to the use of troubling literature and film in the classroom?” For those of you who have seen the questionnaire, troubling literature and film is literature and film that deal with difficult topics, which is true of *GOT*. There are many nasty things here.

So, this is the purpose of the project, and then I am not focusing on private and personal aspects, but what you think and reflect upon *GOT* in this respect. What do you see? And the reason I wanted to do this is that when I first started reading the series, I was struck by how central power was; it controlled everything. You have probably seen it too, and then I thought it would be interesting to know if you see the same as I do. You are 20 years my juniors, and do you have the same experience? We are all exposed to power, we are in relationships in which we are powerful, and we may have relationships in which we almost feel powerless, depending on the situation, and who we are relating to. That is why I think *GOT* is very intriguing, because it may help us to disclose something. If we are more conscious of the things we see, we may be able to disclose when this happens to us or those around us. I think the series has a potential in that respect.

Yes, that was the introduction, and if we look to the agenda, then... I am very pleased that you are participating –very happy about that! It was nice that you were this keen on participating. So... to my role as moderator: I will interfere as little as possible. I will ask questions, but I am not part of the discussion. You are the ones who are going to discuss, not I, so I am not here as teacher, rather more like a researcher, who wants to know what you think of *GOT*. There are no key answers here, and we have already talked about the recorder, and how I will keep the data. You will be made anonymous, as far as this is possible. This is of course a small school, and people know that you have participated, so if anyone reads it, they may recognise you. But, as I said, you may have access to the report before I hand it in, so that I can change things.

You may also get a copy of the consent form, so that you have that information. Other than that, I think you have received sufficient information.

Then there is “Ground rules for focus groups”: “Keep focused!” It is important that you stay focused if we are going to get through everything in one interview. But the point is that the discussion is natural and good and that everyone participates, because you all have your own opinion and experience of what you have seen and read. At the same time you probably have things in common, but you all watch the series with your own backdraft. And try to speak one at the time, and then preferably...it says “confidentiality”, that is, you do not disclose what someone says after the interview... like “he said something really stupid” but this is perhaps more relevant with more personal topics.

Yes, then there is one thing I would like to start with, because I am now in the middle of the fifth book, and then I thought that we could have a round to hear what you have read, and how far you have come.

Simon: I have only watched the series.

Oskar: I have watched the series and read the first two of the books.

Dan: I have only watched the series.

Ingrid: Started watching season three, then?

Dan: Yes.

Karl: I have watched everything and am at the beginning of the fifth book.

Ingrid: Are you done reading, Roy?

Roy: Yes, but it was a while ago. Was done reading in 2011, and brought the books everywhere. Even on a hiking tour in the mountains. The first book got a little tattered.

Ingrid: Oh, dear! Eh... Yes I will try to note a little whilst you speak. The first questions on the paper I have handed out deal with general questions about power. **Question 1**; How do you understand the concept of power? Why don't you start, Simon?

Simon: Well... A fellow has power if he can make someone else do something he does not really want to.

Roy: I think that power is having influence over others and managing to use your resources to decide what others can or may do, so I think that money, for instance, is an easy way

Ingrid: Yes, that you have money?

Roy: Yes, access to money.

Dan: Power may be ways of influencing other people. If you are in a position where you may influence others, then you have a lot of power.

Roy: That was what I meant!

Oskar: Power is...when you can influence others, either through financial gains or that you just talk your way into power.

Roy: Well, it is harder to talk your way into it. You often associate power with money, because it is so easy to have power through money.

Ingrid: and Karl?

Karl: Yes, it is as they say; money is the easiest way; you can just pay people to do what you want, and if you pay enough, most people will be willing to do a lot of things.

Ingrid: Yes, I think you are right about that!

Oskar: There is also power... that is physical power. I mean, you do not need a lot of money, but if you are in possession of loyal people, few people will try to go against you. Like in *GOT*; the king has a humongous debt, several millions, but he still has an army which he can send wherever he wants, almost, so there is tremendous power in other people as well.

Ingrid: Would you say that power is attractive (**Question 2**)?

Roy: Yes.

Dan: Most people try to gain... well... I would say that people who have the possibility to gain power will try to get as much of it as possible and that makes it attractive.

Ingrid: Are people attractive because they have power?

Dan: Yes, I think so.

Oskar: It depends. Politicians, for example, they are rather powerful, but many are very unattractive, even repulsive, so it depends.

Roy: Many people see opportunities through the power of others. They can advance through them.

Oskar: I don't think it's the person who's attractive – it's more the power they possess.

Roy: But, strictly speaking, will not the persons then be associated with power?

Oskar: Yes, but think about the position as prime minister: many politicians want that and it is not necessarily the person in that position, but the power in that position...

Karl: It may be attractive in the way that if you get close enough a powerful person, then you may whisper into his or her ear and influence the decisions that are made.

Ingrid: So people who want power are drawn to people with power?

Roy: Same ambitions.

Ingrid: Where or what does power come from?/What makes someone powerful (**question 3**)?

Roy: In *GOT*, the society is based on the feudal system in Europe, and there you had a family who had been in a major power position for generations, owning castles et cetera, so they get power... they are born with power...

Oskar: In comparison it is like Great Britain, with lords and dukes and all that. They are born into both power and wealth.

Roy: In the Middle Ages, that is.

Ingrid: But not today?

Oskar: No, but England still has lords, and you will pay them more respect than you do others.

Ingrid: If you have a lot of money then?

Dan: Then you can work your way to some type of power. That is, if you can reach an occupational position where you have the possibility to influence, as we talked about earlier...that you can have a say. So power may come from knowledge.

Roy: Well, I just thought of one thing; the aspect of money today, is actually quite similar to the hierarchy of the feudal system. The richer you are the higher up in the system you will be.

Ingrid: But now there is less focus on succession and blood, but...is it the person with power who determines whether he or she has power?

Dan: It is what the people around him think – I mean what they associate him with. Other people give him power. You can't say "I have a lot of power", and then not be influential. Then it does not signify.



Roy: This is actually dealt with specifically in *GOT*, I mean, they say that the power is where the people think the power is.

Ingrid: Hm-hmm, **question 4**: What makes someone subordinate to someone more powerful?

Dan: If we return to what we said about being born into a position, like before, where you would be subordinate to the kings if you were born in a slum area or in a lower caste, or et cetera.

Oskar: Yes, we may say that it is in the culture.

Ingrid: What were you thinking of?

Oskar: Well, I mean, it is about... you have this from you are an infant – that they mean more than you.

Ingrid: Is it still like that? That some people are worth more than others?

Roy: Yes, some places, like the caste system of India. It is not quite out-dated.

Dan: What makes a person subject to another's power may be that one has access to a resource the other wants, or that you need that person to accomplish what you wish. Then they will have a certain power over you, because they can refuse to do it.

Ingrid: Yes! Yes! Totally! Do you know the expression "Domination techniques" (**Question 5**)?

All: mumbles of recognition

Dan: Yes, divide and conquer – like the Romans did – they gave benefits to different people so they would feel appreciated, or how was that again?

Ingrid: So did the Romans use this consciously? Do you use it?

Ingrid: Perhaps you would like to see a list of domination techniques, and see if you recognise them? Now I am handing out a paper with a list of domination techniques which were introduced in the 1970s by a professor named Berit Ås. She singled out five classical domination techniques. I have tried to expand a little on some of them, based on a note from the centre of Equality. The first is "making invisible", that is ignoring people, shutting people out, not commenting or answering others.

Oskar: I am familiar with this.

All: Everyone is!

Ingrid: So you are familiar with many of these, are you? (laughter) So have you done this or been subjected to it?

Simon: I think most people have done some of the things on the list.

Oskar: I feel that making invisible is perhaps not our favoured technique, if we are to mention gender here.

Ingrid: Yes, what do you mean by that?

Oskar: I think that the feminine side uses different methods.

Ingrid: You think that this is done mostly by girls?

Oskar: Yes, I think so.

Ingrid: Have you observed it being used?

Oskar: Yes, I see this quite often, that women try to make others invisible.

Ingrid: Is it easy to do something about that kind of domination technique?

Oskar: No, there is not much you can do, I guess. Ignore back (laughter). You may of course point it out, but the question is whether it makes it any better.

Ingrid: Yes, if you point it out, they may just continue ignoring you. The next is *ridiculing others*, and degrading others. You may use the expression: “my little friend” for instance.

(Laughter)

Roy: We dealt with this in our Russerevy. The mayor calls the other mayors “my little friend”.

Ingrid: Have you observed this technique being used?

Roy: I think it is used very... what is it called...subtly. In politics for example, but it will not just be “my little friend”...

Dan: It is an easy method to use, to degrade others based on their looks or behaviour.

Oskar: I think ridicule has a much greater effect in larger forums, since others have a tendency of joining in.

Ingrid: So the joke is on you. This is also difficult to do something about, because what happens if you try do something about it?

Oskar: You often experience more ridicule.

Ingrid: Yes, because they will often say: “Oh, it was just a joke. What happened to your sense of humour?”

Dan: Yes, and then they just continue.

Ingrid: Yes! And then suddenly you are both over-sensitive and in lack of a sense of humour.

Ingrid: *Withholding information*. That is all the others know about something but you do not.

Roy: Is that a domination technique?

Ingrid: Yes, it is, but it is... The author has specifically related this to feminism. For example women in businesses did not get the same information, perhaps it was given on a night out at the pub with colleagues, and then the decision was made without the women. They were left out of the process. Have you watched the TV-series *Friends*? Rachel finds a new job and has to start smoking, because she discovered that all the important decisions in the office are made out on the balcony where people are smoking. You get it? It is perhaps a technique that belongs in bigger corporates and businesses and in politics, but you may find it in *GOT* as well!

Ingrid: Then there is *double punishment* – that is... if you do something about this thing, you will pay for it, and if you don't you will still have to pay [for it].

Roy: That's a bit like with parents.

Ingrid: Like if you tell them what you have done, you will have to pay, but if you don't, then it is definitely going to be bad, if they find out...

Ingrid: How about *making people feel guilty*? Are you familiar with this?

Oskar: It's incredibly easy to make people do something they don't want to do, then.

Ingrid: Have you done this yourself?

Oskar: Yes, I would very much like to be picked up from the bus, and the like, but then ‘No, don't you worry, I can walk...’

(laughter)

Oskar: That one is a classic!

Ingrid: Are you familiar with this?

All: Yes!

Ingrid: Some parents use this on their children too.

Oksar: And the other way around.

Ingrid: Simon, that really made you laugh!

Simon: Yes...

Ingrid: The reason why we go through these now is that you may recognise these aspects later when we deal with *GOT*. Now some specifications: *Pirating proposals*. Someone has a good idea, but may not have a high status in the group. Then a person with a higher status snatches the idea and presents it as his own. You may have experience this yourselves?

Simon: Yes!

Ingrid: Yes, Roy, you raised a hand?

Roy: It is annoying if you tell a joke in a soft voice and then your friend sitting right next to you repeat it loudly and receive all the credit. It is somewhat the same.

Ingrid: Yes, somewhat, but it is worse if this was a really good proposal which could have given you a higher status. *Insulting and underrating* others? That is they make you feel insignificant?

Oskar: Yes, when you are insecure you are perhaps easier to influence.

Ingrid: How can you make others feel small?

Oskar: You may dominate through your knowledge, like this: "Oh, my God, don't you know even that!"

Ingrid: Yes, I can imagine there will be plenty of examples like that in classrooms...

Oskar: Yes, or with money. There are many ways of doing this!

Ingrid: Yes, *interruptions*: You are just about to tell something important and then someone just blurts out their story. And sometimes it may happen because someone is so eager, but this is actually a way of stopping people. You interrupt when they try to say something. They never get to the point – you just waltz in and start talking.

Dan: If someone does not like your proposal, they may interrupt you all the time so that you do not get to the point, and thereby you do not get to present the proposal. They do this in the American Congress. If they know that someone is going to make a proposal, they can jabber on for nine hours to keep the others from making their proposal. I saw it recently.

Ingrid: Yes, it was the election of a new leader of the CIA. In politics you find a lot of these domination techniques.

Ingrid: *Using difficult language*, have you experienced that someone has tried to make gain power over you by using a difficult language, or have you done this?

Dan: Keep the dictionary ready!

Ingrid: Roy, you said yes to both?

Oskar: This technique works very well in combination with other techniques, such as *insulting* or *underrating* someone.

Ingrid: Yes, you think it is a good combination? Effective?

Oskar: Very effective combination. If you use difficult words, people will necessarily feel stupid and just sit there and: "All right, then".

Ingrid: I just want to point out that this is not "How to become a psychopath in one easy lesson"! (Laughter) But, well observed, because most of the time these are used in combination with other domination techniques. Now we can put them aside. We have now come to power in *GOT*, and we will focus on both the books and the TV-series. We will keep to the first three books of the series, since these have been filmed, because Dan, you

expressed some concern about participating since you feared there would be many spoilers. So we will try to keep to that.

Dan: I will leave immediately if you start anything...

(Laughter)

Ingrid: But those who have read the books may perceive power differently than those who have only watched the series. So **question 6**: Who do you think of as powerful in *Game of Thrones (GOT)*? and What makes them powerful? (**Question 7**)

Simon: We may start with Joffrey – and all the other rulers.

Oskar: Tywin Lannister.

Ingrid: You may also say why you think so (**Question 7**)!

Oskar: He is the richest man in Westeros.

Dan: Yes, and he is Joffrey's grandfather, and Hand of the King. And he is older and more experienced, so it is easier to influence Joffrey since he is so young.

Roy: Tywin has it all! He is a re-known battle leader, he has the whole treasure box of his rich family, and he is the grandfather of a king!

Oskar: And he is sly as anything, and he is eloquent.

Ingrid: Yes. How about you Karl?

Karl: Well, yes, that... and well...

Ingrid: So Joffrey and Tywin are those you think represent power in the series?

Simon: Daenerys with the dragons and an army of 8000 men.

Karl: I can only think of spoilers!

(Laughter)

Dan: You must not say anything!

Ingrid: Yes, why can you only think of spoilers? Is it because power changes?

Karl: Yes! And that is so annoying right now!

Ingrid: Yes, perhaps Dan could cover his ears?

Dan: I can drive home! Then you will get more out of this!

(Laughter)

Roy: I don't think of spoilers.

Ingrid: A small spoiler should be alright, or what?

Oskar: Yes, if they are small!

(Three of the boys, Dan, Simon and Oskar are now covering up their ears!)

Ingrid: Yes, what did you want to say, Karl?

Karl: Well, I probably will be run down by car after this...

Simon: Is he done?

Ingrid: No. He is covering his ears so you may just say it!

Karl: Well, he had power, Tyrion, the dwarf, but it changed after they cut off his nose.

Simon: NO! And I listened to that!

(Laughter)

Oskar: Was it that bad?

Simon: It was not a good thing to hear.

Karl: This isn't a spoiler – it has happened already in the series!

Roy: It is a mine field!

Karl: Yes, that thing with the nose, and then he lost the power he had when he was Hand.

Ingrid: Et cetera?

Roy: Yes, a lot of things happened.

Karl: Yes, as far as I am in the books right now, he does not have a lot of power, but it seems like it will work out well. But I don't know, that's just how I think it will turn out.

Ingrid: (To the three) You may uncover your ears now! So, you have said Joffrey, Tywin, Tyrion, Daenerys, these are characters with power.

Oskar: Cersei. She constantly influences Joffrey.

Ingrid: You may also mention people who have had power, even if things happen along the way to change that. They are presented with power, like Eddard Stark, for example – did he have power?

Roy: The seven big families are just below the king [in rank], and they each have a region, which obviously gives them a high and powerful position, almost level with the king – at least in their own region. But, then there are the power relations between these families. The Lannisters have a lot of money, so they are highest in that respect.

Ingrid: So this relates to different levels. On one level a person may be quite powerful, but will still be subordinate to the king?

Oskar: Rob is also powerful, I mean, he is King of the North, since they have split the country.

Ingrid: Hush, Karl

(Laughter)

Dan: I didn't catch that (had covered his ears)! I am so pleased.

Roy: Now it starts to get really difficult! It's too much!

Karl: Perhaps we need to have a break?

Ingrid: But you do not have to speak about those who have lost their power. We can relate to the fact that they have had power at some point in time, and what was it that gave them this power? That is an interesting aspect.

Roy: Very interesting, at least in seasons two and three. Then there are those rebellions. Then there are all the regions with their rich families, the important families, they are broken up into smaller kingdoms with one king each. Now the noblest families are no longer subjects of the king and the power relations are changed again.

Ingrid: Exactly! Yes, we talked about who has given the characters power, and to sum up, we may say that you talked about position. But is there someone who does not have position, but still has some power?

Dan: Littlefinger knows everything that goes on.

Oskar: And Varys, he's a eunuch.

Dan: And when you know what is going on and you know everyone's dirty secrets you have a lot of influence.

Roy: But again – the aspect of money is there: He is extreme when it comes to finances and such.

Ingrid: It is a little cold (closing window)

(There are muffled voices, the participants joke about power)

Ingrid: You mustn't speak in a whisper, it makes everything so difficult.

(Laughter)

Karl: It wasn't awfully relevant...

(Laughter)

Ingrid (finds ground rules): Here it says; "keep focused!".

(Laughter)

Ingrid: So you consider Varys and Littlefinger as people with power, even if they do not have rank, but they do have a certain position?

Karl: Both are in the small council.

Roy: But both have gained their position because of skills and not necessarily how they are born in that system, which was how it normally happened.

Ingrid: Yes, absolutely. Which characters are subject to the power of others (**Question 8**)? You do not have to just look at the situation as it is today.

Oskar: Those who do not belong to a specific house, like regular farmers and soldiers, are at the bottom of society. You can almost do anything to them.

Ingrid: The masses?

Oskar: Yes, the Lannisters constantly tortured soldiers from the north just for fun, I don't think anyone would do that to a Lannister.

Ingrid: Yes, in Harrenhall. Are people from higher social levels in society treated differently?

Karl: They are treated relatively well in comparison. No one tortures them. They are sold for ransom.

Dan: They are valuable.

Karl: Unless you wish to state a point...

Ingrid: Which of the characters do not have power?

Roy: There are people like Janos Slynt, if you remember him? He was made leader of the King's Guards in the capital King's Landing. He thought he came to power, but he was just used by everyone, really, by Tyrion, Littlefinger, everyone, so he really did not have much power at all.

Ingrid: So he was manipulated somehow?

All: Yes!

Ingrid: Did he realise or understand that?

Simon: He got it in the end.

Roy: Yes, in the end.

Ingrid: Other characters that you think of as being without power?

Oskar: Sansa, at least as far as I have watched.

Ingrid: Yes, that is what you are supposed to base your answers on! You answer according to what you have seen and the point is that if you connect what you think to what you have seen, it is entirely relevant. So why do you think she has no power?

Oskar: She is being abused and if she says or does anything wrong, she is punished for it.

Dan: When she is just traded in for something new, you are not in position to do anything.

Roy: The main problem for Sansa is that she is a captive, a hostage, since her family is now in conflict with the throne

Oskar: She is valuable, but has no power. She is just an object to trade.

Ingrid: Yes, what do you think Simon? You are just laughing!

Simon: She almost sounds like a kind of prostitute.

(Laughter)

Simon: Eh, I just explained it a little badly, but you get it, don't you?

Ingrid: You think it seems like trafficking?

Simon: Yes.

Ingrid: Yes, others you think do not have power?

Karl: Well, there are those poor men in the Night's Watch at the Wall who are just ignored by everyone. They have problems of their own. They don't actually have a lot of say in the big picture.

Dan: Perhaps it has to do with their background, why they are in the Night's Watch?

Karl: Yes, thieves and ...

Roy: There are the slaves in the eastern lands as well. As slaves they have no rights.

Ingrid: Yes, that is true. Now I think I will stop this recorder a moment, so that the files do not become too big. There will be a tiny break.

Ingrid: Yes, we are at **question nine**, and you were talking in the break. This was very bad of you.

(Laughter)

Ingrid: It was not what we agreed upon, and it must not happen again, or else...! Yes, question nine says that, power is never constant or the same for all situations, even when the same people are involved. Give examples of situations and relationships where power switches, or characters gain or lose power. Without making too many spoilers! Dan and those who have not read the books – you must cover your ears, if you insist on introducing these spoilers.

Roy: It is what the entire series is about! That is – how they change their positions...

Ingrid: Are you frustrated now?

Karl: Shout out loudly before you disclose anything!

Roy: ... and to be able to give any clear examples, you have to include the last book as well...

Ingrid: OK, but why don't you cover your ears, and then Karl and Roy can delve into the details? Ready – go!

Roy: OK, Tyrion varies a lot in terms of power – he goes up very highly and then very far down.

Karl: He has been quite average.

Roy: But he has been on a constant roller coaster, because no one likes him, but he has managed to gain power all the time anyway, since he has a lot of knowledge and such. Then there's Robb, who disappears completely.

Someone: (indiscernible sounds and loud laughter)

Roy: Have you...

Ingrid: Oups, he heard that! You can just go on, but the others may take a break. Dan, Oskar and Simon are leaving the room now, so as to not have their fun spoilt, and Karl and Roy may delve into the details. What a comedy!

(Laughter)

Karl: Oh boy...

Roy: Whoa...scary!

Karl: But do go on!

Roy: Yes, and there is Daenerys, because she is also on a kind of roller coaster, at least in the end after she got the unsullied. She sieges a lot of cities, receives a lot of praise, and when she has a bit of challenge, everyone is against her.

Karl: And in the beginning, she is subjected to that... what's his name? Viserys. She takes...

Roy: But what is so interesting about her is that it is more about her person, and of course the fact that she has dragons. And this is a cool concept if you look at power in the series, because this is something the others do not have. It is a totally different instrument of power. It is like having an extremely massive army.

Karl: It is basically like having nuclear weapons in the Middle Ages!

Roy: Right! That's what it is! And then there are those dead kings; Renley, Robb... and things go up and down a little for Stannis too. How far did you read?

Karl: I'm in page 96 [of the fifth novel], but it's not a big deal!

Ingrid: How about Jon Snow, for example?

Roy: Yes, among the minor characters, you find John Snow, then there's Theon Greyjoy, poor chap...

Ingrid: Why "poor chap"?

Roy: Well, he makes a choice, because he has a certain position under Robb, when he becomes king, but he makes a choice because he thinks he'll have more power if he goes to his father and rebels against Robb, but that doesn't happen...It ends up...

Karl: They have a different philosophy down there [on the Iron Islands]; you have to deserve your power, it is not enough to be born into it.

Roy: Yes!

Karl: You have to fight for it.

Ingrid: So, Jon Snow, Theon, Tyrion, Daenerys, Robb?

Roy: There is something going on in Dorne as well. The northern states used Dorne in a power play.

Ingrid: Mmm.. Yes, OK, shall we call them back in? (stops the recorder.)

Ingrid: OK, then we are done with changes in power relations.

Simon: Is it safe now? Is it over?



Ingrid: Yes, it is safe now.

Karl: For now!

Dan: Yes, have you let out some steam?

Simon: Yes, aggression!

Ingrid: Say— are you a little annoyed?

Simon: No, I didn't hear anything, so I'm good. I didn't pick up a thing.

Ingrid: I could see that Oskar heard some.

Oskar: Yeah...

Ingrid: You made a face! Yes, then we have reached **question ten**: Give examples of how power is used to gain something in *GOT*. What do the characters do to have their way?

Dan: Joffrey – in the first season he impales the heads, of the Stark people in particular, to cause fear because of the riots.

Ingrid: Yes, what do the characters in *GOT* do to have their way?

Karl: Varys and Littlefinger constantly work behind the curtain and influence everything and everyone. Later we find out that they had something to do with it.

Ingrid: So what they do is hidden?

Karl: Yes, some of it, at least.

Ingrid: So power is used both in secret and in the open? Yes, Roy?

Roy: Littlefinger has so many different ways of gaining power. He has all that information about people, through his network of spies, and then he owns a brothel, which probably secures him some deals, and he is good with money. He has it all well in hand.

Ingrid: And he is a good liar, I think. If you are good at that people may wish to believe you, because... Do you remember what he said in the first season?

Roy: That the best thing Ned Stark did was to not trust him.

Ingrid: And then in the next episode...

Roy: Yeah...

Ingrid: Then he proved it. So Joffrey placed the heads of his enemies on stakes, and Varys and Littlefinger keep on doing their things. Anyone else who uses power that you can think of? How about Theon, for instance, when he takes Winterfell?

Karl: He pretended to kill them [Bran and Rickon] to demoralise people. But, they were just a couple of unfortunate boys.

Ingrid: So what kind of tactic did he use?

Karl: This is fright or shock tactics.

Ingrid: Do you find that this tactic is used often?

Karl: It is like that thing with the heads. Just about the same tactic.

Ingrid: Which methods does Cersei use?

Dan: Manipulation, she adjusts herself to the surroundings to be able to influence, to gain trust etc.

Roy: She also plays on sex a lot.

Ingrid: Yes, she does. Do you think that is coincidental?

Roy: No...

Oskar: Tyrion also uses a lot of power, among other his family power: "I'm a Lannister – respect me!" And he also uses his gift, his way with words — all the time. He's smart.

Ingrid: So, Tyrion uses many different methods, perhaps? And do you think those people who use several methods, as opposed to those who only make use of one — is there a difference in how well they succeed?

Karl: The miserable wretch who only tries to make threats to get his way...

Ingrid: Yes, who were you thinking of? Who tries to do that?

Karl: No, I wasn't thinking of anyone in particular, I just meant theoretically.

Dan: Theon!

Karl: Yes, him! He practically hits the wall; someone who can't be threatened, and then he's fucked [the participant used the English word here!]. He played all his cards.

Oskar: And it is often so, that what you use, you recognise, so if you only use force, then you do not recognise when you are being manipulated. And just a detour; Tyrion is actually quite a fighter in the books. And that is quite cool. He's one of the most varied [characters] I think.

Ingrid: Yes, he has a lot of aspects to his character.

Roy: That's why everybody likes Tyrion, I guess.

Simon: Is he a dwarf in the books as well?

Oskar: Yes, and his eyes have different colours.

Roy: Though he is not as ugly. He is uglier in the book.

Oskar: I actually find that he is a lot more sympathetic in the series than he is in the books.

Ingrid: Have you considered why they have done this?

Oskar: Well...

Roy: It is because people are going to like him.

Oskar: Tywin, for example, there is this scene in the series where he speaks with Arya, and he seems almost human, but in the books...

Ingrid: But it's not him! It's that Bolton character isn't it?

Karl: Yes, Roose.

Dan: Yees! That's right!

Ingrid: I actually think they have combined something there. They have changed a lot compared to the books. But Arya – to say something about her, do you think she has any power?

Simon: Not much.

Oskar: She has power, somehow. She is very charismatic and always in the company of someone. It seems as if people want to listen to her.

Ingrid: There was an episode where she helped three locked up prisoners escape a cart during a fire, and what happened after this?

Dan: She made friends with Jaqen H'ghar.

Ingrid: And what was that?

Karl: It was murder.

Ingrid: Did this give her power?

Several: Yes!

Dan: She could do three things, she could have three people killed just by mentioning a name and then suddenly she had a lot of power.

Oskar: I was constantly thinking: why don't you kill Tywin?

Dan: She made such friends with him [H'ghar] that if later she was to go into a tavern and say those words, someone from Esos would come.

Ingrid: There are many ways of using power, and to have your way. Katelyn Stark— do you have any examples of what she does when she tries to win through? That is— has she influenced anyone to act in a certain way?

Karl: When she releases Jamie and sends him south, she ruins the plans of that Karstark bloke, who wants to take [Jamie's] head.

Roy: And Jon Snow, Eddard Stark's bastard; she uses that tactic a lot ... ignoring and making invisible, because she could not be his mother, since he was not her son... even if Ned accepted him.

Ingrid: Yes. And at one point, she had Tyrion captured in a tavern. Do you remember that scene?

Oskar: Yes, that is family power again.

Karl: Yes, all the banner men who were there...

Ingrid: Yes, what did she actually do then? What did she do to make them take Tyrion?

Oskar: She exploited their loyalty to the House Stark. They are the Warden of the North, and that makes them the largest and most powerful house in the North.

Ingrid: So she exploited their sense of loyalty and duty. Then there is **question 11**: Power is often defined as a situation where someone has access to a resource the other wants. Give examples of what the characters try to "sell" in *AGOT* (Money, influence, freedom, sex, luxury, knowledge/information, love, protection, rank/position, honour, peace, safety). This is a long list, but by no means complete. What is it that the different characters "sell"?

Dan: Sansa, when Littlefinger is trying to get her home. When he says that if they just wait for the right moment, she will get home safely, he is trying to sell safety.

Ingrid: It's a little like having a resource and then you're trying to sell it.

Oskar: I think that Cersei sells herself a little to the previous king.

Roy: She sells herself a little everywhere, doesn't she?

Oskar: Well, yes.

Ingrid: Could you elaborate a little, without dwelling too much on details?

Karl: Those Kettleblacks.

Ingrid: Yes, that she uses them? They get access to her bed and then she has control of them.

Roy: Yes, and her cousin Lancel, and Jamie, perhaps. At least a little.

Ingrid: That relationship is somewhat special... Are any of the characters bought through a promise of influence or position?

Roy: Yes, Janos Slynt is a good example.

Ingrid: With a knighthood you are a little better than the rest.

Karl: Wasn't he promised Harrenhall?

Roy: Yes, he was made Lord of Harrenhall.

Karl: That went well...

Roy: Yes. And money.

Ingrid: How about knowledge and information? Does anyone sell that?

Oskar: Varys. He is a real information broker.

Ingrid: How about protection?

Roy: There are the mercenary companies fighting in Esos, for places like Tyr, Volantis, Bravos, Pentos etc.

Ingrid: And why does Jon Snow take The Black, do you think?

Roy: Because he is stupid. He is a bit like Sansa: He has a twisted idea of reality, I think.

Ingrid: He has an uncle whom he admires up there, right, and how about that idea of what happens when you get to the Wall? What has been his reality since he arrived at Winterfell? He is a bastard, and not good enough, but what happens when you get to the Wall?

Roy: There is a fellowship.

Oskar: A member of the brotherhood.

Roy: But things did not turn out the way he thought they would.

Ingrid: No, really not. But, what in the other /the target is exploited to achieve this end? (pride/honour, sense of justice, lust/desire, anger/temperament, vanity, ambition, fear, lack of knowledge/information, vindictiveness, grief, love, curiosity, inferiority complex). Now I have listed a lot and we are at **question 12**.

Roy: Isn't it Tyrion or Cersei who says that Jamie is the one part, the physical part of their power, and then they have the knowledge, the language?

Ingrid: Yes, but in particular I think honour is a central issue.

Oskar: Yes, at least in the North. It seems as though they do not put that much weight on that in the south.

Roy: That is because we have such a strong impression of Ned, and he is known by everyone as a man of honour.

Oskar: But I am also thinking of the scene in which Katelyn took Tyrion. I do not think a Lannister would have entered the tavern and said: 'You owe this to the crown!', they would have just said 'We will give you money.', but Stark just went in there and said: 'You are bound to me.'. It seems they are more bound by honour.

Ingrid: And now you must remember that it is a woman who says this! She is very smart in doing this. She begins... who are you and is that your sigil and who are you loyal to? She starts there and makes them say it, and then she makes her point.

Roy: So they almost feel like it is a duty to protect her.

Ingrid: Yes, obviously so.

Roy: Both because she is from the most prominent family in the region, and because she is a woman.

Karl: And in addition she is the daughter of that Riverrun fellow, Hoster Tully.

Ingrid: Yes. Do any of the characters have ambitions that are exploited by others?

Oskar: There is a good example: Slynt. We will just have to keep mentioning him whenever it is relevant.

Ingrid: How about the lack of information? Does anyone get...

Oskar: Ned, actually. It takes him a long time to find out that Joffrey is not Robert's child.

Ingrid: Maybe because it is a dirty game which he doesn't understand?

Roy: It's really not... what is it called...his area of expertise.

Ingrid: Tyrion says he likes it. He's good at it.

Roy: You have to be a little sly.

Oskar: And Ned Stark is honesty in two shoes. It doesn't work.

Dan: It's about moral.

Ingrid: Do you have any examples of how people in position control the behaviour of others. This is **question 13**. Yes, Roy?

Roy: There is a good example from one of the most recent episodes of season three, where Jon Snow comes to the Wildling king and he is about to bow to the ground for him and they do not expect this. That's just in the south.

Ingrid: But are there people with power who control the behaviour of others?

Roy: There are slaves...

Ingrid: How about Joffrey?

Dan: He and his mother.

Oskar: And Sansa, she does what Joffrey wants, so as to not be hurt by him.

Ingrid: So she needs protection, somehow?

Oskar: Yes, actually she does.

Ingrid: And then she has to behave a certain way.

Oskar: I am also thinking of that mercenary, the one that Tyrion...

Several: Bronn!

Oskar: He is there for the money, so you may say that it controls his behaviour.

Ingrid: Yes, but does Tyrion control his behaviour?

Several: No! (laughter)

Oskar: He controls his actions more than his behaviour, perhaps, because he tells him what to do. But his behaviour...

Karl: He's a little impertinent.

Ingrid: Yes a little impertinent. He is quite amusing. Then there is **question 14**: What motives and values do you think lie behind the different types of power use?

Karl: If we look to Theon, he is just... He uses force. He just threatens and fights, and this is the way of the Ironborn – a bit like the Vikings!

Ingrid: But what is his motive?

Karl: What he really wants is, to gain his father's favour.

Roy: That is the reason why he takes Winterfell: He wants the *ironprince*, to be acknowledged by his father, and respect.

Oskar: Yes, and to show that he is not loyal to the Starks.

Dan: When he arrived and he was dressed in the fancy clothes from the Starks...

(Laughter)

Ingrid: Yes, were they impressed?

Dan: No!

Ingrid: There is a very good example of someone who does not have power if you think about the scene in the harbour. They were going out on the ship?

Dan: Yes, when they left him.

Ingrid: Yes, phew! So Theon wants his father's recognition, or approval. Others who obviously have a motive, or someone of whom you may wonder: what on earth are they doing?

Oskar: Daenerys has a very clear motive. She wants to become the ruler of Westeros, an idea she has from her deceased brother.

Ingrid: Yes, she talks about her birth right. Think she said it in Quarth.

Roy: It is the same with Aegon.

Ingrid: How do you mean?

Roy: Er... No, nothing! It's kind of a spoiler.

Ingrid: Ah, yet another spoiler! Ears off!

Roy: No, it's nothing big.

Karl: May put almonds in our ears.

(Laughter)

Ingrid: Grapes are far better! Er.. You spoke before about how you think the characters with the most power are Joffrey, Tywin, Tyrion, Cersei, Robb. Perhaps you can comment on their use of power, motivation and values (**Question 14**)? Yes, Joffrey first, then.

Roy: He's the King at present.

Ingrid: Yes, and how does he exercise his power?

Simon: Violence.

Ingrid: Yes, violence.

Dan: That's the only thing, that and frightening people.

Ingrid: So he creates fear in people. Why do you think he does that?

Dan: He doesn't have much else, since he's so young. He doesn't have much else to go by, like moral or...

Oskar: And he's afraid of losing his power.

Ingrid: But the way he shows his power... Who does he mostly exercise his power over?

Roy: Sansa, perhaps?

Ingrid: Yes, what on Earth is that? Is she a threat to him?

Roy: Perhaps he feels suppressed by Cersei, or something? Some kind of trauma?

Karl: Perhaps it is something Freudian? A Complex.

Ingrid: That might be. But do you remember the birthday present Tyrion got him?

Oskar: Oh! It seems like he is a sadist! He must have experienced some childhood disturbances, or it may simply be that he is inbred.

Ingrid: But it seems like he may have some sadistic traits, at least.

Roy: But Tommen seems much more reasonable than him. But in the book, I don't think... He is presented more like a sadist in the series than in the books, I think.

Simon: To create more contrasts. Better TV.

Roy: In the books I think he seems more ignorant than mean, really.

Ingrid: But he hits Sansa regularly, or has someone else hit her for him, and that is rather peculiar, because she offers no real threat.

Roy: May be the same idea only it becomes more prominent in the film.

Ingrid: Do you have examples in which charisma is used as a tool to exercise power. Who of the characters are charismatic? (**question 15**)

Roy: That must be Renly! He is like the dream king; extremely good-looking, young and ambitious.

Oskar: Yes, and then he has that *Rainbow Guard*, and he is very appealing to the people.

Roy: Yes, a favourite of the people!

Oskar: Tyrion is also very charismatic.

Roy: But by no means the favourite of the people!

(Laughter)

Oskar: No, but he is still charismatic. He manages to talk some people over through the course of the series, quite many, and just by talking to them.

Ingrid: How about Robb?

Roy: Yes, he is a good old leader, in that he inspires people.

Oskar: He is a younger version of his father, Eddard Stark.

Ingrid: They call him "The Young Wolf". It sounds striking!

Ingrid: Do you have examples of situations in which characters give others power or resources to enable them to exercise power? This is **question 16**.

Oskar: When Tyrion gives Bronn the position Commander of the Gold Cloaks [the City Watch]. Now he can exercise power.

Ingrid: Why do you think he gave him this position?

Oskar: Because he trusts him, first and foremost.

Ingrid: Other characters who are given power?

Karl: Doesn't he send off Joffrey's siblings to...

Roy: Yes, Tyrion did!

Karl: Hmm... Where does he send them to?

Roy: To Dorne and something starting with an M.

Oskar: Do you mean Cersei's daughter?

Roy: Yes, what was her name again?

Karl: Myrcella and Tommen.

Roy: Myrcella, yes.

Oskar: And that was how he realised that Pycelle was corrupt. Very smart method, by the way.

Ingrid: And at the Wall, does anyone get power or resources there?

Roy: They do.

Karl: The only, or the one with the most power there is the Lord Commander. They have elections, don't they?

Roy: Yes, they have elections, but the one who is elected still has absolute power, so he can do what he likes with this power.

Karl: They elect dictators!

Ingrid: Yes! Do you have examples of power that is used for a good purpose, where there are good intentions behind the use of power? This is **question 17**.

Dan: When she [Arya] has Jaqen fulfil her three wishes so that they can get out of there [Harrenhall], then the intentions are good on their part, but it isn't so for the others.

Ingrid: Yes, a bad thing for the others.

Oskar: Robb Stark was elected king – he didn't ask for it.

Ingrid: How about Daenerys? She has a clear agenda. What does she want?

Dan: People that can fight for her.

Ingrid: Yes, but she has an added aspect which means a lot to her.

Dan: Three dragons?

Ingrid: Yees...

Oskar: Yes, that thing about women.

Roy: Revenge for the Targaryens!

Ingrid: And has this thing for slaves.

Several: Yes!

Roy: Yes, she freed 8000 slaves in the previous episode! Everyone knew that, right?

Ingrid: The intention was good here.



Dan: Yes, except she still killed all the others.

Roy: Yes, all the slave owners.

Ingrid: But **question 18**; what do you consider as acceptable power use? Who are representatives of this?

Roy: In *GOT*, it seems as though everything that leads to the Greater Good, is acceptable.

Dan: What then, is the Greater Good?

Roy: Yes, what if the road [towards the Greater Good] is a little too dark to reach it?

Ingrid: Varys answers the question “What do you want”, and then he says “peace”. If that is the Greater Good? But do you have any examples of characters exercising acceptable power use?

Roy: There is Ned.

Oskar: I would not say that Tyrion has done anything super bad, either. He is a little arrogant sometimes, but he does not hurt anyone who does not deserve it.

Roy: He has the mind set for it – because of his upbringing, at least. He is a little like Jon Snow – he has never quite fitted in.

Oskar: But he is like that in spite of the family, really. At least so far [in the series].

Roy: Yes...

Ingrid: How about Stannis? Is that acceptable use of power?

Roy: He is like for the Greater Good no matter what. That’s Stannis.

Ingrid: So he does not consider the circumstances?

Roy: He’s a little like Ned Stark, as well, keeping his word all the time. At least that’s what I think Stannis was like. That he kept his word, or?

Ingrid: Mm-hmm.

Karl: He cut off Davos’ fingers because he was a smuggler, even though he saved his entire fleet in...

Roy: Storm’s End.

Ingrid: Yes.

Karl: He cut off his fingers because he had been smuggling.

Roy: He should actually have cut off his entire hand.

Ingrid: He follows rules to the letter.

Roy: There is one such character in almost every fantasy series; one that follows every rule. I have noticed this when I have read [other fantasy books].

Ingrid: And is this acceptable – the way they behave?

Roy: In the books, many think this is unacceptable, it is considered callous, and these characters never really succeed.

Karl: They are a little immoral, perhaps.

Ingrid: Yes, because they lack the ability to consider the circumstances, and you need that as a human being.

Roy: It makes it all so inhumane.

Ingrid: Yes, now there will be a little break from the questions and you will get to see some scenes from the series. I would like you to read through what it says here, whilst I make the DVD ready. This will be the questions dealing with forms of power and power tactics. You will get to see some selected scenes and if you could try to notice the following: Who has power? Why do they have power? How do they use their power? Who gives in? Why do they give in? Do you need a break before we watch or are you OK? I am going to stop the recorder now.

Ingrid: OK. So..Oh, I almost switched to English here...The scene we are going to watch is from episode nine, season one when Ned Stark is in his cell and is being visited by Varys. Now I'm going to pause the recorder whilst we are watching and then you will discuss the scene afterwards.

Ingrid: OK, we have just finished the **scene** where Varys is visiting Ned Stark on his cell. I asked you to pay attention to who has power, why they have power, how they use their power, and who gives in and why. Because you all know how things turned after that conversation? How did things go?

Oskar: Badly. At least for Ned.

Karl: Heads were rolling...

Ingrid: Heads were rolling, in spite of...

Dan: He tried to do the right thing.

Ingrid: And why did he do that?

Dan: To save his daughter, so that his family could get away. It was not for himself, but for his family.

Roy: May I just continue? Yes, what was it that he said first? I don't know if he played on his life first, or was it the realm? What was it that he threatened with first?

Dan: "For the realm".

Roy: Yes, first he said something like "for the realm". He said that, [Eddard should] do the right thing for the realm. He wanted peace. The next thing he did was to try to talk to him about losing his life if he does not say those things. And the last thing he tries is to threaten his daughter. That is what eventually works.

Ingrid: So, like we talked about earlier; they have a resource they may bargain with?

Dan: It seems like everyone has something they can lose and this is what all the others will play on.

Ingrid: Isn't that like in real life too? That we all have something?

Dan: Yeah...

Ingrid: Now you have said a lot about how power is being used, and why did Varys use his power here? Why did he try to make Ned give in?

Oskar: Why? He wants peace!

Ingrid: Yes, but why does he want peace? This will be his motivation.

Dan: He's probably not the biggest champion...

(Laughter)

Oskar: Besides – peace gives stability.

Ingrid: Yes, and what does he like?

Oskar: Sitting down with a glass of wine, perhaps relaxing?

Ingrid: This is a lot easier in times of peace!

Roy: Oh, well...

Ingrid: Roy, you say oh, well? Oh! Right!

(Laughter)

Roy: Did anyone finish the books yet?

All: No.

Roy: Well, then it's... er.. no.

Ingrid: You can just... I mean, you can just spoil it for me...

Karl: I don't care so much either.

Ingrid: OK, the rest of you; close your ears!

Roy: Well, because Varys's final aim is obviously not peace. Not really. He works a little with this and a little with that.

Karl: Well spoken, Roy!

Ingrid: Yes, because I didn't get a thing, did you!

Karl: No!

(Laughter)

Roy: It doesn't matter, but the thing is, he gets a little more interesting, perhaps.

Ingrid: Ok, then you understood a little more of that scene and we have seen who gives in and why.

Simon: Are you done?

Ingrid: Yes, we're done! Would you say that Ned has power in this situation?

Dan: Yes, He has the chance to influence through not giving in to Varys, and that will in turn be a problem for Varys.

Ingrid: So he has a choice, then?

Oskar: At least he thinks he has one.

Roy: But isn't he the one with the power, really?

Ingrid: Yes, how so?

Roy: Well, everything relies on his choice, so he is actually the one with the power

Ingrid: That's a good point.

Karl: Yes, he has the choice.

Ingrid: First I thought that he would not give in, because the scene stops before you get to the place of execution. OK, now we will watch the next [scene], so I will pause it [the recorder].

Ingrid: Yes, now we have just watched the **scene** where Tyrion and Bronn bump into some tribes in the forest. This was also from season one. Did you recognise examples of power use?

Oskar: There was strong manipulation at play.

Ingrid: You think? From Shagga, then?

(Laughter)

Oskar: No! From Tyrion.

Ingrid: Yes, what did he do? Which techniques did he make use of?

Dan: First he played a lot on humour to try to get off the hook, and maybe a little on what we have mentioned before, money: that they (The Lannisters) are very rich, and perhaps to mock them, he says that they are so poor they have nothing.

Karl: In addition he questions their courage and honour; that they run and hide every time someone rides through the forest.

Roy: There are some similarities to the scene with Eddard and Varys. He tried out different methods to convince them. First he tried honour, then money, then power. In the end it was [indiscernible] that won them over.

Ingrid: But Tyrion wasn't the only one to use power here – there were others as well!

Dan: Physical power by hitting Tyrion in the face with his axe to frighten him.

Oskar: That was Shagga.

Ingrid: And were there threats as well?

Dan: Yes, and he used ridicule by letting the remark fall: “The halfman can dance for the children”.

Roy: I was about to say that!

Ingrid: So, there are many techniques in play here, and it is interesting that you point out that Varys and Tyrion use some of the same techniques. That some of the same things happened.

Oskar: They try different things to see what works.

Ingrid: But they also understand each other quite well, don't they?

Dan: Tyrion is a little tell-tale, as is Littlefinger. When he has information he will use it to his own benefit, or rumours, etc.

Ingrid: OK, then I am pausing the recorder again, whilst we watch the next scene.

Ingrid: Yes, then we have seen [**the scene**]what happened right before Robb gathered his troupes to go south. There was a type of power struggle here. Yes, can you comment upon what you just saw?

Dan: At the end he [Robb] plays on honour again, by referring to the breaking of promises, of going against your lord.

Roy: There was also physical power use.

Ingrid: But did Robb do that?

Karl: It was strictly speaking carried out by a well-trained wolf!

(laughter)

Roy: They have a certain connection, so I don't know: was it Robb?

Karl: I guess it was how he trained the wolf.

Roy: But Theon's reaction did perhaps make a difference. But I don't know if that was the reason why the wolf attacked.

Ingrid: Indirectly you may see this as a situation in which you have an assistant that you have trained to do a job for you, if you were to turn the wolf into a person it would perhaps be a bodyguard or something similar. But were there other examples of trying to make someone do as you wish? What was Robb's reaction when the other man said “If I am not made leader I will take my men and leave”?

Roy: Then he threatened him.

Ingrid: Yes, there was a threat.

Dan: He [Robb] said he could just go and do as he pleased, but he would eventually come after him.

Roy: And he started calling him an “oath breaker”.

Ingrid: This man- was it Umber? He addressed Robb in a particular manner.

Dan: Yes, he said he was so green he pissed grass.

Ingrid: It’s like saying “my little friend”.

Karl: Young and inexperienced.

Dan: He [Robb] has never been in a real battle. He [Umber] was a seasoned leader, who had been to war and had experienced everything.

Ingrid: A type of ridiculing, then. Who would you say is the strongest authority here?

Oskar: That will be Robb, at least after the wolf took the fingers! He showed that he had power.

Karl: That other one... Well, Greatjon yelled – like a gorilla!

Ingrid: Yes that is a good point.

Dan: It seemed like Robb knew that he was in control, that he controlled it more, and he was quite calm, whereas the other one, like Karl said, he just yelled and shouted to be extreme. Perhaps [it was] to cause fear?

Ingrid: It has to do with the balance of power too. Does the one who shouts have less power?

Several: Yes!

Roy: But about that shouting— Didn’t Robb stand up first? He got up from his chair and that is something of the same.

Ingrid: But without yelling! So in this scene it is quite clear who is most effective in exercising his power and who gets his way?

Several: Yes!

Ingrid: OK, then I am pausing it again.

Ingrid: Yes, then we have just watched a **scene** from the first episode of season two, where Joffrey celebrates his name day. Yes what did you see? Did you see any use of power?

Roy: There was physical power use, force.

Oskar: Joffrey

Roy: By Joffrey.

Ingrid: Yes, did he carry it out himself?

Roy: No, he had others do it for him, but it was still Joffrey.

Oskar: And then there is Sansa, who manipulates. She sits beside him, and whispers in his ear.

Ingrid: Yes, do you think he discovers that he is being manipulated?

Oskar: I don’t think so. I think he is so arrogant that he will not notice.

Ingrid: Then, does she actually have a little power in that scene?

Karl: Well, Sansa in cooperation with the Hound. He protects her when he sees that Joffrey is getting worked up.

Dan: If Sansa had been the only one to say it... Joffrey immediately questions what Sansa says, but complies when she is supported by someone with more physical power than himself.

Ingrid: So he relies on the Hound. So the Hound actually somehow contributes to empowering Sansa?

Dan: He's the one who carries out all the physical abuse in the beginning.

Roy: Then there is Tyrion who uses very many domination techniques both over the Hound and Joffrey"

Dan: He [Tyrion] generally seems to care little about what Joffrey does and is not afraid. He ridicules him, and sometimes he even hits him.

Ingrid: Yes, there are some examples of that!

Oskar: At the end there he also withheld information.

Ingrid: Yes!

Oskar: About why he was there.

Dan: Even if he is the king

Oskar: And he ridiculed the Hound.

Roy: And he also used a type of ridicule when he offered Sansa his condolences. Sansa's father was declared traitor by King Joffrey, and he [Tyrion] just disregarded that and offered his condolences to the daughter of traitor.

Dan: He might also have done that to be a little more arrogant to Joffrey.

Ingrid: Yes, he is perhaps one of the few who dares to set Joffrey straight.

Oskar: I think Joffrey feels rather small there, especially when Tyrion says: "Well, I'm here to work".

(Laughter)

Dan: This is one of Tyrion's strongest traits; he ridicules. We saw that in the scene from the forest; the first thing he did was to use humour, because he doesn't have a lot else he can do, really, since he's a halfman.

Oskar: A lot of people think of him as ridiculous, just because he is a halfman.

Roy: But it is a good method of defence: Ridicule improves the mood. Everything is safer that way.

Oskar: He says this to Jon Snow; he must turn his weakness into his strength, so he does very well.

Ingrid: And what Sansa does – What does she play on when she suggests that Sir Dontos should rather become a jester?

Roy: That is humour, again, I guess.

Ingrid: Yes, but what does she do? Joffrey likes to make others feel small, he likes to ridicule others.

Dan: Being a jester is perhaps not the best position...

Ingrid: But better than being dead, perhaps?

Dan: Yes.

Roy: At least in Sansa's opinion.

Dan: Sansa said that he must not get a quick death.

Ingrid: Yes, but do you think she meant it like that?

Dan: No, but perhaps Joffrey did.

Karl: He has that sadism...

Ingrid: Yes, she has understood what he is like, and then she uses this knowledge.

Roy: That is what Margaery does now – in season three.

Dan: She consequently plays on that and manipulates him completely, mostly on the sadistic aspect.

Roy: Yes, on his personality.

Ingrid: Yes, because she has figured him out.

Dan: She speaks to Sansa. They find out early that she does not want to say anything bad about him because she's terrified.

Ingrid: So being a good judge of character gives one power. I think Tyrion says that as well. Yes, so who would you say has the most power in that scene? Who shows most power? Who is more effective in the last scene? Yes, Oskar?

Oskar: Definitely Tyrion! He uses many domination techniques and he generally seems to be most powerful.

Dan: In this scene it actually seems as if Joffrey has very little power, because the orders he gives, which were to demonstrate his power, like executing Sir Dontos, are not carried through.

Karl: Tyrion just entered, dominated and then he just left.

Ingrid: So the authority Joffrey possessed in the beginning...?

Dan: it disappeared when Tyrion came in.

Roy: Tyrion always had Joffrey on the defensive. He made Joffrey answer questions, and as soon as Joffrey started asking questions, Tyrion just left. That way he has more authority than Joffrey.

Ingrid: If I had stopped the scene before Tyrion entered, and you were asked to point to who has the most power, what would you say?

Dan: Then I would have said that Joffrey was the most powerful, because he got to give orders, and say something, especially if you had stopped the scene before Sansa said anything.

Ingrid: No, we only have about 20 minutes until you have to leave, so we have to hurry up a little. We are going to talk about different types of power and power tactics in general. Yes, we have talked about who uses force and such, and which of the characters use force (**question 21**)?

Oskar: In this scene, it's obviously Joffrey.

Ingrid: It doesn't necessarily have to be this scene!

Oskar: And then Theon, and Robb in the other scene.

Roy: And most of the kings, really.

Dan: The biggest authority figures, because the most important method in the series seems to be pressuring someone into doing something. You have more power if you can force someone to do something.

Ingrid: And when you are in position to pressuring someone.

Roy: That's just it: The kings have high positions, so they do not need to use more subtle ways. They can make it simple.

Ingrid: Did Theon have authority?

Roy: No, that's perhaps the reason why he failed.

Dan: When he had taken Winterfell and was standing there giving his speech, they knocked him over the head because they were tired of listening to him... It seemed as though his companions only shared his plan for a while and then they just wanted to leave.

Ingrid: Who of the characters do you think your characters act out of fear of aggression and retaliation from powerful characters? This is **question 22**. Yes, Oskar?

Oskar: Sansa.

Ingrid: Yes, and it's rather obvious!

Oskar: She is afraid of Joffrey.

Roy: And Arya, I guess.

Oskar: And Daenerys in the first season.

Ingrid: Yes, what were you thinking of?

Oskar: "You don't want to wake the dragon".

Ingrid: Yes.

Roy: Was that Viserys?

Ingrid: Yes, that's right, and Arya, in which connection do you mean...

Roy: The same as Sansa, really. Same thing.

Oskar: And Cersei for the king, actually, in the first season. He slapped her in that tavern.

Ingrid: Yes, and how about Gilly? That's a rather special situation. She is one of Caster's daughter/wives.

Karl: She's the one with the baby... Yes, because he kills the boys who are born and she wants to avoid that so she leaves with Sam.

Ingrid: You have perhaps not come this far in the series?

Dan: That's just where we are now – it was in the previous episode. Almost the last thing to happen.

Ingrid: Do you have examples of characters that use of threats and/ or promises to gain control or power? This is **question 23**. I mean both here; threatening someone or promising someone something.

Oskar: Tyrion does this to the tribes people. Or, he promises them land, and Varys threatens Ned Stark about his family.

Roy: Tyrion does the same thing to Mord, his captor in the Eyrie.

Oskar: Yes, and he promised Bronn, or whoever wanted to fight on his behalf... he promised them money.

Ingrid: But the point is you need resources, that you are able to promise someone [something]. Or support, or?

Dan: Money is central yet again!

Ingrid: Yes! And often there will be alliances. Do you have any examples of that?

Dan: Finding a common enemy...

Karl: Robb consented to marry the daughter of that horrible man.

Several: Frey!



Karl: That didn't go too well...

(Laughter)

Ingrid: He got to regret that... Or are you not quite there yet? I have not seen all the episodes.

Roy: No.

Simon: Oh, shoot!

(Laughter)

Ingrid: Oups! Sorry.

Roy: What!!! He didn't get to marry her!

Ingrid: Yes, a real bummer.

(Laughter)

Ingrid: **Question 24:** What examples of manipulation can you identify? That may be undermining another's position, dishonouring others, manipulation of environmental surroundings, flattery, for instance. Does anyone use this here?

Oskar: Everyone, really.

Ingrid: Who makes use of this the most?

Oskar: We have mentioned them already, haven't we?

Roy: Wasn't there an incident where Littlefinger was approached by Cersei and two guards?

Ingrid: Yes! I had originally planned to show you that one!

Roy: And then she just threatened him. Perhaps you could show that one?

Ingrid: I don't think there is time. I have some questions left.

Oskar: That's when she says: "Knowledge isn't power – power is power!"

Several: Yes!

Ingrid: And then she only did that to show him. She didn't arrest him, just said "Take him, or maybe not". There is of course a threat in that. Are there any characters that use manipulation more often than others here? This is **question 25**.

Roy: Tyrion?

Oskar: And Littlefinger.

Roy: And Varys

Dan: The gossipers

Karl: Those who are a little more subtle.

Oskar: Cersei.

Ingrid: Who are often victims of such a tactic? This is **question 26**.

Roy: Janos Slynt?

(Laughter)

Ingrid: Yes, but why is he such an easy victim?

Dan: He is really not entitled to a position of authority, and when you want a lot of power and fast, it is easy to be influenced by that.

Roy: He lacks the support of a family.

Oskar: So does Theon.

Roy: Yes, that's the same thing: He doesn't have the support of his family, so everything falls to pieces.

Ingrid: Then you have a strong ambition, and become an easy victim.

Dan: It is easy to be influenced when you only have things you wish for, but do not consider if you have anything to lose.

Roy: Ambitions may make you blind.

Oskar: And he thinks about it all the time – that it's his birth right to be a leader, but he has never considered if he really deserves it, because he has not done anything for it.

Ingrid: Yes, and if he is suited for it.

Oskar: Yes, exactly.

Ingrid: And he has a sister who is ten times his superior

Oskar: Rock-hard!

Several: Yes!

Ingrid: There was an amusing scene which I also considered showing to you, when they are in the harbour...

(Laughter)

Ingrid: She has so much power and he has none, or that even more embarrassing scene... Well...

Roy: And etc.!

Ingrid: But which characters make use of persuasion and logic to gain power? (**Question 27**)

Dan: Tyrion, again. He persuades most people to do things for him. He rarely uses force, he does not really have any physical power.

Ingrid: The only one he hits is Joffrey!

Dan: But Joffrey is not exactly huge.

Oskar: I think about Tywin. He has a lot of power, but he does not really have to use it. Everybody knows that he has it, so he does not have to do anything.

Ingrid: And he is probably quite smart as well. OK. Now we have reached a new topic: The use of troubling literature and film in school. And this is also an aspect I wish to discuss in my thesis, that is whether it is OK to use this in school. By troubling literature or troubling films, I mean literature and film that deal with difficult topics, or topics that may be personally challenging for the individual. And I will claim that *GOT* fits into that category, if you look at the themes and the content. Examples here may be literature about crime, substance addiction, sexuality, prejudice, violence, death, abuse, mental problems, and ethical dilemmas in general. So **question 28** reads: Would you recommend reading *A Game of Thrones* in a full class? What reasons for and against do you see? May reading an excerpt be an option?

Dan: Both yes and no. It may be repulsive to some people considering the violence, and...I have not read the books, but if I consider the series, in terms of sex and violence, it may be repulsive.

Roy: Well, there are five books, and you said how many pages? 6000 pages?

Oskar: No! 4600 pages.

Roy: That will be tiring to read in a class.

Ingrid: Yes, but how about if you read just one, for instance the first (**Question 30**)?

Oskar: Yes, but one book is often 800 pages long. That may be a little too much. Yes, if you consider that it must be read in a couple of months, then 800 pages are too many.

Dan: And then all is connected.

Oskar: I just wanted to say that it's rather heavy reading.

Dan: If they are anything like the [TV-] series, then everything is interrelated and after the first season you are left with very little. Even some episodes into season three I do not know very much!

Ingrid: But perhaps people will be inspired to read more?

Dan: But usually, with forced reading, that just it: It is forced. And when the book is this long, and like he said – it's perhaps even heavy, then it is possibly not a good choice for school.

Oskar: I have to admit it: As soon as I am faced with the phrase: you have to read this book because the school says so, I get a bad taste in my mouth. I don't like being told what to read.

Roy: No! We don't like forced reading!

Oskar: Exactly! For example, if I had gone to the library to find a book, I might have found *A Game of Thrones*, but if anyone had said "You have to read this!", I probably would have said "No...don't want to."

Ingrid: So this is a book which the students should be allowed to choose to read?

Dan: Yes, at least if there is a deadline for the reading. Then it will be like: Oh, no I have to start reading so that I will finish in time, instead of enjoying it.

Ingrid: Yes, it is long. Ok, now we running short of time here. Do I have the time to ask one more question? **Number 29**: Would you recommend watching episodes from the TV-series *Game of Thrones* in a full class? What reasons are there for and against this?

Karl: Of course we would! It is fun!

Dan: It is good, but like I said in the previous question, it may be repulsive to some.

Roy: It is 18+, is it not?

Ingrid: No, 15!

Roy: Really?

(Incredulous laughter and mumbling)

Roy: Seriously?

Dan: This is Norway!

Karl: Have to put one of those disclaimers on it: 'Should anyone feel uncomfortable at the sight of rolling heads, they must leave the room'!

(Laughter)

Ingrid: So you think it should be rated 18, or? Is that what you think?

Roy: Yes. (Laughter)

Oskar: We are quite liberal in Norway, if you compare with the rest of the world. This is the case with blood, but first and foremost sex. It is rated 18 in the USA because of the sex scenes.

Ingrid: But not because of the rolling heads?

Oskar: Oh, no!

(Laughter)

Dan: "It's just animation!" [in a funny voice]

Karl: "No they swap actors as they proceed with the series. Why do you think they just disappear?" [in a funny voice]

Ingrid: In some milieus so-called popular literature or popular culture is not regarded as good enough, and thereby not wanted in the classroom. What do you think of this? (**Question 31**)

Karl: If *GOT* is not good enough, they can just go to\_\_\_\_\_!

Ingrid: Ingrid: I cannot write that in my manuscript! Do you think it is any good then?

All: Yes!

Oskar: And it brings up many topical issues!

Dan: Like Roy said in the beginning, about the feudal systems. You learn about how it is structured, what it was like in Europe before. So you gain an insight into that aspect and royal houses and such.

Oskar: I read somewhere that they compared *Lord of the Rings* to *GOT* and they found *GOT* so much better, because *Lord of the Rings* is fantasy with an aspect of drama, whilst *GOT* is drama with an aspect of fantasy, so it is a lot more relevant.

Roy: They are very different, those two. You can't really compare them.

Oskar: They are both fantasy, guess that's it.

Ingrid: This is the last question, **number 32**: I must ask if *AGOT* has influenced on your relationship to English?

Roy: I have read all of them in English.

Karl: So have I.

Ingrid: And have you been influenced by it, you think. That is your language?

Karl: My vocabulary has improved a little.

Dan: Yes, a little broader vocabulary.

Ingrid: That was the last question. And I will close this interview. Thank you!

## Appendix 6 Transcribed Interview, Group 2

Ingrid: Yes, it is Wednesday and 1<sup>st</sup> of May and this is round two, or that is, this is the second interview, this time with only two students. Yes, welcome to this interview. The recorder is in the middle of the table, and you have perhaps read the information which I handed out, and something about the purpose of the interview? I will read from the report for Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, that is SND, which is where you must apply for permit to go through with a project. In that (report) I wrote: “The purpose of this project is to research to what degree a number of students in upper secondary school are conscious of the use of power, power relations and power structures as they are expressed in the TV and book series *Game of Thrones/A song of Ice and Fire* by George Martin, and how they reflect on the topic. Furthermore I wish to discover what the students think about how to choose literature and film for the classroom. The research question: “How do upper secondary school students experience and relate to power relationships and power structures in the TV-series *Game of Thrones (GOT)* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* and how do they relate to the use of troubling literature in the classroom?” So, those are the research questions and the purpose of the interview. So what I do is to collect relevant information to my thesis through these interviews.

Yes, we may start with the agenda. I have already started by saying why you are here, and what happens first is that I will give some general information, and then say something about the ground rules we need for this interview to run smoothly. Now, this is not so problematic given that there are just two of you, but we will go through them and in the next section you will say something about how much you have read or watched. Then there will be questions related to *GOT* and scenes for you to comment on, and finally we will talk about what you think of using this in teaching, before we sum it all up.

What is important to point out is that all the material, all the data that I gather, that is the recorded interview, the transcript and the finished interview will be destructed when I am done with the project. If I am going to keep it for longer I have to apply for that. The paper is due on 1 September and then there will be a hearing shortly after that. So I will possibly be done with everything within 1 November. This is the date I have set for the completion of the project. What will be available after this date is what is published, which is my thesis, and before I submit my thesis you will have the chance to look through the parts that deals with your contribution. You get the chance to give your approval. You did sign a consent form, but that also says you can back out whenever you wish to. Any questions?

Molly: No.

Ingrid: My role here is not to participate in the discussion, but rather to be a kind of moderator: I will ask questions that will take the discussion further, try to keep you on track, but interfere as little as possible. We have already talked about the recorder, and then it is OK if you lean a little closer to the table when you speak, and refrain from fluttering the paper about too much, because it will make it so difficult to transcribe afterwards. As far as possible I will also keep you anonymous, but it is known that you have participated in the study, and if someone should read the thesis they will know who participated, and since there are just two girls, you will be easier to identify than the boys are. But then again – you will be given the opportunity to give your approval before I submit it. I would like a gender perspective in my thesis, that is – there may be differences as to what girls and boys point out. This will also make it possible to identify you.

So, then there are the “Ground rules for focus groups”: This should be fair enough: “Keep focused!” However, I want the discussion to run its course, and I would much rather have a conversation than an interview! And now there are only two of you, so both will naturally participate in this conversation. Trying to speak one at the time should not be too difficult either. And then I must encourage confidentiality, that is, if someone says something that is meant to be confidential, you should keep that in mind. The things we are going to discuss may not be very personal, so that will perhaps not be a problem. Now I have reached number five on the list, and I have to ask: Molly, have you only watched the series or have you also read some?

Molly: [I] watched the series and read a little of the first book.

Anna: I have only watched the series.

Ingrid: So that means you have actually come equally far?

Both: yes

Ingrid: Because this was a problem in the previous group that some had read all the books and thus knew more. That could be problematic in terms of spoilers. Many were nervous about that. I have read the first four and am halfway through the fifth. I have watched seasons one and two, but I will not interfere, so that should be all right. Yes, then I think we will just start, if you do not have any questions right away?

Ingrid: Well, then we will just start. You have already carried through a questionnaire. Only some of the boys had done that so therefore I did not ask them any questions related to that. It was meant to serve as inspiration, to make you more conscious of things, and reflect on aspects, since I did not give you the interview guide in advance. I think perhaps now that you should have had it [the guide] before, but that is something I will have to discuss in my thesis! So, the first question reads:

Ingrid: **Question one**; How do you understand the concept of power?

Anna: Then I think that you have the possibility to influence decisions, that you have the opportunity to make decisions, or that you have great influence.

Molly: I agree.

Ingrid: Would you say that power is attractive (**question two**)?

Molly: Yes, I would say it is.

Anna: But then it is... When you have power you also have a great responsibility. When many people want that responsibility, power is attractive. You wish to be part of the decision making. But it also comes with clearly negative aspects.

Ingrid: **Question three**; Where does power come from? Or What makes a person powerful?

Molly: Other people make you powerful.

Anna: Well, it may be anything! It may be family ties, economy, it may be social status...

Molly: Intelligence!

Anna: Yes, and charisma.

Molly: Looks.

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: But you said something first; "other people", you said?

Molly: Yes, one cannot... If you are powerful or not has to do with how other people relate to you. I could say that I have a lot of power, but if no one agrees with me, I will not get very far.

Ingrid: You can actually see that in the series. We will come back to this later. Now, what makes someone subordinate to someone more powerful (**question four**)?

Anna: It is the opposite of what we said before. The person is either unwilling to take the power position, or it may also be that people just do not listen to that person.

Ingrid: Yes, Molly, what do you think of that?

Molly: Could you repeat the question?

Ingrid: Yes. What makes someone subordinate to someone more powerful? That others exert their power on you...

Molly: It depends on whether or not you want power. It is a question of will.

Ingrid: Do you know the term domination techniques? (**Question five**) Can you comment if you recognise or identify with any of the examples? I am going to hand it out....Well, you immediately answered yes! (Laughter) So, this is a hand-out which says "Domination Techniques". Domination techniques were popularly known in

the late 1970s. Berit ÅS also published a book that became rather well known. She identified five techniques, but there are many others within these five. I have tried to expand a little [on some of them], but we can start with the first. I thought it might be interesting to hear if you could identify with these examples. The first is making invisible, that is ignoring people, shutting people out, not commenting or answering others.

Molly: If we recognise these?

Ingrid: Yes, have you experienced it, or seen it being done?

Molly: Oh, yes!

Anna: Yes, we have!

(Laughter)

Anna: Definitely!

Ingrid: yes, to both questions?

Anna: Er... yes...

Ingrid: Yes, do you find that they are commonly used?

Molly: Yes, particularly among girls, perhaps. We are good at using domination techniques.

Ingrid: That is what the boys said as well! And *making invisible*, is that a technique mostly applied by girls?

Both: Yes.

Ingrid: If one is exposed to this, how does one feel?

Anna: You feel degraded. Like you don't mean anything.

Ingrid: So, the next is *ridiculing*, that is that you degrade others, you may use the expression: "my little friend", or express negativity through body language.

Anna: I have actually experienced that very rarely. I don't think I have used it myself, but there have been occasions when I have been sarcastic, to be a little cheeky to others.

Ingrid: And do you act like that towards people who are equal to you or to those under or over you?

Molly: Perhaps to those who are equal, because it makes it easier to create a gap [between you]. You simultaneously make yourself great. So you create a kind of....

Ingrid: You kill two birds with one stone?

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: Have you witnessed others exposed to this?

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: Have you seen it in *GOT*?

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: We will return to this more specifically later. Then there is the point that says *withholding information*. And now, this is of course... the source of this is the Centre for Equality in Norway, so it [the examples] often deals with how women experience life at work, or in organisations. Withholding information, if decisions have to be made, will be essential. I don't know if this is something you are familiar with?

Anna: When I think about withholding information, I think mostly about politics and such; the cold war. But it has happened that messages have not been passed on and that one has not received sufficient information.

Ingrid: Was this done consciously, do you think?

Anna: No, or yes, once, but this also happens very rarely. Perhaps it happens more when important decisions have to be made. I don't think this is for trifles.

Molly: But to draw the example from girls, it may be....that is who do you tell your secrets to? That may be quite central.

Ingrid: That you shut people out by what and who you tell things to?

Both: Yes!

Ingrid: I used this example in the other group: I am very fond of the TV-series *Friends*, and there is an example when Rachel has to start smoking because all the important decisions in the office are made out on the balcony where people are smoking. And when they come back in they have decided what they are supposed to do, what kind of collection they will go for, etc. So eventually, Rachel has to go out there to become part of this process. She was not aware of it in the beginning. I don't know if you have seen this episode? You may have this at the back of your minds when you watch the scenes later. Er... *Double punishment*, that is whatever you decide to do will give you trouble. If you do this, there will be problems, if you don't there will be problems. To women it has often been like this: if you inform about a thing you are in trouble, if you don't there is still trouble. If you are at home taking care of you baby, you get problems at work – this has to do with gender equality, and if you don't you are a bad mother. Are you familiar with this kind of thinking?

Anna: No.

Ingrid: This belongs to occupational life, perhaps. How about *making people feel guilty*?

Molly: Yes, that one is definitely familiar!

Ingrid: And efficient?

Both: Very efficient! (laughter)

Ingrid: Have you been exposed to it?

Molly: Yes, absolutely!

Ingrid: A classic!

Anna: My mom, or, no, not mom, she has a real temper, so she does not do that a lot...So me and my brother think it is fun to tease her, whilst daddy gives us a guilty conscience instead. I think he is very much aware of how he can make my brother and I stop. Instead of telling us that he is angry he will say that he is disappointed and such. And then I do get a very guilty conscience.

Ingrid: And you stop what you were doing?

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: So then we will expand a little on those domination techniques: *pirating proposals* and then presenting them as you own? Do you recognise that?

Molly: To a certain degree.

Ingrid: Experienced it?

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: How did that feel?

Molly: Absolutely not good.

Ingrid: And did you speak up about it?

Molly: No, because I felt it was kind of childish to say: "Hey, that was my idea!"



Ingrid: And this is often what happens! You feel a little silly, and think that nobody is going to believe me anyway, and then I will be a petty little jerk. Therefore it is very efficient. You present your idea, perhaps too quietly and then someone just grabs it. ... Er... *insulting and underrating*, this is related to ridicule. Have you experienced it or seen others being treated like that?

Molly: Yes, I have seen others have..., and I have experienced it, but perhaps more...that some have done this to others. I think that one is more of a boys' thing.

Ingrid: That making invisible is a typical domination technique for girls? Is that your opinion as well, Anna?

Anna: Yes, the boys are perhaps more obvious when they use these domination techniques, whereas with girls, it is more below the surface.

Ingrid: A common factor here is that it is often a little hard to speak up against it, since very often it will be met by: "Are you that sensitive?" Er... interruption as a domination technique?

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: You have perhaps both experienced it yourself and witnessed it?

Molly: Yes, and it somehow works the same way as making invisible; you feel that what you have to say is of little importance.

Anna: I completely agree!

Ingrid: Have you experienced that it was used consciously?

Molly: Yes!

Ingrid: How about *using difficult language*?

Molly: Yes, somehow I can say that I have done this myself.

(Laughter)

Molly: If I have been with my friends and some smaller kids have bothered us, we have used difficult words so that they would not understand what we were saying.

Ingrid: And did they get tired and give up?

Molly: Yes, eventually.

Ingrid: How about you, Anna?

Anna: I have used it many times, often to show that I am a little smarter, or superior. You somehow sound more important when you use a difficult word

Ingrid: And did it work?

Anna: Yes, but it rather depends on the words you use. You have to be careful that you know what the words mean, if not things can go quite badly!

(Laughter)

Anna: But it has worked sometimes.

Ingrid: And then you are very conscious when you do it?

Anna: Yes! Usually I just talk without considering so much what I say, but in some situations I need to assert myself and then I may use a more difficult vocabulary and terms that are not so common.

Ingrid: When you are about to lose a discussion?

Anna: Yes!

(Laughter)

Ingrid: This is relatively familiar! But keep those domination techniques in mind for when you are working with those other questions. And then I have to ask: Have you had the time to read through those papers about power that I handed out before the interview? Were they difficult?

Anna: A little.

Ingrid: This is interesting for me to know, should they have been in Norwegian, do you think?

Molly: Maybe.

Ingrid: Yes, let me see... We are now going to talk about power in *GOT*. And now we are going to keep to the first three seasons and books, since these are the books that have been filmed so far. This is perhaps not as important to point out to you since you have come equally far. But then there are the questions, and you have answered [some of] them in that questionnaire before the interview. You have ranked the persons. Originally I had planned to compare with what they said in the questionnaire, but I did not, so therefore I will not do that here either, to make it as similar as possible. Yes, so who do you think have more power in *GOT*? (**Question six**)

Anna: Well, for one, there is Joffrey. He is the one who is in power at the moment, so it will be very exciting to see how things develop.

Molly: He has a very, very visual kind of power. It is very obvious...

Anna: Yes.

Molly: But when I think of power, I immediately think of the Master of Whispers, Varys, because he has so much influence.

Ingrid: Yes, clearly! So Joffrey and Varys. Others that you feel have power?

Anna: One who does not have real power yet... I am so bad with names... I can't pronounce it...

Ingrid: Daenerys?

Anna: Daenerys, yes, because she has the dragons, she has something the others don't and which they very much would like to have. So... She is someone the other people with power should look out for!

Ingrid: Clearly! So Joffrey, Varys and Daenerys?

Molly: And Joffrey's grandfather!

Ingrid; Tywin.

Anna: Did you see the previous [third] episode?

Molly: Mm-hmm

Ingrid: Now I will fetch an overview for you, so I will stop the recorder a little.

Ingrid: Now I have handed out an overview of the central houses [from the DVD]. I did not do that with the other group, but they were so many that they could remember the names without too much trouble. Yes, so Joffrey, Varys, Daenerys and Tywin are the characters you have mentioned so far.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Ingrid: Why do you think Tywin is powerful?

Molly: Just through being Joffrey's grandfather he may influence him a lot. And then... Was he ever king?

Ingrid: No, he was the King's Hand.

Molly: Well, he has had a lot of power, he is experienced.

Anna: If I could mention something from the previous episode... It seemed like Tywin tried to form... He said that Cersei and Tyrion had to marry... So he has an enormous influence on his children, whom again have powerful children. He is above them and may organise everything.

Ingrid: So he decides a lot?

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: And you are allowed to refer to people who have lost their power at this point in the series, but who previously had power. They don't have to have to be people of power by today's status. So Joffrey, Varys, Daenerys and Tywin are people you consider powerful?

Anna: Yes, and Eddard Stark. He used to be powerful, at least where he was. Because he was respected and well liked, it gives him a sort of power. When people respect him...

Molly: I see that she... no... just wait a little... hm. No.... I have to give it a thought...

Ingrid: Would you like to have a small break to look at the character map?

Anna: Yes!

Ingrid: Then we will have a short break whilst the girls study the map of the important houses in the series.

Ingrid: OK, Yes, people with power in *GOT*?

Molly: Now, I don't remember her name, but the girl who will be Joffrey's wife...

Anna: The new one...

Ingrid: Mmm.. the new one.. Margaery?

Molly: Mmm...She is absolutely... She may not have very much power, but you get the impression that she will get it, since she understands how she can manipulate Joffrey. Through that she may gain a lot of power, and then there is her grandmother, who in turn influences Margaery.

Anna: Because we see that Margaery has...for Sansa had very little power when she was with Joffrey, and that is because she let herself be subordinate. She let him control her. Whilst Margaery is perhaps more sly. She knows which buttons to push and Joffrey falls for it so she can actually do what she likes, whereas Sansa did not have that opportunity since she was so controlled by him.

Ingrid: Are there others in the series that you consider powerful?

Molly: Not that I can immediately think of.

Anna: Hodor...

(Laughter)

Ingrid: Who...In house Lannister, are there others there, or no?

Anna: Yes, Tyrion, or...I do not consider him powerful as such, but he has the possibility to be powerful. He is very good at bribing people, and he has much knowledge, and where many are very direct and more brutal in exercising their power, he compensates for his weaknesses by being very smart

Molly: And the fact that he is kind also gives him respect, he cares about people. But he could have had a lot more power if it were not for the fact that he is suppressed because he is a dwarf.

Anna: Tywin is not exactly kind to him.

Molly: But Cersei also has a lot of power, and it will be interesting to see how things develop between Cersei and Margaery.

Anna: I think Margaery is going to take over a little. Cersei used to manipulate Joffrey before, but now Margaery is taking over that role.

Ingrid: So manipulation is a neat domination technique?

(Laughter)

Molly: Very neat!

Ingrid: We can look at **question seven** a little, because you have mentioned rather many, and are there others that you would like to mention before we move on to the next question?

Molly: No.

Ingrid: It may interest you to hear what the boys said – in comparison, since you did not get to hear what they said?

Molly: That would be very interesting.

Ingrid: Then I will find it [my notes]. The first they mentioned was Joffrey, just like you did, and then Tywin, er... Daenerys because of the dragons, and they mentioned Tywin since he was the grandfather and the richest... and Tyrion, and Cersei, and Robb was mentioned... Varys, yes, those were the characters they mentioned, so you have actually named more or less the same, but they did not mention Margaery, and the names did not appear in the same order. Because they mentioned Cersei quite early, really. Many had to cover their ears out of fear for spoilers, because power changes all the time, right? And then Littlefinger was mentioned as well, as someone powerful. I don't know if you agree with that?

Molly: Partly.

Ingrid: But he wasn't the first that sprang to mind.

Both: No.

Anna: But he has spies and follows everything that happens closely

Ingrid: So what gives them this power? You have mentioned it to a certain degree, but would you like to elaborate a little here?

Molly: There are very many different reasons for their power. To comment Joffrey first: He is only powerful because of his title, and... that he can act in a brutal way, so there is fear. There is nothing to stop him, and that gives him a lot of power.

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: Because this is a particular type of power?

Anna: But he is made vulnerable because he makes many enemies, and that may be dangerous to his position. But it is efficient, the power that he exerts. So I am just so excited...

Molly: It is efficient, but how long will it remain efficient?

Anna: Exactly!

Ingrid: Are people impatient with this type of power use?

Molly: Yes, people are not going to put up with it. He's stepping too hard on those under him. And what makes Tywin powerful is his influence on Joffrey and all the others- children and grandchildren. And his experience... He knows how things are done.

Anna: They are wealthy. The Lannisters are known for their good economy, and that can make it easier to get out of tricky situations. And Targaryen – it is basically the dragons and her strong will that gives her power.

Molly: I would like to add that it is interesting to see how she develops her power: When she bought a large army [of slaves], she gave all the soldiers a choice, and this makes them respect her more, they like her better.

Anna: They see her as a sort of saviour, someone who has saved them, and they are indebted to her.

Molly: Compared to if she had just bought them and been done with it.

Ingrid: You have partly answered this before when you named the characters. Have you anything to add? [Both shake their heads] But Cersei – what gives her power?

Molly: As I already said, she is able to influence Joffrey. But also with Tywin... she may not always be heard, but she has the chance to speak. She was the queen and so she had a lot of power through that.

Ingrid: You talked about how some characters were very obvious in the way they used their power?

Anna: She is not so obvious. It may have something to do with being a woman. That the king has the executive power and she, as wife, remains more in the background. So her option, if she wants power, is more about influencing the men around her.

Molly: But compared to the other women... I think, if I do not consider Daenerys I think that, apart from Daenerys, who is more of a warrior, Cersei is a little tougher than the other women, more clear.

Ingrid: Who were you thinking of then?

Molly: Then I am thinking of Katelyn Stark, for instance. She may have a lot of power, but she is quieter. And Margaery.

Ingrid: How does Katelyn Stark use her power?

Molly: She is perhaps more humble. She says what she wants, but she is more humble and more respectful of those in power. When Robb became King of the North, for example, even if he is her son and she therefore has quite a lot of power over him, she immediately gives him power.

Ingrid: Yes, you may remember one episode when they are in a tavern? She is on her way back north. Then she meets Tyrion, and he recognises her. She has him taken and captured. Do you remember how she did that?

Anna: First she tried to cover herself. Then he came in and I don't quite remember what happened after that, but I guess she said her name, or...?

Ingrid: Yes, they recognised her, so she just had to say her name.

Molly: Yes, yes!

Ingrid: But then she directed herself to them, one at the time.

Molly: So she did not use herself as a person of power, but she played the others.

Ingrid: She said: "I recognise your...".

Molly: sigil!

Ingrid: Yes, and "who are you loyal to"? So what did they answer and what was she appealing to?

Molly: She knew that the others...

Ingrid: Then there is something to do with having to be loyal to her and she made them take him. And that is a different way of exploiting your power; that you appeal to people's loyalty. Yes, **question eight**; Who in the series are subjected to the power of others?

Anna: Sansa, because she does not have such a strong character or personality and she is not willing to do anything to gain power. Perhaps she accepts that some people are above her and that some people have more power than her and then she lets things pass.

Molly: It is interesting to compare Sansa and Arya. Both are little girls, but Sansa is very soft and feminine and it does not seem like she particularly wants power. She wants to find a husband and yes, live happily. Arya, on the other hand, wants things to happen.

Ingrid: She says this to her father as well; she does not want to become a little lady.

Molly: But she is hindered by the fact that she is little and a girl. That stops her.

Ingrid: But she has power?

Molly: Sort of, perhaps a little...

Anna: I think at least that she has potential power.

Ingrid: So, Sansa is the character you feel is the most subordinate of the characters? It may also be that in some situations characters are subject to other's power, but are there others that you can think of?

Molly: Yes, actually all the women, except Daenerys, are subject to the power of others.

Ingrid: How do you see this? Is this somehow expressed?

Molly: Just the fact that to get their way they have to sneak about shows this.

Ingrid: And how are women used in the men's power play?

Anna: It could be to form alliances between families, intermarriages, like now Cersei has to marry, I don't remember to whom.

Ingrid: There were several candidates, I think...

Anna: They are somehow like pieces in a game.

Molly: If we look at how Tywin marries off Tyrion...It is very obvious that Tyrion is suppressed, because he is married off, just like a woman.

Ingrid: But what about Robb, then?

Molly: Yes, that is the same thing, that's true.

Ingrid: So the children then...There is perhaps not such a big difference between the boys and the girls in that respect, but **question nine**: Power is never constant or the same for all situations, even when the same people are involved. Give examples of situations and relationships where power switches, or characters gain or lose power. This question did not go well with the boys' group. Three of the boys had to leave the room. There were many things they had to be wary of, and they kept covering their ears. But do you have any examples of changes in power?

Molly: The first thing I think about is when Daenerys and Khal Drogo marry. In their marriage it is easy to see that her power position changes a lot, both how it develops in relation to the people, that is how she gained outward power but also how she eventually gained power over him.

Anna: There is Viserys. He first thought that he had a lot of power, that he was the Dragonborn and then he died when they poured molten golden over him. So he was not the powerful, and she, it appears that she is unhurt by fire, this makes her the Dragonborn, and gives her a lot of power.

Ingrid: This is quite interesting, because she was relatively unsentimental when that happened? "If he were a dragon it would not have killed him".

Molly: But I understand that, because he had really not treated her well at all!

Ingrid: So did he exert his power over her?

Molly: Yes, in the worst ways.

Ingrid: So Daenerys and Viserys - there you see clearly that power has changed? Others?

Anna: Eddard Stark, he was the Hand of the King, for Robert, and then Eddard started to pry a little and discovered that Joffrey is not really Robert's son.... And he was perhaps not as discrete as he should have been, considering that Joffrey has violent tendencies, so he was beheaded in the end.

Ingrid: Yes, but who was it... You said that regarding Joffrey, he was not discrete enough, but who did he tell?

Molly: Was it not.... him there? [shows on the map of Houses].

Anna: Did he perhaps tell.... I can't remember.

Ingrid: He told Cersei - out in the garden.

Anna: Oh? I can't remember that!

Ingrid: In the garden because he wanted her to flee so the children would not be killed.

Anna: Yes, but then I think that somehow, perhaps he lost a little power when he was going to be the King's Hand, because he had more enemies then, or people around him who either wanted his position or wished him gone, since he is seen as a threat. So he gets power, but is also incredibly vulnerable.

Ingrid: He is far away from home, so I think you are right about that.

Molly: Jamie Lannister. He was quite powerful at first, was he the King's Hand?

Anna: No.

Ingrid: No, he was in the King's Guard. The Gold Cloaks.

Molly: Yes, yes, yes! He was quite powerful first, but now he is down and out.

Ingrid: And what changed things for him?

Anna: Was it when Bran saw him with his sister? And then Katelyn suspects that he was the one to push Bran out of the window? And then he was captured, but I don't know if that has anything to do with his power. But by becoming a prisoner, he does lose power.

Ingrid: And what has happened now, in Season three?

Anna: They cut off his hand.

Ingrid: And which hand is that?

Molly: His sword hand.

Ingrid: And is this central, do you think, in relation to his power?

Both: Yes!

Molly: Very central.

Ingrid: Would you like to know what the boys said?

Both: Yes!

Ingrid: The boys mentioned Daenerys and some mentioned Theon. Now I do not know how far you have come in the series?

Molly: Yes, yes! He is a bit of a roller coaster, is he not?

Ingrid: What is his problem, then?

Molly: His biggest problem is first and foremost that he doesn't know where he belongs. He was first with the Starks, and he was not very powerful there, but he was respected, and then he went home to the Iron Islands, where he had no actual power. And there he got false power.

Ingrid: False power, you call it? What do you mean by that?

Molly: He was fooled to think he had more power than was the case. He thought he had power and did...

Ingrid: He had someone whispering in his ear, had he not? What he must to do and such.

Molly: Yes, yes, he had that man... or what were you thinking about?

Ingrid: The one who said what he had to do when he had taken Winterfell.

Anna: He bit off a bit more than he could chew, because you need a proper basis for your power, and he did not have that. You don't suddenly get power just like that. You need something to build upon, and he did not have enough of that.

Ingrid: and it became rather obvious, how things fell apart for him?

Molly: It was kind of... His identity conflict is very obvious, because he is at Winterfell and wishes to have the respect of the people there, but then he tries to do things the Iron way. He tried to introduce the Iron customs to show them...and this is just an unfortunate mix.

Ingrid: He tried to gain respect in two different ways?

Molly: Yes, or he demanded respect.

Ingrid: But respect is perhaps not gained in similar ways in the two groups?

Both: Mm-hmm.

Ingrid: Ok, then I think we will turn to power use.

Ingrid: So, give examples of how power is used to gain something in *GOT*. What do the characters do to get their way? (**Question 10**)

Anna: It may relate to treason, that you stab someone in the back.

Ingrid: Yes, does anybody do that?

Anna: Yes, I feel that in connection with Eddard Stark, Joffrey stabbed Sansa in the back because he promised to show mercy. He got to show her how powerful he is: he is so powerful he can murder her own father.

Ingrid: So that was one way – that you trick someone. I can name the characters you mentioned as powerful, and then you can reflect on how they use their power. It was Joffrey, Varys, Daenerys, Tywin, Eddard, Margaery, Tyrion, Cersei...Yes, those were the characters you named. For example, how does Daenerys use her power?

Molly: It is like I said, she actually has two very different sides; she is either very masterful and strong, stating clearly that "I have dragons, I have something you do not!", and she may say horrible things like "I will burn down all your cities if you do not do as I say!", but she also gets her way when she gives her soldiers the choice [to stay with her or leave].

Anna: She shows a lot of respect to the people who follow her.

Ingrid: She shows other people respect?

Anna: Yes, she shows them respect and therefore she manages to keep them, they are more loyal, when they get something in return

Ingrid: Does it have anything to do with charisma and such?

Anna: She has to be brave, especially since she is a woman, so she has to prove that she is strong enough to handle the job.

Molly: And she has to show it more than many of the men have to...



Ingrid: Yes, I will just find that one... Here is something that I have handed out before, about different types of power. You mentioned Tywin as well – how does he use his power? Perhaps that was not such an easy example, it is maybe easier with Tyrion?

Anna: Tyrion, that may be persuasion.

Ingrid: That he persuades people?

Anna: Yes. He promises money and bribes people to make them his friends, if you get what I mean?

Molly: He is also the one who says: “A Lannister always pays his debt”.

Ingrid: Varys, you said that he has power, but what is it that gives him this power?

Molly: He is so influential, and he knows a lot, he knows things, he is not insecure, and has a lot of confidence.

Anna: But it is a little hard to tell whose side he is on. It seems like he is just playing sometimes, to achieve what he wants.

Molly: It was Eddard Stark who asked: who do you really serve? And then he just answered that he served the realm. So it is a little tricky to see what his plans are.

Ingrid: We will watch that scene afterwards. But Cersei, how does she use her power, when she wants to achieve something?

Molly: With Joffrey, she uses her authority, because she is his mother. She uses her position in the family quite a lot.

Ingrid: But she also has people work for her, in secret. What does she use then?

Anna: Were you thinking of spies?

Ingrid: Well, yes, both that and people whom she wants be in positions where they can do things for her.

Molly: Were you thinking of Sansa, when Joffrey and Sansa were getting married, when that was the plan? It was quite interesting to see how Cersei treated Sansa. She showed her a lot of superficial love and care, saying “little dove” and “you are so beautiful, this will be wonderful”, and “I will take well care of you but you must remember to show that you are worthy of Joffrey by doing this or that”.

Ingrid: She was made a tool.

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: Yes, that is true. Others that you would like to mention in relation to power use? Did you say anything about how Joffrey uses his power? That is – what he does to achieve things?

Anna: All is force. He inflicts pain, he kills people, in a way he is very totalitarian.

Molly: He constantly shows how powerful he is. He asserts himself by stepping on others.

Ingrid: Yes, then we may look at **question 11**: Power is often defined as a situation where someone has access to a resource the other wants. Give examples of what the characters try to “sell” in *GOT* (Money, influence, freedom, sex, luxury, knowledge/information, love, protection, rank/position, honour, peace, safety). This is a long list, but by no means complete. What is it that the different characters “sell”?

Molly: Daenerys sells her dragons, they are what she has and this is very obvious, very easy to see.

Anna: And the Lannisters, when they want to achieve something, it is often about luxury and money.

Ingrid: That they give this to others?

(Heads nodding)

Molly: And protection, since they are a big and powerful family, they have many walls they may place someone behind, and walls to protect themselves behind.

Ingrid: Do you remember a character called Janos Slynt? who was suddenly made leader of the Gold Cloaks? He was not a knight? If you don't remember it's fine. But are there any characters that have been given position? As a means to get power over them?

Molly: Could you repeat the question?

Ingrid: Yes, because what you may deal with is for example, if someone isn't a knight, you may give them a title, or an important position, or you may give them a castle and such things.

Molly: Were you thinking of Tyrion's friend?

Ingrid: Bronn?

Molly: Yes, I am not exactly sure about the details... but it was when Tyrion was Liza Arryn's captive, and he was going to fight for his own life, but then he couldn't because he was a dwarf, and then Bronn stepped up and did it.

Ingrid: To be nice?

Molly: (laughs) NO! What can I say? Why did he do it? It did give him much power, because Tyrion has a lot of money and he went back with Tyrion.

Anna: Then there is Barristan Selmy; he was a knight, wasn't he?

Ingrid: Yes, and leader of the Gold Cloaks

Anna: Yes, he lost his position. He was fired. The position was meant to be for life, and he was offered a castle and wealth, but did not want it. He wanted to be that leader, and then he went to Daenerys and saved her life, right? He made himself worthy of her trust and this gives them a close bond which in turn gives him a certain power.

Ingrid: He has position, that's right.

Both: Yes!

Ingrid: Is there anybody who sells information and knowledge?

Molly: Varys. He often trades information for information. If I am going to give you more insight, you have to invite me in first. Tell me your secrets and then I will help you.

Ingrid: Yes, that is obvious. The point is that some have a resource others want, and if someone can give you honour through giving you a task, then you would like that. But we can look at **question 12**: What in the other /the target is exploited to achieve this end? (pride/honour, sense of justice, lust/desire, anger/temperament, vanity, ambition, fear, lack of knowledge/information, vindictiveness, grief, love, curiosity, inferiority complex). For example.

Anna: Well...Sansa is very vain, and has always dreamed of being like a lady from the south, so she is an easy victim of her own vanity. Because that is the only thing she wants: She wants beautiful dresses, to be "housewife", but I do not think she cares beyond that, and this makes her an easy victim.

Ingrid: Is she easily exploited due to this?

Molly: Yes, because even if she does not have great ambitions, she is a very important player in that game.

Ingrid: yes, very much so.

Molly: And Tyrion is clearly taken advantage of by Tywin, and Tyrion is easily exploited because he feels inferior.

Ingrid: But how does he take advantage of Tyrion?

Molly: You mean how is he exploited?

Ingrid: yes

Molly: Er.. he is easy to trample on because of his physical traits. And also when it comes to love; he is vulnerable in that respect. The first time he married for instance. This has to do with his inferiority complex.

Ingrid: Are any of the characters taken advantage of because they lack information and knowledge?

Molly: Robert, perhaps, or a little. I don't know if he knew about Jamie and Cersei?

Ingrid: I think definitely not.

Anna: No...

Ingrid: But who knows, Martin has surprised us before!

Anna: Yes!

Molly: Tyrion is often left out of important meetings, in spite of his rank.

Anna: I very much agree with Molly there!

Molly: Tyrion has to fight for a place, even if he was supposed to have one automatically.

Anna: The others are born to position, being from the Lannister family guarantees position, so Tyrion should actually be level with Cersei and Jamie, but he is only stepped on, because he is seen as a disgrace.

Molly: And in addition to being a dwarf, his mother died giving birth to him, so Tywin plays a lot on Tyrion's guilt.

Ingrid: Cersei does that too, doesn't she?

Both: Yes.

Molly: It's his fault.

Ingrid: They swapped their mother with him. Pride and honour, then – are there characters who are exploited because of this?

Anna: Well, there is Joffrey, he is blinded by the idea of keeping his honour and power, and that makes him easy to manipulate for Cersei. She just discretely tells him what he must do and then he just takes the bait. He actually makes many dangerous decisions, and makes many enemies because he is blinded by just that.

Ingrid: So his mother is pulling the strings?

Anna: Yes, to some extent, but now Margaery has entered the picture and I think she will change many things because she has a different attitude to the people than he does. To him (Joffrey), honour and pride seems to mean stepping on people and showing his greatness in comparison to them, whereas Margaery meets the people, wants the people to greet them, stops at an orphanage and gives them toys and tries to make herself worthy of the people's respect.

Ingrid: Perhaps she has realised that it is the people, others who decide?

Molly: And that is what she is showing Joffrey now. He is introduced to a whole different way of gaining power, so it will be interesting to see how he will do that.

Ingrid: Then there is **question 13**: Give examples of how people in position control the behaviour of others.

Molly: We have perhaps said quite a lot about that already. There is plenty of manipulation, yes!

Anna: There are these examples... You may control other people's behaviour by showing them a goal to work towards, or by simply playing on their fears. You may make people more aggressive by triggering certain feelings, but you may also make people comply if you promise them things.

Ingrid: And do some of the characters do that, do you think?

Anna: Daenerys often threatens people, for instance.

Molly: She also promises things as well.

Anna: She promises freedom and justice.

Molly: Yes. She promises that when I become great, not if, when I sit the throne, you will live well too.

Ingrid: Yes. What motives and values do you think lie behind the different types of power use? Are there particular values or motives behind? Sometimes power is exercised only because it feels good to be able to, but in most situations it is because there is something people wish to gain, or maybe they wish to alter the behaviour of others, or they want them to do a certain thing or stop a certain behaviour. So I ask again: What motives and values do you think lie behind the different types of power use? (**question 14**).

Anna: To Daenerys it is justice, perhaps more than anything else. The Targaryans did not have much power?

Molly: Yes, yes, they were very powerful!

Anna: Yes, before, but since her family used to be so powerful, it is justice, she is meant to have power.

Ingrid: Yes, that it is her birth right.

Anna: Yes, it is her right, and that is perhaps her motivation; that she is born to be powerful.

Molly: There are more [characters] who think like that; Renly is perhaps also in that category.

Ingrid: Plus, he feels he should because he would make a much better king.

Molly: Yes, but there are others, those who are joining in the fight over the throne all feel they have something unique to bring to the table. Robb Stark, for instance; I get the impression that he wants to put an end to the madness. He wants justice and not just plain butchering. His actions are based on careful consideration. He never wishes to hurt anyone

Ingrid: So he does not have ambitions beyond being King in the North. Yes, **question 15**: Give examples in which charisma is used as a tool to exercise power.

Anna: Tyrion has to use charisma, because he has little else to offer, and the same with Daenerys: Most of the other women are born into a certain power position, but she has to take her position back, and then she has to rely on charisma and her personality.

Ingrid: Yes, clearly! Do you have examples of situations in which characters give others power or resources to enable them to exercise power? (**Question 16**).

Anna: Yes, Molly mentioned Katelyn before, because she is Robb's mother, and she may have a certain influence on Robb's decisions, but when he makes a decision, she lets him do his own thing.

Molly: Yes, somehow she immediately shows her subordination to him, and that gives him power.

Ingrid: It is perhaps not so obvious in the series, but in the book it is described how she avoids embracing him when she is reunited with him in the camp, because he would then perhaps be perceived as a little boy. She tries to avoid doing anything that might cause him to lose authority. Now, I do not remember quite how far you are in the series, but things happen at the Wall as well. Samwell Tarly is one example. What is his position as things proceed?

Molly: He is a little round, a little big...

Ingrid: And he says himself that he is a coward.

Molly: John Snow takes well care of him, takes him under his wing. He protects him, and he starts to work at the library.

Ingrid: Yes, with Maester Aegon.

Molly: Yes, but I think he gets some sort of power through his knowledge about those white walkers.

Ingrid: And he gets to contribute, through his knowledge. He says he is a coward, but at one point, there is someone who reminds him that “you actually killed one of those!” And that contributes to increasing his status and self-confidence. Do you have examples of power that is used for a good purpose? (**Question 17**)

Anna: Yes, I actually think that behind Robb’s actions there are good intentions: he wants justice and to put an end to the bloodshed.

Ingrid: Yes, and first and foremost he wants his father back, because he starts before the father is decapitated. Other than Robb, who ultimately act out of a good purpose? They want something good to be the result of their use of power.

Molly: I could say Varys, but then it is hard to tell.

(Laughter)

Anna: I don’t get him!

Ingrid: No one does!

Molly: He seems to single out people, and he saves many by sharing information with them.

Ingrid: You can imagine what he would be like without the position he has in the realm. He may perhaps not have a lot to gain from a war. How about Daenerys and her attacks on slave cities?

Molly: She always, often takes care of the weakest, and this is solely out of kindness, she gains nothing from it, at least not immediately.

Ingrid: I think it was in season two, when the Dothrakis attacked a village and the men raped a lot of women, and she seized the women and saved them. She exercised power she really had no access to. That is related to what you just said. Now, what do you consider as acceptable power use? Who are representatives of this? This is **question 18**.

Molly: I immediately think of Robb, who is only trying to make the best out of any situation, and to avoid that people get hurt.

Anna: When someone does get hurt, it is only because there is no other way out. There are others [characters in *GOT*] who harm people only because they want to better their own position.

Ingrid: Perhaps a little smart? He let a spy go, and the others were very angry, because it was a Lannister-spy, but he had a clear plan. He was going to trick them, so instead of just killing him, he used the person in his plan.

Molly: Can almost say that the entire Stark family uses power like this.

Ingrid: Arya as well?

Anna: She has a temper, and she likes to fight, but I still think her intentions are good. When she exercises her power, it is more for the sake of justice, and to protect herself and her friends.

Ingrid: Are you thinking of Jaqen H’ghar? The one she can order...?

Anna: Yes.

Molly: But she seems very preoccupied with justice, and this may be both positive and negative, because she may be blinded by the idea of revenge to achieve justice.

Ingrid: She is just 11 years old, admittedly.

Anna: Yes, and one often is a little more extreme then.

Ingrid: Yes, do you have more to add here? No? Then we will watch some scenes from the series, and I will stop the recorder. (**Questions 19 and 20**)

Ingrid: Yes, now you have seen the **scene** where Tyrion and Bronn are travelling through the forest and are surprised by some tribes. Yes, what do you think about the relation between power and the use of power here?

Anna: Initially it is Shagga and his horde who are in power, since they have weapons, but then Tyrion begins to talk, making promises, gold, and says what he can give them. Shagga says no to this, and then Tyrion starts using domination techniques; first he says that they may fight sheep as long as the sheep do not fight back, and that he can shit better weapons. He says ‘Shagga, son of...’, uses his full name, which in a way shows respect. And then he begins talking in a manner that makes them [the tribes] identify with him, because he wants to give them the valley. Since the lords have always spat on them, and the same lords want to see Tyrion dead, they have the same enemy.

Ingrid: Molly, what do you think of this?

Molly: I agree with Anna, but you may see that the power relationship between Tyrion and Bronn is different. First Bronn has power, before they see who their enemy is, because he has physical power. Then Tyrion takes over using his domination techniques.

Ingrid: There are several expressions of power. What does Shagga do to Tyrion? He exercises a particular type of power there, and things took a serious turn.

Molly: Yes, he says that...

Ingrid: He hits him.

Both: Yes.

Ingrid: If we look at the overview I handed out, it is in the upper part of the scale, the most obvious use of power: force, whereas Tyrion uses other methods.

Molly: These methods seem to be new to them. They’re used to the physical power – the simple and obvious power.

Ingrid: Like you said, Anna: He shows Shagga respect by using his whole name, and suddenly there’s someone conversing with you – respectfully! This may also be of some significance. So who gives in, in the end?

Anna: Shagga does.

Ingrid: We don’t see it here, but we know it. So why does he give in?

Molly: Because of everything Tyrion promises. He was just very much interested!

Ingrid: Yes, he did a good job selling his cause!

Ingrid: Yes, then we have seen the scene with Robb at war council with his banner men. What can you say about the use of power here?

Anna: Here were threats involved, or the first one, the one who had his fingers bit off...

Ingrid: The Greatjon.

Anna: Yes, he threatened. He wanted a position and said he would march off with his men, and that is somehow a threat, because Robb would lose an essential part of his army. Then Robb makes a threat, and his threat is perhaps worse.

Ingrid: Yes.

Anna: And then there was the dog, or that wolf...

Molly: The direwolf.

Anna: Yes, it somehow was a means of showing physical authority through violence, or...?

Ingrid: As an extension of Robb, like a useful assistant?

Both: Yes.

Molly: Well, just through his body language; he stood up when he wanted to assert his power, and then the other responded by doing the same. They answered each other like this all the time, so it was very much like a fight. And there was ridicule; "You are so green you piss grass".

Ingrid: So — you are just a kid – it is a little like "honey".

Anna: Yes, it is like when Cersei says "little dove" to Sansa. It may sound like a very nice thing, but, a dove is just something pretty that sits still, without influence, and so this is what she is hinting at to Sansa. That Sansa is just a little decorative dove.

Ingrid: Yes, because they do not even use doves for letters, they use ravens, so there is not even that aspect. Who do you think seems most powerful here? Who gives in?

Anna: Well, Robb is powerful.

Molly: But it is a little interesting to see how, what was his name again?

Ingrid: Greatjon.

Molly: Yes, when he realised that he had lost, then he did something, made things easier by laughing at it. Things could have ended very differently if he did not make that joke!

Ingrid: Robb gave him an opportunity to choose right, and when you get that choice, and this is one of the types of power use (searchers through paper)... yes, influence, then you want to influence others and they will act out of respect for you, for instance. It is at the lowest end of the scale, with the least use of force. You have the choice; you may choose how to act. He probably experienced that he had a choice. Now we will look at the next scene.

Ingrid: Yes, then we have just seen Varys visiting Ned Stark on his cell. Yes, you may comment the **scene** in terms of power and the use of power.

Molly: It is obvious in the beginning, that Varys has more power than Ned, who is chained, whilst Varys is free. Just the fact that he comes to visit and does him a favour gives him (Varys) a little power. He also has information about what is going on outside the prison cell, and he has a solution to offer. But Eddard is not interested in this offer, he says that he does not want to participate in the game. They do not have the same ambitions perhaps.

Ingrid: What does Varys offer him?

Molly: Varys offers him life, but it will be a life without honour, and Ned is not interested in that.

Ingrid: So he does not want it enough?

Molly: Yes, and somehow things turn when Varys brings in Sansa.

Ingrid: So Vary found the one thing, and then he had the resource?

Molly: Yes, because first he plays on honour, then later on...

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: So Varys tried several different methods before he found one that worked. Does this remind you of any of the other scenes you have watched now?

Molly: Reminds me of Tyrion. Both are a little sly; they try different methods, push several buttons before they find the right one

Ingrid: So they have several, they have many methods on their repertoire?

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: And who gives in in the end?

Molly: Ned does.

Ingrid: Yes, OK. (turns off recorder)

Ingrid: Yes, now we have seen the celebration of Joffrey's nameday, and then Tyrion sweeps in to take over as the King's Hand, but Joffrey does not know that. Can you comment upon what you have seen?

Anna: Yes, I saw between Sansa and Joffrey, that Joffrey really just wanted to kill Sir Dontos, but Sansa didn't want that, and so all she does to have her way is to tell Joffrey what he wants to hear. He wants to hear that he is smart and intelligent and all that, so she tries to hint a little...not say directly that she does not want him to kill him... She tries to just... 'yes you are so intelligent to see that he is just a fool, and he deserves a slow death'. When Joffrey hears that he is intelligent, he is a lot easier to sway.

Ingrid: But why does she say that he deserves a slow death?

Anna: She does not want him to die.

Molly: Watching other people suffer seems to appeal a lot to Joffrey

Anna: Yes.

Ingrid: You can see that from the way he exercises his power, perhaps? Yes, if you look at the scene for beginning to end – who has power here?

Molly: It changes a lot, because Joffrey is very condescending to Sansa all the time, but she manages to manipulate him, so she has a little power – when she wants to. And Tyrion has a lot of power when he comes in.

Ingrid: But does not Joffrey have power in this scene?

Anna: Yes, Joffrey has a lot of power, he is the one who exercises power, but then in the end Tyrion comes in. He says what he wants, and does what he wants and Joffrey cannot do anything about it. But he has a lot of power over the others. Like with the Dog, or the Hound: He just calls him Dog, or Hound, and that is probably not so nice for him, but he supports Sansa in that you should not kill someone on your nameday.

Ingrid: So he is like Sansa's ally?

Anna: Yes!

Ingrid: He is called Hound and such, but are there others who speak unkindly to him?

Molly: Yes, Tyrion does that, absolutely.

Ingrid: But what happens towards the end, as far as domination techniques go?

Anna: Yes, Tyrion says he has a job to do, that he does not have the time to celebrate, because he has duties, and that immediately makes him sound more important than Joffrey.

Molly: And when he enters and asks where he [Joffrey] was on the battlefield, and...

Ingrid: Yes, what is he hinting at then?



Molly: That he should have been there and that it is his duty as king to be there.

Ingrid: So then he is insinuating that Joffrey is...?

Molly: A coward, weak, yes... and he says in a sarcastic tone that he is doing a very good job ruling. He gives everyone else attention as well. He is not just focused on Joffrey, 'Your grace', etc.... He also compliments the younger siblings and Sansa...and in taking the time to offer Sansa his condolences... and when Joffrey, I don't remember exactly what he said, but when he brought up the topic of her father being a traitor, Tyrion is very condescending when he points out that Joffrey should have shown compassion and understanding.

Ingrid: So by recognising the others he levels the power relationships a little. We have talked about it before; can you give others power?

Molly: He did give Sansa power when he said that Joffrey ought to have shown her more compassion.

Ingrid: Yes, clearly! And then there is one thing which he says at the end, that he has work to do. How does Joffrey respond to that? Did he understand what he meant?

Anna: I don't think so.

Ingrid: No, this was news. Tyrion carries a letter from his father saying that Tyrion is taking over as Hand of the King in Tywin's place, but no one else knows this. It is only in the letter. And this is a domination technique, and if you look at the list, you probably see what I am aiming at!

Molly: Yes, withholding information.

Ingrid: Yes, it is clear that if the others do not know, he could have sent a raven, but that was the whole point; that they would not inform, because then you can just sweep in and do your business. Yes, so now we are at... Yes, we can look at who doesn't have power in the scene. Is there anyone who doesn't have power?

Molly: There is of course the jester.

Ingrid: Sir Dontos.

Anna: All are pawns who contribute to either taking away or giving power, consciously or not. So you may say that when Tyrion gives Joffrey's siblings attention, this partly reduces Joffrey's power, but besides being a pawn, they don't have any particular power. Then it is perhaps...Sansa has no real power either, but she has an ability, a possibility to influence Joffrey a little.

Ingrid: I think about what you said earlier about Sansa; that she doesn't use her power, it seems like she doesn't want it, she doesn't use it. But now, when she did use her power, to what end, to what purpose did she use it?

Anna: It was to save someone, so her intentions are good. It was a little difficult to see because I haven't thought about it before, before I saw this scene.

Molly: Especially after her father was so unjustly killed, I think she has become more and more preoccupied with justice, because she seems to have been a little naïve before. She has grown up in a good family, and has perhaps not seen much evil. She may not have understood before now, that people may have evil intentions. And now she has become more conscious of it.

Ingrid: And perhaps she now manages to see how she may exercise some power, if only very little. She may not have the opportunity to change her own position much, but that of others, and this may give her a personal lift, that you have the possibility to do that. The last part of power in *GOT* relates to power and tactics, so who uses force [press], this is a strange word in Norwegian, to achieve power, that is you force your will upon others. Who are representatives of this kind of power? (**Question 21**)

Molly: I immediately think of those who know about... Jamie and Cersei... they often use, I can't remember ...

Ingrid: Force refers to... if you look at the list by Fairholm, that was handed out, he has developed a model, where force is a very obvious form of power use. It can almost, or sometimes become physical.

Molly: OK

Anna: Then there is Daenerys and Joffrey, those are the most obvious. They exercise the power.

Ingrid: Do they do this themselves?

Anna: Not... no. But they decide who will exercise the power.

Ingrid: So they have someone do it for them?

Anna: Yes, Joffrey is actually too much of a coward, and in addition Cersei doesn't want him to go to war.

Ingrid: "Mama said I wasn't allowed..."

Anna: Yes, but that's the way it is!

Molly: Yes, that is how it is.

Ingrid: The mother also said that one should not hit others, that it is not royal to hit another person.

Anna: Yes, and then he makes his guards hit Sansa.

Ingrid: And this is really a quite typical form of power – that you find others that can do the job for you, either because, and that is found in the hand-out, either because you think that they are more popular and will have a better chance at succeeding, or that afterwards they will be unpopular, and you won't have to suffer that consequence. You use someone as a tool. So Daenerys and Joffrey are characters that you feel use force to exercise their power?

Anna: Theon also did that, but it didn't really help, because as Molly pointed out: his power was false. Amongst others, the two kids he killed, that's a very clear evidence of this.

Ingrid: But perhaps you saw how Varys and Tyrion tried to find the tactic that worked, tried several different ways, and they never had to resort to force. And if you start with that – force – what do you have left? Do you have anything else to add?

Molly: No, I wouldn't say so, because it is the last resort, when nothing else works. Because you do something very drastic, something that can't be undone: It is hard and brutal and final.

Ingrid: Can't sew the head back on again...

Molly: You can't say you didn't mean it like that, because that was exactly what you meant!

(Laughter)

Ingrid: Who of the characters do you think your characters act out of fear of aggression and retaliation from powerful characters? This is **question 22**.

Molly: Sansa, somehow, she's very afraid of Joffrey. But Joffrey also, a little, because if he fears someone, he strikes hard before they have become a real threat.

Anna: Yes, he actually fears everyone. If they show any sign of not supporting him they must immediately be eliminated, and that is really the biggest sign of fear.

Ingrid: Do you have examples of characters who use of threats and/ or promises to gain control or power? (**Question 23**).

Molly: Varys, he can often offer a kind of solution to a problem through information.

Ingrid: And many contacts...

Molly: The most of those who exercise power do that, except Joffrey, because they have a promise that he is going to help them.

Ingrid: If you do not do this, then I will, or if you don't' do this then I will...

Both: Yes.

Ingrid: What examples of manipulation can you identify? That may be undermining another's position, dishonouring others, manipulation of environmental surroundings, flattery, for instance if you are in a cell and someone takes away your light, and if you are used to luxury and they strip the house of luxurious things, yes you get what I mean? Flattery may be such a method. Is anyone good at manipulation here? (**Questions 24,25**)

Molly: Tyrion is very good.

Anna: Yes, he knows how to use both his title and his family, but when it doesn't work, like with Joffrey, Tyrion can't promise Joffrey gold and such, because he has that already, what he does then is to use other persons, for instance with flattery: he flatters others instead of Joffrey.

Ingrid: Difficult for Joffrey to do something about that!

Anna: And Sansa, she flatters Joffrey so that he does what she wants.

Molly: But she flatters him in a way that isn't really flattery, it is very acidic.

Ingrid: Does he get it?

Anna: No! Because he does not really see the context, he only hears the words "you" and "intelligent" and that does it for him.

Ingrid: Littlefinger, then, do you find him manipulative?

Both: Yes.

Molly: He has a lot to offer, in terms of his business...

(Laughter)

Anna: Personal enterprise!

Molly: And he has control over a lot of money and economy, and he has a lot of spies, lots of information.

Anna: He also withholds information, because it seems like Varys... they compete a little. They are actually quite similar, using the same methods.

Ingrid: Do you have any examples?

Molly: That entire scene with Tyrion in the forest!

Ingrid: Who are easy targets for power exercised through manipulation, and why? Do they learn that they were manipulated later? (**Question 26**)

Molly: People who are blind with lust for power

Anna: Joffrey, like you said: he is blind.

Molly: He has one intention, and is blind to all the rest.

Anna: I think Cersei is very difficult to manipulate.

Molly: That is perhaps because... she doesn't have one intention, she has so incredibly much she wants to achieve, so she has to be observant of everything all the time.

Ingrid: Is she good at manipulation?

Anna: It depends on who...

Ingrid: But the way she treats Sansa...?

Molly: She is really good at that!

Anna: Yes, because she is kind to Sansa, somehow, but simultaneously she is giving Sansa the feeling that she does not deserve it, that she must make herself worthy, and that Sansa really is an inferior.

Molly: And when the direwolf is killed... she demands it to be killed, so she actually manipulates a lot of people.

Ingrid: And she takes advantage of her position. It is also a little intriguing because in that situation she tries to exploit her position, and then she is told to shut up by her husband, the king. But, on to **question 27**: who makes use of persuasion and logic to gain power?

Anna: Tyrion, Varys and Littlefinger.

Ingrid: Do you have any examples of this?

Anna: No specific situations, but Varys is very indirect, he hints.

Ingrid: Yes, but by persuasion and logic I don't really refer to manipulation. But that you explain to people that if this happens then you have to...

Anna: Yes, yes, but he offers people a solution. There's a problem, and then a consequence, and then he tells them what they must do to avoid the consequence.

Molly: Especially that scene from the prison cell. It's exactly what you say now, Anna. He offers a solution, discusses the consequences, and yes...

Ingrid: Yes, he may not be very blunt, that is true, and what he says is based on logic. Yes, then we are actually done with all the questions that are about *GOT*, so we are on to the last part, which you have already partly answered in the questionnaire you did before the interview. Do I have to find it, or do you perhaps remember what you answered?

Ingrid: By troubling literature or troubling films, I mean literature and film that deal with difficult topics, or topics that may be personally challenging for the individual. And I will claim that *GOT* fits into that category, if you look at the themes and the content. Examples here may be literature about crime, substance addiction, sexuality, prejudice, violence, death, abuse, mental problems, and ethical dilemmas in general. So I ask, would you recommend reading [the novel] *A Game of Thrones* in a full class? What reasons for and against do you see? (**Question 28**)

Molly: The benefit is that there is so much to look into, so much that may be discussed, and reading it in English will increase the vocabulary a lot. There are incredibly many examples of different situations and moral dilemmas that one can deal with, but this may also be negative, that there is so much, because there is a lot you have to understand, that you must be able to see and work with, and some of it makes very strong impressions.

Ingrid: The books are relatively long. Do you consider this a problem?

Anna: It depends how much time you have, and because the book contains so much, one option could be to get to choose your own approach to a paper, what you want to focus on, since there is so much.

Ingrid: But what level do you think relevant for this book?

Anna: It must be in upper secondary school.

Molly: Yes, and I would say the VG 3, both because of the length, and the difficult language.

Ingrid: You are reading it in English?

Molly: Yes, there are very many words that are unfamiliar and failing to understand the basics, which actually can be quite complicated, will make it very difficult with all the new (words)

Ingrid: Is reading an extract an option? (**question 30**)

Molly: Yes, I think that is a really good idea, because then one could choose to focus on certain aspects and dilemmas.

Ingrid: Reading one chapter and considering power, for instance. Would that be better?

Molly: I would say that would be better.

Anna: If the students are intrigued, they could read in their spare time.

Ingrid: Would you recommend watching episodes [from the TV-series] *Game of Thrones* in a full class? What reasons are there for and against this? (**Question 29**)

Molly: Yes, but then again, I like *GOT*, and I think fantasy and this type of series are cool and good, but I know that very many do not like it at all.

Ingrid: That fantasy is boring?

Molly: Mm-hmm. They can't relate to it and don't find it exciting. But, I think many could find one episode interesting.

Ingrid: But what reasons are there against showing an episode?

Molly: Yes, as I said already, because it may be regarded as boring, and then there are many strong impressions and very many troubling scenes.

Anna: Some angry parents may call, but that probably doesn't happen in upper secondary school...

Ingrid: It is rated to 15 in Norway!

Anna: Actually, the students could be allowed a part in the decision making, whether to use it or not. I think the majority would say yes, because it is a popular series. So even if fantasy perhaps is rather special, *GOT* has managed to capture people's interest.

Molly: incredibly many.

Ingrid: One of the boys said that there is less fantasy in *GOT* than in *Lord of the Rings*, because it focuses more on relationships and people, so there might be something there. Do you have any recommendations as to the use of *GOT* in school?

Molly: If we would recommend it or not? I say go ahead!

Anna: Yes, go ahead!

Molly: Because the fact that there are such strong impressions and images may be good, because it forces you to think, and it leads to a reaction, either positive or negative.

Anna: You are not supposed to sugar coat everything either, and strong impressions – most people can handle *GOT*, but if anyone thinks that it is too strong, they can say it, but that may have a negative consequence for the teaching, if all the others would like to watch *GOT*, whilst one student does something else.

Ingrid: Perhaps the students could be given a choice; you can choose between this and that? There are other ways of looking at power...there are other series or films that may be equally good. In some milieus, so-called popular literature/popular culture is not regarded as good enough, and therefore not eligible for the classroom. What do you think of this? (**Question 31**)

Molly: I think this is completely wrong. Why should we not reflect more on something we are more exposed to, that constantly surrounds us? Why should we not contemplate what we are watching?

Anna. In addition, much of popular literature is popular for a reason; many people like it, and it catches on. So actually, it should be natural to study this literature, but then again, popular literature may be a little simple, and perhaps a little shallow, so it might be more difficult to work with it.

Molly: It may also be that many of the classics have incredibly many deep meanings, but popular literature may also have that if you only take the time to really look for it. In Harry Potter, you may actually draw a parallel to WW2 and the Holocaust, so yes...

Ingrid: There are many good points here! Then I must ask if *AGOT* has influenced on your relationship to English? (**Question 32**)

Anna: Yes.

Molly: Yes.

Anna: Well, now I have not read the book, so I reckon that if I had read the book, I would have had a stronger relationship to English, but I have learnt new words and terms, and in addition it is a lot more fun to watch a series in English, one that isn't dubbed, so you have to learn English to be able to pay attention and to understand.

Molly: It has definitely influenced on my relationship to English. I read quite a lot of English, but in *GOT* there are many words that he [Martin] has invented, so I am even more dependent on understanding the real words to understand the context. So I have to stop quite often. I am challenged and have to stop to look up words. I think that's a good thing.

Ingrid: Yes, there are quite a lot of descriptions of scenery and such and at least I think it is easy to imagine what it looks like, because of the accurate descriptions. There will of course be many adjectives, many descriptions of nature, and unfamiliar words because of this. Yes, now we are done with all the questions I had prepared. I do not think we need to sum up the discussion, but if you have questions, we can deal with them now.

Molly: I don't have any questions, really. Not now anyway.

Anna: No, this interview was all right.

Molly: Yes.

Ingrid: Yes, I have planned to ask you again, when a few weeks have passed, if you have become more conscious of power and power structures by working with this, so I am going to ask you a few questions later. It will only be a couple of questions on a piece of paper.

Both: Yes.

Ingrid: Then I would like to thank you both for participating. It was very exciting and interesting to hear what you had to say, and I think you have contributed with a lot of smart reflections. I am very pleased that I decided to run a second interview with the two of you!

Molly: Were we very different from the boys?

Ingrid: Er... You have focused on different things. The boys were focusing on, had control of the knights, how they fought, and such, you girls saw a little more... I have to sit down and look it through, before I can answer this, I am afraid. A lot was the same, but of course; they were five, you were two, so it is also about that. If you had had another participant with you, he might have helped you remember things you did not remember now. But I think you have given very good answers, and you have answered some questions thoroughly, which the boys just went through in a rush. They focused on other things. So it's going to be very exciting to start working with the material. So thanks a lot, and then I am closing this interview.

**Appendix 7          Post-Interview Questionnaire**

*A month has passed since you took part in the interview and I would like to ask you some additional questions. You are not expected to give lengthy answers, short ones will suffice.*

1. Has your participation in the interview changed the way you view the characters and the power structures in the series?
  
2. If yes, please elaborate!
  
  
  
3. Have you become more conscious of power as you see it in your everyday life?
  
4. If yes, please elaborate
  
  
  
5. Has the participation changed the way you relate to people around you?

## **Appendix 8            Compilation of Answers, Pre-Interview Questionnaire**

These questions are part of the pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix 4) which was handed out to the participants before the interview. The questionnaire was written in Norwegian for an easier understanding and therefore more accurate answers, as the aim is first and foremost to research the participants' relationship to power use and power structures in the works, not their English skills. The questions have been translated into English.

### **Reflections on power in general**

**1. Have you ever experienced feeling powerless?**

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes, through illness in my family

**2. Was this due to what someone else did or said or through your own feelings/thoughts?**

- Yes
- Yes
- No
- Yes
- No (through illness in my family)

**3. What could have changed the positions?**

- "If I had talked back to the person, or I could have responded differently."
- "If other people had been involved as well, the situation had been less unpleasant"
- "Only coincidence could have changed the situation."
- "Violence"
- Nothing

**4. What could you have done to change the positions?**

- "I could have spoken up for myself, and said what I felt and what I thought. I could have presented other perspectives."
- "Very little"
- "I could have been more stubborn when I tried to get across my point of view. I shouldn't have given up that easily."
- "Be violent"
- -

**5. Have you ever felt that you were in a position in which you had power over others?**



- “Partly”
- Yes
- “I don’t know. I don’t think so.”
- Yes
- Yes

**6. What do you think caused this feeling?**

- “I was in control of the situation. I had it all planned.”
- “Age, intelligence, and possibly also gender.”
- “I have a tendency to know when I am in power.”
- “I was in charge”
- “[I had] the possibility to influence others and knowledge”

**7. Did anything or anyone empower you?**

- “Someone did that. “
- “Age, intelligence, and possibly also gender.”
- -
- No
- “Yes, they gave me the possibility to influence others. “

**8. Have you consciously tried to empower others? If yes, what did you do or say?**

- “Yes, I said specifically to someone that “You know what you are doing, here.”. I encouraged them.”
- Yes, I have given people who were in difficult situations two or more choices that seemed sensible. The person would then choose one of the alternatives, with the result that he or she forgets to consider other options.”
- “Well, I usually give people a pep-talk. I want them to realize that they CAN change things in stead [sic] of complaining all the time. Sometimes I give away my "power" to others, and given them the responsibility (sic) to make choices.”
- “Yes, I included them and told them that they had responsible.”
- Yes, I gave people with little influence support in a specific case.

## **Power in general**

**9. Give examples of situations in which power is often exercised**

- “Coercion in sibling relationships, when you have an aim.”
- “The head of the family, in queues for the ferry, parents’ power over their offspring, etc.”
- “Power can be used in different groups (among friends), power can be used as a parent, power can be used to control your siblings, power can be used on pets, power can be used in marriages.”
- “In dictatorships, strict regimes, those with much influence (Justin Bieber)”

- “Politics, in decision-making”

**10. Name some ways in which power is used.**

- “Trample on others, become close friends with someone, taking control of a situation and surprising someone.”
- “Show physical power, manipulation, bribery, etc.”
- “Give harsh critique (make people feel insecure), give reasonable advices, offer an easy way out of a sticky situation, form alliances, threat people, indoctrination, discipline (sic), gain knowledge, propaganda, lie.”
- “Get someone else to do something they do not want to or ought not to do”
- “Gather people (in politics and elections), violence.”

**11. Give examples of situations in which power struggle is an issue**

- “Among siblings, in friendships, between parents and children, in a school class.”
- “ In elections, in competitions, etc.”
- “There can be power struggles between parents and children, within ourselves, in politics, in relationships, teacher vs. pupils, in social arenas - generally there's always a power struggle somewhere. People have a tendency to prove themselves the best.”
- “ In war, in criminal milieus, dealing with trafficking and drugs, etc.”
- “In politics, in organizational boards”

**12. Who has more power in society today? Suggest some reasons for this.**

- “The media”
- “This is a difficult question. If you consider that money controls most of what goes on in the world, I would say that the richest individuals/groups in the world has more power, but there is also psychological power, where it may not necessarily be the richest, but the smartest in the room who dominates. There is physical power, like in North Korea, where ¼ of the population are employed in the military, etc. So everything boils down to what you mean by power.”
- “Politicians because we chose them to make decitions (sic) for us and the media. Media has a significant amount of power because they can influence us; they tell us what's in, and we follow.”
- “The USA, because it is a large and powerful country. Justin Bieber.”
- “Prime Minsters, and the richest people in the world. “Money is power”.”

**13. Who has less power in society? Suggest some reasons for this.**

- “Those without knowledge and information.”
- “The poor and those with no or little education are typically represented, for logical reasons.”
- “The people with the least power are generally those who don't speak - those who remain silent. They are often the ones with the loudest minds, but since they don't

spread their message, nor act (only writing comments on articles on Dagbladet.no). As a result, we'll be ignorant of their opinion. The people who scream the loudest usually get their way.”

- A poor country, they are powerless on national level. People that are low on the social ladder.”
- “Old people. They have few possibilities to influence, and are not being heard in society today.”

#### **14. What determines who has power?**

- “Knowledge = control. Strength, self-confidence, ability to convince others”
- “Physical attributes, intelligence, environmental aspects.”
- “I’m not sure. Charisma?”
- “People with a strong ability to influence others.”
- “Money, friendship, contacts, being a good rhetoric.”

#### **15. What may cause loss of power?**

- “Sudden contradictions, unexpected questions.”
- “Financial reasons, dissatisfaction in the people (for politicians or similar), age, illness, etc.”
- “Being a douche and being stupid. You can only pick one!”
- “A drop from a high position, when you are no longer considered a role model”
- “[That you are] unpopular among the people, making unpopular decisions. Violence.”

#### **16. What ways are there to gain power?**

- “Be kind or good to others, or evil and unkind to others”
- “Work hard with your body, your mind or your position in society.”
- “You must be able to communicate, get followers, give hope and you [had] better be clever.”
- “Be a role model, corruption (Like Putin and Sepp Blatter).”
- “Through knowledge”

#### **17. What ways are there to give others power?**

- “To obey them. To boost their self-confidence.”
- “By delegating responsibility or reduce one’s own power to help others rise.”
- “Give it away? Or help that person. Clear his/hers path, helping that person, talking nice about that person, being honest.”
- “Place them in a higher position and give them responsibility”
- “By supporting them, giving them knowledge, money, contacts.”

#### **18. Mention some character traits you think are typical for powerful people**

- “Intelligent, smart, confident, and a clear aim.”

- “Ambitious, selfish (often), an IQ of more than 30, etc.”
- “They are charismatic, intelligent, a natural authority, wise and clever, know what to say and when to say it and confident.”
- “No sympathy”
- “Good rhetorical skills”

**19. Which character traits will make you feel less powerful?**

- “Insecurity, lack of knowledge.”
- “lack of self-confidence, passive”
- “Perhaps that person ain't (sic) clever. Or maybe that person is, but he/she lacks the ability to communicate. Communication is the key!”
- “Sympathy, has clear ideas of values.”
- “Socially insecure.”

**How have you been influenced by the series?**

**22. How much and what do you read in your spare time?**

- “I read a lot! Fantasy, amusing Norwegian novels, factual books.”
- “I used to read a lot; books and cartoons. Now I mostly read school books.”
- “I haven't read the books yet, but I do read a lot.”
- “About nothing, only homework.”
- “Little, crime novels.”

**23. If you have only seen the series, do you consider reading the novels as well?**

- Yes
- “I have already read the first two books and I have number 3 and 4, so we'll see when I manage to read the rest”.
- “Yes, but it's hard to find them [in the library] because they're so popular.”
- No
- “I have only watched the series”.

**24. Do you study English in school this school year?**

- Yes
- No
- Yes
- No
- No

**25. How has watching/ reading the series influenced your relationship to the English language, or in case you study English; the subject?**

- “My vocabulary has expanded”

- “I do not study English this year, but I can say that one really gets to see the sly and manipulative side to the language.”
- “It has definately (sic) improved. I've learnt new words, and I now feel that the English classes has (sic) helped me understand English better.”
- -
- “Increased vocabulary”

**26. How has your language been influenced by the series?**

*a) Do you read faster?*

- Yes
- “No, not noticeable!”
- Yes.
- -
- No

*b) Do you read more?*

- No
- No
- Yes.
- -
- No

**c) Has your vocabulary expanded?**

- Yes
- “My vocabulary was all right from before, but everything that one reads will help expanding the vocabulary”.
- Yes.
- -
- yes

**d) If you study English in school, have your spoken and/or written English improved?**

- “Yes, my English improves when I read English!”
- “I do not study English this year.”
- “Not that much, I need more time, but I'm in heading the right direction.”
- -
- -

**Problem literature in the classroom**

**27. Do you consider it right or wrong to use *A Game of Thrones* as obligatory reading in an entire class or group? Give reasons for and against using this novel.**

**For:**

- “May lead to increased insight and understanding, may expand the students’ vocabulary, and there are many moral dilemmas to look into.”
- “On one hand I understand if someone will refuse to read it because it is a long book, but still, one is subjected to incredibly many important points of view in these books. It may be fantasy, but the incidents and situations are still relevant.”
- “Game of Thrones would be a great book to read because it’s a book that everyone likes. However, the problem is that you can’t read just one book - you have to read them all. At least the first book should be read, and then the students can read the rest if they want.”
- -
- “Yes and no; this series may be repulsive to some students, but it is modern and cool!”

**Against:**

- “It is heavy reading, and long. There are many very strong forces at work, relating to psychological and physical violence.”

**28. Do you consider it right or wrong to make watching one or several episodes from the TV-series *Game of Thrones* obligatory for an entire class or group? Give reasons for and against using this series.**

**For:**

- “There is a lot that may be discussed, and an increased understanding of how power is used and a different language.”
- “I think this depends much on the teacher. If the teacher manages to connect the series to central aims in the curriculum, and if the result is increased interest in the subject, I would give the start signal!”
- “It would be right. If you wish to show how power is distributed, *AGOT* is a very good tool.”
- “I don’t mind at all - I cannot see anything negative about this. I think the politicians should establish a separate, obligatory *GOT*-class, where every student has to watch the ENTIRE series!”
- “Yes and no; this series may be repulsive to some students, but it is modern and cool!”

**Against:**

- “There are strong scenes of violence, moral dilemmas, but this may also be positive.”

**29. Do you have any experience in reading problem literature/ watching problem movies in an entire class? If so, what is your opinion of this?**

- “I think it is positive as long as one manages to pay the necessary respect for individuals. If one manages that, problem literature or films may be very rewarding and give a new and broader outlook on life and increase the students’ understanding. “

- “I must say that I resent anything that is specifically forced on me. Being able to choose series or books is absolutely to be preferred, even if in the end the choice perhaps still would be *AGOT*.”
- “I don’t know what that is.”
- No
- “Yes, it inspires discussion, and I don’t see that as a problem.”

**30. In your opinion, what reasons speak for selecting problem literature/film in school?**

- “Increased understanding”.
- “Easier to gain insight.”
- “Easier to work in groups and everything is open for discussion. It makes it easier to organise for the teacher.”
- “I don’t know.”
- “It may be a good tool”.
- “It is challenging”

**31. What reasons speak against using such literature or film?**

- “It may be difficult for individuals who are “different”. If the students do not manage to gain understanding, such literature may cause xenophobia or prejudice.”
- “Many will probably share the resentment I mentioned above when you are forced to study something”.
- “Don’t know.”
- “Perhaps some students do not like *GOT*?”
- “It may be repulsive to the student and students may feel violated.”

**32. Are there any topics or forms you think should be avoided? Which and why?**

- -
- “I think as long as the teacher does not use physical violence and the form the teacher chooses works, it does not matter what form this is”.
- “No. Because if *Game of Thrones* is considered as "problem literature" (sic) I certainly (sic) won't mind.”
- -
- “No, but one should be critical to the presentation of sex and violence in education.”

## **Appendix 9           Compilation of the Post-Interview Questionnaire**

I originally asked five questions (see appendix 7) here to make it as easy as possible for the participants to answer hoping this would help the turnout. In my presentation of the answers, I have combined questions 1 and 2 and 3 and 4.

### **1. Has participating in the interview changed anything about how you view the characters and power relations in *GOT*?**

“My participation in the interview has absolutely changed a lot in terms of how I view the characters and power relations in *GOT*. Since the interview I have been a lot more conscious of what power is and I can see a lot more clearly when it is applied, and in which ways. I notice more often how characters influence their own positions, and those of others’, through body language words and actions. I also understand characters better by noticing these aspects, because I can see where their strengths and weaknesses are.”

“Yes, I look for examples of how the different characters exercise their power, and who has power over whom.”

“Yes, I have become a lot more conscious and I have tried to notice how the more powerful characters in the series act towards each other and sometimes I notice examples of power use that I did not notice before.”

“ Yes, I have noticed the power relations more and how the different characters use power.”

“Yes, I have become a lot more conscious of who has power and who may rise to power.”

“ Yes and no, I notice the power use more than I used to, but I still have the same impression of the characters, even if I notice their techniques.

### **2. Have you become more conscious of power as you see it in your everyday life?**

“I have also gained an increased consciousness of the use of power in general. If I am following a discussion, either on TV, radio, or in my own living room, I now notice how the different people both win and lose in all sorts of power struggles. What this participation has done for me is to increase my consciousness a lot and it has triggered my interest. Reflecting on the use of power and power relationships has inspired me, because now I see and understand new aspects and sides to the people around me. In the future, I will continue to reflect on and notice power and power use.”

“A little. I sometimes try to notice how different people act towards each other.”

“Yes, I have noticed different examples of power use by people around me”

“ Yes, I notice a lot faster if someone is trying to manipulate others, and I notice much faster who has real power in a group of people.



**3. Has participating in the interview changed anything in your relationship to other people?**

“No”

“Not really. There and then, during the interview, I thought about where my position was in the system of my class and in the group of people I hang with outside school. But it is rather when I am reading a book or watching a series, when I am associating with someone else that I think about who has power and such. In my daily life I don't think about it much.”

“No, it has not”

“Not noticeable”!

“No.”

## Appendix 10      The Interview Guide

### General questions

1. How do you understand the concept of power?
2. Would you say that power is attractive?
3. Where or what does power come from?/What makes someone powerful?
4. What makes someone subordinate to someone more powerful?
5. Do you know the term *domination techniques*? Do you recognise the examples listed in the hand-out?

### Power in *A Game of Thrones*

6. Who do you think of as powerful in *Game of Thrones (GOT)*?
7. What makes them powerful?
8. Who are in a dependency relationship/ does not have power in *GOT*?
9. Power is never constant or the same for all situations, even when the same people are involved. Give examples of situations and relationships where power switches, or characters gain or lose power.

### The Use of Power in *GOT*

10. Give examples of how power is used to achieve different ends in *GOT*. What do those in power in the series do, to achieve their ends?
11. Power is often defined as a situation where someone has access to a resource the other wants. Give examples of what the characters try to “sell” in *GOT* (Money, influence, freedom, sex, luxury, knowledge/information, love, protection, rank/position, honour, peace, safety).
12. What in the other /the target is exploited to achieve this end? (pride/honour, sense of justice, lust/desire, anger/temperament, vanity, ambition, fear, lack of knowledge/information, vindictiveness, grief, love, curiosity, inferiority complex).
13. Give examples of how people in position control the behaviour of others.
14. What motives and values do you think lie behind the different types of power use?

15. Give examples in which charisma is used as a tool to exercise power.
16. Give examples of situations in which characters give others power or resources to enable them to exercise power.
17. Give examples of power that is used for a good purpose.
18. What is acceptable power use? Who are representatives of this?

### **Commenting scenes from the TV-series**

*You will now watch some scenes from the series. Whilst watching, try to notice who is in power and why, how power is used, and who gives in and why.*

19. Who do you consider the most efficient characters in exercising power? Why?
20. Who do you consider powerless? Why?

### **Forms of power used in *GOT*:**

21. Give examples of characters who make use of force to achieve an end/gain power over others.
22. Give examples of situations in which characters act out of fear of aggression and retaliation from powerful characters.
23. Give examples of the use of threats and/ or promises to gain control or power.
24. What examples of manipulation can you identify? (undermining another's position, dishonouring others, manipulation of environmental surroundings, flattery)
25. Who makes use of manipulation to gain power, and why do you think these characters choose this form?
26. Who are easy targets for power exercised through manipulation, and why? Do they learn that they were manipulated later?
27. Give examples of the use of persuasion to gain power

### **The Use of Problem Literature in the Classroom**

By problem literature is meant literature and film that deal with difficult topics, or topics that may be personally challenging for the individual. This may be literature about crime, substance addiction, sexuality, prejudice, violence, death, abuse, mental problems, and ethical dilemmas in general.

28. Do you consider *A Game of Thrones* a good choice to read in full class? What reasons for and against do you see?
29. Would you recommend watching episodes from *Game of Thrones* in a full class? What reasons are there for and against this?
30. How may *GOT* be used?
31. Some scholars claim that popular literature or popular culture should not be used in the classroom due to its poor or disputable quality. What is your opinion of this?
32. How has *GOT* influenced on your relationship to English?

**Appendix 11      Participant Debriefing Form****The Aspect of Power in *Game of Thrones*/*A Song of Fire and Ice***

In connection with my Master studies at Høgskolen i Østfold I am writing a Master's thesis on George R. R. Martin's book series *Song of Fire and Ice* and the TV-series *A Game of Thrones*, which is based on Martin's books. I am inviting you to participate in a group interview, hopefully shortly after Easter, with 6-8 other students for an informal discussion about power and how it is presented in the series. Having read the books is an advantage, but not a requirement. Furthermore, should you have missed out on a couple of episodes in the TV-series, you may still participate, but you must have watched a majority of the episodes.

Since some of you may have read all the books that have yet been published, this may also influence the discussion. My study, however, focuses on the first two books, as these are the books that have been adapted into film as of today. The third season, based on book three will be released on April 1<sup>st</sup>, and will run this spring, so we might touch on aspects of this book/season as well.

**The purpose of the study**

With this study I wish to find out how students relate to the aspect of power in the book-and TV-series *A Song of Fire and Ice* /*A Game of Thrones*. Reading the first book, I was immediately struck with the way power is a part of all the relationships between people and how one who is in power in one relationship may find that he is subjected to power in another. I am curious about how you, as students in upper secondary school, relate to this topic, if you have read the books and watched the series with the same experience as mine, given that I am your senior by twenty years. I would like to investigate how you relate to the presentation of power in the series, what aspects of power you find easiest to disclose and if you see parallels to power use in real life. Eventually I would like to know to which degree you think watching the series has made you more aware of power structures in your own lives. Central questions in this connection are: what is power, and what determines who has power or not?

**Research question**

How do upper secondary school students experience and relate to power relationships and power structures in the TV-series *A Game of Thrones* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin?

**Relevance in the Curriculum:**

In addition to aims regarding literature and language, the study has educational relevance on several levels. Focusing on the topic of power, its first relevance is found in the main objective of the subject English: “The programme subject’s broad approach to culture and society in the English-speaking world shall develop one’s skills in critical analysis and reflection” (1). Additionally, in the curriculum for the subject *English Literature and Culture*, one of the competence aims is to “interpret literary texts and other cultural expressions from a cultural-historical and social perspective”. Both of these aims may be related to the discussion of power as represented in the books and in the TV-series.

Moreover, the introduction of the *Core Curriculum for Primary, Secondary and Adult Education* in Norway, states the following about the aim of education: “The aim of education is to furnish children, young people and adults with the tools they need to face the tasks of life and surmount its challenges together with others. Education shall provide learners with the capability to take charge of themselves and their lives, as well as with the vigor and will to stand by others”(5). The *Core Curriculum* further points out that education “must accustom them [the learners] to taking responsibility - to assess the effects of their actions on others and evaluate them in terms of ethical principles (5). This kind of awareness is a further aim of the study. Thus the purpose and goal of my study is twofold: Firstly, I wish to find out how you relate to power in the series, and secondly, I wish to create an awareness of the issue that may prove useful for you in the future.

**How the study will be carried out**

The data for my thesis will be collected in two parts:

- First there will be a short questionnaire for you to fill out individually about power and power structures in general.
- Next there will be a focus group interview during which I will also give a brief lecture on power theory and show you some scenes from the series for you to comment on.

Additionally I will prepare questions for you to answer in the interview. The interview will be carried out after school, shortly after Easter.

- The interview may be carried out in English or in Norwegian, according to your preferences.

### **About the data collection**

For the purpose of collecting data, the group interview (focus interview) will be taped. However, I guarantee that neither the names of participants, nor the school's name will be identifiable in the report, and the data will be destroyed after the study is completed. Each participant will also be given access to a copy of the report once it is finished. You will be asked to sign an *informed consent form*, but it is perfectly possible to withdraw from the research should you have second thoughts.

Regards,

Ingrid Fagnastøl

\_\_\_\_\_, 4. March 2013

### Works cited:

Directorate for Education and Training, 1994. *Core curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education in Norway*. Web. 4 March 2012.

[http://www.udir.no/Upload/larerplaner/generell\\_del/5/Core\\_Curriculum\\_English.pdf?epslanguage=no](http://www.udir.no/Upload/larerplaner/generell_del/5/Core_Curriculum_English.pdf?epslanguage=no)

Directorate for Education and Training, "English - Programme Subject in Programmes for specialization in General Studies".2006. Web. 4 March 2012.

[http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English/Curriculum-in-English/\\_english/Upper-secondary-education-/](http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English/Curriculum-in-English/_english/Upper-secondary-education-/) .

## **Appendix 12      Template of the first Approach to the Participants**

This is a template that shows how the participants were first introduced to the topic and how they were invited to participate. The approach came as a result of having asked several students in the school if they knew of any students who watched *Game of Thrones (GOT)* or had read the books. I then approached the students who had been named.

“Hi, have you watched *GOT* or read *A Game of Thrones*? I am reading the series now and have started watching the TV-series as well. From the beginning it struck me how everything in this series is permeated with power, power struggles and hierarchies.

I am a master’s degree student in addition to my job as a teacher, and I have decided to write my thesis on this topic. I want to ask you if you could be interested in participating in my study. I will explain a little what this means:

Power exists in all relations and at all levels in society. For instance, here and now, as teacher and student, we are in a power relationship to each other. I think this type of power relationship is interesting to explore, and what I would like to do is to research what students in upper secondary school think about this topic, and how they reflect on it. I would like to use *GOT* in this work, because it offers many examples of different uses of power, and it is popular.

My research question is for the moment as follows: How do upper secondary school student experience and relate to power relationships and power structures in the TV-series *GOT* and the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin?

I am planning to gather data through a questionnaire and a group interview. The questionnaire will be carried through individually and will deal with power in general, and with power in the series. The group interview will be like an informal discussion between you and other students who also have watched or read the series. The discussion will be about power and *GOT*. I will mainly focus on the first two books in the series, and the first two seasons.

To be able to use the interview in the thesis I will have to record it and then write everything down. In my thesis I will not use your name, but a fictional name. Because of the recording I will have to apply to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (SND) for permission to go through with the study.



If you are interested, you will be contacted in a few days and you will receive additional information about the study and a consent form that must be signed if you wish to participate. If you are younger than 18, you also need the signature from your parent or care person. This permits me to use the recording in my thesis.

You may withdraw from the study anytime you wish to. The interview is not part of the English subject, and will be held outside school hours, most likely an afternoon or a weekend. I hope participation will be possible for you then. My thesis will be handed in in September, but the interview will be held as soon as possible.”

## Appendix 13 Study Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Ingrid Fagnastøl, master degree student at Høgskolen i Østfold. In this study I hope to learn about how a group of learners in upper secondary school relate to the aspect of power in the TV- and book- series *Game of Thrones* and *A song of Ice and Fire*. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have read the first two /three) books of the series and or watched a majority of the episodes of the TV-series.

Should you decide to participate, I will ask you to fill in an individual questionnaire and invite you to a group interview with a group of other learners from the school. I anticipate that there will be one meeting in addition to the questionnaire, which you will deal with individually. I expect the group interview to last approximately 2 hours, maybe a little more due to the clips from the TV-series. It will possibly be held on an afternoon /evening, or in the weekend. This will be after Easter.

In the process you may be challenged on your opinions, you may disagree with others, but I hope that taking part in this study will also teach you something about power and how power plays a part in all our relationships. Apart from this, I cannot guarantee, that you will receive any benefits from this study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. If you give me your permission by signing this document, the interview will be used in a Master's thesis at Høgskolen i Østfold.

Even if you decide to participate by signing this form, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

If you have any questions, please give me a call (\_\_\_\_\_)

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

Date

---

Signature of participant

Signature of researcher

## Appendix 14      Domination Techniques/ Hersketeknikker

Disse fem ble gjort allmenn kjent av Professor Berit Ås, hun er derimot ikke den som først identifiserte dem.

1. **Usynligjøring**; ignorere, utestenge, ikke kommentere eller svare (Making invisible)
2. **Latterliggjøring**; rakke ned på, «lille venn», negativt kroppsspråk (ridicule)
3. **Holde tilbake informasjon** (Withholding information)
4. **Dobbeltstraff** (Double punishment or damned if you do or damned if you don't)
5. **Gi motstanderen skyldfølelse** (heaping blame and putting to shame)

Litt utdyping:

- **Kuppe eller stjele andres ideer** og presentere som egne (Pirating proposals)
- **Fornærme eller gjøre liten** (Insulting and underrating)
- **Avbrytelser** (interruptions)
- **Bruke vanskelig språk**

Notatet er basert på følgende kilde:

The Centre for Gender Equality, Norway. "Domination Techniques: What They are and How to Combat them", The Union of Women's Organizations of Macedonia, April 2001. Address. Web. 27 Apr. 2013.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/daphnetoolkit/files/projects/2002\\_181/int\\_domination\\_techniques\\_norway.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/daphnetoolkit/files/projects/2002_181/int_domination_techniques_norway.pdf)

**Appendix 15      Time Schedule for Focus Group Interview**

**Time:** 12:00, on Saturday ..... April 2013

**Scheduled length:** ca. 2 hours

**Venue:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Welcome****2. Agenda**

- Goal and purpose of the meeting (collect useful information for report)

**3. General information**

- My role as moderator
- The means to record the session
- Terms of confidentiality (consent form, copy of transcripts and of the finished report)

**4. Ground rules for focus groups interviews**

- keep focused
- A natural yet focused discussion
- participation from all
- try to speak one at the time due to recording
- confidentiality

**5. Introductions of participants**

Have you just watched the series or read the books as well?

**6. Questions and answers about power in general****7. Questions and answers about *GOT*****8. Commenting on scenes from the TV-series *GOT***

## **9. Popular literature and film about troubling topics**

### **10. Wrap up**

- A quick sum up
- questions from the participants



## Appendix 16      Tasks 20 and 21, Pre-Interview Questionnaire

### Ranking Persons According to Power

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Student 1</i>	<i>Student 2</i>	<i>Student 3</i>	<i>Student 4</i>	<i>Student 5</i>
1.	<i>Barack Obama</i>	Barack Obama	<i>Barack Obama</i>	President Obama	<i>President Obama</i>
2.	<i>Michelle Obama</i>	Michelle Obama	<i>Michelle Obama</i>	Police officer	<i>Michelle Obama</i>
3.	<i>Police officer</i>	Police officer	<i>Vicar</i>		<i>Police officer</i>
4.	<i>Teacher</i>	Teacher	<i>Teacher</i>	Beautiful woman, 29	<i>Teacher</i>
5.	<i>Beautiful woman, 29</i>	Vicar	<i>Police officer</i>	Michelle Obama	<i>Beautiful woman, 29</i>
6.	<i>Vicar</i>	Beautiful woman, 29	<i>Beautiful woman, 29</i>	Vicar	<i>Store manager</i>
7.	<i>Store manager</i>	Store manager	<i>Man, 30</i>	Store manager	<i>Man, 30</i>
8.	<i>Man, 30</i>	Taxi driver	<i>Store manager</i>	Teacher	<i>Taxi driver</i>
9.	<i>Woman, 36</i>	Woman, 36	<i>Woman, 36</i>	Woman, 36	<i>Cleaning assistant</i>
10.	<i>Man, 80</i>	Man, 30	<i>Taxi driver</i>	Cleaning assistant	<i>Woman, 36</i>
11.	<i>Taxi driver</i>	Cleaning assistant	<i>Man, 80</i>	Boy, 7	<i>Vicar</i>
12.	<i>Cleaning assistant</i>	Man, 80	<i>Cleaning assistant</i>	Girl 8	<i>Man in wheelchair</i>
13.	<i>Girl, 8</i>	Man in wheelchair	<i>“Man in wheelchair?”</i>	Man, 80	<i>Man, 80</i>
14.	<i>boy, 7</i>	Girl, 8	<i>boy, 7</i>	Taxi driver	<i>Boy, 7</i>
15.	<i>“Man in wheelchair?”</i>	Boy, 7	<i>Girl, 8</i>	Man in wheelchair	<i>Girl, 8</i>

## Ranking Characters in *GOT* According to Power

One participant had only listed one name for this category.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Student 1</b>	<b>Student 2</b>	<b>Student 3</b>	<b>Student 4</b>	<b>Student 5</b>
1.	Joffrey	<i>Tywin Lannister</i>	Joffrey	<i>Joffrey</i>	
2.	Tyrion	<i>Littlefinger</i>	Tywin Lannister	<i>Cersei</i>	Joffrey
3.	Cersei	<i>Varys</i>	Daenerys	<i>Tyrion</i>	
4.	Eddard	<i>Tyrion Lannister</i>	Littlefinger	<i>Eddard Stark</i>	
5.	Robb	<i>Cersei Lannister</i>	Tyrion	<i>Jamie Lannister</i>	
6.	Varys	<i>Jamie Lannister</i>	Cersei	<i>Tywin</i>	
7.	Littlefinger	<i>Joffrey Lannister</i>	Varys	<i>Sansa Stark</i>	
8.	Catelyn Stark	<i>Robb Stark</i>	Eddard Stark	<i>Littlefinger</i>	
9.	Tywin Lannister	<i>Daenerys</i>	Robb Stark	<i>Jon Snow</i>	
10.	Shae	<i>Catelyn Stark</i>	Jon Snow	<i>Daenerys</i>	
11.	Daenerys	<i>Shae</i>	Jamie Lannister	<i>The Hound</i>	
12.	Jamie L	<i>Eddard Stark</i>	Theon Greyjoy	<i>Robb Stark</i>	
13.	Theon Greyjoy	<i>Jon Snow</i>	Sansa	<i>Catelyn Stark</i>	
14.	Jon Snow	<i>Arya Stark</i>	Catelyn Stark	<i>Varys</i>	
15.	The Hound	<i>The Hound</i>	Brienne of Tarth	<i>Brienne of Tarth</i>	
16.	Brienne of Tarth	<i>Brienne of Tarth</i>	Shae	<i>Arya</i>	
17.	Arya Stark	<i>Theon Greyjoy.</i>	Arya	<i>Theon</i>	
18.	Sansa	<i>Sansa Stark</i>	Samwell Tarly	<i>Shae</i>	
19.	Samwell Tarly	<i>Samwell Tarly</i>	Gilly	<i>Samwell Tarly</i>	
20.	Gilly	<i>Gilly</i>	The Hound	<i>Gilly</i>	