

## Game of Thrones

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Game of Thrones	
<span></span> <div>Game of Thrones title card</div>	
<b>Genre</b>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fantasy</li><li>Serial drama</li></ul></div>
<b>Created by</b>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>David Benioff</li><li>D. B. Weiss</li></ul></div>
<b>Based on</b>	<i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i> by George R. R. Martin
<b>Starring</b>	see List of <i>Game of Thrones</i> characters
<b>Theme music composer</b>	Ramin Djawadi
<b>Opening theme</b>	"Main Title"
<b>Composer(s)</b>	Ramin Djawadi
<b>Country of origin</b>	United States
<b>Original language(s)</b>	English
<b>No. of seasons</b>	7
<b>No. of episodes</b>	67 (list of episodes)
Production	
<b>Executive producer(s)</b>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>David Benioff</li><li>D. B. Weiss</li><li>Carolyn Strauss</li><li>Frank Doelger</li><li>Bernadette Caulfield</li><li>George R. R. Martin</li></ul></div>
<b>Production location(s)</b>	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Northern Ireland</li><li>Croatia</li></ul></div>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland</li> <li>Spain</li> <li>Malta</li> <li>Morocco</li> <li>Scotland</li> <li>Canada</li> <li>United States</li> </ul>
<b>Running time</b>	50–80 minutes
<b>Production company(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Television 360</li> <li>Grok! Television</li> <li>Generator Entertainment</li> <li>Startling Television</li> <li>Bighead Littlehead</li> </ul>
<b>Distributor</b>	Warner Bros. Television Distribution
Release	
<b>Original network</b>	HBO
<b>Picture format</b>	1080i (16:9 HDTV)
<b>Audio format</b>	Dolby Digital 5.1
<b>Original release</b>	April 17, 2011 – present
Chronology	
<b>Related shows</b>	<i>After the Thrones</i> <i>Thronecast</i>
External links	
Website	
Production website	

***Game of Thrones*** is an American fantasy drama television series created by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss. It is an adaptation of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, George R. R. Martin's series of fantasy novels, the first of which is *A Game of Thrones*. It is filmed in Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland, Canada, Croatia, Iceland, Malta, Morocco, Scotland, Spain, and the United States.<sup>[1]</sup> The series premiered on HBO in the United States on April 17, 2011, and its seventh season ended on August 27, 2017. The series will conclude with its eighth season premiering on April 14, 2019.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Set on the fictional continents of Westeros and Essos, *Game of Thrones* has several plots and a large ensemble cast but follows three story arcs. The first arc is about the Iron Throne of the Seven Kingdoms and follows a web of alliances and conflicts among the noble dynasties either vying to claim the throne or fighting for independence from it. The second story arc focuses on the last descendant of the realm's deposed ruling dynasty, exiled and plotting a return to the throne. The third story arc follows the longstanding brotherhood charged with defending the realm against the ancient threats of the fierce peoples and legendary creatures that lie far north and an impending winter that threatens the realm.

*Game of Thrones* has attracted record viewership on HBO and has a broad, active, international fan base. It has been acclaimed by critics, particularly for its acting, complex characters, story, scope and production values, although its frequent use of nudity and violence (including sexual violence) has been criticized. The series has received 47 Primetime Emmy Awards, including Outstanding Drama Series in 2015, 2016 and 2018, more than any other primetime scripted television series. Its other awards and nominations include three Hugo Awards for Best Dramatic Presentation (2012–2014), a 2011 Peabody Award and five nominations for the Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series – Drama (2012 and 2015–2018).

Of the ensemble cast, Peter Dinklage has won three Primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (2011, 2015 and 2018) and the Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor – Series, Miniseries or Television Film (2012) for his performance as Tyrion Lannister. Lena Headey, Emilia Clarke, Kit Harington, Maisie Williams, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Diana Rigg and Max von Sydow have also received Primetime Emmy Award nominations for their performances.



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## Background

*Main article: List of Game of Thrones episodes*

*See also: Synopsis of A Song of Ice and Fire*



Power and violence are central themes of *Game of Thrones*, and the number of weapons made for the series (some of which are shown here) reflects this.

## Setting

*Main article: World of A Song of Ice and Fire*

*Game of Thrones* is roughly based on the storylines of *A Song of Ice and Fire*,<sup>[4][5]</sup> set in the fictional Seven Kingdoms of Westeros and the continent of Essos. The series chronicles the violent dynastic struggles among the realm's noble families for the Iron Throne, while other families fight for independence from it. It opens with additional threats in the icy North and Essos in the east.<sup>[6]</sup>

Showrunner David Benioff jokingly suggested "*The Sopranos* in Middle-earth" as *Game of Thrones*' tagline, referring to its intrigue-filled plot and dark tone in a fantasy setting of magic and dragons.<sup>[7]</sup> In a 2012 study of deaths per episode, it ranked second out of 40 recent U.S. TV drama series (with an average of 14).<sup>[8]</sup>

## Themes

*Main article: Themes in A Song of Ice and Fire*

The series is generally praised for what is perceived as a sort of medieval realism.<sup>[9][10]</sup> George R.R. Martin set out to make the story feel more like historical fiction than contemporary fantasy, with less emphasis on magic and sorcery and more on battles, political intrigue, and the characters, believing that magic should be used moderately in the epic fantasy genre.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> Martin has stated that "the true horrors of human history derive not from orcs and Dark Lords, but from ourselves."<sup>[14]</sup>

A common theme in the fantasy genre is the battle between good and evil, which Martin says does not mirror the real world.<sup>[15]</sup> Just like people's capacity for good and for evil in real life, Martin explores the questions of redemption and character change.<sup>[16]</sup> The series allows the audience to view different characters from their perspective, unlike in many other fantasies, and thus the supposed villains can provide their side of the story.<sup>[13][17]</sup> Benioff said, "George brought a measure of harsh realism to high fantasy. He introduced gray tones into a black-and-white universe."<sup>[13]</sup>

In early seasons, under the influence of the *A Song of Ice and Fire* books, main characters were regularly killed off, and this was credited with developing tension among viewers.<sup>[18]</sup> In later seasons, critics pointed out that certain characters had developed "plot armor" to survive in

unlikely circumstances, and attributed this to *Game of Thrones* deviating from the novels to become more of a traditional television series.<sup>[18]</sup> The series also reflects the substantial death rates in war.<sup>[19][20]</sup>

### Inspirations and derivations

Although the first season closely follows the events of the first novel, later seasons have made significant changes. According to David Benioff, the series is "about adapting the series as a whole and following the map George laid out for us and hitting the major milestones, but not necessarily each of the stops along the way".<sup>[21]</sup>

The novels and their adaptations base aspects of their settings, characters, and plot on events in European history.<sup>[22]</sup> Most of Westeros is reminiscent of high medieval Europe, from lands and cultures,<sup>[23]</sup> to the palace intrigue, feudal system, castles, and knightly tournaments. A principal inspiration for the novels is the English Wars of the Roses<sup>[24]</sup> (1455–85) between the houses of Lancaster and York, reflected in Martin's houses of Lannister and Stark. The scheming Cersei Lannister evokes Isabella, the "she-wolf of France" (1295–1358);<sup>[22]</sup> Isabella and her family (particularly as portrayed in Maurice Druon's historical-novel series, *The Accursed Kings*) were also a main inspiration for Martin.<sup>[25]</sup>

Holland further proposes that other historical antecedents of series elements include Hadrian's Wall (which becomes Martin's Wall), the Roman Empire, and the legend of Atlantis (ancient Valyria), Byzantine Greek fire ("wildfire"), Icelandic sagas of the Viking Age (the Ironborn), the Mongol hordes (the Dothraki), the Hundred Years' War and the Italian Renaissance.<sup>[22]</sup> The series' popularity has been attributed, in part, to Martin's skill at fusing these elements into a seamless, credible version of alternate history.<sup>[22]</sup> Martin acknowledges, "I take [history] and I file off the serial numbers and I turn it up to 11."<sup>[26]</sup>

### Cast and characters

*Main article: List of Game of Thrones characters*



Peter Dinklage (Tyrion Lannister) has led the principal cast since the second season

*Game of Thrones* has an ensemble cast estimated to be the largest on television;<sup>[27]</sup> during its third season, 257 cast names were recorded.<sup>[28]</sup> In 2014, several actor contracts were renegotiated to include a seventh-season option, with raises which reportedly made them among the highest-paid performers on cable TV.<sup>[29]</sup> In 2016, several actor contracts were again renegotiated, reportedly increasing the salary of five of the main cast members to £2 million per episode for the last two seasons, which would make them the highest paid actors on television.<sup>[30][31]</sup> The main cast is listed below.<sup>[32]</sup>

Lord Eddard "Ned" Stark (Sean Bean) is the head of House Stark, whose members are involved in plot lines throughout most of the series. He and his wife, Catelyn Tully (Michelle Fairley), have five children: Robb (Richard Madden), the eldest, followed by Sansa (Sophie Turner), Arya (Maisie Williams), Bran (Isaac Hempstead-Wright) and Rickon (Art Parkinson), the youngest. Ned's illegitimate son Jon Snow (Kit Harington) and his friend, Samwell Tarly (John Bradley), serve in the Night's Watch under Lord Commander Jeor Mormont (James Cosmo). The Wildlings living north of the Wall include young Gilly (Hannah Murray), and warriors Tormund Giantsbane (Kristofer Hivju) and Ygritte (Rose Leslie).<sup>[33]</sup>

Others associated with House Stark include Ned's ward Theon Greyjoy (Alfie Allen), his vassal Roose Bolton (Michael McElhatton), and Bolton's bastard son, Ramsay Snow (Iwan Rheon). Robb falls in love with the healer Talisa Maegyr (Oona Chaplin), and Arya befriends the blacksmith's apprentice Gendry (Joe Dempsie) and the assassin Jaqen H'ghar (Tom Wlaschiha). The tall warrior Brienne of Tarth (Gwendoline Christie) serves Catelyn and, later, Sansa.<sup>[33]</sup>

In King's Landing, the capital, Ned's friend King Robert Baratheon (Mark Addy) shares a loveless marriage with Cersei Lannister (Lena Headey), who has taken her twin brother, the "Kingslayer" Ser Jaime Lannister (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau), as her lover. She loathes her younger brother, the dwarf Tyrion Lannister (Peter Dinklage), who is attended by his mistress Shae (Sibel Kekilli) and the sellsword Bronn (Jerome Flynn). Cersei's father is Lord Tywin Lannister (Charles Dance). Cersei also has two young sons: Joffrey (Jack Gleeson) and Tommen (Dean-Charles Chapman). Joffrey is guarded by the scar-faced warrior, Sandor "the Hound" Clegane (Rory McCann).<sup>[33]</sup>

The king's Small Council of advisors includes the crafty Master of Coin Lord Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish (Aidan Gillen) and the eunuch spymaster Lord Varys (Conleth Hill). Robert's brother, Stannis Baratheon (Stephen Dillane), is advised by foreign priestess Melisandre (Carice van Houten) and former smuggler Ser Davos Seaworth (Liam Cunningham). The wealthy Tyrell family is represented at court by Margaery Tyrell (Natalie Dormer). The High Sparrow (Jonathan Pryce) is the capital's religious leader. In the southern principality of Dorne, Ellaria Sand (Indira Varma) seeks vengeance against the Lannisters.<sup>[33]</sup>

Across the Narrow Sea, siblings Viserys (Harry Lloyd) and Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke) – the exiled children of the last king of the original ruling dynasty, who was overthrown by Robert Baratheon – are running for their lives and trying to win back the throne. Daenerys becomes married to Khal Drogo (Jason Momoa), the leader of the nomadic Dothraki. Her retinue includes the exiled knight Ser Jorah Mormont (Iain Glen), her aide Missandei (Nathalie Emmanuel), and the sellsword Daario Naharis (Michiel Huisman).<sup>[33]</sup>

Production

### Conception and development



Showrunners D. B. Weiss and David Benioff created the series, wrote most of its episodes and directed several.

In January 2006, David Benioff had a phone conversation with George R. R. Martin's literary agent about the books he represented, and became interested in *A Song of Ice and Fire* as he had been a fan of fantasy fiction when young but had not read the books before. The literary agent then sent the first four books of *A Song of Ice and Fire* to Benioff.<sup>[34]</sup> Benioff read a few hundred pages of the first novel, *A Game of Thrones*, shared his enthusiasm with D. B. Weiss and suggested that they adapt Martin's novels into a television series; Weiss finished the first novel in "maybe 36 hours".<sup>[35]</sup> They pitched the series to HBO after a five-hour meeting with Martin (himself a veteran screenwriter) in a restaurant on Santa Monica Boulevard. According to Benioff, they won Martin over with their answer to his question, "Who is Jon Snow's mother?"<sup>[36]</sup>

I had worked in Hollywood myself for about 10 years, from the late '80s to the '90s. I'd been on the staff of *The Twilight Zone* and *Beauty and the Beast*. All of my first drafts tended to be too big or too expensive. I always hated the process of having to cut. I said, "I'm sick of this, I'm going to write something that's as big as I want it to be, and it's going to have a cast of characters that go into the thousands, and I'm going to have huge castles, and battles, and dragons.

—George R. R. Martin, author<sup>[37]</sup>

Before being approached by Benioff and Weiss, Martin had had other meetings with other scriptwriters, most of them wanting to turn it into a feature film. Martin, however, deemed it "unfilmable" and impossible to be done as a feature film, stating that the size of one of his novels is as long as *The Lord of the Rings*, which had been adapted as three feature films.<sup>[37]</sup> Similarly, Benioff also said that it would be impossible to turn the novels into a feature film as the scale of the novels is too big for a feature film and dozens of characters would have to be discarded. Benioff added, "a fantasy movie of this scope, financed by a major studio, would almost certainly need a PG-13 rating. That means no sex, no blood, no profanity. Fuck that."<sup>[13]</sup> Martin himself was pleased with the suggestion that they adapt it as an HBO series, saying that he "never imagined it anywhere else".<sup>[38]</sup> "I knew it couldn't be done as a network television series. It's too adult. The level of sex and violence would never have gone through."<sup>[37]</sup>

The series began development in January 2007.<sup>[4]</sup> HBO acquired the TV rights to the novels, with Benioff and Weiss as its executive producers, and Martin as a co-executive producer. The intention was for each novel to yield a season's worth of episodes.<sup>[4]</sup> Initially, Martin would write one episode per season while Benioff and Weiss would write the rest of the episodes.<sup>[4][39]</sup> Jane Espenson and Bryan Cogman were later added to write one episode apiece the first season.<sup>[6]</sup>

The first and second drafts of the pilot script by Benioff and Weiss were submitted in August 2007<sup>[40]</sup> and June 2008,<sup>[41]</sup> respectively. Although HBO liked both drafts,<sup>[41][42]</sup> a pilot was not ordered until November 2008;<sup>[43]</sup> the 2007–2008 Writers Guild of America strikemay have delayed the process.<sup>[42]</sup> The pilot episode, "Winter Is Coming", was first shot in 2009; after a poor reception in a private viewing, HBO demanded an extensive re-shoot (about 90 percent of the episode, with cast and directorial changes).<sup>[36][44]</sup>

The pilot reportedly cost HBO \$5–10 million to produce,<sup>[45]</sup> while the first season's budget was estimated at \$50–60 million.<sup>[46]</sup> In the second season, the series received a 15-percent budget increase for the climactic battle in "Blackwater" (which had an \$8 million budget).<sup>[47][48]</sup> Between 2012 and 2015, the average budget per episode increased from \$6 million<sup>[49]</sup> to "at least" \$8 million.<sup>[50]</sup> The sixth-season budget was over \$10 million per episode, for a season total of over \$100 million and a series record.<sup>[51]</sup>

### Casting

Nina Gold and Robert Sterne are the series' primary casting directors.<sup>[52]</sup> Through a process of auditions and readings, the main cast was assembled. The only exceptions were Peter Dinklage and Sean Bean, whom the writers wanted from the start; they were announced as joining the pilot in 2009.<sup>[53][54]</sup> Other actors signed for the pilot were Kit Harington as Jon Snow, Jack Gleeson as Joffrey Baratheon, Harry Lloyd as Viserys Targaryen, and Mark Addy as Robert Baratheon.<sup>[54][55]</sup> Addy was, according to showrunners Benioff and Weiss, the easiest actor to cast for the series, being that his audition was on point.<sup>[56]</sup> Some of the characters in the pilot were recast for the first season: Catelyn

Stark was initially played by Jennifer Ehle, but the role was recast with Michelle Fairley.<sup>[57]</sup> Daenerys Targaryen was also recast, with Emilia Clarke replacing Tamzin Merchant.<sup>[58][59]</sup> The rest of the first season's cast was filled in the second half of 2009.<sup>[60]</sup>

Although many of the cast returned after the first season, the producers had many new characters to cast for each of the following seasons. Due to the large number of new characters, Benioff and Weiss postponed the introduction of several key characters in the second season and merged several characters into one or assigned plot functions to different characters.<sup>[27]</sup> Some recurring characters were recast over the years; for example, Gregor Clegane was played by three different actors, while Dean-Charles Chapman who played Tommen Baratheon also played a minor Lannister character.<sup>[61]</sup>

## Writing



George R. R. Martin, author of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is a series co-executive producer and wrote one episode for each of the first four seasons.

*Game of Thrones* used seven writers in six seasons. Series creators David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, the showrunners, write most of the episodes each season.<sup>[62]</sup>

*A Song of Ice and Fire* author George R. R. Martin wrote one episode in each of the first four seasons. Martin did not write an episode for the later seasons, since he wanted to focus on completing the sixth novel (*The Winds of Winter*).<sup>[63]</sup> Jane Espenson co-wrote one first-season episode as a freelance writer.<sup>[64]</sup>

Bryan Cogman, initially a script coordinator for the series,<sup>[64]</sup> was promoted to producer for the fifth season. Cogman, who wrote at least one episode for the first five seasons, is the only other writer in the writers' room with Benioff and Weiss. Before his promotion, Vanessa Taylor (a writer during the second and third seasons) worked closely with Benioff and Weiss. Dave Hill joined the writing staff for the fifth season after working as an assistant to Benioff and Weiss.<sup>[65]</sup> Although Martin is not in the writers' room, he reads the script outlines and makes comments.<sup>[62]</sup>

Benioff and Weiss sometimes assign characters to particular writers; for example, Cogman was assigned to Arya Stark for the fourth season. The writers spend several weeks writing a character outline, including what material from the novels to use and the overarching themes. After these individual outlines are complete, they spend another two to three weeks discussing each main character's individual arc and arranging them episode by episode.<sup>[62]</sup> A detailed outline is created, with each of the writers working on a portion to create a script for each episode. Cogman, who wrote two episodes for the fifth season, took a month and a half to complete both scripts. They are then read by Benioff and Weiss, who make notes, and parts of the script are rewritten. All ten episodes are written before filming begins since they are filmed out of order with two units in different countries.<sup>[62]</sup>

Benioff and Weiss write each of their episodes together, with one of them writing the first half of the script and the other the second half. After that they begin with passing the drafts back and forth to make notes and rewrite parts of it.<sup>[38]</sup>

## Adaptation schedule

Benioff and Weiss originally intended to adapt the entire, still-incomplete *A Song of Ice and Fire* series of novels for television.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> After *Game of Thrones* began outpacing the published novels in the sixth season, the series was based on a plot outline of the future novels provided by Martin<sup>[66]</sup> and original content. In April 2016, the showrunners' plan was to shoot 13 more episodes after the sixth season: seven episodes in the seventh season and six episodes in the eighth.<sup>[67]</sup> Later that month, the series was renewed for a seventh season with a seven-episode order.<sup>[68][69]</sup> Eight seasons were ordered and filmed, adapting the novels at a rate of about 48 seconds per page for the first three seasons.<sup>[70]</sup>

Season	Ordered	Filming	First aired	Last aired	Novel(s) adapted	Refs
Season 1	March 2, 2010	Second half of 2010	April 17, 2011	June 19, 2011	<i>A Game of Thrones</i>	<sup>[71]</sup>

Season 2	April 19, 2011	Second half of 2011	April 1, 2012	June 3, 2012	<i>A Clash of Kings</i> and some early chapters from <i>A Storm of Swords</i>	[72][73]
Season 3	April 10, 2012	July – November 2012	March 31, 2013	June 9, 2013	About the first two-thirds of <i>A Storm of Swords</i>	[74][75][76]
Season 4	April 2, 2013	July – November 2013	April 6, 2014	June 15, 2014	The remaining one-third of <i>A Storm of Swords</i> and some elements from <i>A Feast for Crows</i> and <i>A Dance with Dragons</i>	[77][78]
Season 5	April 8, 2014	July – December 2014	April 12, 2015	June 14, 2015	<i>A Feast for Crows</i> , <i>A Dance with Dragons</i> and original content, with some late chapters from <i>A Storm of Swords</i> and elements from <i>The Winds of Winter</i>	[79][80] [81][82][83]
Season 6		July – December 2015	April 24, 2016	June 26, 2016	Original content and outline from <i>The Winds of Winter</i> , with some late elements from <i>A Feast for Crows</i> and <i>A Dance with Dragons</i>	[79][84] [85][86]
Season 7	April 21, 2016	August 2016 – February 2017	July 16, 2017	August 27, 2017	Original content and outline from <i>The Winds of Winter</i> and <i>A</i>	[67][68] [69][85][87]
Season 8	July 30, 2016	October 2017 – July 2018	April 14, 2019	May 19, 2019		[88][85] [89][3][90][91]



The first two seasons adapted one novel each. For the later seasons, its creators see *Game of Thrones* as an adaptation of *A Song of Ice and Fire* as a whole rather than the individual novels;<sup>[92]</sup> this enables them to move events across novels, according to screen-adaptation requirements.<sup>[93]</sup>

## Filming



The Azure Window at Ras-id-Dwerja, on Gozo, was the site of the Dothraki wedding in season one.

Principal photography for the first season was scheduled to begin on July 26, 2010,<sup>[6]</sup> and the primary location was the Paint Hall Studios in Belfast, Northern Ireland.<sup>[94]</sup> Exterior scenes in Northern Ireland were filmed at Sandy Brae in the Mourne Mountains (standing in for Vaes Dothrak), Castle Ward (Winterfell), Saintfield Estates (the Winterfell godswood), Tollymore Forest (outdoor scenes), Cairncastle (the execution site), the Magheramorne quarry (Castle Black), and Shane's Castle (the tourney grounds).<sup>[95]</sup> Doune Castle in Stirling, Scotland, was also used in the original pilot episode for scenes at Winterfell.<sup>[96]</sup> The producers initially considered filming the whole series in Scotland, but decided on Northern Ireland because of the availability of studio space.<sup>[97]</sup>

The first season's southern scenes were filmed in Malta, a change in location from the pilot episode's Moroccan sets.<sup>[6]</sup> The city of Mdina was used for King's Landing. Filming was also done at Fort Manoel (representing the Sept of Baelor), at the Azure Window on the island of Gozo (the Dothraki wedding site) and at San Anton Palace, Fort Ricasoli, Fort St. Angelo and St. Dominic monastery (all used for scenes in the Red Keep).<sup>[95]</sup>



The walled city of Dubrovnik became King's Landing in season two.

Filming of the second season's southern scenes shifted from Malta to Croatia, where the city of Dubrovnik and nearby locations allowed exterior shots of a walled, coastal medieval city. The Walls of Dubrovnik and Fort Lovrijenac were used for scenes in King's Landing and the Red Keep. The island of Lokrum, the St. Dominic monastery in the coastal town of Trogir, the Rector's Palace in Dubrovnik, and the Dubac quarry (a few kilometers east) were used for scenes set in Qarth. Scenes set north of the Wall, in the Frostfangs and at the Fist of the First Men, were filmed in November 2011 in Iceland: on the Vatnajökull glacier near Smyrlabjörg, the Svinafellsjökull glacier near Skaftafell and the Mýrdalsjökull glacier near Vik on Höfðabrekkuheiði.<sup>[95][98]</sup>

Third-season production returned to Dubrovnik, with the Walls of Dubrovnik, Fort Lovrijenac and nearby locations again used for scenes in King's Landing and the Red Keep. Trsteno Arboretum, a new location, is the garden of the Tyrells in King's Landing. The third season also returned to Morocco (including the city of Essaouira) to film Daenerys' scenes in Essos.<sup>[99]</sup> Dimmuborgir and the Grjótagjá cave in Iceland were used as well.<sup>[98]</sup> One scene, with a live bear, was filmed in Los Angeles.<sup>[100]</sup> The production used three units (Dragon, Wolf and Raven) filming in parallel, six directing teams, 257 cast members and 703 crew members.<sup>[28]</sup>



Ballintoy Harbour was Lordsport on the Iron Islands.

The fourth season returned to Dubrovnik and included new locations, including Diocletian's Palace in Split, Klis Fortress north of Split, Perun quarry east of Split, the Mosor mountain range, and Baška Voda further south.<sup>[101]</sup> Thingvellir National Park in Iceland was used for the fight between Brienne and the Hound.<sup>[98]</sup> Filming took 136 days and ended on November 21, 2013.<sup>[102]</sup> The fifth season added Seville, Spain, used for scenes of Dorne, as well as Córdoba.<sup>[103]</sup>

The sixth season, which began filming in July 2015, returned to Spain and filmed in Navarra, Guadalajara, Seville, Almeria, Girona and Peniscola.<sup>[104]</sup> Filming also returned to Dubrovnik, Croatia.<sup>[105]</sup>

Filming of the seven episodes of season 7 began on August 31, 2016, at Titanic Studios in Belfast, with other filming in Iceland, Northern Ireland and many locations in Spain,<sup>[106]</sup> including Seville, Cáceres, Almodovar del Rio, Santiponce, Zumaia and Bermeo.<sup>[107]</sup> The series also filmed in Dubrovnik, which is used for location of King's Landing.<sup>[108]</sup> Filming continued until the end of February 2017 as necessary to ensure winter weather in some of the European locations.<sup>[109]</sup>

### Directing

Each ten-episode season of *Game of Thrones* has four to six directors, who usually direct back-to-back episodes. Alan Taylor has directed seven episodes, the most episodes of the series. Alex Graves, David Nutter, Mark Mylod, and Jeremy Podeswa have directed six each. Daniel Minahan directed five episodes, and Michelle MacLaren, Alik Sakharov, and Miguel Sapochnik directed four each. Brian Kirk directed three episodes during the first season, and Tim Van Patten directed the series' first two episodes. Neil Marshall directed two episodes, both with large battle scenes: "Blackwater" and "The Watchers on the Wall". Other directors have been Jack Bender, David Petrarca, Daniel Sackheim, Michael Slovis and Matt Shakman.<sup>[110]</sup> David Benioff and D. B. Weiss have directed two episodes together but only credited one each episode, which was determined after a coin toss.<sup>[65][33]</sup>

### Technical aspects

Alik Sakharov was the pilot's cinematographer. The series has had a number of cinematographers,<sup>[111]</sup> and has received seven Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Cinematography for a Single-Camera Series nominations.<sup>[112]</sup>

Oral Norrey Ottey, Frances Parker, Martin Nicholson, Crispin Green, Tim Porter and Katie Weiland have edited the series for a varying number of episodes. Weiland received a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing for a Drama Series in 2015.<sup>[112]</sup>

### Costumes



The costumes of Ygritte, Jon Snow and Tormund Giantsbane reflect the harsh climate in which they are worn.



Dresses worn at the royal court in King's Landing indicate their wearers' wealth and status.



Functional weapons and armor, like Brienne of Tarth's (left), were manufactured for the series.

Michele Clapton was costume designer for *Game of Thrones*' first five seasons before she was replaced by April Ferry.<sup>[113]</sup> Clapton returned to the series as costume designer for the seventh season.<sup>[114]</sup>

The costumes used in the series drew inspiration from a number of sources, such as Japanese and Persian armour. Dothraki dress resembles that of the Bedouin (one was made out of fish skins to resemble dragon scales), and the Wildlings wear animal skins like the Inuit.<sup>[115]</sup> Wildling bone armor is made from molds of actual bones, and is assembled with string and latex resembling catgut.<sup>[116]</sup> Although the extras who play Wildlings and the Night's Watch often wear hats (normal in a cold climate), members of the principal cast usually do not so viewers can recognize the main characters. Björk's Alexander McQueen high-neckline dresses inspired Margaery Tyrell's funnel-neck outfit, and prostitutes' dresses are designed for easy removal.<sup>[115]</sup> All clothing used is aged for two weeks so it appears realistic on high-definition television.<sup>[116]</sup>

About two dozen wigs are used for the actresses. Made of human hair and up to 2 feet (61 cm) in length, they cost up to \$7,000 each and are washed and styled like real hair. Applying the wigs is time-consuming; Emilia Clarke, for example, requires about two hours to style her brunette hair with a platinum-blond wig and braids. Other actors, such as Jack Gleeson and Sophie Turner, receive frequent hair coloring. For characters such as Daenerys (Clarke) and her Dothraki, their hair, wigs and costumes are processed to appear as if they have not been washed for weeks.<sup>[115]</sup>

### Makeup

For the first three seasons, Paul Engelen was *Game of Thrones*' main makeup designer and prosthetic makeup artist with Melissa Lackersteen, Conor O'Sullivan, and Rob Trenton. At the beginning of the fourth season Engelen's team was replaced by Jane Walker and her crew, composed of Ann McEwan and Barrie and Sarah Gower.<sup>[112][117]</sup>

### Visual effects

For the series' large number of visual effects, HBO hired British-based BlueBolt and Irish-based Screen Scene for season one. Most of the environment builds were done as 2.5D projections, giving viewers perspective while keeping the programming from being overwhelming.<sup>[118]</sup> In 2011, the season-one finale, "Fire and Blood", was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Special Visual Effects.<sup>[112]</sup>

Because the effects became more complex in subsequent seasons (including CGI creatures, fire, and water), German-based Pixomondo became the lead visual-effects producer; nine of its twelve facilities contributed to the project for season two, with Stuttgart the lead.<sup>[119][120]</sup> Scenes were also produced by British-based Peanut FX, Canadian-based Spin VFX, and U.S.-based Gradient Effects. "Valar Morghulis" and "Valar Dohaeris" earned Pixomondo Primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Special Visual Effects in 2012 and 2013, respectively.<sup>[112]</sup>

For season four, HBO added German-based Mackevision to the project.<sup>[121]</sup> The season-four finale, "The Children", won the 2014 Emmy Award for Visual Effects. Additional producers for season four included Canadian-based Rodeo FX, German-based Scanline VFX and U.S.-based BAKED FX. The muscle and wing movements of the adolescent dragons in seasons four and five were based largely on those of a chicken. Pixomondo retained a team of 22 to 30 people which focused solely on visualizing Daenerys Targaryen's dragons, with the average production time per season of 20 to 22 weeks.<sup>[122]</sup> For the fifth season, HBO added Canadian-based Image Engine and U.S.-based Crazy Horse Effects to its list of main visual-effects producers.<sup>[123][124]</sup>

### Sound

Unusual for a television series, the sound team receives a rough cut of a full season and approaches it as a ten-hour feature film. Although seasons one and two had different sound teams, one team has been in charge of sound since then.<sup>[125]</sup> For the series' blood-and-gore sounds, the team often uses a chamois. For dragon screams, mating tortoises and dolphin, seal, lion and bird sounds have been used.<sup>[126]</sup>

### Title sequence

*Main article: Game of Thrones title sequence*

The series' title sequence was created by production studio Elastic for HBO. Creative director Angus Wall and his collaborators received the 2011 Primetime Emmy Award for Main Title Design for the sequence,<sup>[127]</sup> which depicts a three-dimensional map of the series' fictional world. The map is projected on the inside of a sphere which is centrally lit by a small sun in an armillary sphere.<sup>[128]</sup> As the camera moves across the map, focusing on the locations of the episode's events, clockwork mechanisms intertwine and allow buildings and other structures to emerge from the map. Accompanied by the title music, the names of the principal cast and creative staff appear. The sequence concludes after about 90 seconds with the title card and brief opening credits indicating the episode's writer(s) and director. Its composition changes as the story progresses, with new locations replacing those featuring less prominently or not at all.<sup>[128][129][130]</sup>

## Music

*Main article: Music of Game of Thrones*



Ramin Djawadi composed the *Game of Thrones* score.

The music for the series was composed by Ramin Djawadi. The first season's soundtrack, written in about ten weeks before the premiere,<sup>[131]</sup> was published by Varèse Sarabande in June 2011.<sup>[132]</sup> Soundtrack albums for subsequent seasons have been released, with tracks by the National, the Hold Steady, and Sigur Rós.<sup>[133]</sup> Djawadi has composed themes for each of the major houses and also for some of the main characters.<sup>[134]</sup> The themes may evolve over time, as Daenerys Targaryen's theme started small and then became more powerful after each season. Her theme started first with a single instrument, a cello, and Djawadi later incorporated more instruments for it.<sup>[134]</sup>

## Language

The Westerosi characters of *Game of Thrones* speak British-accented English, often (but not consistently) with the accent of the English region corresponding to the character's Westerosi region. The Northerner Eddard Stark speaks in actor Sean Bean's native northern accent, and the southern Lord Tywin Lannister speaks with a southern accent, while characters from Dorne speak English with a Spanish accent.<sup>[135][136]</sup> Characters foreign to Westeros often have a non-British accent.<sup>[137]</sup>

Although the common language of Westeros is represented as English, the producers charged linguist David J.

Peterson with constructing Dothraki and Valyrian languages based on the few words in the novels;<sup>[138]</sup> Dothraki and Valyrian dialogue is often subtitled in English. It has been reported that during the series these fictional languages have been heard by more people than the Welsh, Irish, and Scots Gaelic languages combined.<sup>[139]</sup>

## Effect on location

*Game of Thrones* is funded by Northern Ireland Screen, a UK government agency financed by Invest NI and the European Regional Development Fund.<sup>[140]</sup> As of April 2013, Northern Ireland Screen gave the series £9.25 million (\$14.37 million); according to government estimates, this has benefited the Northern Ireland economy by £65 million (\$100.95 million).<sup>[141]</sup>

Tourism Ireland has a *Game of Thrones*-themed marketing campaign similar to New Zealand's Tolkien-related advertising.<sup>[142][143]</sup> Invest NI and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board also expect the series to generate tourism revenue.<sup>[141]</sup> According to Arlene Foster, the series has given Northern Ireland the most non-political publicity in its history.<sup>[144]</sup> The production of *Game of Thrones* and other TV series also boosted Northern Ireland's creative industries, contributing to an estimated 12.4-percent growth in arts, entertainment, and recreation jobs between 2008 and 2013 (compared with 4.3 percent in the rest of the UK during the same period).<sup>[145]</sup> In September 2018, after the filming had finished, HBO announced plans to convert its filming locations in Northern Ireland into tourist attractions to be opened in 2019.<sup>[146]</sup>

Tourism organizations elsewhere reported increases in bookings after their locations appeared in *Game of Thrones*. In 2012, bookings through LateRooms.com increased by 28 percent in Dubrovnik and 13 percent in Iceland. The following year, bookings doubled in Ouarzazate, Morocco (the location of Daenerys' season-three scenes).<sup>[147]</sup> *Game of Thrones* has been attributed as a significant factor in the boom of tourism in Iceland that had a strong impact on its economy. Tourist numbers increased by 30% in 2015, followed by another 40% in 2016,<sup>[148]</sup> with a final figure of 2.4 million visitors expected for 2016, which is around seven times the population of the country.<sup>[149]</sup> However,

the increase in tourism to Dubrovnik, with *Game of Thrones* estimated to be responsible for half of its annual increase over many years, had led to concerns on "over-tourism" and its mayor to impose limits on tourist number in the city.<sup>[150][151]</sup>

Availability

### Broadcast

*Game of Thrones* is broadcast by HBO in the United States and by its local subsidiaries or other pay television services in other countries, at the same time as in the U.S. or weeks (or months) later. The series' broadcast in China on CCTV, begun in 2014, was heavily edited to remove scenes of sex and violence in accordance with a Chinese practice of censoring Western TV series to prevent what the *People's Daily* calls "negative effects and hidden security dangers". This resulted in viewer complaints about the incoherence of what remained.<sup>[152]</sup> Broadcasters carrying *Game of Thrones* include Showcase in Australia; HBO Canada, Super Écran, and Showcase in Canada; HBO Latin America in Latin America; SoHo and Prime in New Zealand, and Sky Atlantic in the United Kingdom and Ireland.<sup>[153]</sup>

### Home video

The ten episodes of the first season of *Game of Thrones* were released as a DVD and Blu-ray box set on March 6, 2012. The box set includes extra background and behind-the-scenes material but no deleted scenes, since nearly all the footage shot for the first season was used.<sup>[154]</sup> The box set sold over 350,000 copies in the first week after release, the largest first-week DVD sales ever for an HBO series, and the series set an HBO-series record for digital-download sales.<sup>[155]</sup> A collector's-edition box set was released in November 2012, combining the DVD and Blu-ray versions of the first season with the first episode of season two. A paperweight in the shape of a dragon egg is included in the set.<sup>[156]</sup>

DVD-Blu-ray box sets and digital downloads of the second season became available on February 19, 2013.<sup>[157]</sup> First-day sales broke HBO records, with 241,000 box sets sold and 355,000 episodes downloaded.<sup>[158]</sup> The third season was made available for purchase as a digital download on the Australian iTunes Store, parallel to the U.S. premiere, and was released on DVD and Blu-ray in region 1 on February 18, 2014.<sup>[159][160]</sup> The fourth season was released on DVD and Blu-ray on February 17, 2015,<sup>[161]</sup> and the fifth season on March 15, 2016.<sup>[162]</sup> The sixth season was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 15, 2016.<sup>[163]</sup> Beginning in 2016, HBO began issuing Steelbook Blu-ray sets which include both Dolby TrueHD 7.1 and Dolby Atmos audio options.<sup>[164]</sup> In 2018, the first season was released in 4K HDR on Ultra HD Blu-ray.<sup>[165]</sup>

### Copyright infringement

*Game of Thrones* has been widely pirated, primarily outside the U.S.<sup>[166]</sup> According to the file-sharing news website TorrentFreak, *Game of Thrones* has been the most pirated TV series since 2012, which means it has held the record for six years in a row.<sup>[167][168][169][170][171][172]</sup> Illegal downloads increased to about seven million in the first quarter of 2015, up 45 percent from 2014.<sup>[166]</sup> An unnamed episode was downloaded about 4,280,000 times through public BitTorrent trackers in 2012, roughly equal to its number of broadcast viewers.<sup>[173][174]</sup> Piracy rates were particularly high in Australia,<sup>[175]</sup> and U.S. Ambassador to Australia Jeff Bleich issued a statement condemning Australian piracy of the series in 2013.<sup>[176]</sup>

Delays in availability apart from HBO and its affiliates<sup>[177]</sup> before 2015 and the cost of subscriptions to these services have been cited as causes of the series' illegal distribution. According to *TorrentFreak*, a subscription to a service for *Game of Thrones* would cost up to \$25 per month in the United States, up to £26 per episode in the UK and up to \$52 per episode in Australia.<sup>[178]</sup>

For "combating piracy", HBO said in 2013 that it intended to make its content more widely available within a week of the U.S. premiere (including HBO Go).<sup>[179]</sup> In 2015, the fifth season was simulcast to 170 countries and to HBO Now users.<sup>[166]</sup> On April 11, the day before the season premiere, screener copies of the first four episodes of the fifth season leaked to a number of file-sharing websites.<sup>[180]</sup> Within a day of the leak, the files were downloaded over 800,000 times;<sup>[181]</sup> in one week the illegal downloads reached 32 million, with the season-five premiere alone ("The Wars to Come") pirated 13 million times.<sup>[182]</sup> The season-five finale ("Mother's Mercy") was the most simultaneously shared file in the history of the BitTorrent filesharing protocol, with over 250,000 simultaneous sharers and over 1.5 million downloads in eight hours.<sup>[183]</sup> For the sixth season, HBO did not send screeners to the press, so as to prevent the spread of unlicensed copies and possible spoilers.<sup>[184]</sup>

Observers, including series director David Petrarca<sup>[185]</sup> and Time Warner CEO Jeff Bewkes, said that illegal downloads did not hurt the series' prospects; it benefited from "buzz" and social commentary, and the high piracy rate did not significantly translate to lost subscriptions. According to *Polygon*, HBO's relaxed attitude towards piracy and the sharing of login credentials amounted to a premium-television "free-to-play" model.<sup>[186]</sup> At a 2015 Oxford Union debate, series co-creator David Benioff said that he was just glad that people watched the series; illegally downloaded episodes sometimes interested viewers enough to buy a copy, especially in countries where *Game of Thrones* was not televised. Co-creator D. B. Weiss had mixed feelings, saying that the series was expensive to produce and "if it doesn't make the money back, then it ceases to exist". However, he was pleased that so many people "enjoy the show so much they can't wait to get their hands on it."<sup>[187]</sup> In 2015, *Guinness World Records* called *Game of Thrones* the most pirated television program.<sup>[188]</sup>

### IMAX

Beginning on January 23, 2015, the last two episodes of season four were shown in 205 IMAX theaters across the United States; *Game of Thrones* is the first TV series shown in this format.<sup>[189]</sup> The show earned \$686,000 at the box office on its opening day<sup>[190]</sup> and \$1.5 million during its opening weekend;<sup>[191]</sup> the week-long release grossed \$1,896,092.<sup>[192]</sup>

Reception and achievements



*Game of Thrones* was highly anticipated by fans before its premiere,<sup>[193][194]</sup> and has become a critical and commercial success. According to *The Guardian*, by 2014 it was "the biggest drama" and "the most talked about show" on television.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Cultural influence

Although *Game of Thrones* was dismissed by some critics before it began,<sup>[9]</sup> its success has been credited with an increase in the popularity of the fantasy genre. On the eve of the second season's premiere, a CNN.com blog post by Joel Williams read, "After this weekend, you may be hard pressed to find someone who isn't a fan of some form of epic fantasy" and cited Ian Bogost as saying that the series continues a trend of successful screen adaptations beginning with Peter Jackson's 2001 *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy and the *Harry Potter* films establishing fantasy as a mass-market genre; they are "gateway drugs to fantasy fan culture".<sup>[195]</sup> Its success in the face of its genre was attributed by writers to a longing for escapism in popular culture, frequent female nudity and a skill in balancing lighthearted and serious topics (dragons and politics, for example) which provided it with a prestige enjoyed by conventional, top-tier drama series.<sup>[9]</sup>

The series' popularity increased sales of the *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels (republished in tie-in editions), which remained at the top of bestseller lists for months. According to *The Daily Beast*, *Game of Thrones* was a favorite of sitcom writers and the series has been referred to in other TV series.<sup>[196]</sup> With other fantasy series, it has been cited for an increase in the purchase (and abandonment) of huskies and other wolf-like dogs.<sup>[197]</sup>

*Game of Thrones* has added to the popular vocabulary. The first season's scene in which Petyr Baelish explains his motives (or background) while prostitutes had sex in the background gave rise to the word "sexposition" for providing exposition with sex and nudity.<sup>[198]</sup> "Dothraki", the series' nomadic horsemen, was ranked fourth in a September 2012 Global Language Monitor list of words from television most used on the Internet.<sup>[199]</sup> In 2012, the media used "Game of Thrones" as a figure of speech or comparison for situations of intense conflict and deceit, such as the 2012 United States Supreme Court decision regarding healthcare reform legislation,<sup>[200]</sup> the Syrian Civil War<sup>[201]</sup> and the ousting of Bo Xilai from the Chinese government.<sup>[202]</sup>

"Khaleesi" has increased in popularity as a name for baby girls in the United States. In the novels and the TV series, "khaleesi" is the title of the wife of a khal (warlord) in the Dothraki language held by Daenerys Targaryen, and not actually a name.<sup>[203]</sup>

### Critical response

Season	Critical response	
	Rotten Tomatoes	Metacritic
1	90% (36 reviews) <sup>[204]</sup>	80 (28 reviews) <sup>[205]</sup>
2	96% (35 reviews) <sup>[206]</sup>	90 (26 reviews) <sup>[207]</sup>
3	97% (43 reviews) <sup>[208]</sup>	91 (25 reviews) <sup>[209]</sup>
4	97% (43 reviews) <sup>[210]</sup>	94 (29 reviews) <sup>[211]</sup>
5	95% (53 reviews) <sup>[212]</sup>	91 (29 reviews) <sup>[213]</sup>
6	94% (30 reviews) <sup>[214]</sup>	73 (9 reviews) <sup>[215]</sup>
7	94% (46 reviews) <sup>[216]</sup>	77 (12 reviews) <sup>[217]</sup>

*Game of Thrones* has received critical acclaim, although the series' frequent use of nudity and violence has been criticized. Its seasons have appeared on annual "best of" lists published by *The Washington Post* (2011), *TIME* (2011 and 2012) and *The Hollywood Reporter* (2012).<sup>[218][219][220]</sup>

The performances of the cast have received immense praise. Peter Dinklage's "charming, morally ambiguous, and self-aware"<sup>[221]</sup> Tyrion, who earned him Emmy and Golden Globe awards, was noted. "In many ways, *Game of Thrones* belongs to Dinklage", wrote Mary McNamara of the *L.A. Times* before Tyrion became the series' central figure in season two.<sup>[222][223]</sup> Several critics highlighted performances by actresses<sup>[222]</sup> and children.<sup>[224]</sup> Fourteen-year-old Maisie Williams, noted in the first season for her debut as Arya Stark, was singled out for her season-two work with veteran actor Charles Dance (Tywin Lannister).<sup>[225]</sup> Stephen Dillane has received positive reviews for his performance as Stannis Baratheon, especially in the fifth season, with one critic noting "Whether you like Stannis or not, you have to admit that Stephen Dillane delivered a monumental performance this season."<sup>[226]</sup>

The series has a rating of 97 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, with an average score of 8.4 out of 10 based on 44 reviews.<sup>[208]</sup> All episodes had positive reviews of 91 percent or higher on Rotten Tomatoes, and a 97-percent rating (based on 50 reviews) for the season as a whole.<sup>[210]</sup> On Rotten Tomatoes, it has a rating of 95 percent and an average score of 8.6 out of 10 (based on 52 reviews).<sup>[212]</sup> The season has a rating of 96 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, with an average score of 8.4 out of 10 based on 29 reviews.<sup>[214]</sup> After the first episode aired, the seventh season held a rating of 97 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, with an average score of 8.2 out of 10 based on 29 reviews.<sup>[216]</sup>

First-season reviewers said the series had high production values, a fully realized world and compelling characters.<sup>[227]</sup> According to *Variety*, "There may be no show more profitable to its network than 'Game of Thrones' is to HBO. Fully produced by the pay cabler and already a global phenomenon after only one season, the fantasy skein was a gamble that has paid off handsomely".<sup>[228]</sup> The second season was also well received. *Entertainment Weekly* praised its "vivid, vital, and just plain fun" storytelling<sup>[229]</sup> and, according to *the Hollywood Reporter*, the series made a "strong case for being one of TV's best series"; its seriousness made it the only drama comparable to *Mad Men* or *Breaking Bad*.<sup>[230]</sup> *The New York Times* gave the series a mixed review, criticizing its number of characters, their lack of complexity and a meandering plot.<sup>[231]</sup>

The third season was extremely well received by critics, with Metacritic giving it a score of 91 out of 100 (indicating "universal acclaim").<sup>[209]</sup> The fourth season was similarly praised; Metacritic gave it a score of 94 out of 100 based on 29 reviews, again indicating "universal acclaim".<sup>[211]</sup> The fifth season was also well received by critics and has a score of 91 out of 100 (based on 29 reviews) on Metacritic.<sup>[213]</sup> The sixth season has been praised by critics, though not as highly as its predecessors. It has a score of 73 on Metacritic (based on nine reviews), indicating "generally favorable reviews".<sup>[215]</sup> The seventh season scored 77 out of 100 (based on twelve reviews) and was praised for its action sequences and focused central characters,<sup>[217]</sup> but received criticism for its breakneck pace and plot developments that "defied logic."<sup>[232][216]</sup>

## Sex and violence

Despite its otherwise enthusiastic reception by critics, *Game of Thrones* has been criticized for the amount of female nudity, violence, and sexual violence (especially against women) it depicts, and for the manner in which it depicts these themes. *The Atlantic* called the series' "tendency to ramp up the sex, violence, and—especially—sexual violence" of the source material "the defining weakness" of the adaptation.<sup>[233]</sup> George R. R. Martin responded that he feels obliged to be truthful about history and human nature, and that rape and sexual violence are common in war; and that omitting them from the narrative would have rung false and undermined one of his novels' themes, its historical realism.<sup>[14]</sup> HBO said that they "fully support the vision and artistry of Dan and David's exceptional work and we feel this work speaks for itself."<sup>[14]</sup>

The amount of sex and nudity in the series, especially in scenes that are incidental to the plot, was the focus of much of the criticism aimed at the series in its first and second seasons. Stephen Dillane, who portrays Stannis Baratheon, likened the series' frequent explicit scenes to "German porn from the 1970s".<sup>[234]</sup> Charlie Anders wrote in io9 that while the first season was replete with light-hearted "sexposition", the second season appeared to focus on distasteful, exploitative, and dehumanizing sex with little informational content.<sup>[235]</sup> According to *The Washington Post's* Anna Holmes, the nude scenes appeared to be aimed mainly at titillating heterosexual men, right down to the Brazilian waxes sported by the women in the series' faux-medieval setting, which made these scenes alienating to other viewers.<sup>[236]</sup> *The Huffington Post's* Maureen Ryan likewise noted that *Game of Thrones* mostly presented women naked, rather than men, and that the excess of "random boobage" undercut any aspirations the series might have to address the oppression of women in a feudal society.<sup>[237]</sup> *Saturday Night Live* parodied this aspect of the adaptation in a sketch that portrayed the series as retaining a thirteen-year-old boy as a consultant whose main concern was showing as many breasts as possible.<sup>[235][238]</sup>

In the third season, which saw Theon Greyjoy lengthily tortured and eventually emasculated, the series was also criticized for its use of torture.<sup>[239]</sup> *New York* magazine called the scene "torture porn."<sup>[240]</sup> Madeleine Davies of *Jezebel* agreed, saying, "it's not uncommon that *Game of Thrones* gets accused of being torture porn—senseless, objectifying violence combined with senseless, objectifying sexual imagery." According to Davies, although the series' violence tended to serve a narrative purpose, Theon's torture in "The Bear and the Maiden Fair" was excessive.<sup>[241]</sup>

A scene in the fourth season's episode "Breaker of Chains", in which Jaime Lannister rapes his sister and lover Cersei, triggered a broad public discussion about the series' depiction of sexual violence against women. According to Dave Itzkoff of *The New York Times*, the scene caused outrage, in part because of comments by director Alex Graves that the scene became "consensual by the end". Itzkoff also wrote that critics fear that "rape has become so pervasive in the drama that it is almost background noise: a routine and unshocking occurrence".<sup>[14]</sup> Sonia Saraiya of *The A.V. Club* wrote that the series' choice to portray this sexual act, and a similar one between Daenerys Targaryen and Khal Drogo in the first season—both described as consensual in the source novels—as a rape appeared to be an act of "exploitation for shock value".<sup>[242]</sup>

In the fifth season's episode "Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken", Sansa Stark is raped by Ramsay Bolton. Most reviewers, including those from *Vanity Fair*, *Salon*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Daily Beast*, found the scene gratuitous and artistically unnecessary.<sup>[233][243][244][245]</sup> For example, Joanna Robinson, writing for *Vanity Fair*, said that the scene "undercuts all the agency that's been growing in Sansa since the end of last season."<sup>[246]</sup> In contrast, Sara Stewart of *The New York Post* wondered why viewers were not similarly upset about the many background and minor characters who'd undergone similar or worse treatment.<sup>[247]</sup> In response to the scene, pop culture website *The Mary Sue* announced that it would cease coverage of the series because of the repeated use of rape as a plot device,<sup>[248]</sup> and U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill said that she would no longer watch it.<sup>[249]</sup>

As the sixth and seventh seasons saw Daenerys, Sansa and Cersei assume ruling positions, Alyssa Rosenberg of the *Washington Post* noted that the series could be seen as a "long-arc revenge fantasy about what happens when women who have been brutalized and raped gain power"—namely, that their past leaves them too broken to do anything but commit brutal acts in their own turn, and that their personal liberation does not affect the social change needed to protect others from suffering.<sup>[250]</sup>

## Fandom

*Main article: A Song of Ice and Fire fandom*



In this manipulated image published by the White House, U.S. President Barack Obama (a fan of the series) sits on the Iron Throne in the Oval Office with the king's crown on his lap.



The popularity of the show in the country, coupled with its filming locations in Northern Ireland, led to the creation of a show-specific exhibit in the National Wax Museum Plus in Dublin.

*A Song of Ice and Fire* and *Game of Thrones* have a broad, active international fan base. In 2012 *Vulture.com* ranked the series' fans as the most devoted in popular culture, more so than Lady Gaga's, Justin Bieber's, *Harry Potter's* or *Star Wars's*.<sup>[251]</sup> Fans include political leaders such as former U.S. president Barack Obama,<sup>[252][253]</sup> former British prime minister David Cameron,<sup>[254]</sup> former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard<sup>[255][256]</sup> and Dutch foreign minister Frans Timmermans, who framed European politics in quotes from Martin's novels in a 2013 speech.<sup>[257]</sup>

BBC News said in 2013 that "the passion and the extreme devotion of fans" had created a phenomenon unlike anything related to other popular TV series, manifesting itself in fan fiction,<sup>[258]</sup> *Game of Thrones*-themed burlesque routines and parents naming their children after series characters; writers quoted attributed this success to the rich detail, moral ambiguity, sexual explicitness and epic scale of the series and novels.<sup>[259]</sup> The previous year, "Arya" was the fastest-rising girl's name in the U.S. after it jumped in popularity from 711th to 413th place.<sup>[260]</sup>

As of 2013, about 58 percent of series viewers were male and 42 percent female, and the average male viewer was 41 years old.<sup>[261][262]</sup> According to SBS Broadcasting Group marketing director Helen Kellie, *Game of Thrones* has a high fan-engagement rate; 5.5 percent of the series' 2.9 million Facebook fans talked online about the series in 2012, compared to 1.8 percent of the more than ten million fans of *True Blood* (HBO's other fantasy series).<sup>[263]</sup> *Vulture.com* cited Westeros.org and WinterIsComing.net (news and discussion forums), ToweroftheHand.com (which organizes communal readings of the novels) and PodcastofIceandFire.com as fan sites dedicated to the TV and novel series;<sup>[251]</sup> and podcasts cover *Game of Thrones*.<sup>[264]</sup>

## Awards and accolades

*Main article: List of awards and nominations received by Game of Thrones*

*Game of Thrones* has won numerous of awards since it debuted as a series, including 47 Primetime Emmy Awards,<sup>[112]</sup> 5 Screen Actors Guild Award, and a Peabody Award.<sup>[265]</sup> It holds the Emmy-award record for a scripted television series, ahead of *Frasier* (which received 37).<sup>[266]</sup> In 2013 the Writers Guild of America listed *Game of Thrones* as the 40th "best written" series in television history.<sup>[267]</sup> In 2015 *The Hollywood Reporter* placed it at number four on their "best TV shows ever" list,<sup>[268]</sup> while in 2016 the series was placed seventh on *Empire's* "The 50 best TV shows ever".<sup>[269]</sup> The same year *Rolling Stone* named it the twelfth "greatest TV Show of all time".<sup>[270]</sup>

The 2011 first season received 13 Emmy nominations (including Outstanding Drama Series), and won for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (given to Peter Dinklage for his portrayal of Tyrion Lannister) and Outstanding Main Title Design. Other nominations included Outstanding Directing ("Winter Is Coming") and Outstanding Writing ("Baelor").<sup>[112]</sup> Dinklage was also named Best Supporting Actor at the Golden Globe, Satellite and Scream Awards.<sup>[271][272][273]</sup>

In 2012, the second season received six Emmy Awards from 11 nominations, including Outstanding Drama Series and Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Dinklage).<sup>[112]</sup>



The 2013 third season received 16 Emmy nominations, including Outstanding Drama Series, Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Dinklage), Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series (Emilia Clarke), Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series (Diana Rigg) and Outstanding Writing ("The Rains of Castamere"), winning two Creative Arts Emmys.<sup>[112]</sup>

In 2014, the fourth season received four Emmys from 19 nominations, which included Outstanding Drama Series, Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Dinklage), Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series (Lena Headey), Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series (Rigg), Outstanding Directing ("The Watchers on the Wall") and Outstanding Writing ("The Children").<sup>[112]</sup>

The 2015 fifth season won the most Primetime Emmy Awards for a series in a year (12 awards from 24 nominations), including Outstanding Drama Series; other wins included Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Dinklage), Outstanding Directing ("Mother's Mercy") and Outstanding Writing ("Mother's Mercy"), and eight were Creative Arts Emmy Awards.<sup>[274]</sup>

In 2016, the sixth season received the most nominations for the 68th Primetime Emmy Awards (23). It won for Outstanding Drama Series, Outstanding Directing ("Battle of the Bastards"), Outstanding Writing ("Battle of the Bastards"), and nine Creative Arts Emmys. Nominations included Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Dinklage and Kit Harington), Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series (Clarke, Headey and Maisie Williams), Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series (Max von Sydow) and Outstanding Directing ("The Door").<sup>[275]</sup>

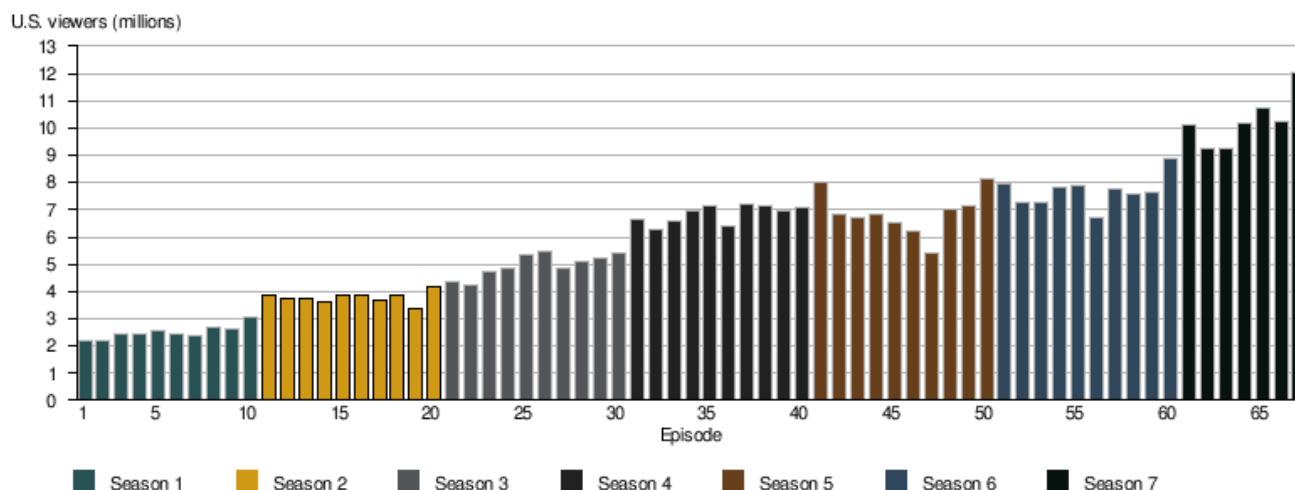
In 2018, the seventh season received the most nominations at the 70th Primetime Emmy Awards (22).<sup>[276]</sup> It won for Outstanding Drama Series, Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Peter Dinklage), and seven Creative Arts Emmys.<sup>[277]</sup> Nominations included Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series (Lena Headey), Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau), Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series (Diana Rigg), Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series (David Benioff and D. B. Weiss for "The Dragon and the Wolf"), and Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series (Jeremy Podeswa for "The Dragon and the Wolf" and Alan Taylor for "Beyond the Wall").<sup>[278]</sup>

### Viewer numbers

The first season averaged 2.5 million viewers for its first Sunday-night screenings and a gross audience (including repeats and on-demand viewings) of 9.3 million viewers per episode.<sup>[279]</sup> For its second season, the series had an average gross audience of 11.6 million viewers.<sup>[280]</sup> The third season was seen by 14.2 million viewers, making *Game of Thrones* the second-most-viewed HBO series (after *The Sopranos*).<sup>[281][282]</sup> For the fourth season, HBO said that its average gross audience of 18.4 million viewers (later adjusted to 18.6 million) had passed *The Sopranos* for the record.<sup>[283][284]</sup> By the sixth season the average per-episode gross viewing figure had increased to over 25 million, with nearly 40 percent of viewers watching on HBO digital platforms.<sup>[285]</sup> In 2016, a *New York Times* study of the 50 TV shows with the most Facebook Likes found that *Game of Thrones* was "much more popular in cities than in the countryside, probably the only show involving zombies that is".<sup>[286]</sup> By season seven, average viewer numbers had increased to over 30 million per episode across all platforms.<sup>[287]</sup>

The series set records on pay-television channels in the United Kingdom (with a 2016 average audience of more than five million on all platforms)<sup>[288]</sup> and Australia (with a cumulative average audience of 1.2 million).<sup>[289]</sup>

### *Game of Thrones*: U.S. viewers per episode (millions)



Season	Episode number										Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	2.22	2.20	2.44	2.45	2.58	2.44	2.40	2.72	2.66	3.04	2.52
2	3.86	3.76	3.77	3.65	3.90	3.88	3.69	3.86	3.38	4.20	3.80
3	4.37	4.27	4.72	4.87	5.35	5.50	4.84	5.13	5.22	5.39	4.97

<b>4</b>	6.64	6.31	6.59	6.95	7.16	6.40	7.20	7.17	6.95	7.09	6.84
<b>5</b>	8.00	6.81	6.71	6.82	6.56	6.24	5.40	7.01	7.14	8.11	6.88
<b>6</b>	7.94	7.29	7.28	7.82	7.89	6.71	7.80	7.60	7.66	8.89	7.69
<b>7</b>	10.11	9.27	9.25	10.17	10.72	10.24	12.07	N/A			10.26

Audience measurement performed by Nielsen Media Research.<sup>[290]</sup>

Other media and products

*See also: Works based on A Song of Ice and Fire*

### Video games

*Main article: List of A Song of Ice and Fire video games*

The series has inspired several video games based on the TV series and novels. The strategy game *Game of Thrones Ascent* ties into the HBO series, making characters and settings available to players as they appear on television.<sup>[291]</sup> Behaviour Interactive is developing a free-to-play strategy game based on the series for mobile devices.<sup>[292]</sup> *Reigns: Game of Thrones*, a spin-off of the *Reigns* strategy video game series, is in development by Nerial, published by Devolver Digital, and set to release in October 2018.<sup>[293]</sup>

### Merchandise and exhibition



*Game of Thrones* merchandise in HBO's New York City store

HBO has licensed a variety of merchandise based on *Game of Thrones*, including games, replica weapons and armor, jewelry, bobblehead dolls by Funko, beer by Ommegang and apparel.<sup>[294]</sup> High-end merchandise includes a \$10,500 Ulysse Nardin wristwatch<sup>[295]</sup> and a \$30,000 resin replica of the Iron Throne.<sup>[296]</sup> In 2013 and 2014, a traveling exhibition of costumes, props, armor and weapons from the series visited major cities in Europe and the Americas.<sup>[297]</sup>

### Accompanying material

*Thronecast: The Official Guide to Game of Thrones*, a series of podcasts presented by Geoff Lloyd and produced by Koink, has been released on the Sky Atlantic website and the UK iTunes store during the series' run; a new podcast, with analysis and cast interviews, is released after each episode.<sup>[298]</sup> In 2014 and 2015 HBO commissioned *Catch the Throne*, two rap albums about the series.<sup>[299][300]</sup>

A companion book, *Inside HBO's Game of Thrones* (ISBN 978-1-4521-1010-3) by series writer Bryan Cogman, was published on September 27, 2012. The 192-page book, illustrated with concept art and behind-the-scenes photographs, covers the creation of the series' first two seasons and its principal characters and families.<sup>[301]</sup>

*After the Thrones* is a live aftershow in which hosts Andy Greenwald and Chris Ryan discuss episodes of the series. It airs on HBO Now the Monday after each sixth-season episode.<sup>[302]</sup> The Game of Thrones Live Concert Experience, a 28-city orchestral tour which will perform the series' soundtrack with composer Ramin Djawadi, is scheduled to begin February 15, 2017 in Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>[303]</sup>

Each season's Blu-ray and DVD set contains several short animated sequences narrated by the cast as their characters as they detail events in the history of Westeros.<sup>[304]</sup> For the seventh season, this is to include the animated prequel series *Game of Thrones: Conquest & Rebellion*, illustrated in a different animation style than previous videos. The series focuses on Aegon Targaryen's conquest of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros.<sup>[305]</sup>

### Successor shows

Taking place thousands of years before the events of *Game of Thrones*, the series chronicles the world's descent from the golden Age of Heroes into its darkest hour. And only one thing is for sure: from the horrifying secrets of Westeros's history to the true origin of the white walkers, the mysteries of the East to the Starks of legend ... it's not the story we think we know.

—Logline released by HBO<sup>[306]</sup>

In May 2017, after years of speculation about possible successor shows, HBO commissioned Max Borenstein, Jane Goldman, Brian Helgeland, Carly Wray and a fifth unnamed writer to develop individual *Game of Thrones* successor series. All of the writers were to be working individually with George R. R. Martin, who also co-wrote two of the scripts.<sup>[307]</sup> In September 2017, it was announced that *Game of Thrones* writer Bryan Cogman was developing the fifth prequel series.<sup>[308]</sup> D. B. Weiss and David Benioff said that they would not be involved with any of the projects, and want to enjoy the successor series as fans.<sup>[2]</sup> Martin said that all the concepts under discussion were prequels, though he believes the term "successor show" applies better to these projects, as they are not *Game of Thrones* spin-offs in the traditional sense. He ruled out Robert's Rebellion (the overthrow of Daenerys's father by Robert Baratheon) as a possible idea, and revealed that some may be set outside Westeros.<sup>[309]</sup>

On June 8, 2018, HBO commissioned a pilot to a *Game of Thrones* prequel series from Goldman as showrunner and Martin as co-creator.<sup>[310]</sup> Regarding the other four projects, HBO president of programming Casey Bloys said that some of them have been abandoned completely, while some remain as possibilities for the future.<sup>[311]</sup> The accepted prequel will take place in the Age of Heroes, a period that begins roughly 10,000 years before the events of *Game of Thrones*. Notable events of that period include the foundation of powerful Houses, the Long Night when the White Walkers first descended upon Westeros, and the Andal Invasion when the Andals invaded from Essos and conquered most of Westeros.<sup>[306]</sup> Writing in a blog post in June 2018, Martin suggested "The Long Night" as a title for the upcoming series, and revealed that the filming location, the cast and the director for the pilot episode were yet to be determined.<sup>[312]</sup>

In October 2018, it was announced that Naomi Watts had been cast as the female lead in the pilot, playing a character described as "a charismatic socialite hiding a dark secret."<sup>[313]</sup> In January 2019, eight actors were cast as series regulars, including Toby Regbo, Ivanno Jeremiah, Georgie Henley, Naomi Ackie, Denise Gough, Jamie Campbell Bower, Sheila Atim and Alex Sharp. It was also announced that S. J. Clarkson would direct and executive produce the pilot.<sup>[314]</sup>