

Game Masters

Classroom Activity Kit

28 June - 28 Oct 2012



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ABOUT THIS CLASSROOM ACTIVITY KIT

The ACMI *Game Masters* Classroom Activity Kit is designed for teachers of primary, secondary, TAFE and other tertiary students with an interest in games. Throughout this kit the terms 'game', 'computer game' and 'videogame' are used interchangeably to mean videogames, computer games and other applications that can be controlled by players using consoles or other digital screen based equipment.

The *Game Masters* exhibition, along with the *Game Masters* Education Resource and the Classroom Activity Kit provide teachers and students with the unique opportunity to engage with a major state of the art exhibition and to learn about the exceptional skills and processes of the world's greatest videogame designers.

As well as enhancing student engagement with the *Game Masters* exhibition, the information and suggested learning activities in the kit can be adapted to a range of learning contexts and outcomes. Teachers are invited to select information and activities that are relevant to the needs and abilities of their students.

Content in the *Game Masters* Classroom Activity Kit:

- ranges in depth and difficulty,
- is adaptable to allow teachers the flexibility to select activities to meet both their specific curriculum requirements and their students' needs and learning styles,
- can act as a stimulus to encourage further exploration of games,
- provides suggestions for further research by students both at school and at home,
- offers references and web links.

Note: As with film and TV texts, it is important to ensure that any games demonstrated, studied and brought to school for study purposes are selected according to classification guidelines for the age group, and are appropriate to the needs and abilities of your students. Please be aware that new classification guidelines are likely to be introduced into each Australian state and territory at the beginning of 2013.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHEETS

Videogame Classification

One of the first things teachers need to consider when bringing videogames into the classroom is the content of the game and its appropriateness.

One of the best ways to do this is to refer to the classification markings found on the front, back and spine of all legal videogames purchased in Australia. The markings are also colour coded to make identification easier: green for G, yellow for PG, blue for M and red for MA15+.

Additionally, Consumer Advice can be found to the right of the classification symbol. This advice gives teachers, parents and young people information about the type of content they can expect.

For more detailed information concerning the classification of videogames in Australia, please visit the OFLC website: www.classification.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx

It is important to note that G, PG and M classifications are only recommendations. However, the classification MA15+ is a legally restricted category. Generally teachers are advised to avoid using age-restricted games with students below Years 11 and 12.

Legislation to introduce an R 18+ videogame category was passed by the Australian Federal Parliament in June 2012. Before R 18+ games can be sold, each state or territory must introduce its own legislation. If states pass complementary legislation, the new system will be introduced on 1 January 2013. It is important that teachers keep up to date with these changes in videogame classification.

INTRODUCTION

Introduce students to the idea of videogame classification in Australia.

Students aged 15 years or over: can view or play M and MA15+ films and computer games by themselves.

Students aged under 15: cannot view or play MA15+ films and computer games unless accompanied by a parent or a guardian.

- Ask students if they believe videogame classification is important. Discuss.
- How does the classification of videogames compare to the classification of films?
- Are there any differences? What are they?
- Six classifiable elements are taken into account when classifying videogames:
 - themes
 - violence
 - sex
 - language
 - drug use
 - nudity

Discuss these elements with your students. Are they surprised by any of the elements on the list?



CONSUMER ADVICE

- Ask students if they know what 'consumer advice' is, in relation to videogame classification?
- Ask students what they think is the main purpose of the consumer advice line which accompanies the classification markings on videogames?
- How important do you think the consumer advice line is? Why? Explain.

RESEARCH

Students can explore the existing guidelines available here:

www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2008C00126/Html/Text




- How are videogame ratings determined?
- Do students agree with the ratings standards outlined?
- Encourage students to find out more about recent Federal Government legislation in relation to the introduction of an R 18+ rating for videogames.
- What are the arguments in favour of this change? What are the arguments against this change?
- Explore this issue in the form of a class debate.



CONSIDER

- Why have videogames been subject to more stringent restrictions than films or print literature?



VIDEOGAME CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION SHEET

ADVISORY CLASSIFICATIONS	G, PG and M
	<p>The content is <u>very mild</u> in impact.</p> <p>G films and computer games are for general viewing.</p>
	<p>The content is <u>mild</u> in impact.</p> <p>PG films and computer games contain material that a parent or carer might need to explain to younger children.</p>
	<p>The content is <u>moderate</u> in impact.</p> <p>M films and computer games are not recommended for people aged under 15.</p>

AGE RESTRICTED CLASSIFICATIONS	MA 15+ and R 18+
	<p>The content is <u>strong</u> in impact.</p> <p>A person aged under 15 cannot watch or play MA15+ films or games unless they are accompanied by his or her parent or an adult guardian.</p> <p>A guardian is a person who is exercising “parental control” over the person under 15 years of age. The guardian must be 18 years or over.</p>
	<p>The content is <u>high</u> in impact. This classification applies only to films.</p> <p>R18+ films are restricted to people aged 18 years of age and over.</p>



Exploring Game Types

Before exploring game design or creation with your students, give them the opportunity to investigate and learn more about the types of game available. The best way for students to learn about these games is to play them.

RESEARCH

Students will be both players and market researchers.

- Ask students to consider the most important features of a game (concept, look, character design, gameplay).
- Each student can then write a set of market research questions with the aim of assessing a player's satisfaction with a game.
- Allocate a game type to each student. (Maybe they could pull their game out of a hat.)
- Each student needs to access and play an example of the game type s/he has been allocated.
- After students have had a chance to play the games, divide the class into pairs.
- Students can then respond to their partner's market research questions.
- Now divide the class into focus groups based on the type of game played. Students can compare their experiences of and responses to the game they played. Each group can then report back to the class.
- Students can test their new-found knowledge by completing the Match Genre to Description Worksheet on the next page.

GAME TYPES: A QUICK INTRODUCTION

Platform Games

These include the original *Donkey Kong* and *Super Mario Bros* (both playable at the *Game Masters* exhibition) where the gameplay follows a character moving through an environment on different levels or platforms to get to an end point. This end point may be a new level or an 'End Game' screen.

Platform games usually involve running and jumping over or onto various obstacles along the way, climbing up things, jumping up onto things, etc.

Later versions of *Donkey Kong* such as *Donkey Kong Country* have kept the same principles, but have far superior graphics to the original arcade version that came out in the 1980s.

Escape Games

A good example of an Escape game is *The Crimson Room*
www.freeonlinegames.com/game/crimson-room

These games, often without a great deal of explanation, involve the game's main character waking up trapped in a strange, unfamiliar place. The character must figure out little puzzles, or find a variety of items, or both, in order to escape.



These games are typically first person games, where the screen shows the subjective point of view of the 'trapped' person instead of the actual character.

This type of game usually involves some sort of inventory, so the player can store items, clues, notes, etc. and go back and check what they have done if they need to later.

Puzzle Games

Some examples of this type of game are *Tetris*, *Bejewelled* and *Klax*.

In these games, the user is required to create patterns or make certain shapes fit into random places, or link similar colours, shapes, etc.

These games, despite being quite similar and simple in nature, can be very addictive and are very popular.

Children's Games

Some examples of games made specifically for young children are *Snake Classic* and *Chicken Little Memory Game* (<http://kids.yahoo.com/games/games-index/>).

These games usually involve lots of bright colours and simplified gameplay aimed at developing skills such as hand-eye coordination, memory, knowledge and understanding.

The topic or style of these games doesn't usually matter, as long as they are colourful and attractive to children and have an element that would make children want to play, without realising they are being 'tricked' into learning something at the same time.

Educational Games

These games, such as those on the *Visy Enviromaniacs* website (www.visyenviromaniacs.com.au/) or *The Diabetic Dog Game* (<http://nobelprize.org/educational/>), usually wrap the concept of learning, developing social awareness or dealing with a social issue in the attractive and less confrontational guise of a game.

The *Games for Change* website (www.gamesforchange.org) runs a competition called The Knight News Challenge that encourages multimedia creators to 'advance the future of news by funding new ways to digitally inform communities'.

Essentially, game and multimedia creators submit proposals to Games for Change about a game or interactive they'd like to create that fits into the above theme and the proposals that show the most promise receive production funding.

An educational game doesn't necessarily have to be about a large-scale global issue to be relevant and effective. You might choose something more relevant to your local community, or school, such as: the importance of completing homework, the importance of exercise and nutrition or the destructive impact of bullying.



Basic Shooters

Space Invaders and *Zombie Ninjas in Space* (www.occupied.com.au/zombie.html) are classic shooter games and are pretty straight forward in their objectives.

In these games there is something that will attack you in some way, propelling objects at you, be it bullets, brains or apples, and the game player has to avoid being hit with these objects, whilst trying to shoot the attacker at the same time.

These games are quite simple, but very popular. This type of game generally involves the aim of getting high scores, or progressing through different levels. The further you get through the game the faster, harder and more challenging the various levels will become.



MATCH GENRE TO DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET

Name:

Genre	Description
Strategy Games:	games that originally existed on freestanding, coin-operated machines. E.g. <i>Pong</i> and <i>Space Invaders</i>
MMORPG: or 'Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games'	games in which the player's character has skills and abilities represented by statistics. Gameplay involves the characters exploring and completing quests that build up their statistics and possessions. Can be single or multi-player. E.g. <i>Everquest</i> and <i>Ultima</i>
Platform: or side scrollers	games that require the player to take on a leadership role and oversee every detail of the provided scenario(s). Gameplay focuses on strategies and careful planning and resource management in order to win. E.g. <i>Age of Mythology</i>
RPG: or 'Role Playing Games'	games in which the player has a first-person perspective of their character. E.g. <i>Doom</i> and <i>Quake</i>
Simulations:	games aimed at teaching, discussing or debating real-world concepts via gameplay. E.g. <i>Virtual U</i> and <i>September 12</i>
FPS or First Person Shooters:	games attempting to realistically mimic conditions of a particular environment or activity. E.g. <i>SimCity</i> and flight emulator
Serious Games	multi-player role-playing games that enable thousands of players to play in an evolving virtual online world at the same time. E.g. <i>Diablo</i> and <i>WarCraft</i>
Classic Arcade Games:	games in which the background scrolls and the player jumps from platform to platform. Game-play generally includes running and jumping. E.g. <i>Donkey King</i> and <i>Super Mario Bros</i>



Exploring Leisure Habits

There is a lot of discussion about the impact of videogames on children. Some people believe that videogames lead to kids being lazy and antisocial. In this activity students survey the class's leisure habits and analyse the results.

DISCUSS

Focus on each of the following statements and ask students to respond, drawing on their own experience or the behaviour of peers.

'Videogames are mostly played by lonely, smelly teenage boys.'

'Children can't concentrate anymore because they play too many videogames.'

'People play videogames because it is much easier than going out and socialising.'

'The kids of today are fat, lazy and ignorant because they play too many games.'

'Videogames are a waste of time and stop people from engaging in positive activities related to sport, music and the community.'

- What do students think about each of these comments?
- Do they agree with some of the statements and disagree with others?
- Is it likely these comments were made by people who play games?

COMPLETE THE SURVEY

Ask students to complete the Leisure Habits Worksheet.

- Collect the results.

REPORT ON THE RESULTS

- Divide students into pairs and ask each pair to design a graph showing the information gathered in the survey.
- Present the findings to the class.
- Analyse the results as a class:
- Do the findings support the statements?
- Do the findings match student opinions?
- Ask students to write their own statement about the impact of videogames based on the findings.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- You may like to look at some of the results on gameplay in this recent report on Australians' use of digital media: www.igea.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/DA12FinalLinkVideo.pdf



LEISURE HABITS WORKSHEET

1. How often do you read books?

- Daily 3 or 4 times each week once a week
 once a fortnight monthly every few months

2. How often do you play sport?

- Daily 3 or 4 times each week Once a week
 Once a fortnight Monthly Every few months

3. Have you ever played a computer game?

- Yes No

4. How old were you when you first played a videogame?

- < 5years < 10 years < 15 years

5. How often do you play videogames?

- Daily 3 or 4 times each week Once a week
 Once a fortnight Monthly Every few months

6. Who do you usually play videogames with?

- Self only Brothers/sisters Parents Friends

7. Do you play games online?

- Yes No

8. When you play videogames, how long do you play?

- < 1 hour < 3 hours < 5 hours < 8 hours > 8 hours

9. What videogame do you enjoy most?

10. When playing videogames, what do you use mostly?

- Hand-held game A console PC or Mac
 Internet Mobile phone games

11. What makes a good videogame? List the three things that are most important to you.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Gender and Representation In Games

This activity will assist students to consider the representation of women in videogames.

Most games don't have a central protagonist character that is female. Often women are represented in an overly simplified and sometimes sexist way. When the female character is the protagonist, her portrayal varies considerably.

DISCUSS

- As a class, discuss why game makers represent woman in the ways that they do.
- Stimulate discussion with examples for students to consider, and encourage students to provide their own examples.
- Divide students into pairs and have them focus on two videogames that have playable female characters.

REPORT

- Using the prompts in the table (on the next page), ask students to collect and discuss their findings about the two videogames with a partner, and then report their findings to the class.

CONSIDER

As a class consider these additional questions:

- Does the gender of the player affect consumer buying choices?
- Does the gender of the central character influence your choice when buying videogame? If so, why?
- Are the representations of female characters positive or negative in the videogames you have selected?
- In some games, you can select to play as a male or female character. Does the gender of a character affect your choice or their abilities within the game? If so, how? Explain why this is the case.



REPRESENTATION IN GAMES WORKSHEET

	Game 1	Game 2
What does your character look like? Clothing, appearance, size.		
How is the character presented to you as a player -first or third person?		
How is the character positioned within the game world? What are their abilities?		
Does having a central female character affect the way in which conflict is represented?		
Does a central female character affect the appeal of a game?		



Reimaginings

Many fairy tales are hundreds of years old but they are still being told, interpreted and reimagined.

Fairytales have inspired television programs such as *Once Upon a Time* and films like *Mirror, Mirror* and *Snow White and the Huntsman* and America McGee's videogame *Alice: Madness Returns*.

How would you reimagine *Little Red Riding Hood* (or another popular fairy tale) as a game?

BECOME A GAME DESIGNER

- Divide the class into small groups of 3 or 4 students.
- Give each group a section of the *Little Red Riding Hood* story.
- Have each group design their own level of the game based on the section of the story they have been allocated.
- Ask each group to choose a game type and a visual style inspired by their section of the story. (For example, the section where the wolf pretends to be the grandmother could be an Escape game.)

It is important students understand that the whole process of game making isn't just about coming up with a finished product. It's about exploring possibilities, researching different ways of doing things, developing skills and ideas and using this information to inform their own thinking in a way that will lead to a superior final design.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Finding inspiration

- Research the work of Jakub Dvorsky who combines photographs with animated characters.
- The concept
- Reimagine the world, style and genre of the story you have selected.
- The look
- Make a mindmap, character sketches, level design, map/screen design and sketches of worlds, backgrounds, etc.
- The characters
- Use the Character Development and Game Characters worksheets to plan the characters.

Type of game

- Explore types of game: platform, puzzle, basic shooter, maze.
 - Give students the chance to play a variety of different games, so they can make a thoughtful choice.
 - Refer to the Game Type Worksheet for ideas about exploring games with students.

Gameplay

- Design the gameplay. Think about:
 - the objectives
 - challenges



- scoring
- lives

THE PLAN

Consider the purpose of the game level.

- What is the aim of the game:
 - to entertain ?
 - to provide a challenge?
 - make people think?
- What will the end point of the game be?

THE IDEA

- Brainstorm all ideas.
- Make a decision.
- Design the game.

THE LOOK

- The visual elements of the game are just as important as the actual game play.
- Design and draw objects/characters for the game.
- Create storyboards that show how the action will look as the game is played.
- Use Flash to design an animation of game characters and the game world.
- Make models of characters using a variety of materials.
- Design the game world: make it as textured and interesting as possible.
- Make a stop motion animation with 3D models or using 2D cutouts.
- Be inspired: Research the work of Jakub Dvorsky who combines photographs with animated characters.

THE OUTCOME

- Present group ideas and storyboards to the class.
- Compare designs.
- How would all the separate levels work as part of a whole game?



GAME CHARACTERS WORKSHEET

Features and aesthetics

Name:

	Character 1	Character 2
Title of game		
Character's name		
Main colours of character		
Type of movements		
Main actions of character		
Key dialogue of character		
Character's likes		
Character's dislikes		
Character's emotions or feelings		
Character's relationships		



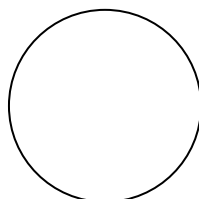
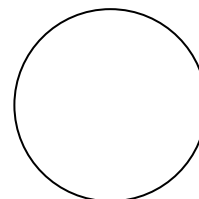
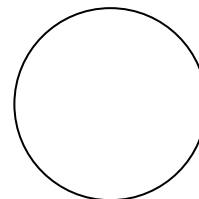
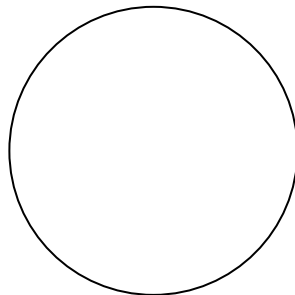
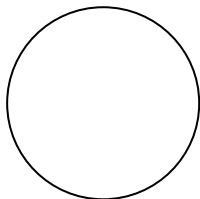
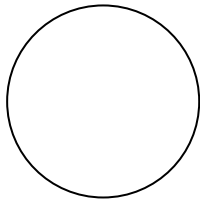
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Name:

Add to the diagram below to create a concept map or web diagram that responds to questions about your character. You might respond to questions such as:

- What does your character look like?
- What gender is your character?
- What does your character do?
- What is the character's name?
- Who are your character's friends?
- What are your character's big dreams?
- What are your character's greatest fears?

- How old is your character?
- Where does your character live?
- What does your character wear?
- What sort of personality does your character have?
- Who are your character's family?
- Does your character have a defining moment?





The Amazing Olympics QR Race

In this activity students will engage in a race, find clues, complete challenges and work as a team to achieve overall success.

EQUIPMENT

- Smartphone/Tablet per group with installed QR Code Scanning App*
- Nintendo Wii with Wii Fit game or
- Xbox Kinect with EA Sports Active 2.0 game or
- Playstation Move with Move Fitness game

Divide students into groups and give each group a unique clue in the form of a riddle that, when figured out, will take them to a different part of the school.

At each of these locations, students will find a QR Code** that, when scanned, will reveal another riddle clue to take them to their first checkpoint.

Each checkpoint will be manned and either have a piece of exercise equipment, or a game console set up with an exercise game ready to go. To receive the next clue each group member will have to complete a challenge with the equipment or game. They might need to skip rope, cycle on an exercise bike or complete a certain number of levels in an exercise game.

Once all members have completed the challenge successfully, they are given the next QR code to scan. This will give them the next riddle clue to figure out and take them to their next checkpoint.

This continues until all the checkpoint challenges have been successfully completed.

The QR scanning apps will store the codes that have been scanned, preventing teams from skipping challenges or claiming to have completed a challenge they didn't engage in. Additionally, if you want to add an extra element to your challenges, the groups could use the smart phones/tablets to film themselves completing the challenge.

The winning team is the first team to complete all challenges and arrive at the final checkpoint.

** QR is short for Quick Response. It is very easy to make your own QR Codes. Just follow the steps below:

Go to the website, www.qrstuff.com

Choose *Plain Text* from the first section called *Data Types*.

In the box under the second section's heading, *Content*, type your riddle/clue.

Section three is just changing the colours, which you can ignore unless you really care about the colour of your code.

Go to section four, entitled *Output Type* and click on *Download*. This will download your QR Code in the form of an image that you can print out and scan using any QR Code app.

* QR Code Scanning apps are free and available from the App Store/Android Market. A good one for Apple users is simply called *Scan*. Good apps for Android users are *Barcode Scanner* or *QR Droid*.



Spore

Spore is a computer game, released in 2008, which allows players to control the evolution of a species from a single celled organism to a space-exploring technological race.

The player controls the creature's appearance, body shape and parts, food choices and attitude, deciding if their creature will be an aggressive carnivore or a peaceful herbivore.

Spore will help your students 'create, evolve, explore and share.'

As a class, play through the first, micro-organism stage of the *Spore* game (ideally on an interactive whiteboard).

- Let the class make choices about appearance, body parts and the food the creature will eat. You can write the suggestions up on the board.
- As you play, clarify the definition of carnivore, herbivore and omnivore.
 - Use the board to keep a log of the choices the class makes, also noting the outcomes of those choices.
- Consider how the creature changes as it develops.
 - How have the choices made by the class affected the creature? Explain.
 - Would students make different choices next time? Explain and give reasons.
- Focus on the scientific theory of evolution.
 - What do students already know about this theory?
 - Can this theory be applied to your creature? Explain.
 - What features would maximize your creature's ability to survive?
- Ask students to create their own creatures and report to the class about their growth and development.

The game keeps a history of your creature, so students can review the choices and actions they have made along the way.



Art Invaders

In this activity students make their own version of street art, inspired by the 8bit characters of *Space Invaders*.

The work of French street artist, Invader, is inspired by the 1978 arcade game *Space Invaders*. Invader uses small mosaic tiles to form the 8bit character from the game, and sticks them onto the built environment all around the world. They can be found on buildings, gutters, bridges and walls. You can see one on the Princes Bridge, St Kilda Rd, just behind ACMI.

INTRODUCTION

Show students examples of street art created by Invader and art from the original *Space Invaders* game.

RESPOND

- Do you think this is art? Why or why not?
- Think about the artist's name and how this relates to the way he displays his art works.
- Why might Invader have chosen to display his work in the street rather than in a gallery?
- How does the place where an artwork is displayed (its context) affect the response to or the meaning of a work?

EQUIPMENT

- Square mosaic cardboard tiles – mixed colours. (These can be purchased from an art supply shop or students can make their own.)
- Paper: divided into a grid of 13 x13 squares: Each square in the grid should be the size of the mosaic cardboard tiles.
- Glue sticks

ACTIVITY

- Provide each student with piece of grid paper, and a container of mosaic cardboard tiles.
- Ask students to choose tiles in a single colour, arrange them on the paper to create an alien.
- Next, ask students to choose tiles in a complementary colour and fill the remaining grid squares with these tiles. (Complementary colours are colours that bring out the best in each other, the colours are noticeable against each other. www.tigercolor.com/color-lab/color-theory/color-theory-intro.htm)

To display students' work, arrange as a *Space Invaders* gameplay screen or use the students' work to create a giant *Space Invader*.

Students may decide to follow the lead of Invader and hang their work in different places all over the school.



Game Sounds

While many people focus on the visual aspects of videogame design, sound and music are integral to the game playing experience.

Early games relied on a fairly basic set of electronic noises but present day games feature full surround-sound music soundtracks and sound effects. Videogame soundtracks follow a similar production process to those used in the feature film industry and are as carefully planned and as sophisticated as the design of the game play.

More recently, games have begun to feature music performed by a range of popular musical artists and bands including hip-hop, rock and techno and full orchestral compositions. In the most engaging games, visual and sound design work together to draw players into the gameplay.

LISTEN, COMPARE AND EXPLAIN

- Listen to a number of different game soundtracks and consider how sound and music contribute to the experience of playing the game.
- Listen to the soundtracks of some early videogames with more recent games.
 - Compare the use of electronic sounds, musical motifs, sound effects and music scores.
 - Consider the purpose and effect of the music in each of these games. Does it convey mood or build excitement? Does it enhance gameplay?
 - Analyse the way sound and music are used at various points in the game.
 - Describe elements such as pitch and tempo.
- In what ways do elements of the soundtracks of games help to:
 - identify characters?
 - create atmosphere or feelings such as excitement, humour, pathos?
 - build suspense, heighten tension, change pace or mood?
 - give a player information or clues about what choices to make?



History In Games

In this activity students will create a timeline of videogames that includes references to famous historical events, locations or civilisations. Students will work in groups to investigate videogames that make reference to historical events, locations or civilisations in our own past.

EQUIPMENT

- Computers with internet and printer access
- A3 paper
- Markers and pens
- Scissors, glue and tape

RESEARCH

Students research the actual events and find the links the game makers have made to create a theme within the game.

- Why have the games incorporated these events?

CREATE A TIMELINE

Using either, an online timeline maker (www.timetoast.com) or A3 paper, groups of students will plan, design and create a timeline that includes:

- dates and locations.
- historical reference(s) within the game.
- the historical event or location.
- images to highlight similarities between history and videogames.

PRESENT

Each group presents its timeline to the class, including extra information on the historical event or location and a critique on how well the videogame has managed to portray the event or location.

REFLECT

- How have historical events influenced videogames and the narratives they employ?

CHALLENGE

Challenge students to plan and storyboard a videogame relating to a historical event.

They will need to consider:

- how the choice of event will determine the audience.
- how to arrange the information to suit the targeted audience.
- the choice and organisation of relevant and interesting information.
- how the game will be linked to actual events.

Ask them to include a written explanation of how they have responded to these considerations in their design.



Videogame Geography

In this activity students choose a game to explore its location and how this impacts on the gameplay.

TO BEGIN

Ask students to choose a game they enjoy playing and to jot down the features of the location and landscape of the game.

DESCRIBE

Students prepare a report on the function of landscape and location in the game. They should consider the following questions in their response:

- How does location and landscape add to the design of the game?
- How does it affect gameplay?
- How do the characters interact with their location?
- Would these interactions be possible in another location?
- Do natural forces like wind, fire and rain impact on the game?
- Do the characters travel over distances through changing landscapes, or do they remain in one location?
- How important is a spatial understanding of location to gameplay?

Students can share their descriptions with the class. It will be interesting to compare different accounts of the same game.

MAPPING THE GAME

Ask students to draw a map of the area they covered while playing the game.



Words With Friends

ACTIVITY

Words with Friends is a scrabble-like game in which two players play against each other online. Players are given letters, and have to make words from them. They must make real words.

The application can be downloaded onto any Android device, iPad or iPhone.

Games can be started randomly or with specific friends or classmates. The teacher is able to set up several student accounts and in this way monitor the games being played. Setting up multiple accounts allows students to play games with each other and other students in the school.

Games can be saved and continued over several sessions.

Hanging With Friends

ACTIVITY

Hanging with Friends is a hangman-like game in which students can play against each other online. Players are given letters, and have to make a word from them; the opposing player has to guess the word.

The application can be downloaded onto any Android device, iPad or iPhone, and games can be started randomly or with specific friends or class mates. Teachers are able to set up several accounts for the class and in this way monitor the games being played. Setting up multiple accounts allows students to play games with each other and other students in the school.

Games can be saved and continued over several sessions.



The Braid Puzzle Challenge

One of the unique aspects of Jonathan Blow's hugely successful game, *Braid*, is that the puzzles and challenges do not need to be completed in a linear order. Provided all puzzles are completed at some stage, the end reward is still the same.

In this activity, students work together in teams to complete challenges. Once a challenge is completed, the team gains a piece of a puzzle. The group that solves the overall puzzle wins.

The puzzle could be a literal puzzle, with large cut-up pieces, or it could be pieces of a maths equation to be solved or single lines from a poem.

ACTIVITY

- On an oval, in a school quad, or in any area with a bit of wide open space, set up five checkpoints.
- Each checkpoint has a different challenge. These challenges could be changed to suit the specific needs of your class.
- For example a primary Maths student might have to answer a times table question and then do 10 star jumps. An English class might have to spell words or answer questions about a novel they're reading and then do 4 shuttle runs.
- Divide students into groups of 3-4, and provide each student with a checklist to be marked off each time they complete a challenge.
- Once all group members have completed the activity, the group receives a piece of the puzzle
- Each group must complete each of the challenges to receive all pieces of the puzzle. The order in which they receive the pieces doesn't matter. They do however need all the pieces of the puzzle before they can solve it.



Game Review

In this activity students will take on the role of a game reviewer.

ACTIVITY

Divide students into groups and ask them to complete a Game Overview Worksheet for two or more games.

Next, ask each group to consider:

- the qualities essential to a good game. (They may like to refer to the Exploring Game Types activity on page 11.)
- whether different players focus on different aspects of gameplay.
- if different types of game need to be judged by a different set of criteria.

RESEARCH

Each student should read at least 3 game reviews from 3 separate sources. It might be interesting to choose different reviews of the same game.

- What aspects of the game did each reviewer focus on?
- How did the reviews differ? How did they overlap?
- What are the criteria used in these reviews?

CREATE

Write a review of a videogame.

- Students could be encouraged to choose a game they haven't played before.
- Alternatively, groups of students could write reviews of the same game and then reflect on the similarities and differences of each person's critique.

GAME REVIEW RESOURCES

<http://impulsegamer.com/>

www.rockpapershotgun.com/

www.abc.net.au/tv/goodgame/

www.abc.net.au/abc3/goodgamesp/



GAME OVERVIEW WORKSHEET

Name:

Game title	
Game publisher	
Hardware used to play the game (Wii, Playstation, Game Boy etc)	
Genre	
Intended age range	
Describe the world or the setting of the game	
List the main characters in the game	
What is the aim or goal in this game?	
What is the game's plot or storyline?	



GAMING IN THE FUTURE WORKSHEET

Name:

What do you think videogames will be like in the future? How will you play them?

Design your own videogame system. Use your imagination!

Game system name:

Write about the features of your gaming system. How will people play games on it?



QUOTES FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Each of these quotes provides the opportunity for stimulating discussion, classroom debate or further research.

'...interacting with the patterns in games is a lot like interacting with other human beings. Some we may dislike, even if we find it in ourselves to appreciate the differences. With others, we enjoy their company and make an effort to work with them. But every once in a while, we fall in love, and we can spend forever with them and still find more to discover.'

www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/issues/issue_232/6882-Designers-Little-Helpers.3

'...It's almost impossible for someone who's not game-literate to understand how a videogame can create meaningful experiences. Unlike paintings, sculptures, films, books, photographs, or songs, videogames rely on the audience's ability to touch them to be complete creative works.' www.1up.com/features/games-art-dissecting-debate

'...Knowing how to design a successful game involves system-based thinking, iterative critical problem solving, art and aesthetics, writing and storytelling, interactive design, creating game logic and rules, and programming skills. The game designer must also be thinking about how people will interact with the game and how the game will shape both competitive and collaborative social interaction. Game designers must explicate and defend design ideas, describe design issues and player interactions at a meta-level, create and test hypotheses, and reflection the impact of their games as a distinctive form of media. Game designers make and think about complex interactive systems.'

Game Design 101 (Game star Mechanic)

<https://sites.google.com/a/elinemediamedia.com/gsmlearningguide/home>

Jonathon Blow on his game *The Witness*:

Q 'Is *The Witness* playable from start to finish yet?'

A: 'Yeah, but I recently broke the ending again! I moved a building and didn't really hook the design back up again.' www.edge-online.com/features/jonathan-blow-interview?page=3

Students may also like to visit sites like: www.gamasutra.com or www.magcloud.com/user/1UP and select their own 'quotable quote' on videogames to add to the mix.



ENCOUNTERING CONFLICT: VCE CONTEXT AND GAMES

Games are a stimulating and multi-faceted resource for exploring a variety of themes as part of the VCE English context study. This unit is intended to be an introduction to the study of the Encountering Conflict context at a Year 10 or 11 English level incorporating a variety of games and films. Teachers of year 12 students can use some of these ideas as part of a more advanced program of study and analysis.

CONTEXT – ENCOUNTERING CONFLICT

In exploring the context theme, students should be encouraged to identify a range of conflict situations and types of conflict. These range from the obvious manifestation of conflict as physical conflict and violence, through to the internal personal struggle with issues of conscience, identity and responsibility.

THE GAMES

This unit focuses on the games *LA Noire* and *Heavy Rain*. Many other games also present players with battles to be won or lost, confrontations to be resolved and moral choices to be made.

Deus Ex and *Metal Gear Solid* are included in the *Game Masters* exhibition as playable games and they are an excellent source of meaningful content.

This contextual study will require at least one of the following consoles, games and films:

Consoles: Playstation 3 or Xbox 360

Games:

- *Heavy Rain* (Playstation only game)
- *LA Noire*
- *Silent Hill 2*
- *Dead Space*
- *Mass Effect*
- *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (the original *Deus Ex* is playable in *Game Masters*)
- *Metal Gear Solid* (*Metal Gear Solid 1, 2, 3* and *4* are playable in *Game Masters*)

Films:

- *The Dark Knight*
- *Minority Report*

BRIEF OUTLINE

John F. Kennedy once said, 'The hottest place in hell is reserved for those who in time of great crises maintain their neutrality'. www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/~/_/link.aspx?_id=4099B66534F44DAFAC5303C26D9C7977&_z=z

He also stated, 'A man does what he must – in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers, and pressures – and that is the basis of all human morality.' www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Quotations/Profiles-in-Courage-quotations.aspx



Many films and games deal with the concept and perceptions of morality and how people respond and react in these difficult times.

Heavy Rain

In the PS3 game *Heavy Rain* you take on the role of a number of interconnected characters, including Ethan Mars, a man trying to deal with tragedy as best he can and raising his son alone and Scott Shelby, a private detective trying to track down clues to the identity of the Origami Killer, a serial killer who uses extended periods of rain to drown his victims.

The storyline of the game is described as an 'interactive psychological thriller' and is modelled after the film noir genre of storytelling.

As the game progresses, you are faced with a barrage of choices. Many of these require quick and instinctive decisions, choosing from multiple options that momentarily float around your character's head. The choices you make and how you choose to treat those around you, will determine how subsequent scenes play out and how your character's story unfolds.

LA Noire

LA Noire was developed by the Australian company Team Bondi for Rockstar Games in 2011 and is set in Los Angeles in the late 1940s. The game follows police officer, Cole Phelps' rise through the ranks of the LAPD, gradually progressing to the rank of Detective as he moves through different departments and between different partners. It becomes clear through the regular cutaway scenes that Phelps is a troubled soul who has made some dubious choices throughout his life.

The players must make many choices throughout the game and, in doing so, are challenged to consider questions of right and wrong and how to treat other people. As a player you can choose to act with integrity and honesty or to make less noble but potentially more advantageous decisions.

The choices that are made along the way can affect how the storyline will unfold and how various characters will behave as a result.

STARTING THE UNIT

A challenge when introducing games into the classroom is that it can be difficult for everybody to experience the text (game) at the same time. An important aspect of games that incorporate narrative and storylines into the gameplay is that players interact with the narrative. For this reason, it may be effective to break the class into groups and to use a rotational setup. Let's say the English class contains 20 students. They can be broken into 4 groups of 5. On the game console, each group could be set up with a login account so that each group's progress through the game can be saved separately.

The timetable below uses 10 one-hour lessons allowing all groups to see two films and play two games for 2 hours each. In the first two lessons, Group 1 and 3 will play the game¹ on separate workstations.² Since

¹ You may choose to use only one of the games from the list provided, or you may choose more, or you may use your own games, it's up to you.



most of the suggested games are single player games,³ individual group members, over the two hours, may only play for 20 to 25 minutes each, but as a group they'll contribute to the choices made along the way and one member should be a scribe to record what happened and the choices that were made and how far through the storyline they progressed, so they can report effectively later.

During these times, other groups can watch films at separate workstations and rotate accordingly every two lessons. Groups may wish to come in at lunch time and play extra hours on the games as well, but this is of course up to the teacher's discretion.

These activities wouldn't necessarily need to occur consecutively. The teacher may wish to break every two lessons or so to form discussion, reflection and analysis, ensuring students are maintaining their focus on the concept of encountering conflict, morality and internal struggle.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Hour One	Heavy Rain	Minority Report	LA Noire	Dark Knight	Dark Knight
Hour Two	Heavy Rain	Minority Report	LA Noire	Dark Knight	Dark Knight
Hour Three	Minority Report	Dark Knight	Dark Knight	LA Noire	Heavy Rain
Hour Four	Minority Report	Dark Knight	Dark Knight	LA Noire	Heavy Rain
Hour Five	Dark Knight	Heavy Rain	Minority Report	Minority Report	LA Noire
Hour Six	Dark Knight	Heavy Rain	Minority Report	Minority Report	LA Noire
Hour Seven	LA Noire			Heavy Rain	Minority Report
Hour Eight	LA Noire			Heavy Rain	Minority Report
Hour Nine		LA Noire	Heavy Rain		
Hour Ten		LA Noire	Heavy Rain		

A reflection can be written after each activity, and once all texts have been experienced each group would report to the rest of the class on their progress throughout the games and their varying experiences. Depending on the games chosen, there are many key points to discuss. For example:

- What choices did groups make at certain key points?⁴
- What effect did choices have on the game?
- How were choices affected the next time a similar situation arose?
- Did the first choice affect them negatively, despite it being the right thing to do?

2 It is a good idea for each of the workstations to have multiple sets of headphones, preferably one for each group member, so they can be immersed in their own text and not be disturbed by the other things going on.

3 For this task it's probably a better idea to avoid co-op and online play.

4 During *LA Noire*, as the detectives are travelling to the next crime scene, they will be alerted to other crimes happening nearby that are less crucial to the game's narrative. They have the choice to stop that crime or ignore it. Occasionally, if they prevent one of these lateral crimes, they will be somehow punished/affected negatively, because they took too long getting to their main objective.



- Were they less inclined to make that choice the next time because they weren't rewarded for their efforts?

Choices and elements of morality are evident in many games and can form the basis for important discussions not just about the games' stories, but also in relation to students' personal choices and concepts of morality.

- Ask students who have made different moral judgements and choices at similar key points in the games to defend or discuss why they made that decision.

The game experience and subsequent discussion could feed into the class's first written piece. This could be a short introductory exercise based around a basic encountering conflict prompt. For example, 'Conflict brings out the best and the worst in people.' Discuss with reference to the game *Heavy Rain*.

As the unit progresses, students should be challenged to develop the sophistication of their writing and make more complex comparisons between not just the games, but also the films.

FILM NOIR ⁵

It will be helpful to introduce students to the conventions of the noir genre to enrich their understanding of the texts overall.

Terms for describing Film Noir: cynical, pessimistic, dark.

History/Influences: Film noir lasted from 1940s to the early 1950s and was influenced by hard-boiled detective fiction. It was low budget, filmed in black and white and showed the influence of German Expressionism in its atmospheric use of dark and light.

The Noir Hero is an ordinary, imperfect man, often haunted by the past and subject to twists of fate. The noir hero is often disillusioned to begin with or becomes this way by the end of the film.

The Femme Fatale is a dangerously beautiful and mysterious woman who captivates the hero but is often the source of his downfall.

Visual Elements

- Low angle shots, dark foregrounds, shadows
- Low ceilings, claustrophobic settings
- Side-lit close-ups
- Urban settings – cold, dark, rainy streets
- Lots of violence and sexual tension
- Use of narration or voice-over
- Straight vertical lines
- Scenes split by lines implying disorder
- Ribbons of light

Claustrophobia and Disillusionment: Characters are often trapped by circumstance or the past and, in general, the visual style of the films represents this feeling. Noir films end in failure, disillusionment, or even death.

⁵ Adapted from A. S. Guest's Heart of Darkness presentation - www.authorstream.com/aSGuest6949



Many of the elements described here can be found within the films and games. It can be a useful exercise to create a mind map, simple table or spreadsheet to record these elements, and then individually, in groups, or as a class, discuss and analyse how these elements are interconnected across the film and game texts studied.

PREPARATION FOR FINAL PIECE OF WORK

Once students have developed a greater understanding of the content of the games and films, they can focus on key points that relate to the context of Encountering Conflict. By this stage, students will have completed a short piece of writing, discussing the moral choices they personally made or influenced during the playing of the games. They will also have completed oral presentations reporting back on their choices and progress and the effect their choices had on their progress. Finally, they will have completed mindmaps and/or tables analysing and linking the various events and choices made in the films and games.

Before writing the final piece for this unit, teachers may wish to enhance their students' understanding. Students can be encouraged to explore how characters deal with conflicting choices in a completely different text.

Some film suggestions are *Billy Elliot*, *Dodgeball*, *Love Actually* and *Up*. Suggested print texts: *The Crucible*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men*.

Key issues in *The Crucible*

- the inner turmoil of John Proctor
- the public conflict within the Salem community
- marital conflict

Key issues in *Billy Elliot*:

- conflict over definitions of masculinity
- family conflict
- social and industrial conflict
- moral conflict experienced by Billy's father as he struggles to be a good unionist and a good father

THE FINAL PIECE

As a lead-up to the final assessment for this unit, it may be helpful to get the students to write a selection of shorter pieces dealing with some of the texts they've studied. This will assist them to develop their ideas more clearly before they tackle the final big essay.

Once they have written a small folio of practice/formative pieces, students can be given the final assessment piece to round off the unit.



SUGGESTED PROMPTS (accessed from a variety of online sources)

The Nature of Conflict:

1. 'Conflict is inevitable.'
2. 'Conflict occurs between the powerful and the powerless.'
3. 'Without conflict, there is no progress or change.'
4. 'Conflicts from history can teach us many things about ourselves and the times in which we live.'
5. 'Conflict is an unavoidable part of being human.'
6. 'Some conflicts are unavoidable.'
7. 'Conflict is the true test of someone's inner strength and understanding.'
8. 'It is not always easy to distinguish the innocent from the guilty in situations of conflict.'
9. 'One conflict always contains the seeds of another.'
10. 'There is always more than one side to any conflict.'

Key questions raised by this type of prompt:

- What are the different types and levels of conflict?
- Is it possible to live in a society without conflict? Or is conflict inevitable?
- When analysing conflict, why is it important to explore the cultural/historical/social/economic/religious context of the conflict?
- Do you think those in positions of power are more or less likely to incite conflict to get what they want? Do the more powerful always win?
- Are there always two valid sides to every conflict?
- Taking the long view of human history, does conflict rule, or do consent and harmony? Why?

How individuals/groups react to conflict:

1. 'People's responses to conflict vary.'
2. 'Often, how we respond to conflict depends on a variety of cultural factors out of our control.'
3. 'Who we are is truly tested and proven when we encounter conflict.'
4. 'Conflict can reveal unexpected qualities in an individual.'
5. 'An individual's ability to deal with conflict is determined by their self-knowledge.'
6. 'Why conflict occurs is less important than how it affects people.'
7. 'It is through conflict that we grow.'
8. 'It is how people deal with conflict and what they learn from it that is important.'
9. 'Conflict may change a person for the better.'
10. 'Conflict brings out unexpected qualities in people.'

Key questions raised by this type of prompt:

- How does conflict affect individuals differently?
- Is conflict something we should always avoid?
- Is a person's response to conflict always dictated by the cause of the conflict?
- Are there cultural factors that might contribute to different responses to conflict?
- Is what we call 'manners' really an informal system designed to limit instances of conflict between individuals?
- What factors influence how a person deals with conflict? (Consider factors such as: temperament, social/cultural/historical/family/political/religious background and the nature of the issue.)



- Describe some of the ways people may respond to conflict. (For instance, they may respond with: tact, dignity, concern for others, aggression, hostility, self-pity or objectivity.)

Causes of conflict:

1. 'Conflicts involve a clash of ideas, interests and expectations.'
2. 'Conflict is born of fear.'
3. 'Conflict is born of ignorance and intolerance.'
4. 'The prime instigator of conflict is fear.'
5. 'Fear of what is different or unfamiliar lies at the root of conflict.'
6. 'Major conflicts often arise from minor misunderstandings.'
7. 'Conflict is often the result of miscommunication.'
8. 'New environments create conflict.'
9. 'Social hierarchies create conflict.'
10. 'Conflict is often the result of differing beliefs.'

Key questions raised by this type of prompt:

- What are some possible causes of conflict? (Consider causes such as: greed, racial prejudice, differences of opinion and the failure to communicate.)
- Can a conflict have more than one cause?
- Why is fear often a source of conflict?
- Is the cause of a conflict between nations similar to the cause of a conflict between two individuals?
- What role do different values play in the creation of conflict?

Consequences of conflict:

1. 'Conflict can be a catalyst for change.'
2. 'A conflict's importance lies not in its causes but in its consequences.'
3. 'Conflict can divide and unite the people who encounter it.'
4. 'Conflict can challenge a person's values.'
5. 'Conflict can result in a positive outcome.'
6. 'Conflict causes growth as well as loss in people's lives.'
7. 'Conflict brings out the best and worst in people.'
8. 'National identity is born out of conflict.'
9. 'Survivors of conflict are forever shaped by their experience.'
10. 'There are no rules for who will survive conflict and who will be destroyed by it.'

Key questions raised by this type of prompt:

- What are the consequences of conflict?
- What are the short-term consequences of conflict?
- What are the long-term consequences of conflict?
- What are some positive outcomes of conflict?
- What are some negative outcomes of conflict?
- Are small-scale conflicts as devastating as large-scale conflicts such as war?

Resolving conflict:

1. 'Conflicts may be difficult to resolve.'
2. 'Some conflicts have a history that makes them impossible to resolve.'



3. 'Conflict cannot be resolved with violence.'
4. 'The way that conflict is resolved determines whether we heal and move forward.'
5. 'Conflict can only be resolved when both parties are prepared to compromise.'
6. 'The search for truth and justice is vital in resolving conflicts.'
7. 'Conflict is rarely resolved.'
8. 'It is possible to resolve conflict but sometimes we choose not to do so.'
9. 'Conflict has the ability to bring people together towards resolution.'
10. 'Conflict is more likely to persist than to be resolved.'

Key questions raised by this type of prompt:

- How are conflicts resolved?
- What types of conflict are the most difficult to resolve?
- Do you think that there are there some conflicts that can never be resolved?
- What impact might different solutions to conflict have on individuals?
- Is there always a solution?
- Is there a tendency in nature, or in people, to try to resolve conflict? Why?

IN CONCLUSION

Many students engage with and know more about videogames than any other form of text. However, as well as drawing on students' existing knowledge, this approach to the context theme, Encountering Conflict, encourages students to be more reflective about their gameplay and the choices they make while playing. Many videogames are driven by conflict and the playing of games provides multiple perspectives for players to consider the context theme in relation to a range of issues, emotions and choices.