

LEARNING, EDUCATION, & GAMES



VOLUME 4: 50 GAMES TO USE FOR
INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE

Learning, Education, & Games, Vol. 4

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50 Games to Use for Inclusion, Equity, and Justice

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INTRODUCTION

Picking the right game can be an overwhelming process, as there are so many different types of games available and so many questions to consider. Who is the audience? What are the learning goals? What is the context for using the game? Does it have to be a strictly educational game—or can we use a commercial game and adapt it for classroom use?

In addition, we also want to ask about how a game might (or might not) enhance belongingness and care for our students. Does the game represent the diversity of the world's peoples, cultures, and stories? Does it foster an inclusive community? Does it connect to justice, equity, diversity, belonging, and inclusion initiatives or social-emotional learning? Can the game help us to fully express aspects of our identities? Can it help us to understand humanity better?

We hope this guide, *50 Games to Use for Inclusion, Equity, and Justice*, will help everyone find games that teach these important skills and topics.

WHY DID WE CHOOSE THIS TOPIC?

All of us deserve to fully participate in human society. Being able to learn, grow, and play are at the core of being in a caring and equitable world. Beyond the ethical reasons for inclusion, there are empirical benefits. Diversity, justice, and equity are factors that have been linked to educational, occupational, and interpersonal success (Stevens, et al., 2008; Warren, 2014). These factors also relate to more effective teams and organizations, as well as greater problem-solving ability (Coleman & Taylor, 2023; Hong & Page, 2004; Phillips, 2014).

Despite all of this, video games have not been diverse in their representations, or inclusive in their communities, though recently there have been shifts toward more diverse representation and equitable games (Chess, et al., 2017; Kafai, et al., 2016; Cole & Zammit, 2021; Schrier, 2019, 2021). Likewise, educational realms have lacked inclusion and equity, but have been taking steps toward greater use of diverse texts and resources, as well as more inclusive learning communities (Ferguson, et al. 2019; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021). This volume is yet another step in a long process of creating more inclusive, caring, and equitable educational and game communities.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

In this volume, we highlight 50 games that can be used to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in classrooms, at home, in workplaces, museums, after-school programs, workshops, and more—online, in person, or using a hybrid format. This list is not exhaustive, and is just one small contribution to an important field.

The book features a wide variety of game types, such as digital games and analog (non-digital) ones, including board games, card games, escape rooms, and other in-person games. The guide features mobile and console games, LARPs, classic childhood games, and popular commercial off-the-shelf

(COTs) games released in the last five years. The collection includes digital games that have been extremely popular, such as *Minecraft*, *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, *Overwatch 2*, and *Among Us*, as well as less well-known finds, such as *Prisoner in My Homeland*, *Raji: An Epic Tale*, and *Toma el Paso (Make a Move)*. It includes classic games such as *Candy Land* and *Chess*, and indie games such as *Papers, Please*; *Unpacking*; *Kind Words (lo fi chill beats to write to)*; and *That Dragon, Cancer*. Some of the games included within this collection were specifically made for educational purposes, while others are entertainment-focused games that can be adapted for classroom use. Some of the games are only for more mature audiences, and others are for preschoolers, elementary school students, middle school, or high school students.

Each of the fifty case studies included in this volume has been written by games and education experts, including teachers, researchers, and game designers. Several of the chapters are even written by the designers and developers of the game featured in the chapter, such as *Lost & Found*, *The Challenge and Inequality of Care*, and *Svoboda 1945: Liberation*. However, perhaps most importantly, all of the authors are game enthusiasts and care about how we can better use games to support learning. Each entry includes a summary of the game as well as a detailed explanation of how to use it in a classroom or educational setting.

But, no game is perfect. Many of the games in this book have flaws or limitations. This book gives advice on how to more effectively foster inclusion, and enhance the learning of equity-related concepts and skills. Teachers, mentors, and guides may need to further adapt games to ensure their effectiveness.

When going through this volume, we ask readers to also remain mindful that games are not standalone experiences. For any game to be an effective learning experience it needs to be carefully integrated with regard to the curriculum, logistical requirements, and student needs. The context and community around it, and inside it, matters. It also requires an educator, parent, mentor, or another resource who can help support and guide the players and shape the learning experience with them (often called educational scaffolding; Hogan & Pressley, 1997). This support can include providing a forewarning of themes relevant to culture, power, and identity; reflecting on these themes before and after the game; and helping players adopt strategies to regulate, identify, and work through challenging emotions or even opt-out as needed.

To help in finding the right game for your needs, we also curated several lists, such as ones organized by age group and game types (e.g., COTs games, indie games). These lists can be found in the next section. We hope these lists will help educators and families discover ways to creatively teach important themes, skills, and topics related to inclusion, equity, and justice.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

All of the chapters in this book include information on the game and how to use it in educational contexts. This information can be used to help decide whether a particular game would work for a learning need or audience, as well as to provide inspiration on how to teach using it. Each chapter includes:

Key Details, which provides a quick list of details about the game, including the number of players, cost, developer, genre(s), and the platform(s) to use to play the game;

Summary, which introduces the game and provides an overview of its gameplay;

How to Use this Game, which relays specific examples of ways to use the game in an educational setting to foster inclusion, equity, and justice;

Tips & Best Practices, which shares helpful tips, techniques, and strategies for people using or playing the game;

Related Media & Games, which lists some additional media and games that educators may want to check out;

Further Reading, which lists some books, articles, and research that educators may want to read to find out more about the game, or to learn more information about related topics or themes, such as about using games in an educational context.

ABOUT THE SERIES

50 Games to Use for Inclusion, Equity, and Justice is the fourth volume in the book series, *Learning, Education & Games*, which was written, edited, and reviewed by members of the Inclusive Games Network. The first book focuses on the curricular and design considerations related to using games for learning. The second book focuses on practical, technological, institutional, and contextual challenges to consider when creating and implementing games for use in formal and informal educational settings. The third book focuses on 100 case studies of games that can be used in a classroom, home, workplace, or other setting. All books are available for free through ETC Press. Please see the following links to download the first two books:

Learning, Education, & Games, Volume 1: <https://press.etc.cmu.edu/books/learning-education-games/1/1>

Learning, Education, & Games, Volume 2: <https://press.etc.cmu.edu/books/learning-education-games/2/2>

Learning, Education, & Games, Volume 3: <https://press.etc.cmu.edu/books/learning-education-games/3>

Please note that some of the text in this introduction has been drawn from *Learning, Education, & Games, Volume 3*.

KEY TERMS

Diversity: Diversity relates to demographic variety with regard to categories like race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual identity, age, class, and ability. It does not lead to equity on its own; and should be paired with perceived inclusion.

Inclusion: This is an organizational effort to make sure that everyone has equitable access to the group, feels belongingness, and can participate freely.

Equity: This is a systematic freedom from bias or favoritism, such that everyone can participate in a fair and impartial way.

Justice: This is a weighing of conflicting claims or values; and the restoration of what is fair and deserving for everyone.

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CURATED LISTS

BY AUDIENCE

Elementary/Primary School

Against All Odds

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Awkward Moment

Candy Land

Capture the Flag

Chess

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics

Minecraft

VersaTiles

Wizards & Warriors

Middle School

Against All Odds

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Awkward Moment

Capture the Flag

Celeste

Chess

Dialect

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics

Elder Scrolls Online

Fair Play

Hire Up

Ikenfell

Kids on Bikes

Kind Words

Lost & Found (game series)

Minecraft

Morra Cinematic Game System

Night in the Woods

Overwatch 2

Prisoner in My Homeland

Raji: An Ancient Epic

Signs of the Sojourner

Svoboda 1945: Liberation

Toma el Paso

Thirsty Sword Lesbians

Tunche

Valiant Hearts

VersaTiles

Wizards & Warriors

High School

Against All Odds

Among Us

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Awkward Moment

BaFa' BaFa'

Black Closet

Capture the Flag

Celeste

Chess

Depression Quest

Dialect

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics

Elder Scrolls Online

Fair Play

Hire Up

Ikenfell

Kids on Bikes

Kind Words

Lost & Found (game series)

Minecraft

Morra Cinematic Game System

Night in the Woods

Overwatch 2

Papers, Please

Prisoner in My Homeland

Raji: An Ancient Epic

Queers in Love at the End of the World

Signs of the Sojourner

Spirit Island

Spiritfarer

Svoboda 1945: Liberation

Tales of Arise

Toma el Paso

The Beginner's Guide

That Dragon, Cancer

The Quiet Year

Thirsty Sword Lesbians

Tunche

Unpacking

Valiant Hearts

VersaTiles

Virginia

Wizards & Warriors

College and Adults

Among Us

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

BaFa' BaFa'

Black Closet

Capture the Flag

Celeste

Challenge and Inequality of Care

Chess

Depression Quest

Dialect

Dragon Age

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics

Elder Scrolls Online

Fair Play

Hire Up

If Found...

Ikenfell

Kids on Bikes

Kind Words

Living Colors

Lost & Found (game series)

Minecraft

Morra Cinematic Game System

Night in the Woods

Overwatch 2

Papers, Please

Prisoner in My Homeland

Queers in Love at the End of the World

Raji: An Ancient Epic

Signs of the Sojourner

Spirit Island

Spiritfarer

Svoboda 1945: Liberation

Tales of Arise

Toma el Paso

That Dragon, Cancer

The Beginner's Guide

The Quiet Year

The Walking Dead: Season One

Thirsty Sword Lesbians

Tunche

Unpacking

Valiant Hearts

VersaTiles

Virginia

Wizards & Warriors

BY GAME TYPE

Non-digital Games

Awkward Moment

BaFa' BaFa'

Candy Land

Capture the Flag

Challenge and Inequality of Care

Dialect

Kids on Bikes

Living Colors

Lost & Found (game series)

Morra Cinematic Game System

Spirit Island

The Quiet Year

Thirsty Sword Lesbians

Toma el Paso

VersaTiles

Wizards & Warriors

Board Games

Candy Land

Chess

Lost & Found (game series)

Spirit Island

The Quiet Year

Toma el Paso

VersaTiles

Single-Player Digital Games

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Black Closet

Celeste

Depression Quest

Dragon Age

Fair Play

Hire Up

If Found...

Ikenfell

Kind Words

Minecraft

Night in the Woods

Papers, Please

Prisoner in My Homeland

Queers in Love at the End of the World

Raji: An Ancient Epic

Signs of the Sojourner

Spiritfarer

Svoboda 1945: Liberation

Tales of Arise

The Beginner's Guide

Unpacking

Valiant Hearts

Virginia

The Walking Dead: Season One

That Dragon, Cancer

Multiplayer Digital Games

Among Us

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics

Elder Scrolls Online

Kind Words

Minecraft

Overwatch 2

Spiritfarer

Tunche

Mainstream/Commercial Digital Games (CoTS)

Among Us

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Dragon Age

Elder Scrolls Online

Minecraft

Overwatch 2

Tales of Arise

Valiant Hearts

The Walking Dead: Season One

Indie Digital Games

Black Closet

Celeste

Depression Quest

Fair Play

If Found...

Ikenfell

Lost & Found (game series)

Kids on Bikes

Kind Words

Night in the Woods

Papers, Please

Queers in Love at the End of the World

Raji: An Ancient Epic

Signs of the Sojourner

Svoboda 1945: Liberation

That Dragon, Cancer

The Beginner's Guide

The Quiet Year

Toma el Paso

Tunche

Unpacking

Virginia

Larps (Live Action Role-Playing Games)

Challenge and Inequality of Care

Morra Cinematic Game System

Wizards & Warriors

Classic Games

Candy Land

Capture the Flag

Chess

Free Games

Against All Odds

Among Us

Capture the Flag

Challenge and Inequality of Care

Depression Quest

Fair Play

Hire Up

Living Colors

Overwatch 2

Prisoner in My Homeland

Queers in Love at the End of the World

Toma el Paso

Wizards & Warriors

The Chapter Was Written By a Developer

Challenge and Inequality of Care

Hire Up

Living Colors

Lost & Found (game series)

Morra Cinematic Game System

Overwatch 2

Svoboda 1945: Liberation

Toma el Paso

Wizards & Warriors

Table Top Role-Playing Game (TTRPG)

Dialect

Living Colors

Morra Cinematic Game System

Thirsty Sword Lesbians

Game adaptations/mods

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics

AGAINST ALL ODDS

INMACULADA HERNÁNDEZ MARTÍN & MARTA MARTÍN-DEL-POZO

Game: *Against All Odds*

Developer: UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), The United Nations Refugee Agency

Year: 2005

Platform(s): Online (PC); Browser-based; PC

Number of players: Single-player game

Genre: Serious/educational game; role-playing game

Type of game: Browser-based digital game; computer-based digital game

Curricular connections: Social studies; ethics; civics; social justice; social and emotional learning (SEL)

Possible skills taught: empathy; critical thinking; ethical decision-making; diversity; analyzing moral dilemmas; civic analysis; collaboration; communication; teamwork; deliberation; problem solving; identity exploration

Audience: 12-15 years old

Length of time: 45-60 minutes

Where to play: A classroom, at home.

Cost: Free

URL: As Flash is no longer supported, the original URL is not available anymore. Teachers interested in using this game can apply to archives@unhcr.org and they will receive full access. UNHCR in collaboration with Digital Preservation Coalition have preserved the game after Flash software came to an end. They will receive a copy that allows them to choose a language and access resources. They can also use BlueMaxima's Flashpoint, which is a web game preservation project: <https://bluemaxima.org/flashpoint/>. Teachers can download and use Flashpoint 10.1 Infinity.

Summary

In *Against All Odds* (in Spanish, *Contra Viento y Marea*), the players take the role of a refugee who needs to flee their country. Throughout the levels, the game shows the different situations that refugees have to face, either crossing the border or arriving and settling in a new country. The game is divided into three parts with four levels each. The first part, War and Conflict, is related to the consequences of war and repression and it comprises four levels: (1) interrogation, (2) you have to flee!, (3) get out

of the town!, and (4) leave the country now!. The second part, Borderland, is related to the arrival in the neighboring country through (1) shelter for the night!, (2) find the interpreter!, (3) refugee or immigrant?, and (4) new in the class. The last part, A New Life, is related to the establishment of a new life in the new country and it includes: (1) looking for a job!, (2) time to go shopping, (3) sort by origin!, and (4) your first apartment. The game consists of challenges related to questions and answers, the selection of alternative options, and the player's movement through the scenes. In the beginning, the players can choose between different young characters (3 males, 3 females) so that the students can feel more identified with their character, as well as they can write the name they want. The players have to make difficult decisions that allow them to reach the new country, including deciding if they are willing to give up their rights (the right to vote, the right to sexuality, the freedom of information, the freedom of association, the freedom of religion, etc.) and leaving behind their home, belongings, and friends. In addition, the game allows players to tackle the parts and levels of the game in any order, depending on what players, students, or teachers want to work on, showing a summary of the previous levels as a context.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Although the game is recommended for children over twelve years old, it can also be used with children from ten to twelve years old, depending on their maturity level and their sociocultural context, if there is factual context and emotional support given during the experience. For students under twelve, consider using the second (Borderland) and third (A new life) parts, and skipping the first part of the game (War and conflict), which could be overwhelming for them.

When we used *Against All Odds*, we taught a group of ten-year-olds, one hour per week, within the subject of Social and Civic Values. The school was located in a small town with several companies employing immigrant workers, so the students had different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, some of the students lived in a public facility because they were under the protection of a Spanish public administration. Our students were used to dealing with cultural differences and personal circumstances and they usually showed empathy for others' feelings and talked about it in an open way. In this school context, the Syrian refugee crisis was in the news, so this particular group of students expressed concerns about the situation.

Educators should use extended resources to improve the game experience for their students. To prepare for playing *Against All Odds*, educators should first access a link named web facts and another one called for teachers on the landing page. Educators can also download the teacher's guide. Prior to playing the game, educators should offer information about human rights, the official UN declaration of human rights, and also talk about some possible reasons behind the decision to flee one's own country. Teachers working with students unfamiliar with issues of immigration and refugees can use the UNHCR educational materials called Teaching about Refugees and their Guide for Teachers. The resources include short animated videos in different languages, several data infographics, some interesting reports, and personal stories are classified by age (ages 6-9, ages 9-12, ages 12-15, ages 15-18) to help teachers to choose the most convenient for their context.

We highly recommend playing Borderland, and especially the third (refugee or immigrant) and fourth (new in the class) levels. It can be interesting for the students to look at *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan to learn more about how it feels when arriving in a different country, without any reference point. This

illustrated book can be especially useful for those unfamiliar with refugees or immigration issues. Before playing the third level, it seems important to bring to light the differences between being an immigrant and a refugee. In my experience, students tend to perceive the world as based only on their own personal context, so discussing issues related to religion, political views, gender roles, or sexual diversity may help them to understand why people flee their countries.

The third part of the game, Looking for a job, gives us the opportunity to take a closer look at day-to-day activities. If you have immigrants or second-generation students, let them share their perspectives (without tokenizing them or putting them on the spot). Even if they are children, they will have stories and may have had problematic interactions when shopping, going into a bookstore, going to the park, etc. It is important to note that their local classmates may be surprised by this behavior, so it is a great opportunity to discuss inclusion attitudes and empathy. The third level, sort by origin, is particularly tedious for students to play, but can be an opportunity to research about the origins of some goods like bicycles or spaghetti. At this level, my recommendation is playing the game, and after they fail, invite them to do some digging to discover the unknown origins, such as chess. Educators may want to make this a cooperative challenge. Students can work cooperatively, distribute the goods, share their findings, and ensure no one is left behind.

Students are used to role-playing game experiences, but their usual objective is to reach the next screen. A thorough selection of support materials will help to situate the game's content within real issues, and to help students face their assumptions and to reflect on their prejudices. For example, when working with the first level of the second part, shelter for night!, students could reflect on what would happen if someone unknown knocked on their door at night asking for help using a foreign language.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should play the game beforehand to reflect on the kind of questions students may ask about the topic as they play.
2. Teachers should play the game beforehand to verify how the content fits the student audience, regarding potentially sensitive topics and age-appropriateness.
3. If the game is played in pairs in the classroom using a computer for each pair, teachers should circulate, observing reactions and discussion to ensure the understanding of the situations presented, and to help to struggle with challenges and questions.
4. Teachers can choose the level or the part on which they want to work, depending on the content or the time they have available.
5. Teachers should make a brief explanation of the context and plot of the previous levels, and students should watch the summary shown by the game.
6. Teachers interested in using BlueMaxima's Flashpoint can locate information and manuals on its webpage, including information about supported operating systems, prerequisites, and how to use it. Teachers can use Flashpoint 10.1 Infinity, being smaller in size, but an Internet connection is required when users play the game for the first time.
7. Teaching materials related to this game can be located at: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant->

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Bury Me, My Love (<https://burymemylove.arte.tv/>)

Cloud Chasers: Journey of Hope (<http://cloudchasersgame.com/>)

Path Out (<https://www.path-out.net/>)

Survival (<https://omniumlab.com/portfolio/survival-algeciras-unaoc/>)

Teaching about Refugees (<https://www.unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees.html>)

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Sou, G. (2018). Trivial pursuits? Serious (video) games and the media representation of refugees. *Third World Quarterly*, 39(3), 510-526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1401923>

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AMONG US

KAREN (KAT) SCHRIER & NICHOLAS FISHER

Game: *Among Us*

Developer: Innersloth

Year: 2018

Platform(s): Nintendo Switch, Android, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, iOS, PlayStation 5, Microsoft Windows, Xbox Series X and Series S

Number of players: Multiplayer

Genre: Indie game; Action game; social game; online co-op

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Social studies; civics; ethics; communication

Possible skills taught: Ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration; communication; argumentation; listening; deliberation; debate

Audience: 8+ years through adult

Length of time: each session is about 10 minutes

Where to play: Classroom; at home

Cost: \$4.99 (free on mobile)

URL: <https://www.innersloth.com/games/among-us/>

SUMMARY

Among Us is a multiplayer social deduction game in which a group of up to 15 players play together at the same time. Players are divided into two teams: either crewmates or imposters (up to 3). The crewmates need to deduce the identities of the murderous alien imposters in their midst before the imposters kill them (in a cartoon style). Players play by moving around the map and completing tasks, such as fixing wiring or emptying trash. If you are the imposter, you can sabotage areas of the map or kill other players. You may also be able to shapeshift into other players. Players can also call meetings or report dead bodies. If you do this, all the players get called into a conference and enter the deliberation and voting phase. They have a set amount of deliberation time, where they can identify potential imposters, or share evidence about their whereabouts. Players then vote on whom they think is the imposter. If enough players vote for someone, they get ejected from the game, and their true identity (imposter or crewmate) is shared. Crewmates can win if all the imposters get ejected, or if they complete all of their tasks. Imposters win if they kill or eject all of the crewmates or sabotage

enough systems. A game session may include multiple votes or may have only one depending on how quickly the crewmates identify the imposter.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Educators can use *Among Us* to facilitate skills essential to enhancing inclusion, equity, and justice. First, the game supports communication and listening skills, and group facilitation skills, which are connected to the ability to think critically, build diverse and inclusive teams, and engage in antiracist practices (Bussey et al, 2021; Brandert, et al, 2021). Further, the game builds argumentation skills. The game helps players practice skills like building arguments and persuasion, which connects to civic engagement and our ability to ensure justice for all (Schrier, 2021). Moreover, *Among Us* helps us to see and critique the relationship between power and influence, and the ethics of having just or unjust systems (Lebow, 2005). To win the game, students need to be able to convince others to trust them and to identify suspects. They need to share evidence of what they have been doing or what they saw (“I was in Admin doing the swipe card task” or “I saw a body in Security, and orange was venting.”) These shared clues or perspectives help the group of players to then collectively decide who to vote for—and whom to suspect. The players can also work together in the game to protect each other, watch security cams in the game, or follow suspects that they have identified.

There are a number of ways to use the game to encourage communication and argumentation, and to reflect on systems of justice. One is to have students play the game and focus on observing and interacting on the map *without* speaking aloud. They can quietly complete tasks, watch security cams, and gather evidence. Then, during the deliberation and voting phases, they can speak aloud and share their collected data with other students. They can take turns making a case for whom they think are the imposter(s). They also need to defend themselves from any accusations or persuade others not to suspect them. Players then must consider the information they acquired, what others shared, and what they have observed to vote. Students then again are silent once the vote is complete, and they return to the game’s map.

Another possibility for students is that they can communicate during the whole game by talking aloud while exploring the map and the voting and deliberation phases. They can call out issues, share evidence, divide up tasks (fixing lights, looking through security cameras), and identify suspects. One limitation (and benefit) of *Among Us* is that it doesn’t have any real-time voice capabilities and their text is limited to pre-selected words and phrases. If students are playing in a classroom or other physical location, they can speak aloud and share insights while they play. If students are online, they can play while in a Zoom meeting or Discord channel. Students can also take on the challenge of needing to communicate with limited means, such as by only using the in-game words and phrases to build their case.

In my course on ethics, I have divided students into thirds and had them join different Discord channels. They played the map quietly and then deliberated who the imposters were by explaining their locations, what tasks they were completing, and whether they saw someone else kill another player.

Additionally, the game encourages social reasoning, as well as reflection on one’s incorrect interpretations, assumptions, and biases. Players can interrogate interpersonal dynamics and how

they relate to the game's system, rules, and roles, all of which are useful for enhancing antiracist practices (Bussey et al, 2021; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Players can be a Scientist, Engineer, or Guardian Angel in addition to the basic Crewmate, while Imposters now have the chance to play as the Shapeshifter. Playing as the Engineer gives the player the ability to travel through vents—an ability that was previously exclusive to Imposters. Shapeshifters are given the ability to temporarily disguise themselves as any other living player while retaining their usual Imposter abilities, granting them another tool that can be used to frame other players. The Shift ability does leave behind evidence, however, forcing the Shapeshifter to be discreet about how they use the ability, lest the rest of the players catch on to the ruse. Educators can help students to sift through these different rules and how the system of *Among Us* affects how we judge and evaluate others. Educators might ask: How do the rules in our everyday systems affect how others treat us? How might we revise these systems to be more equitable?

Sometimes, players may have little evidence to use to build their case. Players may revert to problematic and superficial assumptions to base their votes on (“I don’t like the color pink,” “Their name is suspicious”), rather than using valid evidence. Once players vote they can see whether their votes were correct, which can encourage them to revisit their incorrect assumptions. Educators can spur this type of reflective dialogue by asking students to first share their strategies for voting. What evidence did they use and which perspectives did they prioritize or downplay? What might they have done differently and what other information should they seek next? Second, after the vote is complete, educators can ask the students to reflect on any biases, and how they may evaluate evidence differently in the future. Students should also interrogate the relationship between power and influence. How do we ensure that there are just and equitable systems for voting and making collective decisions?

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Put students into groups of 6-10 to play in a session, otherwise, there will be too many people who need to share and communicate findings.
2. On the other hand, play around with the size of the groups because if there are too few people in a group, it is less challenging to figure out the imposter and the game sessions are shorter with fewer deliberation phases.
3. Consider changing the deliberation and voting time to being either longer or shorter depending on your pedagogical goals.
4. Sometimes students may get bumped from the server so have the codes for the sessions handy for students to all see.
5. Have students change their names, colors, and outfits to see how others may evaluate them differently.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Fall Guys (<https://www.fallguys.com/en-US>)

Goose, Goose, Duck (https://store.steampowered.com/app/1568590/Goose_Goose_Duck/)

Jackbox Party Pack (https://store.steampowered.com/app/1005300/The_Jackbox_Party_Pack_6/)

Werewolf Online (<https://netgames.io/games/onu-werewolf/>)

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ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW HORIZONS

EMILY BAUMGARTNER

Game: *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*

Developer: Nintendo, Inc.

Year: 2020

Platform(s): Nintendo Switch

Number of players: 1, can play online with others

Genre: Adventure game; social simulation game

Type of game: Digital game

Curricular connections: Science; math; art

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; creativity; problem solving; intelligent decision-making; financial literacy

Audience: Rated PEGI 3; 3+ years to adult

Length of time: Unlimited

Where to play: Anywhere you can bring a Nintendo Switch

Cost: \$49.99

URL: <https://www.animal-crossing.com/new-horizons/>

SUMMARY

Animal Crossing: New Horizons allows players to assume the role of a new resident to an island where they can build and decorate their house, help take care of the island, collect bugs, fish, fossils, and meet some characters along the way. Players can also build items using a D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) crafting table and can give items to their neighbors or decorate the island further. Additionally, there is a stock market of sorts where the player can purchase and sell turnips for varying prices during the week. The game also allows players to visit other islands with any friends who have been added on Nintendo Switch, if the player chooses to subscribe to Nintendo's service. *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* also allows players to build relationships with their neighbors. The island starts off with two neighbors and as the game progresses, the player has the choice to allow new characters to move in. Players can assist their neighbors by giving them items or doing favors for them, such as finding a lost item somewhere on the island. Since this is a real-time game, it can go on for as long as the player chooses, and it has activities and items that are related to the season the player is currently in. For instance, during the spring, the player is able to hunt for eggs around the island.



Figure 3.1. An example of a designed room in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*. ALT TEXT: An avatar with long dark hair and a blue hat stands in a room designed with a stereo, billiard table, plant, green couch, jukebox, and lamp. There is floral pink wallpaper and a purple floor. The wall is decorated with a painting and white and pink stockings.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Animal Crossing: New Horizons has many benefits to support inclusion and diversity. It also has a lot of teachable lessons that can assist in the classroom with a myriad of different subjects, such as math and science. The character that the player chooses is not tied to a particular gender identity, or to a specific appearance. The character is also able to change clothing at any point in the game (and at one point, a clothing store comes to the island to give the player even more choices!). The player is even able to change their facial features, hair color, and skin color. Previous versions of this game had limits to gendered clothing and features, but *New Horizons* went away with this restriction. This feature can help players feel like they can express themselves while playing and this could lead to lessons on “being yourself” and self-acceptance. Conversations in the classroom can revolve around color coordination with clothing and clothing that goes together for a specific task (i.e. what you would wear to go swimming, what you would wear to go camping, etc.). Additionally, teachers could talk about accepting others as they are and encouraging students to express themselves. Please note that the game does not include curly hair or diverse hairstyles, which teachers should be aware of.

Players can invite other animal characters to their island. The whole point of the game is to build a community that feels like home. Individual characters have different personalities, different colors, and different animal types. The player builds relationships and can help their neighbors out and receive something in return. Educators can use this aspect of the game to help students see that friends and neighbors might look or act differently than them—and that is beneficial. Educators can also use this to show them that you can have empathy toward others, especially when they are struggling or in a bad mood. One idea to incorporate this into a curriculum would be to have students journal

about their feelings toward the animal that just moved onto their island. After about a month or so, have the students journal again and see how their feelings may have changed over the month. Another idea is to have students research or report on their favorite animal. Pair them with another student and have them share scientific facts about the animal based upon the animals that move onto their islands. Have students think about whether these animals would be friends in real life, and why or why not. Teachers can also have students create their own “classroom” in the game and attend their class together on one of the islands using the Island Connect feature. This does require a bit of work on the teacher’s part to create the building for it, but there are resources online to help.

Educators can also use *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* to start conversations about money and economic disparity. In the game, players have to earn bells (money) by selling items to the island shop and they are also able to purchase items, bridges, or upgrades to their home. While this can provide beneficial financial literacy lessons, it can also bring up a lesson about poverty and how other people may be living much differently than the students are. Additionally, it could also be a math lesson where students can research how much certain items cost in U.S. Dollars (USD) and compare to how many bells they are asking for.

While this is not specific to game play, one of the game’s creators, Aya Kyogoku, shows that women can be a voice in video game creation as she is a co-director of the series. In the previous iteration of *Animal Crossing*, she helped to hire many female staff to create a more equitable distribution of gender identities (Lane, 2020). Educators can use this to help introduce conversations about careers and jobs in STEM fields and topics about gender discrimination for older students. Women are significantly underrepresented in technology education and conversations at the K-12 level could help inspire and support students for careers in STEM fields (Varma, 2010).

One major limitation of the game is the cost and the platform it is on. Because it is a paid game and on one platform (Nintendo Switch), this could cause issues with affordability and accessibility. The game limits a Switch device to one island for the game, so teachers can either have students share islands or play within groups. If students have their own devices at home, teachers can encourage them to bring them into the classroom. There are other similar games listed below that are free or lower-cost with more platform options.



Figure 3.2. A character chatting with a neighbor on the island. ALT TEXT: An avatar with long dark hair and a blue hat stands outside and talks to a character with a white head and black ears. The character named Genji says “You wanna sit here? Sorry! My legs are so tired from my last workout, I couldn’t get up if I wanted to.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should play the game beforehand to ensure they can help students troubleshoot. For instance, understanding how to switch tools, how to use the D.I.Y. bench, and how to navigate the island.
2. It should be noted that all of the shops and resources are not available until further in the game, so there may be students who have their own consoles who are further along and they will likely have access to them.
3. Educators can encourage students to explore each other’s islands. This can be done by going to the airport and the user is able to provide a code or search for a Nintendo friend. This can be utilized to trade island resources or provide gifts to one another.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Stardew Valley (ConcernedApe)—Available on PC, Xbox One, Playstation (PS) 4, Nintendo Switch, iOS and Android

The SIMS 4 (Maxis)—Available on PC, Xbox One, PS4

Yonder: The Cloud Catcher Chronicles (Prideful Sloth)—Available on PC, Xbox, PS4, PS5, Nintendo Switch

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AWKWARD MOMENT

MATTHEW FARBER & WILLIAM MERCHANT

Game: *Awkward Moment*

Developer: Tiltfactor/Resonym

Year: 2012

Platform(s): Tabletop/analog

Number of players: 3-8 players

Genre: Party game

Type of game: Card game

Curricular connections: Social and emotional learning (SEL); science, technology, engineering, technology (STEM)

Audience: 12 and up

Length of time: 20 minutes

Where to play: Home, parties, classrooms

Cost: \$22.95

URL: <https://resonym.com/game/awkward-moment/>

SUMMARY

Awkward Moment is a commercial party game with a “judge picks” core mechanic. Similar to games like *Apples to Apples*, players draw from two decks of cards: Moment cards and Reaction cards. Moment cards feature an array of embarrassing but relatable situations adolescents are likely to encounter. Examples range from “Your teacher calls on you when you haven’t done your homework” to “There is a spider on your wall.” Reaction cards share responses ranging from silly to surreal. One reads, “Hide in a bathroom stall.” One player is selected to be the Decider or judge. Here, *Awkward Moment* is differentiated from other party card games in one key way: the criteria for choosing the best match changes depending on a third deck, the Decider cards. Examples of Decider cards might award the player with the silliest, bravest, or even the least appropriate Reaction card to any given Moment card. *Awkward Moment* was developed as part of a National Science Foundation grant informed by “psychological theory and research on stereotype threat and implicit bias, two powerful psychological obstacles that have been shown to reduce self-efficacy, persistence, and performance among members of underrepresented groups in STEM” (Teachers Guide, 2012, p. 2). While most Moment cards feature silly situations, some pertain directly to gender bias in STEM fields. One card reads, “While shopping

at the mall, you see a store selling ‘Math is hard!’ T-shirts for girls” (see Figure 4.1). Instructors can use this game to engage in these topics with youth.



Figure 4.1. Image of Awkward Moment Cards. Source: *Awkward Moment* by Mary Flanagan and Tiltfactor. Published by Resonym. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. ALT TEXT: There are six cards. The blue card is called a “Moment” card and says “While shopping at the mall, you see a store selling ‘Math is hard!’ T-shirts for girls.” The orange card is called a “Decider” card and says “Hardest to do.” The yellow card is called a “Reaction” card and says “Be like Marie Curie and win Nobel Prizes.”

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Educators can use *Awkward Moment* with the base rules described in the summary section. Because the game enables large groups to play, it is ideal for parties and classroom settings. As there are 432 total cards and not all are required for single gameplay rounds, teachers can split the deck for large classrooms. Teachers can also purchase multiple decks or swap in different players while the rest of the class actively observes.

In a classroom setting, it is important to establish norms and expectations with students. For instance, no player should feel pressured to share an experience that might be too personal or triggering to themselves or potentially to other players. Educators can show the YouTube video on the Tiltfactor website to model respectful table discussions around moments and reactions. In the video (<https://youtu.be/15UnBq0QKjo>), an adult facilitator is part of the group of young players, leading by modeling appropriate reactions.

In addition to the gameplay described earlier and demonstrated in the video, the box includes “Game Rules with Variations,” alternate sets of instructions. In “Double the Awkward, Double the Fun,” two drawn Decider cards rather than one are selected. “It’s Kind of an Awkward Story” challenges players to invent a character and create a backstory that leads to the drawn Moment.

We will now share the variation “Make Your Own Awkward,” an alternate playstyle included in the game box that asks players to add their own embarrassing situations to the deck. *Awkward Moment* won the Autism Live Top Game Award 2019, which inspired us to engage with an on-campus participant group, Go On and Learn (GOAL), an inclusive higher education program. The GOAL facilitators joined the group as the adult player did in the video mentioned earlier. The GOAL program enables students with intellectual and developmental skills to attend university.

First, we played the game with the GOAL students using the standard instructions in the box. Next, we gave students blank index cards and asked them to share an awkward moment they experienced on each card. GOAL student-created Moment cards included situations like, “You go to class and can’t find an accessible seat” and “Your parents email your professors to check up on your grades.” GOAL students played first with the basic instructions at an event and then engaged with the expanded deck. The expansion deck of the Moment cards created by GOAL faculty can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/3xsUwTD>.

Using the variant “It’s Kind of an Awkward Story,” educators can create post-game learning activities. Based on this, the GOAL facilitators and students were taught how to use the interactive fiction tool Twine to design Social Stories on how to react to their awkward moments in college. Social Stories are multimodal texts, often presented in a comic strip format, first developed by Carol Gray to model social situations for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Gray, 2021).

In addition to students creating cards, educators can also add to the Moment deck. When adding cards, consider the audience. For example, with undergraduate students, Moment cards might include situations like cramming for an exam or not being able to find a parking spot in the student lot. In high school, cards might include showing up to class with the wrong textbook. Although it might be tempting for educators to stack the deck with “educational” cards, like a deck in a middle school advisory setting focused on conflict resolution, we recommend adding silly or ridiculous situations too. Kaufman and Flanagan (2015) found that overloaded decks have led some players to suspect that the game was trying to teach them something, leading to less authentic conversations about reactions.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The rules of the game state that the player who collects the most Moment cards is declared the winner. In a classroom setting, consider forgoing win or loss states, instead focusing on the cards as discussion and conversation starters.
2. As mentioned earlier, in a classroom, an adult facilitator should first establish norms and expectations for anything triggering that may come up in gameplay discussions.
3. An adult facilitator (i.e., teacher, counselor) should be embedded in classroom gameplay.
4. Player-designed cards can be silly (i.e., accidentally wearing a shirt inside out) and not necessarily personally embarrassing.

5. When using the variant to add new Moment cards to the deck, follow the game's research on intermixing to make no more than 30 new cards on new content, not replacing all of the Moment cards.
6. Players should also be given the option not to share their own designed Moment cards, as having others "play" a lived experience can be problematic and potentially traumatic. Some situations or predicaments are unsuitable for gameplay and should be vetted by a trusted adult facilitator, like a teacher or counselor.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Apples to Apples (Mattel, 1999)

Buffalo: The Name-Dropping Game (Tiltfactor, 2012)

What Do You Meme? Family Edition (What Do You Meme?, 2022)

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BAFÁ BAFÁ

LOU ANN FALLS, JOLIE STREETER-DUCZKOWSKI, & MICHAEL ZIMMERMAN

Game: *Bafá Bafá*

Developer: Simulation Training Systems, Dr. R. Garry Shirts

Year: originally 1974, updated in 2015

Platform: Tabletop; non-digital

Number of players: 12-50 participants (2 facilitators, 10+ players)

Genre: Role-playing game, cross-cultural immersion

Type of game: Analog game

Curricular connections: Social Studies, American history (Indigenous People's Day): American literature; ethics; civics; anthropology; sociology; social work; psychology

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; creativity; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; identity exploration; metacognition; executive function; cross-cultural understanding; cultural competencies; empathy

Audience: 14+ years

Length of time: 1.5-2.5 hours, depending on number of players

Where to play: Two rooms/spaces in close proximity but beyond hearing range

Cost: \$329 one-time purchase of the kit. The kit is reusable and includes all the materials necessary for gameplay, such as cards, tokens, and detailed instructions.

URL: <https://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com/schools-and-charities/products/bafa-bafa/>

SUMMARY

Bafá Bafá is a highly interactive role-playing game that simulates a cross-cultural experience. The initial objective is to discover the traditions and rules of a fictional culture through observation and live interaction, but the larger underlying goal is for participants to see firsthand how it feels to be lost in an unfamiliar culture, experiencing a sense of “Othering,” or culture shock. Participants work together to solve the mysteries of a puzzling culture, and then reflect on their experiences and how it affects their perceptions of diversity and inclusion, particularly as it relates to other cultures. After a brief introduction, the two groups are separated in nearby rooms. Each group receives a crash course on their room's secret culture via the provided flash drive. Then, when ready, each room sends a member to briefly visit the opposing room. These visitors observe the other room's unknown culture to learn its secrets; each room's residents become the locals in their culture, behaving according to their predetermined customs. Visitors interact with locals for five minutes, then report back to their rooms. Groups brainstorm theories about the opposing room and rounds of visiting continue

until everyone has had a chance to play the visitor. Finally, both groups are reunited to discuss their experiences and reveal their cultures' secrets. The reflection segment of the simulation is the most important part and should not be omitted. There is no winner; the point of the exercise is to reflect on how it feels to be the "Other" and how we, in turn, can make people feel less like an "Other."



Figure 5.1 *BaFá BaFá* kit including USB drives. ALT TEXT: Materials related to the *BaFá BaFá* game. There are sheets of cards in blue, green, pink, white, yellow, and red. There is an instruction manual and guide, and sheets of tokens that are red, green, and black. There are bracelets in green, red, and blue colors, and circular pieces in purple and red. There is a box for *BaFá BaFá*.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Supporting inclusion, equity, and justice requires the development of empathy. *BaFá BaFá* supports these themes by providing participants with a firsthand experience of being included and then excluded. In the safe space of gaming, players become members of an in-group; this provokes the "Othering" of people in the out-group. In turn, players must take on the role of the "Other" and endure the frustration that comes with it. This highlights for students their own sense of tribalism and the exclusionary behaviors that perpetuate inequality and injustice. Stereotypes will emerge. Recognizing their power and peril is part of the endgame discussion (Dunn, Meine & Dunn 2011: 225).

Teachers can use this game to help students learn that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should best be understood based on a person's own culture, rather than being judged against the criteria of another. To do this, after playing the game, educators could lead a reflective discussion on the impact of crossing cultures. Teachers might ask students questions similar to the following: What words describe the "other" culture? What words describe your feelings in that other environment? How did you feel about your visitors? This self-awareness could lead toward empathy and cultural consciousness, which expands understanding of people different from themselves. One student

reported: “[The game taught me that] we need to be more sensitive to people living here with different cultures. It’s super overwhelming and confusing for them” (Falls, 2021: 3).

This simulation may encourage participants to reflect metacognitively on their own behavior as an insider. For this reason *Bafá Bafá* is useful as a pre-reading activity for books and movies with topics and themes such as the Holocaust, immigration, Indigenous rights and sovereignty and divisive political issues (Inglis et al., 2004: 481; McCallister & Irvine, 2002: 437). Teachers can then encourage students to apply their personal insights from the game to fiction and real-world situations through journal writings, blogging, or creative projects.

Educators should take note of some considerations. First, it is difficult for a latecomer to join the game, so instructors should try to avoid this with a hard deadline for arrival (if necessary, perhaps latecomers can join as observers not associated with a culture). Second, students who are neurodiverse, need one-on-one support, or generally have a low threshold for emotionally stressful situations, may find the challenges of the game more frustrating than enjoyable. These students are still encouraged to try the game, but a one-on-one support person is highly recommended to guide them through these challenges. Finally, a large area of physical space is ideal when players can move easily from one room to the next, but groups cannot overhear each other.

Bafá Bafá is intended to be experienced only once. While the kit can be reused for many years, individual players are not expected to play the game repeatedly. After a participant has played once, they have uncovered the mystery of the opposing culture, and they cannot participate again; however, they can become facilitators for future groups. Ideally, teachers would play *Bafá Bafá* with a new batch of students each year or semester.

Before the visiting rounds begin, it is important that each group feels familiar with the expectations of their own culture. They will pretend to be a native-born resident of their fictional culture, and they must play the part accordingly. Cultural rules are simple and can be learned in about 10-15 minutes. Visitors are expected to interact with the locals, but are prohibited from asking unfair questions, such as, “What are the rules of your culture?” Instead, facilitators should encourage participants to be respectful, inquisitive, and strategic. Players need to communicate well with their teams and build on each other’s observations.

When the groups are reunited, the game is over, and the reflection begins. Using the kit’s prompts or your own, facilitators guide students in discussing how it feels to be an outsider versus an insider. At least 30 minutes of reflection is recommended. The key takeaway is to apply the reflection to real-world situations by empathizing with marginalized groups who must navigate within those in power and/or the majority.



Figure 5.2. Students playing Bafá Bafá. ALT TEXT: Five people are sitting and standing around a table, talking and gesturing to each other. The people are wearing a variety of only black or black and yellow. The people seem to be in an office setting, with file cabinets and a whiteboard.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The kit includes all necessary materials. Explicit instructions and videos on every step of the game are on the USB drives included with the kit.
2. Each room requires at least one facilitator/teacher to demonstrate and answer questions about the game (two facilitators minimum). Before playing, facilitators will need at least 30 minutes to set up the game and familiarize themselves with the cultures.
3. A dry run with just the facilitators is recommended.



Figure 5.3. Students playing Bafá Bafá. ALT TEXT: Four people are standing close together and smiling and talking to each other. They are holding cards in their hands. The people are wearing a variety of only black or yellow. The people seem to be in a room with other people playing in the background.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Guns or Butter (<https://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com/schools-and-charities/products/guns-or-butter/>)

Power of Leadership (<https://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com/schools-and-charities/products/power-of-leadership/>)

Rafá Rafá (<https://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com/schools-and-charities/products/rafa-rafa/>)

Where Do You Draw The Line? (<https://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com/schools-and-charities/products/where-do-you-draw-the-line/>)

StarPower: Use & Abuse of Power, Leadership & Diversity (<https://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com/schools-and-charities/products/starpower/>)



Figure 5.4 Close-up of visitor badges for Alpha and Beta Cultures. ALT TEXT: There is a button that says "Alpha" and is purple. There is another button that says "Beta" and is red.

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BLACK CLOSET

JOHANNES KATSAROV

Game: *Black Closet*

Developer: Hanako Games

Year: 2015

Platform(s): MS Windows, macOS, SteamOS + Linux

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Role-playing game, simulation, strategy, investigative

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Diversity, ethics, gender, leadership, management, mobbing, social and emotional learning

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration; metacognition; moral sensitivity

Audience: 13+ years through adult

Length of time: About 6 hours in story mode

Where to play: Classroom or at home

Cost: \$19.95

URL: https://store.steampowered.com/app/400580/Black_Closet/

SUMMARY

In *Black Closet* players take the role of Elsa, the student-council president of a prestigious all-girls boarding school named St. Claudine's. Managing a team of up to five student-council members, the players' main challenge is to prevent scandals from unfolding at St. Claudine's while maintaining a good reputation for the student council. In the game's story mode, players will also learn to identify themselves as one of very few Black students at St. Claudine's, and recognize how Elsa's chances to visit a university of her choice depend on their success in managing the student council well. Every week, players are confronted with a new case to investigate, e.g., a rumor that a sports event will be sabotaged, strange sounds at night, or lost teaching supplies. To solve these mysteries, they task the other members of the school council with diverse activities, e.g., interrogating suspects, using their charisma to obtain clues, searching places, or using their stealth skills to follow a person secretly. Council members' abilities and willingness to perform these tasks are limited, though, and players need to make smart choices to prevent scandals on time. By building good relationships with select members of the student council through shared weekend activities, players slowly increase the loyalty

of these people—and possibly detect a traitor. Successful investigations also yield experience points, which can be used to enhance the abilities of team members. Strong abilities will be needed to solve the more challenging mysteries that slowly unfold in the story mode.



Figure 6.1. Two stolen items have been found when searching Tameka's room in Black Closet. Should she be suspended? ALT TEXT: This image is an interface from the game. There are a number of different features such as folders on different characters, like Courtney and Ingrid. There are ratings on Council Karma (at 80) and School Reputation (at 80). Tameka's stats are also shown. Different actions are available like Question, Harass, Stalk, Suspend, Expel, and Detention. On the bottom of the interface are materials like Sedative, White Gloves, Fashion Tips, and Magnifier.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

The game is suitable for courses that aim to expand students' skills for moral reasoning, raise awareness for gender-based stereotypes and prejudice, and discuss questions of justice. Educators can use *Black Closet* to sensitize learners to diverse ethical problems in the sphere of work and education, e.g., mobbing, while challenging them to take on multiple female perspectives—and *only* female perspectives.

To promote moral development, educators can have students identify an ethical problem in the game that they would like to discuss in class (solitarily or in small groups). This is something that students can prepare as homework or in class. For instance, students may want to discuss a problem like mobbing, and how they tried to solve it through their decisions in the game. Interrogating innocent girls or being caught snooping around in their rooms will not only harm the reputation of the student council but will be framed as disrespectful acts or infringements of privacy, and be sanctioned later on in the game. However, failing to solve (some) mysteries also leads to problematic outcomes, e.g., if a student is seriously harmed by another. In this way, *Black Closet* presents many cases that teachers can use to explore ethical questions with students through experiential learning—a teaching approach

that was recently shown to be the most important driver of effective ethics education in a meta-analysis (Katsarov et al., 2021).

If time or money are scarce, teachers can discuss specific cases from *Black Closet* by sharing their screen on a projector. They can have students take turns making decisions on how to approach a particular case from the game, beginning with the description of the case at the beginning of the week. Or, students could vote collectively on decisions via an online anonymous poll. Through a Socratic inquiry and probing questions, teachers can then promote a closer, critical examination of the underlying ethical issues, e.g., by asking “When should a person be allowed to invade another person’s privacy?” Students will also be confronted with the possible consequences of their actions and decisions this way, depending on whether the case is resolved on time or not.

In applying any of these approaches, it is important to know that *Black Closet* randomly generates cases with diverse names, subjects, and turns from more than one hundred options. Therefore, every player will be confronted with different cases, and cases typically last for two weeks. This means that players often need to handle two investigations simultaneously. This enhances replayability but limits the game’s usability for standardized learning in class. For this reason, teachers should save their games at the beginning of each week (when a new case is introduced) to be able to select from a couple of good cases in preparing their classes.

Beyond its focus on ethical problems related to education, *Black Closet* is a game that challenges players to take a variety of female perspectives. A core message that *Black Closet* subtly conveys through its gameplay is that women have diverse talents, which they can master to become highly effective in different roles and functions such as leadership, journalism, policing, and social science.

Playing Black virtual characters has been shown to reduce implicit racial bias in White people (Banakou et al., 2016). *Black Closet* explores the potential of Black women for roles in leadership, management, and problem-solving by having students solve cases in the role of Elsa, a gifted Black student. Students can discuss the representation of Black characters in games and other media, and how the representations in *Black Closet* are similar or different.

Black Closet also explores different sexual identities. In the story mode, players can explore different relationships with the other girls from the school council, including slowly evolving romances with two of the girls, one of them from an economically insecure background. Messages are conveyed in a subtle manner (a so-called embedded design), which has been shown to reduce learners’ reactance and enable greater changes in their attitudes (Kaufman et al., 2021).

Gradually, once students have become immersed in the game and have explored their role over extended time, educators can engage students in discussions of race, gender, and power in contemporary society, e.g., by discussing the pros and cons of all-girls colleges, the fragility of Elsa’s chances to pursue a career of her choice (being a Black woman without legacy connections), or widespread prejudice against women in STEM professions and leadership positions. Educators can also explore the experience of playing a woman in an all-female environment with students, and how this design challenges widespread norms of representation.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. *Black Closet* will probably yield the largest effects on learners' awareness of ethical problems and their inclusiveness through free, prolonged play—alone or in small groups.
2. Have learners play in “story mode” to get most out of the game in terms of perspective taking.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Gone Home. Digital game by The Fullbright Company (2013).

The Women. Play by C. B. Luce (1936), movie directed by G. Cukor (1939), remake by D. English (2008).

This War of Mine. Digital Game by 11 Bit Studios (2014).

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CANDY LAND

MAUREEN QUIGLEY

Game: *Candy Land*

Publisher: Milton Bradley/Hasbro

Year: 1949-2021

Number of players: two to four

Genre: Turn-based race-to-the-finish; board game

Type of game: Analog; board game

Curricular connections: Art, design critique, visual communication, race studies, (for secondary education): Visual Arts National Core Standards – Creating: VA: Cr1.1.IIIa, CR2.3.IIa, and Responding: Re.7.2.Ia

Possible skills taught: Observation, description, visual analysis, comparative analysis, responding, creation, design decision-making, iterative practice, ethical game design

Audience: Pre-K, elementary (to play the game); for DEI purposes (secondary or higher education students)

Length of time: Approximately 20 minutes to play, three class periods for discussion and design

Where to play: Anywhere board games can be laid out: home, school, social environment

Cost: Approximately \$10

URL: <https://hasbrogaming.hasbro.com/en-us/product/candy-land-game:C4E461C2-5056-9047-F5F7-F005920A3999>

SUMMARY

Candy Land is a classic board game with simple race-to-the-finish mechanics. The game was originally designed in the 1940s by Eleanor Abbott, a retired school teacher, and intended for young polio patients (Kawash, 2010). Directed at early childhood players from ages three-six, the game teaches the basics of colors, numbers, and rule-following. Over a 70-year period, there have been multiple editions and redesigns of the board and accompanying artwork. In more recent editions, the *Candy Land* board has evolved into a colorful landscape filled with delicious candy fields and populated with fantasy characters like King Kandy and Queen Frostine. A path of multi-colored spaces winds its way across the kingdom from the lower left to the top of the board, with Candy Castle at the finish line. Two to four players choose game pieces in the form of gingerbread figures and place them at the starting point. Players take turns pulling the top card from a stack with colored squares or pictures of sweet treats and move to the matching space. Simple rules involving shortcuts and loss of turn allow for variation in game speed. The game is over when the first player arrives at the Candy Castle.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

The artistic choices made throughout the many editions of *Candy Land* provide an excellent opportunity to spark conversations about historical representation in game art. Educators at many levels, from Pre-K through college, may focus on the history of the game and its intended first audience: young children hospitalized with polio. The original 1949 edition included the depiction of one of the “Candy Kids” at the starting point with a visible line going up his leg. This is believed to represent a leg brace used by childhood polio survivors (Kawash, 2010). The 2021 edition of the board includes a young man in a peppermint wheelchair. Simple game play accompanied by images from these editions of *Candy Land* can serve educators as a foundation for age-appropriate discussions about games that are created as escapist fantasies for players living through quarantine and physical illness.

Art educators, graphic designers, and game design instructors at the high school or college level can use the game to help students think holistically about game design: to focus not only on mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics in their games, but also on deliberately inclusive representation in their design. One way to do this is to have students play several *Candy Land* editions. I have five versions of *Candy Land* available for play. These randomly purchased boards represent games published by Milton Bradley in 1962 (2011 reprint) and 1984, and by Hasbro in 2010, 2014, and 2021. I set up the five boards so that up to four students at a time may play at each table.

Once the boards are set up, educators can then have students analyze the artwork across these multiple editions, focusing on the artistic choices made for human figures. Students may be given brief introductions to visual and stylistic analysis, comparative description, and design vocabulary, with which they can then write or verbally describe the visual differences among the boards. Other historical editions of the board game can be shared through digital presentation for further comparison. Prompts may be given to the students so that they can recognize that only in the 2021 edition is the box and board inhabited by characters representing multiple races and abilities. Readings may extend the conversation to erasure of diversity within the board, digital, and online games that they are more familiar with as young adults (Everett, 2009; Hargrave, 2020; Higgin, 2008). Educators may have students write their reflections as a journal entry, blog, or other creative artifact.

As a next step, art educators and graphic designers may have students redesign boards, cards, or other game pieces from *Candy Land* with an eye toward diverse representations of character design and game environment. Projects involving painting, drawing, or digital re-designs of the game can help students to conceptualize and realize creative projects that address diversity and equitable representation in games. Original game art can be created from this starting point and with this lens.

A brief summary of my three-part assignment for college students in a game design class:

1. Day One: Students play different editions of *Candy Land* to (re)familiarize themselves with the rules and mechanics of a well-known game.
2. Day Two: Students learn vocabulary and visual analysis techniques to describe the boards and characters fully.
 1. In class, students discuss their visual observations using appropriate vocabulary.

2. After class, students read essays focused on diverse representation in games and blog their reflections.

Day Three: Students redesign the visual appearance (not the mechanics) of *Candy Land* through a lens of diversity.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Purchase or acquire the 2021 edition of *Candy Land* from Hasbro. Purchase or acquire earlier editions of *Candy Land* as comparison boards.
2. If possible, set up multiple editions for students to make direct comparisons of game art during game play.
3. Use *Candy Land*'s 2021 edition as a starting point to discuss equitable approaches to game art and diverse representation in gaming.
4. Use *Candy Land*'s 1949 and 2021 editions as starting points to discuss the representation of illness in gaming.
5. Use *Candy Land*'s 1949 and 2021 editions as starting points to discuss games to be played during quarantine or illness.
6. Have students redesign the *Candy Land* board with diverse characters and environments as an art or graphic design project.
7. If game play does not relate to the history assignment, images of the game boards can be acquired at candyland.fandom.com (see Related Games & Media).

RELATED MEDIA

All editions of the game, including images, bibliography, and historical information are available at https://candyland.fandom.com/wiki/Candy_Land_Wiki:Welcome

Chutes and Ladders (1943-2013) (<https://shop.hasbro.com/en-us/product/chutes-and-ladders-game/1095F835-5056-9047-F548-2F4D0AEF4ACC>)

FURTHER READING

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Hargrave, E. (2020). *Inclusion, diversity, and representation in board games and beyond*. Retrieved from <https://stonemaiergames.com/inclusion-diversity-and-representation-in-board-games-and-beyond-guest-post-by-elizabeth-hargrave/>

Higgin, T. (2008). Blackless fantasy: the disappearance of race in massively multiplayer online role-playing games. *Games and Culture*, 4(1), 3-26.

Kawash, S. (2010). Polio comes home: Pleasure and paralysis in *Candy Land*. *American Journal of Play*, 3(2), 186-220.

CAPTURE THE FLAG

LESLIE HAAS & JILL T. TUSSEY

Game: *Capture the Flag*

Developer: Unknown

Year: 19th century; based on the United States Civil War

Platform(s): Physical space (field, gymnasium, park)

Number of players: 10 + players

Genre: Live-action role-playing, strategy, team building

Type of game: Analog

Curricular connections: English language arts, ethics, history, mathematics, social studies, and theater

Possible skills taught: Collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, relationship skills, self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making

Audience: 8+ years through adult

Length of time: Time varies depending on location and the age and skill of players. Approximate length of time: 15 minutes-30 minutes+,

Where to play: Campground, school or recreation center gymnasium, park, playground, sports field

Cost: Free

URL: <http://www.lesliehaasandjilltussey.com/capture-the-flag.html>

SUMMARY

Capture the Flag is a strategic game that can be played with many players. It can be played in any large gymnasium or outdoor area that can be divided into two equal parts. Players are also divided into two equal parts, or teams, each with its own side of the field. The objective of each team is to protect its flag from capture while simultaneously capturing the flag of the opposing team. Therefore, teams must develop both offensive and defensive strategies. Flags can be represented by any item players can easily carry, such as small toys, balls, or pillows. Before gameplay begins, each team must decide where to hide their flag. This location must be within the team's side of the field and remain stationary. Teams also designate a place, within their side of the field, for the opposing team players to be placed in time-out. This spot remains constant throughout the game. Individuals who are tagged, or touched, by opposing team members go into the opposing team's time-out spot. Players can only rejoin the game once their teammates locate them and tag them back into play. Tagging players back

into the game can be difficult, as the time-out spot is often guarded by the opposing team. However, it is in the best interest of each team to have all members participating. Overarching rules for this game are centered on non-violent and non-bullying interactions. Inclusive teamwork and collaboration are also promoted.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Capture the Flag offers experiential learning opportunities to build social, emotional, and academic capacity. Prior to gameplay, educators should review the social, emotional, and academic needs of individual students. This is an important step to ensure that specific needs are being met while engaged in the game. During gameplay, teachers will be observing and recording student strengths and challenges. After gameplay, students and teachers will discuss connections made to social, emotional, and academic experiences and content.

Teachers can support the development of caring relationship skills and social awareness through the collaborative process of developing offensive, defensive, and rescue strategies. Academic skills, such as speaking and listening skills are practiced through ethical interactions and gameplay. Educators can take notes and complete formative assessments over different speaking and listening standards while students throughout gameplay. They can also develop *bonus passes* and strategically place them on the field prior to players' arrival. Passes can be used by the individual who finds the pass or gifted to a teammate as a support for collaboration. Example passes are: *get out of time-out* and *can't be tagged for 1 minute*. Additionally, each team has equal access to *bonus passes* that encourage the care and compassion of others and their surroundings. Teammates can award each other the *bonus passes* or teachers can award the *bonus passes* while observing teams. Teachers can support these skills by outlining strategies that allow each team member to have a voice during times of collaborative planning. An example strategy would be to have each player hold up a fist. Each time a player adds to the conversation, one finger is held up per turn to speak. A minimum of two turns and a maximum of three turns would ensure all players are given space to express themselves. While students are engaged in game play, teachers monitor groups that may need additional support. The goal is for student groups to work through any challenges that may arise. Teachers are close by to offer guidance with the next steps or help students navigate tense times of conflict or frustration.

Educators can enable student growth in the areas of self-awareness and self-management through careful attention to where they are on the field, how they communicate with others, how they tag other players, and how their actions impact others. They can also help players practice skills by taking on the roles of collaborator, defender, opponent, and supporter during gameplay. Each experience offers students opportunities to regulate their actions and remain mindful of themselves, others, and their surroundings (Bowman, 2010). Before gameplay, teachers can provide character trait reviews of different roles students may encounter during the game and role-play positive interactions. Students can model character traits. An example is: Defender – attentive, observant, responsible, and steadfast. After the review, students form small groups to discuss and role-play positive interactions while being monitored by teachers. After the discussion and interaction, students will be more likely to better understand the desired actions during gameplay.

Teachers can spur responsible decision-making by having players communicate and support one another. This can lead to camaraderie, engagement, enjoyment, and motivation. Post-game

discussions offer a review of the impact of responsible decisions on gameplay outcomes. One strategy example is to sort players into small groups to complete a Venn Diagram graphic organizer to compare and contrast responsible versus irresponsible decision-making on gameplay outcomes. Teachers can review the process and expectations of this activity, which will help ensure that students focus on the concepts of responsible decision-making. While in the small groups, teachers can monitor group discussions, provide prompting, and ask additional questions. Observation notes made during gameplay can also be incorporated to differentiate prompting questions or specific guidance for each group.

Many educators are faced with challenging behaviors. Embedding social and emotional learning opportunities into games provides authentic practice opportunities for skill development. The strategies and soft skills required to complete games can be brought into the classroom again and again by teachers and used as celebrations. Social and emotional skills are the foundation of soft skills and/or emotional intelligence, which impact academic, social, and professional experiences (CASEL, 2020b). Furthermore, social and emotional development supports improved academic outcomes and behaviors across academic disciplines and demographic lines (CASEL, 2020b; Clark, et al, 2021). When students grapple with an academic problem and want to quit, teachers can remind them of how they persevered during gameplay. Additionally, when students struggle to communicate with classmates, teachers can remind the group to communicate through challenges during gameplay.

In addition to social and emotional benefits, teachers can connect academic areas to *Capture the Flag*. Its gameplay has connections to literacy, mathematics, and history. Comparing, contrasting, and communication also all tie to literacy. Books related to components of the game can be embedded into the classroom as Read Alouds or independent reading materials. Mathematical connections, such as strategic thinking, problem-solving, time, and measurement, can be highlighted during *Capture the Flag*. Educators also have opportunities to address historical connections between *Capture the Flag* and the Civil War.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Educators should act as a referee during the game to ensure players are tagging one another appropriately.
2. Teachers may want to recruit adult or older student volunteers to referee the time-out locations to ensure players are adhering to the rules.
3. Consider allowing each team to hide their flag while the other team is facing the opposite direction.
4. Choose a graphic organizer for players to use after gameplay to compare and contrast responsible versus irresponsible decision-making on gameplay outcomes.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

FortWhyte Alive. (n.d.) *Outdoor Games*. (<https://www.fortwhyte.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Outdoor-Games.pdf>)

Lessons for SEL. (2020). Can you “name that emotion?” Social emotional learning video. [YouTube].(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-vbDrGk-Xc>)

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CASEL (2022). *What does the research say?* Retrieved from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/>

CELESTE

CHRISTOPHER LEECH

Game: *Celeste*

Developer: Maddy Makes Games (aka Matt Makes Games, Extremely Ok Games)

Year: 2018

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows, macOS, Linux, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One.

Number of players: Single-player game

Genre: Platformer

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Psychology, health & social, communities.

Possible skills taught: Empathy, identity exploration, problem-solving, fine motor skills, knowledge of mental health.

Audience: 13+ to adults (although it is rated PG 13+)

Length of time: Main story 9 hours, up to 50+ (all content at higher difficulties)

Where to play: This could be played in a classroom together (one person plays, others watch) or at home.

Cost: \$19.99/£14.99 (Frequently on sale at up to 75% off \$4.99/£3.74)

URL: <http://www.celestegame.com/>

SUMMARY

In *Celeste*, you play as Madeline, a trans woman on a quest to climb the almighty Celeste Mountain. While jumping, grabbing, and dashing through the treacherous landscape it becomes clear that Madeline is experiencing some mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression. Climbing the mountain is a way to prove to herself that she can do something against all odds. This task is somewhat complicated when Granny, Mr. Oshiro, and Theo all appear and either help or need the help of Madeline. As if things couldn't get any tougher Badeline (Bad-a-lin) appears, a purple and scathing version of Madeline! Badeline is the manifestation of doubt, anxiety, and depression. It is only by eventually accepting this part of herself can Madeline be at her strongest and then reach the mountain's peak. The game is a challenging platformer in which the mountain is as much a character as a setting. It openly informs the player that failure is expected to achieve success. This is the core gameplay loop in *Celeste*, as many attempts are required to clear the rooms in each level unlocking a new checkpoint. This is not only a difficulty curve, but this is a metaphor for the internal "climb" Madeline is facing.



Figure 9.1. Title screen for *Celeste*. ALT TEXT: The title “Celeste” is made of ice and sits in the center of the screen the letter tops covered in snow. You see Madeline reaching for a strawberry with wings seemingly just out of reach. In the background, murky colors are the sky, with clouds. Around Madeline are some of the other significant characters—the top left of the image is Badeline (Madeline’s manifestation of her anxiety). The bottom left is Mr Oshiro, a ghostly Hotelier. Top right is Theo a bearded hipster currently trapped behind a cracked mirror. Lastly, bottom right is Granny who “greet” all those who attempt to scale Celeste Mountain.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Celeste incorporates several topics that provide valuable experience to the player, such as playing a character experiencing mental health challenges, having a diverse cast of characters (gender, age, ethnicity), and understanding that resilience and failure are parts of success. It’s important to note that Maddy Thorson, the game’s creator confirmed Madeline was a trans woman, canonically in November 2020 (Thorson, 2020). Thorson, who is a trans woman, only discovered during and after creating the game that they were not cisgender and this is reflected in the game.

Practically speaking, there are a few ways educators could have students play this game. This could be as part of a weekly/bi-weekly video game club to give everyone the chance to enjoy levels, by passing the controller and the educator leads discussions around certain sections. This is more controlled and allows a more direct link to pedagogy. Also, levels could be set as “homework” and class is brought together to discuss this week’s level. This allows more experienced, or players wishing for a challenge to collect the strawberries, speedrun, or complete the B-Sides/C-side versions of the levels (these being harder versions). This would allow students to play at their own pace, and engage in more of the game this way, and can nicely open discussion with “How did this week’s level make you feel?” and then discuss key areas/sections of the level together. The following are topics that could be specifically deliberated using this game.

Mental health. Educators can use the game to support understanding of mental health in multiple

ways. First, mental health representation is explicitly in the dialogue, such as the exchange between Madeleine and Theo about depression. Implicitly, this can be seen within the gameplay itself. Madeline is climbing a mountain with increasing levels of difficulty, a metaphorical representation of internal challenges. This is typified by the presence of Badeline, a character who represents Madeline's fear, anxiety, and depression. Educators can use this opportunity to discuss mental health openly, and without stigmatization with students. There's some research that suggests playing as such characters in and of itself can be useful for de-stigmatization (Ferchaud et al., 2020). Madeline can serve as an example of how feeling down, anxious, stressed, or challenged are all normal healthy emotions.

Resilience. Educators can use the game to explore how resilience and failure are both parts of success. Some levels, or screens are tough for the player, as this is symbolic of the internal challenges Madeline is facing but more importantly overcoming. Teachers can highlight this and allow students to replay the levels as needed to achieve success. It is only by accepting our development as players, that we can guide Madeline to the top of the mountain. In-game, Madeline accepts Badeline as part of herself and in doing so becomes stronger and more complete. Teachers can support this by telling students about the importance of self-acceptance, as it's only by accepting, championing, and improving the things we maybe don't like about ourselves that we can go on to achieve.

Accessibility and representation. Educators can also explore the concept of representation in media, as the cast itself is diverse and inclusive. They can use prompts for discussion such as discussing that Madeline is trans, and the fact that multiple ethnicities are present and accepted. Granny represents an older character who is full of jokes and physically disabled, and a complete person. The game also offers many accessibility options under "Assist Mode," where players can make Madeline invincible, have infinite dashes/stamina, and reduce the game speed by 50%. This can help teachers to explore the concept of universal design by highlighting that even if you do not need any of these features, it makes the game more accessible to all. Teachers can apply this to real-world examples in a classroom such as ramps or the text size on labels. Educators might also make use of Assist Mode to reach the dialogue sections with greater ease and to reach points like the breathing exercise on the Ski lift. In this case, educators can use prompts to engage in discussion like talking about breathing, feeling calm when being panicked, and how it is natural to feel panicked or calm at different times.

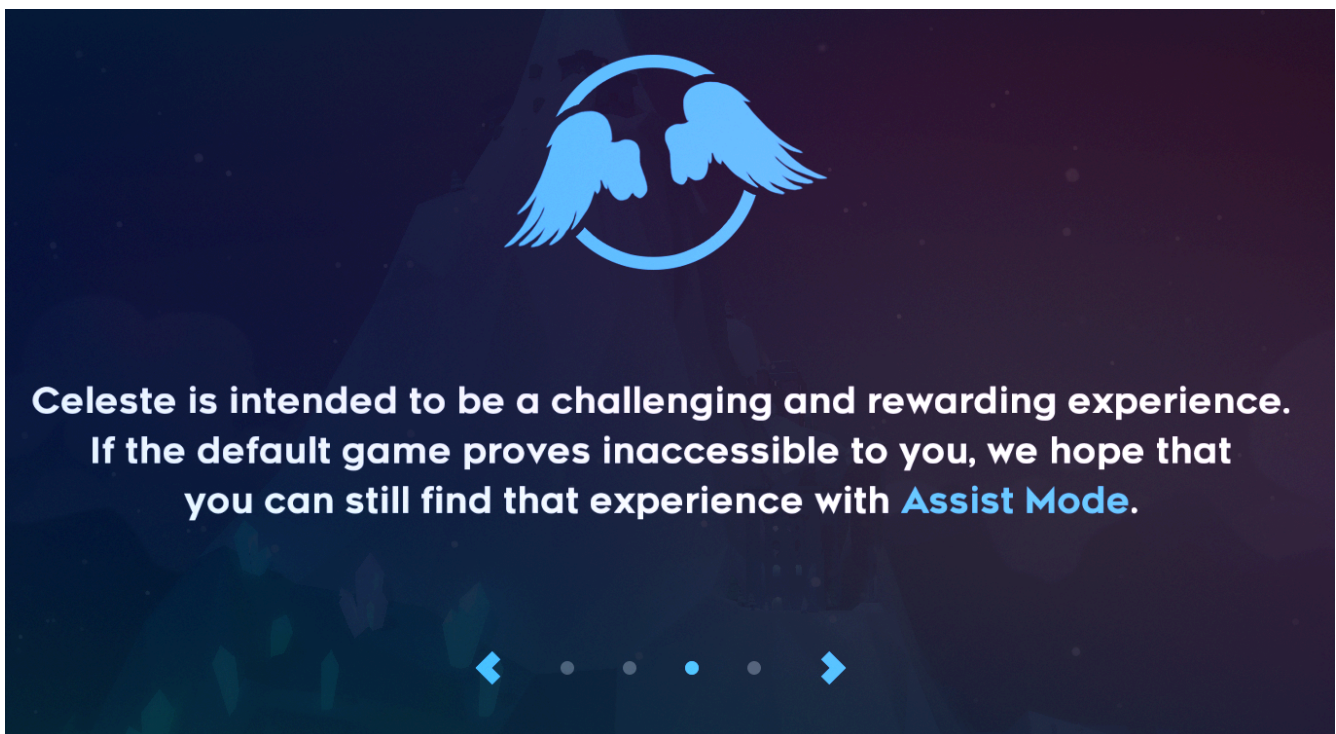


Figure 9.2. A screenshot of Assist Mode in Celeste. ALT TEXT: A screenshot taken from the Assist Mode options menu, accessed when loading a save file. It reads: "Celeste is intended to be a challenging and rewarding experience. If the default game proves inaccessible to you, we hope that you can still find that experience with Assist Mode."

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. A controller is more optimized than a mouse and keyboard, but you can still play with both types of controllers.
2. Check out YouTube Hints and tips for techniques—especially as some of the tutorials aren't very clear. One video to watch is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SQKKG7Dz5c>
3. Watching speed runs can be a way of watching techniques without spoiling the story. One speed run to watch is by death_unites_us. It is family-friendly and includes ALL the games levels: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeC-GJdfnOg>
4. If some players require more challenge you could suggest trying to find all the strawberries or for even more advanced players each level has a B-Side/C-Side. These are harder versions of each level.
5. You can activate a cheat on the first level that allows students to unlock all the levels that can be played in any order. The game will know and provide a label on the save file, instructions here: https://celestegame.fandom.com/wiki/Cheat_Mode
6. Use assist mode where required for maximum enjoyment, such as by making Madeline invincible, or providing unlimited Dashes.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

TowerFall (<https://www.nintendo.com/us/store/products/towerfall-switch/>)

Celeste Original Soundtrack (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>)

Celeste B-Side Soundtrack (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v>)

Celeste Classic (<https://mattmakesgames.itch.io/celesteclassic>)

Celeste Classic 2 (<https://mattmakesgames.itch.io/celeste-classic-2>)

Official *Celeste* Merch (<https://www.fangamer.com/collections/celeste?page=1>)

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CHESS

VANESSA L. HADDAD

Game: *Chess*

Developer: Unknown, developed in India

Year: Approximately the 6th century

Platform(s): On a board, chess.com, lichess.org

Number of players: 2

Genre: Abstract strategy game

Type of game: Board game

Curricular connections: History; social studies; ethics

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; metacognition; executive function; creative writing

Audience: 2+ years through adult

Length of time: Varies

Where to play: A classroom, at home, a public space, online

Cost: Free to play online; \$14.99 and up for a board and pieces

URL: chess.com, lichess.org

SUMMARY

Chess is a board game that emerged as an offshoot of an ancient game from India called *Chaturanga*. It has maintained popularity globally since its inception, and is played both formally, such as in rated tournaments, and informally, such as in pubs, parks, and other public spaces. Since early 2020, chess streaming has increased on Twitch, a popular live video broadcast service. Professional players such as American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura (twitch.tv/gmhikaru) rank 69th in views on Twitch, and The Botez Sisters (twitch.tv/botezlive), rank 211th in views as of August 2022. Additionally, the Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit* (October 2020) sparked a broader interest in chess, with 62 million American households watching within the first month of the release of the show (Friederberg, 2020). The game is played on a square board, with 64 squares of two different colors. Each player starts with 16 pieces. The pieces are: pawn (eight per player), which can move forward two squares from their starting point, and one thereafter; rook (two per player), which can move vertically or horizontally, but not diagonally, across the board; knight (two per player), which moves around the board in an “L” shape; bishop (two per player), which can move diagonally across the board on squares of the color the piece originates on; queen (one per player), which can move in any direction on the board; and king

(one for each player), which can move one space at a time in any direction. The object of the game is to capture the opponent's king piece. *Chess* is a game that is played by people of all ages, all over the world. *Chess* provides an even playing field for people across age groups, languages, geographic locations, neurotypes, and abilities. Additionally, it is accessible and often free to learn through books, videos, interactive lessons, and coaches.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

There are many potential benefits to playing *chess*, such as an improvement of executive function, improvement of memory, learning how to win and lose gracefully, increase in focus, development of creativity, development of problem-solving skills, and teaching players how to be calm under pressure. It also provides the opportunity to socialize and assists in the improvement of affective regulation (Romanova et al., 2018; Dania et al., 2021).

Educators can use *Chess* in a variety of ways in educational settings, including formal classroom instruction, and after-school programs. *Chess* lessons could be incorporated into formal instruction as a means to develop critical thinking skills, especially dialogical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic planning. A curriculum for teaching *Chess* is available for free through chesskid.com, and a link to this resource is provided in the related games and media section.

To reap the benefits of chess playing, educators could have students play the game regularly at the beginning of the school day, or as part of a scheduled break time. Additionally, an important step for promoting prosocial engagement would be to encourage students to work together to review their games once they are finished playing. This would improve the ability of giving and receiving feedback tactfully and productively, and to learn from mistakes.

Educators can create a chess club with the intention of having students interact who may not typically otherwise. For example, in some schools, students may not have the opportunity to have sustained interaction with students who are different from them, whether it be due to grade level, tracking, or having non-inclusive classroom structures. Students are not limited in playing by being neurodivergent, or by not being able-bodied. Creating a club online, such as on chess.com, or chesskid.com, is a great way to connect students together in a free, accessible way that is inclusive.

Educators could also be included as a part of a unit on how people have played games or spent leisure time historically. This particular type of link can humanize historical figures and everyday people that students may feel far removed from. A *Ted-Ed* video, as well as a *Buzzfeed* article that provides a vignette of *Chess* in day-to-day life around the world, are great starting points in the related games and media section below.

Educators could have students incorporate *Chess* into a role-playing game, in the style of *Reacting to the Past*. Students could design media or other artifacts around historical examples of inequality. One question central to this idea is, why does white always move first? This rule had not been incorporated into official play until the *Fifth American Chess Congress* was held in 1880 (Shabaaz, 2020). Exploring the history around this change could provide more insight into racial inequality itself, and how this may have influenced how the game is played today.

Another area of opportunity is to have students tell narrative stories using chess game move

notations. Buckthal and Khosmood (2014) used BRUTUS (an artificial intelligence storytelling program), with story nodes and skins that they created for this purpose, as they “use chess games as drama-producing events to generate traditional stories in multiple genres that contain no chess-specific content” (p. 1). The potential for creating interesting stories from how games are played can be tied into other areas of the curriculum, such as creative writing. Additionally, students may use their chess games to create their own stories. This could be accomplished while playing a game in real time, or analyzing notation sheets from previous games of their own, or the games of others.

A limitation of teaching and using *Chess* in educational settings is cultural perception. The stereotypical perception of someone who plays *Chess* is that they are likely to be a “nerd,” from a particular socioeconomic background, or that only certain people are “good” at the game, or are more naturally talented. There are major misperceptions of the ability between male and female players that are still prevalent in the chess community and culturally (Shahade, 2022). If educators and students believe in these ideas, then naturally engagement with the game could be limited. It would be imperative to dispel these myths directly with students prior to beginning a chess unit. This could be achieved by presenting students with examples of people who play *Chess* from a variety of backgrounds, and some examples are listed in the related games and media section below.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Encourage students to think about, and rethink their perceptions of *Chess* players and chess, and provide them with examples of diverse chess players
2. Have enough boards, pieces, notation sheets, pencils, and time clocks for all participants.
3. Encourage Swiss style tournament play, which allows everyone to continue to play regardless of if they win or lose.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

22 Historical Photos of People Playing Chess (<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/piapeterson/photos-people-playing-chess>)

A Brief History of Chess, Ted-Ed video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeB-1F-UKO0>)

Chess.com ([chess.com](https://www.chess.com))

Chess for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVyu_vBPgk4)

Chess for Inclusion (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW1faCe89Y8>)

ChessKid (<https://www.chesskid.com/chesskid-for-teachers-and-schools>)

How a Simple Game of Chess can Break through Stereotypes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8szXhIA5L5o>)

International Chess Federation ([fide.org](https://www.fide.org))

Interview with Deafblind Chess Player Carsten Thorup (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL5gPg0Gcqg>)

Lichess (lichess.org)

Reacting to the Past (<https://reacting.barnard.edu/>)

United States Chess Federation (<https://new.uschess.org/>)

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DEPRESSION QUEST

LIZ MILLER

Game: *Depression Quest*

Developer: The Quinnsspiracy, Patrick Lindsey, Isaac Schankler

Year: 2013

Platform(s): Web browser, PC (Steam) [2014]

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Interactive fiction, visual novel, text-based

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Psychology, English, art

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking, mental health awareness, identity exploration, empathy

Audience: 14+ years old through adult

Length of time: One hour

Where to play: During class time, at home as homework

Cost: Free or pay what you want (a portion of which will be donated to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline)

URL: <http://www.depressionquest.com/>

SUMMARY

Depression Quest is a text-based experience in which the player takes on the role of someone dealing with the symptoms of depression. The player encounters a variety of everyday life events, such as communicating with a significant other or navigating school and work pressures. Each event provides a set of multiple-choice responses, many of which are inflected by mental illness. The game asks players to make choices from the perspective of someone who is depressed. For example, mentally “healthy” options, such as completing a homework assignment or openly communicating one’s feelings, are often crossed out, leaving open choices like nap-taking, procrastination, or avoiding interpersonal dialogue instead. Player choice influences subsequent events and available options for proceeding. The game’s music and displayed images change over time to reflect the narrative’s progress, whether one successfully navigates depressive symptoms or struggles to manage them. The end goal of *Depression Quest* is not to “cure” depression, but instead to better understand the experience of living with mental illness.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Depression Quest provides the starting point for rich dialogue about mental health experiences, disability representation, and the presence of women and minorities in the video game industry. Educators can use the text as a starting point to a semester, setting the tone for the kinds of conversations with students. To begin with, the game helps open up discussion on the topic of mental health, something I always try to center in my teaching, as many students experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Educators may want students to understand that it is okay to struggle, to have bad days, and to need a break. By working through the visceral experience of depression in the game, students (ideally) begin to see that an educator is open to conversations about mental health needs.

In my classes on writing and video game studies, I like to discuss with students issues of disability representation or disability simulation—by which I mean experiences designed to mimic what it is like to have a certain disability. What does it mean to depict disability in media? What constitutes a productive representation over a harmful one? And in the context of video game studies, what is the value—if there is one—in asking players to experience mental illness? To that end, I typically assign the short *BBC* article “Not just a game: Is it right to ‘recreate’ disability?” (Tracey, 2014) to accompany our discussion. I do not wish to assert with students that a game like *Depression Quest* can inherently solve societal problems that exacerbate mental illness; rather, I hope to show how real people are affected by such simulations and encourage students to not only develop empathy through experiencing symptoms through a game, but also to think more deeply about the issues they and their peers face and what place they might wish to occupy in the world.

Some students will inevitably open up about their experiences with depression and other symptoms, which an instructor will have to feel comfortable managing in a classroom setting. Other students may feel uncomfortable with the all-too-true representation of depression and the negative feelings *Depression Quest* evokes during gameplay. Still, others may not relate to the game at all, perhaps because they believe such a topic does not belong in a game, or because they simply have no firsthand experience with depression on which to rely, or because they do not consider the text-based exploration a “game” in the first place. Anyone who wishes to discuss the text with students or young adults in their lives in other capacities must be prepared to have difficult conversations. Ultimately, this is no reason to *not* assign the game, as such dialogue often yields meaningful insight and understanding.

Finally, it is difficult to talk about *Depression Quest* without also discussing Gamergate, a culture war kicked off by the game’s designer Zoë Quinn and their status as a (at the time) female-identifying developer promoting inclusivity and diversity in gaming. (Quinn now uses they/them pronouns; For an extended outline of the events that catalyzed Gamergate, see selected readings below.) In a classroom setting, the game provides a grounding for conversations on the harassment and abuse experienced by many women, gender-nonconforming folks, disabled people, and/or BIPOC simply for existing as developers and gamers. While a less “fun” conversation, the topic helps students understand why diversity and representation are important and sets the stage for the games played throughout the rest of a course.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Instructors should provide information about the game beforehand to prepare students for the experience of playing *Depression Quest*.
2. It is also important to consider the value of playing the game during class time vs. assigning it as homework. Though the game is relatively short, educators will want to think about how much synchronous time they wish to devote to gameplay, discussing difficult emotions that crop up during and after playing, and addressing the heavy topics associated with the game (as discussed above).
3. Because *Depression Quest* invites divisive opinions, educators might find greater success with presenting the game as an object of study rather than a representative document of depression.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice (2017).

Night in the Woods (2017).

What Remains of Edith Finch (2017).

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DIALECT

DIANA J. LEONARD & RUTH MAKONNEN

Game: *Dialect*

Developer: Thorny Games

Year: 2018

Platform(s): Player manual as a hardcover book or PDF

Number of players: 3-5 players

Genre: Role-playing game

Type of game: Analog

Curricular connections: Social studies; literature; theater; art; ethics; civics

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; creativity; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration; metacognition; executive function

Audience: Likely 14+ through adult out of the box, but could be adjusted for younger players.

Length of time: 3-4 hours

Where to play: A classroom, at home, at a cafe.

Cost: \$29

URL: <https://thornygames.com/pages/dialect>

SUMMARY

Dialect is a rules light storytelling game “about language and how it dies.” Players collaborate to depict an isolated community (e.g., a group of scientists living on Mars) and improvise scenes from the vantage point of characters living in that community. Play is guided by a facilitator using the game book and a specialized deck of cards, which are meant to spark the imaginations of players. To begin, players choose their “isolation backdrop” (the community they inhabit) either from a predefined list or crafted with guidance from the game book. They collaboratively imagine the isolation via Community Questions that help add depth and clarity to their isolation as it exists at the start of the game. Three Aspect Generation Questions help define the core reality of the isolation (e.g., “what about our planet defines daily life?”) each attached to a tag phrase (e.g., “The Red Planet”). Three Aspects will be referred to frequently throughout the game and should each be written down on an index card and placed centrally in the shared playspace. Next, players each draw three Voice Cards, choosing one to help define their character and their role in the isolation (e.g., leader or explorer). Players can choose a character name from a list or generate their own. They next introduce their characters, describe how they relate to the three Aspects, and clarify any existing connections with

the other characters and the community at large—all with guidance from their selected Voice Card. Once the roles and isolation Aspects have been established, players go through several Ages as their community’s story unfolds. *Dialect* guides players to build a shared language together by inventing new vocabulary, such as euphemisms that evoke the feeling of each era. There is room for creativity, but the game acknowledges that new language items will likely stem from a language the players all speak (i.e., English). At the start of an Age, players are dealt new cards they can use during play and take turns completing three phases: make a connection between a card from their hand and an Aspect, collaboratively build a word that has evolved from that new connection, and have a conversation. The conversation is a roleplayed scene that incorporates the new word, often in the context of the events of the isolation. Some or all players can participate in the conversation as their character in the isolation. Rounds of play go through several era transitions leading to an inevitable end ranging from rebirth to annihilation. By playing this game, learners can explore themes of linguistic justice, global communication, and social identity.



Figure 12.1. The *Dialect* game book, bag, and cards, laid out in white space. ALT TEXT: An image of the bag, game book, and cards. The cards are red, black, and white; the top card says “Story,” with a “1” in the lower right-hand corner.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

At the outset, *Dialect* asks players to think about language, its importance in our internal and external worlds, and the changes it inevitably undergoes over time. Then, the player is confronted with the ubiquitous death of languages worldwide. This is an integral part of *Dialect*, as every isolation’s

language is condemned to perish in the course of game play. For an educator guiding their students through *Dialect*, it could be helpful to open this idea up for discussion. Although the transformations that languages undergo are an indication of a civilization's progression through time, language loss need not be portrayed as inevitable. The educator could raise this point by giving examples of successful initiatives of language revival, such as the national project titled First Languages Australia, which has supported the revival of over 39 of Australia's indigenous languages. If applicable, educators can also discuss the implications of playing this game in English/as a speaker of English—a hegemonic language that has arguably the most range and access worldwide. This discussion might touch on colonialization and cultural genocide, particularly as they relate to indigenous languages and peoples, while also avoiding painting all indigenous people as victims but rather as active participants in their own language maintenance. An educator leading this game could demonstrate real-life examples of how languages have become endangered and have gone extinct. An important follow-up to this would be highlighting past and current efforts to revitalize endangered languages (e.g. the Native Language Immersion Initiative for Native Youth).

Educators can improve teamwork and equalize the efforts of each player by rotating the facilitator role. The facilitator of the game is identified as a shepherd who guides players on their journey. The *Dialect* guide directly encourages the facilitator to amplify the voices of the players that are being heard less and prompts the person with this role to monitor safety during the game. Rotating this role at each age transition can increase engagement, cultivate leadership skills among all players, and be an effective way to divide responsibility for maintaining a safe game space, all of which can help foster a positive learning community.

Before the game starts, educators should scaffold safety by discussing the importance of setting and respecting boundaries, facilitating discussion around safety mechanics that are applicable in real life, and relating that back to the game space so that the importance of such considerations becomes clear. For example, *Dialect's* appendix introduces the players to the concept of safety mechanics and an X-card—an index card that is on the table during the entirety of the game and can be activated by any of the players at any point. This card can be referenced (either lifted or pointed at) when a player desires to edit out anything during game play without having to explain themselves. This safety mechanism can aid in opening the door to discussions around safety and well-being during game play, but may require a pre-game discussion to make sure players would in fact feel comfortable to use it without fear of interrupting the game flow.

To further improve player safety, we recommend each playgroup hold an extensive discussion of safety mechanics, consent, and the ability to opt-in/opt-out during a pre-game workshop session (i.e., “game zero”). The educator can introduce pre-established safety methods such as the X-card to students as a starting point and open up the floor to brainstorm how to further enhance every player's experience. For example, educators can invite the groups to each generate ideas about a substitute for an X-card that may be more relevant and approachable to them. It is important that the workshop session itself has some form of community rules and agreements that ensure all players express their safety needs and concerns within their playgroup. Clarifying questions about safety mechanics can be answered here, which will aid the flow of game play later on. By intentionally spending time discussing safety mechanics, any stigma against using these methods during the game is ideally counteracted.

To make the introduction to *Dialect*'s rules more interactive, educators can ask students to read out loud a few play example scenarios for the rest of their group, which can serve as a guide for new players and can also be helpful for educators attempting to explain the general flow of the game. Once the flow of the game makes sense to the students, the educator can ask them what aspects of the sample interactions depicted in the guide worked well and what could be improved. This can allow the students to note these qualities, suggest any more that come to mind, and set intentions for how they will engage with the game and each other.

Dialect offers student players a lot of agency to contextualize their characters in authentically diverse ways and shape the game accordingly. Educators can guide students in a post-game reflection on how the choices they made at character creation impacted the story overall. Educators can also incorporate reflection questions that help students to think about how their skills (e.g., negotiation, collaboration, creative thinking, and performance) improved during play and how they might yet grow in these areas.

Educators can also craft a post-game reflection using the *Dialect* guide's supplied debriefing questions around how the players are feeling and what they will remember from this story they have constructed. Educators can adapt these questions to their class community. Individual students can respond to prompts in a journal format, and then debrief with their group, perhaps followed by an all-class debrief. Importantly, these debriefing steps can help students process their emotions related to grief and loss. This game purposefully guides players to build something and then watch it come undone, which can generate a variety of feelings—possibly even ones that are connected with real-life losses, especially since the game can awaken players' apocalyptic imagination.

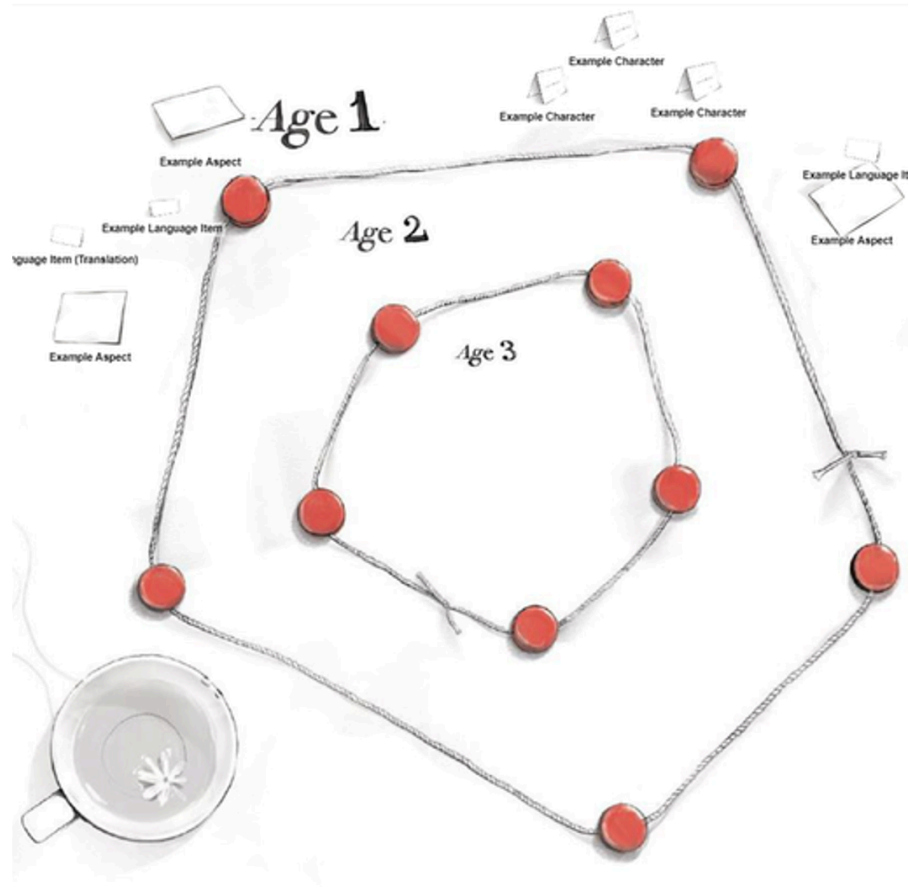


Figure 12.2. Assets available from Roll 20 Marketplace allow players to collaborate on the *Dialect* game in digital space via <https://marketplace.roll20.net/browse/module/3903/dialect-game>. ALT TEXT: An image of concentric shapes formed by rope denoting the three ages of the game (Age 1, Age 2, Age 3). Outside of this are digitized index cards labeled *Example Character*, *Example Aspect*, *Example Language Item*, as well as a coffee cup holding a small white flower.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should play the game beforehand to better understand the flow of play.
2. Teachers may want to prepare a physical “X” card or provide players with materials to make their own.
3. Teachers can invite students to take turns being the facilitator so as to democratize play and to spread the labor and leadership skill attainment around more equitably.
4. Teachers can prepare a list of endangered languages and the means by which they have been maintained or renewed by indigenous speakers.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Dialect gameplay explanation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtUoWSSLWmg>)

Example of gameplay using the Roll 20 module (https://youtu.be/15judg_pl88)

Sign (<https://thornygames.com/pages/sign>)

Shock: Human Contact (<https://glyphpress.com/talk/shockhuman-contact>)

The Quiet Year (<https://buriedwithoutceremony.com/the-quiet-year>)

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DRAGON AGE

CHRISTINE TOMLINSON

Game: *Dragon Age* series (*Dragon Age: Origins*, *Dragon Age II*, and *Dragon Age: Inquisition*)
Developer: BioWare
Year: 2009, 2011, 2014
Platform(s): PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Microsoft Windows
Number of players: Single-player main stories
Genre: Role-playing game (RPG)
Type of game: Digital
Curricular connections: Gender studies, social sciences, game studies, media studies
Possible skills taught: Application of methods/theory, ethical decision-making, empathy, critical thinking
Audience: Mature (17+)
Length of time: 40-80 hours to complete each main story
Where to play: At home
Cost: Ranges from approximately \$20-\$40
URL: <https://www.ea.com/games/dragon-age>

SUMMARY

The fantasy-based role-playing game (RPG) series *Dragon Age* emphasizes single-player experiences and player agency. The games introduce players to increasingly complex information about in-game cultures and structural perpetuations of inequalities. Players can explore approaches to addressing and remedying these issues in a fictional setting while evaluating realities of access, social barriers, and discrimination. These games are intended for more mature audiences and can be used to discuss ethical decision-making. To explore these narratives, players create their own characters, selecting a physical appearance, gender (within a binary option), weapons, and in-game species or race at the beginning of the game. These games tend to emphasize fantasy-based races, allowing players to select between elves, dwarves, humans, and Qunari (large, humanoid beings with horns on their heads and grey-toned skin). Later, players also have some influence on the character's beliefs, personality, attire, and even their sexuality through the option to engage in romantic relationships with in-game characters. Players may also experience in-game discrimination through interactions with NPCs or by playing as certain in-game identities. The focal point of the games often centers on inequalities and exploitation of socially oppressed groups, namely elves and mages, both of which are possible to select as the player character. Players encounter issues and topics of discrimination, historical oppression,

and social and political dynamics. Players must also choose between reinforcing oppressive structures and maintaining the status quo or pushing the gameworld toward equity, inclusion, and expanded diversity.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Dragon Age offers opportunities to explore representation and cultural dynamics. Educators focusing on social sciences or gender studies may be especially interested in highlighting character design and narrative. Instructors will get the most out of using these games by introducing relevant concepts in a general way first and using the game(s)—whether played or conveyed through examples—to allow students to work through the material both independently and together. Depending on the instructor’s goals, character and narrative analyses can be comparative within and between games to illustrate different approaches and outcomes. For example, how do the narrative shifts between games frame issues of justice and inequality? Providing students with opportunities to compare perspectives (e.g., analyzing content from a conflict theory versus a symbolic interactionist approach) highlights new angles of thought; think-pair-share activities or short writing assignments followed by small discussions are good models for this.

Class discussions can be focused on specific lecture and reading topics. If an educator is covering institutional discrimination, for example, they might want to show portions of the game that highlight traditions and legislation that prevent and limit access for in-game groups. Students could then discuss how the game reflects similar experiences and outcomes in the physical world, how the game affords players agency to push against it, and how these illustrations in a game may provide incomplete pictures of how these structures work in the physical world. If an instructor is working with theories of gender identity and norms, clips from the game comparing how different characters act, dress, interact, or engage romantically can be useful for highlighting how media can reflect, reinforce, or subvert socially defined expectations.

While direct play is ideal, educators could record their own gameplay or find playthroughs online and share videos with students to illustrate important interactions, scenes, or decision-making events. Instructors can include specific examples of scenes with social dynamics or have students consider brief relevant analyses (as seen here, with an emphasis on how *Inquisition* changes the series’ approach to inequality: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_9hQtmBhuk). If the classroom or structure of the course permits, live play may also be used.

The following are some brief suggestions for incorporating the games:

1. **Inequalities and Oppression.** Educators can use game elements that tackle discrimination, access, stereotyping, and segregation of elves and magic users. Students can discuss both the fictional cases and possible comparisons to physical world realities. Game content can also be considered in addition to the cultural contexts in which it was developed—what does it reflect, engage with, or respond to? This topic can be incorporated with existing course theories on inequality, cultural reproduction, structural barriers, biases, and stereotyping, as well as media as a reflection of culture. This works well with quick write activities after introducing concepts. For example, educators can provide some foundational knowledge during lecture, then ask students to shift their focus to representations, either providing text-

based or video examples from the game, and then have students assess how the game might be reflecting, illustrating, or avoiding physical world realities and experiences.

2. **Player Behaviors and Experiences.** RPGs often reveal surprising or counter-intuitive things about behavior, with players frequently aiming to improve in-game worlds (Murzyn & Valgaeren, 2016) and make supportive choices for their characters (Tomlinson, 2021). In discussing inequalities in the game and the player's role in determining what happens, students can engage with and investigate their own presumptions about human behavior and morality. Educators can take this as an opportunity to allow students to test their own biases and assumptions. This can include the use of iClicker or discussion activities where students can assess choices in the narrative, guessing what players might choose to do. Another approach could be to use an interactive Jamboard session (or something similar) where students can register their own responses to an in-game scenario before moving forward with play or revealing what choice a player made in a presented video clip.
3. **Gender and Sexualities.** Instructors can use these game elements to support practice analyses (including text or content analysis) or to explore gender and its cultural drivers. Educators can highlight characters' expressions of gender and sexualities through theories on representation, gender expression and identity, feminist and queer theories, and gender as a social construct. After discussing relevant concepts, instructors can have students review scenes from the game (again, either recorded by the instructor or found online). This can be accomplished in quick writes, group discussions, or think-pair-shares where students conduct their analyses of examples of gender expression and norms or sexualities in the scene. As one possible example, the characters in *Dragon Age II* have highly gendered mannerisms during periods without player input. In *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, there is a more gender-neutral protagonist, where mannerisms and dialogue remain mostly non-gendered for player characters, except in the case of two heterosexual romance options (e.g., Cassandra and Cullen). Students can consider why this change might be present and what messages this communicates. Instructors can facilitate student discussions online or in the classroom and in several formats, including short papers, think-pair-shares, group discussions, or posts and responses. Prompts are an important part of this process and may vary based on course level. For example, "Take 10 minutes to identify 3 examples of cultural concepts of masculinity in the scene we just watched."
4. **Content Versus Contextual Analysis.** Instructors can also use context to provide important information about content. For example, representations of a trans character improved with the hiring of trans writing consultants. There is also a prominent gay character in *Inquisition* who was primarily written by a gay man who used the character to reflect many of his own experiences. However, there are other contexts as well. As with many companies, EA has been at the center of harassment and sexual misconduct accusations. These instances give students opportunities to consider video game content with different kinds of information in mind. In this case, educators may want to provide students with news articles discussing these elements of the game and company to facilitate further consideration of game content. (See for example <https://gamerant.com/electronic-arts-investigating-sexual-misconduct-allegations/>)

As with all digital games, there are limitations to representation. Although BioWare has produced games that can be considered queer—particularly in comparison to many other mainstream games

on the market—the options and representations can be constricted (Chang, 2017). Although games often reduce sexuality to a choice that reinforces heteronormative ideals (Adams, 2015; Chang, 2017), instructors can facilitate discussions on limitations in games, common aspects of game and narrative design, and potential paths forward. To highlight and explore these issues, educators can give students opportunities to demonstrate their understandings of content and its limitations by examining game content and making suggestions for improvement via papers, discussions, or presentations.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The entire context of the games may or may not be necessary, depending on your goals and the purpose of using/including the game. Enough context to ground students in the example should suffice.
2. You may not always be able to find an appropriate clip of something from the game online. In this case, it is best to record your own play and find elements that are relevant and stand out.
3. Keep in mind that these games are large and have a lot of play elements to them.
4. Instructors who want to record their own videos or feature live play should take notes as they go and save frequently! This will make it easier to pinpoint important points of discussion for the class and cue these up.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Mass Effect Legendary Edition (2021), BioWare (<https://www.ea.com/games/mass-effect/mass-effect-legendary-edition>)

Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne (2009), *Dragon Age: The Calling* (2009), *Dragon Age: Asunder* (2011), David Gaider, Tor Books/Dark Horse Books

Dragon Age: The Masked Empire (2014), Patrick Weekes, Tor Books/Dark Horse Books

Dragon Age: Last Flight (2014), Liane Merciel, Tor Books/Dark Horse Books

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Murzyn, E., & Valgaeren, E. (2016, October 26-27). Our virtual selves, our virtual morals: *Mass Effect* players' personality and in-game choices. In *2016 International Conference on Interactive Technologies and Games (ITAG)* (pp. 82–86). IEEE.

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DRONE RACING FOR QUADRIPLEGICS

SEBASTIÁN AGUSTÍN TORREZ

Game: *Drone Racing for Quadriplegics*

Developer: Daniel Sequeiros

Year: 2016

Platforms: A racing drone and a hands-free radio controller (R.C.) mounted on a first-person view (F.P.V.) goggles

Number of players: 2+

Genre: Racing game

Type of game: Drone-based game

Curricular connections: Adaptive sports; civics; ethics; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (S.T.E.M.)

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; empathy; equality in sports; respect; social inclusion; teamwork

Audience: 10+

Length of time: About 2 hours

Where to play: For instance, a classroom, a park, a campground

Cost: The software license is free and the R.C. parts cost approximately \$40. Requires (for each pilot) at least one tiny racing drone and F.P.V. goggles

URL: <http://www.dronechair.com.ar/>

SUMMARY

Drone Racing for Quadriplegics arises from a modification of racing drone devices that allows disabled and non-disabled game pilots to control drones. The modification consists of hands-free radio controllers mounted on F.P.V. goggles. The teacher connects the F.P.V. glasses to the drones' front cameras so each pilot can also see the real-time track tour as if they were inside the drones. The pilots steer the drones by moving their heads in three directions: 1) horizontally from right to left as in a negation gesture, 2) tilting to the right or left, and 3) vertically up and down as in a nodding gesture. The pilots also control the throttle with bite-pressure devices that are placed in their mouths. The radio controllers transform the movements of the head and the force of the bites into equivalent maneuvers in the drones. Thereby, the pilots can compete and enjoy high-speed flight through telepresence. Each pilot has an assistant who also acts as a judge and measures their times. The teacher takes the role of race director and indicates the time of departure. The game objective consists of crossing obstacles on a track with the drone in less time than the other pilots. The number

of races for each game may change depending on the number of participants. The same equipment of the game also allows for other educational activities beyond the original race format.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Unlike other games in the book, an educator can create the game, *Drone Racing for Quadriplegics*, through the modification of current tools and technologies, such as hands-free radio controllers. These tools allow educators to organize an inclusive drone race inside or outside the classroom, as well as modify other similar games. In this particular game, radio controllers can be placed like helmets on the head of any pilot, which helps both disabled and non-disabled students play. First, the teacher puts a hands-free radio controller on their head and an acceleration device in their mouth and then explains how the commands of the racing drone works.

There are a number of ways an educator can support this game. First, they can lead a discussion on how certain technologies can help create more equitable conditions in society, and especially in sports (United Nations, n.d.-a and n.d.-b). They can also talk about how in general, people with disabilities experience systemic discrimination and bias. One of the ways to avoid ableism is by creating adapted devices and using universal design.

Teachers can have students work on a group collaborative task such as designing the track. To promote equality, the design of the activity must include disabled students and those who do not identify themselves as having a disability. If the race takes place inside the classroom, the teacher can use the chairs as obstacles. If it is done outside—for example, a park—the teacher can use the benches. The teacher can use this part of the game in STEM classes to make at-scale designs of the track and its obstacles, evaluate the speed of the drone used, and calculate ideal trajectories or possible deviations due to inertia. Advanced STEM students, helped by their teacher, can solve possible connection difficulties between the drones and the hands-free radio controllers of *Drone Racing for Quadriplegics*, or use microcontrollers to build other inclusive games.

When the track is ready, the teacher takes the role of race director. In one version, the teacher chooses two volunteers from the class who will be pilots, one of them quadriplegic and the other non-quadruplegic. Next, the teacher assigns an assistant to each pilot. Each assistant must have a chronometer to measure the time of the pilot assigned to them. The teacher requests that the assistants put the radio on the pilot's head and the accelerator in their mouth. Before starting the race, the teacher requests that the assistants place the drones on the starting line and turn them on—but without activating the motors. The teacher gives the pilots and assistants a few minutes to check if their F.P.V. glasses are correctly receiving the video signal from their drones. Then, the teacher says: "Quiet please," "Start engines," and "On your marks, ready, go!" Pilots must simultaneously fly through the track with their drones using the same type of devices. After the race, educators should have the students reflect on their experiences and explore other examples in which quadriplegics participate in cultural experiences (Blanket Sea, 2021) and sports activities (Lupton, 2022).

The previous suggestions are focused on the original race format of the game, but it is not the only way to do it. Teachers also could implement other activities using the same equipment. For example, the students can fly the drone over different parts of the school or the city to identify sites and buildings that could be made more accessible for people with disabilities and, after that, they can

design proposals for improvement. These kinds of exercises also can trigger discussions about the biases necessary to overcome that hinder the access of people with disabilities to the labor market and other social and cultural activities.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Study and adhere to local drone use regulations.
2. Visit drone racing websites for inspiration on building tracks.
3. Use the F.P.V. goggles and hands-free R.C. in advance to understand the experience.
4. Separate the video channels assigned to each drone pilot to avoid interference.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

FAI Drone Sports (<https://www.fai.org/drone-sports/>)

La storia di Luisa Rizzo, che pilota droni oltre la disabilità (<https://youtu.be/VVPSMbxCapI>)

Quadriplegic Argentine finds adrenaline rush with racing drone (<https://youtu.be/FINbdXiHEmg>)

STEM Education Programs | She Maps (<https://shemaps.com/>)

Women And Drones (<https://womenanddrones.com/>)

The teacher can get the hands-free control components (MPU6050 inertial measurement unit, Arduino Uno microcontroller, and nRF24L01 transceiver chip for 2.4 GHz), the drone, and its interfaces at international e-shops such as Aliexpress. (<https://www.aliexpress.com/>)

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ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

SAM SRAUY

Game: *Elder Scrolls Online*
Developer: ZeniMax Online
Year: 2014
Platform(s): PC, OSX, Playstation, Xbox, Stadia
Number of players: One or more
Genre: Fantasy MMORPG
Type of game: Video game
Curricular connections: Social studies; literature; art; ethics; humanities
Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; creativity; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration
Audience: ESRB rated M for mature. Common Sense Media suggests 16+
Length of time: Extended
Where to play: At home
Cost: Varies with edition
URL: <https://www.elderscrollsonline.com/>

SUMMARY

Elder Scrolls Online (ESO) is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG)—a type of game that allows numerous players to interact and play in a persistent online environment. ESO stands out from other similar games because of the way it features LGBTQ++ identities, and connects players through stories that evoke shared human experiences. Players create their own customized characters, interact with other players and computer-controlled characters called non-player characters (NPCs), and engage in side stories. As players engage with the game’s storyline and side stories, they encounter NPCs of different backgrounds such as trans* and LGBTQ++ characters. The players play in a third-person perspective, fighting monsters, completing storyline missions and side tasks (called quests) offered by various NPCs. By doing so, players will gain levels where they can improve their in-game abilities. While there is a main storyline, players can also wander and immerse themselves in the game’s open world and side quests. ESO has many stories that involve LGBTQ+ identities, where players are able to consider the perspectives, desires, and needs of marginalized people.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Shaw (2012; 2017) noted that for inclusion to matter, we have to strive for more *mundanity*. Mundanity allows for inclusion to matter while not feeling so superficial or bracketed that it elicits pushback. A character's gender and sexual identity are depicted as one of many other characteristics. In other words, queerness is presented as normal and unsurprising. The player's *experience* with both the LGBTQ+ characters and straight characters shares the same core—the heartache and worry of love and marriage. Teachers can use this in-game presentation of LGBTQ+ identities to prompt students to practice perspective-taking and consider where societal views of “normal” come from. Discussion prompts can include: Who is included or excluded from conceptions of “normal?” What are some critiques of using a label of “normal?” What are the shared similarities among seemingly different groups? How do other media represent queer identities and cultures? Are they treated as exotic or “normal?”

Activities outside of the game, such as reflective writing exercises or group discussions can provide opportunities for students to engage these themes more substantively. Educators can ask students to write (and if comfortable, share) personal stories related to those in the game, to emphasize similarities and differences of experiences among people. Students can also analyze LGBTQ+ representations in specific books, movies, television shows, and other video games, and compare it to ESO.

Teachers can also allow students to address other games and how those games successfully or unsuccessfully deal with diversity. For instance, in the official fan forum for ESO, user Aluluei remarked, “That is something that I very much appreciate about the Elder Scrolls games. LGBTQ+ relationships are just part of life, as opposed to being the subjects of Very Special Episodes that come with a Content Warning and notice that Parental Guidance is Recommended.” The player's remark about “Very Special Episode” and “Content Warnings” alludes to the practices, like the “gay planet,” in *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, another MMORPG, where queer subjects are bracketed off as side content apart from the main game (Hamilton, 2013)—a separate-but-not-quite-equal representation that reinforces dominant views. *Life is Strange: True Colors*, *Tell Me Why*, and *Gone Home* are other contemporary games that students may have played that feature LGBTQ+ characters.

Teachers can help students practice empathy by reflecting on and talking about social and familial expectations, fear of disappointing others, and their own desire for self-determination. They can then explore the similarities to in-game characters. In one quest, an elf named Rinyde asks the player to find her scholar brother, Larydel, who ran away to join a troupe of performers. Unbeknownst to her, her sibling is trans and secretly joined the troupe a year prior and transitioned to a woman named Alchemy. The quest draws its emotional power not from the character's identity but from the need to be authentic and accepted.

Teachers can have students take ideas from discussions and reflective writing and write their own fan-fiction stories with ESO characters. Students can be asked to write short stories about what these characters' lives might look like after the quest ends. Or, students can be prompted to create fictions about how their game characters' lives were changed or challenged by helping the NPCs. Teachers can have students take these stories and share them with each other and discuss how similar issues faced in these quests might play out in their communities.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. If possible, students and teachers should try to play through the same side stories.
2. Fan-created forums and wiki sites are plentiful and can serve as a starting point for in-class discussions. In the event that the game is cost-prohibitive, an excellent wiki is The Unofficial Elder Scrolls Pages wiki, which can be found at <http://uesp.net>.
3. ESO is free to play once the base copy of the game is purchased. However, a premium version is available where players can access extra perks. The price ranges from \$12 USD to \$15 USD per month. These requirements can be prohibitive for students and educators alike. In these cases, various “Let’s Play” videos (where content creators record themselves playing the game) can be found on YouTube. One example that features the Rinyde and Larydel/Alchemy quest mentioned above can be found at <https://youtu.be/BAV5p9aGNal>.
4. Use trigger warnings when using the game. Issues of familial and community acceptance or rejection can evoke painful experiences for students.

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FAIR PLAY

JOHANSEN QUIJANO

Game: *Fair Play*

Developer: Wisconsin Institute for Discovery

Year: 2021

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows, mac OSX.

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Role-Playing Game (RPG)

Type of game: Digital Console Game

Curricular connections:

Possible skills taught: Communication; critical thinking; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity

Audience: Teen or Adult

Length of time: 1–2 hours

Where to play: In a lab or on home console

Cost: Free

URL: <https://fairplaygame.org/>

SUMMARY

Fair Play is a videogame created by the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that follows the story of Jamal, a young black man in his first year at a doctoral STEM program in a predominantly white institution (PWI). As Jamal, players will have to navigate through the game while facing microaggressions and more overt forms of discrimination. Players guide Jamal as he tries to overcome these biases in his quest to become a successful student. The game has five missions. In the first mission players explore the Student Union building and chat with other students as they learn the ins and outs of academia and the second mission tasks the player with finding an advisor. During both missions, players see Jamal at the receiving end of microaggressions. For the third mission players must write a proposal for a conference. This is where the story takes a turn for a more dramatic conflict as Lucas, another graduate student, attempts to copy Jamal's proposal. The fourth mission is for Jamal to prove himself yet again as being worthy of being in the program as Lucas plagiarizes Jamal's paper and then accuses Jamal of plagiarism. Because of the way racial bias is coded into the game, Lucas is given the benefit of the doubt while Jamal is at risk of being kicked out of the program. Finally, if players are able to navigate their way through accusations

of plagiarism and institutional bias, the final mission involves giving a scholarly presentation. The game's mechanics are fairly straightforward and involve point-and-click mechanics to move around and speak with NPCs, branching dialogues, a quest list, and an Almanac to keep track of the types of racial biases Jamal faces. Of special interest is how players identify racial bias in the game. In every chapter, Jamal will face some sort of racial bias—from stereotyping and tokenism to shifting standards of judgment—and players can identify the type of bias and make NPCs become aware of how their behavior is problematic. These biases are then cataloged in the Almanac where they are explained in detail along with the example of how they are manifested in the game and lists of citations for further reading. These mechanics, along with the story, make the game an ideal tool for classroom discussion and professional training on racial bias.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

At the core of the game's design is the creators' desire to expose players to the perspective of students who come from marginalized groups in hopes of reducing implicit bias. Research conducted by Gutierrez and others showed that *Fair Play* “has the potential to reduce implicit bias, possibly because of a game's ability to foster empathy through active perspective taking” (2014, p. 371). This was again demonstrated in 2017, when Kaatz and others showed efforts to reduce bias via roleplay, identification, and gameplay proved to be successful, as “Fair Play can promote perspective taking and increase bias literacy, which are steps toward reducing racial bias and affording Blacks equal opportunities to excel in science.” The game received several awards and helped developers earn two grants (Armitage 2017) and produced powerful testimonials from players who say that the game helped them better understand the experience of “being on the receiving end of implicit biases, which are common for marginalized groups like racial minorities and women” (Miller 2017). There's little doubt that the game “capitaliz[es] on the potential effectiveness of role-playing video games to promote the type of active learning required to increase awareness of and reduce subtle racial bias” (Kaatz 2017). This section will explore two ways in which the game can be used in high school and college classes to promote diversity and inclusion as well as a better understanding of implicit and systemic bias. Because each chapter takes 10 to 20 minutes to complete, instructors will have time to assign the game as part of an in-class play session if students are unable to play the game at home. Instructors should first introduce the concepts of implicit bias and systemic oppression. They should discuss how these structures directly impact diversity and equity, and that to create more inclusive spaces it is contingent both on individuals being aware of any implicit biases they might harbor as well as on institutions to address any policies they might have or practices they might engage in that disincentivize efforts to advance diversity and equity. Instructors should remind students to keep an open mind as they play and address any questions they might have before beginning the play session.

The game has five missions, and it is up to each instructor to decide which missions to play in class and which missions to play for homework assignment. The modalities listed below have been used with similar degrees of success:

1. Dedicating a whole class period for students to play through the game and a second class period to discuss their experiences.
2. Spreading out the gameplay experience throughout several sessions, asking students to reflect on their experiences playing each chapter right after they finish playing it.

3. Asking students to play specific chapters at home and then discussing their experiences over two class sessions—one for the first three chapters and another for the final two chapters.
4. Asking students to play the whole game at home and then discussing their experience in one class period.

As instructors plan their lessons and write discussion questions, they should pay special attention to the game's Almanac. The Almanac provides clear definitions of the types of biases shown in each chapter along with references for additional readings. Instructors can leverage these guides as they consider Jamal's experiences in-game and whether their students are able to empathize, relate, or understand the kind of hardships Jamal is going through. Instructors can also ask students to find parallels between the events depicted in the game and similar events that they have either seen in other media, heard happen in the real world, have seen happen to a friend or relative, or have been victims of themselves. Educators may want to use trigger warnings.

Some questions instructors can ask include:

1. Do you think that what happened to Jamal in [x] situation was fair? Why or why not? [x=one of the situations from the game]
2. What do you think was Jamal's biggest obstacle to success so far? How so?
3. Why do you think that an NPC was acting in a specific way toward Jamal? Go beyond "racism" or "implicit bias." Feel free to hypothesize on the NPC's back story and experiences.
4. How would you have responded to situation [x] were you in Jamal's shoes? Do you think that would have worked? Why or why not?

Ultimately, the purpose of the game is to get players to reflect on their own biases and on systemic oppression, so teachers should make sure to wrap up their discussions with questions that prompt self-reflection: What did you learn from playing the game? How has the game changed our outlook on D&I efforts? Other questions can, of course, be designed by instructors as needed.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. First, play through the whole game at least once. Make sure to take notes on the sections that you find most interesting and relevant to the discussion you want to have with your students.
2. In class, introduce the topics of diversity, inclusion, discrimination, and microaggressions before introducing the game. This will help students contextualize the game as part of a broader conversation.
3. Discuss the game's inner workings and mechanics in class before students begin to play.
4. Play through the first stage in class with your students to show the game's mechanics at play.
5. Make sure that you walk around the room as the students play and answer any questions.
6. Try to include all your students in the class discussions.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

1979 Revolution: Black Friday (<https://1979revolutiongame.com/>)

Life is Strange (<https://lifeisstrange.square-enix-games.com/en-us/>)

Sunset (<https://tale-of-tales.com/Sunset/>)

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HIRE UP

WEI JIE DOMINIC KOEK & VIVIAN HSUEH HUA CHEN

Game: *Hire Up*

Developer(s): Vivian Hsueh Hua Chen & Jimmy Sheng Tian Ho

Year: 2021

Platform(s): WebGL

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Role-playing game

Type of game: Video game

Curricular connections: Ethics

Possible skills taught: Ethical decision-making; empathy; perspective-taking

Audience: 10+ years through adult

Length of time: 15 minutes

Where to play: Classroom; home

Cost: Free

URL: <https://tinyurl.com/hireupgame>

SUMMARY

Hire Up is a video game designed to foster positive intergroup perceptions toward immigrants. The game seeks to highlight the importance of treating everyone with respect and equality, regardless of their cultural background. The game is set in a fictional food establishment where players assume the role of the owner, who manages day-to-day operations of various food stalls. The goal of the game is to make sufficient profits to sustain the business. One major task is the hiring and management of human resources. Players are presented with the background of workers during the hiring phase, which includes their age, gender, race, and nationality. Players click on the workers' avatars to interact and know their thoughts and emotions as the game progresses. The main narrative of the game involves scenarios that require moral decision-making as well as casual conversations between players and the workers' avatars. For example, players have to decide between acknowledging a customer's distasteful comments toward their worker or defending their worker at the expense of losing in-game credits. Dialogues are triggered by workers or customers. At the end of each dialogue, a non-player character "friend" appears and asks players about their thoughts about the situation to prompt players to reflect upon the issues. Players are presented with the consequences of their choices, which reflect their workers' state of psychological well-being at the end of the game.

Throughout the game, players help with cleaning tables and engaging in conversations with the diners.



Figure 17.1. Screenshot of the video game Hire Up. ALT TEXT: The game screenshot takes place in a food court setting. There is a number of booths like ones for Seafood (with a shrimp on top), Drinks (with a plastic drink cut and straw on top), and Noodles (with a noodle bowl on top). There are cafeteria tables in the area and a few digital characters walking around. There is an objective listed in the upper left that says “Check on any of your workers” and “Tips: Click on your worker to see their details.” In the upper right it says Week 1, Day 1, time (:58), and \$19580).

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Hire Up is best used as an experiential learning activity to complement classroom discussions on social inclusion relating to race and immigration. Students will interact with in-game characters of various races, gender identities, and nationalities. Exposure to media characters of different cultural backgrounds can shape one’s intergroup beliefs and attitudes (Breves, 2018). The embedded moral scenarios that involve the various workers prompt players to reflect upon their choices and empathize with the workers. Specifically, moral situations may evoke a sense of responsibility among players and this may encourage them to consider the emotions and potential implications of their decisions toward the game characters (Chen & Koek, 2020; Green & Jenkins, 2014; Katsarov et al., 2019). For instance, one scenario requires players to make a decision between getting an injured worker to rush an order or rejecting the customer’s request at the expense of losing earnings. This scenario could prompt players to consider how the worker’s injuries may worsen and the painful experiences that the worker has to experience as a result of their decision.

There are two ways to incorporate the gameplay in classrooms. Educators working with older students can have them play the game individually and engage in discussions afterward. For younger

students, teachers can guide the gameplay and ask students to share their responses to each of the in-game scenarios. In both cases, educators should conduct a post-game class discussion for students to reflect upon and share their gaming experiences with one another for approximately an hour (Tzuo et al., 2013; Watson & Fang, 2012).

During the discussion, educators should provide an age-appropriate introduction to the history and current trends of immigration, as well as xenophobia and racism. Some discussion prompts could include getting students to consider various acts of discrimination that they have experienced or witnessed in their personal lives and through media portrayal. This is to establish the importance of immigration in our everyday lives and the implications of discriminatory acts and stereotypes toward people of different nationalities. With that, educators can ask students to discuss their choices in the game and how the characters would feel about their choices if it happened in a real-life context. For example, educators can ask students to share about their decisions either to rush or not rush the injured worker and consider how the worker might have felt. How might the worker feel? How did the student feel after seeing the consequences of their decisions? Would they change their decisions after seeing those outcomes? Educators can discuss with students workers' rights, and the substantial contributions of immigrant workers to the overall economic progress and development of companies and countries.

Hire Up has certain limitations. For instance, some players may justify their immoral choices toward immigrant workers by arguing that it is just a game or that the company's profits should always be prioritized over workers' well-being. In such cases, educators should provide real-life case studies of situations where immigrant workers have been mistreated in their workplace and use those examples to illustrate how such game scenarios are plausible in reality. Or, they could use evidence to challenge the notion that company profits should supersede human rights, such as by providing critiques of capitalism or showing the economic impact of inhumane treatment. Ultimately, the goal is to persuade students that even though the game is situated in a fictional environment, these situations do occur in real-life and they can have substantial impacts on the well-being of those involved individuals and greater society.

Finally, it is crucial for educators to highlight that some individuals may form stereotypical associations between people of certain cultural identities and the jobs that they undertake due to the limitations in portrayals of characters in this game. Educators should take this opportunity to share more about how media representations may unfortunately contribute to xenophobia and prejudice. For instance, educators could explain that some people may incorrectly have the perception that all service workers are immigrant workers based on this game. Educators should encourage students to consider the authenticity of media content that they are exposed to and think about how the content may or may not be reflective of the actual world.



Figure 17.2. A screenshot of interactions with workers in Hire Up. ALT TEXT: The game screenshot takes place again in a food court setting. There is a close-up of the booth for Drinks (with a plastic drink cut and straw on top). There is a character named Krisha who is labeled as “Indian Foreigner” with a sad face in red. There is an objective listed in the upper left that says “Hire a cleaner to keep the food court clean!” and “Tips: Click cleaner signboard at the middle of the food court.” In the upper right it says Week 1, Day 6, time (5:07), and \$12000.



Figure 17.3. Example of a moral scenario in Hire Up. ALT TEXT: The game screenshot takes place again in a food court setting. There is a close-up of the booth for Noodles (with a noodle bowl on top). There is an overlay in the User Interface that says, “Yash: My back is injured, but we could earn more money just from this one customer. Should I rush the order?” There are two choices, “Don’t Rush” and “Rush Order.” There is an objective listed in the upper left that says “Hire a cleaner to keep the food court clean!” and “Tips: Click cleaner signboard at the middle of the food court.” In the upper right it says Week 1, Day 2, time (1:40), and \$19800.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Educators should play the game beforehand to familiarize with the controls and gameplay content.
2. Educators should remind students to pay attention to the tutorial page that features the game controls and interface.
3. Players should have stable internet access on a PC and use a mouse for optimal gameplay experiences.
4. Educators should utilize simultaneous chat functions to allow students to share and discuss their gameplay experiences, if the game is used for remote teaching.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Against All Odds (<http://www.playagainstallodds.ca/>)

City of Immigrants (<https://www.mission-us.org/games/city-of-immigrants/>)

Icebreaker (<https://simmer.io/@gameresearch/icebreaker-3>)

Papers, Please (https://store.steampowered.com/app/239030/Papers_Please/)

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IF FOUND...

JOHN P. HEALY & CHARLIE CULLEN

Game: *If Found...*

Developer: Dreamfeel

Year: 2020

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows; macOS; iOS; Nintendo Switch

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Visual novel

Type of game: Computer-based digital game

Curricular connections: Literature; media studies; social and emotional learning (SEL); gender studies

Possible skills taught: Empathy; identity exploration

Audience: For instance, 12+ years through adult

Length of time: 2-3 hours

Where to play: Classroom, at home

Cost: \$12 (Steam), \$5 (iOS)

URL: <https://dreamfeel.ie/iffound>

SUMMARY

If Found... is a visual novel set in 1993 on a remote island off the west coast of Ireland. The game follows the story of a young woman, Kasio, on her return home to the island and the challenges, conflicts, and friendships she experiences during this time. The story of the game focuses on the experiences of the trans protagonist as she navigates returning to her familial home and expressing her identity to family and friends. Players explore the pages of Kasio's diary to explore the past 28 days of her life and through this, they build a strong connection to Kasio, her family and friends and gain a deep understanding of the challenges and triumphs she experiences during this time. The simplicity of interaction encourages players to engage with the narrative elements and form a strong connection with the protagonist and her world. Interspersed throughout the story of Kasio is the story of a black hole about to destroy the Earth. The gameplay is simple, involving using your cursor or finger to erase the hand-drawn art to reveal the stories under each page (see Figure 18.1). The game uses subtle animations to provide movement in every scene and brings the stylistic hand-drawn art brings the game to life. Each page that the player erases reveals further depth within the narrative and the complexities of Kasios' life and her experiences become more apparent. The game also includes

additional information for players such as providing definitions and explanations for subjects that may be unfamiliar to an international audience. Lastly, the game highlights how local creators, artists, and game makers are producing a broad range of game design work that speaks to social and cultural issues outside of the mainstream game industry.

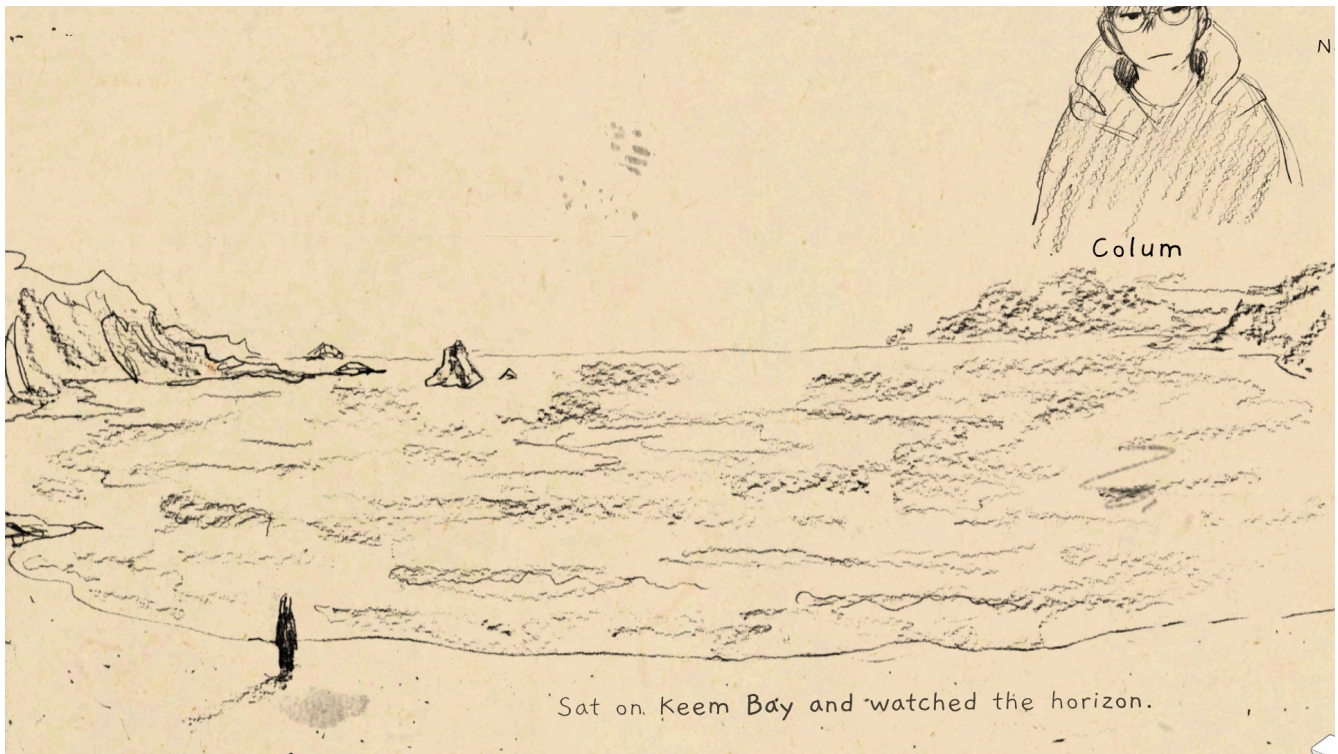


Figure 18.1. A page from Kasio's diary showing the hand-drawn art style that is used throughout the game. *If Found...* ALT TEXT: A page that is hand-drawn with black ink on a yellowed page. In the right, it has a figure of a person with the label "Colum." There is a figure at the bottom of the page that is looking out over the ocean with mountains. At the bottom is text that says, "Sat on Keem Bay and watched the horizon."

HOW TO USE THE GAME

In this section, we detail how to use the game in a classroom context to broaden students' understanding of games as a medium and reflect on the role of the auteur within the development of indie games. We also encourage educators to look for local creators and designers who may be producing games exploring topics that are more familiar to their own students' experiences.

We used *If Found...* as part of an honors course on games in culture and context at an Irish university, and we draw on the experiences of the lecturer for this section. The unit came about as a response to concerns raised among the student body about their lack of awareness around issues of diversity and representation in the games industry. The learning unit aimed to explore how games are cultural artifacts reflecting the values, beliefs, and politics of their creators. Figure 18.2 shows the overall structure of the learning unit and the activities undertaken. This type of approach may be applied to media programs in general or other programs where the goal is to engage with the topics of diversity and inclusion with regard to LGBTQ+ people.

To use the game, we first assigned students three different tasks: 1. implicit bias evaluation, 2. the gameplay experience, and 3. assigned readings. For the implicit bias evaluation, we asked the students to complete the *Harvard Transgender Implicit Association Test* (Transgender IAT:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>) to understand their own biases. Following this, we asked students to complete the gameplay experience by playing or watching a playthrough of *If Found...* Finally, we assigned students a reading from *The Queer Games Avant-Garde* (Ruberg, 2020, pp. 63-72), in which the creator of *If Found...* is interviewed, as well as a reading on indie game production studies (Whitson et al., 2021). We then held a class session with a discussion around the issues of gender and representation in games and local communities of game creators, and then the instructor delivered a lecture on the topics of representation and local game production.

We structured the discussion as a think-pair-share activity with a primary focus on the think and pair components of the method (Cooper et al., 2021). Individual students were prompted to consider the following question “in what ways are the beliefs of the designer, Llaura McGee, communicated by playing *If Found...*?” After a period of time to consider the question they were asked to pair up and structure their response to the question. We then prompted the students to share their responses with their peers, using prompts such as:

- How does Llaura’s approach differ from what you see in mainstream games?
- How might diverse stories in games impact the industry as a whole?
- What can we learn about the game-making process by considering local and indie game production?
- How does diversity impact indie game design and production?

Finally, we encouraged individual students to create a personal statement in response to the prompt “As a game designer, how does my work consider the issues of diversity and local game production?”. These statements are private to the students and are not shared with the class but rather a chance to reflect on how the topics discussed can be considered in their practice.

This game can also be used in a media studies classroom or a design studies context. To use it in media studies you could use a similar learning unit structure but focus on prompts related to media theory and cultural production. In a design studies context, you could focus on the design process of the game through the reading and place this in conversation with design studies literature, here the educator may want to consider how the process followed by Llaura McGee differs from traditional design disciplines.

This learning unit was a chance for students to gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of issues at play within indie games and their impact on the game industry. The approach has been effective in our experience but did require careful consideration of the specific details to suit our context. Choosing *If Found...* was deliberate; we felt students might respond better to a local game with relevance to their experiences as opposed to a game from a different cultural or regional background. *If Found...* is also a game that gradually builds empathy and understanding of the protagonists perspective and we hoped that this might raise awareness of the value of diversity and inclusion in the everyday lives of our students as both players and creators.

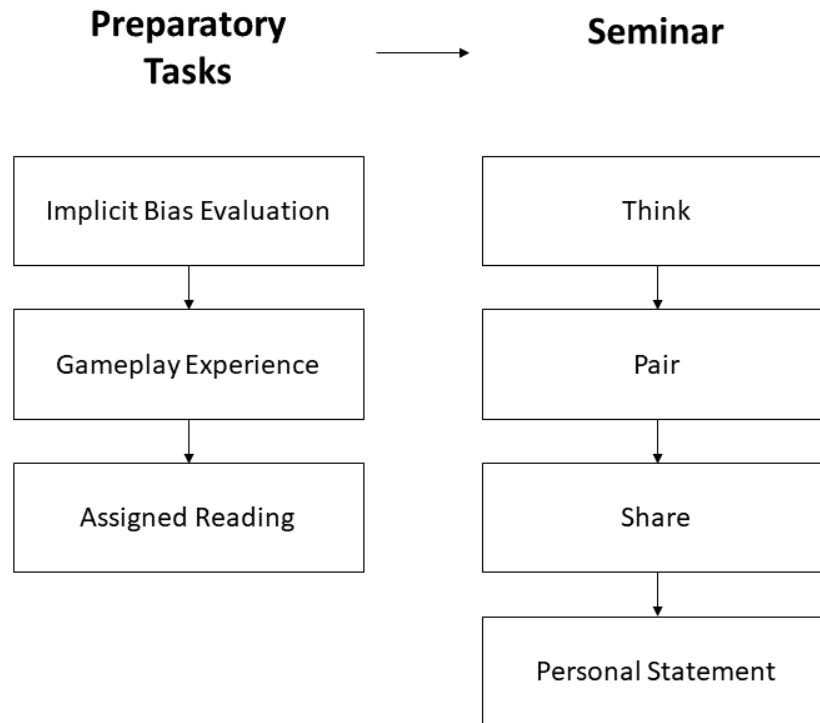


Figure 18.2: The structure of the learning unit with activities conducted at each stage. ALT TEXT: A chart that has a list of preparatory tasks on the left side. It has Implicit Bias Evaluation first, with an arrow to Gameplay Experience, with an arrow to Assigned Reading. On the right side, it has a list under the title “Seminar,” it has “Think” with an arrow to “Pair,” with an arrow to “Share,” with an arrow to “Personal Statement.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Before assigning the game to students, educators should play it themselves and identify whether it is suitable for their use or if there may be more locally representative games to use such as *Gone Home* in the Pacific Midwest or *Night in The Woods* in the Appalachia.
2. Given the cost of the game and the simplicity of interaction, students are asked to either play the game or watch a Let’s Play (see example below in Related Games & Media) of the game from start to end to experience the entire narrative arc of the game.
3. Supporting discussion on the topics of representation can be challenging, especially with some students, so it may be best to let students voluntarily share their thoughts as opposed to calling on students to share.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Example “Let’s Play” of *If Found...* (<https://youtu.be/1HsUJXLlgiU>)

Gone Home (<https://www.gonehome.com/>)

Night in the Woods (<http://www.nightinthewoods.com/>)

Harvard's *Project Implicit* (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>)

Why Diversity Matters in the Modern Videogame Industry (<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jul/18/diversity-video-games-industry-playstation-xbox>)

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IKENFELL

KÜBRA AKSAY

Game: *Ikenfell*

Developer: Happy Ray Games, Inc.

Year: 2020

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows, macOS, Nintendo Switch, Playstation 4, Xbox One

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Role-playing game (RPG)

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Cultural studies, literature, creative writing, language arts, game design

Possible skills taught: Empathy, identity exploration, critical thinking, character development, writing

Audience: 10+ years through adult

Length of time: 15-25 hours

Where to play: At home or in the classroom

Cost: \$19.99

URL: <https://www.humblegames.com/games/ikenfell/>

SUMMARY

Set in a colorful, pixelated 2D environment, *Ikenfell* is a turn-based tactical RPG about a group of diverse characters. The game begins by putting the player in control of Maritte, a teenage girl traveling to the titular magic school Ikenfell, in search of her sister Safina, who did not come home for the summer break. Unlike Safina and her friends, Maritte is initially introduced as an “ordinary” girl with no magical powers, but she suddenly gains pyromancy skills on her way to Ikenfell. The player is soon introduced to the other students who help Maritte in her search for Safina and unravel the mysteries surrounding the school. As the game proceeds, some of these new characters join the player’s party, and they can also be controlled by the player. Throughout the game, the players explore their environment, talk to other characters, solve puzzles, and fight enemies. Each one of the playable characters has distinct personalities, backgrounds, and unique spells that they can cast during combats. When in combat, both the player characters and enemies can move along the battlefield, represented by grids, and then use an action or cast a spell, in turns. To attack, cast spells, and block enemy attacks effectively, the player must position the characters and time button presses correctly.

While the timing-based combat system becomes more and more challenging as the game advances, the settings allow players to customize the required degree of precise timing at any point in the game.



Figure 19.1. An image of *Ikenfell*. ALT TEXT: An image of the game, which includes a cartoon, pixelated scene. There are trees in the background, a blue bird, and mushrooms in the foreground. There are three characters that are also in the foreground. Two characters have black hair (one short, one long) and one has long orange hair. The character that has short black hair also has black skin. The other two characters have white skin. Above a character with orange hair, it says "Ignite." It says on the bottom, "Deal full damage to a ranged target." On the bottom right is a list of the three characters, which say "24/24" for the orange and short black-haired characters; the character with long black hair says, "22/22."

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Ikenfell can be used in creative writing, literature, or language arts classrooms to analyze and practice narrative and character development that includes marginalized characters. Secondly, the game's accessibility options can be examined in game design classes to help students apply inclusive design practices. This chapter will focus on two examples of how *Ikenfell* can be used for teaching and learning in different fields.

While young female protagonists and their coming-of-age stories are becoming increasingly popular in contemporary video games (Harkin 2021), *Ikenfell* is a particularly good example of inclusive representations and character development with its six playable characters, all of whom identify as either female or non-binary. Moreover, the game makes the characters' gender identities, romantic orientations, and preferred gender pronouns (PGP) explicit to the player. Each playable character has their PGP next to their names on the character selection screen, and while there are multiple non-binary characters, they each have a different PGP. Romantic relationships between some of the

characters are a part of the game's story. In addition, multiple characters struggle with issues such as bullying, depression, and PTSD. Due to the detailed and diverse representations of the characters, *Ikenfell* lends itself well to writing and character development activities in the classroom. One way of using the characters in the game is for educators to prompt the students to write new dialogues between their favorite characters after they complete the game. This classroom exercise motivates students to pay more attention to the personalities and backgrounds of the characters they play as, which can contribute to their writing skills.

The game can take around 20 hours to play, so it is not an ideal game for students to play to completion in the classroom. Instead, teachers can assign the game for students to play before the beginning of the teaching period, either to completion or the first few hours depending on the course requirements for the particular class. This way, educators can use the classroom time for a post-play reflection and discussion. Depending on the number of students and the length of the class time, instructors can also require written responses reflecting students' individual experiences of the game, such as on the representations of diverse characters and their experiences with them. For a more engaging classroom activity, teachers can ask each student to pick a character and reflect on this character's representation and journey through the game in oral and written responses. Written assignments can especially be suitable for *Ikenfell*, as some students might find it easier to reflect upon sensitive topics in written form. If the class does not require written responses, the students can be divided into groups and discuss their selected characters, first within their groups, and then with the entire classroom. This can be especially helpful for high school students, as they can easily identify with the characters in the game who are also teenagers and deal with some of the problems that are common in their age group, such as bullying. Examining diverse characters does not only help students develop critical thinking, empathy, reading, and writing skills, but it can also support students from marginalized groups and help them feel a sense of belonging (Steiner 2021).

Ikenfell also has a diversity of accessibility options (Mathys 2020). As every player's experience of a game is highly personal, players could provide feedback on the types of customization and accessibility options in their game (Blackheart qtd. in Mathys, 2020). Students could use a simple checklist of accessibility features and identify which ones it includes. They can also brainstorm additional checklist items. The checklist can then be applied to a list of other games. This way, students can evaluate multiple games using the same checklist and compare the accessibility features different games have. With *Ikenfell*, educators can help students consider accessibility in different ways, such as whether it is in terms of its content or physical interactions. For instance, *Ikenfell* turns on content warnings to warn the player about anything that can be uncomfortable for some players to see, such as scenes depicting self-harm or blood. Other accessibility settings include reducing the camera shake for players with visual impairments or adjusting the timing options, which can make the combat sections more accessible for players with a fine motor disability.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. *Ikenfell* is available on both computers and consoles. As the game does not have high system requirements, students can use their personal computers, laptops, or computers at school to play it before or during class.
2. Teachers should play the game beforehand and make themselves familiar with the accessibility

and sensitivity options. This way, teachers can inform students about options such as content warnings or camera and combat settings that students might want to adjust before they start playing the game.

3. Because playing the game to completion takes around 20 hours, teachers can divide the game into two or three sections and assign the sections to be completed outside of the classroom and before the class.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Celeste (2018) (<http://www.celestegame.com>)

Steven Universe (<https://www.cartoonnetwork.com>)

Undertale (<https://undertale.com>)

REFERENCES

Harkin, S. (2021). Liminal rhetoric in girlhood games: Developmental disruption in Night School Studio's *Oxenfree*. *Game Studies*, 21 (3). <http://gamestudies.org/2103/articles/harkin>

Mathys, Q. (2020). Ikenfell dev talks adding sensitivity and accessibility options to more games. *Game Rant*. <https://gamerant.com/ikenfell-sensitivity-accessibility-more-games/>

Steiner, R. (2021). Promoting inclusivity of LGBTQ students and classroom community through English Language Arts. *Learning to Teach*, 10(1). <https://openjournals.utoledo.edu/index.php/learningtoteach/article/view/472>

KIDS ON BIKES

SUSAN HAARMAN

Game: *Kids on Bikes*

Developer: Jonathan Gilmour and Doug Levandowski

Year: 2018

Platform: In-person or virtually

Number of players: 1 Game Master (GM) and 2-7 players

Genre: Role-playing game

Type of game: Analog tabletop role-playing game

Curricular connections: Ethics; civics; social studies

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; critical thinking; problem solving; empathy; imaginative ideas; identity exploration;

Audience: 12+ years

Length of time: As short as 1 hour and as long as 3-4 hours in one sitting. Option of ongoing connected sessions.

Where to play: A classroom, after school activity, at home, in community centers or libraries.

Cost: \$25.00 for physical copy of Core Rule Book; \$6.99 for PDFs of Core Rule Book. A shorter free version can be found at <https://www.huntersentertainment.com/kidsonbikesrpg>

URL: <https://www.huntersentertainment.com/kidsonbikesrpgtw>

SUMMARY

The tabletop role-playing game (RPG) *Kids on Bikes* features a band of friends searching for the truth about the mystery plaguing their hometown. The game is a collaborative storytelling and world-building game, with players taking on the role of kids who try to solve a mystery as a game master (GM) leads them through the narrative and plays all the other inhabitants of the town. The GM creates the initial mystery for players to solve, but the story is co-created by player and GM actions after the game begins. Players also co-create the town and lore together, allowing players to consider what sort of society or world they want to engage in. Players will narrate the action they will take and, when prompted by the GM, roll a die to decide the outcome of their actions. A character's chance of success will vary depending on how strong they are in a particular trait, which is decided by players when they create their characters. The game focuses on group discussion, improvisation, and emergent problem-solving, allowing players to work together to find any number of ways to approach the mystery.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Tabletop RPGs like *Kids on Bikes (KoB)* use role-play that demands a level of imagination, creative problem-solving, and collaboration from players. When facilitated and debriefed intentionally in educational settings, these games are resources for building essential civic skills either in a social studies or ethics class or as an after-school activity. *KoB* is one of many tabletop RPGs, but its focus on youth, simple rules, and game mechanics that privilege creative problem-solving over violence make it an excellent tool for educators seeking to form committed and imaginative citizens through deliberative problem-solving and empathy. Because *KoB* uses youth as protagonists and asks players to help define the world, players in an educational setting may be able to more easily make connections to their current community and life. Educators, serving as the GM of the game should ask thoughtful questions during game play or in debrief sessions to help students make these connections.

Collaborative creation of the town is an essential part of *KoB* that happens before the game even starts. Players work with the GM to determine what the town is like, who lives there, what major issues or concerns impact the area, etc. The game's playbook asks players and GM to use this conversation to think about systems of power in the game world (i.e., racism, sexism, ableism, etc.), how they manifest, and how they might impact the characters. For instance, players can choose to play in a universe where oppressive systems like heteronormativity do not exist.

Educators can use this step to have students reflect on their own biases and facilitate important conversations on how these systems show up in everyday lives and interactions. Students can identify what they believe are the biggest social issues facing their own town and then decide whether or not to include that in the game world. If students want to include an issue, educators can ask students to describe how they have experienced or seen it, which will encourage important systems thinking skills in students. If students do not wish to include it, the educator should ask why this town does not experience that issue (i.e. lack of employment) and encourage them to think about the ways in which a community may address larger social issues.

Especially when used in tandem around education for civic skills and identity, the experience of playing *KoB* could encourage students to think about their own understanding of what being an active citizen looks like in a society with unjust structures. Educators can encourage students to think about how citizenship is defined by asking if the actions of the characters in the games would be considered "good citizenship" by their civics textbooks. Because the kids in the games are often acting outside of the law or other social systems, students can reflect on how challenging power systems and self-advocacy are important aspects of civic engagement as well as social change. This can encourage the practice of critical hope as students examine power structures through a critical lens and simultaneously endeavor to generate different ways of proceeding.

Debriefing after a game session is essential to help facilitate learning. Educators should allow students to share feedback with the GM and others in the game. After each session, teachers can ask students how their character may have behaved differently than they would have behaved, or how they think their character's actions would have been received in the real world.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The kids are the only ones taking the mystery seriously, so adults either dismiss them or block their progress. The GM should be mindful that this may remind players of their own experiences of dismissal. Debrief after the game about how that felt and how players can advocate for themselves in real life.
2. Cooperative town creation is one of the most powerful educative and reflective moments that the game creates. Invite students as they construct the town to reflect on why they are or are not making a community similar to the one they currently live in.
3. If the primary mystery in the game relates to major challenge faced by the players' actual, real-world community, make sure to allow players to discover creative approaches to the problem, rather than forcing a particular resolution.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Kids on Brooms by Jonathan Gilmour, Doug Levandowski, and Spenser Starke

Teens in Space by Jonathan Gilmour and Doug Levandowski

A free online character sheet for the game with dice roller created by Todd Page (<https://kids-on-bikes.glitch.me/>)

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KIND WORDS (LO FI CHILL BEATS TO WRITE TO)

SHANNON R. MORTIMORE-SMITH

Game: *Kind Words (lo fi chill beats to write to)*

Developer: Popcannibal; Scott Ziba

Year: 2019

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows; macOS, Linux

Number of players: Multiplayer

Genre: Atmospheric, relaxing, casual, indie, interactive, lo-fi

Type of game: PC

Curricular connections: English language arts; American government and civics, health and wellness, psychology, music

Possible skills taught: Self-awareness, empathy-building, personal reflection, epistolary writing, storytelling

Audience: 13+ (middle school; high school; college students, young adults)

Length of time: Open gameplay; structured 10-30 min. sessions recommended

Where to play: Home; classroom; after school clubs; youth programs

Cost: \$4.99

URL: [https://store.steampowered.com/app/1070710/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1070710/Kind_Words_lo_fi_chill_beats_to_write_to/)

[Kind_Words_lo_fi_chill_beats_to_write_to/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1070710/Kind_Words_lo_fi_chill_beats_to_write_to/)

Tags: Atmospheric, Casual, Indie, Relaxing, English language arts; ELA; ELA games; Mental health, Empathy-building

SUMMARY

Kind Words (lo fi chill beats to write to) is an online, multiplayer, letter-writing game designed to inspire players to spread good will. The game's premise is simple: players are invited to unburden their thoughts by composing brief letters and releasing them to the game's online global inbox to be read by other players. Players are simultaneously encouraged to click on the letters submitted by others and compose thoughtful responses (see Figure 21.1). Originally designed as a way of countering the public vitriol and negativity of American politics (Fellow Traveller, 2021), *Kind Words* shows our collective and cultural need for understanding, compassion, and above all, *kindness* in uncertain times. The game's interface contains a diorama of a bed, a bookshelf, and a desk situated by an open window, where a virtual avatar sits, contemplates, and composes letters (see Figure 21.2). Relaxing lo-fi tracks, written by Clark Aboud, mingle in the backdrop, providing a soothing, untroubled, and dreamlike atmosphere for writing. Players can additionally decorate their rooms with stickers gifted from other

players as thanks for a response to their letters. When players log on, they are greeted by Ella, a friendly mail-delivering deer, donning a post office cap, who invites them to “write about [their] worries or just ask for some advice.” Players can access a simple list of options on the side menu to write a letter, read and respond to other player’s letters, or fly a paper airplane with positive words (see Figure 21.2). Ella encourages players to respond with empathy and validation. She also directs players to links for mental health resources, including the suicide prevention lifeline. Her approach sets the tone for interacting with other players. Ella’s guidance, coupled with the game’s entirely anonymous system—players choose a letter of the alphabet to represent themselves, and they are not allowed to follow up with other players—allows *Kind Words* to avoid the trappings and toxicity present in most online social media platforms. *Kind Words* honors its players’ openness and understanding by designing a space where vulnerability is expected and genuinely valued.

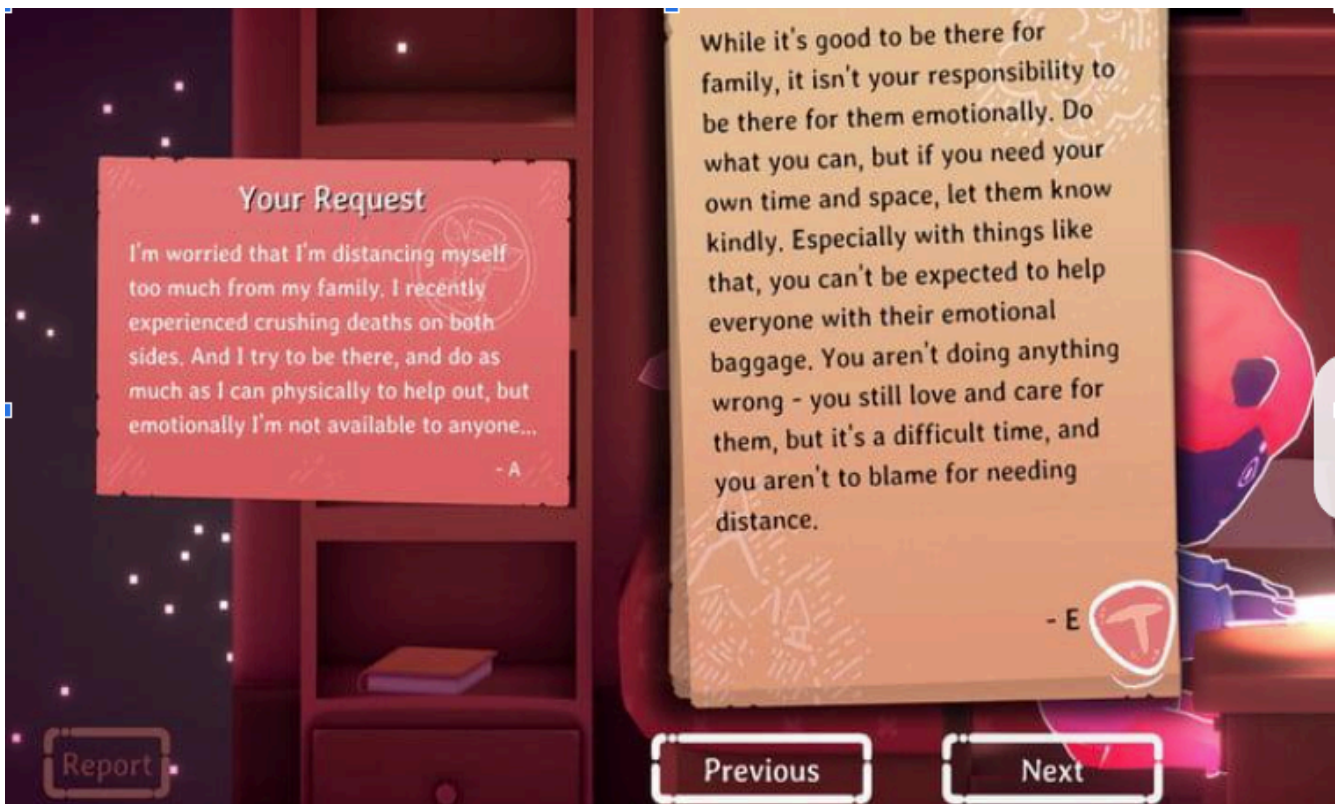


Figure 21.1. A player letter and response in *Kind Words*. ALT TEXT: On the left of the image, it says “Your Request: I’m worried that I’m distancing myself too much from my family. I recently experienced crushing deaths on both sides. And I try to be there, and do as much as I can physically to help out, but emotionally I’m not available to anyone... -A.” On the right it says, “While it’s good to be there for family, it isn’t your responsibility to be there for them emotionally. Do what you can, but if you need your own time and space, let them know kindly. Especially with things like that, you can’t be expected to help everyone with their emotional baggage. You aren’t doing anything wrong - you still love and care for them, but it’s a difficult time, and you aren’t to blame for needing distance. -E.” In the image, these text boxes appear over a character who is sitting in a bedroom, at a desk. There is a bookcase with one book in it. The image is dark purple and red (and so is the character). The text boxes are lighter red and yellow.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

The power of *Kind Words* is in its ability to foster empathy and connect us to the broader human experience. To play the game is to know that words can heal. Lessons with this game, then, should begin with the power of words. Civics, American Government, Social Studies, Speech, and English Language Arts educators might ask students to study the rhetoric of American politics, free speech,

hate speech, and social media information/disinformation online in order to begin critical discussions regarding the impact of words and language in society today. Educators could additionally ask students to consider their own personal online interactions or those they have witnessed on social media platforms like Twitter, Tik-Tok, Instagram, or Facebook. How were words used to heal or to harm others? Knowing the origins and purpose of the game--to combat cruelty and bullying online and in the media--students may gain historical insight by exploring and thinking critically about the events that transpired during the 2020 presidential election cycle, the Covid-19 pandemic, and beyond. What might the power of “kind words” be in situations like these? Why are “kind words” what we need in times of personal strife or uncertainty? To explore questions like these, students might keep a free-writing journal where they track current events and “trending” political or popular rhetoric. Educators could then have students reflect on the implications and impact of this language by thinking critically about what they have encountered and by constructing their own words around it. Or, students can start a private blog, website, collage, or other media artifact.

Given the seriousness of some letters, perhaps the most powerful way teachers might engage students in *Kind Words* is through the deliberate construction of open, in-class, safe spaces, where discussions regarding mental health issues and awareness can be fostered. Health educators, for example, might use letters from the game to teach age-appropriate strategies for identifying when a friend’s words may require care beyond mere “kindness.” Social workers, counselors, or other mental health care experts might be invited into the classroom to teach lessons on kindness and self-care, or to review the mental health resources embedded within *Kind Words* itself. Under the auspice of these professionals, students might engage in guided discussions where they role-play how to help a friend who has disclosed a diagnosis of anxiety or depression, for example, or who has revealed suicidal ideations. Providing students with these tools and opportunities is not only kind—it could save a life. Older students might be given opportunities to download and play the game on their own and report their experiences back to small peer groups or catalog them in their daily journals. To structure individual gameplay, teachers might provide a list of possible questions or phrases that scaffold students’ letters or responses. For example, “What words of kindness did you receive from others this week? What was your reaction when you read these words? What words of kindness did you offer others? What did you notice others were struggling with? How could you relate to these struggles? Did someone’s words signal that they may be in need of care beyond kindness? or How did the game create an environment of trust, gratitude, cultural validation, respect for diversity, inclusion, or solidarity?”

The traits of kindness might be further probed by deconstructing the words and language of the characters or historical figures the students are studying in history, literature, or film. Educators might ask: What attributes do kind folks possess? What words do they speak? How can we be more like the people we admire? Students might, for example, watch speeches or YouTube videos featuring leaders like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Theresa, Fred Rogers, or Malala Yousafzai and consider the ways that non-violent rhetoric and social advocacy have the power to assuage conflict and persuade others toward peace and kindness. Similarly, the words and attributes of fictional characters might also be probed in this way. How does friendship defeat Voldemort in *Harry Potter*? What do Auggie Pullman’s experiences in *Wonder* teach us about the importance of kindness? What is the overall message of Abileen Clark’s words, “You is kind, you

is smart, you is important,” in the *Help?* Students might collect quotes, scenes, or scenarios that demonstrate the power of kindness and discuss these examples together in class.

With teacher supervision and guidance, *Kind Words* might also be played collectively within the classroom. Teachers can easily display the game from one laptop or central computer and projector, and either self-select or randomly open anonymous player letters for review. As a writing warm-up, for example, students might read a submitted letter, and then write their own response to that player in their journal. Teachers could invite students to share their responses together, or collectively construct a response letter. The class might also decide on a “daily positive message” to place in a paper airplane for other players to enjoy. Further, students might be asked to publish a letter together so that they might check for responses in a future class period. This “class” letter might pose a simple question, for example: “What do you do to cheer yourself up when you’re having a bad day?” or “What gives you the most joy in the world?” or “Which young world leaders do you admire the most, and why?” or “If you could make any dream come true, what would it be?” The purpose of such questions is to elicit engaging responses that the class can open and respond to together. Once letters are received, students could vote on the sticker they send to each writer as a form of thanks.

Finally, the kindness promoted by the game might also be spilled into real-world spaces. After playing the game, educators could have students develop their own “kindness” projects. Some examples could be painting stones with kind words and placing them where others might see or find them; creating a kind words awareness campaign to combat online toxicity by designing posters to be displayed around the school; planning a “random act of kindness” to enact for another student, teacher, or administrator; designing children’s books with kindness themes, and visiting early elementary classrooms to read and gift these books to younger students; designating one student each day for “words of praise;” fostering “kind words” pen-pals with senior citizens in the community, or planting a “kindness” flower garden in the school or broader community. What the game makes most clear is that our words have the power to impact the lives of others. How can we, as teachers, use the promise and simple premise of the game to teach empathy and honor the lives of our students?



Figure 21.2. A player room and game menu in *Kind Words*. ALT TEXT: A purple and red character sits in a bedroom, at a desk. There is a book, bed, rug, stereo, desk, lamp, window, and a cat in the bedroom. It is a mix of different red tones. The background behind the bedroom is purple with different stars. There is a paper airplane flying toward the bedroom. On the right side are different icons for the user interface. The icons include a heart, paper and pencil, paper airplane, letter, and a question mark.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The game can easily be played in short 10-minute segments, as a bellringer or warm-up activity.
2. Since the content of *Kind Words* is generated through the personal letters submitted by players, it may be important to preview the letters prior to play. Given player anonymity, some letters may contain serious content or issues; the appropriateness of letters should be carefully evaluated by each instructor.
3. Teachers may wish to review the linked mental health resources with their students and discuss the importance of reaching out to mental health experts in times of need.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

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Journey (<https://thatgamecompany.com/journey/>)

Missed Messages (<https://zephyo.itch.io/missed-message>)

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LIVING COLORS

ELIANE BETTOCCHI

Game: *Living Colors: games about afro-resistance*

Developer: Interactive Stories Research Group

Year: 2020

Platform(s): HTML

Number of players: 1 to 6

Genre: Role-playing game (RPG)

Type of game: Analog

Curricular connections: Art; ethics; civics

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; creativity; critical thinking; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration;

Audience: 14+ years through adult

Length of time: 1 to 4 hours

Where to play: Anywhere with internet access

Cost: Free

URL: <https://livingcolors.netlify.app/>

SUMMARY

This online analog role-playing game presents the practical and direct consequences of everyday racism, provoking a sensation of discomfort that will open the space necessary for the manifestation of an Orisha, which is a messenger spirit in the West African Yoruba people's religion. It is important to note that by "messenger spirit" we do not mean that the character becomes immaterial, but rather receives special abilities to act as a messenger of the Orisha. These messengers are connected to the symbolic and religious repertoires of the African-Diasporic culture, so they cannot manifest in societies that are authoritarian and forcibly homogeneous. In such societies, they tend to be progressively forgotten and run the risk of disappearing. Thus, the main objective of this game is to simulate the experience of building an African-Diasporic identity from the concept of Orisha and from there, create connections to activism. After creating the characters, the players will be offered 16 role-playing game (RPG) adventures, each one dealing with a different aspect of a conspiracy against a group of activists from a fictional community in a Brazilian city. The conspiracy involves opposition from politicians, businesspeople, media/religion groups and police-militia. The game begins with the adventure "What ship is this?" During the game, the characters become magical beings after receiving

a divine revelation, thus becoming messenger spirits of a divinity. There are two main challenges in the games: one ethical and one conceptual. Both parameters are defined by the character's Orisha, as well as other factors. This promotes replayability as each playthrough might access a different perspective that helps players to comprehend the complex events in the game.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

This game is recommended for high schoolers and mature audiences due to its graphic images and content. It is a game that aims to show the uncomfortable aspects of racism and how to deal with racial bias and discrimination on a daily basis. Therefore, the very first step is for educators to play the game and explore the website.

The second step is to get to know your group of students. Do they understand the differences among the terms bias, microaggressions and macroaggressions, discrimination, prejudice, or racism? Which biases have they encountered? Do they know the differences between explicit and implicit bias? Knowing your group might help you decide your primary learning goal with this game. Is it to introduce them to racism; help them heal wounds caused by racism; help them recognize and reduce their own biases; or something else related to racism?

After establishing this groundwork, you should ask your group if they prefer to play individually, in small groups, or all together. If they choose individually or in small groups, give them access to the internet and about 1 hour to create their characters. If they choose to play all together, the best way is for an educator to project or share their screen to cast the website, and guide the group through the decisions. The students could collectively vote on decisions via an anonymous polling application or they can take turns choosing. But, again, that depends on your goals and your group profile.

The next step is character creation. You can pause after that activity and ask questions about how students expressed themselves through the character they created, or why they chose their character's attributes. Students can sketch an image of their character or create a media artifact such as fan fiction related to them. Or, the students can immediately play the RPG adventure. This RPG adventure requires at least 2 hours, no matter how you play it.

This game has important limitations. It can trigger unpleasant experiences and feelings particularly due to graphic images and language (including slurs), as well as the core themes of violence and racism. Therefore, the best way to deal with possible conflicts is to know your group and talk to them before offering the game. Make sure that players know what to expect and how to opt out. We suggest that educators take time to play the RPG themselves, get familiar with the rules, and then choose how and whether the game should be played in the classroom.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Play the game yourself and explore the pages on the website (<https://livingcolors.netlify.app/>).
2. If students play individually or in small groups, give them access to the internet and about 1 hour to create their characters. They can use cell phones, PCs, or iPads.
3. Consider alternate assignments or exercises in case students want to opt out, such as Project Implicit (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>).

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

A gata sob o ojá (<https://marcusvinicius.itch.io/a-gata-sob-o-oja>)

A Nova Califórnia (https://store.steampowered.com/app/699510/The_New_California/)

Aurion: Legacy of the Kori-Odan (https://store.steampowered.com/app/368080/Aurion_Legacy_of_the_KoriOdan/)

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LOST & FOUND (GAME SERIES)

OWEN GOTTLIEB

Game: *Lost & Found*; *Lost & Found: Order in the Court – the Party Game*; *Lost & Found: New Harvest*

Developer: MAGIC Spell Studios (RIT), Initiative in Religion, Culture, and Policy.

Year: 2017, 2020

Platform(s): Tabletop

Number of players: 2-5 players for Strategy Games, 3-5 players for the Party Game (both games support more players as well)

Genre: Mid-weight “euro” style game; party game

Type of game: Analog (digital mobile prototype exists for the first game)

Curricular connections: Comparative religion; medieval history; Judaism; Islam; legal history; religious law; art history, legal reasoning and ethics

Possible skills taught: *Lost & Found* and *Lost & Found: New Harvest*: collaboration and cooperation along with competition; trade-off decision making, *Lost & Found: Order in the Court – the Party Game*: legal and ethical reasoning skills, improvisational storytelling

Audience: *Lost & Found* and *New Harvest*: High School and up; *Lost & Found: Order in the Court – the Party Game*: Jr. High and up.

Length of time: *Lost & Found*: 60-90 min; *Order in the Court – the Party Game*: 30-60 min; *New Harvest*: 60-90 min

Where to play: All games in series: classroom or home; party-game also good for camp and parties

Cost: *Lost & Found*: \$55.99; *Order in the Court – the Party Game*: \$52.99; *New Harvest*: \$59.99

URL: www.lostandfoundthegame.com

SUMMARY

The *Lost & Found* series of games is set in 12th-century Fustat (Old Cairo). It teaches about prosocial aspects of religious legal systems, promoting understanding of religious traditions’ contributions to intra and cross-community collaboration and sustainable governance practices. The first game in the series is a strategy game called *Lost & Found* (high school and up). In *Lost & Found*, players take on the role of villagers who must balance family needs with communal needs. They must balance cooperative actions even while addressing individual needs. The second game in the series, *Lost & Found: Order in the Court – the Party Game* (12 and up) is a fast-paced storytelling and judging game. Players compete to tell the best story about how a medieval legal ruling may have gotten to court in the first place. The game emphasizes legal reasoning. *Lost & Found* and *Order in the Court* both teach elements of the Mishneh Torah, the Jewish legal code written by Moses Maimonides. Maimonides

was influenced by the works of Islamic legal scholars and philosophers such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Al Ghazali; he also influenced Islamic scholars. The 3rd and newest module, *Lost & Found: New Harvest*, draws from sources such as the Averroes' (Ibn Rushd) *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer* and *Al-Hidayah* by Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani. This Islamic law module also allows players to learn about the shared relationship between Jewish and Islamic legal systems of medieval North Africa. *New Harvest* can be played as a stand-alone game, or it can be paired with the original *Lost & Found* base game, so that players can take on both Jewish and Muslim roles and explore how these laws play out for these two communities.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

In this game, players have the opportunity to learn about the function of religious law in the lives of Jews and Muslims in the 12th century. Religion must be contextualized in time and place, and by situating Judaism and Islam at this particular moment in medieval North Africa, the games provide cases to broaden and deepen understanding of religious law and of ways of understanding Islam and Judaism.

Key techniques to using the *Lost & Found* games in the classroom include focusing on primary source material that leads to more informed gameplay, enhanced practice of game-play techniques prior to play, and media literacy about game design (Gottlieb and Clybor (2022); Gottlieb and Schreiber (2020b)). Educators may want to lead reflective discussion on the emotional reaction to losing or finding an object, or on the deliberative and collaborative processes of navigating trade-off decisions. Educators can have students wrestle with the trade-off decisions and the law in the strategy games, such as the needs of the community versus the needs of one's family. Primary source material can be found under Related Games & Media.

The strategy games (*Lost & Found* and *New Harvest*) require time to play through a full game and educators might consider multiple game sessions. The games are both collaborative and cooperative. Any or all players can win, but if anyone goes destitute, all players lose. As with many learning games, time to reflect in discussion is key, so educators should make sure there are times for reflection on the play experience. Because the games can be used for various subject matters ranging from comparative religious literacy to medieval history to legal history to art history, educators should consider which key elements they wish to emphasize in their own learning environments. Note that *New Harvest* includes a historical reference guide in the instructional booklet.

While playing *Order in the Court – the Party Game*, give learners a couple of practice rounds of play. Educators should remind the students that, after the judge scores, the historical answer can be found on the reverse side of the ruling card. The game can be played with more than five players as well and the deck can be split to allow for multiple groups. It is possible to also use the Mishneh Torah source text to show the relationship between a given law and the way the ruling cards are written. Be careful not to use more than two or three additional examples prior to play to preserve rulings. Using both the strategy games and party game together allows for particular emphasis on trade-off decision-making (strategy games) and legal reasoning (the party game).

The system is flexible, so preparation is key for decisions about which aspects of the game will be most resonant with learning goals. For example, if an educator wants to emphasize the art history of the

period and time, then play can lead to organized discussions about depictions in the strategy games of architecture, ritual objects, and material culture researched and pictured in the game. If comparing Jewish and Islamic approaches to the law is of particular resonance to the learners, then playing a game combining the base *Lost & Found* with *New Harvest* is ideal (instructions to do so are in the *New Harvest* booklet).

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Play each game before bringing it to the classroom or learning setting. Allow time for learning the game(s) yourself. Take advantage of the free demo guides for the strategy games (*Lost & Found* and *Lost & Found: New Harvest*) on the website: www.lostandfoundthegame.com (upper right corner under “demo sheet”)
2. Consider how you will wrap into your curriculum goals, such as teaching material the games are based on prior to play. This might include looking at the Mishneh Torah passages, or learning about Fustat in the 12th century.
3. Play through a round with the learners as a way to teach the game. *Order in the Court* comes with example play-throughs in the instructional booklet, and you can add additional learning rounds
4. Consider how you wish to formulate the lesson, how much of the game(s) you want to play either before or after lecture and or discussion.
5. Allow for reflection time and discussion after play—either play session or play rounds
6. Consider using articles available about the design of the game to discuss the medium of game designs for history.
7. Consider discussing how players felt when their objects went missing or were returned and engaging them in discussion about why the laws might be set up the way they are set up.

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MINECRAFT

MAMTA SHAH, SIIRI PAANANEN, & OUTI LAITI

Game: *Minecraft*

Developer: Mojang Studios

Year: 2011

Platform(s): Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch, iOS, Android, Windows 10

Number of players: 1-50+ players depending on the kind of multiplayer game being played

Genre: Sandbox; survival

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Engineering; math; art; science; theater; language/culture; history; geology; chemistry; architecture

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; creativity; problem solving; design; inquiry; communication; construction; expression; languages

Audience: PEGI: 7+, ESRB 10+ years

Length of time: 15-60 minutes per session, on average

Where to play: In a classroom, at home, online, in libraries, at after-school activities

Cost: ~\$27-30. The license for each edition (e.g., Java, Bedrock, Education) must be bought separately. Subscriptions to Minecraft Realms have multiple pricing options too.

URL: <https://www.minecraft.net/>

SUMMARY

Minecraft is an open-world sandbox game that allows players to explore and create. Gameplay takes place in a pixelated 3D environment resembling a natural world with many different biomes (e.g., forests, tundra, and deserts) and ambient music. Every element in the world is made from blocks of corresponding materials. For example, trees are made from blocks of wood and ores from blocks of ore. Players can break apart and collect these blocks using their hands or tools (e.g., pickaxe) crafted in the game using gathered materials. In the survival mode, as the name suggests, survival is the key objective, which is predicated on player's ability to maintain their health and wellbeing (maintaining proper levels of nourishment). Players must also create weapons and build shelters to protect themselves from the attack of hostile mobs (e.g., zombies, wither skeleton). In addition, players can choose the difficulty level based on their skill and experience (peaceful, easy, normal, hard, and hardcore mode). Their choices impact the ease of gameplay and the nature of challenges players will encounter. In the creative mode, players can use their imagination and an unrestricted supply of materials to build anything. Players are invincible in this mode, and they are also granted the ability

to fly in the game world, literally and figuratively. Essentially, *Minecraft* teaches the player primarily through pure discovery. Players are given the opportunity to freely explore the game, set objectives and create artifacts, collaborate, cooperate or compete, and make their own decisions without explicit direct instructions or guidance from the game. These affordances of *Minecraft* lend the game to be applied for teaching many different educational topics. In this chapter, we discuss the application of *Minecraft* in the context of two informal settings; the home and Indigenous communities, which have infrequently been written about in the vast literature on *Minecraft*. We hope that parents, caregivers, and educators (e.g., youth coordinators, classroom teachers) may find these illustrations and tips useful. Given the context of this book, our unique applications enable parents and educators to be guides and nurture children's and students' interests and expertise in *Minecraft*.



Figure 24.1. Leading a *Minecraft* board game session (L) and playing *Minecraft* on Xbox after returning from summer camp (2020 and 2021) in the afternoon. ALT TEXT: There are two photos. On the left is a child with black hair and brown skin, They are crouched on the floor and looking over a board that has green, yellow, and brown cubes on it. There is another board in the foreground. There are cards around the floor that are green and brown, and others that are white. They are not legible. There is a box with the title "Minecraft" on it. On the right is a child with black hair and brown skin. They are looking at a television screen in a den with bookcases on either side of the television. The screen has a digital game playing on it that is purple, white, and black. It is not clear what the screen says on it, but there are words.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Home Context by Mamta Shah

Minecraft is hugely popular among children ages 3-12, the peak being between ages 6-8 (Mavoa et al., 2018). However, little is known about children's evolution as they learn to play the game, socialize (e.g., discussion boards, chat rooms), and engage in the meta-game materials (e.g., YouTube) in home settings (Dezuanni, 2018; 2020). Even less is known about the role of parents (Hjorth et al., 2020). Since the summer of 2020, I (Mamta Shah) have been interested in creating and supporting opportunities for my son Mihir (pseudonym, now 9) to hang out, mess around, and geek out in

Minecraft (Ito, 2009). For this chapter, I joyfully reflect on my experiences as a parent, a learning scientist, and a game-based learning researcher to describe some ways in which parents can help their kids learn through *Minecraft*. These approaches are equally applicable by teachers interested in supporting the use of *Minecraft* in the classroom, at home, and through flipped instruction opportunities.

Mihir evolved from being a novice player to a self-identified “master builder” through his access to the game from the story mode on Netflix, to playing offline on our Xbox 360 (see Figure 24.1), to playing online (single-player) before subscribing to realms on *Minecraft Java Edition* for multiplayer game playing. The following are ways parents may share *Minecraft* experiences with their children.

1. *Minecraft Story Mode* on Netflix—The digital platform hosts *Minecraft’s* story mode, an episodic point-and-click narrative experience. Viewers input decisions that affect the course of the story, using a remote control. This resource is simple, yet engaging, especially for younger players.
2. *Minecraft: Biomes and Builders*—This easy-to-learn strategy and turn-taking board game is designed collaboratively with Mojang to emulate the experience of playing *Minecraft* (e.g., build structures, fight mobs). The game is great for families and an opportunity for children to draw references and showcase their growing vocabulary from the digital version (see Figure 24.1).

Parents can also support their children in exploring and contributing to the ever-expanding *Minecraft* culture beyond the game environment. Our favorite ones have been books and YouTube videos.

1. Books—Each year, many fiction and non-fiction *Minecraft* books get published. They are an excellent resource for children to refer to for guidance on basics and specific topics, tutorials and hacks, projects and inspirations (independently and with parents) (see Figure 24.2). Parents may consider encouraging their children to journal their experiences or create their own book of *Minecraft* creations (see Figure 24.3).
2. YouTube—The platform is ripe with videos created by players and for players of all levels of fluency with *Minecraft* (Shah, 2021). Mihir and I watch videos to collectively expand our knowledge about the game (see Figure 24.4). This naturally paved the way for Mihir’s desire to create informative videos for others (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raYxnYklfPI>).



Figure 24.2. From learning about the basics (R) to using books as references (L). ALT TEXT: In the left image, a child with a mask on, brown skin, and black hair writes in a notebook as they crouch on the floor. A book, "Minecraft" is next to the child at a bench. On the right is a child with black hair and brown skin. They are sitting and reading a book. A Minecraft board game and a few books are next to the child.

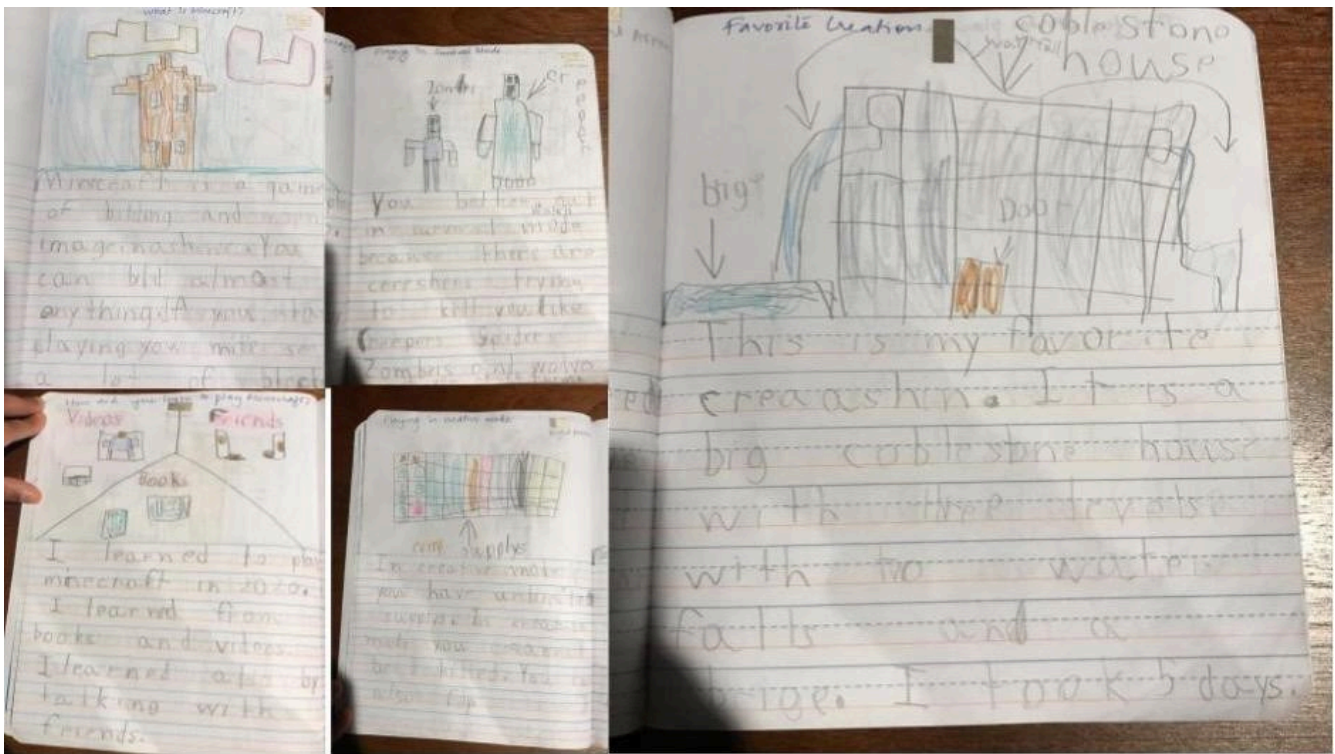


Figure 24.3. Mihir's Play Journal. ALT TEXT: There are two photos. On the left is one with four pages showing. At the top of each page is a drawing in crayon and at the bottom are some sentences written by a child. One of the pages says "I learned to play Minecraft in 2020. I learned from books and videos. I learned also by talking with friends." There is a picture at the top of Videos, Friends, and Books, labeled. The right image has a page that is more closeup. At the top of the page is a building labeled "house." The words below say, "This is my favorite creaashin [sic]. It is a big cobble stone [sic] house with three levels with two water falls and a [unreadable]. I took 5 days."

Date	Question	Notes captured in Mihir's words from before and after watching a video related to his question.
10/5/2021	How do you make a mine in Minecraft?	I know you can use TNT to make a mine, use branch mining, use strip mining and you could end up killing yourself while you are mining. Those are some of the things I already know about mining. I am looking for additional tips on how to create a mine and I need to revisit this question because this is an important part of the game. This video taught me about grid and compact mining. I did do the spelunking <u>mining</u> but I didn't know the name for it until now. I also have done ravine mining first time accidentally when I was in survival peaceful. I spent the night doing that. One time I was playing in Carla's realm and despite her telling me not go into the ravine I did and mined iron. Then when I got back to the surface, vindicators attacked <u>me</u> and I died.
10/06/2021	How do you use a jungle temple in Minecraft?	A jungle temple is basically a temple in a jungle made of stones and mossy cobble stone and cobble stone. It has traps in them and at the end of those traps there are <u>loots</u> . You might a horse <u>saddle</u> , pig <u>sadle</u> , and you can find horse armors. I think I learned about jungle temples from one of the books. I want to learn how to use jungle temples. I <u>dont</u> know exactly how to frame it but <u>thats</u> I what I want to learn about. This video showed me things that I know like dispensers (how to disarm them), how to make sure you <u>dont</u> trip on the trip wire and the levers to open a secret passage to the treasure. After watching this video and another one- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB6L3y_57jQ the right question is how to loot a jungle temple.
10/11/2021	How to build a vegetable and fruit garden in Minecraft?	I know how to grow things like beetroot, potatoes, carrots, wheat, pumpkins, melons and harvest these things. But there is more I can learn about growing a garden. I like the design of the garden shown in this video. The placing of the blocks and plants was done well. I will think about the placement of plants in a similar way in my ginormous garden.

Figure 24.4. Expanding Knowledge Through YouTube. ALT TEXT: A chart that shows different dates, questions, and "Notes captured in Mihir's words from before and after watching a video related to his question." The first question dated 10/5/2021 is "How do you make a mine in Minecraft?" The notes say, "I know you can use TNT to make a mine, use branch mining... and it goes on about what the video taught. The next says, "How do you use a jungle temple in Minecraft" and is dated 10/06/2021. The notes say, "A jungle temple is basically a template made of stones and cobblestone and cobblestone. It has traps in them...." and goes on about using the video to add animals and things like dispensers and trip wire. The third question is dated 10/11/2021 and says "How to build a vegetable and fruit garden in Minecraft. It says as notes, "I know how to grow things like beetroot, potatoes, carrots, wheat, pumpkins..." and it explains how to plant and harvest them and growing a garden.

Indigenous Communities by Siiri Paananen and Outi Laiti

Minecraft has become a popular tool of play and creation in Indigenous communities around the world, making it a metaverse for Indigenous cultures. For example, *Ngā Motu* is a *Minecraft* world, created in collaboration with Microsoft, where children in Aotearoa, New Zealand, can have in-game lessons of the language, history, and culture of the Māori. In addition, the world is open to everyone with a ready lesson plan, helping visitors to understand their position when visiting and to respect the environment as a cultural heritage of the Māori.

Self-determination is the key feature in Indigenous game design, meaning that Indigenous people are in key roles throughout the game creation process (LaPensée et al., 2021). One way to create sovereign virtual spaces, preserve Indigenous cultural heritage, and make living cultural content is game development (Laiti, 2021). *Minecraft* has been recognized as one of the most optimal platforms for presenting and promoting cultural heritage (Garcia-Fernandez & Medeiros 2019), making it cost-effective, and working as a ready-made framework as opposed to building a game from scratch.

Outakoski et al. (2018) have studied Sámi language revitalization in the era of social media and gaming, and the relevance of these tools for the Sámi language. Sámi languages are the very core of Sámi educational principles as all Sámi languages are endangered due to colonization and assimilation policies, especially in the past. Most of the Sámi children live outside of *Sápmi* (Sámi region), having fewer possibilities to interact with their community members in their native language. Therefore, *Minecraft* can function as a Sámi metaverse and an online Sámi community.

The benefits of *Minecraft* have also been noticed in Sámi communities, where *Minecraft* has been used as part of an afternoon activity for children over 7 years (PEGI 7). We will now review how a Sámi community in Utsjoki has used *Minecraft* as a part of their after-school activity. This can act as an example for other communities, on how they can use *Minecraft* to foster education, community, and cultural heritage.

The *Minecraft* after-school activities described here are the collaboration results of Deanuleagis Sá mástit-project (Municipality of Utsjoki) and School of Gaming (sog.gg). The educators developed an after-school activity that took place in the Northern Sámi language in *Minecraft*. For example, the educators supported the active usage of Northern Sámi by renaming the in-game activities with the language instead of English. The educators also uplifted networking with Sámi speakers by putting the students into groups and giving them tasks. The educators let the students take the lead on design and technical activity, while the educators scaffolded the cultural context and curated the tasks to complete inside the game—e.g. building a *lávvu* (Figure 24.5). As there are right and wrong ways of building a *lávvu* in real life, in *Minecraft* (and in Sámi education) the right way is found best via trial and error. The educator can support the creation from their own experience (e.g. building a real *lávvu*) and encourage children to explore how real life and *Minecraft* worlds can connect.

Educators implementing this type of activity should consider sharing responsibilities with others. For example, educators might need guidance and technical support for the parents if students are playing at home (e.g., helping with installations of the game). Educators might want to consider hiring young Sámi gamers who play *Minecraft* as apprentice educators. They can guide the children in the game world as experts, implementing contemporary master-apprentice learning models.

For now, there is no open access Sámi world in *Minecraft* with a lesson plan in English. Indigenous communities have limited resources; thus, the main focus is revitalizing Sámi languages via closed sovereign spaces. However, The Norwegian Sámi Parliament building is available in *Minecraft: Education Edition* in Norwegian and Sámi languages. The after-school activity can be used for building Sámi *Minecraft* environments that may turn into open-access learning platforms for all students in the future (See Figure 24.5).

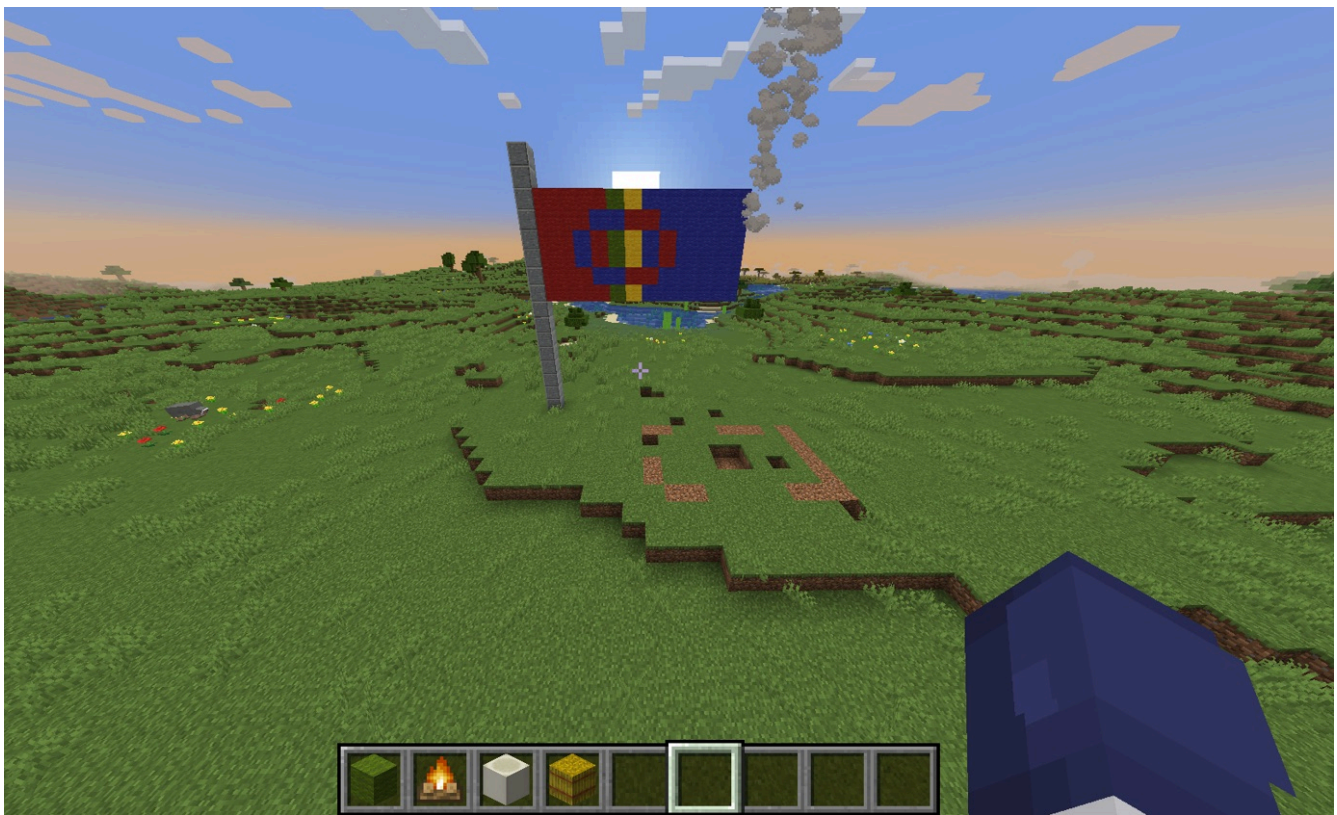


Figure 24.5. Every day can be a Sámi flag day in Minecraft. The smoke is coming from *lávvu*, a traditional Sámi tent. Screenshot and Minecraft Sámi art by Aslan Laiti. ALT TEXT: A screenshot of Minecraft. Most of the picture is green grass that is pixelated, with a flag in the middle of the image with red, blue, green, and yellow. There is red on one side and blue on the other side, with yellow and green stripes in the middle. There is a blue and red circle on top of it. There is a blue sky and clouds, with some smoke in the distance. At the bottom there is an inventory, which is a strip of boxes with some items in the boxes. There is a grass block that is a green cube, a bonfire, a wool block that is a gray cube, and a hay stack, that is a yellow cube. The other parts of the inventory are empty.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

For parents and teachers

1. *Minecraft* playdates (collaboratively in person and remotely via Zoom), *Minecraft* Facetimes with family and friends (e.g., describing a creation, asking for advice, sharing knowledge), and visits to library and bookstore can facilitate rich moments and spaces for playing and learning.
2. Connected Camps (<https://connectedcamps.com/online-learning-with-minecraft>) and Outschool (<https://outschool.com/search?q=mincraft#abl9dzfu00>) offer many courses all year round. Children, adolescents, and young adults (YA) can connect with other *Minecraft* players and mentors in online, guided, and synchronous experiences.

For Indigenous Contexts

1. *Minecraft* has been translated into Northern Sámi language, so by playing, one can learn words in Northern Sámi. The translation is found in the *Minecraft* menu for the *Java* version, and translation packages for *Bedrock* and *Education* versions can be found e.g. here (<https://www.gaisi.org/minecraft>).
2. When planning to organize *Minecraft* after-school activities for adolescents, educators should

check to see if there is a ready-made possibility for it. Computer classes in school, gaming rooms, or similar places might already have *Minecraft* licenses and installations.

3. Educators outside Indigenous communities can explore the *Minecraft* world of the Sámi Parliament in Norway (available in *Minecraft: Education Edition* in Norwegian and Sámi languages).
4. Tech support or other assistance might be needed for organizing *Minecraft* activities, take it into consideration during planning.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Books on *Minecraft* (<https://shop.minecraft.net/collections/books>)

Minecraft Educational Edition (<https://education.minecraft.net/>)

Indigenous Stories Challenge (<https://education.minecraft.net/en-us/challenges/indigenous-stories>)

Explore Māori Culture with Minecraft (<https://education.minecraft.net/en-us/resources/learn-maori>)

Explore Indigenous History and Culture with Manito Ahbee Aki (<https://education.minecraft.net/en-us/blog/explore-indigenous-history-and-culture-with-manito-ahbee-aki>)

The Sámi Parliament, Karasjok/Norway. RevenJoakimMc (<https://www.planetminecraft.com/project/the-sami-parliament-karasjok-norway/>)

Live Gaming Lemet Máhtiin. Sámediggi Sametinget (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-lSya-GmPE>)

Gávpotfearán. Ludocraft (<https://ludocraft.com/gavpotfearan/>)

Indylan. Mobile Virtual Learning for Indigenous Languages (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.indylan>)

Sámi Game Jam. Hosted by Finnish Game Jam (<https://itch.io/jam/sami-game-jam>)

School of Gaming (<https://en.sog.gg/>)

Skábma – Snowfall. Red Stage Entertainment (https://store.steampowered.com/app/1665280/Skabma__Snowfall/)

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MORRA CINEMATIC GAME SYSTEM

SAM A. LEIF & MATTHEW MONTALTO

Game: *Morra Cinematic Game System*

Developer: Mighty Narwhal Productions

Year: 2021

Platform(s): Tabletop

Number of players: Technically unlimited; 5-6 players optimal

Genre: Tabletop role-playing game; live-action role-playing game

Type of game: Analog

Curricular connections: Theater; history; language; social studies; numeracy; ethics

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking; social and emotional learning (SEL); problem-solving; empathy; identity; social skills; collaboration; communication; creativity; ethical decision-making; executive function

Audience: 10+ years through adult

Length of time: Flexible, 30 minutes–5+ hours (with breaks)

Where to play: Classroom; home; small group settings; afterschool program

Cost: \$19.99 digital copy

URL: <https://mightynarwhal.com>

SUMMARY

In the *Morra Cinematic Game System (Morra)*, players assume the roles of Actors in a movie. The leader takes on the role of the Director, and the narrative structure for the game is a movie. This movie can be a spaghetti western, an epic fantasy, or a heroic action-adventure. *Morra* allows the group to explore their storytelling abilities while working together to come up with their collaborative movie. A first step is to decide what roles people will be taking for the game. Most students should take on the roles of the game's actors. Educators can also use students to act as Director for multiple small groups. This movie structure for the game gives players a vocabulary and mechanics for communicating when the narrative crosses boundaries that may harm them in any way. For example, a player or Director can say "cut" if they feel uncomfortable. The group then immediately moves to the "Writer's Room," where changes can be made to the game to accommodate players' concerns and reestablish a safe gaming and storytelling environment. During gameplay, improvisation, problem-solving, creative thinking, and teamwork are all used and developed. *Morra* embodied the 'nothing about us without us' mantra and included a diverse writing and design team, building ideas of inclusivity and equity

into the game from the foundation. *Morra* can be played in a table-top style or in a live-action style. When played table-top style, players will sit together around a table to play the game, describing the actions taking place in a scene for others to imagine. In live-action play, players safely act out scenes in an improvisational fashion, including opportunities such as dressing up as their characters. *Morra* permits educators to tackle sensitive social and ethical inequities plaguing our society by fostering empathy and perspective-changing in a positive, non-threatening manner.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Prior to using a system like *Morra* in the classroom, the teacher should have a conversation about expectations in the game space. Role-playing games can provide an opportunity to create an inclusive environment, but only if intentionally established. It is possible to use this style of game and never address topics of equity, inclusion, or justice, so teachers should set expectations from the beginning regarding the environment they are trying to create. Below we provide examples of such intentional uses of the *Morra* system in a middle school and a high school classroom.

In any classroom setting, *Morra* can be used to cultivate a safe space to confront difficult topics. *Morra* can facilitate developing and practicing skills required to diffuse potential racist or inequitable situations and model how to proactively create anti-racist, inclusive communities. The teacher as Director can weave realistic scenarios throughout the movie allowing students the opportunity to practice confronting inequity and promoting inclusion, compassion, care, equity, and justice in a safe, make-believe space. What's important here is that missteps are correctable. Students can follow a path, realize they could have made a different choice, and "back up" to replay the scene, choosing a different reaction. In a social studies class, educators can present a scenario featuring negative social interactions and ask students to roleplay how they might engage prosocially to foster good citizenship. In a history class, educators may present a historical setting and have students roleplay as everyday citizens within that time period, taking on the persona of the disempowered. In both classes, educators use the rules and structures of *Morra* to guide students through the exercises.

In a middle school classroom, educators can use *Morra* character development to provide structure for creative writing. Character embodiment (i.e., role-playing) allows the player to assume the voice, personality, and culture of their created character. Characterization is an essential part of facilitating embodiment; it allows students to understand their characters and how each character's personality, motivations, and perspectives drive their actions. Educators could use the lens of PAIRS to achieve characterization, leading students through developing a character's physical features, actions or attitudes, inner thoughts, reactions, and methods of speech. To illustrate, see the sample lesson plan below fostering characterization. Educators can have students begin to roleplay with each other through a scenario to help students visualize and solidify their characterization.

In a high school classroom, *Morra's* setting design components provide ample opportunities for proactively creating a setting that considers issues of social justice and equity and promotes anti-racist inclusive communities. Educators can assist students in creating an entire world setting and adventure for their classmates to complete. Set building and scene-creation can be facilitated by prompts asking Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of a potential movie. Educators can have students break into small groups, pick a prompt, and play out a scene situated in that world. Further, educators can direct students to design their world to explicitly include disempowered students such

as students of color, neurodivergent students, students with differing needs, LGBTQA++ students, and/or students from marginalized ethnic backgrounds. For example, in designing an ideal world, issues present in the real world can be discussed in terms of root causes, potential solutions, and roadblocks toward achieving a more inclusive world. Students can roleplay in small groups to answer questions such as who could facilitate a change to the identified social issue and what might the solution look like. Educators can then facilitate a larger group discussion on what systematic barriers exist that have stopped progression in ‘real life.’

Sample Characterization Lesson Plan for Middle School:

Day 1: Develop a character

- 5 physical traits
- 5 actions the character has taken or will take
- 5 thoughts the character has
- 5 reactions others have about their character
- 5 descriptions of the method of speech
- 5 motivations that guide the character
- Combine into a narrative background

Day 2: Respond to prompts

- Trade paper with another student
- Students will write a short story about the character they received based on a prompt
- Example Prompts:
 - How would this character react to ...
 - How would this character feel if ...
 - Describe a meetup between this character and ...
- In small groups, discuss the stories written, the ways the character retained or deviated from the original conceptualization, and why the choices were made
- Update their character descriptions to increase clarity

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Establish a code of conduct and behavior guidelines such as respecting boundaries, allowing everyone time to speak and share their thoughts and input, speaking respectfully, and taking breaks when needed.
2. Provide a quick-reference handout to each student listing basic rules such as Dramatic Moment checks and encounter guidelines. The website drivethrurpg.com is a great resource for these types of materials.
3. In addition to their own actor’s characteristics, students can create important non-player characters they may encounter such as merchants, family relations, or community members.

4. It might be useful to start with a short, simple adventure and pre-made characters so students can experience the game before diving into making it their own. The *Morra Cinematic Game System* book contains a number of settings, adventures, and premade characters.
5. Encourage students to take notes during the game.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Dungeons & Dragons (<https://dnd.wizards.com>)

Hero Kids (<https://www.heroforgegames.com/hero-kids/>)

Kids on Bikes (<https://www.huntersentertainment.com/kidsonbikesrpg>)

Roll20 Virtual Tabletop (<https://roll20.net/>)

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NIGHT IN THE WOODS

AHU YOLAÇ

Game: *Night in the Woods*

Developer: Infinite Fall, Secret Lab, Studio Finji

Year: 2017

Platform(s): PC, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, iOS, Xbox One

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Adventure Game, Platform Game

Type of game: Video Game

Curricular connections: Humanities, literature, history, art, social studies, informal learning

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking, empathy, self-reflection

Audience: 12+ years old

Length of time: 5 to 8 hours

Where to play: At home, or classroom in short sections

Cost: \$19.99

URL: <http://www.nightinthewoods.com/>

SUMMARY

Night in the Woods (NITW) is an adventure platform game. The game does not require high-level skills with its controls that consist of simple point-and-click interactions and dialogue choices. We start playing as Mae, a 20-year-old who returns to her hometown instead of starting a new semester of college. As Mae, we experience her mysterious dreams at night, and in the morning, we spend our days hanging around in town. The overall design of the town makes us feel trapped and forces us to sit with and experience Mae's boredom. Unlike many games, NITW does not present us with clear goals to complete, and we do not understand if there is an end or if we are close to it at any point during most of the gameplay. The goals are short-term and feel random, such as deciding to visit a friend at work after texting with them in the morning. The overall experience of embodying Mae as a game character is boring, repetitive, and aimless in the best possible way. Throughout these aimless wanderings, we have conversations with locals, including our old friends that we often hang out with, revealing information about Mae's understanding of herself, the world, and the stories of others. These interactions show that Mae suffers from mental health issues (including anxiety, depression, and dissociative identity disorder). Therefore, we start experiencing Mae's daily interactions from a mental health perspective as the narrative slowly unravels and reveals the depths of her issues. The

boredom, aimlessness, and repetitiveness that the game presents become tools for communicating Mae's mental state and situation. *Author's Note: A member of the game development team has had allegations that they are abusive in the workplace. So, even though the focus of this chapter is the narrative experience of the game, which is different from that individual's role in the development of NITW, it is important to acknowledge these allegations and hold the industry accountable for creating safe workplace environments.*



Figure 26.1. Mae and Bea chatting about life in the game *Night in the Woods*. ALT TEXT: There is a blue screen with some yellow and red lights on a bridge in the background. In the foreground are two characters that are animallike. One has a long snout and one has a round face and pointy ears. The pointy-eared creature says, "We're both trapped."

HOW TO USE THE GAME

NITW is a game that offers a multilayered look into mental health. While the focus of this chapter is to highlight *NITW* as an educational tool to shift the perception of mental health, it is also important to address that the game presents us with multiple other lenses of inclusion, such as LGBTQ+ representation, elitism, and inequity of capitalism, which are inevitably tied to mental health. The game encourages us to reflect on its unconventional loose goal structure and create a safe space for exploring the issues it highlights through a relatable experience (Flanagan, 2013).

NITW presents opportunities to discuss the gameplay experience in different levels and varying depths with its players, depending on the age group and context. The story is divided by days and events as chapters in the game. Each of these chapters can be used for collective gameplay that can be fitted into a class period. However, since it is a single-player game, it is essential to engage the students in collective decision-making as the game is being played together in the classroom. This can be done with engaging activities like voting, collective brainstorming, and sketching. In addition to traditional materials, digital tools such as Poll Everywhere, Miro, Figma, Mural, and Padlet can be used by educators to engage their students in these group activities.

While *NITW* is not appropriate for anyone below 12 years old, it might be helpful to have different age groups play different parts of the game depending on their needs, as identified by their teacher/parent. For example, if a student has mental health issues related to their sexual identity and acceptance, the related sections (such as Mae's encounters with other LGBTQ+ people) from the game can be explicitly targeted to create meaningful discussions with the students and their peers.

Additionally, educators can use *NITW* for humanities-focused courses like art, history, and literature to encourage critical thinking. As an interactive fiction game, *NITW* is very dialogue-heavy and can be used as an alternative literature piece where students can read and interact with the game collectively. While students choose how to reply to the characters, the teachers can guide the conversations to highlight its themes in a similar way to how textual analysis or book discussions might be conducted. The characters, situations, and events can be analyzed around the concept of mental health and the factors surrounding it.

The replayability of the game also brings more opportunities for class implementation where educators can encourage students to explore alternative storylines and compare them. Teachers can also ask students to write their own "fan fiction" storylines for the characters as a creative writing practice around critical issues such as belonging, identity, and mental health.

Additionally, the game depicts an interesting commentary on capitalism, economics, the history of these systems, and how they impact small-scale towns related to inclusivity and mental health. In a class where socioeconomic systems and their histories are discussed, the game can be leveraged to help learners explore different views. Educators can have students form teams of different opinions, similar to debate teams, and explore different in-game reactions they receive from townspeople based on which ideologies they support through Mae's words. For example, the chapter where Mae and her friends talk with the townspeople in the mines can be a good educational tool to discuss conflicting views regarding class.

Finally, the game can be used in art class. Educators can facilitate a collective gameplay session where students imagine and design themselves as townspeople in the game. Since the game characters are anthropomorphized animals that have simple designs, students can interpret it in their art-making process in a playful, engaging way while still thinking about the larger-scale issues that are addressed in the game in relation to their own experiences. This can allow the teacher to create conversations around mental health and inclusivity through students' lived experiences.

These are some suggestions on how *NITW* can be used in different classes with different activities from an educator's perspective. However, the use cases are not limited to these. Each chapter can be replayed with different choices; therefore, it creates more opportunities for exploration and potentially different outcomes for each student group, which can create spontaneous teaching opportunities. Finally, in a less formal learning context, parents can use the game to help navigate difficult conversations, such as about mental health.



Figure 26.2. Mae tells Bea about her mental state. ALT TEXT: Two animallike characters are in a living room cartoon setting. They are lying on a dark orange couch. The room has light blue walls, a light orange carpet, and wall decorations. A bookcase is on the right side and a door is on the left side. There is one window with a blue curtain. One character has a long snout (looks like an alligator) and one has a round face and pointy ears (and looks like a cat). The long-snouted creature says, "I dunno...What you're going through, it exists."

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The game does not require high-level hardware. It can be downloaded to almost any computer and connected to a projector or screen in the class.
2. There are many online collaboration tools that are free to use, such as Padlet, Miro, Mural, and Figma. These can be leveraged for collective decision-making and co-creative processes in the classroom.
3. The in-class voting on Mae's replies can be prepared beforehand or done in real-time on tools like Poll Everywhere. Poll Everywhere is a free tool where educators can prepare questions and embed them in presentation tools such as Google Slides and MS PowerPoint. Students can submit their replies through their devices and results can be followed live.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Lost Constellation (<https://finji.itch.io/lost-constellation>)

NITW Kickstarter Campaign (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1307515311/night-in-the-woods>)

NITW Trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u17kM8oSz3k>)

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OUTBREAK

ELAINE FATH, JESSICA HAMMER, & ALEXANDRA TO

Game: *Outbreak*

Developer: OH!Lab (Designers: Elaine Fath, Alexandra To)

Year: 2018

Platform(s): Tabletop; analog

Number of players: 3-5

Genre: Co-operative Board Game

Type of game: Board Game

Curricular connections: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)

Possible skills taught: Curiosity, Question-Asking

Audience: 9+ years

Length of time: 40-60 minutes

Where to play: A classroom, summer camp, indoor recess

Cost: ~\$48 from the Game Crafter, digital materials available for free upon request

URL: <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/outbreak6>

SUMMARY

Outbreak is an asymmetric, cooperative tabletop game with question-asking as a core mechanic. The game is played by 2-5 adventurer players (ages 9+) and one robot player, typically an older child or adult facilitator. Together with their trusty robot assistant, the adventurers explore a mad scientist's mansion in search of the antidote to a deadly disease. Each room in the mansion has a challenge that the adventurers must overcome, but only the robot can enter the room to find out what it is. The adventurers ask questions of the robot to figure out the challenge, overcome the challenge using gear cards, and collect antidote tokens to win the game. The core of the game is the question-asking phase. When the robot player enters the room, they receive hidden information on what is inside. However, being a robot, they cannot simply tell the adventurers what is happening. Instead, the adventurers must ask yes or no questions to the robot. These questions must be asked in ways that the robot can understand. The adventurers receive battery-shaped question tokens that can be understood by the robot, but each one can only be used once. They must figure out the room's challenge and what resource cards to play to overcome it before they run out of questions to ask!



Figure 27.1. Outbreak board game components including: sample battery-shaped question tokens, skill reference sheet, game board, a sample room challenge card, and two sample resource cards (not to scale). ALT TEXT: There is a game board in the middle that is blue, green, and red. There are spots on the board for cards and a path you can follow with triangle symbols on it. On the left of the image are cards that say, “Are there any ___?” “What happens if ___?” “Does the room have ___?” and “Is it ___?” There is also a skills card that lists things like “Fight,” “Friend,” “See,” “Loves animals,” “Block,” “Hack,” “Fix,” and “Fast.” On the right are two cards that say, “A Group of Scientists,” and “Grace.” There is also a card that says, “Cold Cage: the polar bear is angry because his collar is broken: Other stuff in the room: frozen water; growling sounds; water everywhere; computers. Need:” And some symbols below of a brain, cat, and empty box.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Adolescent science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum in the U.S. identifies curiosity as a core skill necessary for success in the classroom. *Outbreak* focuses on skill-building to cope with two common barriers to feeling and acting on curiosity: fear of failure and hesitancy to ask questions. These barriers are relevant to all adolescent students, but can be particularly salient for girls, students of color, and others who are marginalized in STEM fields (To et al., 2018). The game provides opportunities for members of these groups to improve their skills, and fosters a classroom environment where they are not penalized for using them.

Outbreak can be used in middle-grade classrooms and after-school programs, in groups of 2 to 5 students, and at least one proctor, and about 40–60 minutes of playtime, which gets faster with more playthroughs. The game can accommodate a group in which age or reading proficiency is different between players. It may be necessary to run multiple games of *Outbreak* at once to engage a larger group or entire class. If you choose to run multiple games, a great option is for older students to come into the classroom and help out as the robot. However, if the option is unavailable for you, it is not necessary. Depending on the pacing of the game, it may be necessary to limit one session of *Outbreak* to the duration of one class. If preferred, *Outbreak* can also run for multiple sessions. More details on setup and gameplay accommodations for different classroom needs are available in the teacher’s guide.

Outbreak addresses hesitancy to ask questions. Questions both articulate knowledge gaps and signal uncertainty socially. Taken together, these two factors can make approaching unfamiliar topics feel socially threatening or even impossible. *Outbreak* addresses this by requiring players to show and normalize uncertainty in front of a group with the alibi of play to protect them. Room exploration

normalizes the idea that there is game information that nobody knows, and that everyone is experiencing uncertainty.

A teacher might run *Outbreak* with several students, including a student who is anxious about speaking up in class when they are confused. The teacher passes out the question tokens and is careful to make sure that all students know that an important game rule is that only the person with the question token can ask the question. The student hesitates at first, but this rule “norms” the idea that they—and everyone else at the table—does not know the information and that it is okay to be the one asking questions. The teacher watches to make sure that no one else teases the student for asking, and plays the robot responding with enthusiasm.

Indications that the game is working to norm question-asking are when:

- Students are following the question token format
- Students are allowing everyone to have control of their own turn
- Students are framing questions that extract more information from the robot over time
- Students are building on previous knowledge and mistakes from other rooms

Indications when the game is not working:

- Non-participation, one student controlling
- Students are asking the same questions every round
- If repeated play means that the students have memorized the answers

The following are some suggestions of classroom activities that you can use to potentially see the benefits of *Outbreak* after gameplay.

- Before playing *Outbreak*, have the students brainstorm a list of questions about the relevant topic that is being learned and record the list of questions. After playing *Outbreak*, have students brainstorm another list of questions and compare the types of questions.
- Another option could be to use the question token format for asking questions relevant to the in-class material. For example, if a science class is learning about photosynthesis, you can prompt the class to ask questions about photosynthesis based on the question tokens.
- Any sign of evidence-based reasoning and critical thinking means that the game has achieved its goal of promoting curiosity.

Aside from norming questions, *Outbreak* lets students practice “norming failure” in a safe way. Losing cards, for example, is necessary to win the game. The rounds are short enough that players can incorporate feedback from failures into their strategy. Players can lose nearly half the rounds and still win. The facilitator or mentor can support this lesson by framing failure as (a) an inherent part of what makes this game fun, and (b) a way to “get good” at the game.

For example, educators could run *Outbreak* with several of their students that they know are afraid to fail in class. Treat “round fails” as fun and as new information to change strategy, and use growth mindset language (focusing on effort and practice as paths to improvement, and avoiding fixed

language such as “you are so smart!”) to set a good tone. More details about how to do this are in the teacher’s guide. Roleplay as the robot to make mistakes feel fun rather than scary or upsetting. After the game, educators can talk with students about failure’s role in improving at the game and how it could apply to making mistakes or not knowing information in the classroom. They can refer back to the game when students hesitate to make mistakes or get an answer wrong in class discussions.

There are some limitations of *Outbreak* to be aware of:

- This game is replayable, but not infinitely replayable. Think of it as a puzzle that helps students ask better questions—once the puzzle is “solved,” the students have learned the needed skills and the game will no longer be as interesting.
- If a culture of “trash talk” or teasing develops at the table, the game can be counterproductive. Facilitators will need to gently guide the adventurers to collaborate; the fiction of the game (e.g. spooky theme, the mad scientist) can help as an outlet for any negativity. This is because of the unique way game tone can help students attribute any feelings of activation to the game story, not each other or themselves, turning it into excitement rather than stress (Holmes et al., 2019).
- *Outbreak* is a transformational game designed for skill-building rather than for knowledge transfer (Culyba, 2018). Details on how to best support transfer from the game to a larger STEM environment are available in the free teacher’s guide.

To minimize limitations, we recommend playing the game at least once before sharing it with your students, and playing the game with any student-proctors before they are allowed to lead the game for other groups.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Players often benefit from a narrated and facilitated practice round to clarify the rules.
2. Plan to play multiple times. Students who played *Outbreak* once a week for 2-4 weeks became more comfortable with question-asking and more tolerant of uncertainty.
3. Create an environment where students are comfortable with failure. Be mindful of correcting grammar and/or vernacular, which might discourage students from sharing their thoughts.
4. *Outbreak* includes a teacher’s guide, which is available as a free digital file at the game website. It includes scripts for a practice round, ways to adjust the game difficulty, and other best practices for play. This can be accessed at <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/outbreak6>

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Betrayal at House on the Hill (Avalon Hill, 2004) (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/10547/betrayal-house-hill>)

Codenames (Czech Games Edition, 2015) (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/178900/codenames>)

Mysterium (Libellud, 2015) – (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/181304/mysterium>)

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective (Space Cowboys, 1982) (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/2511/sherlock-holmes-consulting-detective-thames-murder>)

Treehouse Dreams (Graypaw Games, 2015) – (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/199416/treehouse-dreams>)

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OVERWATCH 2

NAZIH FARES

Game: *Overwatch 2*

Developer: Blizzard Entertainment, Inc.

Year: 2022

Platform(s): PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Nintendo Switch, Xbox One, Xbox Series S|X, Microsoft Windows

Number of players: Multiplayer up to 12 players (6v6)

Genre: team-based multiplayer first-person shooter

Type of game: For instance, analog

Curricular connections: Geography; social studies; literature; art; ethics

Possible skills taught: Empathy; culturally relevant content; identity exploration

Audience: 12+ years through adult

Length of time: 2 hours

Where to play: A classroom, at home. Internet required, no offline play available.

Cost: Free to play

URL: <https://playoverwatch.com/en-us/>

SUMMARY

Overwatch 2 is a team-based multiplayer first-person shooter game, where six players need to work together to win key objectives on a map against an opposing team of the same size. This game requires a solid synergy not just between the players themselves, but also by picking the right hero character to counter the opposing team's picks. There are many modes in the game including the core gameplay loop via quick play, competitive play for the more devoted players, and finally Arcade, which is a series of 3v3, 6v6, and free-for-all modes that change every week. *Overwatch 2* relies on a team formation of two Tank (shield-class characters), Damage, and Support roles (six in total). The Tank role (a choice of eight heroes) is meant for players who want to absorb the damage away from his teammates, create space for the other five players, and in general considered the leader or initiator. The Damage role (a choice of 17 heroes) on the other hand is solely focused on killing the enemy, with different heroes being better at countering others. Lastly, there is the Support class (a choice of seven heroes), which is meant to empower their teammates with damage, defensive, or health boosts. Team members will need to decide on who takes the specific roles to form a robust synergy to beat the enemy. Since hero picks are not locked past their roles during the match, your teammates will be able to switch to a

different hero depending on the situation, such as a switch to a more long-range damage hero like Widowmaker if the enemy's Pharah is giving you a hard time.



Figure 28.1 Image of *Overwatch 2*® Origins Edition. In the middle, larger, is a black puma-like creature wearing a white coat with a large gun. Across the figure, it says “Assemble your team: 19.” Team members pop up across the screen like “Ozimandus, Lucio, Roadhog, Sombra, Zarya, and Zenyatta.” In the top left corner, it says, “Defend Custom Game Havana.” On the bottom, there are images of different characters, and it says things like “Tank,” “Damage,” and “Support” above them. The entire background is black and the bottom has some things like “Select Ana,” “Hero Details,” “Select Skin,” “Chat,” and “Join Team Chat.”

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Educators can focus on the core gameplay mode of *Overwatch 2*, a 6v6 match, which starts by picking your role in the team from either a Tank, Damage, or Support. Having students to plan together on the best formation for a match, as well as adapting flexibly to changing strategies while playing, requires a range of skills such as cognitive flexibility, judgment and decision-making, and an innovative mindset.

To successfully execute this, access to at least 12 decently powered computers is needed, but could also be simulated with only 6 players against AI-powered bots if numbers are an issue. Because of this, it's recommended that educators talk with their school's IT department to make sure they consider *Overwatch 2*'s minimal technical requirements as well as opening potential firewalls and ports to install and download the game from Blizzard's Battle.net desktop app.

Once that is taken into consideration, educators can proceed first with the cultural education aspect of the game as it will prepare students to understand each of the current 32 heroes' abilities and counters but also backstory and origins. This can help to open up discussions about the game as well as the various forms of representation depicted within the heroes. Prior to this discussion, educators should familiarize with the lore of each hero in the game, as they reflect cultural aspects of marginalized groups (e.g., Native Americans (Pharah), Arabs and Muslims (Ana), people of color from

different nations (Baptiste, Lucio or Doomfist), sexual identities (e.g., Tracer identifying as a lesbian and Soldier 76 as gay) and physical and mental abilities (i.e., autistic spectrum (Symetra), physical disability (Ana)). Some heroes also exhibit qualities associated with various mental and physical conditions. Students can learn more about the heroes by reading each hero's page on the official website of the game, and can also extend to the multiple out-of-game lore content such as free-to-access novels, comics, and backstory videos.

The representation of different cultures, religions, and societal aspects goes beyond the origin of the hero's backstory and is extended into their cosmetic skins in-game. While most of these cosmetics require microtransactions to unlock, educators can still showcase the visual example in *Overwatch's* Hero Gallery. For example, educators could start with Ana's section in the gallery, a Support sniper hero of Egyptian origin. She is a rare positive representation of a veiled Muslim woman in gaming, portrayed as a supportive person to her teammate, which differs from problematic tropes sometimes associated with the Arab world. Many of her in-game cosmetics showcase different links to ancient Egyptian mythology deities such as the Wadjet, Horus, Pharaoh (a mummy-themed one) and Bastet skins. Her voice lines are a mix of English and Egyptian Arabic dialect sentences performed by Egyptian voice actress Aysha Selim, going as far as saying "Azayak" (How are you? In English) or Warihum quwitak/quwitik (Show them your strength in English, depending on the gender of the opponent). Educators can lead students in discussions of representations of characters in games and other media, or can provide resources around the inspirations for each of the characters. For instance, a teacher could share texts on ancient Egyptian mythology or on common Arabic phrases. This provides an opportunity for educators to open discussions about different marginalized communities across culture, gender, and ability, among groups that tend to be grossly underrepresented in media (and games specifically)

Following this, educators could have students play some matches, with teachers setting up a closed match under the Game Browser section, and then creating a custom game. Once that is done, the teacher(s) can assign themselves as spectators of the match and organize the blue and red teams with 6 students on each end (if numbers are an issue, you can also fill in the remaining spots with AI-controlled bots with an easy difficulty).

All matches will have an end-of-game scoreboard, to evaluate which team has won, but the focus is for the students to really learn how to think flexibly through the practice of changing strategies to counter the opposing team. For example, Bastion is very effective against Reinhardt, Winston, and Mercy, while weak against Genji, Widowmaker, and Hanzo (due to their deflective and long-range damage abilities). Once the match is done, educators should debrief as a team, and reveal what students believe in terms of their picks of heroes, and tactics as a unit, to learn from their mistakes.

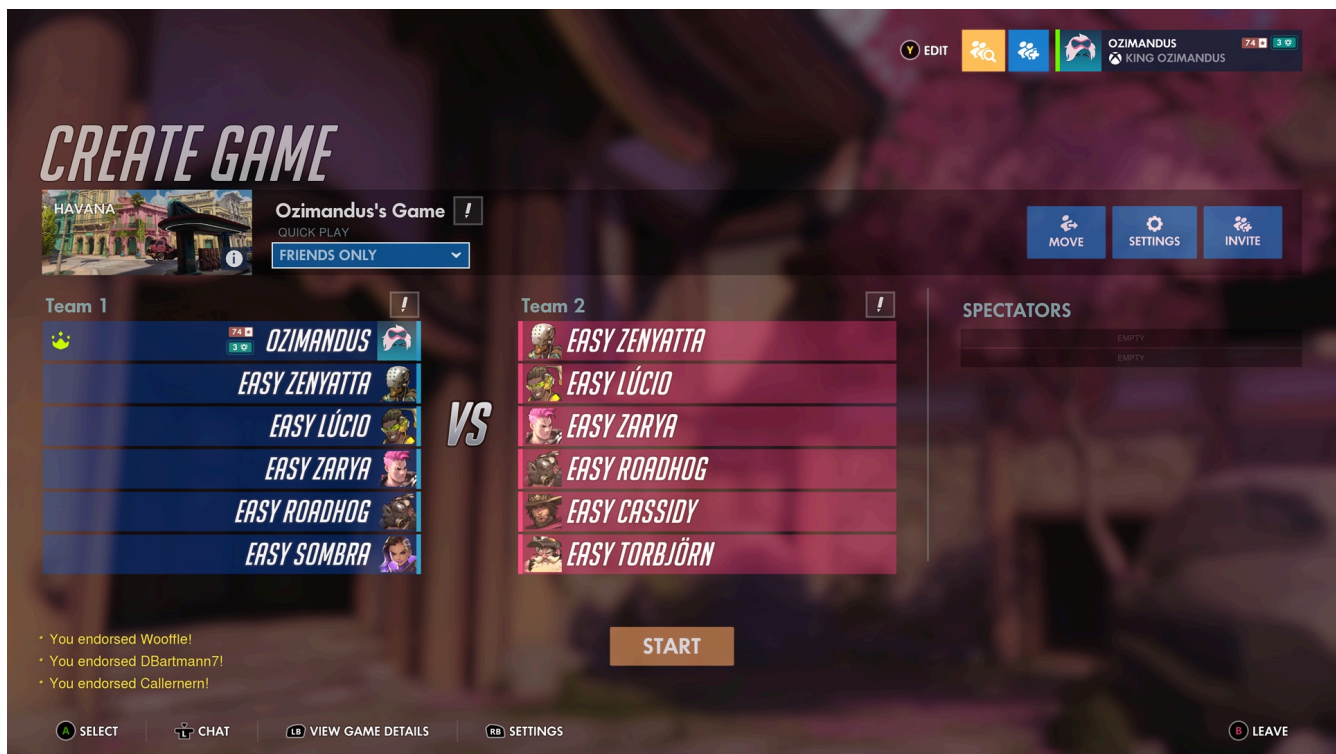


Figure 28.2. Image of *Overwatch 2*® Origins Edition. ALT TEXT: This is a screenshot with a purple and orange swirling background. There is a title at the top that says, “Create Game.” It also says underneath that, with an image, “Havana” and “Ozimandus’s Game” and “Friends only.” Team 1, which is blue, says Ozimandus, Easy Zenyatta, Easy Lucia, Easy Zarya, Easy Roadhog, Easy Sombra. Then Team 2, which is red, says “Easy Zenyatta, Easy Lucia, Easy Zarya, Easy Roadhog, Easy Cassidy, and Easy Torbjorn. There is a “Vs” between the two teams and a start button on the screen. There are some other buttons on the screen like “Select,” “Chat,” and “View Game Details.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should play the game in advance to familiarize themselves with the gameplay and the lore of the game’s heroes. This can be done with the tutorial mode in the Training section on the main menu, but also investigate the game’s other play modes and different aspects of the game’s content.
2. Highly encourage the students and teachers to learn about the hero’s counters from known esports sites such as <https://rankedboost.com/overwatch/counters/>

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Overview of the game’s basic details in terms of modes and game loop (<https://playoverwatch.com/en-us/about/>)

Overview of all character’s backstory and related media (<https://playoverwatch.com/en-us/heroes/>)

Overwatch 2-related comic books and short novels (<https://playoverwatch.com/en-us/media/>)

How to buy and install *Overwatch 2*® on PC (https://eu.shop.battle.net/en-us/product/overwatch?blzcmp=ow_buy_nav)

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PAPERS, PLEASE

SAMUEL SHIELDS & EDWARD MELCER

Game: *Papers, Please*
Developer: 3909 LLC
Year: 2013
Platform(s): Microsoft Windows, OS X, Linux, iOS, Playstation Vita
Number of players: Single-player
Genre: Puzzle/Simulation
Type of game: Digital
Curricular connections: History; Social Studies; Ethics; Civics
Possible skills taught: Moral Reasoning, Public Debate, Empathy
Audience: High School or University Students
Length of time: 4 hours for the entire storyline; 10-15 minutes per level.
Where to play: A Classroom, At Home
Cost: \$9.99
URL: <https://papersplea.se/>

SUMMARY

Papers, Please is a “Dystopian Document Thriller” developed by Lucas Pope in which the player acts as an immigration officer in the fictional Soviet-Era-inspired country of Arstotzka. The player’s main responsibility is evaluating migrants and their documents for discrepancies and threats. This is done by comparing documents to a rulebook, and by performing investigatory actions determined by your government on a given day. Arstotzka is undergoing significant social unrest, and the threats of political violence and terrorism are thick in the air. As the game progresses, the government reacts to these threats with increasingly authoritarian policies to protect its borders: stereotyping nations, forced searches, and physical violence all are employed on migrants who are attempting to reunite with their family, find work, or escape violence. Meanwhile, the player’s family begins to starve and fall ill while they try to make a living as a border agent. Every missed or overlooked document means a shorter paycheck, which means heat, food, or medicine must be forgone for a while. The juxtaposition of these two gameplay systems helps the audience experience how dehumanization can occur from systemic pressures created by different immigration policies. *Papers, Please* is thus an effective tool to teach the morally complicated landscape of immigration policy and promote productive sociopolitical discussion (McKernan, 2021). The game enables players to directly experience and empathize with

the dehumanizing outcomes of immigration policy instead of abstracting out the human perspective during a discussion.



Figure 29.1. The bureaucratic, document-based gameplay highlights how different immigration policies can dehumanize people. ALT TEXT: A screenshot from *Papers, Please*, which shows a very detailed interface. On the top is a gray pixelated image with a long line of black figures and some blue characters holding guns in front of a few borders. In the middle left is a woman's face. She has tan skin and brown hair. She is wearing a purple sweater. On the bottom left, there is a dark green and brown area with buttons. One says "Interrogate." In the middle is an open entry visa and a notebook. They are in a dreary purple and green color. There is a line across pointing to the woman, that says "Discrepancy Detected" where the term "All Kolechians must be searched." There are also other rules in a rulebook that say things like "Entrant must have a passport" and "Citizens must have an ID card."

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Papers, Please may help educators facilitate discussions of political topics (Peña, 2018). For example, the game might ask the player to implement a rational policy in response to a terrorist attack: assess incoming migrants for threats. However, the player quickly finds that this policy leads to traumatizing scenarios for the non-player characters. Following the policy to the letter of the law leads to players separating families, incarcerating people based on ethnicity and gender, enabling political violence, and more. The game's exploration of a fictional border reveals a dissonance between the rational and moral aspects of immigration (Morrissette, 2017).

Thus, this game can help students to explore immigration policy and moral reasoning in history, ethics, or social studies. The following activities are intended to include the entire classroom in the decision-making aspect of *Papers, Please*, enabling the entire class to both experience and interact with these complex scenarios.

ACTIVITY 1: Classroom "Let's Play"

A "Let's Play" is a walkthrough of a video game where the player(s) often comment on the events of

the game during play. The format of a game walkthrough was popularized on the streaming platform Twitch, where the audience often had input that the player could leverage in playing the game. Instead of utilizing a streaming platform, an educator (or a briefed student) will manage the game in front of the classroom (or over video chat with screen-sharing).

Throughout *Papers, Please*, there are a number of morally gray decisions to be made through the act of allowing or rejecting entrance into Arstotzka. These decisions are driven by the difference between the ruthless efficiency of the rules that the Arstotzkan government levies and the reality of each individual the player evaluates. For this activity, the educator will be pausing the game during morally complicated decisions and polling the class for the next moves. This allows the class to slow down the gameplay and dive into the various social, political, and moral issues at play. For instance, when the player is given the option to spare a person from detention at the cost of medicine for their family—what will students do? While the game is paused, the class could discuss the scenario and what options they could take. The students could then take a poll and vote. When the votes are counted, the game is unpaused and the action with the highest votes is performed. Due to the controversial topics covered in this game, it is especially important for any votes for potential in-game actions to be taken anonymously. This is because students will feel more inclined to respond honestly while minimizing the risk of potential social repercussions to students.

The action provided may sometimes end in game-over screens or in compromising situations for the main character—but either way, the class has discussed the moral implications of the decision. Due to the episodic nature of the game, this exercise can be done in short pieces over a number of days (15 minutes a level, not including discussion). The game also provides a level-select screen, so specific moments can be selected from the game if a shorter activity is desired.

An extension activity might be an analysis of what the policies and symbolism of the game represent or relate to in the real world. This discussion can be tailored to your audience, but motifs in the game point to both Soviet-era Eastern-Bloc governments and contemporary United States border policy as historical and social references to investigate as a class.

Activity 2: Moral Reasoning in Action

The dilemmas presented in *Papers, Please* will be familiar to most, but experiencing them as a key agent in the dilemma presents the opportunity to enable moral reasoning practice.

An educator can demonstrate this with their class by extending Activity 1. Prior to introducing the class to *Papers, Please*, the educator should select a few decision points from the game and phrase them into hypothetical scenarios. For example, on the fifth day of the game, the 8th entrant will be a man and wife entering Arstotzka from Antegria. While the husband has correct documentation, the wife does not. If the inspector allows the wife across the border, the inspector will receive a citation and/or a reduction in pay, which leads to the inspector's family falling ill or dying. Does the player let the wife join her husband? Or you might pick from a family-separation scene and provide the prompt: Your country is experiencing an uptick in terrorism. Should people who cannot provide adequate documentation be rejected entry from the country? Different variations of these questions could be given to the students before playing the scenario in game, but the prompts should be yes/no questions and be asked anonymously. Some of these questions may produce homogenous responses,

but many should provide controversial outcomes. After votes are collected, play the game in the Let's Play format of Activity 1. However, when a scenario occurs that was voted on beforehand then automatically chose the option with majority vote.

After playing the scenario, the educator can re-distribute those questions to show the class how views may have changed over time. This discussion can then lead into rhetorical methods, moral reasoning, or how current events are progressing at the time of discussion.

These activities could be tailored either to a civics course, a philosophy course, or a history course – the educator can frame the activity to focus on the aspects of the game that their course is focusing on. In philosophy, you might discuss moral reasoning and the ethics of borders. In a history course, you might reference historical events such as the Iron Curtain or the U.S.-Mexico border to frame gameplay.

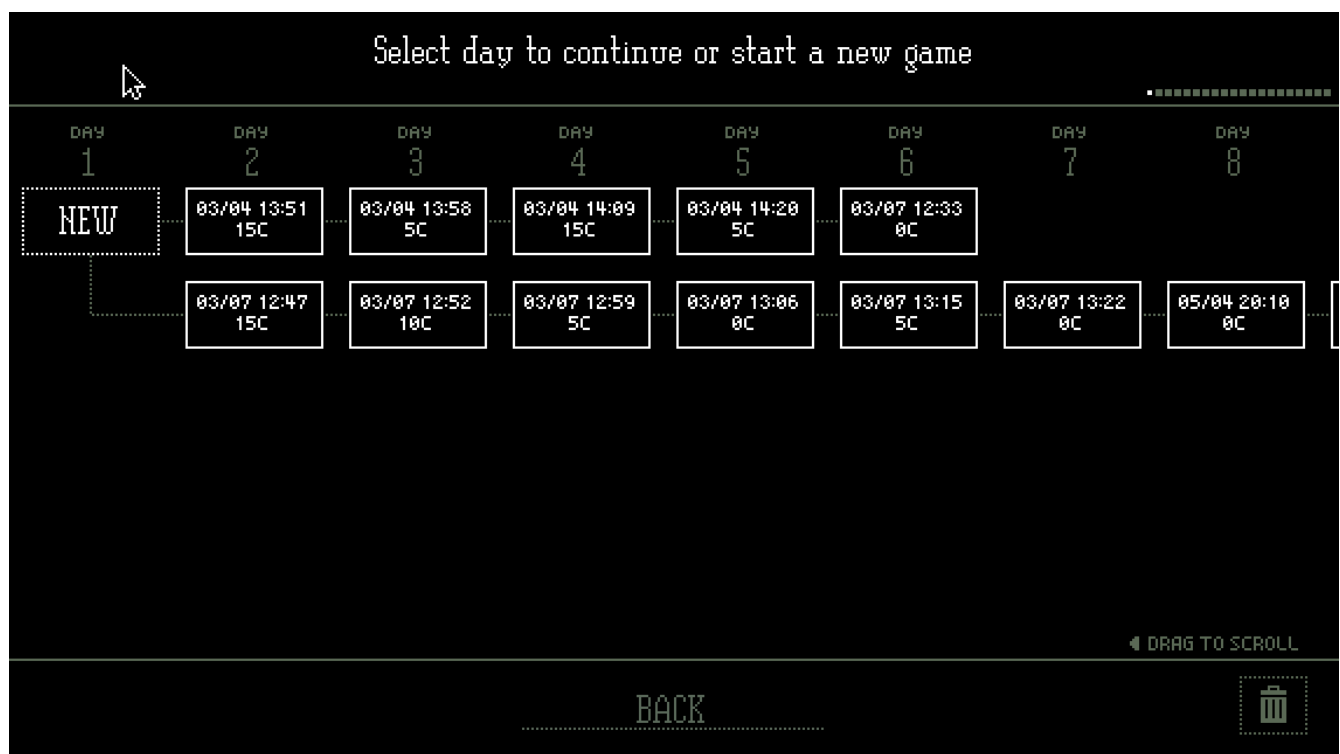


Figure 29.2. The day selection screen is pivotal to finding scenarios for your class to debate. Be warned—days must be played before you can jump to them! ALT TEXT: There is a black screen. On it is a list horizontally of days, “Day 1” to “Day 8.” The screen says “Select day to continue or start a new game.” Under day 1 is a box that says “New.” Under the other days are dates and numbers. For instance, one box says “03/07 12:33 OC.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. *Papers, Please* contains explicit content that might be especially triggering to those impacted by immigration issues. Clear trigger warnings and opt-out opportunities should be given to the class and/or their guardians before introducing the game.
2. This game is not easy and takes time to learn. Selecting good discussion points also requires an understanding of the game and how it is structured. Give yourself enough time to beat the game at least once. Play enough so that you would feel comfortable playing in front of an audience.

3. If you cannot or do not want to play through the game, there are a plethora of “Let’s Play” videos that can be found on YouTube to use in place of gameplay. Ensure that you screen videos for inappropriate content before sharing them with your class. An example of a commentary-free video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDD5OOAcTUg>

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Bury Me, My Love, a narrative game following a Syrian refugee. Available for Switch, iOS, Android, and Steam. (<https://burymemylove.artetv/>)

This War of Mine, a serious game following civilian life during a modern war. Available on Steam, GOG, and Humble Store. (<https://www.thiswarofmine.com/>)

Papers, Please: The Short Film, a film adaptation of the game covering a limited number of scenarios. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFHHGETsxkE>)

The Republica Times, a web-based game created by Lucas Pope dealing with similar themes in a journalism context (<https://dukope.com/trt/play.html>)

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PRISONER IN MY HOMELAND (MISSION US)

ANNA MENYHÉRT

Game: *Prisoner in My Homeland (Mission US)*

Developer: Thirteen/WNET/PBS and Electric Funstuff

Year: 2021

Platform(s): PC, iPad

Number of players: Single-player, or class settings

Genre: Adventure role-playing game

Type of game: Digital, browser-based

Curricular connections: History; social studies; literature; creative writing; science; ethics; Japanese area studies

Possible skills taught: Historical empathy; historical thinking; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; intergenerational trauma awareness; historical research skills; racial injustice awareness; knowledge of Japanese cultural elements; writing.

Audience: 9+ years, middle school children; but the topics covered in the game are more suitable for the age group 12+

Length of time: 90 minutes–2 hours

Where to play: In a classroom; at home

Cost: free

URL: <https://www.mission-us.org/games/prisoner-in-my-homeland/>

SUMMARY

Mission US games explore difficult and complex moments in United States history. *Prisoner in My Homeland* in specific deals with racial injustice and forced displacement. It explores the fate of 120,000 Japanese Americans, who had to leave their homes and relocate to prison camps after the U.S. declared war on Japan during WWII. In this game, the Tanaka family (mother, son (Henry), and a daughter named Lily) move in 1941 from Bainbridge Island, Washington, where they had a strawberry farm, to Manzanar in California. The FBI arrests the father and he joins the family a year later. The game uses second-person narration and explains that, “You are 16-year-old Henry Tanaka.” According to the Teacher’s Guide, “You’ll step into the shoes of a young person during an important time period in US history.” The goal is to understand history, not to win, so “there are no right or wrong answers.” The setting in Manzanar is a military incarceration camp (previously and erroneously called an “internment” camp), with barracks, an eating hall, and a school building. Ten thousand people live there as prisoners. The player character, Henry, faces various challenges, and earns badges like

Athlete, Community Builder, Family Matters, Duty Calls, Question Authority, Scholar, and Stoic. Players' choices impact Henry's story and the resulting game. The challenges in the game are relevant to the life of a 16-year-old, but are adjusted to incarceration camp life, and include making the barrack space more comfortable; finding a job; spending the earnings wisely; going to school; making friends; and making a decision whether to go college, the first person in the family to do so. In addition, supporting Henry's father when he arrives after being released from detention requires emotional and mental maturity. This also helps players to understand the challenges Japanese Americans face, such as hostility and xenophobia. The challenge that requires the most moral maturity is the choice of signing an allegiance document expressing your loyalty to the U.S., after the government forced you (as Henry) to live in this incarceration camp. Without signing the document the "right way," that is, adhering to the U.S. government's ideology, you will not be able to leave the camp and go home.

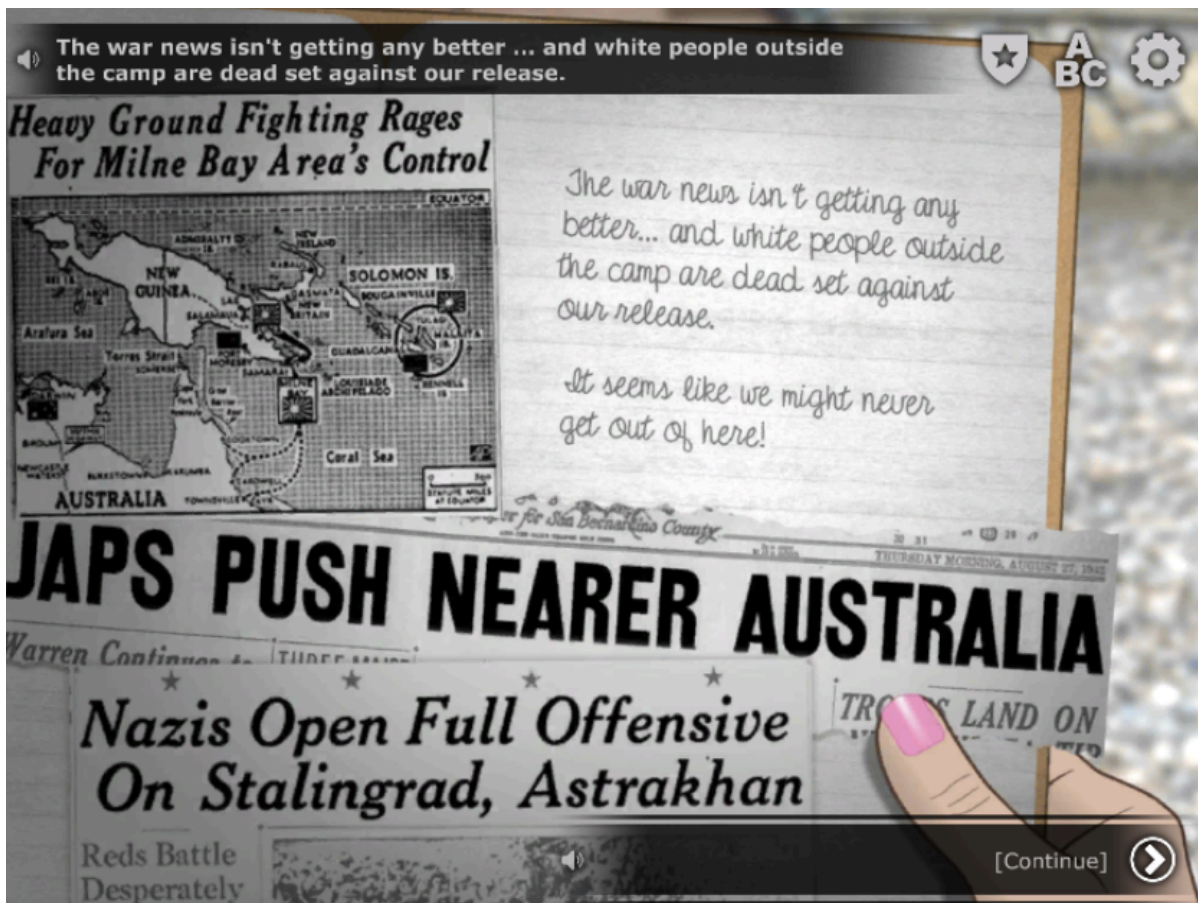


Figure 30.1. Historical sources in the diary. The picture shows contemporary newspaper headlines of WWII war news such as "Nazis Open Full Offensive on Stalingrad" and "Japs Push Nearer Australia" ©2022 THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC. ALT TEXT: There are four newspaper articles and headlines overlaying a screen, with some words also on a notepad. One of the articles says, "Heavy Ground Fighting Rages for Milne Bay Area's control," another says "Japs Push Nearer Australia," (note that this is a derogatory term but was included on the screenshot). The next article says "Nazis Open Full Offensive On Stalingrad, Astrakhan." A hand with beige skin and pink nails holds the articles. The notepad says, "The war news isn't getting any better...and white people outside the camp are dead set against our release. It seems like we might never get out of here!"

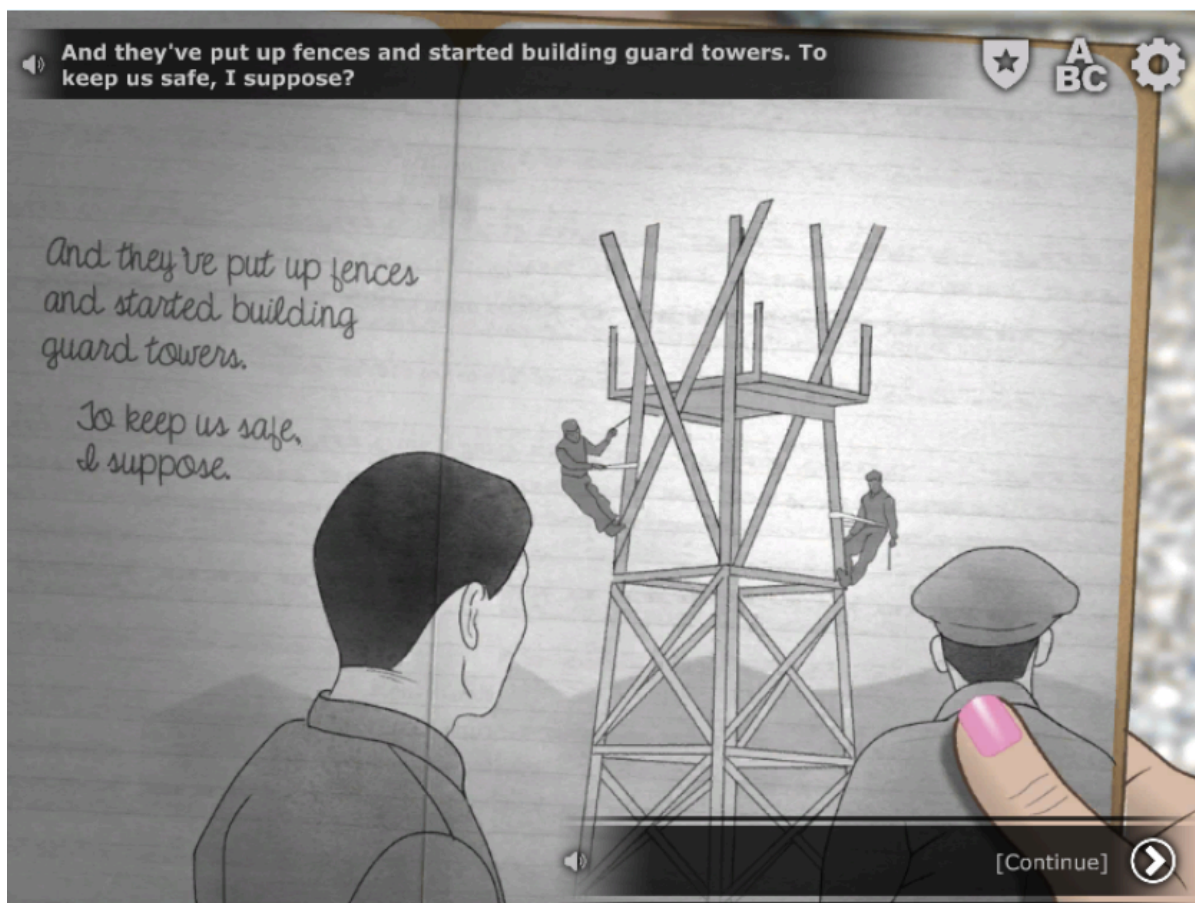


Figure 30.2. Henry understands the situation gradually, his first reactions are naïve. The picture shows Henry seeing a guard tower being built. He is asking if it is to keep them safe ©2022 THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC. ALT TEXT: Some script on top of a gray image says “And they’ve put up fences and started building guard towers. To keep us safe, I suppose?” There is a black, gray, and white drawn image with a person on the left with short black hair, and a person on the right with short black hair and a hat. They are watching a tower in the distance with two shadowy figures on it. A hand with pink nails is holding this image.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

There is a clever narrative twist that sets up the game narrative: the Prologue starts with Maya Tanaka, Henry’s granddaughter, finding his diary after his death. Henry had never talked about his incarceration in the Japanese internment camps. Maya wants to know more so she meets Great-Aunt Lily, Henry’s sister, and together they read the diary. Their comments accompany Henry’s challenges. Players thus remain aware of the historicity of the story throughout the game. The diary allows a glimpse into historical research methods, into how discovering a document makes it possible to understand the past. It illustrates how a larger context (macro-history) provides a historical framework for a history of a family (micro-history).

The educator could make a selection of archival materials from the game for classroom discussion (and more historical sources are available in the Teacher’s Guide, see link below). Students can discuss the role the discovery of the diary in the development of historical understanding in the game. Some prompts might be: how can we look back at the past with the help of historical documents, both archival (newspapers, photos) and private ones, such as a diary? The educator can draw attention to the visual elements that keep the awareness of historicity throughout the game, such as the pink nail polish on the finger of the hand holding the diary. Students then can collect their own documents

that could have a historical value, such as from their families, or from local libraries and community centers.

The game deals with emotions and trauma in a subtle way. The Tanaka family does not explicitly discuss their fear. There are certain scenes that indirectly indicate that a family member has a difficult time emotionally: when they arrive in the camp, Lily elopes when she thinks her father arrived; and when he does arrive a year later, he is not well mentally; and he remains inside in their barrack for a long time. When Henry's grandma dies in Nagasaki after the atomic bombing, he writes in the diary "I don't know what to feel any more." Players might gradually understand the impact that discrimination, forced relocation, separation, imprisonment, and impoverishment has had on Japanese-American families up to and including the present day. The educator can discuss with the students what they think the family feels and why the members of the Tanaka family do not talk about their fear.

Another topic for further discussion: the long-term impact of historical and intergenerational trauma in US history. It is no accident that Henry had never talked about Manzanar with his kids and grandkids. Great Aunt Lily explains the shame, fear, and guilt the family experienced. She says it was very painful for people to remember their time in the camp. Such elements accompany trauma and may have a long-term intergenerational impact. The diary shows how young people can uncover silenced traumatic history and work through intergenerational trauma caused by racial injustice and discrimination. Students can discuss how events of the past have a long-term emotional and mental impact on families and communities, and how it is possible for younger generations to work through past traumas through historical awareness and empathy. Students might share some family history at this point. Family histories might include intergenerational trauma. The educator should remind students that they should only share what they are comfortable sharing and do not need to participate. The educator should also emphasize the importance of listening to each other with empathy and respect.

It is possible to play certain parts of the game together, in small groups, or in the whole class, lead by the educator, students discussing the options Henry is facing, and the potential consequences of the choices. Students can also vote anonymously and decide on the next action. I specifically recommend this approach when Henry has to decide whether to sign an allegiance document expressing his loyalty to the U.S. (see explanation above). The educator then could explain the complexity of the situation, and the moral, political, and historical aspects.

Educators can also link historical and contemporary anti-Asian sentiment, such as how during the Covid-19 pandemic it has increased in the U.S. The game focuses on the experiences of Japanese Americans, through which players at first can sense and later understand the hostility of the majority group, non-Japanese Americans. The only non-Japanese character, the camp-school teacher, is sympathetic to some extent but still expresses assumptions and beliefs that are micro-aggressions. For example, when discussing with Henry where he should go to college she says "It would be better to go somewhere where there are not so many of you" and "Some people aren't comfortable with having Little Tokyos." Students can discuss bias, and how systems, language, and policies can be hurtful and discriminatory. They can discuss how to identify, reflect on, and reduce their own biases as well.





Figures 30.3-4. This is the only frightening visual scene. In the first image, strong lights trace the barracks. The second picture shows a man's figure in the spotlight, with the guard shouting from the tower, "Get back to your barracks!" ©2022 THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC. ALT TEXT: On the first image, there is a blue image with lots of black rows of homes or barracks. It is nighttime. There are four lights that are shining across the image of the barracks. The second image has two hands with pink fingernails holding a black, gray, and white image of a person with a hat, on top of a tower, shouting "Get back to your barracks!" A person on the ground has their hands up, and they have black hair. A caption at the top says: "[Great Aunt Lily]: I don't think so...where would we have gone? But they still treated us like the enemy."

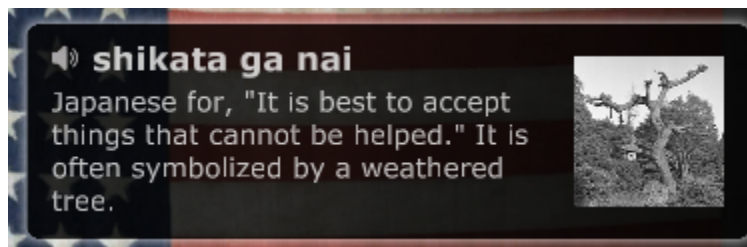


Figure 30.5. Shikata ga nai. The image shows a weathered tree, the symbol of the attitude ©2022 THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC. ALT TEXT: An image that is black and says "Shikata ga nai: Japanese for, "It is best to accept things that cannot be helped." It is often symbolized by a weathered tree." There is a small photo of a weathered tree in black and white.



Figure 30.6 Reactions of bystanders to Japanese Americans leaving for the camps. Japanese Americans, adults, and children, walking with suitcases at a railway station next to a train ©2022 THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC. Bainbridge Island incarceratedees walking to train, March 30, 1942. ©Museum of History & Industry, Seattle. ALT TEXT: There is a hand holding onto a map and a photograph. The photograph has people in black and white in a line. There are adults and children and there is a train alongside them. Some of the people are holding bags. It says, "Crowds had lined up on the streets to watch us." The map says "Seattle." The caption on the image says, "[Great Aunt Lily] We felt like zoo animals!"

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The Teacher's Guide is 300 pages. It includes information on the historical background, together with primary sources and resources, a glossary of key terms and Japanese phrases, as well as classroom activities (document-based activities, discussion, and writing prompts), and classroom videos. (<https://www.mission-us.org/teach/prisoner-in-my-homeland/>)
2. Introduce the themes of historical understanding and historical/intergenerational trauma before playing the game.
3. Introduce the game by watching the trailer together.
4. The game works well if it is played at home. Educators can have the post-game discussions take place in the classroom.
5. Play the other *Mission US* games as well (<https://www.mission-us.org>).
6. Educators may have limited time to spend on the game. If there is only a little time, educators should focus on how the awareness of being discriminated against develops gradually in the narrative, and how this awareness influences students' choices regarding survival and

resistance.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Other *Mission US* games (<https://www.mission-us.org>)

Teacher's Guide (<https://www.mission-us.org/teach/prisoner-in-my-homeland/>)

Mission US Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MissionUS>)

Connecting Asian American History and Anti-Asian Racism, *Mission US* webinar (<https://www.mission-us.org/.../webinar-recording-now.../>)

“The Japanese, Japanese-American, and American Perspectives.” A themed booklist on AdLit (All about Adolescent Literature) (<https://www.adlit.org/books-and-authors/booklists/japanese-japanese-american-and-american-perspectives>)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Bystander intervention trainings (<https://www.advancingjustice-chicago.org/what-we-do/bystander-intervention-trainings/>)

Manzanar National Historic Site (<https://www.nps.gov/manz/index.htm>)

Japanese American Resource Library (<https://asianamerican.uconn.edu/archives-and-collections/japanese-american-internment-resources-2/japanese-american-internment-resources/nonfiction/#>)

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QUEERS IN LOVE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

JACOB EUTENEUER

Game: *Queers in Love at the End of the World*

Developer: anna anthropy

Year: 2013

Platform(s): Browser

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Interactive fiction, Twine, role-playing game

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Creative Writing, Environmental Studies, Gender Studies, Literature

Possible skills taught: Problem-solving, ethical decision-making, empathy, identity exploration, perspective/point of view

Audience: Adults and mature audiences

Length of time: 10 seconds

Where to play: In classroom, at home

Cost: Free

URL: <https://w.itch.io/end-of-the-world>

SUMMARY

In this game, the player takes on the role of a queer partner with their lover just as the world is ending. As the game begins, a counter in the upper lefthand corner of the screen begins to tick down from ten. Built using the game engine Twine, the game is text-based with blue hyperlinks that allow the player to make different choices and take different paths through the game. At the start, players are given a few sentences of text and four options: give, take, kiss, or hold. There is no tutorial, no character creation, and no opening cutscene. When the counter in the corner reaches zero, the world ends, and the player is forced into a game over screen. In between the beginning of the game and the end of the world, the player can make dozens of rapid decisions about what they want to do with their last seconds of life. Because the game is focused on the relationship between the player and their partner, some of the options explore sex and intimacy. Other paths emphasize the desperateness of the situation or eventually end up with a moment of personal triumph. Of course, the first time a player plays the game, ten seconds doesn't seem like enough time to accomplish anything. However, after several playthroughs, the player can deftly navigate the textual passages and reveal more twists and turns, options and endings, to this tight, poignant story. Ultimately, this game places the player in

an impossible situation in order to foster empathy and exploration of identity as the world crumbles around them.

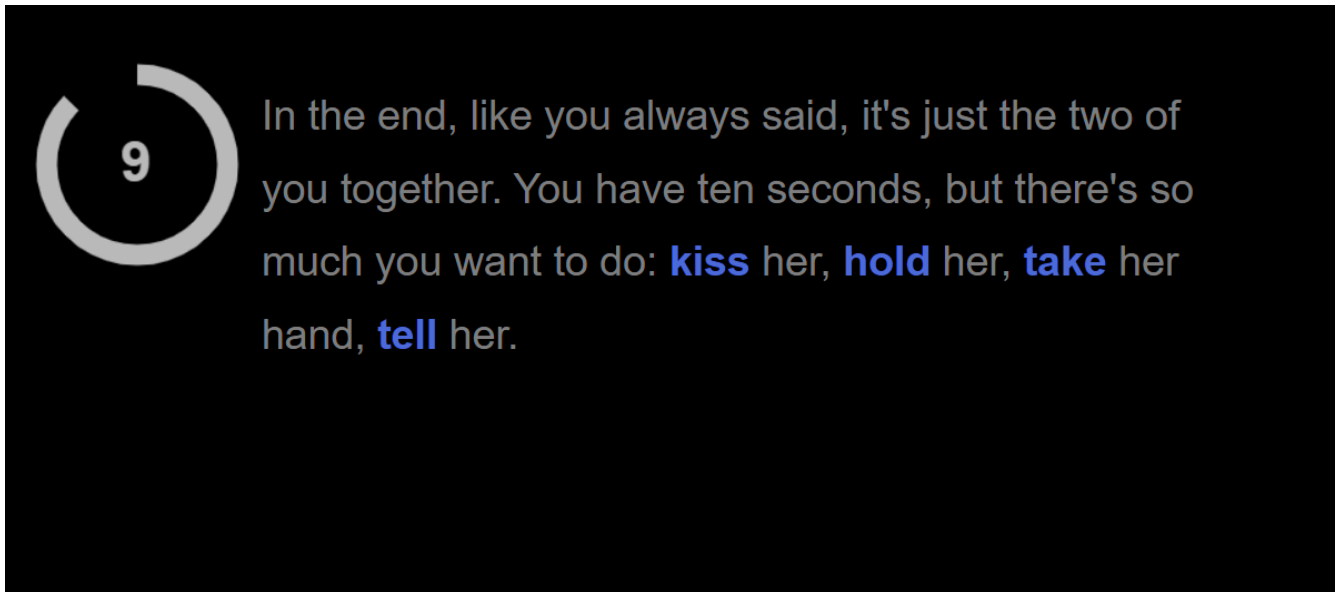


Figure 31.1 The starting screen with options highlighted in blue and the timer in the top, left corner in *Queers in Love at the End of the World*. ALT TEXT: This has white text against a black background. It says “In the end, like you always said, it’s just the two of you together. You have ten seconds, but there’s so much you want to do: kiss her, hold her, take her hand, tell her. “Kiss,” “hold,” “take,” and “tell” are all in blue text rather than white.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Queers in Love at the End of the World is a simple-to-play, simple-to-master, text-based game. It can run on virtually any machine capable of connecting to the internet—from tablets, to phones, to Chromebooks. In addition, the severe time constraint placed on the player—only having ten seconds before the world ends—means it can be played, experienced, and discussed multiple times in a single class. The game’s text-based focus, playful perspective, and emotional challenge make it an excellent game to quickly drop into a variety of classes and disciplines.

The ease of access and low barrier to entry are in fact features of both the game and Twine, the engine used to create *Queers in Love*. Twine allows for users to write primarily in simple text to create interactive stories and games. Little to no coding is required, and because of this, Twine has long-inspired game developers who have not had funds or access to specialized training or mentorship in the games industry. This includes many LGBTQ and BIPOC game designers such as *anna anthropy*. The text-based nature of the game is often unique for players who have grown up in an age of graphics cards and first-person shooters, which makes it an excellent starting point for discussion in classes such as literature, first-year composition or first-year writing, and creative writing. Educators can quickly get students running a browser-based version of Twine and writing their own interactive stories or games without writing any lines of code. Students will be accustomed to the way text is used in academic and college writing to form arguments and make claims, but the hyperlinked nature of the text in *Queers in Love* offers a different way of thinking and talking about language. For exercises, educators can have students list and discuss the various verbs and highlighted text that they can click on and interact within the game. Then, students can look at their own creative work and analyze their verb choice in light of the hyperlinked verbs in the game. The power, dynamism, and elasticity of

language are on full display as students list and describe what led them to choose various words and phrases. In particular, the positioning of the player as “queer” from the title makes visible the often assumed “defaults” of a gamer, for example, that they are stereotypically white, heterosexual, men. When students interact with text in novel ways, they are better able to recognize how language is used to persuade, entertain, and inform us daily.

The title is not the only way the game draws in the reader and encourages them to temporarily adopt and engage with new identities. As with many text-based games, *Queers in Love* uses the second-person perspective to draw the player into the game’s world. The player is referred to as “you” in every instance. Teachers can ask questions and set up activities to get students to think of other examples of second-person communication they often encounter. Typical examples students will be familiar with include giving or receiving directions, advertisements, and rhetorical questions. Analyzing why these examples use second-person perspective so frequently, while books and movies do so rarely can lead to wonderful discussions and writing prompts that engage with point of view and perspective. Prompts that have students use the second-person perspective in the form of directions or a greeting card help bring to light the importance of structure and genre in writing.

Students in a creative writing class have likely thought and discussed the merits of first-person and third-person perspectives, but interactive games provide a new opportunity for media to play and experiment with perspective. Students will often initially concede that the second-person perspective establishes a closeness between the reader and author, but it is often productive to push back on this. To some, the “you” in *Queers in Love* can feel alienating and distant. The “you” is often a way of projecting or repressing an experience. Educators can have students rewrite sections from the game in a first or third-person perspective and describe how the content and emotional impact shift. From there, educators can have students recast their own stories or the stories read in class into second-person perspectives. In this way, the purpose and meaning behind the craft decisions an artist makes can be shown to be much more complex. These discussions of narrative perspective also tend to naturally lead into discussions of perspective and objectivity much more generally.

Typically, frustration is something you want to avoid. However, with *Queers in Love*, frustration is inevitable and an intended part of the experience. This can be a great way to begin a conversation about the types of experiences games can offer that other media cannot. Feelings such as the pride of beating a particularly difficult boss or the envy of a roommate getting the rare treasure item instead of you. Every game of *Queers in Love* ends the same way: the world ends. The feelings, emotions, and decisions players are forced to make help them become aware of the many invisible or tricky paths they must travel every day. Educators can have students analyze the time constraints students face daily such as paper deadlines in class, street crossings downtown, and the shot clock in a basketball game. With these constraints in mind, educators can have students contrast them with the ten-second countdown to the end of the world in *Queers in Love* to help understand how time impacts our decisions and foster empathy for the choices people make that may not make sense to us individually. From positioning the player themselves as queer through the title of the game, to the use of “you,” to the graffiti scribbled on the wall in the “Afterward,” the game argues for empathy, community, and finding joy even in the hardest moments of our lives.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should play the game beforehand and be familiar with the sexual and mature content of the game. While never explicit or graphic, the game does prominently feature an adult relationship.
2. The game features multiple endings and paths for the player to explore. Having discussions about the different paths the players took and the reasoning behind their decisions is key.
3. Teachers can direct students who are interested to download the free Twine software that was used to make the game. It can also be used entirely in the web browser to create fun, simple games that can be shared with others.
4. Teachers or students interested in text-based games should explore the wide offerings of interactive fiction, from historical narratives to political campaign simulations to science-fiction first-contact stories.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Howling Dogs, an interactive fiction game by porpentine (<https://xrafstar.monster/games/twine/howlingdogs/>)

Depression Quest, an interactive fiction game designed by Zoë Quinn (<http://www.depressionquest.com/dqfinal.html#>)

Black Wave, an end-of-the-world story centered in Northern California and 90s-lesbian culture by Michelle Tea (<https://www.andotherstories.org/black-wave/>)

“Bandersnatch” episode of *Black Mirror*, an interactive episode of a television show originally scripted in Twine (<https://www.netflix.com>)

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RAJI: AN ANCIENT EPIC

POONAM CHOWDHURY & GURJOT S. SIDHU

Game: *Raji: An Ancient Epic*

Developer: Nodding Heads Games

Year: 2020

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Action-adventure, puzzle

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: History, religious studies, social studies, literature, art, ethics

Possible skills taught: Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, ethical decision-making, empathy, identity exploration, hand-eye coordination

Audience: 10+ years (E10+ ESRB rating)

Length of time: 7 hours

Where to play: At home, in a classroom setting, and on a mobile device

Cost: \$24.99 (PS4, Switch, Steam)

URL: <https://rajithgame.com/>

SUMMARY

Raji: An Ancient Epic brings India and Indian culture to international audiences. The developers of *Raji: An Ancient Epic* call it “a labour of love that we crafted to share the beauty and wonder of our cultural heritage with gamers across the world” (quoted in Smith, 2020). The game is set in ancient India and follows the story of Raji, a young circus performer who is chosen by the Hindu gods Durga and Vishnu to fight the demon lord Mahabalasura. Raji must defeat hordes of demons and solve puzzles to reach the demon lord’s lair. Although skeptical of her capabilities in the beginning, Lord Vishnu later provides Raji with the choice of weapons that help her slay all the demons in her way. Through various cutscenes and conversations between Durga and Vishnu, the player learns about the avatars these gods took in the past to save the world from various evils. The game is set in a mythical version of India, and the art style is heavily influenced by Hindu and Buddhist art. The aesthetics are “inspired by the medieval architecture of Rajasthan, which was the pinnacle of architectural achievement during the medieval era of India” (Kickstarter campaign, *Raji: An Ancient*

Epic). The mythological narrative, the costume choice, and the background score add to the Indian culture expressed in the game.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Teachers can use this game as an opportunity to learn about Indian history, culture, and religions. However, it is important to highlight that India is a heterogeneous tapestry of cultures and the game falls short in this regard and provides a “flattened” representation of India instead. Teachers should use this as a springboard to lead students to explore the diversity of India. Some starting points could be: What is the cultural significance of Asuras in Hinduism? What is the status of the circus performers community in India? Does the visual depiction of positive and negative characters in the game shed some light on stereotypes and biases? With this lens, educators can use the game in a classroom setting to not just explore India but to also build a critical mindset in their students. This would allow learners to engage with the game critically and explore other possible ways that the narrative could have played out. Once the students are familiar with the game, teachers can motivate them to adapt the game’s narrative to another context. For example, if the game was set in a Greek or Aztec setting, how would the characters or the plot change?

The game begins with Raji celebrating the auspicious Hindu festival of “Raksha Bandhan” by giving a Rakhi (an amulet-like thread piece) to her younger brother. In return for this Rakhi, the brother promises to protect his sister from all evils. As with most traditions, Raksha Bandhan has transformed over centuries and thus it could be worthwhile for learners to explore the cultural evolution of the festival. The students could try to find out if there are any similar traditions in their native cultures, and if so, how have those traditions evolved over time. The teacher could facilitate this analysis by bringing to the fore that the game flips the tradition of Raksha Bandhan and has the sister try to save the brother from evil. Furthermore, unfortunately, the only emotion the titular character, Raji, expresses is that of anger coupled with a strange masculine heroic confidence. This juxtaposition could serve as another aspect for critical reflection from a feminist lens. Students can be motivated to contrast Raji with other video games and literature with female central characters such as Lara Croft in the *Tomb Raider* franchise.

Traditionally, games with a historical or mythological backdrop, such as *Age of Mythology* and the *Assassin’s Creed* series, provide opportunities to learn about another culture in a detailed and interactive manner. These games feature short notes detailing the mythology and the background of the characters. While this feature is missing in *Raji: An Ancient Epic*, the teacher could develop such notes in advance or engage the students in designing the notes based on the game. Since the gameplay spans a few hours and covers a range of curricular topics, teachers of different subjects could coordinate their lesson plans. For example, teachers teaching history, religious studies and literature could collaboratively use the game in their lessons. Teachers can encourage the students to maintain a journal as they play the game. This could be especially useful for students of architecture as they could explore the style of Pahari paintings and medieval Rajasthan through the game.

The game features many puzzles. Teachers could use these as fun activities to engage younger students. Older students could take a step further and try to design their own puzzles that could have been in the game.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should be aware that the hack-and-slash nature of the game could be limiting in terms of accessibility. The gameplay demands a certain level of hand-eye coordination and dexterity from the players. Teachers might need to make accommodations accordingly, such as, making children play in small groups. Additionally, students could reflect on how the game could have been made more accessible for larger audiences.
2. Teachers should illustrate that the game does not represent a holistic picture of India by highlighting the issues of cultural and religious representation.
3. Teachers could consult encyclopedias and other academic sources when discussing the visuals, music and cultural elements of the game. If possible, experts or members from the Indian community could be brought in to add nuance to the conversation.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Asura (<https://www.asurathegame.com/>)

Smite (<https://smitegame.com/>)

REFERENCES

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Mukherjee, S., & Chowdhury, P. (2022). The Unheard India in *Raji: An Ancient Epic*: Remediating Orientalism and patriarchy in games from the Global South [Extended abstract presentations]. *Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) 2022 International Conference*. July, Krakow, Poland (hybrid conference).

Mukherjee, S. (2022). *Videogames in the Indian Subcontinent*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

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SIGNS OF THE SOJOURNER

DIANA J. LEONARD & RUTH MAKONNEN

Game: *Signs of the Sojourner*

Developer: Echo Night Games, LLC; Bromio

Year: 2020

Platform(s): Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Steam, Windows, and Macintosh operating systems

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Deck-building role-playing game (RPG)

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Social studies; math; ethics; civics

Possible skills taught: Intercultural communication; creativity; critical thinking; problem-solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration.

Audience: 10+ years through adult

Length of time: 4-5 hours

Where to play: Classroom; at home

Cost: \$19.99

URL: <https://echodog-games.itch.io/signs-of-the-sojourner>

SUMMARY

Signs of the Sojourner is a narrative digital game about relationships and communication in which the player character, Rhea, travels around the game world looking to fill the shelves of the family store. She becomes a caravan trader to keep her hometown of Bartow thriving following the death of the previous trader, her mother. The story touches on themes of loss and resilience, as Rhea is grappling with their mother's recent death and climate-driven scarcity issues. Mechanically, this is a card deck-building game in which players learn and grow through the cards that they choose to retain and play. Players start with a deck of ten cards that are fairly homogeneous (a mix of triangles and circles) to represent Rhea's childhood in the town of Bartow. The player aims to choose cards that match the ones in their interaction partner's hands. When chosen well, the cards help the player learn more about the people and world around them. Conversations go smoothly at first (if you have similar cards as your partner), but with every new interaction a card is added to the deck and one must be discarded. This may at times lead the player to feel frustration such as when conversations end abruptly or opportunities become blocked. Narratively speaking, as Rhea travels farther from

home the conversations change gradually both in topic and tone, and this is represented by new symbols appearing on the cards. At first, the new symbols seem strange and alien as do the themes of conversation, but with time the player character begins to pick up more cards that match their new social context. There are several possible endings to *Signs of the Sojourner* depending on card play choices the player makes along the way. These include Rhea ultimately moving away from Bartow permanently, reaffirming her connection with her hometown, and/or forging a long-term connection with groups or individuals she meets along the route. Therefore, a major theme of the game is the tension between stasis and change—how time away from her home community transforms Rhea and also destabilizes what home means to her and where she feels she belongs.



Figure 33.1. In the game, *Signs of the Sojourner*, a dialogue box depicting a rocky conversation between the player and another character—starting with clashing cards and then resolving into this Accord—and there is still a while to go before the chat concludes. ALT TEXT: The dialogue box says “Airat” with the dialogue, “Papaw doesn’t want me to go, I think. But I have to, you know... become an adult, and make adult choices, like live on my own...” There is a person with brown skin and white hair on the right side of the image.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Signs of the Sojourner is a game about connecting with people and communicating, which are the foundation of inclusionary practices. One’s deck is representative of their character as it reflects their past experiences and shapes their present and future relationships. This game prompts players to empathize with a diverse cast of characters and situations. Further, the protagonist is a woman of color who experiences a “borderlands identity” that transgresses space and place; she is therefore in some control of her own destiny while also being marginalized (Equality Archive, N.D.).

The gameplay encourages students to adopt a variety of perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of the other characters’ viewpoints. The themes of travel, returning home, and being misunderstood are useful starting points for sharing experiences like that of refugees and immigrants. The instructor can help students think about the loss of control and associated perils of being a refugee by having

the students journal about their character's experiences throughout the gameplay, as well as complete essay assignments aiming to relate the in-character dynamics with the out-of-game personal and communal observations. For students who are themselves refugees, these experiences are expected to foster psychologically healthy integration into the host country whereas they are expected to foster empathy in students who are residents/non-refugees (Echterhoff et al, 2020). By fostering this empathetic understanding, one can find commonalities with distant others and therefore reduce prejudice which would in turn proactively affect one's understanding of equity and justice.

Another example of how this game may promote inclusion is reflected in the self-published article, "Signs of the Sojourner and All the Pieces of Me," in which the author reflects on how the game simulates code-switching (changing our mannerisms, tone of voice, and language choices to fit into a given context; Cooks-Campbell, 2022) due to its emphasis on "how we align ourselves to be understood by others" (Signor, 2020). The author relates the game to their own journey after coming out as gay and seeing the value and drawbacks of compartmentalizing oneself to relate to others. Signor says that the end of the game "represents someone coming into their own, accepting all these pieces and knowing exactly how to fully live their truth." By playing through to its completion, therefore, students may share Signor's insight that "we never stop growing—we never stop getting cards replaced in our decks—but we eventually learn what pieces are important to getting our whole selves understood no matter what the situation." For that reason, reflections throughout the course of playing the game are encouraged. Students should be invited to engage in five minutes of journaling activity per every hour of play. Afterward, reflections can be done in groups or pairs as this will allow students to envision a variety of possible game outcomes based on the choices they make during the game.

Educators can encourage reflective play by helping players immerse in a game character. Teachers can ask students to reflect on their past immersion experiences (e.g., games, fiction, films), engaging them with questions about what immersion feels like and what practices/contexts make immersion more likely for them. Next, a short group role-playing activity could give students the chance to test out these strategies and practice post-game reflection before launching into the digital game. If the game is played in multiple sessions, however, this might reduce players' immersion with the game and disrupt the flow of play. To mitigate this, instructors can remind students of key reflections from the previous gaming session and ask about the priorities and feelings of the character they are embodying, Rhea, such as "How am I (Rhea) feeling at this point in my journey? What do I (Rhea) want most out of life right now? Why? How do I (Rhea) plan to go about getting that?"

Since students are likely to play the game at a different pace, educators can form debriefing groups for students who are at a similar stage of the gameplay. This way, these debriefing sessions will be most effective at prompting the desired learning outcomes. Students who finish early may be able to replay again and make different choices to see how the various branches of conversation play out for the protagonist. Additionally, instructors should organize a post-game reflection and debriefing session with students in which they will pose a series of questions focusing on the in-game choices they made and how they feel about the ending they unlocked, as well as how they navigated the frustration of coming back to the hometown and not being able to effectively converse with the characters closest to the protagonist.

Despite all the advantages of playing *Signs of the Sojourner*, some limitations need to be acknowledged.

First, some students might find the deck-building portion of the game too challenging. If the player were to struggle with this aspect of the game, they would be unlikely to get through the story and experience the quoted outcomes. A good way to mitigate this would be for educators to provide students with a tip sheet containing the most useful information about deck building and the characteristics of different cards. Second, there are possible concerns as to the thematic component of the game. Namely, some of the presented themes might be emotionally challenging for a younger audience to handle. For example, these would include climate change anxiety and references to the death of the loved one as well as family-related conflicts and injustices. Possible ways for educators to mitigate these risks in their students is to encourage scaffolding activities like debriefing which could be done incrementally per every hour of play. By doing so, students would find ways to gradually process their exposure to the worrisome aspects of the game, all while being supported by an experienced educator.

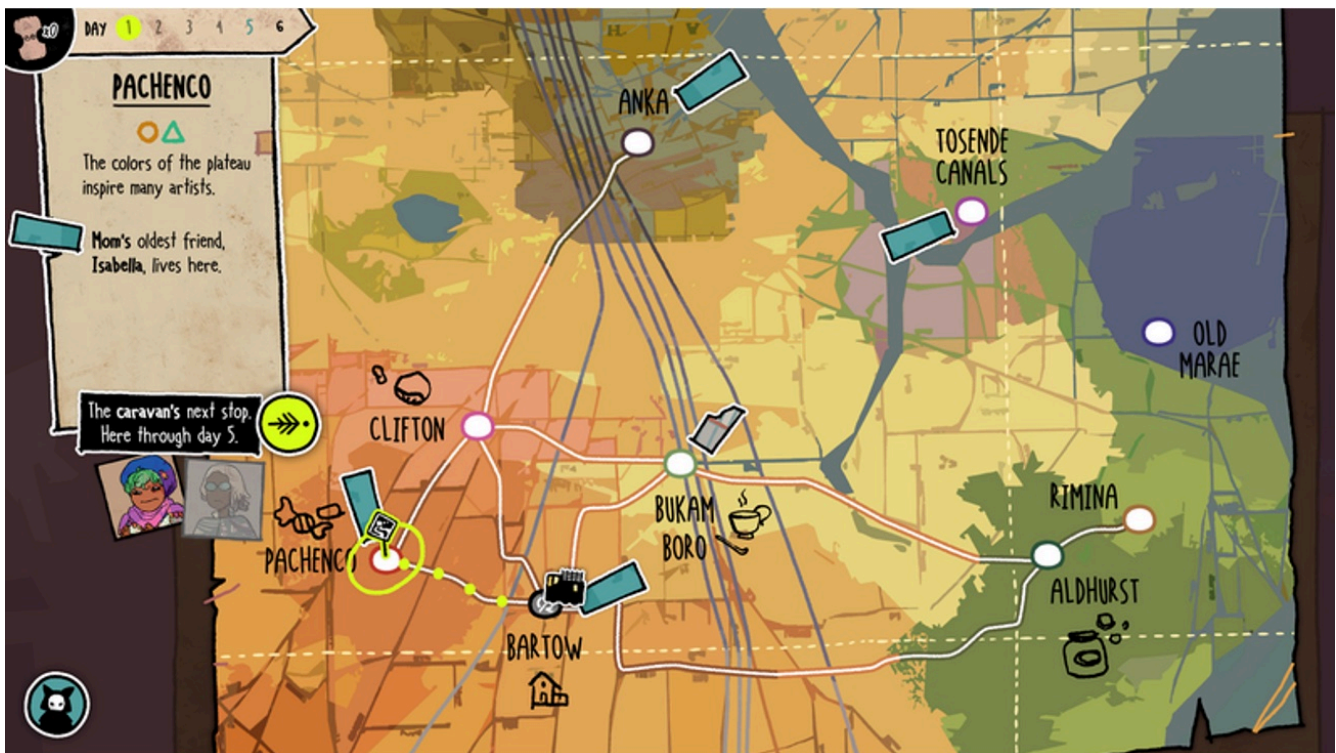


Figure 33.2. A road map showing possible locations for Rhea to visit. Players might choose to follow the caravan or to go their own route—either way, they will certainly miss something as they cannot be at all places at once. ALT TEXT: There is a map with different areas like Pachenco, Bartow, and Clifton. There is a text box that describes Pachenco and says, “The colors of the plateau inspire many artists. Mom’s oldest friend, Isabella, lives here. The caravan’s next stop. Here through day 5.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Educators are encouraged to play the game beforehand in order to understand the story plot and find the best ways to encourage reflective play that suits their teaching style.
2. A playthrough of the main plot is around 4 hours long. Students should be encouraged to play the game in more than one sitting as that would prompt reflection over a longer period of time and increase learning outcomes.
3. Teachers should explain to students that this is not a win-or-lose type of game. Rather, it is about strategizing the best possible outcome based on personal goals or interests.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Official *Signs of the Sojourner* Wiki (https://signs-of-the-sojourner.fandom.com/wiki/Signs_of_the_Sojourner_Wiki)

Book of Travels (https://bookoftravels.fandom.com/wiki/Book_of_Travels_Wiki)

Iris and the Giant (https://irisandthegiant.fandom.com/wiki/Iris_and_the_Giant_Wiki)

Road to Guangdong (<https://www.nintendoworldreport.com/review/54864/road-to-guangdong-switch-review>)

This Is Reality (<https://www.taminggaming.com/en-us/game/This+Is+Reality>)

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SPIRIT ISLAND

TONY BUSHNER

Game: *Spirit Island*

Developer: Greater Than Games (analog)/Handelabra (digital)

Year: 2017

Platform(s): Board game, iOS/Android, Windows, MacOS

Number of players: 1-4, 2 players optimal

Genre: Cooperative, area control, hand management

Type of game: Analog/digital adaptation

Curricular connections: Social studies, history, literature, digital humanities

Audience: 14+ (young adults, high school students, college students)

Length of time: 60-90 minutes

Where to play: Tabletop (analog); shared tablet/PC (digital); *Tabletop Simulator* add-on (Steam Workshop); print and play version available online (<https://www.pnpparadise.com/set-5/spirit-island>)

Cost: \$80 (analog); \$20 for full game OR \$2 monthly subscription (iOS/Android); \$25 (MacOS/Windows); Free (print and play; *Tabletop Simulator* add-on)

URL: <https://greaterthangames.com/product/spirit-island/> (analog) / <https://www.handelabra.com/spiritisland> (digital)

SUMMARY

Spirit Island is a cooperative territory control board game with asymmetric player abilities that represent powerful nature elementals protecting a small island from invading colonizers. An Indigenous tribe, the Dahan, co-exists with the player-controlled nature spirits on the island and acts as non-playable NPC allies in the fight against the invading forces. On each turn, NPC settlers automatically explore new parts of the island, build settlements and cities, blight the land by over-extracting resources, and engage in war with the native Dahan. Players must work together to grow the presence and power of their island spirits, destroy NPC colonial settlements, and strike fear into the hearts of the invaders before they overrun the island and spoil the land from which nature draws its power. *Spirit Island* is played on a modular board depicting an island with various environment types. Players control elemental spirits to fight against wave after wave of relentless colonizers. The elemental spirits grow in power through spreading their influence tokens across the map and acquiring powerful new Power cards that they can use to keep pace with the increasing spread of colonists over the course of the game. Each turn, players will place influence tokens from their spirit

board to the game map to represent their spirit's presence on the island; as presence tokens are moved to the game map, they reveal upgrades that allow the spirits to play more Power cards and gain energy used to play those cards. Power cards help the spirits move, destroy, and otherwise fight against the colonizers—though players will need to work together to use their individual powers to manage the threats on the board from turn to turn. There are several resources to keep track of and layers of strategy to keep in mind, so students should be warned that the game will take a bit of work to learn to play effectively. But with appropriately managed expectations, students tend to take to *Spirit Island's* gameplay quickly. While victories are rare, students' experiences with loss can be generative for the complex conversations that this game encourages.



Figure 34.1. A close-up image of the *Spirit Island* map with the Dahan homes and the colonial explorers, towns, and cities occupying distinct geographic regions. ALT TEXT: A map or game board that has green, orange, gray, and brown regions. There are mini figures on it including a house, an explorer, and white, black, and red tokens. The different regions also have icons on them and numbers.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

When using *Spirit Island*, teachers may choose various levels at which students might engage with the game. Even at its easiest difficulty level, *Spirit Island* is a difficult and complex game that requires forethought and communication to play effectively. For this reason, it is recommended that teachers introduce the game slowly: have students start with reading the rulebook/watching a “How to Play” video and then reviewing how the game is played in class, where students can ask questions. The digital versions of the game on iOS/Android have a free demo that students can download, which

should help familiarize them with the phases of the game and general strategy. The demo version of the game has a turn limit, so students cannot play through a full game of *Spirit Island* without purchasing the full version; however, four students can play on one device, so cooperative play in the classroom can be facilitated either through the digital version, the board game version, or a mixture of both. No matter which modality the instructor chooses, cooperation and communication between players should be just as accessible to students playing digitally as they would be if students were playing the analog version. A full game of *Spirit Island* takes 60-90 minutes to complete, so play may need to be split between two class periods. It is also highly likely that students will lose the game in a shorter time period, so planning to cut play short after playing as much as possible in one class period is also a valid option.

Spirit Island is one of a small handful of board games that challenges the medium's uncritical reliance on colonialism as a convenient theme. It is a kind of anti-*Settlers of Catan* game that calls into question the assumptions and logics of games about resource extraction and the building of infrastructure in "unoccupied" land, as well as a tendency for colonialist board games to ignore or even commodify the presence of indigenous peoples. As such, it is best paired with discussions on games like *Settlers of Catan*, *Puerto Rico*, or *Archipelago*, which encourage students to consider how each of these games frame the colonialist project. The No Pun Included video on colonialism linked later is a great starting point that outlines the medium's problematic relationship with colonialism and enumerates the ways that *Spirit Island* pushes back against the uncritical adaption of such an at-hand theme. Colonization is a theme often and uncritically used in many European-style board games that often explore mechanics of resource-acquisition, empire-building, and focus heavily on efficiency while downplaying the impact of the logics of colonialism on indigenous subjects. *Puerto Rico*, for example, has players acquiring what are simply referred to as "workers" that are purchased from boats that arrive on the island, and are represented by brown discs that are permanently placed in fields to enable the harvesting of crops. As is typical in colonialist board games, the ethics of what is being represented is not questioned by the game's theme nor mechanics and is simply part of the system that players must exploit to achieve victory. *Spirit Island* provides a fascinating case study of how games can challenge the at-hand themes used in other games while still holding true to the ludic qualities that make Eurogames so popular among board game enthusiasts. Few other board games flip the colonialist narrative to give players the opportunity to play from the perspective of the colonized, and the theme/terminology employed brings attention to the harmful effects a colonizing power has on the land and people: after exploring and building, colonists "ravage" the land and native populations; continued ravaging eventually leads to blight on the land which threatens to overwhelm the island's ability to fight back and heal; colonists are expelled from the island only when they fear the island and its indigenous people. Rather than pit players against each other as they strive for dominance (as is the logic of most Eurogames), *Spirit Island* stresses the importance of collective, collaborative action as players can only hope to defeat the colonists by working together to balance their spirits' strengths and weaknesses. Students may be asked to consider not only the logistical difficulty of the game but also the emotional response to seeing their island overrun by the relentless pace of a more efficient and unrelenting force.

Pushing even further still, students can consider the narrative frame of *Spirit Island* and the passivity of the indigenous people, the Dahan, relative to the nature elementals that players embody in the game. The Dahan are largely treated as a resource that players can use against the colonizers, with

players using their Powers to move the Dahan around the board like pawns to be used or sacrificed. Educators may want to question the authenticity of non-indigenous designers making a game based on indigenous themes. Designer Eric Reuss is looking to address some of the problematic aspects of *Spirit Island* in a future Dahan-focused expansion for the game (and his 2020 BoardGameGeek design post is an example of the kind of research and consideration that responsible designers need to do if they are going to make a game about an experience that they have not lived through themselves). Teachers may ask students to take Reuss' post as a starting point to consider how they would create their own expansion or modification to *Spirit Island* to give the Dahan more agency, or how they would modify another game to subvert its colonialist narratives. *Spirit Island* also offers campaign scenarios that feature different alternative-history colonialist powers (the United Kingdom, Sweden, etc.) for players to square off against. The rulebook contains a significant Lore section that provides insight into the motivations of these colonialist powers.



Figure 34.2. Each player's spirit board in *Spirit Island* starts with Presence markers covering the board. As the Presence of the spirit grows on the map, Presence markers are taken from the spirit board, allowing players to gain more Energy and play more cards every turn. ALT TEXT: Two different spirit boards. One has a photo of orange lightning and a description of the special rules, innate powers, growth, and an area to put tokens. The other board has an image of a blue river that seems to have tendrils. It also has a description of the special rules, innate powers, growth, and an area to put tokens. On this board, there are also blue tokens covering the token area in the middle of the board.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. *Spirit Island* is a difficult game to win; temper students' expectations for beating the game on the first try.
2. Have students explore the rulebook thoroughly. Reuss included extensive sections on in-game lore and design notes that help add context to the gameplay.
3. This game is quite complex, so educators should offer multiple ways for students to learn the game through reading the rulebook, watching one of the various how-to-play videos available online, watching a play online, playing through the digital tutorial, and/or practicing the game on their own before attempting to play during class time.
4. If playing the physical version of the game, set up the game board using the recommended "First Play" setup found in the rulebook and have students use the recommended Power Progression cards included in the box instead of having them draft their Major/Minor Power cards throughout the game.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Archipelago (2012)

Puerto Rico (2002)

Settlers of Catan (1995)

"Colonialism – The Board Game Struggle," No Pun Included (<https://youtu.be/VquFSxs9VXA>)

Eric Reuss' BGG Thread on requests for assistance with the Dahan expansion: <https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/2517190/roadmap-and-some-requests-assistance>

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SPIRITFARER

MEHMET KOSA

Game: *Spiritfarer*

Developer: Thunder Lotus Games

Year: 2020

Platform(s): Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, macOS, Microsoft Windows, Google Stadia

Number of players: Single Player, Local Co-op

Genre: Resource Management Sandbox Game

Type of game: Video Game

Curricular connections: Social and emotional learning (SEL), English language arts

Possible skills taught: Awareness of ageism, acceptance, empathy, patience, resource management, map reading

Audience: PEGI 12+

Length of time: 25 hours

Where to play: Classroom, Home

Cost: \$29.99

URL: <https://thunderlotusgames.com/spiritfarer/>

SUMMARY

Spiritfarer is a game about dying, acceptance, and closure. The goal of the game is to help out spirits (i.e. the deceased) in completing their final wishes and then to take them to the Everdoor, the portal to the afterlife. The player plays as a character called Stella who is the ferry master. The game starts as Stella taking over the older Spiritfarer. Stella visits new islands, befriends new spirits in these islands and takes them to the boat, collects resources, and upgrades her boat to both build chambers for the newcomers to make them feel comfortable, and to have better technology (i.e. new rooms) to craft new materials (see Figures 35.1 and 35.2). The gameplay is cozy and relaxing, and players are not rushed or stressed. They can take as much time as they would like, to accomplish tasks. The theme of death is not shown as a grim event, nor is it handled with a negative tone. It is emphasized that death comes eventually, and one needs to accept it. Although characters die all the time in a lot of other games, the portrayal of death is mostly trivial. *Spiritfarer*, on the other hand, examines death in a very different light. Although dying can be a scary thought, the game exposes players to the concepts of accepting and letting go when the time comes. The experience is deeply emotional since the game is

about learning how to say goodbye to friends and family. *Spiritfarer* is a single-player game but it also allows two co-located people to play together, where one player plays as Stella and the other plays as her cat, Daffodil.



Figure 35.1. Stella's giant-sized boat, including some of the spirit passengers' chambers and rooms for resource modifications. ALT TEXT: An image of a cartoon board that is very colorful. The boat has a number of rooms and compartments, and ladders to other rooms. Each room is a different color, including blue, purple, red, orange, and gray. One room has a clock and another has trees in it. There is also a windmill. On the left side of the screen, there are some icons, including one that is highlighted and labeled as "Build."

HOW TO USE THE GAME

In *Spiritfarer*, the player interacts with spirits throughout the game, who have diverse sets of personalities with different needs, desires, and unfinished businesses. Since the game is about dying, getting old, and saying goodbyes, it can foster discussions around death and ageism. This can be used to talk about inclusivity for older persons. Before assigning the game to the students, it might be good for the teacher to convey an initial description of ageism and its effects, to create some context for students. Another approach could be to start by asking students to come up with their own definitions of ageism, acceptance, and closure (e.g., "What is ageism in your own words?", "What do you understand from acceptance?", or "How does someone get a closure after impactful events?"). These could be helpful openers in social-emotional learning classes.

After the student-led class discussions and student answers, teachers can then bring up specific discussion points that are not captured by the students, such as caring for others, patience, letting go, and acceptance by giving examples from the game. For instance, students can discuss the reasons why Stella rides the boat. Is it with colonist intentions, or to care and provide for others? They can pepper their discussions by sharing clips from the game captured through their own gameplay or using YouTube videos that include major scenes (e.g., CrankyTemplar, 2021; turaform, 2020).

Players also learn to be patient via some aspects of the game such as trying to catch the right fish to cook a certain meal, traveling to a location to get certain materials (e.g. to build lodging for spirits), or playing a musical instrument to speed up the growing of their plants. Players help Alice, for instance, a spirit who slowly loses her memory, by helping her via conversations, dressing up in a specific way to look like her daughter, and by physically escorting her to bed. Moreover, Stella or spirits do not always get the closure that they desire. Sometimes they lose people without even saying goodbye. This is signaled via the Atul character, who disappears without Stella taking him to the Everdoor. Another example is that Astrid is a disappointed character (by her lover) but never manages to resolve her problem. Therefore, the discussion can revolve around how people sometimes have to accept the circumstances and move on. Some more specific prompts that teachers can use are: “Why is Stella going from island to island?” “How did you feel about fishing and/or cooking for guests?” “How did you feel about Atul disappearing rather than you taking him to the Everdoor?”

The game can be used over the span of a semester or for shorter periods of time. Each week, students can be expected to play a portion of the game which might include delivering one or more spirits to the Everdoor. The game has a percentage tracker for in-game progress that might be helpful for assigning play assignments as well. Each of these tasks may require a short reflection paper by the students to record their experiences and their critical analyses. These then can be discussed in class every week or once in every several weeks. Some example prompts for the reflection papers can be: “What captivated you about this storyline?” “How would you describe this character’s personal growth?” or “What were some decisions this character (or you) took to arrive at a closure?”

The game can also be thought of as an implicit critique of capitalist societies, in which human value is sometimes equated to their production capacity. People might especially become less productive after certain ages. In *Spiritfarer*, older characters are presented in a dignified way, having intrinsic values (Wagner et al., 2021). One clear example of this idea is the narrative bit about the exploited workers for the benefit of the upper class at the Bottom Line Corp Island. Depending on the level of the class, the discussions can go as deep as talking about the relationships between the organizations of the economy, welfare programs, and aging. Regarding these, teachers can ask: “What does the Bottom Line Corp want?” “How are the Bottom Line Corp workers treated in your opinion?”

There are also several points in the game that touch on subjects that are not necessarily about death or aging directly, such as meditation and being whole (e.g. Summer), challenging the usefulness concept as a purpose in life (e.g. Gustav), or giving people space when they need it (e.g. Astrid). These can also appear as talking points during class discussions. Teachers could start these conversations by asking: “What do you think about Summer’s practices?”, “Should objects or people always be useful to be considered valuable, or can they just have artistic or intrinsic value?”

The main shortcoming of the *Spiritfarer* is the fact that it initially included some ableist writings (e.g. Gustav’s words implying being dead is better than being disabled). After this was spotted by the gaming community, Thunder Lotus Games issued an apology and stated that those parts would be changed (Thunder Lotus Games, 2021). Although this can be stated as a limitation of the game, this situation might also be utilized by the educators with deliberate intention in the classroom to talk about ableism, regardless of whether those narrative parts are fixed in the game (e.g., by showing the relevant part in the game and asking “What do you think about Gustav’s words about being disabled?”

“Would you change them if you were the game designer / company?”, “If yes, how would you change them?”).



Figure 35.2. The map on which the player navigates their boat in Spiritfarer. ALT TEXT: A large map that is on a parchment-like paper. It has a grid overlaying it. It has different areas that look like water and some areas that have different icons on it, like a thunderstorm icon. The edges of the map look like they are burnt by fire. There are instructions on the bottom right part of the map, such as “Zoom in,” “Zoom Out,” “Confirm Travel,” “Back,” and “Set Waypoint.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers can assign weekly assignments for students to play in their own time (instead of whole in-class gameplays), since the game takes around 25 hours to finish.
2. Educators can clip important moments as videos from the game to show them in class or have student(s) play them in class to further spark class discussions.
3. Additionally, teachers can encourage students to clip and/or take screenshots of game parts that students think are worth mentioning and/or playing in class.
4. The game allows for co-located play, therefore the teacher can allow students to play in pairs for homework assignments.
5. Teachers may consider issuing a photo-sensitivity warning to students as the game includes flashy animations during certain events (e.g., meteor showers).
6. Teachers can let the students know about the player support & knowledge base website that the developer published, in case students face any issues: <https://thunderlotusgames.com/support/spiritfarer/>

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Spiritfarer Art Book (<https://thunderlotus.itch.io/spiritfarer-art-book>)

Cozy Grove (<https://cozygrovegame.com/>)

Mutazione (<https://mutazionegame.com/>)

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SVOBODA 1945: LIBERATION

SHAWN CLYBOR & VÍT ŠISLER

Game: *Svoboda 1945: Liberation*

Developer: Charles Games

Year: 2021

Platform(s): PC, iOS

Number of players: one

Genre: Adventure, full-motion video

Type of game: Video game

Curricular connections: History; social studies; ethics; civics

Possible skills taught: Historical thinking, critical thinking; ethical decision-making; historical empathy

Audience: 12+ years through adult

Length of time: 2.5 hours

Where to play: A classroom, at home

Cost: \$14.99

URL: <https://svoboda1945.com>

SUMMARY

Svoboda 1945: Liberation facilitates deeper understandings of the complex and contested history of Eastern Europe by presenting key historical events of 1945-1952 from diverse and oftentimes conflicting points of view. The game places a particular emphasis on groups whose narratives have been peripheral to historical narratives of East-Central Europe, including women, Sudeten Germans, and Volhynian Czechs from modern-day Ukraine. It also touches upon the Holocaust and present-day antisemitism. *Svoboda 1945: Liberation* is a narrative adventure game that blends full motion video (or FMV) interviews with real actors and branching dialogue choices. Players assume the role of a preservationist at the National Heritage Institute who is sent to the fictional village of Svoboda near the Czech-German border to determine if an old schoolhouse is eligible for landmark status. Players quickly realize that the fate of the building is highly controversial among the locals because its history is deeply intertwined with their personal and family experiences during and immediately after World War II. The goal of the game is to successfully navigate these perspectives to gather evidence about the building's history, and then determine whether it should be preserved as a monument or demolished to make room for a thriving local agribusiness. The contentious events at the heart of *Svoboda 1945:*

Liberation connects to the final days of World War II and the turbulent years that followed immediately afterward. Although the states of Eastern Europe and Russia celebrated their liberation from Nazism in 1945, their celebrations occurred against a backdrop of targeted violence against ethnic minorities, government-organized population transfers, and the rise of increasingly paranoid, repressive, and antisemitic communist dictatorships. These traumatic events had a long-lasting impact on the region. *Svoboda 1945: Liberation* was written in cooperation with a team of professional historians from the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

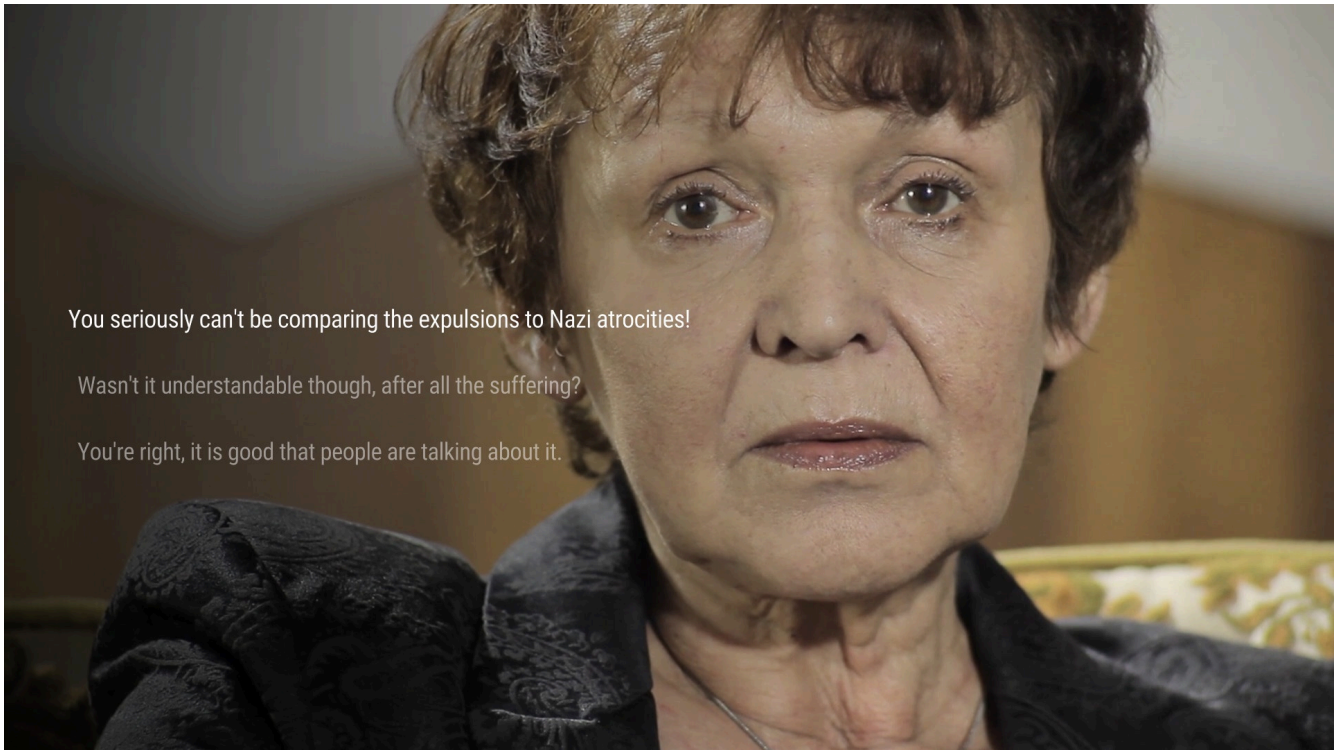


Figure 36.1. Interview with a character in *Svoboda 1945: Liberation* (Charles Games, 2021). ALT TEXT: A photograph of a woman is on the screen. It gives three options, "You seriously can't be comparing the expulsions to Nazi atrocities!," "Wasn't it understandable though, after all the suffering?" and "You're right, it is good that people are talking about it." The first option is highlighted in this screenshot.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

The game's educational objectives stem from pedagogical constructivism, historical empathy, and social learning theory. The game can be used in history and social studies classrooms to teach historical thinking, including sourcing, corroboration, and synthesis. It can also be used to teach civic education and teamwork. In our teaching of the game, we have used *Svoboda 1945: Liberation* in two different ways: first, as a text for classroom discussions in high school and college level world history courses; second, as a model of a digital narrative in a seminar-style high school course about video games and media literacy. It would also be useful in an ethics or philosophy class.

As a historical text, *Svoboda 1945: Liberation* creates opportunities to discuss the experiences of everyday people during World War II and its aftermath. The game connects to topics such as fascism, the Holocaust, the expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe after the war for their "political unreliability," and the rise of communism under the shadow of Joseph Stalin. These issues remain relevant today, and an ongoing lack of historical knowledge about them may contribute to ongoing

xenophobia and antisemitism. Educators can have players conduct interactive interviews with different individuals who experienced these events firsthand, the game allows for an exploration of the experiences of the victims of totalitarian regimes and the motivations that led everyday people to collaborate. Because these testimonials are often affected by the identities and experiences of the individuals testifying, it also allows for explorations of perspectivity and bias. For example, several Czech characters in the game defend the expulsions of Germans from Czechoslovakia after 1945 as necessary and just, which in turn can be contrasted against the harrowing accounts of the victims. The game also creates opportunities for teaching source corroboration. Educators can ask students to compare the perspectives of characters from minoritized backgrounds to standard historical narratives, where these perspectives are often marginalized or erased.

Beyond its use of historical content, the game's interviews and testimonials provide opportunities for social and emotional learning as students evaluate their approaches to the game and metacognitively reflect on ethical and emotional considerations when interviewing the game's trauma survivors. Educators can assign students short articles relating to Holocaust testimonials and ask them to develop a short set of guidelines that should guide their approach to conducting interviews. The game is also a strong fit for culturally responsive teaching. As a final project, educators can ask students to conduct oral history interviews with members of their own families, supplement the testimonials with additional research from secondary source literature, and write their own historically accurate narrative story about a major historical event that a family member experienced firsthand. Additionally, the game's exhaustive encyclopedia can be assigned as a required secondary source in both creative projects and more traditional research projects or essays.

In a game studies or media studies course, *Svoboda 1945: Liberation* can be used as a model of interactive storytelling. Educators can ask students to develop their own digital narratives using the cameras on their mobile phones and Charles Games' FMV engine toolkit, which is available for purchase at the Unity Asset Store and can be downloaded onto a school computer in a library or tech center for student use. This type of student project would need three to four weeks minimum and would be a strong fit for a media production or computer science class, or could even be used in an advanced history course with a project-based focus.

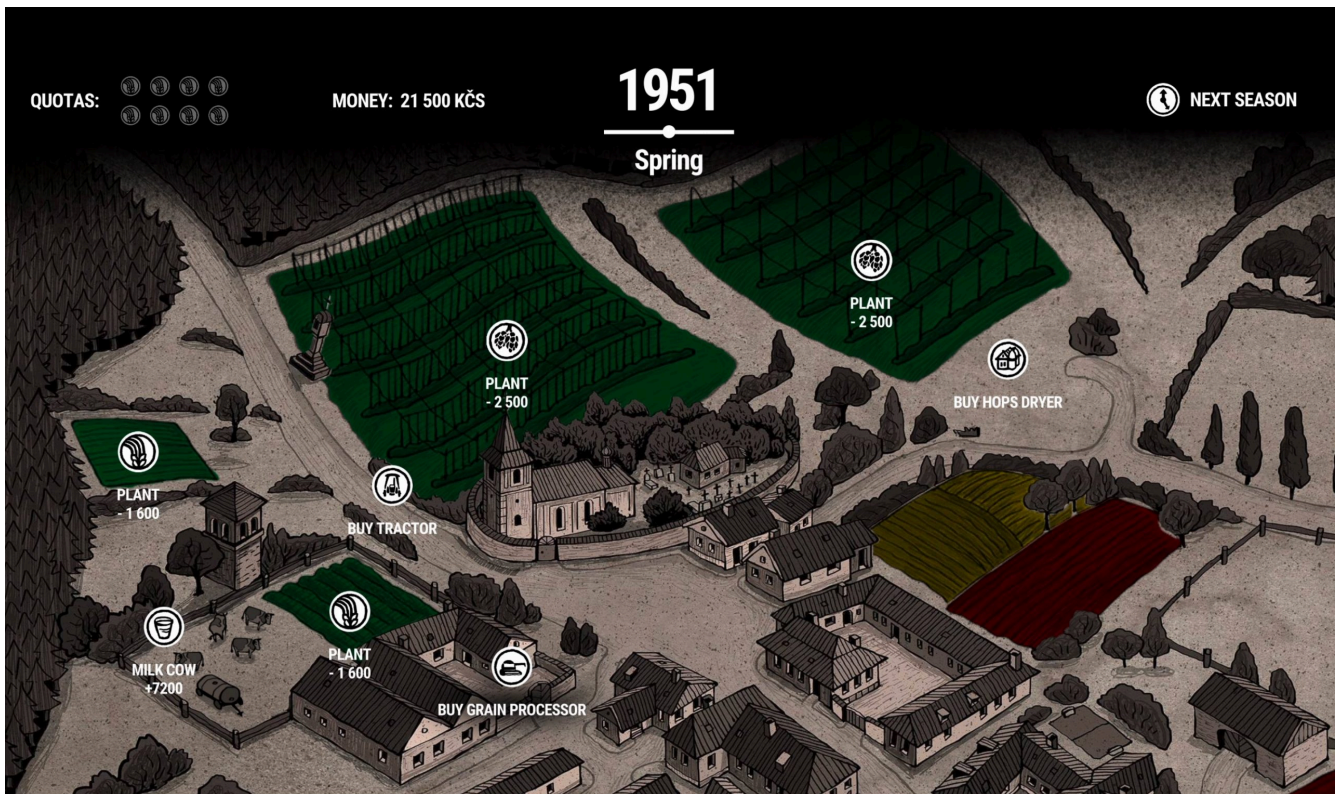


Figure 36.2. Playable memory of the communist collectivization in Svoboda 1945: Liberation. In this mini-game, players sow and harvest fields, earn funds, buy resources, invest in new real estate, and so forth. Yet, they must meet gradually increasing mandatory quotas introduced by the communists to push rich farmers to “voluntarily” join collective farms (Charles Games, 2021). ALT TEXT: An image of a map. It has four green areas that say “Plant” on it, with different money amounts associated with each one. There are also different buildings on the map, using a black and gray ink-drawn type of style. There are also different icons around the map, like “Milk Cow,” “Buy Grain Processor,” “Buy Tractor,” and “Buy Hops Season.” At the top of the interface, from left to right, it says “Quotas,” with eight icons next to it; “Money: 21 500 KčS,” “1951: Spring,” and “Next Season.”

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The game can be played in its entirety in 2-3 sittings (about 2 hours total), or specific interviews and interactive sequences can be assigned independently.
2. Students can play the game in class or independently as homework. We have seen the best results when we ask students to play outside class, and then have them replay specific sequences in class as they work on activities.
3. The game can be played individually but works best when played as a team of 2-3 students per group. This creates opportunities for students to test their understanding of content and discuss their choices during dialogues and mini-game sequences.
4. Using the FMV engine requires basic knowledge of Unity, which outside a computer science class might require the teacher either to run the FMV engine for the class, or to teach 1-2 students how to run it as their contribution to a larger class game project while other students write scripts, conduct research, or perform roles.
5. To access free tutorial videos for the Charles Engine FMV toolkit, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wocZ9PUXCI4&list=PLgLwLcLPKtF1VEtp0xrA7OaM0sXgJbSNTB%22>

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Attentat 1942 (Charles Games, 2017, <https://attentat1942.com>)

My Child Lebensborn (Sarepta studio, Teknopilot, 2021, <https://www.mychildlebensborn.com>)

Through the Darkest of Times (Paintbucket Games, 2020, <https://paintbucket.de/en/game/through-the-darkest-of-times>)

Train to Sachsenhausen (Charles Games, 2022, <https://traintosachsenhausen.com>)

Charles Engine FMV (Charles Games, 2021, <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/tools/game-toolkits/charles-engine-fmv-176200>)

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TALES OF ARISE

STEPHANIE MARTYNIUK & JOHANSEN QUIJANO

Game: *Tales of Arise*

Developer: Bandai Namco Studios

Year: 2021

Platform(s): Playstation 4, Playstation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, Microsoft Windows

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Action, role-playing game (RPG)

Type of game: Digital Console Game

Curricular connections: Media and Communication Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Social Studies, English Studies.

Possible skills taught: Communication; creativity; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration; strategy

Audience: Teen or Adult

Length of time: 50 Hours full game; each chapter can be done in around 8-10 each

Where to play: In a lab or on a home console

Cost: \$59.99

URL: <https://en.bandainamcoent.eu/tales-of/tales-of-arise>

SUMMARY

Tales of Arise is a Japanese Role-Playing Game (JRPG) that depicts the conflict and strife between the Renans, a technologically advanced society, and the Dahna, an enslaved people with a rich history going back for millennia. The game follows the exploits of two protagonists: Alphen and Shionne. Alphen is an amnesiac Dahna enslaved person who is unable to feel pain and wears an iron mask. Shionne is a Renan who rebels against her own people and wishes to see all the Renan lords die. As the pair rises up against the Renans in rebellion, they set to take down all the Renan lords and free the Dahnan people from their oppression. Aided in their quest, the pair are joined by a host of colorful characters. Alphen and Shionne eventually learn that things are not as black-and-white as simply stating that Dahnans are a universally good, oppressed people and Renans are a universally evil race of oppressors. This game helps to foster empathy and perspective, throughout gameplay by shifting the opinion of our protagonists, as they quickly learn there is both good and evil which exist in all peoples. As the game progresses, players further learn that the animosity between Renans and Dahnans is one

that has been imposed on them through propaganda and a false history, as it is revealed that Renans and Dahnans are one people.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Considering each game's chapters tackles a unique aspect of representation, oppression, and power, it could be warranted for instructors to approach their discussions of the game throughout gameplay-based questions. Ideally, instructors will assign students to play up to a certain part of the game, read a text related to the themes and ideas presented in the game (such as Jennifer Malkowski's *Gaming Representation* or other similar readings to complement students' analyses of the game), and engage in classroom discussion in a similar manner as one would when teaching literature. These discussions could then lead to oral presentations or written prompts for analysis.

As an example, educators can help lead a character study on the portrayal of ethnicity, color, and tokenism in the chapter, Menencia: Dohalim il Qaras. This could be done in an advanced or AP High School English class or a first-year rhetoric & composition course, or to a deeper extent in upper-level game studies or literature college courses. Students could first read Lisa Patti's chapter, *Entering the Picture: Digital Portraiture and the Aesthetics of Video Game Representation*, in Malkowski's book. They would then play through the Menencia chapter in the game. Class discussions led by the instructor would focus on the depiction of the artistic and intelligent Dohalim, the only character of color in the game.

In a game where many characters are one-dimensional generic tropes, seeing Dohalim provides a refreshing contrast to other games, where characters of color are framed as stereotypical tropes. Through a facilitated lecture, instructors could further devolve into this character's arc and unpack that though there is some character growth, there is no deep exploration of his changes, or lack thereof, in spiritual belief. Furthermore, teachers could mention despite him being designed to visually signify coming from a culture that is neither Renan nor Dahnans, the game shows neither a strong resonance from the character to his particular culture nor any indicator of how other characters in the game might see him as an outsider.

In class, large or small group discussions could begin by identifying how games in general depict students' previous experiences with diversity and inclusion. This could be built into an activity that speaks to identifying why this is happening in pop culture and having students identify significant challenges to ensuring equity in video games. Teachers could ask students to reflect on how to move forward to better representation of marginalized voices in video games. These kinds of considerations might allow students to unpack the following sort of questions in group presentations or written analyses, encouraging students to further explore these topics at length. The following are some prompts that educators could use.

1. How does the system set up by Dohalim il Qaras encourage diversity and inclusion between the Dahnans and Renans?
2. Focusing on Dohalim il Qaras, what do you think about the game's treatment of the character? What could have been done to further explore his character?
3. What difference would it make if Dohalim were of a different race? What about other

characters?

4. What design choices could designers have made to create a more inclusive world representative of diverse cultures? In other words, how could designers apply the same ethos used in Dohalim's design to the rest of the game?

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Have saved states ready for students at the beginning of the Menencia chapter, around the 20-hour mark. This save file can be backed-up to cloud storage and to an external USB drive for re-use.
2. Some students may not be able to play through the game. Allow them to watch YouTube playthroughs of the game. Krystal109 has a multi-part play-through with the Menencia chapter being parts 14 to 20. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChHqwMQYGmQ>)
3. Keep the conversation focused on the game and assigned articles. Students will often want to bring up their own experiences with the issues represented in the game, and that's fine! The purpose of any exploration of critical topics is for students to explore, learn, and grow. If conversation steers into different avenues, it is exigent on instructors to bring the conversation back to how the game relates to the readings and the themes while making connections between narrative, game design, aesthetics, and the students' experiences.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Final Fantasy 7 Remake

Tales of Berseria

Tales of Vesperia

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THAT DRAGON, CANCER

KAREN (KAT) SCHRIER & GREGORY BEAUDOIN

Game: *That Dragon, Cancer*

Developer: Numinous Games

Year: 2016

Platform(s): Android, iOS, Microsoft Windows, Linux, macOS, Ouya, Classic macOS

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Indie game; art game; narrative-based game

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Social studies; literature; civics; ethics

Possible skills taught: Ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration; communication; storytelling

Audience: 12+ years through adult

Length of time: Approximately 1 hour

Where to play: Classroom; at home

Cost: \$9.99

URL: <http://www.thatdragoncancer.com/#home>

SUMMARY

That Dragon, Cancer expresses the heartbreaking story of a family taking care of their young child, Joel, after he is diagnosed with cancer. It also explores the family's grief following Joel's death from cancer. The game was created by Numinous Games, which is led by the Green family (Ryan and Amy) who lost their son Joel to cancer. *That Dragon, Cancer* invites the player to participate in a linear story filled with vignettes from the family's life, which helps to include the player emotionally in this story (Farber & Schrier, 2021). For instance, there is one vignette where the player (as father, Ryan) needs to try to console Joel with juice, but continually fails. There is also one where the player watches as the parents find out about their son's cancer recurrence. In this vignette, the player is also interacting with a cancer version of the popular "See N Say" animal noises toy. As O'Hern et al. (2020) describe, "Over the course of several vignettes, players progress through his diagnosis, treatment, and death using point-and-click-style mechanics and occasional game styles from other video games (platforming, racing, puzzle solving)" (p. 1379). Each vignette asks the player to perform different actions, like racing around a hospital floor collecting items. Completing each of the vignette's challenges (e.g., helplessly trying to give Joel juice) moves the narrative forward and allows the player to experience

the Green's story, but the player cannot change the narrative. No matter what the player does, Joel succumbs to cancer. The last vignettes involve entering a church, lighting candles, playing a keyboard, and listening to prayers, as well as later seeing Joel eating his favorite food (pancakes) and playing with his dog in a heaven-like setting. The game also incorporates real audio (e.g., voice messages) recorded by the family.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Not many students have the opportunity to really embrace illness, loss, and grief, whether through a game or other medium, or in a classroom setting. *That Dragon, Cancer* enables students to be vulnerable, to empathize, and to express their own emotions. Practicing social and emotional skills supports equity and is important and necessary for creating an inclusive and equitable environment (Schlund, et al., 2020; Mak & Therriault, 2022).

So how do we encourage students to be their raw, emotional, authentic selves? First, we need to give students permission to not play this game. Students need to feel autonomy over their emotional responses. This game is extremely emotionally stirring and some students are not ready, comfortable, or able to manage the emotions required for playing this game. They may have friends, siblings, or parents who have gone through serious illness and died, or they may have faced disease and illness. Thus, educators should give enough context to the game so that students can make the decision for themselves as to whether they can engage. If students cannot play the game, provide an alternative assignment for them, such as having the students who opt-out work together to design a board game prototype to support the expression of a specific emotion (e.g., greed, grief, joy). Or, teachers could have students play another game like *Loneliness* and write a reflection on the experience. However, teachers may want to have a variety of exercises available as open choices so that students do not have to self-identify as opting out.

To elicit the most out of the game, educators may pair the game with other activities. Students may do an emotion exercise, like look at an emotions wheel and identify the emotions they are feeling while playing the game, or you can talk about Ekman's six universal emotions and their nuances (see: *The Atlas of Emotions* as <http://atlasofemotions.org/>). Or, educators can talk about humor and play, and its ability to help us share vulnerabilities and sadness. Instructors can also have students create memes related to empathy and games, such as by choosing their favorite games and talking about a sad moment in it, such as a time when they wanted to save a game character or pet.

To help students analyze the game, teachers may want to apply the ethical framework, Ethics of Care. This is a framework that focuses on how ethics emerge from our responsibility toward and care of others. This framework emerged from one of the authors' courses, Ethics and Gaming, and argues that morality is tied to our relationship with others, such as that of parent to child, or even a school to its students. Care is the central component of how we treat others ethically (Noddings, 1998).

After evaluating the Ethics of Care framework, instructors could then have students break up into teams of 3-4 and discuss the game in detail. Educators could give each team a different vignette from the game (e.g., racing around the hospital floor). The students first need to describe and define what happens in the vignette. Next, they need to dive into the specific elements in the game that help to foster and elicit emotion. Prompts to use could be, "What are the storytelling, artistic, audio,

and design techniques used to encourage emotional awareness and empathy for the characters in the game?” Instructors could also have students connect this back to care, and how the game expresses the strong relationship of a parent to a child, and their responsibility to protect them.

Finally, educators could bring the groups back together for a full-class discussion, where they continue to share findings and consider the responsibility of the game developer to the player. How does the developer support the player in identifying and expressing their emotions, and understanding the full spectrum of humanity? What is the responsibility of the developer in ensuring that players are not so emotionally overwhelmed that they cannot play? And, what is the responsibility of the player to help a developer to tell their stories, and share their authentic selves? Students could consider if the very act of playing and listening is a form of seeing others and including them. By analyzing and interpreting different scenes and images present in the game, students also gain a better sense of how games in general can elicit feelings, tell unique, stories, and connect with others.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Show students the trailer of the game (found on the game’s website) and give enough context about the game so students can decide whether they are able to play it and/or engage in discussions about it.
2. Some students may start the game and find that they need to disengage because it gets too emotionally overwhelming for them. Explain that it is okay to disengage.
3. Ask students to keep a journal while they play the game so they can identify the elements of the game that enhance or affect their emotional responses.
4. Consider sharing the documentary of the making of the game, *Thank You For Playing*, alongside playing the game.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Depression Quest (<http://www.depressionquest.com/>)

Loneliness (<https://www.necessarygames.com/my-games/loneliness>)

Papo & Yo (https://store.steampowered.com/app/227080/Papo__Yo/)

Thank You For Playing (<http://www.thankyouforplayingfilm.com/>)

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THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE

LEE W. HIBBARD

Game: *The Beginner's Guide*

Developer: Everything Unlimited Ltd.

Year: 2015

Platform(s): PC

Number of players: Single-player game

Genre: Interactive storytelling

Type of game: Video game

Curricular connections: Social studies; literature; digital humanities; computer science; ethics

Possible skills taught: Ethical decision-making; empathy; metacognition

Audience: 13+ years

Length of time: 1.5-2 hours

Where to play: A classroom; at home

Cost: \$9.99

URL: https://store.steampowered.com/app/303210/The_Beginners_Guide/

SUMMARY

The Beginner's Guide follows the story of a game developer, named Coda, as told by the game's narrator, Davey Wreden. Gameplay involves the player experiencing a series of small games originally created by Coda, and players are guided by Davey's narration through each of the games, most of which are brief and mechanically simple puzzle-style games and environments the player walks through. As Davey guides the player through each game, he also tells the story of his relationship and friendship with Coda, whose troubled relationship with his own creative work results in games that Davey frequently describes as "unplayable" and even at times modifies to help the player complete specific levels. As the player gets further into the story and learns more about Davey and Coda's relationship, it becomes evident that the two share different views of Coda's games and even Coda's state of mind as a creator. Eventually, the player learns that at one point Davey shared Coda's games with other people against Coda's wishes. The player, unintentionally complicit in Davey's betrayal of his friend's trust, gradually uncovers the circumstances that lead to Coda cutting Davey out of his life for good. Blurring the lines between reality and fiction, *The Beginner's Guide* maintains the figure of the narrator as the game's creator Davey Wreden, despite speculation years after the game's release as to the existence of

Coda or someone akin to him and controversy upon release about it being fiction or nonfiction (Dale 2015).

HOW TO USE THE GAME

The Beginner's Guide creates a narrative space to discuss current issues related to privacy, information sharing, and consent, as well as the importance of understanding the context of a narrative. The game uses an overreaching narrator who modifies existing game artifacts and both speaks for and over the creator of those games. This provides a framework for educators to impart lessons of equity and justice regarding the telling of other people's stories, aligning with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals for developing social justice and being aware of cultural competencies (Extension Foundation 2022).

Educators could lead discussions of the game after group or individual gameplay to highlight the fact that throughout the game, Coda never speaks to the audience verbally, and only communicates either through the seventeen or so small games the player experiences or via printed text in one of the games, where he addresses Davey directly. The nature of the player experiencing games through the lens of someone else's interpretations means they only ever get the experience of each game secondhand, something that educators can discuss with students to highlight the major issues that arise when source material is being interpreted by an outside reader. Discussions of these interpretations with students align with discussions of decolonizing retellings of historical events from only a single universalizing perspective (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). The game also provides an instance of one person violating the privacy and explicit wishes of another, something crucial to impart in discussions of data security, surveillance culture, and consent, issues relevant to young people navigating digital spaces.

The game is short enough that it can either be played within a classroom environment in its entirety or can be assigned as an external text for students for later discussion. It also has a linear story with pause points between the games within the game for discussion, questions, and elaboration on specific aspects of the overarching theme, with the games being played sequentially. Having students play the game themselves and reflect upon their experience through specific lenses and curricular topics (for example privacy, audience, consent), can give students guidelines as to how to engage with the material most effectively. The simplicity of the mechanics (primarily involving the player walking around and interacting occasionally with objects or puzzles) makes the game accessible to non-gamer audiences, and the low cost makes it feasible as a text for students to purchase themselves or a text for instructors to purchase one or multiple copies. Students could easily play the game solo or in small groups, or even as an entire class, depending on the format.

The primary limitation of the game is engaging with the potential emotional impact of a story that deliberately brings the player into a complicit relationship with the violation of a character's trust, as reported by some initial reviews of the game (Hudson 2015). Providing content warnings or giving students space to express how they feel about their role in the game's narrative could help scaffold it as a discussion of empathy and ethics as well as discussions of speaking over marginalized voices and promoting DEI values of understanding implicit bias, avoiding microaggressions, and social justice (Extension Foundation 2022). The game also is best interpreted via multiple playthroughs, which takes time and requires additional buy-in from students to engage with. However, guided discussion of the themes may aid in this aspect.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. The game's message has the most impact if it is played through without spoilers, so attempt to keep the primary plot points under wraps before playthrough.
2. Multiple playthroughs enrich the game experience, so accommodating for that time would benefit discussing the themes in-depth
3. As the game is low impact on a computer and short, it is very accessible for educational venues, including classrooms, workshops, and external text assignments for students.
4. *The Beginner's Guide* is frequently included in sales and bundles on the Steam platform, making it easy to pick up for a reduced price. Having it on an account wishlist allows for notifications of sale events.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Her Story (https://store.steampowered.com/app/368370/Her_Story/)

The Stanley Parable (<https://www.stanleyparable.com/>)

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THE CHALLENGE AND INEQUALITY OF CARE

TRACI LEVY

Game: *The Challenge and Inequality of Care*

Developer: Traci Levy, Ph.D.

Year: 2022

Platform(s): In-person, or online with a video conference platform

Number of players: 12-25, 16+ optimal

Genre: Live action role-playing game (LARP); role-playing game (RPG)

Type of game: Learning game; empathy game; game for change

Curricular connections: Political science; sociology; public policy; philosophy; public health; social work

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; critical thinking; creativity; empathy; ethics; storytelling; problem solving

Audience: 18+ years

Length of time: Eight 75-minute sessions that include set-up, gameplay, and debrief; adaptable to other session lengths and numbers

Where to play: Classroom, conference room, or online

Cost: Free

URL: Contact the designer, Traci Levy, to request game materials at bit.ly/CareGame.

SUMMARY

The Challenge and Inequality of Care is an educational, live-action role-playing (LARP) game focusing on informal (unpaid) caregiving in the United States. The game includes an instructor's manual, role sheets, a player handbook, suggested readings, and other resources. Players are workers at a hospital, mainly in the units that are not patient-facing (e.g., janitorial, legal, public relations, etc.). Despite players' shared workplace at a hospital, the game focuses on unpaid caregiving outside of institutions like hospitals. Players are given role sheets that provide information about each player's demographics, job, and main caregiving responsibilities. They also use the role sheets to creatively develop their roles. Their challenge is to meet their caregiving responsibilities while keeping their job and their health. Starting a few sessions in, players spend roughly half of game sessions in work unit meetings and the other half in caregiver support groups. These groups are related to each player's main care challenge—major chronic medical conditions in the U.S. such as dementia, COPD, and heart failure. In work unit meetings, players deal with issues such as staffing pressures, repercussions of missed work days, demands for overtime, eligibility for leave through the Family and

Medical Leave Act (FMLA), etc. In the peer-led caregiver support groups, players create and share their caregiving stories, including challenges and joys. Care costs and planned game interventions generated by the game moderator complicate players' progress by simulating the dynamic, uneven, and sometimes unpredictable nature of care demands. Resource bundles constrain each player's decision about how to meet their care costs. Decisions, in turn, influence their future resource bundles. Some players face little resource strain, while others experience intense strain. *The Challenge and Inequality of Care* pushes players to examine how these factors interact with class, race, gender, and different familial configurations. It encourages students to consider whether, in what ways, and for whom current public policies and workplace practices may be unjust and uncaring.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

To use the game, educators will assign role sheets to students and follow the instructor's manual to help them explore the following complex inequalities.

- Class issues: players have very different access to financial resources. For example, the pay disparity between the janitorial and legal department staff.
- Race/ethnic disparities: the racial composition of employee roles roughly approximates national data for each work unit, and pay disparities within and between work units are folded into players' resource bundles.
- Inequities in which relationships of intimacy care the FMLA recognizes and supports: for instance, qualifying employees who are caregiving for a parent have access to leave through the FMLA, whereas they do not if caring for a sibling.

Next, educators encourage students to make decisions about how to meet their care costs, as well as interact in their work units and caregiver support groups. As the game advances, differences in player resources and burdens become increasingly clear.

Educators then lead players through figuring out whether their employment situation and main care responsibility would make them eligible for leave under the FMLA. Based on their role sheets, some players will realize that the length of time they have been working at their job, how many hours a week they work, the size of their company (if they are a subcontractor at the hospital), and/or their relationship to the person for whom they are caring make them ineligible for FMLA leave. In fact, even if they qualify, some players will realize they cannot afford to take unpaid leave without financially disastrous results.

Elements of gender and sexuality come into play through various game elements. By following the instructor's manual and using the readings recommended in the game materials (or substituting readings on related topics), teachers can help students explore these issues. For example, some suggested readings focus on gender differences in who performs more unpaid labor in households. This gender difference is also a main game issue in one session. Additionally, role sheets in the game provide player roles that are male, female, nonbinary, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, and/or open to interpretation. Players have agency to decide whether and how they will reveal or integrate their role's sexual orientation, gender identity, etc., into gameplay. During the debrief after playing the

game, teachers have the flexibility to choose whether and how much to highlight these choices and issues.

Given the subject matter of the *Challenge and Inequality of Care*, players may find role-playing in demanding caregiving and workplace situations stressful. Teachers can help manage the difficult content by doing the following.

- Assign the pre-game questionnaire to the game materials. It invites players to indicate whether they would like to avoid certain roles—for example, a role that deals with a particular caregiving situation/chronic condition that may be sensitive for them.
- Remind players of the game rule that no player—nor any of their fictitious friends or family members—dies during the game.
- Carry out the recommended liminal rituals—i.e., demarcating when game play begins and ends. By doing this, teachers can help players separate from their character’s concerns.
- Keep the class activities, interventions, and/or assignments that highlight the potential joys of caregiving.
- Introduce live-action role-play (LARP) signals and other safety mechanics to help players express or withdraw consent, indicate distress within the game, etc. (Bowman, Brown, & Koljonen 2017). Measures like this can help manage and diminish any negative aspects of player “bleed” (Leonard & Thurman, 2018).
- Conduct and assign the in-class and written debriefs that the game materials recommend. These tools allow teachers to help students better understand what they learned and process the emotions they may have felt while playing the game.

Interestingly, many students mistakenly believe they learn less through active learning than traditional lectures (Deslauriers, McCarthy, Miller, Callaghan, & Kestin, 2019). Teachers who debunk this belief can help students better appreciate the educational value of playing the game.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should read the instructor’s manual to familiarize themselves with the game before running it. Teachers can request free access to the instructor’s manual and other game materials (bit.ly/CareGame).
2. The readings suggested in the game materials are meant to be free and accessible to college students. Before beginning the game, it’s wise for teachers to test the URLs and access through their university’s library.
3. If playing the game in person, it is helpful to use name tags and/or index cards with player names, and download and hang up an FMLA poster for employers (available for free online).

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Care Jam 2021 (<https://itch.io/jam/care-jam-2021>)

Reacting to the Past (<https://reactingconsortium.org/>)

Surviving the Indifferents (<https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/studio/project/arrow-of-care/>)

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THE QUIET YEAR

DAVID KOCIK, JILL BUDNY, JON CASSIE, LAYA LIEBESELLER & WREN DALTON

Game: *The Quiet Year*

Developer: Buried Without Ceremony

Year: 2019

Platform(s): Analog, digital PDFs

Number of players: 2+, 3-4 players optimal with moderator

Genre: Tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG)

Type of game: Analog; digital

Curricular connections: Ethics; civics; literature; art

Possible skills taught: Communication; creativity; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; identity exploration; metacognition

Audience: 12+ through adult

Length of time: 1-3 hours

Where to play: Classroom; office; video conferencing platforms

Cost: *The Quiet Year*: \$51.16 for physical copy, \$7.87 for PDF; *The Deep Forest*: Free PDF

URL: <https://buriedwithoutceremony.com/the-quiet-year>

SUMMARY

The Quiet Year (TQY) is a cooperative community and map-building game. Players roleplay as members of a group as they build a map and narrative over the course of one in-game year. Players first take turns sketching community boundaries by drawing terrain on a large sheet of paper and developing abundant and scarce resources. Second, players take turns drawing from a deck of cards organized into four seasons by suits. Each card presents two narrative prompts, and the players answer one, adding to the collaborative story. Play begins in Spring, represented by the Hearts suit. These cards prompt players to build community collaboratively. As seasons progress, decisions become more divisive. Conflicts arise in summer and fall. Death and famine come with winter. After a prompt is resolved, the player is asked to *Start a Project* (e.g., build a well), *Discover Something New* (e.g., find a long-lost artifact), or *Start a Conversation* (e.g., elder care responsibilities). After this action is resolved, the next player pulls a card. Turns continue until the King of Spades is pulled in winter and the settlement is destroyed. TQY provides opportunities to question patriarchal, zero-sum approaches to leadership and explore non-hierarchical, equitable models of community. Through collaborative mapping and storytelling, players reflect on community tensions, work through potential conflicts,

foster collective action, honor diverse viewpoints, and reflect on the nature of power, place, and community decision-making.



Figure 41.1. A group of players creating a map for *The Quiet Year*. ALT Text: Three people around around a table. We can only see their hands. There are markers, papers, cell phones, and cards on the table, alongside a poster. One person appears to be drawing with a blue marker on the poster. The poster is white with drawings on it done in marker. There is a blue-lined river with orange fish, some wording in red marker, a purple tree, some houses in black on a green area, and some purple and red shapes near a black lighthouse.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

To prepare students for the game's themes of community, collaboration, and colonialism, educators could engage them in a free-writing exercise about patriarchy and leadership by asking students to read a short text or watch a brief video that highlights an example of patriarchal leadership. Possible free-write or discussion prompts include:

1. What qualities does our community tend to associate with being a good leader?
2. What problems might be associated with practicing leadership in these ways?
3. What is lost when authority is not shared more broadly?

To begin a playthrough, educators should divide the students into groups of three or four people. Materials should be set up in advance, and students should take turns reading instructions out loud to establish collaborative authority. Teachers can explain rules but should ultimately redirect authority to groups so they can experiment with democratically oriented structures of power and decision-making.

While gameplay begins with any card from the Spring section of the deck, we encourage groups to begin with the Ace of Hearts, which asks players to consider power and family structures. Both options connect directly to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) considerations and prime students to consider issues of family, power, and leadership throughout. As students continue playing the game, instructors should check in with groups to assist with any questions about rules.

Educators should also prompt students to reflect while they're playing by asking questions like:

1. Which decisions have been easiest for you? Which decisions have been hardest?
2. Which decisions have the group agreed on? Which decisions have the group disagreed on? Why?
3. Which characters or groups have the most authority in the game? Why?
4. Which characters or groups have the least authority in the game? Why?

For K-12 and college settings, we encourage instructors to facilitate the game over four to five weeks, with students collaboratively writing a ledger about all decisions made during each play session. Students could also take time between each turn to write short reflective responses about leadership, patriarchy, and DEI. These written materials could lead to a larger essay, presentation, creative writing piece, or other group project. For one-day sessions, we advise facilitators to shorten the game length by eliminating cards from each season and providing pre-made maps. Instructors should debrief via small or large discussions after groups are done.

Prompts for group projects and discussions include:

1. When and how did leaders emerge? How was their leadership similar or different to that of the "real world?"
2. Describe a time when your group resolved something ambiguous in the rules. Did you appoint a leader or did you resolve the issue collaboratively?
3. At what point in the game did your input feel the most valued/respected? What made it feel that way?
4. Describe a time when your group was at odds about a decision. How did you deal with differences of opinion and what was the outcome?
5. This game's rules represent social forces. How did the formation of factions and limited resources affect your game? How does this reflect inequities in our communities?

Educators should keep in mind some limitations of the game. The sustained collaboration of *TQY* may be difficult for some students, and teachers should consider relationships between students when forming groups. *TQY* does not explicitly refer to DEI, anti-racism, or decolonization, so if educators wish to explore those topics, make sure to provide additional texts or guiding questions. The game's successor, *The Deep Forest*, explores these issues more explicitly, so teachers may consider using that game instead.

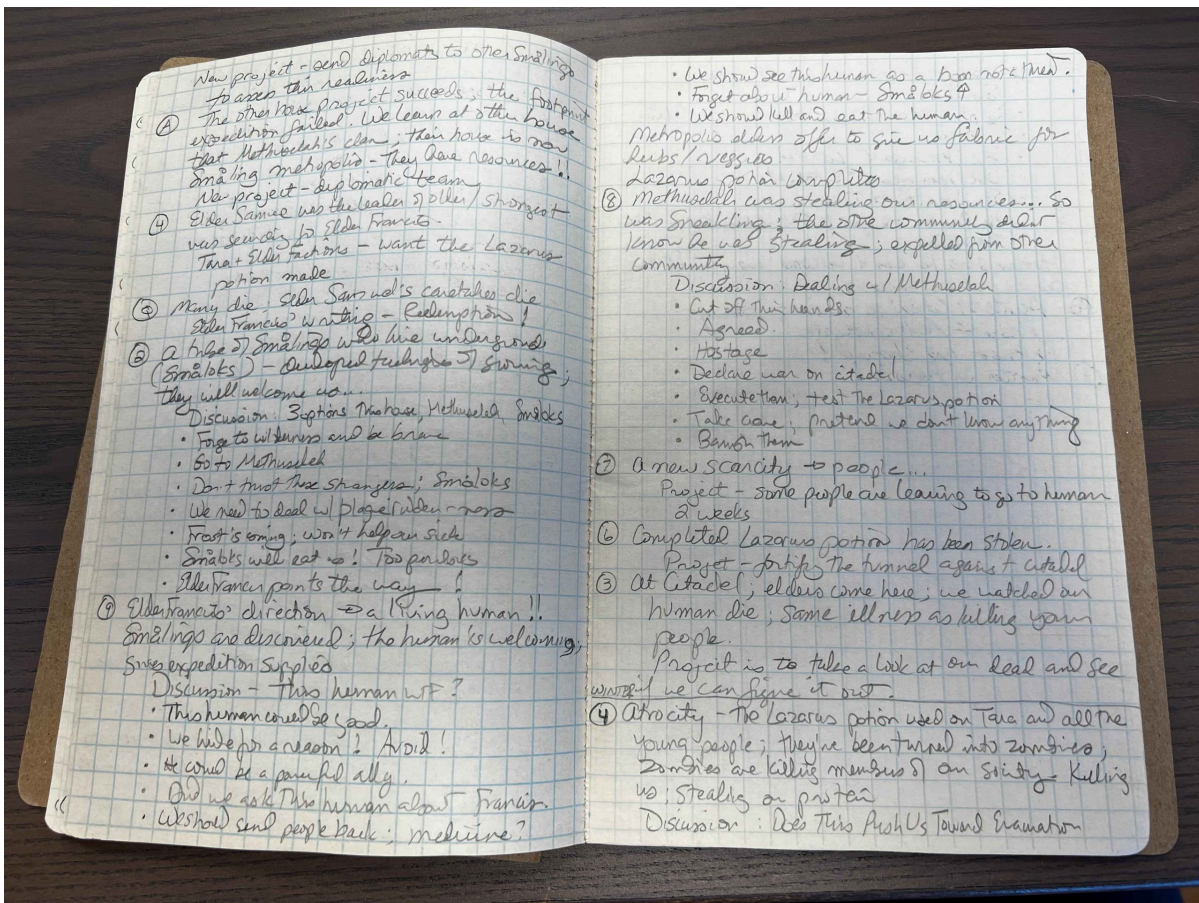


Figure 41.2. A journal detailing all group decisions in a playthrough of *The Quiet Year*. ALT TEXT: This is an image of a journal with lots of cursive writing. The journal has graph pages, and only two pages are open. We can only read some of it, like one part says "7. A new scarcity + people...Project-some people are leaving to go to human 2 weeks." Another part says, "9. Elder Francis' direction → a living human!!" It also says, "This human could be good."

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Educators should print out PDFs of game rules from the game's website at <https://buriedwithoutceremony.com/the-quiet-year>.
2. Facilitators can use Google Jamboard or Miro to play the game virtually.
3. Teachers should playtest the game in advance with a small group of students if possible.
4. Teachers can shorten playtime by removing cards from each season.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Dog Eat Dog by Liam Liwanang Burke (<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/198050/Dog-Eat-Dog>)

Misspent Youth by Robert Bohl (<http://misspentyouth.robertbohl.com/>)

Rise Up: The Game of People & Power by Tesa Collective (<https://store.tesacollective.com/products/rise-up>)

Spirit Island by R. Eric Rauss (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/162886/spirit-island>)

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THE WALKING DEAD: SEASON ONE

SARAH STANG

Game: *The Walking Dead: Season One*

Developer: Telltale Games

Year: 2012

Platform(s): Microsoft Windows, OS X, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, Android, iOS

Number of players: Single-player

Genre: Role-playing game, point-and-click adventure, graphic adventure

Type of game: Video game

Curricular connections: University-level courses related to media studies, game studies, communication studies

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking; problem-solving; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration

Audience: Adult

Length of time: Roughly 12 hours

Where to play: At home; classroom

Cost: \$14.99; the first episode is free on Android and iOS

URL: https://store.steampowered.com/app/207610/The_Walking_Dead/

SUMMARY

Based on the comic book series by Robert Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Season One (TWD)* takes place during a zombie apocalypse and features a complex and fully fleshed-out Black man named Lee Everett as the playable protagonist. Lee takes on the role of caring, supportive, and protective guardian to a young Black girl named Clementine, helping her to survive in a violent and hostile world while also navigating complicated situations and making difficult decisions as the leader of a group of survivors. Lee is a history professor, and is generally portrayed as intelligent, kind, and level-headed, though his personality is somewhat shaped by the player's decisions throughout the game. Players enact some agency in these stories by making decisions as Lee, many of which are morally ambiguous and emotionally charged. Yet there is no clear "winning" and "losing"—players make decisions based on the limited information provided to them and every action usually has both positive and negative consequences that are difficult to predict. Most of the gameplay focuses on decision-making within a time limit, and while the game occasionally requires players to react quickly, aim the cursor, and press buttons rapidly, it allows them to try again as many times as they

need should they fail. Although this is arguably simpler and more accessible gameplay than that required in many games, it can still be challenging and intense, especially because the content is violent and upsetting (the game is suitable for adults aged 18+ so this would be for use in higher education settings). *TWD* is notable because there are so few games where the player must adopt the role of a non-white protagonist and because the game critiques racism and portrays Blackness, especially Black masculinity, in nonstereotypical ways.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Lee is a notable character because few games centralize a capable, educated, and complex Black male protagonist who is also a caring father-figure. Yet Lee faces his share of adversity, and some of these situations are racially charged and so can offer the potential for rich discussion and teachable moments for the students. The series provides ample opportunities for discussion and reflection regarding how the characters are portrayed, what choices the students made and why, and the different ways each student perceived and reacted to both the characters and the game's events. Educators should guide and facilitate discussion to encourage students to reflect on how *TWD* relates to historical and contemporary issues regarding race representation in media.

To use the game to learn about media representation and Blackness in media, educators can first have students play through at least the first two episodes of *The Walking Dead: Season One* before class. Students can be asked to keep a "gameplay journal" in which they make note of how each scenario and character made them feel, and what decisions they made or would have made had they been playing and why. Students can also be asked to watch and/or read some critical pieces before or after playing the game (such as Everett & Watkins, 2008; Media & Film Theory, 2019; and The Opportunity Agenda, 2011).

In the class, educators can facilitate activities such as group discussions, think-pair-share, or forum posts, and assign work such as written reflections or essays. Educators can prompt the students with questions like: why does representation matter? What is intersectionality and why does it matter (i.e., why are we focusing on Black masculinity specifically)? What can games offer in terms of representation and empathy that other media might not? These discussions would work best in courses related to media studies, but could also work in any course where a discussion about race representation in games and/or other media is relevant. Educators can point to specific scenes to help support discussion, such as:

1. When the game opens, Lee is a convicted murderer, handcuffed in the back of a police car. Although associating Black masculinity with violent criminality was perhaps an unfortunate choice, it offers the opportunity to discuss with students their experience of playing as a Black man handcuffed in a police car being driven by an older white male officer. Educators can contextualize this with Black Lives Matter, anti-Black racism, and police brutality, though care should be taken since some students may be particularly triggered by these discussions.
2. Throughout the first game, Lee interacts with several white characters, some of whom make comments or assumptions related to his race. This includes a friendly, "benevolent racist" like Kenny, who assumes Lee can pick a lock because he is "urban," and an aggressive, belligerent, and hostile older man named Larry whom Lee can call out as a racist. These segments could provide an interesting discussion point for students as they reflect on how they perceived

Kenny and Larry, which response they chose in these conversations, and what factors influenced their experience and decision.

3. *TWD* allows players to determine some of Lee's actions and therefore to some extent shape the kind of person he is, yet Lee's portrayal as an effective leader and dedicated adoptive father is maintained regardless of player choice. In this sense, the game offers players the opportunity to determine their own responses to racism and the way they construct Black masculinity through Lee's behavior, while still presenting a generally positive and nuanced portrayal of a Black man—a rarity in video games. Asking students to reflect on their feelings towards the content and characters could lead to a fruitful discussion regarding the ways video games can foster empathy and understanding, especially in the context of considerations of diversity, inclusivity, and social justice.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Remind students that this game is for adults and contains graphic violence. Educators should provide content warnings related to violence, gore, blood, amputation, suicide, cannibalism, child death, homophobia, racism, and mentions of sexual violence.
2. Since the game is somewhat lengthy, educators should play through it themselves to determine which episodes are most relevant for discussion, to develop discussion questions, and to assess the appropriateness of the content for their students.
3. Although the gameplay is simpler than many games, it can still be challenging, especially given the intensity of some situations. It is therefore recommended that the students be allowed to watch the game being played by others in "Let's Play" videos should they prefer (such as https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbeYgHj_yAA).

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

The other games in *The Walking Dead* series (<https://www.skybound.com/the-walking-dead/games>)

The Walking Dead comic series (<https://imagecomics.com/comics/series/the-walking-dead>)

The Walking Dead television series (<https://www.amc.com/twdu/the-walking-dead>).

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THIRSTY SWORD LESBIANS

TATE JOHANEK & KRISTA L. BENSON

Game: *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*

Developer: Evil Hat Productions

Year: 2021

Platform(s): Tabletop; digital

Number of players: 3-6 players

Genre: Tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG)

Type of game: Analog (can be played digitally)

Curricular connections: Literature, social justice, ethics, social and emotional learning (SEL)

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; storytelling; creativity; gender/sexual identity exploration; critical thinking; problem solving; ethical decision-making; empathy

Audience: Any age that is comfortable talking about sexuality and gender

Length of time: 2-4 hours

Where to play: A classroom, digital learning spaces, with a group of friends, in communal identity-based spaces

Cost: \$14.99

URL: <https://www.evilhat.com/home/thirsty-sword-lesbians/>

SUMMARY

Thirsty Sword Lesbians (TSL) is a tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) based on the *Powered by the Apocalypse* (PbtA) game system meant to encourage queer storytelling through world-building, character construction, and conflict resolution. The game consists of one player who serves as the gamemaster (GM) and directs the story's narrative by establishing the non-player characters (NPCs) and plot points. The other two or more players create their own characters that navigate the world through various moves that include fighting, flirting, and figuring out other characters' motives. The game specifically sets up mechanics for player comfort, safety, and communication while also allowing narratively for an open world that can be shaped according to the needs and desires of the players. Games can last anywhere from a single several-hour session to a long-term game of four sessions or more depending on factors like class time, player interest, and the GM's level of intricacy regarding game construction. While other TTRPGs may integrate queerness and a diverse character spectrum, *TSL* specifically bases itself on marginalized representation and queer connections to develop a world in which such identities are normalized. In doing so, systems of oppression such

as racism, homophobia, and transphobia that normally maintain unequal power dynamics are dismantled, either in the world-building process or through challenging these narratives during gameplay. The game centers a queer worldview and uses fantasy to subvert power dynamics, which helps queer players to imagine limitless constructs of the self. However, anyone can benefit from how the game generates empathy through enacting first-person accounts of queer experiences and encourages experimentation with character relationships during gameplay. It also helps students consider the ways that gender and sexuality, as well as other aspects of experience and social privilege/oppression, impact gameplay, and the broader world.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Thirsty Sword Lesbians (TSL) can be used as a collaborative storytelling exercise in a variety of settings, such as introductory survey courses, specialized upper-division undergraduate courses, Sociology, Women's and Gender Studies, English, and Writing. Krista used this for the first time in their LGBT Identities college course in Fall 2021, where Tate was a student. Using class time across the semester, the students played in their small roleplaying groups in Zoom breakout rooms every 2 weeks. During these sessions, students would meet in their breakout groups and spend 75 minutes of class time playing *TSL* with their groups. After each session, Player Characters (PCs) and GMs would complete individual adventure journals that both summarized the narrative and action developments during the sessions, and that would prompt reflection and future planning for both GMs and PCs regarding their goals for narrative development and successful collaboration. The game was ideal for this project because it set a common language for collaboration and queer storytelling while also allowing individual student groups to identify their own goals within this framework and to work together to have all students' goals met or addressed. The project required students to maintain their ongoing adventure journals, where they assessed their own collaboration, knowledge of queer storytelling, and to assess the roles of their colleagues.

To support students' learning, educators can assign readings and videos about how some queer and transgender players use TTRPG games to explore gender identity, sexuality, and other issues of identity. This can help foster a common understanding of how TTRPG games have specific implications and impacts for LGBTQ++ people. Instructors could also consider assigning distinct readings and videos to PCs and GMs for homework before game sessions. GMs can be assigned interviews with professional GMs talking about building things like empathy and emotional intelligence into their games to ensure GMs have the resources to think about these issues. The PC resources could include interviews with professional TTRPG players who discussed issues like how to make big decisions and be emotionally present in the game.

One of the highlights of *TSL* is the very clear directions given for Session 0, the session where players create guidelines for collaborative play, agree on a general tone and story direction for the campaign, and negotiate boundaries. A gaming palette is specifically featured to support this section, where players can practice establishing safe boundaries of consent by deciding which content should be minimized or removed from the game. Educators can emphasize the communicative and trust-building aspects of Session 0 as they frame the activity for students, emphasizing that discussions of safety, consent, and how to communicate discomfort are especially important skills when engaging with worlds that center marginalized populations.

The role of GMs in Session 0 is to guide dialogue surrounding content exclusion and suggestions for world-building. For players, one out of nine playbooks are chosen, in which completion of the playbook involves developing an archetype for their character as well as establishing their character's emotional conflict. Players can then assign "strings" to each other to determine relationships between characters and anticipate the impact of one character's narrative decisions on another. Strings function as a game mechanic that quantifies these kinds of relationships that can be leveraged for individual player or group needs. In doing so, players learn to establish queer relationships, set a narrative direction, and solidify a collaborative environment. Flirting is one of the options for a core mechanic and interaction between PCs and NPCs. Flirting in this game can be a strategy or simply a fun move to play with your friends. Educators can support the use of strings and flirting by incorporating this game dynamic into Session 0, where students can establish foundational strings between players and also determine which relationships between players they may want to use the flirt action towards. Some students may express hesitancy toward engaging with these relational gameplay mechanics, which further emphasizes the need to establish rules and boundaries for the safety and comfort of students (as well as the need to consider student maturity level when choosing the game). Educators may also consider whether their observation of gameplay may impact students' comfort with creative gameplay. For example, when Krista taught this game, they told students that they would not observe the actual creative gameplay unless explicitly invited into the individual session and instead relied on Adventure Journals for a summary of the games in session. Students reported informally that the lack of being "judged" by their instructor for their improved creative choices at the moment did eventually make them more comfortable making larger creative choices.

For students who have never played a tabletop roleplaying game, the creative aspect of creating a character and making decisions as that character, while also learning the mechanics of *TSL*, can be challenging. We recommend that instructors assign students an example playthrough such as Team Bread Box's *Thirsty Sword Lesbians: For the Honour of Gayskull* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjiWdYGeu1Q>). Watching playthroughs can help students "see" what a playthrough can look like, as well as experience takes on a variety of character types, and see ways that the game mechanics can support collaborative queer storytelling. Educators can encourage students who are experienced TTRPG players to serve as GayMasters in their playthrough groups and/or to share tips and tricks about enjoying the collaborative TTRPG environment with other students. We found that even a small number of experienced TTRPG players and/or enthusiastic inexperienced TTRPG players made a big difference in small group dynamics when playing the game.

It is not uncommon for classes to have few to no experienced GMs to manage the gameplay. The solution here is *not* to have a single large campaign, as educators really need to keep the game groups to 4-5 players, including the GM. This may mean asking students with no previous GM experience to take on this role anyway. In our experience, 2 out of 3 GMs in the class had no prior experience with leading a TTRPG-based game. Those who were new GMs learned through both recorded interviews assigned in class and in-game exploration. Following this experience, we recommend that instructors encourage connection between any experienced GMs and newer GMs as peer mentors and also provide access to general GM online tools such as the ones listed in the Tips & Best Practices. The core playbook also assisted with the GM process for new GMs by providing guidance for both narrative and action moves to facilitate creative narrative and gameplay. Based on their experience, first-time GMs are encouraged to organize a narrative outline. GMs can encourage stronger player engagement

by developing NPC dialogue for players to engage with or beginning the narrative in the midst of conflict. Educators can encourage these kinds of decisions by providing examples of “narrative gifts” either with a worksheet or by playing a narrative gift improv game.

The game’s nature is heavily reliant on PC choices that can (and should) complicate linear modes of narration, so having a structure on which to base dialogue and plot points can help solidify character progression and conflict resolution, ensuring all primary goals are met following completion of the game. Educators can support this process by making themselves available to all players and encouraging players to check in with their group with any concerns, opportunities they’d like to explore, and any questions they have. Educators could also help with a shared investment in the narrative outline by creating a worksheet to be completed in class that asks questions like: “What environment(s) will your game take place in?” “Which Non-Player Characters have you created to further the storyline?” and “What main plot points are essential for furthering your story?” From there, the educator can also remind students that the outline is a starting point and reference guide, but gameplay may not include all of the elements planned. When educators emphasize how this is a productive approach to collaboration and communication, that can mitigate player confusion and allow the students to experience this kind of flexibility within structure as a generative opportunity.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Core playbook character sheets and a game start guide are located at <https://www.evilhat.com/home/thirsty-sword-lesbians-resources/> and should be used to guide gameplay and establish comfort with new players.
2. Online dice-rolling resources can be used for new players (such as <https://rgbstudios.org/dnd-dice/?m=MCAwIDAgMCAwIDAgMCAwIDA=>) while experienced students can bring their own dice if they choose.
3. Instructors should familiarize themselves with *Powered by the Apocalypse* (PbtA) game mechanics, as the game mechanics will be the consistent common denominator through different groups’ games.
4. Instructors should ensure that the GM-to-PC ratio is never larger than 1:5, ideally more like 1:4 or 1:3 if the GM is not experienced with TTRPGs. More than this ratio inhibits all players’ ability to take a meaningful role in the game and can make designing encounters more complicated for the GM.
5. Instructors should avoid surveilling game sessions unless encouraged by students since the game’s emotional mechanics involve vulnerability to further the storyline and surveillance can limit the extent of gameplay. Adventure journal check-ins can be used to ensure students are staying on-task and accomplishing gameplay goals.
6. EvilHat Productions offers a Game Start Guide including a GM reference sheet, a palette sheet for establishing boundaries, and a basic moves PC reference sheet helpful for structuring gameplay. (<https://evilhat.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Thirsty-Sword-Lesbians-TSL-Handouts.pdf>)
7. Narrative gift-giving can be useful in a variety of improvisational writing and acting and “gift-giving” improv games can help students get more comfortable with this form of interaction.

See more here: <https://jimmycarrane.com/the-best-way-to-give-a-gift-to-your-scene-partner/>.

8. The game works most successfully when players are making an effort to empathize with queer ideas and engage with queer storylines.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Dungeons and Dragons 5th edition

Dimension 20 on Dropout (<https://www.dropout.tv/dimension-20>) or YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC8zWlx8aBQme-x1nX9iZ0A>)

Voidheart Symphony (<https://ufo-mina.itch.io/voidheart-symphony>)

The Girlfriend of My Girlfriend is My Friend (<https://stargazersasha.itch.io/girlfriend>)

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TOMA EL PASO (MAKE A MOVE)

LIEN TRAN & KATHERINE MORAN

Game: *Toma el Paso (Make a Move)*

Developer: Lien Tran, Amiguia Americana (ImmigrationGames.com)

Year: 2012

Platform(s): Tabletop

Number of players: 1-5 players, 3-4 players is optimal

Genre: Tabletop game, role-playing game, transformational game, social impact game

Type of game: Analog

Curricular connections: Immigration; civics; American studies; U.S. history; sociology; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

Possible skills taught: Problem-solving; decision-making; empathy (allyship or compassion for immigrant youth)

Audience: College-level students in a classroom context; immigrant youth ages 13+ (players ages 8+ may also be able to co-play with an older player)

Length of time: 40-50 minutes (followed by a recommended debrief discussion)

Where to play: College classroom; youth group; social service group; college residential housing with hallmates or floormates; community center; library; at home with family and friends; an immigration shelter

Cost: Free print and assemble version (PDF file with option to use Google Slides for chance cards) or the print-on-demand game set via The Game Crafter for \$50+ (\$50.99 for a single-language version in English or Spanish)

URL: <https://immigrationgames.com/make-a-move/>

SUMMARY

The original audience for *Toma el Paso* is unaccompanied and undocumented immigrant minors (UUIM) currently in the care of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and undergoing removal proceedings to learn about the three pathways for release from the current shelter in which they are staying. The game introduces players to key personnel, namely the case manager, and critical items required for each pathway. By playing the game, UUIM gains important information that can reduce confusion about their current situation, which may help them make informed real-world decisions about which pathway to select and what actions, within their control, to take. When played in an educational context, players can take on the perspective of a UUIM applying for shelter release. On most turns, a player starts by rolling a six-sided die and moves up to the number rolled and

in any direction; a player's very first objective is to land on the same space as and 'meet' with the case manager. At this first meeting, the player is presented with three application 'envelopes' showing a brief description for each possible pathway: reunification, federal foster care, and voluntary departure. Once they select which one to apply for, the player flips over this envelope and finds three critical items they must collect before submitting their application. They must move around the board to achieve these items and then apply for release. The optional chance cards introduce both actionable and external events that speed up or slow down your application and approval.

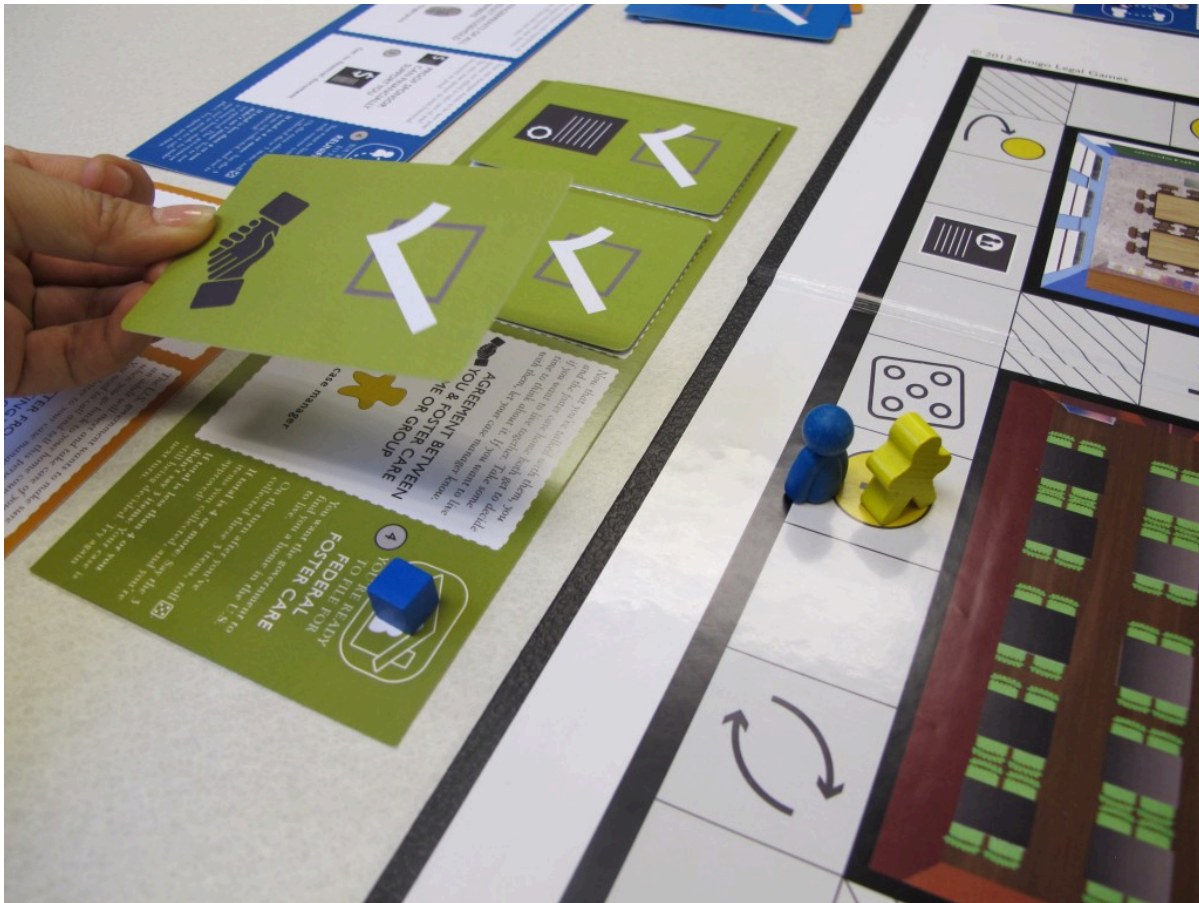


Figure 44.1. The blue player is perspective-taking as an undocumented immigrant youth who is currently in the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, in removal proceedings, and applying for shelter release. They have selected release by federal foster care (depicted in green) and have just collected their final item by 'meeting' with the case manager, which is represented by the yellow game piece. The final item is an agreement between you and a federal foster care home or group to live there. ALT TEXT: There is a board on the right that is white and outlined in black and has yellow and blue "meeples" on it. Only part of the board is showing and on one of the board's spaces is a die icon, and on others are arrows. On the left side of the screen is a hand holding a green card with a white checkmark and a shake hands icon in black. There are also green and blue mini-boards that have lots of writing and cards on them. The one in the foreground says "Federal Foster Care" and has green cards and a blue cube on it.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

This game works best in a classroom in which students know a little about the recent history of immigration and detention in the United States, particularly the immigration of undocumented minors, before playing. To prepare students, teachers might assign a series of recent news articles or first-person accounts. For example, in a college-level immigration history course, students read

scholarship on detention centers before playing. For a suggested bibliography, see <https://immigrationgames.com/find-activities/educational-resources/>.

It is recommended to introduce the game using the short trailer video in the class session prior to actual gameplay. Educators should share that the game was designed in collaboration with juvenile immigration stakeholders with the primary intention of being used by unaccompanied and undocumented immigrant minors (UUIM) who are currently in U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) custody. Then they could assign students to watch the how-to-play video and reading the game instructions as homework the night before class. All videos and game resources are available at: <https://immigrationgames.com/make-a-move>

On the day of play, students can be divided into groups of up to 6 people per game set; the ideal number is two to four players plus one game facilitator. The game facilitator is the rules arbiter, who is responsible for clarifying and making sure players follow the rules. The game itself takes about 40 minutes to play whether or not you play with the optional chance cards.

There is a basic and an advanced version of the game. The basic version does not use the chance card deck (marked with a question mark on the back), so there is one less rule and set of events to consider. Playing the advanced version using the chance card deck allows players to learn more about scenarios that could accelerate or delay an application for shelter release. When playing with chance cards, note that if the icon in the top left corner does not match the player's selected pathway for release, then the card does not apply to them, and it can be discarded.

Examples of chance card events are:

- *You are rewarded for excellent behavior!* Take an extra turn on any one of your turns.
- *You're doing such a great job checking in with the case manager that you already have an appointment to meet again!* Go directly to the case manager on any one of your turns.
- *You've been rude to the shelter staff. You must get counseling from the clinician.* Get to [heart space] before collecting any more items.
- *Uh oh, your case manager realizes something was not done correctly.* Remove the last item collected [from your envelope].
- *Uh oh, your case manager finds out your sponsor does not have a bed for you. Call your sponsor and ask them to get a bed for you.* Get to [phone space] before collecting any more items.

After playing the game, the teacher should lead students in a discussion, starting with reflecting on the experience of playing the game (What did they like? What didn't they? How did it make them feel?). For classes of less-experienced students, teachers might break the ice by dividing students into new groups and asking them to report on their game-playing group's experiences with the game. Remind students for whom and why the game was created and ask them to think about what the game is meant to teach.

Three different types of prompts can then help stimulate deeper discussion: (1) prompts that ask students to compare what they learned playing the game to what they learned in particular class readings or lectures; (2) prompts that ask students to analyze the board game in the same way they

might analyze a cultural text or historical artifact (what is communicated by the structure of play? Why might the game designer have made a particular choice?) and/or (3) prompts that ask students to place themselves in the instructor's shoes, and think reflexively about what games (as opposed to other materials like books, photographs, films, etc.) can teach us.

Generally, students begin by observing that the game is intended to teach UUIM about critical policies and procedures for their current situation. Eventually, students connect their felt experience with the game's pedagogical purpose. For example, students often note how frustrating it is to have to chase a moving case manager figure around the board. This leads to a discussion about why that rule exists and how it might reflect reality as well as the frustration faced by a young person in detention who is attempting to secure their own release. Students can analyze the game as a cultural text and as a window into the circumstances it simulates and in which it was designed to be played. Students may share discomfort with the more negative consequences in the game, which opens a window into the bureaucratic challenges faced by UUIM. For example, one student commented after playing that "the opacity of the immigration system is typified by the use of chance cards which can either help or hurt you regardless of your actions up to this point."

Students also often comment on a felt disjuncture: they played a board game, which many of them associate with childhood and their families, yet they know this game was designed for young people incarcerated far from their families and homes. Students report that playing the game gave them a glimpse into some of the challenges faced by minors in detention and made them reflect on how different their own experience—safe in a classroom—was from some of the young people who play the game to learn about their current reality. Students can be encouraged in this line of thought either by asking them to consider what they now think they understand about the experience of UUIMs, or by asking them to think about how their experience of game play compared to other experiences with tabletop games. *Toma El Paso/Make a Move* is particularly valuable in this sense: it encourages empathy and knowledge through experience in the way many simulations or roleplaying games do, but it does so while also encouraging students to be self-reflexive and respectful of the distance between their own experience and that of a young person playing the game in detention.

Finally, the post-game discussion might conclude with students reflecting on the existence of the game itself. Students reflect on the fact that the game was created in the first place because there are so many migrant youths in detention who may feel confused and alone and who need help navigating the complex system in which they find themselves. In other words, learning about the existence and purpose of this game, which simulates a real-world system with its inherent injustices, encourages students to confront what it means that a game like this is needed.



Figure 44.2. An aerial view of a four-player game session of *Toma el Paso (Make a Move)*. Each player has all 3 pathways available to them, but they can only be actively working toward one at a given moment. The pathway they are currently pursuing is designated with their colored cube in its top right corner. A matching card is placed on top when an application item is completed, the order of which must be from left to right. ALT TEXT: A bird's eye view of a whiteboard outlined in black. There are many spaces and different areas like ones with tables, and ones with a justice symbol (scales). There are also spaces with a die, a number, a heart, a telephone icon, and arrows. There is a deck of cards with a question mark on it. There are cards that are blue, orange, and green around the board. These cards have checkmarks on them and different icons. There are also mini-boards that are blue, green, and orange. These mini-boards have cards and icons on them. The text on them is too small to read.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Purchase or print game set(s) needed for your total class size. You can purchase either English or Spanish game sets or print and assemble a free do-it-yourself (DIY) game set in English. Links are available at <https://immigrationgames.com/make-a-move/>
2. No more than 5 people should play using 1 game set; 4 players is recommended. One more person can participate per game set if you assign 1 student to be a game facilitator.
3. If you choose to use the DIY game set, instead of printing out the chance cards, you can use a web-enabled device (or download for offline use) the Google Slide deck linked from the website.
4. Introduce the game in a previous class session using the game trailer video at <https://vimeo.com/lienbtran/toma-el-paso-trailer>.
5. It is highly recommended to assign students, particularly the game facilitator, to watch the

how-to-play video in English (<https://vimeo.com/lienbtran/toma-el-paso-how-to-play>) or Spanish (<https://vimeo.com/lienbtran/toma-el-paso-espanol>) before the game session.

6. On the day you play the game, allow at least 60 minutes of class time to both play the game (40-50 minutes) and to debrief with discussion (20-30 minutes).
7. The game also works well when played at home and then discussed afterward during class. Students have asked to borrow the game to play in their residence halls or with their families and have shared how the game sparked important conversations in these settings as well.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Immigration Nation (<https://www.icivics.org/games/immigration-nation>)

The Waiting Game (<https://projects.propublica.org/asylum>)

Papers, Please (<https://papersplea.se/>)

Latino Americans “Episode 4: The New Latinos” (<https://www.pbs.org/video/latino-americans-episode-4-new-latinos>)

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TUNCHE

EZEQUIEL ALEMAN

Game: *Tunche*

Developer: Leap Game Studios; Hypertrindigital (publisher)

Year: 2022

Platform(s): Nintendo Switch, Playstation, Xbox, PC

Number of players: 1-4 players (local)

Genre: Action

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Science; civics; social studies; literature

Possible skills taught: Collaboration; communication; problem-solving; empathy

Audience: 7+ years through adult

Length of time: 10 hours

Where to play: Classroom, summer camps, at home

Cost: \$19.99

URL: <https://www.leapgs.com/tunche>

SUMMARY

Tunche is an action video game that is inspired by myths and folklore from the Amazon rainforest. The game tells the story of four characters from different indigenous tribes who enter the depths of the forest to find *Tunche*, a mythical creature. The game can be played solo or cooperatively (up to 4 players). It consists of fighting against waves of enemies using different button combinations (Fig. 45.1). The game mechanics are simple enough for novice players to start playing in collaboration with friends leading to a fun, fast-paced experience. *Tunche* stands out due to its culturally rich narrative. The game includes scenes and characters that can be used to teach students about Peruvian and Latin American legends while engaging them with environmental themes in the Amazon rainforest. *Tunche* provides a rich narrative framework to connect the culture of indigenous communities with content areas related to environmental conservation.



Figure 45.1. Four players fighting against enemies in World 1 of *Tunche*. ALT TEXT: A screenshot that has a dark green, brown, and lighter green background. There seems to be greenery, like leaves and trees in the background. In the foreground are four characters. They are different sizes. One of the characters has long brown hair and tan skin. They have a black hat. They seem to be fighting a few creatures, one that looks like a frog and one that looks like a warthog. The number six is above two of them. On the right side of the scene are three other characters. All three have tan skin and dark hair. At the top of the screen are four different mini-pictures of the four characters. On the left is Pancho, who has 65/100 in the red bar and 100/100 in the blue bar. They have “Deft 8 hits.” Next is Hat Kid, who has 44/100 in the red bar and 100/100 in the blue bar. They have “Deft 6 hits.” Next is Qaru, who has 78/100 on the red bar and 93/100 on the blue bar. They have “B 3 hits.” Finally, there is Rumi. They have 100/100 of the red bar and 97/100 of the blue. They have “B 3 hits.” Underneath each of the characters are some additional numbers, too.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Despite the growing diversity in schools, the lived experiences of communities of color are underrepresented in the standardized curriculum in science (Kier & Johnson, 2021). For example, a science unit about the Amazon may include rich references to climate change or biodiversity but may not consider any cultural elements from the communities that inhabit the forest. A culturally relevant framework in STEM can support educators in standing against oppressive structures in the curriculum, promote stronger relationships with students, focus on the students’ cultural assets, and center marginalized identities (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Tunche is divided into four worlds. Each world can be completed in approximately 15-25 minutes. Educators who wish to play the game in their classrooms can invite four players at a time to complete a room while projecting the game onto a large screen. In between segments or worlds, there are narrative cutscenes that can be used to trigger discussions and activities, such as the introduction to (see Fig. 45.2).

One way in which teachers can make connections between the game and the Amazon rainforest is by having students analyze the final creatures they encounter at the end of each world. For example, Mapinguari, the final creature in World 1, is based on the legend of a beast that lurks in the forest. It is very likely the animal that gave origin to this legend was the Megatherium, a giant, hairy ground

sloth that inhabited North and South America, and that became extinct about 10,000 years ago. Once they find Mapinguari, students can learn about the rich ecosystem in the Amazon and how many species are becoming extinct due to overhunting and habitat loss. Some activities that can extend the experience include doing research about the legend to discover what type of animal the Mapinguari was, how it became extinct, and how other species may be in danger of extinction today.

The next creature in the game is Boutu, a creature inspired by the Amazon River dolphin, an animal that is currently affected by the loss of food supply due to overfishing, and the fragmentation of its habitat by hydroelectric dams. Ukumari, the fourth enemy in the game, is a creature inspired by the legend of a spectacled bear that would climb the Andean mountains to bring water to the villagers until he could find no more ice. Since the game does not tell the legends behind each boss, students can fill the gap by reading the legends in class and making connections with the Amazon rainforest.

It is important to note that some of the legends in the game describe mythical creatures that represent real horrors the indigenous communities experienced. Runapura, the third boss, is a jaguar demon that attacks people during the night. In the cases of Boutu and Yakuruna, some of the legends that can be found online describe how they would transform into seductive men to capture and impregnate young women from the villages. This was often a culturally accepted explanation for unwanted pregnancies or sexual violence against women. Some of these depictions can be inappropriate for younger children, and it is important for educators to assess the content of the legends based on the age level of their students.

Depending on the grade level of the students, final bosses offer opportunities for educators to connect environmental issues in the Amazonian rainforest to social justice themes using guiding questions such as:

1. Why is overhunting a problem today? How is it affecting native communities?
2. What are the consequences of human construction in the rainforest? Who is most affected by them?
3. Why did local communities use legends to explain unwanted pregnancies or sexual abuse?

The four main characters students can choose from also have engaging stories. Rumi is a shaman looking for power and knowledge to become the leader of her tribe. Qaru was cursed after attempting to hunt a sacred beast and is looking for Tunche to ask his forgiveness. Nayra is a warrior and wants to prove to everyone what she is capable of, and Pancho is the leader of a tribe that has been enduring numerous landslides and floods. The main storyline for each character is introduced before the first boss so learners do not have to finish the game to get to learn about the motivations of each character.

Educators can help the students explore the four main characters and their motifs and discuss how the characters' personal desires had consequences that affected their ecosystem. Some guiding questions to support discussions around this theme are:

1. Is it fair that Rumi takes the magic from other living creatures to defend the tribe?
2. Why was Qaru attempting to hunt the sacred beast?
3. How will Nayra prove her worth by killing Tunche?

4. Why was Pancho's tribe affected by landslides and rains?

Tunche's accessible game mechanics and dynamic characters support the development of culturally rich STEM activities related to the Amazon rainforest. By centering the STEM curriculum around the culture of marginalized communities, educators can promote richer connections between the lived experiences and cultures of their students with the curriculum they teach at school.



Figure 45.2. A cutscene telling the origin of Rumi's story. ALT TEXT: It is a storyboard or comic-strip style cartoon image. There are six panels stacked on the left and four on the right. On the left, first there is a child with tan skin and short dark hair, who seems to be pointing. Then the next panel is a child with tan skin and long dark hair, a closeup of the face. Then there is a medium shot of the two children together in the same scene, with green bushes and a blue sky behind them. Then there is just the child with the long dark hair smiling. The child with the short hair looks surprised in the next panel, in a closeup. Then there is another closeup of the one with the long hair, looking uncertain. Next, in the panels on the right side, a medium shot of the two looking at each other. The one with the short hair seems to be shouting and putting their hand to the side. Then, a shot of just the one with long hair, shouting, with a fire-looking shape behind them. Then, another shot of the short hair one, also shouting and with a fire-looking shape. Then a shot of the long hair one leaving, with the short hair one shouting after them. The long hair one is also in a cut out, outside of the panels. They are holding a spear.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Encourage students to play in teams of four to take advantage of the different playing styles of the characters and make it easier to complete each level.
2. Losing is an integral part of *Tunche's* gameplay; every time the characters are defeated, they can upgrade their skills. Explaining this to students can ease their frustration.
3. Reading guides can encourage students to keep playing to find the different cutscenes.
4. Prompt students to write down the names of characters and investigate them as they play.
5. Hat Kid is a guest character, and she is not related to the Peruvian folklore.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Aztech Forgotten Gods (<https://www.playaztech.com/>)

Mulaka (<https://www.lienzo.mx/mulaka/>)

Never Alone (<http://neveralonegame.com>)

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UNPACKING

ALISHA KARABINUS

Game: *Unpacking*

Developer: Witch Beam

Year: 2021

Platform(s): Windows, macOS, Linux, Nintendo Switch, Xbox One, PlayStation 4/5

Number of players: One

Genre: Puzzle; ambient adventure; environmental narrative

Type of game: Digital

Curricular connections: Cultural analysis; contemporary history; accessible design

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking; problem solving; empathy; identity exploration and coming-of-age narratives; metacognition; executive function

Audience: Rated E for Everyone; recommended for preteen+ for curricular use

Length of time: 3-5 hours

Where to play: At home or in class

Cost: \$19.99

URL: <https://www.unpackinggame.com/>

SUMMARY

Unpacking is a cozy game about moving houses. In this indie game, the simple act of emptying boxes expands into a rich narrative spanning more than a decade of new homes and new discoveries. Each of the game's eight levels represents a move, and in each stage, the player is given an isometric view of rooms with piles of boxes waiting to be unpacked. Players click to open boxes, and individual items can be easily moved or rotated. While the controls are simple, placement is not; finding a suitable place for each item can be challenging. Some items, such as silverware or toiletries, are easily tucked into expected locations. Others, however, may not quite fit or may require particular care, and in these items, the bulk of the story unfolds. *Unpacking* is light on dialogue but rich in layered meaning, making use of every detail afforded by the high-resolution pixel art style.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

The game's tasks are relatable, and enable players to fall into a comfortable rhythm of moving items around. This ease of play allows educators to fit the game into a variety of curricula and contexts.

While little preparation is necessary, educators should familiarize themselves with the game before classroom use. While watching video playthroughs may be sufficient to help with progression, educators should strive to play at least a few levels to learn details like item rotation. Educators should also explore the game's accessibility settings to assist students who may want to make adjustments.

Educators utilizing *Unpacking* as a tool for thinking about diversity and inclusion (in any context and at any level) may want to begin contextualizing the game by talking about coming-of-age stories across media forms. Who often gets to be the hero? What are typically heroic characteristics? What are the typical stakes? Priming discussions in this way makes players more likely to notice the details that come together to construct a very unusual video game protagonist. Because *Unpacking* is a relatively short game, educators may also find it works well alongside similar stories. *Gone Home* covers similar thematic territory, while *Firewatch*'s explorations of grief and masculinity could serve as a thought-provoking foil. Educators interested in exploring uncommon protagonists across media forms might find the queer fantasy graphic novel *Nimona* a useful companion text.

As students prepare to play, educators may want to assign a play journal or reflective activities, even if students will be participating in classroom discussions, as *Unpacking*'s narrative of self-discovery may mean students need a place for more private thoughts. Beyond that, little student preparation is necessary, and educators may be best served by letting players simply explore the space and story. Students can play alone, either inside or outside class, but may benefit from shared play in small group sessions, which can help foster cooperation and discussion. In group settings, educators should be careful to highlight strategies for negotiating disagreement, but since *Unpacking* lacks a standard fail state (players simply cannot progress on standard difficulty without finding solutions), players in groups may feel less pressured.

Allowing students space for discovery is important, as *Unpacking*'s narrative unspools through the succession of homes. At the game's midpoint, the protagonist moves in with a romantic partner, and suddenly the game shifts from a narrative of freedom and growth and becomes instead a story about making the self a little smaller and more contained. The puzzle mechanic means players are immediately confronted with what takes the protagonist herself years to understand: that this is not *her* home. Educators should encourage discussion of this narrative turn; ask students how this changes the game's stakes, and how it might impact the protagonist to be in a space with no room for her to grow. Give students space to explore situations when they may have felt similarly reduced or discouraged. College students in particular should slip easily into the context of claiming and shaping a space, as many may have recently unpacked their own things into a dorm space.

Unpacking's puzzle format means players spend time studying each room and item, and this intimacy drives sense-making. In most situations, students will begin to analyze the space and the game's imagery, but educators may want to foster analysis with prepared prompts or lists of items to track or note. Ask students how the protagonist's age becomes apparent at different levels. How do we learn about her favorite things? Her religion? Her relationships?

Curricula focused on particular social justice issues may want to highlight in-game items such as menstrual products and lingerie, which are rarely seen or even referenced in games. Students may have little experience with some of the game's items, and not quite understand where they should go or how they are used, opening another rich potential vein for discussion. Why is menstruation so

rarely discussed in media? How are bras constructed and why does this make them difficult to place within the levels? Further, since the game's progression through time is clearly marked, classes may find it useful to discover whose version of these times this is, and what that further reveals about the character, the story, and even the ways we tell stories in the first place.

Technology can be another touchstone. As *Unpacking* very intentionally uses items such as game consoles and media devices to establish the passage of time, instructors can help shape these discussions by highlighting things like the changing shape of computers and the increase in digital devices over time. These prompts can help student players to look deeper without directing their gazes specifically toward revelatory moments. Educators should give students the space to discover these moments on their own, but also provide the tools to kickstart analysis. Post-play, educators can give students screenshots of the finished rooms and ask them to annotate gadgets and devices. They can ask if they would be able to place the story in a moment of time without the built-in year markers.

Educators can also encourage the discussion of social issues in the game, such as markers of class. For instance, the protagonist rarely lives alone or has space to herself, which seems to indicate her family is not wealthy. But she goes to college and has technology at hand at a time when neither were quite so common, and is able to return home to live with family after a difficult breakup. These social and cultural nuances may unlock discussion points for students who have their own complex lives to navigate. Educators may also want to ask students to explore how what we learn about the character through these revelations aligns or contrasts with tropes and stereotypes attached to the identities that are revealed throughout the game. *Unpacking's* title ultimately feels like no accident: despite a deceptively simple veneer, there's a lot to unpack here, and a wealth of content for exploring identity and self-discovery.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. If possible, encourage students to play in groups to add a cooperative dimension to the puzzle-solving.
2. Resist the urge to tell players too much about the story—allow players space to discover (unpack!) the game's themes and events.
3. Set anti-spoiler rules (or ask students to create community standards for themselves).

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Firewatch (<https://www.firewatchgame.com/>)

Gone Home (<https://gonehome.com/>)

Gao, L. (2022) *Messy Roots: A Graphic Memoir of a Wuhanese American*.

Stevenson, N.D. (2015) *Nimona*.

FURTHER READING

Fukunaga, J. (2022). Unmaking and undoing. *First Person Scholar*. <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/unmaking-and-undoing/>

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VALIANT HEARTS: THE GREAT WAR

ANGELICA JOY DINGLASAN

Game: *Valiant Hearts: The Great War / Soldats Inconnus: Mémoires de la Grande Guerre*

Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier, Inc.

Year: 2014

Platform (s): Microsoft Windows, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 3, Xbox One, Xbox 360

Number of players: Single-player game

Genre: Puzzle game; adventure game; historical game

Type of game: Computer and console-based digital game

Curricular connections: History; social studies; ethics; philosophy; language

Possible skills taught: Problem-solving; eye coordination; empathy; reflection; philosophical analysis; ethical analysis; analyzing moral dilemmas.

Audience: 12+ years through adult (middle school, high school, college, adults)

Length of time: 6 ½ hours, 9 hours in 100% completion, 1hr 30mins in each chapter

Where to play: Home, class, after school, at a World War museum

Cost: \$14.99 on Steam

URL: <https://store.steampowered.com/app/260230/>

[Valiant_Hearts_The_Great_War__Soldats_Inconnus__Mmoires_de_la_Grande_Guerre/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/260230/Valiant_Hearts_The_Great_War__Soldats_Inconnus__Mmoires_de_la_Grande_Guerre/)

SUMMARY

Valiant Hearts: The Great War is a historical fiction, side-scrolling point-and-click puzzle adventure game that follows four characters of different gender identities, nationalities, allegiances, and goals (a Frenchman named Emile, an American soldier named Freddie, a German soldier named Karl, and a Belgian nurse named Anna). Along with them is a German dog named Walt, who accompanies them, and they can give commands to help grab objects to them. The story is told through the emotional journey of all four of the characters as they go through many hardships at the time of war such as Emile and Karl separated from their loved ones, Freddie avenging the death of his wife, and Anna healing the injured and sick while searching for her father. Different game mechanics accompany each character, and most of them involve solving point-and-click puzzles. Other sections vary from wartime segments, stealth sections, and rhythmic car chases. Each character can interact with objects as well as perform a melee attack and throw projectiles. There are also unique traits to the characters. Historical facts about war unlock as the game progresses and the players collect historical objects. There are hints if the player is stuck in a section.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

Although this game has a cartoon art style, there is violence that can be problematic for some students (especially violence toward young kids). The game is more appropriate for students who understand the historical context of violence and war, and that we can learn from what happened before, as “History here is not simply background content to be witnessed, but a space for exploration and reflection.” (Hartman, et al., 2021).

Educators can prepare the game by downloading it on Steam (the mobile version of the game is no longer available to the public). Students can play it in a four-day session for four chapters, which take around one hour and thirty minutes each. The difficulty level of the game is easy and a hint can pop up for the student if they get stuck, so the game’s pacing doesn’t distract from the narrative. Students can play in groups of three to four or on their own. They can play the game at their own pace until a chapter ends. After each playing session, students can have a group discussion accompanied by screenshots and videos of the game to recall and review the events that happened. The following are the different approaches to how educators can teach the students. They can be done in any order.

Historical empathy through historical artifacts: Students can follow a walkthrough on how to collect the historical objects in the game world, looking into archival materials and online resources in the game’s menus to read historical facts related to each object. They can choose to read this optional text at their own pace and the teacher can assign them an essay on what historical facts the civilians and soldiers have touched upon during the war, perhaps relating them to recent real-world events. Students can reflect on how they can empathize with historical figures by understanding the challenges they faced.

World war moral dilemmas: Educators can also guide a discussion for students to question the moral dilemmas that are shown in the game. For instance, at one point the French alliances are blowing up German soldiers after one of them helps Emile after he freed him. This is precipitated when Emile accidentally kills his commanding officer who forces his troops into gunfire which leads to their deaths. It also comes with the game not only allowing players to help enemies but it also encourages them to take action. Educators can ask their students what would justify each character’s actions and the commanding officer and how they feel about it. There is no right answer, which makes the discussion more engaging and benefits the students’ learning of empathy.

Everyone needs a hand: This is arguably the most important lesson to take away from *Valiant Hearts*. Unfortunately, history books, as well as new outlets, can feed misinformation and disinformation that favors one nation over the other. The section after the tutorial of the game in which the American soldier Freddy is discriminated against by the French allies should be a reminder that every side of war has good and bad elements. This framing can help students re-evaluate one-sided media portrayals, such as the coverage of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Then students can write an essay on wars besides the “world wars” and how they have been covered by media.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should encourage students to look up other wars besides the “world wars,” such as the American Civil War, the Soviet War in Afghanistan, etc. This tip should be integrated into the How to section.

2. Take note that there are some scenes that contain violence, such as shootings, explosions, murder, and such.
3. Collecting historical objects and reading historical facts is optional, but it can further enrich the student's experience of the game.
4. Before starting to play the game, ask the question "Why does war exist?" and "Is it possible to end wars entirely?" This discussion is suitable for high school and college students.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

All The Light We Cannot See (2014) (<https://www.anthonydoerr.com/books/all-the-light-we-cannot-see>)

Paper's Please (2013) (<http://papersplea.se>)

The Grizzled (2015) (<https://www.cmon.com/product/the-grizzled/the-grizzled>)

This War of Mine (2014) (https://store.steampowered.com/app/282070/This_War_of_Mine/)

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VERSATILES

VICTORIA INGALLS

Game: *VersaTiles*

Developer: hand2mind, Inc.

Year: 1965

Platform(s): Manipulative

Number of players: For example, 1+, 3–4 players optimal per game board

Genre: Tile-based, board game

Type of game: Analog

Curricular connections: Mathematics, science, history, literature

Possible skills taught: Problem-solving; collaboration; communication, critical thinking

Audience: 6+ years through adult

Length of time: 12 minutes

Where to play: Classroom, at home

Cost: \$15

URL: <https://www.hand2mind.com/>

SUMMARY

The concept behind hand2mind's *VersaTiles* is that students answer questions from an analog matching game and then place answers onto a game board. The game is adaptable to any content and learning level as an engaging, screen-free alternative. To begin each game, the instructor gives each group of students a sheet with 12 questions at the top of a page and 12 potential answers in a grid at the bottom of the page. The team's goal is to answer each of the 12 questions with a correct choice from the 12 possibilities labeled A through L. Based on the paper answers agreed upon by the group, students collaborate to transfer answers from their papers to place each number tile on its matching letter space on the game board. (The trick is that each of the 12 numbered tiles game board has a colored shape on the back.) When the group unanimously agrees on the selections and completes the tile placement on the board, they raise their hands to indicate that the team has completed the game. Because of the patterned backside of each tile, a mere flip of the box allows for an immediate check of the group's answers. True to its name, the game board's option to a traditional matching game is a *VersaTiles* combination of content review, game, collaboration, group discussion, and quiz that can be used from kindergarten through college in subjects ranging from STEM through the Humanities and everything in between. For example, a young elementary student might see images

of a variety of common geometric shapes as the questions with the names of rectangles, squares, etc. listed in the answer grid at the bottom of the same page. In a young adult setting, the question page might have a series of history facts and corresponding dates in the answer grid for matching. In a collegiate environment, students might be matching chemical compound structures with their appropriate names. Thus, the *VersaTiles* game board allows for open-question options and play styles.

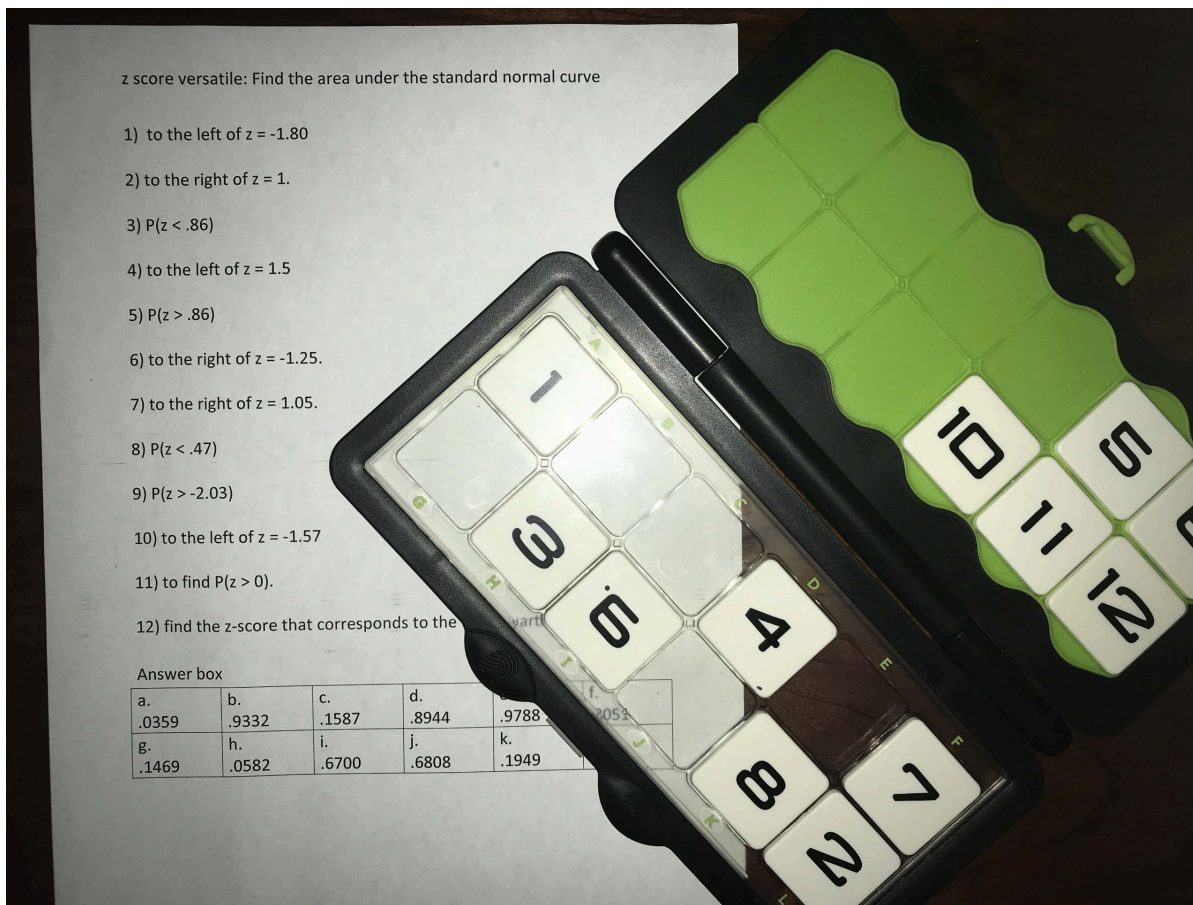


Figure 48.1. Question sheet with answer grid at the bottom of the page, with an overlay of a VersaTiles game box in its mid-completion stage. ALT TEXT: An image that has a paper to the left and a container with tiles on the right. The tiles have numbers on them and are white. There are tiles with the numbers 1, 4, 7, 3, 8, 2, 5, 10, 11, and 12. The paper says things like “z score versatile. find the area under the standard normal curve. 1) to the left of $z = 1.80$.”

HOW TO USE THE GAME.

Using the website where the game boards were purchased, educators can find a key for building each quiz game, as well as a key to build any of 42 color-side patterns with the letter/number matches of each tile. However, you can also build your own patterns and then reverse-engineer the answers to create the key of the pattern. Building each of these content-driven games takes approximately 10 minutes. Taking each of these quiz games absorbs approximately 12 minutes of class time.

The game board is always the same, but the age-appropriate question levels within Bloom’s taxonomy are the teacher’s variable to control within any content or grade band. A few examples include:

- Upper elementary level Spanish vocabulary, knowledge level: *que significa la mesa* (numbered question) with a table (answer in grid).

- Middle school Language Arts, comprehension level: identify the main character of the story (numbered question) with Percy (answer in grid).
- High School Anatomy, analysis level: classify hydrogen (numbered question) with gas (answer in grid).
- College-level Statistics, application level: solve for the standard deviation of 12, 20, 17, 18, 10 (numbered question) with 4.2 (answer in grid).

On the game play day, teachers can use hand2mind's *VersaTiles* to enhance an inclusive classroom activity by having students work in teams with random assignments of students into heterogeneous groups. Students are working toward a common goal as each tile is worth points toward their shared grade. Such placement aligns students with a common content-mastery goal: all voices are equally valued and heard with the strategic division of labor for completing the activity. That is, some teams will have each member simultaneously solve each problem together while others assign certain questions to each individual and collectively complete the box-matching and associated tile placement. Although the group component of the activity minimizes the pressure to succeed, the outcome of equitable achievement is maximized. Each group member must contribute to complete the game board, regardless of the simultaneous solutions or collaborative parts methodology behind the completion. More specifically, lively discussions decide the strategic division of labor to get full credit on the first round of answers, but having already formed rapport through other class work done together makes students more apt to trust the safe space within their group. Rather than relying on a traditional quiz, this game allows students to learn from each other even while being assessed.

I recommend a brief visual demonstration on how to match up the questions & answers with the placement of each tile on the board before giving the question/ answer sheets and game boards out to students. Then, to better enable collaborative discussions inclusive of all group members, guide students that all group members must agree on all completed answers. It is a good idea to walk around the room for accessibility in answering any questions about the process of completing the game or availability to grade a box when it is done. When a student group indicates that they are ready for their work to be checked, close the box, flip the black box over so the back side of the closed box is showing, and reopen using the side tabs. The reverse side of the number tiles is either a red, yellow, or blue shape that when combined, makes a pattern within the game board structure. The pattern formed on the back side of the tiles in the box is quickly and easily identified as correct or incorrect based on your pre-formatted pattern. I often start a discussion with each group as I assess the answer box pattern concerning the benefits of group learning and group assessment as it affects their individual learning.

Additionally, to be more inclusive of all abilities, instructors can allow students to self-correct any mistakes made from the matching as an additional assignment to gain back any missed points. For instance, if orange and blue are in the opposite positions of where they should be according to the (hidden) backside pattern, flip the board back over to determine which numbers the students answered incorrectly. If time allows, while other groups complete their boards, educators might want to allow the student teams to gain back any missed questions, but they must provide both answers and explanations in this second round.

Regardless of time constraints, educators can foster a spirit of reflection and continue the learning

process by instructing the students to take the paper containing the game questions home so that they can think deeply about their group's incorrect answers. This portion allows for those learners who are more highly motivated and/or are slower thinkers to gain back full credit for each incorrect tile. That is, in an attempt to be as fair and equitable as possible with their course grade totals, each group member proceeds through the next round of the game acting as an individual. In this scenario where there is additional time until the next class session, students are to each write down their answers with an explanation of the corrected solution and process.



Figure 48.2. Completed VersaTiles game board flipped for checking to reveal the backside of tiles, with colored pattern showing. ALT TEXT: Two tile boards. One has the numbers 1-11 on them. They are white tiles with black numbers. The other tile set has tiles that are blue and white, yellow and white, and red and white.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Facilitate the assignment of teams into random heterogeneous groupings based on gender, race, ethnicity, etc., or, sometimes allow students to select their own groups or use pre-formed teams from other group activities.
2. Give each student a paper that lists the questions and a matching answer grid so that each group member may adequately see the questions for discussion.
3. Walk around the classroom during the activity to ensure that all learners are engaged and placing tiles.
4. Keep a timer running on the front screen, as well as verbally announcing 5-minute, 3-minute,

and 1-minute warnings until the buzzer.

5. Place a value toward each tile. I recommend 1/2 point for each tile, with a total assignment grade of 6 points.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Quizlet (<https://www.quizlet.com>)

STEM Simulation Gizmos (<https://gizmos.explorelearning.com/index.cfm?method=cResource.dspResourceCatalog>)

The Unfair Game (<https://comprehensibleclassroom.com/2015/10/27/the-unfair-game/>)

VersaTiles game boards (<https://www.hand2mind.com/item/VersaTiles-answer-case-single>)

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VIRGINIA

CODY MEJEUR

Game: *Virginia*

Developer: Variable State

Year: 2016

Platform(s): PlayStation 4, Microsoft Windows, Xbox One, macOS

Number of players: Single-player game

Genre: First-person, narrative, mystery, walking simulator

Type of game: Video game

Curricular connections: Literature, history, art, media, gender studies, critical race studies, popular culture

Possible skills taught: Critical thinking, textual analysis, empathy, identity exploration, game design

Audience: 14+ (high school students, college students)

Length of time: 2 hours

Where to play: Classroom, home, community center

Cost: \$9.99

URL: <https://www.variablestate.com/projects/virginia>, <https://store.steampowered.com/app/374030/Virginia/>

SUMMARY

Virginia is a first-person, narrative-driven, mystery game that has players play as Anne Tarver, a fictional FBI special agent working in 1992. Anne and her partner investigate the disappearance of a teenage boy, Lucas Fairfax, in the fictional town of Kingdom, Virginia. While the game does not explicitly identify Anne's race, it is clear from the images of her in the mirror and on her badge that she is a woman of color, apparently Black, and while she is investigating Lucas' disappearance, she is also tasked with spying on her partner Maria Halperin (maiden name Ortega), who appears to be Black and/or Latinx. As the two investigations unfold, it becomes apparent that things in Kingdom are not what they seem, with citizens of the town withholding information from Anne and Maria and the FBI covering up a history of dismissing agents (especially agents of color) whom the agency deems as too troublesome, difficult, or nosy. The gameplay consists of exploring environments and interacting with objects and characters. There are no complex puzzles to solve or challenges to overcome, instead the game focuses on the gradual unfolding of the narrative. The game has a cinematic art style, from its movie-like opening credits to the cuts, fades, and edited transitions from one scene to the next.



Figure 49.1. Anne Tarver, a young Black woman wearing a green jacket and light blue dress shirt, examines her reflection in a public bathroom mirror as she prepares for a day of work at the FBI. ALT TEXT: A screenshot that has a mirror in a bathroom. The bathroom has blue and purple tiles. The woman has dark brown skin and purple-blue hair in a ponytail. The woman has a dark green blazer and a name tab with FBI printed on it. They also have a light blue shirt on.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

One of the most noteworthy elements of *Virginia* is its complete lack of dialogue and voice acting, which is unusual for a game that focuses primarily on storytelling. The characters never say anything or speak to each other, and instead, emotions are communicated through facial expressions; while narrative is communicated through interacting with objects and text. Beyond setting *Virginia* apart, this element is also what makes the game an excellent teaching tool in multiple regards. Educators can draw students' attention to the lack of speech during play sessions together in a classroom or via prompts provided to students playing on their own outside of class. Immediately after this observation, educators should ask students why the developers chose to make the game this way. Whenever I teach *Virginia*, usually through a group play session, student answers to this question guide class discussion toward multiple possible interpretations and the implications *Virginia* has for social justice. In addition to helping students find their own answers, educators can reference the following points to guide discussion.

First, educators and students can discuss whether the absence of narration and dialogue makes other parts of the game stand out more and take on more meaning. Instead of focusing on the narrator, how a character sounds, or what someone says, students might notice that the player has to pay close

attention to how characters move, what clues are present in the game environment, and how the music shifts the tone of different scenes. Educators should ask students to share out loud how they are interpreting the scenes in the game as they play together. After interpreting several scenes and clues in the game together, educators should note how the meaning of the clues is not obvious, and instead, it is up to players to piece together the mysteries of what really happened in the past and develop their own interpretations of the game's events.

Second, *Virginia*'s lack of puzzles, challenges, and combat makes students question what they think a game is and what they value in the games they play. Most students are initially bewildered by the game because they are used to common game actions like fighting, shooting, racing, or jumping, and none of those actions are possible in *Virginia*. Instead, the primary action of *Virginia* is just walking, which students might first experience as boring until they realize that the game's main activities are mental and emotional. Educators can draw attention to this fact by highlighting how walking around in the game makes the player more reflective and thoughtful about their experiences, and a teacher can further encourage this by pausing the game in class and asking students to share their thoughts or feelings out loud (or write them down). As Kagan points out, this mode of playing by thinking, feeling, and reflecting is often gendered as feminine and considered passive compared to more masculine or active games, and this makes *Virginia* even more valuable as a teaching tool for getting students to experience different types of games and encounter their own biases.

Finally, educators should emphasize how the silence of the characters in *Virginia* also reflects the silencing of people in the actual world according to differences such as race and gender. I have found that students may not make this connection right away, but educators can help students notice it by asking questions such as: how are characters like Anne and Maria (women of color) treated by the other characters in the game? What makes them different from the other characters, and do they seem to be valued or dismissed? With these prompts, students will notice that Anne and Maria are the only people of color present at the FBI, and they are further the only women except for one white woman who is a secretary for Anne's boss. This also helps students see how the game's narrative, including Anne's assignment to spy on Maria, is largely about how marginalized people are pitted against each other in institutions. Thus, the literal silencing of the characters through lack of narration mirrors the silencing of marginalized peoples through systemic racism and sexism.

Students who share these identities often pick up on these implications very quickly in the early scenes of the game, but for students who do not share them, it can initially escape their notice. For this reason, I have found the most effective approach to teaching *Virginia* is to give students the concepts and vocabulary to notice inequity and lack of diversity before playing the game. To do this, I often assign a short reading from Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* that helps students see differences in identity more clearly (Lorde, 1984). In particular, educators using this text should emphasize the concept of the "mythical norm," which refers to the hegemonic norms of whiteness, maleness, able-bodied, and cisgender, etc in society and how differences from these norms are treated as lesser.

While *Virginia* excels at challenging students' assumptions and biases about games and social justice, there are a couple of prominent limitations to the game. The game includes references to drugs, specifically alcohol and LSD, and later in the game shows Anne using drugs. This could make the game's content inappropriate for younger students, and for this reason, I recommend teaching *Virginia* in a class at the secondary education level or higher. More problematically, it could also

contribute to what Gray describes as the “ghettoization” of Black characters in games through stereotypical portrayals of Black persons as criminals, drug users, and hustlers (Gray, 2018). This limitation can be mitigated by educators drawing attention to these stereotypes and discussing with students how Anne and Maria’s drug use in the game stems from how frustrated they feel due to systemic racism, rather than any innate, harmful, stereotypical connection between Black people and drugs. Despite these limitations, I have found that *Virginia* gives a nuanced portrayal of women of color protagonists dealing with predominantly white institutions, and this helps players and students better understand and empathize with such experiences.



Figure 49.2. In an imaginary future after spying and reporting on other people of color at the FBI, Anne becomes Director and asks her protégé to do the same. The image shows Anne’s hand tossing a case file for a Black male FBI agent across her desk to a young, apparently Asian American woman sitting opposite her. In the background is Anne’s large office, including a sitting area, bookshelves, and a door to the outer room where her secretary works. ALT TEXT: A person sits at a desk. They have a yellow file in front of them. They have ivory-colored skin and dark black hair. They are wearing a light blue shirt and a silver necklace. There is a brown-colored hand that reaches out in front of the image. In the background of the room is a couch, cabinet, some books, and two lamps.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers should play the game ahead of time to reach the end of the mystery and develop a few interpretations of it to answer questions and guide students through the unresolved ending.
2. Pausing the game after critical scenes can help create space for discussion during a group play

session. If students are playing it on their own, encourage them to slow down and reflect on the clues they encounter, perhaps writing them down.

3. Basic content warnings can help prepare students for what they will encounter in the game, including some surreal and bizarre segments, as well as some references to and depictions of drug use.
4. First-person games like *Virginia* can be disorienting or nauseating for some players. Providing a link to a video recording or Let's Play video of the game can help students who might feel sick while playing it.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

Firewatch (<https://www.firewatchgame.com/>)

Gone Home (<https://gonehome.com/>)

Twin Peaks (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098936/>)

The Vanishing of Ethan Carter (<http://ethancartergame.com/>)

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Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.

WIZARDS & WARRIORS

MEGHAN GARDNER, CHRIS WILEY, & TRACY RUSSO

Game: *Wizards & Warriors*

Developer: Guardian Adventures

Year: 2001

Platform: In-person or virtual LARP

Number of players: 1 Game Master and 10 players or 1:10 ratio

Genre: Larp (Live Action Role-Playing Game)

Type of game: Analog live-action role-playing game

Curricular connections: DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), humanities, life skills

Possible skills taught: Knowledge transfer; collaboration; communication; creativity; critical thinking; ethical decision-making; empathy; identity exploration; metacognition; executive function

Audience: 6 – 18 years old, depending on the complexity of the curriculum and maturity level of the story.

Length of time: One hour to full days/weeks

Where to play: This LARP can be used in informal learning environments such as summer camps and afterschool programs either indoors with open space (gym) or outdoors with enough navigable space (campgrounds, playgrounds, etc)

Cost: \$395 for a full online teacher course or a free shorter version PDF available in January 2023 at <https://www.guardup.net>

URL: <https://guardup.com/day-overnight/>

SUMMARY

Wizards & Warriors is a live-action role-playing (LARP) game designed for children and teens with the primary goals of increasing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and life skills such as nonviolent conflict resolution, understanding, and acceptance of differences, leadership and working as a team with individual skill sets. Players are heroes summoned to test their mettle as courageous, honorable, and compassionate heroes against a litany of characters, monsters, puzzles, and moral challenges. The game has an ethos and cast of established characters that allows for the introduction of an infinite number of new characters. The game is an interactive story that reacts to players' choices, allowing for a co-creative story arc. Players gain special skills through specific learning points that they can use to "level up" their characters' abilities. Players learn these skills in

“guild halls,” a time and place when staff teach the players each skill that is tied to a specific STEM or life skill lesson. These lessons are then recorded on their Character Sheet and utilized by players at key moments in the story to help solve the mystery or resolve the conflict (see Figure 50.1). The story and system of the game are versatile and are designed to bring any existing story from the mythology, literature, or history of various cultures to life. The creatures or characters are played by staff and can be represented on a small scale by a single game master (GM) or grand scale with an entire cast of staff.

Wilderness Protectors | CHARACTER SHEET

Player Name _____ Character Name _____

RANGERS
 Search & Rescue

Ability – Team Attack (Multiply Damage)

WATCHTOWER
 Research & Analysis

Ability – Research (Reveal Clues)

WARDENS
 Conservation & Preservation

Ability – Ally Gain/Item Character

Player Group [circle one]:

Character Class [circle one]: **DEFENDER** **ECOLOGIST** **MEDIC**

Current Stamina _____ Unused Skill Points _____

SKILL LIST

Basic Skill Name _____	# of Skill [or ∞] _____
Basic Skill Name _____	# of Skill [or ∞] _____
Adv. Skill Name _____	# of Skill [or ∞] _____
Adv. Skill Name _____	# of Skill [or ∞] _____
Master Skill Name _____	# of Skill _____

Defender Starting Skills

- 5 Stamina
- Close Attack [-∞]
- Body Armor

Defender Purchasable Skills

- Basic Skills [cost 1]
- Δ Close Defense
- Advanced Skills [cost 2]
- Δ Rifle [-∞]
- Δ Evade
- Master Skills [cost 3]
- Δ Taser

Ecologist Starting Skills

- 3 Stamina
- Rifle [-∞]
- Investigate x1

Ecologist Purchasable Skills

- Basic Skills [cost 1]
- Δ Investigate
- Advanced Skills [cost 2]
- Δ Close Attack [-∞]
- Δ Poison
- Master Skills [cost 3]
- Δ Disorienting Spray

Medic Starting Skills

- 4 Stamina
- Close Attack [-∞]
- Med Kit x1

Medic Purchasable Skills

- Basic Skills [cost 1]
- Δ Med Kit
- Advanced Skills [cost 2]
- Δ Antidote
- Δ Defibrillate
- Master Skills [cost 3]
- Δ Tranquilizer

Figure 50.1. Player Character Sheet for Wilderness Protectors-themed adventure. ALT TEXT: There is a sheet that says “Wilderness Protectors: Character Sheet” at the top. It also has blanks for Player Name and Character Name. The player group can be circled (Rangers, Watchtower, or Wardens). Character class can be circled (Defender, Ecologist, Medic). The Current Stamina and Unused Skill Points can be filled in. There is a list of blanks for Basic Skill Names and # of Skill (or the infinity sign). There is some text for Defender, Ecologist, and Medic Starting Skills but the text is too small to read.

HOW TO USE THE GAME

A STEM curriculum can be taught within the story and game system. Instead of a teacher leading the students in a session on electricity, the teacher can play a character like Merlin the wizard to teach them how the lightning spell works by making use of the concepts of electricity so that they can use the spell to protect themselves. STEM modules (moments in the story when students explore STEM as it pertains to the story) can be used for general introductions to a wide variety of

subjects. For example, students interacting with creatures played by the teacher from different biomes allows for the introduction of biodiversity; designing tools allows for introducing engineering, and mathematical riddles, and puzzles explore specific mathematical concepts.

The avatar system (students adopting a character that they play) allows the players to try out new and emerging identities for themselves, whether trying out different manifestations of ethics, leadership qualities, genders, or societal roles. English Literature teachers can capitalize on this process by encouraging students to play specific characters out of literature.

Teachers can also choose stories for players to navigate from non-mainstream cultures. Example cultures explored in the past by *Wizards & Warriors* include Syrian, Bulgarian, Japanese, Moroccan, and both the Abenaki and the Arawak indigenous people. In these adventures, the players were given a number of quests to solve mysteries or navigate challenges that were based on the individual culture's stories. They did this by learning from, negotiating with, and occasionally doing battle against creatures and characters from various cultures. In each of these adventures, *Wizards & Warriors* enlisted the assistance and direction of cultural educators and advisors who were members of those cultures.

An example activity was one adventure that explored the Arawak indigenous culture. Opiyel (oh-pie-yell), Guard Dog of Coabey (the land of the dead for the Arawak people), had returned to the underworld after 500 years of absence, to continue his job of judging a dead spirit's worthiness. However, when he returned, Coabey was infested with a plague, brought over by rats from a faraway land (Columbus and the Spaniards). This plague affected Opiyel, and shattered his Zemi vessel (a container for his vital essence) into many shards. The shards scattered across Coabey, and he needed the Heroes' help to put it back together before he could continue his work. The players partnered with and battled against various characters and eventually returned with all of his shards, while learning that the rats were invasive animals that were infected with a plague and purposefully set upon the Arawak/Taino by the Europeans.

The game requires individual players to join groups where they make decisions and advance the story and their characters by working together and ensuring group cohesion. Staff playing Hero Leaders help facilitate these conversations both within the story meta and the group discussions. This can be accomplished by asking questions of the group at various moments during the adventure or by having a space within the story for a moment to gain insight into what the students are thinking. In *Wizards & Warriors*, there is a space called The Library where the students gather to meet The Librarian who is a staff person asking questions specifically selected to encourage the students to both assess their current progress and also to reflect upon what they have learned.

Equity is explored in the game system through individual autonomy and teamwork. Player autonomy is explored by changing the story arc based on their choices. The educator can accomplish this by writing a skeleton of a plot but allowing for player choices in a chance encounter and interaction (a player decides to spare a villain and the Plot Writers adjust the story for this decision). In this, each player feels like they have a voice and that their actions matter (Hyloft, 2010). This encourages players to work toward shared goals in the game and use those in-game explorations and interactions to transfer the new skills out of the game to similar situations in the real world. Teachers can enable this

by having a debriefing or reflection session at the end of each adventure where players discuss what they learned and how it would apply it to their life outside of the adventure environment.

Limitations of the game system include staff representation. Educators cannot authentically represent a culture outside their own. The way to work around these limitations is to recruit staff and consultants from diverse backgrounds that you wish the heroes to understand. This can be accomplished by partnering with local cultural centers, consulates, performance groups, and other representatives of the culture you wish to explore. When doing this, it is important that the educator work collaboratively with the cultural advisors and give them the authority to lead the design of the adventure with their input. They should have the final say in how the story is presented, what language is used, whether the props or costumes are appropriate, etc. This is how the educator can avoid cultural appropriation. To assist in locating a cultural advisor, visit www.CulturaConnector.net which is a free directory for cultural advisors to list and to be found.



Figure 50.2. Players can learn about the human skeleton to earn special healing skills to use in the game. ALT TEXT: There is a photo of a child who has blondish-brown hair and a blue dress. They are putting magnets on a whiteboard that has a skeleton on it, alongside some magnets with words on them. Another person's hands are also adjusting the words.

TIPS & BEST PRACTICES

1. Props, lighting, well-written stories, and training of the staff all add to player immersion.

Training for events like this can be found at <https://www.GuardUp.net> and by partnering with a theatrical group.

2. Props and costumes can often be sourced at second-hand shops with a little accessorizing or light modification to make them match the theme.
3. The game does not require much technology unless the teacher is exploring a current-day or futuristic story theme.
4. The more staff available to play characters opposite the players, the better. Just be sure to provide them with written instructions on their character's backstory, the character's special information to impart or skills to use, and how the character can handle the various possible outcomes.
5. Having a designated staging area (called "Logistics") which is an "out of game" area for debriefing the staff on how the interactions went is ideal. The bigger the scale of the game, the more important a Logistics location is as well as an assigned person who has the sole job of managing Logistics.



Figure 50.3. Students negotiated with Opiyel, the dog that guards the realm of death in the Taino culture in order to allow dead souls to enter. Cultural Educator, Claudia Fox Tree of the Arawak tribe, oversaw the story development. ALT TEXT: There is a person who is dressed in an outfit with white, red, and yellow streamers. They also have a mask with white, red, and yellow colors. They have five feathers on their head that are green, blue, and yellow feathers. Next to them is a person with long black hair and brown skin. They have glasses and are smiling. They have a black and gray shirt on. They are standing in front of white walls.

RELATED GAMES & MEDIA

The Story School (<https://www.thestoryschool.org>)

Reacting to the Past (<https://reacting.barnard.edu/>)

Transform Your School Through Story, podcast with Danny Bauer from *Better Leaders, Better Schools* and Meghan Gardner from *Guardian Adventures* (<https://guardup.com/transform-your-school-through-story/>)

Renaissance Adventures LARP (<https://www.renaissanceadventures.com/>)

Majestic Adventures (<https://questnorthwest.com/about/tour-of-adventure-quest/experiential-education-and-larps/>)

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Rachel Kowert, Ph.D is a research psychologist and the Research Director of Take This. She is a world-renowned researcher on the uses and effects of digital games, including their impact on physical, social, and psychological well-being. In her current work, she serves as one of the primary investigators on the first grant-funded project from the Department of Homeland Security about games and extremism. She has spoken about her work to thousands of people across the globe, including the United States Congress, United Nations, and Department of Homeland Security. An award-winning author, she has published a variety of books and scientific articles relating to the psychology of games and, more recently, the relationship between games and mental health specifically. She also serves as the editor of the Routledge Debates in Media Studies series and the upcoming ETC press series Psychology of Pop Culture. Recently, she founded her YouTube channel Psychgeist, which serves to bridge the gap between moral panic and scientific knowledge on a variety of psychology and game-related topics. In 2021, Dr. Kowert was chosen as a member of The Game Awards Future Class, representing the best and brightest of the future of video games. Dr. Kowert has been featured in various media outlets, including NPR, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, and *Wired* magazine. To learn more about Rachel and her work, visit www.rkowert.com.

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Diana J. Leonard (she, her, hers) is Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology at Lewis & Clark College. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology at U.C. Santa Barbara in 2012. Her empirical research regarding intergroup conflict has been published in top Social Psychology journals and presented at international academic conferences. While working on her Ph.D. in an intergroup emotions lab, Leonard joined the Southern California cinematic boffer larp community, where she currently serves as a storyteller and community manager for the post-apocalyptic larp Apocalypse 47. As a result, Leonard's research agenda blends practice with scholarship: she applies social psychology theory and methodology to the study of larp social dynamics. Meanwhile, as an educator and larp designer, she uses elements of roleplay to empower students and larpers alike to explore marginalized identities in and out of the classroom.

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Gregory Beaudoin is a graduate of Marist College, and was a dual major in French and Games & Emerging Media with a concentration in Technical Development and Programming. In his free time, he works on games and writes scripts for Unity/Unreal Engine, using C#/C++. He hopes to work as a gameplay programmer for either an indie or large studio and continue making indie games in the future. Learn more at <https://gjbeaudoin.wixsite.com/mysite>.

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justice and transnational feminist frameworks in conversation with one another offers a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to recognizing the significance and impact of contemporary examples of family separation. See also www.beyondthetext.net.

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Dr. Jill Budny is the Assistant Director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Honors College and a member of the teaching faculty, where she offers courses in political philosophy, American politics, and constitutional law. She also spearheads many of the college's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, including the Honors Summer Leadership Camp, the Game Studies Summer Camp for high school students, the Honors Equity Team, and the Race, Justice, Power Conference, among others. Her research interests include the role of emotion in political life and the education of the irrational in ancient Greek political thought, contemporary debates concerning the nature of freedom in American political thought, and the limits of liberalism. Dr. Budny holds an M.A. in Political Science from Fordham University and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Notre Dame. See also: <https://uwm.edu/honors/>.

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Tony Bushner is a lecturer and advisor at the University of Michigan's Digital Studies Institute, where they teach courses on game design, prosumer communities, and digital rhetorics. Their research lives at the cross-section of digital humanities, technical writing, and game studies, and they are currently working with the DISCO Network on developing anti-racist, anti-ableist pedagogical interventions for STEM students. Tony's pedagogy approaches course design as a ludic challenge: how can we

as educators create playful environments that maximize student/player agency and curiosity while offering low-stakes opportunities for experimentation and generative failure? Outside of academia, Tony performs live glitch art for chiptune and other experimental electronic music acts under the stage name D'oh!nut.

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Dr. Chen's research interests include how technology brings changes in communication behaviors and facilitates both negative and positive individual and social outcomes, as well as the social and psychological impacts of interactive digital media, which includes video games, virtual reality, and social media. She investigates the ways in which individuals negotiate their identities and social relationships through interpersonal interactions both in real life and in virtual environments. Dr. Chen has worked on several interdisciplinary projects that look at specifically the design of interactive digital media, such as serious games, virtual reality, and AI for positive social, psychological, and learning outcomes.

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Shawn Clybor (Ph.D. and M.A., Northwestern University) is a published scholar, educator, social studies curriculum writer, game designer, collections manager, and consultant. His interest in game-based learning began with his experiences at Charles Games in Prague, where he worked on the development teams for two educational serious games that have received over two dozen nominations and awards. He is currently the Chief Technology Strategist at the Bakehouse Arts Complex in Miami, a position funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, where he is responsible for the research, strategies, and recommendations intended to physically and programmatically transform Bakehouse over the next five years as a center for art making and art presentation in the digital age. See also <http://www.bacfl.org/>.

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Dr. Charlie Cullen is Head of the School of Mechanical Engineering at the Technological University of Dublin (TUD), where he aims to combine lecturing and research within the largest multi-campus school in the institution. He is currently working on *An Introduction to Audio Synthesis and MIDI Control* for Routledge, where he is also editor for the forthcoming series *Embedded Interaction Systems*.

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Angelica Joy Dinglasan is currently an undergraduate student at iAcademy in Metro Manila, Philippines to study for her course on the Bachelor of Science in Entertainment and Multimedia Computing Game Development and a member of Inclusive Games. She has worked on multiple games in itch.io as LuluCat. Her aim is to research how narrative games can impact the players in many ways and help create games that are fun with inclusiveness in mind along with making art on mediums people can enjoy. Even though there are not as many titles and affiliations as the other incredible authors, she's hardworking in projects and events to make the world more fun, knowledgeable, and accepting. During her spare time, she likes to play visual novels and listen to

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Lou Ann Falls has been an ESL instructor/adjunct professor for over 25 years. She presently coordinates Tutoring for Multilingual Students, a peer tutoring program for multilingual language learners at Bridgewater State University. Lou Ann taught EFL in Rio de Janeiro, the Amazon River Basin, Vancouver, BC, and ESL in Massachusetts. She has taught in middle school, high school, community college, college, and adult programs. A fascination with crossing cultural boundaries began when she moved from Georgia to Rio de Janeiro. Later as she moved to Massachusetts, she realized that the feelings of estrangement were similar. That experience launched a fascination with understanding cross-cultural experiences and a search to find ways to encourage empathy.

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Nazih Fares is a French-Lebanese esports and video game professional veteran. He has worked with over 14 different gaming publishers during his career, currently leading localization and communications work on *World War 3*, *HAWKED*, and *Eggy Party*. He has also been elected as a member of the International Game Developer Association (IDGA) Board of Directors, and the current Vice Chair of the IGDA Game Credits Special Interest Group, which promotes inclusivity and best

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Nicholas Fisher graduated as a Games and Emerging Media major from Marist College with a concentration in Design, Writing, and Culture, as well as a minor in Psychology. In his free time, he enjoys designing *Magic: The Gathering* decks, as well as developing homebrew content for D&D 5e, in addition to working on countless other pet projects. Moving forward, he hopes to work at an indie game company and, from there, go on to become a successful indie developer in his own right. Learn more at <https://nicholasafishercom.wordpress.com>.

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Meghan Gardner is the founder of Guardian Adventures, which provides consultation and development of innovative and educational events, products, and training programs. Her expertise is in emotionally immersive and culturally inclusive experiences where participants are highly engaged and can transfer their learning from the training environment into practical use in the workplace or beyond. Meghan is also the founder of Cultura Connector, a 501c3 nonprofit that specializes in locating and partnering with cultural advisors in a corporate environment or media project so as to ensure that the culture or lived experience being explored is portrayed with sensitivity and accuracy. Establishing and honoring these partnerships is key for any organization that wishes to be inclusive in both its internal operations and client-facing products and services. In her work with

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Dr. Haas' teaching experience includes working with K-12, undergraduate, and graduate students. Additional experiences include instructional coaching, professional development, curriculum design, and department administration. Opportunities in highly diverse settings have acted as both a catalyst and foundation for her focus on integrating and connecting literacy across disciplines through culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices. With a focus on technology-based

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Jessica Hammer is the Director of the Center for Transformational Play, jointly appointed in the HCI Institute and the Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research focuses on transformational games, which are games that change how players think, feel, or behave. She is also an award-winning game designer.

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John P. Healy is an experienced Lecturer in Game Design at Technological University Dublin's School of Media. With over a decade of experience, he has successfully taught undergraduate and postgraduate programs in game design. As an active researcher, his focus is on game design education and practice, aiming to enhance our understanding of how games are made and how best to teach game-making. His research is dedicated to developing process supports for game design education, with a particular interest in exploring the game design process and identifying the essential skills necessary for success in the field. In addition to his teaching and research work, John serves as a design consultant for clients in the healthcare, education, and civil service sectors. With his professional experience at game studios such as Jagex Game Studios and Jolt Online Gaming, he has developed games that have been played and enjoyed by millions of players worldwide. John's passion for game design is evident in his teaching, research, and consulting work, where he demonstrates his commitment to helping students and clients succeed. See also: <https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/faculties-and-schools/arts-humanities/media/people/johnphealy.html>

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Victoria Ingalls is a Professor of Mathematics at Tiffin University in Northwest Ohio. Though she began her teaching career in the K-12 environment, she did adjunct work and earned her doctorate while raising 5 young children. Those parental and educational experiences heavily influenced her classroom pedagogy and practices to teach collegiate-level math to undergraduates, to the point of using some of her kids' toys as teaching examples and classroom games. She has presented and published extensively on student engagement and classroom satisfaction.

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Jovo Janjetovic is an undergraduate student at Lewis & Clark College, where he is pursuing a dual degree in Psychology and International Affairs with an anticipated graduation date in May 2023. His research interests include the use of interactive immersive techniques for the reduction of prejudice against marginalized groups. One of the projects he recently coordinated focused on empowering marginalized groups through the medium of escape room-themed games. Apart from that, he is active in an NGO sector working on multiple social justice interventions primarily focusing on public policy.

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Tate JohaneK is a master's student in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department at The Ohio State University. He studies the impact of homosocial environments on queerness, particularly through sleepovers, as well as queer identity formation within social media. His current research focuses on how youth contextualize their own queer identity on social media, specifically interrogating Tik Tok's positionality of producing public videos that create conversations of queerness that integrate themselves into adolescent interpersonal relationships.

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Alisha Karabinus, Ph.D., works at the intersection of game studies and technical communication. She is an editor of the forthcoming collection *Historiographies of Game Studies*, and her work has previously appeared in such journals as *Technical Communication*.

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Johannes Katsarov is a serious games researcher at the Leuphana University Lueneburg (Germany), where he develops digital games to sensitize people to ethical problems and risks associated with new technologies like blockchain, chatbots, and social media. Currently, he is finishing up a serious moral game on the use of artificial intelligence in business, which has already been tested by more than a hundred students from diverse degree programs. Previously, he worked at the University of Zurich (Switzerland), where he conducted research on the promotion of moral sensitivity and research integrity. Here, he also developed two digital games for ethics education, which are used for the training of medical and business students at several universities, and submitted a doctoral dissertation in ethics on "Virtuous Play—Promoting Moral Sensitivity with Digital Games." His principal research interest is to identify teaching mechanisms and strategies that effectively facilitate the development of responsible attitudes and competencies for moral agency.

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David Kocik is a Ph.D. dissertator in the Media, Cinema, and Digital Studies plan in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, where he is the Managing Director for Serious Play, a graduate student group researching games, play, and live streaming. His academic work focuses on the political, economic, and social intersections of video game production, sexuality,

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Mehmet Kosa is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the College of Arts, Media and Design, Northeastern University, also affiliated with the Department of Psychology, Arizona State University. He investigates games and players at the intersection of Social Psychology, Information Systems, and Human-Computer Interaction disciplines. His research focuses on motivation for gaming, player mindsets, experiences and attitudes, and the design of XR/hybrid/analog games for education and health. Some recurring concepts in his work are self-determination, escapism, well-being, learning, presence, mindfulness, and play or purchase intentions. See also: <https://www.mehmetkosa.com>.

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Outi Laiti, Ph.D. is a Sámi game researcher and designer. In 2020, [gamesindustry.biz](https://www.gamesindustry.biz) nominated her as one of the 100 Game Changers for her work on promoting e.g. Sámi gaming. She is an Associate researcher at the University of Helsinki Indigenous studies. Her field of research is education and computer science with a focus on Sámi language and culture in digital games and programming. She is also active in designing and co-organizing Sami Game Jams and has been involved in several game development and educational projects in the past. Her doctoral thesis "Old Ways of Knowing, New Ways of Playing" published in January 2021, discusses the potential of collaborative game design to empower Indigenous Sámi. See also: outilaiti.fi.

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Christopher Leech is a Ph.D. Researcher from Liverpool England. Chris' Ph.D. is in Psychology and looks at video games and student mental health. As you might guess, he cares about video games, the people who play them, and how we all experience our mental health. Chris is also a person with Albinism, which means he's visually impaired, legally blind, or severely sight impaired. He also has lived experience of mental health challenges and speaking about it is something he thinks is important to help reduce stigmatization and that is why he is researching the area and has written this book chapter. Outside of work, Chris is a content creator streaming weekly on Twitch and hosts a monthly podcast "Psyched to be with you" (available wherever you find your podcasts). He also streams games while considering their mental health representation and applying a psychological look at game design, and story. He is also known as a mental health ambassador and where possible takes part in various charity events. See also: <https://linktr.ee/BlindPsyche>

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Sam Leif (they/them) is a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas's Teaching and Learning, Interaction and Media Sciences program in the College of Education and the Lab Manager for the Interaction and Media Sciences Lab. Their research focuses on the development and assessment of expertise in digital environments. Additionally, Sam writes on topics of inclusive game design, ethical gender-related data collection in research studies, and gender non-conforming experiences. Sam holds a Bachelor of Social Work and a Bachelor of Science in Human Services Counseling from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas as well as a Master of Library and Information Science from San José State University. See also <https://www.samleif.com>.

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Dr. Traci Levy is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Adelphi University. Her research focuses on the politics of caregiving in the United States. She is passionate about teaching, pedagogy, and inclusion. Her academic publications focus on the politics surrounding relationships of intimacy and care, hospice as a model of care, educational needs, and relational rights. Dr. Levy has extensive training in the Reacting to the Past roleplaying pedagogy. She regularly uses live-action roleplaying (LARP) and other types of games in her undergraduate classes. She is the designer of *The Challenge and Inequality of Care*—a LARP that highlights the hardships and inequities of juggling paid work and unpaid caregiving in the United States within the context of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For years, Dr. Levy co-authored and co-facilitated the "Gender Bias & Title IX" workshop that was part of Adelphi's Diversity Certificate program. Additionally, she co-facilitated these workshops for faculty and staff of several Long Island (NY) public school districts. Dr. Levy holds a doctorate from the University of Notre Dame.

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Laya Liebeseller is a play scholar and anthropologist studying tabletop roleplaying game communities in the pandemic. They are a game designer by trade and enjoy yarn crafts and baking. Academically they are interested in playing with the ways we disseminate information for public use. How can we use games methodologically to allow theory to be experienced, highlighting theory as a mutable and changing process? As a designer, they are interested in how games can facilitate thinking beyond ourselves to imagine different ways of being and knowing.

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Ruth Makonnen is a graduate of Lewis & Clark College where she studied Psychology and Gender Studies. Her interests include research surrounding inclusivity and racial and gendered bias and related preventative measures and interventions. She is currently working on research regarding chronic pain among veterans on long-term opioid therapy.

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Education and Games, Volume 3. She presents at various secondary teacher education conferences across the province and colleges throughout the US. As well, Stevi also enjoys making games for education which have gained an international following in the English Language Learners' teaching community. When not teaching in a classroom, Stevi will be found in her art studio throwing pottery or painting, behind a computer composing short stories, or nose-deep in a book. Her latest project has been working on a New Adult Fantasy novel.

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William Merchant is an associate professor and methodological researcher at the University of Northern Colorado who specializes in research design, funded projects, and evaluative consulting. He believes that the art of research methodology is in the process of interpreting complex scenarios and converting them into (simple) linear coherent studies. His primary interests are using unique and innovative technologies to generate new data sources for inquiry. He has contributed to the fields of science education curriculum, the perceptions of aging populations, innovative teaching methods, parenting interventions, patient and clinician perceptions of empathy and empathy training, and employment issues related to Multiple Sclerosis. Outside of his time teaching, conducting research, and pursuing funding opportunities you will most likely find him playing music, tinkering with some home project, or just taking it easy.

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Matthew Montalto is a freelance creative writer, author, and administrative assistant at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Along with his works bringing the Morra Cinematic Game System to life, Matthew has also written for *The Midnight World*, a tabletop roleplaying game that tackles PTSD and other mental health conditions via narrative gameplay as a source of catharsis. In addition to this, Matthew hopes to publish his first novel and a collection of short stories in the near future. When he isn't working, Matthew is an avid board game, tabletop RPG, and LARP enthusiast. Besides the games he runs for his friends as a storyteller and Dungeon Master, Matthew's favorite games are the ones he runs for his husband of fourteen years, Jose.

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Chris Wiley came from a family of engineers and educators and developed a penchant for theater and storytelling. Chris graduated from his small college in the South and moved to the busy city of Boston where he worked as a special education teacher and moonlighted as an actor/stage combatant. In 2008, he discovered Guard Up, Inc. in Burlington, MA. Working under founder Meghan Gardner, he started as a camp counselor at their overnight camp eventually becoming a director. Every summer, the eduLARP camp called Wizards & Warriors transformed hundreds of campers into heroes. Chris fell in love with the camp community, interactive learning, and fantasy play that impacted campers' academic and personal development. In 2013, The Story School was founded as a non-profit educational organization by the team behind Guard Up. The pandemic necessitated a transition for The Story School and Chris answered the call to become the Executive Director also taking over the overnight camp program. Chris Wiley has been able to help The Story School navigate

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