

Check your ALCE Reading Skills: Activity 3

Key and item analysis

Text

This text has been adapted from an article in a newspaper.

Gaming has gone from a minority activity a few years ago to mass entertainment. The next generation of games consoles will intensify the debate over the impact of video games on society, as the industry tries to reach out to new customers and its opponents become ever more vocal. The new powerful computers will offer unprecedented levels of performance. This will make possible characters with convincing facial expressions, opening the way to games with the emotional charge of films, but it will also make depictions of violence even more lifelike, to the dismay of critics.

In America, half of the population plays computer or video games. However, most players are under 40, while most critics of gaming are over 40. The average age of American gamers is 30. Most are “digital natives” who grew up surrounded by technology argues Marc Prensky of *Games 2 Train*, a firm that promotes the educational use of games. He describes older people as “digital immigrants” who have had to learn to use technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. But relatively few of them have embraced video games. The demographic divide does much to explain the polarization of opinion over gaming and, in particular, worries about violence.

But aren't critics right to worry that gaming might make people violent? Yet, there have been no studies that track the long-term effects on the players themselves, says Dmitri Williams, who studies the social impact of media at the University of Illinois. Another problem, he continues, is that it is meaningless to generalize about “game play” when there are thousands of games in dozens of genres. It is equivalent to suggesting that all television programs, radio shows, and movies are the same.

Games are widely used as educational tools too, not just for pilots, soldiers and surgeons, but also in businesses. In “Got Game”, a book published last year by Harvard Business School Press, John Beck and Mitchell Wade, two management consultants, argue that gaming provides excellent training for a career in business. Gamers, they write, learn the rules of the in-game world through trial and error, become skilled at making decisions and evaluating risks, and prove to be flexible in the face of change. But gaming can be used as part of job training for new recruits about their tasks and responsibilities too. Convincing older executives of the merits of using games as part of training can be tricky, but when firms realize that their trainees are 20-year-olds, more and more are willing to take the leap.

Pointing all this out makes little difference, though, because the controversy over gaming will take time to resolve. Sometimes attitudes can change relatively quickly, as happened with the Internet. Once condemned as a cesspool of depravity, it is now recognized as a valuable medium, albeit one where as with films and TV, children's access should be limited and supervised. So are games inherently good, or bad? Actually they are neither. Like books, films, the Internet, or any other medium, all can potentially depict violence, and can also be used to educate and inform.

Question 1

What point is being made in paragraph 1 about the new game consoles?

- A. The game performance they offer will appeal to a younger audience.
- B. They have a function that allows discussion with other players.
- C. They lead to an increase in realism for video games.
- D. They offer the possibility of control over the amount of violence games contain.

ANSWER KEY

C.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Medium

ITEM INFORMATION

C is the correct answer choice because the text states “The new powerful computers will offer unprecedented levels of performance. This will make possible characters with convincing facial expressions, opening the way to games with the emotional charge of films, but it will also make depictions of violence even more lifelike...”

Question 2

According to the text what does a person’s attitude to games depend on?

- A. Access to computers at the workplace.
- B. Exposure to computers since childhood.
- C. Level of education and job training.
- D. Financial resources and social background.

ANSWER KEY

B.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Medium

ITEM INFORMATION

B is the correct answer choice because the text states “...most players are under 40, while most critics of gaming are over 40... The average age of American gamers is 30. Most are “digital natives” who grew up surrounded by technology...”

Question 3

Why are games used in corporate training according to the text?

- A. Games encourage players to obey regulations.
- B. Games do not distract employees from their job training.
- C. Games are the only way young employees can learn.
- D. Games promote creative problem solving.

ANSWER KEY

D.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

More challenging

ITEM INFORMATION

D is the correct answer choice because the text states “Gamers... become skilled at making decisions and evaluating risks...”

Question 4

What does “to take a leap” at the end of paragraph 4 refer to?

- A. To employing very young employees.
- B. To the risk of losing the new recruits.
- C. To the use of video games as a training tool.
- D. To changing trainees’ attitude to video gaming.

ANSWER KEY

C.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Medium

ITEM INFORMATION

C is the correct answer choice because the text states “Convincing older executives of the merits of using games as part of training can be tricky, but when firms realize that their trainees are 20-year-olds, more and more are willing to take the leap” – in this sentence “take the leap” refers to “using games as part of training”.

Question 5

What point are Beck and Wade making in their book “Got Game”?

- A. Video games encourage idleness at the work place.
- B. A serious strategic training program can include video games.
- C. Games have been accepted by the young and are largely rejected by the old.
- D. Quiz games are needed to test the workers’ knowledge of rules.

ANSWER KEY

B.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

More challenging

ITEM INFORMATION

B is the correct answer choice because the text states “...gaming can be used as part of job training for new recruits about their tasks and responsibilities...”

Question 6

Which sentence reflects accurately the essence of the text?

- A. Video games may not be as bad as we thought they were.
- B. Video gaming should be banned in public places.
- C. Video game technology has reached unprecedented levels of advancement.
- D. Video games will take over the entertainment industry.

ANSWER KEY

A.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Medium

ITEM INFORMATION

A is the correct answer choice because although the text mentions many criticisms of video games, it concludes “Like books, films, the Internet, or any other medium, all can potentially depict violence, and can also be used to educate and inform.”
