Phillip Fredieu

Argumentative Synthesis

Beavers

10/1/17

The Potential of Video Games in the Academic World

Video games. The very idea of computer gaming brings to mind myriad different things: violence, controversy, angry screaming twelve-year-olds. But one thing that people do not often associate with video games is education and the potential they have in it. Video games have the possibility to help students in the classroom because they can build skills like creativity, problem-solving, the confidence to take risks, and perseverance. Video games are the greatest media form of the modern day, so why should we not learn to harness its potential for educational purposes, as we have with art, music, and film?

Video games are largely shunned and shrugged off in the professional world. They are viewed as a waste of time, a mere toy. This could not be further from the truth. Video games are the greatest, most advanced media of the modern world. They combine art, music, storytelling, and cinematics with the ability to explore the story's world on your own, at your own pace. Yet, somehow, educators and the professional world still see these wondrous works of art and talent "as the enemy of learning. Nothing but a time suck" (Aberman), but this is not the case. In his article, "The untapped lessons hidden in computer games," Jonathan Aberman, states that "We as a society need to be schooled on how today's young people learn, why technology and gaming are not the enemy, and that traditional classrooms... are outdated." The traditional classroom style of learning has long been in need of an update. A lecturer standing and droning on about a

topic is far from the most effective form of education. This form of teaching easily fails to captivate students, and it is easy for a student's mind to wander away from the subject of the teaching. In truth, "the computer gaming industry is booming, and we should better harness its power" (Aberman). When a student is simply listening to a lecturer drone on about their subject, the student can very easily find themselves looking for a more interesting point of focus, like doodling in their notebooks, or even simply taking a nap. The information in the lecture flies right over the student's heads. It doesn't engage them in the lesson. This is where video games can help in the process. Video games "create a feedback loop between game and player; the more the user participates, the more rewarding it is" (Aberman). This means that a well-made video game can make education a much more engaging experience for the student, improving retention of information and bringing them to interact with the lesson.

Video games do much more than simply encourage participation. An article written by T. Rees Shapiro states that "Modern video games encourage exploration and, above all, failure." At first glance, this may seem like an argument that hurts the entire point of bringing video games into the world of academia, but the truth is very much the opposite. There are countless proverbs and sayings that all have the same meaning: you learn more from failure than you do from success. In his article, Shapiro is reporting on a book written by Greg Toppo, which is simply titled *The Game Believes in You: How Digital Play Can Make Our Kids Smarter.* Shapiro highlights the greatest points in the book, such as "What better tool to capture children's fleeting attention spans than the exact thing that distracts them from school to begin with?" With this quote, he is referring to the fact that video games are very much an enticing and engaging thing that draws the attention of students. While this article is primarily aimed towards the education

of younger students, its ideas can be applied to higher education as well. Shapiro points to the varied success of attempts to make educational games in the past, and then points Toppo's claim that people simply are not doing it right. Shapiro points to Toppo's quote that well-designed games "*don't* reward casual effort, mindless repetition or rat-in-a-cage responses. Instead they reward practice, persistence, and risk-taking." Shapiro goes on to support the claim that video games encourage creative thinking and risk-taking, going on to say that "via dozens of attempts at particularly difficult levels, video-game players must innovate their path to success in a way that exemplifies the best kind of learning." He uses this to further infer that if players are taught to so readily accept the concept of failure in video games, what keeps them from taking risks in the classroom, such as giving an answer to the teacher that they are not so confident is correct? Encouraging this kind of risk-taking in students is to encourage them to ask questions and get involved, so that they may better understand what they are doing.

Of course, many try to claim that video games are wholly useless things that can only hurt the educational process and bring our youth to ruin. That any form of violence in a video game can and will lead to violence in the real world, and that people who play video games are simply wasting their lives and diminishing their thought capacity. This could not be further from the truth. As Forbes writer Erik Kain states in his article, "No, For The Millionth Time, Video Games Don't Cause Real World Violence," if the players of violent video games truly had their empathy and reason destroyed by doing so, "the 70 million copies of *GTAV* that have been sold globally would have thrust the world into chaos." He goes on further to dismantle these nonsensical claims about how video games corrupt their players and destroy their minds, pointing out the enormous differences between violence in video games and violence in the real

world, as well as how simple common sense wins out over virtual pixels every time when it comes to actions in the real world. Those against gamers attempt to use claims that people who committed terrible acts of violence also played violent video games before doing so. This claim is one that may be the most ridiculous, because thousands upon thousands of other people play the exact same game, but they simply continue to live a normal life without hurting another human being.

Video games are a great, wondrous, mysterious thing. They are the greatest form of media in the modern age. The companies and corporations that create these vast virtual worlds are on a steady rise. It is a mystery how this true miracle of media is still looked down on by so many, whether it be claims that they are simply a childish waste of time, or whether they are evil things that corrupt those who partake. The art of the video game is one that should be cultivated, nourished, and harnessed, just as the world has done with art, literature, and film. This wondrous form of art and entertainment can be used to better the way we develop our skills and thoughts. Video games have the potential to transform education as we know it, and it is potential that the world should capitalize on.

<u>Works Cited</u>

The untapped lessons hidden in computer games - Jonathan Aberman

How video games can be an educational tool - T. Rees Shapiro

No, For The Millionth Time, Video Games Don't Cause Real World Violence - Erik Kain