VIDEO GAMES – week 6

1. Read about Shigeru Miyamoto, the creator of the Mario video game from Nintendo. Put the verbs in brackets in the correct form. (This is the beginning of a New Yorker article dedicated to Miyamoto. I encourage you to read the rest. The source is given at the end of the document. The article was written in 2010.)

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When Shigeru Miyamoto (1)……………… **(be)** a child, he didn’t really have any toys, so he (2)……………… **(make)** his own, out of wood and string. He (3)……………… **(put)** on performances with homemade puppets and made cartoon flip-books. He (4)……………… **(pretend)** that there were magical realms hidden behind the sliding shoji screens in his family’s little house. There was no television. His parents were of modest means but hardly poor. This was in the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties, in the rural village of Sonobe, about thirty miles northwest of Kyoto, in a river valley surrounded by wooded mountains. As he (5)……………… **(get)** older, he (6)……………… **(wander)** farther afield, on foot or by bike. He (7)……………… (**explore**) a bamboo forest behind the town’s ancient Shinto shrine and bushwhacked through the cedars and pines on a small mountain near the junior high school. One day, when he was seven or eight, he (8)……………… (**come**) across a hole in the ground. He (9)……………… (**peer**) inside and saw nothing but darkness. He came back the next day with a lantern and shimmied through the hole and found himself in a small cavern. He could see that passageways (10)……………… (**lead**) to other chambers. Over the summer, he (11)……………… (**keep**) returning to the cave to marvel at the dance of the shadows on the walls.

Miyamoto (12)……………… (**tell**) variations on the cave story a few times over the years, in order to emphasize the extent to which he was surrounded by nature, as a child, and also to claim his youthful explorations as a source of his aptitude and enthusiasm for inventing and designing video games. The cave (13)……………… (**become**) a misty but indispensable part of his legend, to Miyamoto what the cherry tree was to George Washington, or what LSD is to Steve Jobs. It is also a prototype, an analogue, and an apology—an illuminating and propitious way to consider his games, or, for that matter, anyone else’s. It (14)……………… (**flatter**) a vacant-eyed kid with a joystick (to say nothing of the grownups who (15)……………… (**buy**) it for him or sold it to him) to think of himself, spiritually, as an intrepid spelunker. The cave, certainly, is an occasion for easy irony: the man who has perhaps done more than any other person to entice generations of children to spend their playtime indoors, in front of a video screen, happened to develop his peculiar talent while playing outdoors, at whatever amusements or mischief he could muster. Of course, no one in the first wave of video-game designers could have learned the craft by playing video games, since video games didn’t exist until people like Miyamoto (16)……………… (**invent**) them. Still, there may be no starker example of the conversion of primitive improvisations into structured, commodified, and stationary technological simulation than that of Miyamoto, the rural explorer turned ludic mastermind.

[…]

Fishermen have a saying, in reference to the addictive sensation of a fish hitting your line: “The tug is the drug.” Gamers, as video-game players (17)……………… (**know**), thrill to “the pull,” that mysterious ability that good games have of making you want to play them, and keep playing them. The pull used to extract quarters from your pockets. Then it became a force that pinned you to a couch. Later, it got your entire family to shadowbox in the living room. Whatever the interface, a great game (18)……………… (**invite**) and (19)……………… (**reward**) obsession, and Miyamoto’s games are widely considered to be among the greatest. He (20)……………… (**call**) the father of modern video games. The best known, and most influential, is Super Mario Bros., which débuted a quarter of a century ago and, (21)……………… (**depend**) on your point of view, created an industry or resuscitated a comatose one. It (22)……………… (**spawn**) dozens of sequels and spinoffs. Miyamoto (23)……………… (**design**) or overseen the development of many other blockbusters, among them the Legend of Zelda series, Star Fox, and Pikmin. Their success, in both commercial and cultural terms, (24)……………… (**suggest**) that he has a peerless feel for the pull, that he is a master of play—of its components and poetics—in the way that Walt Disney, to whom he is often compared, was of sentiment and wonder. Certainly, in Mario, the squat Italian plumber who bops around the Mushroom Kingdom in a quest to rescue Princess Toadstool, Miyamoto (25)……………… (**create**) a folk hero—gaming’s first—with as great a reach as Mickey Mouse’s.

1. In which aspect of their lives were these users affected by video games? Match the comments with the aspects given below (many belong to more than one comment)

5’

*education relationships reasoning career mental health*

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| **Testimonial** | **VG’s impact on…** |
| From gaming […] I have a core group of friends who I have met and got close to online to the point I have been to one guy’s wedding and cuddled his new born son. Also through gaming I can safely say I have met the love of my life and now happily residing in Finland with him. |  |
| Other games that have impacted me were Eternal Darkness, which (in addition to having an amazing narrative) led me to begin reading H.P. Lovecraft, which I love. Also BioShock led me to seek out and read Ayn Rand’s The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged, which I also feel is a positive impact. |  |
| The Half Life series, Mass Effect series, BioShock, Fable 3, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 1 & 2 (and probably a few others […]) have altered how I look at and go through life for the better (I tend to think things through a bit more and think more about the consequences). |  |
| To me, gaming is mostly about relaxing, relieve stress and get a little lost in world different from the real one, where you don’t have to worry about pretty much anything |  |
| [Through online gaming] I also met a lot of people (who I’ve never met in person) who I would consider better friends than people I see on a daily basis. Sad, but true. |  |
| Violence in video games is fun and has no negative impacts on me outside of video games, if anything taking out my anger by curb stomping some zombies in a video game is much safer than me taking out my anger by curb stomping people IRL. |  |
| Through Age of Empires and Age of Mythology, I learned a bit of interesting information about history and mythology |  |
| Final Fantasy VII helped me get through with a very tough spot in my life where I was contemplating suicide. Thus, it’s one of my forever-favorites. |  |
| Believe it or not, Fallout 3 may end up being responsible for my life’s work, and it’s not the game itself but one little piece of the audio that’s responsible. I got hooked on Galaxy News Radio […] I thought to myself, “whatever happened to good old-fashioned radio plays like that?” Then I thought “with the advent of the podcast, this old content delivery form could be brought back to life!” So I put an ad on Craigslist looking for writers […] We’re up to a tenperson creative and acting team […] Plus, once our show goes live in May, it could be the spark plug for an Internet radio station. […] How’s that for gaming making life better? |  |
| Playing games like Final Fantasy VII and Diablo helped build vocabulary for the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). Honestly, somebody should put together a list of must-play videogames to help your SAT vocab. |  |

1. Play a game of Interactive Fiction – *Lost Pig* – for 20 minutes.

<http://pr-if.org/play/lostpig/>

Then, come back and answer the questions:

* 1. Did you enjoy it? Why? / Why not?
  2. What was the best feature of the game? What was the worst?
  3. Would you continue playing it? Why? / Why not?

1. QUESTIONS
   1. Why do film adaptations of video games usually fail? (think about feelings / experience, change of medium, audience, time constraints, length)
   2. Is the gaming world misogynistic? (= feeling, showing, or characterized by hatred of or prejudice against women)
   3. Are Esports video games competitions sports? Why? / Why not?
   4. What elements / features do you appreciate more in a video game? (story, gameplay, visuals, humour, genre, voice acting, single or multiplayer, etc) Refer to a specific video game or, if you can, compare two.
   5. Are games played in real life with physical game pieces better than video games? Why? / Why not?
   6. What would persuade you to buy a video game?
   7. Have video games helped you improve any skills / abilities? Have you picked up any skills / abilities while playing video games?
   8. Has a game ever led you to explore an existing piece of literature, art, a part of history?
   9. Do (certain) video games encourage violence? Can (certain) video games be blamed for some people’s violent acts?
   10. Can video games be educational?

**Sources**

https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/20/master-of-play

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271703117\_Players'\_perspectives\_on\_the\_positive\_impact\_of\_video\_games\_A\_qualitative\_content\_analysis\_of\_online\_forum\_discussions/link/5554d56208aeaaff3bf45502/download