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Born to Burn: Love in Gaming

On September 12, 2025, Riot Games released *Born to Burn | Valorant Champions Paris Opening Tease* to promote the VALORANT Champions tournament in Paris. At first glance, the video might appear to be a typical esports hype trailer, filled with shots of players and crowds designed to generate excitement. Yet closer attention reveals a more ambitious intent. In under eight minutes, Riot manages to tell a story not only about a tournament but also about the emotional experiences of players, fans, and communities around the world. The teaser uses Paris, often known as the “city of love,” as both a literal host city and a symbolic stage. With this symbolism, the video reframes competition not simply as combat but as a passionate act of love for the game, for their team, and for the struggles itself. This rhetorical shift is significant. Rather than leaning on warlike metaphors, as many competitive esports promotions do, *Born to Burn* builds a narrative that emphasizes the language of intimacy, sacrifice, and connection. By doing so, Riot transforms the tournament into a cultural event that bridges countries together. *Born to Burn* uses the metaphor of love reinforced through multilingual dialogue, evocative imagery, and emotional appeals to persuade their audience that VALORANT Champions Paris is not just an esports tournament but a communal act of passion and belonging. Through organizing its narrative around defeat, revenge, and brotherhood, and renewal, the teaser positions the championship as a global fiery challenge of endurance and love for the game.

The most striking rhetorical device in the teaser is its framing of love through its visual and textual imaging. Early in the video, a character is shot during gameplay. Instead of focusing

on the violence as many other teasers do, the frame slows, and the words “*tomber amoureux*”, the French word for “fall in love,” appear on the screen (Riot Games). This juxtaposition is deliberately placed as the audience would normally expect bloodshed to be framed as brutality. Instead, Riot casts it as intimacy. The message is clear: to compete in VALORANT is to fall in love with the game, even if it means facing pain and hardship. The question that lingers in the audience’s mind is, “*What does it mean to fall in love with the game?*”

The teaser moves on to answering that question by continuing in narration saying, “*Defeat after defeat, loss after loss, but now it’s our turn* (Riot Games).” Here, love is depicted as enduring hardship, persisting through repeated heartbreak. The visuals support this point with flashbacks to gameplay highlights and past defeats, showing beloved players at their lowest moments only to rise again. By pairing failure with love, Riot suggests that perseverance is a form of devotion and that to truly love something means to accept the pain as a foreshadowing of joy. To fall in love with the game is to devote your life to it through the moments of hardship. The video then transitions by accompanying the phrase “sometimes we kill for love” with a VALORANT agent firing a weapon (Riot Games). The camera then cuts immediately to a museum in Paris, where teams walk past grand paintings. The rhetorical effect is layered, as in the first level, Riot equates the in-game gunplay with the passion of love. On the next level, by transitioning directly into the museum, Riot positions esports as part of the cultural sphere of art, displaying that VALORANT is not just for entertainment but also an artistic performance worthy of reverence.

After the museum scenes, soft visuals of blooming petals and green grass appear. The narration states: “*Love blooms with new beginnings* (Riot Games).” This moment presents a sharp contrast to the earlier flames and gunfire. Where fire was destructive, flowers are

regenerative. The rhetorical point is that esports, like love, is cyclical. The roster changes, players come and go, but new journeys are always around the corner. Love survives, and so does the competitive spirit. While there may be moments when their passion wanes, their love for the game will reignite its spirit, blossoming into another adventure in the game. The closing montage ties all these images together. The crowds roar, gameplay flashes across the screen, and the Eiffel Tower rises against the Paris skyline. Love, initially depicted as painful, is finally revealed as a communal fire of passion.

Brian Carroll emphasizes that clarity, hierarchy, and the design of information structures shape how audiences move through and make sense of content (*Writing and Editing for Digital Media*, Ch. 4). In a digital teaser like this, the architecture is temporal rather than spatial. The audience experiences it sequentially, watching words, sounds, and images unfold one after another. The order of images, phrases, and scenes creates a narrative arc. Born to Burn follows a carefully constructed sequence that mirrors stages of love. The five stages that Riot uses is loss, revenge, new beginnings, brotherhood, and a shared fire.

The first stage is loss and sacrifice. The opening lines about defeat and loss, paired with “*tomber amoureux*”, frame love as painful devotion, situating players and fans alike within a cycle of heartbreak (Riot Games). To love the game is to sacrifice what you have to achieve the dreams of winning and making a name for yourself.

The second stage is revenge and resolution. In the museum, the narration speaks of revenge and giving no mercy. Love is no longer passive endurance but a fierce commitment to reclaiming pride. Love is a continuous choice to commit, and in a way, revenge is a strong way

of showing that commitment to the game. The juxtaposition of fine art with competitive violence suggests that revenge, too, has its own artistry.

The third stage is new beginnings. The field of flowers represents regeneration. The narration about roster changes, such as players leaving and joining, frames love as ever-renewing. Teams may evolve, doubts may come into play, but in the end, the passion endures.

The fourth stage is brotherhood. After the flower field scene, Riot introduces a café scene in Paris, showing Korean players sitting together and talking. An older teammate tells a younger one that he is the future of the team. They reminisce about the bond that they have formed as the narration states: “*It turns strangers into brothers* (Riot Games).” Here, love is framed as mentorship, trust, and family.

The final stage is shared fire. A French voiceover declares, “*It unites a single ember into a shared fire.*” This metaphor brings the arc to completion. Love, once experienced in isolation, becomes collective. When the announcer finally declares, “*Sixteen of the best teams have arrived here in Paris* (Riot Games),” the audience sees not only competition but also a global communion. This architecture persuades by leading viewers through an emotional journey. By the time the montage of players and gameplay appears, audiences are primed to see Champions Paris not just as matches but as the culmination of love’s many forms.

While the teaser itself does not allow the viewer to click or navigate, its design builds affordances that encourage audience participation. One is multilingual narration and subtitles. For example, when the French phrase “*tomber amoureux*” appears, the English subtitle “Born to Burn” appears alongside it (Riot Games). Also, when players from other countries speak in other languages, such as Chinese and Korean, subtitles are made available. This linguistic diversity

underscores the tournament's international character. For native speakers, the phrases carry immediate resonance; for others, subtitles foster intrigue and inclusion. The multilingual design rhetorically invites global audiences to identify with the story.

Another affordance is immersive cinematography. Flashbacks of gameplay remind audiences of real matches, letting fans relive collective memories. POV-like shots and close-ups of players evoke immersion, as if the viewer is sitting alongside the professionals. This style allows fans to imagine themselves within the narrative, not merely outside it. Finally, the teaser leverages platform affordances. Released on YouTube and social media, the video is designed to be shared, commented on, and remixed. Its unfinished narrative, hinting at stories of revenge, renewal, and unity without resolution, creates a gap that only the live tournament can fill. This rhetorical choice demands that audiences tune in, thus ensuring participation beyond the teaser itself.

The persuasive force of the teaser rests on the classical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos emerges through Riot's credibility as the game's developer and tournament organizer. By placing the championship in Paris, a city synonymous with romance and culture, the video borrows ethos from the location itself. Shots of museums and the Eiffel Tower lend prestige, aligning esports with cultural legitimacy. Pathos dominates the teaser. Emotional appeals are apparent in every frame, from the anguish of defeat to the joy of brotherhood. Phrases like *"sometimes we kill for love"* and *"love blooms with new beginnings"* tap into universal human emotions, transforming competition into something audiences can feel in their own lives (Riot Games). The swelling music, crowd chants, and montage editing amplify this pathos, ensuring that viewers leave with their hearts racing. Logos operates more subtly. The announcer's line *"16 of the best teams have arrived here in Paris"*, provides the logical stakes:

the world's top teams are converging, and only one will win. The logical structure of competition supports the emotional appeals. Together, these appeals persuade audiences that Champions Paris is credible, emotionally significant, and logically essential to watch.

The cultural impact of *Born to Burn* lies in its redefinition of esports. By framing competition as love, Riot elevates gaming into a ritual of passion and belonging. This rhetorical move reflects several broader cultural dynamics. First, it showcases the globalization of esports. Teams from Korea, China, Europe, and the Americas are all represented, and the multilingual narration emphasizes inclusivity. Esports here become a shared ritual that transcends borders. Second, it dramatizes the ideology of sacrifice. The notion of being “born to burn” implies that greatness requires suffering. While this is inspiring, it also risks glamorizing burnout, a known issue in professional gaming. The rhetoric simultaneously motivates and masks the costs of high-level competition. Third, it reveals that while love is authentic, it is also branded to be consumed by the fans. Fans are encouraged to buy into these narratives not only emotionally but also commercially, through merchandise, viewership, and digital items. Finally, it contributes to the legitimization of esports as mainstream culture. By situating its story in Paris, a city associated with art and romance, Riot argues implicitly that esports belong on the same stage as traditional cultural spectacles like the Olympics or World Cup.

*Born to Burn* | *VALORANT Champions Paris Opening Tease* is more than a promotional video. It is a carefully constructed piece of digital rhetoric that reframes competition as love. Through the metaphor of love, Riot persuades audiences that Champions Paris is not just about winning games but about experiencing passion, community, and shared fire. The teaser succeeds because it appeals simultaneously to ethos, pathos, and logos, while embedding those appeals in a narrative architecture that moves from loss to renewal to unity. Its ethical implications,

however, are complex. By glorifying sacrifice, the video risks normalizing burnout, and by commodifying love, it blurs the line between authentic passion and marketable product. Yet these very tensions make the teaser culturally significant. It reflects how digital rhetoric in the age of esports can transform play into ritual, competition into identity, and a corporate tournament into a global narrative of belonging. To love VALORANT, the teaser suggests, is to be willing to endure defeat, to seek revenge, to form brotherhood, and to burn together. In Paris, the city of love, Riot proclaims that this love will ignite the world.

## Works Cited

Carroll, Brian. Writing and Editing for Digital Media.\* 5th ed., Routledge, 2023.

Riot Games. Born to Burn | VALORANT Champions Paris Opening Tease. YouTube, 12 Sep. 2025

AI USE STATEMENT: I used AI to help me brainstorm what I would want to write my essay on. It told me that I could use a League of Legends trailer, and that reminded me of the Valorant tournament that was going on. I also used AI to help me with grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. AI was a nice tool to double-check my work, as it pointed out many grammatical errors I made.