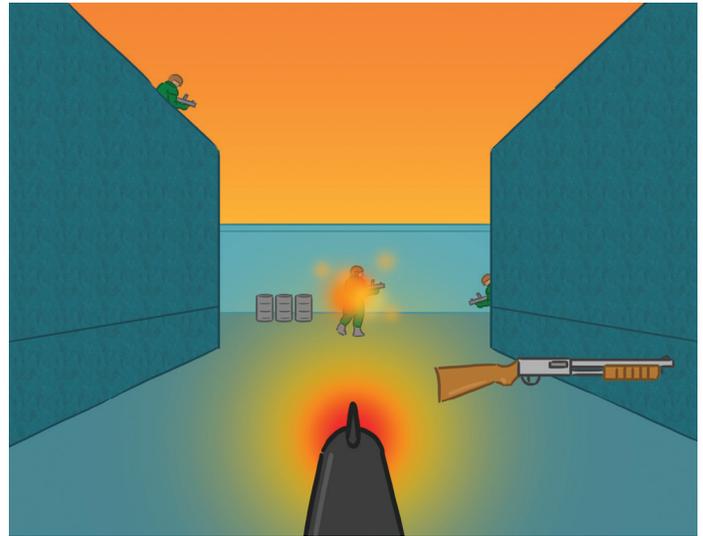


Video Game Violence



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you ever play video games? If so, how often?
2. Do you have children? Do they play video games, and if so, how often do they play?
3. What do you think the average amount of time school-age children in America play video games every day is?
4. Do you think the most popular video games contain violence?
5. Is there a law in your country (city, state, province, etc.) restricting the sale or rental of violent video games?
6. Who do you think might support this kind of law, and who do you think might oppose it?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| ___ 1. rate | a) to be against, to not support |
| ___ 2. mature | b) facts that reveal the truth |
| ___ 3. illegal | c) not social, spending most of one's time alone |
| ___ 4. researcher | d) to estimate the value, to classify |
| ___ 5. aggressive | e) a sum of money paid as a penalty or punishment |
| ___ 6. image | f) against the law |
| ___ 7. fine | g) a proposal for a new law |
| ___ 8. label | h) fully grown or developed, adult |
| ___ 9. explicit | i) clearly and fully shown or expressed |
| ___ 10. antisocial | j) someone who studies and looks for answers |
| ___ 11. bill | k) a picture |
| ___ 12. reject | l) to put a name or description on something |
| ___ 13. proof | m) violent, full of anger |
| ___ 14. ignorance | n) not knowing |

Reading

1. Many school-age children in the United States play video games for close to an hour a day. Almost 90% of the most popular video games contain violence, and much of it is extremely violent. In the US, the video game industry **rates** games that contain violence or sexual **images** as "M" for **mature** audiences. **Researchers** have discovered, though, that children as young as seven years old have played these games.
2. In July 2005, the state of Illinois passed a law that made it **illegal** to sell or rent a video game containing violence or sexual images to anyone under 18 years of age. Those who broke the law would face a year in prison or a \$5,000 **fine**. The video game industry was told to **label** these games as "violent" or "sexually **explicit**." In 2006, this state law was thrown out.
3. For several years, lawmakers in the US tried to get video game labeling acts passed. They wanted violent video games to have a warning like cigarettes. The warning would say, "WARNING: Exposure to violent video games has been linked to **aggressive** behavior." Many parents and researchers support these efforts. They argue that children who play violent video games may act more violently in real life.
4. Many **bills** related to video game violence have been **rejected** by American courts on the basis of free speech. Those who sell or rent video games fight the bills and win. They think that parents, not video stores, should be responsible for what their children are doing or seeing. In addition, no scientific study in the US has proven that video games lead to aggressive behavior.
5. Despite the lack of **proof**, many people blame gun violence in America on the video game industry. They think that violent gaming causes **antisocial** behavior that may lead to mass shootings. In 2012, after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, a US senator said that video games are a bigger problem than guns. The National Rifle Association (NRA) agreed. President Obama argued that there was no proof to this; however, he asked Congress to approve funding to conduct further studies. The president stated, "Congress should fund research on the effects violent video games have on young minds. We don't benefit from **ignorance**."

"I'm very careful about how I portray violence in my films. I do believe that violence, especially violent video games, are not a good thing for young kids."

—Spike Lee

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. How can someone in the US know if a video game contains violence or sexual images?
2. What kind of law did the state of Illinois pass in 2005 regarding video games?
3. Why do many parents support bills related to restricting and labeling violent video games?
4. What do many people who rent or sell video games think about bills related to video game violence?
5. What did President Obama propose after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting?

Vocabulary Review

Complete the following sentences using words from the vocabulary list on page 1.

1. The child with the _____ behavior got into a fight at school.
2. When he drove through the red traffic light, the police gave him a \$100 _____.
3. If she doesn't love him anymore, she will _____ his marriage proposal.
4. He is _____, so most kids don't even know his name.
5. His instructions were very _____. I understood them well.

Discussion

Work with a partner or in small groups. Discuss the following questions.

1. Children's TV programs, comic books, and movies often contain violence. Do you think that violent video games have any different impact on children than these other forms of entertainment?
2. Do you think that a future study will prove that video game violence leads to aggression and antisocial behavior?
3. Do you think that the video game industry has any interest in protecting children from the harmful effects of watching violent or adult sexual images?
4. Do you think most parents carefully monitor the TV programs their children watch and video games they play?
5. Most countries have classifications for movies such as Family Entertainment, General Admission, Parental Guidance, Restricted Adult, etc. Do you think that video games should have a similar type of classification system? Why or why not?

Debate

Below are two topics to debate in small groups or pairs. Your teacher will tell you if you will be debating for or against the idea. You will have ten minutes to prepare your arguments.

TOPIC #1

It is the responsibility of parents, not lawmakers, to decide which video games their children can play. Therefore, there should be no laws restricting the sale or rental of violent video games to minors.

TOPIC #2

Violent video games have a very harmful effect on children and contribute to the increase in violence in our society.

Writing

Choose one of the questions from the Discuss section and write a paragraph in your notebook stating your own opinion.

Useful Expressions and Transitions for Debating

Agreeing and Disagreeing

- That doesn't take away from the fact that...
- That's beside the point.
- With all due respect...
- I agree with you there.
- I agree with ---- (name).
- I see your point, but...
- That may be true, but...
- We're going to have to agree to disagree.
- I get/see where you're coming from, but...
- I'm afraid I disagree entirely.
- I'm afraid I'd have to disagree.
- I agree to some extent, but...
- I disagree with you there.
- Pardon me for disagreeing, but...

Interrupting / Asking to Contribute

- I hate to interrupt, but...
- If I may come in here...
- I'd like to add something.
- Would you like to contribute something?
- I'd like to raise a point.
- If I could speak for a moment...
- I'd like to cut in here.
- You haven't answered my question.

Persuading

- Can you see where I'm coming from?
- I challenge you to give this a try/chance.
- I want you to see it my way.
- Put yourself in my shoes.
- Am I getting through to you?

Expressing an Opinion

- In my honest opinion...
- It is my belief that...
- From my experience...
- From where I look at it...
- From my point of view...

Clarifying / Rephrasing

- Let's be clear here...
- I think you misunderstood what I said.
- What I said was... (repeat a point that was misunderstood or confused)
- What I meant to say was... (rephrase something in a way that is clearer)
- In other words...
- What I was trying to say before I was interrupted is that...

Summarizing / Concluding

- So let me get this straight. You think...
- To conclude...
- I'd just like to summarize by saying...
- Finally, I'd like to reiterate that...
- It's time to take stock of what we've heard today.
- Both sides have some valid points.
- The stronger argument/team today is...

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about and debate whether or not video games cause young people to become violent. This lesson includes writing and speaking activities.

LEVEL: Intermediate–Advanced

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, debate, video games, video game violence, guns, young people, youth, children, NRA, Illinois, US

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Discuss in small groups or as a class. Individual answers.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. d | 3. f | 5. m | 7. e | 9. i | 11. g | 13. b |
| 2. h | 4. j | 6. k | 8. l | 10. c | 12. a | 14. n |

Reading

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with. Discuss the quote.

Comprehension

- Video games that contain violence or sexual images are rated “M” by the video game industry.
- The state of Illinois passed a law that made it illegal to sell or rent a video game containing violence or sexual images to anyone under 18 years of age.
- Many parents support these bills because they believe that children who play violent video games may act more violently in real life.
- Those who sell or rent video games oppose these bills. They think that parents, not video stores, should be responsible for what their children are doing or seeing.
- President Obama asked that Congress approve money to conduct studies related to video game violence and young minds.

Vocabulary Review

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. aggressive | 3. reject | 5. explicit |
| 2. fine | 4. antisocial | |

Discuss

Have students discuss in small groups or pairs. Answers will vary.

Debate

Review language used in debates (see page 5). Then divide students into pairs or groups, with some arguing for and others arguing against one or both of the topics. Alternatively, allow students to choose one topic to debate as a class. If all students want to argue the same side, assign some students to be on the other side of the debate. Give students time to practice making statements about their opinions.

Remind students to defend their opinions with real-life examples and details. They may also need to be reminded to respect the opinions of others. You could also practice interrupting politely. (See our Functional English lesson plan on [Interrupting](#).) Consult our [Teachers' Notes](#) for more ideas on using ESL Library's Mini-Debates in the classroom.

Writing Answers will vary.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Labeling* and *Behavior*. Other English-speaking countries spell the words this way: *Labelling* and *Behaviour*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.