Video Support Notes

First Person Shooter

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Program Summary

Starting from the personal experience of one parent, this program examines the good and bad aspects of violent video games and their possible influence on young people. Through the eyes of the father of a game-obsessed teenage boy, we visit a game convention where teams play off against each other, an academic conference and a trade fair, where the latest video games are marketed. The father-presenter talks to experts from both inside and outside the game industry and to parents of other boys who play these games. The program provides a balanced and informed discussion of many of the issues surrounding the video game debate.

Introduction

The debate about violence in entertainment has been going on since the time of Plato. The mass media has provided an easy scapegoat for those looking for reasons to explain apparently random acts of violence that periodically get reported in the media. The most recent of these debates centres on violent video games. Some of the questions being asked are familiar ones - does violence on the screen lead to violent behaviour, are children becoming desensitised to violence, are the games preventing children from living rounded lives? However, other debates, specific to these games have not received so much attention, to what extent are the games really a mass training program for the armed forces, what is the relationship between video games and warfare, is a generation of young people being persuaded that war is a game? There is a lot of money at stake in the manufacture and marketing of video games and consequently, it is hard for critics of the games to get their concerns heard? Regulation is largely voluntary and often abused. It is argued that parents are responsible for supervising the activities of their children and the industry cannot be responsible for individual behaviour. The arguments are many and complex. Welcome to the world of the violent-video-game debate.

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FIRST PERSON SHOOTER

Program Timeline

0.00	Music start – introduction
2.22	Boys and video games – the game boy generation.
3.00	Description of the game *Counter Strike,* a first person shooter game.
3.50	The rating system
4.00	Griffin's life before video games.
5.00	Progression to game 'obsession'.
5.50	His mother makes a statement about what she observed. Griffin replies.
6.55	The 'addiction' progresses.
7.20	Playing in the video game parlour.
8.30	Other parents of the group are asked for their opinion.
10.00	Heading south to the *Counter Strike* convention.
10.55	What the game gives the kids, eg companionship and a special language.
11.40	Club membership – another spin off from the game.
12.25	The bring your own computer convention.
14.30	Out of 1000 gamers only 3 or 4 are female.
14.50	What are they giving up? Parents look for their children. Conflict.
16.00	A bright child's parents, his brother and possible medical problems associated with the games.
17.40	The warnings on game packages.
18.44	E3 - Electronic Entertainment Expo – the financial incentives.
20.50	Game experts are interviewed about violence.
21.30	Examples from around the world.
23.00	The voluntary ratings system.
	A test of the rating system in the retail market.
24.36	A 'moral crusader' from the army.
26.30	The games and army training.
26.55	Back to the Convention.
28.50	Training for murder?
30.00	A psychiatrist gives an opinion on a mass murderer.
30.40	Schoolyard violence and video games.
31.11	A Chicago academic's conference.
33.35	A British study summarises the evidence.
34.35	Professor Klyne tests kids with games.
35.00	Professor Nick Dyer-Witherford suggests possible consequences of games.
36.00	The merging of video games with war strategy – is war becoming a game?
37.27	A Vancouver group from the Coalition Opposed to Violent Entertainment.
38.40	Doug Lowenstein, industry representative responds.
39.50	Their own family crisis.
40.16	Minh Li - The brains behind the game is confronted.
42.38	The semi finals.
46.00	The parents of the winning team.
47.00	Cutting off from the world – a father loses the battle.
48.30	Are we all shooting in the dark with the minds of those who will shape the 21st century?
50.00	Credits

Questions and Ideas for Discussion and Research

- Carry out a survey to find out information about the use of video games in your school. Here are some questions you could seek to answer through the survey (a survey sheet is provided in these notes):

  1. Which video games are the most popular in your school?
  2. Which video games are the most popular amongst particular demographics (i.e. groups)? E.g. Girls/boys, grade/age levels
  3. Percentage of boys/girls who play video games.
  4. Amount of time each week spent playing games.
  5. Amount of time spent on other activities compared with games.
  6. Attitudes to video games.
  7. Popularity of violent video games in comparison to non-violent games,
  8. Does time spent on video games change depending on the time of year?

- Talk to some parents of students who play video games a lot to find out whether they find the games are a problem and if so, what those problems are.

- Discuss the positive and negative aspects of video games in your group and make a list of pros and cons.

- Discuss whether video games are any different from television, or other forms of screen-based entertainment.

- Discuss the difference between boys and girls and their choice of entertainment. In particular why is it that boys tend to favour violent games, whereas girls prefer to avoid them?

- Make a list of things you can think of that it would be fun to do other than playing video games or watching television or surfing the Internet.

- It is argued that images of 'real' violence, such as seen on the news, are much more disturbing than fictionalised violence. Discuss this contention.

- Discuss the evidence to show that screen based violence leads to violent acts. Avoid using high profile cases that have been reported in the media as evidence, instead try to find out whether there is any evidence for a link that can be found amongst people you know.

- Search the Internet to find out what reports have been written on media violence and find out what their key findings were. Try to find out what groups sponsored the report so that you can interpret the findings taking that into account.

- Imagine a world where video games were so realistic it looked like a film. Would that change your attitude as to whether violent images are harmful or not? How about 'virtual reality' like simulators, where you actually feel you are in a real situation?

- The critics of screen violence argue that it is leading to an increase in violence on our streets. Research the statistics for violent crime in Australia. Do the facts bear out this argument?

- Find out what the crime statistics are for a major city outside of Australia that has a long history and good data collection – London for example. How do those statistics compare with Australia? If you go back a hundred years, what has happened to violent crime statistics in that time? Compare these statistics with the use of television and the use of video games (be careful to take account of the difference between the date of introduction of a technology and its general availability).

FIRST PERSON SHOOTER

- Find someone who has one of the really early video games – an old Atari for example. Have a look at the graphics and listen to the sounds – how do they compare to modern games? Talk to someone who grew up with that early technology, find out whether they felt the same about those games as you do about modern games with far better images and sound. What do your findings suggest about our ability to adjust to images?

- Find some young people who do not play video games and/or watch television. What do they do with their time instead?

- Find out what careers there are in the video game industry.

- Find out what programming language is used to create video games.

- Find out how video games are scripted. Invent your own video game.

- At one point in the program, classical music is used as a backing to the game in progress. What effect did this production device have on you when you were watching the program? A famous (and very violent) film uses a similar device – find out what that film was and what critics said about it.

- Games often use accents and distinctive clothing to identify friends/enemy. What kind of clothing is used in the most popular video games? What kind of accent is used? What does this tell you about our attitude or expectations of certain groups in our society?

- Create a glossary of terms used in the video game world.

FIRST PERSON SHOOTER

Quiz Sheet

Answer as many of the following questions as you can after you have watched the program.

1. Describe the 'Counter Shooter' video game.

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. How is the ratings system for video games policed?

    _____

3. What was it about their son Griffin's behaviour that changed as he took up the video game?

    _____

4. What were some of the concerns voiced by parents of children or other members of the video game group?

    _____

    _____

5. What was the first game Griffin played?

    _____

6. How did Griffin first get into 'Counter Shooter'?

    _____

7. What did the father do to limit computer games?

    _____

8. What 'deal' did he make with his son?

    _____

9. What happened with this deal?

    _____

10. What happened when he banned computer games at home completely?

    _____

11. What did the presenter's wife say about the suggestion that this was 'just a phase'?

    _____

12. Where was the Counter Strike tournament?

    _____

13. What was the presenter's concern about going to this tournament?

    _____

14. What positive things does Counter Strike give the group according to the presenter?

_____

15. What does B.Y.O.C. stand for?

_____

16. What countries did some of the game tournament players' come from that were mentioned in the program?

_____

17. Out of one thousand participants in the tournament how many were female?

_____

18. What age are most of the participants?

_____

19. What happened when the mother who is interviewed at the tournament turned off the game?

_____

20. What did the mother who was interviewed with two dogs next to her dislike about the game?

_____

21. What medical incident happened to the son of the 'woman with the dogs'?

_____

22. What was the doctor reported as saying was happening with war games?

_____

23. What do the game warnings say may happen?

_____

24. What does 'E3' stand for?

_____

25. What is the most profitable product in the entertainment business?

_____

26. What types of video games sell best?

_____

27. What did the video game industry representative say when it was suggested that what is seen in games in murder?

_____

28. What countries other than America are involved in this industry?

_____

29. What characterised the German entry?

   _____

30. What characterised the French entry?

   _____

31. Where was the industry ratings system displayed at the trade exhibition?

   _____

32. What did the industry representative say in response to the suggestion that video games should be compulsorily regulated?

   _____

33. What happened when the presenter's under-age son went to buy 'M' rated video games?

   _____

34. What was the title of Lt. Col. Grossman's book?

   _____

35. What does Lt. Col. Grossman argue violent video games are doing?

   _____

36. What does Grossman use as his main evidence for his argument?

   _____

37. What level does the presenter's group reach in the tournament?

   _____

38. What was the presenter surprised the 'moral crusader' didn't know?

   _____

39. What was the US Secret Service report mentioned in the program about? What were its findings?

   _____

   _____

40. What experts were gathered at Chicago University?

   _____

41. What did the British Government study show?

   _____

42. What did Plato say about media violence?

   _____

43. What were some of the things Professor Dyer-Witherford (the sociologist) suggested about the effect of video games?

_____

_____

44. What, is it suggested, is the relationship between violent video games and war?

_____

45. What did the Coalition against Media Violence manage to persuade the British Columbian government to do?

_____

46. Who invented the game 'Counter Strike'?

_____

47. Where did the inventor's parents come from?

_____

48. How much money did the inventor of the game make from his invention?

_____

49. What will be the difference between 'Counter Strike 1' and 'Counter Strike 2'?

_____

50. What did the parents of the winning team (Clan) think about video games?

_____

51. When his parents offered him a choice between school and the video game, what did Griffin choose and what happened to him subsequently?

_____

52. What were the two things the presenter realised after his two-year battle with his son?

_____

_____

53. What does the presenter suggest we need to be careful about as we enter the new age of computer games?

_____

Student Activity Sheet

<u>Video Game Survey</u>

We are carrying out research into the use of video games amongst students in our school.

Please help us in this project by answering these questions as honestly as you can.

So that your answers can remain confidential, do **not** put your name on this survey.

When you have filled in the sheets, please return the completed survey to: ……………………………

Start Here

Age: …….

☐ Male   ☐ Female

1. What video games have you played in the past month?

2. How many hours do you spend playing video games each day during term time (circle a number for each day)

    Monday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Tuesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Wednesday 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Thursday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Friday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Saturday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Sunday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. How many hours do you spend playing video games each day during school holidays (circle a number for each day)

    Monday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Tuesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Wednesday 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Thursday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Friday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Saturday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    Sunday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Here is a list of other activities. Tick the ones that you engage in regularly.

☐   Watching TV

☐   Playing sport

☐   Doing homework

☐   Hanging out with friends

☐   Playing games (non-video)

☐   Reading

☐   Going to the cinema

☐   Surfing the Internet

☐   Skateboarding

☐   Artistic activities (eg dance, drama, art, music)

☐   Walking a dog

☐   Going for a run

☐   Looking at shops

☐   Spiritual pursuits (e.g. Attending church, meditating, praying)

Other (please list below)

_____

5. From the answers that you ticked above, select the two that you spend the most time on and fill in the chart below for each of them.

Type of Activity: ………………………………

Hours spent during term time (circle a number for each day)

Monday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Tuesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Wednesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Thursday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Friday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Saturday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Sunday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

FIRST PERSON SHOOTER

Hours spent during school holidays (circle a number for each day)

Monday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Tuesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Wednesday 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Thursday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Friday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Saturday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Sunday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

<u>Type of Activity:</u> ……………..…………………

Hours spent during term time (circle a number for each day)

Monday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Tuesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Wednesday 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Thursday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Friday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Saturday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Sunday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Hours spent during school holidays (circle a number for each day)

Monday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Tuesday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Wednesday 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Thursday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Friday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Saturday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Sunday   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. How would you rate video games as entertainment? (tick one answer only)

Poor ☐   not bad ☐   pretty good ☐   very good ☐   The best thing to do ☐

7. How true are the following statements for you? (Circle your response)

My parents think video games are bad for me
Not true   partly true   don't know   true   very true

Video games stop me from doing other things
Not true   partly true   not sure true   very true

Video games are addictive.
Not true   partly true   don't know   true   very true

Thankyou for filling in our survey

Please return the completed survey to: …………………………………

Website References

http://www.culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/conf2001/papers
Papers from a 2001 conference on video game violence (this is the conference cited in the program, take into account that the majority of the participants are associated with the industry in some way)

www.apa.org/releases/videogames.html
American Psychological Association article on the effect of violence in video games.

www.elspa.com
The Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association home page.

www.igda.org
e International Game Developers Association home page.

www.gdse.com/servlet/gdse.main
Game Development search engine page – links to just about everything to do with game development (U.S. site).

www.gamenews.com.au
Describes itself as: "a free resource for Australian game industry professionals and consumers". Includes news, useful links and employment opportunities in the industry etc.

*At the time of printing these Teacher Notes, these web sites were found, after a number of separate visits, to be both accessible and appropriate for the subject material. Teachers are advised to thoroughly check any web site listed here before passing its details on to students.