Who can play?

Media violence – computer games

A lesson plan for Year 4 pupils

Cambridge Education

Healthy Schools

Acknowledgments

With thanks to teachers at:
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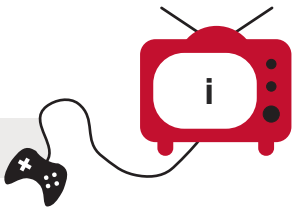

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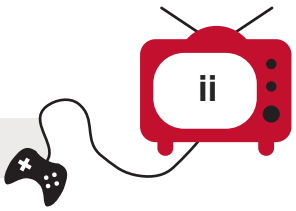
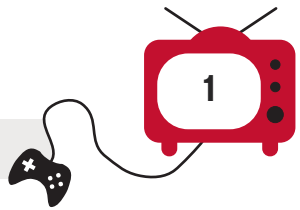


Introduction



Introduction

How to use this lesson plan

This lesson plan has been written for schools who want to teach about the safer use of computer games for children's gaming habits at home. It has been designed to be a part of the school's planned PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) education and citizenship curriculum and provides a clear and comprehensive guide for teaching, at a level that is appropriate for primary age pupils.

We suggest that schools consider teaching this lesson in Year 4, but it could also be used with other age groups in Key Stage 2. For schools using the Islington PSHE education and citizenship scheme of work, it is a Year 4 unit of study, identified on the Year 4 overview and topic plan (see appendices one and two). This lesson can taught as it is written although it will need to be adapted to address the specific needs and requirements of the pupils in individual classes.

Why teach about computer games?

Islington teachers, PSHE education and citizenship subject leaders and learning mentors voiced concerns about children playing 'unsuitable' computer games at home. They were worried that children's behaviour and wellbeing may be affected by the content of these games. Further research showed wide concern about this issue, including from the Government who asked Tanya Byron to review the risks that children face from the internet and video games.

We cannot be sure whether or how violence in computer games affects children, however: *'Most researchers consulted during the Review would say that they believe there is some kind of effect of inappropriate content on some children in some contexts and circumstances.'*
Safer Children in a Digital World, Tanya Byron, DCSF, March 2008

'Perceptions of what is appropriate will vary across cultures, as well as from one family to another or in relation to individual children.'
Safer Children in a Digital World, Tanya Byron, DCSF, March 2008

'Teachers, support staff and school leaders report that increasing numbers of pupils think that the violence depicted on television and computer games is cool, heroic and something that they want to emulate. They believe that children cannot differentiate between what they have seen on TV and real life.'
Social and Emotional Learning Update, May 2009

What are the issues?

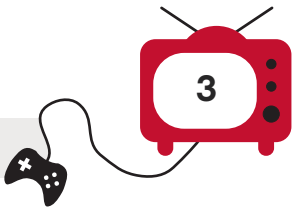
When thinking about the need for this lesson in primary schools, there are some key ideas to consider:

- Alongside the advancements in the development of technology, there has been a lot of concern about how images in the media have become more aggressive, violent and sexualised. Children are widely exposed to the media, it surrounds their everyday lives.
- Throughout primary school children are becoming increasingly independent. They begin to have more free time and 'play' often becomes less controlled. This is a natural part of a child's development and increases as they approach puberty.
- Children's responses to a computer game or film can be very different. This will depend on their age, development and other factors including their home environment, whether parents are involved in playing the game and amounts of exposure to the game.

What to teach?

This lesson plan aims to support pupils to take more care with independent gaming habits. It develops their knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to make informed choices. The lesson:

- gives pupils a basic understanding of why some games are probably not appropriate for younger children, drawing on research about the children's brain development and referring to (suggested) age restrictions. (knowledge)
- develops pupils' skills to evaluate whether a game is suitable for them to play. It supports them to consider risk in different situations and develop the confidence to say 'no' if they are in a situation where they feel pressured. (skills)
- allows pupils to question why there are age classifications for games and films and why some children and adults might not pay attention to these. It also supports them to develop their own ideas and thoughts about different games and gaming habits. (attitudes)



What do pupils think?

Pupils have responded positively to this topic:

43/50 pupils thought that this was an important topic to learn about

45/50 pupils enjoyed the topic

Pupils said:

"It was an interesting lesson"

"I would like to know more. I was quite surprised about the things we learned."

'Some parents may not take the video games classification system as seriously as for films and DVDs because of them being 'games.'
Safer Children in a Digital World, Tanya Byron, DCSF, March 2008

What about parents and carers?

Parents and carers obviously play a vital role in monitoring their children's gaming habits and a workshop for parents would be very worthwhile. The workshop could include:

- an explanation of the age classification system
- an introduction of how games with 'inappropriate' content might affect children's well-being, in relation to brain development and environmental factors
- a discussion about what might be meant by 'inappropriate' in relation to children's gaming habits
- some of the activities from the pupil lesson
- about how to ensure safer gaming at home

For more information and advice for parents see:
Safer Children in a Digital World, Tanya Byron, DCSF, March 2008
www.education.gov.uk

Lesson plan - Media violence (computer games)

Lesson plan - Media violence (computer games)

knowledge skills attitudes

Learning intentions:

Children learn:

- about how to become safer in their computer gaming habits
- about the age classification system for computer games and films
- to evaluate whether a computer game is suitable for them to play
- to manage risk in different situations and to respond to peer pressure

Learning outcomes:

Children:

- understand why some games are not appropriate for children to play
- can identify some possible responses to pressure relating to computer games
- understand the purpose of computer game classification

National Curriculum links:

PSHEC: 1a, 2b, 2c, 2k, 3a, 3e, 3f

Materials and preparation:

- Images of computer games – without age restrictions (t/r 1)
- Cards showing different age ranges (t/r 2)
- Images of computer games – with age restrictions (t/r 3)
- Violence and video games scenario (t/r 4). Taken from cards for little lives, National Children's Bureau.
- Consequences chart (t/r 5)

Alternative/additional activities

- Literacy link: Pupils can design posters for other pupils or for parents that encourage children to play games appropriate for their age range. (Non-fiction unit 4: persuasive texts)

Year 4 • Media violence – computer games lesson plan

Ground rules

- Talk with the children about the rules for PSHE education and citizenship lessons. You can use any format for the rules, including circle time rules such as listening and talking one at a time, or only when you hold the talking object. The important thing is to ensure that during these lessons the following rules are understood and followed: treat each other with respect/no put downs, no personal comments or questions and don't gossip. (For more information see 'Starting Well – classroom rules, pg 12 in the Islington scheme of work for PSHE education and citizenship).

Hook activity

- As a whole class show the pupils a range of images/adverts/front covers of computer games. (t/r 1) Ask the children why they think people like playing computer games.
- Making sure the age classification label is hidden, look at the range of games again. (t/r 1).
- Ask the pupils or ellicit from the pupils what each game might be about.

Introductory activity

- Group the pupils into threes or fours. Give out a selection of the images. (t/r 1)
- At the same time give out the cards showing different age ranges. (t/r 2)
- Ask the pupils to consider which computer game is suitable for which age range. Ask them to match the age range cards to the computer games.
- Display the age range cards and games and match them together as a whole class. Allow the pupils to discuss and debate why they would match each game to an age range and ask them to explain their reasoning.
  - *Why do these games seem most suitable for older children?*
- Explain to the pupils that some computer games and films have age restriction labels printed on them. Show the pupils the age restrictions for the games they were looking at (t/r 3). Have they matched the games to the correct age restriction labels?
- Discuss why games and films might have age restrictions. Ask questions such as:
  - *Why should/shouldn't an 8 year old play a game meant for 18 year olds?*
  - *Why might it not be good for young children to play a game meant for 15 year olds?*
  - *Does it matter if younger children play games that are meant for much older children or adults?*
  - *If people play violent video games, does it affect how they view real violence?*
  - *Do people (children/adults) take any notice of the age restriction labels?*
  - *Why or why not?*

Children's brains are growing all the time. There is a part of the brain called the pre-frontal cortex. This part of the brain helps us to work out right from wrong, what is 'normal' or 'socially acceptable' and to distinguish fantasy from reality. Watching frightening films or playing violent might affect some children's understanding about right and wrong, what is 'normal' or 'socially acceptable' or what is real and what is not real. Or it might make them feel scared. Research has shown that children can often find it difficult to choose games and films that are most appropriate for their age and development.

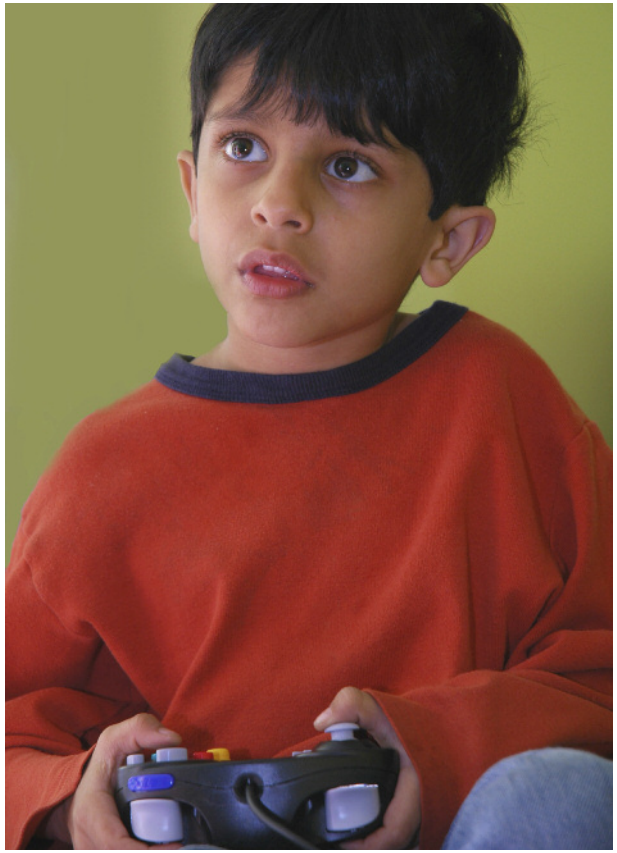
Main activity

- In pairs, ask the pupils to talk about why some younger children want to play games that are meant for much older children or adults.
  - *Why might a 9 year old want to play a game with an age restriction of 15?*

  Take some of the pupils' responses.
- Ask the pupils if they can think of a situation when this might happen.
- Use the 'violence and video games' scenario (t/r 4) to introduce a situation where a child is invited to play a video game with a high age restriction by their friend. In small groups (or with one group demonstrating to the whole class) set up the role play situation.
- Use hot seating to explore what each of the characters might be thinking and feeling.
- Ask the pupils to role play what might happen next.
- In small groups, ask pupils to discuss the possible consequences of playing the game or not playing the game and to discuss what they would do if they were in that situation. (t/r 5)
- Ask the pupils to act in role as the character facing this dilemma in order to feedback their ideas and solutions. Talk about which ideas would work well.

Closing activity

- Ask the pupils whether they think it is important to have a classification system for video games.
  - *What would help children to make the right choices when choosing computer games or films?*



Teaching resources

PS3
PlayStation.Network
PLATINUM
The Best Of PlayStation®3
CALL OF DUTY
WORLD AT WAR
Game and manual in English
ACTIVISION

BBC
Wii
DOCTOR WHO
RETURN TO EARTH
ASYLUM
LICENSED BY
PAL
Nintendo

XBOX 360
PAL
EA SPORTS
FIFA 12
PREMIER LEAGUE
FIFA
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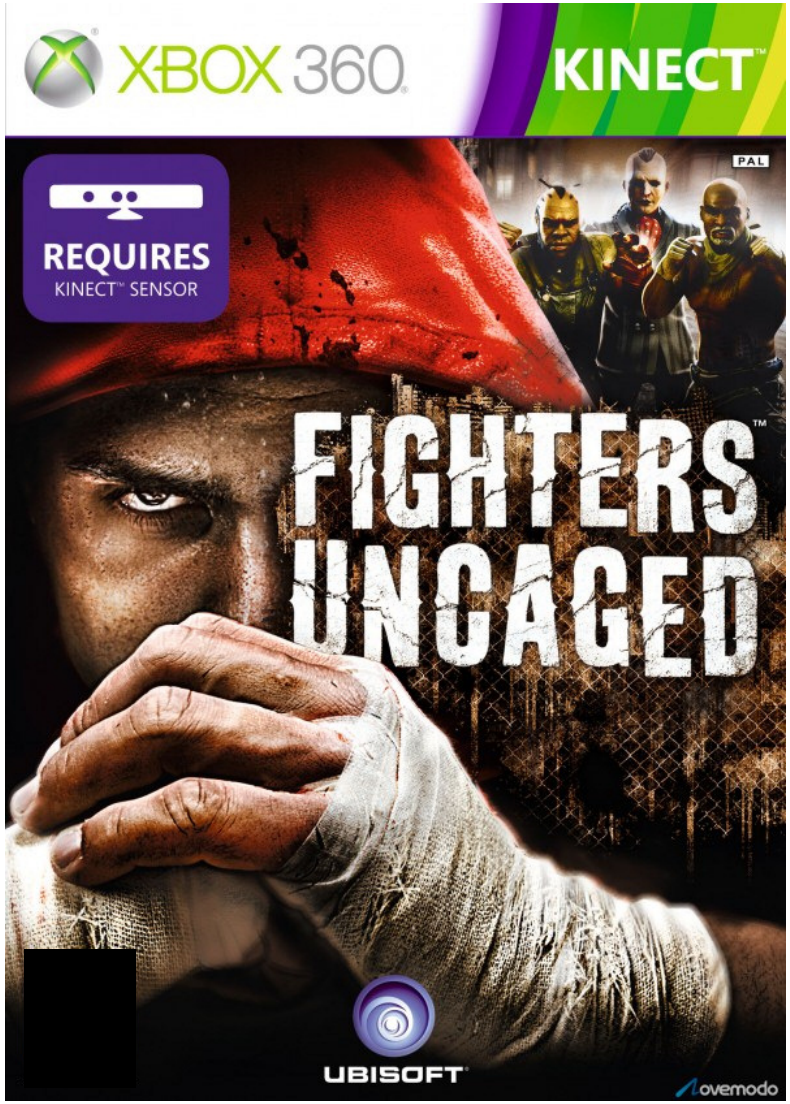
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UBISOFT
Lovemodo

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Microsoft Studios

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Dynamite
TAIO CRUZ
Take on me
A-HA
Pump it
THE BLACK EYED PEAS
Da funk
DAFT PUNK
Price Tag
JESSIE J FEAT. B.o.B.
Marcia Baila
RITA MITSOUKO
ET BIEN PLUS ENCORE!
Wii
JUST DANCE 3
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Only On PlayStation
HIS MUSIC. HIS MOVES.
YOUR EXPERIENCE.
MICHAEL
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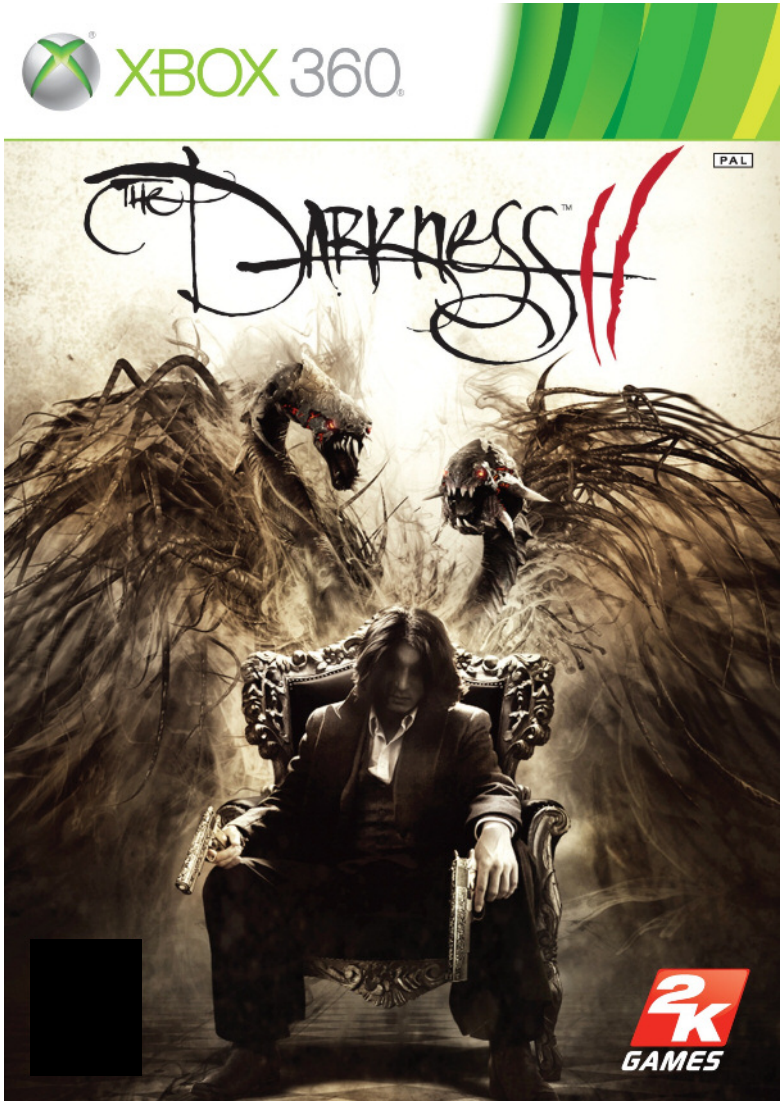
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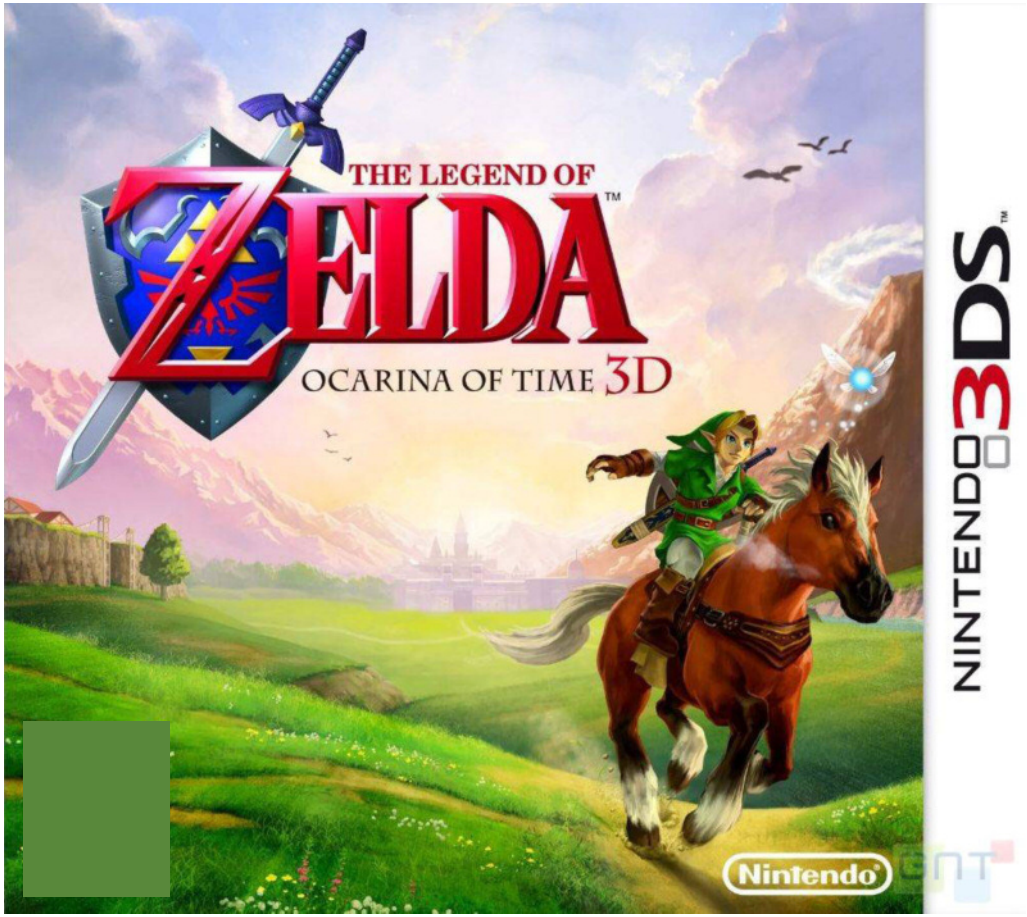
THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
OCARINA OF TIME 3D
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Cards showing different age ranges

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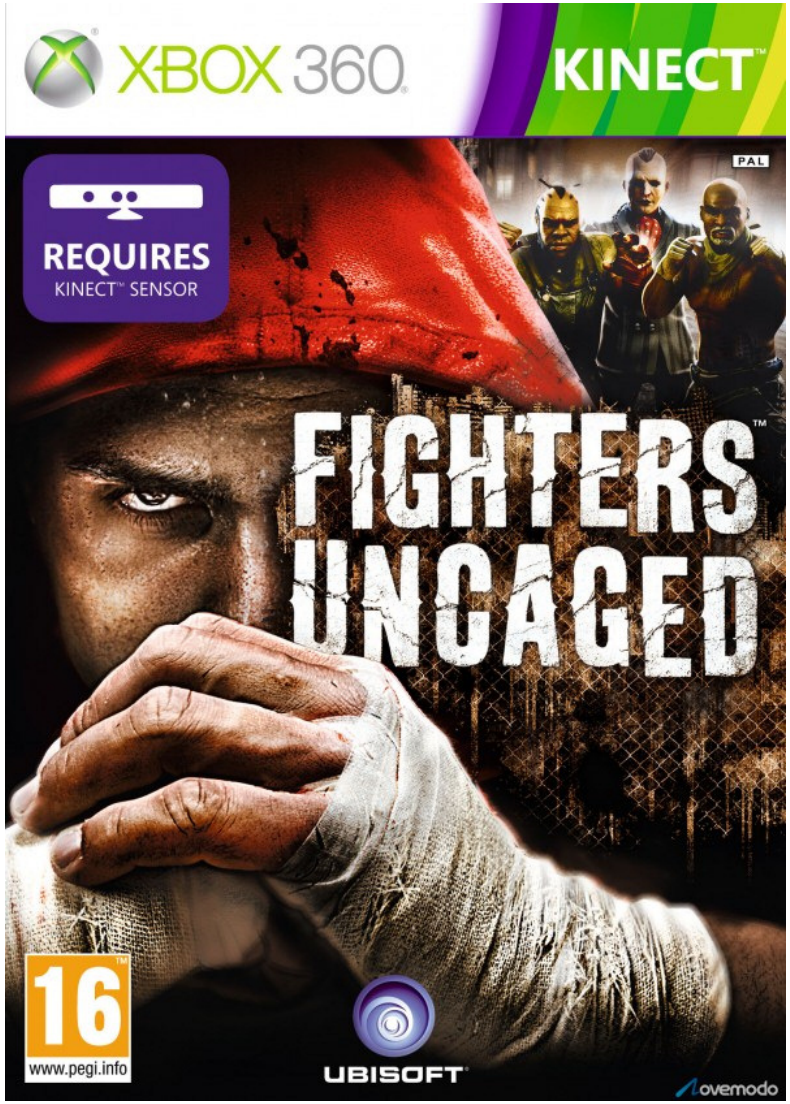
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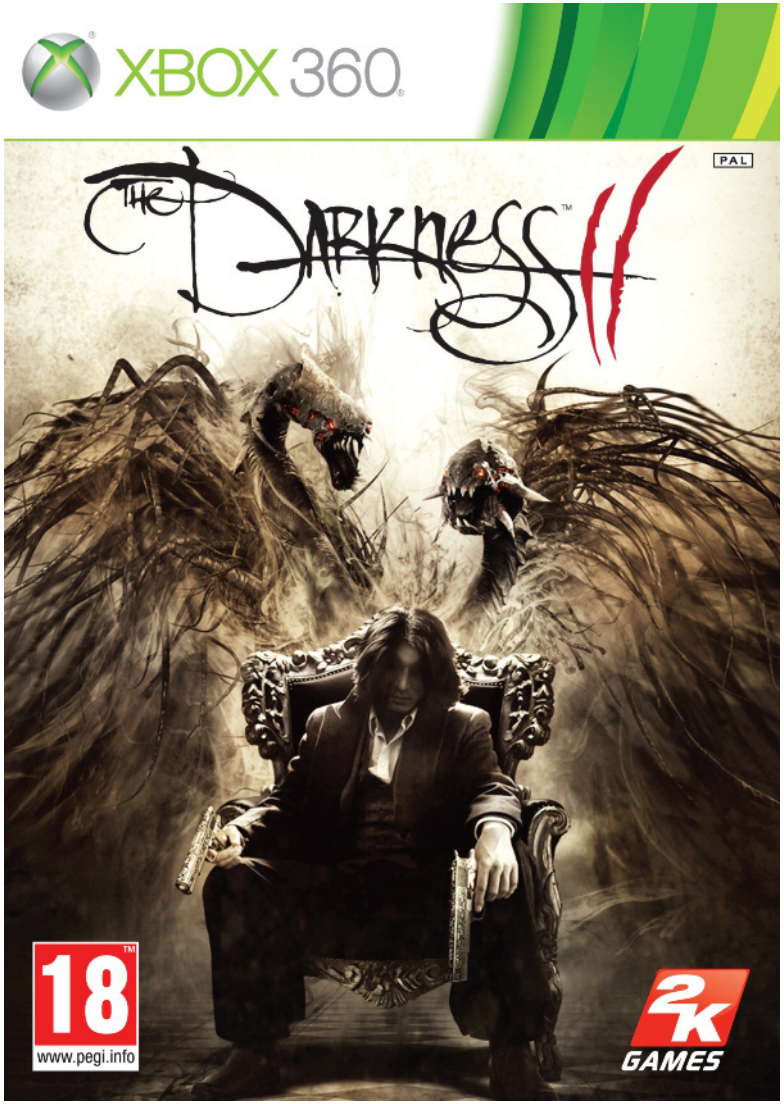
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Violence and video games

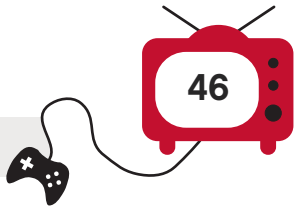
Sam is with his mate Terry playing a video game round at Terry's house. Terry has put on a 15+ game that belongs to his dad. He knows he is not allowed to play it but wants to show off in front of Sam. He can see that Sam is shocked but, as he doesn't say anything, they continue to play.

1 What is happening in this scenario?
2 What do you think might happen next?
3 What do you think Sam and Terry are thinking?
4 What do you think Sam and Terry are feeling?
5 What would you do if you were Sam?

Consequences chart

What might happen if Sam chooses to play the game?	What might happen if Sam chooses not to play the game?

What should Sam do? What should Sam say to Terry?



Appendices

Appendix One

Year 4 Overview (Islington scheme of work for PSHE education and citizenship)

Year 4

Autumn Term 1		Spring Term 1		Summer 1	
SEAL Theme: New beginings		SEAL Theme: Going for goals		SEAL Theme: Relationships	
	Classroom rules Knowing me, knowing you	Me	DATE: Making decisions Exploring decision making and taking responsibility for one's actions	Me and my relationships	SRE (1): Puberty 1 Understanding puberty in the context of one stage of the human life cycle SRE (2): Puberty 2 Exploring the emotional changes associated with puberty and devising strategies for managing difficult situations
Me	Looking after myself: Exploring choices Exploring the choices concerning keeping healthy and the influences there are around this	Me and my...	People who help us: Different jobs Looking at the work of people who help us and inviting a visitor to talk about their work		
		Me	DATE: What we know and understand about drugs Pooling present knowledge on all kinds of drugs and talking about their use and effects		
Autumn Term 2		**Spring Term 2**		**Summer 2**	
SEAL Theme: Getting on/No to bullying		SEAL Theme: Good to be me		SEAL Theme: Changes	
My place in the wrold	Identity: The groups I belong to Identifying the different groups that children belong to, how they feel about their place in these groups and what it feels like to be included and excluded	My place in the wrold	Identity: Traditions Learning about different traditions from different cultures, e.g. birth, death, celebrations, growing up, clothes	Me	Exploring violence: Media violence Exploring the potential impact of violence depicted in a range of media and the media
Me	DATE: About tobacco Exploring why people might start to smoke, why people smoke and the effects of smoking		Making a difference: People with disabilites Finding out more about people with disabilites	Me and my...	Families: Living together Exploring the role of families and different kinds of families. Thinking about what happens when things go wrong in families
				Me	Keeping Safe: In the local environment Identifying potentially dangerous situations within the local environment and developing strategies to keep safer

Appendix Two

Year 4 Topic Plan (Islington scheme of work for PSHE education and citizenship)

Me and my relationships

Exploring violence: Media violence

Exploring the potential impact of violence depicted in a range of media and the media

Learning Intentions

Children learn:
- about how to become safer in their computer gaming habits
- about the age classification system for computer games and films
- to evaluate whether a computer game is suitable for them to play
- to manage risk in different situations and to respond to peer pressure

Learning Outcomes

Children:
- understand why some games are not appropriate for children to play
- develop critical and self management skills
- develop their own ideas and thoughts about computer games and gaming habits

National Curriculum

PSHEC: 1a, 2b, 2c, 2k, 3a, 3e, 3f

SEAL Theme

Changes

QCA Assessment:
- Children can identify some of the factors that affect emotional health and well-being
- Children can respond to, or challenge, negative behaviours such as stereotyping and aggression
- Children can express their views confidently
- Children can investigate topical issues and problems using a range of sources, including the media, to find answers to simple questions or information and advice
- Children can take part in simple discussions and debates on topical issues that affect themselves and others, and talk and write about their opinions, explaining their views

By the time the average child is eighteen years old, they will have witnessed 200,000 acts of media violence and 16,000 murders. Nearly 75 percent of violent scenes on television feature no immediate punishment for or condemnation of violence. The Byron Review, 2008

Suggested Activities and Resources

Children learn:
- Holding a class debate about the affects of violence in the media on young people, exploring feelings about experiencing violence through the media, and thinking about age restrictions on films, TV viewing and computer games

Cambridge Education @ Islington - Exploring violence: Media violence: Lesson plan for Year 4

SEAL LINK: Thinking about thoughts, feelings and behaviour when in different situations (adapting the given situation cards to include ideas from the lessons/learning intentions above)

Changes: Yellow book P18-20

Skills

Personal Skills:
- I can make choices and take responsibility for my actions and decisions
- I can express an opinion

Emotional Skills:
- I can use my instincts and feelings when making a choice

Social Skills:
- I can consider and respect other people's point of view

Appendix Three

Brain development and managing risk around media images

Safer Children in a Digital World, Tanya Byron, DCFS, March 2008 looked specifically at brain development in relation to supporting children to manage risk around 'harmful' or 'inappropriate' material in video games. In particular, researchers looked at the growth of the 'pre-frontal cortex', the part of the brain which develops throughout childhood into early adulthood. This part of the brain 'enables us to make sense of the world and make judgments about our behaviour and the behaviour of others, as well as differentiating between reality and fantasy'.

To help children become safer in their gaming habits, Bryon says it is 'necessary to consider the frontal cortex functions that enable children to manage risks at different ages and stages of development.' This is because 'children of different ages have different levels of skill and understanding about the world (e.g. critical evaluation, ability to make judgments) which will impact on how they interpret content, their behaviour and their understanding of the world'.

The table below sets out an approximate guide to children's (nursery and primary age) brain development and relates it to how we can support children with the management of 'harmful' or 'inappropriate' material in video games.

Age range	Brain development	Support for children
Pre-school	At this age children's ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy in particular is developing They do not yet have the skills to critically evaluate or self regulate. Therefore these children are more vulnerable to content e.g. violent, frightening, sexual or highly emotional	Children's access to video games should be 'robustly monitored' and 'supervised.' What they access, watch, play, when, and for how long should be restricted.
5-11	At this stage, experiences, as well as age, impact on the development of the frontal cortex. Children will still be learning about friendships, right and wrong, social norms and differentiating between reality and fantasy. Still immature at self regulation. It is likely that children of this age will probably start to play a wider range of video games.	Adults will need to provide support – allowing children to explore but at the same time regulating, managing and restricting, as is appropriate. Management of their media diet should start to change, moving from heavy control to management by supervision and increasing discussion about online and gaming behaviour. This enables the child to develop their own critical evaluation and self management skills.

Taken from Safer Children in a Digital World, Tanya Byron, DCFS, March 2008
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/

Appendix Four

The law and video games

There are age restrictions for some films and computer games due to their violent content. There are currently two classification systems in use for video games in the UK: these are Pan European Game Information (PEGI) ratings and The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC).

PEGI ratings

The majority of games have 'PEGI' ratings which are used in most European countries. This system assigns age ratings for games suitable for children aged 3+, 7+ and 12+ for young people, 16+ and adults aged 18+. The vast majority of UK retailers will not stock games without one of these ratings. However, as a voluntary system, it is not an offence to sell a PEGI rated game to someone under the age rating. At the time of writing this, PEGI ratings are due to become legally binding in the UK, but it is not known when.

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)

Video games with gross violence, criminal or sexual activity, human genitals, certain bodily functions, or games with film content, have to go to the BBFC for a statutory classification before they can be released in the UK.

The BBFC can also choose not to classify a game, which makes it a criminal offence to supply it in the UK.

In addition, it is a criminal offence, punishable by up to six months in prison and/or a fine of up to £5,000 to sell or hire BBFC classified games to someone under the age classification.

Key Stage 2, Year 4, Media violence – computer games

PSHE and citizenship

NC ref	Children should learn
1a	to talk about their opinions and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society
2b	why and how laws and rules are made and enforced, why different rules are needed in different situations and how to take part in making and changing rules
2c	to realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities
2k	to explore how the media present information
3a	what makes a healthy lifestyle, including the benefits of exercise and healthy eating, what affects mental health and how to make informed choices
3e	to recognise the different risks in different situations and then decide how to behave responsibly
3f	that pressure to behave in an unacceptable or risky way can come from a variety of sources, including people they know, and how to ask for help and use basic techniques for resisting peer pressure to do wrong