

Morgan Kelly

Dr. Peeples

HONS 110-06

3 December 2021

Learning Literacy through Games

For the first project of the semester, I wrote about my experience in learning video games as a form of literacy, specifically as I learned about them from my parents. I argued that, although video games are often condemned for being too violent or mindless, video games hold their own form of literacy which can be useful in many different aspects of the real world. For example, many video games focus on increasing observation and critical thinking skills through tedious cues and tasks. More specifically, video game literacy involves considerable practice in recognizing and understanding motion, video, and audio cues in each game. Drawing on the traditional style of a Role-playing game (RPG), I designed a video game with the software RPG Maker MV that follows the basic conventions of RPGs and aims to teach video game literacy.



The rhetorical situation in the video game I created, called *Apprentice*, assumes the player is unaware of the conventions of an RPG and that they are, consequently, also lacking in video game literacy. Therefore, the exigence of the video game is the desire to gain video game literacy. By emphasizing the

conventions of a typical RPG, the game aims to teach the player what to observe, how to approach interactions within the game, and how to use basic RPG controls. One function of the game which explicitly teaches literacy is the option to interact with a character and ask questions about specific clues within the game. For example, the character will tell the player to return to them if they have any questions. Then, the player can choose five different options to ask questions about. (Pictured left) One of these options is “Items.” When the player requests to learn about items, the character explains the importance of clicking on and interacting with anything that seems out of the ordinary or has attention drawn to it. The character, when prompted, also tells the player that text functions similarly regarding an indication of importance. Although this method of teaching literacy isn’t the most creative, many traditional RPGs use this method to hint at clues within the game. This character functions similarly, teaching the player how to observe clues about video game literacy within the game.

One common convention of RPGs is detailed storytelling. Different games choose to approach this in different manners, whether the game uses sound, visuals, or words to tell the story. It is generally custom in RPGs for the player to attempt to interact with anything around them in the environment, whether they are speaking to a character, examining an object, or foraging for items. I incorporated this into the game by placing objects around the house that the player could interact with. For example, the player has the option to interact with some pots in the corner of the room. The first indication that the player should examine the pots is the physical condition of one of the pots in the cluster. One pot among the group is shattered in a pile, while the others remain unbroken. When the player interacts with the pots that are still intact, they are given the option to search, break, or leave the pot as they found it. Small details like these in

RPGs condition the player to examine objects which may initially seem unimportant. Objects with similar interactions can be found throughout the game, such as books the player can read through, wells the player can search, and cracks in the floor, which will cause the player to fall. Acknowledging these details and their importance is imperative for improving video game literacy.

Since the game's intention is to teach video game literacy, its audience consists of people who are new to playing video games, whether they are adults who are willing to learn or just curious children. When the targeted audience plays the game, the ideal result would be that players learn how to observe objects which are oddly placed both in games and in real life. In other words, players will learn how to apply skills learned in video games to real-life experiences. A few skills obtained by actively playing video games are observation, problem-solving, and critical thinking. People skeptical of the positive effects of video games serve as a secondary audience; they would notice how the game is implementing the teaching of those skills into the gameplay and main storyline. Hopefully, this would help change their conception of the notion that video games are violent and damaging to children's intellectual abilities. Addressing this issue through a video game is important because it uses the very medium people are skeptical of in order to demonstrate that not all video games will cause children to lose their intelligence.

The most significant constraint I experienced while remediating this text was that I was unable to address one of the main concepts from my first literacy narrative essay, specifically where I discussed the importance of understanding motion cues in video games. Due to the limitations of the software I used to create the game, which was created on a mobile device, the

game would not be able to send vibrations through the device on which the player would hypothetically play the video game. However, in remediating the text, I chose to focus more on teaching skills from the game as a whole, rather than deciding to draw attention to visual, motion, and audio cues individually. With this new purpose in mind, and the new exigence of convincing critics that video games can teach useful skills, I created the current game. This game follows the conventions of RPGs and teaches the player about those conventions by drawing on real-world skills. Another constraint is the gaming website where the game would be theoretically published, *Steam*. Because *Steam* is an engine primarily used by people who own and play video games frequently, people new to playing video games may not see this game first when they open the engine. To address this constraint, the game would also be published on a website that would appear in searches similar to “effects of video games.”

Although RPGs are generally considered a genre of their own, the game I created could be called a fantasy RPG. Fantasy games are commonly seen in RPGs, which makes them easily susceptible to following the conventions of the genre. I chose the fantasy genre because storylines in this genre generally focus on a “nobody” character who must prove themselves by venturing on a dangerous quest and learning many things along the way. I compared this to the experience of learning how to play video games, albeit much less glamorous. The character in the game, like the player, will be learning observation, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills through the trials, characters, and items they encounter. The fantasy genre responds to the player’s lack of game experience by using a main character who also lacks experience, deploying the characters and puzzles within the game to help the player and the main character gain experience. The fantasy genre also addresses the other exigence, which is skepticism of video

games' effects on children. Since fantasy is a genre most people are familiar with, they will likely be more open to accepting an RPG with common conventions than they would be of—for example—a first-person shooter game.

My main goals in remediating my video game literacy narrative into a video game itself were to teach players how to develop adequate video game literacy, convince the more skeptical generations that video games can have positive effects on children, and to subtly teach players how to implement the skills they would learn in the game into real-life scenarios. By teaching video game literacy through a fantasy role-playing game, the player can recognize the common conventions used in fantasy to easily understand the quest for this game, as well as other games. I chose to remediate the text into the fantasy genre in hopes that the player would relate to the main character, as both parties are learning how to analyze and observe certain aspects of the game. Of course, literacy can't be built in a day (or in a game), but learning to recognize the basic tips and tricks in a practice game can provide a solid foundation on the journey of literacy learning.