

The Art of Storytelling

Learning objectives	Identifying the aspects of storytelling in the video game Before Your Eyes, identifying the qualities of good stories, practicing summarizing main points
Subjects	English as a foreign language, Writing, Arts
Recommended Age	15 - 18
Material needed	The game Before Your Eyes
Sequence duration	180 – 210 minutes
Individual or group activity	Individual activity
Inclusion best practices	Text color contrasts to the background or can be adjusted to contrast, subtitles are large and clear and can be adjusted, textual captions indicate who is speaking, all dialogues can be voiced so there is no requirement for reading, and there are different options on how to control the game (Family Video Game Database, 2021)
Expected production	Creation of their own stories
Skills developed	Creativity, Storytelling, Empathy
Price range of the game	<20€
Extension / differentiation activities	This pedagogical sequence can be used as an introduction or inspiration for the IO4 sequence on the creation of the storyboard
Similar games to use with the approach of the sequence	Life is Strange, Gris

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

- **Step 1: Introduction of the game and the task (15 minutes)**

Introduce the game to the students before assigning it as homework. You can show the launch trailer to your students: [Before Your Eyes – Launch trailer](#). It is important to note that the topic may be sensitive for some students and playing can be very emotional. Make sure students feel safe expressing the emotions that the game may stimulate.

Description of the game: Before Your Eyes is a narrative adventure game that shows the story of a soul's journey into the afterlife. The story begins after the main character dies and comes to the ship of the Ferryman, who is helping souls reach the afterlife. In order to help you, the Ferryman needs to hear the story of your life, so he sends you back to the most important moment. You can get the game on [Steam](#).



Image 1. Source: <https://www.beforeyoureyesgame.com/>.

Ask the students to pay attention to specific elements of the story while they are playing the game and to write down their thoughts.

Students may focus on:

- Summarising the story by focusing on the 4 basic parts of the plot:
 - o Exposition
 - o Complication/Conflict
 - o Climax
 - o Resolution
- How is the story told in this game? Whose story is it?
- What do you think of the blinking mechanic in the game? Did it enhance the storytelling? Why?
- Who are the characters of the story? Do the characters symbolize something?
- Who is the narrator? Are the narrator and the main character the same person?
 - Is the story written in the first-person point of view?
 - Is the story written in a third-person point of view?
- Does the story take place in the present, the past or the future?
- What is the most important event in the story?
- Does the title of the game have any significance?

The game uses an innovative approach in storytelling, and, through the life of Benjamin, we can see that everyone has a story to tell. Ask the students to think about what important or defining moments from their lives they would be comfortable sharing with their peers. Students can choose how they want to tell their stories, whether it is through writing, drawing, using images or some other medium.

- **Step 2: Gameplay as homework (100 – 120 minutes)**

We suggest using this game as homework so that the students can explore it at their own pace. On average the game takes 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete.

What is innovative about this game is the use of the blink interaction mechanic – the game uses the webcam to identify your real-life blinks, through which you navigate through the story. To play this game students do not need any specific knowledge about video games. Although the main idea behind the game was to play it with eye blinking, it can also be played with the mouse, so students do not need to use their web cameras if they do not have one.



Image 2. Source: <https://www.beforeyoureyesgame.com/>.

- **Step 3: Creation of their own story (45 minutes)**

Through the game, students became familiar with the basic parts of the plot and saw one example of how to tell a story through a video game.

At this stage, they should create their own stories, which they will bring to the classroom. In case students do not feel comfortable with sharing their personal stories, the stories can be fictional.

- **Step 4: Presentations of stories and discussion: the art of storytelling (20 minutes)**

Discuss with students the storytelling in the game and ask them about their thoughts of the main topic of the game and the use of the blink interaction mechanic for storytelling. You can also discuss the difference between storytelling in video games, books, and TV series.

As students brought their stories to the classroom, you can organise the classroom as a gallery and place students' projects around the room so the peers can review them. By doing this, students can see different ways of storytelling and how different modes can give stories more depth and more meaning.

References

Dreamers Creative Writing (2020). Elements of a Story Explained. Retrieved from: <https://www.dreamerswriting.com/elements-of-a-story/>

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