

Are video games art?

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	None
Learning objectives	Learning more about different art styles in video games
Subjects	Arts, Philosophy, Social sciences, English as a foreign language
Recommended Age	15-18
Material needed	Technological equipment to show the videos, video trailers, PCs or laptops to search for games
Sequence duration	40 minutes without optional steps, 90 minutes with optional steps
Individual or group activity	Group activity
Skills developed (after learning objectives)	Critical thinking, research, collaboration & teamwork, communication, creativity
Price range of the game	Free videos are used in this sequence
Extension / differentiation activities (at the end of the sequence)	This pedagogical sequence could serve as an introduction to further exploring and understanding the perceptions of beauty
Similar games to use with the approach of the sequence	Dark Soul series, Horizon series, NaissanceE, Ori and the Blind Forest, Journey, No Man Sky, Thomas Was Alone
Tips to make the sequence more accessible or inclusive	The videos used in this sequence are in English. However, the students don't need to focus on the

language but the graphics and visual representation in the game.

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

- **Step 1 – Introduction to the topic (5 minutes)**

According to Ovsyannykov (2021), the graphics make the connection between the game and the player stronger. This is because the graphics appeal to players' emotions and senses more effectively. In this sequence, we will explore and discuss the graphics in different games, discuss students' preferences and whether video games are art.

The sequence's focus is on the game's visual presentations, not so much on the game's story or the characters. However, if time allows, it could be interesting to discuss with students the visual representation of certain topics.

Tell your students that they will see trailers of 7 games, and while watching the trailers they can rank the games from 1 - 7 (7 being the lowest) based on their preferences. However, remind them that they should focus on graphics and visual presentation rather than the story or the topic.

- **Step 2 – Showing the videos (15 minutes)**
 - **Ghost of Tsushima**
 - Video to show: [Ghost of Tsushima - Official Cinematic Trailer](#) (duration 1:00)
 - Ghost of Tsushima is action-adventure game in which the player controls a samurai on a quest to protect Tsushima Island during the first Mongol Invasion of Japan.
 - **Ōkami**
 - Video to show: [Okami HD | Reveal Trailer | PS4](#) (duration 3:10)
 - Ōkami is an adventure game set in Japanese folklore and tells the story of how the land was saved from darkness by the Shinto sun goddess named Amaterasu.
 - **Among Trees**
 - Video to show: [Among Trees Launch Trailer](#) (duration 1:05)
 - Among Trees is a first-person survival game in which you explore the colourful wilderness.
 - **What remains of Edit Finch**
 - Video to show: [What Remains of Edith Finch Official Launch Trailer](#) (duration 1:00)
 - You play the game as Edith and explore the family history while trying to figure out why Edith's is the last alive member of her family.
 - **Harold Halibut**
 - Video to show: [Harold Halibut – game trailer](#) (duration 1:27)

- In this stop-motion narrative adventure, the player navigates as Harold through different levels in order to solve mini-mysteries and complete quests.
- **Flower**
 - Video to show: [Flower trailer](#) (duration: 2:07)
 - In Flower, the player becomes wind and takes across the landscape. The game has no text or dialogue, so the narrative develops through visual representation and emotional cues. The game designer even describes it as “interactive poem”.
- **Planet of Lana**
 - Video to Show: [Planet of Lana – Reveal Trailer](#) (duration: 1:59)
 - The story of the game follows Lana, a young girl, and her little friend on a rescue mission through a world full of cold machines and peculiar creatures.
- **Blasphemous**
 - Video to show: [Blasphemous - Announcement Trailer | PS4](#)
 - The game takes place in the fictional region of Cvstodia. The player goes through the game as a Penitent One, a silent knight who travels the land in a pilgrimage.
- **Step 3: The assignment (15 minutes)**

After showing the trailers, let the students discuss their preferences in pairs or smaller groups. Ask them to explain why they rated certain games in the order they did.

They do not need some specific information on what the games are about, as the focus is not on the story of the game, the topic, or the characters, but on the visual presentations in the game.

Optional: You can use this video about how to make game art to help students explain why a certain games makes them feel in certain way: [How To Make Game Art](#)

- **Step 4 – Group discussion and conclusion (10 minutes)**

Following the short discussions, ask the students if they would like to share something with the whole class.

Here are some questions you can use to guide the discussion:

- Which game did you prefer? Why?
 - What do you think about the visuals and the art in the games?
 - Do you like how the games look like? Why or why not?
 - Are the graphics an important part of the story?
 - How important are visual aspects in the game? What about the importance of colours?
 - Which differences do you notice in the games?
 - Is it portrayed realistically? Why or why not?
 - Lastly, are video games art?
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- **Optional: Step 5: The second assignment – search for beautiful video games (20 minutes)**

Divide students into pairs or small groups (it can be the same groups as in the previous step) and tell them to search for a video game that they find beautiful. There are no specific criteria to search for the games. They simply have to find a game that is beautiful to them.

- **Optional: Step 6: Presentation of the games and discussion – why are those games beautiful? (10 minutes)**

Ask the students to present the game they found briefly. They can show some images from the game or a short video.

Use those presentations as a starting point for the discussion – why do they find those games beautiful? What makes the game beautiful? What does it need to have to be visually stunning? You can finish the discussion by asking the students if they consider video games to be art.

References

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fe9DytkcSlc>

GameTrailers (April 25th, 2017) 'What Remains of Edith Finch Official Launch Trailer'.
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IGN (June 29th, 2020) 'Ghost of Tsushima - Official Cinematic Trailer' [Video].
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