Video Game Ratings

Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about video game ratings? What more would you like to know about them?

Definitions: Game console – a device for playing video games Suitable – right for the situation

Reading

Video and computer games are popular among people of all ages. A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 83 percent of children aged 8 to 18 live in homes with a video game console. Forty percent of those children have the game console in their bedroom.

The content of today’s video and computer games varies widely. Game packages have information about the content that can help renters and buyers decide whether a particular game is suitable before they take it home.

The Entertainment Software Rating Board maintains a two-part rating system for video and computer games. First, is the lettered rating symbol, such as E or M. The letter suggests the game’s age appropriateness and appears on the front of the game box. Second, are the content descriptors, such as Blood and Gore, which point out specific elements of the game that have caused the rating and that may be of concern. They appear on the back of the box.

Players can change the content of a rated game by downloading software from the Internet onto their computers. These programs, called “mods,” can make a game’s content more explicit than the rating indicates. This in turn, could make the game inappropriate for players like kids and teens.

Games rated AO (Adult Only) have content that is suitable only for people 18 and older. These games may include, “prolonged scenes of intense violence and/or graphic sexual content and nudity.” Games rated M (mature) “have content that may be suitable for people over 17, and may contain, “intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content, and strong language.”

Games rated T (Teen) have content that may be suitable for kids over 13. They may contain, “violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood and the use of strong language.” Games rated E10+ (Everyone 10 and older) have content that may be suitable for kids at least 10. These games may contain, “more cartoon, fantasy, or mild violence, mild language, and/or minimal suggestive themes.”

An E (Everyone) rating is found on games that have content that may be suitable for kids at least 6 years of age. Games rated EC (Early Childhood) are intended for preschoolers who are at least 3 years old. The games with an EC rating contain no material that parents would find inappropriate.

Source: Federal Trade Commission’s Video Games: Reading the Ratings on the Games People Play

Level 7.0
Understanding

1. Who does the rating for video games? __________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

2. What does the word explicit mean in this text? ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

3. What are the two ratings? What do they tell the renter/buyer? __________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Where are the two ratings on each game found? ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Do you feel a rating system for video games is necessary? Why or why not? ____________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

6. How popular are video games? ______________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

7. What does the word content mean? __________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

8. How can the content of a rated game be changed? _____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Do you play video games? If yes, what are your favorite games? Why do you like them?
   Do you check the ratings before you rent or purchase games? Why or why not?