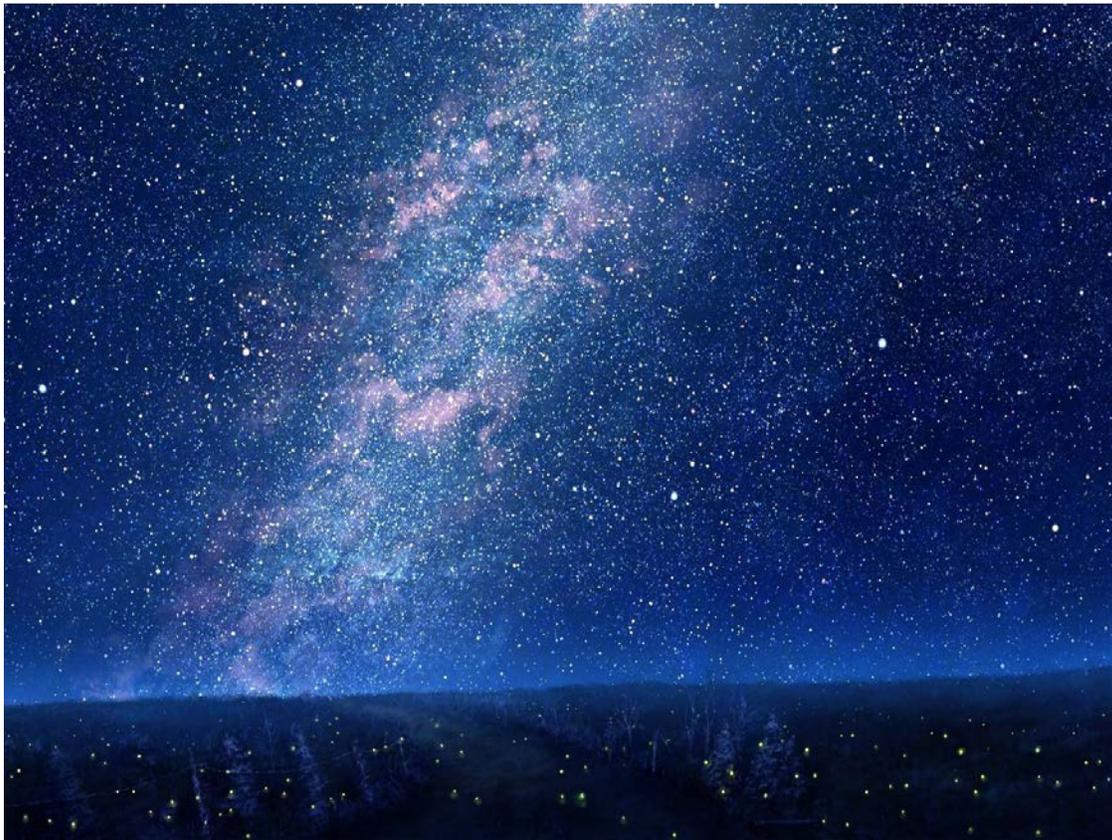


Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Unit Introduction | The Power of Ideals | The Stars of Struggle,
Training, Truth, and Strategy | **The Allegory of Video Games** |
Realistic Hope in History



We live in an age when we can no longer settle for peace as an abstract concept, sentimental wish, or shallow cliché. **The Constellation of Peace** unit leads students into a deeper and more practical understanding that equips them to create a realistic, resilient, and sustainable peace for the 21st century.

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

Prepared by

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Stephanie Clapes, M. Ed., Learning Specialist and Educational Consultant

This is the third of a four-part unit (each part has 5-7 lessons of 1-2 hours each)

1. The Power of Ideals
2. The Stars of Struggle, Training, Truth, and Strategy
- 3. The Allegory of Video Games**
4. Realistic Hope in History

Designed for middle school students

The themes of struggle, training, truth, and strategy on which this unit focuses are appropriate, and critically so, for students in fourth grade through higher education. However, the presentation we have used to frame these themes is designed for middle-school students.

Content

The unit addresses content relevant to **life skills** and **health** classes but the focus on ideals as stars for navigating life allows us to cover material relevant to middle-school **science**, **history**, and **geography** classes as well, through discussions of metallurgy, the geography of oceans and land masses, and celestial navigation techniques in ancient and diverse cultures.

Accessibility

Each of the four parts of the unit has its own script and PowerPoint slides. The combination of visual elements in the slides, and aural elements from the script and the slides (there are sometimes sound effects) increases the accessibility of the presentation for students with visual or hearing impairments.

Learning outcomes and exercises

Each of the four parts of the unit comes with its own specific learning outcomes, activities, supplemental readings, and web resources.

Fair use

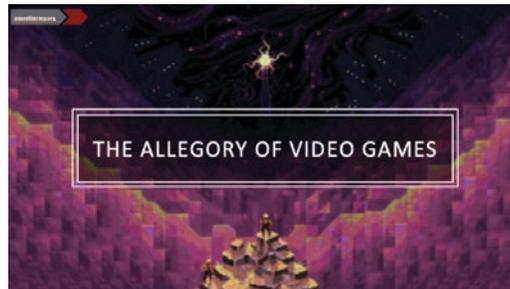
We are pleased to share this curriculum at no cost and ask only that you cite us, as below, when you use direct quotes or paraphrased passages from this lesson plan in your own publications:

Paul K. Chappell and Stephanie Clapes. 2020. Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace. <http://peaceliteracy.org/curriculum/>

And please send us copies of any materials you produce that are based on this curriculum so we can put them up on the Peace Literacy website as models for others. Peace Literacy is meant to be shared! Thank you for embarking on this journey with us!

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games



The Allegory of Video Games is meant to be used in conjunction with a deck of 54 PowerPoint slides available for free download at <http://peaceliteracy.org/curriculum>

Enduring understandings

- Games allow humans to practice important life skills. These can include physical as well as psychological and social skills.
- Games can be seen as allegories for the human experience. We can derive important insights about how to live well as individuals and in communities when we understand these allegories.
- Video games are new kinds of games that serve as allegories not only for the human experience, but also for new kinds of challenges, such as our national and global challenges, along with the challenges that emerge from new technologies.

Macro concepts

- The struggles in video games serve as allegories for the storms of life, illustrating how we can respond to these storms with determination, resilience, and realistic hope. (This ties into **Part 1 The Power of Ideals**).
- Video games serve as allegories for how navigating these storms requires us to embrace struggle, acquire training, pursue truth, and choose strategy. (This ties into **Part 2 The Stars of Struggle, Training, Truth, and Strategy**).
- Video games serve as allegories for underdog struggles in history, such as the civil rights movement. Exploring and understanding these underdog struggles through the power of allegory can give us realistic hope, along with guidance for overcoming our own underdog struggles in the twenty-first century. (This ties into **Part 4 Realistic Hope in History**).

Micro concepts

- All games feed our non-physical need for challenge, and can also feed other non-physical needs.
- As we navigate our national and global challenges, along with the challenges that emerge from new technologies, we must understand the twenty-first century skills needed for increasing peace and well-being at the personal, community, national, and global levels. These skills include: cooperation, self-development, increasing our competency in our humanity, building strong communities, understanding the root causes of problems, and strategic thinking.

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

Learning outcomes

Students who engage with *The Allegory of Video Games* will show growth in their ability to:

- Explain why humans and animals play games.
- Identify the survival abilities that are stimulated when humans play games.
- Identify humanity's non-physical needs and how they intersect with games.
- Explain why communities are important for training (learning and practice) and overcoming struggle.
- Act with a greater sense of appreciation and responsibility toward one's community.
- Explain what an allegory is and offer examples.
- Identify examples of underdog struggles.
- Act with determination and resilience when facing struggle.
- Explain how video games illustrate the importance of the Constellation of Peace.
- Identify the three kinds of video games and how they overlap.
- Develop discernment and awareness when playing video games.
- Explain why embracing struggle, acquiring training, pursuing truth, and choosing strategy are essential for solving national and global challenges.
- Act with greater determination, motivation, and realistic hope when working toward solving personal, community, national, and global problems.
- Develop more self-awareness by understanding their inner world.
- Explain the many benefits of compassion for self and others.

The lessons include exercises to reinforce each of these learning outcomes and we are developing rubrics for assessing them. If you develop any rubrics of your own, please share them with us! (email: sharyn.clough@oregonstate.edu)

Background readings

1. Teachers will benefit from reading Ch.7 of *The Cosmic Ocean* (Chappell 2015), especially the section "The Secrets of Video Games."
2. The novel *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline (2011) shows the direction in which video games and social media platforms are likely to evolve as VR advances.

Lessons

The Allegory of Video Games is divided into 7 lessons; each lesson takes about 1-2 hrs, including ppt. slides and activities, and depending on class size & student engagement.

Lesson 1, p. 7: The Appeal of Video Games

Lesson 2, p. 13: Why Do We Play Games?

Lesson 3, p. 20: The Power of Community / Non-Physical Needs

Lesson 4, p. 28: Understanding Allegories

Lesson 5, p. 41: The Storms in Video Games and the Storms of Life

Lesson 6, p. 48: Human Survival / Inner World

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

Introduction

In the following six lessons, we use video games as an epic and engaging allegorical framework that allows students to more deeply understand the storms of life and the four stars in *The Constellation of Peace*. In these lessons, video games also serve as a lens that allows students to perceive sports, humanity's non-physical needs, the power of community, human survival, our shared human journey, national and global problems, and the depths of the human psyche in new and important ways.

Education systems need to respond to the growing influence of video games and help students become more discerning in their media use. According to Pew Research, in the United States 97% of boys and 83% of girls play video games.¹ Video games currently generate more revenue than any other entertainment medium. In 2017, video games generated 120.1 billion dollars in revenue, whereas TV and TV streaming services generated 105 billion dollars, global film box office sales generated 41 billion dollars, and the music industry generated 17 billion dollars.² Video game revenue also has higher predicted growth over the next decade than the revenue of any other entertainment medium due to the median age of video game players continuing to increase, and the ways in which advancements in Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and 5G will greatly expand how people can play together and interact in virtual worlds. By 2030 social media platforms will start to look more like video games such as *Fortnite* and *Roblox*, where a person can be embodied in an avatar, than the social media platforms of the 2010s.

Video games are one of the most dominant societal influences in the lives of students, and even students who don't play video games can be influenced by video game culture, yet most students receive no guidance from adults about how to navigate these virtual worlds that are becoming a greater and greater part of their social landscape. The virtual worlds of video games are where countless students spend much of their time bonding, socializing, and overcoming challenges.

Interest in video games extends beyond playing video games, and includes watching other people play and talk about video games. In 2018, over 9 billion hours of live stream gaming were watched on the website Twitch (a subsidiary of Amazon),³ and 50 billion hours of gaming content were watched on Youtube.⁴ That is people just *watching* other people play and talk about video games.

People can also earn scholarship money for college by playing video games. In the United States, 170 colleges and universities have esports (electronic sports) teams, with some students receiving scholarship money to play esports. As of 2020, high schools in seventeen states and the District of Columbia also have esports teams.⁵ To put esports in

perspective, more Americans play the team-based video game *League of Legends* than play baseball.⁶

All of this is evidence of video games' exploding popularity. Their appeal is so great that games and game culture are weaving their way into our broader culture, and have become a ubiquitous part of students' lives. Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality will open a much higher-level gaming experience: more intense, more complete, and more immersive. And much larger amounts of money will be involved.

Evidence shows that video games are a risk factor for increased aggression. The American Psychological Association published a review that found a link between violent video game use and "increased aggressive behavior, aggressive cognitions, and aggressive affect" and a decrease in "prosocial behavior, empathy, and sensitivity to aggression."⁷ A risk factor does not mean that people *will* become more aggressive, but that they *can* become more aggressive, especially when other risk factors are present.

The popularity of video games, however, is not necessarily based on violence or violent content. The following lessons show how video games relate to essential human needs and timeless human struggles, and demonstrate the relationship between games and the drive to develop important life skills.

This lesson is designed to be responsive to the growing influence of video games in students' lives. Through this lesson's recognition and exploration of timeless themes, archetypes, and skills embedded in games and game structure, students are empowered to reflect on life as they play. This lesson helps students be mindful and aware of the potential hazards of excessive and mindless media use, and makes them informed and educated about the components of all games (including sports), such as game design and game function, and the potential positive and negative influences of video games.

By recognizing the needs video games can fill in students' lives rather than demonizing video games, we open the door to understanding and reach out to students in order to increase their discernment and awareness. The added benefit of these lessons is that they make the virtual worlds of video games (and the future of social media) accessible and understandable to teachers, which allows for common ground between themselves and students. Teachers can help students understand the very seductive and engrossing virtual worlds that are becoming more expansive every year, and become much-needed guides through the many forms of media often created without consideration for the impact and influence they have on students who will someday lead our society. This develops connections and broadens relationships between students and teachers rather than separating and dividing them.

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

Lesson 1

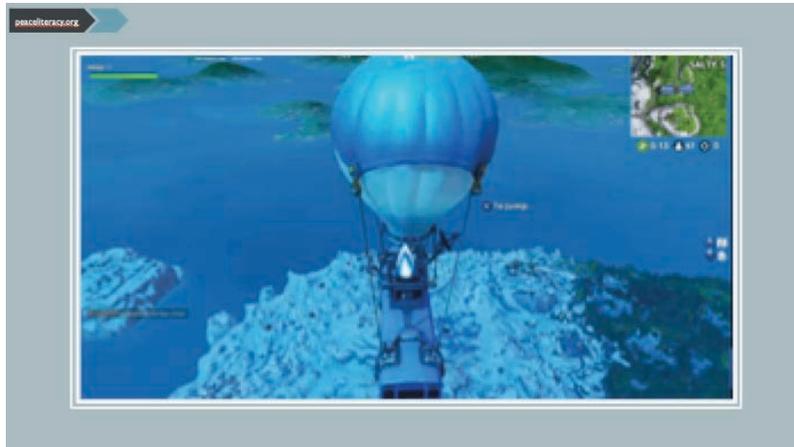
The Appeal of Video Games

(1-2 hrs depending on class size and student engagement; includes 1 activity)

Script

We're going to watch a short clip of a video game. If you recognize what game this is, please don't say the name out loud yet. At the end we will ask for a show of hands to see how many of you know what game this is, and you will be able to identify it for us then.

Show Slide 1 (Video of Fortnite Opening)



How many of you know what game this is?

Take tally, remark on percentage of class that recognizes the clip.

Who would like to identify it for us?

Allow for students to answer.

This is someone starting a round of *Fortnite*. How many of you play *Fortnite*?

Tally again.

How many of you have played *Fortnite*?

Tally again.

If you don't play or haven't played *Fortnite*, how many of you have watched someone play?

Tally again.

How many of you know how to do the Floss?

Allow for responses.

What are some other *Fortnite* dances that you know?

Allow for responses.

Would you say *Fortnite* is popular? A little popular? Very popular? What other popular video games can you name?

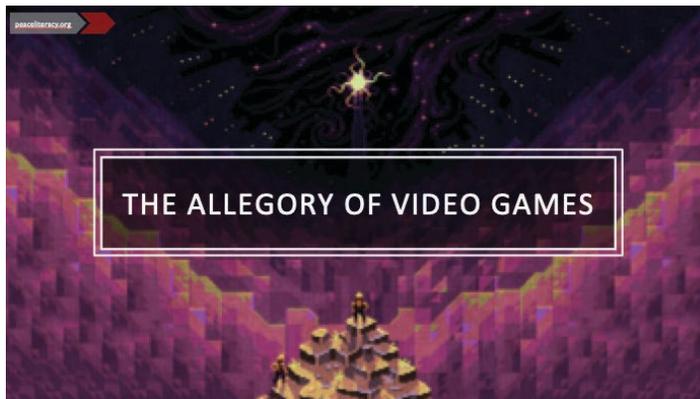
Allow for responses.

Did you know that *Fortnite* has 250 million registered players? That number is larger than the population of most countries in the world, outside of the United States, China, and India.

Why do so many people like to play *Fortnite*?

Allow for responses. Record these early responses to compare to later responses.

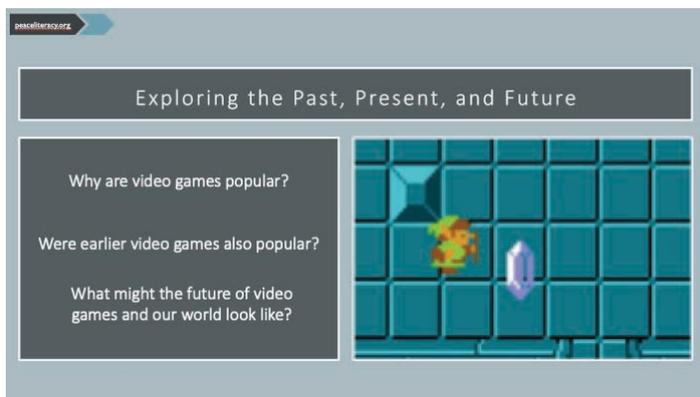
Show Slide 2 (Title Slide)



We are going to explore “The Allegory of Video Games.”

We will talk about what an allegory is later, but first we will talk about video games.

Show Slide 3 (Exploring the Past, Present, and Future)



Read the first question on slide 3: “Why are video games popular?”

Allow for responses. Record these early responses to compare to later responses.

Advance to the second question on the slide and read: “Were earlier video games also popular?”

Allow for responses. (It is not expected that students will be able to answer this question right now.)

We will answer this question by exploring video game history later in this lesson.

Note for Teachers: The discussion later in this lesson on video game history can get students thinking beyond the present and about the past. This broadens their historical perspective and helps them think not only about the past, but also about the future in the later lessons.

Do any of you recognize the video game on this slide?

Allow for responses.

The video game on this slide is *The Legend of Zelda*, which was released by Nintendo in 1986, over thirty years ago. This was the first “Zelda” game. Have any of you heard of the Zelda series? Have any of you ever played a Zelda game?

Allow for responses.

What are some other popular video games that existed before *Fortnite*? What is the earliest popular video game that you are aware of?

Allow for responses.

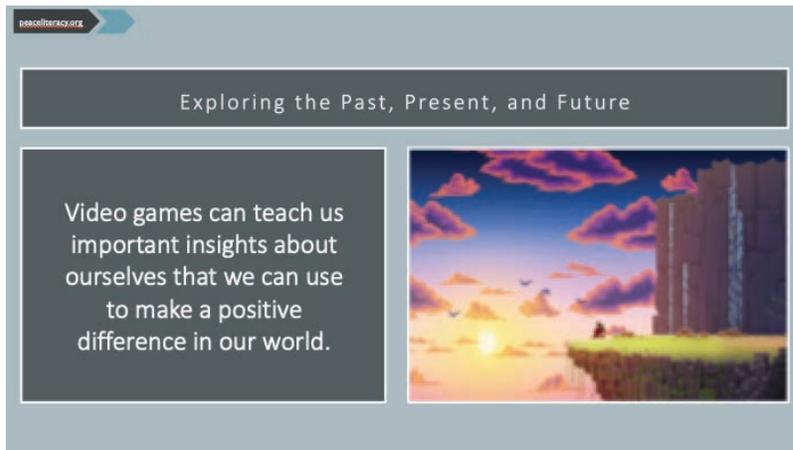
In the following lessons we will not only explore video games from over thirty years ago, but we will also explore how human beings lived over thirty *thousand* years ago. Exploring humanity’s *primordial past*—“primordial” means “very early”—can help us understand what it means to be human and why video games are so popular today.

Advance to the third question on the slide and ask: “What might the future of video games and our world look like?”

Allow for responses. (It is not expected that students will be able to answer this question right now.)

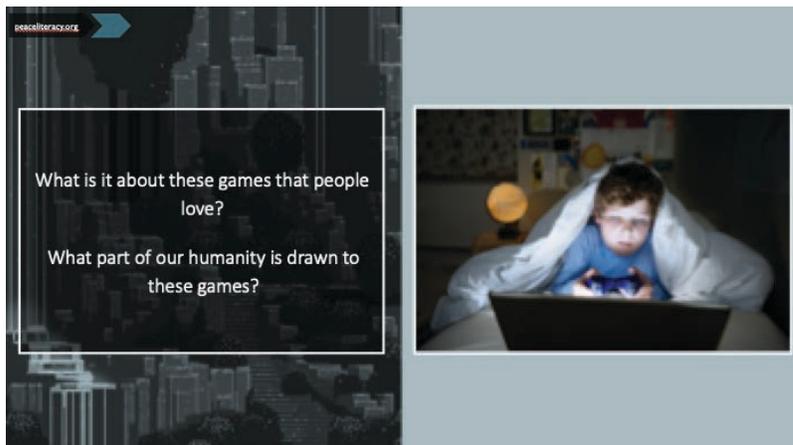
In the following lessons we will not only explore video games from over thirty years ago, but we will also explore what video games and our world might be like more than thirty years from now. This exploration will help us better understand the future of humanity and our world, and what we can do to make a positive difference for ourselves, humanity, and our world.

Show Slide 4 (Exploring the Present, Past, and Future, continued)



Read or have a student read the text box out loud: “Video games can teach us important insights about ourselves that we can use to make a positive difference in our world.”

Show Slide 5 (Picture of child playing video game in bed)

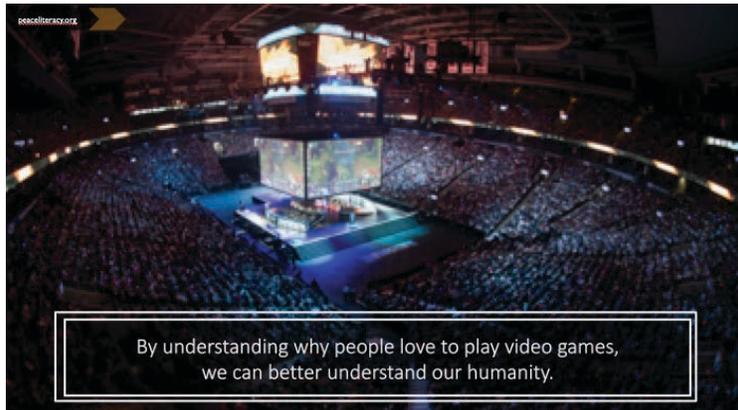


Read the first question on the slide: “What is it about these games that people love?”

Advance to the second question on the slide and read: “What part of our humanity is drawn to these games?”

Note for Teachers: These are rhetorical questions that foreshadow some of the major themes in the following lessons. Tell students that we will thoroughly answer these questions as we go through these lessons and take time to explore.

Show Slide 6 (Picture of Esports Arena)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“By understanding why people love to play video games, we can better understand our humanity.”

Does anyone know what this picture is depicting?

Allow for responses.

This is a *League of Legends* esports event that was held at Scotiabank Arena in 2016, where the Toronto Raptors (2019 NBA champions) play their home games. Scotiabank Arena holds 19,800 people, and tickets for the *League of Legends* event sold out in 34 seconds, faster than any sporting event or concert in the arena’s history.⁸

The following video shows popular video games that existed decades before *Fortnite* and *League of Legends*. This 1988 video about Nintendo shows that the popularity of video games goes back many years. The popularity of video games did not begin with any game people play today, such as *Fortnite* or *League of Legends*.

Show Slide 7 (Nintendo 1988 Video)



Return to script

Why are video games so fun and so compelling to so many people, both in the past and in the present?

Allow for responses. Record responses for use later in the lesson.

Note for Teachers: Earlier we asked rhetorical questions about why people like to play video games. At this point in the lesson ask students to just try to explain why they like to play video games, or why they think other people like to play them. You can ask students what they like about them, the best parts of the games, how to be a good player, and what makes a good/successful player. What are the qualities? You can use this as a break point before getting into the later lessons, especially for younger students so that they can get their excitement about video games out of their system. This discussion can transition into the following activity.

Activity: Video Game History, Research Activity

Pair up and research an early video game (before 2000). You can search for video games from the 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s to get some ideas.

In the last lesson we will explore questions about aggression and violence in video games. For this activity you need to choose a game that has an ESRB rating below “M” (meaning “Mature +17”). (Students can check ESRB ratings at www.esrb.org.)

The generation of children depicted in the *Nintendo 1988* video is now in its late 30s/early to mid 40s. Many of them have children who are now in elementary, middle, or high school. So you can ask your parents, uncles, or aunts if there was a video game that they liked when they were growing up (let the adults know that the game has to have been made before 2000 and rated below “M” on the ESRB website).

What was the story/situation in the video game? What was the objective (or objectives)? What was the gameplay? Why did people like this game?

Make a slide with an image of the game and share your findings with the class.

Note for Teachers: At the end of Part 3 there is a debate activity about the issue of “aggression and violence in video games and other forms of media.” In this debate activity, students will explore misunderstandings that many critiques and defenses of video games have about this complex issue. This will help students see the many nuances of this complex issue that are often not discussed, so that they can approach their own media use with more discernment.

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

Lesson 2

Why Do We Play Games?

(1-2 hrs depending on class size and student engagement; includes 1 activity)

Script

Watching the video on Nintendo and researching video games from the past shows that the popularity of video games transcends this current moment and goes back to the beginning of video game history. In order to more fully answer the question of why video games are so popular, you are going to have to learn more about your humanity.

Let's start with this question: Why do we play games? Here we are referring to video games, sports, and all other games.

Allow for responses. Record responses for use later in the lessons.

Many scientists have asked the question, "Why do we play?" Is there any reason for it other than the fact that it is just fun? And we're not the only species that plays. Elephants, lions, dolphins, pigs, dogs, mice – from the largest to the smallest – all mammals play. Many birds play, and there is evidence that turtles and fish can play. Let's watch some examples of animals playing.

Show Slide 8 (Video of Puppy and Pig Playing)



Is there anything that stood out to you in this video? Anything you noticed?

Why do you think so many animals spend so much time playing?

Allow for responses.

Return to script

Let's watch more examples of animals playing.

Show Slide 9 (Video of Elephants Playing)



Allow students to share observations and thoughts they had from watching the video.

In this video you see how play is very important for the development of elephants. Some of the games they play strengthen their trunks. These games also improve their ability to use their trunks to grab things and pick things up. These games can also help them build social bonds.

What do you think this next animal is learning from playing?

Show Slide 10 (Video of Weasel Playing)



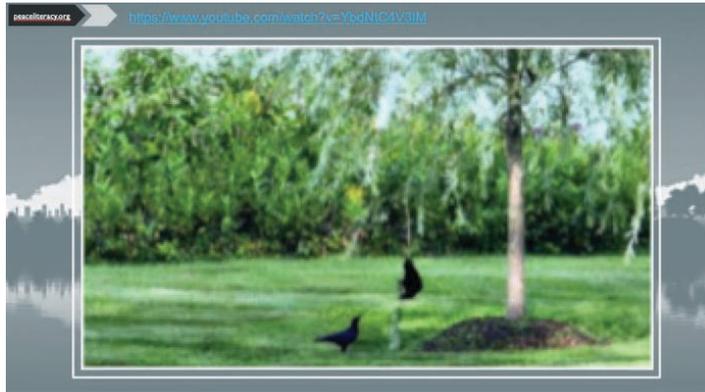
Play video up to 52 second mark.

Allow students to share observations and thoughts they had from watching the video.

Return to script

Next, we're going to watch a video of crows playing. Watch how the crows interact with each other. Also watch how they observe each other, and how they evolve the game.

Show Slide 11 (Video of Crows Playing)



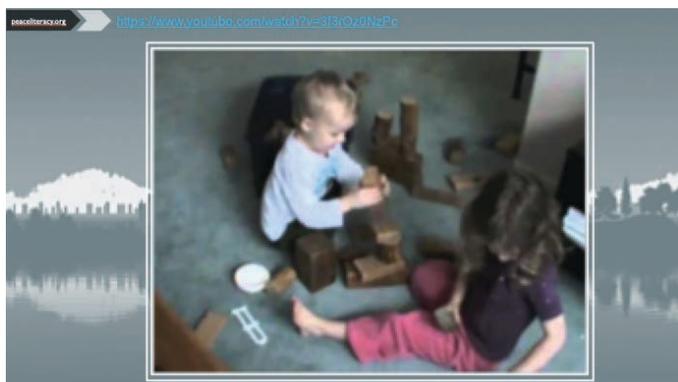
Play video up to 2 minute and 28 second mark.

Allow students to share observations and thoughts they had from watching the video.

The animals in these videos are strengthening their muscles, practicing coordination, learning various skills (including social skills), and getting other positive benefits out of their play beyond simple enjoyment.

Now watch this pair of young children playing with blocks. One of the block towers is going to fall. Watch how each child responds. How does the grandmother respond? What are the children learning from this kind of play and from their interactions with each other?

Show Slide 12 (Video of Children Playing with Blocks)



Play video up to the 2 minute and 20 second mark.

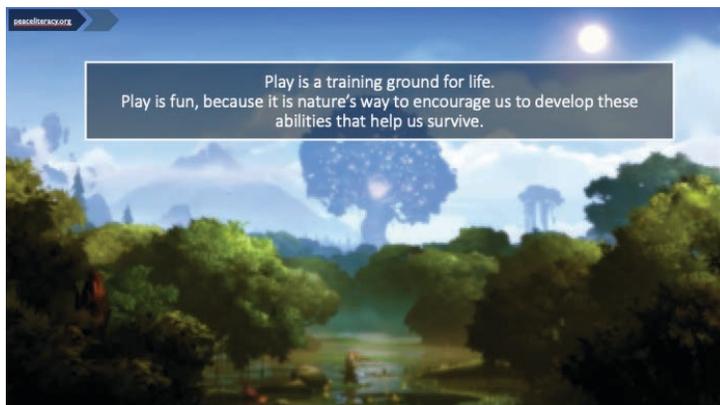
Allow students to share observations and thoughts they had from watching the video.

Did you play with blocks as a young child? What are some other games that young children like to play?

Allow for responses.

Children around the world play similar games. When we play, we can develop our coordination, dexterity, and balance. We can also develop social skills and bond with others, and we can develop abilities such as strategic thinking and creativity. This drive to play is strong in early childhood, and it can go well beyond early childhood, since many adolescents and adults can enjoy playing games such as sports, video games, tabletop games (which include board games and card games), or puzzle games.

Show Slide 13 (*Play is a Training Ground for Life*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud: "Play is a training ground for life. Play is fun, because it is nature's way to encourage us to develop these abilities that help us survive."

This next video shows some of the harsh conditions that our early ancestors had to survive in and how incredible the human odyssey has been.

Show Slide 14 (*Video "Our Human Odyssey"*)



Return to script

Over thousands of years, humans honed basic survival abilities, and practiced those survival abilities in play and in organized games such as sports. What do you think some of those survival abilities might be?

Allow for responses.

Show Slide 15 (*List of Nine Survival Abilities in Games*)



Here is a list of nine basic survival abilities that our early ancestors used to survive. Human survival depended on many abilities woven together, which were complex processes needing much training (learning and practice) to do well. The *fun* that we feel when playing games is nature's way of motivating us to practice these abilities over and over, and encouraging us to *embrace struggle* so that we can improve our abilities.

In **Part 2 *The Stars of Struggle, Training, Truth, and Strategy*** we discussed how struggle can be fun. Play is an example where struggle feels fun.

Show Slide 16 (Basketball)



All games stimulate at least one of these nine survival abilities.

For example, playing basketball won't necessarily help you survive in the wilderness, but basketball stimulates the ability to hit a target.

Basketball also stimulates cooperation, social interaction and bonding, communication, strategic thinking, and physical prowess.

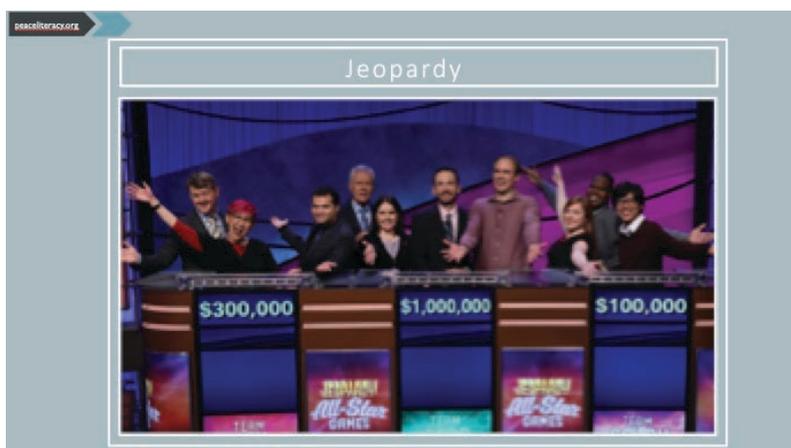
These abilities helped our early ancestors survive in the wilderness.

Show Slide 17 (Chess)



Playing chess won't necessarily help you survive in the wilderness, but chess stimulates strategic thinking, which was a crucial survival ability that our early ancestors needed in the wilderness.

Show Slide 18 (Jeopardy)



Playing a trivia game such as *Jeopardy* won't necessarily help you survive in the wilderness, but *Jeopardy* stimulates knowledge, which was a crucial survival ability that our early ancestors needed in the wilderness.

Show Slide 19 (Candy)

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Games Have a Dual Nature:
They can be a training ground for life and they can also be like candy

- Candy stimulates something that was associated with our ancestors' survival in the wilderness, which was *sweetness*. In nature, sweet fruit contains a lot of nutrients that helped our ancestors survive.
- Similarly, modern games stimulate abilities that were associated with our ancestors' survival in the wilderness. In this way, modern games can be compared to candy.
- The skills we learn in these games don't necessarily relate to surviving in the wilderness, but these games can stimulate these survival abilities, similar to how candy stimulates the sensation of sweetness.

Read or have one or more students read the slide out loud.

In what ways are games different from life?

Allow for responses.

Note for Teachers: These nine survival abilities are discussed in much greater depth in chapter seven of *The Cosmic Ocean* (Chappell, 2015). It is important to tell students that “Hitting a target” in terms of throwing can be defensive as well as offensive, and is a common form of posturing. Please e-mail us if you would like information and videos about how “hitting a target” most likely started out as a defensive rather than offensive human ability. Although these nine survival abilities can overlap, “social interaction and bonding” is listed as a separate category from “cooperation,” because a children’s game such as *Candy Land* can stimulate social interaction and bonding, even though it is a competitive rather than cooperative game. For very young children, *Candy Land* can also stimulate communication, along with the dexterity (an aspect of physical prowess) needed to pick the cards and move the pieces. If a rule change is implemented that allows children to pick two cards and choose which one they want to use, this can stimulate strategic thinking.

Activity: What Game Do You Like? (Think, Pair, Share)

1. Think of a game that you like. It could be a sport, video game, board game, card game, or any game such as wall-ball, foursquare, or jump rope. Pair up and discuss which survival abilities are stimulated by the game you like, along with the game your partner likes. Make a list of the survival abilities you come up with.
2. In your pair, imagine trying to play your game without one of the abilities you listed. For example, imagine playing soccer with great speed and agility (physical prowess), but without cooperation. What would that do to the game?
3. You and your partner make slides that present your games to the class, and that list the abilities needed for each of your games. Be prepared to discuss how missing any one of those abilities would affect the game and your ability to play.

End of lesson 2

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

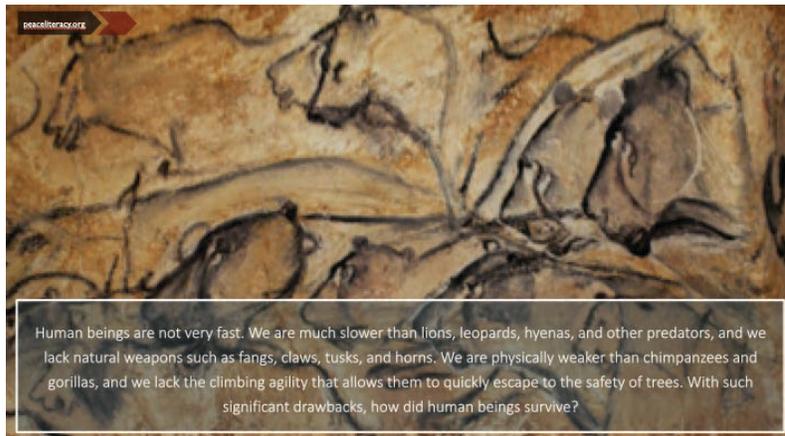
Lesson 3

The Power of Community / Non-Physical Needs

(1-2 hrs depending on class size and student engagement; includes 1 activity)

Script

Show Slide 20 (Picture of Cave Painting)

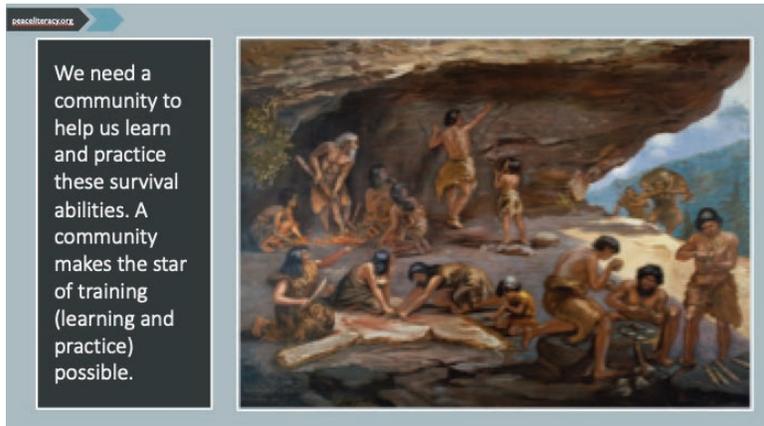


Read or have a student read the slide out loud: “Human beings are not very fast. We are much slower than lions, leopards, hyenas, and other predators, and we lack natural weapons such as fangs, claws, tusks, and horns. We are physically weaker than chimpanzees and gorillas, and we lack the climbing agility that allows them to quickly escape to the safety of trees. With such significant drawbacks, how did human beings survive?”

The video we watched about the Human Odyssey said that “the odds were against” our survival as a species.

Given what we’ve talked about so far, how important was living in a community for developing these survival abilities and for human survival overall? Explain your thinking. *Allow for responses. This question is explored further in the next slide.*

Show Slide 21 (Picture of Community)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“We need a community to help us learn and practice these survival abilities. A community makes the star of training (learning and practice) possible.”

What are things that you have learned from other humans? How many things can you list?

Allow for responses.

What are the benefits of learning from community members beyond your immediate family? What would be the drawbacks if the *only* people available to teach you were your immediate family members?

Allow for responses.

The **power of community** unlocks our **endless capacity to learn and practice** (the star of training), along with our **endless capacity to cooperate in order to overcome struggle**.

You can write this sentence on chart paper or on a white board for emphasis, and for students to refer back to when discussing the following questions.

How can our human capacity to learn and practice be considered endless? What are examples?

Allow for responses.

How can our human capacity to cooperate be considered endless? What are examples?

Allow for responses.

Why is a community necessary for making these endless capacities possible?

Allow for responses.

The power of community, along with the power of learning, practice, and cooperation, were essential for our ancestors being able to survive in the harshest conditions.

Note for Teachers: These questions can be used to strengthen students' muscle of appreciation for their community members in their school and beyond. Increased appreciation enables students to have a stronger sense of stewardship toward their community. As we discuss in the curriculum on *The Muscles of Metis/The Muscles of Our Humanity*, stewardship is the highest expression of appreciation, since not taking the gifts of life for granted (and realizing that these gifts are fragile and can be easily lost if we do not behave responsibly) encourages us to care for and protect these gifts. Stewardship means having a sense of *responsibility*, and being a steward means being a *protector*.

Show Slide 22 (Picture of children with adults)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“Because our large brains take many years to fully mature, a human child remains helpless for a longer period of time than the offspring of any other organism and requires a community to further its growth and development.”

What are some physical vulnerabilities that babies and very young children have?

Allow for responses.

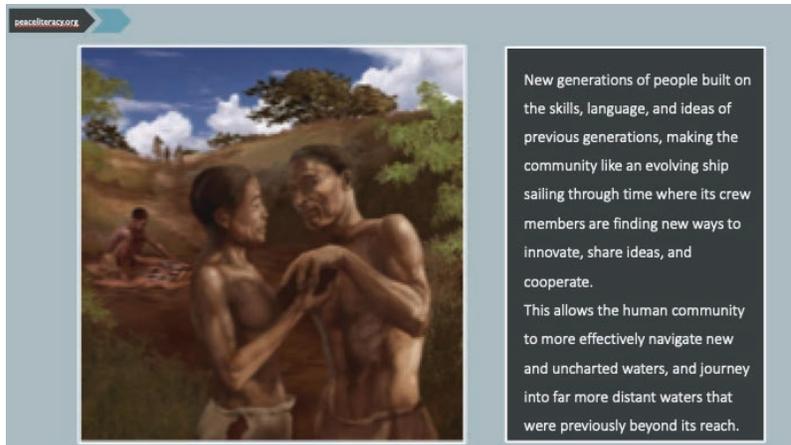
A community is a precondition for children getting their physical needs met. How does a community help children get their physical needs met? List some physical needs you have (that don't include breathing). How many of these physical needs are you able to meet *completely* on your own?

Allow for responses.

In what other ways are children vulnerable?

Allow for responses. Guide this discussion to have students list non-physical needs, which can foreshadow the discussion that begins on Slide 24 about non-physical needs. Examples of non-physical needs include belonging, self-worth, expression, purpose and meaning, and nurturing relationships (which includes the need for trust).

Show Slide 23 (Picture of Community Growth)



Read or have a student read the first text box out loud:

“New generations of people built on the skills, language, and ideas of previous generations, making the community like an evolving ship sailing through time where its crew members are finding new ways to innovate, share ideas, and cooperate.”

Based on what you just read, how is a community like an evolving ship? What are some things that communities build on and pass on to following generations? How many things can you think of?

Allow for responses.

Optional Extension Activity:

Have students watch this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5Qly-VQfbo>) about what the fruit and vegetables humans eat used to look like. This can help strengthen students’ muscle of appreciation for the luxuries we enjoy today that were built on the sweat and labor of countless people over many generations. We are able to have this conversation today because of the hard work of countless people over thousands of years, and this understanding can increase our sense of stewardship toward how we can serve those living today and future generations.

Return to script

Read or have a student read the second text box out loud:

“This allows the human community to more effectively navigate new and uncharted waters, and journey into far more distant waters that were previously beyond its reach.”

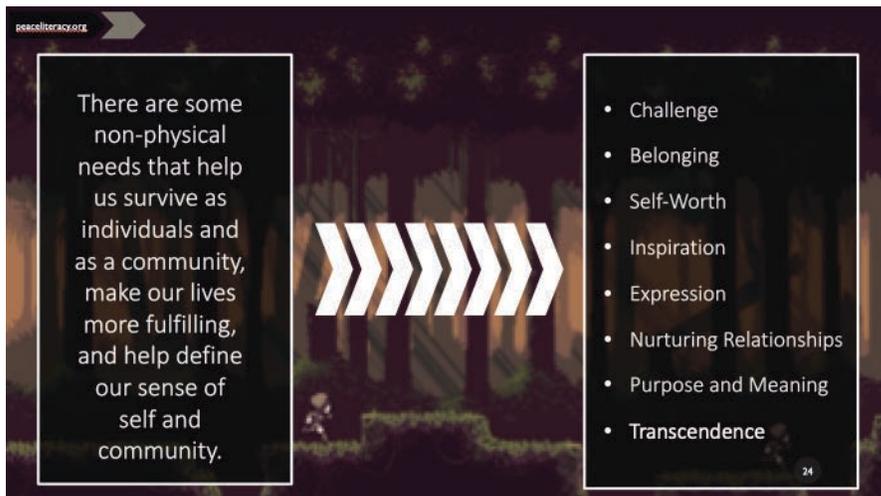
What does this statement mean to you? How do you think it relates to the world today?

Allow for responses.

As we have discussed, our survival has depended on a lot of different factors working together. Some of these factors were physical skills and abilities, and some were psychological skills and abilities.

Similarly, we have physical needs as human beings, **and we also have non-physical needs that we must attend to.**

Show Slide 24 (*List of Non-Physical Needs*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud. Briefly discuss the meaning of challenge, belonging, self-worth, inspiration, expression, nurturing relationships, purpose and meaning, and transcendence.

Note for Teachers: You can describe transcendence as “transcending our sense of time, which can involve temporarily losing our sense of time.” Tell students that although there are many examples of transcendence, one example is having fun. As the old saying reminds us, “Time flies when you’re having fun.” Our sense of fun can increase when it involves other non-physical needs such as challenge, belonging, self-worth, purpose, etc.

When purpose and fun are concerned, a study by Philip Gable and Bryan Poole published in *Psychological Science* (2012) discusses how purpose, in the form of goal-oriented action, can increase our sense of fun and transcendence.

Gable tells us: “Although we tend to believe that time flies when we’re having a good time, these studies indicate what it is about the enjoyable time that causes it to go by more quickly . . . It seems to be the goal pursuit or achievement-directed action we’re engaged in that matters. Just being content or satisfied may not make time fly, but being excited or actively pursuing a desired object can.”⁹

Note for Teachers: The book excerpts *A New Peace Paradigm: Our Human Needs and the Tangles of Trauma* and *The World of Electric Light: Understanding the Seductive Glow of Screens* (both from Chappell, forthcoming) discuss these non-physical needs in more detail and are available at peaceliteracy.org for free download. The human need for explanations is not listed on Slide 24, because explanations does not tie into games as much.

As human societies have evolved and become more complex, the way that our games are organized and celebrated, along with the way many of our games are played, has also become more complex. Watch the following sports compilation video, and reflect on how the non-physical needs we discussed can be fed by either participating in or watching these sports.

Show Slide 25: *(Sports compilation video). This is a 3 minute and 27 second clip from a longer video. We have linked the longer video in the slide notes.*



What thoughts do you have after watching this video? Take a moment to reflect.

Allow for responses.

Challenge is one of our non-physical needs. All games meet our non-physical need for challenge, because all games challenge us in some way. Would games be interesting if you didn't feel some kind of challenge? If games offered absolutely no challenge at all, would they be fun or feel rewarding? Would they be fun to watch? Would they even be

games? Can you even imagine a game that has absolutely no challenge? Explain your thinking.

Allow for responses.

You can see that as our society has become more complex, the way that our games are organized and celebrated, along with the way many of our games are played, has also become more complex. As our society has become more complex, our games have also become a way to meet our complex non-physical needs.

In addition to challenge, which other non-physical needs did you see being fed by participating in those sports and by the experience of watching those sports?

Allow for responses. You can return to Slide 24 to have our non-physical needs available when students provide responses.

Activity: Games Feeding Our Non-Physical Needs (Small Group Discussion)

Begin in small groups and be prepared to meet with the class at the end for discussion and to share findings.

1. Think of one of your favorite games (sport, video game, tabletop game, etc.) that you like to play. Why do you like that game? What motivates you to play? What non-physical needs in this list can be fed by playing that game? Based on your own experience, *in what ways* can this game help feed those non-physical needs? For example, *in what ways* can this game be challenging, or *in what ways* can it foster a sense of belonging? Record your findings to share with the class.
2. Why do people like to watch other people play sports or esports? What draws them to watch other people exercise their skills and overcome challenge? What non-physical needs in this list can be fed by watching others play sports or esports? *In what ways* can these non-physical needs be fed by watching others play sports or esports? For example, *in what ways* can fans express themselves, or *in what ways* can sports or esports be inspiring? Record your findings to share with the class.
3. Can sports, video games, or tabletop games (which include board games and card games) build a sense of community? Can sports, video games, or tabletop games become part of our identity? Explain your thinking.
4. **Our identity is our sense of self and community.** In what ways can these non-physical needs help define people's sense of self and community, thereby forming their identity? What are examples where people's sense of self and community is based on how they feed their need for belonging, expression, self-worth, purpose and meaning, challenge, inspiration, and who is in their circle of nurturing relationships? How much of our identity is based on these non-physical needs?

Note for Teachers: If someone seeks challenge through long distance running, then part of this person's identity can be as a long distance runner. If someone seeks expression through writing, then part of this person's identity can be as a writer. If someone is inspired by *Star Wars*, then part of this person's identity can be as a *Star Wars* fan. Of course, long-distance running, writing, and *Star Wars* can also feed a variety of non-physical needs. Guide this discussion toward the realization that our identity can have many facets like a gemstone (but unlike gemstones such as ruby and diamond, our identity is a metaphorical gemstone that is alive). A person can identify as a student, sibling, long distance runner, writer, and *Star Wars* fan all at the same time. Our need for explanations, which helps form our worldview, is not listed on Slide 24, but also creates facets in our identity.

End of lesson 3

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

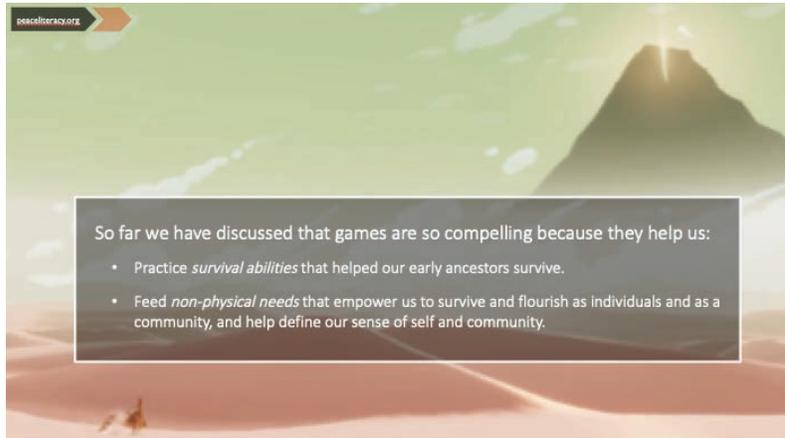
Lesson 4

Understanding Allegories

(1-2 hrs depending on class size and student engagement; includes 1 activity)

Script

Show Slide 26 (*Why Games Are Compelling*)



This is a review before we move into the discussion of allegory.

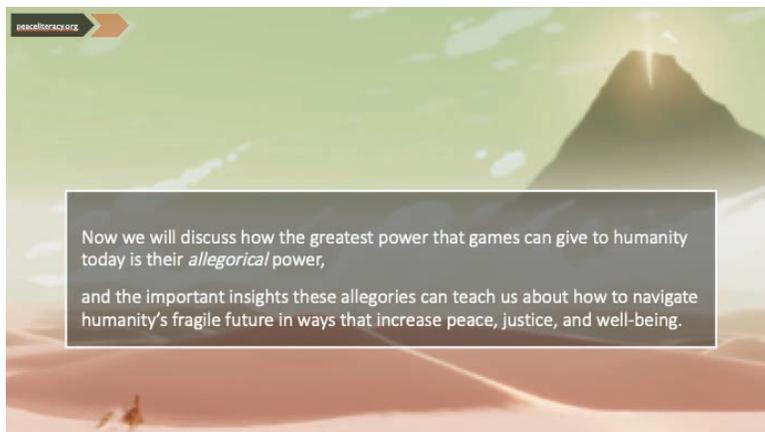
Read or have a student read the following out loud:

“So far we have discussed how games are compelling because they help us:”

“Practice *survival abilities* that helped our early ancestors survive.”

“Feed *non-physical needs* that empower us to survive and flourish as individuals and as a community, and help define our sense of self and community.”

Show Slide 27 (*The Allegorical Power of Games*)



Read or have a student read the following out loud:

“Now we will discuss how the greatest power that games can give to humanity today is their *allegorical power*,”

Click to show the next text box. Read or have a student read the text box out loud.

“and the important insights these allegories can teach us about how to navigate humanity’s fragile future in ways that increase peace, justice, and well-being.”

An allegory is a story that expresses an idea through metaphorical images.

What is a metaphor? What are examples of metaphors?

Allow for responses.

An allegory can be a verbal or written story, where words paint metaphorical images in your mind that convey a deeper meaning.

An example of a verbal or written allegory is *The Three Little Pigs*. While it is a story about three pigs and a wolf, these characters and events are metaphors for a deeper meaning.

What is the deeper meaning of this story?

Allow for responses.

The Three Little Pigs is an allegory about the importance of hard work, determination, and planning.

An allegory can also be a visual story, in the form of visual art. We are going to look at some allegorical paintings to better understand how an image can metaphorically express an idea or a set of ideas. All of the paintings are by Polish artist Pawel Kuczynski.

Show Slide 28 (*Finding Treasure in Books*)



Take a look at this painting. What do you see? What are the elements of the painting? What story could you tell based on what you are seeing?

Allow for responses.

This painting is an allegory. It is telling a kind of story and communicating an idea through metaphorical imagery: a diver, an ocean floor of cell phones, an open book, and a pearl in a book. All of the elements of this painting, when put together, are giving us a message. What idea do you think the artist is trying to communicate through the metaphorical imagery?

Allow for responses.

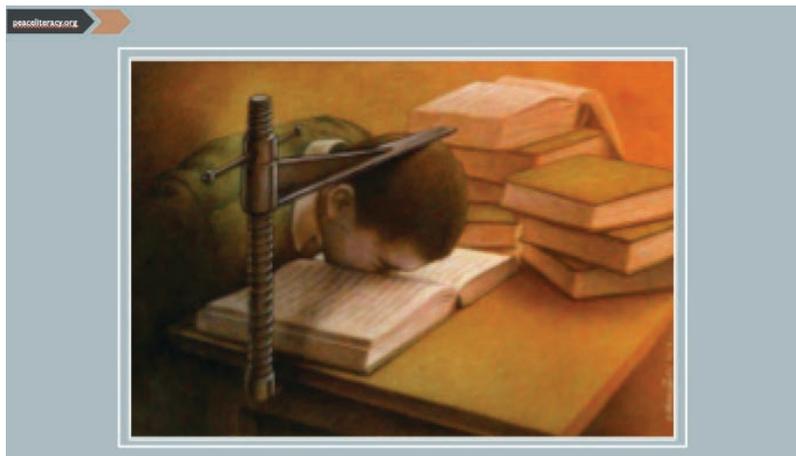
The painter seems to want to tell us that within books, there are treasures for us to find. What might those treasures be?

Allow for responses.

Books can give us treasures such as ideas, understanding, inspiration, and life lessons that help us live well.

Let's look at the next painting. What do you see? What are the elements of the painting? What story could you tell based on what you are seeing? What idea do you think the artist is trying to communicate through the metaphorical imagery?

Show Slide 29 (*Head in a vice*)



Allow for student interpretation and discussion. This image conveys the negative feelings that some students might have toward books due to many factors (such as homework, learning things that don't seem relevant to their lives, fear of failing academically, having difficulty reading, etc.). The "Finding Treasure in Books" image shows that books contain treasures, while the "Head in a Vice" image gives students the option to explore negative feelings they might have toward books (and school more broadly) and why they might feel this way. Perhaps there are students in the class who used to have negative feelings toward books, and now they feel differently. If so, what caused them to feel differently? Perhaps there are students who have always loved books for as long as they can remember. If so, why do they love books? Perhaps students can relate to both this image

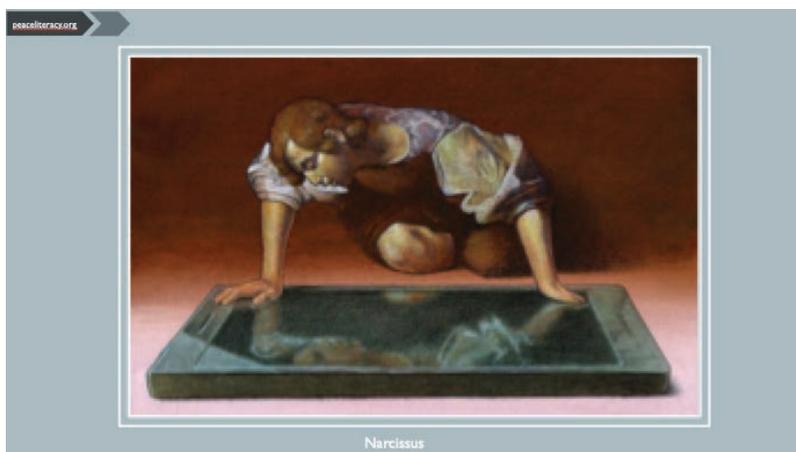
and the previous image. Maybe the books in the “Head in a Vice” image are not actually books at all, but a metaphor for the pressures of school. Maybe “Finding Treasure in Books” is a metaphor for learning that is meaningful, and “Head in a Vice” is a metaphor for learning that is not meaningful. Using these two images together invites a variety of perspectives from students. Using these two images together also shows the versatility of allegories, in terms of the range of ideas that they can express.

Show Slide 30 (Donkey with blinders)



Allow for student interpretation and discussion. You might have to explain what blinders are before showing this painting. You can ask students if any of them think that this image is depicting smartphones too negatively, or if any of them think that there is some truth to this image, which can create debate and show that students have varying opinions about smartphones.

Show Slide 31 (Narcissus Staring into a Smartphone)



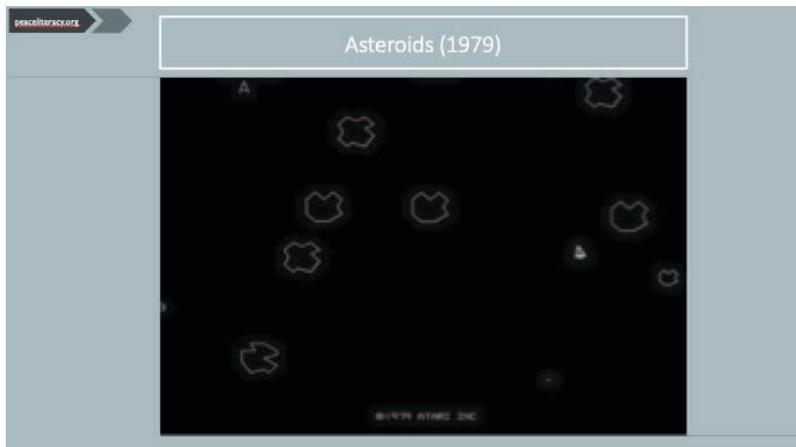
Allow for student interpretation and discussion. You might have to tell the story of Narcissus before showing this image. You can start by asking students if any of them know the story of Narcissus. Again, you can ask students if any of them think that this image is depicting smartphones too negatively, or if any of them think that there is some truth to this image, which can create debate and show that students have varying opinions about smartphones.

Return to script

These paintings show how the elements in an image can work together to create a story, in the form of an allegory, that uses metaphor to convey a deeper meaning.

As we discussed, there are verbal and written allegories such as *The Three Little Pigs*, and allegorical paintings such as Pawel Kuczynski's artwork. Next we will discuss how video games can also be interpreted as allegories that communicate important messages for all of us living today. In the following slides, we will discuss several video games before exploring the allegorical meaning of video games.

Show Slide 32 (GIF of Asteroids)



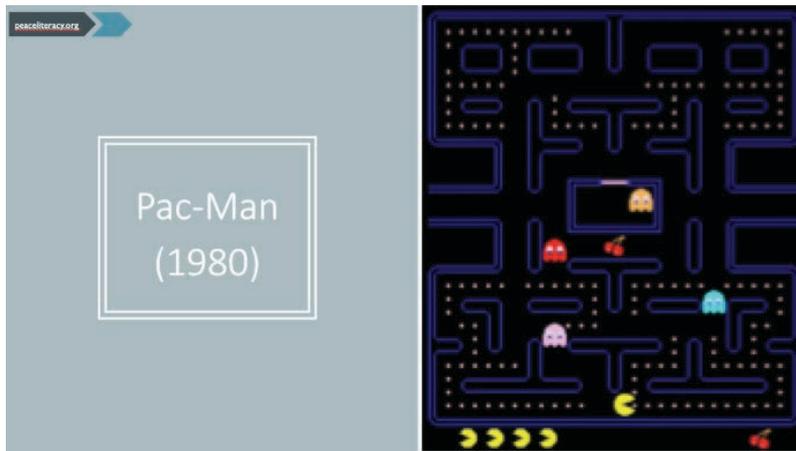
What is happening here? What do you think the gameplay is here? Have any of you ever seen this game? Have any of you ever played this game? What story could you tell based on what you are seeing?

Allow for responses.

You play as a little ship in a field of asteroids. You must destroy the asteroids while also dodging them. The asteroids are larger than you, and they outnumber you.

Let's look at another game. This next game is called *Pac-Man*. Here it is in motion.

Show Slide 33 (GIF of *Pac-Man*)



What is happening here? What do you think the gameplay is here? Have any of you ever seen this game? Have any of you ever played this game? What story could you tell based on what you are seeing?

Allow for responses.

You play as a little yellow creature named Pac-Man. The fruit gives you bonus points. Your main objective is to eat all of the white dots while trying to avoid being touched by four ghosts that are chasing you. The ghosts outnumber you four to one.

Let's look at another game. This next game is called *Galaga*. Here it is in motion.

Show Slide 34 (GIF of *Galaga*)



What is happening here? What do you think the gameplay is here? Have any of you ever seen this game? Have any of you ever played this game? What story could you tell based on what you are seeing?

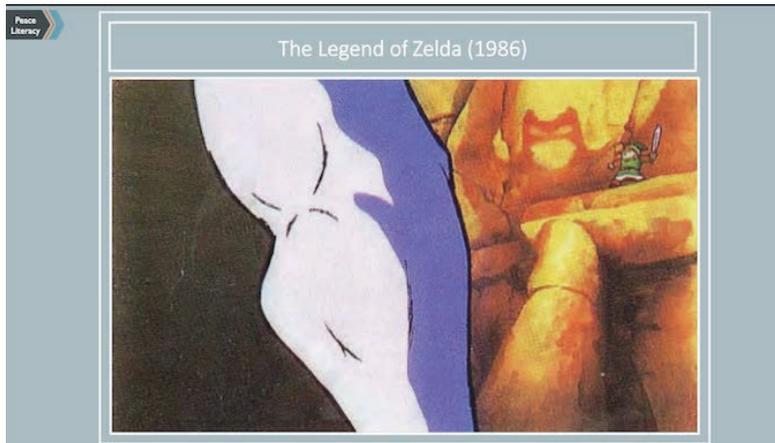
Allow for responses.

You play as a single ship fighting an entire fleet of alien ships. You are trying to shoot the alien ships while also dodging their attacks. Their attacks can destroy you or capture you. At the end of this clip, the ship that you play gets captured by the tractor beam of an alien ship. You are outnumbered many to one.

Note for Teachers: A student might bring up that you can get back your captured ship and play as two ships side by side. Even with two ships, you are still greatly outnumbered.

Let's look at another game. What you are going to see next is a picture from the game's instruction manual. Video games used to have instruction manuals. You might be able to figure out what game this is by looking at this image, even if you have never played it.

Show Slide 35 (Picture of *The Legend of Zelda*)



What do you see in this picture? What contrast can you see here? Does anyone know what game series this picture is from?

Allow for responses. The most noticeable contrast is the size difference between the tiny hero against the wall and the gigantic adversary's shadow against the wall (a student might ask if the adversary is actually tiny and only the shadow is gigantic, but in the game the adversary is much larger than the hero). The name of the game will not appear until you click to advance the slide.

Note for Teachers: You can ask students to guess what game series is being depicted in this picture, because the *Zelda* series is still very popular. If the students don't immediately recognize what game series this is, you can give them a hint by telling them that "Ganon" is the name of the final boss (last adversary you have to fight) whose calf muscle and shadow are depicted in this picture. You can give them a second hint by telling them that the name of the hero you play is "Link."

Return to script

You play as a small character named Link, who is wearing a green tunic and standing against the wall. You are facing Ganon, the most powerful adversary in the game, who is much larger than you and casting a massive shadow against the wall.

This picture is from the instructional manual of *The Legend of Zelda*, released by Nintendo in 1986, the first game in the Zelda series.

At the beginning of these lessons I asked if any of you had ever played this game or any game in the Zelda series. Here is a short gameplay clip from the first Zelda game.

Show Slide 36 (GIF of *The Legend of Zelda*)



What is happening here? What do you think the gameplay is here?

Allow for responses.

You play as a small hero named Link who must retrieve pieces of a powerful treasure known as the "Triforce" from dangerous underground labyrinths. In the labyrinth shown here, Link is facing a giant crab boss shooting fireballs, along with four statues shooting fireballs. You are outnumbered.

Let's look at another game. What you are going to see next is art for a video game called *Super Metroid*, which was released on the Super Nintendo in 1994.

Show Slide 37 (*Picture of Super Metroid*)



Have any of you ever heard of this game? Have any of you ever played this game, or any game in the Metroid series?

Allow for responses.

Click the slide to see the hero circled in the middle.

Notice how small the hero is when compared to the adversaries. Notice how the hero is greatly outnumbered.

What kind of story could this image be telling?

Allow for responses.

In this game you play as Samus Aran, a woman bounty hunter who is trying to retrieve a stolen infant creature called a Metroid from a space pirate leader named Ridley, a winged alien who is depicted on the top left of the image. Here is a short gameplay clip from *Super Metroid*.

Show Slide 38 (*GIF of Super Metroid*)



What is happening here? What do you think the gameplay is here?
Allow for responses.

You are fighting the final boss, a biomechanical creature called Mother Brain, who is much larger than you.

Let's look at one last game, and then we can discuss the allegorical themes that are shared by all of these games. This next game, *Shadow of the Colossus*, was originally released in 2005 for Playstation 2. The remastered version, which you will see here, was released in 2018 for Playstation 4.

Show Slide 39 (*Picture of Shadow of the Colossus*)



Have any of you ever seen this game? Have any of you ever played this game?
Allow for responses.

Here is a trailer for *Shadow of the Colossus*. Based on this video, try to interpret the story in the game.

Show Slide 40 (*Shadow of the Colossus Trailer*)



What do you see happening in this trailer? What do you think the gameplay is? What do you think the story is?
Allow for responses.

In this game you have to find and defeat the sixteen giant Colossi in order to have your wish granted. Each Colossus has its own strengths and weaknesses that you have to discover as you fight them. And as the name suggests, they are massive.

Looking back at *Asteroids*, *Pac-Man*, *Galaga*, *The Legend of Zelda*, *Super Metroid*, and *Shadow of the Colossus*, can you see any similar themes that all of these games have?
Allow for responses.

In each of these games you are facing enormous struggle. Think of the Star of Struggle from the lessons in Part 2, and how each of these games represents that star.

In *Asteroids* you are a tiny ship surrounded by many large asteroids. You are greatly outnumbered.

In *Pac-Man* you are being chased by four ghosts. Again, you are outnumbered.

In *Galaga* you are facing a large fleet of enemy ships. Yet again, you are outnumbered.

In *The Legend of Zelda*, *Super Metroid*, and *Shadow of the Colossus*, you are fighting giants, and these giants outnumber you.

In each of these video games, you play as a character facing enormous struggle. The odds seem greatly against your favor. This theme of facing enormous struggle can be found in countless video games.

These are the elements of the allegory. What is its deeper meaning? What is it representing for us?

Allow for responses.

Video games can be seen as an allegory for the struggles of life, which are represented metaphorically as the Star of Struggle in the lessons in Part 2. At times in our life, we can feel like the tiny ship in *Asteroids* being outnumbered by large asteroids and facing enormous struggle. We can feel like the character Pac-Man being chased by ghosts that outnumber us. We can feel like Link in *The Legend of Zelda* facing adversaries that are larger than us and outnumber us. These adversaries can be metaphors for any kind of struggle that we might face in life. For example, the asteroid field in *Asteroids* could represent math homework that involves a lot of difficult problems, the struggles of learning to read, a challenging situation involving people, a global problem that seems intimidating and overwhelming, and countless other scenarios.

In your ship's log, write about a situation in your life where you felt like the main character in one of these video games facing an immense struggle.

Allow time for writing.

Return to script

Video games are not just an allegory for the struggles of life, but also a particular kind of struggle that we can call the *underdog struggle*.

What is an underdog? What is an underdog struggle?

Allow for responses.

An underdog struggle is one where a person (or group) is facing seemingly impossible odds. At first glance, it seems like the person (or group) has no chance of succeeding. The story of David and Goliath is an example of an underdog struggle. The civil rights movement is also an example of an underdog struggle. All of the video games that we have explored could be allegories for the relatively tiny civil rights movement facing the much larger and more numerous adversaries that consisted of massive racist systems and the widespread root causes beneath these racist systems. Underdog struggles often feel *epic*, in terms of seeming grand, perilous, and significant.

Activity: Underdog Struggles (Paired Research Project)

If you remember back to the video about our human odyssey, the narrator starts by saying, "It shouldn't have happened. That homo sapiens, our species, survived. For 200,000 years, the odds were against us." Our species faced and overcame seemingly impossible odds. Let's quickly review. How did we survive? What were the elements that helped us meet and overcome the struggles we faced?

Allow for responses. To review, make sure that students reference all of the following points covered so far in Part 3:

1. *Our nine survival abilities*
2. *Our nine non-physical needs*
3. *The power of community that unlocks our endless capacity to learn and practice (the star of training) and our endless capacity to cooperate in order to overcome struggle*
4. *How the human community is like an evolving ship where its crew members are finding new ways to innovate, share ideas, and cooperate.*

So embedded in the human journey is a history of facing seemingly impossible odds. Is it any wonder why we have created games where we practice facing enormous struggle?

The underdog struggle is part of the human journey that is depicted not only in video games, but also in many other forms of media such as movies, books, and television shows.

Get in pairs and choose an underdog struggle from a story you are familiar with. This could be a story from a movie, book, television show, etc. Create a slide where you present the following to the class. No more than two pairs of students can choose the same story.

1. What is the hero (or heroes) struggling against?
2. What are their disadvantages?
3. How do they make up for these disadvantages?
4. Optional Extension Question: Are the heroes able to turn these disadvantages into strengths? In what ways?

End of lesson 4

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

Lesson 5

The Storms in Video Games and the Storms of Life

(1-2 hrs depending on class size and student engagement; includes 1 activity)

Script

Show Slide 41 (Video Games as Storms)



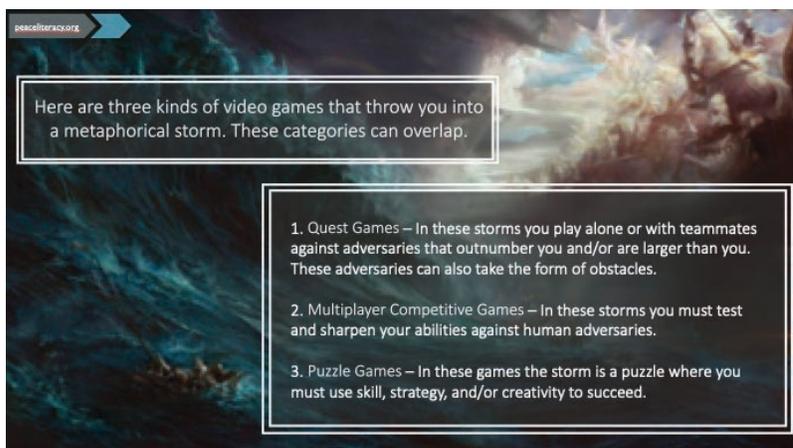
Read or have a student read the following text boxes out loud:

“In every video game, you are thrown into a storm, into a struggle, into a challenge.”

“Video games are allegories for the storms, struggles, and challenges of life.”

As we discussed earlier, at times these storms can seem like impossible odds.

Show Slide 42 (The Three Kinds of Video Games)



There are three kinds of video games that throw you into a metaphorical storm symbolizing the struggles and challenges of life. These categories can overlap.

Read or have a student read these three categories out loud:

“1. Quest Games – In these storms you play alone or with teammates against adversaries who outnumber you and/or are larger than you. These adversaries can also take the form of obstacles.”

“2. Multiplayer Competitive Games – In these storms you must test and sharpen your abilities against human adversaries.”

“3. Puzzle Games – In these games the storm is a puzzle where you must use skill, strategy, and/or creativity to succeed.”

Can you think of a video game that fits into each one of these categories? A single video game can also fit into multiple categories.

Allow for responses.

Note for Teachers: “Open-world games” such as *Minecraft* can combine all three categories. If a student brings up an open-world game (which allows you to choose from a variety of challenges and objectives) and asks what category it fits into, you can ask them to think of the challenges and objectives that they can choose from in the game as *quests*. You can also ask them if the open-world game has any *puzzles*, and if there is a *competitive multiplayer element*. If a game doesn’t involve some kind of challenge and has no objectives at all, then it is questionable if it is even a game. It could instead be a simulation. Not all games have win conditions, since there are games that cannot be “beaten” in the traditional sense. But games typically need to have a lose condition that involves not overcoming the challenge that is presented.

Show Slide 43 (*Video Games and the Constellation of Peace*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“We need the four stars in the Constellation of Peace to overcome the storms in video games. Video games are an allegory for the importance of embracing struggle and harnessing the power of training, truth, and strategy.”

To be successful in video games, you need to embrace struggle, acquire training, pursue truth, and choose strategy. Video games are not just an allegory for the storms of life and seemingly impossible odds, but they are also an allegory for what you need to succeed when facing the storms of life and seemingly impossible odds. If you are not embracing struggle, acquiring training (by strengthening your abilities through learning and practice), pursuing truth (by increasing your understanding), and choosing strategy (by thinking strategically rather than thoughtlessly), you’re not going to improve at the video game. This can also apply to all games such as sports and tabletop games.

Note for Teachers: Discuss the following with students (you can ask for examples from students’ life experiences). In sports the training typically consists of “going to practice,” where a coach helps players learn and practice. Players can also have practice sessions on their own, such as a basketball player practicing dribbling or shooting while alone. When people want to perform as a group in an art such as music, dance, or acting, they also “go to practice” (rehearsal is one kind of learning and practice). When video games are concerned, in quest games and puzzle games the training typically consists of the levels becoming more difficult as you progress through the game. The first levels of quest games and puzzle games can help you learn and practice your abilities so that you are prepared for the harder levels later in the game. When multiplayer competitive games are concerned, being a skilled player requires some degree of intentional learning and practice. The best e-sports players spend many hours training, even exceeding the amount of time spent training in a traditional sport.

Return to script

Think back to Activity 2, where you named a game that you like and listed what survival abilities were stimulated by this game. To get better at this game, you need every star in the Constellation of Peace.

What happens if you don’t *embrace struggle*, you run away from the challenge of the game, and you just don’t play the game?

Allow for responses.

What happens if you don’t *acquire training* (learning and practice) and you don’t develop your skills? What happens if you are playing soccer in middle school, and you have the same skill-level that you had when playing soccer in kindergarten?

Allow for responses.

What happens if you don't pursue truth by increasing your understanding of the game? What happens if you lack an accurate understanding of the game (the mechanics, the rules, the underlying principles, the secrets in the game, etc.)? What kind of player would you be?

Allow for responses.

What happens if you don't choose strategy? What happens if you play thoughtlessly rather than strategically?

Allow for responses.

Video games are not only an allegory for the storms, struggles, and challenges of life.

They are also an allegory for the importance of all four stars in the Constellation of Peace (struggle, training, truth, and strategy) for maximizing our ability to overcome the storms, struggles, and challenges of life.

You can use the ideals of embracing struggle, acquiring training, pursuing truth, and choosing strategy not only in life, but also when playing video games. In addition to the four stars in the Constellation of Peace, what other ideals could guide you when playing video games, especially multiplayer video games? Could any of the ideals from your Constellation of You guide you when playing multiplayer video games?

Allow for responses.

Note for Teachers: In addition to the four stars in the Constellation of Peace, other ideals that could guide people when playing multiplayer video games include: fair play, respect, and being kind to other players (such as helping teach new players how to play the game).

These lessons can help students think of ideals when they play video games, and also practice those ideals when they play video games. Video games will increasingly transition into virtual reality/augmented reality and evolve into new social media platforms. Because these virtual reality/augmented reality social media platforms will increase the ways in which people can interact with each other, harnessing the power of ideals to navigate our interactions with others will become even more important.

Show Slide 44 (*The Storms of Life*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“The four stars in the Constellation of Peace are important for navigating the storms in video games. These four stars are even more important for navigating the storms of life.”

Refer back to the storms of life that students listed in Part 1, or have students do another brainstorming session to come up with storms of life.

Activity: The Storms in Video Games vs. The Storms of Life (Classroom Discussion)

Why are the storms in video games easier than the storms of life? Why might people prefer the storms in video games to the storms of life?

In small groups, come up with a list of reasons why people might prefer the storms in video games to the storms of life.

Note for Teachers: Here is a sample list that previous students have come up with, which you can reference. After each item, we have shared how Peace Literacy addresses the issues that students have raised.

- In video games we are given the tools needed to succeed. (Peace Literacy is a way to give people tools to help them succeed in life.)
- In life the enemy is not as clear as the enemy in video games. (Peace Literacy helps us identify root causes of problems, which are our true adversaries.)

- In video games we are given an instruction manual or a tutorial. (Peace Literacy gives us guidance for living, such as helping us develop adult idealism that can guide us through struggle.)
- In video games we have multiple lives, so if we die we can play again with an extra life. (The stakes are much higher in life than in video games, which makes the Peace Literacy skills that empower us to survive and thrive as individuals and as communities even more important.)
- In video games we deal with NPCs (non-player characters), whereas in the storms of life we have to deal with real people, who are far more complex than NPCs. (Peace Literacy helps us interact with real people in healthier ways.)
- There are cheat codes in many video games, but no cheat codes in life. (Life often requires the harder path where there are no cheat codes. Peace Literacy can equip us to navigate the harder paths of life.)
- We have more control in video games. (We have less control in life, which makes us far more vulnerable in life. Peace Literacy can equip us to deal more effectively with this vulnerability.)
- We have cool powers in video games. (We have cool human powers such as empathy, appreciation, curiosity, imagination, hope, reason, cooperation, the ability to overcome seemingly impossible odds, conscience that can lead to incredible acts of courage, etc. Peace Literacy helps us strengthen and use these human powers in a wide variety of situations.)
- We can take a break in video games. We cannot take a break from life itself. (Peace Literacy can equip us with mental habits that increase our psychological strength and stamina. Peace Literacy can also strengthen our compassion so that we can better care for others and strengthen our self-compassion so that we can better care for ourselves.)
- In video games we can start over. (Again, the stakes are much higher in life than in video games, which makes Peace Literacy even more important.)

Refer back to the last slide (Slide 44 The Storms of Life) and emphasize that this activity shows why the four stars in the Constellation of Peace are even more important for navigating the storms of life than the storms in video games.

Every time a student lists an example where they are less vulnerable in video games than in life, explain that our greater vulnerability in life should encourage us to feel more compassion for others and for ourselves.

Return to script

Through Peace Literacy we are teaching you skills, frameworks, and capacities to help bridge this gap between the greater sense of power that people experience in video games than in life.

Peace Literacy skills, frameworks, and capacities can strengthen our sense of power in life by increasing our competency in our humanity, increasing our ability to navigate and overcome the storms of life, and helping us develop ourselves as human beings. We have to level up in life, just like we have to level up in video games.

End of lesson 5

Peace Literacy Curriculum: The Constellation of Peace

Part 3 The Allegory of Video Games

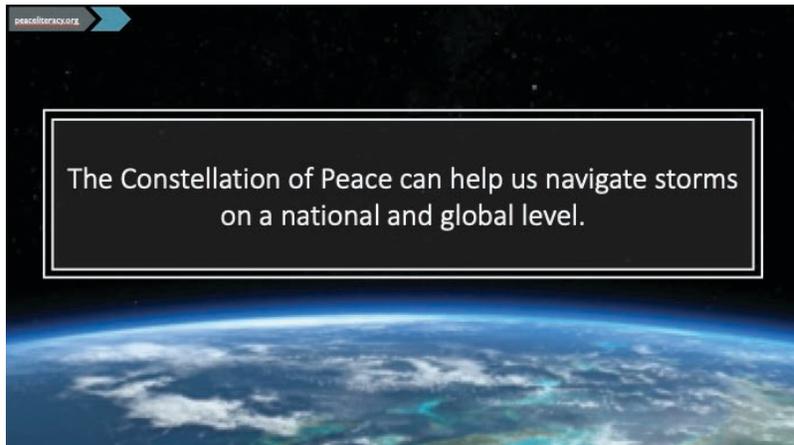
Lesson 6

Human Survival / Inner World

(1-2 hrs depending on class size and student engagement; includes 1 activity)

Script

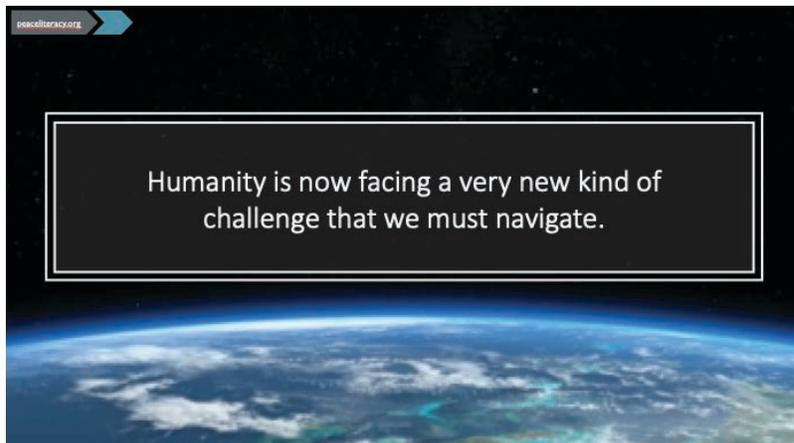
Show Slide 45 (*National and Global Storms*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“The Constellation of Peace can help us navigate storms on a national and global level.”

Show Slide 46 (*A Very New Kind of Challenge*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“Humanity is now facing a very new kind of challenge that we must navigate.”

Show Slide 47 (*Surfing through waste*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud: “The human journey has reached a point where we have become our own greatest threat to our survival.”

How have we become our own greatest threat to our survival?

Allow for responses.

Note for Teachers: Students will likely cite climate change and nuclear weapons as answers to this question. Students are probably more familiar with the threat of climate change than nuclear weapons. You can tie in a lesson on climate change or nuclear weapons to reinforce and expand this discussion.

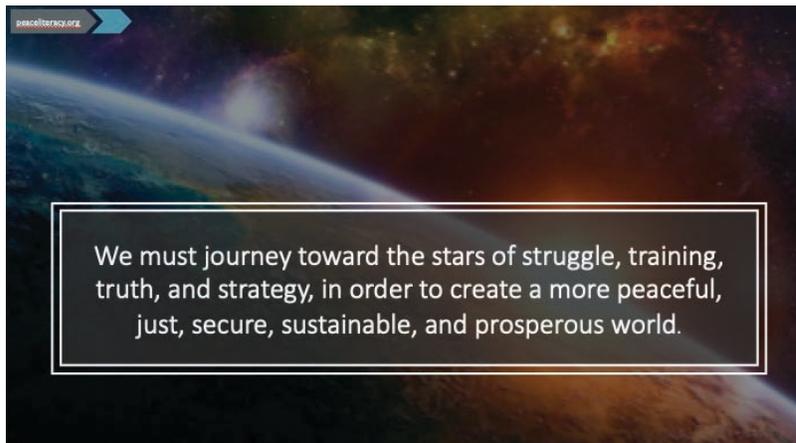
Let’s look again at the list of nine survival abilities. Which of these nine are most needed to create and implement solutions for climate change?

Allow for responses.

Given that the human journey has reached a point where we have become our own greatest threat to our survival, do you think that any of these nine survival abilities are even more important for our survival today than they were for human survival thirty thousand years ago? If so, which ones?

Allow for responses.

Show Slide 48 (*We must journey toward the stars . . .*)

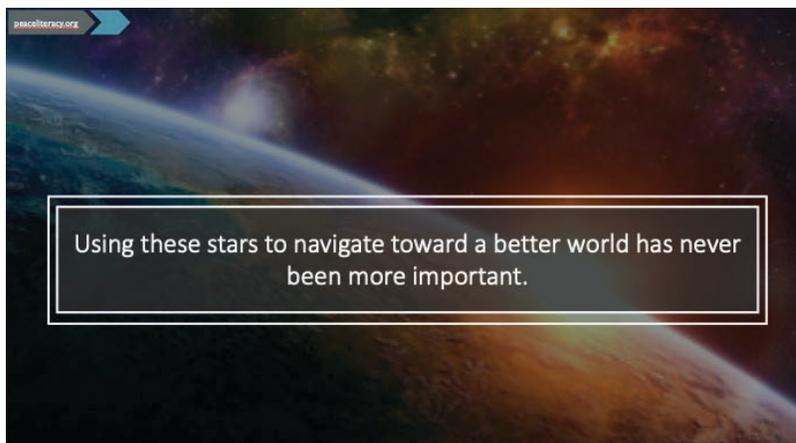


Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“We must journey toward the stars of struggle, training, truth, and strategy in order to create a more peaceful, just, secure, sustainable, and prosperous world.”

If we aren’t journeying toward these stars as individuals or as a society, then we aren’t journeying toward peace that is realistic, resilient, and sustainable.

Show Slide 49 (*Importance*)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud: “Using these stars to navigate toward a better world has never been more important.”

Now we will move from discussing our outer world to discussing our inner world.

Understanding and exploring our inner world can strengthen our capacity to make positive changes in our outer world.

Show Slide 50 (Inner World)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud:

“Video games can be allegories not only for the challenging journey through our outer world, but also for the challenging journey through our inner world—our psyche.”

Note for Teachers: Slides 50 through 52 show that many video games are a modern expression of the ancient mythological theme of entering a dark and dangerous place in order to retrieve a great treasure. In the following quote, mythologist Grant Voth explains how this ancient mythological theme is an allegory for exploring our inner world and facing our fears, and that the great treasure is a metaphor for the increased wisdom and inner strength that we gain from courageously exploring our inner world:

The underworld or the dragon or the monster that later heroes [in mythology] will have to face is really one’s own fear, which has to be mastered in order to achieve individuation [personal growth] . . . In all myths the hero’s quest is a kind of symbolic drama of what is really an inner conflict and it’s valid in any age for men and women alike . . .

This is what Jung says about this particular kind of reading [of mythology]: “In myths the hero is the one who conquers the dragon, not the one who is devoured by it. Also he is no hero who never met the dragon or who, if he once saw it, declared afterwards that he saw nothing. Equally, only one who has risked the fight with the dragon and is not overcome by it wins the hoard, the treasure hard to attain. He alone has a genuine claim to self-confidence, for he has faced the dark ground of himself, and has thereby gained himself.

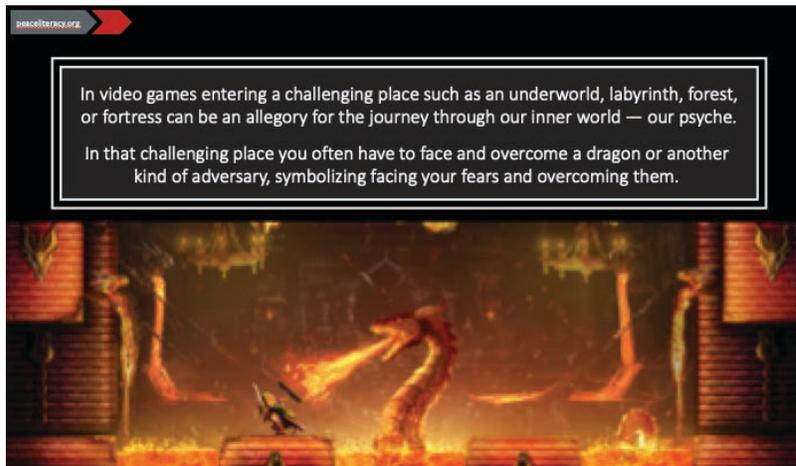
This experience gives him faith and trust . . . For everything that menaced him from inside has been made his own . . . ”

[According to Joseph Campbell] the journey taken by the hero [in mythology] is not a geographic or literal one, but it’s rather a psychological journey. It’s a quest not into the world out there, but into the world [within us], specifically a quest into one’s own unconscious. It’s in the unconscious, Campbell says, that we meet the dragons and demons that we have to fight and slay, we meet the goddess, and we have to become reconciled with our father. All of this is an internal thing. It happens within ourselves. The boon that one brings back from a Campbell quest is an enhanced awareness of one’s self, making life richer, and also we bring back an enhanced understanding of how all psyches work, so that we can bring back enlightenment both for the individual and for the community.¹⁰

You can share the preceding quote, or ideas from the preceding quote, with students.

You can make connections for students between this material and other units they might be studying on **mythology**.

Show Slide 51 (Dragon)



Read or have a student read the first text box out loud:

“In video games entering a challenging place such as an underworld, labyrinth, forest, or fortress can be an allegory for the journey through our inner world – our psyche.”

Click to make the second text box appear, then read or have a student read it out loud: “In that challenging place you often have to face and overcome a dragon or another kind of adversary, symbolizing facing your fears and overcoming them.”

Can you think of video games, movies, television shows, or books where you have seen this theme of a hero entering a challenging place such as an underworld, labyrinth, forest, fortress—or another kind of challenging place—and having to face and overcome an adversary?

Allow for responses.

This challenging place is often dark and dangerous. What kind of challenging place did the hero have to enter? What kind of adversary did the hero have to face and overcome?

Allow for responses.

NOTE FOR TEACHERS: To mention just a few among countless examples, the theme of entering a dark and dangerous place (away from the sun, where the lighting is not the best) and facing an adversary can be seen in films such as all three *Star Wars* trilogies, *The Lord of the Rings* book and film trilogy, the *Harry Potter* book and film series, *Frozen 2* (the scene in the dark ocean), *Wonder Woman* (entering the enemy base at night that leads to the last battle with Ares) the *Lion King* cartoon (the last battle), the *Aladdin* cartoon (the last battle), *The Little Mermaid* cartoon (the last battle), *Terminator 2* (the dark and dangerous steelmill at the end), *Aliens*, and *Black Panther* (the last fight between Black Panther and Killmonger in the dark underground cavern where the dangerous trains are passing by). Some of these movies (*Terminator 2* and *Aliens*) are rated R and not appropriate to discuss with young students, but we are sharing these examples with you so that you can see how common this theme is.

Return to script

When the hero enters a challenging place, which is often dark and dangerous, this can be a metaphor for facing and overcoming fears within ourselves. What is meant by the term “fears within ourselves”? This means fears that have more to do with our inner world than our outer world. What are some fears that people might have to face within themselves?

Allow for responses.

Note for Teachers: Examples of fears we can have that have more to do with our inner world than our outer world include the fear of public speaking, the fear of admitting to a mistake or apologizing, the fear of changing how we think, the fear of being honest with ourselves, the fear of confronting and healing our trauma, the fear of recognizing the problems occurring around the world, and the fear of failing that can make us not want to try.

How can the fears within us seem like a dragon?

Allow for responses.

Reread the text on the last slide (Slide 51).

“In video games entering a challenging place such as an underworld, labyrinth, forest, or fortress can be an allegory for the journey through our inner world – our psyche.”

“In that challenging place you often have to face and overcome a dragon or another kind of adversary, symbolizing facing your fears and overcoming them.”

To illustrate the points on this slide, here is a clip from a video game called *Ori and the Blind Forest*, where you play as a small creature named Ori. In this clip, Ori is in a challenging place—a dark forest—and facing an enormous owl as an adversary.

Show Slide 52 (*Ori and the Blind Forest Video Clip*)



Does anyone have any thoughts on this video that they would like to share?

Allow for responses.

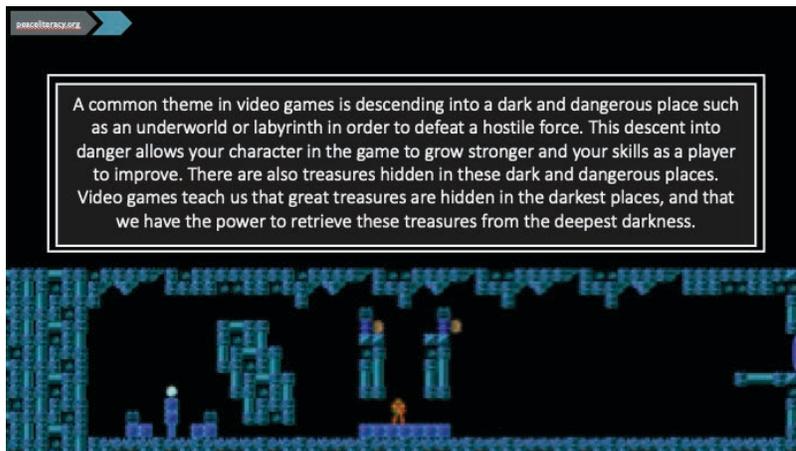
Note for Teachers: You can mention the massive size difference between Ori and the owl, which is a theme from the video games discussed earlier.

What did you see here? What struggles of life could this represent? What could cause someone to feel like Ori in this scene?

Allow for responses.

Allegories like this that convey mythological themes can help us connect to our fears in ways that make these fears more approachable and understandable. There may be times in our lives when we have felt like Ori in this scene. Ori survives this fall and afterward must learn to triumph against these seemingly impossible odds.

Show Slide 53 (Great Treasures)



Read or have a student read the slide out loud: "A common theme in video games is descending into a dark and dangerous place such as an underworld or labyrinth in order to defeat a hostile force. This descent into danger allows your character in the game to grow stronger and your skills as a player to improve. There are also treasures hidden in these dark and dangerous places. Video games teach us that great treasures are hidden in the darkest places, and that we have the power to find bright light in the deepest darkness."

As we already discussed, many movies, books, television shows, and video games have the theme of entering a dark and dangerous place in order to face and overcome an adversary. The *additional theme* of finding a treasure in those dark and dangerous places can be seen in movies, books, and television shows, **but this theme is far more common in video games**. Can you think of video games, movies, books, or television shows where a hero enters a dark and dangerous place in order to retrieve a treasure? What treasure did the hero retrieve?

Allow for responses.

Note for Teachers: The video game *Minecraft* is an example where players go underground into dark places that can contain monsters in order to retrieve treasure in the form of resources. The first ten minutes of the Indiana Jones film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* involves Indiana Jones going into a dark and dangerous place to retrieve a treasure, and the Holy Grail scene from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* also involves him going into a dark and dangerous place to retrieve a treasure. Every game in the *Zelda* series conveys this theme. The video game shown on Slide 53, which also conveys this theme, is *Metroid* on the original Nintendo.

Direct students' attention toward this line on Slide 53: ". . . great treasures are hidden in the darkest places . . ." What are the metaphors of great treasures and darkness referring to?

Allow for responses.

What might some of these metaphorical treasures be?

Allow for responses.

Compassion is one among many great treasures that we can find in our inner world. Let's discuss the great treasure of compassion.

Activity: The Great Treasure of Compassion (Class Discussion and Writing Exercise)

For younger students you can start by exploring these discussion questions as a class, then in small groups, then have students reflect on what they discussed by writing in their Ship's Log. For older students you can use the reverse order and start by having them write about the question in their Ship's Log, then discuss what they wrote in small groups, then expand the discussion to include the entire class.

You may want to hand out their Ship's logs prior to discussion to save time during the activity and so that students don't lose focus in between discussion and reflection time. You can hand out the pencils for reflection time to save from having students drawing and writing during the discussion, or have them in cups at the center of the tables until it is time to write.

After the discussion, give students more time to reflect by writing in their Ship's Log. These reflections can include students writing two or three questions that they have. Guiding questions for reflection are listed after question #9.

Discussion Questions:

1. For many reasons, compassion (in terms of compassion for self and others) can be considered a great treasure. How can this treasure improve our personal well-being? How can this treasure also improve the well-being of our friendships, families, classrooms, workplaces, communities, nations, and planet? Just as great treasures can be challenging to attain, how can the great treasure of compassion be challenging to attain? What training can help us in our journey to achieve this great treasure?
2. Why is the image on this slide (Slide 53), which depicts a journey into a dark, mysterious, and challenging place, an effective metaphor for the journey that leads to the great treasure of compassion?
3. When the great treasure of compassion seems rare in our world, we must remember that this great treasure must be achieved through a journey into a dark, mysterious, and challenging place, and many people are not taught how to even begin this journey, let alone succeed in this journey. What can we do to empower people to begin and succeed in this journey?

Note for Teachers: In our other Peace Literacy curriculum, we discuss how empathy (which forms the basis of the great treasure of compassion) is a natural human capacity, just as language is a natural human capacity. Just as children naturally develop language, they also naturally develop empathy. This is why Pixar and Disney movies work. Children can feel empathy for the robots *Wall-E*, the fish in *Finding Nemo*, the elephants in *Dumbo*, the toys in *Toy Story*, and even the monsters in *Monsters, Inc.* Although language is a natural human capacity, a *high ability* to use language must be developed and is therefore like a great treasure that must be achieved. This is why we teach language from pre-school through higher education, but because language is so complex, even college students can still have trouble writing a good essay. Just as a high ability to use language must be achieved through a challenging journey, a high ability to use compassion must be achieved through an even more challenging journey that leads deep into our shared humanity.

4. How does finding and using the great treasure of compassion require ideals, in the form of the steel of adult idealism? List some ideals that can help us find and use this great treasure. How does finding and using the great treasure of compassion require the ideals of struggle, training, truth, and strategy?
5. How is the great treasure of compassion not a static treasure like gold, but a growing, evolving, and living treasure? How is compassion a great treasure that can be found in pieces and can grow in degrees?
6. How can self-compassion as an ideal help you navigate your inner world? How can navigating your inner world lead to even more self-compassion?

Note for Teachers: The way that self-compassion can help us navigate our inner world, which can in turn lead to more self-compassion, which can in turn help us navigate our inner world, etc., can be considered a “virtuous cycle.” Instead of using the term “virtuous cycle” and its opposite “vicious cycle,” better terms might be “upward spiral” and its opposite “downward spiral,” since this concept can be illustrated by drawing an upward spiral as you explain the process described above.

7. How can compassion for others help you navigate your inner world? How can navigating your inner world lead to even more compassion for others?
8. As we have become the greatest threat to our own survival, why is the great treasure of compassion more important than ever on our human journey?
9. How can compassion for others help us navigate the turbulent storms and uncharted waters of the twenty-first century? How can self-compassion also help us navigate these turbulent storms and uncharted waters?

Reflection questions:

*Draw two overlapping circles. Label one circle **Inner World** and the other circle **Outer World**.*

Our inner world can affect our outer world, just as our outer world can affect our inner world. Problems in our inner world can create problems or worsen problems in our outer world, just as problems in our outer world can create problems or worsen problems in our inner world.

1. How can problems in people’s inner world create problems or worsen problems in their outer world? What are examples?
2. How can problems in people’s outer world create problems or worsen problems in their inner world? What are examples?
3. How can compassion for others, as an aspect of the sword that heals, give us more strategic approaches for addressing these problems in our inner world and outer world?
4. How can self-compassion, as another aspect of the sword that heals, give us more strategic approaches for addressing these problems in our inner world and outer world?

Return to script

Show Slide 54 (*Cavern of Mystery and Treasure*)



What other great treasures might we find during our inner journey?

Allow for responses.

We need the four stars in the constellation of peace to successfully navigate the challenging journey through our inner world, along with the challenging journey through our outer world.

Peace Literacy can offer us many other tools for navigating the storms of life and the uncharted waters of our future.

Note for Teachers:

We have not yet talked about the effects of violence in video games. The issue is complicated. Media reports typically struggle to address the topic clearly and accurately. However, a 2015 research review from the *American Psychological Association* (APA) offers an insightful synopsis of key findings:

“There is convergence of research findings across multiple methods and multiple samples with multiple types of measurements demonstrating the association between violent video game use and both increases in aggressive behavior, aggressive affect, aggressive cognitions and decreases in prosocial behavior, empathy, and moral engagement ... Research suggests that the relation between violent video game use and increased aggressive outcomes remains after considering other known risk factors associated with aggressive outcomes.”

<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/violent-video-games>

In a press release about their review, the APA notes that “no single risk factor consistently leads a person to act aggressively or violently... Rather, it is the accumulation of risk factors that tends to lead to aggressive or violent behavior... The research reviewed here demonstrates that violent video game use is one such risk factor.”

The key here is the concept of “risk factor.” Saying that violent video game use is a risk factor for increased aggressive behavior does not mean that children who

use violent video games will definitely become aggressive. Instead, it means that violent video game use increases the likelihood that they will become aggressive (understood in a variety of ways), especially when violent video game use is combined with other risk factors, such as low impulse control, and exposure to violence in the home. This 2014 review lists the other risk factors found to be associated with aggression in youth:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3411865/#S11title>

It is also important to keep in mind that the range of violence in video games can vary greatly (in these lessons we have chosen to discuss video games with low- or less-explicit levels of violence) and many video games are not violent at all (e.g., *Tetris*, *Bejeweled*, *Journey*, *Rocket League*, *NBA 2K*, *NBA Live*, *FIFA*, and *SimCity*). Furthermore, viewing other forms of media, such as violent movies and television shows, can also be a risk factor for increased aggression.

Given that the use of violent video games is a risk factor for increased aggression, and that many of the most popular video games used by middle school students are violent (defined in any number of ways), how can we talk with students about this issue in ways that honor how important these games can be in their lives?

The issue of risk factors and violent media could be assigned as a reading and group discussion activity.

Do you have ideas for additional activities helpful for navigating this material? Please share them! This is a living document and we plan on updating it.

We also have curriculum that addresses aggression specifically, which might be a good follow-up to this lesson (see *Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1*, available for free download at peaceliteracy.org).

End of lesson 7

Now you're ready for Part 4! *Realistic Hope in History* (Coming soon to peaceliteracy.org)

Please Help!

If you used *The Allegory of Video Games* in your class, **please send a quick email** to our curriculum coordinator, Sharyn.clough@oregonstate.edu, and let us know:

- * the name of your school or school district
- * how many students were in your class
- * what parts worked best
- * any suggestions you have for improvement

Thank you! 😊

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- ¹ Andrew Perrin, “5 facts about Americans and video games,”
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/17/5-facts-about-americans-and-video-games/>
- ² <https://www.gamecrate.com/statistically-video-games-are-now-most-popular-and-profitable-form-entertainment/20087>
- ³ <https://twitchtracker.com/statistics>
- ⁴ <https://venturebeat.com/2018/12/08/youtube-game-videos-were-viewed-for-50-billion-hours-in-2018/>
- ⁵ <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/24/798172352/as-esports-take-off-high-school-leagues-get-in-the-game>
- ⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX-h8ZuVmRA>
- ⁷ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2015/08/violent-video-games>
- ⁸ <https://www.theverge.com/2018/7/27/17616532/overwatch-league-of-legends-nba-nfl-esports>
- ⁹ https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/psychological_science
- ¹⁰ Grant Voth, *Myth in Human History*: Lectures 14 and 21, The Teaching Company, 2010, DVD.