

How Mortal Kombat (and moral panic) changed the gaming world

Level 2: Intermediate

Article summary: This article explains the historical importance of Mortal Kombat and it created a whole new market for video games.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Dependent prepositions

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

8. *fatality*
9. *ensure*
10. *horrifying*
11. *moral panic*
12. *boost*
13. *bloody*
14. *accuse*
15. *era*

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use the key words in the correct form to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they know how the words are used in other contexts.

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to let students discuss the appeal that doing the 'wrong thing' has for young people and how companies might benefit from this appeal and use it to sell products. Ask them to share personal examples of when young people do the wrong thing for fun. End by having students brainstorm the names of products that appeal to the idea of doing the wrong thing (e.g. guilty pleasures like chocolate or brands that are deliberately rebellious, such as *Liquid Death* or *Harley Davidson*). Encourage them to think of as many examples as possible and not to rule them out.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do this task individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Tell students that some of the words may appear in a different form in the article. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

Key:

1. *combat*
2. *tabloid*
3. *controversial*
4. *guts*
5. *opponent*
6. *console*
7. *violence*

Key:

1. *tabloid*
2. *violence*
3. *boost*
4. *combat*
5. *fatality*
6. *guts*
7. *accuse*
8. *bloody*
9. *moral panic*
10. *opponent*
11. *console*
12. *horrifying*
13. *ensure*
14. *era*
15. *controversial*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. Encourage students to answer in complete sentences, e.g., in item 2, they may say, *Joe Lieberman wanted the games industry to have a formal ratings system in order to prevent minors from buying violent titles.*

Key:

Suggested answers:

1. *ripping a heart out or pulling off the head*
2. *a ratings system*
3. *filming actors doing martial arts*
4. *Street Fighter II*

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5. *something more graphic and impactful*
6. *video nasties (e.g. The Evil Dead) were popular because they were controversial*
7. *one company trying to sell more consoles than the other company*
8. *It showed all the graphic scenes.*
9. *Night Trap, Lethal Enforcers, Doom, Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty, Fortnite*
10. *There were games designed for children and games designed for young adults.*

4. Key language

- a. This activity helps students see how certain verbs are always followed by the same prepositions. As an extension activity, ask students to look for these examples in the article. Tell students that some of the words may appear in a different tense in the article.

Key:

1. *d (accuse of)*
2. *e (begin with)*
3. *c (force into)*
4. *a (look at)*
5. *b (succeed in)*

- b. Students complete the table with the new verbs. They won't have the article to help them, so if they are not comfortable guessing, they might want to use a dictionary or their phones. Students might benefit from adding the verbs in task a to the table so that they have all the verb and preposition combinations in one place.

Key:

guess at
believe in
break into
think of
agree with

- c. Students complete the sentences using the verbs and dependent prepositions from tasks a and b in the correct form.

Key:

1. *look at*
2. *forced him into*
3. *think of*
4. *succeeded in*
5. *accused of*
6. *begins with*
7. *believes in*
8. *break into*
9. *agree with*
10. *guess at*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students to complete the table with the examples of controversial media. You might want to show images or explain why these were controversial.

Key:

Art: Fountain by Marcel Duchamp (1917) — Challenged traditional art by presenting a urinal as art
Book: The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie (1988) — Accused of blasphemy, sparking global religious outrage
Music: WAP by Cardi B & Megan Thee Stallion (2020) — The explicit sexual lyrics started debates about female expression
TV programmes: Big Brother by Banijay Entertainment (2000) — Criticised for broadcasting intimate moments in people's lives in the name of entertainment
Video games: Mortal Kombat by Midway (1992) — see article

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- b. Students think of other examples of controversial media and add them to the table. If possible, have students research more information about these examples. Ask them to consider the impact they had.
- c. Students then choose one of the examples and describe the influence it had on their lives or on culture in general. Encourage students to provide examples of the effect it had and to use verbs and dependent prepositions. Remind them that the example is there to support them.
- d. Students present their ideas to the group. Have students discuss which of the examples from the group were the most influential.