



## Socially-based Curriculum Unit: Games for Change

**Unit Title:** Games for Change

**Time Frame:** 4 lessons (300 – 450 minutes)

**Unit Developer(s):** Chris Coculuzzi

**Developed for Course Name and Course Code:** English, Grade 10 Academic (ENG2D)

### **Strand(s) and Curriculum Learning Expectations Addressed:**

#### **Media Studies Strand**

##### **MSV01 Understanding Media Texts: demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts**

MS1.1 explain how media texts, including increasingly complex texts, are created to suit particular purposes and audiences;

MS1.2 interpret media texts, including increasingly complex texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey;

MS1.3 evaluate how effectively information, ideas, issues, and opinions, are communicated in media texts, including increasingly complex texts, and decide whether the texts achieve their intended purpose;

MS1.4 explain why the same media text might prompt different responses from different audiences;

MS1.5 identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power;

MS1.6 explain how a variety of production, marketing, and distribution factors influence the media industry;

##### **MSV02 Understanding Media Forms, Conventions, and Techniques: identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning**

MS2.1 identify general and specific characteristics of a variety of media forms and explain how they shape content and create meaning;

MS2.2 identify conventions and/or techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they convey meaning and influence their audience

##### **MSV03 Creating Media Texts: create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques**

MS3.1 describe the topic, purpose, and audience for media texts they plan to create;

MS3.3 identify a variety of conventions and/or techniques appropriate to a media form they plan to use, and explain how these will help them communicate specific aspects of their intended meaning;

MS3.4 produce media texts for a variety of purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques;



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### **MSV04 Reflecting on Skills and Strategies: reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts**

MS4.1 describe a variety of strategies they used in interpreting and creating media texts, explain which ones they found most helpful, and identify appropriate steps they can take to improve as media interpreters and producers;

MS4.2 identify a variety of their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and explain how the skills help them interpret and produce media texts;

### **Writing Strand**

#### **WRV0.1 Developing and Organizing Content: generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience**

WR1.1 identify the topic, purpose, and audience for a variety of writing tasks;

WR1.2 generate, expand, explore, and focus ideas for potential writing tasks, using a variety of strategies and print, electronic, and other resources, as appropriate;

WR1.3 locate and select information to appropriately support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and print, electronic, and other resources, as appropriate;

WR1.4 identify, sort, and order main ideas and supporting details for writing tasks, using a variety of strategies and organizational patterns suited to the content and the purpose for writing;

#### **WRV0.2 Using Knowledge of Form and Style: draft and revise their writing, using a variety of literary, informational, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience**

#### **WRV0.3 Applying Knowledge of Conventions: use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively**

### **Oral Communication Strand**

#### **OCV0.2 Speaking to Communicate: use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes**

OC2.1 communicate orally for a variety of purposes, using language appropriate for the intended audience;

OC2.3 communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience;

OC2.4 use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology, and several different stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning and engage their intended audience;

OC2.7 use a variety of audio-visual aids appropriately to support and enhance oral presentations and to engage an audience.



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### **Desired Results**

#### **Unit Description:**

Most mediums can be, and are used, in two broad ways: as a means of providing information on a variety of issues and as a means of providing entertainment, and both purposes can be targeted to mass or specific audiences. Granted this is an oversimplification of media, but it does serve as a departure point for examining digital games and that industry's almost exclusive one-sided nature of focusing on its product for entertainment purposes only. In this unit, students will explore digital game literacy and the possibilities of creating and using digital games as a means of fostering social advocacy and change. To that end, students will research a social issue (either local or global) of their own choice, and attempt to use the digital game medium as a means of educating and/or informing a wider audience about that issue.

#### **Enduring Understandings / Learning:**

By the end of this unit students will:

- Understand digital game literacy, especially as a means to promote awareness of social issues;
- Understand the moral implications of reducing social issues into a “gaming” framework, as well as the larger implication of consuming social issues through the lens of mass media;
- Know how to use print and/or electronic technology for research purposes, including electronic databases;
- Use their own imagination, informed by research, to invent creative applications to raise awareness of social issues;
- Be able to communicate with confidence and clarity their own ideas to a wider audience;
- Understand the difficulty—but necessity—to inspire active participation in social justice issues.

### **Assessment Tasks**

#### **Performance Tasks and Other Evidence That Will Demonstrate the Knowledge and Skills Acquired:**

There are three main performance tasks/products students will be responsible for:

1. A report outlining their social issue researched (complete with appendices) and an overview of their digital game
2. A prototype of their digital game
3. An oral presentation directed to potential producers that would introduce the issue and demonstrate the digital game

**Assessment Criteria:** See **Appendix D**



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### Unit Planning Notes

**Prior Learning Necessary (if any):** None.

**Preparation Notes (if any):**

Ideally teachers would have access to a computer lab in order to explore already existing socially-based digital games as well as for students to conduct online research. If not, time in the library to access vertical files and other print sources would suffice. Teachers may wish to explore popular digital games with students as a means of introducing digital game literacy (game purpose, audience, colours and graphics, etc.). As such, teachers may wish to invite students to bring in consoles and games (age appropriate) to allow students the opportunity to introduce products they find interesting. Teachers may need to book a TV with Video and/or DVD player to help facilitate. If not possible, teachers may encourage students to bring in hand-held consoles only. Teachers may also want to help facilitate prototype creation with various coloured construction paper, Bristol boards, markers, and other supplies such as scissors and glue. Alternatively, the physical prototype could be the responsibility of the students or simply be some kind of diagram/description on a piece of paper or chalkboard.

### Learning Plan

**Lesson 1: Digital Game Literacy (75–150 minutes)**

1. The teacher divides the class into small groups and names the groups according to various media forms: Broadcast (which can sub-divided into two groups: Television and Radio), Discs/Tapes (such as CDs and DVDs), Film (including Documentary), Internet, and Publishing (which can be sub-divided into two groups: Books and Newspapers/Magazines). *Note: Specifically leave out Video/Digital Games as a group option.* Instruct the students to brainstorm a list of examples of programming and/or products that are focused on entertainment and those programs/products that are focused on information and/or education; that is, informing/educating the people exposed to the medium of either local, national, or international issues. While students are brainstorming, the teacher should visit each group and provide any assistance required. Teachers may wish to have students write their list on a handout similar to **Appendix A** or on chart paper with a marker and have students tape up their paper before informal presentations begin. After a designated amount of time (e.g. 15 minutes) students designate a speaker from each of their groups to share with the class the results of their brainstorming.



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2. In a whole class discussion, the teacher discusses the Video/Digital Game form and brainstorms with the class based on the criteria mentioned above (entertainment and informational). Whether or not students are aware of any informational/educational games, teachers can also discuss if video/digital games have any educative benefits. *Note: The whole issue of violence in digital gaming and its effects on players is a huge one. This unit is not designed to explore that topic in any detail but it would be surprising if that issue did not come up in the discussion. It is left to teachers and their students to explore that topic to the best of their abilities and simply remember that the purpose of this unit is to explore digital gaming in terms of their potential use for social advocacy and change.*
3. The teacher can bring in examples of games into the classroom, book a computer lab for this purpose, and/or (ideally) encourage students to bring in their favourite (age appropriate) games for inquiry and analysis purposes. Specifically, teachers should ask for a variety of team-player games versus single-player games, and even single-player games can be broken down between first-person and third-person games. Presentations can be individual, in pairs or in small groups. If students are interested in presenting, teachers will provide **Appendix B** for students to fill out to make sure they are prepared to address certain aspects and questions for the class.

### **Lesson 2: The Serious Game Initiative (75–150 minutes)**

1. Teachers should obtain a copy of Hiebert's article in the Nov/Dec 2006 issue of *Canadian Dimension* (see **Resources**) to either read aloud, or preferably make as a handout for students, as a foundation for a class discussion on using digital gaming for social advocacy and change. Teachers may want to use the handout **Appendix C** to accompany the article. In particular, question 4 on the handout could provide the opportunity for debate or dividing the class into three large groups to tackle each one in turn. Most importantly, teachers should explore the moral implications of using social issues for entertainment in developed nations. Suggested teacher prompts for class discussion include: What do you think of reducing social issues that often involve human suffering into a game format for people in developed nations to play? Does the potential of informing/educating a wider audience justify the energy it takes to develop these games? Is this any different than a documentary or a news program? Is there a benefit to being engaged in a social issue through a video game, as opposed to viewing or reading about it?  
*Extension:* If teachers have access to a computer lab, they may want to allow students to explore and play social issue games as well as learn more about the Games for Change program under the Serious Game Initiative (see **Resources** for links to various websites).
2. At the end of the discussion, the teacher would launch the Games for Change Assignment with the provided handout (**Appendix D**).



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### Lesson 3: Research and Presentation Techniques (75–150 minutes)

1. One of the main purposes of this unit is to go over research techniques, and therefore teachers are encouraged to incorporate their own methodology either with library assistance, teacher-led instruction or student exploration. Ideally, teachers may want to introduce students to the following:
  - A visit to the school or local library to examine hard sources of print and media material on social issues, such as vertical files, encyclopedias, magazine subscriptions, books, and multimedia (CD-ROMs, DVDs, Videocassettes, etc.)
  - Access to a computer lab to explore online databases from either the local library or school subscriptions.
  - Access to a computer lab to view some of the web links provided in the **Resources** section of this unit that might assist students with exploring various social issues/causes and providing necessary information for their report, as well as assist in inspiring prototype designs.
2. Teachers should instruct students that when making their presentations students should regard the class as representatives from a not-for-profit organization familiar with the social issue they have addressed, and that they are trying to convince the organization that their digital game will assist in raising awareness of the issue. Teachers may want to provide a demonstration for the students and/or invite a guest speaker from a not-for-profit organization committed to some kind of social issue who is well versed in making presentations on behalf of the organization. This has the added benefit of making direct contact with local activists as inspiration for the students.

### Lesson 4: Work Periods and Presentations

Teachers should allow enough work periods to allow students to write/type their reports as well as build their prototypes. This enables teachers to supervise and provide opportunities to discuss individual concerns with students. This would culminate in the presentations of the social issues. Prototype presentations, however, can be done where several students set up stations around the class and other students move from station to station in order to view the demonstration and/or play the game, depending on the nature of the prototype.

### Resources

Hiebert, Paul Ryan. "Games For People who Want to Change the World." Canadian Dimension November/December 2006: 56-57.

Games for Change  
<http://www.gamesforchange.org>



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### *Sample Games:*

Ayiti: The Cost of Life

<http://gamelab.com/game/ayiti>

PeaceMaker

<http://www.peacemakergame.com>

Darfur is Dying

<http://www.darfurisdying.com>

Wasteland Adventure

<http://a.parsons.edu/~cpeng/wastelandadventure/game.swf>

McDonald's Video Game

<http://www.mcvideogame.com/index-eng.html>

### *Suggested websites for research:*

Global Issues

<http://www.globalissues.org/>

Centre for Social Justice

<http://www.socialjustice.org>

Amnesty International (Canada)

<http://www.amnesty.ca>

Canadian Labour Congress

<http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/>

Z Communications

<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/places/allPlaces>

## **Other Possible Course Applications**

ENG2P – It seems the practical application of building a prototype may be of interest to students taking this course; therefore more emphasis might be given to that aspect of the unit.

Grade 9/10 Technological Education – Technological Education classes that have access to build simple game constructs would enable students to directly apply their creative ideas to digital game design. There may be an excellent opportunity for an integrated assignment between the English and Tech departments.