

Teacher's Guide for Odyssey™: *Let's Play: The Science of Fun*

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Teacher's Guide prepared by Lois Sepahban, B.A., M.A. Lois has taught students of all ages from kindergarten to high school. She teaches and writes in California.

Let's Play (8-13)

Reading for Understanding

1. Why is playing important for babies? *Babies learn about their environment by touching and sucking on objects; babies learn to speak by babbling.*
2. What is "mutual respect"? *an agreement among equals or respect between peers*
3. How do children learn "mutual respect"? *by playing rule-making and rule-breaking games like hide-and-seek, tag, and marbles*
4. What is "unilateral respect"? *obeying the rules of an authority figure, like parents, teachers, and law enforcement*
5. How can playing teach us to read and understand other people? *Responses from our opponents, like words, expressions, and body language help us see how other people see us.*
6. How is play important in adolescence? *Adolescents experiment with clothing, hair, make-up, and language styles to define their identity.*

Activity

In this article, you read, "Play is the basis for the very *best* work." Consider the ways that you play—organized team sports, creative or artistic hobbies, experimenting with your personal identity. Can at least one of the ways you play be realistically developed into a type of work for you at some point in your life? How? Can you think of other people who have developed this same type of play into work? In your journal, use these questions to discuss ways to incorporate play into your work as you grow into adulthood.

Why Do Animals Play? (14-19)

Reading for Understanding

1. How is playing dangerous for animals? *They can be badly hurt; they can become so wrapped up in play that they are unaware of danger.*
2. Why is playing essential for animal survival? *Playing is a way for animals to practice skills they will need later in life.*
3. How is play different for predator and prey animals? *Predator animals play by stalking, pouncing, and attacking; prey animals play by dashing and leaping.*
4. How is play different for most male and female animals? *Among most animals, males play more aggressively and females play more gently.*
5. Why do many animals choose to play in dangerous ways? *They are developing physical and mental flexibility to prepare for unexpected events in adulthood.*
6. How do animals invite others to play? *Play bows, relaxed slapping with the paw, and rapid approach and withdrawal.*
7. How does playing help animals become smarter? *Playing uses nerve cell connections that would otherwise be lost.*

8. How does a sense of fair play work with animals? *If an animal plays too rough, it will have trouble finding other playmates.*

Activity

Choose one of the animals described in the article and create a poster. Include a fact box providing information about the animal in childhood and adulthood. Describe the ways the animal plays and how those ways of playing increase its ability to survive. Use pictures to illustrate your poster.

The Boy Who Couldn't Play (20-23)

Reading for Understanding

1. What is "social orientation"? *the process of listening, learning, and responding to others*
2. What is "discrete trial therapy"? *a method of simple repetition used to teach children with ASD*
3. What is "parallel play"? *when children play next to each other using similar toys*
4. What is "cooperative play"? *when children create pretend worlds together*

Discussion

In this article, you read about James, a boy with ASD. Using what you've learned about ASD, how would you help or befriend a student with this disorder?

A Jumbled World (23)

Activity

Children with ASD have a difficult time advocating for themselves. How can you be a voice for them? In a small group, design a campaign to raise awareness of ASD among your peers. First, brainstorm ideas for your campaign. Be sure to include ideas for different media—print (posters, for example), radio/television, and online. Create a slogan for your campaign and share your ideas with your class.

Janissary Games (24-27)

Activity

In this story, the author uses games and play as the background for a science fiction story. Write a fictional story of your own that uses games and play as the background.

Got Game? How to Know for Sure (28-30)

Reading for Understanding

1. Why do ludologists study games? *Games take up a large amount of people's time, so ludologists want to understand what makes them work and why people play them.*
2. Which game players are immune to the ludemes' allure? *Cheaters.*

Discussion

In this article, you read, "Cheaters test the limits of ludemes and find innovative ways to win by skirting the rules." Answer the questions about cheaters posed in the article:

1. Do cheaters ever win?
2. Do cheaters come up with strategies that no one else is clever enough to dream of?
3. Do they test games in ways that no one else is bold enough to try?
4. Do cheaters never win because, by changing the rules, they are playing some other game of their own making?

Fun and Games in the Electronic Age (32-34)

Reading for Understanding

1. What are some ways that games have changed since 1972? *Better graphics, more types of games, and more ways to play games.*
2. Why is it important for a game's interface to be intuitive? *So the player can figure out how to play the game quickly.*
3. According to the article, what is one reason games are so expensive? *The long process of testing and improving a game.*

Do Video Games Have a Dark Side? (34)

Discussion

In this article, you read about some positive and negative aspects of video games. How do you think video games have impacted your friends' lives? Your own? Your family? Can you define clear parameters for appropriate game usage and inappropriate game usage? When do you think video games cross the line and become a negative influence?

It's Not Just a Game! (36-39)

Reading for Understanding

1. When did the modern sports we know today come into play? *In the early nineteenth century.*
2. What are some skills we learn from playing sports? *Exercise, negotiating, monitoring our attitude.*
3. What are some other benefits of sports? *Raise energy levels, improve moods, healthy brain development.*
4. What causes us to stop having fun when we're playing? *Sports can become too aggressive and games sometimes lead to misunderstandings.*

Activity

What is your favorite sport? Choose a sport from this article or another one you enjoy and create a poster to describe it for your class. Include information about the history of the sport, some famous people who have played it, and what skills are necessary to play this sport well.

Culminating Activity

You've read about the importance of play in the mental and physical development of human and non-human animals. Work in a small group to make up a game for others in your class. Take information from a recent assignment (science or history work well) and convey it in a game

format. First, brainstorm the type of game you will create—board game? Puzzle? Sport? Treasure/Scavenger hunt? Something else? Next, make up rules for the game. What equipment or tools will you need? What does the play area look like? Is it a field? The classroom? The playground? A board? What other components will you need to create to make the game work? Questions? Clues? Play your game with your group members to work out any problems before you present it to your class.