

THE ROUNDUP

BY AND FOR THE STUDENTS OF HALF HOLLOW HILLS HIGH SCHOOL WEST

VIDEO GAMES ARE MORE THAN GUYS WITH GUNS

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Video games are an easy target to shoot at for many journalists and news stations. However, are these attacks on gaming justified or are they unfairly treating an important form of art? Could games also be a learning tool, not just a bloody brain cell killer?

When it comes down to just the definition, video games are definitely an art form. Art is defined by Oxford dictionary as “the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.” Video games do this with flying colors, especially in recent years. Some do this by being fun and addicting, such as mobile games. Others deliver deep and interesting stories, such as the *Fall-*

out series and the *Mass Effect* trilogy. When combined, there’s no doubt that video games deliver a lot to the table when it comes to art.

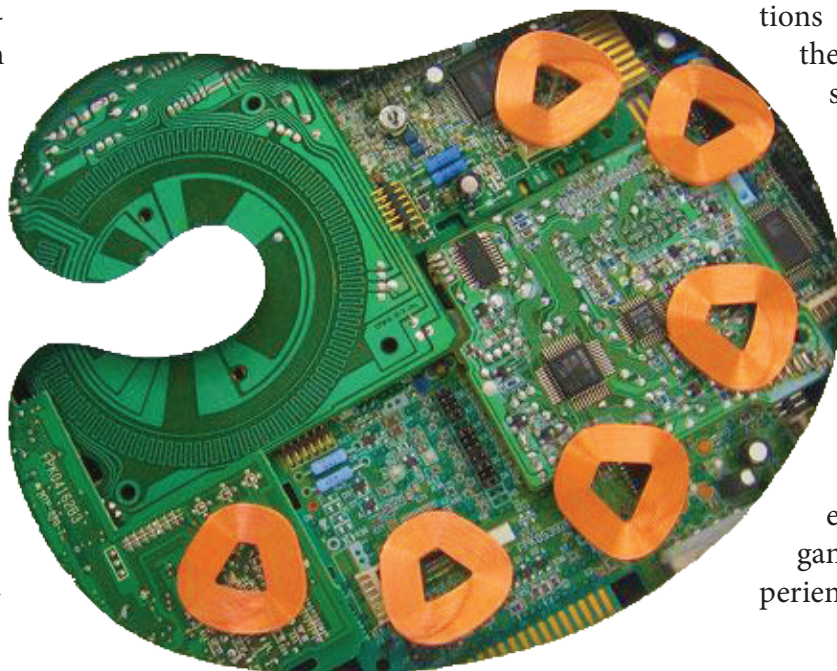
However, art is subjective. Although some have opposing opinions, others argue that video games are definitely an art form, stating that the right game can deliver a powerful message that leaves a lasting impression on the player. This is best displayed in video games like *The Talos*

Principle, a puzzle game that tackles what could happen with the development of A.I. and finding meaning and hope in a doomed world. Other games do this in a more subtle manner, such as *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*, which takes place in World War I, showing the true carnage that took place during the lesser known World War.

In contrast, some view video games as works of destruction and violence. Why do some

believe this? Because some of those involved with school shootings played violent video games. This is the result of news channels finding a scapegoat for horrible acts, such as the massacre at Sandy Hook or Columbine, without giving legitimate arguments for why these murders took place.

Articles and news broadcasts tend to target video games as a large cause for violence, claiming that they use indoctrination much like terrorist organizations would; however, the dust will settle soon enough. The film industry went through the exact same problem, and now they are considered forms of high art that rather trigger inspiration and emotion. Video games will soon experience the same re-





sult. People might shun video games now for being testosterone-filled action and explosions all over the place, but if they take a look closer at what games are there, they might realize that there is more to it than guns and muscular men. They will find games with deep stories and messages, memorable characters that will live throughout the history of entertainment, and most importantly, a form of art.

However, is there more to video games than just an art form? What about as a learning tool that uses the objectives of Common Core to teach the player? Love it or hate it, Common Core has changed mathematics forever, looking to allow people to tap into their problem solving rather than computation skills. However, math is not the only medium that promotes something similar to Common Core. It turns out that video games have used problem solving a lot longer than Common Core's conception, and these games promote it the best.

Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft is a free-to-play app turned card game from the popular video game studio, Blizzard Entertainment. In the competitive scene, it's usually the third highest viewed video game on Twitch.tv, a website where professional gamers stream their content to a live audience. The game is growing constantly, with a community of at least 30 million. The game, which is also based on the MMORPG, *World of Warcraft*, promotes Common Core's problem solving motive by giving you a way to deal with any scenario with

any group of cards you get. Every deck you make can win any matchup it is put up against; it all depends on how the player uses the cards to take down every enemy and win every match. *Hearthstone* is very easy to learn, with many interesting but user-friendly concepts to explore. Admittedly, some of the game is based more on luck rather than skill, but the game overall is strategic, addicting, and fun.

Two other, more recognizable aspects of popular culture are *Minecraft* and *The Walking Dead*. *Minecraft* is a blocky world that you explore and create to fit your own image, and *The Walking Dead* is a tv show about a group of survivors just trying to, well, survive. What happens when you put the two together? You get *Unturned*, a free to play game designed and developed by Nelson Sexton, owner and founder of Smartly Dressed Games. In this blocky, zombie-filled world, you play a survivor trying to make his way through the new, treacherous society. The game requires you to think in large, open spaces, where the best survivors can scope out any situation. The game also has a very diverse inventory, forcing you to maintain what you have because you are forced to face dangers such as zombies, dehydration, starvation, radiation, or even taking one too many pills which would normally keep your health afloat. *Unturned* will put you into a situation where you have to be versatile to survive, and if not, you'll surely just become a zombie's next meal.

Yet another Blizzard game is contains a theme of problem solv-

ing, and that game is *Starcraft II*. The *Starcraft* series has been around since 1998, and with every expansion gets more and more strategic, with a large amount of balance always put into the workload in this fast-paced competitive real-time strategy game, or RTS. When playing a match of *Starcraft*, you're challenged to make a military base, gather multiple resources, which are limited, and build an army, as well as take out the enemy player who's doing the exact same thing, all in less than an hour. *Starcraft* forces you to think like a military general, and consider what will be the best path to success. Different scenarios will constantly have you wondering "should I go on the offensive or do I keep building my army?" or "should I expand my the resources in my base or do I focus on what I have now?" and to lead into the next point, "do I have time for another round, or do I need to get back to work?" The game is extremely addicting, and much like the previous Blizzard title discussed, it makes you feel smart, and makes you want to jump right back into the crazy alien galaxy.

All in all, video games can give us not only a great story, a fun time with friends, or a way to pass time, but also a learning experience, not only for education but for artistic purposes too. They introduce people to many forms of problem solving in a way that makes it all simple fun, and actually makes you want to learn more. Gaming is a creator, not a destroyer, and should be treated as such.

