

# The Amazing History of Video Games

A look at the past, present, and future of one of America's favorite pastimes

## About the Story

Lexile: 930L

For qualitative complexity factors,  
go to *Scope Online*.

**Learning Objective:** to write an essay  
synthesizing information from two  
articles

**Key Skills:** figurative language,  
interpreting text, key ideas and details,  
tone, cause and effect, synthesis,  
text features

**Essential Questions:**

- How has the internet changed the world?
- How does technology affect society?
- What is the importance of human connection?

**Standards:**

The article and lesson support these  
Common Core anchor standards: R.1,  
R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, R.9, W.2, SL.1,  
SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—  
including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



## Video Games Transformed

How technology has made video games more connected than ever  
By Mackenzie Carter

It's a Friday evening, and you just got home from school. You're in the den playing your favorite game, *Animal Crossing*. You're playing against people from all over—your friend who moved to California, a classmate you just met at school, and your cousin in Michigan. As you play, you joke around and chat about your lives.

You look at your dog, Frankie, who watches you dilly-dally with a frown. Maybe you'll take him for a walk after one last chat with

Today, such a scene is not unusual. But not so long ago, it would have been impossible. Thirty years ago, if you wanted to play a video game, you mostly played alone. Then, you could team up with a friend to play *Super Mario Bros.*, but it wasn't as easy as every day thing. You might play on your GameBoy or on your television, or you could wait your turn to use the family computer. And most kids didn't have more than a handful of games to choose from—if they were lucky to have any.



In the early 2000s, however, video games began to change dramatically. First came the Internet, which made it possible for computers to different places to connect and share information. For video games, the Internet opened a whole new world of possibility. By connecting a console to the Internet, gamers no longer had to be in the same room to play with each other. For the first time, players from around the world could meet up online to play. This led to the first *Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMO)*, *EverQuest*, a popular MMO today.

After the Internet came smartphones, which changed the way we play video games again. You no longer needed a GameBoy or a home console to join in on the fun. Now you could play all kinds of games right on a phone. What's more, games like *Angry Birds* and *Candy Crush* captured a whole new audience of people who would not have considered themselves "gamers" before. Given how accessible video games have become, perhaps it's not surprising that nearly 75 percent of Americans now play video games.

**More Connected**  
Today, the world of video games is more connected, more social, and more dynamic than ever before. We

have thousands of games to choose from and we can play them from just about anywhere. We can gather a squad and parachute into *Fortnite's* *Battle Royale* from our couches, score a goal on our hand, tried to *PlayStation* while waiting for the bus, or head to the beach with a few friends in *Animal Crossing* in the car on the way to grandma's house. And we can play these games on all different platforms—phones, tablets, computers, consoles.

So what effect do all these games having on us? Experts say that video games can be a healthy way to relax, socialize, and learn, but as with anything, moderation is key. Of gaming too often with regular life—if you're skipping meals, skipping on sleep, or ignoring time with friends, it's time to take a break.

**What's Next?**  
So what's next for video games? As technology continues to evolve, gaming will too. Experts predict game streaming services will soon become the norm, making it as easy to play a game as it is to listen to a new song. Games will likely become even more life-like too. For example, artificial intelligence could replace scripted cutscenes. In other words, instead of seeing them from a pre-written script, characters in video games will be able to "think" of how to respond to you on their own.

In truth, however, video games have been advancing so rapidly that there is no telling what they might look like decades from now. Maybe on Friday night in the future, we'll be using holograms instead of screens. And maybe Frankie will be able to join in on the fun. Virtual tech, anyone?

## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

**Video:**

- Into the World of Game Developers

**Audio:**

- Author read-alouds
- Vocabulary
- Text-to-speech

**Recommended pairings from the *Scope* archives:**

- Paired Texts: "How *Animal Crossing* Conquered the World"
- Debate: "Are Video Games a Sport?"
- Debate: "Should Alicia Give Up *Fortnite*?"
- Grammar: "The Secret Lives of Video Game Characters"

**Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:**

- Preparing to Write: Video Games Then and Now
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- **Core Skills Workout:** Central Ideas and Details,\* Text Structure, Text Features
- Choice Board
- Quiz\*
- Contest Entry Form

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

## 1. Preparing to Read

20 minutes

### Do Now: Journal and Discuss (15 minutes)

- **Journal:** Project the prompts below on your whiteboard. Have students choose one prompt to respond to in their journal or on a piece of paper.
  1. *If you could be a character in any video game, which one would it be and why? Tell a story about a day in the life of your video game character.*
  2. *Make a list of your favorite video games from throughout your life. What was it that you liked about each game? How have video games changed during your lifetime?*
  3. *How do video games affect your emotions? When you're spending a lot of time playing video games, do you feel more connected to people or less connected? Explain.*
  4. *What are some good things about playing video games that people might not know?*
  5. *For what reason(s) do you NOT play video games?*
- **Discuss:** Have students gather into groups according to which prompt they chose to discuss their responses. Then have a member of each group share the common themes that arose in their discussion.

### Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project or screen share the activity **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. (Optionally, have students complete the practice activity for homework.) Highlighted words: *accessible, dynamic, enticed, immortalized, industry, punctuate, recession, solitary*

## 2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

### "The Forgotten Magic of Arcades"

- Have a volunteer read the **As You Read** box that appears on page 22 of the magazine and at the top of the digital story page.

- Read the article once through as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Kristin Lewis read her article aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Have students reread the article silently. Then pose the following close-reading questions to the class. Have students share their thinking with a partner first, then expand the share into a whole-class discussion.

### Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Imagery is vivid language that appeals to the five senses. How does author Kristin Lewis use imagery in the introduction? What does this imagery add to the article?** (figurative language) *Lewis uses imagery to transport readers to a place they might have never been: an arcade. For example, in lines like “Pings and dings punctuate the air as ghostly lights illuminate the shadows” and “. . . the quarters you’ve been saving all week clink in your pocket like diamonds,” Lewis uses language that makes the sights, sounds, and feelings of entering an arcade come to life, helping readers imagine the place her title describes as magical.*
2. **Lewis writes that “the world of video games was on the brink of disaster.” What does she mean by “the brink of disaster”? What caused the video game industry to come back from the brink?** (interpreting text, key ideas and details) *Something that is on the brink of disaster is at a point very near to complete ruin or failure. More advanced home gaming consoles and the games that went along with them are what brought the video game industry back from the brink.*
3. **What is Lewis’s tone as she discusses arcades?** (tone) *Lewis’s tone as she discusses arcades is almost wistful. (Wistful means “expressing a quiet sadness or longing for something, especially something from the past.”) From the title of the article—“The Forgotten Magic of Arcades”—to the imagery she uses in the introduction, to the concluding paragraph in which she writes, “Still, when we open a game on our phone or pick up a controller, we should thank those early arcade games,” Lewis sounds as though she associates arcades with happiness and she’s a little sad that they are no longer popular in the way they once were.*

### “Video Games Transformed”

- Read the article as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Mackenzie Carro read the article aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.

- Divide students into groups to read the article again and discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions, some of which apply to both articles.

### Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Author Mackenzie Carro explains that 25 years ago, playing video games at home “was usually a solitary activity.” How does Lewis’s article “The Forgotten Magic of Arcades” help readers understand why this was true? (cause and effect)** *Lewis’s article helps readers understand that though playing video games began as a highly social activity that took place in arcades, the advent of home gaming consoles transformed playing video games into an activity you could do without leaving your home and, consequently, into an activity you could and would do alone.*
2. **In what way is an MMO similar to an arcade of the past? (synthesis)** *In the same way that arcades provided a physical space for people to gather and play video games together, MMOs provide a virtual space where players from anywhere on the planet can “gather” and play together online. Plus, as Carro writes in her introduction, MMOs allow players to joke around and chat as they play. In other words, MMOs, like the arcades of the past, make playing video games a social activity.*
3. **How does the information in the timeline “Greatest Hits” relate to the two articles? (text features)** *The timeline provides additional details to support a key idea of the articles: As technology has evolved over time, so have video games and how we play them.*

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Carro writes that the world of video games is currently more connected and more social than ever. What are the advantages and disadvantages of connecting with people virtually?** *Answers will vary.*
2. **What do you think is next for video games? What do you *hope* is next for video games?** *Answers will vary.*

### 3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Video Games Then and Now**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the prompt on page 25 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story article.
- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated culminating activities.

Recommended pairings from the *Scope* archives that explore video games and their role in our lives:

- Paired Texts: [“How Animal Crossing Conquered the World”](#) (September 2020)
- Debate Essay Kit: [“Are Video Games a Sport?”](#) (December 2020/January 2021)
- Debate Scavenger Hunt: [“Should Alicia Give Up Fortnite?”](#) (September 2018)
- Grammar: [“The Secret Lives of Video Game Characters”](#) (March 2021)