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Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts

by

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## Abstract

This convenient case study will explore the impact of not-games on secondary English language arts students in a high school located in a satellite community of a major city of Alberta. These not-games are often free, short, intuitive, and readily available on the Internet, exposing players to novel issues and perspectives. This study examines whether not-games help students learn about literature through a more rhizomatic strategy that encourages reflection about literature via kinaesthetic or haptic experiences that not-games provide, thus making the learning memorable. Two English Language Arts 30-1 classes experienced not-games alongside a novel and short story unit. Those students who presented or wrote on not-games were analyzed for influence. Using the theory of Deleuze and Guattari, not-games can be considered a “minor literature” or a machine of transposition for deterritorializing arborescent approaches to literature by flattening them into a rhizomatic plateau with many entry points, offering nomadic, transversal opportunities to discover new flight lines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987).<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:* not-games, game, English, literature, secondary, Deleuze, Guattari

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<sup>1</sup> Minor literature, machines of transposition, deterritorialization, arborescence, rhizomatic plateaus, transversality, and lines of flight are explained and discussed in the first chapter. See the table of contents.

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Scott Gibson Dodd. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts”, No. Pro00040862, August 21, 2013.

### **Dedication and Thanks**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Marion Joanne Dodd, for believing in me, supporting me, and doing countless chores to make it all happen. Three groups of people helped either directly or indirectly, without whom this paper would not have realized its full potential: My family, children –Ben and Mitch– and friends; colleagues at work; professors and peers at the university; and of course, the students themselves who always surprised me with their willingness to try something new. Special thanks goes to the following: Dr. Jason Wallin, my supervisor, who gave me countless suggestions to improve this thesis and who introduced me to the heartwarming philosophy of Deleuze and his love for difference and the equally heartwarming philosophy of Guattari and his love for transversality; Erik deJong, PhD student in Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta who introduced me to not-games and encouraged me at every turn, telling me even to email famous not-game creators; Larry Dick, the previous principal at my school, who not only supported the use of video games in a secondary English language arts classroom but hired deJong for a semester to team-teach with me; the School Board of Trustees for the district and Duncan Knoll, the current principal who freely extended school and staff support; Sylvia Smith, the school librarian who faithfully collected permission letters from parents and students; and finally, but not least of all, the students who were a joy to work with and continue to be the promise of more joy to come: they were a privilege to work beside and have taught me over the years what I have taught them in countless ways.

March, 2014.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge all the not-game creators mentioned in this thesis because without them, this thesis would not have been possible. Their creativity and ingenuity provided rich resources to analyze, and they gave students countless moments and issues to reflect upon. Not-game designers often create games without any monetary remuneration, and yet the impact of a not-game is both profound and immeasurable because it challenges people like my students to think differently. Not-games broaden horizons, ultimately making the world a better place. I encourage not-game artists to continue their work and thank all of them, past and present, and those yet to come, some of whom may come from the very not-players inspired by those who pioneered this new genre.

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## Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts

In the twenty-two years that I have been teaching in Alberta, students and society have changed more than schools, but over time, schools have had to change as well, even if only a little in comparison. As an English Language Arts teacher, one of the largest changes in the curriculum since 1991 occurred when the visual image and film gained more currency as a text form with the new Alberta English Language Arts curriculum of 2003 (Alberta Education). This change precipitated one of the greatest shifts in knowledge acquisition because the world had become even more visual, thanks to the inexpensive proliferation of ubiquitous screen and projector technologies that range from hand-held to high rise tall. New augmented realities are emerging that blur the boundaries between biology and technology with integrated screen technologies. Google is marketing a pair of glasses that will allow the viewer a visual image or commentary by glancing to the right or left of the screen by spring 2013.<sup>3</sup> The *Globe and Mail's* front-page newspaper index now has a daily link to visual footage from its website. Anyone who has spent time in a sports bar knows how arresting the visual image can be, especially as it shows the slap-shot and rising cheer from the evening's hockey game on television. Even when you do not want to look, you look (much to the irritation of your date who is trying to hold a conversation and your attention). Humans have a predilection for flickering images on the screen (Smith & Mital, 2013; Wolf, 2007). This lure is further enhanced by sound and carefully chosen cinematic strategies which, when combined, create an arresting multimodality alongside the newest techniques, such as 3D technology, and rolls them into one slick package, combining moving imagery, rhythmical scene changes, framing, texture, colour, music, voiceover, and the occasional written word in both expected and unexpected ways. With advances in technology,

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<sup>3</sup> See: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSnB06um5r4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSnB06um5r4)

computers, and software, we are not only digitizing our world and our understanding of our world, but we are merging reality and digital reality in ways hitherto unimagined. In the past, we watched film at an arms length, and now we are being transported into a whole new world, a digital world known as the brain screen (Pisters, 2012). This is taking viewers and turning them into the protagonist of the film itself, not unlike playing a video game, except the viewer is being played in more immersive ways. This ontology approaches a haptic experience, such that you are no longer watching men land on the moon; you are on the moon, or as in the 3-D film screening of *Avatar*, you are on the distant planet, Pandora. Gaming takes this one step further, making a truly haptic experience not only immersive but interactive. When students tell you about their game play from the night before, you begin to realize what you're up against as a teacher in order to capture their attention. One feels compelled to give them more kinaesthetic experiences with language in order to compete.

With a game controller in your hands, suddenly you are moving in that world, making it and co-creating it. Given the predilection that humans have for games as a pastime (Huizinga, 1944/1950; McGonigal, 2011), it is no small wonder that the species would go one step farther by manipulating the multimodality of imagery, movement, point of view, sight, and sound into one that they can control, manipulate, and maneuver, providing flow, an experience that is closer to real than ever before, an immersive simulation that the brain and body keeps forgetting is a simulation. In a phrase, the gamer is re-born into a digital world. What makes them so alluring is their temporally dynamic structure (Lauwaert, Wachelder, & van de Walle, 2007, p. 94) wherein one can anticipate challenges, surprises, rewards that build affordances for more engagement. There are new "friends" that guide you, help you, and even die for you so that you can learn better how to play to the next level. "It is a game's built-in surprise structure that

channels players' desire and will to play" (Lauwaert, Wachelder, & van de Walle, 2007, p. 95). Your desires and frustrations are kindled in a perfect "bandwidth" of balance to hunt, gather, explore, and collect in order to advance without dying (Ash, 2012, p. 15). This occurs in a beautiful world, more lush, azure, vibrant, and tangible –even if the setting is in a desert– than the dreary room from which you play: the software augments the gamer's experience of reality into the hyper-real because his or her sense of time is also affected. "The graphic and visual realization of the time economy in digital games is drastically different" (Lauwaert, Wachelder, & van de Walle, 2007, p. 96) due to its temporal dynamic structure, creating an ontological experience tailor-made for the player. It's a perfect fit: not too easy, not too hard, just right, with affordances in the guise of doors, locks, chests, cabinets, holes, and secret spaces. Microsoft demands that each Xbox 360 game have a thousand unlockable points (Ash, 2012) to reinforce your need for commendation, status, belonging, and even learning. This is fun.

Suddenly a nuclear bomb explodes, creating a global event that Ash (2012) refers to as a scripted event. Surprise turns into shock –awe– as the stark silhouette of a helicopter gunship careens into a building, its shadow burned into the user's retina from the blinding white flash. All hell breaks loose, typical of a scripted event. Peril, exhilaration, gore, eruption, destruction leaps at users as they run into the ever so dynamic future of the game, experiencing a new life with anticipations all of its own.

In Stiegler terms, scripted events attempt to amplify the user's capacity for both protention and retention through closely wedding together primary and secondary retentions (perception and memory) which are needed to project (anticipate) future events. Indeed, following Stiegler, one could argue that the proliferation of scripted events in games draws players' attention into a space in between aversive and attractive

and voluntary attentive in order to avoid negative affects, such as dying, which in turn produces an intense state of captive attention. In other words, scripted events encourage the player to concentrate on the present moment, but in order to do so, they must constantly shift between a state of perception (primary retention) and memory (secondary retention) that enables anticipation (protention) to occur. (Ash, 2012, p. 19)

Life in the game is never more exciting because the action creates an augmented, haptic experience that is fine-tuned with just the right modulation, sound, and vibration. It is both productive and seductive in a symbiotic relationship that can become parasitic because it is so rewarding in its embodiment. But it's not real; it's digital or virtual reality (VR) which seems realer than real, and as the literature review will point out, students today spend an enormous amount of time, living out their lives in this VR format, the very antithesis of their real life (RL) experience in schools where their lives are striated, mapped and over-coded (jagodzinski, 2014).

Surely, there is something schools can learn from this embodied game experience, helping students move from first person shooter games to first person learning games.<sup>4</sup> At the very least, we could give them what jagodzinski (2014) calls a “sense-event,” creating affective moments for students to help them learn. “It happens in a time out of joint (Deleuze calls this a time of Aion) and in any place whatsoever” (p. 71). This thesis explores the possibilities that not-games offer to create this sense-event to promote learning in an environment that resonates and honours students' daily experiences with an increasingly visual world.

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that learning cannot be accomplished from first person shooter games. A recent study of 72 females in Texas who do not game demonstrated improvements in cognitive flexibility by playing an hour a day of *StarCraft* for a total of 40 hours when completing more complex tasks within the game (Glass, Maddox, & Love, 2013).

## Student Trends

So what are students doing with their free time and how does it compare with what they do in schools? There is mounting evidence from the National Endowment for the Arts (2008) research division and the Kaiser Report (2010) to suggest that the time spent on long, sustained reading amongst young people is dropping, with the average senior high student in the United States reading a book only 38 minutes a day because 7.5 hours of their day is spent with media. If you consider that they are taking in more than one type of media at once, it amounts to 10.75 hours a day, with some of the heaviest users of media clocking sixteen hours a day (Bauerlein, 2008; Rideout, Foerh, & Roberts, 2010, p. 20 and 30). For the average user, a part of those 7.5 hours a day is not in school, but at home, in front of a video game.<sup>5</sup> In recent classes, I had a couple of students playing video games at home for two or more hours a day, and a fifth of the class playing them for an hour a day, so it is no wonder that today's teachers worry about how much time is devoted to homework and reading when so much of it is being consumed by playing video games. They are becoming so popular that it is predicted that they will overtake television as a form of entertainment (Dyer-Witthford & dePeuter, 2009), and in North America where virtual gaming has exploded, "sales of games rival the cinema box office ... and seem set to overtake the music industry in revenues (Dyer-Witthford & dePeuter, 2009, p. xvi). Game sales are predicted to be around 70 billion dollars by 2012; two out of three families have at least one gamer; and half of the video games in the United States are purchased, surprisingly, by women. According to the Kaiser report, 60% of young people are playing video games on any

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<sup>5</sup> The terms, "video games" and "computer games" will be used interchangeably, though technically, games played on a computer are computer games and those played on standalone consoles such as PlayStation or Xbox are considered video games. Since these consoles have become computers, the terms will be used interchangeably.

given day (Rideout et al., 2010), and 97% of all young people in the United States play these kinds of games on a regular basis (Lenhart et al., 2008; McGonigal, 2011). This is a growing trend, and as students become even more engaged with technology, they may become less engaged with traditional methods of schooling because it is not as interactive, as immersive, or as fun. Forty-seven percent of high school aged dropouts in the United States cited boredom as the reason for leaving the school system prematurely (Bridgeland, Bilulio, & Morison, 2006, p. iii). Of the two subject areas polled, 37% of a Canadian sample said that they were not intellectually engaged in language arts or math classes (Friesen, Milton, & Willms, 2009). It is not clear whether school has become more boring or whether student expectations have changed because of their exposure to the high engagement of interactive media and video games. In the future, the gap will only widen: The exponential growth in the complexity and verisimilitude achieved by video games is such that gamers in 2015 may well regard today's video games akin to the sophistication of *Pong* (Delwiche, 2010). The result will see an entire generation of students, whose lives have changed from that of previous generations because so much is available at the click of a button, and it is changing students' perspectives and perhaps the way they think, and what they demand: Researchers are beginning to suggest that attention spans are becoming shorter (Annetta, Minogue, Holmes, & Cheng, 2009; Hayles, 2007).

Nevertheless, this growing student demand for compelling pedagogy has rung a clarion bell, suggesting a need to reboot education so that it emulates, or at least accommodates, the kind of interactive, immersive, and tailor-made learning environment that students experience outside of school while playing a computer game (Bogost, 2005; Gee, 2007). All educators want children to be excited about learning, even to be addicted to learning, but educational theorists are wary when it comes to video games in the classroom because they are seen as revolutionary

and “threaten[ing] current educational sensibilities” (Bogost, 2005, p. 124). Without a doubt, “Attention is the Holy Grail for learning” (Strayer, 2010, p. A1), but there is also something disturbing about the perceived need to make education just as engaging as a video game.<sup>6</sup> Some reports agree, with even students suggesting that balance is crucial when it comes to video game integration into curriculum delivery (Groff, Howells, & Cranmer, 2010):

Students like game-based learning, but they also want balance. Numerous students felt it was important to emphasize that while they greatly enjoy console game-based learning, that they would not want their entire school experience to be designed this way. Some noted that they like traditional textbooks . . . . (p. 57)

The clarion call does not tell educators to completely forsake all of the inroads of the last century, but it does call for an evolution that embraces a student’s changing real life as lived and their virtual life as played. There must be an acknowledgement of the pedagogical value of games without pandering to them or spending huge resources of time and money. The system needs changing and must do so by accommodating those changes without, by experimenting with them within. However, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) write, “You don’t do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file” (p. 160). Educators need to put their ear to the ground to hear what students want and need. As mentioned later in this thesis, Guattari’s method of transversality (2009) offers hope whereby vertical structures that frown on change can be transversally enmeshed into ones that invite influences from horizontal planes of student input.

### **This Teacher’s Trend: Reflexivity**

I am not a gamer, though my two sons played video games and of course, many of my students play video games. My sons gained a lot of efficacy and autonomy from playing video

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<sup>6</sup> For a haunting video of students playing video games, see Robbie Cooper’s footage (2009) of children at [www.robbiecooper.org](http://www.robbiecooper.org) and go follow “Simulations-Immersion-Photos.”



games, largely because it was one of the first areas where they could show expertise that I, as a parent did not have. Though I had more savvy with computers than they did because of doing things like removing those irritating viruses more than once, I, clearly, did not know the world of the game consoles as they did, first Nintendo, then PlayStation, and then Xbox. That was their territory and bragging rights. Every time I attempted to play with them, I lost. My wife lost. We were consummate losers and they were winners who found themselves better at something than their parents for the first time in their lives. This identity and ensuing expertise eventually wound its way towards the computer and the various software they had to use for school. On an anecdotal level, the transfer of knowledge that went from the gaming console to the computer impressed me. This was further entrenched by the games they also played on the computer itself. This kind of connection between gaming and the future employer expectations for employees has been written about in the literature since (Beck & Wade, 2004; Gee, 2007; Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, & Haywood, 2011.). As someone who has always had a fascination with technology and what it could do for me and how much money I could save by knowing how it worked, I was easily mesmerized by technology when it came into the classroom. The other piece that affected me deeply was the grip that video gaming had on my two children. They could disappear for hours with only a periodic, frantic dash to use the washroom. The basement would groan with explosions and meanwhile, my wife and I would have the remainder of the house to ourselves, both of us doing all the chores and naively, feeding their habit at the same time. I began to resent this piece because as they grew older, it became clear that as parents, we were doing more of the household chores than our parents had done for us. Video games took a lot of time and to interrupt their game was unforgivable because they were either competing with each other or trying to beat the next level. From a reflexive point of view, I believe that my

jealousy for the attention they paid to video gaming has me wondering if my students, as well, are too busy to do their homework “chores” for the same reason? How can I bring them back? How can I lure them to be more curious, to learn in class, or to take that curiosity for learning and practice it, play with it at home, instead of playing the same video games that my two sons played? I believe teachers have a lot to learn from video games in terms of learner scaffolding and positive reinforcement (Gee, 2007; McGonigal, 2011), but I am envious of the amount of attention that games draw away from classroom learning. This has led me to my research question, which acknowledges the incredible potential of this Janus-faced technology (Arnold, 2003), making me wonder whether they can be harnessed on a smaller scale without allowing them too much intrusion or emphasis.

### **Thesis Objectives**

Suggesting that students play video games in a secondary English Language Arts classroom might seem antithetical at first, especially given that reading and writing are core elements of the curriculum and since many English teachers over fifty years of age do not game. However, when you realize how vast the English curriculum has become since it embraced the visual image through picture and film media and its ensuing literacies, it is not that shocking that video games offer similar, if not greater opportunities for engaging students to understand literature along similar curricular lines. This is especially convincing when you consider the medium of certain kinds of video games as a visual art form (Gee & Hayes, 2011) and when you look at their potential from a different theoretical lens, as I will attempt to do through the ideas of two French philosophical thinkers, Deleuze and Guattari. By the turn of the 21st Century, the new English Language Arts curriculum of 2003 (Alberta Education) made it clear that media, film and visual literacy were to become a part its umbrella, even if these literacies deserved more

time in a separate curriculum in other course disciplines, such as media or film studies. Given the limited time a high school student has to complete all of the competing demands of math, science, social studies, English language arts, and preferred options, it is not surprising that the written word and the visual media were rolled together because all of them are about persuasion and manipulation, albeit through different kinds of rhetoric. Secondary English has always examined author's ideas and then encouraged students to find ideas of their own and merge them by going up through specific, often teacher-led analysis in a tree climbing-like fashion where curriculum was limited to a central core. What if students were encouraged, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) suggest, to drill across different foci, transversally (Guattari, 2009), by employing a medium, a machine with which many young people are fond: video games? Furthermore, what if they were ones that were designed to provoke or disrupt commonly held sensibilities about the issues that authors creatively navigate? Deleuze and Guattari (1990/1995) regarded a book as a "little non-signifying machine" (p. 7), so what would happen if another machine, a not-game, were placed beside it or outside of it?

This intensive way of reading, in contact with what's outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows, one machine among others, as a series of experiments for each reader in the midst of events that have nothing to do with books, as tearing the book into pieces, getting it to interact with other things, absolutely anything . . . is reading with love.

That's exactly how you read the book. (pp. 8-9)

In this instance, Deleuze and Guattari see many machines at work, some within and some without of the other as an assemblage working from each reader's context, timeline, and perspective. Could not-games add to such machines to assist as a minoritarian device<sup>7</sup> to provide

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<sup>7</sup> Minoritarian devices are discussed on page 20.

learners a line of flight into broader plateaus than they would otherwise traverse (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987)?

Much of Deleuze and Guattari's approach was a retraction from aborescent, hierarchical thinking in favour of broader landscapes in order to widen the possibilities of thinking and ways of living (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987), and this has often been an objective of writers who want readers to see old problems in new light. The problem rests with the interpreters (teachers) of the literature who want to contain literature by boxing it into transcendent or "correct" interpretations, confining ideas to a series of Chinese boxes, one trapped within the other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986). Teachers, acting as interpreters for literature, have created thematic units whereby stories, poems, and films were aligned by the teacher along pre-determined connections whether it be African American issues or post colonial issues or conflict conflagration or resolution issues, and students were expected to make these connections by drawing conclusions and tethering them along familiar, tree-like, systemic, or predictable lines of analysis. Though there can be trees within rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987), Deleuze and Guattari would rather students find their own constructions allowing them to be tilted or deterritorialized. An artist might call this a rendering of the familiar into something distorted so that truths can be squeezed out of it, a blurring to see what has not been yet seen. Sprinkling video gaming art/technology into a world of literature could also create this kind of blur because it is novel, coming at the literature at an oblique angle, hence offering opportunities to put a wrench into common sense (Colebrook, 2002), exposing the questions that answers sometimes hide (Baldwin, 1962).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> James Baldwin felt that the artist's role was to expose the questions that the answers hide.

### Game Polarities

Similar to film and literature, video games operate on a continuum where at one end, there are the more popular, entertaining, and escapist ones (profitable, commercial-off-the-shelf video games) and more recently, there have surfaced the less popular yet thought-provoking “art house” or “indie” video games that make people think to provoke some kind of change in attitude. As Perrine (1987) pointed out in his introduction to *Story and Structure*, now an old-school castaway of short story units in many high schools in Alberta, literature falls on a continuum between escapism and interpretation, and like video games, stories have more or less both aspects of escapism or interpretation where the former trends toward the status quo with flattering heroes and the latter tries to challenge different notions of heroism. The two polarities are rarely pure since the different types slide on a continuum with varying elements of each side, so it is possible to have an escapist story that brings out healthy interpretive concepts, but they are rarer and usually pander to the lowest common denominator: monetary profit. Does it sell? In the world of video games, there is, indeed, money to be made, a lot of money,<sup>9</sup> but because of the enormous investment required to create a compelling game, there is also a lot of money to lose. Similarly, commercial games can be utilized for learning purposes, as forthcoming examples will demonstrate. Not-games, those that trend toward the interpretive category, are also known by some gamers as serious games, persuasive games, indie games, or empathy games, and they, too, each have their own agenda achieved through different rhetorical means; however, the financial considerations are fewer. Nevertheless, they have an agenda that challenges the status quo. Game creators Harvey and Samyn (2010), refer to these games as the opposite of a game, a “notgame.” In their talk to the “Art History of Games Symposium,”

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<sup>9</sup> Activision’s *Call of Duty, Black Ops* made \$1 billion in the first month it was released in 2010 (Cross, 2011).

Harvey and Samyn (2010) say that the notgames are “catering to people who don’t like games” (1 min 19 s), and Samyn goes on to say, “We are taking matters into our own hands, rejecting typical game elements of rules and goals, challenges and rewards” (15 min, 44 s). They feel that game design has a lot to offer if they go beyond the paradigm of winning and losing. Their answer is the creation of notgames which “[design] tools to explore emotion” (17min, 40 s) through interactivity, unlike typical games which have been co-opted and commodified for profit, either refusing to grow or unable to grow because, “they are too happy” (Harvey and Samyn, 2010, 12 min 28 s and 15 min) with the old paradigm. This is his “not manifesto” about his new approach to game design from his blog:

**Not a Manifesto**

Notgames is not a category.

Notgames do not exist. There are no notgames.

Notgames is not an art movement.

Notgames is not a genre.

Notgames is a project.

Notgames is a challenge.

Notgames is a question.

*Can we create a form of digital entertainment that explicitly rejects the structure of games?*

*What is an interactive work of art that does not rely on competition, goals, rewards, winning or losing? [Author’s Emboldened Italics]*

The notgames thought is inspired by videogames. By those fine moments in virtual experiences when we feel like we're in another world, when we believe a synthetic character is our friend, when our bodies merge with the system and the software becomes our hands and eyes, when we find ourselves enthralled by the very thing that we are doing at that moment in complete disregard of the prize that we might be winning or losing.

Rare moments that are all too often shattered by the demands of the game. So let's ask ourselves what if we don't allow the game to interfere? What if we create an experience that consists only of such beautiful moments? And figure out how to design it so it remains as engaging as a game can be but without the "unnatural" constraints.

So notgames is **a design challenge**.

This is a new medium. It may be suitable to create works that re-use old formats (such as films and games). But that's not where the challenge lies! We are interested in the *unique* things that this technology is capable of. What can we do with the medium of videogames that can only be done in this medium? And what is the best way to offer this experience to an audience?

One of the motivations for the notgames thought is the desire to explore the potential of videogames as a medium. Videogames are software. Software can be anything. There is no need for software to be games. There is no need for videogames to be games. Especially not if the games structure may be holding us back, may be limiting the potential of the medium.

So notgames is also **an artistic challenge**.

The question is not whether videogames are art. The question is how can we make good art with the medium of videogames. Notgames proposes that one direction of exploration may be to abandon the idea that what we make, should be a game. To approach the medium with an open mind.

It's a question.

An invitation.

An exercise. (Samyn, 2010, p. March 19)

From Samyn's appeal in his blog, it's clear that he is trying to find a definition in-between the many polarities of game space in an attempt to create a new form. This is why I prefer to put a dash between the words, "not" and "game," hence a "not-game," because it accentuates the "not" and the "game" as an assemblage (Guattari, 2009). The very notion of something being declared as "not" gives off the suggestion that it is and it might be otherwise. The dash puts it somewhere in-between what it is and what it is not, a nomad in smooth space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). We play to learn and learn to play with concepts wherein the polarities arc from game entertainment to its historical place as a teaching tool that has implicit and explicit philosophical underpinnings that games refract at the same time (Flanagan, 2009; Huizinga, 1944/1950). Pleasure is not their primary aim, though like most games, they can be fun to play; not-games are not, however, just a game. They can be about very serious issues that help the player empathize with social conditions that they had not fully imagined living out on a day-to-day basis. (One of my students misheard the term, "not-game," and heard "thought-



game.”) The playful game aspects deterritorialize the serious aspect for the gamer, allowing the gamer to reterritorialize and map out the issues at play. As researcher Jordan says,

The use of video games in English courses will not necessarily be “fun” either, and indeed, many video game experiences can be far more frustrating, confusing, and difficult than fun. Instead of the concepts of “fun” and “play,” perhaps scholars should focus on “fulfillment” or “enactment” as a guiding term. (2011, p. 46)

The not-games discussed in this thesis simulate shadow lives that people live out so often on the fringes or the margins of our society. For this reason, it is not surprising that these kinds of video games could have an exciting role to play in the English language arts classroom because of their ideological and philosophical emphasis. Literature itself is a kind of hypothetical situation, a simulation, a fiction, a game, or a play, and in reading or acting, we play the game of make-believe –not-real life– and this kind of distancing provides students with abstractions, so that they can discuss controversy or character decision-making at an arms-length without directly implicating themselves in discussion. This is why empathy focused not-games are particularly interesting to the English language arts teacher because so much of what literature teaches is empathy, ethics, and values. Not-games creators, like authors, have ideas to share and the students have an opportunity live out the scenarios in the not-games which harbour these ideas. Similar to interpretive literature, entertainment is not the primary paradigm, so not-games can demand more thoughtfulness, observation, and attentiveness because they are harder “to read” or to play. Visually, they are deceptively two-dimensional, compared to the gripping and seductive, three dimensionality of commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) video games. This can be a problem for less mature students who expect or demand more, so they are tempted to give up because the game is “boring.” The contrast is, however, purposeful since not-games are often free, readily

available online, easier to create, yet ideologically driven and subversive. For instance, Magnuson (2011) created his not-game, *The Killer*, where you are a stick-man with a rifle, jabbing your prisoner in the back, forcing him/her to continue walking. You walk for a long time to the Cambodian killing fields of 1975-1979 where eventually you have a choice to kill your prisoner or let him/her run free.

*The Killer*, as far as I see it, is something like a short interactive poem, and it doesn't intend to be anything more. I call it a notgame to try and spark a little bit of realization that not everything interactive has to be a game, and also to try and prepare the player for encountering something that won't be fun. (Magnuson, 2011)

These not-games offer a wonderful opportunity to provoke discussion about challenging ideas by connecting them rhizomatically to the literature that an English class has studied, either amplifying the author or the student's ideas or disrupting them in the Deleuzian and Guattarian sense (1975/1986) of the word. In this way, it can be said that not-games are a kind of machine, unfolding the literature into the reader/not-gamer, throwing questions into assumptions or tracings we have about how we might live our lives, throwing "non-thoughts within thought" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 59) to inspire a forthcoming, an immanent diagram of how one might live. Put another way, Wark (2007) says:

Whether gamespace is more real or not than some other world is not the question; that even in its unreality it may have real effects on other worlds is. Games are not representations of this world. They are more like allegories of a world made over as gamespace. They encode the abstract principles upon which decisions about the realness of this or that world are now decided. (Wark, 2007, p. 020)

This is the end-game of all educators, to see that students learn and change based on applied

principles. How one goes about this is less important, but students must be engaged and willing for theirs is more of a gamespace than ever before, and how better to reach them than by using a language, a gaming algorithm, more familiar to them, for it is their effect on the real world that trumps everything else.

### **Transversality**

The notion of a not-game as an encoding machine operates on a number of levels: it helps to break down the vertical hierarchies and binaries in a classroom: teacher/student; writer/reader; reading/understanding; them/me or serious/playful or not-game/game or learning/fun. It does this by pushing and pulling explorations sideways and decentralizing typical structures in a classroom. Guattari (2009) explored and practiced transversal methods in a psychiatric hospital from 1955 to 1970 –the Clinique de la Borde in Cour-Cheverny– where he created a complicated grid of rotating duties that flattened doctor or nurse/patient hierarchies in order to provide better treatment by allowing treatment to escape traditional striated and molar lines. As the following quote implies, he took this structural change quite far: “By contrast, it was much more difficult to get people who had been hired as laundresses, maids, or bookkeepers to collaborate in the care of patients and collective activities. Some were afraid of giving injections . . .” (Guattari, 2009, p. 179). Genosko (2009) explains that, “Transversality avoids getting stuck in hierarchy . . .” (p. 51). He then quotes Guattari who defines it like this:

Transversality is a dimension that strives to overcome two impasses: that of pure verticality, and a simple horizontality. Transversality tends to be realized when maximum communication is brought about between different levels and above all in terms of different directions. (Guattari in Genosko, 2009, p.51)

It essentially takes power and sends it in a different direction so that it is dispersed more evenly

so that everyone can gain traction from it, much like a transversal differential gear on a car distributes power in more beneficial directions. Not-games do much the same by putting students beside other students as they play side by side on the computer, working together. When the teacher comes around, s/he is beside the students watching them play, and my experience reveals a very different dynamic between teacher and student as they play an interactive not-game: it is almost as if the teacher disappears and at times, I felt ignored. I became another student in the class. Power is redistributed by the very fact that we are playing to learn. What we see on the screen is often cartoon-like in colour and layout, two dimensional, and very simplified, which is non-threatening and mysteriously invitational. Carnavalesque. This decentralizes the formality and coding of the written word in a piece of literature and renders it differently. The use of not-games is really the creation of a tool to assist in creating transversal relationships between people, institutional structures, literature and life in a new assemblage. Reynolds (2006) puts it another way, “Transversal power is any force –physical or ideational, friendly or antagonistic– that inspires emotional, conceptual, and/or material deviations from the established norms for any variables, whether individuated or forming a group”(p. 2). Though his focus is in drama, the ends are the same whereby the audience or a class of students is encouraged to connect with others and issues via an assemblage of themselves, the story, and in my case, the not-game(s). “People most often move transversally when they empathize or imagine they are empathizing with others” (Reynolds, 2006. p. 12). The not-game is chosen by the student that best achieves this transversal connection between the various parts, taking them further into the short story, into the not-game, and ultimately into themselves and each other –not necessarily in this order– unfolding the embroidery and re-weaving these threads together, creating a new tapestry, a series of knots, that is more affecting,

more reading, and hopefully, more memorable.

### **Not-Games as a Minoritarian Machine**

One could go further because not-games are often very political, subverting various causes or assumptions, trying to get their players to replay (stutter) key moments in a character's life from different angles. Deleuze and Guattari (1975/1986), in their book, *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature* were fascinated by Kafka and offered a new interpretation of his work, trying to erase typical molar interpretations of his work by showing how he shuffled the very notions of metaphor and archetype by abandoning them, hence creating a new release, a minor literature that subverted literature as a whole by abandoning traditional forms. They saw his literature as a machine that sliced across them, exposing new sides, new perspectives, giving reading new "enunciations" (p. 18).

The literary machine thus becomes the relay for a revolutionary machine-to-come, not at all for ideological reasons but because the literary machine alone is determined to fill the conditions of a collective enunciation that is lacking elsewhere in this milieu: "*literature is the people's concern.*" (Kafka as cited in Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986, pp. 17-18)

The comparison of minor literature to a machine could also suggest these tiny not-games and how they subvert by abandoning traditional forms, getting players to think differently about certain issues.

Deleuze and Guattari (1975/1986) had three criteria for minor literature: "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (p. 18). In terms of Kafka, they were pointing out how an oppressed Jew could use the German language to shake-up the German establishment. Not-games use the language of video games, some of it open source and therefore re-programmable

in a collaborative fashion, to challenge the gaming establishment and what it means to game, or in the case of Magnuson's *The Killer* (2011) what it means to kill, as in a first-person shooter game. As Harvey and Samyn (2010) said, "not games reject typical game elements of rules and goals, challenges and rewards" (15 min 44 s). The next aspect of a minor literature is that, "everything in them is political" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986, p. 17). Not-games encourage the individual to see one's self reflected and connected in and to other issues, other people, other stories harmonizing their different frequencies, yet at the same time providing enough distance to be able to discuss them without being too personal or too revealing. The last characteristic of a minor literature helps readers or players to articulate their oppressions to their oppressors as a community of others in league against power. Remembering that not-games are predicated on offering players choices within the framework, and that often they have an open source element, allowing players to re-write the not-game code or create modifications (mods), consider Deleuze and Guattari's (1975/1986) third attribute of minor literature:

It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility; just as the dog of

"Investigations" call out in his solitude to another science. (p. 17)

Though this kind of writer would require game design skills that would be out of the realm of many students, new technologies will change this, making modifications more accessible to the average player. (See the website, <http://gamestarmechanic.com/> for tutorials on how to make simple video games.) Nevertheless, there are game modifications (mods) that have been well documented both in terms of commercial-off-the-shelf games (Gee & Hayes, 2011) and older

games from the late seventies (Frasca, 2001). In terms of a minor literature, the motivation behind the modification is key to whether it qualifies as subversive.

The other attractive aspect of not-games is their relative ease to play, their affordability, if not being free altogether, their availability online and their short duration. Conversely, commercial games can take up to 50 hours to learn (Gee, 2007, p. 91), incur high licensing costs, and require expensive platforms to operate them –though they can also be harnessed for learning and deterritorialization as the literature review will attest. Not-games are easy to play and this paper argues that they can be harnessed to create tears or leakages in short stories, novels, films, or plays in a high school English class. As a result, the combination is unobtrusive and easily managed as an adjunct to whatever is happening in the class already. That said, there is wonderful potential in not-games because they can be easily harnessed to provide instructional moments and destabilizations –a profound sense-event, a pivot, if you will– for the rest of the term. They are wonderful mnemonic devices from which one can reference future ideas, characters, and stories and it's clear that students like them, finding them even seductive (Mitchell & Savill-Smith, 2004). The motivational piece of the game plays a large part in pulling students towards more research, more consideration, more understanding of whatever issue or topic the “text” creators are exploring, both literary authors and the game creators.

It is true, that at present, there are only mixed results that verify that video games in the classroom actually improve grades (Egenfeldt-Nielson, 2007; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, & McVay, 2012), but in an English language arts classroom, the kind of learning that not-games would try to promote would not really be quantifiable any more than showing the film of a novel. Instead, the focus is on different ways to stretch student thinking and their literacies, not to determine whether or not their grades improve as a result of not-gaming. There is an

exciting opportunity for an English language arts teacher to seed the literature units with not-games to inspire further thought and connections with the literature about which they plan to write. As Jordan (2011) says, it is more important that students think about these questions: “How are video game texts constructed to tell stories or make arguments? How do video game players participate in the textual experience and create meanings? How are video games used to persuade audiences” (p. 48)? These questions could then be connected to a piece, or pieces of literature, studied in an English course so that there could be transversal, cross-pollination between texts as well.

How could the movements of deterritorialization and processes on reterritorialization not be relative, perpetually branching onto one another and caught up in each other? The orchid is deterritorialized by forming an image, the exact tracing (calque) of the wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes itself on this image. The wasp is deterritorialized, however, by becoming part of the orchid’s reproductive apparatus, but it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. The wasp and the orchid thus make a rhizome, insofar as they are heterogeneous . . . At the same time, it is a matter of something altogether different: no longer an imitation at all, but the capture of a code, the code’s surplus value, an increase in valence, a genuine becoming – the becoming orchid of the wasp, the becoming wasp of the orchid –each of these becomings assuring the deterritorialization of one of the terms and the reterritorialization of the other, the two becomings intertwining and relating each other in a circulation of intensities that always pushed the deterritorialization further along. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 19; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 11)



When a student comes to a not-game after reading a short story, there are similar, circular becomings going on as with Deleuze and Guattari's diagram of the wasp-orchid assemblage. There is an untying and retying of knots of the literary embroidery, a mapping of new connections between one machine and another, between readers and machines. This kind of inter-textual connection can compliment and augment philosophical, immanent questions so that students are able to map out, embroider, more of their own connections in a memorable way. It encourages students to fill-in the characters of the literature they read in the same way that they play and fill-in the characters of the not-games, giving the literature more resonance. Groff et al. (2010) suggest that games can offer additional context around a topic or an issue, that they can entice students to be more reflexive about what they would do given that context and the game-play decisions that they made within the game, and as a result, gain additional perspective regarding point of views each time they replay the game. This is also a primary outcome of the Alberta English Language Arts Curriculum (Alberta Education, 2003).

### **Research Question**

What kind of connections do students make between not-games from the Internet when they are juxtaposed to issues that authors address in their texts? As a result of not-game play, are students' perspectives about gaming and the interpretation of literature deterritorialized in the Deleuzian and Guattarian sense of the word because of the new rhizomes that are created? Are their thoughts, discussions, and writings more nomadic regarding the multi-faceted issues in the literature students read than they would be otherwise without playing the not-games? How do, for example, the sense-events of not-games provide a line of flight, affecting the learning process when it comes to a better understanding of themselves and the life that surrounds them? In short, do not-games help students unfold the author's ideas embroidered within literature than they

would without them?

Students have always struggled with identifying and isolating theme within literature, and not-games can help unpack the author's ideas by helping students identify with character dilemmas by sorting out the gravity of certain issues within different contexts, be they wrapped up in setting or a time period. Students can be slipped into simulations that mirror the foreign or the Other. Inserting students into not-game simulations that resonate with their media-savvy sensibilities and demands can tease issues out one at a time, helping them appreciate the author's concerns. In essence, the not-game becomes a new tool born out of their fond familiarity with video games and their digital sensibilities. In this approach, students are now being enjoined to use gaming in a more productive manner in the form of a not-game which acts as a deterritorializing machine that helps them tease out the rhizomatic connections within the embroidery of literature and the lives of the students.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The literature about video games in the secondary classroom is in its infancy, but it falls into several camps: there are books about the roots and pedagogical value of games and play (Flanagan, 2009; Huizinga, 1944/1950); there are books and theses about video games as persuasive tools either for schools or for a wider audience (Bogost, 2011; Gee, 2007; Iuppa & Borst, 2009; McGonigal, 2011; Rigby & Ryan, 2011); there are books about video gaming theory (Galloway, 2006; Wark, 2007); there are journals that explore the culture, ideology, and theory of computers and video games ( A few examples: *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *Computers and Education*, *E-Learning*, *Entertainment Computing*, *Fibreculture*

*Journal, Game Studies, Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, On the Horizon, Simulation & Gaming, TechTrends.*); and then there are disciplinary journals that explore course-specific pedagogy and periodically research video game integration in math, science, language learning, social studies, or English Language Arts (*English Journal; The Journal of Social Studies Research*, etc.). Three literature reviews on video gaming in classrooms were available and these helped to point out further directions (Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey, & Boyle, 2012; McClarty et al., 2012; Young et al., 2012). Given that there is so little literature on video gaming in a secondary English Language Arts classroom, this review had to do a pretty broad sweep, so there are studies that refer to video gaming implementation in other secondary and post-secondary level subject areas in the humanities, and there are studies that deal with video game implementation at the junior high level in language arts. The few articles dealing with post-secondary implementation were excluded –save for one thesis due to its connection to English language arts– because student motivation is much higher in that context: They are more mature; tuition costs make them more accountable; and many students choose courses based on future career necessities. Jordan’s thesis (2010), was the post-secondary focus that was included because he examines the potential role of a specific game in the field of English studies. The bulk of the studies that were included dealt with just secondary English Language Arts primarily, and they focused on using video games to inspire creative and expository writing (McClay, Mackey, Carbonaro, Szafron, & Schaeffer, 2007) or to encourage students to read, using student enthusiasm for video games to motivate their reading (Jolley, 2008).

This review then examines the genre of small, independent games that are beginning to surface on the Internet and how they are being used to persuade. The implications for the secondary English language arts classroom are exciting, as they are for the humanities in general.

Since English embraces so many disciplines within the Alberta curriculum –novels, graphic novels, cartoons, film, art– there is a lot of flexibility built into the program of studies. It is not so much what materials or how a teacher uses those materials to get students to the desired outcomes; it is that students meet the outcome targets of secondary English language arts. These targets include analyzing and creating narrative texts in whatever form, and though computer games have changed a great deal since the program of studies was written (Alberta Education, 2003), they deserve their own kind literacy training as well (Bourgonjon, Valcke, Soetaert, & Schellens, 2010).

Since Piaget and Vygotsky, educational theorists are convinced that people learn best when they construct learning for themselves in ways that they know best (Becker, 2006; Frasca, 2002; Young et al., 2012). This is easily verified when people learn to drive a car or build a fence: they learn best when they do it themselves in a setting that facilitates and scaffolds their learning so that it is achievable. The challenge for educators has been trying to tailor learning for maximum efficiency so that students learn more and remember what they have learned for years to come. Today's educators are increasingly faced with students who are also learning informally at home through an online environment that is becoming ubiquitous, what with Internet access at home and on the run. This environment can be more captivating than traditional schools because it is individually modulated to their ability which is particularly gratifying, so naturally, students gravitate to what serves their interests, their desires, and their human predilection for self-determination and positive feedback. Video games feed this very predilection. For many years now, games have been regarded by the pedagogue with askance, bordering on disdain because on the outside, they look like they are more about fun than they are about learning. As Rodriguez (2006) points out, Huizinga (1944/1950) was the first scholar to

examine play critically. Huizinga knew its importance primarily because he regarded play as essentially an irrational activity that was not played out for utilitarian ends, such as learning. Fun had to come first. This does not preclude learning however:

*Playing can be part of the learning process because the subject to be learnt is, at least in some respects, essentially playful. The use of serious games in the learning process therefore illuminates the fundamental nature of the subject being taught* [Italics Rodriguez's]. Philosophical games should not, for instance, be treated merely as efficient techniques to make philosophy more appealing or entertaining to students; the act of playing can become a genuine medium of scholarly inquiry into the roots of philosophical activity. (Rodriguez, 2006, para. 30)

The tension between utility and entertainment value has meant that some games aren't very instructive because they are either too boring or too distracting. The study of literature runs into similar problems because it is either too abstruse or too escapist. The best literature manages to combine elements of both as it delves into what it means to live, with the "how" and "why" clutched in the balance of entertainment values and philosophical considerations. The video game paradigm offers intriguing possibilities for not-games because it is a medium that many of today's students love and know best, and not in small part due to the fact that video games create positive feedback systems that cause the brain to release what we now know as dopamine, a neurotransmitter that cycles motivation and pleasure (Willis, 2012).

As of 2012, there were three literature reviews concerning the educational validity of employing video games in the classroom (Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey, & Boyle, 2012; McClarty et al., 2012; Young et al., 2012), and their findings suggest that research is in disarray because very few research studies are empirically based because the results are not quantitatively

based (McClarty et al., 2012) and that what is available is of poor quality (See also, Kebritchi, 2010). Most of the research is qualitative since the first review found only 129 out of 7,392 papers that provided empirical, quantitative evidence proving that video games improved learning (Connolly et al., 2012), and then they stated that only 70 of these studies were considered robust. They were listed and briefly summarized in the appendix of the paper: the games they discussed covered all gender issues and various subject areas except English language arts; however, some of these games could be adapted for that purpose, such as Lavender's study (2008) on the game, *Homeless*, as will be discussed later. The second review admitted that though they had left out simulation games from their criteria, they concluded that the research on the use of video games had some validity for their use in language learning, history, and physical education but not in science and math (Young, et al., 2012). Young, et al. (2012) went so far as to say:

After our initial analyses, we determined that, to date, there is limited evidence to suggest how educational games can be used to solve the problems inherent in the structure of traditional K-12 schooling and academia. Indeed, if you are looking for data to support that argument, then we are sorry, but your princess is in another castle. (p. 62)

They qualified their findings by suggesting that researchers have a lot of work to do and suggested aggressive and even intrusive data collection to ensure video game worthiness in an educational setting. They also admitted to ignoring powerful simulation games that they felt had potential but as a part of another study. Furthermore, it was clear that they did see a need for further investigation given the vitality of video games in the popular culture both as an entertainment and training tool, but that context and intention in the classroom had to be scrutinized more carefully. “[Taking this constructivist approach] suggested that our princess

might be beckoning from another castle on the distant horizon” (Young, et al., 2012, p. 64). McClarty et al. (2012) agreed that there was little transfer of learning from a video game to outside contexts and that a teacher with specific pedagogical strategies linked to the game were essential components of learning. They did, however, acknowledge several sources, which noted incredible engagement, attention, and motivation that video games offered the modern-day student (Groff, et al., 2010; Joyce, Gerhard, & Debry, 2009).

Whether players learn accidentally or intentionally has a lot to do with the type of game, its context, and the motivation behind it. What can be startling is how much players learn, even if it is incidental or seemingly irrelevant, untimely or immeasurable. Bogost (2005) paraphrases Wright who calls this “invisible education” because it cannot be measured:

Imagine if every student could pursue independent study, and if their interests wander, whatever resources they needed would be available to them. If there were some system observing them, sorting them, accruing credits, without forcing them to do something for a certain amount of time very day, and then try to apply metrics to it, what would that world feel like? I think a lot of kids are doing that right now, when they get home from school, online. But it's invisible education to us. (Wright, 2005, Day 2)

All games have these invisible educational ideas; according to Flanagan (2009), even playing with a dollhouse has ideological implications regarding consumerism and home ownership (Flanagan, 2009). According to more traditional thinking about gaming in classroom, Reeves, Champion and Meglan (2010) want more accountability: what are you trying to get students to learn, how do you know they learned it, and how will the evidence be collected to prove it? Though parents and players might not be thinking such questions of the kind of games played at home (Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007), others feel it is the obligation of the educator to

query this pedagogical piece with all game-play in a classroom. Flanagan has created an entire website dedicated to querying the values at play in video games in search of creating new games that teach values (<http://valuesatplay.org/about-vap>). That said, most video games fall hard on old habits, prioritizing mass appeal as a commodity more than anything else. The focus of this thesis suggests that one should examine the quality of exchanges as a result of cross-pollination to see if students learn differently when not-games are juxtaposed to literature. This kind of learning cannot always be measured quantitatively because play is not strictly utilitarian in a didactic way and to do so renders it less a game and more a routine. That said, there are opportunities to seed learning with play that can be measured qualitatively.

### **Typical Video Games**

Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) games are on the escapist end of the spectrum and though there are many types of commercial games, the largest ones are designed to entice consumers to join a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) for an annual subscription. They have become wildly successful in terms of dollars and time spent: The COTS video game *Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2* has earned over 100 million dollars, while the MMORPG *World of Warcraft* has logged 5.93 million hours of game play since its inception, according to McGonigal (2010). “As cultural products, video games reflect hegemonic values. For instance, living in a capitalistic society, we can expect games to reflect values related to acquiring wealth, perseverance, and free markets” (Toscana, 2011, p.5). Marsh (2011) is quick to point out in his introduction that corporations, business, healthcare organizations, and the military around the world are zeroing in on the serious games bandwagon as an adjunct to the



training or recruitment they already provide.<sup>10</sup> Because they have a lot of funding at their disposal,<sup>11</sup> they can create a game that meets the highest expectations, giving audiences and players exactly what they want, while also reinforcing the hegemony of the military-entertainment complex.

### **Commercial-off-the-shelf Video Games in Secondary Social Studies**

Presently, there is no research on commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) video gaming in Grade 11 or 12 English classrooms, but video games were used in one instance to encourage creative writing in junior high and in a Grade 10 classroom. These will be discussed later. One study examined COTS video games in secondary social studies classrooms, either with and without modification. One such instance of an unmodified, commercial game involved a Grade 11 history class in the United States that used *Civilization III* (by Firaxis) as a direct placement in the classroom where students literally sat down in the class once a week and actually played the game on the projector screen at the front of the room (Lee, & Probert, 2010). (The game focuses on building civilizations and making decisions regarding expansion, exploration, and conflict.) These game strategies were then linked to historical events or concepts involving, “manifest destiny, U.S. western expansionism, Imperialism, and the Spanish American War. Other content

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<sup>10</sup> Susca (2012) discusses one game used for recruitment: “The U.S. Army launched *America’s Army* on July 4, 2002; it has been downloaded more than 42 million times and has virtual Army comprised of 519,472 “soldiers” (Susca, 2012, p. 1). She goes on to say that, “The Army, through its successful *America’s Army* franchise, produces this video game as a way to brand the military and target adolescents. To reach recruitment goals, the government uses a lower-than-expected-industry age rating to target adolescents as young as 13 (Susca, 2012, p. 9). The Canadian military announced in December of 2013 that it will use first person shooting games, such as *Call of Duty* as a part of their training (Brewster, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> The U.S. military spent 32.8 million dollars over a ten-year period in creating and improving *America’s Army*, but Susca (2012) says that the military claims the game conserves 700 million to 4 billion dollars per year in recruitment costs but acknowledge that the real figure will not be known for five or more years when thirteen year olds are old enough to enlist.

frames such as the settlement of Jamestown, U.S. relations with Native Americans, and Colonial America emerged during game play” (Lee & Probert, 2010, p. 16). Gamers could build embassies in rival cities which allowed students to learn about the rules and regulations regarding embassies, a real learning experience because up until then, they had never heard of an embassy before. Within them, there were opportunities for communication, trade, alliances, espionage, and counter espionage. Events that occurred in game play were subsequently used as teachable moments to make connections to World War I. Since the study involved only one computer with a data projector, the more dominant students took over and then other students remained passive, setting a precedent for future classes. Such approaches to learning are high-risk, and they offer many other types of learning that just cannot be measured in quantitatively, much in the same way that it’s hard to measure what one learns from a video game outside of school. But that’s not to say that learning doesn’t take place. What made this experiment so valuable was its measured and balanced delivery with specific curricular targets. This qualitative study suggested that periodic gameplay in the classroom required enormous creativity and adaptability on behalf of the teacher to make those curricular connections but that the approach clearly increased student interaction, engagement, and motivation as they learned about history in the game and how it connected to American history. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) might say that this happened because of the rhizomatic nature of the classroom setting where students could make multiple connections on many different levels and then allow the teacher to cross-pollinate these levels through game-play and class discussion. Lee and Probert (2010) could not verify increased learning, saying that it was too complex to measure. Another factor to consider is the amount of time it takes for students and teachers to learn how to play *Civilization III*. However, it is conceivable that student engagement is more valuable than quantitative evidence that proves

increased learning; it depends on the classroom context. Squire and Jenkins (2003) reported success in using the same game with students from minorities who suddenly became very enthusiastic once they recognized they could change history to defeat those who had won in the past. Here, the COTS game is co-opted and transformed into a minoritarian literature that acts as a machine, breaking down stereotypes and empowering a people yet to come—the students in their becoming (Reynolds, 2006; Rogue in Parr, 2005/2010; Wallin, 2010). Though there are no COTS video games such as *Civilization III* that would meet English language arts curriculum needs at the high school level, there were some that were used at the junior high level, but this time with some modifications made to the game.

### **Commercial-off-the-shelf Video Games in Grade 7 & 9 Language Arts Classes**

In Wisconsin, COTS video game integration was achieved by using key episodes from the role playing game *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* (by Bethesda Game Studios) which offered enough flexibility to follow open-ended plot lines created by the gamer through a series of moral choices. The teacher wanted her students to explore the moral dilemmas of the character who had to make decisions about stealing or being involved in a gang. This game provoked animated discussion amongst this Grade 7 class about ethics and what motivated them. This was then tied into a writing activity where students defended their character's choices and what implications might materialize as a result. Students learned about activities that they could not experience in real life: "I now have a better understanding about moral choices, because the game was a fun way to learn and analyze real life situations. ...it show[ed] how some serious choices you make are hard to take back" (Kadokia, 2005, p. 32). This kind of supplement is not nearly as dominating as playing a game in its entirety, but the teacher acknowledged that because she was familiar with the game software, it only took her an hour to pull the excerpts from the

game she wanted to show the class. Someone less familiar would take longer because that teacher would need to play the game, taking weeks to learn and months to play; however the benefits of student engagement were clear. Again, improved marks were not. Nevertheless, the game context was shifted to what could be suggested as a Deleuzian and Guattarian perspective, using it as a minor literature in order to deterritorialize students' ethos. Whether this should be measured and quantified is questionable.

Another experiment also showed how a game could be modified for an English language arts 10 classroom: Edmonton researchers from the University of Alberta brought Bioware's *Neverwinter Nights* into an English 10-1 class in Edmonton so that twenty-one students could write their own scenes using a middleware technology known as *ScriptEase*. Students were encouraged to write back stories or out-scenes based on the original storyline of the game. These were then inserted into the game to meet creative writing objectives. Students played with shifting tenses, moods, and character positioning in order to create new story lines, allowing them to "...capitalize on the excitement of having the literacy practices and concerns of their classrooms correlate to practices and concerns of the real literacy world" (McClay, et al., 2007, p. 281). The problem with this approach was the proprietary nature of *ScriptEase* and that without it, the project would not be viable. The researchers also acknowledged that students found *ScriptEase* a little harder to work with than the game itself (McClay, et al., 2007, p. 699). This is the problem with this kind of video game integration is that the technology can usurp the curricular objectives, especially for those students or teachers who are not familiar with it or just not technologically savvy enough. The software takes too much time to learn both for teacher and student alike and as a result, dominates the learning experience, making it more of a tree to climb than it should be. Any time proprietariness emerges, so too does the arborescent nature of

control and ownership: the copyright dictates what can be used where and when because it is not freeware that is readily available to schools.

### **The Role of Commercial Games in Education**

So far, the literature discussed has either dealt with commercial games, chunks of commercial-off-the-shelf games, or modified COTS games in the classroom, and the research shows little quantitative evidence of significant learning as a result of its use. Student motivation increases as does enthusiasm, and teachers can channel this energy into reading and writing, but beyond that there is not enough empirical data to influence the major players in education to support the massive change and expense it would involve to incorporate video games on a regular basis. Furthermore, Bogost (2005) makes it clear that the commercial video game industry is as entrenched in making money as the field of education is entrenched in old school approaches to learning, so he feels that the chances of the two ever sacrificing their territories to help children learn curricular objectives are slim. “With video games and education caught in a similar ruts, to support change in one means supporting revolution in the other” (Bogost, 2005, p. 119). He feels that commercial video games are a dead end because they are not prepared to invest their profits in the untested territory of education because they are making enough money as it is and that is their primary motive for game creation. In Harvey and Samyn’s words (2010), “they are too happy (15 min). (Again, proprietariness is a form of arborescence too.) They are not concerned with promoting art or promoting social change, but Bogost (2005) is critical of education as well because he also feels that it is more concerned about maintaining power and social control through schooling that creates well-heeled and compliant citizens and that it replicates itself to serve its own needs rather than liberating students as critical and independent thinkers. He invokes Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1982/1968) and suggests a

paradigmatic shift that embeds a dialectic relationship between student agency and the curriculum. Reynolds (2006, 2009) would call this kind of connective traction, transversality. Bogost (2005) warned that video gaming challenges status quo sensibilities (arborescent approaches to learning), of which schools are often guilty of reinforcing, and one only has to look at the Italian website, Molleindustria ([www.molleindustria.org](http://www.molleindustria.org)) and play the range of controversial games to see examples of how these sensibilities can be disrupted and offended: players experiment with bisexuality in one game; or play the role of a “task force” employee working for the church, covering up the tracks of a priest who happens to be a pedophile. Some of these computer games are so “serious” that Dyer-Witford and de Peuter (2010) call these tactical games of political activism, some designed to spread political dissent against governments –read education here– and corporations to act as hacktivisms. In one case, the game *Counter-Strike* was hacked and peace signs were put on virtual walls and “players were encouraged to give each other virtual blow jobs instead of virtually blowing each other away” (Dyer-Witford & de Peuter, 2010, p. 1). This types of mods operate as any minor literature should: causing viewers to stutter as their “common sense” notions of warfare are deterritorialized, offering a line of flight to peace through satirical episodes of sexuality. These are the types of demonstrations that occur in the virtual world against games of Empire where new battle lines are being drawn between activists on one side and government and corporate interests on the other (Dyer-Witford & de Peuter, 2010, p. 2). With free and ready access to the Internet in the classroom, it is easy to see that these counter-sensibilities could collide, creating controversy in the classroom as well. That is not necessarily a bad thing, especially as teachers explore transversality, not as an arborescent, moral monitor but one who relays the broad spectrum of controversy. However, educators are going to need to look beyond the

corporate interests of the gaming industry if they are to harness the disruptive, haptic force of video games in video game literacy because with COTS video games, “games become an accessory to the same hierarchy; they don’t puncture the spectacle of culture of politics” (Laurel, in Bogost, 2005, p. 122). If a secondary English curriculum is trying to teach students about the range of authors’ ideas, then it need not look any further than not-games, but it has to tolerate the radical opinions as well and be prepared for some radical disruptions and deterritorializations, both for students, parents and teachers.

### **Military and Corporate Training Games**

In a speech at Disney’s EPCOT centre near Orlando, Florida, Reagan (1983) pointed out the air force’s interest in video games because they felt that the next generation of pilots in the American military were going to be the world’s best because of their improved hand, eye, brain coordination from game-play. As mentioned earlier, *America’s Army* is now used as an online recruitment tool, and with the rampant use of military drones in war zones overseas, pilots fly them using guidance commands from American soil, using that same hand, eye, brain coordination that they would have first learned in their childhood as a video gamer.

The military has long been at the forefront of the digital-curriculum movement, and it has for decades been the largest financer (by far) of educational technology. In fact, over the past century, the military has profoundly influenced educational institutions in the skills that are valued and taught, how students are evaluated and sorted, and the methods and modes of instruction. (Mead, 2013, p.7)

In America, the military has a keen interest in building expertise in order to maintain military supremacy, so its influence on education is pervasive, with some schools giving the military access to school attendance records. It is also interesting that recently, there has been a growing

interest in using video games in the work-place to teach workers some of the mundane aspects of work-place safety, for example. It is becoming clear that there is an increasing legitimacy found in the implementation of video games in the work place as a teaching tool, and it can be assumed that this is not a money-losing proposition for either the retailer or the purchaser. The Waterloo, Ontario based company, Axonify (2013) make this clear on their website:

The problem with corporate learning today...Typical employee training isn't fun, engaging, social or gamified. Employees quickly forget what they've just learned.

Training is not customized to what an employee knows and doesn't know. Content tends to be static and costly to change. Failure of learning costs organizations millions of dollars a year. High employee turnover results in a constant need for training. Training results are difficult to measure... Until now. ([http://www.axonify.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/axonify\\_overview.pdf](http://www.axonify.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/axonify_overview.pdf))

The results they claim are impressive –with up to 45% reduction in safety incidents at one automotive repair shop based in Philadelphia called, “Pep Boys.” They also claim a 95% voluntary participation in their game-based training modules that can be done in thirty to ninety seconds. If workers answer all the questions correctly, they can play a slot machine that comes with financial rewards. Their premise is based on increased memory retention after short bursts of play on a daily basis. Axonify has experimented with mobile gaming on employee smart phones, merging play with training refresher courses that accelerate and increase learning, often off the job on an employee’s own time. For the health care sector, they advertise an \$8.5 million dollar savings in insurance claims and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (the American OSHA) fines over 2.5 years (Axonify, 2013). Their clients not only include, “Pep Boys,” but, “Walmart” and “Toys R Us.” One of my students has a part-time job in a major



restaurant chain:

Outside of English, these not-games are a great way or training people how to work, fight, or simply memorize things. I'm amazed how many things about video games I remember compared to things I learn in school. Things people are interested in seem to have a larger impact on people than things that people aren't interested in, even if they aren't directly related. I learned and memorized a lot of recipes that I use, every day that I work, from playing a training game at my work. (Sage,<sup>12</sup> 2013, English 30-1 student)

It is ironic to see corporations harnessing the rhizo-networks of mobile cell phones, repetitive short bursts of information for short term memory gain, and competitive game-play, not for any philosophical grounding but because it works and it makes money.

### **Atypical Video Games**

When considering the field of serious games, there are many permutations and purposes in mind, so much so that one writer referred to it in a sub-heading on the topic as a "minefield" (Iuppa, & Borst, 2009). Corporations mentioned in the last section refer to their games as serious games too, so it helps to categorize video games by examining their purpose, particularly when they emphasize a theme, concept or a lesson rather than entertainment or cost-saving values. These less popular video games branch into five different areas, all stemming from the genre known as the serious game. There are education games, known as e-games or edutainment games which include health, math, reading or training games (See Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2007) who has an excellent critique of education games); applied games (Srinivasan as cited in Sheldon, 2011) which are direct and specifically applied to concrete learning tasks; persuasive games, whether it be advertising games (adver games) or recruiting games for the military (as mentioned

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<sup>12</sup> All the student names used in the case study are pseudonyms.

before); independent games, known as Indie games which are often revolutionary street games designed to queer the status quo; newsgames, which may have a political or a social message; and finally empathy games, designed to promote understanding of different perspectives. As previously mentioned, Magnuson (2011), a creator of such games, referred to his empathy games as “not-games,” a term particularly meaningful for a secondary English language arts because of its implied binary oppositions between play and the profound. Magnuson borrowed the phrase from Harvey and Samyn (2010) as he was addressing serious issues he uncovered while travelling in South-East Asia, such as the Cambodian genocide or refugees trying to escape through the demilitarized zone between the North and South Korea. These issues were disturbing and deserved to be contemplated and questioned, rather than played as a game out of caprice. Each of these game terms is imbricated within the other, much like a Gordian knot (knot-games?), so it is often hard to tell them apart, and every researcher has his or her own definition. The notions surrounding a game, its purpose, and what the motivation is for playing it further exacerbate the problem. Huizinga (1944/1950) made it very clear that games that were either too easy or not fun enough were games that were not played very often. This is particularly problematic when students, particularly less mature, less thoughtful students, are introduced to a not-game: they may not always find them “fun” enough because the games queer the notion of game entertainment from the outset. Marsh (2011) makes this distinction by suggesting that serious not-games are on a continuum wherein the most serious side of it, “...is to provide experience and emotion to convey meaning” (p. 61). Not-games often come from a different political bent however, hence their value in deterritorializing different perspectives. As much as these not-games can startle and disrupt students’ notions of what a game should look like and act like because of a popular bias for rich three dimensional environments such as *Halo*

(which offer stunningly beautiful, verdant environments, peppered with violent first person kill-or-be-killed demands), the educator must balance these polarities when attempting to motivate students. Another factor has to do with student bias for a familiar ideology and common sense, something that not-games also startle and disrupt. This is the fulcrum of English language arts, however: to help students become independent thinkers, knowing when they are being influenced and how game constructs and formats deliver rhetoric as well.

### **Educational Games**

The failure of games that tried to please everyone is evident in another field of video games, known as edutainment games: Klopfer, Osterwell, & Salen characterized them as a, “dead market . . . from the 1990s” (2009, p. 1). Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2007) from the University of Copenhagen said they have more to do with training via bites of information than with learning via lasting pedagogy. Memorization becomes more important than understanding over-arching concepts concerning spelling or reading or math for example.

The dynamics found in edutainment are also apparent in the e-learning industry, where low budgets, high amount of mediocre contents and craze for ease of use has led to the lowest denominator . . . . The decision-makers buying the e-learning tools are not the ones using them. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007, p. 267)

Though Egenfeldt-Nielsen notes the enthusiasm of many researchers in his examination of twenty-two studies from 1981 to 2006 regarding elearning, he suspects their studies have many short-comings due to bias and a lack of a control group comparing other teaching methods. Whenever a video game is introduced, it is not fairly compared to regular teaching methods and may, in fact, be less efficient: students and teachers have to learn the game, set up the technology, and then learn the course material that the game is designed to teach, and this may

not be worth the extra effort than just studying with regular methods, especially if their learning does not increase enough to warrant the extra time and effort. However, Egenfeldt-Nielsen acknowledged that students reported spending more time learning the material than they would otherwise because student motivation and enthusiasm for gaming was greater, so the hope was that more time on task meant more learning occurred. He described two generations of computer gaming where the first generation focused on behaviourism by practicing skills, and then the second generation focused on cognitive constructivism, which helped to focus the learner's problem-solving skills and hand-eye coordination (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007). He then calls for a third generation of video games that require teachers to facilitate the learning experience through coaching and debriefing, such that the game itself becomes secondary, "provid[ing] rich and compelling experiences that can be explored further with a variety of teaching methods" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007, p. 276). This means that the games have to be tailored or modified to fit the curriculum and the teacher. Klopfer, Osterwell, & Salen (2009) also make this clear when they say, ". . . in creating experiences that are both fun and filled with learning, the success of different recipes (mixes of media, immersion, styles of games, learning goals, mixtures of content, etc.) depends quite a bit on the audience, context, content, goals, and facilitation" (p. 25). This is a difficult mix to make that requires academia to work with the video game industry, a blend that has yet to come to fruition (Johnson, Adams, & Cummins, 2012). Furthermore, games cannot be used as a stand-alone panacea for pedagogy; they require mediation between teacher, student and machine. Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2007) goes on to say, "A third generation computer game . . . wants to mingle with other curriculum and practice" (p. 277). This meets the criteria set by Bogost (2007) and Young et al. (2012) so that serious games do not replace

traditional methods but supplement them in an attempt to harness the power of video game learning and the energy of the video game enthusiast.

This call for a third generation of video game can be met by the serious games known as independent games, newsgames, empathy games or not-games because their primary goal is not financial but rather “the desire to change the user’s way of thinking and view of the world, whether focused narrowly on the job task or consumer habits or trained on larger social and cultural issues” (Iuppa & Borst, 2009, p. 15). The English language arts curriculum in Alberta has similar goals for the high school student when it comes to thinking and global perspectives:

Students engage in exploration to discover possibilities and to extend their awareness.

Through exploration, students begin to formulate their thoughts and ideas, organize and make sense of their experiences, and acknowledge and express their feelings. Exploration enables students to discover and understand what they think and who they are. (Alberta Education, 2003, p. 15)

This knowing of self is one end of the axis while knowing the outside world is the other end, and according to Young et al. (2012), this is more important than whether video games improve test scores. We have stop asking whether, “. . . video games enhance academic achievement” (Young et al., 2012, p. 84) and start thinking about the larger picture or plateau. This is a Deleuzian/Guattarian challenge.

How does a particular video game being used by a particular student in the context of a particular course curriculum affect the learning process as well as the products of the school (such as test grades, course selection, retention, and interest)? No research of this type was identified in our review, suggesting the missing element may be a more sophisticated approach to understanding learning and game play in the rich contexts of

home and school learning. (Young et al., 2012, p. 84)

This is the area of research that needs exploring in the English language arts curriculum: how do, for example, not-games affect the learning process when it comes to a better understanding of literature and life? So much of English literature is about marginalized people, and it demands that we examine our relationship with them from many different levels. How can something so dissimilar be so similar to us and why should we care?

Based on the literature so far, it seems that Europe is farther ahead than anyone, particularly when one reads the study that focuses on six case studies in, “How are digital games used in schools?” (Wastiau, Kearney, & Van den Berghe, 2009).<sup>13</sup> First and foremost, they note the incredible impact that games have on motivation, which based on the research, should not be a surprise. Students like the fact that education, when it encourages game use, is acknowledging their ubiquitous predilection for games and their need to be involved in their learning as players. The report made clear that the efficacy and the meaning they gain from sharing their expertise with either teachers or other students should not be underestimated (Wastiau, Kearney, & Van den Berghe, 2009). They also reported that gaming took “the drama out of learning” (Wastiau, Kearney, & Van den Berghe, 2009, p. 10) by making the learning more reliable, primarily because games were individualized and allowed for repeating levels after failing the grade, so to speak. Those who had to repeat certain levels were not nearly as harshly judged for their frequency in failing so the less academic student seems to benefit from gaming in the classroom more. Many teachers of gaming in the classroom reported increased learning over a longer period of time and that the games were tailored to the learner/user; hence, the games seemed to

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<sup>13</sup> The countries in the report targeted a number of countries, though the report was published in Belgium: Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain (Catalonia) and the United Kingdom.

garner more attention, even if teachers were unsure if “. . . the knowledge and skills directly linked to the subject being taught” (Wastiau, Kearney, & Van den Berghe, 2009, p. 11). Student enthusiasm and the heightened teacher-awareness that there is something potent about game-playing in the classroom has led this consortium to create a charity that recommends even more investigation into the when, how, and why behind the efficacy of gaming alignments to a particular curriculum of study (Wastiau, Kearney, & Van den Berghe, 2009, p. 17).

### **How Video Games Affected Player Attitudes in Three Different Studies**

There were a few games that were studied extensively in terms of their impact on gamers and whether they changed attitudes after being played, but only three studies were specific about testing the game’s efficacy: Lavender’s study (2008) called *Homeless: It’s No Game* (by Wetcoast Games); the study by Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, and Raphael (2012) on *Real Lives* (by Educational Simulations); and Jordan’s doctoral thesis dissertation (2011) on the impact of the COTS game, *The World of Goo*, in a post-secondary English classroom. The first study showed mixed results with the game helping some players to have more empathy and other players experiencing little change in attitude towards the homeless. It did, however, have some effect on raising awareness of social issues, particularly if the player sees the game as realistic. As Lavender (2008) maintains, the more conviction one has in a certain belief, the less likely it will change over time, and this needs to be taken into consideration when measuring a game’s efficacy (p. 31). He measured results by having forty-two participants from Simon Fraser university mailing groups and social contacts in Vancouver, B.C., and divided them into three groups, one of whom played the game, one of whom read a short story on homelessness, and one of whom was a control group. Before doing anything, they answered a web-based survey of questions regarding their attitudes towards homelessness and then they proceeded with the game

or reading and then re-did the survey after a week. The primary problem with the results was the small number of participants and the simplicity of game play, which was not unlike that of a maze of squares where some squares allowed access and others did not due to the time of day or a physical need. That said, Lavender did notice that the game players seem to have more, longer-lasting empathy than story readers. He then triangulated these results with qualitative results such as comments and found similar results. But his findings were not conclusive and to his regret, he did not include interviews. If participants found the game realistic then their attitudes were more likely to shift but if not, no change was evident (Lavender, 2008, p. 74). Lavender concludes by stating that persuasion is a complicated matter and that more longitudinal studies need to be done. He may well need a better game, something the next study had.

This game, *Real Lives*, was used for the study created by Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, and Raphael (2012) and had implications for novels that take place in other countries and cultures. It involved a larger number, 301 participants, from a Northern California high school. Like the previous game, it appealed to players' emotions, but this game was more sophisticated and appealed to those emotions more effectively through music (the other game had no music) and better graphics and narratives in order to experience the life of the other, ". . . vicariously experience[ing] what life could be like for a male or female in another country, including education, employment, marriage, having children, confronting diseases and natural disasters, and so on" (Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, & Raphael, 2012, p. 442). They then had to make choices based on events that occur in the game. Over a three-day period, some played alone, some played in pairs, and the control group researched life in another country through traditional methods of Internet research and the creation of a PowerPoint presentation. This control group, unlike the other control group from the previous study, actually used constructivist principles so



that their learning could be more accurately gauged against the constructed learning by the gamers –a criticism levied by Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2007) in his study on game research (Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, & Raphael, 2012). Again, questionnaires ranked by Likert scales were filled out before, during and after the experiment. Their findings showed that those who played the game for only two hours garnered more empathy and greater interest in doing more research on their country than the control group. They did not record their debriefing sessions, but they recommended doing so in future research for triangulating purposes.

The third study by Jordan (2011) on the COTS game, *The World of Goo*<sup>14</sup> was the closest that any researcher came to suggesting video gaming as a part of the English curriculum, albeit at the post-secondary level:

. . . viewed as another composed narrative text for analysis, video games seem to fit well in English theory and pedagogy. Students examining video games as narrative texts learn how to do fine-grained analysis of storytelling techniques, as well as the verbal/aural/interactive resources used in the narration. (p. 31)

Jordan's (2011) theoretical framework employed a vast array of literary theories, something he called, "a hybrid theoretical framework", borrowing from, "the fields of literary studies, narratology, film theory, aural theory, reader-response criticism, game studies, and multiliteracies theory to analyze video games" (p. 50). He then applied these lenses to the *World of Goo*. One really has to play the game to begin to understand how the narrative plays out in the strategic, triangular links of what looks like toxic blobs of oil made to look cute in an anthropomorphic way. The amount of text in the various sign posts that give hints and editorial commentary must

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<sup>14</sup> This game has five levels and requires the player to draw lines of pipes and triangles with a certain number of goo balls, moving them from one area to another through the construction of bridges, trellises, and towers that are structurally sound. The trick is to make it without collapsing or using up all the goo balls, so that you can move on to the next level.

grow in number as the player moves to the higher levels: “There is plenty of text in this game, often subtle, often ironic, and sometimes quite moving. However, I would also argue that this game tells a story, that it is a narrative” (Jordan, 2011, p. 77). He chose the game for his thesis because it was easy to play, readily accessible at an affordable price, and unique as a puzzle game because it employed rhetoric, satire, tone, and as he mentioned, a story-line. It is the story of humankind, following a similar narrative trajectory, starting in the golden age of a natural environment, later becoming an agrarian society, growing more industrial with a maze of cast iron pipes until it enters the information age we live in today: corporations loom large with hubris and the goo balls decide to destroy that which they helped to create. In the later stages of the game, different tribes of goo balls begin to appear, each with their own “culture” of written and unwritten rules. Of course, the two sides must be reconciled in order to work together in order to harness each other’s strengths to complete the game, all of which occurs in a remarkable and symbolic landscape and sound-scape. Jordan (2011) makes a compelling case for the inclusion of a video game as a part of an undergraduate level English course just by the very nature of what he demonstrates can be deconstructed from *The World of Goo*. He does not, however, intend to prove that the game improves learning over other mediums such as novels or plays, but rather he shows how the game is an excellent resource for demonstrating the benefits of literary analysis. It is only natural that the analysis of this new literacy begin at the secondary school level, but only at a lower level of analysis than the one Jordan (2011) employed.

### **Other Serious Games Available**

One should note that there are other games available; in fact, there are a lot of simple games out there, and they are growing at an exponential rate, but most of them did not have robust research studies attached to them, or they involved science and math students or college

level students. Nevertheless, these serious games are important because they show the possibilities of what is available on the Internet. Because some of these games are quite short, Yi (2011) was concerned about the temporality of persuasion and how long the learning might last, particularly given that a game might be over in five minutes: Yi felt more research had to be done in this area. However, the problem of lasting change as a result of witnessing a two-hour tragedy, for example, has been at issue since Aristotle when he talked about the efficacy of tragic form and how long it would affect the audience after watching it. Furthermore, how can this learning be measured, particularly if its suasion is achieved through the affective domain, namely intense emotions? This is the locus of a number of empathy games that follow. Frasca (2002) experiments with this in his *September 12<sup>th</sup>* game which has a very simple premise about the fight against terrorism: there is no way to win the game, hence its point. The game player shoots artillery at buildings where terrorists were last seen, and the explosions cause collateral damage which, like cutting one of the heads off the twelve-headed hydra, three more take its place, spawning three times more terrorists. The game, however, is short and it is unclear whether the player leaves the game with any long-term conclusions about the war on terror. *FearNOT!* by E-Circus (2008) is a game for nine to twelve-years-olds about the prevention of bullying wherein the player is the victim's invisible friend who offers advice. Playing the game as an adult triggers an emotional response as the mind replays similar scenarios from childhood: bullying in one form or another is a lived, human experience, so these kinds of games give strategies to those who face the oppression; furthermore, the victim is empowered by offering the very advice that might help to contextualize and solve bullying in his or her life. Another game more appropriate to Grade 12 students is the game *Façade* (Mateus & Stern, 2005) where the player chooses a character name and is then phoned by friends s/he has not seen for a long time –Trip

and Grace. They have just moved into a new apartment and would like the player to come over. Upon arrival, the conflict begins and based on what the player types in response to the character prompts, the outcome is determined: is the player's friendship sacrificed or do Trip and Grace break up? These kinds of video games offer interventionist interactivity and bring another dimension to video gaming whereby players are given agency in real world problems as if performing in a simulated play in a theatre. Frasca (2001) was the first to connect Boal's book, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) to video gaming, hence his thesis, *Video gaming of the Oppressed*. Grappiolo, Cheong, Togelius, Khaled, and Georgios (2011) talk about this kind of agency that Frasca describes:

Related to immersion in games is agency: players can interactively take actions and make decisions that impact on game content and progress. Games allow players to role-play in ways similar to drama workshops: within bounded, virtual environments, they can adopt new perspectives and play different roles . . . Games also facilitate the experiencing of multiple perspectives on one issue or situation. For example, in the context of conflict resolution, a player could first play the role of aggressor, then later the role of mediator, each time applying different conflict resolution strategies. (Grappiolo, et al., 2011, p. 192)

This kind of agency offers huge opportunities for a child who is normally shy and easily preyed upon; now, s/he can practice taking on different roles in a safe and anonymous environment wherein s/he could "play" with other people online, perhaps his/her own peers from his/her school in an attempt to learn about conflict resolution (Grappolio et al., 2011). This technique is similar to what Boal (1979) used but in theatre, whereby he would use improvisation around a pertinent political conflict in a community and ask those involved in the oppression to "step in"

and “play out” potential resolutions with other actors who played the oppressors. This provided a forum for discussion and emancipation for Boal (1979) and psychological therapy for Frasca’s students (2001) in a virtual space that could then be acted upon in the real space. This is Deleuze and Guattari’s minoritarian text at work, helping people become by exchanging emotional experiences, escaping majoritarian bias and assumption (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986).

Frasca (2001) went a step farther by encouraging students to make their own games about their oppressions based on very simple modifications to older game platforms, such as arcade games like *Space Invaders* or *PacMan*. He used an online forum for his students to generate gaming ideas and to provoke discussion about the oppression they wanted to characterize in a game. In typical Boal fashion, he was less interested in the solution than the discussion (Frasca, 2001, p. 98). He gave an example: One of his students, someone he calls Peter, is having trouble telling his people that he is gay, so he comes up with different games modified from the old game platform of *Space Invaders and Tetris*. For the first game, instead of invading space ships, there are parents, friends, or peers raining down on the oppressed, gay teenager at the bottom of the screen. He deletes the laser rays that used to zap the space ships because the teenager doesn’t know how to deal with the potential homophobic insults and dismay. The laser ray has been disabled in the video game; he cannot fight back. Peter’s peers on the forum alter the game with their design suggestions: fight back with art and song on the subject; do not fight alone, so add characters to stand beside the solitary gay teen at the bottom of the screen; or don’t fight at all, but cover your ears. The second game that the student created was based on *Tetris* where players were challenged to match same sex couples: failure to do so resulted in opposite sex couples that procreated, lessening the chances of finding a gay couple (Frasca, 2001, pp. 100-108). Frasca

mentioned that there were limitations to this approach: privacy issues, anonymity issues, and forum solvency issues where usage fell over time. There would be technological programming issues as well. Nevertheless, the empowerment that students can access through video game adaptation and creation could be poignant. This approach works so well because it is rhizomatic in nature, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) would point out, with many student groups offering suggestions for each of the problems encountered.

The problem with this approach in an English language arts class is twofold: modifying computer script can be difficult –though this is becoming more accessible– and requires expertise from a computing course if there are many game design issues involved; also, the simulations are based on real and often controversial or ideological issues which either required anonymity or some kind of censorship in order to maintain privacy issues in a classroom. Game creation using such programs as *Scratch* or *Kodu* meet the needs of the creative representation strand of the Alberta English curriculum but again, programming logistics take too much time outside the purview of the program of studies. Jordan (2011) agrees, suggesting that without a computer game-programming department, game production is too far removed from the scope of any English curriculum.

### **Summary of the Literary Review**

Where does the English language arts class fit into these broad range of video games? Given that student culture is very much influenced by video games, not-games offer a new line of flight away from stereotypical and popular video game deployment that can bring discussion around student expectations of video games and how they control the players. By juxtaposing not-games with pieces of literature in the English classroom, there is a real opportunity to disrupt student thinking about context, character and theme. In the past, with the arrival of each new

genre, English teachers in Alberta were told they had to ensure student literacy, first with the written word, then with film, and then with the graphic novel. Based on the literature, it is becoming clear that this is the new “genre,” video games, if only because of their burgeoning popularity with the students we teach. The virtual space is becoming a paradigm all of its own, and teachers have an obligation to ensure video game literacy as well. Of the researchers who examined video gaming in the classroom, it is clear that many of them agreed that they could only be used as a supplement to good teaching (Becker, 2007; Connolly et al., 2012; Young et al., 2010). “Teachers must learn how to assess whether a specific game might be useful for them in the classroom, and if so, under which conditions” (Becker, 2007, p. 7). “They can allow for more aspects of experience to be represented and juxtaposed efficiently and creatively than can texts composed merely of words” (Gee & Hayes, 2011, p. 119). This is the potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s endorsement of rhizomes and their impact on learning (Wallin, 2010). Video games may increase learning and improve grades and sometimes they may not, but in English language arts, this is tangential to the central question of meeting the students where they are at, getting them involved in their own learning, representing experiences efficiently and efficaciously, so that they are motivated to think about it and write about it. “Learning is accomplished through a complex array of formal and informal activities, experiences, and interactions” (Reeves, Champion, & Meglan, 2010, p. 2103). The study of literature, any literature, including not-games is just that, an array of activities, experiences, and interactions, and a transversal array at that. Whether or not this rhizomatic approach improves grades is not really the point. There is an exciting opportunity for an English language arts teacher to seed the literature units with not-games to inspire further thought and connections with the literature about which they plan to write. As Young et al. (2012) made clear, there is little research in this

area. This hole in the research affirms the need to experiment with the placement of not-games within the boundaries of the English language arts curriculum. From the literature review, it became clear that though Europe is new to gaming in the classroom, they are further ahead in terms of the number of classrooms that are experimenting with video games as a part of the curriculum delivery (Wastiau, Kearney, & Van den Berghe, 2009). Though they are experimenting with educational games and COTS (commercial-off-the-shelf) games, and even serious games that deal with conflicts around the world (Global Conflicts, 2010), they, too, have not used not-games as an artistic, machinic impetus in the secondary language arts classroom, as far as this literature review can tell.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Traditions**

Given the little research on the effect of philosophical and artistic not-games in the Secondary English Language Arts classroom, it is warranted to experiment with their effect on students with a case study that combines literature with not-games. Because of their brief nature, there will be little curricular intrusion and students will gain from the experience because of not-games' multimodality. The study was qualitative and measured from comments made in while students played games in class, gave or responded to presentations, wrote personal responses, provided interviews and completed anonymous surveys. "One of the inherent characteristics of case studies is that they operate with a severely restricted focus" (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001, p. 2). This would be why this particular methodology suited this research question. According to Yin (1994), "the case study is preferred in examining contemporary events . . ." (p. 8) and studying the effect of not-games in a classroom suits this design need because students' use of video games is so ubiquitous. Case study is also more suitable because it aligns



the study of literature as students study it in class. Stake (2006) maintains, “The case [as in case study] has an inside and an outside. Certain components lie within the system, within the boundaries of the case; certain features lie outside. A few of the outside features help define the contexts or environment of the case” (p. 3). There are several insides and outsides going on when merging a not-game to literature that students are studying in an English language arts course. They bring their own experiences and the experiences of those they know, most often their parents, the other adults in their life, and their peers into their interpretations of the literature and then of the game as it resonates with it. “Case study issues reflect complex, situated, problematic relationships. They pull attention both to ordinary experience and also to the disciplines of knowledge (e.g., sociology, economics, ethics, literary criticism)” (Stake, 2006, p. 10). This is perfect for the kind of interpretation and analysis required when gauging the effectiveness of a not-game such as *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009) with literature wherein characters find themselves at odds with institutions larger than they had first imagined. This case study wanted to determine whether not-games helped to generate more ideas and detail than if the game had not been played, and if they helped students to better grapple with nuance and the paradox of human nature.

According to Yin, (1994), case study requires that “data come largely from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts” (Yin, 1994 in Zucker, 2009, p. 1). He also maintained that case studies answer the questions “How” and “Why,” and this worked for the original research question (Yin, 1994): How do not-games assist students with their understanding of literature in their writing and why does or why does this not occur?

### Methods for Interpretation

“Deleuze maintains that it is only out of nonsense that thinking can occur” (Mazzei, in Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 106). This was one of the goals of incorporating not-games into English language arts<sup>15</sup>: there was an attempt to agitate, unfold, and disturb what writers wrote and what students thought about the stories they chose by asking them to play not-games and witness what happened as a result. Since the theoretical lens was based on the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari (1968/1994; 1972/1977; 1980/1987), the rhizomatic maps that these French philosophers espoused suggested that students would learn more than if they only read and interpreted their stories alone as they normally would. This approach typically favours arborescence and tracing where molar truths are ensconced in hierarchies and archetypes that promote copying or mimicry (tracings) from Oedipus on down<sup>16</sup> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1977; Deleuze, 1983). Though the aborescent approach has a place in English analysis, and is quite typical of literary analysis, Deleuze and Guattari are looking for a disruption, a line of flight out of the hierarchy of pattern resonance into learning by association with something completely different, hence their attraction to works like Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1975/1986) where the protagonist undergoes a transformation out of the human phylum, becoming a cockroach. Learning by association is the same process being used with associating not-games to literature. Students have more choice by being encouraged to make their own connections between unrelated, nonsensical text forms and build their own becomings through these combinations.

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<sup>15</sup> A list of not-games and links are proved in Appendix A. While this list is not exhaustive, since not-games continue to grow, this list is what students were given to explore.

<sup>16</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1977) were highly critical of analysis that surrounded the Oedipus complex because so much of it was based on Sophocles’ play that it became transcendent. They prefer to see analysis that is the result of a multiplicity of influences: schizoanalysis.

Even the key words of the Deleuze-Guattari procedure, words like *rhizome*, *lines of escape*, *assemblage (agencement)*, become battle-sites for a process of deterritorialization as the authors violate their own proprietary authorship of terms and make the words tremble, stutter. (Polan, as cited in Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986, p. 27)

Not-games come at an oblique enough angle that they can allow students to deterritorialize their understanding of literature so that they, too, could “stutter” (p. xxvii) and find out something they might not otherwise discover, both about their assigned stories and the genre of video games in general. Gough (2005) makes the possibility of the rhizome very clear when he says, “the space of educational research can also be understood as a ‘rhizome space.’ Rhizome is to a tree as the Internet is to a letter” (p. 3). This case study was to determine whether this phenomenon was accurate by “shaking the tree” (Gough, 2005, p. 4) for whom and when. The whole notion of this case study was to show that not-games, “. . . implicate rather than replicate; they propagate, displace, join, circle back, fold. Emphasizing the materiality of desire, rhizomes like crabgrass, ants, wolf packs, and children [and not-games], de- and reterritorialize space” (O’Riley, as cited in Gough, 2005, p. 7). The rhizome played itself out as the student played the not-game over and over again, either finding clues that they missed the first time or refreshing the protagonist after failing the level. Thoughts reoccurred but were slightly different each time. Then another student played the same not-game and their insights combined to create more difference through the repetition of the not-game. Perhaps they read a review or comment about the game online. More thoughts and insights surfaced. What subtleties were missed from one game to the next, from one player to the next? Then another not-game was played from the rhizome of not-games available. What did that not-game have to do with their short story or

their different readings of the short story? There were no easy (arborescent) answers, just collisions and questions. Students made the synapses connect and shared with others.

The key to this research methodology is how one interprets effectiveness. Since not-games are short, taking anywhere from five minutes to an hour to play, English Language Arts 30-1 students played the not-games and then prepared a presentation on their short story, a poem, and the not-game that they played. Students were asked to consider their thoughts as they played the game the first time and then subsequent times. Did they know someone who lives or lived like this character in the not-game and why did they live in this manner? Of whom does the protagonist in the not-game remind them in either real life or in fiction? How common is this kind of lifestyle? What should someone do? How would the protagonist of the story play the not-game? What would s/he learn? Which not-game would s/he favour and why? Students were asked if they might have any commonality with the protagonist or their conflict in the future. After answering these questions, they may or may not have solved the game, since the game-play was often predicated on either survival or reaching some kind of goal which may or may not be achievable. This required additional not-game-play at home, which furthered their connections. As they played, they were asked to reflect on the various characters from the literature at hand. Students could make connections between the figures in the game and their characters from their narrative, thinking about how they were all implicated rhizomatically on one level or another. They could play through any game imagining the protagonist of the game as each or all the different characters in their story. How were the setting similar? The work-day? Was the not-game satirizing their lifestyle in any way? Were any of the characters trying to avoid this lifestyle? What were the benefits of working in this environment and what were the drawbacks? What kinds of jobs are like this? These were asked orally during the presentations,

and in the future, these should be formalized as a short assignment. Students were then asked to write a personal response assignment similar to the one on the Alberta English Grade Twelve diploma exam. The difference was that the not-game replaced the photograph. (On the diploma, students read a poem, an excerpt from a novel or short story, and a photograph and are required to use these texts as a staging ground for either a personal anecdotal, creative, or analytical response. They can write on one or all three pieces of literature.) The primary goal was to get them to engage with the material in a manner that would extend their learning through the relationship-triangle between the not-game, the literature, and their own lives which could be pulled together by connecting the gaps between the various texts, providing enough insight to address any English diploma-type question.

### **Research Site, Participants, and Time-line**

Since the study was a convenient study, the students that used the not-games were students I was assigned to teach English Language Arts. As mentioned in the dedication of this thesis, deJong introduced me to not-games in February, 2011 when we team-taught a group of Grade 11, English Language Arts 20-2 students in a suburban, upper-middle class high school outside of a major city in Alberta where demographics have not changed much in thirty years.<sup>17</sup> Because of societal and parental pressure, participation rates are quite low in what is called the Dash Two stream (English Language Arts 20-2), so those students who struggle the most with language expression and comprehension take the course. Though the not-games had resonance with them, they were less given to philosophical considerations and had high demands for video-

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<sup>17</sup> deJong agreed to team-teach the English 20-2 course with myself because the school was interested in reaching struggling English students through experimental video-gaming applications which involved assignments that used not-games, and software creating programs such as *Scratch*, and *Kodu*. This program was cut when AISI funding was cancelled by the Alberta Government in 2012.

game entertainment parameters, so they found the not-games strange and/or boring and had difficulty articulating their feelings about them. This was when I realized the potential of using them in a regular Dash One stream, particularly with Grade 12, English Language Arts 30-1 students who must be philosophical in their writings about literature. Originally, I intended to connect one not-game to a piece of literature, as I did with the game, *Afghanistan* (Serious Games, 2010) to Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) but soon realized that a modified short story unit combined with diploma style personal responses could yield more chaotic potential when students were given more choices, both in terms of stories and not-games. I experimented with Grade 11, English Language Arts 20-1 students as well, but similar maturity issues played out, as they had with my English Language Arts 20-2 students the year before. In the end, two Grade 12 English Language Arts 30-1 classes were studied, the latter group being given a thought-paper assignment that asked them to assess not-games in general in addition to the diploma style personal response.

These responses were analyzed for ideas and connections to see if they were enriched or reterritorialized because of playing the not-games. Three students were interviewed from past classes, one male and two females. Though the male was a gamer, the two females were not. One female wrote about not-games quite a bit and the other one did not refer to the not-game in her written responses. During the marking of diploma exams in Edmonton, eight teachers from different parts of the province responded to an invitation to consider a unit using not-games (See Appendix E), but only one responded to supplementary emails requesting interviews. This particular teacher focused on the not-game, *Afghanistan* (Serious Games, 2010), which he connected to the class novel, *The Kite Runner*. In an attempt to collect some kind of information about their perspective on student experiences with not-games outside of the convenient study,

teachers were sent a Google Form, hoping that they would find that less intrusive and anonymous, but none of the teachers filled it out. I suspect that skepticism, and a lack of time and interest all played a role in teacher reticence. There was also a major flood in Southern Alberta in the Spring of 2013, just days after teachers expressed initial interest and given that some of the eight teachers were from areas heaviest hit by the flood, this would explain their reluctance to follow through with the study. At the same time, many teachers find the idea of video gaming in an English classroom strange.

### **Methods for Data Collection**

Data collection came from four potential areas: comments made during not-game play in class or during a presentation; student writing, which could be creative if they so chose; a presentation to the class and ensuring comments from classmates; an anonymous survey; and four interviews. Based on my previous experience in teaching the literature, I was able to tell if not-games had any influence on the depth and quality of their writing on that literature and whether it was influenced by the not-games. It was interesting to see how students handled the rhizomatic and oblique angles of the not-games and the kinds of connections they made between the two media, some of which called for some creative thinking. This is precisely the type of thinking espoused in the secondary English curriculum. Obviously, the more connections, the more evidence there was to suggest that not-games did have an impact on student perception of literature and rhetorical suasion in general. If you look at Appendix A and D, you will notice that not-games were attached to specific stories, but I later dropped those attachments, recognizing that students could make rhizomatic connections that I would never make, so rather than suggesting certain not-games for specific stories, I just gave them a list of not-games and let

them determine the connections, most of which were far more interesting than the ones with which I could have created.

Students were told that this unit was similar to the expectations surrounding the personal response section of the diploma exam, with the exception of the not-game which replaced the photograph. Students read their assigned story, choose a poem that related to the story, and then played the not-games. It was important that students gave the not-games more than a passing glance, which was tempting given their simple and misgiving appearance, particularly for students who had pre-conceived biases about what a video game should look like, based on the video games they played in the past. Students were told to “solve” and finish their not-game. Some were very short and only last a couple of minutes, so in this case, students were asked to try several and play them long enough to come up with a number of answers to the aforementioned questions and observations. Students were then asked to come together in their assigned groups to pool their queries and findings. Students had to consider their assigned literature and find connections or disconnections to the poem they chose and the not-games they played. (Connections did go beyond the literature in the unit, so students made references to previously read literature.) They were asked the following questions:

1. Does the not-game comment more on one character than another? On one wish-fulfillment more than another?
2. Is there an ironic or symbolic commentary that the not-game provides for the literature, the conflicts, and the dilemmas within?
3. Would the author of the literature agree with the creator of the not-game? Why or why not?
4. What would the characters think of the not-game puzzle, conundrum, or conflict?



5. Is a character's life or wish implicated in the game?
6. Usually, there is a philosophy that operates as an undercurrent to the not-game, so how is it similar or dis-similar to that of the literature that they are studying?

Students were encouraged to note their frustrations, discoveries, insights, and connections and present them to the class, using their stories, poems, and not-games as a platform. Just before the presentations, all students were tested to ensure that they had read each other's stories.

The answers to these questions were recorded and then later coded for new kinds of discoveries specific to the not-games. A final assignment was fashioned after the Personal Response section of the written English diploma exam. This allowed them to make a personal choice as to what form they wanted to write, whether it was creative, personal, anecdotal, or analytical: it was their personal choice, just like it would be on the diploma. Since this assignment would mirror the diploma exam, the same rubric would be used. After the process was over, questionnaires were sent, using Google Forms, which collected anonymous data from the class (see Appendix C for the complete survey). Three students were selected from the sample for an interview and these were transcribed (Appendices G, H, and I).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The obvious concern was student evaluation and that it be objective and impartial to however students felt about the not-games. This called for a professional distance on my part, so that a student choice was completely unrestricted as to whether they wrote or discussed not-games or not. Only a couple of classes were dedicated to the playing of the not-games, so it did not take up a lot of class time that would have been used on other curriculum demands. There is a natural desire to anticipate positive returns from not-game exposure, especially when so much time is dedicated to that end, but from a professional perspective, the not-game is just another

tool from which teachers and students may or may not benefit. Some not-games relate better to some students and teachers more than others and that is not a problem. The case study was just that, a study to determine what kind of influence not-games might or might not have on student appreciation and understanding of literature.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of the study were in the interpretation of the student responses. As a researcher who has a predilection for the avant-garde, it is pretty tempting to see what you want to see in the results. Though the responses can be qualified to a certain extent, they are still quite open to interpretation, and this is intensified by the insertion of narratives (the not-games) being super-imposed on the literature. Students have been taught to seek connections between literatures in the past, so will this be more of the same where students find direct connections or tracings from the not-game to the literature? Will something new actually arise? Students have very rigid expectations of what a video game looks like, acts like, and feels like, so this bias can act as a barrier to new discoveries, new lines of flight. As an adult with considerable fine arts experience, both as a student, a participant, and as viewer/audience member, it is easy to superimpose my hopes and my wide-angled artistic lens on the integration of not-games into an English classroom. Their lens is bound to be different and likely more critical and telescopic. This is unavoidable but like all research, it is an experiment that the literature suggests is worth trying.

### **Conclusion**

Not-games are a new form of game that opens up new opportunities for students and teachers alike. Visual literacy and media literacy can be targeted through video games, something that has not been done up until now (Jensen, 2013). Interactive games can be re-

imagined as an art-form, as Magnuson suggests about his game, “The Killer” (2011), which can bring meaning to literature in a novel form, a form that is usually reserved for the home as an entertainment tool. As gaming software creation tools advance, students could even be inspired to create their own games based on the stories they read. The possibilities are exciting and this is a field of study that is only just beginning. There is so much more to come in terms of gaming technology, and gaming as a learning tool is not only gaining currency in pedagogical circles, but also in the gaming world where industry is just starting to pay attention to the possibilities as a profitable venture in education (Jensen, 2013). As the amount of time that young people spend reading declines, never is there a more desperate time than now to engage youth in alternative and innovative methods of exposing them to literature to help them make connections in a way that prepares them for the future. The hope is that this research can pave a runway for other teachers, researchers, and gamers to help literature, indeed, themselves, come alive. Undoubtedly, the skill of reading is incredibly important in order to ensure student success in the future.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Introduction to Findings**

The use of not-games in English Language Arts is an uphill battle, as it seems to be in many subject areas. Almost all students are keen and enthusiastic, far more interested in trying something new than many teachers. Though I have given teachers the opportunity to play not-games by giving them access codes to games that would fit wonderfully with social studies, for example, only one of my colleagues used them in the classroom. There is a well-documented gap between teacher and student comfort level with gaming and this played itself out in the school (Sheldon, 2011). Furthermore, games are often seen as capricious, child-play, and

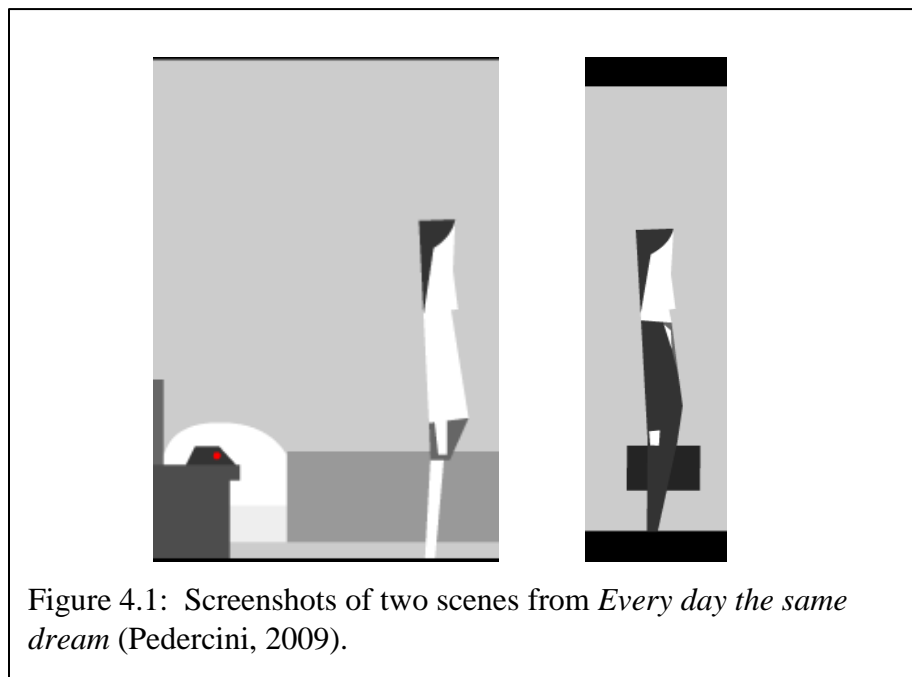
unsuitable for the “mature” environment of a high school. As the literature review pointed out, this may well be a mistake, but there is still a distance to go in terms of research and suitable game development. There is also room to grow in terms of what is interpreted as learning. If a student remembers an experience that cannot be measured in terms of marks and evaluation, does it count as learning? This is a Deleuzian/Guattarian question because society wants to attribute this test to that moment, as if one could replace the other and as Roy (2003) points out, life is much more complicated than that, focusing rather on rhizomatic differences than aborescent similarities (Roy, 2003). As the understanding of gaming potential gains currency in education, the hope is that teachers will be given more permission to introduce gaming into the classroom, since there are powerful lessons to be learned. Games are not a panacea, but it is a tool well worth employing when the occasion presents itself, as these findings suggest.

The findings were collected from a number of sources, most of the salient ones coming from student writings, be they from personal response assignments, presentations, or small writing assignments. However, students were also polled about not-games on two separate Google Forms via their Gmail, one a teacher evaluation and one a survey on not-games. In order to understand student comments, a couple of not-game were explicated.

#### **Deleuzian/Guattarian Analysis of *Everyday the Same Dream* (Pedercini, 2009)**

Students were exposed to seventeen different not-games by sending them a series of links via Gmail, so that they could easily find the not-games and play them. Additional not-games were found as time went on. Pedercini’s not-game, *Every day the same dream* (2009), was popular with students likely because of its irony, subtle challenges, and similarity to either their lives as students, their lives to come, or their parents’ lives as white-collared workers. The facelessness of Pedercini’s main character (2009) is a kind of machinic catalyst, endearing and

likeable in his tidy suit and his slim attaché-briefcase. He's cute. His situation of repetition and difference both within the not-game and without in the life of the not-player creates a form that also teases out issues, thoughts, anticipations of becoming as a chaotic attractor of sorts, as indicated in the student talk-aloud in Appendix G. When students first meet him, he is standing beside his bed in his boxers and the alarm is flashing. Non-diegetic guitar music strums in the background, lackadaisically, accompanied by percussion and the occasional whining saxophone. He walks robotically and walks confidently on his heels. By the time the character gets to work after a short drive in the little, identical car that everyone else is driving, it's clear that everyone looks exactly the same and that they are destined to repeat the same day, every workday of the week for years to come.



This is a Deleuzian exploration, one about which he wrote in his doctoral thesis, *Difference and Repetition* (1968) where he begins with a quote by Danton, a character from Buchner's play, *Danton's Death* (1835):

It is so wearisome. First you put on your shirt, then your trousers, you drag yourself into bed at night and in the morning drag yourself out again; and always you put one foot in front of the other. There is little hope that it will ever change. Millions have always done it like that and millions more will do so after us. (p. 4)

The first time the not-game was played in front of the students, the most outspoken one yelled out, “Ah, shoot myself!” This indicated immediate engagement and deterritorialization because the student immediately saw the humdrum repetition in the scenario and flatly rejected it. Student interest is piqued when they realize that there’s a way to “win” as the player is told by the elevator lady that an additional step can be taken in order to “become a new person” (Pedercini, 2009). The hunt is on to find the differences in the daily grind of each day, and it turns out that there are five of them and they can be discovered in any order. However, players must pay attention and from Tanner’s think aloud (see Appendix G), dictated as he played the not-game, you can hear his excitement as he tries to find differences in the game: “‘Four more steps and you will be a new person’ (reading the caption under the elevator lady). Oh, I see! I get it now! This is an anti-conformist thing, isn’t it? You gotta figure out what’s different and everything. I wonder. I’m gonna to try going left this time. Ah ha!” (Tanner, 2012. English 30-1 student). Nevertheless, many students will repeat the not-game’s day twenty to thirty times before they figure it out. As Tanner said in his walk-through talk aloud, “It all seems a predestiny thing, almost” (Tanner, 2012. English 30-1 student). The not-game, like many games, and indeed, like life, is very repetitive, cyclical, but as Deleuze points out, there are always differences because repetitions are never the same because as we repeat the day, we are aware of the repetition because of our memory of the first one. “Alarm again. Wardrobe. Same stuff. Okay. Television, off. Hunh, yeah, sunlight. I get it. There’s got to be something that changes

in this” (Tanner, 2012. English 30-1 student. p. 215). Williams (2003, 2013) explains that Deleuze highlighted three types of repetition: habit, just like we see in *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009); memory, which “leads us to have a fixed representation of things” (Williams, 2003, 2013, p.12); and then, the most interesting and complex repetition, what Williams (2003, 2013) explains as, “how things change in relation to virtual becomings, to difference in itself” (p.12). This can be anything from global or seasonal changes to interior mood changes and is in-between the habit and the memory of it in a smooth, nomadic space that cannot be named without rendering the variation evanescent, yet it is this variation that gives living life (Williams, 2003, 2013, p.13). So much of life and indeed, this not-game, is about repetition and yet it is in the differences where one finds life and yet the differences would not exist without the repetitions. The problem that Tanner had towards the end of the not-game was that he could not find how to find the last difference. As I said, “If you miss that window then you keep going through which is a lot like life. . . . If you miss the window, . . . you’ll just keep repeating the same thing over and over and over and over again. Those opportunities only come up once in a while” (Gibson Dodd as interviewer, 2012, Appendix G, p. 220). What was interesting in the talk-aloud walk-through with Tanner was when I started asking him to draw similarities in the repetitions of the not-game to the repetitions we experience in life. The dialogue captures this best:

Scott: So why do think that people live their lives like this?

Tanner: Well, lots of them don’t have a choice.

Scott: Why not?

Tanner: Do bad in school, don’t get a good job, start poor, end poor. (Gibson Dodd & Tanner, 2012, Appendix G, p. 221)

This is an example of the kind of chaotic attractor that exists in this not-game. Tanner implicates himself and his fellow students who like him, will be thrust into the real world when they graduate from high school the next year. Though I suggested that the protagonist's job of the not-game was probably a pretty good one, he said, "depends what you count as a good job. I mean being an average conformist person, does the exact same as everyone else isn't exactly what I'd want to do with my life; it's kind of boring and pointless" (Tanner, 2012, Appendix G, p. 222). The veracity of this statement is juxtaposed to each individual and how we determine meaning from life, but it is interesting that the not-game tapped into the need for variation and that without it, life lost its luster. One of the choices in the not-game is the option to go out on the balcony of the office tower where the character works and jump off. Tanner pointed out that he found this option before all of the others and likely followed this route earlier than the not-game designer had intended, but it was startling how the quickly the not-game inspired, or teased out, a conversation about life, his experience with a friend's depression around his mother's suicide, and the system of schooling. This is in concert with how Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) understand how art acts as a machine that diagrams our world into it, deterritorializing us with sense-events that cause reflection about potential new becomings: "Will I end up in a job like this? Will I experience this kind of facelessness as a worker in the real world; will I become tethered to this kind of existence because of my life as a consumer; will I have similar values? Will I feel the need to end it all? How do I experience repetition now and in the future? What will become of me? How can I be different and find differences worth living for?" Tanner struggles with this as well: "Lots of them get trapped in it and never leave. Yeah, that won't be me. (Laughs). I'd hate that. I would hate that so much; I'd hate it every day I went there. (Laughs)" (Tanner, 2012, English 30-1 student, Appendix G, p. 225). With only a



little prompting because the game ends with suicide, the not-game teased out Tanner's memories of his friend and how that friend dealt with depression:

I remember I had a friend cut his wrists and he said because he thought, he was depressed, really depressed because his mom committed suicide and ah, he'd, he'd always message me on MSN and ask me for help and I would say that you're not my friend until you stop cutting your wrists. And he tells me to this day that's was one of the only reasons he stopped cutting his wrists because he didn't get sympathy for it. He got less sympathy and no support for doing it, so he stopped doing it. And that's kind of one of the things behind suicide: Everybody looks, "Oh that poor person," instead of going, "Oh that person's an idiot; why would he do that and the only people that really do that is the family members afterwards, but they don't make it public as they're thinking that; I think. They try understand and, they kind of they try to understand and they also will never really understand cause they probably would have never done it themselves, really. This is pretty much all I have to say on that topic though. (Tanner, 2012, English 30-1 student, Appendix G, p. 226)

At this point, he was asked a question that would help him distance his emotions from the narrative and then was asked to reflect on his own life and its similarities to the life within the game: "You've been a student for twelve or thirteen years now. Do you think your last thirteen years have been anything like this?" (Gibson Dodd, Interviewer, 2012, Appendix G, p. 227).

The response yielded a fascinating analysis of the school system with an undercurrent of anger and dismay as he recounted his time spent in the school system. He is angry because classes are boring, repetitive, and people with less academic ability than he has, give up. He also takes a job at the diploma exam weighting here, in the province of Alberta, and then summarizes by saying

that chances do not come by often and that you do not get a second chance in the real world:

Well, I kind of know it's like that because with me, like it's not a marks thing because I always have high enough marks to do, but it's just monotonous because you come in everyday, and you sit in the same desk and the seating plan, same teachers, same crap, same people don't like you, same people like you, usually, unless you do something to make someone mad at you or something, or you make friends with someone which is very very rare. Hunh. Usually mad would probably come before fixing. But I mean it gets really repetitive after, like, like I told my dad I wanna kind of want a year off school before I go to university because it, it's too much just the same. Like normally if I had the same work ethic I do now as I did in grade 9, I'd have almost 100% in all my classes probably. Like my math, my calculus class I have an 80 and all my other classes I have an 80. This is the only one I'm doing bad in because I'm bad with figurative speech, but I mean, I have like a 90 something in Chemistry, and I hardly do any homework at all. I don't really I daze off a lot in the classes too, and I mean, I still get good marks in them but I feel bad for the people who don't because they'll probably end up like that. But I mean, it's hard not to end up like that; they set it up purposely so that the most important years are the ones after you've already done it for hundreds and hundreds of years and you just stop caring anymore. Like in elementary, you get an A and you're high-fiving everyone, like in threes and in secondary, you're like Junior High you're like "Oh wahoo, I got a good mark" and here, people, you see people high-five each other when they fail because they don't care. They just give up, and they don't care anymore about what happens here because they've done for it so long because they don't think anything bad will happen from failing it by the time they get here. And they get trapped in that, kind

of. Let's face it; if you don't get a diploma, you're not gonna probably get a job anymore. People always say you don't need one anymore, but I kinda think that's bullshit because it's very few people who don't need a diploma. Very few. Like we're talking about Bill Gates. 'Kay, well, you really think that there's a Bill Gates at the back of the classroom that gets a 40 and all this. One out of a trillion people maybe. Like, there's not many people who cannot pass high school and be successful. And I mean there's lots of people who don't pass high school for a long time because they hate the way everything runs. Like I mean our final tests; I hate our final exams because I just hate the way how you get like a really good mark all the way up to the end of the year like it did in my 30 course and then it drops your mark like 7% because they make it like a really ridiculously, overly, hard final exam that doesn't have anything correspondingly; like lots of the questions are not even curriculum corresponding on some of them; like some, some of the social questions aren't actually what we've been talking about in our social examples, so how does that have any relevance to what I've learnt in my class, and you lose marks for that, massive marks 'cause it's like 50% of your mark. That's another thing that just really kills motivation to even do anything 'cause I mean, let's face it, you could get a fifty in this class, and go in and study hard for the diploma and get a hundred on the diploma and you'd have a seventy-five, so I mean really it's all about the one test at the end of the year... and it's just kind of stupid when it's like that. (Pause.) Like it's like the same thing kind of with this job, because once someone gets asked to get out of their cubicle to go to a better job, you turn it down, or you fail it, and it's failed; like it doesn't matter how many years you spent doing a job properly in the cubicle; you failed

your chance (laughs). You don't usually get a second one . . . . (Tanner, English 30-1 student, 2012, Appendix G, pp. 228-229)

The not-game has done its work by pulling ideas, criticisms, fears and solutions into play. All of Tanner's concerns, memories, and projections gravitate to the fore, and through this haptic experience, his life is unfolded from his observations about the past and his fears about the future. The periods, the days, the schedule, the very classroom seat he chooses to sit in all repeat in similar cycles over and over again. "The molar habit of capture underscores the project of much contemporary schooling, which epistemologically territorializes the curricular map as tracing of what is already known and what everyone already knows (Wallin, 2010, p. 54). We are such creatures of habit that the habit becomes who we are, as teachers, as students, as reified curriculum because it has become stratified, codified as the sedimentary rock of the ages. The predictability fossilizes us. It is only that which renders it strange, foreign, arresting, and alarming that can defibrillate the death-wish of domination. De Landa (2000) in his paper on "Deleuze, Diagrams and the Genesis of Form" (p. 33) discusses the growing understanding of DNA in a developing embryo and shows how our understanding has changed from that of a blueprint representation to how DNA actually creates a form that allows structure to take place. There is something similar going on with the not-game as it, too, creates a form, a chaotic attractor, that allows embryonic, student thinking and affect to fill it up with their own stories, fears, and anticipations. Similar to how DNA contributes to morphogenesis (De Landa, 2000), the chaotic attractors of the not-game pulls the student right into its setting, creating an upset.

It is only in these far-from-equilibrium conditions that the full variety of immanent topological forms appears (steady state, cyclic or chaotic attractors). It is only in this zone of intensity that difference-driven morphogenesis comes into its own, and that matter

becomes an active material agent, one which does not need form to come and impose itself from the outside. To return once more to the example of the developing embryo, the DNA that governs the process does not contain, as it was once believed, a blueprint for the generation of the final form of the organism, an idea that implies an inert matter to which genes give form from the outside. The modern understanding of the processes, on the other hand, pictures genes as teasing out a form out of an active matter, that is, the function of genes and their products is now seen as merely constraining and channeling a variety of material processes, occurring in that far-from- equilibrium, diagrammatic zone, in which form emerges spontaneously. (De Landa, 2000, p. 37)

This is where, in this instance, this little not-game teases out such forms that can create fissures and molecular cracks, not only on its own but as a molecular, minoritarian disruption to any literature it is placed beside, causing fissures to the molar line as one reflects on the rhizomatic collisions within and without.

### **The Not-game, *Afghanistan* (Serious Games, 2010) and *The Kite Runner* (Hosseini, 2003)**

In March of 2013, I tried out a not-game called *Afghanistan* by Serious Games Interactive<sup>18</sup> (2010) because I was teaching the novel, *The Kite Runner* by Hosseini (2003). Here, the connection from the not-game to the literature was more direct and applied, as in Sheldon's (2012) use of the term, "applied games," whereby students play games that directly apply to what they are learning, whether it is history, math, or computer skills. With this not-game, *Afghanistan*, students could easily make a direct connection between a game and a novel set in the same country. However, the spin-off effects of the game were not "applied" because the narratives are not connected in any way. There may be some who feel that this game is not

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<sup>18</sup> Serious Games Interactive is a partnership between Egenfeldt-Nielsen and Unity Technologies in Denmark.

really a not-game because it keeps a score tally and there are clearly winners and losers; however, this debate misses the point because it still comes at students at an oblique angle, and it gets students thinking and feeling in ways that they haven't before.

Hosseini's novel is divided into three parts: the first part is set in the present-day in San Francisco where the narrator –Amir– receives a telephone call that takes us back through time to Afghanistan, in the early seventies, about five years before the Russians invaded; the second part occurs when Amir and his father flee to America, winding up where the story started; and the third part sends the narrator back to a now Taliban-controlled Afghanistan where he seeks redemption and a return to his family in America. Students read a section of the novel every week, finishing after three weeks. After the second week, just before the narrator returns to Afghanistan and with the Taliban in control, Amir is shocked to see the once bustling and animated capital city of Kabul as an empty shell of what it once was. His fear is palpable as a gang of bearded Taliban race by in their standard-issue half-ton truck, armed with Kalashnikov rifles, glaring as they go by. Amir is chastised for staring at them, for eye-contact with them is forbidden. Though the novel is arguably too easy for Grade twelve students, its subject matter is mature and is ripe with cultural references to Islam and linguistic references to Pashtu—a refreshing attribute, given that so many novels in typical English classrooms are imbued with Christian or Jewish allusions or Western sensibilities. The novel exposes students to a culture that they know very little about. For example, students will often confuse Arab countries with Muslim ones, not knowing the difference between the two, and will not be familiar with the five pillars of Islam because none of these aspects are a part of the Alberta curriculum even in social studies –depending on the teacher, of course. When I came across the Serious Games Interactive (2010) website, I was thrilled that there was a game called *Afghanistan* because it helped to make

up for this deficit, not by giving them facts about Islam, but by giving them a haptic experience of what Afghanistan was like under Taliban rule, something I will unpack later. Aside from that, the story lines are completely different. There is no metaphor at work where one character from the not-game might be similar or applied to another character in *The Kite Runner*; however, the cultural conflicts are very similar, pitting religious sensibilities against secular ones. Deleuze and Guattari (1975/1986) felt that metaphors were trappings from the old world of scholastic analysis, limiting potential becomings, so the heterogeneous collision of narrative experiences from not-game to student creates a dynamic where they can stammer and stutter –“He killed me?!” – and arrive at their own understandings, making their own connections by having their own experiences with the grafting of one storyline alongside another.

The not-game, *Afghanistan*, requires players to become a character named, Michael who receives a desperate letter from a friend, Allan, who pleads for him to help with undetermined threats against the school that he’s voluntarily set up in Afghanistan. After landing in Kabul, Allan calls Michael’s cell phone but reception is not good and the format of the game becomes clear. Based on Allan’s oral statements, the player can choose between different responses. After Allan says that he feels the school is in even worse danger, the player can respond by clicking on one, two, three or more texts, each with a different outcome. This one had two options that players could choose: Either, “What can I do to help” or, “That sounds a bit risky. What do you expect from me?” (Serious Games Interactive, 2010). The response you choose determines how much information you find out, which is tallied on a scoreboard, profiled in a head-shot, in the upper left hand corner of the screen. (See the number “5” in figure 4.2 below, which is a low score given that a better player should have “30” points by now.) Curt or impatient responses are not well tolerated: upsetting an elder or showing disrespect will either

limit your options, or depending on the circumstances, cause premature death. (When the player dies, the game has to be re-started; one cannot simply be rejuvenated and re-inserted where you left off.) Some choices are not obvious in terms of garnering the most points, such as the choices indicated in the screen-shot from the game below: Does one have coffee when you've been offered tea? Which choice will garner more information? Since the number of points in this screen shot are quite low, all of five points (depicted in the upper left-hand side, inside the profile of the tiny head), the player might want to think about this carefully. (Hint: accept the tea.)



Figure 4.2: Global Conflicts Web Player: entitled, *Afghanistan*. Copyright 2010 by Serious Games Interactive.

After being told that you have just endured a seventeen hour bus ride from the airport to the small town where your friend has his school, the situation soon grows more urgent: Allan has been taken to the hospital with serious injuries because his school was set on fire. If one is too eager to find him, the characters you meet might not be as inclined to provide the necessary



information for successful game-play as indicated by the following screen-shot (Figure 4.3).

One is tempted to ask why he's in the hospital but will it improve your score, both in terms of the game and your relationship with the Afghan elder?



Figure 4.3: Global Conflicts Web Player: entitled, *Afghanistan*. Copyright 2010 by Serious Games Interactive.

Once the one-eyed, chief of police arrives (Qasem), the situation becomes tenser because Farooq has explained that one cannot converse frankly around him. As you can see by the game score (15) in Figure 4.4, this player has offended the chief by calling him, “suspicious,” amongst other offenses. The next set of choices are more grave: Does one mention what Farooq has already told the player? Does one ask the police chief if his police force has investigated the fire? Does one point out that it seems strange that a police chief needs to be careful in his own village? The game objective is to reopen the co-ed school but this proves very difficult because the Taliban views the education of girls as a Western cultural value and the police chief knows it. So should the player. The ensuing journey which takes the player through many parts of Afghan

countryside takes about forty-five minutes of game-play which makes it easily accomplished, and short –if one gets the answers correct. Only two English 30-1 students managed to get a co-ed school reopened in that time period, but five students managed to get a boys school opened instead.



As they played in the computer lab, I circulated around the room, getting them logged in. Students were eager to get started, often helping each other out if they had trouble logging in their game code. Once they started, after 15 minutes, there was not a sound. I put the highest score in the class on the whiteboard as they were playing to generate a spirit of competition. After they played for 50 minutes, the resonance of the game experience was readily apparent: students were talking about fear, Afghan culture and the profound disappointment they experienced when they died or the realization that in order to win they had to compromise –or lie. This was similar to the paradox of putting aside urgent questions in favour of questions that

would honour the elder, Farooq. The player has the human impulse to find Allan, Michael's co-worker, right away and determine why he was in the hospital in the first place and if he was alright rather than ask seemingly "pedantic," cultural questions at the beginning of the game. Those students who died early on were upset because they thought they could resume where they left off, largely because the message on the screen said that, "Unlike real life, you can try the game again to re-open the school" (*Afghanistan*, 2010). The two students who eventually solved the game got 175 points, the highest one could get. Interestingly, the student who had one of the best diplomatic and leadership skills of all the students in the class won the game first. After the period was over, some students said they wanted to keep playing the game at home so that they could finish the game successfully. It was clear that the game had struck a haptic chord and found purchase with the students. The question was, did it help them with their thinking or their writing in a tangible, measurable way and was that important?

Of the twenty-four students who wrote in-class essays on the novel, there were two essays that showed a direct influence from the game that were identifiable, though these students did not mention their source as the game itself because the assignment question did not ask them to write about the game but rather the novel. Based on my expertise on teaching the novel, I knew the details would have come from the game itself, but because the essay question<sup>19</sup> asked them to identify the author's ideas, they only referred to Hosseini and his novel (2003). Susan wrote,

The novel provides insight to the Afghan culture that you would otherwise be blind to.

It showed that respect is taken very seriously even with the simplest words could offend

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<sup>19</sup> The January 2011 essay question was as follows: "Discuss the idea(s) developed by the text creator about the conflict between pursuing a personal desire and choosing to conform" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 8).

them, and that the way of life there is very different from ours. (2013, English 30-1 student)

She is trying to align Afghani cultural mores to the essay question concerning conformity and how without the novel, the reader would not be aware of such norms. The emphasis behind her statement suggests that it has been inspired by the not-game, *Afghanistan*, particularly when she points out that “even . . . the simplest words could offend them and that the way of life there is very different from ours.” The game offers many choices of words in its dialogue and if you choose the wrong set of words, characters “shut down,” “cool off,” stop giving information or ensure that you’re no longer an influence. The haptic sense of danger that the game engenders is also relayed implicitly by another student, Cathy, who writes,

. . . the Taliban start showing their true intentions and start using fear tactics on civilians in order for them to conform to their way of life. We see how through this fear people are brought to act on atrocities, if not the punishment is to be more severe. (2013, English 30-1 student)

Though it is possible that the student picked up on this from the novel, the “fear tactics” she speaks of are not mentioned as specifically in the novel as they are in the game because even the not-game’s one-eyed chief of police is careful about what he says and does. Furthermore, the multimodality of the game allows students to vicariously experience the consequences when they do not conform, either by suffering a rifle-butt to the head through the open window of one’s car while stopped at a Taliban check-point, or worse yet, the gun-shot that ends your life if you do not answer interrogation correctly. This is quite a bit different than the experience one might have when reading a novel about someone else’s death. Arguably, the visceral experience of being killed as a first person player in *Afghanistan* has enough impact and as a result, is just as

memorable, if not more so, than the experience a reader has while reading the novel, largely because the player fills in the role of the person being executed. Death happens to you and not to them and instead of rejuvenating where you left off, as in a typical video game, you have to start from the beginning, which takes 30 minutes of play to get back to where you left off to try it again. That said, however, the impact of death on a good reader who is able to transport him or herself into the world of the novel is also profound and memorable, particularly for characters with which one loves. For example, as you are reading *The Kite Runner*, you can still see in your mind's eye, as if you were a helpless bystander, the Taliban's gun raised and fired capriciously into Hassan's head. It is a mistake to weigh one form against the other: both have impact, the contrast making our lives more meaningful, more precious. That said, however, some students relate better to one format over the other –particularly in an increasingly multimodal world– and whether a student relates to one format more than the other, both should benefit from the Deleuzian/Guattarian complementarity of the two forms. It should not be seen or understood as an either/or –better than– comparison between the two forms, but rather should be seen as a complementarity of forms, echoing off each other.

As teachers, our job is to further the work of the writer who attempts to shed light on otherwise unknown worlds, characters, conflicts, cultures, and traditions so that students know better how to navigate choice or conformity under pressure, whatever their situation may be. The Global Conflict not-game *Afghanistan* assists with that territory by deterritorializing the issues in *The Kite Runner* and reterritorializing them through the haptic experience of the not-game through the students' emotions, their exclamations, their disappointments, even their momentary fear and death.

**Interview (Appendix J) Analysis with English 30-1 Teacher (Bill) from January of 2014**

Bill's general impression with not-games was favourable, even enthusiastic, particularly given that he had recently diminished his use of technology in the classroom, yet said that not-games would be an area where he would make an exception, given the ripe opportunities it offered. It was clear that the teacher was frustrated with the student's general lack of inquiry into reading but that not-games were more favourable to students because it was a part of their milieu and that teachers who used them had more currency with students. Bill summarized it this way:

. . . and I think that this this not-game and not- and kind of the good games in general, um, really helped me to help build that relationship with students because now they think that I am least relatively current and that what I'm saying if I'm relatively current, that means that they think the one saying is applicable to the world that they live in as opposed to the world of books, which they think they don't live in, so I think that was one really nice thing about this not-game was that I I'm always trying to help them see how the things I always say are engaging to, um, to the world they live in, and this was one more way for me to at least build a relationship with them that made it so that they feel as though I am current and that was really important to me. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

Earlier in the interview, Bill said that he wished students would examine style and structure in literature the way that they looked at these components within the not-game, *Afghanistan*, something they seemed to do intuitively:

. . . they want to know the characters and they want to know what's going on [in literature], but they don't do something about it in terms of the deliberate choices that the text creator would've made in order to get that idea across, and I think that they're far

more willing to do that in a game, actually think about how it's created, and I'm, I would like to, at some point, um, even maybe attach them to short stories or attach it to, um maybe another novel or another, some sort of game, anyway, to see whether or not they can make those comparisons, make that little leap from the way they're willing to analyze their culture or their video games, the things that they think are not theirs because school presented them, um, so I don't, I don't know how to go about doing that. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

It is interesting to note that the teacher was very much attuned to the book culture versus student culture and that according to him, reading and literature were not a part of their culture but that gaming was and that it could provide a bridge from one to the other. This is where not-games can help diminish the “either/or” binary thinking of “us” versus “them” and encourage more inclusivity with the “both/and” lens of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987). In this way, the not-games act as a catalyst into “things that they think are not theirs” (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014). I suspect that because of the passing familiarity that students had with gaming and the novelty factor of playing a not-game in school, that the likelihood of remembering this experience in the future would be higher as a result. The concern of learning longevity in terms of course content is a continuing issue and played out in the interview:

I don't know how many of them; if I had to predict, I'd probably say a fairly small number of them would actually remember too much of, um, the content of [the not-game], but I know that many of them will remember the experience of it, and that is more than I can say about and, you know, unfortunately, a percentage of my classes, right; most of them, most of my classes go off without, I'm sure them remembering very much in a year's time or two, um, but I, I don't know how much of the content they'll remember; I think

they will remember the structure of the game, the social kind of experience that it was, because they all did it together, um, and some of the conversations they had afterwards which I think is, that's part of the goal. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

As English Language Arts teachers often say to their students, it is not so much what one says as how one says it. Not-games offer a new approach to curriculum delivery in terms of manner and this was important to this particular teacher in terms of credibility and bridging the two worlds, that of the student and that of literary or teacher culture. When Bill was asked if he told any other teachers about his attempt at not-gaming, the tension was clear because he was in foreign territory for a school.

Um, I told some. Um, of course the ones I told know, uh, who I am and how I operate, so they weren't really surprised that I'd be trying it. Um, the, but I swear, I think I told three or four staff members. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

Bill is a young staff member compared to the provincial average age for teachers in the province of Alberta, so perhaps this explains why other teachers are not surprised that he is willing to try not-games in the classroom. Of all the tools that Bill has used to embellish the cultural context of *The Kite Runner* (Power Points, handouts, discussions, films), Bill made it clear that students felt that the not-game was vastly superior to even the most compelling documentary film on Afghanistan.

. . . they said that they vastly preferred doing the *Afghanistan* game than even watching a film that's an engaging film, you know not just an informative, um, bland narrated film, but still a fairly engaging film. They would far rather do the not-game than do that.

(Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

When asked why, Bill said that students could not answer that, so he posited a theory that,



their learning styles were more conducive to that kind of, um, media or medium: Right, they, they were used to it, they like it, they were at the same time trying to figure out how the game worked, but also, you know, making sure that they, um, these kids I asked, of course, the high achiever kids, um, they were still reading everything, as opposed to those who just kind of clicked their way through. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

Since *Afghanistan* has a fair amount of reading to each slide that determines which choices follow, it is possible that immature or more impatient students will just “click” their way through flippantly, taking little regard for the choices they make. In *Afghanistan*, they don’t live long. However, Bill pointed out that after one of his weaker students died in the not-game, she did go back, change it from a language she could not speak (Danish) and play it properly, taking the not-game more seriously than novels or films that they’ve worked on in class.

She, she did go back and actually start again and do it, in, you know, in English, and trying to figure out how it works, so for some kids, I think it's it is the game itself presented a puzzle for them? That they wanted to try to figure out right, how, how the actual game itself was structured. You know (*with frustration*) more so in the game. I'd love it if they could think about novels and films in that way; you know, think about it as a puzzle and how to break apart, and think about the structure and how it's built, but they seemed immediately ready to do that with the game, and they weren't ready for that with the actual novel or film. So. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

Bill felt that their engagement had something to do with the “fun factor” of the game and the need to figure out a puzzle and that helped to explain why students took it more seriously than other literature in the course. Galloway (2006) explains the lure of the algorithmic puzzle this

way:

So while games have linear narratives that may appear in broad arcs from beginning to end, or may appear in cinematic segues and interludes, they also have nonlinear narratives that must unfold in algorithmic form during gameplay. In this sense, video games deliver to the player the power relationships of informatics media firsthand, choreographed into a multivalent cluster of play activities. In fact, in their very core, video games do nothing but present contemporary political realities in relatively unmediated form. They solve the problem of political control, not by sublimating it as does the cinema, but by *making it coterminous with the entire game* [italics his], and in this way video games achieve a unique type of political transparency. (Galloway, 2006, p. 92)

Students are slipped into the issues in a dynamic, unmediated, haptic experience that gives them control that arms-length literature or film does not because they slip into the reader and tell what happens or who thinks and speaks, but literature or film does not involve them in the way algorithmic puzzles invite players to involve themselves. Though the teacher was reticent to say that not-games worked for all students all the time, he was willing to allow that not-games represented another tool available for teachers to use and that though not all students took to it, most did and some more than others, just like any other tool. Bill felt the potential for not-games to tap into helping students to find their philosophical voice was significant:

. . . I am also really curious too about, you know, I'm always trying to get students to engage with some sort of bigger picture, moral philosophical ideas, and um, you know, for a number of kids they can access those on a purely kind of cerebral basis; for some kids I think they need a tangible set of circumstances, and if I give them those

circumstances, as I try to, you know by setting up some scenarios or hypotheticals, um, that really helps those kids, but if there are these kind of not-games that have those kinds of structures already in place, they have the details, and then we can debrief and talk about it afterwards: those are the kind of games that I'd be interested to see if there I'm helping them develop their kind of moral or philosophical voice. (Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Appendix J, 2014)

Based on the success of not-games in this teacher's class, it might be incumbent upon teachers to take a serious look at not-games, looking for not-games that might assist with this kind of philosophical development. Moreover, it might be incumbent upon curriculum developers to commission not-game development in this area; at the very least, curriculum developers need to give credence to this kind of exploration.

### **Survey Analysis (Appendices B, C and D)**

The first survey discussed here is the anonymous, semester-end teacher survey for English 30-1 students (Appendix B) where they were asked a couple of questions specific to not-games: 17 of the 24 students in the spring class of 2013 responded and all 23 of the students in the fall class of 2013 responded for a total of 40 respondents. This survey is not unlike the kind of survey students fill out for their professors at university. The information gleaned from this form helps determine what units and pedagogical approaches will be taken in following semesters. The survey had more significant results with regards to their overall reaction to not-games in general. The enthusiastic response was surprising, what with 27 of the respondents recommending not-games for future classes and seven of them close to recommending them for a combined total of 86% of the class. Even the three lukewarm respondents did not dismiss the experience entirely by choosing zero on the Likert scale, the one that said, "not really."

32. Not-games were useful tools to understand a different perspective about the literature we read in class.

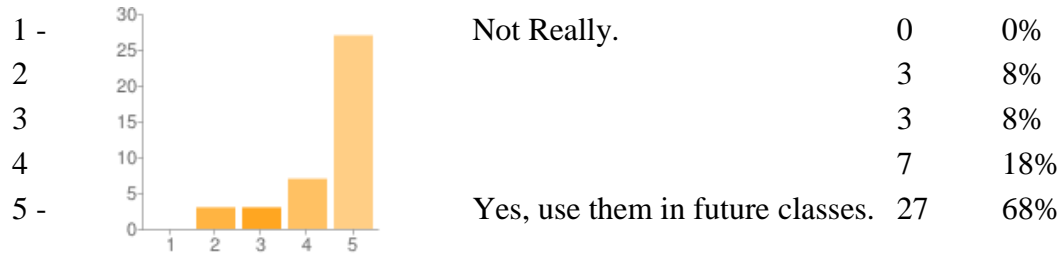
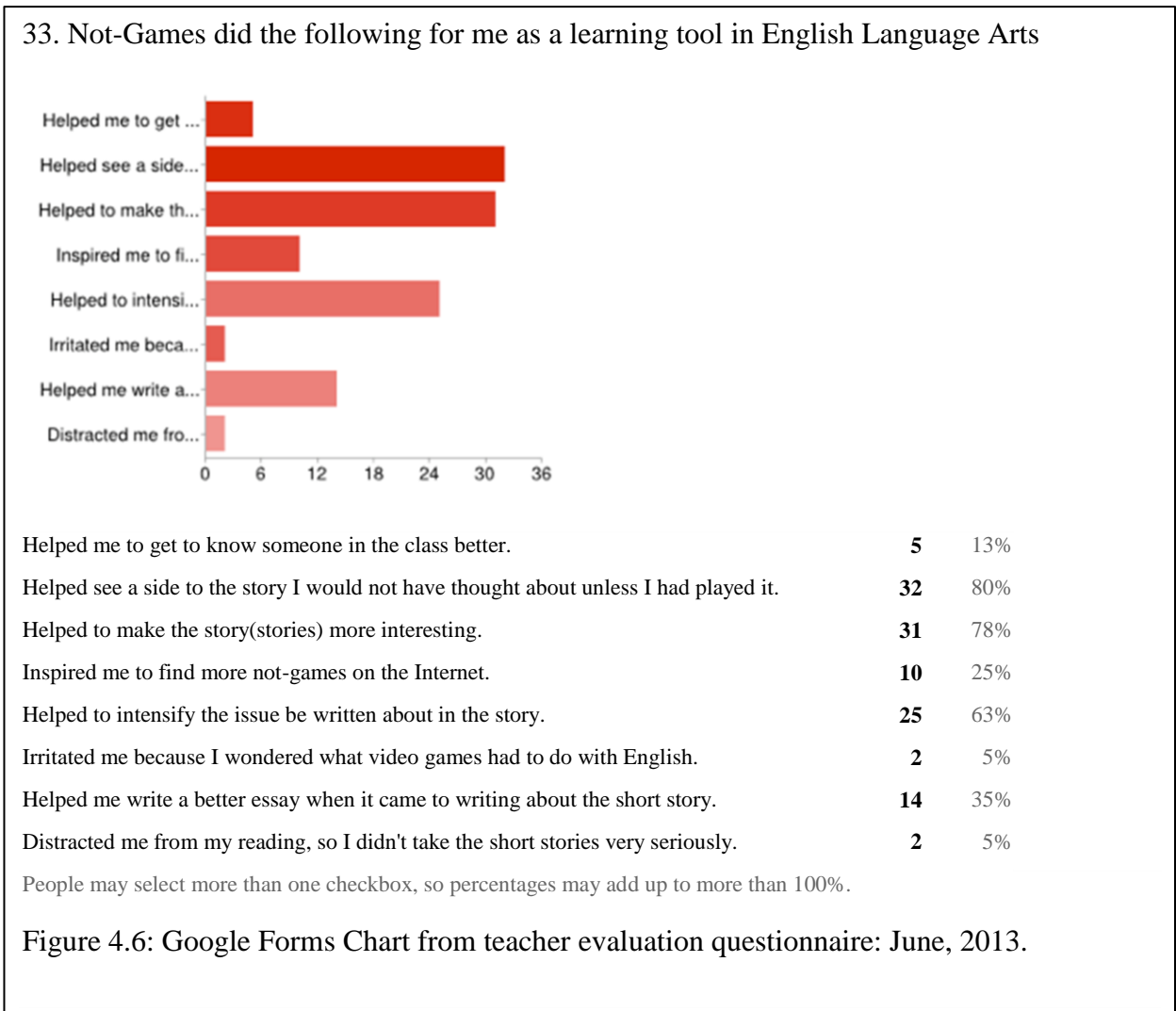


Figure 4.5: Google Forms Chart from teacher evaluation: June 2013 and January, 2014.

The second question of the survey results in Figure 4.6 below suggested that not-games demonstrated what students felt they learned from not-games in general: 80% of students felt that not-games, “helped see a side to the story I would not have thought about unless I had played it.” This is evidence of student thinking being unfolded, the not-games deterritorializing the reader’s interpretations as a function of minor literature. It gave them the ability to “enunciate” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986, p. 17) a perspective that they would not have gleaned from just reading the novel. “. . . this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility” (ibid). The not-games also played with the class dynamic by helping some students to get to know each other better (13%) by transforming the classroom assemblage and flattening whatever hierarchies existed before that prevented them from getting to know each other (transversality). The other results are quite impressive in terms of speaking to the haptic efficacy of the approach: 78% students said that the not-games helped to make stories more interesting; and 63% said they helped to intensify the issue being written about in the story. Other results show that 35% of respondents felt that the not-game actually helped them write a better essay when it came to writing about the short story. As with any subversive

approach to learning, there are bound to be confusions and irritations and so there should be in any learning environment: 5% of the students in the results shown in figure 4.6 above felt irritated because, “I wondered what video games had to do with English” or the not-games “distracted me from my reading, so I didn’t take the short stories very seriously.”

Forty-seven student in total played not-games at the English Language Arts 30-1 level from two separate classes, one in the spring of 2013 and one in the fall of that same year, so students were polled after the unit was completed. The Google Forms survey was optional and



this survey was specific to not-games (see Appendix C for the questions and Appendix D for the results). Unfortunately, only 16 respondents volunteered to fill it out. When analyzing these results, one possible interpretation would suggest that the students who did not fill out the survey may not have approved of not-games in an English classroom and so did not feel comfortable spending the twenty minutes required to fill it out. This would be the most cynical interpretation and though it may account for a few students, I suspect that there are other reasons at play: namely, that many students do not either like or use school Gmail addresses, favouring their own or not using email at all, considering it “old school;” or being too busy or simply forgetting to do so. However, when considering the not-game results a bit more optimistically, the sixteen respondents reveal some interesting trends from the results found in Appendix D. Question four demonstrates that roughly a third of respondents played some of these not-games at home. When I reminded students as they were leaving for their next class that their only homework was to play not-games at home, one student even said, “Now that’s homework I can take.” Though my concern for less mature students was that the not-games were too plain in terms of graphics, question seven clearly showed that was not the case for an English 30-1 class, with 82% of respondents saying they were fine. An overwhelming number (94%) knew that behind each not-game there was a clear argument or idea being presented (Question #8, Appendix D), so this might have accounted for the low number of students who were bothered by the simple graphics. Though the one student thought, “the not-games were stupid” (Question #10), it was remarkable to see their emotional impact on students as they played, either feeling sad, angry, or afraid to die. From an English Language Arts teacher’s point of view, the most exciting result was from question eleven where twelve of the sixteen students either agreed or strongly agreed that playing the not-game helped them make connections to the short stories they read. This is important

because it is unsolicited and foreign for students to admit: they have never played or seen not-games, and they have never been encouraged to connect them to literature and yet when they do, it yields positive results for all but two students. Even these two students are unwilling to say that they would never try not-games in the future (Question #12), so not-games have piqued the interest of all students who responded. Based on the results from question thirteen, students make a number of connections (they could check off more than one) to either the conflict because it was rendered more real (9), or to a new perspective they had not thought about (11) to an emotion they did not feel from the literature (11) to thinking about the issues in the story more frequently (7) as a result of playing the not-games. The memory tag plays in these results as well, where students claim that the not-games help them remember the issues of the story better (10). Similar to what Jen said in her interview (Appendix I), students spread the news to others, sharing their experiences (Question #15). Fear of death and the ending figures highly in the not-games (44%) and their emotional responses are different than the ones they experience in a first person shooter game (75%). When students are asked to come back to the literature yet again, they confirm earlier results: ten of them say that the not-game affects their thinking about their reading. Twelve of them say that it gave them insight: “Yes it challenged or really challenged my way of thinking in a new way.” None of them deny its effect (Question #20). Question 22 makes this clear when they admit that at least one of the not-games taught them something, and they cannot say that none of them taught them anything. Students are clear that not-games are interesting enough to help students think differently about literature (Question # 24) because they are weird (3), they “counter expectations of typical games” (12), and “they are artistic attempts to get people thinking” (14).

Based on these results from the two surveys, both the teacher evaluation and the not-

game poll, one can see that not-games offer students something new and relevant to the study of literature and that it is a tool, one of many tools, which works for a lot of students. Ten out of the 40 students on the teacher survey said that their experience with not-games in the classroom inspired them to find more not-games on the Internet. The question then becomes, if a teacher can engage student in this way, then why not? The next section focuses the blended genre unit of short stories, poems, and not-games in the same English 30-1 class.

### **Short Stories, Poems, and Not-Games for Presentations and the Personal Response**

The unit plan in Appendix E goes into more detail, but essentially this unit was designed to meet the curriculum requirements for the short story genre, teach students about choice and metacognition by providing students lots of different choices, and to help students learn about the personal response section of the Alberta, Part A, Diploma exam. In this exam, students are given three pieces of literature from which to choose –a poem, an excerpt from a short story or novel, and a colour or black and white photograph. How they choose to write is personally up to them. They can write in prose on one, two, or all three texts either explicitly as in an essay or implicitly as in a short story. Though the first writing assignment of the exam is called a “Personal Response,” they do not have to write about personal issues, though they may: it is personally up to them. (The diploma exams are carefully coded so that no one except the exam manager has access to the actual names of the writer.) This is a wonderful assignment that requires students to make connections between the different texts that interact with each other, the student’s life experiences and the question itself. How students “connect the dots” between the exam topic question, the texts provided, and their personal response is critical and must be done in a timely manner, since they have two writing assignments to complete in three hours. (Most students spend roughly one hour on the personal response, which is worth 40% of their



mark, spending fifteen minutes reading the texts carefully and then crafting a response in the remaining forty-five minutes.) The range of response is fascinating, and those who are insightful write movingly, entertainingly, or creatively. One of the trademarks of an honours level response is the ability to be specific in terms of key details either from the texts provided or inserted into their creative, implicit response. The not-game unit has adapted the range of texts on the exam only in terms of replacing the photo with the not-game and allowing them a broader range of choices in terms of both the question to which they respond and the texts they want to use. Though their choice of short story determined their group, they chose the rest of the texts for their presentations, something I will return to later. Replacing the photo with the not-game was arbitrary on one hand because of my interest, yet there was a design in mind: They are both visual works of art that are often confusing because of their distortions, and typically, students who are weak readers will often write on the photograph, sometimes a poor choice from a metacognitive point of view. Weaker students start with the obvious and do not move into the specific detail of the photograph, which could help them make insightful responses to the exam question, had they discussed them. Students need more exposure to strange visual experiences and not-games provided this, demonstrating that game designers have a point to make just like photographers do. Often students consider photography or even film as a point-and-shoot affair, much like they would do with their smart phone. If they manage an arresting picture, it's a fortuitous accident, but they do not know what makes a photograph a work of art, nor do they understand that a photographer might have an idea, a purpose behind that artwork. The not-game offered a kinaesthetic relationship between the player and the not-game designer in a way that demanded more time than casually looking at a photograph for thirty seconds. Weak students do not realize that a photograph should be as carefully read as a poem or a short story

excerpt. This unit was designed to get students to interact with the visual world in a way that they do at home when they play video games and to think more carefully about design and purpose to the end that they can write about a creator's idea(s) with more traction. The hope was that students who struggle when it comes to being specific in their writing about details in a photograph would transfer their seemingly nascent ability to pick out specific details from the not-games to more specific details in the photograph on the personal response of the diploma exam. The success of this strategy is hard to measure but returning once again to question number 33 of the teacher survey in Appendix B, it is heartening to see that 35% of students said that not-games helped them with their writing when it came to the short story, so hopefully this applies to writing on photographs as well. Students can at least be encouraged to "play" a photograph more carefully, the way they would play a video game at home.

Since students had a choice as to which genre to write about –the short story or the not-game– their choice to write on not-games was significant in terms of their impact on the students. They could have chosen to write on something more familiar, such as a short story/novel excerpt or a poem, but instead they wrote on the not-game, something unfamiliar to them as a component in English Language Arts. The mark for this evaluation was out of forty marks and would have been worth 3.76% of the teacher mark for the course. This may seem low but students were motivated and wanted to try their hardest because it was an assignment that was closely related to their diploma mark which would be worth 20% of their final mark. In this regard, it is even more impressive that they chose to write on the not-game because they knew that there would be no such thing on the diploma exam. There, they would have to write on the photograph provided. Investment was also high because students were writing from a personal perspective and had seen the question in advance since they had chosen the question as a group.

Of the 47 students who wrote personal responses for this unit, 16 chose to write on the not-game and other written texts and two of the 16 students wrote solely on the not-game (see figure 4.11 below). A 34% response rate is pretty good on a genre that students have either never seen or written about before.<sup>20</sup> The favourite not-game of the ones listed in Appendix A was Perdercini's *Every day the same dream* (2009), but some students wrote on other ones, some making "chaotic" connections that I would not have made. Though each of the students has been given a pseudonym, these same names will be referred to again when discussing additional works and their presentations in the next section. Though I will focus primarily on the paragraphs that specifically refer to the not-games themselves, understand that the responses were longer because they may have also written on the short story and their personal life experiences in relation to the question. This would represent about an hour's worth of writing for each student on a computer, sometimes more and sometimes less.

However, in order to get to the point where students could write on the short stories, they were given a group presentation assignment to help them formulate their ideas about the short stories before they wrote on them.

### **Presentations Based on Short Stories, Not-Games, and Poems**

In the presentations, all groups had to incorporate a short story, poem and not-game of their choice that best related to them and each other. They had to do some research on the authors, answer some questions for the story itself, and show how the not-game disrupted or enhanced the other texts. Then student groups had to choose a question from previous personal responses on older diploma exams to which they felt they could best respond. In all, there were

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<sup>20</sup> From my experience as a diploma exam marker, student response rate to the photograph on the diploma exam would be around 50%, depending on the perceived ease or lure of the picture. The other students would write a personal response to either the poem or short story/novel excerpt provided.

six groups with anywhere from three to five students in each group. Students were given the short stories a couple of weeks in advance so that they could read all of them and decide which story they wanted to present. Once that was established, the group met and went through a number of poetry anthologies to choose a couple of poems that they thought connected to their story. Subsequently, they were taken to a computer lab where they were given an email with links to several not-games (see Appendix A). This unit allowed a teacher to cover a lot of territory in a short amount of time, exposing students to short stories, poetry, personal response criteria, and different text-creators' ideas. The student interest in not-games was clear and only a couple wondered what video games had to do with English Language Arts (see survey results, Appendices B and D). Many of the students used the Prezi format depicted in Figure 4.7 below. Almost all of the presentations assumed combinations that were unique and unanticipated. Though as mentioned, the class favourite was *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009), the combination of it with stories like "Clothes" (Divakaruni, 1995) and "Glass Roses" (Nowlan, 1968) was unusual because this not-game (see figure 4.8 below) was so different from these stories in terms of setting, character, and plot; however, the thematic resonances that students discovered were startling and provoked a lot of discussion with the class as they listened. A number of times as the students presented, other students asked questions quite spontaneously without my having to leverage questions and answers. Again, I felt as though I disappeared and the discussion became excited and animated. Though students had been assigned to read each other's short stories, not all of them had. Most of them had, however, played the not-games and knew what they were about, blurting out their own discoveries about them. Though students had been encouraged to help each other out and that questions coming from the class could increase the group presentation mark, and ultimately their own mark, the energy around the not-games

was not to be underestimated because they worked as a chaotic attractor (De Landa, 2000) in terms of discussion and question and answer. This was a product of the juxtaposing qualities of unexpected difference between the two genres. For example, the group that presented on Divakaruni's short story "Clothes," compared the author's protagonists, a newly-wed couple

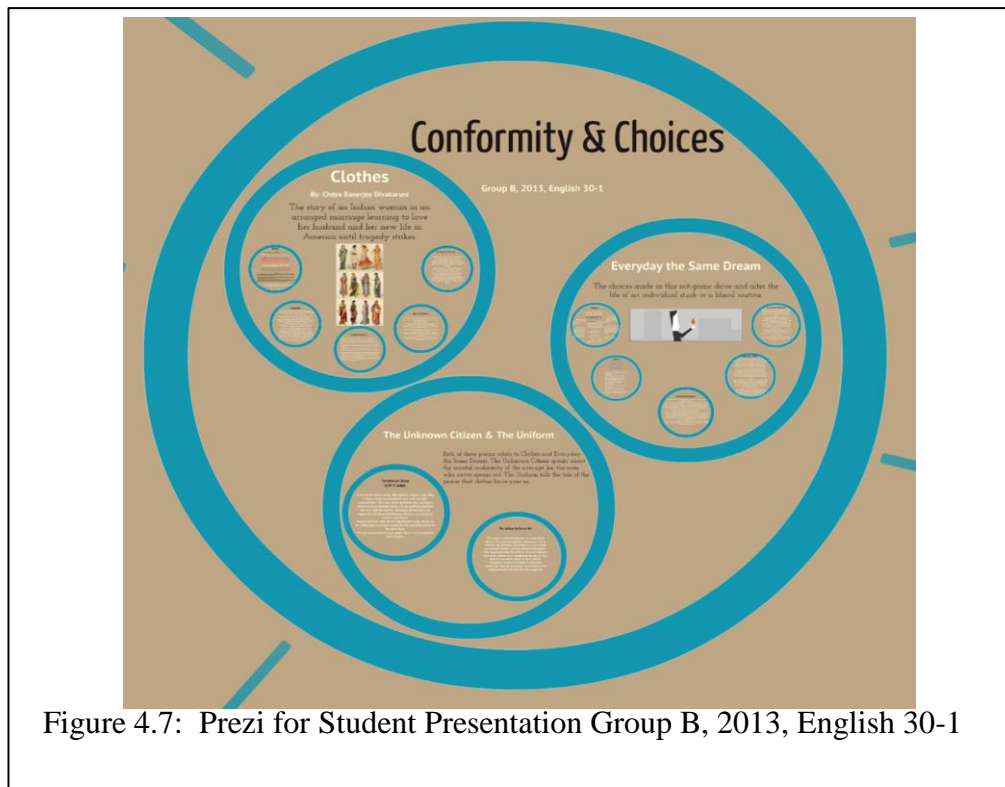


Figure 4.7: Prezi for Student Presentation Group B, 2013, English 30-1

from an arranged marriage in India, to Perdercini's *Every day the same dream* (2009), a connection not readily apparent to me as the teacher (see figure 4.1 above and 4.8 below).

The people of this game are all faceless. . . . Why bother with mouths, eyes, and ears if you are not going to bother to use them properly. . . . Without a conflict of spirit, change does not ensue and without change, the world becomes dormant. (Student Presentation Group B, 2013, English 30-1)

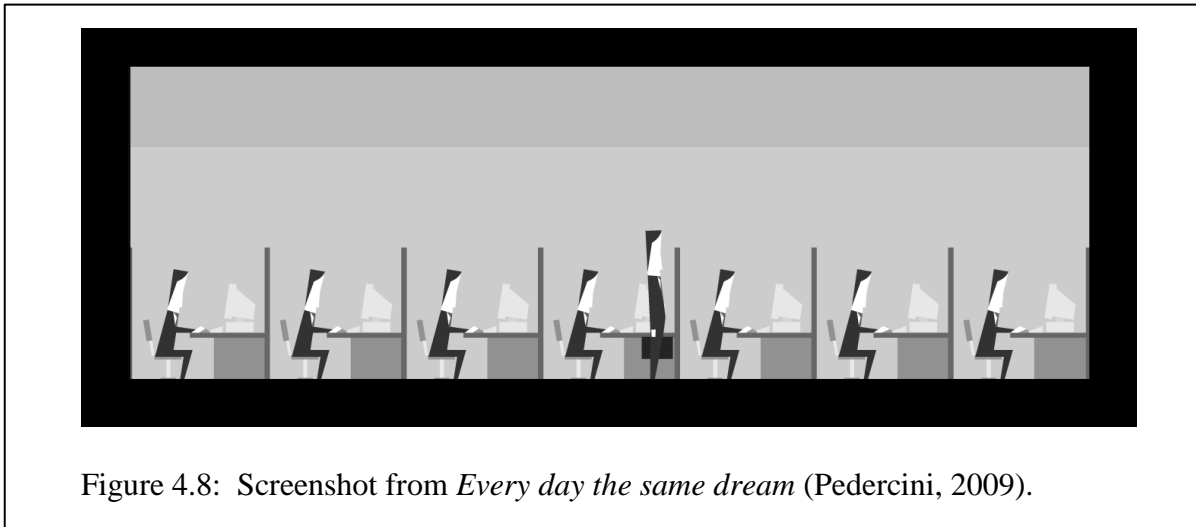


Figure 4.8: Screenshot from *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009).

They challenged the characters of both texts for their dormancy and suggested that its tragic events actually served a purpose to awaken the protagonists of each text, hence awakening us.

“Clothes” deals with a cultural conformity whereas *Every day the same dream* deals with societal conformity. . . . Both texts deal with the presence of conformity and the interactions of an individual in accordance to such a preexisting force. . . . The characters in both stories strive for freedom of some kind. It is obviously their intent to be different or independent so as to find their own way... even if it means abandoning the comforts of conformity. (Student Presentation Group B, 2013, English 30-1)

As a result of these presentations, students were far more aware of the systems outside of their control and how it exerted enormous pressure on their lives as indicated by this slide from one of the student power points: “If an individual gets too wrapped up in other’s expectations they get trapped in a daily routine. It relates to the story because they both deal with the importance of decision making, and how others will affect you” (Student Presentation Group C, 2013, English 30-1). The discussion that this not-game provoked with the whole class was quite moving and the class became quite still as they realized how they and their futures were implicated by the game. Why would someone live like this every day, living the same dream? Some students

thought that this was the protagonist's dream and that he knew no differently, as if he was one of the prisoners in Plato's, "Allegory of the Cave" (a text we had studied at the beginning of the year.) Others from the group who focused on "Glass Roses" (Nowlan, 1968) realized that even as a lumberjack in the middle of the forest, one's future behind the pulp-saw was the same humdrum, monochromatic life in the office, even though the settings were quite different.

One of the most interesting presentations used a not-game and story not mentioned thus far: Pedercini's not-game *Desert of the Real* (2009) and Percy's short story, "Refresh, Refresh" (2005). Pedercini really stretches the definition of a game, let alone a not-game because unlike the others, it is not interactive (see Figure 4.9 below).



Figure 4.9: Screenshot from *Desert of the Real* (Pedercini, 2009), a not-game taken from *America's Army*.

This choice on behalf of the text creator ended up being quite important in terms of later class discussion. Percy's short story is about a couple of friends whose fathers are both sent to the Iraq war and how, "The fathers fighting the war over in Iraq had its effects back home on the boys. The author emphasizes the emptiness the fathers leave behind and the long lasting effect

and trauma [war] can have on the families” (Student Presentation Group D, 2013, English 30-1).

When combining the two texts, the critique of the American military complex became poignant:

An irony of the not-game is that it is speaking out about the horrors of war, yet it was made with "America's Army", a game designed to promote military recruitment. This allows the true spirit of the game to become more clear to the viewers because they suddenly see a program that usually glorifies war and violence, being used to show how badly people are affected after returning home. The majority of the video is filled with clips of the soldier walking aimlessly, without purpose, and with nowhere to go. This symbolizes the creators thoughts that once they have been traumatized, they are lost for the rest of their lives because they are so affected by what they have done and seen that they can never be the same again. (Student Presentation Group D, 2013, English 30-1)

Students made the connection between the aimlessly walking soldier in the not-game to the story's fathers who died at war. When asked about the lack of choice in the game and why it was even included as a not-game on the Molleindustria website, the group said that in the end, the fathers had no choice once they were sent to Iraq and that when their sons ended up enlisting themselves –even though they taunted and bullied the town recruitment officer– they, too, were acting without efficacy, just following their father's footsteps because that is just what young men are supposed to do. Just as Pedercini had hacked into the game, *America's Army*, and lifted scenes from it and re-sequenced the images to queer the very notion of gaming and recruiting for war, so to were the players who tried to play the game: they could only watch it the game being played out for them on YouTube video, just as the sons and fathers' lives are played out for them at war. “[‘Refresh Refresh’ was] an obvious title after reading the book, but what else does it mean? The clear statement of “Refresh Refresh” not only refers to their emails but a continuous



circle of biopower (Student Presentation Group D, 2013, English 30-1).<sup>21</sup> Student understanding of military recruitment and patriotic service to country had been deterritorialized by the students' presentation as they showed the entire not-game to the class because it added so much more saliency to the short story that wouldn't have been there otherwise.

### **Explication of *The Killer* (Magnuson, 2011)**

First person shooter games are by far some of the most popular video games available and many boys have played them, so this English 30-1 class was no different. As a result, when not-games queered this sensibility, student reaction was quite visceral, far more than I would have expected given the simplicity of some of these games. Though I had anticipated prejudice against some not-games, like Magnuson's *The Killer* (2011), I was surprised by student affect when they experienced the game (see figure 4.10). The testimonials on the website by in large agree (<http://www.gametrekking.com/the-games/cambodia/the-killer>). After walking through the game, a few students are quoted and then a brief deconstruction follows.

*The Killer* (Magnuson, 2011) is a remarkably simple game that has rolling scenery that scrolls by as you hold the space bar down. Simple instructions tell the player to hold the space bar and if you let go, the white letters appear, telling you to go a bit farther, "You haven't gone far enough" (ibid). You play the stickman with the white face while the stickman in front of you has a black face. You hold a rifle and as you walk forward, you jab your prisoner in the back which nudges him along. Every now and again, he tires and your rifle pokes him in the back; he arches and walks a little faster. "Continue to the fields" (ibid), the white letters chide when you stop for a bit to see what happens. The scrolling scenery goes past pineapple bushes, palm trees and giant silk cotton trees. Odd conical mountains rise from the plains in the background. Day

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<sup>21</sup> Students had been introduced to the Foucault's ideas about biopower: that societal control had to be maintained by channeling human potential into military and para-military institutions.

fades to night three times in the course of your journey, which can last up to four and a half minutes of not-game play. You cross rivers, and the clouds slowly clear as the single conical mountains are slowly replaced by whole mountain ranges of many odd colours. If you choose to listen to the Jónsi's song (2010) called "Tornado," it's Emo guitar strumming pulsates through the background. Every time you let go of the spacebar, you are given a different message, depending how long it's been: "There are fields ahead" (ibid). If you chose to hear background songs because you don't like Emo music, then you hear birds, rushing water. When you get to the beach, you hear the surf and the seagulls. So does your prisoner who slows down enough that you end up jabbing him in the back again. You come across two rivers side by side where presumably the ground is soft from all the moisture. The white letters inform you: "You have reached the fields" (ibid). When you let go of the space bar, the music stops or the sounds stop and everything is strangely quiet: "Use your mouse to aim" (ibid). A black circle moves with your mouse as you take aim. This is your moment. The prisoner kneels and gently bows his head. You must shoot to advance the not-game but you do not have to shoot the prisoner. Either way, the sound of the gun shot is loud and ricochets. You only get one shot. If you shoot him, he slumps to the ground and falls through it as the scenery scrolls down instead of sideways. The carcass rolls head over heels, down, down until there's another body and another. The music begins, even if you said you didn't like Emo music, and soon there are hundreds, thousands of bodies, all falling. The screen goes black with millions of bodies until you can't distinguish one body from the other. Death loses definition and black becomes the national colour of the Khmer Rouge. Instead of credits beginning to roll, information about the four-year genocide of Cambodia between 1975 to 1979 scrolls from the bottom of the screen....

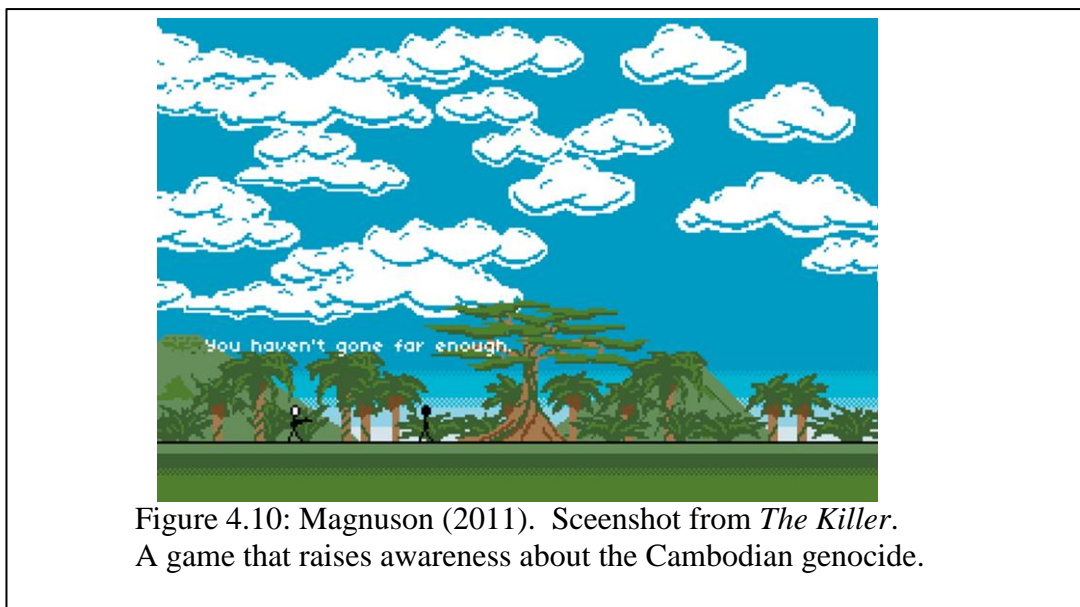


Figure 4.10: Magnuson (2011). Screenshot from *The Killer*.  
A game that raises awareness about the Cambodian genocide.

Mark's affect in the following quote is poignant because it demonstrates how one feels after having such a haptic experience:

*The Killer* is a beautiful game because it makes you think so carefully about what it means to kill another human being. The moment I shot him, I regretted it. He falls through the ground past dead bodies. At first it is one, then a couple scattered out, and after a while, the number of bodies increases until the wall of wasted humanity is so thick all you can see is black. It's very powerful. (2013, English 30-1 student)

When adversarially questioning this sentiment in front of the class by pointing out the simplicity of the game and the fact that the not-game's protagonists are merely stickmen in an almost "laughably designed computer game," other students came to his aid saying that its simplicity was amplified by the amount of time you had to take to play the game which forced the player to think more about the choice to shoot and the person s/he was shooting. Unlike students in the English 20-2 class who were younger and in the non-academic stream, most English 30-1 students said in our class discussion that most others chose not to shoot the prisoner but rather

aimed elsewhere. Though both stickmen ending up dying anyway, the whole event really shook the class, prompting one student to download the not-game's theme song, "Tornado" (Jónsi, 2010) onto his iPod which plays in the background as you play. Though the discussion on students' personal responses comes in the next section, the following reaction to the not-game is poignant given the adversarial comment about "laughable graphics" and the assumptions some students make about virtual reality and its haptic effect on student affect. His indignant response to the following diploma exam question, which was given to the class for the sake of practice, is telling: "What do these texts suggest to you about the human need to make a commitment or renounce a course of action?"

The thought that senseless killing in video games has demoralized and made such an awful heart wrenching thing to do in real life okay because it is virtually being done is absurd. The fact that our conscious and morals still allow us to play these video games just because we say they are for fun or we disregard in our own minds that they are inappropriate or have any meaning. Everyone who plays them probably has different ways to rationalize warfare or killing people in games because they see no harm of it. But it is so interesting that when given a little background information or the fact of slaughter of a helpless stickman in the not-game "The Killer" so many people seemed to find there morals and were told by their conscious that it was the wrong thing to kill the man, most people let him go. In the end the stickman died any ways but the people who let him go felt a little satisfaction that even though he died they had tried to help him and let him go in the end. On the other side of things the people who executed the man regretted deeply the fact that they had just taken the stickman's life. They admitted being wrong and knew that they had made the wrong decision immediately. The information in the after video of

the game was shocking. It opened my eyes greatly to what had happened in the genocide of Cambodia. It was a genocide that flew under the radar essentially. And it really made me think about morals and how and why no one stepped in to stop this genocide like we tried with Rwanda. Also the fact that I don't think I have ever heard one person or perspective that has a guilty conscious [sic: conscience] about what happened in Cambodia, yet when we play this little game that means nothing and we have to kill a single virtual human being we all of a sudden feel guilty or bad or a mix of emotions such as empathy. If we would have tried even if meant renouncing the actions we had attempted we would know that we put an effort in at least. Even possibly making a commitment to helping them out but nothing was done. (Alan, 2013, English 30-1)

The student's response is passionate because genocide has been personalized for him as a haptic sense-event because of several molecular collisions: the guilt of virtual killings due to his knowledge of first person shooter games, his lack of knowledge about the Cambodian genocide which the not-game summary completes and what he already knows about the Rwandan genocide, and then the confluence of two Deleuzian/Guattarian minoritarian, literary machines: the not-game and the short story to which he also responds, "On the Rainy River" (O'Brien, 1990). They slice into each other, creating fissures in Alan's common sense assumptions about first person shooter games and his ignorance about the Cambodian genocide. The role of not-game as art become salient when considering Alan's response and what Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) write about art:

It should be said of all art that, in relation to the percepts or visions they give us, artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the

compound. (p. 175)

In this instance, Alan has been drawn into the compound of affects, of self, story, and not-game which then reframed his understanding of what it meant to be drafted into war as in the story, “On the Rainy River” (O’Brien, 1990) which then rethreaded his understanding of what it meant to be a killer, be it real or virtual. This process of being drawn, redrawn; framed and reframed is essentially the process of being deterritorialized and reterritorialized with new lines of flight from old molar assumptions about what this student once regarded as common sense: namely that first person video games were harmless. Another student (Mark) made this connection between the two texts:

The underlying philosophies in both texts are strikingly similar how they put the viewer into the action, making them think about how they would react. Overall, the story and the not-game do a fantastic job at relating to one another, from the levels of decision we have to make in life, to what these choices mean to use and our own world around us.

(2013, English 30-1 student)

There are wheels within wheels as students careen into the character’s dilemma which is channeled and focused by the not-game, *The Killer* (Magnuson, 2011) which acts as a propellant, jettisoning the student into this new line of flight that forces one to “think about how [one] would react . . . as the viewer is put into the action” (Mark, 2013, English 30-1 student) with a hair trigger (a moral dilemma) and the safety off.

How is this little not-game achieving such accelerant properties? One has to break down the slip, as it were, of how students become the soldier, holding a rifle with a sensibility and realism that commercial video games do not achieve; after all, these students quoted above have all admitted to playing violent video games and shooting countless virtual bodies before. But

this not-game is different. The title is alluring: it is called, *The Killer* and students like the title immediately because they assume that they get to be a killer and they are right. From the outset, the game is simple and because it is so simple, player choice is very direct and in real time. You choose music or not music; then, you are presented with a tiny, little stickman who points his meager rifle at another stickman's back. The frame rate is extremely slow: night falls and clouds come from the direction you are pointed towards but nothing other than clouds move and they move at exactly the same rate as they scroll by. Birds and odd hoots from monkeys are heard in the distance if you chose ambient sounds. Jónsi's song "Tornado" begins if you chose music: it is somber, heavy and depressing. You are told to hold space to start walking. Even the instructions are vague: what does it mean to hold space? Students quickly realize it is the space bar, and when you press it, your stickman lunges forward, spearing the other stickman in the back. A thump is heard as the man arches his back in what has to be pain. You hear your own footsteps and the footsteps of the person in front of you, your prisoner. When you release the space bar, the stickmen stop. You are alone in the middle of what appears to be the jungle. Nothing is happening except what you make happen and the reality of the weather and the daylight. The other man, who you now realize has a black face, unlike your white face, does not run away. There is nowhere to run. The clouds continue overhead on their own volition, and daylight waxes and wanes, but the rest of the scenery moves only when you do. The player controls the scenery, the frame rate, the sound, the footsteps, and the number of times you jab your prisoner in the back. The song hauntingly demurs, "You kill everything through/You kill from the inside/.../I wonder if I'm allowed ever to see/I wonder if I'm allowed to ever be free" (Jónsi, 2010). With the exception of a one in 20 chance of a landmine exploding, nothing random occurs. No other players appear or affect the player's control. Rarely, someone will

step on a hidden mine and the game is over, but there is nowhere else to step because the stickmen only walk in a straight line. Students have complete control but they cannot walk backwards. Students can take as long as they like by pausing, but the four and a half minutes is a long time for such a simple game, so they have a lot of time to reflect on what's happening and the words of the song if they chose it. They listen. They remember the title: *The Killer*. Every time they stop, they are reminded to carry on, enjoined by the white lettering to go to the fields ahead. The scenery changes but the walk is deliberate and slow. The player is taking the prisoner somewhere far away to a place where no one will know. Only nature can see what is happening and where they are. No one else is there. Eventually they get to the sea and they have arrived. The choice is offered. The bull's eye sight moves with the mouse. They can subscribe to the appellation of the killer, or they can shoot elsewhere and let him go. Once their decision is made, the not-game takes control and the screen becomes black with bodies as mentioned before. Nabais' quote is pertinent here:

Art is the uprooting of the pure affect and percept from the whole subjective sphere. It is the process of distillation of the sensation. To succeed this process, there are specific procedures to each creator. But they all concentrate themselves on the same point: the becoming-inhuman, the becoming-color, the becoming-cry or pure sound of man. (2010, p. 168)

Players of *The Killer* are invited to become-bullet in the chamber of a stickman's gun, virtual and real. They have been uprooted from their subjective selves by the haecceity of the sense-event into which they were slipped, the simplicity of choice and the player-controlled frame rate of the game. Their immanence is in the choice they made.

I have played some very gruesome shooting games such as *Halo*, *Call of Duty*, *Grand*



*Theft Auto*, and more. These are games where you shoot multiple people for no reason and think nothing more of it than it just being a game. But “The Killer” was not like that at all. I played the game three times and every single time I couldn’t get myself to shoot the prisoner. I would aim the gun at his head and then would quickly shoot into the sky. This game really made me feel sorry for all of those that had to suffer what the prisoner did and even more sorry for those that didn’t get to run free. It really makes you wonder why anyone would execute an innocent person even if those are their orders. (Fynn, 2013, English 30-1 student)

The recognition of first person shooter games and comparing them to not-games shows the incredible resonance that this particular gamer experiences when the notions of very powerful, commercial video games are deterritorialized by simple philosophical gestures on behalf of not-game artists. Where before he shot thousands of victims in *Halo*, now he couldn’t shoot one because he was invited to wonder. His immanence was in not being *The Killer*. He was stammering in his own video gaming language because of the assemblage between the not-game and his past experiences with video games.

It is an assemblage, an assemblage of enunciation. A style is managing to stammer in one’s own language. It is difficult, because there has to be a need for such stammering. Not being a stammerer in one’s speech, but being a stammerer of language itself. Being a foreigner in one’s own language. Constructing a line of flight. (Deleuze, 1977/1987, p.4)

His line of flight may help him rule out a military or paramilitary career, or it may give him a new understanding of productivity, a way to understand the thread that he has followed and a way to anticipate a different future that differs from those who follow the same path mindlessly.

**Reterritorializing by Deterritorializing with Not-Game Discussion in Personal Responses**

According to Deleuze, when a minor literature disrupts how we think, shakes what we assumed was common sense, and renders what we thought were good relations into something monstrous; our identity in whom we thought we were –our knowledge of self– and what we think of others become deterritorialized with ruptures, fissures, leaks, and holes (Colebrook, 2002). Similar to Fynn above who saw his previous attitude about virtual killings as monstrous, we can then become someone new; both our thinking and our capacity are affected. These moments of instability –sense-events– are incredibly powerful and provide artists tremendous opportunities to build bridges and runways to different ways of thinking about self, people, places, and change. Through the students’ personal response assignment, it became evident that the not-games deterritorialized students’ thinking and augmented their insights because of these rhizomatic connections they made to literature and how they were implicated through them. It was then that they were able to provide nomadic insights into how they should then live in terms of ethical choices. When the not-game forces them to be one of the characters holding the gun for up to four minutes of not-game play, poking the stickman in the back, walking to the beaches, these students, when they thought about it carefully, could not shoot their prisoner or felt badly if they did. They become nomads, caught between what the not-game told them to do, what their past experience with video games would have them do, and what their newly awakened conscience is telling them to do. The not-game stickman who died personalized the act of killing another human being for them. It highlights their act of choice not just in the not-game but in real life because the algorithm created an experience that Galloway maintains is less mediated than other media (2006). Fynn’s lament about the not-game scenario ethically sublimates real life ethos: “It really makes you wonder why anyone would execute an innocent person even if

those are their orders” (Fynn, 2013, English 30-1 student). The compound of affects that ricochet from the not-game, his past with first person shooters, and reading of O’Brien’s short story (1990) about dodging the Vietnam War collide and deterritorialize his first person shooter ethic and makes him wonder about acts of war as ultimately coming down to the executing an innocent person.

A similar event occurred with Louis who read Goodwin Parker’s essay on, “What is Poverty” (1971). His notion of poor people was completely disrupted when he read her story about her life and her children’s life in filth and discovered admiration for her willingness to sacrifice her needs for her children’s. Suddenly the identity he had placed on poverty was rendered monstrous by the detail, rationale, gut-wrenching agony and sheer embarrassment of being so poor. “We live in a society that is quick to judge other people based on artificial importance. People can be stuck at rock bottom simply because of the perspective other people have of them” (Louis, 2013, English 30-1 student). What Louis implies, is that he was one of those people, like many of us, who helped keep “them” at rock bottom. Louis compared the story to the not-game, *ImmorTall* (Miller, 2010), a science fiction game that has a strange monster crash land on earth who is befriended by a little girl who feeds it, takes it to her family who is at first afraid, and then fond. The army soon arrives and attacks both the monster and the family, the monster defending itself and his new family.

The bombing and the shooting in the game is a symbol for the relentlessness of judging that takes place in society. . . . The army sees the alien as dangerous, because it looks different and they are not used to seeing things like that in their world. (Louis, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Here, the student’s perception of the army is deterritorialized, as well as all of us who “are not

used to seeing things like that in their world” (ibid). The sense-event makes him realize that people are too quick to judge the alien in the same way as people are quick to judge those who live in poverty as lazy or unintelligent.

The alien, very much like Parker, put himself in danger to protect the people it cares about. . . . The alien is in the end willing to die to protect the family as much as it can just as Parker is by putting her health in danger to feed her children as well as she can. . . . At the end of the game, the alien is often put to death by the army and while he lay there, snow begins to fall on it and eventually covers it up. (Louis, 2013, English 30-1 student)

By the end of the next line of Louis’ response, we know that the contact with these two stories has cemented his new understanding into new territory:

The snow is a symbol for how we often cover up and forget about people like Parker and the alien. This people should not be forgotten, but learned from. Had we been able to respect to look at their perspective, we would see them for the heroes they really are. (Louis, 2013, English 30-1)

Another student, Fran, read “Glass Roses” (Nowlan, 1968) and connected it to the not-game *Loved* (Ocias, 2009). Her notion of what a father/son relationship was shaken by Nowlan’s story about Stephen’s growing disagreement with his father about a friendship with another worker at his father’s lumber camp and how Nowlan wrote about the son’s quiet rebellion in a positive light. This mirrored her own relationship with her father and his disparagement for her growing interest in the acting profession (not her actual interest). She also recognized some of her own father’s voice in the not-game, *Loved* and as a result, her identity as an obedient daughter was deterritorialized: she realized that she did not have to agree with the

father she loved, just as Stephan did not agree with his father.

*Loved* is about a little character that is being verbally abused by the mysterious voice in the sky. The voice is controlling the player and makes the player confused to what he/she should end up doing. You either have the option to do what the voice says, or make your own decisions. When I played this game, I ended up listening to the voice at the beginning, but then I got tired of doing what it wanted. Eventually I started disobeying the voice and went on doing my own thing. There were some consequences like you would get bullied or told you are not worthy of living in this world. . . . The voice, just like the dad [in “Glass Roses”], is controlling the players every move. This makes the player feel trapped. (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Here the territorial boundaries of a loving parental relationship are disrupted by the notion that parental love, though well-intentioned, can be wrong.

At the end of the story, when Stephen is forced to make the decision of waking Leka up or not, is like the ending of the game *Loved*. When Stephen makes the decision of touching Leka to wake him up and disobeying his father, is like the break through point in the game. This is when Stephen’s world becomes colorful and lets him know that he is his own person and is obligated to make his own choices. (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Fran takes this discovery and compares it to her own situation, either reterritorializing her old life and becoming anew, or feeling affirmed, if she has already made her decision previously:

In life there are many things that you may have to decide upon that can make other people unhappy. I’ve had to make some of those decisions myself in order to make my life a happier place. For example, when I am older I would like to have drama somewhere

in my life. I've been doing it for six years and I act every single day of the week. It is what makes me unique. Unfortunately, my dad doesn't approve of my choices.

He also thinks that acting is a distraction with my studies. I somewhat agree, but if I didn't have it in my life, my life would be boring. I know that I need acting in order to have self-happiness. Like in "Glass Roses," I have to make the decision of obeying what my father would like, or doing what I do best and what makes me happy. I think that I will end up doing what Stephen does in the story and choosing my own path. I know that some people may not like what I've chosen but I'd rather have myself being happy over others. (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student)

What is certainly a new discovery here is that Fran does admit that daily acting classes may, in fact, be a distraction to her studies, so in the end, both the parent and the student are right to be concerned.

Half of the students who chose to include not-games in their personal response writing chose to write on *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009), not surprising given its popularity amongst students. The startling aspect of the game is that it is so boring, mundane, and yet so typical of life for many middle and upper-middle class people. One student characterized "his need to do something new" through a first person narrative:

I remembered the catalyst of this all, the elevator lady. I had always taken the elevator down to the garage alone at 7:29am every morning until one day, I can't really recall, this old, grizzled lady was suddenly there. At first, I had ignored her. Actually, I never really spoke to her until I began to feel the emptiness. That floating sadness that was always peering over my shoulder, turning everything I touched into a meaningless endeavor. (George, 2013, English 30-1 student)

The refrain in this instance is the predictable routine that turns into drudgery for the sake of earning a living. George went so far as to question the very notion of sanity if you never try something new and that, “when you change your daily routine that you will really start living life your life [sic].” He is never specific about how one could change one’s life or how one could remain employed and avoid routine, but he implicitly understands the need to reterritorialize in order to be fulfilled and that confusion or deterritorialization is not necessarily a bad thing in one’s life.

Sandra also identified her life with that of the faceless male character in *Every day the same dream*.

When I wake up in the morning it’s the same thing over and over again. You get up get ready go to school and go home or to work and it is a constant repetition. After a while you just start to fall into routine and become accustomed to it but sometimes it’s nice to break the cycle. (Sandra, 2013, English 30-1 student)

She focused on the tiny details in her life at work and how they can be made more meaningful if you paid attention to them, or as Deleuze would say, reterritorialized these moments by soaking them in.

There was one lady the other day who came in [to my workplace] and we chatted for a while and she told me a few really funny stories and that changed my mood for the entire night. Whether this little old lady knows it or not she changed my perspective and gave me a new experience. If she had not come in that night it could have been someone else who came and had a conversation and it could have been someone who was very rude and that would have changed my mood as well, but not for the better. These new experiences and these little things that happen every day that we just pass off as

casualties are actually very influential things. (Sandra, 2013, English 30-1 student)

It is no coincidence that the “little old lady” of which she speaks is also in the not-game on the elevator and in a similar way to the game, Sandra accesses the wise woman’s talismanic qualities to help shape her attitude about her work life, making it more meaningful or as she says, “influential.” The student acknowledges that making life more interesting does not have to involve dramatic changes, but that any change can deterritorialize: “these little changes could include whether you want to stay in or go out, have coffee or tea, where [sic] shoes or boots. Whether we realize it or not all these decisions have an impact on the outcomes of our day” (Sandra, 2013, English 30-1 student). This insight gives her a clue how to reterritorialize her future differently.

The other student, George, was far more dramatic by having his character undergo a metamorphosis similar to what characters underwent in the films, *Pleasantville* or Neo in the *Matrix*, a film the class had seen episodes from earlier in the semester.<sup>22</sup> He explores a number of Deleuzian stutters as he documents his first person daily routine as if he is inside the not-game, *Every day the same dream* at the very end of the game. He is on the roof of the building where he works and he’s watching someone who looks and dresses just like himself. The door to the roof “sighs and creeps” behind him. The man’s brief case “hugs the cold confines of the concrete.” Nothing is right because, “normally most of the employees would be latched to their computer screens like leeches to an unsuspecting human (George, 2013, English 30-1 student).” Reality is pulling apart with leaks, holes, and paradoxes:

Today, had proved to be a radically distorted sort of day. Nothing was following the

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<sup>22</sup> His creative, first-person narrative is included in Appendix F because it represents an excellent example of what not-games can do for more academic students –he should have been in Advanced Placement English.



sequence of things. I had not arisen to be greeted by the same mundane phrases that spewed from my well-intending wife. I had not been greeted in the elevator by that strange lady who had goaded me to break free of the cycle. (George, 2013, English 30-1 student)

The paradoxes such as the “well-intending wife spewed” and “the strange lady . . . goaded me to break free” are representative of the not-game ideas that suggest the lure of systems that are larger than life. He judges himself and the need for a job routine as “lifeless” and turning people into “shells” that though they “occupied space,” were nevertheless not “present.” The situation that he presently finds himself is “strangely odd and a little perturbing” because he is watching a man just like himself prepare to jump off a railing on top of a high rise.

When I approached within arm’s reach of the fellow, he did what I had suspected he was going to do anyway. He suddenly, as if cut from a puppeteer’s string, collapsed forward and hurdled towards the cold, unforgiving ground that spread before him. (George, 2013, English 30-1 student)

In death, the strings that made him a puppet are cut and the ground “spreads before him” almost as if it were a blanket. Next, the student plays with his identity, identifying himself as the one who had just leapt, “Had I seemed so lifeless as I had hurdled toward the ground yesterday . . . (student’s ellipsis) or was that last week? A year ago perhaps (George, 2013, English 30-1 student)?” Time collapses as he realizes that nothing mattered, “There had been no spiritual investment anyway (George, 2013, English 30-1 student).” It is at this point that the student implies a new territory of thought, that one must make a “spiritual investment” in order to make life matter; he implies that life cannot just be about material things, like money. “Odd fragments of thought always slice through [his] normal patterns of thought” (George, 2013, English 30-1

student), as he realizes that if you reject society you must fill in that “void” with something else. At this point the narrator’s reality transmogrifies and the black and white world becomes iridescent from the few colours that represented this spirituality that existed in the not-game. After he blacks-out, the student’s narrator wonders, “Had this been the price I had to pay for tearing asunder the comfortably secure views I held before. . . (George, 2013, English 30-1 student)?” The student reterritorializes the notion of security into a lifestyle more radical but vested in meaningfulness. “The world seemed to be coming away at the hinges (George, 2013, English 30-1 student).” His unhinged order is saner than the previous insanity disguised as order because he discovers his own voice after having spoken with society’s voice without realizing it. He is on a new plateau and discovers that, “Now I had a purpose, I could redesign this world to match the one I desire . . . all it will require is a little empathy . . . and a great dosage of emotional freedom” (Ellipses, his: George, 2013, English 30-1 student). The not-game has allowed the student to find a way out of the dream into a new reality through the use of empathy, emotional freedom, and spiritual investment.

### **Summary of Not-Game Discussion in the Personal Response Assignment**

Students who included a discussion on the not-games (highlighted in yellow in Figure 4:11) did tend to perform better than those of a similar writing ability who did not mention the not-game in their personal response, but the data pool is too small. Those students who were weaker writers based on their term mark tended to improve more than they would otherwise, had they not used the not-game as a part of their discussion. There are a number of factors at work: writing about the not-game gives students more to discuss; the form is novel for English, so students are excited to write more; and the not-games are more interactive so it helps to ground their discussion in concrete detail, also improving their mark. There may be something to the

interactivity of the not-game with the short stories and the ensuing discussion each group had with each other in order to build their class presentation that may have helped them write a better personal response than they normally would as well. Fran, for example, seemed to find a lot of traction between the not-game, *Loved*, the short story, “Glass Roses,” and her own personal experience with her father. This is not necessarily tied to her experience with the not-game, but if her insights did not come from there, then they most certainly came from the small group discussion and their experiences with familial relationships as juxtaposed to the not-game. As her group wrote in their presentations,

I think that the game creator (Alexander Ocias) created this not game to highlight the idea of decision making. Standing up for yourself is a difficult task to complete in today's world. It also shows how unsettling your world can be without having your own say in it.

(Student Group A, 2013, English 30-1)

Though the not-game seemed to help students articulate parental approaches in light of the short story, it should be made clear that all literature can operate as a Deleuzian and Guattarian machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986) where the short story disturbs someone’s sensibilities, stuttering commonly held beliefs (having the common sense to obey your parent) to strange territory, deterritorializing them enough that students can then dilate their ability to act and react as they reterritorialize new sensibilities. What not-games do that short stories do not is give students choice and interactivity within the territory. The best readers will actually supplant their minds into the point of view of the narrator or a certain character and become them, taking on their choices as if s/he were him/her, but the not-game makes this verisimilitude more concrete and kinesthetic, a traction that weaker readers can utilize as well. This would correspond to some of the findings below when you look at the final marks of the average students in the table.

Though it is unfair to compare the two assignments listed below since they did not have the personal response question in advance for the last assignment –making it harder– it is still worth noting that all but three students who included a discussion on the not-game on the first assignment either did as well or fared better than the second response when not-games were replaced with the photograph. Again, they did not have time to discuss the components of the story, the poem, and the visual with their group in advance, so their improved mark may have more to do with the discussion than the not-game supplement. Those who normally do well seem to do well either with or without not-games, but by in large, their enthusiasm for a novel approach was effusive, even ebullient at times.

Figure 4.11: Students' marks of personal responses with and without not-games.

	<b>Personal Responses</b>	<b>With Not-Game</b>		<b>Without Not-Game</b>		<b>Final Marks</b>
	Due Date:	4/11/13		5/27/13		
	Total Out Of:	40		40		
	<b>Class #1</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	Allison	34	85%	36	90%	87%
2	Andrew	30	75%	NHI	NHI	74%
3	Anne	28	70%	28	70%	82%
4	Beatrice	28	70%	EXC	EXC	71%
5	Bill	28	70%	40	100%	82%
6	Bob	32	80%	28	70%	77%
7	Cathy	NHI	NHI	36	90%	72%
8	Fern	24	60%	NHI	NHI	46%
9	Fran	30	75%	26	65%	59%
10	George	40	100%	32	80%	93%
11	Jen	30	75%	32	80%	86%
12	Kara	28	70%	30	75%	79%
13	Leah	30	75%	40	100%	86%
14	Louis	32	80%	32	80%	75%
15	Mary	NHI	NHI	32	80%	54%
16	Phil	32	80%	36	90%	81%
17	Robert	30	75%	28	70%	80%
18	Sally	28	70%	NHI	NHI	56%

	<b>Personal Responses</b>	<b>With Not-Game</b>		<b>Without Not-Game</b>		<b>Final Marks</b>
19	Sandra	30	75%	NHI	NHI	61%
20	Shandra	28	70%	22	55%	69%
21	Sheila	24	60%	30	75%	66%
22	Susan	26	65%	38	95%	77%
23	William	32	80%	24	60%	73%
24	Wilson	26	65%	NHI	NHI	60%
	<b>Class #2</b>	<b>2/10/13</b>		<b>12/6/13</b>		
25	Alan	28	70%	28	70%	80%
26	Angela	22	55%	28	70%	65%
27	Anne	28	70%	30	75%	85%
28	Blake	26	65%	NHI	NHI	69%
29	Catherine	22	55%	30	75%	76%
30	Christie	28	70%	30	75%	84%
31	Dawn	26	65%	NHI	NHI	54%
32	Denise	36	90%	28	70%	77%
33	Drew	28	70%	NHI	NHI	66%
34	Fynn	36	90%	26	65%	80%
35	John	30	75%	32	80%	75%
36	June	26	65%	32	80%	68%
37	Kelly	24	60%	36	90%	80%
38	Kerry	30	75%	38	95%	80%
39	Luke	20	50%	26	65%	65%
40	Marian	36	90%	30	75%	81%
41	Mark	30	75%	30	75%	82%
42	Matthew	36	90%	NHI	NHI	57%
43	Paul	20	50%	36	90%	83%
44	Sage	26	65%	32	80%	67%
45	Sarah	20	50%	NHI	NHI	57%
46	Shaylynn	28	70%	32	80%	74%
47	Shea	36	90%	40	100%	87%
NHI =Not Handed In; EXC = Excused						
Figure 4:11, continued: Students in yellow responded to a not-game.						

When looking at personal responses from the first column with the not-games that did not score as high, it is interesting to see how students struggle to answer the prompt by too often writing about something adjacent to the texts that they are writing about, rather than finding an edge to

work against. A difference. From a Deleuzian/Guattarian perspective, interpretation becomes claustrophobic if it is transcendent, confined in arborescence, typical in many English classes. This is a typical trap to fall into both for teachers and students alike wherein they try to repeat similar performances from the past. One has to approach the topic with the context that one is in now, not one from a past performance. Rather than trying to line up all the similarities between personal experience and not-games and texts, one should be looking for differences and contrast. This gives the writer more concrete details to think about, more to write about.

Deleuze seeks to overcome the dogmatic image of thought in order to construct an ontology of difference. . . . In rejecting the dogmatic image, Deleuze has offered a view of being that overflows the categories representation seeks to impose on it. The world is always more than representation can capture; the world remains untamed by the dogmatic image of thought. (May, 2005, p. 96)

Perhaps, teachers should be helping students find differences and contrast in order to give them the best purchase, the best traction. Sometimes, we line up stories and poems that are too similar to each other and then expect students to find similarities amongst them when perhaps we should be working with more oblique angles when it comes to generating insight. This is the refrain with which students have become altogether too familiar, so students who struggle with writing mimic this approach in their own writing, showing how the circumstances in a short story is just like theirs. In the next response from a stronger student, she focused on differences when she read the text, “What is Poverty” (Goodwin-Parker, 1971); she used it as a literary machine to parcel out the differences from her own life and those who live in poverty. As a result, she had more to write.

My first real eye opening experience of poverty came around Christmas of this year. I

felt the best way to find the Christmas spirit I had been missing was to give it to others, so I volunteered to make and deliver hampers to families . . . who couldn't afford to make Christmas happen. I was shocked when I entered the room to see endless cardboard boxes waiting to be filled with food and supplies. . . . These were families who were struggling in hiding alongside mine in our city that has a reputation for being rich and snotty. Words cannot describe the way those lines of boxes and anonymous tags touched me. I kept asking myself, how would you explain to your child that Santa wasn't coming, and there was no Christmas dinner this year? My own daily complaints seemed so irrelevant, so pathetic. My feelings of sympathy and futile attempts at understanding compelled me to help deliver the hampers as well. Meeting the families was a life changing experience. All appearances of a normal home concealed the true need that existed among my community. Their humble gratefulness and slight embarrassment at their need was touching in a way I cannot fully understand or express. In reading the short story, I was instantly reminded of this moment. (Alison, 2013, English 30-1)

As a result of being deterritorialized by the shock of difference, she then takes the next step by reterritorializing her attitude towards those who differ from her:

Although I have never been in a situation of poverty, my perspective has become one of understanding. I no longer give people living on the street looks of judgment. Never again will I believe that those in poverty are there by their choices alone. Serving the homeless and poor will be something I do throughout my whole life, as I attempt to erase the guilt I feel towards the simple luck of the draw that was inexplicably in my favor. Facing someone else's reality is not a task for the faint hearted. In opening our

eyes and our minds, without prejudice, we have the chance to understand. (Alison, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Though she does take Goodwin-Parker's life story (1971) and draws similarities between it and an experience that reminded her of it, it is not the similarities where she finds new ground: it is in the differences.

As teachers, we are often afraid to offend students with stories that will challenge their sensibilities, so we ply the curriculum with stories that ruffle but do not ruffle enough to warrant a parent phone call. This is wrong. This is why controversial literature is more powerful because it runs against the grain of common sense, causing people to stutter, to shake, causing them to re-think and reterritorialize. As mentioned in the literature review, there are not-games that are also just as controversial. As Bogost (2005) said, video games are seen as revolutionary.

#### **Interview with English 30-1 Student #1 (Fran) from Class of February to June, 2013**

The interview with Fran (Appendix H) revealed a number of salencies with the use of not-games in English Language Arts, namely that they are memorable, that they broadened horizons about "what was out there, more" (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student), and that they carry themes that have an impact on a student's philosophical view of life. Any number of students could have been chosen from this class, but since there are doubts about whether girls like video games as much as boys do, two girls were chosen for interviews. Neither of them was dramatically enthusiastic about them in class (or so I thought), unlike most of the boys, and only one of them utilized not-games in their personal response assignment, so the assumption was that girls might offer a more balanced, temperate, and therefore more credible perspective about their use in schools. Fran struggled more with English Language Arts than the second student who was interviewed. She was also a year younger in age.



When I interviewed Fran, it had been close to seven months since she had used not-games in a classroom setting. She indicated that she has not played them since, but she would have been thinking about them ever since she received the request for an interview in October and seen the questions that I would be asking (see Appendix J). Her memory of them was striking since she needed very little prompting to remember the names of them, particularly her favourite ones, *Afghanistan* (Serious Games Interactive, 2010) and *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009), though she did remember the not-game she wrote about in her personal response assignment, *Loved* (Ocias, 2009), when prompted (pp. 112-113). That she remembered the not-games so readily suggests not-game potential in the class room. Based on what she said about being exposed to, “. . . the poverty that is going on around in the world and like how people are being treated, opposed to how we’re living” (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student), it was clear that there were other games which she had played but could not recall their names. The not-game, *Afghanistan* (Serious Games Interactive, 2010) was the one she clearly remembered, likely because it is a forty-five minute game, and she had also played it voluntarily at home. Though she could not remember specific scenes of poverty in the game, she could remember the “blown up,” one-room school and how poor it seemed to her. (The objective of the not-game, as you may recall from an earlier discussion (p.76), is to get it reopened as a co-ed school for both boys and girls.) There were other not-games as well that the class would have played, even if only briefly that dealt with poverty as well: *Third World Farmer* (Hermund, Toubro, Nielsen, Salqvist, & Spycher, 2008), *Darfur is Dying* (Ruez, York, Stein, Keating, & Santiago, 2008), *The Phone Story* (Pedercini, 2011), to mention a few. Though she did not mention these not-games by name, the impact of their deterritorialization of “how we’re living” was clear:

Um, I remember doing projects on them in that we; it kind of helped me see, like, what was going around in the world, 'cause we're kind of like, I don't know –we're not like– um, I need the word; I don't remember; we're not exposed to like most of that kind of like ideas, and I feel that the not-game kind of helped me see what was out there, more.

(Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Fran searches for the word, likely “sheltered,” as she tries to articulate her growing understanding of the world outside the one in which she lives. She recognizes that there are new ideas out there that she never considered, and she recognizes that ideas can be a product of geographical context, one that, in this case, is enmeshed in poverty. The poverty propels ideas that deterritorializes her sheltered world. Fran goes on to attribute her experience with this game for contributing a better understanding of the cultural differences she read about in her last novel of the course, Hosseini's second book (2007) on Afghanistan, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. She felt that the not-game had more of an impact than a film or documentary on cultural differences, in this case, that of Islam, because in the not-game, *Afghanistan*, “you're, like, in control of what happens” (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student). This speaks to the haptic power of video game technology that gives players interactive experience with an affect and a percept, providing what Deleuze called a haecceity (Smith & Greco, as cited in Deleuze, 1997/1993). Here Smith and Greco (1997) speak about the impact of fiction, using a Deleuzian/Guattarian (1987/1980) analysis, but the same impacts can evidently be experienced from not-games as well:

They are assemblages of nonsubjectified affects and percepts that enter into virtual conjunction . . . The landscape is no longer an external reality, but has become the very element of a ‘passage of Life.’ As Deleuze and Guattari put it, “We are not in the world, we become with the world.” (1994/1991)

Deleuze and Guattari (1994/1991) go on to say that “we become by contemplating it” (p. 169). Fran has become more worldly and knowledgeable because she was invited to contemplate through the assemblage of the not-games, the literature, and her own life.

The not-game that had the most thematic impact for Fran, the one that deterritorialized her day to day life was Pedercini’s not-game of repetition, *Every day the same dream* (2009) because,

It like made me realize that like everyone has their daily routine, and it doesn’t really switch. Like, every day you wake up and do like the same thing and nothing every really changes. Which is. I mean, I never really realized it until I saw it in the game. (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student)

This was fascinating because the not-game exposed a world she lived every day, something the literature in the course did not achieve, and yet the not-game gave her something for which to strive, a difference as small as examining a pretty leaf to “change it more drastically . . . that caused you to change.” (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student). We can assume that through her mundane, daily routines that all of us experience, she has learned how to find differences that will make her life more meaningful: “like maybe we could do something different to like, open our minds about the world instead of doing everything the same every day” (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student).

Her final revelation came through a discussion in the interview about the not-game, *Loved* (Ocias, 2009) and its assemblage to Nowlan’s short story “Glass Roses” (1968) and her own life: In all three, the individual is torn between doing what is expected of them and fulfilling their own needs. Her conclusion is that, “they should do what they believe is right in the world and not what other people are telling them what to do” (Fran, 2013, English 30-1

student). Though Fran is not a gamer, she felt the not-game had more impact than the short story because “I like seeing how everything goes, and I feel like the not-game like, like all them helped me like see it and I could like explain things in more detail, and things like that.” Furthermore, she said that she preferred not-games over reading, “because you’re able to like see everything that’s happening opposed to a book where you have to make it up in your mind.” When asked if she had any friends in the school who wondered if their classes should have access to not-games, she said, “some of my friends in other classes were like wondering why they wouldn’t play not-games, and they, they’d want to, like, look at it and like see what it, what it was all about” (Fran, 2013, English 30-1 student). This reaction is predictable given the incredible lure that video game technology has with young people today. The novelty factor is at play as well. Nevertheless, the question remains why more teachers do not employ it, even if for short amounts of time throughout a course, since students want more of it, and it helps to broaden perspective with new ideas presented in a format to which they are drawn.

### **Interview with English 30-1 Student #2 (Jen ) from Class of February to June, 2013**

Unlike Fran, Jen’s interview (Appendix I) revealed an avid reader who just cannot seem to get enough when it comes to reading: “. . . like anytime I have a spare minute, I’ll just pick up a book and when I have a good book, I’ll just read over and over and over again” (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student). Her perspective was valuable because, like Fran, she is not a gamer, but she does not need any visual cues, such as a not-game, to assist her in visualizing the story. For example, Magnuson’s not-game, *The Killer* (2011) might help a student visualize what a soldier might go through during a tour of duty overseas such as in the short story, “On the Rainy River (O’Brien, 1990). Nevertheless, her endorsement of the not-game genre was surprisingly effusive, so much so that she talks about them whenever she mentions her English 30-1 course in

high school:

. . . so a lot of times it came up in conversation that way, or we'd be talking about in my English class too in, in, at school now, and we were, I was talking to this one girl, like um, yeah, about like what we did in English and, so I brought it up, and she said, "Oh, that's really cool!" And she told me she went home, and she told me that she whipped up a bunch and that she found all these not-games, and so she came back and she was really excited, so. (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student)

One of the traits of the not-game that came up from Jen's perspective were the feelings that they evoked. She was particularly perplexed that the same not-game could bring out the same reaction in different people with different personalities, mentioning this twice in the interview:

. . . because every time I showed somebody the game because I have shown people this game afterwards, um, they all have the same reactions which is weird 'cause they all have different personalities and different people but then their reaction at the end is always very very similar (laughs). (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student)

The other quality she attributed to not-games were their staying power in terms of memory, saying, ". . . just being out of English for as long as I have been, I've thought about the not-game more than I have the story" (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student). There may be a number of reasons for this, one being that the stories she read were more cultural-time specific in terms of context. "Clothes" (Divakaruni, 1995), for example, is about an East Indian couple experiencing a new life in America which is not as transferable for Jen as *Every day the same dream* which is more along the lines of her cultural milieu. She even says that the not-game, ". . . is very familiar to me . . . because we see as a student doing the same thing over and over and over" (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student). There may be something to the interactive component of the

not-game as opposed to the story, but remember, Jen is a reader through and through. It could also be the novelty factor of not-games in general, but her words, however, are intriguing when she speaks about *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009):

. . . that one I think that I'll remember longer mostly because of the feeling that I have when I was playing it 'cause like I still remember the feeling I had the first time that I played it and I realized what the ending had to be and every time I played it I still get the same feeling and I think that's really cool and that's something I'm not going to forget.  
(Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student)

She remembers the first time that she played it because of its evocative feelings and yet she has played it countless times again, still feeling what it felt like the first time. Pedercini's *Every day the same dream* is haunting and not all not-games have the same staying power for all people, but this is a problem of aesthetic taste. She maintains that the not-game potency is memorable and she finds it eerie that people with different personalities all react to it the same way.

Another quality of the not-game was the seemingly oblique angle that they came at the class. Was the randomness of attaching the genre to literature helpful? Was its difference rather than its similarity more powerful?

Well, when I first saw them I was a little bit unsure of them 'cause I don't, I'm not, I don't play video games at all, and I was kind of worried 'cause, well, I, I kind of, kind of want to read books (laughs), but, um, after, and I know that other people were a kind of confused, but the people that I know like to play video games were like, "Ah, this is awesome, for you to play games in my English class: Best day, ever!" (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Nevertheless, students had to work harder to make connections between the short stories they

were given and the different not-games. Jen thought that this challenge actually helped to bear more fruit because once students made connections from disparate vantage points, they made a bond more powerful because of that farther distance, having less similarity and more difference.

This is similar to what Deleuze observes in *Dialogues II* (1987/1977):

You should not try to find whether an idea is just or correct. You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere, in another area, so that something passes between the two which is neither in one nor the other. Now, one does not generally find this idea alone; a chance is needed, or else someone gives you one. You don't have to be learned, to know or be familiar with a particular area, but to pick up this or that in areas which are different. (p. 10)

Too often we look for similarities when we should harvest the rewards of difference, and Jen agreed when it came to finding connections between not-games and short stories:

. . . the connection that you'll make is probably more valuable than if it's just given to you right way . . . because you've worked hard to find it, and you've obviously worked, you've thought about it and put hard work into it, so I think for you, it's more valuable that you've done this and worked hard for it than if you've just been given it. (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Many times, by going through this process, students found all kinds of new ideas as a result of such molecular, chaotic collisions. This was never more evident than during presentations when students were encouraged to ask questions of the presenting group, one idea or observation feeding into the next. As the teacher, I would sit among them and watch it all happen and slowly fade from "view," since I was no longer needed until it was time to move on to the next presentation. When I asked Jen about those teachers who felt that not-games do not have a place

in the classroom, her response was telling:

Um, I think that, I would say to them that they should try it before they knock it like I think that they should really see what effects it has on the students that they're with 'cause I don't think that you can just say, "Oh, I don't think it has a good impact on them if you've never tried it and never seen impacts . . . . I think, it was very appropriate for English 30-1 because some of the themes in the not-games are more appropriate for older students, than Grade 10 students or Grade 11 students. And also I think, um, that it's better for Dash 1 because more of the connections are there, and you can, you can think about the connections that are there, and you can think about all the connections that are there. (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Jen goes on to say that it takes maturity to fully grasp, "what the games mean and make subtle connections in your mind while you're playing" (Jen, 2013, English 30-1 student). These subtleties take patience and a willingness to search for them, characteristics found in more mature students, and Jen even suggests that advanced placement student may also be a suitable choice for the future. These are students who may be more open to such philosophical, molecular collisions.

## Chapter 5

### Summary of Methods and Procedures

The methods of research were primarily through student writing, presentations, surveys, and interviews. Because the study was qualitative, and convenient one, the data was interpretive and open to bias, whether it was my bias or the student's bias. People want to please and may be tempted to say what they believe a person wants to hear. This can affect interviews, presentations, and any written material, especially when it's graded. In some ways, this is hard



to avoid, but even still, it is still possible to parse out salient moments that seem to transcend this effort to please. For the interviews, I deliberately chose two females because of the popular misconception that girls either do not game or would not like gaming as much. The effusiveness of their favourable reactions surprised me. Granted, students who were less excited would be reluctant to come to the school for an interview, but it was interesting that those who were interviewed were as excited as they were. Even for those who did not game, the idea that a teacher would wade into student “territory” or into the novel aspects of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century lent him credibility even if not for the right reasons. As the teacher who was interviewed said, “. . . these not-games really helped me to help build that relationship with students because now they think that I am least relatively current” (Bill, 2014, English 30-1 Teacher). Though this spoke to the novelty effect of technology and that new techniques may feel better because they are different or familiar, it also spoke about the transversal characteristics to which students are drawn. The teacher was willing to try something new, took a risk, perhaps even made mistakes in front of the class. The teacher was willing to step into an unfamiliar world with which students are far more comfortable than the teacher’s familiar world of the old school approach to learning. It put the teacher and the learning on a level that students could reach and generated enthusiasm. The teacher can then be learner too as students show them this or that technique in a not-game because they know that the teacher has not been down every algorithmic corridor of all the not-games. They might even share the games they know about with the teacher. The relationship that teachers build with students and help build from one student to another gives learners greater capacity to learn and to interpret. Not-games do that because students talk their choices out loud as they play, sharing with one another and helping each other solve its algorithmic puzzles. They cry in dismay or yell out in victory as they triumph about going from one level to the next: this

cannot help but give students a leg up in building relationships with others and the teacher. Not-games generated learning and interpretive potential. As mentioned earlier, students were so busy, so engaged, that the teacher's presence disappeared. When the teacher approached a student while they played, there was a different dynamic at work: they showed the teacher rather than just the teacher showing them. They became the ones who were engaged and enthralled and they shared with you their findings and their interpretations, their successes and their failures as one human being to another: this is transversality.

Ascribing grades to student work is probably the least transversal act one can do, so examining marks on written personal responses is antithetical to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical leanings. Keeping in mind their penchant for "Both" and "And," essentially their anathema for transcendence, the marks in figure 4.11 remained in this thesis because they seemed to point to a trend: students seemed to fare better when including not-games in their discussion. Certainly, not all of them did, but enough did that a trend seemed to surface, so more research needs to be done in this area as well. Though there was no conclusive evidence, there was a suggestion that mining for difference through juxtaposition might be a better strategy for English language arts teachers to pursue rather than seeking out similarities between texts or between abilities. In Appendix A, there are not-games listed and beside them there are suggested texts that align with the not-games. The research suggests that this was a mistake and narrowed students' options. Fortunately, they broke out of such parameters and in later iterations of the unit, the suggested texts were no longer listed beside the not-games. Not-games are strange enough to begin with and do not need to match thematically with the literature studied because the research demonstrated that there was more traction, more discussion, more discovery, more spark when there was a greater difference between the stories and the not-games.

### Discussion and Summary

Not-games in English Language Arts classrooms are just one tool of many, and for some students, not-games may well be better than other tools. Bill's observations about his students favouring the *Afghanistan* not-game (Serious Games, 2010) over his very good documentary film is worth remembering here. Students are familiar with the video game format and a remarkable number of them enjoy not-games, whether they are gamers or not, male or female. It has been my observation that more academic and more mature students are better suited to grapple with the philosophical and oblique angles from which not-games come. More work should probably include Advanced Placement students and International Baccalaureate students in both of the humanities courses because they are usually so curious and given to such philosophical quandaries. It is a mistake to underestimate the enormous potential that interactive not-games offer, even the simplest ones such as *The Killer* (Magnuson, 2011). This is the world from which they play and increasingly it is the world from which the military corporate complex plays as well. Schools and teachers need to play along in order to compete for attention, if for anything, to teach video game literacy to students who are intrigued by it. Some teachers decry the evils and travails of smart phones, of video games, of any new technology, and certainly, these are typical concerns that surface every time there is a paradigm shift: there are strengths and weaknesses tightly folded in digital technologies, and these recent changes should not to be underestimated; they are rhizomatic and capriciously exponential from time to time. However, it is too easy and too generalized for teachers to point and blame technology and misanthropically ask what is coming of the world when teachers do not enter into the balance about which they lament: does the teacher have a smart phone of his or her own, does s/he play a video game, does s/he have *Google Earth* on his or her classroom computer when teaching social studies?

Increasingly, there is a growing chasm between orthodox texts and digital technologies that have only just been introduced into schools in the last eight years. As for not-gaming in the classroom, it has to be teachers and curriculum university professors who give it pedagogical currency; otherwise, student focus and attention will be captured by and for the military and the corporations who will have gone before like pied pipers and laid the framework for how government curriculum designers start dictating entrepreneurship and personalized engagement (McRae, 2013). The teaching profession constantly underestimates its own influence as a model of temperance and inspiration, and teachers do have a vital role to play in the digital, virtual world. But they must claim it before others with more vested self-interests claim young people and their education for themselves. The greatest Empire of all is the human mind, but it is too easily colonized at a young age by the very algorithm that could liberate it. But this takes hard work and perhaps it is harder now than ever before because so much of casual learning is virtual, or simulated or mediated. Interestingly, Galloway (2006) says that video games are less mediated than other media in how they “present contemporary political realities in relatively unmediated form” (Galloway, 2006, p.92). This suggests more research is needed to track this unmediated phenomenon in how today’s students learn because there was this sense in this case study’s qualitative data that suggested this immediacy, that not-games helped to bring to students when it came to the written words in the stories that they read. As Alan says below in the not-summary, they had a role in, “helping the thought process about a piece of literature” (2013, English 30-1 student). Together, they seemed to provide an entry to human thought and to what it was that made them human in an ever-shifting plateau of what it means to be human. Not-games seemed to bring out the nomad as human, as identity, as idea, as issue, as conflict, as society, as past, as present, as immanence. Whether this was because of some innate quality of

not-games or whether it had more to do with the cultural milieu of timeliness is not clear.

Philosophy inquiry need not be limited to text, however. Not-games offer machinic potential to slice into ideas to unfold them for students who do not value orthodox texts because they find them too folded or “sublimated” as Galloway would say (2006, p. 92). Video gaming is this generation’s launch pad into an algorithmic philosophy, an undiscovered country which could help students to think, to ponder, to wonder outside the limitations of the here and now, money, possession, and status, all the trappings of capitalistic biopower. Eventually, with improved and simplified software, students will make their own not-games and one day, because some teacher taught about gaming literacy, perhaps there could be a Mozart of liberating gaming algorithms who will take players to places where authors of interpretive fiction and films have taken readers and viewers in the past. These algorithm designers could potentially take us through the algorithm to what it is to be human and beyond because gaming is less mediated, less sublimated; they have the potential to immerse us in the best expression of our humanity in a way that is coterminous with our own needs, our strengths, our tragedies to unfold our potential to be more than what we are, to help us merge with the sum that is greater than our parts where haecceity is haptic, and we will better know what it is to be alive and what it is to be dead and all the variegations in between as we slip into the molecular to know what it is to learn and how learning is to be alive. But gaming is powerful and intoxicating, so it must be a process of liberation not enslavement which requires an interlocutor, a teacher, a medium of sorts.

### **Thought Papers on Not-Games as a Not-Summary**

During the second class of English Language Arts 30-1 students, I realized that I had missed an opportunity to have students write a few paragraphs on the suitability of not-games in the course. We had already done a number of thought papers on a whole range of philosophical

subjects, so one more such paper seemed appropriate.<sup>23</sup> I made it very clear that students were welcome to dismiss the not-game genre in an English Language Arts course if that's how they felt.<sup>24</sup> The unit was obviously a controversial approach and no other teacher they had in the past had mentioned them; they had never heard of them before. Students were not aware that I was doing my thesis on not-games, though they were aware that I was taking classes at university. The thought paper responses were wildly enthusiastic and seemed to fall into five categories: memorability, interactivity, 21<sup>st</sup> Century suitability, empathy-building for the Other, controversial conflict resolution strategies, and developing question strategies for the literature that they were reading in class. Arguably, these are all transversal triangulations between student, the not-game, and the literature's philosophical considerations. You can hear the indignation in Alan's voice as he writes,

Some people may say that not-games have little to do with English Language Arts. I completely disagree with this point. I feel as if something can be used as a learning tool to assist the understanding of a short story or helping the thought process about a piece of literature it has a lot to do with English class. (2013, English 30-1 student)

Here, the student sees the not-game as another tool to help with the understanding of literature and cannot fathom why a teacher would overlook it, particularly when students struggle with reading.

Students have often said that they do not read as much as they used to when they were younger, but they recognized the power of writing if it was "dissected properly." Students felt

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<sup>23</sup> A thought paper is half way in between an essay and a personal journal response. It is usually quite specific and requires some thinking on their behalf but it does not have to be research driven but it can be. It is usually six hundred words long or thereabouts. The term is my own.

<sup>24</sup> Students had to choose one of the following three questions on which to write: 1. "What is the effectiveness of not-games? 2. Which is more effective: the not-game or the short story/essay? 3. Not-games have little to do with English Language Arts: Defend."

that, “short stories go into more detail and have the potential to be much more effective than a not-game, but only if the reader dissects it” (Drew, 2013, English 30-1 student). We can assume that dissection might include visualization, careful reading and re-reading, question and discussion and debate, all tools that good readers employ when they read. Students, however, acknowledged that their generation was different than the ones that came before, largely because of technology. John, who is emphatic when he says that he is not a gamer, said, “students in the present day learn much differently than their parents did. Their minds work on a completely different level. They need visual stimulus, something to grab their attention, and not-games do a very good job of this” (2013, English 30-1 student). Kerry, a female student, echoes this sentiment:

I think many young adults would find the not games more effective in understanding a story, because it is such a familiar activity for them. In today’s society, reading has almost been replaced with technology. With the growing collection of phones, televisions and computers you can buy now, people have turned to them, and have simply let reading go. So, most people would admit that they would rather, and do, play video games instead of read. (2013, English 30-1 student)

Ironically, much of what students do when they look at digital screens is read, but it is not nearly as long or sustained since much of it comes in short bursts, as in tweets or Facebook posts.

Blake makes his predilection for the visual world clear as well:

In this new digital age, something like a Not-Game can get the message across subliminally and may be easier to understand for people who just aren’t at the level of reading that it may take to understand some short stories . . . . Maybe I am however slightly biased considering that I am a gamer, so it would be natural for me to want more

video games of sorts or Not-Games to be inducted into our society. . . . In the classroom, I believe that Not-Games ought to be an essential tool for learning and out to be used in conjunction with Short Stories to get the feel of both elements as opposed to just one. (2013, English 30-1 student)

There is even a certain tone of desperation in his voice. They instinctively understand the need for reading, and they certainly do not discount the need to read thoroughly and quickly, but they appeal for “both/and,” the double capture that Deleuze proposes here:

We said the same thing about becomings: it is not one term which becomes the other, but each encounters the other, a single becoming which is not common to the two, since they have nothing to do with one another, but which is between the two, which has its own direction, a bloc of becoming, an a-parallel evolution. This is it, the double capture, the wasp AND the orchid: not even something which would be in the one, or something which would be in the other, even if it had to be exchanged, be mingled, but something which is between the two, outside the two, and which flows in another direction.

(Deleuze, 1977/1987, p. 7)

There is a relationship that can be built between literature and not-games, and even though it appears far-fetched and chaotic in difference, it is in this far-fetchedness, as it is unfolded that creates the energy of understanding. Blake, who struggles with the written form more than he does the digital form, recognizes the value of fiction but sees a need for a mixture of forms, an intermingling, because,

. . . you get a different aspect of understanding from a written source than a visual one. Visual one, you can see the emotions of characters and the action *unfolding* [Italics mine] whereas in a written source you need to imagine it as if it were happening and for some



people that's a little more difficult to do. (2013, English 30-1 student)

The “unfolding” of emotion and action is critical to the not-games’ potency because the written word’s emotions and actions are too folded for Blake who is not as much of a reader as others in the class.

The empathic emotional response was a common theme amongst student responses as well. The not-games had a seemingly talismanic affect about them. “It really puts it’s [sic] message right in your face” (Blake, 2013, English 30-1 student); “it, by being interactive, forces everybody to pay attention” (Drew, 2013, English 30-1 student); “They may also teach students certain morals and ethics they need to feel themselves in order to understand them” (John, 2013, English 30-1 student); “trying to create an emotion within a player or a reader can be difficult to do, but it is easier to do so with a not-game than with a short story” (Denise, 2013, English 30-1 student); “But every time I got shot, I got more and more emotionally invested in the game (Fynn, 2013, English 30-1 student). The last student goes on to say:

Then when I got halfway across the bridge, it felt like I had really been shot. I let out a small yell of pain and couldn’t move. I just sat there and stared at the screen trying to figure out what had happened. A short story of a man trying to do the same thing would have been interesting and sad. But at the same time I wouldn’t have felt as emotionally attached and as disappointed as I did with this game. (Fynn, 2013, English 30-1 student)

There is definitely something going on here in terms of the emotional investment students are willing to make or are invited to make as a transversal gesture when they play these not-games. This helps them to reach farther back in time when it comes to remembering key events when they write their essays or personal responses:

Not-games are very effective in teaching lessons because they present information

in a way that is very memorable. Turning useful information into a game helps humans recall the material because, simply, it's fun. For example, what would be more memorable for you, playing a video game with crazy colors and sounds and entertainment, or reading from a textbook with no pictures and a hard-to-read font? Obviously you are more likely to think about the game after you completed it because it caught your attention. You would recall the information from the game faster, and more vividly because it interested and entertained you. The information you read in the textbook would go straight through your head, and you would retain much less context than you did from the game. This is due to how the information is presented. If information is presented in an inventive way, it becomes more appealing to us, and therefore, we remember more of it . . . .

To conclude, not-games are very effective, for a number of reasons; they present important life lessons that can be missed by reading and they present information in a memorable way so that people are very likely to remember the information. If people were smart, they would use not-games for training purposes and in school a lot more than they do now. I don't doubt that in the future, we will see an increase in not-games, because it's really hard to overlook the many benefits that not-games provide. Out with the old, and in with the new, not-games are crazy beneficial, and I would like to see them being used more often. (Anne, 2013, English 30-1 student)

This is an area that deserves more attention for additional research. Can this personal anecdote be proven? Not-games are a bit like Velcro or a coat hanger in the sense that create a larger surface area for students to latch onto. Whether there is tangible evidence for this remains to be seen. Certainly students are more likely to remember something for which they are fond, and

this could be technology's "novel" effect, wherein students gravitate to anything that's new and different. What is interesting to note is the growing interest for games in both the military and corporate worlds, so there is growing evidence that it does make monetary and commercial sense. Does it make emotional sense, empathic sense, or more specifically, educational sense? I come back to John, one of the few students in the class who insisted he was not a gamer yet makes Galloway's (2006) coterminous connections to political transparency:

Another thing not games are very capable of doing, is putting you in a situation where you have to deal with events, life, or emotional disputes from someone else's perspective. These style of games are very good at showing the "other side of the equation" so to speak. Games like *Façade* [Mateus & Stern, 2005] for use to deal with often very tense and emotional situations that you may never have been in before. This helps us gain another perspective on life and think about the people who have to deal with stressful situations every day.

Not-games are a way to simulate stressful and tense situations that may occur in life. They are incredibly effective in a classroom setting because they are able to engage today's youth in a way that traditional methods just can't accomplish. They can give incredible insight into the different perspectives of life. They may also teach students certain morals and ethics they need to feel themselves in order to understand them. They should be used as a tool to help student in English as the course is about learning humanity, ethics, the corruptible nature of power and the true nature of mankind. (John, 2013, English 30-1 student)

Both John and Blake's earlier comments reminded me of Wark's (2007) notion of gamer theory where gamespace has the ability to unfold the folds of the real world, creating a link between the

two worlds (p. 190). Some of these not-games were played with the whole class, because like the not-game that John mentions above, *Façade* (Mateus & Stern, 2005), some are old and require XP or take time to download or require a nominal fee to play. He cites this game because it allows him to interact in an unusual situation, a fight between a married couple, building empathy for the Other, experiencing an emotion that few young people have experienced from the inside because that is the transversal ability of not-games, they slip players into folds they know little about and in the slipping into, the fold is unfolded. This empathy building for the Other was also extended by such not-games as *Third World Farmer* (Hermund, Toubro, Nielsen, Salqvist, & Spycher, 2008):

In this game, you are in control of a farm that is located in the middle of a poor country with no civilization near you. You must provide for your family by planting crops and then harvesting them and hopefully generate a profit. The chances of success are very slim though. You must battle through hardships such as war, dry seasons, guerilla forces, sickness, and crashing markets. While playing this game, it felt as if I was truly running the farm and as if my life depended on it. I spent my money in very realistic ways. Medicine was my priority since I didn't want my family getting sick and with the left over money, I bought the cheaper crops in order to generate more income. I've played several games that were very similar to this one. But the other games didn't have the same circumstances and were seen as nothing more than just games. "Third World Farmer" made me really consider what life would be like to live in a third world country and have a slim chance of getting out of poverty. It also made me appreciate money more because when I buy things, I never think twice about it. In "Third World Farmer", if you spent your money wrong, your family would suffer and die. Had we read a story

about a third world farming family that survived on the bare minimum, I don't think I would have been affected as much. I wouldn't have been impacted in a way that made me reconsider how I spend my money. (Fynn, 2013, English 30-1 student)

It is hard to know whether Fynn would have been affected by a short story or a novel on third world farming: there are not a lot of writers from this background who are writing and creating novels powerful enough and with the commercial reach that could touch someone like Fynn. But a not-game did. On a recent visit to the site, there now appears commercials much like what you would see on a YouTube video, so there is one type of commercial support that pays for the creation of these not-games. What is saddening is that there are so few educational sponsors or commissions for the creation of these kinds of not-games, at least in Canada. Wark (2007) says,

It is not a question of adding games as the tail end of a history of forms but of rethinking the whole of cultural history after the digital game. Play may be unthinkable, but it nevertheless has a history, and that history traverses both cultural forms and the history form of being itself. To approach it, to think this unthinkable category of play, is to play in and against language. Gamer theory calls for concepts that make the now rather familiar world of the digital game strange again. (p. 225)

But the genre persists with or without educational support and teachers can make use of them, helping students render their gaming language foreign to them once again. But educators and curriculum designers need to go back and focus on differences rather than similarities with a Deleuzian/Guattarian philosophical rendering.

The students' thought papers on not-games sounded more urgent than the desire for an honours grade for their papers. There was a genuine fondness for not-games, as if they had discovered a new play-mate friend in literature as an art-form, another nodule in the rhizome of

expression. Not-games helped them connect to authors, to the teacher, and to each other in ways that students do not celebrate very often in their writing. Their becomings were more immanent.

## Chapter 6

### Teacher, Student, School, and Game as

### Not-Teacher, Not-Student, Not-School, and Not-Game

Schools are reluctant to change even when society around it is changing at an exponential rate. This is not unlike the record industry that refused to change when digital software became available: they were not interested because they controlled it and changing it would have enormous financial implications. The printing industry is similar and with paper books about to disappear and records and CDs all but gone, it is clear that systems can be changed by outside influences if they refuse to change from within, and this is due to digital technology, one of the greatest change agents society has ever known. Napster and similar, later online software programs revolutionized the record industry by circumventing the traditional distribution model of the record industry and eventually gutting it in the process. Education is being similarly challenged from technology without and though schools are trying to change, it is constrained by an old, top-down, transcendent, arboreal, industrial model from the nineteenth century. The image of the indifferent gym teacher blowing his whistle, telling students to run the course around the track, applies metaphorically to any department, as teachers deliver the mail (Pinar, 1984, 12), the government curriculum. All too often, superintendents and then administrators and then teachers feel they need to be in control with molar lesson plans that are limited to explicit outcomes, with some superintendents demanding that teachers write their curricular outcomes on the white board before the lesson begins (Foothills School district, Alberta, 2013). The students sit passively while instructions begin and their molecular phones buzz or ping in

their pockets, competing for their attention, deterritorializing it from a rhizome that is not always productive because it is often founded on a need to belong.

As it stands, the very notion of “teacher” is heavily burdened with connotations from a priori notions of what teachers are supposed to teach. This inherited vision of what came before tempts teachers to teach the way they were taught in much the same way that parents tend to parent the way they were parented. Aoki (2005) defined this conventional landscape as, “a master curriculum planned under an authority, authorizing sameness and homogeneity throughout the province” (Aoki, 2005, p. 417).

Likening the single curriculum to a single tree dominating the landscape, I call such landscape “arboreal.” Within this landscape the lone tree casts in benign shadow over the landscape such that “teaching” becomes “implementation” and “instruction” becomes in-structuring students in the image of the given. (Aoki, 2005, p. 417-418)

Based on what is happening in the Foothills district of Alberta, the teaching profession has not come very far from within. However, education should take what happened to the record industry as advice and take note of the rising technologies without.

The largest influence on young people is the ubiquitous proliferation of Internet access on smartphones –even in the classroom– and the ability to interact and/or produce with technology in a meaningful way that reinforces the human need to belong and contribute. Web 2.0 and now even Web 3.0, and the gaming industry have given tools to young people that they never had before, and they are keenly interested because it gives them the power to produce, something that schools do not offer as a tailor-made, individualized choice on a need-to-know basis (Gee, 2007). It is both liberating and debilitating at the same time, an insidious paradox that is typical of Capitalism, offering choice in such a compelling manner that it can dominate, intoxicate, and

zombify users, luring their attention to whimsical desires and scintillations even while in the classroom. This two-faced conundrum emancipates and controls much like education itself.

The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class. This involves deliberately organizing wants and needs amid an abundance of production; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one's needs satisfied; and making the object dependent upon a real production that is supposedly exterior to desire (the demands of rationality), while at the same time the production of desire is categorized as fantasy and nothing but fantasy. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1977, p. 28)

The forces of Capitalism cannot easily be excised from the Internet, and as pop-up advertising increases, this is becoming next to impossible as the dominant class reterritorializes this virtual space for profit. “. . . after centuries of exploitation, why do people still tolerate being humiliated and enslaved, to such a point, indeed, that they actually want humiliation and slavery not only for others but for themselves” (Reich as cited in Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1977, p. 29)? As the immature students lack the necessary discipline and focus to disconnect themselves from this smartphone enslavement, they become even more disadvantaged, becoming so entangled in their phone-space that disconnecting them can become a major confrontation for the classroom teacher.

However, the positive part of this paradox is that young people can finally have more of a say in a world that they can believe has been partially constructed by their own making in ways that previous generations could never claim. (Web 2.0 allows for users to produce and publish in ways that people never could before.) Some teachers are trying to harness this energy by hitching a ride and grafting lessons plans onto the technology that students bring into the



classroom. As the literature review mentions, students become more engaged as the classroom environment is more in sync with the world they have come to know. The introduction of the not-game is one such endeavor, and though it has Deleuzian and Guattarian overtures from a minoritarian aspect, the concept would have more impact if education were turned inside-out with more emphasis on the multiplicities of difference (Aoki, 2005), than on enframement, on not-teacher rather than teacher, not-student rather than student, not-school rather than school.

The teaching profession has the awesome task of helping young people grow and learn in a competitive market place that wants results and to ensure that end, it ranks students, teachers, schools, and countries according to those results. In Aoki's words (2005), the system turns students into "standing reserve, a stockpile of resources to be on hand and on call for utilitarian ends" (p. 153). Then it pays teachers money for doing that job responsibly and at great financial cost, but the value of that investment is both financially staggering and ethically staggering as one generation succeeds the next as knowledge and wisdom is transferred through time.

The suggestion of teacher/student/school as not-game rings like a double entendre, a paradox. The very notion of playing games and learning in school seems to be contradictory and yet according to many researchers, it does not have to be (Bogost, 2007; Huizinga, 1956; Flanagan, 2007; Gee, 2007; McGonigal, 2010). The idea of turning these social fabrications into not-games is suggesting a role for not-gaming in education, and it implies that the teachers and students can be liberated to help people learn, including the teacher. One can role-play and transmogrify into what otherwise they are not and half-way in-between.

Not-schools need to move away from teaching mimicry towards a leaping-off-from, hopping from one lily-pad to another with exponential, rhizomatic possibilities of understanding, embracing students as learner but also pushing them into unfamiliar territories as partner, sharer,

disseminator, critic, emancipator, teacher. All roles need to be flattened and smoothed out (Roy, 2003). Only deep philosophical reflection can jump-start the inherited, aborescent reiterations from repeating themselves generation after generation, and this is why the schizo-analysis toward the rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) offer promising interruptions to this trend. Not-games are only one example of such a rhizomatic interruption; though like all rhizomatic tools, they, too, can become too rooted and need to be deterritorialized again in order to encourage flow and meaning. Not all rhizomes are productive for all people.

There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots.

Moreover, there are despotic formations of immanence and channelization specific to rhizomes, just as there are anarchic deformations in the transcendent system of trees, aerial roots and subterranean stems. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 20)

Even with its capitalistic foibles, the best technological example of rhizomatic delivery is the Internet and Wi-Fi ubiquity connecting everyone to it. As mentioned, not all rhizomes are good; it depends on motivation and outcome. One only has to experience the conquest of lily-of-the-valley or the ever-resilient fairy ring in the garden or the front lawn to know how pernicious a rhizome can become: you cannot just break it off or pull it out: it has to be excavated or poisoned. Once embedded, they spread voraciously at the peril of any other plant that does not have its rhizomatic advantages, suffocating any taproot plant in its way. Not only do they spread unknowingly underground through their fibrous root system, sending up new plants to the surface, but when they go to seed like other plants, they are airborne as well. They are very hard to destroy which is a good thing if it means learning in the classroom, but if it is preventing other forms from growing then it reverses into homogeneity through survival of the fittest, choking out the other. There can be no absolutes with a pedagogical approach but rather a flexibility that

doesn't telescope one lens over another but accommodates all lenses akin more to a kaleidoscope. There is room for trees on their plateaus as well (Pisters, 2012). It all depends on the task at hand and this is where not-schools needs to navigate, understanding that, "The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots . . . an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 21)." This happens when something goes viral on the Internet when suddenly the heterogeneity of attention suddenly zooms into focus on one issue. The Borg from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is an example of a rhizomatic hive community: The question is how can we create a hive that honours difference, independence and efficacy? How does one start it so that it can begin to take root? At times, I have walked into a Dash 2 classroom (E.L.A. 20-2, for example), excited by an idea about games, and allowed students a wide range of choice only to come up against a lack of motivation: students are just doing time until they can leave. Some are not curious enough to allow the rhizomatic nature of research and discussion to take root, or they are encoiled in the non-productive rhizomes of their friends on Facebook or Twitter, hence preoccupied.

Aoki (2005) tried to find such a place for teachers to dwell, somewhere between the curriculum-as-planned by government and the curriculum-as-lived by the people in the classroom, noting the many individuals, all with their own stories, habits, and pre-occupations, and personalities that supplement the reality of the moment in the four walls of the room. A not-teacher dwells and lingers somewhere in between these two polarities. I would posit that today's classroom is burdened by another curriculum that did not exist in Aoki's time as a teacher. Using his terminology, I would suggest that the not-curriculum is the curriculum-to-be-lived,

partly the one on the students' rhizomatic smart-phones. It is set in the future tense because the most distracting elements of smartphone applications are about what is to come, what one could be, what one could buy, what someone did and what it will mean: what will your future look like in your attempt to belong? These are often Capitalistic machinations of competition, another rhizome in kind, and they need to be merged, grafted, and transformed with the curriculum-as-planned in honouring the multiplicities of in-between.

For example, according to this understanding our identities as teachers or curriculum supervisors are not so much in our presences; rather, our identities, who we are as teachers and as curriculum supervisors, are ongoing effects of our becomings in difference.

But where in multiplicity is such a place? In *Dialogues*, Deleuze states: "In a multiplicity what counts are not . . . the elements, but what there is between, the between, a site of relations which are not separable from each other. Every multiplicity grows in the middle. (Aoki, 2005, p. 205)

Schools need to flatten their hierarchies, perhaps by rotating the assistant principal and department head positions amongst staff. This allows teachers to understand the larger picture so that they know the issues from as many different sides as possible. Schools need to put more of curriculum development in the hands of teacher and most importantly, in the hands of the students. Students come with very specific demands about what they want to learn. What are they? Learning needs should be identified and compromised on a more consensual basis.

Giroux (2000) states:

Indeterminacy rather than order should become the guiding principle of a pedagogy in which multiple views, possibilities, and differences are opened up as part of an attempt to

read the future contingently rather than from the perspective of a master narrative that assumes rather than problematizes specific notions of work, progress, and agency. Under such circumstances, schools need to redefine curricula within a postmodern conception of culture linked to the diverse and changing global conditions that necessitate new forms of literacy, a vastly expanded understanding of how power works within cultural apparatuses, and keener sense of how the existing generation of youth are being produced within a society in which mass media play a decisive if not unparalleled role in constructing multiple and diverse social identities. (p. 179)

As teachers, we have a responsibility to coordinate these growing literacy needs, including gaming and not-gaming, and we need to find out what it is that students want, and they need to be given this voice.

Roy's case study (2003) examines one school with a Deleuzian analysis and shows how mentorship and learning in the work-world (communal service learning or work experience) are both examples of the rhizomatic potential that is available to schools. (He calls the non-traditional school, The City School, and teachers are required to write a curriculum to every job placement for work experience.) As any good teacher knows, curriculum-as-planned must be counter-balanced with teachable moments, even ones that are experienced as challenging, uncomfortable, and even rebellious. This is Freire (1968/1970), but it is also Deleuze and Guattari (1987/1980). There needs to be a fluidity to teaching that embraces change, abrupt changes if it meets the needs of the learners: it should not be pre-determined and striated because predictability kills anticipation. The not-teacher is not a late night talk-show host, but timing, nuance, tempo, pace, and rhythm, all the while reading the audience, are vital components to

maximize interest, knowing that not all learning can be nor should be measured (Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2008).

Some teachers feel the gamification of education is where this in-between world lives. Some teachers dismiss it as edutainment. It is somewhere in-between the multiplicities.

The recent trend to gamify education is relatively new. Some teachers are experimenting with gamification within their curriculum because it intensifies friendly competition and students enjoy it (Kapp, 2012; Sheldon, 2011). In 2009, Quest to Learn (Q2L) opened its doors to Grade 6 students and went so far as to employ the design concepts of games throughout their entire curriculum with a school in New York and the other in Chicago. Their philosophy of learning is captured on the Institute of Play website:

Quest to Learn’s unique standards-based integrated curriculum mimics the action and design principles of games by generating a compelling “need to know” in the classroom. Each trimester students encounter a series of increasingly complex, narrative challenges, games or quests, where learning, knowledge sharing, feedback, reflection and next steps emerge as a natural function of play. (Salen, 2013, p.1)

The diction carefully balances accountability with play, using words like, “standards-based,” “curriculum,” “classroom,” “trimester,” and “learning” and juxtaposes them with these words: “mimics,” “action,” “design,” “games,” “compelling,” and “quests.” The very name, “not-game” captures this tension between two seemingly disparate worlds that is becoming closer as humans become ever more enmeshed into the technological rhizome with the ubiquity of both the smartphone and the Internet. The fusion of fun and responsibility is even putting lives at risk with more people dying as they text when they drive. This speaks to what it is that teachers are up against when it comes to captivating attention from their technology. As Herzog (2013) put

it, “There’s a completely new culture out there. I’m not a participant of texting and driving – or texting at all – but I see there’s something going on in civilization which is coming with great vehemence at us (p. L3).”

In some ways, it is easier to describe what a not-school is not than it is to describe what a not-school is. As educators, we know only too well what the student as learner under the tree of knowledge is supposed to act and look like. We know only too well what the teacher looks and acts like as the bearer of the fruit from that tree. It is far more difficult to break this hegemony of curriculum delivery down into pods that spread horizontally, placing the student as an equal part as learner in the not-game matrix. Find out what students want and what they need but incorporate them into the decision body rather than only involving them with organizing school social events and other felicities. Survey them but not just anonymously; rather find out who they are and what they want to contribute. Help them understand the financial implications of their suggestions. Work with them. Help them help themselves, each other. Become another student in the class. Become what you’re not. Start focusing on difference rather than similarity. Not-games are just one step on the journey to becoming a nomad in this sedimentary plateau.

As a final gesture of transversality, the final word belongs to students Paul and Sage, who agree with one another about not-games and its potential for literature:

The not-games contain a different form of education, which is why students find them so interesting. Not-games are a very effective way to cause students to question and appreciate the material that they are reading. (Paul, 2013, English 30-1 student)

The not-games have effectiveness within an English class because they can bring different ideas and perspectives to the literature you’re reading. Many not games can be applied to many different stories with many different themes. In a way, they are a visual

representation to the literature you compare it to. I felt like I knew an adequate amount of information when reading some of the short stories, and got a majority of what the theme was that the author was trying to present to the reader. After playing through some of the not games, I suddenly realized that I had a much better grasp on the ideas that the author was trying to put across that the average analyst of the same short story wouldn't get. It makes a different type of connection as you are comparing literature with something visual and interactive. Not-games' effectiveness is to put a deeper understanding of other concepts into place. Anybody could read a short story and understand the theme. But to physically play a not-game and make connections between the game and the story, you begin to understand what you are reading. (Sage, 2013, English 30-1 student)



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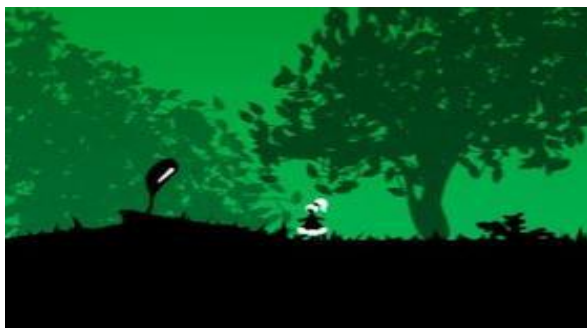
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## Appendix A

## Not-games



[Loved \(Ocias, 2009\)](#)



[ImmorTall \(Miller, 2010\)](#)



[A Majesty of Colours \(Weir, 2009\)](#)



[Gray \(Bohleiter & Wohlwend, 2009\)](#)

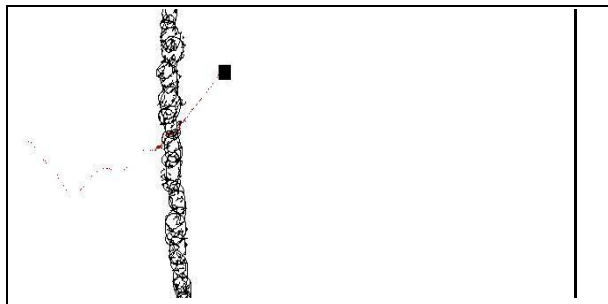
## Potential Literature

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller  
*Shawshank Redemption* by Frank Dallamont  
 “Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence  
 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
 “Digression” Richard Wilbur (poem)  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
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*Shawshank Redemption* by Frank Dallamont  
 “Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)  
 “Digression” Richard Wilbur (poem)  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence  
 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

**Not-games****[The Killer \(Magnuson, 2011\)](#)****[Homeless: It's No Game! \(Lavender, 2010\)](#)****[Freedom Bridge \(Magnuson, 2011\).](#)****[Welcome to the Desert of the Real \(Pedercini, 2009\)](#)****Potential Literature**

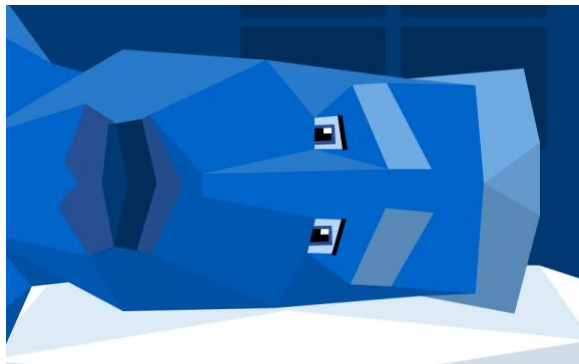
“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence  
 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

“What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker  
 “Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence

“What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
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 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence  
 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy



**Not-games**[Oiligarchy \(Pedercini, 2008\)](#)[Loneliness \(Magnuson, 2011\)](#)[Every day the same dream \(Pedercini, 2009\)](#)[Unmanned \(Pedercini, 2009\)](#)**Potential Literature**

“What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker  
*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller  
 “Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller  
 “Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)  
 “Digression” Richard Wilbur (poem)  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence

“On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller  
*Shawshank Redemption* by Frank Dallamont  
 “Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)  
 “Digression” Richard Wilbur (poem)  
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 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan  
 “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien  
 “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence  
 “Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

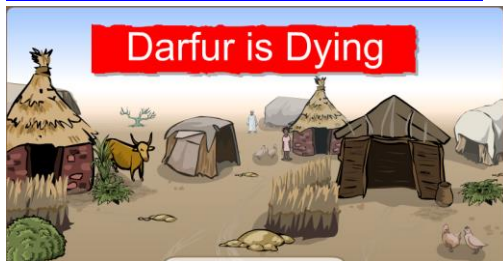
## Not-games



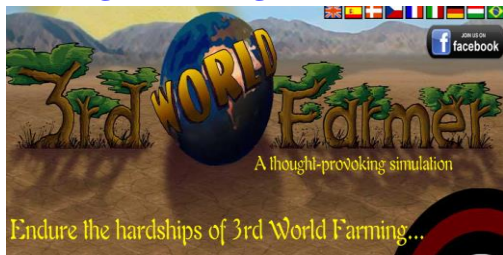
### [Cartlife \(Hofmeier, 2011\)](#)



### [The Phone Story \(Pedercini, 2011\)](#)



### [Darfur is Dying \(Ruez, York, Stein, Keating, & Santiago, 2008\)](#)



### [Third World Farmer](#)



### [Afghanistan \(Serious Games Interactive, 2010\)](#)

## Potential Literature

“Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan

“What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker

“Useless Boys,” by Barry Dempster (poem)

“Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence

“On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien

“Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

“On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien

“Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

“On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien

“Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

“On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien

“Refresh Refresh” by Benjamin Percy

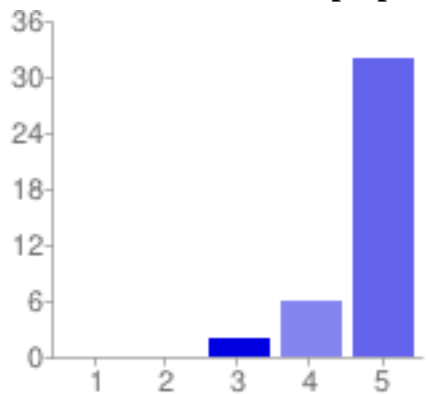
*The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini

**Appendix B: English 30-1 Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire at the End of Semester**

Please answer honestly. I take these results seriously and what you say, particularly what you write in the second survey can have a big impact on the changes that I make in the future. As a result, I will send a separate form, requesting written comments, should you be interested. (There isn't room here.) This evaluation is for teacher purposes only. I will be the only one reading it, so you do not have to pad your scores. This is not a mandatory evaluation, but it is one that I consider crucial; education should be student-centred, catering to the needs of students. This evaluation will not be read until after all teacher marks are finalized. The survey will be anonymous.

**40 responses**

**1. The teacher was well prepared.**

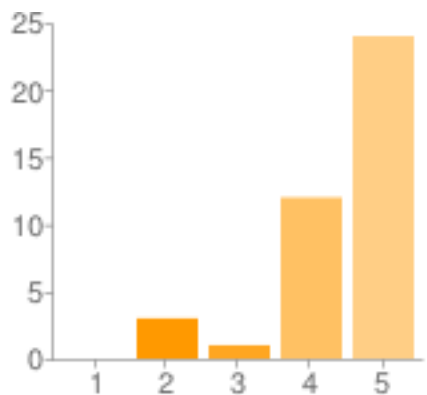


1 - Strongly Disagree	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	2	5%
4	6	15%
5 - Strongly Agree	32	80%

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

**2. The teacher motivated me to learn**

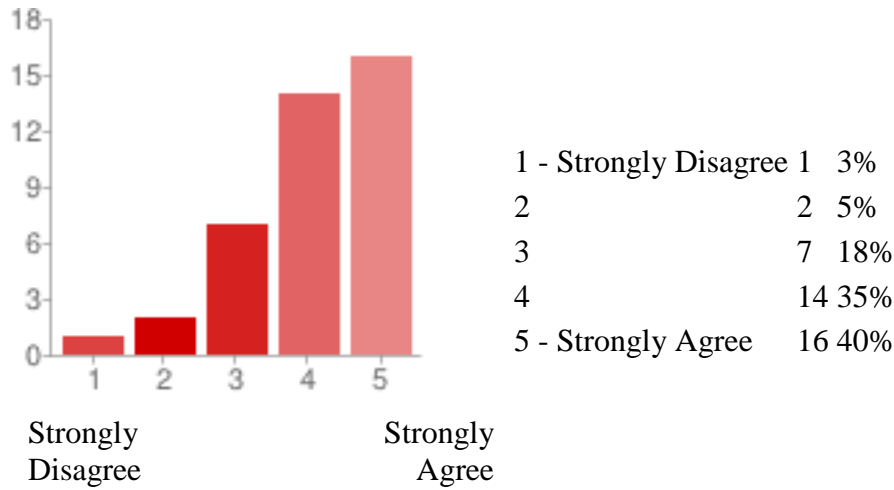


1 - Strongly Disagree	0	0%
2	3	8%
3	1	3%
4	12	30%
5 - Strongly Agree	24	60%

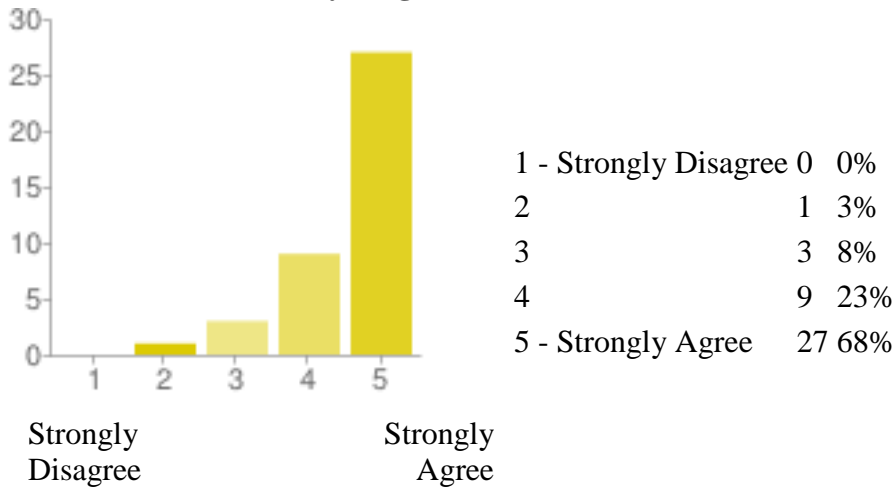
Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

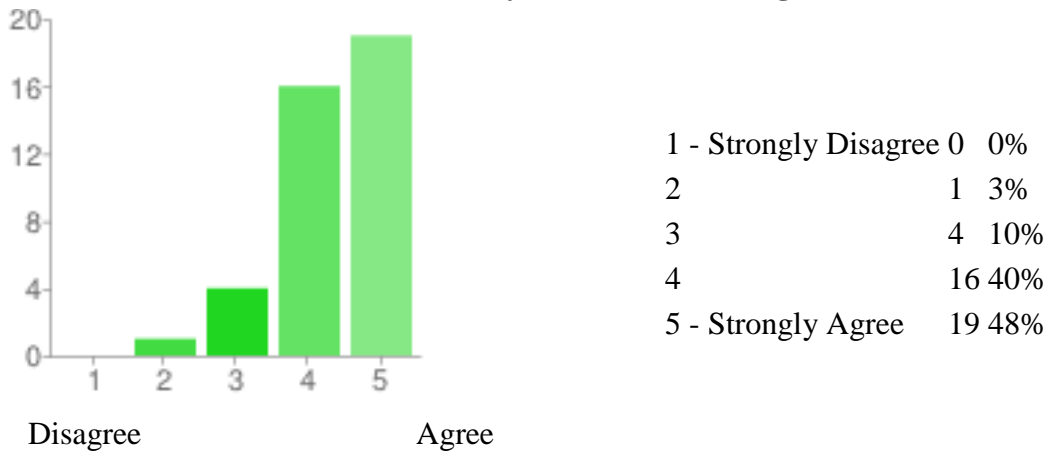
**3. The teacher was flexible to student needs.**



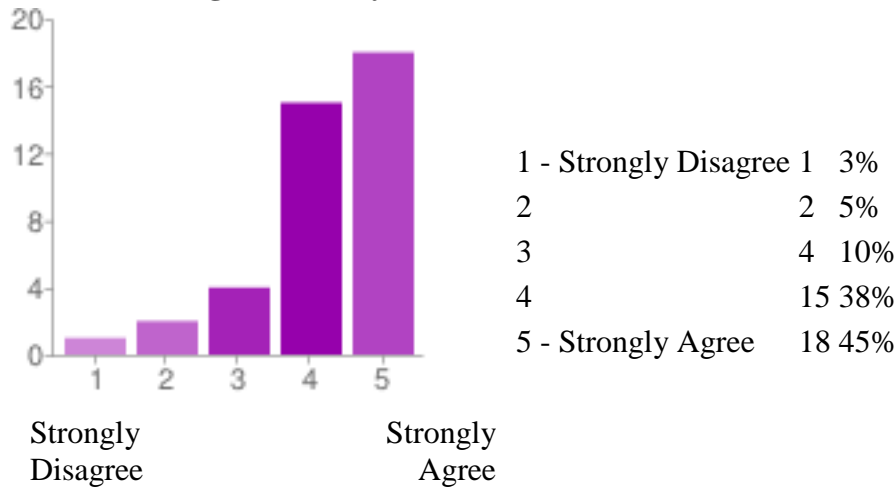
**4. The teacher effectively taught the course.**



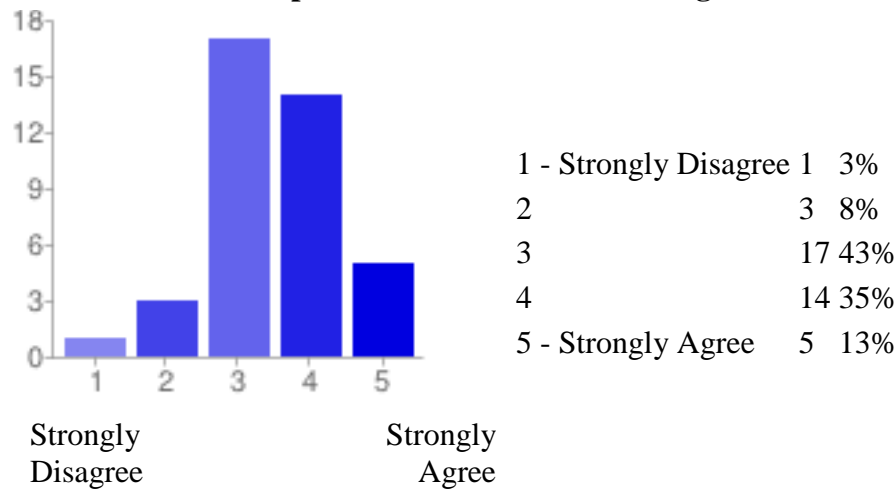
**5. The comments of the teacher on my work were thorough, constructive, and helpful.**



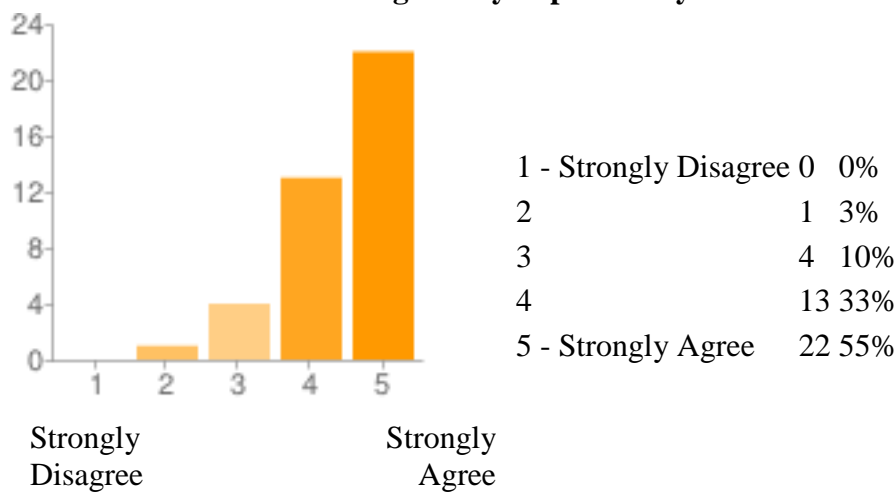
**6. The teacher graded fairly.**



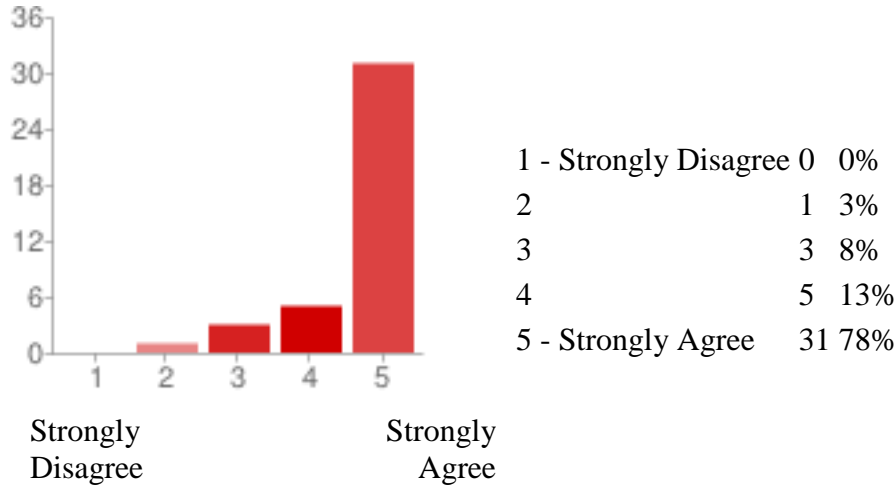
**7. The teacher made periodic invitations to challenge a mark.**



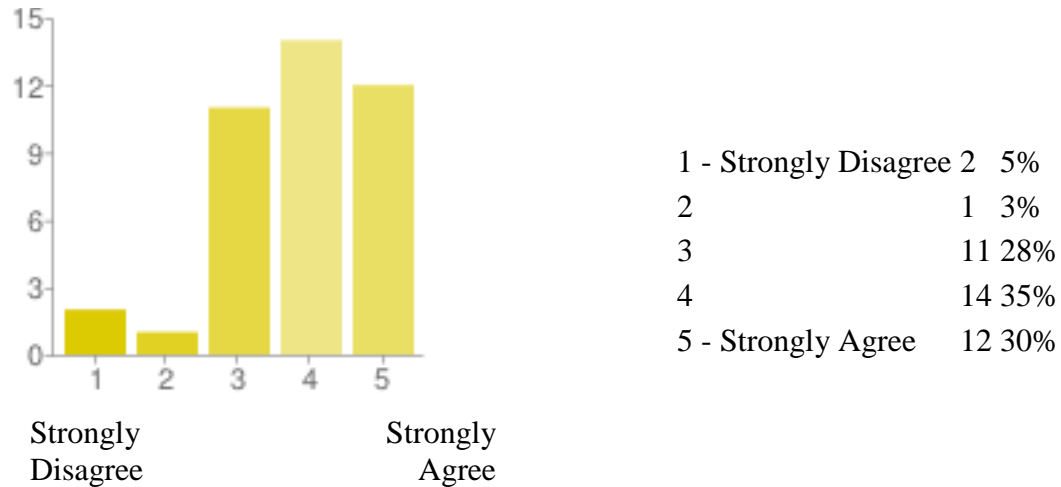
**8. You learned valuable things that you previously did not know.**



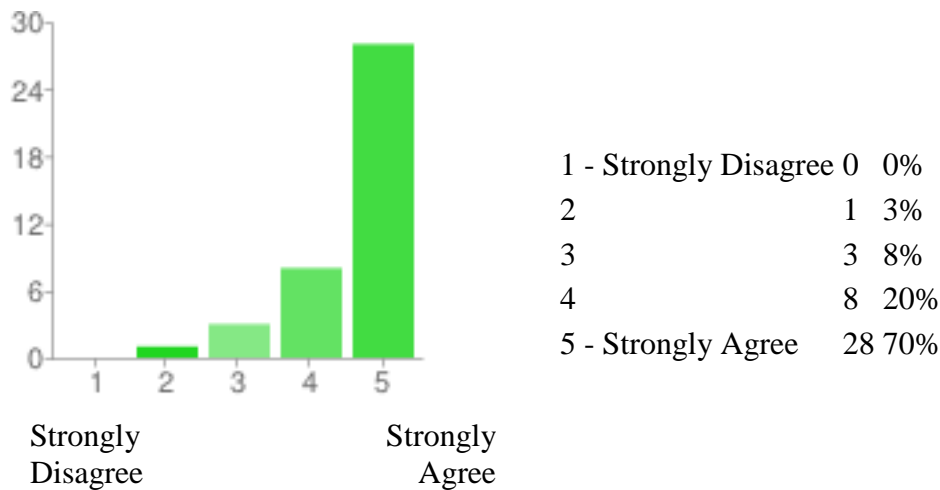
**9. The teacher challenged me to think.**



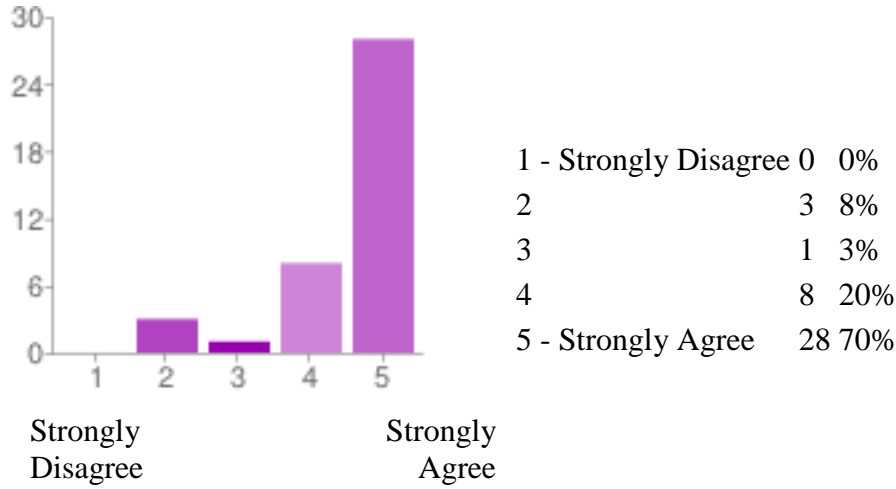
**10. The teacher should continue to be easy-going about overall classroom management.**



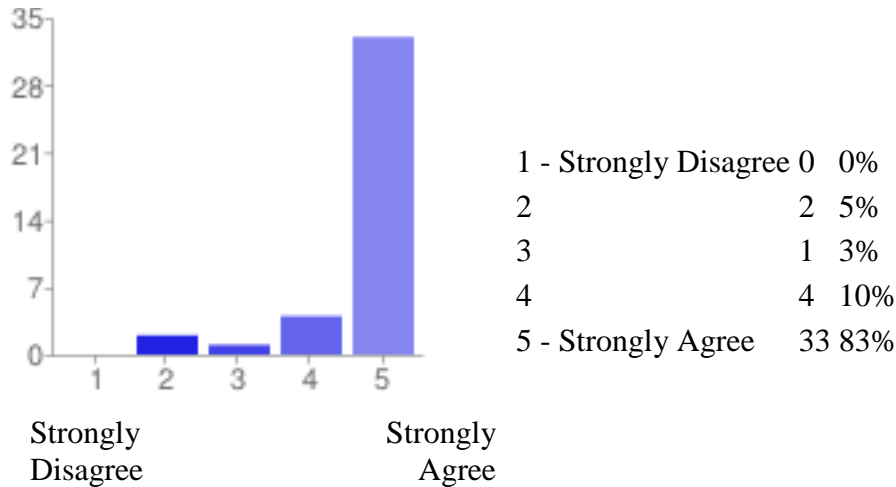
**11. The teacher created an environment that was conducive to learning.**



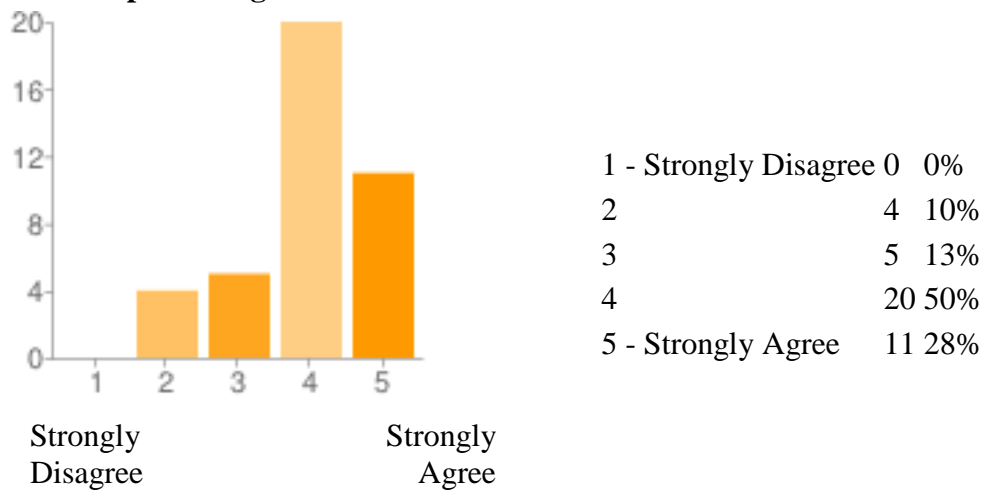
**12. Overall, how do you rate your teacher in this course?**



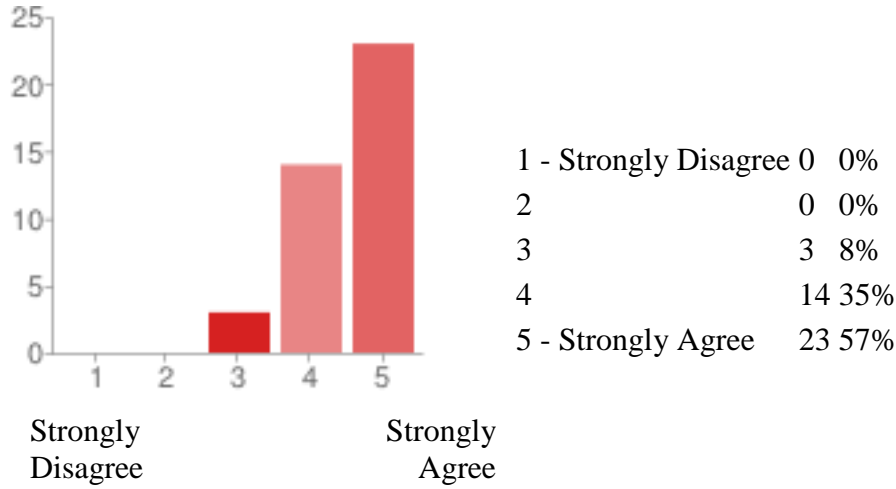
**13. If you were a principal, would you hire this teacher again?**



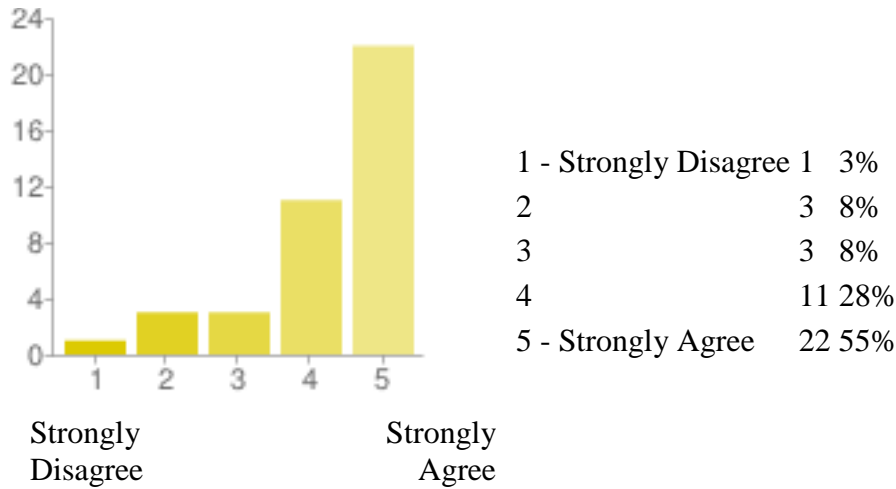
**14. Group learning in the various units that we studied this term was helpful.**



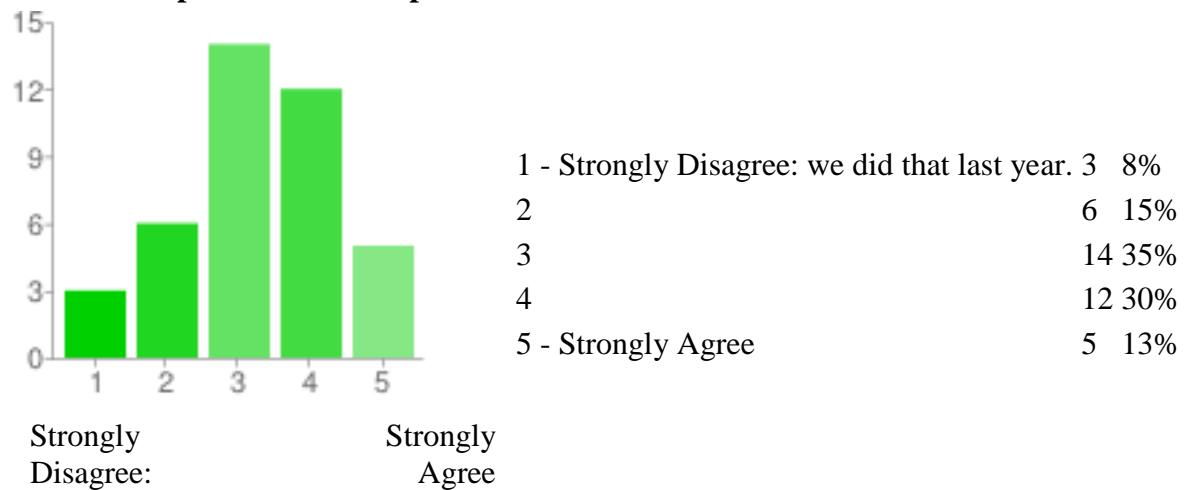
**15. There was enough homework in this course.**



**16. You feel you have a better idea about how to write an essay.**



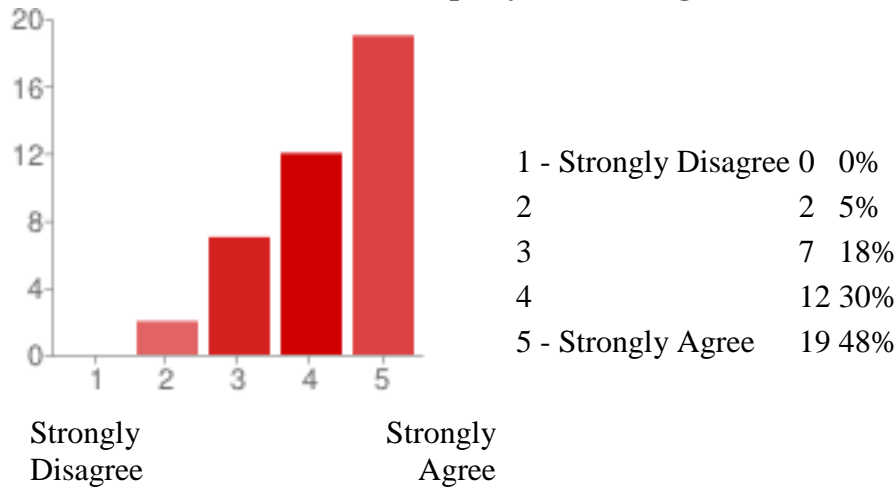
**17. More emphasis should be placed on sentence errors..**



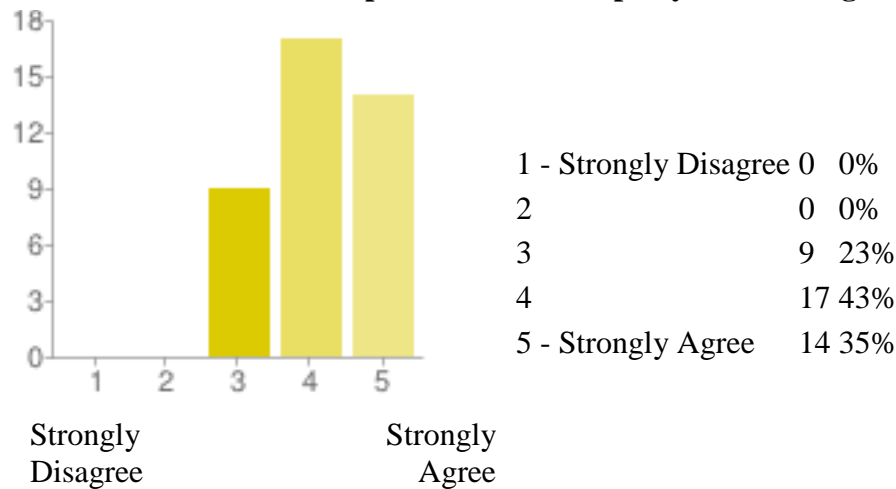




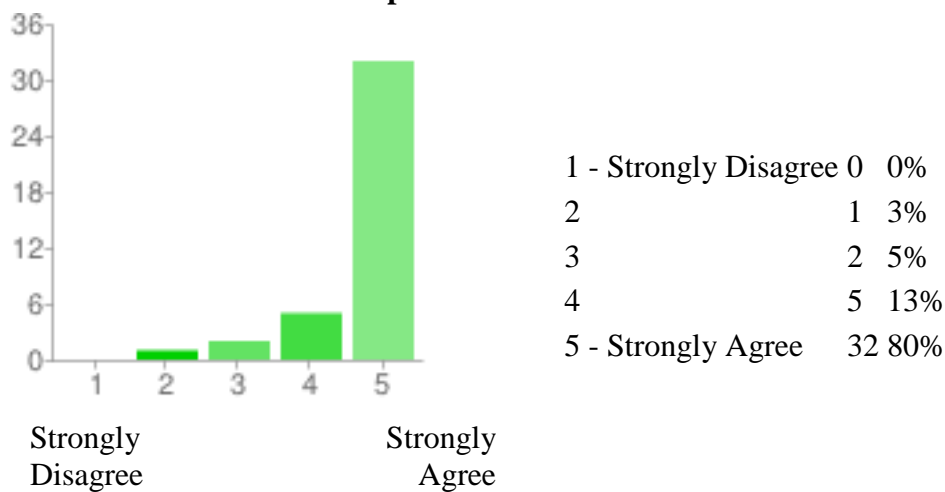
**21. You felt the Smart Board helped your learning.**



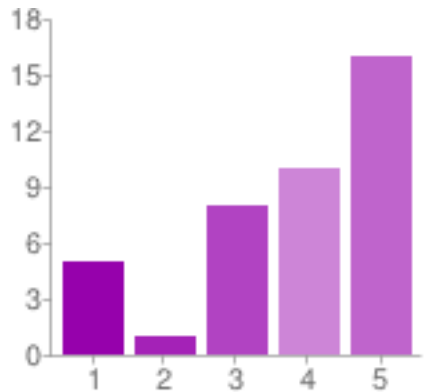
**22. You felt the Smart Response Clickers helped your learning.**



**23. The class discussions helped me to learn about the literature studied.**



**24. Did you favour essays being marked in Microsoft Word as opposed to with a pen, "old school"?**

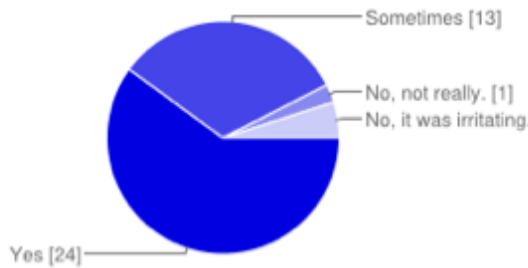


1 - No, mark old school.	5	13%
2	1	3%
3	8	20%
4	10	25%
5 - For sure. It was more specific.	16	40%

No, mark old school.

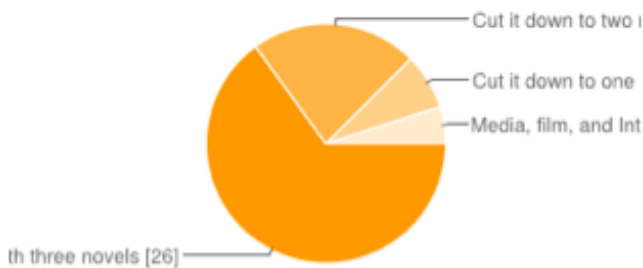
For sure. It was more specific.

**25. Did you find the text messaging useful?**



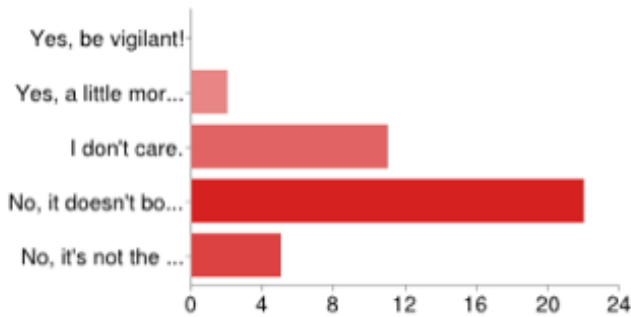
Yes	24	60%
Sometimes	13	33%
No, not really.	1	3%
No, it was irritating.	2	5%

**26. Some teachers are having students only read one novel and more media and short stories. Should there be fewer novels in this course?**



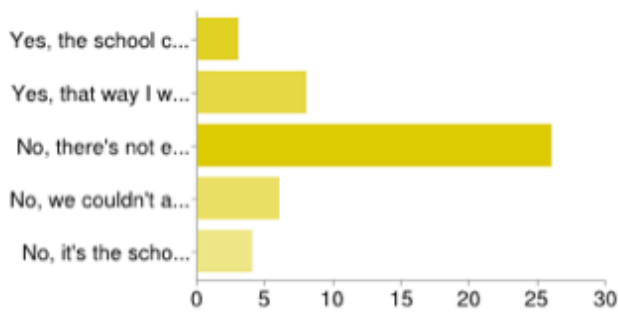
Keep with three novels	26	65%
Cut it down to two novels	9	23%
Cut it down to one novel	3	8%
Media, film, and Internet articles/stories are more important.	2	5%

**27. I was fairly casual about cell phone violations in class. Do you think I should start taking away phones in class?**



Yes, be vigilant!	0	0%
Yes, a little more strict	2	5%
I don't care.	11	28%
No, it doesn't bother other students	22	55%
No, it's not the teacher's business.	5	13%

**28. Do you think students should be asked to bring their own laptops or netbooks to school?**



- Yes, the school couldn't possibly manage 1100 laptops/netbooks
- Yes, that way I wouldn't have to work on crappy ones.
- No, there's not enough demand for them in classes
- No, we couldn't afford a \$300 netbook.
- No, it's the school's responsibility to provide all learning tools

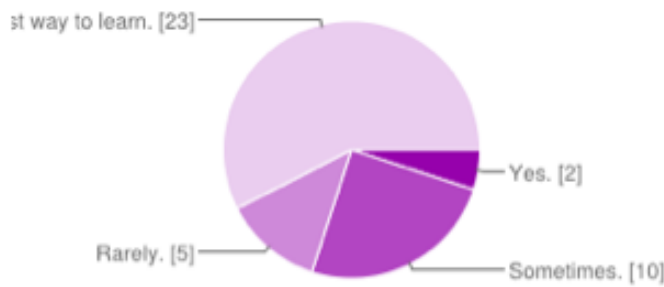
People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages 100%.

**29. Did you feel the material in the course was relevant to your life and your needs?**



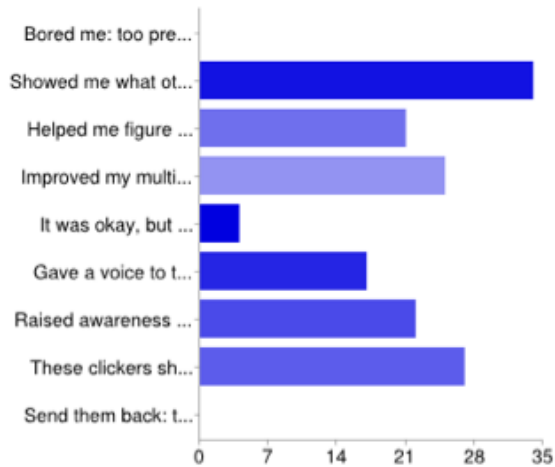
Yes	37	93%
No.	3	8%

**30. Does the teacher do too much lecturing in this course?**



Yes.	2	5%
Sometimes.	10	25%
Rarely.	5	13%
No, it's the best way to learn.	23	57%

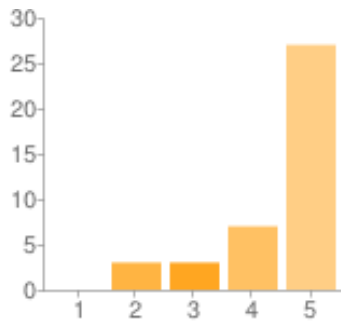
**31. Check off what the Smart Response Clickers did for you.**



Bored me: too predictable.	0	0%
Showed me what other people thought	34	85%
Helped me figure out what I didn't know	21	53%
Improved my multiple choice strategy	25	63%
It was okay, but they were overused.	4	10%
Gave a voice to the silent bystanders.	17	43%
Raised awareness about other people's ethics.	22	55%
These clickers should be used as an anonymous polling device more often.	27	68%
Send them back: they're duds.	0	0%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

**32. Not-games were useful tools to understand a different perspective about the literature we read in class.**

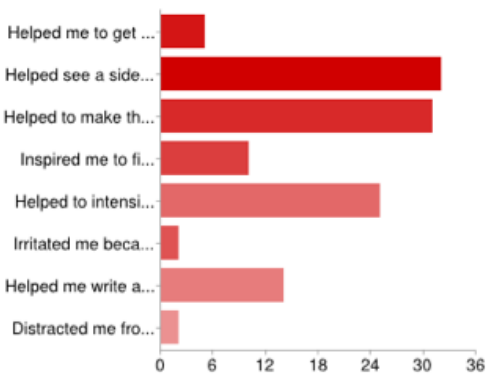


1 - Not Really.	0	0%
2	3	8%
3	3	8%
4	7	18%
5 - Yes, use them in future classes.	27	68%

Not Really.

Yes, use them in the future.

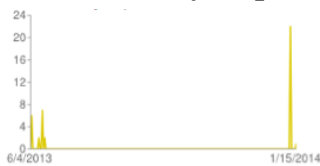
**33. Not-Games did the following for me as a learning in English Language Arts**



Helped me to get to know someone in the class better.	5	13%
Helped see a side to the story I would not have thought about unless I had played it.	32	80%
Helped to make the story(stories) more interesting.	31	78%
Inspired me to find more not-games on the Internet.	10	25%
Helped to intensify the issue be written about in the story.	25	63%
Irritated me because I wondered what video games had to do with English.	2	5%
Helped me write a better essay when it came to writing about the short story.	14	35%
Distracted me from my reading, so I didn't take the short stories very seriously.	2	5%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

**Number of daily responses**



**Appendix C: Questionnaire from Google Forms****Not-Games In English Language Arts**

This survey is an anonymous survey regarding your recent use of not-games (serious games) in English Language Arts. Answer as honestly as you can. Written comments are especially helpful. You do not have to fill out the survey, but if you do, I thank you for your time! Your participation will help teachers understand how students prefer to learn about narratives.

\* Required

**1. What was the piece of literature you studied? \***

Give the title and author.

**2. How many not-games did you play for the piece of literature you studied? \***

A piece of literature would be considered a poem, a short story, a play, a film, or a novel.

1 2 3 4 5

**3. Which not-games did you play? \***

Check off all that apply.

- The Killers
- Every day the same dream
- Unmanned
- Welcome to the Desert of the Real
- Homeless: It's not a Game!
- Darfur is Dying
- Third World Farmer
- Freedom Bridge
- Loved
- Immortal
- Majesty of Colours
- Gray
- Oiligarchy
- Cart Life

- Phone Story
- Afghanistan
- Loneliness
- Other:

**4. On average, for about how long did you play each not-game? \***

Check off the box that matches the closest time that you played the not-game.

- 5 minutes
- 10 minutes
- 15 minutes
- 20 minutes
- 25 minutes
- 30 minutes
- 45 minutes
- 60 minutes
- I played the game more than once on separate occasions.
- I played the game at home on top of the time played at school.
- I had to beat this game or figure it out.

**5. Did you like the piece of literature your group chose? \***

Be honest.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

**6. Provide an insight from the piece of literature. \***

**7. Were the graphics of the not-game too plain for you? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Yes, the graphics were <u>too plain</u> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	No, the graphics were fine.



**8. Did you think the not-game presented an argument or an idea? \***

1 2 3 4 5

---

 Not at all.      Yes, it was clear.
 

---

**9. What did you learn from the not-game(s) \***

Provide an insight or something you hadn't thought about until you played this not-game.

**10. Did you experience any emotion while playing the not-game. \***

- I was afraid that I would die.
- I felt like I needed to compete with my classmate or group member
- I was sad for the people depicted.
- I was angry at the game.
- I was confused.
- I was frustrated.
- I thought it was stupid.

**11. Did playing the not-game(s) help you make connections to the short story? \***

1 2 3 4 5

---

 Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree
 

---

**12. I would like to try more not-games in the future. \***

1 2 3 4 5

---

 Strongly disagree      Strongly Agree
 

---

**13. Check off the statements that you think apply after playing the not-game(s). \***

- I was bored
- The conflict in the piece of literature was more real because of playing the not-game(s)
- I thought about a perspective that I had not thought about after reading/viewing the piece of literature.

- I felt an emotion that I did not feel from the piece of literature.
- When I died, in the not-game, it helped me understand the emotional issues in the piece of literature.
- I received help from other classmates while playing the game.
- I got to know someone better in the class as a result of sharing not-game strategies.
- I remembered the issues in the story better.
- I thought about the issues in the story more as I tried to find connections to the game.
- Other:

**14. What did you learn about the short story as a result of playing the not-game(s)? \***

**15. How many people did you talk to about the not-game(s)? \***

Don't include people within your group. Do include parents, siblings, friends, etc.

**16. Did either the not-game(s), the piece of literature, or the combination of them both inspire you to do more reading or thinking about the topics or issues presented? \***

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

**17. What elements of the not-game has the most impact? \***

- The music
- The choices
- The game-play
- The figures and how they moved
- The ending
- Dying

**18. When your character died, was the feeling you had different than when your character dies in a first shooter game? \***

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

**19. Did the game affect your thinking related to the literature? \***

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all      A lot

**20. Did the not-game give you insight into the short story or the poem that you hadn't thought about before? \***

1 2 3 4 5

No, not at all      Yes, it really challenged my thinking in a new way.

**21. When you combine all of the not-games that you played, how many minutes in total did you play? \***

**22. Did all of the not-games you played teach you something new? \***

- Yes, all of them taught me at least one thing.
- Some of the not-games taught me something
- One not-game taught me something
- No, none of the not-games taught me anything.

**23. You have read approximately seven short stories, but you only played not-games with the short story you chose. Thinking back, did the not-games help you make more connections to that short story? \***

1 2 3 4 5

No, not really      Yes, it made me think about issues in the short story in a new way.

**24. Playing not-games in English Language Arts is a new initiative. Check off all that apply. \***

- Not-games don't really belong as a part of this course.
- Not-games are too boring to really help students think differently about literature.
- Not-games are weird.
- Not-games are artistic attempts to get people thinking.
- Not-games don't really work as a genre.
- Why don't we get to play real video games in English Language Arts?
- Not-games counter expectations of typical games.

**25. Based on the presentations that you saw the other students give, do you think the not-games helped to inform their understanding of the short story they read? \***

1   2   3   4   5

---

No, not at all.      Yes, the not-game really helped their understanding of the story.

---

**26. Tell me a bit about your personality. \***

- I consider myself quite a linear thinker.
- I consider myself a random thinker.
- I consider myself to be artistic.
- I am a math/science person.
- I am an English/social person.
- I am outgoing.
- I like to try new things
- At a party, I go up to people and introduce myself.
- I stick to myself when I'm in a new environment.
- I like playing video games.
- I don't play video games very often.

---

### Appendix D: 16 responses

#### 1. What were the pieces of literature you studied?<sup>25</sup>

1. Refresh Refresh and kite runner
2. Clothes by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Presentation Piece) On the Rainy River by Tim O'Brien Refresh Refresh by Benjamin Percy What is Poverty by Jo Goodwin Parker Horses of the Night by Margaret Laurence My Parent's Bedroom by Uwem Akpan
3. Clothes by Chitra Divakaruni On the Rainy River by Tim O'Brien My Parent's Bedroom by Uwem Akpan What is Poverty by Jo Goodwin Parker The Glass Roses by Alden Nowlan Refresh, Refresh by Benjamin Percy Horses of the Night by Margaret Laurence. These are all the stories we read in class, but I studied Clothes in depth.
4. everyday same dream, clothes
5. The wars-Timothy Findley Glass Roses- Nowlan
6. Everyday the Same Day Loved
7. Chicamauga
8. Hamlet by William Shakespeare Blindness by Jose Saramago The Kite Runner by I forget the others name
9. Kite Runner - Khaled Hosseini Blindness - Jose Saramago
10. on the rainy river - tim obrian the wars - timothy findley
11. the Kite Runner Blindness Paul's Case (Short Story)
12. -Shakespeare - Romeo and Juliet -The Alchemist - Paulo Cohelo -To Kill a Mockingbird - Harper Lee -
13. Rock climbing
14. The Glass rose
15. Glass Rose
16. The Wars Blindness 1984 Street Car Named Desire Glass Roses etc

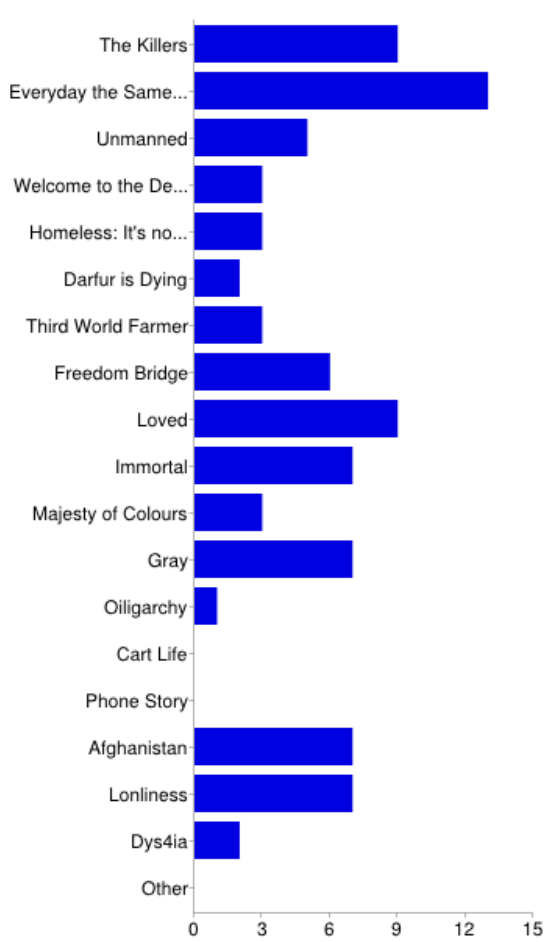
#### 2. How many not-games did you play for the piece of literature you studied?

5,5,9,8,3,2,8,2,2,12,7,3,5,5,3,8

---

<sup>25</sup> These numbers correspond to the numbers in questions 6, 9, and 14 so these students can be cross-referenced by their respective numbers in these four questions.

**3. Which not-games did you play?**



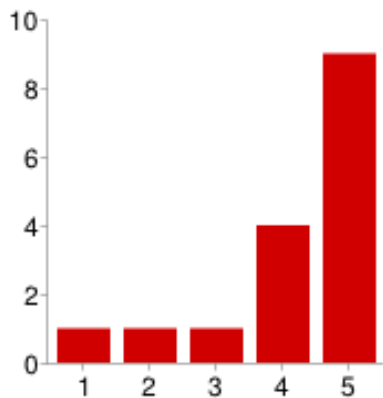
Not-Game	Count	Percentage
The Killers	9	10%
Everyday the Same Dream	13	15%
Unmanned	5	6%
Welcome to the Desert of the Real	3	3%
Homeless: It's not a Game!	3	3%
Darfur is Dying	2	2%
Third World Farmer	3	3%
Freedom Bridge	6	7%
Loved	9	10%
Immortal	7	8%
Majesty of Colours	3	3%
Gray	7	8%
Oiligarchy	1	1%
Cart Life	0	0%
Phone Story	0	0%
Afghanistan	7	8%
Loneliness	7	8%
Dys4ia	2	2%
Other	0	0%

**4. On average, for about how long did you play each not-game?**



5 minutes	<b>1</b>	3%
10 minutes	<b>4</b>	14%
15 minutes	<b>5</b>	17%
20 minutes	<b>4</b>	14%
25 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
30 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
45 minutes	<b>1</b>	3%
60 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
I played the game more than once on separate occasions.	<b>4</b>	14%
I played the game at home on top of the time played at school.	<b>5</b>	17%
I had to beat this game or figure it out.	<b>5</b>	17%

**5. Did you like the piece of literature your group chose?**



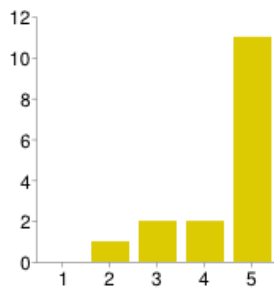
1	<b>1</b>	6%
2	<b>1</b>	6%
3	<b>1</b>	6%
4	<b>4</b>	25%
5	<b>9</b>	56%

**6. Provide an insight from the piece of literature.**

1. . [no answer]
2. The piece of literature may have not been my first choice, however, the prevalent cultural context, much like that found in the book, Kite Runner, was a unique vessel to use to study the concepts, themes, and forces that are present within our own western oriented paradigms as well as in others manifested around the world.

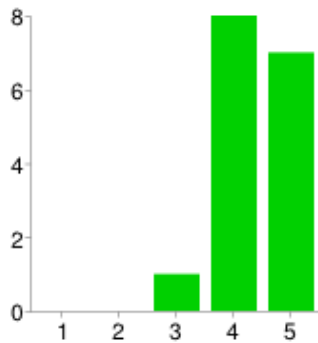
3. That happiness is elusive, sometimes you have to go through life just to find it. It doesn't come easily, happiness is not a gift, it is something earned. Clothes also shows that happiness can only be attained after we break away from the chains of conformity that bind us.
4. thought provoking
5. Showed me the struggles to become who you are as a person.
6. Everyday the Same dream was insightful, and made me think critically. I played through multiple times in order to capture all the details that the creator put into it. I had played it before English 30, about 3 years before but I thought harder about it now than I did then.
7. . [no answer]
8. I didn't enjoy the other pieces of literature as much as I enjoy the literature of Shakespeare and his play Hamlet.
9. It made me feel depressed, but it was a wonderful story.
10. i really liked the wars, it's far from an average book and the dark events that happen throughout the course of the story make you really feel for the characters in the book. It's not an easy book to read but definitely worth it.
11. Paul's Case: He was not wanted or accepted for who he was, just like in the not game loneliness and loved
12. X was a great short story to read as it was very different. The story provided for an interesting class presentation followed by plenty of discussion.
13. It was plain
14. The piece of literature I picked was vary interesting it made me think of the struggles of the war.
15. It was a very good story that I learned a lot from and could even write my diploma essay on.
16. It's a fun creative way to get students more interested in English. It also makes them think outside the box. Having to connect it to a short story was a really good idea because I had to make connections to things I've never thought I had. It was very helpful.

**7. Were the graphics of the not-game too plain for you?**



1	<b>0</b>	0%
2	<b>1</b>	6%
3	<b>2</b>	13%
4	<b>2</b>	13%
5	<b>11</b>	69%



**8. Did you think the not-game presented an argument or an idea?**

1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	1	6%
4	8	50%
5	7	44%

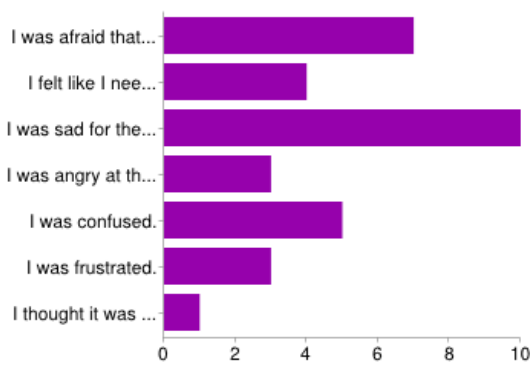
**9. What did you learn from the not-game(s)**

- made me look at certain things differently
- I had always perceived such things as conformity as being an entity one either opposes or embraces to an extent. One's world is comprised of one's compromise with this constant current ebbing away at one's will power, doctrines, and ideals. The not-game, *Every Day the Same Dream*, allowed me to realize that one doesn't necessarily have to choose a degree of resistance, if any at all, for this construct of human thought still plays by a code of conduct established by the existing paradigm. The game encouraged one to remove themselves from the reality entirely. Instead of swimming against the current or allowing it to take you, why not simply swim out in an obscure direction? Why not climb out of the cave and turn your eyes upon the world within the world, the one that is integrated behind every entity present in your perceived society. The reason this concept is so novel to myself is that I had succumbed to a trap. The trap was choosing to either fight or give in... both of which are born of the same reality. Perhaps the designer of the game was attempting to indicate that for one to truly acknowledge a realm that incorporates the expression of one's spirit in a fashion that is very much tangible, they would have to build a world of their own. If some of the ideals of conformity appealed to you, include them in your ultimate design and leave out the doctrines that were appalling to you. Wipe the slate clean, essentially. For if you make choices based solely on somehow addressing the conformist presence currently occupying your realm, you will never escape the chains that confine you. It is very much a reiteration of Rousseau who once stated, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." The unfortunate flaw to such a statement is that Rousseau believes we are even free to begin with. We are literally shoved into a predetermined order that constantly whines for our obedience and attention. Of course, the common good is often at mind but is the common good spiritually progressive for all? Most often, it is not. It is a grey penumbrae, much like that found in the not-game, that fails to satisfy anyone but doesn't really merit an extreme emotional reaction. Our indifference leads to the rotting of our spirits and a world of empty shells milling about, claiming to be human. Part of this integrated bleakness is the mundane choices that have already been laid out before us. It's like answering a multiple choice test. We can only choose a or b, but where is c? Why does it even have to be another letter? Where is option 2, where is option alpha, where is option me. The point here is essentially that the game encourages us to create our own options, not that of the options the society provides us with. Even if we think we are freeing ourselves, casting asunder the confines of our

orderly society, we still remain trapped. I for one would rather the truth as to the nature of the world before me, not a fragment of that truth presented as THE truth. Society provides us with answers. How does one be free? Rebel against society. How does one achieve happiness. Compromise with society. With society.... The answer to this riddle is to simply not acknowledge society for it is not a true extension of one's spiritual inclinations. In order to be truly free, we must not be granted a choice, that it is too easy. The choice I am speaking of is that of the refined variety, synthetically designed by society and people of other spiritual inclinations. Collective choice is so much more simplistic than subjective choice, for we have to build the options. Freedom is difficult to achieve and requires abstract and insightful thinking and synthesizing. If it takes a man to nose dive off a skyscraper to bring us out of the whirlpool, so be it. Never be afraid to offend for if you didn't, we would be seduced by the system later... such seduction may even be present now.

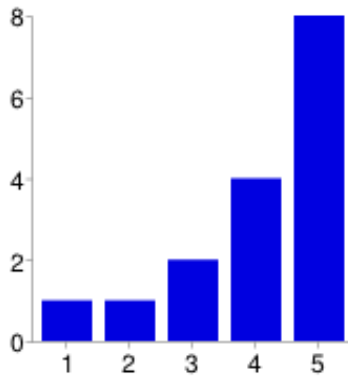
3. I studied Everyday the Same Dream in depth, and I found that this game is astounding. Everyday the Same Dream showed just how stuck we are in our routines. We never stop to smell the roses, excuse the cliché, but it is true. This game really showed the pitfalls of utterly and completely conforming to our society, which is something I hadn't really thought about to a great extent before playing the not-game.
4. think about things from different perspective
5. Choices rule your life.
6. Everyday the Same Dream made me think about my daily routine, and whether or not I am in trapped in it.
7. The struggles that a lot of people face that I wouldn't have realized had I not played them.
8. The hard life and decisions in Afghanistan. The only game I liked was the one called Façade where you had to say things to the couple that secretly hated each other. Loved that one I loved making them mad.
9. That there is always a hidden message behind the gameplay.
10. They brought me into realistic situations that i was able to put myself into and actually apply myself. For example in the killer, i learned that i would never be able to shoot an innocent human being since i was not able to listen to my orders in the game.
11. The not games reinforced my understanding of the pieces of literature. They provided a different perspective on the same matter
12. The not-game gave me a more personal relationship with the main character X. It gave me insight as to it's emotions and how it felt.
13. There is another side to a story
14. yes
15. I learned more about the ideas presented in the short story that you don't necessarily get from just reading. I also didn't know that their were short stories that are related to English.
16. Different views.

**10. Did you experience any emotion while playing the not-game.**



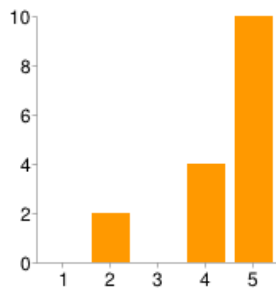
I was afraid to die	<b>7</b>	21%
I felt like I needed to compete with my classmate or group member	<b>4</b>	12%
I was sad for the people depicted.	<b>10</b>	30%
I was angry at the game.	<b>3</b>	9%
I was confused.	<b>5</b>	15%
I was frustrated.	<b>3</b>	9%
I thought it was stupid.	<b>1</b>	3%

**11. Did playing the not-game(s) help you make connections to the short story?**

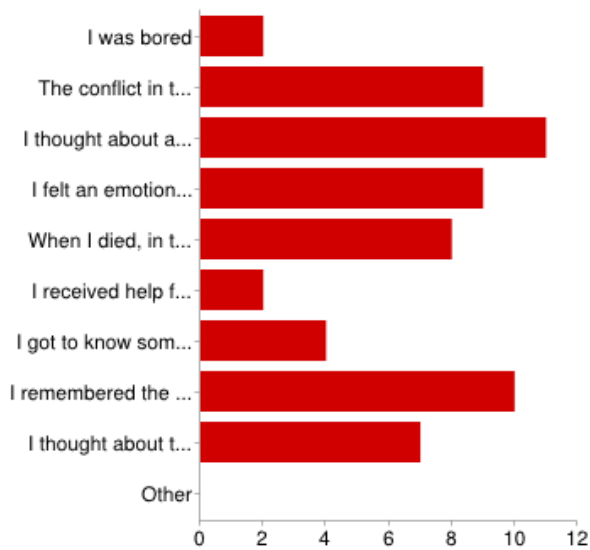


1	<b>1</b>	6%
2	<b>1</b>	6%
3	<b>2</b>	13%
4	<b>4</b>	25%
5	<b>8</b>	50%

**12. I would like to try more not-games in the future.**



1	<b>0</b>	0%
2	<b>2</b>	13%
3	<b>0</b>	0%
4	<b>4</b>	25%
5	<b>10</b>	63%

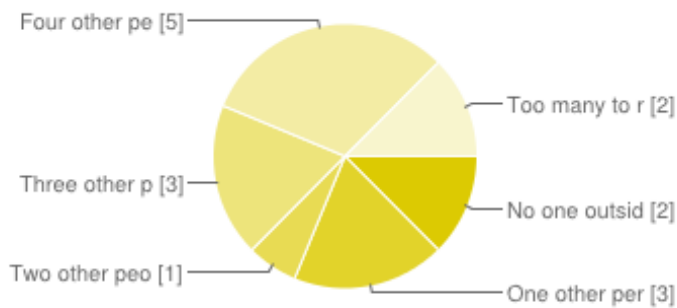
**13. Check off the statements that you think apply after playing the not-game(s).**

I was bored	<b>2</b>	3%
The conflict in the piece of literature was more real because of playing the not-game(s)	<b>9</b>	15%
I thought about a perspective that I had not thought about after reading/viewing the piece of literature.	<b>1</b>	18%
When I died, in the not-game, it helped me understand the emotional issues in the piece of literature.	<b>8</b>	13%
I received help from other classmates while playing the game.	<b>2</b>	3%
I got to know someone better in the class as a result of sharing not-game strategies.	<b>4</b>	6%
I remembered the issues in the story better.	<b>1</b>	16%
I thought about the issues in the story more as I tried to find connections to the game.	<b>7</b>	11%
Other	<b>0</b>	0%

**14. What did you learn about the short story as a result of playing the not-game(s)?**

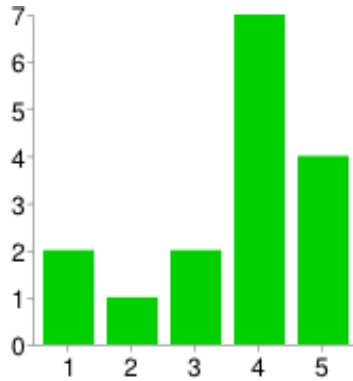
1. more
2. The concepts of conformity, how the deaths were catalysts to a shattered reality, and how happiness does not necessarily follow spiritual freedom.
3. I learned that Sumita was the faceless character from the not-game. Her struggles were essentially the same, and her ideas and actions parallel those in the not-game. Sumita did not truly live until after Somesh's death, much like the faceless character in the not-game.
4. insight
5. The right choice is not always the right thing
6. following the routine set out for you, instead of the one you choose.
7. nothing
8. Mountains are hard to climb
9. Again, hidden meanings everywhere
10. war is very devastating to everyone in it and around it
11. reinforces that there are more than one perspective that can be intellectual
12. A connection with the main character.
13. Need to make sacrifices
14. fear
15. characters emotions and perspectives
16. a deeper meaning

**15. How many people did you talk to about the not-game(s)?**



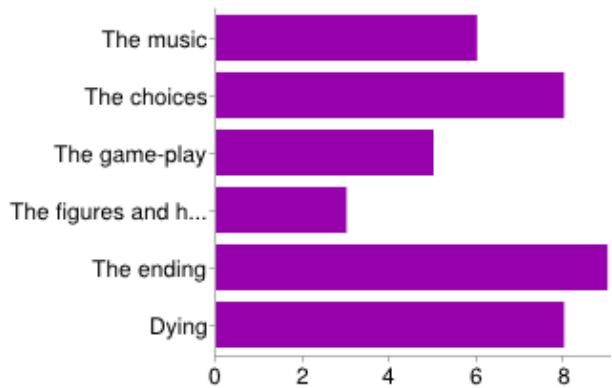
No one outside my group.	<b>2</b>	13%
One other person	<b>3</b>	19%
Two other people	<b>1</b>	6%
Three other people	<b>3</b>	19%
Four other people	<b>5</b>	31%
Too many to remember.	<b>2</b>	13%

**16. Did either the not-game(s), the piece of literature, or the combination of them both inspire you to do more reading or thinking about the topics or issues presented?**



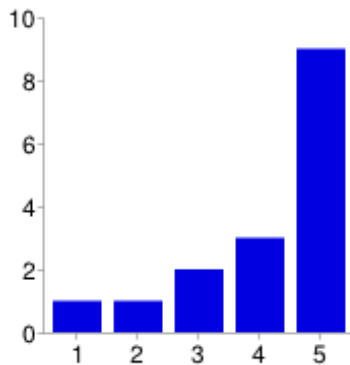
1	2	13%
2	1	6%
3	2	13%
4	7	44%
5	4	25%

**17. What elements of the not-game has the most impact?**



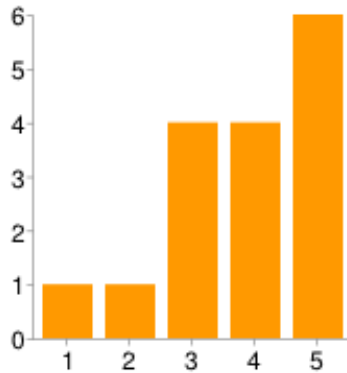
The music	6	15%
The choices	8	21%
The game-play	5	13%
The figures and how they moved	3	8%
The ending	9	23%
Dying	8	21%

**18. When your character died, was the feeling you had different than when your character dies in a first shooter game?**



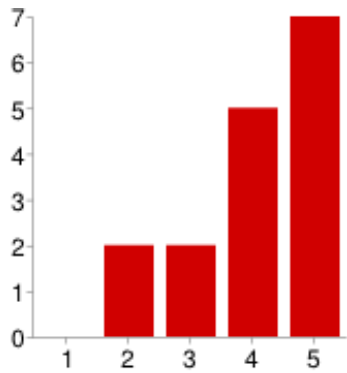
1	1	6%
2	1	6%
3	2	13%
4	3	19%
5	9	56%

**19. Did the game affect your thinking related to the literature?**



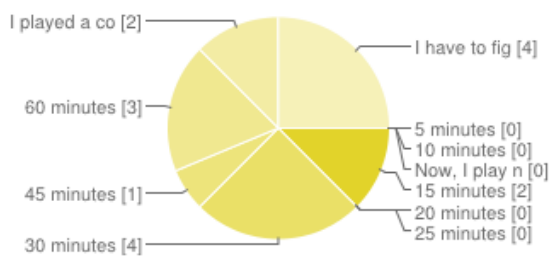
1	<b>1</b>	6%
2	<b>1</b>	6%
3	<b>4</b>	25%
4	<b>4</b>	25%
5	<b>6</b>	38%

**20. Did the not-game give you insight into the short story or the poem that you hadn't thought about before?**



1	<b>0</b>	0%
2	<b>2</b>	13%
3	<b>2</b>	13%
4	<b>5</b>	31%
5	<b>7</b>	44%

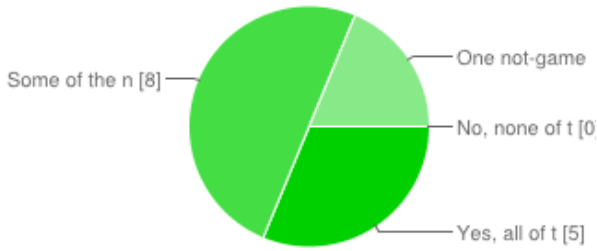
**21. When you combine all of the not-games that you played, how many minutes in total did you play?**



5 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
10 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
15 minutes	<b>2</b>	13%

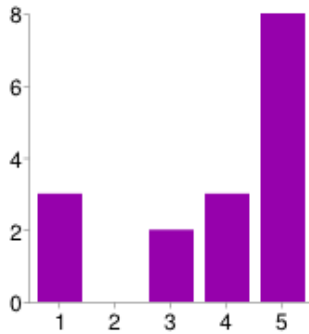
20 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
25 minutes	<b>0</b>	0%
30 minutes	<b>4</b>	25%
45 minutes	<b>1</b>	6%
60 minutes	<b>3</b>	19%
I played a couple of not-games on separate occasions	<b>2</b>	13%
I have to figure out each not-game in order to win it.	<b>4</b>	25%
Now, I play not-games all the time.	<b>0</b>	0%

**22. Did all of the not-games you played teach you something new?**



Yes, all of them taught me at least one thing.	<b>5</b>	31%
Some of the not-games taught me something	<b>8</b>	50%
One not-game taught me something	<b>3</b>	19%
No, none of the not-games taught me anything.	<b>0</b>	0%

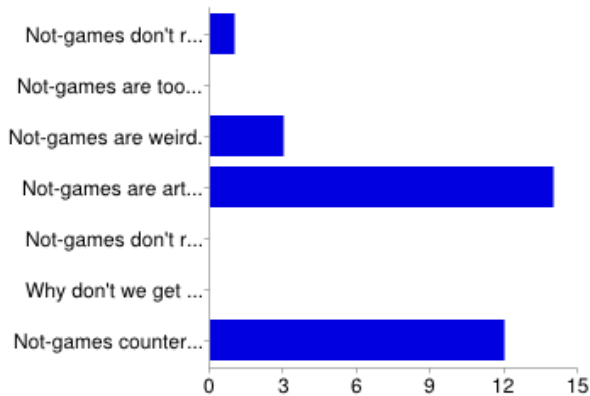
**23. You have read approximately seven short stories, but you only played not-games with the short story you chose. Thinking back, did the not-games help you make more connections to that short story?**



1	<b>3</b>	19%
2	<b>0</b>	0%
3	<b>2</b>	13%
4	<b>3</b>	19%
5	<b>8</b>	50%

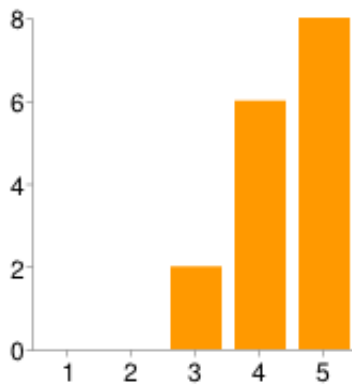


**24. Playing not-games in English Language Arts is a new initiative. Check off all that apply.**



Not-games don't really belong as a part of this course.	<b>1</b>	3%
Not-games are too boring to really help students think differently about literature.	<b>0</b>	0%
Not-games are weird.	<b>3</b>	10%
Not-games are artistic attempts to get people thinking.	<b>14</b>	47%
Not-games don't really work as a genre.	<b>0</b>	0%
Why don't we get to play real video games in English Language Arts?	<b>0</b>	0%
Not-games counter expectations of typical games.	<b>12</b>	40%

**25. Based on the presentations that you saw the other students give, do you think the not-games helped to inform their understanding of the short story they read?**



1	<b>0</b>	0%
2	<b>0</b>	0%
3	<b>2</b>	13%
4	<b>6</b>	38%
5	<b>8</b>	50%

**26. Tell me a bit about your personality.**



I consider myself quite a linear thinker.	<b>7</b>	9%
I consider myself a random thinker.	<b>11</b>	14%
I consider myself to be artistic.	<b>7</b>	9%
I am a math/science person.	<b>8</b>	10%
I am an English/social person.	<b>4</b>	5%
I am outgoing.	<b>8</b>	10%
I like to try new things	<b>10</b>	13%
At a party, I go up to people and introduce myself.	<b>6</b>	8%
I stick to myself when I'm in a new environment.	<b>6</b>	8%
I like playing videogames.	<b>9</b>	11%
I don't play videogames very often.	<b>4</b>	5%

**Number of daily responses**



### Appendix E: Mixed Genre Short Story Unit

- Length:** This unit is designed to cover twelve 67-minute periods but can run longer.
- Overview:** This unit is designed to help students on a number of fronts: they are reminded of the short story as a resource for the diploma exam, provided they know it very well. They will be briefly introduced to the different short stories from which they can choose and then they will be told that their groups will be determined based on the story that they chose. In this group, they will choose a poem and a not-game to go along with their short story. This is designed to emulate the personal response section of the Part A diploma exam, replacing the photo with a not-game<sup>26</sup>. The preparation for their presentation will encourage students to make connections between seemingly disparate points or oblique angles just like they would on the diploma exam where they make connections between one or more of the texts and their own lives and of course the diploma question at hand.
- Rationale:** This unit is intended to further develop the student's concept of the short story as a medium intended for diploma exam writing. Through this study, the student should begin to appreciate the nuances of character development and presentation as well as the author's intentions, tone, and/or ideas in the short story. Because diploma exam situations require understanding and synthesis in a very brief time, students need to practise this. As well, students will have the opportunity to experience similar syntheses in other groups as they walk through their discoveries as mentioned in other group presentations.
- Assumed Procedures in Place:** Students will be expected to work both independently and in groups of 3 or 4. As well, some work will have to take place outside of regular class time, so groups should be chosen with consideration given to ease of co-ordination. Students will need access to a computer and the Internet.
- Materials:** complete set of short stories, since all students will be required to read all the short stories, questions for each story, personal response exemplars duo-tang, computer lab or class set of laptops, web addresses for the not-games.

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<sup>26</sup> The term, "not-game" comes from a game designer by the name of Michael Samyn (2010) who writes about it on his blog (<http://notgames.org/blog>). Magnuson (2011), a follower of Samyn's, referred to the not-game genre as a work of art whereby the primary aim is not entertainment, such as typical video games, but rather reflection and an unpacking of assumptions with regards to escapist genres in general. "*The Killer*, as far as I see it, is something like a short interactive poem, and it doesn't intend to be anything more. I call it a not-game to try and spark a little bit of realization that not everything interactive has to be a game, and also to try and prepare the player for encountering something that won't be fun" (Magnuson, 2011).

**Recommended short stories:** “My Parents’ Bedroom” by Uwem Akpan; “Clothes” by Chitra Banerjee Divakarun; “What is Poverty” by Jo Goodwin Parker (an essay, not a short story); “Happy Event” by Nadine Gordimer; “Horses of the Night” by Margaret Laurence; “Glass Roses” by Alden Nowlan; “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien; “Refresh, Refresh” by Benjamin Percy; “Saturday Climbing” by W.D. Valgardson. Some of the short stories are controversial, so teacher beware: “In my Parents’ Bedroom” is about the Rwandan genocide with graphic and disturbing scenes; “Refresh, Refresh” uses coarse language in one section with regards to casual sex; and “Saturday Climbing” makes reference to casual sex and drug use.

**Unit Organization:** Days 1-2 focus on introducing and reading parts of the short stories. Since students need time to read the short stories, I will often give them the short stories a couple of weeks before I actually start the unit. This gives them time to digest the stories. Content quizzes should be organized so that reading is guaranteed. Each of the groups must come up with these lower-level Blooms taxonomy questions on their own for the rest of the class to answer. Days 3-4 introduce the genre of not-games, what they mean, and how to play them. A computer lab is best booked for Day 4 so that students can play these both individually and as a group. Day 5 and 6 will allow time for groups to answer the questions for their assigned short story and to prepare the presentation, using either *Power Point*, *Prezi*, or *Google Presentation*. I would give them group expectation parameters in terms of content and delivery at this time. On Day 7, I would take the students step by step through the creation of a Personal Response based on the expectations of the diploma exam by walking them through the rubrics and prior student exemplars for the personal response. They need to understand that each diploma exam (Part A English Language Arts) provides three texts and that they can respond to one, two, or all three of the texts either explicitly as in an essay or narrative, anecdotal format or implicitly as in a short story, journal, screen play, eulogy, speech, newspaper article, etc. Days 8-10 focus on the group presentations of their short story, the answers to questions, and the author’s intent in writing the short story. They would read their poem to the class –with a copy of it integrated into their presentation- and point out its connections to the story and why they chose it. Furthermore, they would provide screen shots of the not-game, explaining its connections to the story and poem and how the author’s intentions merge, intersect, compliment or contradict. On Day 12, students would write their personal response.

Each lesson in this unit addresses a variety of overlapping outcomes from Alberta

Education’s English Language Arts 30-1 Curriculum which can be found at

<http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/645805/srhelapofs.pdf>. At the end of each lesson,

there is at least one primary General Outcome and one Specific Outcome that applies to the activities of the day. This is not a comprehensive list, but it does demonstrate the diverse range of outcomes addressed as the unit progresses. Each outcome has been presented in the precise wording in which it appears in the curriculum document, along with numerical references.

**Evaluation Overview:** Informal Evaluation:

- Teacher will monitor in-class participation, individual and group.
- Teacher is encouraged to conduct homework checks, particularly during the essay writing process.
- Teacher is encouraged to offer comments on initial small group presentations to prepare students for expectations in the upcoming presentation.

Formal Evaluation:

- Content quizzes for each of the short stories.
- Personal Response, weighted as a major assignment (100 marks) but will be out of 40 marks as per the grading according to Alberta Education's personal response rubric (See appendix).
- The teacher will view the presentation created by groups of students, weighted at 80 marks. This assignment is graded according to the rubric provided in the appendix.

### Day 1

**Lesson Outline:** The primary objective of this lesson is to generate excitement for the purpose of the unit and the different approaches that they will be taking into the readings. There is a high degree of choice, so students need to be given a précis of each of the stories, by reading the introduction, providing perhaps a quote or two, and giving the social and/or historical context of the story. Students need to be told that they will be giving presentations and that groups will be determined based on which story that they choose. They need to know, however, that they will be responsible for reading all the short stories and that each group will be creating content quiz questions for each of them to ensure that everyone has read them by the deadline. (A brief discussion about the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy is warranted as well as the difference

between a simple recall question and a meaningful question that points to something significant in the story *and* ensures the student has read the story.) The final evaluation will be on the presentation itself, as well as a personal responses which will take an hour of in-class time. This response will be in the same format as the one on the Part A of the English Language Arts Diploma exam, so a discussion about that is warranted. They can write either analytically or creatively, explicitly or implicitly but a connection to text must be understood –more on that later. Students should be told that instead of a photograph, a new genre is going to be explored, that of a not-game –more on that later, too.

**Materials:** short stories, Bloom’s Taxonomy from the Internet, previous English Language Arts Diploma Part A Exams from the Internet.

**General Outcomes: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms, and respond personally, critically and creatively.**

**Specific Outcomes:**

- 1.1 Discover possibilities
  - 1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
- 1.2 Extend awareness
  - 1.2.1 Consider new perspectives
  - 1.2.2 Express preferences, and expand interests
- 2.2 Understand and appreciate textual forms, elements and techniques
  - 2.2.1 Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content

Alberta Education. (2003). *English Language Arts Senior High School Program of Study*. Available at <http://education.alberta.ca/media/645805/srhelapofs.pdf>.

## Day 2

**Lesson Outline:** Once groups have been established after students have been given enough time to choose their short story (a week or so?), they need time to get together to meet and decide how they are going to proceed with their presentation and what kinds of roles they want to complete. At this time, I would provide poetry anthologies, questions for the short story (See appendix, where some questions self- created and others come from either the anthology, the teacher’s guide, or from other teachers), and the following set of discussion items. The chance to play not-games is later, on day 3, so for now, students are focusing on the written elements of the assignment. I would also provide a copy of Laurence Perrine’s essay, “Escape and Interpretation,” from his *Story and Structure*; this will allow students to see the hidden agendas of escapist literature both in terms of writing and gaming.

### Group Work Discussion Items:

1. Identify the author’s ideas of the short story by examining character, character change, and theme.
2. Choose several poems are potential poems to connect to the short story. You will narrow it down to one later.
3. What is the ideology of the story and the poem. You need to keep these in mind for when you choose your not-game(s). What do they disrupt? Think of Perrine’s essay.

4. Why did the writers make these stories: what's their point(s)? (Similar to #3 and 4)
5. Answer the questions for your short story. Answer for the class.
6. Identify which parts of the short story and poem you don't understand: try to come up with some explanations, rationales, etc. Break down the poem the same way you did in previous poetry units.
7. Make decisions about your presentation and how you will do it, with Power Point, Prezi, or with Google Presentation.

**Materials:** Poetry Anthologies, short story questions, class set of Perrine's essay, "Escapism versus Interpretation," extra copies of the short stories for those students who forgot them, a few laptops for research purposes.

**General Outcomes:** You can see how this activity begins to touch on all five of the general outcomes in the *Alberta Education E.L.A. Senior High Program of Study*:

**General Outcome 1**

**Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.**

- 1.1 Discover possibilities
  - 1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
- 1.2 Extend awareness
  - 1.2.1 Consider new perspectives
  - 1.2.2 Express preferences, and expand interests

**General Outcome 2**

**Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms, and respond personally, critically and creatively.**

- 2.1 Construct meaning from text and context
  - 2.1.1 Discern and analyze context
  - 2.1.2 Understand and interpret content
  - 2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge
  - 2.1.4 Use reference strategies and reference technologies
- 2.2 Understand and appreciate textual forms, elements and techniques
  - 2.2.1 Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content
  - 2.2.2 Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects
- 2.3.1 Connect self, text, culture and milieu

- 2.3.2 Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance of print and nonprint texts
- 2.3.3 Appreciate the effectiveness and artistry of print and non-print sources

**General Outcome 3**

**Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to manage ideas and information.**

- 3.1 Determine inquiry or research requirements
  - 3.1.1 Focus on purpose and presentation form
  - 3.1.2 Plan inquiry or research, and identify information needs and sources
- 3.2 Follow a plan of inquiry
  - 3.2.1 Select, record and organize information
  - 3.2.2 Evaluate sources, and assess information
  - 3.2.3 Form generalizations and conclusions
  - 3.2.4 Review inquiry or research process

**General Outcome 4**

**Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to create oral, print, visual and multimedia texts, and enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.**

- 4.1 Develop and present a variety of print and nonprint texts
  - 4.1.1 Assess text creation context

4.1.2 Consider and address form, structure and medium  
 4.1.3 Develop content  
 4.1.4 Use production, publication presentation strategies and technologies consistent with context  
 4.2 Improve thoughtfulness, effectiveness and correctness of communication  
 4.2.1 Enhance thought and understanding and support and detail  
 4.2.2 Enhance organization  
 4.2.3 Consider and address matters of choice  
 4.2.4 Edit text for matters of correctness

**General Outcome 5**  
**Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.**

5.1 Respect others and strengthen community  
 5.1.1 Use language and image to show respect and consideration  
 5.1.2 Appreciate diversity of expression, opinion and perspective  
 5.1.3 Recognize accomplishments and events  
 5.2 Work within a group  
 5.2.1 Cooperate with others, and contribute to group processes  
 5.2.2 Understand and evaluate group processes

(Alberta Learning, 2003, pp.13-14)

**Specific Outcomes:**

1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions  
 2.1 Construct meaning from text and context  
 2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge  
 3.1.2 Plan inquiry or research, and identify information needs and sources  
 4.1.1 Assess text creation context  
 5.1.2 Appreciate diversity of expression, opinion and perspective

(Alberta Learning, 2003, pp.13-14)

**Day 3 and 4**

**Lesson Outline:** Tell students that the not-game addresses have been emailed to their Gmail accounts and that the pictures and titles of the games are linked to specific web addresses. This will prevent students from “accidentally” playing not-games that may not be as appropriate as others. Students should open their Gmail and play the not-games after they have been reminded about the premise and philosophy behind the not-game. Some games require immense patience, immense only because some students may be particularly accustomed to face-paced video games that don’t allow for reflection but rather demand fast reflexes instead. They should choose three or four not-games and narrow it down later. Some not-games are more like puzzles and so have to be played more than once and more than by one player so that they accumulate as many perspectives as possible. They should play each game individually and then pair up into their groupings to play the games together for maximum perspective. Encourage students to play these at home so that they can think about them as much as possible. Given their artistic bent, it is wise to think about the game creator’s philosophy and why they would spend so much time creating them in the first place –and for free. Their objective is to choose a not-game(s) to connect to the short story, trying to make thematic connections: which not-game(s) relate most and why. In the specific outcomes listed below, note the emphasis on non-print forms, gaming



being an incredibly popular choice amongst young people today. Because not-games run counter to the culture of gaming, the teacher may want to model one of the simpler games in front of the class so that they can begin to see the kind of questioning required to unpack the game. This could be done on Day 3 and then the individual/group work could be done in the computer lab the next day.

**Materials:** computer lab, student Gmail addresses, not-game link sheet mailed to student Gmail.

**Specific Outcomes:**

- 1.1 Discover possibilities
  - 1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
  - 1.1.2 Experiment with language, image and structure
- 2.1.2 Understand and interpret content
- 2.3 Respond to a variety of print and nonprint texts
  - 2.3.1 Connect self, text, culture and milieu
  - 2.3.2 Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance of print and nonprint texts
  - 2.3.3 Appreciate the effectiveness and artistry of print and nonprint texts

(Alberta Learning, 2003, pp.13-14)

**Day 5 and 6**

**Lesson Outline:** Students should spend time sharing their answers to the questions and focusing on specific quotes and incidents within the short story. They will want to make choices about their presentation format and make decisions about the content for each slide. Show them what Prezi looks like and have the website explanation ready to go. They may want to use the laptop for researching the context of the short story, poem, and/or not-game. The teacher may want to recap strategies for determining indirect character traits and pointing out the connection between character change and theme. Going over presentation necessities would be important too.

**Materials:** a laptop for each group, extra copies of the short story and the questions, Prezi website on the media projector, ready to go.

**Specific Outcomes:**

- 1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions

b. modify tentative interpretations and tentative positions by weighing and assessing the validity of own and others' ideas, observations and opinions; and identify areas for further inquiry or research

p.17)

(Alberta Learning, 2003,

2.1.1 Discern and analyze context	
	c. explain how understanding the interplay between text and context can influence an audience to appreciate a text from multiple perspectives [for example, an audience can appreciate how historical and societal forces present in the context in which a text is set can affect the style, diction and point of view chosen by the text creator  (Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 23)
3.1.2 Plan inquiry or research, and identify information needs and sources	
	e. develop and draw from a repertoire of effective strategies and technologies for gathering, generating and recording information  (Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 42)
5.2 Work within a group	
5.2.1 Cooperate with others, and contribute to group processes	

### Day 7

**Lesson Outline:** Focus on the personal response of the diploma exam, part A, walking students through a duo tang (or <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/diplomaexams/examples.aspx>) of student exemplars of personal responses. Choose a specific month and year for an English 30-1 exam and go through the question, the prompting texts and how students handled it. Show them the standards and how each one was marked. Be sure to read an entire creative response and talk about the difference between implicit and explicit responses and show how student ideas can be embedded implicitly in a creative response. Students need to understand what it means when they choose a format and how it is personally up to them when it comes to how they write their response. “Personal” does not have to mean that they need to connect the text to their personal lives, though it could. They could write an analytical essay on one, two or all three of the texts if they wanted to do so: it’s personally up to them. This is what “personal” means in the personal response question. This is an important factor of metacognition, knowing what you do best given a specific task. Tell students to read the rest of the student exemplars for that exam writing so that they can see the whole range of both creative, analytical and narrative styles from a satisfactory level to an excellent level on the scoring rubric (See appendix).

**Materials:** Class set of blue duo tangs or website on the media projector.

<b>Specific Outcomes:</b>	
2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge	
	c. use metacognitive strategies to relate prior understandings of textual elements used in previously studied texts to understandings of new texts d. explain how prior understanding of textual elements, like theme, in previously studied texts can assist in understanding new texts (Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 25).

**Metacognition**

Language study helps students develop an awareness of the strategies that they use to complete learning tasks successfully and to talk about, write about and represent themselves as learners. In essence, the study of language enables students to develop metacognition: it enables them to become more consciously aware of their own thinking and learning processes and to gain greater control of these processes. Essentially, metacognition involves reflection, critical awareness and analysis, monitoring, and reinvention. Students who are engaged in metacognition recognize the requirements of the task at hand, reflect on the strategies and skills they may employ, appraise their strengths and weaknesses in the use of these strategies and skills, make modifications, and monitor subsequent strategies. Many of the specific outcomes in this program of studies emphasize metacognition. Students recall and describe *what* they have done in a particular situation, and recount *how*, *when* and *why*. Students then assess the value of the strategies they have used, make modifications to them or abandon them in favour of new approaches, and monitor the use of these reworked or new strategies in future situations (Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 3).

**Day 8 through to Day11**

**Lesson Outline:** Students may need a day or two more, or perhaps a weekend to complete the presentations, but some degree of choice is important in terms of which group wants to go on what day. Students need to be told that their final personal response for the unit does not have to be about the short story/poem/not-game(s) on which they focused. They may find that they would prefer to write on a different group's focus. It depends on the question they get for the final personal response. In the past, I have allowed students to choose the personal response question from the past that best goes with their story, poem, and/or not-game but this could be a teacher choice. If the teacher forces their hand, this is when they may choose to write on a story that better fits the question rather than writing on their specific story. This is a good lesson to learn, encouraging students to have a secondary source to rely upon in case the question they're assigned doesn't work well with their first choice. For example, the story, "My Parents' Bedroom" would not work well if the topic was on "happiness," given that the whole story takes place during the Rwandan genocide. Students will watch the other presentations and view the connections that other students made between the various texts. The focus will be on teasing out the connections between texts, themselves, and the author's intent.

**General Outcomes: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms, and respond personally, critically and creatively.**

**Specific Outcomes:**

- 2.2 Understand and appreciate textual forms, elements and techniques
- 2.2.1 Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content

2.3.1 Connect self, text, culture and milieu

- a. identify and consider personal, moral, ethical and cultural perspectives when studying literature and other texts; and reflect on and monitor how perspectives change as a result
- b. form positions on issues that arise from text study; and assess the ideas, information, arguments, emotions, experiences, values and beliefs expressed in works of literature and other texts in light of issues that are personally meaningful and culturally significant
- c. assess the choices and motives of characters and people portrayed in texts in light of the choices and motives of self and others

(Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 28).

### Day 12

**Lesson Outline:** Students write the personal response in a 67 minute block. They can write in response to a prompting question using either the short story, the poem, the not-game or all three texts. Depending on how much scaffolding a teacher wants to provide the class, they may bring in the short stories and poems into the computer lab where they write the final in-class personal response. They do have the texts on the diploma exam so there is no need to make the text inaccessible. This response is more about making connections between the question, the text(s), and one's personal life, creative output, or one's analytical insights. Remind students to use the planning page (see Appendix), especially if they are responding with a creative text.

**Materials:** Planning page put in digital format so that it operates as the title page for their personal response.

**General Outcomes: Students will write . . . to comprehend literature and other texts in . . . print, . . . , and respond personally, critically and [/or] creatively.**

**Specific Outcomes:**

4.1.3 Develop content

- a. take ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging
- b. recognize and assess personal variables [such as personal experience and prior knowledge] and contextual variables [such as availability of time and resources] that influence the selection of a topic, concept or idea; and address these variables to increase the likelihood of successful text creation
- c. establish a focus for text creation, and communicate scope by framing an effective controlling idea or describing a strong unifying effect

4.2 Improve thoughtfulness, effectiveness and correctness of communication

4.2.1 Enhance thought and understanding and support and detail

4.2 Improve thoughtfulness, effectiveness and correctness of communication

(Alberta Learning, 2003, pp. 50-61).

## Appendix F

### “The Dissolving Dream,” by George, English 30-1 student.

Based on the not-game *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009).

I emerged onto the roof, the door sighing as it crept back behind me. A man stood at the far end of the roof, his briefcase lay perfectly on its side, hugging the cold confines of the concrete. The man was no different from any other, clean cut hair, a crisp business suit, no colour to be called for. But something bizarre was unfolding. Normally most of the employees would be latched to their computer screens like leeches to an unsuspecting human. Today, however, had proved to be a radically distorted sort of day. Nothing was following the sequence of things. I had not arisen to be greeted by the same mundane phrases that spewed from my well-intending wife. I had not been greeted in the elevator by that strange lady who had goaded me to break free of the cycle. The wall of cars that I had to face on a daily basis was non-existent. I hardly was surprised to enter my workplace to find it devoid of life... although it already had been lifeless before, the normal shells of people that occupied such space were not present. When I approached the roof, one of the final locations of my divergent actions, I was rather surprised to find this one still existing entity. The situation that I encountered, though, was strangely odd and a little perturbing. The man stood poised on the edge of the rail, gazing out towards the horizon of grey. Silent. Faceless. There was no sign of anything actually existing behind the indifferent presence that was before me. Confused and a little intimidated by this foreboding circumstance, I stepped forward to attempt to inquire as to what was happening today? Why is there nobody around? Why are you standing on that railing? Why our world so empty? When I approached within arm's reach of the fellow, he did what I had suspected he was going to do anyway. He suddenly, as if cut from a puppeteer's string, collapsed forward and

hurdled towards the cold, unforgiving ground that spread before him. I could only watch numb and helpless as the figure collided into the ground below with a sickening crack, twitched, and lay still.

I swiftly crashed down through the various rooms of the building, replaying the horrific incident that I had just witnessed. Had I seemed so lifeless as I had hurdled toward the ground yesterday... or was that last week? A year ago perhaps? Oh what does it matter, that reality is behind me now. All the time that existed between my actions of deviation mattered not. There had been no spiritual investment anyway. I smashed through the back door and hurried to the figure that was haphazardly sprawled before me. Black, inky fluid was seeping from underneath the corpse as I approached it. I was remotely surprised to see he possessed any life juices, he had seemed so drained, so dead before he even hit the ground. My knees buckled and I sank into the fluid creeping outward from the body. Melancholy and fear had overtaken my body. "Relax," I soothed myself. "Think of this logically." I recalled the events that occurred before this unreal world took form. Okay... so first I had my old life. A steady job, a loving wife, a nice car, a smart-looking suit, a- *and no purpose*. "Stop doing that!" I grasped at my cranium. I used to be able to think in a clear-cut manner, but these odd fragments of thought always slice through my normal patterns of thought. At times, recently, I have found myself perceiving things in such a manner reflexively. *This is what you wanted wasn't it?* Well yes I wanted to break the cycle of my old life... but I hadn't considered that there must be something to fill the void once society was removed.

While this flurry of thought marauded my mind, the pool of dark fluid that consumed the ground around me began to convulse. Suddenly wrested from my thoughts, I gazed in bewilderment as the fluid began to... change. It began to take on hues that I had never been seen

in such multitude before. Blazing oranges, like that leaf, glaring greens, much like the sign indicating the roof, and soft pinks, like the wet nose of that cow, all began to streak through the fluid. Colours from those T.V. commercials began taking solid form on this growing fluid, but unlike with the screen, they remained rather than appearing for an instant and then teasingly flashing away. I staggered back, fearful of the spectacle, but raised my hands to discover the fluid was still stuck to my skin. It suddenly shot in all directions at once, covering me in the volatile fluid. My eyes began to burn a searing pain and as cries of agony sliced through the air, I became vaguely aware of something happening to the body. Flashes of colour, nature, people without suits, and other such aspects of the world fired through my mind. Then... there was nothing.

For an instant, I was immersed in darkness. I was afraid. The feeling of suspension and weightlessness was occupying my vessel. There was no direction, no structure or order. Nothing of the old world remained. I needed to get out of here. But what if there was no escape? Had this been the price I had to pay for tearing asunder the comfortably secure views I held before. *But isn't this what you wanted?* Enough! I screamed... wait, I had screamed? My eyes snapped open. I was standing where I had been before, I was back. The world seemed to be coming away at the hinges. What had I done that was sparking such degeneration? I remembered the catalyst of this all, the elevator lady. I had always taken the elevator down to the garage alone at 7:29am every morning until one day, I can't really recall, this old, grizzled lady was suddenly there. At first, I had ignored her. Actually, I never really spoke to her until I began to feel the emptiness. That floating sadness that was always peering over my shoulder, turning everything I touched into a meaningless endeavor. At the height of such feeling, the lady had one day turned to me and murmured, "Five more steps until you are a new person." Had I

not completed the steps? Does that not entail that I am a new person? Suddenly it dawned upon me. The voice... the one that always had cut into my thoughts ever since that encounter... was that him... this new person. Where was this voice now, it was always prone to popping into my thoughts at such times as this. I suddenly remembered my arm and the fluid and slowly lifted my hand. I nearly shouted. It was a creamy peach colour, not the same judgmental white that always haunted my vision. I suddenly realized that the environment around me was different. I spun around in a full circle to behold a world of colour. What had been grey had all along been a hue of something vibrant. Weird purple, yellow, and red buildings reached toward the sky around me. The sky was a deep violet with orange streaks crisscrossing through. Once I had recovered, I noticed the body next to my feet. He was still grey and lifeless, very much out of place to this new world. A tree might look nice there, I thought. The unfortunate fate of this man in his succumbing to misery and society was very much contrasting the disorderly, colourful world around us. His body, as if by my design, twitched and suddenly morphed into a growing brown form with green appendages sticking out at various angles. A tree... a tree now stood there. Wait a moment, had this actually been of my doing. Understanding began to grip my thoughts. This world... this world was a product of my thoughts. But I had many thoughts, why was it reacting only to certain ones? "It is because I was blind before, I did not have the state of mind to perceive the environment around me." The words flowed through my mouth without concentrated thought. Such words were normally spoken by that annoying voice I thought with irritation. Hold... I had just spoken those words, given them meaning... had I become the voice? A bubbly, warm feeling began coursing through my body. Happiness. I hadn't felt such a thing in a long time. As I looked around me again, slowly, I began to realize the true nature of this world. It was the physical manifestation of my spirit. Before it had been dark and grey but now



that I had become enlightened as to a new frame of thought... I was no longer blind. I could see. Now I had a purpose, I could redesign this world to match the one I desire... all it will require is a little empathy... and a great dosage of emotional freedom.

## Appendix G

### **Talk Aloud and Interview with Student who Plays *Every day the same dream*.**

Tanner: Unh, You're right about the music. Arrow keys. Wardrobe. A business suit.

Interesting. Alarm. See. Ah, it turns it off. Neat. (Laughs) A wife. Odd, I guess.

TV. Hunh, that's portrayed as like, like it gives you a seizure or something (Laughs).

Ah, I'm late, like I'm at work. Elevator button. Assuming this opens the door. What?

How do I get in here. There we go. Hello. "Five more steps and you'll be a new person" (reading caption under the woman in the elevator). Hmm. Parking lot. Took

five steps! Nothing changed, huh. Uh, I wonder what happens if you crashed. Or can you even crash? It all seems a predestiny thing, almost. Huh, I'm predestined to be

late! (Laughs.) "Go to your cubicle!" (reading the caption under the boss). What a

jerk. Hunh, they all look exactly the same. Maybe a conformity thing. Wow, which

one is mine. So many. Ah, there you go. Oh, wow, I'm right in the middle. This would be a terrible existence. Alarm again. Wardrobe. Same stuff. Okay. Television,

off. Hunh, yeah, sunlight. I get it. There's got to be something that changes in this.

"Five more steps and you will be new person" (reading the caption under the elevator lady). Hunh. I have a feeling that this has something to do with the elevator lady's

rhyme; I don't know why. I'm going to try to crash! It is possible, hunh. I didn't

notice that last time: every car's the same too. The tree only has one unique feature.

"You're late again" (reading the caption under the boss), and the stock hasn't changed at all: there is not a new day on the stocks; the day didn't even change or it doesn't look

like it did. These people are perfectly in sync; not only do they look exactly alike.

Hmm. One question I have is where does my briefcase go? Oh, I see. Don't go to my

cubicle. I see it. Escape. Yes! And this is going to be suicide, isn't it? My guess is if this is suicide, jump. He hates his everyday life 'cause it's the exact same every time, so he jumps. And then he wakes up again: what?! Now, this is getting confusing! Did he fail to commit suicide or something! (Laughs.) What? There's got to be some other choice that I haven't done yet. That's it. I wonder, can I walk pass the elevator? Hit the button in case I can. Nah, I can't. "Four more steps and you will be a new person" (reading the caption under the elevator lady). Oh, I see! I get it now! This is an anti-conformist thing, isn't it? You gotta figure out what's different and everything. I wonder. I'm gonna to try going left this time. Ah ha! "I can take you to a quiet place" (reading the caption under the homeless person). Graveyard. This kind of correlates to suicide doesn't it? Hmm. This is interesting. Hunh. Now, I know to go right at the bottom here. This is a white bottle here, this time? No. There's going to be three this time. Yes! (reading the caption under the elevator lady). Okay, I'm doing this in record time. This won't be 25 minutes (laughs). I'm determined. Crosswalk sign. This is going to be another suicide thing: there's going to be a car isn't it? No, can't walk through it; I see. That's their way of stopping me from getting three steps. Ah, let's see: what if I just refused to move. I just refused to go? Hunh. That's not one of them. It's got a do something to do with this leaf here. Come on, leaf. See if I can get back to my car. Ah, I waited for it to fall this time. There we go. Ah, the stock changed today! Neat. I see. Every time I get a new step, it's a new day, right?! I don't know how suicide would count as a step for a new day, though. There's something in here that's really hard to find that I found last time, but it's not the same, isn't it? My cubicle. I'm gonna check this out again, but I don't think it's over here. No, there's

nothing over here. Let's just sit in my cubicle this time. Hunh. Alarm. Wonder what happens if I don't get changed? "Dress up you're late" (reading the caption under his wife). Nah, I refuse. Hunh (Laughs). This is going to be weird. "Two more steps and I'll be a new person" (reading the caption under the elevator lady). So the leaf was one. I have a feeling that not getting dressed will be another one 'cause they all look exactly the same, so if I'm not dressed with no briefcase. Let's see. No, over here is nothing. Even the windows look the same. Faster. There we go. Bah. The leaf's gone today (laughs). Interesting. "What? Where is your tie?" (reading the caption under the boss). I don't care; I didn't wear it. I'm fired. Now, this is going to lead to the last step, isn't it? What if I come in tomorrow? I'm gonna get my job back; that's what I'm going to do. I'm determined to get my job back today unless the day hasn't changed this time. I kind of noticed last time, I think, the stock was going down. Maybe the business will collapse, altogether. "One more step ..." (reading the caption under the elevator lady). What could it be that I've done differently every time? Maybe if I? No. Can't hit the button on that. I know the parking symbol is the only thing unique about the building, but I don't know how I can use that. I can't use that. not move from your law what if I show up super late? I already got fired there. Let's see. The tree's the same. Car's the same. Don't think I can go back. No. "You're late" (reading the caption under the boss). Go to my cubicle. Can I go through this? No. The stock is collapsing; maybe the company is not fall or something. Try and talk to one of them, maybe? My cubicle? I don't want to sit in my cubicle? Talk? Talk? Nope. Man, they're moronic! They're just there. There's gotta be something I'm missing here. Last step's probably the hardest one, isn't it? Yeah, I'm not going to get

changed again this time, but I have a feeling, it's gonna... Ah, her text doesn't change for this. "One more step. . . (reading the caption under the elevator lady). What could it be? Can I go back into the elevator maybe and go up? Nope. Nothing here again. Hmm. Running out of hope on this last step. Hopefully it doesn't fire me again. Okay, I already went through this little... What could it be? No, I've turned the alarm off before. Hmm. Television? (Pause) Talk to her twice, maybe. Can't talk to her twice. This is kind of confusing. Oh, I get it: doors! Nope, can't use 'em without using the button. No, it's not missing the elevator or being late. Maybe if I don't talk to the elevator lady at all this time. That's it, isn't it? It's got something to do... No, dangit. Hunh. Where are the black people in this anyways; everybody's white (laughs), and they're all in a business suit. They're all in the exact same car, like there's no diversity at all in this. I have a feeling it's right in front of my face, and I just miss it every time. "You're late. Go to my cubicle" (reading the caption under the boss). I don't want to go to my cubicle. I wonder if I walk right back to work after he tells me to go to my cubicle? No. Hunh. This last one's tricky. Hunh. Can I look at the stock? No. Talk to this guy? No. Hunh. Huhn. I think the last step is to give up? I don't think it has anything to do with the game, or am I wrong? (Pauses for quite a long time.) Okay. If I wait, does she make breakfast like when the leaf fell or something? I don't even know. That's another thing: Why is she always cooking breakfast when I'm late? That's gotta be a jerk move – you never get to eat anything! (Pause.) Light bulbs the same, button the same, click click click click. Nah, it goes down again. "One last step..." (reading the caption under the elevator lady). It's gotta be something; I think it's something theoretical because I think I've done everything that you can do

differently. “Parking” (reading sign). I’m going to stop here and let traffic build for a while. Wonder what happens. I’m going to wait 10 more seconds. Unh. No. What could it be? There's this tree, which looks the same every time. This guy which says the same thing every time; these guys which do the exact same every time. How none of them have a briefcase and I do, I don't know. (Laughs) Hmm. Windows parallel the same cubicle; everybody's completely in sync; even the mouse. I cannot find this last step. Unh. Is this last step to just not play anymore? Gotta be the last step, isn't it? This is my last attempt before the night falls.

Scott: Do you think people live like this?

Tanner: Yes, sadly!

Scott: Why?

Tanner: Well, I mean: suicide, depression. Suicide wasn't that far off. I think I had, I have a feeling I found that step first by accident, and it should've been the last one I found. (Pause.) ‘Cause I mean I don't know what they're talking about was a quiet place over here? Was it drugs, but the depression from conformity like this where absolutely everything's the same can lead to drug abuse, can lead to ... When he picked up the leaf I think it kind of represented his hope in life, like when the last leaf on a tree died, it kind of like, just depressed him more, you know, and then when he comes in in a different suit, the one time ever, and his boss fires him. His business, his stock is crashing. Everything kind of a cycle of depression; it's kind of like a machine, but I don't see any last step here; other than to stop (Laughs)

Scott: So why don't you want to stop [playing the game]?

Tanner: Because I feel like there should be a last step and that's probably the main moral of this game, is that there is never a last step but you always think there is so that why you don't stop doing this. That would be my guess. And that was my last one; I'm done now. I, is there actually?

Scott: (nods)

Tanner: There is a last step?

Tanner: Where? How?

Scott: Unh, this, uh, this is the first time that I've actually noticed that there's no writing in the last step to guide you to the last step, that you actually have to find the last step, but there's no writing to indicate that there is a step there, and that's why you're missing it.

Tanner: Hunh.

Scott Un, so that, that's an eye-opener for me because I hadn't noticed that before.

Tanner: Unh.

Scott: And you're right, people complete the last step and then, the game ends and you can start again if you want to but you start exactly where you began again.

Tanner: So is it like a hidden thing?

Scott: It is a hidden thing, but there's a very short window which you can access it. If you miss that window then you keep going through which is a lot like life.

Tanner: Yeah.

Scott: If you miss the window, you'll, you'll, uh, you'll just keep repeating the same thing over and over and over and over again. Those opportunities only come up once in a while.

Tanner: Is it something to do with the cars?

Scott: Yes.

Tanner: I knew it! (Laughs) I knew it was something to do with the cars; I just couldn't figure what it was. Do you crash it or something?

Scott: Uh, no, you tried that and it didn't work.

Tanner: Oh yeah, that's right. I also tried stopping it and being late, but that didn't work either.

Scott: Yeah, there was only one thing you had to do because there was no writing, but had there been writing you would have done it.

Tanner: Oh, I think I know what it is: honk the horn, maybe? I'll try it this time.

Scott: Remember the window of opportunity is very narrow.

Tanner: I hope I get this right. (Sighs) The window of opportunity is very narrow. There it is. I got into my car. You have to click as you go through.

Scott: No, no, no, no –ah!. (Laughs.)

Tanner: I went through it again. I went through it again. I should have paid more attention after I got the ability to go into my car.

Scott: That's right.

Tanner: I get it. I think I get it; I'm going to rush through this, real quick. I don't know which is faster, suicide or cubicle. (laughs)

Scott: So why do think that people live their lives like this?

Tanner: Well, lots of them don't have a choice.

Scott: Why not?

Tanner: Do bad in school, don't get a good job, start poor, end poor.

Scott: Isn't this a fairly good job, though?



Tanner: Depends what you count as a good job. I mean being an average conformist person, does the exact same as everyone else isn't exactly what I'd want to do with my life; it's kind of boring and pointless.

Scott: But yet you think there's a lot of people who live their life like this?

Tanner: Yeah.

Scott: How much do you think they earn a year?

Tanner: Probably like a hundred and fifty grand at tops.

Scott: How much do you think that boss earns a year?

Tanner: A lot more. Like three hundred or plus, depending on how big the business is. That guy is probably going bankrupt because his stock appears to be collapsing.

Scott: So these people have... Explain to me one more time why they live this life.

Tanner: Not sure. (Pause.) Cow. (Laughs.) He just pets the cow's nose. (Laughs.) Pretty funny. Let's keep going. See what's beyond the cow. My car again, hunh. There we go. I see. And that was the last thing and then the game will end. I find it interesting 'cause I live on an acreage so he just pets the cow, like where did he go to pet the cow anywhere near a city; that's interesting to me because usually there, there not even within close proximity or anywhere near where a city road would be. Whuh, I hope my parents don't freak out at me. They shouldn't. My grandma usually just does her crossword puzzles when I do stuff like this. Game didn't end? That's interesting.

Scott: What's interesting?

Tanner: The game didn't end after the last step, if that was the last step. Not sure though. There's no wife now. What happened here? It looks. The wife really ruins things when she's not there (Laughs). Like on Interiors. There's no elevator lady; no one's

here. Hunh. That's odd. Let me guess, this is the day the business collapsed. I'm gonna guess. Stock's gonna go right to the bottom, business is gonna be collapsed, wife's gonna have left him, elevator lady's gonna be out of a job. No one's gonna have a car anymore. This is gonna be every day the same. This is gonna be the day it ends or something. This is where you're supposed to jump, I think. Not sure though. Huhn. (Pause) Now, I'm debating whether I should jump or just sit in my cubicle again. I don't think I can sit in my cubicle. No I can't even. Only thing left to do is jump. That's a pretty strong message. Gonna a fal- . (Pause.) That's the game. That's interesting. Now, I'm trying, having a hard time figuring out whether it showed him at the end jumping, or it showed someone else jumping the last, other person other than him in his business before it collapsed, jumping, but I'm not sure, so I'm going to leave that at that. My guess, though, would probably be is that it was him, just because of the specificness of the game being everyone else was not there. His wife I don't think would not have jumped. It wouldn't make sense. Elevator lady doesn't make sense. I think it was just, uh, portraying him being kind of a ghost after he jumped off, when he died.

Scott: Why do you think the game designer set that up that way?

Tanner: Well, so he could go back and finally not, like, be in a different kind of day, maybe, is one possibility, but the more likely possibility was so that maybe he could go back and stop himself, I would think? And then he could just change his daily routine from there somehow. It doesn't matter how; he could find a way, you know.

Scott: So why do people live their lives like this?

Tanner: Well, 'cause they fall into a cycle of depression and then they stop caring and realizing how bad it is, and then they remain stagnant in the cycle over and over and over again.

Scott: For how long?

Tanner: Until they die or figure it out that they're in one. (Laughs). And then sometimes when they figured out they don't even care, so, I mean.

Scott: Why don't they care? Why don't they ever figure it out?

Tanner: Less motivation, like they don't, they don't like have very much motivation to do anything else. They're kind of trained to think with literal thought.

Scott: Hmm. Why are they trained that way or how are they trained that way?

Tanner: Hmm. School, kind of. School, video games, advertisements, all the things that show people being kind of moronic, and the ones that show-

Scott: Define for me moronic.

Tanner: Like, like they just do stupid things, and it kind of combines them together as a group, and they just keep doing it anyways over and over again. Almost similar to the definition of insanity, but not quite because it's got slight differences but I mean, not really. I mean, it's kind of, kind of like idiocy, but it's like it's concealed idiocy like they don't realize that they're being an idiot when they do it.

Scott: Are there any professions that you see yourself, that look like that?

Tanner: Look like?

Scott: Do you see yourself in that, in that kind of job?

Tanner: Maybe for a little while, but not for long. Long enough so that I can earn some money and then go to a different job that I like, probably.

Scott: So that's why they do that to earn money?

Tanner: Probably. Lots of them get trapped in it and never leave. Yeah, that won't be me.

(Laughs). I'd hate that. I would hate that so much; I'd hate it every day I went there.

(Laughs.)

Scott: So do you think there are different kinds of suicides and that that suicide is a metaphor?

Tanner: Well, it's an escape, a metaphor for escape.

Scott: So how do people escape that kind of lifestyle?

Tanner: The only way they think they can at the point in time that they figure it out, and they just jump off a building or you know. (Laughs.)

Scott: It just seems so a, too a ....

Tanner: It's kind of gruesome, a little.

Scott: Pretty violent.

Tanner: Yeah.

Scott: Are there other ways of escape?

Tanner: Ah well, you can get another job, you can search around, you can start doing other things, but lots people like to take the easy way out, and, kind of suicide. (Laughs.) I mean, ah, I mean, ah, people don't like to fix broken things, really, they like to just discard them and get a new one.

Scott: Even when it's their life?!

Tanner: Even, some people I would think. (Pause.) I remember I had a friend cut his wrists and he said because he thought, he was depressed, really depressed because his mom committed suicide and ah, he'd, he'd always message me on MSN and ask me for help and I would say that you're not my friend until you stop cutting your wrists. And he tells me to this day that's was one of the only reasons he stopped cutting his wrists

because he didn't get sympathy for it. He got less sympathy and no support for doing it, so he stopped doing it. And that's kind of one of the things behind suicide:

Everybody looks, "Oh that poor person," instead of going, "Oh that person's an idiot; why would he do that and the only people that really do that is the family members afterwards, but they don't make it public as they're thinking that; I think. They try understand and, they kind of they try to understand and they also will never really understand cause they probably would have never done it themselves, really. This is pretty much all I have to say on that topic though.

Scott: Do you think the system (pause) makes people do that? And describe the system as you see it in this game.

Tanner: The system as in this, like a repetitive, monotonous lifestyle, mechanical almost. It does and it doesn't. It's a combination of the system and a weak mind. If someone is strong-minded and strong willed, they'll get through it. Most people aren't strong-minded so most people so would it would lead to them going somewhere similar to that or at least may be not complete suicide but a degree of it. Great depression, maybe a mental break, or something. Lots of possible things that come from depression: Heart disease, all kinds of stuff.

Scott: (Pause.) Why didn't he become a homeless guy? Why don't people become homeless guys? They don't live system, systemic lives.

Tanner: Well, I mean, it's kind of one, shameful, two, you can't afford anything you want so I mean if you can't afford anything it's almost like, it's almost like committing suicide, if you can't do anything; I mean, it's the same thing. You'd just be on a different path as a homeless guy, you'd be sitting looking at a wall all day. Instead of going, looking at

a cubicle all day. I mean I'd rather be looking at a cubicle all day than a wall. At least in a cubicle you're busy, in a wall you're just (pause) spaced, looking at a wall.

Scott: In a cubicle you're looking at a wall too (laughs).

Tanner: Yeah, but you're, most of the time there's a computer screen, you're getting work or something, you can focus on something to pass the time. Homeless guy, what are you going to do? Are you going to count how many cracks on the sidewalk? Or I mean it's boring. It's very boring.

Scott: There's more purpose.

Tanner: There's more purpose, yeah, even though it's very little purpose, kind of a mechanical purpose and one person doesn't really matter in it.

Scott: You've been a student for twelve or thirteen years now. Do you think your last thirteen years have been anything like this?

Tanner: Well.

Scott: Like the game, *Everyday the Same Dream*?

Tanner: Well, I kind of know it's like that because with me, like it's not a marks thing because I always have high enough marks to do, but it's just monotonous because you come in everyday, and you sit in the same desk and the seating plan, same teachers, same crap, same people don't like you, same people like you, usually, unless you do something to make someone mad at you or something, or you make friends with someone which is very very rare. Hunh. Usually mad would probably come before fixing. But I mean it gets really repetitive after, like, like I told my dad I wanna kind of want a year off school before I go to university because it, it's too much just the same. Like normally if I had the same work ethic I do now as I did in grade 9, I'd have almost 100% in all

my classes probably. Like my math, my calculus class I have an 80 and all my other classes I have an 80. This is the only one I'm doing bad in because I'm bad with figurative speech, but I mean, I have like a 90 something in Chemistry, and I hardly do any homework at all. I don't really I daze off a lot in the classes too, and I mean, I still get good marks in them but I feel bad for the people who don't because they'll probably end up like that. But I mean, it's hard not to end up like that; they set it up purposely so that the most important years are the ones after you've already done it for hundreds and hundreds of years and you just stop caring anymore. Like in elementary, you get an A and you're high-fiving everyone, like in threes and in secondary, you're like Junior High you're like, "Oh wahoo, I got a good mark," and here, people, you see people high-five each other when they fail because they don't care. They just give up, and they don't care anymore about what happens here because they've done for it so long because they don't think anything bad will happen from failing it by the time they get here. And they get trapped in that, kind of. Let's face it; if you don't get a diploma, you're not gonna probably get a job anymore. People always say you don't need one anymore, but I kinda think that's bullshit because it's very few people who don't need a diploma. Very few. Like we're talking about Bill Gates. Kay, well, you really think that there's a Bill Gates at the back of the classroom that gets a 40 and all this. One out of a trillion people maybe. Like, there's not many people who can not pass high school and be successful. And I mean there's lots of people who don't pass high school for a long time because they hate the way everything runs. Like I mean our final tests; I hate our final exams because I just hate the way how you get like a really good mark all the way up to the end of the year like it did in my 30 course and then it drops your mark

like 7% because they make it like a really ridiculously, overly, hard final exam that doesn't have anything correspondingly; like lots of the questions are not even curriculum corresponding on some of them; like some, some of the social questions aren't actually what we've been talking about in our social examples, so how does that have any relevance to what I've learnt in my class, and you lose marks for that, massive marks 'cause it's like 50% of your mark. That's another thing that just really kills motivation to even do anything 'cause I mean, let's face it, you could get a 50 in this class, and go in and study hard for the diploma and get a hundred on the diploma and you'd have a 75, so I mean really it's all about the one test at the end of the year... and it's just kind of stupid when it's like that. (Pause.) Like it's like the same thing kind of with this job, because once someone gets asked to get out of their cubicle to go to a better job, you turn it down, or you fail it, and it's failed; like it doesn't matter how many years you spent doing a job properly in the cubicle; you failed your chance (laughs). You don't usually get a second one. (Pause) – I should probably get going.

Scott: Well, thank-you.

Tanner: No problem.

Scott: Just hit the stop button.



**Appendix H****Interview with Fran, English 30-1 student: November 12, 2013 at 2:35 to 2:55pm.**

Scott: Okay, we're live; I know it feels a bit weird, uh but uh, we'll, uh, just go through these questions and, uh, we'll just sort of get an idea of what your experience with not-games. Uh, you were in my class, uh, from February until June of 2013, and so it's been quite a while since you've been in the course; we've had a whole summer since then, and, um, I just, um, would like to know what you remember about not-games in English? Let's discuss that one: what do you remember about them?

Fran: Um, I remember doing projects on them in that we; it kind of helped me see, like, what was going around in the world, 'cause we're kind of like, I don't know –we're not like– um, I need the word; I don't remember; we're not exposed to like most of that kind of like ideas, and I feel that the not-game kind of helped me see what was out there, more.

Scott: Um, what kind of things? Can you think of one or two things that you saw that were out there that you didn't know prior to seeing the not-games?

Fran: More like the poverty that is going around in the world and like how people are being treated, opposed to how we're living . . .

Scott: Right, okay, and is there a specific not-game that you're thinking of or that you can remember?

Fran: It's was the Afghanistan game. I don't remember.

Scott: Right, okay.

Fran: I don't remember the actual name.

Scott: Yeah, it was called the *Afghanistan*.

Fran: Oh, yeah.

Scott: And, uh, so that was a forty-five minute game, that was a longer game.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: And so you were impacted by the poverty you saw there. Ah, was there a particular scene you were thinking of?

Fran: Um, I think it was when the character was, uh at the school, I think.

Scott: Yeah, that's right.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: So it's interesting that you can remember those details from, uh, so long ago without any prompts. And do you remember what happened to the school?

Fran: Was it blown up or something?

Scott: Yeah, yeah, blown-up and burnt down by the Taliban. Right. K. And uh, so, what, uh, how would you characterize their impacts, so their impact is, more or less understanding what's out there: the Poverty. Is there anything else, you would add to that?

Fran: Um. I'm just trying, the *Everything the Same Dream Game*?

Scott: Right

Fran: It like made me realize that like everyone has their daily routine and it doesn't really switch. Like, Every day you wake up and do like the same thing and nothing every really changes. Which is. I mean, I never really realized it until I saw it in the game.

Scott: Interesting, yet you've been living that life, like I assume you kind of repeat the same thing, at least on school days.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: And yet that game drew attention to the fact that everyone is going through that routine on a daily basis.

Fran: Yeah. It was just interesting to see.

Scott: Ummm. And yet that wasn't something that was made apparent in the literature we studied.

Fran: No.

Scott: Like say books for example or films.

Fran: *Shakes head, "No."*

Scott: Uh, so of the Games that you can recall, which one was your favorite and why?

Fran: Unh, mostly *Every day the same dream* because of the same reasons that, um, we basically have the same routine but one thing can change it drastically.

Scott: Right, right, okay. And what was the one thing that could change it drastically?

Fran: Um, I think they had when just a leaf fell off a tree, I believe, and that just changed the routine and you had to start the game over. Opposed to if you did everything the same, then you'd just keep going on.

Scott: So there were little moments that were different that caused you to change.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: And you had to. How many, do you remember how many changes did you have to find?

Fran: Maybe there were five? Around there?

Scott: Yep, that is exactly right. K, and do you think that, uh, the not-game helped you understand any of the literature in the course that we read, that is if you had not played not-games.

Fran: Um, I think so, a little because I've read, this summer, that book, with, uh, Mirium,

Scott: Ah yes, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Hosseini, 2007).

Fran: Yeah, that one. And it kind of related to, uh, Afghanistan, didn't it?

Scott: Yeah.

Fran: With how, like, it's just how different our world is from it, here as opposed to Afghanistan, for example.

Scott: You read that book as a part of the course or you read it on your own over the summer?

Fran: It was a part of course.

Scott: Right, okay, it was one of your independent novels? (Pause)

Fran: Right, that was it.

Scott: And without belaboring the point, what aspect of Afghanistan or the Muslim culture did you understand better as a result of this game, in terms of the book, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Hosseini, 2007).

Fran: Um, more like how the characters met? Like, I don't know; it's really weird, like how Mirium had to be married off to an older man and then, just only like a few years later, he got married to another woman, so technically he had two wives, and it's just different, I guess.

Scott: And how's that difference captured in the game, do you remember?

Fran: The game was more based on like on how the wars and how the people were affected by it and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (Hosseini, 2007) was more directed towards a woman's point of view in the Muslim culture, I guess, yeah.

Scott: And the game prepared you for that cultural difference?

Fran: Yeah, a little, just to like, because it was more of a drastic change from where we're living now.

Scott: And how is that different from just reading a book. How does a not-game prepare you in a different way than just reading a book would?

Fran: Because you're able to like see everything that's happening opposed to a book where you have to make it up in your mind.

Scott: K, so, wouldn't a film do just as good a job?

Fran: I guess so, but in the game you're like in control of what happens.

Scott: And that makes a difference? Because you're in control of what happens?

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: Did you manage to reopen the school on the game? Or did you die, in the game?

Fran: I think I died. (Laughs.)

Scott: Okay. And did you play more than once, that game?

Fran: Yeah, it was difficult to, uh, not die, I guess. (Laughs.)

Scott: And so, did you play at home?

Fran: Yeah, but just once, though.

Scott: K.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: K. Have you found any other, uh, not-games?

Fran: No, just the ones that we studied in class.

Scott: And do you think this helped your writing, the not-games?

Fran: Um, I think so because I like to like I like visualizing. I like seeing how everything goes, and I feel like the not-game like, like all them helped me like see it and I could like explain things in more detail, and things like that.

Scott: Uhhh. What was the short story you did for your not-game, do you remember?

Fran: Hmm, the Rose? I don't know what it was called. There was, "The Glass Roses."

Scott: "The Glass Roses (Nowlan, 1968)."

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: Right Okay. And there was a not-game you played in connection to “The Glass Roses,” do you remember?

Fran: No.

Scott: It was called, *Loved*.

Fran: Right. And it was the one that had colours at the end?

Scott: Yep. And it would say to you, “Are a boy or girl?” And you would type in, “I’m a Girl” and it would say, “No, you’re not; you’re a boy.”

Fran: Right.

Scott: Do you remember that?

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: And uh, you wrote a little bit about that in your response to “Glass Roses,” and the game *Loved*, and uh, you talked about having a personal experience with that, uh, or you made personal connection with that. Do you remember that?

Fran: Was that about (pause) my dancing?

Scott: Yes.

Fran: I think it, cause, uh, I think cause *Loved* was a strict game, like you only had one decision and if you chose the wrong one, then the game would, like, take you down for it. And, I think, yeah, I related it to my dancing?

Scott: Right. And uh, are you, are you still dancing?

Fran: Yep.

Scott: Yeah, and that’s something you really loved and yet you made the connection between your personal, uh, love for dancing and Stephen in “The Glass Roses” who wanted to be

himself but was in a lumber camp and couldn't; he didn't really feel he really belonged there, and you also made a connection between *Loved* and how you felt that you were being, I don't know, can you explain in terms of you dancing and *Loved*: what was the connection you made between that? How did you find resonance with the game *Loved* and your dancing?

Fran: I think I referred it to how one of my parents didn't accept my dancing as much.

Scott: uhmm.

Fran: and how... I don't know, (pause), I think it was just cause it was more strict and dance kind of got in the way of my, like, school life and my social life, and it was just hard to balance everything as in like "Glass Roses" he wants to, like, be just himself as his father in the short story doesn't want him to and he wants him to be more like his father in the end.

Scott: And you think that the not-game helped trigger that connection more so than if you'd not played the not-game at all?

Fran: I think so, yeah; it was just easier to see because you either had one decision or it was wrong if you chose it.

Scott: Right. Okay. Uh, which you think you'll remember longer, the story the not-game was attached to or the not-game itself?

Fran: I think the not-game because I just I think I remember things from seeing it as opposed from reading it.

Scott: K, and as you said earlier, doing it, like actually making the choices.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: Would you categorize yourself as, um, a gamer?

Fran: Um.

*Announcement over P.A.: Mr. Smyth and Mr. Jones, will you please go to the Math Workroom. Mr. Smyth and Mr. Jones to the Math Workroom, please.*

Fran: Um. Not exactly. I think, I don't really play video games, except for those not-games usually, but not all the time (laughs).

Scott: And, uh, do you think not-games can relate to people who don't play games very often? Do you think there's, uh, room for, for not-games in a classroom or for people who don't play games?

Fran: Yep, I think so, cause I just feel like they open us up to more parts of the world and they just like open our minds up to, uh, what we might be blind to. (laughs).

Scott: And so that's kind of the next question: Do you think it has a place in English language arts? Do you think not-games, do you think, uh. the class is richer for using not-games or is it just too radical or not appropriate or may be too controversial? Some of the games were controversial.

Fran: No, I think that they're beneficial to, maybe some learners, learners, um, because maybe people like me like to see things, as opposed to some who just like reading about these issues but I just think they have a different take on learning and it's beneficial to some.

Scott: Do you think it would be harmful to some?

Fran: I think some people who like, um, I guess so, but (pause) some people might not agree with some of the games, like *Afghanistan* or maybe not be able to handle it.

Scott: Tell me about that.

Fran: Maybe some, ah, students might have a personal connection to something like that? I'm not sure, but...



Scott: Did you see any controversial games that you thought were controversial? (Pause) For you?

Fran: Not exactly. (Laughs.)

Scott: Okay. So what ideas did you remember from the not-games you played the most? What do you think you learned from them?

Fran: Um. I just learned like in *Every day the same dream*, that like maybe we could do something different to like, open our minds about the world instead of doing everything the same every day, and just like, and also *Loved* and how some people might have that strict rule in maybe their housing, but, I don't know, like, and how they should do what they believe is right in the world and not what other people are telling them what to do.

Scott: So if you had kids who were interested in something that you felt was wrong or not appropriate for them, how would you handle that?

Fran: I think that I would state my opinion but like if that was what made them happy then they should go for it.

Scott: Uh, what did you think other students thought about not-games in the class?

Fran: Oh well, I talked to some of them for our projects and stuff, and from what I heard, they found it helpful, and it was just interesting to learn about and talk about with everyone else.

Scott: And did anyone say this is really tough. This is really stupid. This has nothing to do with English?

Fran: No, I think everyone found good use with them.

Scott: Did anyone feel we spent too much time on not-games?

Fran: Not from my group, but maybe someone in a different group but my group was good.

Scott: And did anyone, uh, say, unh, that other teachers should employ not-games or that you know they wish –‘cause it was grade 12– they wish they had done it previously or not?

Fran: Um, yeah, actually, some of my friends in other classes were like wondering why they wouldn't play not-games, and they, they'd want to, like, look at it and like see what it, what it was all about.

Scott: And so did they, did you show them the addresses or did you show them.

Fran: Well, I just told them the names of it and like that they're– yeah...

Scott: Look Online, and, and did any of them play those not-games and see them?

Fran: Um, maybe a couple of them, but just most of them just wanted to try it out, but I'm not sure if they did or not.

Scott: Right.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: Okay. Tell me your personality and your likes or dislikes. Uh, would you say you're right brain, left brain, uh, artistic, uh, mathematical, um, I hear you love to dance.

Fran: Yeah.

Scott: But, uh, tell me about how you, yourself, or how much, maybe others do.

Fran: Um, I think I'm an artistic person because I dance like a lot a lot, and, but I also like the science side like for after high school I plan on doing like more science based things but, yeah, I think more artistic.

Scott: But yet you want to pursue a career in science?

Fran: Yeah. I think, like, both sides.

Scott: Right. Okay. And uh, left brain is very organized, mathematical, linear; uh, each thing follows a very specific, ordered pattern. Would you describe yourself that way? Or

would you describe yourself more random, more impulsive, more creative?

Fran: I think, like both, I guess?

Scott: Sure.

Fran: Because my creative side kind of comes from my dancing, but as well I like to be organized and like for school, like, I like science and I like research and all that stuff, so yeah.

Scott: In terms of the whole interview and whole process, do you have anything to add or anything you'd like to say about not-games in English Language Arts–

Fran: Um.

Scott: Or in school in general?

Fran: No, I just really like, the option of having not-games in the curriculum because it just helped me see more like ideas around the world, and it just opened more up to like different views and how other people take on those different ideas.

Scott: Well Fran, I can't tell you how much I appreciate your coming to this interview and spending this half an hour with us, and, uh, it's really great. It was great to have you in the course, and great that you're back here at [the school] for your twelfth year because you took that English 30 course as a grade 11 student. Okay, so, it was I'm really glad it worked out that way.

Fran: Thank-you.

Scott: You bet, thank-you.

**Appendix I****Interview with Jen, English 30-1 student: December 18, 2013 at 2:45 to 3:10 pm.**

Scott: We are live. Okay, so [Jen], I really appreciate you coming down here and uh, that's fantastic. I'll just start with the first question: It's been several months since you were in 30-1, and to be precise it's been July, August, September, October, November, December, almost six months, since you were in English 30 -1. What do you remember about not-games? That would be my first question to you.

Jen: Well, I remember the feelings I got after playing them, or while I was playing them because I remember, um, I think it was *The Killer* (Magnuson, 2011), one that I remember really vividly too because we walking the guy to his execution (laughs) and I remember, like once I realized what the ending was, I just like felt like doing it right in my stomach, and I don't want to do this no more, um for him, right? So I remember the reaction mostly that I had while I playing them, and I think that really affected my understanding of them too because it gave me, allowed me to empathize more with the characters that I saw. So, and, yeah. (Laughs).

Scott: And so that's their, in a sense, their impact. Um, you mentioned empathize about the characters. Which characters? The character in the not-game itself? Yeah. And did you make any leap to any of the stories from the not-game like *The Killer*, like the story you chose was "Clothes" (Divakaruni, 1995). What connection or did you with that particular game?

Jen: Well once, I took the time to kind of sit down and look at it, you can see some of the connections. And I found out once I played the game a few times over, because the story that we did with "Clothes" was *Every day the same dream* (Pedercini, 2009), so I

remember like looking at *Every day the same dream* too and like, I felt connected to the, to the protagonist in the game because he's gone through this routine. It seems like he doesn't enjoy his life. Everything the same; nothing ever changes. It's very very similar to "Clothes" because if you look at it she's. . . (laughs). Well it's similar but it's different because everything changes for her. But then, at the same time, like, it's dealing with these changes as the main theme throughout, right, and choosing how to react to these changes which I think is also a theme throughout *Every day the same dream* cause he, sorry (laughs), he, I'm really sorry, (laughs) –

Scott: It's alright.

Jen: –um, he, he makes these choices- and then he has to deal with the repercussions of them after, so I thought that was kind of the connection I made after playing the *Every day the same dream* a few times.

Scott: Um, what, which one's your favorite of all of all the not-games and then between the not-games and the stories because you read more than one story because as a class we read six or seven stories, so of the stories you read which was your favorite? Of the not-games in which we played which was your favorite? And of the combination, which was your favorite?

Jen: Unh, Um, of the stories, I, I did really like "Clothes" 'cause it was something that you don't read about that often, and it's something that growing up where I grew up you don't hear about it that often either, so it was really interesting to hear, or read something that is so unfamiliar that then it becomes somewhat relatable?

Scott: Um, tell us a little bit about the story of what you remember.

Jen: Well, I remember that it was about, um, a girl living in India with her parents, and she

is, ah, she gets put into an arranged marriage, and then when she becomes married, she needs to move to America with her husband, and then, ah, her husband, after working one night, is shot and killed and it's about her dealing with that loss after he's killed. But I remember mostly about her talking about her saris and the colours of her saris and how she would choose based on how she felt at the times. And that, (laughs). But really like that one 'cause I just thought it was something so different, and I like reading about something different, so. And then the the not-game that I liked the best was, I think it was *Every day the same dream* as well because I, I played it so many times and it just became familiar. And that one, I liked it because every time I showed somebody the game because I have shown people this game afterwards, um, they all have the same reactions which is weird 'cause they all have different personalities and different people but then their reaction at the end is always very very similar (laughs).

Scott: Right, right. And what combination, you, between the not-game and the short story did you have the most resonance with?

Jen: Um, well, ours was just *Every day the same dream* and, "Clothes," so that one I was very familiar with. But I think there was, um, the, the, I think someone did "Glass Roses" (Nowlan, 1968) and the, *ImmorTall*, (Miller, 2010) one with the alien?

Scott: uhmm.

Jen: I think it was that one. I really like that one because it wasn't two things that I really thought would go together, just he, because it's just odd, but now I think about it you have the alien in *ImmorTall* protecting the people, and in the "Glass Roses" you have, both the, uh, I think his name was Stephen, was the protagonist, and he was protecting, ur, I can't remember his name, but he was the Ukrainian man?

Scott: Ummm.

Jen: He was protecting him from the other men in the cabin and at the same time when they were out in the cold, the Ukrainian man was protecting Stephen almost so I thought that was an interesting parallel I didn't recognize it at first.

Scott: In the past, I have selected which stories go with which not-games. And eventually I realized that this might be a mistake because I might not see the connections that other students might make, and you pointed out sort of an unusual connection that you didn't see before, and I don't think I would have seen that before either, and so (pause) I guess my question is what do, do you think it should be randomized like that for students to make up their own minds as to which not-games go with which short stories or should it be more determined?

Jen: Um, I think it should be more randomized 'cause I think if you give them the freedom to make their own connections then I think the things that can come out of that are so much more than the connections that one person alone can make? So the different opinions and the different perspectives on it can really make a difference.

Scott: You didn't write about the not-game in your personal response, unh, and so, and that was a, a choice an option you wrote just on the short story "Clothes" itself, and all students had the choice between the story or the not-name or the poem, in your class. Ah, do you think the not-game helped your writing, ah, in that particular instance?

Jen: I think it helped me understand, "Clothes" a little bit more because I think it helped me make connections to what this, the protagonist was feeling? And once I had that it made it easier to find different themes within the story.

Scott: And help me out with that because the not-game is clearly about a white guy who's a

businessman, ah, probably in his 20s maybe 30s:

Jen: Unhmm.

Scott: Uh, what does it have to do with story “Clothes” about an East Indian, an arranged marriage?

Jen: Well, it’s just, the, another theme that we found was conformity in both the story and in the, in the not-game, and we found that breaking away from this conformity is another thing that affects us so, and the choices that we make is also another way, so I found that, um, the conformity we found is the arranged marriage and in the the choosing to continue on with the routine every day every day every day, so I found that that kind of helped me understand because when Cynthia, I think her name was Cynthia [Sumita], was first entered into the arranged marriage, she didn’t, she didn’t want it, she didn’t accept it, she didn’t like it, and I think we see that, too, because this man is obviously, from what I can tell is not happy with his life as it is, and I think that just the feelings that we have towards conformity were really evident in both the story and in the not-game, and I think that was one of the themes that I—I can’t remember fully (laughs)- but I think that was one of the themes that I, I talked about in my, in my writing? And in my presentation as well? And just the choices that we make as well, because just the way that Cynthia deals with the death of her husband, and the way that this man finds a way out of, uh, his, uh, routine are very similar because, um, it’s just breaking away from something you’re so familiar with. And it’s hard to do but somehow we both find a way to do it in our own way. So I think kind of helped me figure that out by seeing this visually versus just reading it and thinking about it.

Scott: Hmm. In English we spend a lot of time looking for similarities. We will do this



particular film because it's about that particularly story? This isn't really what's going on with not-games. Not-games are sometimes random and, unh, seemingly not connected at all, but you think the lack of obvious connection is helpful?

Jen: I think so. 'Cause I think you have to work harder to find the connection but the connection that you'll make is probably more valuable than if it's just given to you right away?

Scott: And why more valuable?

Jen: Because you've worked hard to find it, and you've obviously worked, you've thought about it and put hard work into it, so I think for you, it's more valuable that you've done this and worked hard for it than if you've just been given it. I mean you would learn to make connections more easily because you've worked so hard to find one.

Scott: Hmm. And so when you were first introduced to not-games, what was your response and the response of other classmates, to these games and their place in a literature course?

Jen: Um?

Scott: English course?

Jen: Well, when I first saw them I was a little bit unsure of them 'cause I don't, I'm not, I don't play video games at all, and I was kind of worried 'cause, well, I, I kind of, kind of want to read books (laughs), but, um, after, and I know that other people were a kind of confused, but the people that I know like to play video games were like, "Ah, this is awesome, for you to play games in my English class: Best day, ever!"

Scott: Ha ha.

Jen: But, um, I, I, after playing them I did, I really saw the value of them with the literature

because I saw, I saw the connections that could be made, and the, the um, the lessons that were taught through them, and how the reactions that people had and had after playing the games could really be applied to the reactions that we had after reading the novels.

Scott: Have you ever found any other, um, not-games since being in English?

Jen: Um, I haven't really, I haven't really looked for them and I haven't really found any, but I have shown others the games that we played in our class, so.

Scott: Why?

Jen: (Laughs, with a bit of exasperation). Mostly it's because of people asking what they were 'cause I would be talking about them, and, um I remember um, one day, I was having a conversation with somebody about them and, "Oh, what's a not-game. Have you ever heard that that is?" So I showed them *Every day the same dream*, and they were really interested in it, and then I went on and showed them, think I showed them the *ImmorTal* one, and *The Killer*, and then people were really interested in it. So, and I've shown other people them too to see their reactions. And like I said, I think it's really interesting to see all these different personalities playing them, but the reactions you get from them are all very universal, almost.

Scott: And so why would you talk about them? You're not a gamer, so why would you talk about them outside of class?

Jen: (Laughs). Well, sometimes they just come up in conversation, like we'd be talking about English classes, I'd be like, "Oh, I did this in my English class and I thought it was cool, and I think that's not something that a lot of other English classes did, so a lot times it came up in conversation that way, or we'd be talking about in my English class

too in, in, at school now, and we were, I was talking to this one girl, like um, yeah, about like what we did in English and, so I brought it up, and she said, “Oh, that’s really cool!” And she told me she went home, and she told me that she whipped up a bunch and that she found all these not-games, and so she came back and she was really excited, so.

Scott: Interesting. And, which do you think you remember longer? Ah, the story, uh, that the not-game was attached to or the not-game itself?

Jen: I think the not-game ‘cause I’ve, just being out of English for as long as I have been, I’ve thought about the not-game more than I have about the story, like speaking of “Clothes” and *Every day the same dream*. Like I’ve thought about *Every day the same dream* more, and I’ve even played it a couple of more times just to see what I could have done differently, and uh, that one I think that I’ll remember longer mostly because of the feeling that I have when I was playing it ‘cause like I still remember the feeling I had the first time that I played it and I realized what the ending had to be and every time I played it I still get the same feeling and I think that’s really cool and that’s something I’m not going to forget.

Scott: Hmm. And he commits suicide at the end of the game.

Jen: Uhmm.

Scott: Which is one interpretation.

Jen: Uhmm.

Scott: Could be someone else committing suicide, depending how you read it.

Jen: Uhmm.

Scott: Um. Isn’t that a bit nihilistic?

Jen: Um. Hmm. I don't think so. I think it's showing how other people deal with the choices that they, that they make.

Scott: Do you think that's promoting suicide?

Jen: No, I don't think so. I think it's a way to show how different people deal with different things; I don't think it's saying whether it's right or it's wrong. I think it's leaving it up to the interpretation of the player, but I don't think it's ever promoting it because you don't ever see the end after that, right? So he just, he jumps off the, off the building and then it, and it end, uh, it ends right? As far as I can remember? (Laughs). But um, I like if you go to the very very end, it stops, and he just jumps off the building, and he's just left there watching, I think that's how it ends? And like there's no celebration after that, and you don't see that anything that says, "Improved" or "Becomes worse" because of him jumping off the building or committing suicide, so I don't think it, it's promoting it at all, really, um.

Scott: Yet you come back to this game again, and I'm curious about that. Um, because clearly the game's not about suicide if you're come back to it—

Jen: Uhmm.

Scott: —of your own free interest because of that feeling, a feeling there. Do you see yourself playing that game or being inside that Game?

Jen: Well, I really empathize with the guy in the guy's who's, who's doing the same routine because we see as a student doing the same thing over and over and over; it's, it's very familiar to me, and I like to see that he can, he can do things differently, like when he goes to see the cow or he, he catches the leaf and I like that he can find little bits or little changes in his day, and it makes me feel better, and that's what I like about the

game.

Scott: 'Kay. You've answered questions six, uh suggesting that, that you're not a gamer: Um, do you think that not-games can relate to people who don't play games very often?

Jen: I think so (laughs) 'cause me being an example, I, I'd never play videogames, and I quite enjoyed playing these in English.

Scott: And so, I'll show you a couple more that I've discovered more since then. Um, but, uh, um: what do you see people who are naysayers or for that matter, other teachers who don't think games have a place in the classroom?

Jen: Um, I think that, I would say to them that they should try it before they knock it like I think that they should really see what effects it has on the students that they're with 'cause I don't think that you can just say, "Oh, I don't think it has a good impact on them if you've never tried it and never seen impacts that it's better to not have.

Scott: And do you think it's appropriate for a Grade 12 class or do you think it's more appropriate to a younger grade or to a Dash Two stream?

Jen: I think, it was very appropriate for English 30-1 because some of the themes in the not-games are more appropriate for older students, than Grade 10 students or Grade 11 students. And also I think, um, that it's better for Dash 1 because more of the connections are there, and you can, you can think about the connections that are there, and you can think about all the connections that are there. When it's Dash Two, it's – I don't want to sound rude (Laughs) or anything like – but they might just think, "Oh I get to play games; I love playing games, and just think about it as a game rather than what the games mean and make the subtle connections in your mind while you're playing.

Scott: Um. And they're not very good games, as games go.

Jen: (Laughs). No, No, they're somewhat depressing almost.

Scott: Right. Okay.

Jen: But ah, yeah,

Scott: And, uh, what about AP? Do you think it belongs in an Advanced Placement class?

Jen: I think it would be very different, AP actually. 'Cause again, the whole thing is making connections and seeing how other things can relate to literature and applying that to every day society because that is what we do with all our essays, and I think that would actually a very good way to make all of the literature relatable to students.

Scott: Ah, some of this will be repetitive, and uh and uh, this is question 8: So what ideas do you remember from not-games you played the most and what did you learn from it?

Jen: Ah, I remember, well, again, I remember the feelings that I had, and I remember the ideas, the ideas as they related to the short stories, so I mostly applied the *Every day the same dream* to "Clothes" and I didn't, I didn't really look closer at the other short stories, when now I wish I probably should have, but I, um, do remember really the idea of conforming and breaking away in from conformity in *Every day the same dream*.

Scott: Other students, you mentioned some of them already; ah, I'm interested in students who were quite negative—

Jen: Huhmm.

Scott: —about not-games and without using any names, uh, I'm more interested in their sentiments.

Jen: Um, I think many people, not many people, the couple of students I talked to were confused as to why we were using our time on this when we could be using it on like

another a play or another novel for something to write on for our diploma 'cause I don't think a lot of students felt comfortable writing on like a not-game for a diploma exam, so just because of the weighting that it had on our mark and how unfamiliar we were with this in relation to analyzing it, really.

Scott: How long? Or how much time was spent on not-games, that you remember?

Jen: Um, during, during the course, you mean? Um, I wouldn't say a very long time; I think we, most of the, not even the same amount of time was spent on the short stories; 'cause from what I can remember, we started the short stories, and then we got the not-games, and then, I think, we never really spent a lot a lot of time in class exclusively talking about the not-games. But we mostly talked about short stories, and then we were given the assignment to connect the short stories to the not-game, so I don't think we spent too much class time on the not-game exclusively.

Scott: Okay, so, uh, the short story unit probably ran three weeks, and of class time, we probably used how much time would you say actually playing games in class?

Jen: Playing games? I think we had maybe two or three classes, playing games in class, so again, it wasn't very much time compared to the rest of the short story unit.

Scott: And you found them easy to access at home, on your own? I don't, I don't know if you were able to access them on your phone or your iPad?

Jen: Ah, no, I didn't, I don't have an iPad at the time (laughs) and also my phone is not (laughs). wirelessly capable, so I'm going to say—

Scott: Sure, okay.

Jen: —but um, I found them very easy to access when I was at home, considering, especially since they were sent out on an email as well, so I like that 'cause they were all in one

place

Scott: Sure.

Jen: And I could really see all the different ones.

Scott: Yeah, you can just click on a link and off you go.

Jen: Yeah exactly, and send it off.

Scott: Tell me a bit about your personality, your likes and dislikes.

Jen: I think I'm very nice.

Scott: (Bursts out laughing.)

Jen: Um, I'm fairly quiet with people that I don't really know that well. Um, I really like to play soccer; I like to play sports; I'm athletic; I don't like to sit around and do nothing; Um, I like to go outside; I love animals; I want to be a veterinarian when I get older; And um, I love to read; like reading is one of the things that I do all the time; like anytime I have a spare minute, I'll just pick up a book and when I have a good book, I'll just read over and over and over again (laughs). And um, I, I don't know; I don't have a lot of dislikes. Really. 'Cause, I don't really think about things I don't like; I just focus on the things I do like.

Scott: Would you say you're right brain or left brain?

Jen: Ah,

Scott: Do you know what I mean about that?

Jen: Yeah, it's hard 'cause I love to draw, and I love love love history, and I like to write, but I find sciences are easier for me, like I have to apply myself more, and I find I'm more of a perfectionist with art than I should be, so would say I'm probably more, pretty sure left brain for sciences. Yeah. So, I'm more left brain, but I enjoy right brain activities.



Scott: What kindled your love for reading, where did that start?

Jen: Um.

Scott: Sort of off topic but.

Jen: No, no worries. Um, I started reading when I was really really young. Like my mom made reading a really important thing in our lives. Like I remember (laughs) I was learning my alphabet like two years before I even got into kindergarten (laughs), so it's always been very important; I just kind of a habit I fell into, and I never really put down.

Scott: What drives your love for reading; what keeps it going?

Jen: Um, hmm. I just, I like to see the differences, and what I don't see every day 'cause I like to get lost in another, another place, almost. Like I just like, the, the, getting out (laughs), this is going sound bad, but like getting away from my life and getting into somebody else's because it's neat what other people go through on a regular basis.

Scott: Do you see pictures when you read?

Jen: Um, I can play it through my head. Yeah, I like to imagine it, so sometimes when I'm really really immersed in a book, it's not like I'm reading it; it's like I'm watching a movie. So.

Scott: So, it's like you're watching a movie.

Jen: Yeah.

Scott: Right. Um, where, how do these not-games change that, or alter that, or add to that, or subtract from that?

Jen: Um, well I think, if I'm sometimes again if I'm immersed in a book, I can see it like a movie, but if I'm not very immersed in a book, and there are books that I find I really

really just don't, don't get into, I find the not-games would help me with that because I probably can relate the themes to it and the not-games is a way a way to see it visually and kind of help with that side of it.

Scott: And yet the not-games have nothing to do with the story.

Jen: (Laughs). But I think if you work hard enough you can find a connection somehow because I think the not-games are designed –they're specific– but they, you can alter them enough to fit what you're reading if you tried hard enough, I think.

Scott: And it's worth the effort.

Jen: I think so, yeah.

Scott: Kay. I really appreciate your coming down, hearing your thoughts and being so candid about your experience with not-games.

Jen: No problem.

Scott: Thank-you so much.

Jen: No problem.

**Appendix J****Teacher Interview with Bill, English 30-1 teacher, Rural Alberta, January 10, 2014.**

Scott: Okay looks it looks like we're recording, so let's get down to business.

Bill: Okay

Scott: First of all, thanks so much for, uh, offering to spend some time with me going through some of these questions concerning, uh, the not-game, serious game *Afghanistan*.

Bill: No problem.

Scott: Ah, in several months' time and I'm just going to go through these questions one by one here: In several months' time, what you think they're going to remember more (Name), the, uh, not-games or the novel, *The Kite Runner* and, uh, what do you think most last with some longer?

Bill: I think it depends on the student I think because of the novel a lot of students really engage with it and think about it a lot, but I think there were some kids who didn't really enjoy the novel for a variety of reasons, but I think that they, um, really enjoyed the game more than more than other kids, and their kind of engagement with it was some not what I expected it to be.

Scott: Maybe you should just outline how long they played the game for.

Bill: Sure.

Scott: And if they played it at home.

Bill: Sure. Um, I got them to play it in class, so we had an 80 minute block that I had dedicated to making sure I could get it set up and get them logged in properly and to see how the game would work. Because the login process and everything was so easy, they got to spend probably at least, at least an hour on the game which means that everybody got

through the game at least once. Some of them got through it, uh, at least two or three times. Some I think, the most was, four, so a lot of them actually went to the game to see what other kinds of paths they could use, and I think that a lot of those kids tried to figure out how the game itself actually worked, um, and then afterwards I had a little conversation with them in class, um, the next day, about how, how they liked it, and what they thought, and um, whether or not it actually helped their understanding of the novel, so that was my process.

Scott: How many students won the game; they were able to open, reopen a coed school?

Bill: Um, the first time round I think it was, ah, about half; I think about half of them did. Um, those who failed the first time kept trying until they could do it, um, and I don't know if that was a product of, you know just sheer stubbornness or um, actual or curiosity about how the game was structured or if they wanted more information. I think again, it depended on the kid.

Scott: Did any of them not managed to win the game or even end the game? Did some of them just keep dying all the time?

Bill: Um, I think, let's see, I did this four months ago, I think they all managed to all eventually get through the game, all the way to the end I think (pause)...

Scott: Because it's possible to open up just a boy's school, not a coed school

Bill: Oh really! No, I, they, uh, that wasn't a conversation that that I had, so I don't know whether or not they anyone got to that result.

Scott: And what kinds of scores were they getting in, in the, uh, mug shot of the head profile.

Bill: Um.

Scott: Did you keep track of that?

Bill: I didn't keep track, of it, but I, I did kind of keep some informal stats.

Scott: Huhmm.

Bill: A lot of them, who of course got through it quickly had, you know, very kind of low scores, and the kinds of students who had the highest scores, the first time through, um, were my kids who were easily the most curious (pause) ...

Scott: Right. And, um, would you say the most academic or the most patient?

Bill: Um, they, (pause) I'm trying (pause) to rethink, to replay who was: a couple of them were academic in terms of their outlook on life; these were also the kind of kids who, like I wouldn't call them academic in terms of, um, their final overall grades?

Scott: Right.

Bill: It's not a, I don't think it's a reflection about that at all, but I think it was the kind of kid who, um, once they actually found something they were actually interested in, they would, um, push until they figured out as much as they could about it.

Scott: Himm.

Bill: And I know of the two kids I think who got the top scores, um, one of them, um, (pause) yeah, one of them had, um, is not, uh, a very academic kid at all, like uh, academic in terms of final grade; um, he's not a kid who's very interested in class usually; he's definitely kid who, um, is kind of on the margins, and yet he was the one who seemed most interested in how the game worked and trying to gain whatever score he could. The score itself, I think, was what motivated him. So that was really interested me.

Scott: I guess the big question is would you use this not-game again, if you taught *Kite Runner* again.

Bill: Ah, yeah. I would. Um, I had, I did try, I wanted to compare this kind of not-game to the

other ways that I had been introducing *Kite Runner* and getting them to understand the cultural context, so I used the same kinds of films that I used before about Afghanistan: the same kinds of, um, discussions and PowerPoint handouts, as many kind of, you know, multiple means of engagement as possible, but even after all those things, I took a couple of kids aside and asked them, you know, specific kids who, which ones they preferred, and all the ones (*Skype transmission was garbled for two seconds*), they said that they vastly preferred doing the Afghanistan games than even watching a film that's an engaging film, you know not just an informative, um, bland narrated film, but still a fairly engaging film. They would far rather do the not-game than do that.

Scott: Why?

Bill: (Pause) Um. (pause) They, when I asked them why, the only response they could come up with was because, um, they felt that their, um, of course they wouldn't say it this way, but their learning styles were more conducive to that kind of, um, media or medium: Right, they, they were used to it, they like it, they were at the same time trying to figure out how the game worked, but also, you know, making sure that they, um, these kids I asked, of course, the high achiever kids, um, they were still reading everything, as opposed to those who just kind of clicked their way through.

Scott: Huhmm.

Bill: And so I think that that's because they could take it at their own pace, and they could do it, when they want to do it, how they want to do it. I think that's why they like it.

Scott: Do you think anybody played home?

Bill: Um.

Scott: Oh, you've got dial-up out there, right?

Bill: Hm, well yeah, it depends on the kid. Some kids don't even have Internet at home.

Scott: Okay.

Bill: So, um, I don't think any of them did, um, but I don't know.

Scott: And what do you think they, you know, part of the question, number one, asks, "What is the not-game's impact on the student's learning?" and you were just sort of about to talk about that: what do you think they're learning from this game?

Bill: (Pause) I don't, I don't know. I think, again it depends on the kid. Some, I even had one girl who was not the kind of academic kid who really, um, cares about school anyway, who turned, I think even the first time she went through it, um, turned it on a different language and went through and clicked away, and I did kind of get the feeling that when she did at the first time, that there were number of kids who started that way the first time, um, but then after she went through the first time, and I'm pretty sure it ended poorly. She she did go back and actually start again and do it, in, you know, in English, and trying to figure out how it works, so for some kids, I think it's it is the game itself presented a puzzle for them?

Scott: Uhm.

Bill: That they wanted to try to figure out right, how, how the actual game itself was structured. You know (*with frustration*) more so in the game. I'd love it if they could think about novels and films in that way; you know, think about it as a puzzle and how to break apart, and think about the structure and how it's built, but they seemed immediately ready to do that with the game, and they weren't ready for that with the actual novel or film. So.

Scott: And why do you think they were ready for it with the game? You've sort of alluded to this already.

Bill: Yeah, I, I think it's because this is something that they, because it has this kind of fun idea behind it,

Scott: Uhm.

Bill: Um, something that they're, you know, at least the kids who are playing games, anyway, usually, um, that, what they're, what I assume anyway that they're doing when they're playing video games, is they're trying to figure out how it works, and how to succeed, and how to get whatever end-result that they want, and um, I kind of think because they are prepared for that, that was the lens with which they started to view the game immediately. I don't know if that, for that not-game, I don't know if that this was the purpose of that not-game. I came to that not-game with the idea of hoping to get in the (*Skype transmission becomes garbled for five seconds*).

Scott: (Laughs.) 'Kay, you're breaking up a bit. Can you repeat that last sentence, two sentences? (Pause) Oh, I think we lost you. (Pause) Yeah. I bet you can hear me.

Bill: Are you okay?

Scott: Ah, now I can hear you, yeah.

Bill: Okay.

Scott: I didn't hear that last bit.

Bill: Okay. The, the way, can you hear me know?

Scott: Yeah perfect.

Bill: The way in which, I think I was saying, in which the way in which they engage with the structure of the videogame, um, was really nice. I wish they could address that same structure with novels and films and those things. I think, I've got an idea; I don't really know; I think the reason that they addressed in those ways, um, was because they were



when, when they are playing their own videogames, they are, um, approaching it as a kind of puzzle to get the end-result, that whatever end-result they want, and I kind of wish that they would, um, translate those skills in terms of looking at the structure of the game over to you looking at the structure of the novel or the structure of the film, structure the short story, the poem that whatever we're studying. And I've even, though I think the looking at the structure was an unintended byproduct, I wanted them initially to get the history and background of Afghanistan.

Scott: Uhhmm.

Bill: Um, I'm starting to think now that what I'd want to use not-games for is to get them to see the structure of something that someone else has created, and then translate the same kinds of skills over towards the things that we're studying already. They have to study a novel, then how can we get them to look at this, take their skills at figuring out the structure of the game to translate it over to analyzing the structure of the novel.

Scott: Okay thank you. Ah, do you think, ah, that this helped them, helped them to understand, to understand any of the literature or, or, uh, or *The Kite Runner*, in terms of, you talk about structure, do you think it helped them to understand any of the culture in Afghanistan?

Bill: Um, from what they told me, they said that it did really help them understand, especially the latter third of the novel. Um, of course that's, I showed the game after I'd already, I used the game after I had already done the film and the lectures and the power points and handouts and everything else that I had.

Scott: And they finished the novel?

Bill: They hadn't finished the novel.

Scott: Okay.

Bill: I did it in the middle of the novel.

Scott: Okay.

Bill: So um, that was, I think that where I place it in the novel was useful too, because they had already gone through the first the first third –we’re in America– and we’re preparing to go back to Afghanistan for the last third of the novel, and that's where it’s kind of most relevant for the, for the information that's in the game.

Scott: Do you think it helped them with their writing at all? I assume they wrote an essay on the novel?

Bill: Yep, yep, they did. Um, (pause) I, uh, I don't know if it helped their writing.

Scott: Yep, fair enough. In my writing, in my essays I found two paragraphs, in all of the essays that I felt were informed by the, by the not-games.

Bill: Okay.

Scott: And had they not played the not-game, they would not of added those details, but that was again only two paragraphs out of the whole set of thirty students writing five paragraphs apiece, right?

Bill: Yeah. I had no kind of tangible references to any of the details from the game, but there, you know, like anything else they might have just been using their knowledge implicitly and their understanding of Amir and his culture so.

Scott: You didn't play, play any other not-games? This was the, *Afghanistan* is the only not-game you've played so far with the English 30 class, is that correct?

Bill: Yes. Yes.

Scott: Right, okay. Okay and um, how many in the class would you say, are actual gamers?

Bill: Oh.

Scott: Did you have any students say, “Why are we playing a game in English?”

Bill: Ah, um, yeah, I had a couple, for sure. Um.

Scott: And were they female or male?

Bill: Both.

Scott: Okay.

Bill: I have a a nice variety: I have, uh, one kid who, um, already makes apps to the point where he's paying for his college tuition with what he's done with technology, and I have other kids who don't have a computer at home.

Scott: Right.

Bill: So, I have, you know, because of the wide variety of students, I think some of them were far more, um, computer savvy anyway, and that those kids who were computer savvy, um, most of them were excited about it. The, some of the other ones were quite hesitant, but when they got going they understood.

Scott: What about the student who is making apps game apps and making money off of it: what was his response to the not-games?

Bill: Um, he, he is also a kind of student who is very, loves everything that we do, so he really, he really enjoyed it. Um, he was one of the kids that I asked about it afterwards, um, whether or not he, um, whether not he thought that that was better than the other ways that I had been presenting the, the background information? Um, he said he agreed, um, that he liked the game better than the film or what, everything else, but he didn't really have any, um, when I tried to get some reason out of him, he just said he like it.

Scott: Were there any students who were not gamers who played the game and though doubtful

at first, were converted as they played the game and found it useful?

Bill: Um, yeah I think their were about, uh, probably eight, seven or eight students who were hesitant at first, and by the end, I think only two or three of them actually didn't like the experience.

Scott: Would you say this is a tool, another tool in the toolshed that English teachers can use, and uh, some students will relate to it and some won't, like anything else.

Bill: Absolutely, absolutely.

Scott: Do you think not-games have a place in English Language Arts?

Bill: Ah, yes. I think so.

Scott: And why is that?

Bill: Um.

Scott: You talk about structure?

Bill: Yep, I really like that that that was, um, that was the big one for me for this game, um which I thought was a kind of nice little parallel to what we normally end up doing, um, but I am also really curious too about, you know, I'm always trying to get students to engage with some sort of bigger picture, moral philosophical ideas, and um, you know, for a number of kids they can access those on a purely kind of cerebral basis; for some kids I think they need a tangible set of circumstances, and if I give them those circumstances, as I try to, you know by setting up some scenarios or hypotheticals, um, that really helps those kids, but if there are these kind of not-games that have those kinds of structures already in place, they have the details, and then we can debrief and talk about it afterwards: those are the kind of games that I'd be interested to see if there I'm helping them develop their kind of moral or philosophical voice.

Scott: Global Conflict Games has a number of games –I’m sure you saw them on the website–

Bill: Yep.

Scott: Did you think there's some use for these games in social studies, and, uh, you may not be familiar with the social studies curriculum: I just wondered.

Bill: Yeah I'm, I don't know; I can't say because I don't know too much about what they're currently doing in social but um, I, I hope they have, um, some sort of um, basis: I think that from, from the one I did from the *Afghanistan* game, I think that it, it has as much applicability to social as English.

Scott.:Hmm. Uhmm. Interesting and what do you think they'll a remember from this from this game: do you think they'll remember the not-game at all in a year's time, what they learned from it?

Bill: Um. Again, depending on the kid. Some of them, absolutely. I, I don't know how many of them; if I had to predict, I'd probably say a fairly small number of them would actually remember too much of, um, the content of it, but I know that many of them will remember the experience of it, and that is more than I can say about and, you know, unfortunately, a percentage of my classes, right; most of them, most of my classes go off without, I'm sure them remembering very much in a year's time or two, um, but I, I don't know how much of the content they'll remember; I think they will remember the structure of the game, the social kind of experience that it was, because they all did it together, um, and some of the conversations they had afterwards which I think is, that's part of the goal–

Scott: Hmm.

Bill: –building that kind of classroom community, so.

Scott: And were they upset when they died because at they have to start the game all over again

when they die?

Bill: (Laughs). Yeah. Yeah, some of them were especially the the first two who died who of course were the first two who died because they were trying to race through the entire game. They were pretty vocal.

Scott: (Laughs)

Bill: But I think that did change how some of the other people were playing the game? I don't think they thought or realized that they could die, and so now that some of them, they kind of announced that to everybody . . . (*Skype transmission falters for 1 second*).

Scott: You're just breaking up a bit here.

Bill: ... about him that was the deterrent for whatever strategy they were using to try and push through the game.

Scott: Right, okay, and what did you think about—

Bill: Are you still there?

Scott: Yeah I'm still here. Yeah, I can hear you but maybe you can't hear me. Can you hear me?

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

Scott: What do you think other teachers thought about your use of net not-games in English Language Arts? Or did you tell them?

Bill: Um, I told some. Um, of course the ones I told know, uh, who I am and how I operate, so they weren't really surprised that I'd be trying it. Um, the, but I swear, I think I told three or four staff members.

Scott: And would you categorize yourself as sort of out there in terms of, uh, attempting new things?

Bill: Um, yeah, I, I

Scott: This is related–

Bill: I want to decide (*talking to someone else*).

Scott: –this is related, this is related to the last question about your personality, your likes, your dislikes, your personality traits, that kind of thing.

Bill: Oh, okay. Um, yeah, I got too many things (*talking to someone else*). Are you there?

Scott: Yeah, I'm here. You'd try new things and uh, um, you'd try not-games again, and maybe you try more not-games, particularly from a structural point of view. Can you tell me a little more about not-games the structural point of view?

Bill: Um. Sure. I, I think it might be nice, um, I, I worry sometimes about students trying to, you know they, they read it, they read their stories, they read it for content, which of course is important, um, they, so any short story or any novel and play: they want to know the characters and they want to know what's going on, but they don't do something about it in terms of the deliberate choices that the text creator would've made in order to get that idea across, and I think that they're far more willing to do that in a game, actually think about how it's created, and I'm, I would like to, at some point, um, even maybe attach them to short stories or attach it to, um maybe another novel or another, some sort of game, anyway, to see whether or not they can make those comparisons, make that little leap from the way they're willing to analyze their culture or their video games, the things that they think are not theirs because school presented them, um, so I don't, I don't know how to go about doing that. I'd love if you have anything that be great, but ah, I think that's kind direction I'd have to be interested in.

Scott: I think you'd really like that not-game, *Every day to same dream*, that would be something worth exploring in terms of its structure it, because there are five different ways of

playing, at five different levels, and, uh, some kids find different levels at different times and maybe that's not structural, I'm not sure.

Bill: Yeah.

Scott: It's structural, but it's up to them in terms of which structure they choose, and sometimes it don't even know the choices are making until after, until in retrospect. Do you have any—

Bill: The whole matter is an interesting idea.

Scott: —do you have any questions or any comments in terms of your overall experience with not-game that you'd like to add to finish this interview?

Bill: Um, you know I, yeah, I think I have been recently, um, the kind of person who's in some ways been pulling back from too many ah, uh, from a number of current technological ways of approaching education: I've been moving away from Smart boards back towards the whiteboard and chalkboards, and you know I I I at least think that some of best things that I can get students, um, to do come from building the relationship with students, and I think that this this not-game and not- and kind of the good games in general, um, really helped me to help build that relationship with students because now they think that I am least relatively current and that what I'm saying if I'm relatively current, that means that they think the one saying is applicable to the world that they live in as opposed to the world of books, which they think they don't live in, so I think that was one really nice thing about this not-game was that I I'm always trying to help them see how the things I always say are engaging to, um, to the world they live in, and this was one more way for me to at least build a relationship with them that made it so that they feel as though I am current and that was really important to me.



Scott: Uhhh. Hihmm. I found that during, (laughs) the times when we would play not-games in class, and we only did this three times, uh, during the whole year, but when they would play in class, I, I disappeared. All of a sudden, I was, even when I came around, it was quite clear they were in a comfort zone that I didn't threaten.

Bill: Yeah.

Scott: And so I was there as much as a learner and uh,

Bill: Yeah.

Scott: And not a teacher and so that I found it sort of flattened the relationship between teacher and student,

Bill: Yeah,

Scott: in an exciting way in, in what I'll call a transversal way.

Bill: (Pause) Yeah.

Scott: And ah, that's very interesting and I agree the, the traction aspect of the, being current is a, can't be underestimated.

Bill: Yeah, absolutely.

Scott: (Name), I just thank you so much for your time; uh, I've used 30 minutes of it and uh,

Bill: Uh, yeah no problem.

Scott: And I, I really appreciate it, and I will be busy transcribing over the weekend! (Laughs)

Bill: Yeah, you can say that; it's probably more than you wanted, isn't it?

Scott: Nah, it's fine, it's fine! It's great. No, they average around 22 to 30 minutes: perfect.

Bill: Okay.

Scott: 'Kay.

Bill: Okay.

Scott: Thanks so much and uh, hey, we'll be in touch, and let me know how everything goes.

Bill: Yeah, let me know it everything goes with your, finishing this thing off, so

Scott: For sure, I will; I, uh, I'm hoping to, uh, defend in March.

Bill: Nice.

Scott: Yeah, for sure.

Bill: Okay.

Scott: Hey.

Bill: Awesome.

Scott: Take care, (name),

Bill: For sure.

Scott: Bye.

Bill: You bet.

## Appendix K

### Information Letter and Consent Form; Interview Requests and Interview Questions

Scott Gibson Dodd  
Research Investigator,  
Graduate Student in Secondary Education,  
Secondary Education  
450 Education South  
University of Alberta,  
Edmonton, Alberta. T6G 2R3

September, 2013.

Dear Parent,

I am a graduate student in the Education Faculty at the University of Alberta, and have taught your son or daughter English Language Arts at Paul Kane High School in the past year or two. Presently, I am in my final year of my Masters in Education with a focus on technology, and am interested in how technology connects with the literature I teach in the senior high classroom. My focus has been on small Internet games known as “not-games” (also known as serious games). These short games provoke reflection on a range of serious issues, some of them similar to the issues we study within the literature of the course. As a teacher, I have incorporated them in the classroom for the past two years. Your son or daughter has either experienced them or written about them, or given a presentation on them in previous English classes. Given that digital files are easy to keep, I have kept assignments that your son or daughter has created for the course, and now I would like to do research on these written and/or presentational responses. Students have also filled out anonymous surveys to ensure that this particular approach has been meaningful enough to continue their use in the classroom.

This letter is to ask your permission to use these responses as a part of my thesis for my Masters degree in Education. At no time, will any real names be disclosed, so pseudonyms will be created so that no one will know who wrote what. Students will remain anonymous throughout the entire process. My thesis will only use made-up names. All data will be password protected, encrypted, or kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room and will be destroyed in seven years' time, once the study is completed. My Graduate supervisor, Dr. Jason Wallin will oversee all research (Phone: 780-952-6764; Email: [jjwallin@ualberta.ca](mailto:jjwallin@ualberta.ca)).

The plan for this study will have been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta and the St. Albert Public School Board in order for me to ask your permission. **If your son or daughter is over the age of consent, then he or she needs to sign this letter; however, if your son or daughter is presently under the age of consent, then I would still need his or her “assent” and also your consent, so both signatures would be required.**

Your consideration and time in reading this letter regarding this matter is sincerely appreciated. I have always believed in trying new things as an educator, and not-gaming is one of them. Now, in my Masters of Education thesis, entitled, *Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*, I'd like to use real material from the classroom, but keep your son or daughter's work anonymous. This may help other educators and indeed other students, to make learning more relevant and more in line with 21<sup>st</sup> Century experiences.

Contact me if you have any concerns, doubts, or questions. Please bring this letter with the consent back to me or send it in this self-addressed stamped envelope. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the research study at any time before November of 2013. If you have concerns about this study, you may contact the Research Ethics Office, at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

Scott Gibson Dodd

Graduate Student,  
 Secondary Education Department,  
 University of Alberta  
 Email: [sagibson@ualberta.ca](mailto:sagibson@ualberta.ca)

Teacher and English Department Head,  
 Paul Kane High School,  
 St. Albert, Alberta.  
 Ph. 780-459-4405  
 Email: [scott.gibsondodd@spschools.org](mailto:scott.gibsondodd@spschools.org)

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it. I understand, allow, and give **consent** to use

\_\_\_\_\_’s (write in first and last name) material from my son or daughter’s English Language Arts class for Scott Gibson Dodd’s thesis on Not-Games: this includes but is not limited to written responses, presentation software such as *PowerPoint* or *Prezi*, and anonymous survey submissions via *Google Forms*.

**Parent Name (printed) and Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Participant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

*Optional Section*

*Please include my son or daughter’s real name if any of his/her writing or work is used in the thesis on not-games. **Parent and/or Student Signature only if you do NOT want his or her work to be anonymous:***

\_\_\_\_\_

### Consent Letter for a Student Interview

*Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*

Scott Gibson Dodd

Graduate Student in Secondary Education,

Education Faculty,

University of Alberta,

Edmonton, Alberta

September, 2013.

Dear Parent,

As you may remember from a previous consent letter I sent to you, I am presently taking my Masters degree at the University of Alberta in Secondary Education, and your son or daughter was one of my English students at Paul Kane who was quite passionate about the incorporation of video games as a part of the curriculum in English Language Arts. (I referred to these games as “not-games” during the course.) Now, I would like the opportunity to interview him or her about his or her experiences in order to transcribe parts of them into my thesis, entitled, *Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*. The interview would take about an hour of your son or daughter’s time and would be recorded for transcription purposes. The interviews will take place in my classroom (Room 175) at Paul Kane High School, any time between 2:30 and 5:30 p.m.

This letter is to ask if your son or daughter would be interested and to ask your permission to use your son or daughter’s words as a part of my thesis, entitled *Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*, for my Masters degree. At no time will any real names be disclosed, so pseudonyms (fake names) will be created to maintain the anonymity of interviewees. At no time, either during the research or after the research process, will any real names be disclosed so that all interviewees will remain anonymous throughout the entire process. My Graduate supervisor, Dr. Jason Wallin will oversee all research (Phone: (780) 952-6764; Email: [jjwallin@ualberta.ca](mailto:jjwallin@ualberta.ca)).

By the time you have received this letter, I will have received Ethics Approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board and also from the St. Albert Public School Board in order to ask you for permission to conduct these interviews. **If your son or daughter is over the age of consent, then he or she needs to sign this letter; however, if your son or daughter is presently under the age of consent, then I would still need his or her “assent” to interview him or her.** If your son or daughter is under the age of consent (18 years), they also need to sign in order to provide assent.

Your consideration in allowing your son or daughter to give the interview would be greatly appreciated. I have always believed in trying new things as an educator, and the use of educational video games as a part of the viewing component of the English curriculum (not-gaming) is one of them. Now, in my Masters of Education thesis, I’d like to use your son or daughter’s honest opinion about the impact of not-games in English, but keeping his or her

interview anonymous. This may help other educators, and indeed other students, to make learning more relevant and more in line with 21<sup>st</sup> Century experiences.

Please contact me if you have any concerns, doubts, or questions. Please send this letter with the consent back to me or send it in this self-addressed stamped envelope. You may withdraw from this research at any time, up until November of this year. If you have concerns about this study, you may contact the Research Ethics Office, at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

Please see a list of potential questions below.

Scott Gibson Dodd

Graduate Student,  
Secondary Education Department,  
University of Alberta  
Email: [sagibson@ualberta.ca](mailto:sagibson@ualberta.ca)

Teacher and English Department Head,  
Paul Kane High School,  
St. Albert, Alberta.  
Ph. 780-459-4405  
Email: [scott.gibsondodd@spschools.org](mailto:scott.gibsondodd@spschools.org)

### Interview Questions

1. It's now been several months since you were in English 30-1 at Paul Kane, what do you remember about not-games in English? What was their impact on you? Which one was your favourite and why?
2. Do you think that the not-game helped you understand any of the literature in the course better than if you had not played the not-game?
3. Do you think that the not-game helped you in your writing in the course better than if you had not played the not-game?
4. Have you found any other not-games since being in English 30-1?
5. Which do you think you'll remember longer, the story that the not-game was attached to or the not-game itself? Why or why not?
6. Would you categorize yourself as a gamer? Do you think not-games can relate to people who don't play games very often? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that not-games have a place in English Language Arts? How so?
8. What ideas do you remember from the not-games you played the most? What did you learn from it?

9. What do think other students thought about not-games in an English Language Arts class?
10. Tell me a bit about your personality, your likes and dislikes.

I understand and give **assent (permission)** to Scott Gibson Dodd to interview son or daughter, \_\_\_\_\_'s (print in first and last name) with the intention of transcribing words from the interview and inserting portions of it into Scott Gibson Dodd's thesis entitled, *Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*.

**Name Printed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Information Letter and Consent Form for a Teacher Interview**

Scott Gibson Dodd  
Research Investigator,  
Graduate Student in Secondary Education,  
450 Education South  
University of Alberta,  
Edmonton, Alberta. T6G 2R3

September, 2013.

Dear Teacher,

I am a graduate student in the Education Faculty at the University of Alberta, and you have taught secondary English Language Arts using not-gaming technology. Presently, I am in my final year of my Masters in Education degree with a focus on technology, so I am studying the impact of technology and video gaming on literary understanding. My focus has been on the use of small Internet games known as “not-games” (also known as serious games) and to find out if they provoke reflection on the issues we study with literature in the classroom. As a teacher, I have been intrigued by not-games and have incorporated them in the classroom for the past two years. You have experienced them in your classrooms as well.

Now, I would like the opportunity to interview you about your experiences in order to transcribe parts of them into my thesis, entitled, *Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*. The interview would take about an hour of your time and would be recorded for transcription purposes. The interviews could either take place in my classroom (Room 175) at Paul Kane High School, any time between 2:30 and 5:30 p.m. or at your school or using *Skype* online.

At no time will any real names be disclosed, so pseudonyms (fake names) will be created to maintain respondent anonymity. The final document, my thesis, will only use made-up names. All data will be password protected, encrypted, or kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room and will be destroyed in seven years' time, once the study is completed. My Graduate supervisor, Dr. Jason Wallin will oversee all research (Phone: (780) 952-6764; Email: [jjwallin@ualberta.ca](mailto:jjwallin@ualberta.ca)).

The plan for this study will have been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. I have always believed in trying new things as an educator, and not-gaming is one of them. Now, in my thesis, I'd like to use your honest opinion about the impact of not-games in English. This may help other educators, and indeed other students, to make learning more relevant and more in line with 21<sup>st</sup> Century experiences.

Contact me if you have any concerns, doubts, or questions. Please send this letter and consent form back to me in this self-addressed stamped envelope. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the research study at any time before November of this year. If you have concerns about this study, you may contact the Research Ethics Office, at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.



Please see a list of potential questions below.

Scott Gibson Dodd

Graduate Student,  
Secondary Education Department,  
University of Alberta  
Email: [sagibson@ualberta.ca](mailto:sagibson@ualberta.ca)

Teacher and English Department Head,  
Paul Kane High School,  
St. Albert, Alberta.  
Ph. 780-459-4405  
Email: [scott.gibsondodd@spschools.org](mailto:scott.gibsondodd@spschools.org)

### Interview Questions

1. In several months' time, what do you think students will remember about not-games in English? What was the not-game's impact on the student and his or her learning? Which one was their favourite and why? What was their impact on you and which one was your favourite?
2. Do you think that the not-game helped students understand any of the literature in the course better than if they had not played the not-game?
3. Do you think that the not-game helped them in their writing in the course better than if they had not played the not-game?
4. Have you found any other not-games online that you would consider for use in a classroom? For which units or literature?
5. Which do you think students will remember longer, the story that the not-game was attached to or the not-game itself? In your opinion, what would account for this?
6. Would you categorize yourself as a gamer? Do you think not-games can relate to people who don't play games very often? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that not-games have a place in English Language Arts? Why or why not? How so or how not so?
8. What ideas do you think students will remember from the not-games they played the most? What did you learn from it? What will they have learned from it?
9. What do think other students thought about not-games in an English Language Arts class? What do you think other teachers think about not-games in English Language Arts?
10. Tell me a bit about your personality, your likes and dislikes. What personality traits seemed to be more or less enthusiastic about not-games in English Language Arts?

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it. I understand and give permission to Scott Gibson Dodd to interview me with the intention of transcribing words from the interview and inserting portions of it into Scott Gibson Dodd's thesis entitled, *Not-Games in Secondary English Language Arts*.

**Name Printed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_