

ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – What's distinct about video games

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a talk about video games. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the task again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you what the speaker says about ways in which video games are distinct from other art forms and what we might learn from them. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Now tell me what the speaker says about ways in which video games are distinct from other art forms and what we might learn from them. I'll stop you after one minute.

Audio script

Welcome to this week's radio show on what we can learn from digital technology. Today we're going to look at a commonly discussed issue. It's hard to think of another human activity that divides us as much as the playing of video games. Those that play the games often do so for hours and with a passionate enjoyment. The question that interests many opponents of video games is how distinct they are from more traditional forms of entertainment such as narratives and drama. Perhaps we should appreciate that video games are a completely distinct genre. Let's explore some of the differences.

Unlike other art forms, the video gamers enter into a challenge. They have to prove themselves at each stage of the game before continuing. Just imagine if you couldn't continue to the next chapter of a novel, or the next act of a play, until you had successfully answered questions about the themes! Or, if you couldn't listen to the next track on an album, unless you showed how well you could dance! And yet this is the world of video gamers.

Another essential difference between video games and the other art forms is the element of competition. When reading a novel or watching a play there is no need for anybody to win or lose. Finally, readers of novels and viewers of plays take a less active part than gamers. They simply turn the pages or sit still until the end. In short, gamers are much more active participants than in other art forms.

So, what can we actually learn from gaming? I wonder whether we could use it to our benefit, instead of protesting against the addictive nature of video games. What we label as 'obsession' in one field is valued as dedication when applied in more academic areas. Perhaps we could learn something from the determination to succeed of video gamers. And there's another aspect that we might learn from. Video game techniques have proved irresistible in commercial entertainment. And they could be used in fields that are vital for society, such as business, politics and education. Of course, providing incentives is not a new technique in teaching and training programmes, but now we have clearly seen the power of regular small rewards to keep players searching for a solution, so why not learners or employees?

And lastly – we should note – the motivation is strong, even with games that are designed never to be finished. If only teachers could get their students to keep looking for answers in the same way! So, for those of you that have had your doubts, perhaps this will convince you that there is, in fact, a lot to be learned from playing video games.

Answers

Main point/gist: The speaker is talking about ways in which video games are distinct from other art forms/traditional forms of entertainment/narratives and dramas and what we might learn from them.

How video games are distinct

- ▶ They are a challenge – players have to prove themselves at each stage
- ▶ The element of competition – no need to win/lose
- ▶ Players are more active participants – readers/viewers play less active part/just turn pages/sit still

What we can learn from video games

- ▶ Determination/dedication of gamers to succeed (rather than seen as an obsession)
- ▶ Apply techniques to fields vital for society – such as business/politics/education
- ▶ Power of incentives/regular small rewards – could keep learners/employees searching for solutions
- ▶ The motivation to find the answer is strong – even when there is no 'end' (could be useful for teachers/students)