

HISTORICAL VIDEO GAMES: ARE PLAYERS LEARNING OR ARE LEARNERS PLAYING?

ABSTRACT: When discussing historical video games, World War I (WWI) historian Chris Kempshall poses overarching questions: Should historical video games be entirely factual, accurate and authentic? Or should they be judged upon their ability to entertain? Kempshall's questions are central to the field of study and concisely encapsulate a plethora of themes and ideas. His questions may appear simplistic, as they can be interpreted as a choice between two mutually exclusive options. I argue that this choice is not necessary. Several mainstream historical video games are not simply a prevalent form of entertainment, but also offer a complex understanding of the past. Popular video games such as *Call of Duty: WWII*, *Battlefield V* and *Mafia III* offer knowledge acquisition that helps shape the collective representation and understanding of history.

APPROACH: Three mainstream historical video games making the top ten worldwide sales list in their month of release were examined, as they would have the greatest influence on our collective memory.

Call of Duty: WWII



Source: Sledgehammer Games. *Call of Duty: WWII*, 2017.

Top Grossing Titles by Category Worldwide, ranked by November 2017 earnings

PC	CONSOLE	MOBILE
1. League of Legends	Call of Duty: WWII	Honour of Kings
2. PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds	FIFA 18	Fantasy Westward Journey
3. Dungeon Fighter Online	Star Wars Battlefront 2	Monster Strike
4. Crossfire	Destiny 2	Lineage M
5. Fantasy Westward Journey Online II	NBA 2K18	Candy Crush Saga
6. Destiny 2	Grand Theft Auto V	Clash of Clans
7. World of Warcraft	Middle-Earth: Shadow of War	Clash Royale
8. Call of Duty: WWII	Fortnite: Battle Royale	King of Chaos
9. World of Tanks	Madden NFL 18	Lineage 2 Revolution
10. Star Wars Battlefront 2	Forza Motorsport 7	Fate/Ground Order

Source: SuperDataArcade. Top selling games by total digital game sales, November 2017.

Battlefield V



Source: EA DICE. *Battlefield V*, 2018.

Top Grossing Titles by Category Worldwide, ranked by November 2018 earnings

PC	CONSOLE	MOBILE
1. League of Legends	Red Dead Redemption 2	Pokemon GO
2. Dungeon Fighter Online	FIFA 19	Honour of Kings
3. Crossfire	Call of Duty: Black Ops IIII	Candy Crush Saga
4. Fortnite: Battle Royale	Fortnite: Battle Royal	Monster Strike
5. Battlefield V	Fallout 76	Clash of Clans
6. PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds	Battlefield V	Fate/Grand Order
7. Sims 4	NBA 2K19	Puzzle & Dragons
8. World of Tanks	Grand Theft Auto V	Knives Out
9. Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	Madden NFL 19	Clash Royale
10. DOTA 2	Assassin's Creed Odyssey	Toon Blast

Source: SuperDataArcade. Top selling games by total digital game sales, November 2018.

Mafia III



Source: Hanger 13. *Mafia III*, 2016.

Top Grossing Titles by Category Worldwide, ranked by October 2016 earnings

PC	CONSOLE	MOBILE
1. League of Legends	Battlefield 1	Pokemon GO
2. Crossfire	Mafia III	Clash Royale
3. World of Warcraft	FIFA 17	Monster Strike
4. Dungeon Fighter Online	Call of Duty: Black Ops III	Clash of Clans
5. Sid Meier's Civilization VI	Grand Theft Auto V	Mobile Strike
6. Overwatch	NBA 2K17	Game of War: Fire Age
7. Battlefield 1	Destiny	Fantasy Westward Journey
8. World of Tanks	Gears of War 4	Candy Crush Saga
9. DOTA 2	FIFA 16	Puzzle & Dragons
10. Fantasy Westward Journey Online II	Star Wars Battlefront	Clash of Kings

Source: SuperDataArcade. Top selling games by total digital game sales, October 2016.

CONCLUSION: This project on video games reveals that the idea that accuracy and inclusivity cannot coexist in video games is a misconception that spawned from the lack of representation in popular history sources. Video games offer many interactive ways to educate players about sensitive topics in a subtle manner. The long-term impact of video games is yet to be determined. Future studies on how players react and learn from these games will undoubtedly provide insight into this question. Historical video games have proven to be effective transmitters of the past with great potential to diversify our collective memory.