9

The loot box phenomenon

GambleAware

NSW
GOVERNMENT

Activity introduction

Quick summary

Students will listen to a podcast exploring the origin of loot boxes, and how their initial conceptualisation matches the modern phenomenon. They will explore some of the more problematic uses of loot boxes by different developers and companies, and create their own argument as their point of view on the issue. Finally, students will work through a satirical game 'Loot Box Simulator', to identify the purpose and contention of a multimodal text.

Learning intentions

Students will:

- Engage with a range of multimodal texts to develop their understanding of the function and issues of loot boxes in gaming.

- Prepare an oral presentation to present their point of view on the issue.

- Evaluate different texts to determine their intent and purpose.

21st-century skills

Communicating

Critical thinking

Digital literacy

Empathy

Personal and social skills

NSW Syllabus outcomes

- **EN11-2** uses and evaluates processes, skills and knowledge required to effectively respond to and compose texts in different modes, media and technologies

- **EN11-3** analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts, considers appropriateness for purpose, audience and context and explains effects on meaning

- **EN11-5** thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and analytically to respond to and compose texts that include considered and detailed information, ideas and arguments.

General capabilities

Literacy

Information and communication technology (ICT) capability

Critical and creative thinking

Personal and social capability

Ethical understanding

Stage 6 Syllabus objectives

Objective A

Through responding to and composing a wide range of texts and through the close study of texts, students develop knowledge, understanding and skills in order to:

- communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

Objective B

Through responding to and composing a wide range of texts and through the close study of texts, students develop knowledge, understanding and skills in order to:

- use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context.

Objective C

Through responding to and composing a wide range of texts and through the close study of texts, students develop knowledge, understanding and skills in order to:

- think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical.

Topic
The loot box phenomenon

Unit of work
Stage 6 English

Time required
90 minutes

Level of teacher scaffolding
Medium - the teacher will need to facilitate some discussion, and guide students through the activities, as well as explaining how to use Flipgrid if students are new to this program.

Resources required

- A device capable of presenting a podcast to the class

- Appendix A: Student worksheet

- Appendix B: Student worksheet

- Students will require a device to record their Flipgrid video and a device on which to play 'Loot box simulator'

Keywords

Loot box, gambling, history, problem, CS-GO, micro-transactions, Flipgrid, lootbox phenomenon, problems for young people, addictive behaviour, evaluate texts, multimodal texts, oral presentation, online gaming, gaming, graphic representations, lootbox simulator, quest, loot.

Teacher worksheet

Teacher preparation

Gambling can be a high-risk activity and is a priority concern for young people. Therefore, before conducting the lesson on gambling, it is recommended that teachers and parents read the Facilitator pack. The pack provides teachers and parents with essential information about gambling harm amongst young people and clarifies the nature of gambling-related behaviours and how to approach sensitive topics.

Learning intentions

Students will:

- engage with a range of multimodal texts to develop their understanding of the function and issues of loot boxes in gaming.
- prepare an oral presentation to present their point of view on the issue.
- evaluate different texts to determine their intent and purpose.

Success criteria

Students can:

- read, understand and evaluate a podcast, online article and computer game
- argue using evidence their own perspective on loot boxes
- discuss the issue of loot boxes in modern gaming.

Teaching sequence

30 minutes - Part A: The history of loot boxes

30 minutes - Part B: The problem with loot boxes

20 minutes - Part C: Loot box simulator

10 minutes - Reflection

Lesson introduction

Work through this resource material in the following sequence:

Part A:
The history of loot boxes

Step 1

Listen to the first 17:21 of 'The splitscreen quest for epic loot' with the class. While listening, students should complete the questions on Appendix A. ***Please note, there is one incidence of profanity in this first 18 minutes.***

Step 2

Discuss student answers – use Appendix A – Teacher resource to support discussion.

Part B:
The issue with loot boxes

Step 1

Provide students with the list of articles exploring the problems surrounding loot boxes for them to access online:

– The CS:GO gambling scandal: Everything you need to know

– New study reaffirms link between problem gambling and loot boxes

– Leaked documents show EA really wants you to buy FIFA loot boxes

– In-Game purchases poison the well

These articles have a range of sub links that will allow students to explore this issue further than just these particular articles.

Step 2

As they read, students should create a graphic representation of their understanding of the key points. They could use a format like below (See Appendix C).

Step 3

Based on their reading, students should choose what they think is the *most significant* problem with how loot boxes are used in gaming, and plan a 1-2 minute oral explanation of their argument. This presentation should use examples and vocabulary sourced from the readings.
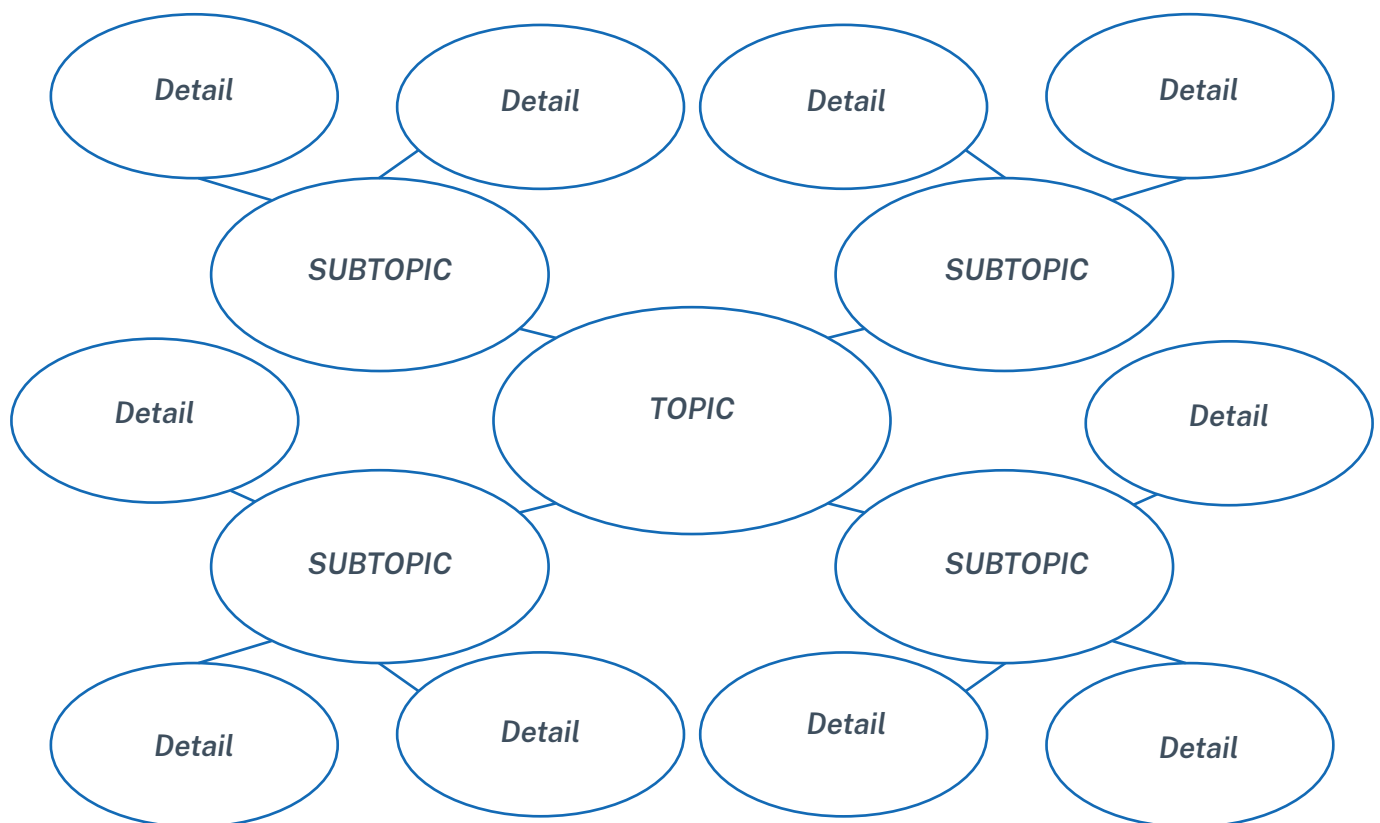
Step 4

Students should record their point of view using the application: Flipgrid.

Please note: Teachers will need to set up a class group and topic and share this with students for them to post their recordings. Click here for a step by step guide.

Link: blog.flipgrid.com/gettingstarted

Step 5

Students can watch their peers' flipgrid recordings and record their own response to at least three. If there are already a number of comments on one video please move on and comment on a video that has less comments attached to it.

If teachers have selected the feature, students could 'like' the recordings they particularly enjoyed.

The teacher could present some of the best arguments to the whole class for discussion if appropriate.

Part C:
Loot box simulator

Step 1

Ask students to navigate to Steam, to download the simulator: Loot box simulator

Link: store.steampowered.com/app/889240/ Loot_Box_Simulator

This is a free game that presents "a satirical look at the current trajectory of the game industry".

Step 2

Students should play through the game, considering what message is being portrayed by the game developers. Students can make a note of the decisions they make as they move through the game and compare this with a classmate.

Step 3

Facilitate a discussion -

1. *What impact did their decisions have?*

2. *What was the point of the games within the game?*

3. *Why did the game have a long and detailed introduction narrative?*

4. *Did this really matter?*

5. *Did students spend time on the main quest, or did they focus on the loot boxes?*

6. *Is that a problem?*

7. *Was the majority of the class focused on the quest or the loot boxes?*

8. *Why do you think this was?*

9. *Has playing this game opened your eyes to an issue that you were previously unaware of? Explain your answer.*

Reflection

Based on the learning from today, students could consider how their perspective of loot boxes may have changed. Ask students to consider what they could do to challenge some of the problems identified in the use of loot boxes in gaming.

Learning Support

- Students may require additional response to 'remove themselves from the game' and think objectively.

- Students may need additional support with online programming.

Extension

- Students might like to listen to the entire podcast and elaborate on a discussion, theme or topic about why it was compelling and some important questions it posed.

- Students may like to create a graph showing the classes responses to the Lootbox simulator game and reflect upon what their findings show about teens and gaming addictions.

  - This could be split into genders, regular gamers/ new gamers etc.

Teacher reflection

Take this opportunity to reflect on your own teaching:

What did you learn about your teaching today?

What worked well?

What didn't work so well?

What would you share?

Where to next?

How are you going to get there?

Appendix A

The splitscreen quest for epic loot

Step 1

Listen to the episode: <u>The splitscreen quest for epic loot</u> from the beginning of the episode through to 17:21.

Link: art19.com/shows/kotaku-splitscreen/episodes/ced28f94-0952-4293-8b02-d00b81866531

Step 2

Work through the following questions:

1. How did Erich and David initially envision loot?
2. What did they have to change for Diablo?
3. Why do the creators use the analogy of a 'slot machine' for the structure of loot dropping in the game?
4. Why do you think games follow the same colour scheme created by Diablo?
5. Do you think Erich and David are responsible for companies using loot boxes to potentially exploit people?

Appendix A – Teacher reference

The splitscreen quest for epic loot

Read the following transcript: <u>Why video game loot is so addictive</u>, according to the creators of Diablo.

Link: kotaku.com.au/2021/04/why-video-game-loot-is-so-addictive-according-to-the-creators-of-diablo

Link: art19.com/shows/kotaku-splitscreen/episodes/ced28f94-0952-4293-8b02-d00b81866531

Listen from the beginning of the episode through to 17:21, and answer the questions below:

How did Erich and David initially envision loot?
- *As a way to generate magic items, like what happens in D&D.* - *Random item generation was in the games they were playing.* - *Gaining loot is a highlight for gamers - paper and pencil or on computer.*
What did they have to change for Diablo?
- *Desire for anticipation for random drops of loot.* - *Thinking about what could be a cool thing to find for the gamer.* - *Story was secondary to the loot - the story was designed particularly for this.*
Why do the creators use the analogy of a 'slot machine' for the structure of loot dropping in the game?
They were basically making a slot machine – every time they kill a monster, you pull the lever. Sought to have things drop quickly. Colour coded system to grade items. *Use of colour and sound to increase excitement, like a poker machine.* *Created a system where players had to click twice to reveal the loot - increased the anticipation.*
Why do you think games follow the same colour scheme created by Diablo?
Student response will vary.
Do you think Erich and David are responsible for companies using loot boxes to potentially exploit people?
Student response will vary.

Appendix C

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   Detail      Detail        Detail        Detail

        SUBTOPIC              SUBTOPIC

   Detail           TOPIC           Detail

        SUBTOPIC              SUBTOPIC

   Detail      Detail        Detail        Detail
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