LESSON: **ARE WOMEN HARD TO ANIMATE? FEMALE COMBATANTS** (60 MINUTES)

In this lesson or series of lessons, students will watch the "Are Women Hard to Animate? Female Combatants" video from the Feminist Frequency series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, and will explore the consequences of pervasive apathy towards female inclusion in military shooters and other combat-oriented games represented by various excuses made within the industry. Students will consider the difference between portraying women as victims versus active participants in various gaming contexts, and will be encouraged to critically interrogate the excuse of believability commonly used to argue against the presence of women in these types of games.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson/series of lessons, students/viewers will:

1. Explore the consequences of a lack of female inclusion in combat-oriented games;

2. Interrogate common excuses pertaining to the exclusion of female characters as active participants in such games;

3. Consider the difference between women as victims of violence versus active participants and the difference between violence and gendered violence as it pertains to female representation in violent games and other forms of media.

MATERIALS

- Computer

- Projector

- Printed copies of "Female Combatants" note companions

- Video game examples and computer access

Before: Minds On

If this is the first lesson being used in the *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* series, a preliminary discussion regarding 'critical analysis' as a process of questioning and 'tropes' as identified patterns will help students understand the goal of the videos (helping viewers question the media they use/consume and the broader implications of media); An introduction to season 1 of the series might also be needed. **[5 MINUTES]**

Work through key themes/definitions prior to viewing the video, covering the difference between violence (What is violence?) and gendered violence, and the difference between victimization and active participation in violence (the question of violence against female villains etc.). **[20 MINUTES]**

During Action!

Watch the "Are Women Hard to Animate? Female Combatants" video (places to pause due to time constraints or opportunities for embedded discussion and/or activities below):

00:28	E3 and Assassin's Creed: Unity – Arguments against the inclusion of women in combat-oriented games
02:50	Female Combatants in Military Shooters
03:07	Women as victims vs. Active Participants
03:50	Violence vs. Gendered Violence
05:25	Problematizing violence against female characters as 'sexy'
05:40	Suggestions
06:05	The (non)problem of believability and female combatants

[10 MINUTES]

Differentiated Instruction:

- Note companions to help students work through definitions and content, including collaboration following viewing;

- 'Pause and Reflect' opportunities throughout viewing

After: Consolidation & Connection

Jigsaw activity: Post four pieces of chart paper around the room and divide the class up into four groups, assigning them to the following headings: Real-life female combatants (brainstorming vocations where women are in active roles alongside men, women in history who could fall under this category, etc.), Video game combatants (playable characters/support characters students know of who work alongside male characters in video games), TV/Movie female combatants and Villains/Enemies in various forms of media. Provide students with 10 minutes to brainstorm examples under each heading (encourage the use of devices for research assistance), and then have groups switch in 1-minute rotations through the categories adding any additional examples. **[15 MINUTES]**

Have students debrief these lists, noting patterns, similarities and differences in the characters/individuals discussed based on the video and their own observations. **[10 MINUTES]**

POST-VIDEO ACTIVITY OPTIONS

Researching 'Female Combatants'

- **Option 1:** Students will research a real-life female combatant presently active (an individual from the military, a firefighter or police officer working alongside their male counterparts, etc.) and the experiences of this individual in their line of work (should it be possible, students could interview someone in a role such as this in their community);

- **Option 2:** Students will research a woman in history who could be considered a female combatant, also exploring the social contexts this woman would have been operating within;

- **Option 3:** Students will pick one significant female character who could be considered a 'combatant' from various forms of media, with an emphasis placed on how this character operates within their fictional world and the benefits for viewers in seeing women in these roles (or a critique of how the character is represented).

TROPES VS. WOMEN IN VIDEO GAMES:
"Female Combatants"

Women as Victims vs. Active Participants "When we refer to depictions of violence against women, we're generally discussing situations in which women are being attacked or victimized specifically because they are women, reinforcing a perception of women as victims. […] The way for games to handle female combatants is not to present them as sexualized treats for the player. Rather, it's to present them simply as combatants who happen to be women fighting alongside their male counterparts on equal footing."	**Gendered Violence Against Women** Gendered violence is different from other acts of violence because it is geared towards women specifically because they are women. The sexualisation of female characters heightens the often gendered nature of violence, as defeating a female enemy who is sexualized through mannerisms and costume is often intended to have the effect of sexiness or desirability for a presumed straight male player.

E3 – Arguments against the inclusion of women	
Women as Victims vs. Active Participants	

TROPES VS. WOMEN IN VIDEO GAMES: "FEMALE COMBATANTS"

Violence vs. Gendered Violence	
The (non)problem of believability and female combatants	