

**LESSON: BODY LANGUAGE AND THE MALE GAZE (60 MINUTES)**

In this lesson or series of lessons, students will watch the "Body Language and the Male Gaze" video from the Feminist Frequency series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, and will consider how female characters in video games are often sexualized through their body language. Even simple actions such as the way a character walks, sits or jumps communicates information about a character, but often the amount of authentic information that can be revealed through body language is limited by overt attempts to sexualize and objectify female characters and otherwise cater to the male gaze and a presumed male audience.

**LEARNING GOALS**

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

1. Explore body language as a communicative tool that develops character;
2. Consider how sexualizing or objectifying body language and the male gaze limits female characters in both video games and media in general;
3. Imagine alternatives for pre-existing female characters who have been sexualized or objectified with regards to movement animation and body language, and explore the power of body language in story and character development

**MATERIALS**

- Computer
- Projector
- Printed copies of "Body language and the male gaze" note companions
- Video game examples and computer access

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]**

**Before: Minds On**

Body Language activity: Hold a brief discussion on what body language is and how it contributes to how we communicate. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 and assign each group an emotion. Examples could be anger, sadness, anxiety, fear, or excitement. Give students 5 minutes to come with a different way each person in the group could use body language to express the emotion they have been assigned (*a group of 5 would show 5 different poses or actions*). Debrief this activity by discussing how various emotions and contexts can be communicated in a variety of ways using body language. **[20 MINUTES]**

LESSON: **BODY LANGUAGE AND THE MALE GAZE****During Action!**

Watch the "Body Language and the Male Gaze" video (places to pause due to time constraints or opportunities for embedded discussion and/or activities below):

00:25 Body Language, character development and gender

01:40 Movement as Communicative Tool

04:40 The Male Gaze and Media Culture

06:10 Suggestions **[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**

**Independent Inquiry:** How can we see the male gaze embedded in media culture? In small groups, ask students to consider body language or the male gaze in a movie trailer of their choice through a brief independent exploration using movies they are familiar with (*laptops or media lab required*) **[15 MINUTES]**

Discuss as a class what students observed about the presence of the male gaze and the presence of a presumed male viewer **[10 MINUTES]**

**POST-VIDEO ACTIVITY OPTIONS****Objectives and Tactics Exercise**

Ask students to pick a game that contains a female character they are familiar with, or provide them with examples from the 'Body Language and the Male Gaze' video. The goal of this activity is to engage students in the process of reimagining a game that sexualizes or objectifies female characters through body language or the male gaze instead as one which honours the character depth of these women.

**Instructions:** *"Take 20-30 seconds of game play or a cut scene in which you think movement animators favoured the male gaze and the sexuality of female characters over personality, emotions or context and reimagine how the female character's movement should have been animated instead. Ask the following questions: What is happening? What is the character doing? How are they being represented in sexualized ways that perpetuate the male gaze? Once you have explored these questions, break down what you are seeing in the following way:*

*What is their primary objective in this scene (i.e. scaling a wall, taking a break, stealing something)?*

*What are three ways you could communicate this objective solely through body language? Pay attention to context. For example, if Lara Croft from the Tomb Raider franchise were to scale the side of a mountain, she would probably not be sticking her butt out to look more appealing to a presumed male viewer. Her face might exhibit fear, her body would be pressed close to the side of the mountain, etc.*

*Break down every major or significant action in the game play or cut scene you chose."*

**Extension activity:** Because this analytical tool is taken from drama as a way to develop depth in acting, this format can also assist students in reimagining (and acting out) monologues or cut scenes from video games in which characters are being sexualized or otherwise acting in accordance with the male gaze instead of responding to the context or communicating through body language who they are as individuals.

Ask students to pick a cut scene from a game they think perpetuates gender stereotypes or the male gaze, and ask students to type up a significant monologue from it, analyze the context and content of the scene, and follow the 1 objective/3 tactics format sentence-by-sentence. This monologue or scene can then be performed in front of the class alongside a comparison of the original scene, showing a diverse range of ways body language could communicate information about a story and character beyond sexuality or the male gaze. This is also an opportunity for students to explore character in more depth.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TROPES VS. WOMEN IN VIDEO GAMES:  
**“Body Language and the Male Gaze”**

**Body Language**

Body language and movement can be used in games and other visual media to communicate information about a character and their objectives moving through a space. Female characters' body language is often dictated more by the male gaze and less by their personalities or goals, limiting how much information can be communicated about a character through body language.

**The Male Gaze**

First discussed by Laura Mulvey with regards to how female bodies are portrayed in the arts in a way that assumes a male viewer, the male gaze impacts the way a camera or other visual frame pans, lingers or caresses the female body. The male gaze is a deeply embedded part of media culture, and can only be eliminated through acknowledging the humanity and depth of all characters.

**Body Language  
and Character  
Development**

**Movement  
Reinforcing Gender  
Stereotypes (Female  
sexuality, male walk  
vs. female walk)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TROPES VS. WOMEN IN VIDEO GAMES:  
"BODY LANGUAGE AND THE MALE GAZE"

<b>The Male Gaze and Media Culture</b>	
<b>Suggestions</b>	