LESSON: **ALL THE SLENDER LADIES: BODY DIVERSITY IN VIDEO GAMES** (60 MINUTES)

In this lesson or series of lessons, students will watch the "All the Slender Ladies: Body Diversity in Video Games" video from the Feminist Frequency series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, and will explore the absence of physical diversity in characters from a variety of video games. Students will also explore this problem in the context of various other forms of media, and will consider the consequences of exclusion and lack of representation in both video games and a variety of media forms.

LEARNING GOALS

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

1. Explore the absence of physical diversity in characters in video games and other forms of media;

2. Link a lack of body diversity in video games to other social phenomena, considering the presence of oppressive beauty standards imposed on women and other aesthetic experiences;

3. Further investigate the consequences of exclusion and lack of representation in video games and a variety of media forms.

MATERIALS

- Computer

- Projector

- Printed copies of "Body Diversity" note companions

- Video game examples and computer access

- Beauty magazines (assorted)

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]**

Divide class into groups or pairs depending on how many beauty magazines you have available to you, and ask students to look through the magazines and gather observations regarding what they see – Who is in these magazines? What kinds of images? What do the articles seem to be about? Who do they think the intended audience is? This minds on activity will provide a foundation for students to begin to understand the exclusionary nature of representation in many forms of media, leading directly into a similar occurrence in video games. **[20 MINUTES]**

During Action!

Watch the "All the Slender Ladies: Body Diversity in Video Games" video (places to pause due to time constraints or opportunities for embedded discussion and/or activities below):

0:30	Blizzard & Overwatch
01:25	Body Diversity in Male vs. Female Characters
02:40	Slender as Standard in Female Character Design
03:50	Problematizing Value linked to Desirability
04:30	Consequences of Exclusion
04:55	Representations of Various Ages
05:40	Variety that does exist
06:20	Overwatch revisited **[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

Based on students' observations before viewing the video, provide students with an opportunity to make connections: How can a lack of body and age diversity in video games be harmful? What are the consequences elsewhere regarding limited representation in the media? **[10 MINUTES]**

Use the following videos as an opportunity for students to explore further the damaging effects of beauty ideals and exclusionary media representation, embedding discussion that links back to the tropes video:

• "Dead Men Can't Catcall" by Samantha Peterson – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJnJNcNKmC8&t=0s

• "What Guys Look For In Girls" – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSHnnPunShg

• "Identity: A Love Story" by Erin Schick – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AQ5-hJQ1yg

• "Lost Voices" by Darius Simpson & Scout Bostley – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpPASWlnZIA

(Review videos for sensitive language before using) **[15 MINUTES]**

POST-VIDEO ACTIVITY OPTIONS

Slam Poetry Session: Experiences of Beauty Standards and Representation
For this activity, the lack of representation of body and age diversity in video games can be the foundation for students to discuss other kinds of pressures they experience related to beauty standards and exclusionary media practices. Slam poetry is a unique and personal way for students to engage with these issues, as it sometimes involves research into various social patterns or phenomena, encourages students to explore their own emotions and experiences, facilitates authentic conversation between students, and helps students work on their writing and presenting skills.

Students can approach this activity in a variety of ways either in groups or independently, and can work closely with the topic of video games or use it as a conceptual jumping-off point to engage critically with other forms of media.

The following links are great places to get started in teaching slam poetry:
https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/brief-guide-slam-poetry
http://www.varsitytutors.com/englishteacher/poetryslam.html
http://ed.ted.com/lessons/become-a-slam-poet-in-five-steps-gayle-danley

Other slam poems can be found (with a school appropriate category) on the Button Poetry channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5DH3eN81b0RGJ7Xj3fsjVg

TROPES VS. WOMEN IN VIDEO GAMES:
Body Diversity in Video Games

Problematizing Slender as Standard

An overwhelming majority of female characters in video games have a similar stature – a slim physique with few varying details. Reflecting oppressive beauty ideals perpetuated in media elsewhere, a lack of body diversity suggests that only those who are thin are 'worthy' of recognition or representation.

Age Diversity

Age diversity can be defined as a representation of a broad range of ages in characters. Older male characters are common in video games, but female characters are disproportionately young and fit common beauty ideals. Age diversity in games is an area of much needed growth, as only having young and 'beautiful' female characters wrongly links value to youth and limits what can be considered 'desirable'.

Blizzard & *Overwatch*	
Body Diversity in Male vs. Female Characters	
Slender as Standard for Female Character Design	

TROPES VS. WOMEN IN VIDEO GAMES:
BODY DIVERSITY IN VIDEO GAMES

Value linked to Desirability	
Consequences of Exclusion	
Age Diversity	
Overwatch **Revisted**	