

LESSON: WOMEN AS REWARD (2 HOURS)

In this lesson or series of lessons, students will watch the 'Women as Reward' video from the Feminist Frequency series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, engage in discussions regarding the concept of male entitlement in the context of interactive media, and will be invited to reflect on their own gaming practices. Post-video activities will solidify learning, and provide students with a variety of opportunities to reflect upon discussions resulting from the video, including how these concepts may apply to their own experiences.

LEARNING GOALS

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

1. Consider how the 'women as reward' trope variously manifests itself in a broad range of video games and interactive media;
2. Learn about how this trope works within the conceptual framework of male entitlement;
3. Apply the content of this video (particularly the concept of male entitlement) to broader discussions concerning how interactive media such as video games can impact social interactions and gendered experiences/expectations.

MATERIALS

- Computer
- Projector
- Printed copies of 'Women as Reward' note companions

Before: Minds On

Begin with an open discussion regarding students' current video gaming experience (e.g. titles, consoles, independent or group play, role-playing games, online, themes, genres etc.), create a web of experiences and titles, and make connections between game content/consoles etc. **[5 MINUTES]**

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) **[5 MINUTES]**

LESSON: **WOMEN AS REWARD****During Action!**

Watch 'Women as Reward' video (places to pause due to time restraints or opportunities for embedded discussion below):

- 0:45 Earned Cinematics (covered in Introduction)
- 4:05 'Standard Hero Reward'
- 5:00 'Women as Reward' trope defined
- 7:00 Organization of video broken down (opportunity to remind students of the note companion)
- 7:15 Easter eggs
- 11:00 Unlockable Costumes
- 15:30 Experience Points
- 18:40 Collectibles
- 21:35 Achievements
- 24:00 'Trophyism' defined
- 25:40/25:55 'Male Entitlement' defined
- 28:15 Concept of Consent in the context of gaming discussed
- 30:35 Broader implications for society discussed **[35 MINUTES]**

Differentiated Instruction:

- Note companions to help students work through definitions and content, including collaboration following viewing;
- 'Pause and Reflect' opportunities throughout viewing
- Emphasis on the use of visual examples

After: Consolidation & Connection

EITHER: work through and expand upon the definitions of key terms (e.g. cinematics, reward, easter eggs, unlockable costumes, experience points, collectibles, achievements, trophyism) and how tropes or concepts work. In the process collate interpretations from students' notes as a class

OR: students work in pairs to compare their definitions of key terms and how tropes or concepts work before sharing their observations. **[15 MINUTES]**

Pose discussion questions based on the video, using images from the video or watching short clips from it as necessary:

- How do you think the experience of playing Samus Aran's character changes for the player when she is revealed to be a female character? How about when she is stripped down/playable without her suit? How do you think the experience of playing capable female characters in the *Resident Evil* franchise change when they are wearing their alternate costumes?
- Can you think of other instances in contemporary media where women are objectified? How do those instances relate to what occurs in video games?
- Do you think video games can reinforce or perpetuate male entitlement as is argued in the video? Why or why not? **[30 MINUTES]**

POST-VIDEO ACTIVITY OPTIONS

These activities can be used in-class or as summative evaluations (assessment of learning) provided they also work to prove students are reaching curriculum expectations within the courses in which this lesson is being used. These activities are also flexible depending on resources and needs – students can work independently or collaboratively.

1. Video Response

Have students (either independently or in groups) review a few ways in which women are used as reward from the 'Women as Reward' video and make a brief "Women Are..., Women Are Not..." video. Students will source examples from games either mentioned in the video or through their own research that illustrate the trope of women as reward. Students will also brainstorm a list of positive attributes women are treasured/valued for such as: Women are mothers, Women are leaders, Women are strong using examples from games, other media and their own experiences. Using this collection of both trope-based and value based examples, a creative video challenging the use of women as reward trope should be created. Have a film festival to feature everyone's work.

An example of this type of video can be shown to clarify the concept is the "I Am, But I Am Not..." videos like <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMQjyRc7eiY>.

2. Create a Costume

Have students choose a female video game character or a character featured in the 'Women as Reward' video and, based on basic research about this character and the games they are in, design alternate costumes for the character that enhance the character's playability without objectifying or sexualizing them.

Teachers may want to refer students to a site such as Repair Her Armour which features modifications of the costumes of female game characters (<http://repair-her-armor.tumblr.com/page/3>).

3. Broader Media Contexts

Provide students with magazines from a variety of sources and have students do comparative research regarding how women are represented in media advertising and video games, where the emphasis is placed on exploring the various ways female bodies are 'used' in different forms of media. Discussion should involve considering the difference between interactive media (video games) and other types of media.

Have students create a collage of images found during their research and words that represents a) negative or objectified 'uses' of women's bodies and words associated with this 'use' and b) positive or empowering representations of women's bodies and words associated with that message.