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## "Fortnite-Addiction or Amusement?"

By Kimberly Crouch, English, Oh My!

Teachers and parents are overhearing their kids, especially teens, talking non-stop about something called, Fortnite. You probably hear this word a few times a day, and are wondering what this new craze is. You are not alone. Teenagers are obsessed with this new video game, and it has many adults wondering about its impacts, violent content, and the obsessive tendencies it is causing; however, teens and the video gamers argue it is entertaining, extremely exciting and collaborative. In the end, the major topic of conversation has left many baffled and wondering: Is Fortnite an addiction with teenagers, or is it just another form of amusement?

### What is Fortnite?

Fortnite is a zombie survival game in which players can either team up or play solo, to try to be the last player standing. It is all about surviving the zombie-apocalypse, a very popular genre. This game is so highly addictive because, frankly, it is fun to play and adds a new and innovative building aspect like *Minecraft*, to a playful, comical world that is entertaining and fun for amateurs and pros. The player can pop into a match, be the first to "die", and quickly hop right into the next game. In addition, *Fortnite* has a dystopian, *Hunger Games*-like goal, where in order to win, the player needs to be the sole survivor. What better way to allure teens into a game than to use a dystopian genre they are so familiar with from school and on the shelves of bookstores?



According to Dexerto, "Fortnite was released in July 2017 and experienced a meteoric rise in popularity that's due to its fast paced and addictive Battle Royale mode where players can build and shoot their way to success in an innovative take on the genre that has never been seen before.". Also, an intriguing aspect is this game is available to play for FREE on a computer, PlayStation, and Xbox One, and this game has soared above competitors and is now the most popular game on Amazon. It has become a gaming masterpiece, belonging in the gamer's hall of fame. "Fortnite's popularity seems to have caught everyone off guard including the developers, who responded to hitting 3.4 million concurrent players in February..." (Newsweek).

### The Controversy of Fortnite

There are many varying emotions about *Fortnite*—Is it a game of amusement and entertainment, or is it a game that is causing addictive and worrisome tendencies? Parents and teachers are worried this video game is too violent for teenagers, as it still has the "killing" feature, while others feel its comic-book style backgrounds, features and characters dissolve the realistic and virtual features like *Call of Duty* or *Battlefields*. Let's take a look at the positive and concerning aspects of this game.

#### PRO-What's Wrong with FortNite? It's Entertaining, Free & Instills Team Work!

First, one of top reasons why *Fortnite* is so popular is because it is free. Kids do not need to ask their parents for money to buy this game like they do for games on the Xbox or Play Station. Of course there are the add-ons, but initially, there is no expense, which is a huge advantage for parents. Many of the Xbox and Play Station games not only require someone to buy the gaming console and games, but there are quite a few other accessories (steering wheels, fancy controllers, etc.) that may need to be purchased for a particular game. This can cost parents a few hundred dollars for their children to experience high-quality, realistic games. However, the creators of *Fortnite* ingeniously created a game that is just as appealing as a Xbox or Play Station game, for free. According to Guardian.com, "Fortnite is the latest game to prove how powerful a free game offering can be," says James Batchelor of Gamesindustry.biz. "The impressive revenues Epic has generated show that people are more than willing to invest in an experience they enjoy. It is another example of an ongoing trend in the mobile space: 'real games for real gamers'. With smartphones becoming even more powerful, traditional gamers are seeking more PC-like and console-like titles to play on the go, and *Fortnite* shows that companies no longer have to water down their games for mobile."

Besides *Fortnite* being free and available on multiple devices including smartphones, it is a highly entertaining and engaging game for kids and teenagers. Adolescents are very familiar with the dystopian genre: a post-apocalyptic world that is centered on learning how to survive and stay alive in the new world. This is one of the most popular genres out there right now, and in short, *Fortnite* is *The Hunger Games* in a game. Players are dropped →



onto an island with other players, and they have to scramble and find weapons. There is the "killing" factor, where the players have to kill the other players to be the last one standing, but there is no blood, gore, or realistic visuals. There are also far worse games in circulation than *Fortnite*. Take *Grand Theft Auto* for example. Many teens play this game, and the content is far more inappropriate. According to Dexerto, "In the grand scheme of things, *Fortnite* is one of the most enjoyable and least disturbing games that youngsters could be playing. The cartoon-like feeling, building elements, and teamwork coupled with hilarious dance moves and strange weapons mean that it never takes itself too seriously." Because of the cartoons and humorous nature of the game, adolescents will not take the "killing" too seriously. In *Fortnite*, the players get to change outfits of their characters and "emotes", allowing players to dress up as astronauts and superheroes, and perform dance moves and mocking gestures towards other players. How could someone take this seriously?

One parent contributed, "I have a 10 year old son and 7 year old twin girls. I play duos with all 3 of them. It is just a game and a cartoonish one at that. You can drink a potion and become a bush. When you kill someone they turn into a pile of loot. I feel that I do a good job raising my kids and teaching them right from wrong, real world vs games/movies. I am always honest and open with my kids and willing to answer any questions that they might have. It is a kid friendly game and is much less shocking then some of the stuff that they hear about going on in the real world." This game definitely distinguishes between real life situations and a fun, entertaining, silly comic-style game. *Fortnite* does not instill violence, and *Fortnite* makes it clear to its players that it is just a game.

Lastly, not only is this game free and entertaining, but it also builds some amazing collaborative skills. Players can work as a team, playing with their friends near and far, as well as communicate with them. This is a very effective way for kids to stay in touch with their friends and socialize, even if it is on a gaming platform. They are communicating and talking, something kids tend to lack in the technological world today. In addition, this game helps build critical thinking and creative building techniques. According to Today.com, "'Letting a child play also means giving her or him the opportunity to think ahead, plan, strategize, create, and – in multiplayer mode – collaborate," she said. In essence, kids are learning from this game, just like in *Minecraft* and other building games; they are using their creative genius and imagination."

## **CON-Fortnite is Addicting, Violent and Distracting in the Classroom!**

Though many will argue that *Fortnite* is not the root of the problems in households and classrooms, many parents and teachers disagree, and they are seeing this game become a huge distraction and addiction in and out of the classroom. This is all students are talking about—what level they have reached, who they killed, and how late they are staying up to conquer the game. Because kids can "die" and hop right back into a new game makes the game highly addictive since they can quickly start over in the adventure. According to many parents, this game is sucking the life, time and effort out of kids more "than any other game COMBINED" (Scary Mommy). It is affecting the attention span of kids, and it has been recently estimated that over 40 million people are playing *Fortnite* in a variety of platforms. It is also not only the game. Due to YouTube and other website platforms, kids are also watching their favorite tubers play, viewing strategic videos, and learning tips at all hours to beat the game. It is not just the game that is interfering in these kids' lives, but the video game is found across a multitude of platforms.

According to Psychology Today, "[too much screen time] can unintentionally cause permanent damage to their still-developing brains...The ability to focus, to concentrate, to lend attention, to sense other people's attitudes and communicate with them, to build a large vocabulary—all those abilities are harmed." Some adolescents will tell you that they are staying up all night playing this game. Teacher, Steven Singer, calls it the *Fortnite Face*: "glassy red eyes, heads slumped on the table and the inability to stay awake for more than 10 minutes at a time...Teaching them is like teaching someone in a deep sea diver suit. They can't really see or hear you very well. And any message you get back from them sounds like it's coming from the bottom of the ocean." If students have to stay up all night to follow and play this game, many can agree that it is extremely addictive.

Addicting is not the only adjective that can describe *Fortnite*. Parents and teachers agree that this game is also violent, despite the comic-like environment. Regardless of the cartoony characters and humorous choices kids can make during the game, the main purpose is to use weapons and kill other players. This in itself is a problem, and kids should not be subjected to these types of games.

Psychology Today recently published research on whether or not violent video games desensitize players. The researchers concluded that players who played a violent video game over an extended period of time experienced desensitization to emotions and feelings. In essence, these players were not reactive to others' feelings. In addition, "past studies have shown that players of violent video games sometimes become desensitized to emotional stimuli like violence and can display lower empathy and higher aggression." (Psychology Today). Kids should not be playing games with shootings, guns, and artillery, and due to recent school incidences, many more question if these games are impacting students' psychological wellbeing. No one should find entertainment in killing or hurting another human.

Lastly, teachers will explain how distracting this game has become in the classroom. Teachers are finding that this is the hottest topic of conversation in the classroom, and they are spending all their time at home playing this game, forgetting about their academic responsibilities. Steven Singer, a teacher, says, "Their kids were playing the game at every opportunity and ignoring most everything else." It can be assumed that students are not completing their homework and activities for school due to the addiction of this game.

Others say *Fortnite* is "destroying" their school. Just like many other games, schools try to ban and block websites so students cannot get onto these sites. However, some students are extremely savvy with technology and know the work-arounds of the system. Game playing at school is tying up the Wi-Fi bandwidth at schools, slowing the systems down for actually academic lessons.

In addition to Wi-Fi issues, *Fortnite* discussions are making their way into the classroom, and it seems as if the conversations continue from the night before. The students would rather talk about competitions and wins, than the actual lesson: "Gutierrez says that in his class, students have a question at the start of the first bell ring that they need to discuss in order to prep for the AP test. One day, instead of delving into the material, students in Gutierrez' class debated the particulars of a game instead. 'Students spent the entire time talking about *PUBG*'s auto aim, and not the question like normal,' Gutierrez said." (Hernandez). Students are losing focus on what is important in their academic lives.

In the end, the controversy over *Fortnite* will probably be a never-ending debate in and out of the classroom and households. Kids should be able to have fun with their friends and play games; however, many agree this should be done in moderation. In addition, the debate over video games and violence will continue to raise issues, as research reports a variety of findings. For now, kids love this game, and just like any popular fad, in a few months something new will catch the attention of these adolescents, and it will vanish. It will become old news, and a new craze will be on *Fortnite*'s heels!



# T-Chart Template

## Debate Question

Claim (Answer the Question)

**YES!** (Agree/Pro)

**NO!** (Disagree/Con)

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# "FORTNITE - ADDICTION OR AMUSEMENT?" RACE WRITING

**SHORT RESPONSE: AFTER READING THE ARTICLE, WHAT IS ONE POSITIVE AND ONE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE GAME "FORTNITE?" MAKE SURE TO USE TEXT BASED EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR RESPONSE.**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.