

Read the passage below and answer the following questions.

A letter to the editor expresses a writer's opinion about a topic that is usually of interest to others in the community. Writers of effective letters combine facts with opinions to try to influence others to share their views. The following letters were written by a brother and sister.

Letter 1

Computer Games and Violence

1 Picture this scene: a teenager late at night, alone in his bedroom, playing his favorite video game. Everyone is asleep but this teen, who is not only awake, but also has adrenaline pumping as he destroys enemies with gunfire and grenades. Such a scene plays out with ever-increasing frequency, as more teens separate themselves from family and society, living in the strange and violent world of computer games.

2 The question we as a society have to ask is, "What influence do these computer games have on the youth of America?" Everyone knows that video games influence violent behavior. The National Institute on Media and the Family released a study claiming 69% of families surveyed have children who own or rent electronic games, with the children playing these games an average of 7 hours per week. Other studies show that junior high school boys, in particular, have an attraction to these games. Should the games be outlawed? I don't think so. Should they be controlled? Obviously!

3 A rating system is already in place that labels games "T" (suitable for those 13 and older), and "M" (for those 17 and older). Unfortunately, the system is poorly enforced at stores selling or renting these games. Better enforcement would ensure that society doesn't have to ban video games in general. Anything that is prohibited only becomes more attractive to teens looking for something to rebel against.

4 To be a teenager is to be in rebellion: We are no longer children, but we are not yet adults. Living in between these two worlds is frustrating enough. But we live in a violent society as well, and computer games are only one source of the problem. Parents need to become more involved, laying out guidelines about what is acceptable behavior. And teens need to take individual responsibility for their (our) actions. Playing violent video games may seem like fun when we're alone in our rooms or with close friends. But there is a fine line between fantasy and reality that can easily be crossed. We have to be careful of what we watch and play. We might become a part of the fantasy.

5 If we care at all about protecting children and teens, we as a nation must take steps to limit the use of these violent games by those who are most vulnerable to their effects. The future of our society may depend on it.

6 Again, let us return to that scene late at night. The warrior has just killed all the enemies. He now lies down to sleep. In his dreams, other demons come to haunt him. He is no longer free to sleep sweetly. The violent world of video games seeps into sleep and infects his subconscious yearnings. The teen who has just destroyed those androids on the video scene has become an android himself.

-Amanda Paisley
Zanesville High School

Letter 2

Don't Blame Computer Games

1 Yes, there comes a time at night when the warrior has to sleep. Androids destroyed, everyone safe, rest must come to those who want to fight another day. But we're not really talking about warriors, and we're not really talking about fighting. The issue is computer games, and how they supposedly make teens violent. Some teens – maybe. All teens? C'mon! This teen plays computer games for an hour or two a night. Has it made me violent? Ask the fly I refuse to swat, in an effort to be kind to insects.

2 Let's look at the issue seriously for a minute. Some teens do play too many video games. And some teens do get violent. However, only a small percentage of video games feature the kind of violence that sends my sister through the roof. And guess what? In the past year, statistics have shown that teen violence is going down, not up.

3 As for the computer games, I supposedly like to play while the rest of my family is asleep. To me, it's like playing cops and robbers, the types of imaginary games my dad played as a kid. Then there are the adults who tell us that teens should read more. Well, I've read books that are supposed to be "classics," and so many of them are full of violence, they make me wonder. Even fairy tales

can be violent. When was the last time you read "Hansel and Gretel" or "Snow White?" Stories about witches who eat children and evil queens who poison young girls are a lot more violent than any video game I've played.

4 Restrict video games, and what will be restricted next? Will we outlaw fairy tales?

5 Millions of teens currently play video games, but only a small percentage commit violent acts. Other factors play a greater role, such as poverty, a history of violence in the family, and the availability of guns. As actor Bruce Cruise recently said, "Video games don't harm people; people harm people."

6 Like my sister, I also believe in individual responsibility. I understand that everything I do has consequences, and should I ever hurt anyone, even by accident, I'm the one who's responsible. I even know that too much of a good thing can be bad for you. (Name your "thing" – computer games, candy, or in my sister's case, shopping at the mall.)

7 I will play my video games with the knowledge that fun is fun, so long as nobody gets hurt, and I don't overdo it. Let's try to find the real causes behind today's problems and then solve them. Don't blame computer games.

-Brendan Paisley
Zanesville High School

1. The greatest difference between Letter 1 and Letter 2 is -

- A. Only Letter 1 uses emotional appeals
- B. Only Letter 2 uses emotional appeals
- C. Letter 1 uses facts and statistics as well as emotional appeals
- D. Letter 2 only uses facts to support its argument

2. What is the author's purpose?

- A. To explain how video games are similar to playing cops and robbers
- B. To persuade the reader that fairy tales are more violent than most computer games
- C. To inform the reader that the author's sister spends too much time shopping at the mall
- D. To convince the reader that teens should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding video games

3. Which of the following quotations best expresses the main idea of Letter 1?

- A. Should the games be outlawed? I don't think so. Should they be controlled? Obviously.
- B. Anything that is prohibited only becomes more attractive to teens looking for something to rebel against.
- C. To be a teenager is to be in rebellion: We are no longer children, but we are not yet adults.
- D. The teen who has just destroyed those androids on the video scene has become an android himself.

4. What does the author mean when using the highlighted text above?

- A. Adults and teenagers live on two different planets
- B. Living as a teenager and living as an adult are completely opposite
- C. Teenagers should strive to live like adults
- D. Adults and teenagers often disagree

5. The highlighted word "yearnings" in this passage means which of the following?

- A. money received
- B. something you want
- C. violence
- D. dreams