

Pointers For Parents

Finding Family-Friendly Video Games

(NAPSA)—A University of Pennsylvania study found that most school-age kids play video games for 53 minutes a day. Add to that a review from the group Children Now reporting that 89 percent of the top-70-selling video games contain some kind of violence and it may be easy to see why some parents are concerned. In truth, though, some of the most popular video game series are family-friendly.

Ask a videogamer why he plays a certain game and odds are he won't say it's because the game is violent. Children tend to choose games based on storyline, visuals and effects.

For instance, Ubisoft's video game series called "Myst" has sold more than 12 million copies since being introduced in 1993—without featuring any adult themes, killing or one ounce of blood or gore. Instead, it has gained popularity for its play features and graphics.

In fact, the game has become so popular that the final chapter of the series, "Myst V: End of Ages," published by Ubisoft, is being hailed by many gamers as the end of an era. The final installment challenges players to restore the lost empire of the "D'ni"—an ancient civilization of people who thrived for thousands of years but later met with a great catastrophe. Players make decisions and solve puzzles while they unravel characters' motives and ultimately save the kingdom. To finish the game, players need to make strong moral choices with their characters, which is one reason it has become popular with parents.

Like the others in the series,



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nary graphics—trees blow in the breeze, faces change expressions, clouds drift through the sky and insects run about. However, "Myst V: End of Ages" uses new "photo-realistic" 3D scenes through a live-action video technique not yet seen in other games. In addition, it uses a new type of technology to give players more influence over the virtual world around them.

Recently, educators in the U.K. used the game to help teach literacy skills and creative writing to their students. Teachers showed the game on a large screen and manipulated characters in the game to change scenery. They then asked children to write what they saw—descriptions of weather, actions, landscape, etc.—and to read those pieces to the class. Teachers reported that the game held students' interests and one educator said it helped his class write at an accelerated level.

The game is available in stores nationwide and it is rated "E" (Everyone). For more information on the game, visit www.mystvgame.com.