

Reading Lesson

B2 Services: Edutainment

Reading

How can we learn in our free time? Read these extracts from different texts on the “edutainment” industry and find out.

A) Edutainment: A Study of the Gaming Industry

By Dr. Mick Powers, first published February 26, 2020

Edutainment is about using entertainment in a wide variety of forms to educate and inspire. It is often aimed at young children who learn through play or through watching specially produced TV shows or playing video or board games. New technologies have allowed innovative formats to develop, lowered the costs of production, and made the content much more immersive. A result of this is that the boundaries between what is meant to entertain and what is meant

to teach are less clear. Watching a TED Talk on YouTube may help a student with confidence-building skills, and playing Minecraft® may strengthen a teenager’s concentration skills. Following a soap opera storyline may help young adults learn about the consequences of making different moral choices, and playing Scrabble® may improve a person’s vocabulary. The reasoning behind mixing these two approaches is the possibility that it can lead to better learning outcomes. The pleasure derived from the “edutainment” process means that learning can go unnoticed as opposed to the formal learning at school which actively promotes the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. My aim in this paper is to look at the impact that the gaming industry can have on helping school-aged children develop certain key skills, and how they balance this with the need to make money and market a product.



B) A Letter to the Editor of *The Evening Post*

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to draw attention to some of the opinions raised in your article “Edutainment: the role of kid’s TV shows” (*The Evening Post*, 10/31/20). As an editor on one of the TV shows mentioned in the article, I’d like to point out that rather than producing programs “solely designed to increase TV viewer ratings” as your writer suggests, we work closely with educational specialists and academics when planning and producing any children’s TV shows that have an educational framework to them.

We take our work very seriously as we understand the influence that TV shows across all networks can have on children. To this end, we aim to produce shows that educate on a number of different levels either directly (as in the case of *Spelling Shack*, where preschool children have fun learning about spelling through play) or indirectly (as in the drama *Teen Diary*, aimed at 12- to 15-year-olds, which focuses on dealing with divorce).

Our challenge is to continue to produce a range of “edutainment” that is both interesting to watch and which helps young people build on their knowledge and skills in all areas of life. I think your writer could benefit from taking a closer look at the effect that “edutainment” has on learning.

Yours,

Daphne Sanchez, Senior Editor CBC

Reading Lesson

© A Review of Virtual English Classroom App

My tutor recommended an app for me to download to help with my English. The target market is high school students, and the app features a digital learning platform alongside video games to help improve your level of English and your digital competency skills. There are some tasks on the app that we complete in the classroom which gives us the chance to discuss the topic and get input and feedback from our class teacher. We complete grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing tasks at home which are usually topic-based. Correct answers to these allow you to build up your points which you can use to buy various add-on items in the gaming activities. So, for example, completing 10 vocabulary questions correctly gives you five points which you can use to “power up” or move onto the next level of some of the platform games. You also earn points by solving puzzles in English. I wasn’t expecting the games to be of very good quality, but they are surprisingly good and I like the fact that they act as a “reward.” There are also video and music clips in English to watch where the lyrics appear on screen, which really help with my understanding of spoken English. Podcasts are also available to download on a variety of topics. My only criticism would be that the app requires a monthly subscription fee, so it might not be affordable to all students and you need quite an up-to-date operating system—which not all of my classmates have—to be able to download the app. But other than these issues, it’s a great way to learn and have fun at the same time. The app developers are also currently working on similar apps in other languages including Spanish, French, and German. I’d highly recommend it.

add-on item (n): something that is added to something that allows it to perform better or be more advanced

clips (n pl): short parts of a movie, TV show, or video

derived from (v): had something as its origin; came from

digital learning platform (n): an online or virtual system which allows users to access information and learn about a particular subject

framework (n): a system of rules or ideas that establish the way something operates in society

subscription fee (n): an amount of money paid weekly, monthly, or yearly to receive a particular service

Vocabulary

Match the definitions (1–5) to the words (a–e).

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. the possible or likely results of something | a target market |
| 2. the process of learning new skills or getting knowledge | b inspire |
| 3. the ability to do something well | c outcomes |
| 4. to give someone the enthusiasm or desire to do or create something | d acquisition |
| 5. a group of consumers at which a product is aimed | e competency |

Reading Lesson

Comprehension

Choose the correct letter (a, b, or c) to answer the questions.

1. Which text was written to outline the usefulness of one example of edutainment?
 - a Text A
 - b Text B
 - c Text C
2. Which text was written to examine the value to education of the edutainment industry?
 - a Text A
 - b Text B
 - c Text C
3. Which text was written in response to a criticism of edutainment?
 - a Text A
 - b Text B
 - c Text C
4. Which text was written to present an academic analysis of edutainment?
 - a Text A
 - b Text B
 - c Text C
5. Which text was written by someone working in the edutainment industry?
 - a Text A
 - b Text B
 - c Text C

Thinking

To what extent do you think it's possible for "edutainment" to both entertain and educate? Give examples to support your opinions.