

Cambridge IGCSE[®] (9–1)

SET C

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

0990/02

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition

INSERT

2 hours

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **3** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A

The following passage is taken from an article about violent video games.

What effect do violent media have on our behaviour? It's not a new question – in the 1950s, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham wrote a book called "Seduction of the Innocent", which claimed that comic books were unnecessarily exposing children to violence and causing them to become delinquent. Although Wertham's methods and claims have since been called into question, similar concerns about the links between violent media and violent behaviour have been raised about television and, most recently, video games. 5

Grand Theft Auto V, the latest in a line of controversial games that have often been brought up in relation to various crimes, was released on Tuesday. Not long after the launch, some news outlets reported that a man had been attacked and robbed of the game, his watch and phone. 10

But what do we actually know about the link between violent video games and aggression? Despite the apparently obvious connection that is all too often portrayed in the media, the reality of the situation is a bit more complicated.

There is some evidence to suggest that there is a link between playing violent video games and showing more aggressive tendencies, at least in the short term. For example, in a study published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology this year, participants played either a violent or non-violent video game for 20 minutes per day over 3 days. After playing the game, they then played a competitive task in which, if they won, they could blast their opponent with an unpleasant noise. The researchers found that participants who played violent games blasted their opponents in the secondary task for longer, which was interpreted as an increase in aggressive behaviour. 15 20

However, it also depends on the context in which these sorts of games are played. A study by Seth Gitter and colleagues showed that if participants were asked to play a violent video game with a positive goal in mind (for example, protecting a friend in a zombie game), they showed reduced levels of aggressive behaviour compared to participants who were asked to simply kill as many zombies as possible. In other words, it's not the simple act of playing violent video games that dictates whether they have a negative effect. 25 30

Context is an important factor when considering longer-term studies – in particular, what other factors may also be having an effect on behavioural development. A 2012 study looking at the behavioural development of 165 teenagers over the course of 3 years found that when pre-existing emotional, family and social problems were accounted for, any aggression-increasing effects of playing violent video games disappeared. 35

The problem with trying to compare different studies in this area is that everybody does everything differently. In 2009, Craig Ferguson and John Kilburn argued that many studies use poorly validated or unreliable aggression measures, and that there was a bias in the research literature towards only publishing studies showing a significant link between video games and aggressive behaviour. 40

But wait! That study was itself called into question a year later, when Craig Anderson and colleagues published a meta-analysis arguing that playing violent video games poses a causal risk for aggressive behaviour. They also suggested that the Ferguson and Kilburn paper used flawed methods and didn't do a particularly comprehensive job of citing the relevant literature. Case closed? Nope – Ferguson and Kilburn next published a comment claiming that the Anderson paper was also flawed. And so the wheel turns. 45

This isn't intended to be an exhaustive look at the psychological literature, but the point is this: the question as to whether playing violent video games negatively affects behaviour hasn't been completely answered yet. Moreover, because 'violent video game' (much like 'screen time') is quite a broad concept, we're probably not capturing the subtlety of any effects in an adequate way at the moment. To really get an understanding of what's going on, we need to be looking more at the way in which these sorts of games are being played – for example, no one has yet really looked at if and how the multiplayer aspect of video games (playing in the same room together, playing online together) has any sort of effect. 50
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So until there is more definitive evidence, it doesn't seem right to imply that there is a clear and known effect. And it certainly isn't right to tenuously highlight links between video game use and violent behaviour whenever it is vaguely possible to do so. It detracts from figuring out if there is another underlying cause instead. 60



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