

SCHOLASTIC

AFK

away • from • keyboard

MOVING GAMERS FROM SCREEN TO PAGE



What Is Scholastic's AFK Initiative?

Scholastic's "Away From Keyboard" (AFK) Initiative builds on kids' interests in video and computer games through original fiction, guidebooks, and behind-the-scenes storytelling with massively popular games like *Halo*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Five Nights at Freddy's*, *World of Warcraft*, *Pokémon*, and many more. The books in this program will provide ways to develop literacy skills and kids' love of reading in addition to enriching their gaming experiences with additional knowledge, world building, and strategies. AFK books offer a range of titles that teachers, librarians, and parents can use to engage and support growing readers of all ages and interests.

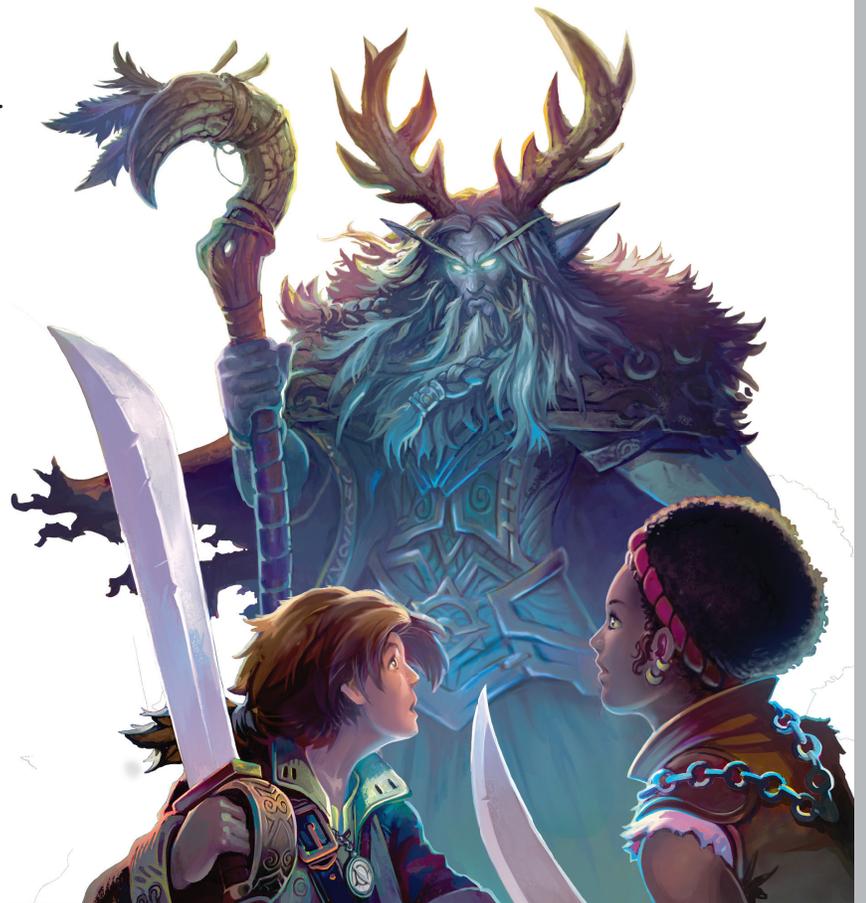
Just as graphic novels and comics have gained prominence and become more accepted in both literary and educational areas, digital media like video games is also becoming a more integrated part of the cultural and educational landscape. There are additional learning opportunities with gaming and other alternate forms of media, which can provide an entry point to focus on STEM and coding.

The titles in the AFK line can be used in conjunction with the games for literacy lessons and with curriculum-based standards, touching on elements of story, craft and structure, key ideas and details, diverse literacies, critical-reading skills, and more.

Can Video Games Be Used for Learning?

Absolutely! As video games have become mainstream entertainment for children, our understanding of their role in education and child development has evolved as well. Research suggests that video and computer games can increase engagement, expand creativity, support memory and content retention, and aid in the acquisition of positive social skills for kids of all ages.

Gaming has also been shown to aid in brain development and metacognition by promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, project management, and other skills vital to success in school and life. In addition, contemporary games represent a wide cross-section of genres, time periods, topics, themes, and characters, offering a seemingly endless supply of inroads to content across curriculum.



What Are the Benefits of Using Gaming in the Classroom?

Motivate Student Engagement

In recent years, librarians, teachers, and parents have reported tremendous success in engaging kids through video and computer games. Gaming has been shown to motivate and empower kids by giving them a world they can shape and control. It also presents challenges that kids may not be able to achieve success with on the first try—giving them the chance to “fail” without the worry of real-world consequences. Recent studies have also shown that gaming provides kids with learning disabilities a platform to express and represent themselves.

Limitless Educational Potential

Today, video games can be nearly limitless in their depth and scope. Games offer worlds with infinite boundaries and character storylines that play out over months and years. Games also tackle an incredible range of topics—from philosophy to science to history and beyond, games offer innovative ways for kids to explore a wide array of content. The AFK titles further enrich these learning experiences by providing opportunities to engage with these worlds beyond the screen and, beyond that, to boost reading and literacy skills.



Expand Creativity

Games are a place where kids need to improvise and adapt, immersing themselves in worlds, characters, and settings that engage their imaginations and critical-thinking skills. Some games even allow kids to build entire worlds from scratch. Studies have found that kids who play these kinds of games score much higher on creativity tests than non-gamers and that gaming provides important cognitive, social, emotional, and motivational benefits. The AFK novels expand upon these as well by sharing more of the story, requiring reading comprehension skills, engaging in further storytelling and world building through the written form, and providing an opportunity for kids to integrate information from diverse media and formats.

Build Community

Many video games require cooperation and engagement with other participants. Kids must work together to finish complex tasks, think critically through each of their decisions, and take turns as both leaders and followers to overcome challenges. As a result, kids must constantly examine choices and their consequences both individually and alongside their peers, fostering important social skills, including project management, problem-solving, and self-expression. Through the AFK Initiative, kids will be able to gain additional knowledge that they can bring to these communities and share in order to advance and grow their gaming experiences.

Discussion Questions for AFK Titles

1. Can you identify the key elements of storytelling in the game and in the related book (setting, character, theme, plot)? How does a story get told in a game? How is that the same or different from how the story emerges in the book? How do these storytelling elements overlap in the game and book and how do they differ? How do they work together to give you an even more complete understanding of the game or story?

See: *Five Nights at Freddy's*, *Hello Neighbor*

2. Describe the journey/quest that the main character embarks upon. What changes do the characters and/or world go through during this journey?

See: *Halo*, *World of Warcraft*, *Assassin's Creed*

3. How is good and evil defined in the books or the game? How do you know what is good and what is evil? Do you agree with the characters' decisions? If not, what would you have done differently? What makes a "hero" and "villain" within the books or the game?

See: *Assassin's Creed*, *Hello Neighbor*

4. Themes including justice, survival, right vs. wrong, and transformation are all common features in gaming. Where do these themes and others show up in either the books, the games, or both? How are these themes represented differently in the books or the game, and how does that affect the way you understand them?

See: *Assassin's Creed*, *World of Warcraft*, *Five Nights at Freddy's*, *Halo*, *Hello Neighbor*

5. How are suspense and foreshadowing used in the book or the game to create conflict and excitement around the plot? How do these clues further character development and world building?

See: *Five Nights at Freddy's*, *Halo*, *Hello Neighbor*

6. Can you identify historical, social, and cultural connections to the fictional settings in the games or books? How do the books utilize these historical settings and themes to help develop the plot and characters? Why do you think the writers/game designers chose this as the setting?

See: *Assassin's Creed*, *Halo*

7. Analyze the use of figurative language, imagery, characters, and settings in the books as they relate to the game. What elements do the books provide that weren't included in the game? And what elements are present in the game, but not in the text of the books? Would it have been possible to represent those elements in text or gaming?

See: *Assassin's Creed*, *World of Warcraft*, *Five Nights at Freddy's*, *Halo*, *Hello Neighbor*



Suggested AFK Classroom Activities

World Building: Using a real-world historical event or something imagined yourself, build a world from scratch—paying close attention to setting and characterization. Either individually or in groups, write and/or draw this world and then present your creation to the rest of the class.

Game Development: Think of a quest/journey that you have taken. What challenges did you face? How did you overcome them? In groups or individually, build a game that tells this story. You can use prose, artwork, technology, or another format to develop this game. Make sure to write directions, and feel free to be as creative as you want, using costumes, building a game board, developing props, etc.

Hero's Journey: Learn about the hero's journey (use <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/herosjourney/> as a starting place). Using what you know about this story pattern, analyze the path of a character or characters through the lens of the hero's journey. Highlight significant events in the story and create a timeline that depicts those events as they relate to the journey of the character.

Paired Readings: Video game storylines have expanded into movies, television, and prose. Using 3–5 different media related to one or more specific games, compare and contrast the representation of characters, storylines, settings, and other important details of the texts. How do these different representations affect the experience and change your perspective on the game?

Antagonist's Journey: Have students analyze the antagonist and their role in the game/prose. What motivates the antagonist to be “evil”? What details let you know that they are a villain? Is there a difference between the way the antagonist is represented in the game vs. the prose? Write a paragraph and/or draw an image featuring defining features of the antagonist.

Mythos & Themes: Most video games have their own “mythos” and associated themes. Analyze the mythology and themes that show up most often in games, both visually and textually—such as good vs. evil, oppression vs. freedom, individual vs. community, and so on.

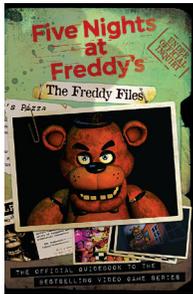
Characters & Settings: As you read, draw or create visual art of the characters and settings at the end of each chapter/section based *only* on the prose. Then, using the visuals from the games, compare your drawings to the images from the games—how do they match and how do they differ? Is there anything different about the storytelling of the book vs. the game that influences how the characters are represented?



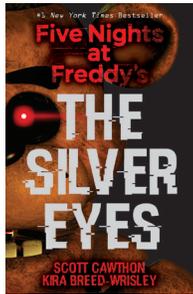
AWAY • FROM • KEYBOARD TITLE LIST

FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S • Grades 7 & up

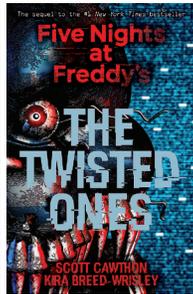
Five Nights at Freddy's is a bestselling survival horror video game, where players defend against the malfunctioning animatronic characters in a pizza restaurant—Freddy Fazbear's Pizza—by using security cameras to track their movements through the facility! Creator of the game series, Scott Cawthorn, brings his game and characters to life in a number of Scholastic books, including young adult novels and guidebooks. Full of intense gameplay and twisted mysteries, these books capture all the excitement, terror, and strategic gameplay that is so integral to this beloved game series.



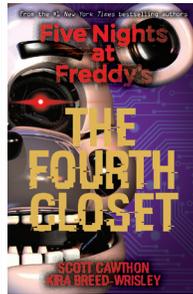
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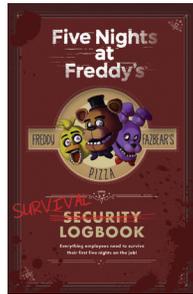
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\$9.99



978-1-338-32302-3
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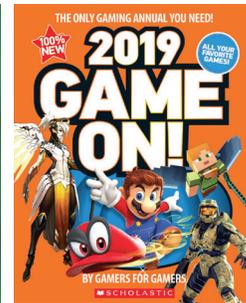
978-1-338-22930-1
\$12.99

GAME ON! • Grades 3-7

The ultimate guidebook BY gamers FOR gamers, *Game On!* books feature the best games to play today, the hits of tomorrow, and all the latest gaming hardware and technology. Gamers will love the exclusive interviews with YouTube legends, top streamers, and game developers, all within an environment that's informative and fun.



978-1-338-18993-3
\$14.99



978-1-338-28356-3
\$14.99

OVERWATCH Grades 7 & up

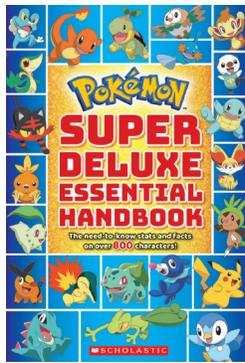
Overwatch follows an international task force of heroes, banded together to restore peace to a war-torn world. In this official guide for ages 12 and up, readers explore the backstories of *Overwatch's* diverse cast of characters, unique weapons and abilities, and ever-changing landscapes.



978-1-338-11280-1
\$8.99

POKÉMON SUPER DELUXE ESSENTIAL HANDBOOK Grades 2-5

After 20 years of captivating gamers, *Pokémon* is stronger than ever! This deluxe handbook, perfect for readers of all ages, includes stats and facts on over 800 *Pokémon*, with nearly 500 illustrated, full-color pages.



978-1-338-23089-5
\$14.99

READY, SET, PLAY! Grades PreK-3

In this essential guide to all the coolest games that are appropriate for ages 5-8, readers will learn all the best tips and tricks for their favorite games like *Minecraft*, *Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *Mario Party Star Rush*, *Splatoon*, *LEGO Dimensions*, and more.



978-1-338-18994-0
\$7.99

HELLO NEIGHBOR • Grades 5 & up

In the hit stealth/horror video game *Hello Neighbor*, gamers navigate through a threatening neighbor's house to uncover what is being hidden in the basement. The goal is not to be discovered by the menacing neighbor, Mr. Peterson, and there's one vital catch: Advanced technology learns from the gamer's every move, so an evolving strategy is key. In these mystery-packed, illustrated prequel novels, Carly Anne West provides many puzzles to unearth after a young boy, Nicky Roth, moves to a new town and meets his strange new neighbors, the Petersons . . .



978-1-338-28007-4
\$7.99



978-1-338-34859-0
\$7.99

HALO • Grades 7 & up

Based on the hit game that has captivated gamers for over 17 years, Scholastic's Halo books explore the human race's challenges with fanatical alien races, and mysteries older than civilization itself. Uniquely trained super-soldiers, the Spartans, spearhead the efforts to overcome incalculable odds, by using team-work along with their specialized training.



978-1-338-25363-4
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978-1-338-25364-1
\$9.99

RWBY: AFTER THE FALL Grades 7 & up

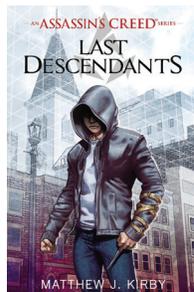
In the future-fantasy world of *RWBY*, Rooster Teeth's hit animated webseries, teens train to become warriors. Join the fight in this epic official, original novel from Nebula award-winning author E.C. Myers and *RWBY*'s head writers!



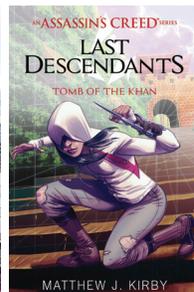
978-1-338-30574-6
\$9.99

ASSASSIN'S CREED • Grades 7 & up

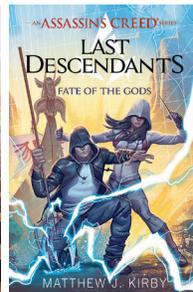
At the heart of this bestselling, action-adventure video game series is a centuries-old struggle between the Assassins—who fight for peace and free will—and the Templar, who believe that peace comes through the control of humanity. In this young adult trilogy, a teenager named Owen and his friends uncover the existence of a powerful relic, the Trident of Eden, and must find it before it falls into the wrong hands.



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\$9.99



978-0-545-85553-2
\$9.99



978-1-338-16395-7
\$9.99

WORLD OF WARCRAFT • Grades 3-7

With more than 100 million players worldwide, *World of Warcraft* is the world's most subscribed massively multiplayer online role-playing game. Controlling a character avatar within the game, players explore the landscape, fight monsters, complete quests, and interact with other players. In this middle-grade book series, the son of a famous explorer faces mysteries and challenges in an action-packed adventure.



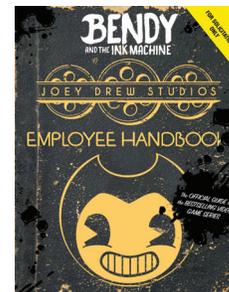
978-1-338-22567-9
\$7.99



978-1-338-02937-6
\$7.99

BENDY AND THE INK MACHINE: JOEY DREW STUDIOS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK Grades 7 & up

Unlock the mysteries of the hit horror video game *Bendy and the Ink Machine* in this terrifying, in-world guidebook! Readers can sort through memos, letters, and other found documents to unwind the mystery at the heart of the game.



978-1-338-34392-2
\$14.99

Resources and Further Reading

“How Video Games In The Classroom Will Make Students Smarter” by Jordan Shapiro, *Forbes*

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jordanshapiro/2015/03/30/how-video-games-in-the-classroom-will-make-students-smarter/#57b15a2c6d12>

“More Than Fun?” by Sharon O’Malley, *Inside Higher Ed*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/07/19/educational-games-expand-classroom-learning>

“A new venue for video games: K-12 classrooms” by Carolyn Jones, *EdSource*

<https://edsource.org/2018/a-new-venue-for-video-games-k-12-classrooms/597100>

“Scholastic Launches AFK Initiative to Promote Video Game Tie-Ins” by Karen Raugust, *Publishers Weekly*

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/76124-scholastic-launches-afk-initiative-to-promote-video-game-tie-ins.html>

“Away From Keyboard: Taking Gaming Offline” Scholastic On Our Minds Podcast

<http://oomscholasticblog.com/podcast/away-keyboard-taking-gaming-offline>

“How Video Games Can Train Your Brain to Be More Creative and Productive”

by Marla Tabaka, *Inc.*

<https://www.inc.com/marla-tabaka/how-video-games-can-train-your-brain-to-be-more-creative-and-productive.html>

“Video Games Improve Creativity and Stimulate Imagination” by Gameaboo

<https://www.gameaboo.com/video-games-improve-creativity-stimulate-imagination/>

“Children reap the benefits of video games” by Yvette Brazier, *Medical News Today*

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/307736.php>

“Playing video games may ‘enhance learning’” by Catharine Paddock, PhD, *Medical News Today*

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/319614.php>

“Assassin’s Creed Has a New Mission: Working in the Classroom” by Justin Porter, *The New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/arts/assassins-creed-origins-education.html>

About This Guide

This guide was created with Pop Culture Classroom, which delivers high-quality, all-inclusive educational resources to school districts, teachers, and community organizations using comics, graphic novels, and related pop culture media.

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