

Using King Kong In 8th Grade English

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I. Teaching writing skills with King Kong

Introduction to King Kong

What is *King Kong, the Official Game of the Movie*?

King Kong, the Official Game of the Movie (King Kong) is an action adventure game, based on the movie, as directed by Peter Jackson. The story of Kong is well known, and the game is based entirely on the remake. A movie director, Carl Denham, is on the run from the studio executives. He has a map of an island, Skull Island. Upon landing on the island, the crew, along with the hero and damsel in distress, soon discover that the giant gorilla, Kong, is in love with the girl. You, the game player, take the roll of Jack Driscoll, who sets about rescuing the girl from Kong.

While this game is an adventure game, the game play is much like a first person shooter. As you navigate about the island, Jack must fend off various creatures using spears, bones, fire, and a few weapons that the crew has brought. You are accompanied on much of the journey by other members of the crew, including the movie director, the Jack Black character from the movie. At times you must solve puzzles in order to proceed, other times your task is to protect the girl or a member of the crew, and then ultimately to bring the girl back to the boat, and then on to New York City.

The most fascinating aspect of the game is the ability to play as Kong himself. At one point in the game you are confronted with a giant Tyrannosaurus Rex, you quickly realize that there is no way the Jack is going to kill it, when along comes Kong. The game changes views, and you become Kong.

As an educational tool, *King Kong* will present students with a rich and textured atmosphere that will facilitate the assigned writing skills, specifically from the California

Content Standards. Students will interact with the game, using Kong as a tool to practice their writing skills.

Genre

Most of King Kong is set in the jungles of Skull city, and moving to the streets of New York, then ultimately on the top of the Empire State building. The game is a blend of two genres of game play: the first person shooter and an adventure game.

King Kong plays predominantly as a **first person shooter**. A first person shooter (FPS) emphasizes shooting and combat from a specific perspective. The FPS places the player behind a weapon with the player's "hand" holding the weapon. This perspective is meant to give the player the feeling of "being there." Most FPS are very fast-paced and require quick reflexes. King Kong takes the perspective of Jack Driscoll. Jack, when the weapon button is pushed, (on the PS2 this is the "L2" button) is holding a weapon.

As the game progresses, King Kong also plays as an **adventure game**. An adventure game cast the player as the protagonist of the story in which the player participates. These games normally require the player to solve various puzzles and find various artifacts. In King Kong, you must solve various puzzles in order to move the story along. In one level, you must figure out that to move through the area you must: find a spear, stick the spear into one of fire pits, and then take the spear and burn the briar in order to move along. In other levels, to move past a big group of "killer" bugs you must spear a bug like object, throw it to the side, and watch the "killer" bugs go after this new food morsel.

Platform

King Kong is manufactured to be played on every mode of game play available to the gamer. The game can be played on the X-box, X-box 360, PS2, Gamecube, Nintendo,

and the personal computer. For the purposes of this assignment, the PC version of the game will be utilized.

Goals

The primary goal of this teacher guide is to provide students with a rich environment that will enhance their writing experience. Students will find inspiration from the interactions of the game's characters who demonstrate definable personality traits and characteristics. Students will be excited to interact with a popular game, based on a widely successful movie to supplement curriculum in the instructional setting. This excitement will transfer to the written word, and enable students to meet the standards of English in a fun and entertaining environment.

Students need to have fun in their education, and to many students the task of writing is too much of a chore. This teaching guide will present the English student with the opportunity to engage in English standards in a fun and exciting way.

It is the goal of this guide to use King Kong to inspire students to seek levels of writing previously unused. The skill of writing is one that is greatly sought after in the corporate world. As students leave education and enter the workforce, they will quickly learn that the skill of writing is greatly desired.

II. How the game will be used

Using King Kong in your Classroom

King Kong can be used in nearly every instructional unit. The game can be used to meet many of the California content standards for 8th grade English. Assignments can be written that students perform at home, in the computer lab, or on the classroom set of laptops. This Teacher's Guide is designed to help you to use *King Kong* in your

classroom with minimal preparation. As you and your students explore and play with *King Kong*, you will be encouraged to use the game to facilitate the implementation of many other content standards, as you craft your lesson plans. Many options are available to create custom lessons to fulfill the requirements for the English class.

1. Use *King Kong* to present a literary criticism. California content standard for reading, 3.7: Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its authors. Students demonstrate their ability to critique the story, placing the critique in the culture of 1930's depression era. Students could research the original movie, with supplied reviews and biographies, and compare this to the current release of the movie or game.
2. Use *King Kong* to write a technical document. This meets the California content standard for writing, 2.6: Write technical documents: Identify the sequence of activities needed to design a system, operate a tool, or explain the bylaws of an organization. Students would write a technical document, documenting how they defeated a level, or solved a puzzle, or defeated a particular monster.
3. Use *King Kong* as part of a unit on communication. California content standards related to listening and speaking. Students would communicate orally their view of King Kong.

Game Play

Student will be encouraged to purchase the game for the home. While students are in class the pc version of the game will be loaded onto the schools classroom set of laptops. These laptops are accessible to teachers through the library. The game King Kong will be loaded onto the laptops. Each laptop will be equipped with a mouse.

Hardware needed for this assignment:

- A. Set of classroom laptops
- B. King Kong loaded onto every computer.
- C. Laptop screen being projected through projection unit, onto screen.
- D. Sound capabilities, from computer through classroom speakers.
- E. Laptop mouse.
- F. Headphones for each laptop.

Scheduling Class Time

King Kong has been developed as a linear story, as each level must be completed before the next level is accessed. The ability of students as gamers will depend on their individual experience. The “ability” of each student controls the time element for level completion. Students will need to be able to play the game outside of the classroom in order to reach the desired level to complete the assignments. In class time would then be used specifically for the narration of an action scene.

- 15 – 20 minutes of class time to expose students to game play.
- 2 class periods to formulate ideas for the persuasive essay.
- 2-3 class periods to write the narrative.

Whole Class Instruction

As each class on campus has a projection unit, the whole class can participate in the assigned activities.

- One person (student or teacher) facilitates the discussion.
- One person operates the program, using suggestions from individual students or from teams of students.
- Students can take turns interacting with the game for the narrative.

Group Work

Divide the class into groups of two to three students each, assigning each individual of the group the role of: villain, hero, and innocent bystander. Students in each group will watch and observe, the other participants as they play the game, keeping notes of the action.

- Villain: This student will gather information from the game, to present Kong as a Villain.
- Hero: This student will gather information from the game, and internet, to present Kong as a Hero. This will be discussed by the members of the group.
- Innocent bystander: This student will play the game, and research information, to present Kong as just an innocent bystander. They will present this information to

the other members of the group.

Partner Work

Students will work with a partner, observing game play, to form the basis of their narrative, as they will be narrating the game play of their partner. These findings will be reported to the class.

Individual Work

Students will be given time to play the game, as a means of familiarization. They will also play to reach a specific level, in which to write the assignments. During the individual gameplay students will be observed by instructor.

Sound Issues

It must be noted that students must use headphones. King Kong is a very stylized game, and the implementation of music is very important in the overall feel of the gameplay.

For this reason, students must be able to play the game with the sound turned up.

Headphones may be borrowed from the library workstations, or students may bring in their own headphones. During partner and group gameplay, care will be taken to provide ample space for students so that the volume of one game will not inhibit the gameplay of others.

III. Subject Matter Addressed By King Kong

Subject and target audience

This teaching guide was written specifically for the Eighth grade English class. The target audience is 8th grade students enrolled at Los Angeles Baptist Junior/Senior High School (LAB), of North Hills, California. This is a private Christian school, under auspices of the Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society. Students enrolled at Los

Angeles Baptist are ethnically diverse, and very representative of the surrounding community. Students at LAB are enrolled in a computer skills class in the seventh grade, consequently a very high percentage of students a computer literate. The typical 7th and 8th grade student at LAB comes from a financially strong home, therefore many have more than one game consoles, as in X-Box, Gamecube, Gameboy, PS2, PS3, and Nintendo. For this assignment, the financial burden of purchasing King Kong would prove to be negligible to most students.

LAB students are high achievers in most academic areas, and test in the higher percentiles on the ACT's, and SAT's.

Specific Content Standards

The following content standards are taken from the California Department of Education, English Language Arts, and Content Standards.

A. 1.0 Writing Strategies

- 1.1 Create compositions that establish a controlling impression, have a coherent thesis, and end with a clear and well-supported conclusion.
- 1.2 Establish coherence within and among paragraphs through effective transitions, parallel structures, and similar writing techniques.
- 1.3 Support theses or conclusions with analogies, paraphrases, quotations, opinions from authorities, comparisons, and similar devices.

B. 2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

- 2.1 Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives.
 - 2.1a Relate a clear, coherent incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
- 2.4 Write persuasive compositions:
 - 2.4a Include a well-defined thesis
 - 2.4b Present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support arguments, differentiating between facts and opinion.
 - 2.4c Provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader concerns and counterarguments.

IV. The Lessons

Getting Started

Before You Begin

To use *King Kong*, you and your students will need the following basic computer skills:

- Starting an application
- Using a mouse
- Using menus and submenus
- Saving the game as levels are completed

If you do not know how to do all these things, please see the manual that came with the computer and with the game *King Kong*.

Teacher and Student Preparation

1. The game will have been loaded onto the laptops by the tech class.
2. You and your students will not need to take a crash course in computer literacy in order to use *King Kong*. The first level accessed will present pop-up screens that function as a tutorial on key use to use tools, and navigate in the environment.
3. Some of the lessons require saving the game as you progress. When covering one of these lessons, you may want to demonstrate the procedure using the projection unit in the class. Students will follow along. You should also provide a handout on the demonstration.
4. Before your students begin the activities, you might want to put a copy of the *King Kong* Controls reference sheets on the wall for students for reference.
5. Prep students beforehand regarding the assignments (see the resource materials section, and class handouts) in the creation of persuasive essays, and the use of narration.

Lesson One – Such Excitement

Objective

Students will produce a written narration of an action scene, as they observe another student play their selected level. Students will write a narrative, using descriptive strategies, relevant dialogue, and specific action, of a specific action sequence, observed of another student. This narrative will include background descriptions, including the scene environment, feel, look, and how this relates to the action of the character.

Setup

This lesson will take two to three class days. Students will be presented with material that describes what a narrative encompasses. More material is included in the **resource materials and handout section**.

-----The Following should be printed out and given to students -----

Narrative writing tells a story. In essays, the narrative writing could also be considered reflection or an exploration of the author's values told as a story. The author may remember his or her past, or a memorable person or event from that past, or even observe the present.

When you are writing a narrative essay, loosen up. After all, you are just telling a story to someone, something you probably do every day in casual conversation. Use first person and talk it through first. You might even want to either tape record your story as if you were telling it to someone for the first time or actually tell it to a friend. For this assignment, you will begin by taking notes of the action that you observe from your partner. It will help if you let your partner play the same level a number of times.

Once you get the basic story down, then you can begin turning it into an essay. If you feel that you lack enough details, then you may choose to have your partner play a different level. You could write about your character, the different characters attacking you, or your favorite part of the action. The important aspect to remember is that you should have a story. **In a successful narrative essay, the author usually makes a point, for this assignment the point is the thrill of level completion.**

Features

1. The story should have an introduction that clearly indicates what kind of narrative essay it is (an event or recurring activity, a personal experience, or an observation), and it should have a conclusion that makes a point.
2. The essay should include anecdotes. The author should describe the person, the scene, or the event in some detail. It is okay to include dialogue as long as you know how to punctuate it correctly and as long as you avoid using too much.
3. The occasion or person described must be suggestive in that your description and thoughts lead the reader to reflect on the human experience. For instance, I read an excellent student essay that told the story of a young woman forced to shoot several wolves that were attacking her cattle. She told her story and included the inner struggle she faced as she made the choice of saving the cattle or saving the wolves. She shot the wolves, but learned that whatever her choice had been, she would not have been comfortable with it. One of life's lessons is that sometimes there is no right choice, and that was the point of the essay.
4. The point of view in narrative essays is usually first person. The use of "I" invites your readers into an intimate discussion.
5. The writing in your essay should be lively and show some style. Try to describe ideas and events in new and different ways. Avoid using clichés. Again, get the basic story down, get it organized, and in your final editing process, work on word choice.

----- end of printout -----

Gameplay

1. Introduce students to the King Kong game interface. Using the projection unit, navigate through the launch screen, exit screen, and save screen. Have students save games using their last name, with period, as other students will be using the same game.
2. Launch game, let students play for 15-20 minutes to familiarize with game play.
3. Stop game play, make sure they close laptops to avoid distraction. Generate a class discussion to get students thinking about what they observed. Asking the following: What characters, humans and non-humans (bugs), did they observe? What types of backgrounds were present? How did the sound of the game influence game play? How did the character move? How did they, the player, feel when they "dispatched" a creature? What colors were present?
4. Go back, play the same level, this time be more concerned with the environment of the game, and not the action as much. They will probably "die" more than before, that is OK, students need to concentrate on the sounds, sights, movement, and emotions as they play. Write down their findings.

5. Teacher will decide if they assign partners, or allow students to select their partner. With partner, discuss their initial findings. Select a “fun” level that will be observed, in order to turn into a narrative story.
6. Observe play of partner, keeping as many notes of game play as possible. Students may need to play the same level a number of times. (Use Handout #1)
7. After each partner has taken their turn, students will begin using the notes gathered of the action to write their narratives.
8. Students will be given the opportunity to use computers after school.

Follow-up

After students have had time to observe and note the action of their partner, the instructor will do the same assignment. A student volunteer will play the game, utilizing the projection unit. The instructor will write down notes as they observe the actions of the player. Upon conclusion, students will meet with partners to discuss whether they need to go back and play the game again, most probably will, let them.

Students will take their observations and write their narratives. This will be done in class, with the final, “typed” assignment turned in. Some students will be given the opportunity to present their narrative to class, while their partner plays the game on the projection unit.

Extension

Referencing the internet, have students find reviews and opinions, of King Kong. This may be included in the final narrative. Have students compare these reviews to their findings.

Lesson Two – Who is the Bad Guy?

Objective

Students will prepare a persuasive argument explaining why King Kong is either a villain, a hero, or an innocent bystander. Students will present their findings to class in a one-minute oral presentation.

Setup

Students will need to complete as much of the game as they can. They need to be to the level of the game where Kong appears, takes Anne Darrow, and then Jack is rescued by the director, Carl Denham. This lesson will follow the narrative assignment; consequently, they should have progressed well into the game.

As students progress, they will need to keep in mind the idea of the persuasive argument. In persuasive writing, we try to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our arguments and conclusions and adopt our way of thinking.

Students are to be challenged to think of Kong in terms of his situation. What is a villain? A villain is the evil character who strives against the hero. What is a hero? A character, person, who embodies the noble traits of society, a rescuer. What is an innocent bystander? A chance spectator that without fault of their own, becomes a part of the action.

Students will be given a list of character traits that must be defined prior to game play.

(Handout #2)

What is a persuasive essay? Instructor will use the supplied links, in the resource section, to present to class the idea of a persuasive essay. (Notes, Handout #3)

Gameplay

1. Students will be given class time, 20 minutes, depending on your schedule; students might need more time, to play the game.
2. As the game progresses, they will begin formulating their argument for writing the persuasive essay. Students will need to have completed up to the level where Kong takes Anne.
3. Students will then be broken up into groups of three. The three members of the group will take one perspective; villain, hero, or innocent bystander, and attempt to present to the others why Kong is that “persuasion.”

4. In their groups of three, students will observe each other playing, keeping notes as to which of the character traits (from the handout) Kong possesses.
5. Students will then be given time to compile their thoughts, and write out their essays.

Follow-up

In this assignment, students will consider whether Kong is good, bad, or innocent. In so doing they must present a persuasive argument, convincing the audience of their position.

This essay, once typed, will be given to another student, in a different class period, to review and critique. Giving the essay to a student in a different period will ease the tension students may feel critiquing a student in the same class. Students will be mandated to critique with a pencil, as pens or highlighters will not be accepted (this will make it easier to erase harmful language deemed inappropriate). Students will receive a grade on the essay and on the critiquing.

Instructors must be cautioned to create a feeling of security with the students in that a review by a peer can be a double-edged sword. Previewing the critiques prior to passing back to the author is a good idea. Overly negative critiques will need to be edited.

Teacher will then select three essays to be read aloud in class. At the end a vote will be taken as to the perception the class will have of Kong. A poster of Kong will be supplied, with the proper moniker inserted above his visage.

Extension

Students will be encouraged to identify who are the villain, hero, and innocent bystander of the human characters.

Resources can be found on the internet detailing human acts of animals, especially in the area of therapy using dogs, cats, and dolphins.

V. Class Handouts

(You will need to copy and past the handouts for use)

Handout # 1

Name: _____ Period _____

Player observed: _____

Characters seen - including the player:	Environment:
Colors:	Sounds:
Strategies used by player:	“Coolest” part of the level:
How were problems solved?	Rate the level: Impossible Hard Medium – Kinda hard Not much to think about Wish it was harder – too easy

Reaction when player completed level:	

Handout #2

Name _____ Period _____

What is true character? Character is the cumulative effect of the most desirable character qualities found in a person. Heroes exhibit traits such as self sacrifice and bravery. Heroes are men and women, or maybe giant gorillas, of exemplary character.

What character traits does Kong exhibit? Look up the following in the dictionary and write out their definitions. While playing the game, record your impression of the traits Kong might exhibit.

1. Virtue

2. Self-sacrifice

3. Courage

4. Loyalty

5. Honesty

6. Piety

7. Truthfulness

8. Diligence

9. Obedience

10. Bravery

Handout #3

(Notes for writing a persuasive essay – for the instructor - or to be used as)

In persuasive or argumentative writing, we try to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking.

Elements toward building a good persuasive essay include

- **establishing facts**
to support an argument
- **clarifying relevant values**
for your audience (perspective)
- **prioritizing, editing, and/or sequencing**
the facts and values in importance to build the argument
- **forming and stating conclusions**
- **"persuading" your audience** that your conclusions
are based upon the agreed-upon facts and shared values
- **having the confidence**
to communicate your "persuasion" in writing

Here are some strategies to complete a persuasive writing assignment:

Write out the questions in your own words.

- **Think of the questions posed in the assignment**
while you are reading and researching. Determine
 - facts
 - any sources that will help you determine their reliability
(as well as for further reference)
 - what prejudices lie in the argument
or values that color the facts or the issue
 - what you think of the author's argument
- **List out facts;** consider their importance:
prioritize, edit, sequence, discard, etc.
Ask yourself "What's missing?"
- **What are the "hot buttons"** of the issue?
List possible emotions/emotional reactions and recognize them for
later use

Start writing a draft!

Start as close as possible to your reading/research

Do not concern yourself with grammar or spelling

- **Write your first paragraph**
 - Introduce the topic
 - Inform the reader of your point of view!
 - Entice the reader to continue with the rest of the paper!

- Focus on three main points to develop
- **Establish flow from paragraph to paragraph**
- **Keep your voice active**
- **Quote sources** to establish authority
- **Stay focused** on your point of view throughout the essay
- **Focus on logical arguments**
- **Don't lapse into summary**
in the development--wait for the conclusion
- **Conclusion**
 - **Summarize, then conclude, your argument**
 - **Refer** to the first paragraph/opening statement as well as the main points
 - does the conclusion restate the main ideas?
 - reflect the succession and importance of the arguments
 - logically conclude their development?
- **Edit/rewrite the first paragraph**
to better telegraph your development and conclusion.
- **Take a day or two off!**
- **Re-read your paper**
with a fresh mind and a sharp pencil
 - **Ask yourself:**
Does this make sense? Am I convinced?
Will this convince a reader?
Will they understand my values, and agree with my facts?
 - **Edit, correct, and re-write** as necessary
 - **Check spelling and grammar!**
 - **Have a friend read it** and respond to your argument.
Were they convinced?
 - **Revise** if necessary
 - **Turn in the paper**
 - **Celebrate a job well done,**
with the confidence that you have done your best.

How to respond to criticism:

Consider criticism as a test of developing your powers of persuasion.
Try not to take it personally.

If your facts are criticized, double check them, and then cite your sources.

If your values are criticized, sometimes we need agree "to disagree". Remember: your success in persuading others assumes that the other person is open to being persuaded!

Fear: If you are not used to communicating,

especially in writing, you may need to overcome fear on several levels. Writing, unlike unrecorded speech, is a permanent record for all to see, and the "context" is not as important as in speech where context "colors" the words. For example: your readers do not see you, only your words. They do not know what you look like, where you live, who you are.

Hopefully in school, and class, we have a safe place

to practice both the art of writing and of persuasion. Then later, when we are in our communities, whether work, church, neighborhoods, and even families, we can benefit from this practice.

Persuasion also has another dimension:

it is built with facts, which illustrate conclusions. Of course, this means you need to know what you are talking about, and cannot be lazy with your facts, or you will not succeed in convincing anyone. This shows another level of fear: Fear of making a mistake that will make your argument or persuasion meaningless. Since you are writing, and the words are on paper for all to see (or on a web site!), you need to work to make sure your facts are in order.

Information retrieved from the internet on August 26, 2006:

<http://www.studygs.net/wrtstr4.htm>

Permission was given on the website to freely distribute.

VI. Resource Materials

Lecture material for instructor – Writing Narratives:

<http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/resources/languagearts/readingwriting/narrativewrit.htm>

<http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/comp1/narrativ.htm>

Material for Persuasive Essays

http://www.geocities.com/fifth_grade_tpes/persuasive.html

<http://www.studygs.net/wrtstr4.htm>

References

California Department of Education, English content standards. Retrieved August 20, 2006 from: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/enggrade8.asp>

Peter Jackson's King Kong – The official game of the Movie. Retrieved August 20, 2006 from: <http://www.kingkonggame.com/us/>

A brief guide to writing Narrative essays, by Jennifer Jordan-Henley, retrieved August 16, 2006, online from: <http://www.rsc.c.c.tn.us/owl&writingcenter/OWL/Narration.html>