

The “Pokémon GO” Phenomenon

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you play games on a mobile device?
Which games?
2. Why is Pokémon GO such a popular game?
3. Is Pokémon GO a summer phenomenon,
or will it remain popular for a long time?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can. Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| ___ 1. artificial | a) causing strong feelings |
| ___ 2. overlay | b) the sudden appearance (in a game setting) |
| ___ 3. phenomenon | c) to appear as a layer on top of something |
| ___ 4. distracted | d) to cause a person, animal, or character to come toward you |
| ___ 5. trespass | e) something that suddenly attracts a lot of interest |
| ___ 6. sensitive | f) not real, but trying to look real |
| ___ 7. drain | g) a person who is walking in public |
| ___ 8. boundary | h) unable to focus or concentrate on what’s important |
| ___ 9. predator | i) a specified area that a person must not go inside or outside of |
| ___ 10. lure | j) to become empty, to use up all of the energy |
| ___ 11. spawning | k) one who hunts others for the purpose of causing harm |
| ___ 12. pedestrian | l) to enter a private area without permission |



Reading

THE “POKÉMON GO” PHENOMENON

Fitness app or death trap?

1. “Pokémon GO” is a real-world exploration game made by Niantic. Unlike virtual reality, which creates an **artificial** digital world, Pokémon GO uses augmented reality. This technology **overlays** digital information onto a real-world view. Pokémon GO uses a device’s GPS to pinpoint a gamer’s location and turn it into a Pokémon world.
2. In the summer of 2016, Pokémon GO became a global **phenomenon**. At first, it seemed like a great way to get gamers off the couch. The more you wander around, the more successful you are at catching pocket monsters. After downloading the app, many Pokémon GO players (“trainers”) got out their running shoes, bicycles, or Rollerblades for the first time in months or years.
3. Before long, health and safety experts began issuing Pokémon GO warnings. Stories of **distracted** gamers began to make headlines. Pokémon trainers were walking into lakes, falling off cliffs, and driving off roads or into vehicles. They were also **trespassing** on private property and playing in **sensitive** areas, such as cemeteries and memorial museums. Two teens in Florida were shot at by a homeowner who thought they were thieves.
4. Kids aren’t the only ones playing this game. In fact, many young kids don’t have a data plan and can’t do much with the game at home. Parents who share their own devices find that they have to set time limits. The game can quickly **drain** a phone battery and a family’s data plan. Distracted children can also stray from neighborhood **boundaries**.
5. Police are also concerned about the safety of gamers. They think the game could be used by child **predators** to **lure** kids into bushes or alleys. John Hanke, the CEO of Niantic, says that safety is a priority for developers. He says the game limits the **spawning** of Pokémon to areas that are safe for **pedestrians**. According to Hanke, players don’t need to enter private or dangerous areas to “catch ‘em all.” This hasn’t stopped gamers from straying into minefields.

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. How does augmented reality differ from virtual reality?
2. What examples of distracted gamers are mentioned in the reading?
3. What could happen to children who stray from their neighborhood boundaries?
4. What did John Hanke say about the safety of Pokémon GO?
5. Why does the reading mention minefields?

Vocabulary Review

Which word from page 1 is described in the sentence?

Use each word one time only.

#	Sentence	Word
1	It's a global craze! Everyone is playing Pokémon GO.	
2	If you play for an hour, you won't have any battery power left.	
3	I accidentally walked into a tree while playing Pokémon GO.	
4	The kids are only allowed to play at the park behind our house.	
5	The teens hopped a fence to catch Squirtle near a neighbor's pool.	
6	Pikachu suddenly appeared in my front yard.	
7	Watch out for people who walk into the streets while playing Pokémon GO.	
8	The young gamers walked so far that they got lost.	

Pokémon GO Lingo

As you play Pokémon GO, you will learn some informal English. You will also learn some words that have a specific meaning in the game. This is called "lingo."

Find some gamers who play Pokémon GO. Ask them to explain the following Pokémon GO lingo. Write the meanings in your own words.

#	Lingo	Meaning
1	Gotta catch 'em all!	<i>You have got to catch all of the Pokémon!</i>
2	Gotcha!	<i>I got/caught you!</i>
3	Poké Ball	
4	Level Up	
5	Incense	
6	Evolution	
7	Type	
8	CP	
9	Eggs	
10	Gyms	

Discussion

1. Couples, friends, and families can be seen walking around together while staring at their screens. In your opinion, is this a positive or negative aspect of the Pokémon GO phenomenon?
2. Do you think Pokémon GO will actually encourage people to explore local landmarks, or will they simply catch Pokémon and move on?
3. In your opinion, what is the greatest safety risk of a game like Pokémon GO? Should people believe all of the headlines about Pokémon GO accidents?
4. How do you feel when you see adults playing games like Pokémon GO?

“The game itself is intended to facilitate the real-life stuff.”

—John Hanke, CEO of Niantic

Brainstorming

Work with a partner and discuss this question.

How have/could businesses use “Pokémon GO” as a marketing tool?

Share your ideas with your class.

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

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3. Before long, health and safety experts began issuing Pokémon GO warnings. Stories of _____ gamers began to make headlines. Pokémon trainers were walking into lakes, falling off cliffs, and driving off roads or into vehicles. They were also _____ on private property and playing in _____ areas, such as cemeteries and memorial museums. Two teens in Florida were shot at by a homeowner who thought they were thieves.
4. Kids aren't the only ones playing this game. In fact, many young kids don't have a data plan and can't do much with the game at home. Parents who share their own devices find that they have to set time limits. The game can quickly _____ a phone battery and a family's data plan. Distracted children can also stray from neighborhood _____.
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Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about Pokémon GO, the popular augmented reality game. They discuss the positive and negative effects of the phenomenon that has taken over the world in the summer of 2016. Pokémon GO lingo is included.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 1.5 – 2 hours

TAGS: discussion, Pokémon GO, Pokémon, the Pokémon GO phenomenon, augmented reality, gaming, mobile device, technology

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class. Answers will vary.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. f | 3. e | 5. l | 7. j | 9. k | 11. b |
| 2. c | 4. h | 6. a | 8. i | 10. d | 12. g |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 6. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

- Virtual reality creates an artificial digital world, while augmented reality overlays digital information onto the real world.
- Examples of distracted gamers include people who walked into lakes, fell off cliffs, or drove off roads.
- Children who stray from their boundaries could get lost or could become prey to child predators.
- John Hanke said that safety is a priority for Niantic. He said that pedestrians should not have to go into dangerous areas to catch Pokémon.
- The reading mentions minefields as an example of a dangerous area where distracted gamers have ended up.

Vocabulary Review

A few options may be possible, but here are the answers if each word is only used once.

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. phenomenon | 5. trespassed |
| 2. drain | 6. spawning |
| 3. distracted | 7. pedestrians |
| 4. boundary | 8. strayed |

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Pokémon GO Lingo

Answers may vary.

1. You have got to catch all of the Pokémon!
2. I got/caught you!
3. A Poké Ball is a ball that you throw at a Pokémon to catch it.
4. In Pokémon GO, to Level Up is to become a stronger Pokémon trainer by catching/evolving/battling Pokémon. (In other Pokémon games, the Pokémon themselves—rather than the trainer—Level Up and become stronger by battling.)
5. Incense is a pot of incense that draws Pokémon toward players for 30 minutes.
6. Evolution is the process in which a Pokémon changes into a different, more advanced species of Pokémon.
7. A Type is a property of a Pokémon and its attacks (such as Fire, Water, or Fairy).
8. CP stands for Combat Power. It is a combined statistic for a Pokémon’s level, as well as its attack, defense, and special statistics.
9. An Egg eventually hatches into a Pokémon. A player must place an Egg in an incubator and walk or bike to hatch it.
10. Gyms are real-world locations (often a place of interest or activity) where players can have their Pokémon battle other trainers’ Pokémon.

Discussion

Answers will vary. For writing practice, higher-level students can choose a question and write an essay response.

Brainstorming

Answers will vary. For writing practice, higher-level students can choose a question and write an essay response. Invite pairs to present their ideas to the class.

Listening

1. artificial, overlays
2. phenomenon, downloading
3. distracted, trespassing, sensitive
4. drain, boundaries
5. predators, lure, spawning, pedestrians

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Neighborhood* and *Neighbor*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Neighbourhood* and *Neighbour*. Note that *Toward* is preferred in North American English, while *Towards* is preferred in British English. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

You may wish to point out to your students that *Rollerblades* is capitalized in the reading because it’s a trademark. Other examples of trademarks include *Kleenex* and *Band-Aid*.