



Break the Game

DELVE DEEPER READING LIST



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Kim Rott, librarian at Sentinel High School in Missoula, Montana, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *Break the Game*.

Contributors



Kim Rott / M.Ed.

Kim Rott is a retired English teacher and librarian at Sentinel High School, where she urges her students to read broadly, think deeply, and research wisely. As a “Speaker in the Schools” for Humanities Montana, she teaches media literacy to students across Montana. She has an M.Ed. in library and information technology from Mansfield University in Mansfield, Pennsylvania.

ADULT NONFICTION

Boluk, Stephanie & LeMieux, Patrick. *Metagaming: Playing, Competing, Spectating, Cheating, Trading, Making, and Breaking Videogames*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

The greatest trick the videogame industry ever pulled was convincing the world that videogames were games rather than a medium for making metagames. Elegantly defined as “games about games,” metagames implicate a diverse range of practices that stray outside the boundaries and bend the rules: from technical glitches and forbidden strategies to Renaissance painting, algorithmic trading, professional sports, and the War on Terror. In *Metagaming*, Stephanie Boluk and Patrick LeMieux demonstrate how games always extend beyond the screen, and how modders, mappers, streamers, spectators, analysts, and artists are changing the way we play.

Metagaming uncovers these alternative histories of play by exploring the strange experiences and unexpected effects that emerge in, on, around, and through videogames. Players puzzle through the problems of perspectival rendering in *Portal*, perform clandestine acts of electronic espionage in *EVE Online*, compete and commentate in Korean *StarCraft*, and speedrun *The Legend of Zelda* in record times (with or without the use of vision). Companies like Valve attempt to capture the metagame through international e-sports and online marketplaces while the corporate history of *Super Mario Bros.* is undermined by the endless levels of *Infinite Mario*, the frustrating pranks of *Asshole Mario*, and even *Super Mario Clouds*, a ROM hack exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Cross, Dani. *A Trans History of Gaming*. Independently Published, 2024.

From egg-spitting dinosaurs to non-binary beastmasters and transgender gods, gaming has always been a place for the most memorable and outlandish trans characters to grace our screens - but how were their stories told, and how have they changed?

A Trans History of Gaming is the most comprehensive account of trans representation in gaming, stretching across decades of characters and detailing how depictions have progressed from the dawn of video games to the modern era.

Getty, Stuart. *How to They/Them: A Visual Guide to Nonbinary Pronouns and the World of Gender Fluidity*. Sasquatch Books, 2020.

What does nonbinary really mean? What is gender nonconforming? And isn't *they* a plural pronoun? In this charming and disarming guide, a real-life *they*-using genderqueer writer unpacks all your burning questions in a fun, visual way. No soapboxes or divisive comment-section wars here!

Sometimes funny, sometimes serious, always human, this gender-friendly primer will get you up to speed. It's about more than just bathrooms and pronouns--this is about gender expression and the freedom to choose how to identify. While *they* might only be for some, that freedom is for everyone!

Hodent, Celia. *The Psychology of Video Games*. Routledge, October 8, 2020.

What impact can video games have on us as players? How does psychology influence video game creation? Why do some games become cultural phenomena?

The Psychology of Video Games introduces the curious reader to the relationship between psychology and video games from the perspective of both game makers and players. Assuming no specialist knowledge, this concise, approachable guide is a starter book for anyone intrigued by what makes video games engaging and what is their psychological impact on gamers. It digests the research exploring the benefits gaming can have on players in relation to education and healthcare, considers the concerns over potential negative impacts such as pathological gaming, and concludes with some ethical considerations.

With gaming being one of the most popular forms of entertainment today, The Psychology of Video Games shows the importance of understanding the human brain and its mental processes to foster ethical and inclusive video games.

Lorenz, Taylor. *Extremely Online: The Untold Story of Fame, Influence, and Power on the Internet*. Simon and Schuster, October 3, 2023.

For over a decade, Taylor Lorenz has been the authority on internet culture, documenting its far-reaching effects on all corners of our lives. Her reporting is serious yet entertaining and illuminates deep truths about ourselves and the lives we create online. In her debut book, *Extremely Online*, she reveals how online influence came to upend the world, demolishing traditional barriers and creating whole new sectors of the economy. Lorenz shows this phenomenon to be one of the most disruptive changes in modern capitalism.

By tracing how the internet has changed what we want and how we go about getting it, Lorenz unearths how social platforms' power users radically altered our expectations of content, connection, purchasing, and power. In this "deeply reported, behind-the-scenes chronicle of how everyday people built careers and empires from their sheer talent and algorithmic luck".

Moorhead, Austin. *Young Guns: Obsession, Overwatch, and the Future of Gaming*. Hachette Books, 2020.

The fascinating story of the quest to build the world's first professional gaming league and the global race of the most gifted players to take home its first championship.

Launched in January 2018, the Overwatch League (OWL) is the first large-scale concerted effort to build a competitive, global framework for an esports that can rival the largest pro sports leagues. \$3.5 million in prize money, a broadcasting deal with ESPN, and the purchase of OWL teams by celebrity owners including Robert Kraft, owner of the New England Patriots, and Stan Kroenke, owner of the Los

Angeles Rams, set the stakes for the launch. The first season ended in a tense round of playoffs that climaxed in a suspenseful championship series in a sold-out Barclay's Center.

Austin Moorhead, a gamer who found himself fascinated by the emerging world of pro players, embedded himself during OWL's debut season with multiple teams, including the London Spitfire, which would go on to become Overwatch's first world champion. In *Young Guns*, he takes readers behind the scenes of the wild first season of a competition that just might become as ingrained in our culture as Sunday football, revealing a high-stakes, pressure-cooker world of profane teenagers who earn six-figure salaries, TV executives, and traditional sports owners struggling to understand and conquer youth culture, and a game whose innovation progresses so fast that fans watch their favorite gamers practice for hours just to keep up with it. Told with perspective on the subculture and unrivaled access into how both the OWL and the teams that compose it have built themselves to succeed, *Young Guns* is a fascinating look at the ascendance of competitive gaming and the future of sports.

Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*. Zero Books, 2017.

Recent years have seen a revival of the heated culture wars of the 1990s, but this time its battle ground is the internet. On one side the alt right ranges from the once obscure neo-reactionary and white separatist movements, to geeky subcultures like 4chan, to more mainstream manifestations such as the Trump-supporting gay libertarian Milo Yiannopolous. On the other side, a culture of struggle sessions and virtue signalling lurks behind a therapeutic language of trigger warnings and safe spaces. The feminist side of the online culture wars has its equally geeky subcultures right through to its mainstream expression. *Kill All Normies* explores some of the cultural genealogies and past parallels of these styles and subcultures, drawing from transgressive styles of 60s libertinism and conservative movements, to make the case for a rejection of the perpetual cultural turn.

Shanley, Maria. *Well That Explains It: A Compilation of Researched, Personal Essays*. Maria Shanley, 2020.

In 2015, Marie Shanley almost took her life for the first time. After the incident, she promised herself that if she ever felt better, she would help make sure that no one ever felt as alone and uninformed as she did in those moments. In 2017, she created Mxiety, a live talk show around mental health education, along with a website dedicated to gathering reliable resources and sharing her story in an informed way. This book is a compilation of essays that have been published on Mxiety.com, featured on Medium, The Mighty, TakeThis.org, Yahoo News and more.

ADULT FICTION

Zevin, Gabrielle. *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow: A Novel*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2022.

From the best-selling author of *The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry*: On a bitter-cold day, in the December of his junior year at Harvard, Sam Masur exits a subway car and sees, amid the hordes of people waiting on the platform, Sadie Green. He calls her name. For a moment, she pretends she hasn't heard him, but then, she turns, and a game begins: a legendary collaboration that will launch them to stardom.

These friends, intimates since childhood, borrow money, beg favors, and, before even graduating college, they have created their first blockbuster, *Ichigo*. Overnight, the world is theirs. Not even twenty-five years old, Sam and Sadie are brilliant, successful, and rich, but these qualities won't protect them from their own creative ambitions or the betrayals of their hearts.

Spanning thirty years, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Venice Beach, California, and lands in between and far beyond, Gabrielle Zevin's *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* examines the multifarious nature of identity, disability, failure, the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all, our need to connect: to be loved and to love.

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION

Dawson, Juno. *What's the T? Sourcebooks Fire, 2022.*

Discover what it means to be a young transgender and/or non-binary person in the twenty-first century in this candid and funny guide for teens from the bestselling author of *This Book is Gay*.

In *What's the T?* Stonewall ambassador and bestselling author Juno Dawson is back again, this time with everything you've wanted to know about labels and identities and offering uncensored advice on coming out, sex, and relationships with her trademark humor and lightness of touch. It is informative, helpful, optimistic, and funny but with a good dose of reality and some of the things that can downright suck too.

The companion title to the groundbreaking *This Book Is Gay*, *What's the T?* tackles the complex realities of growing up trans with honesty and humor and is joyfully illustrated by gender non-conforming artist Soofiya.

Hansen, Dustin. *Game On! Square Fish, February 19, 2019.*

Veteran video game designer Dustin Hansen takes YA readers on a fun and fascinating trip through the brief but intensely innovative history of video games.

Find out about the fast and furious growth and evolution of video games (including how they are quickly taking over the world!) by looking at some of the most popular, innovative, and influential games ever, from Pong, the very first arcade game ever, to modern hits like *Uncharted*.

Learn about the creators and inspiration (Mario was named after Nintendo's landlord after he barged into a staff meeting demanding rent), discover historical trivia and Easter eggs (The developers of *Halo 2* drank over 24,000 gallons of soda while making the game), and explore the innovations that make each game special (The ghosts in *Pac-Man* are the first example of AI in a video game).

Finally, here's a young adult nonfiction book about video games. Whether you consider yourself a hard-core gamer or are just curious to see what everyone is talking about, *Game On!* is the book for you!

Roberts, Kizzi. *Gaming Addiction (Dealing With Addiction)*, Brightpoint Press, August 1, 2022.

Video games are an enjoyable hobby in moderation. But when people play so much that they neglect other aspects of their lives, harm can result. *Gaming Addiction* examines the science behind this addiction, how it affects people's lives, and how modern treatments offer hope.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Madden, Tobias. *Take a Bow*, Noah Mitchel. Page Street Publishing, 2023.

Seventeen-year-old gaymer Noah Mitchell only has one friend left: the wonderful, funny, strictly online-only MagePants69. After years of playing RPGs together, they know everything about each other, except anything that would give away their real-life identities. And Noah is certain that if they could just meet in person, they would be soulmates. Noah would do anything to make this happen--including finally leaving his gaming chair to join a community theater show that he's only mostly sure MagePants69 is performing in. Noah has never done anything like theater--he can't sing, he can't dance, and he's never willingly watched a musical--but he'll have to go all in to have a chance at love.

Morris, Brittney. *Slay*, Simon Pulse, 2019.

By day, seventeen-year-old Kiera Johnson is an honors student, a math tutor, and one of the only Black kids at Jefferson Academy. But at home, she joins hundreds of thousands of Black gamers who duel worldwide as Nubian personas in the secret multiplayer online role-playing card game, SLAY. No one knows Kiera is the game developer, not her friends, her family, not even her boyfriend, Malcolm, who believes video games are partially responsible for the “downfall of the Black man.”

But when a teen in Kansas City is murdered over a dispute in the SLAY world, news of the game reaches mainstream media, and SLAY is labeled a racist, exclusionist, violent hub for thugs and criminals. Even worse, an anonymous troll infiltrates the game, threatening to sue Kiera for “anti-white discrimination.”

Driven to save the only world in which she can be herself, Kiera must preserve her secret identity and harness what it means to be unapologetically Black in a world intimidated by Blackness. But can she protect her game without losing herself in the process?

Zhao, Katie. *Last Gamer Standing*. Scholastic, Sept. 21, 2021.

Ready Player One meets the action of battle royale video games in this middle-grade sci-fi perfect for fans of Fortnite.

In twelve-year-old Reyna Cheng's world, gaming is everything. Professional esports teams are the mainstream celebrities. Kids begin training from a young age, aspiring for the big leagues.

Reyna is the up-and-coming junior amateur Dayhold gamer, competing in a VR battle royale against AI monsters and human players. But despite Reyna's rising popularity and skills, no one knows who she

is. Gaming is still a boys' club and to protect herself against trolls and their harassment, she games the mysterious TheRuiNar.

When Reyna qualifies for the Dayhold Junior Tournament, she knows she's got what it takes to win the championship title and the \$10,000 prize. It's a chance to take a step forward towards her professional esports dreams and to help her family with the costs of her mother's hospital bills.

But when she's blackmailed and threatened to be doxed by an anonymous troll, Reyna has to confront the toxic gaming community head-on.