

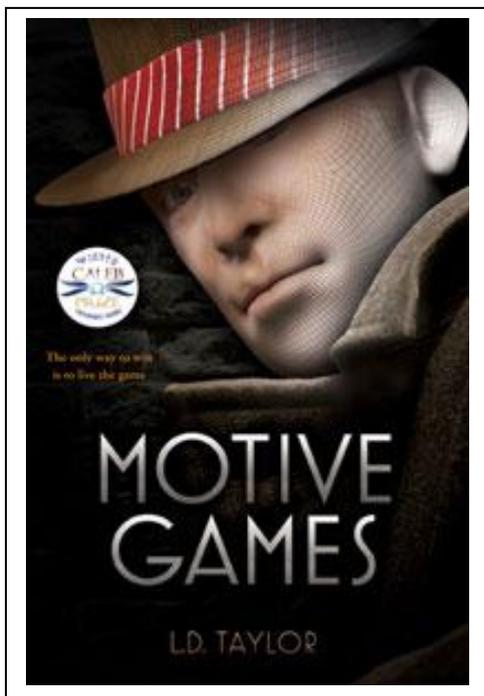


Wombat Books

Books you'll want to share

Teacher's Notes and Ideas

Prepared by Wombat Books



Motive Games

By LD Taylor

ISBN: 978-1-921632-25-9

Recommended Retail: \$16.95

Recommended Age: 12 to adult

Introduction/Story Summary	page 2
Key Learning Areas	page 3
Values Addressed	page 3
Themes	page 3
About the Author	page 3
Motive Games Spelling and Punctuation Style	page 3
Discussion Questions	page 4-14

Wombat Books, PO Box 1519, Capalaba BC Qld 4157 www.wombatbooks.com.au/teachingnotes.html
07-32451938 info@wombatbooks.com.au

Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books ABN: 30 137 345 941

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use within schools but not offered for commercial sale.

Introduction

Phil Roland is sure his dad's death wasn't an accident. Thousands of adults had hated him for designing a popular, but controversial first-person shooter (a violent videogame). Thousands of kids had hated him because he'd walked away with the rights to the game before a sequel could be made. Now Phil's got a plan to prove Dad didn't just fall down a set of stairs. But getting that proof means getting in at Motive Games, getting Dad's eccentric detective friend to help him investigate, and getting past his own grief and despair.

In this fast-paced thriller, based on *La Chanson de Roland*, real-world technology collides head on with real-life dilemmas. The result is a high-tech murder mystery with heart, soul ... and ultimately, hope.

Story Summary

Phil Roland is obsessed with the idea that his father was murdered. A series of angry blog rants directed against his dad (Marc Roland), a famous game designer, spurs Phil to take action to prove that Dad's death, three months previously, couldn't have been an accident. He decides that the answer is to convince someone at Dad's old company, Motive Games, to help him make an animated simulation that shows that his dad's fall was the result of a push.

Mom convinces her ex-husband's reluctant business partner, Charles, to take Phil on at Motive: a sixty-person game development company situated in Montreal's (Canada) high-tech district. Phil is thrilled. Not only will he have access to the skilled animators who can help him to create a simulation of Dad's fall, he'll be working with the team that is making Dad's last game. As a successful modder (game modifier), he'd hoped to be working with the art team, however, he's been told he'll be helping out with marketing.

Completing the simulation helps prove Dad was not the victim of an accident, but it doesn't help narrow down the suspects. Dad had been highly unpopular in certain sectors: some people had blamed a teen's murderous rampage on one of his earlier games (*Serial Assault*), and a lot of kids were furious when he'd left the company that produced *Serial Assault* with the intellectual property rights, so that a sequel could never be created. In addition to the huge lists of suspects this creates, Charles, now sole proprietor of Motive Games, may also have had a motive to kill Dad.

Fortunately Phil meets Arthur Turpin at this time. Turpin is a retired detective who has worked as a consultant for Motive Games. Turpin is a quixotic character who Phil finds frustrating at times – though it's clear that the 'crazy old guy' has some good ideas about how to go about investigating Dad's death. Beyond his detective savvy, Turpin walks Phil through many of the philosophical questions that arise in the story: ethical issues around video game production; the joys of creating (art), rather than simply consuming (media and entertainment); the hope of life after death.

Together Phil and Turpin narrow down the suspects. Originally, they favour Dad's ex-partner (motive: can produce a sequel to *Serial Assault* and get out of financial difficulties once Marc is dead) and Allan Roth's half brother.

After close examination – neither turns out to be the murderer. In the meantime Phil, Turpin and Phil's best friend, Oliver have been trying to determine how the murder could have been committed and made to look like an accident. It is Phil and Oliver who finally solve this puzzle and it leads them directly to the 'who' – Motive's lead programmer Robert Ganel. What remains for them to uncover is why he did it.

Oliver and Phil come up with part of the answer by reading through Dad's old emails. Ganel is a black hat hacker who communicates with his bosses via encrypted email. Marc had obviously discovered this as well, but had not lived long enough to pass on his knowledge.

What remains is for the boys to acquire evidence of Ganel's hacking activities and force him to confess to Dad's murder. Using technology, teamwork and a lot of nerve, they formulate a plan to download – from Ganel's USB key – some of the stolen financial files.

But just as Phil is about to close the trap, he undergoes a personal crisis. Dad's game is in trouble and all types of doubts about their plan creep in. After some soul-searching, Phil carries out the plan to get the needed evidence. Then he confronts Ganel at the scene of the crime with this information, as well as accusing him of Dad's murder. Ganel confesses, but then his mafia bosses unexpectedly arrive on the scene. Turpin, Oliver and others are close by listening in on the exchange, however. Phil gives them a clue about what to do and they come to his rescue. Ganel almost escapes at this point, but Phil and his team are too quick for him.

In the denouement the reader learns that whole mafia ring is behind bars, Motive Games' financial crises is resolved, and Phil finds peace about his father's death and hope for his own future.

Key Learning Areas

English

Technology (3D graphics, animation, programming)

Classic Literature (La Chanson de Roland/The Song of Roland)

Values Addressed

Discernment of the value of media

Creativity

Perseverance

Justice

Hope

Friendship

Themes

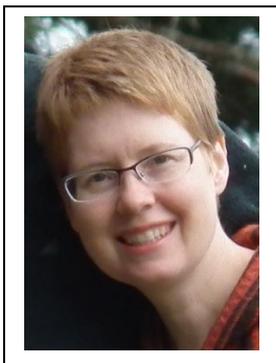
Technology as a vehicle for good, and evil

Creativity vs consumerism

Death and loss

Good versus evil

About the Author



After graduating from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada with a BA in English Literature and History, LD Taylor began a career as a marketing writer for the 3D graphics and animation software industry. This gave her many opportunities to visit well-known film, broadcast and videogames studios around the world. A few years before her family's immigration to New Zealand, she decided to spearhead a family project that would combine one of her teenage sons' interests (videogames) with one of her own (mystery novels). In 2011 the resulting manuscript, entitled *Motive Games*, won the Caleb Prize (Australia/New Zealand) in the Young Adult category.

Motive Games – Spelling and Punctuation Style

Because this is an internationally available story written by a Canadian citizen living in New Zealand and published in Australia, it was difficult to decide what spelling and punctuation style to use. Ultimately, it was decided to keep the spelling in line with the setting. Thus the punctuation style is North American, the spelling style Canadian, but showing preference to the British (rather than American) option, when an option was available.

Pre-reading Discussion Questions

Mystery Fiction as a Genre

Mystery and detective fiction, sometimes also called crime fiction, are forms of literature dating back to the mid 19th century.

1. Have you ever read a mystery novel before?
2. Name one or more famous detectives from fiction literature.

In the golden age of detective literature a group called the Detection Club (1928) set out the rules for a mystery novel:

- The solution of some mystery or puzzle is necessary in order to resolve the central conflict.
 - The detective(s) must use only their wits and skills to solve the puzzle, and these wits and skills must be believable in the context of the story.
 - No clue that is important to the solution of the puzzle may be concealed from the reader.
 - Unusual and improbable circumstances, such as super criminals, obscure poisons, crime rings, secret entrances, coincidences and the like, must be used infrequently and skillfully enough to be believable in the context of the story.
 - Justice must, in one fashion or another, be brought about by the action of the detective(s).
3. Given the above guidelines, how would you say mystery novels differ from suspense novels or horror novels?

Enrichment Activities

- Have students research the history of crime literature (broken down by eras).
- Have students research the similarities and differences of the detective, mystery, suspense, horror etc. genres.

Mystery Fiction as a Game

One of Britain's great detective novelists, Dorothy L Sayers, believed that mystery stories were a type of game.

1. From your experience of reading mystery stories would you say that Sayers is right? Why or why not?
2. How would following the 'rules' of mystery novels (above) make the story more like a game?
3. Have you ever played a puzzle-based or mystery/adventure video game? If so, how did it compare with mystery stories you have read?

Videogames

1. What are the major genres of videogames? (Answers should include: real-time strategy (RTS), sports, adventure, puzzle games, card and casual games, level-based games, first-person shooters (FPS), third-person shooters, role-playing games (RPGs) and massively multi-player online RPGs (MMORPGs)).
2. Which are your favourite genres and why?
3. Rank from most important to least important the elements of a video game (in your opinion)
 - graphics and animation
 - story/plot
 - gameplay*
 - social aspects (i.e. multi-player options)Explain your choices.
4. How many hours per week do you spend playing videogames? Are you happy with this number or would you like to play more or less? Give the reasons for your choice.

* gameplay may be most simply defined as the system(s) by which players interact with a game.

Videogame Development

1. Name some game development companies. (Answers could include: EA, Valve, Naughty Dog, Blizzard, id, Rockstar Games, Nintendo, Square, Sony, Microsoft, Crytech, Unreal, 2k games, etc.)
2. What are some of the jobs that people do in a game development company? (Answers should include: artist, graphic artist, animator, programmer, QA (quality assurance). Also acceptable is scriptwriting, business development, marketing, music composers, administrators)
3. Have you ever thought you'd like to work for a videogame company? If so, doing what?
4. Do you know anything about game modding (or addons)? Do you know anyone who makes them? Name some famous game mods. (Answers may include Counter-Strike, Garry's Mod (GMod), Age of Ice).

Discussion Questions during Reading

Chapter 1

Attack of the Trolls

Vocabulary (please note that a glossary of technical terms is located at the back of the book)

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- FPS – First-Person Shooter (a popular videogame genre)
- Intellectual property – a work or invention to which one has rights and for which one may apply for a patent, copyright, trademark, etc.
- AI – Artificial Intelligence (one of the key components in a videogame)
- Post/posting (n) – a comment in an online forum, which is 'posted' (v) by the person writing it
- Avatar – an icon or figure representing a particular person in computer games, internet forums, etc.
- WTH – 'what the heck/hell'
- Troll – a person who vents his or her anger via online forums, often using language that is more abusive and coarse than he/she would use in real life
- Alias – one's user-name in an online forum
- Thread – as it pertains to an online forum, a thread refers to all the replies related to a given post

1. What communication methods familiar to teens are used in the first chapter?
2. Phil feels angry and victimised by the comments he reads under Roy Marsile's blog post. Have you (or has a friend or relative) ever been attacked on a website or via text, email, etc.? If yes, how did you feel? What did you do about it?
3. Phil considers posting a reply to the people insulting his dad, but decides there's no use 'feeding the trolls'. What does this mean? Do you agree with his decision?
4. How big a problem is cyber-bullying in your life? In your friends' lives?
5. If someone posts something online that they later regret, what, if anything, can they do to fix the situation?

Chapter 2

Dynamic Plan

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- RTS – Real-Time Strategy (a popular videogame genre)

- Mod(n)/ Modding (v) – refers to a modified version (or the making of a modified version) of a professional video game by an amateur; modifications range from small fixes to the creation of an entirely new game
 - Game engine – the underlying software of a videogame responsible for gameplay, networking, audio playback, computer graphics display, interpreting player input, etc.
 - Source code – the software files containing the instructions for a game; written in a common programming language (e.g. C++) by the game’s programmers
 - Scripting language – any one of a number of simplified programming languages (e.g. Python) that can be used to write software or extend more complicated programmes
 - Map editing tools – a software programme for scene assembly
 - Art assets – the computer files which form the visual elements of a game; generally created using 3D graphics and animation software or video files
 - Scene assembly – the organisation and layout of the objects in a given game level or chapter
 - Simulation – a computer representation of the natural outcome of an event given a certain set of criteria; the computer makes complex dynamics calculations as part of this process
 - Dynamics – the branch of physics concerned with the motion of objects under the influences of forces
1. In what ways does Phil express his anger? What helps him calm down? Discuss what other things people do to help them calm down when they’re angry?
 2. How important do you think modding and making game art/animation is to Phil? Back up your answer with clues from this chapter.

Chapter 3

Mission One

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following term:

- Stealth Mode - a setting in certain types of videogames whereby the player moves more slowly, but is harder to detect
1. In this chapter we discover more about how his father’s death has impacted Phil. What new information is revealed and how does it change your view of Phil, if at all?
 2. Do you think Phil’s mom is being wise in letting him take a semester off from high school? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

Team Motive

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Engineering – synonymous with ‘programming’ in the context of game development
- Server – a computer or set of computers that provide(s) services (e.g. storage, internal and external website hosting, email hosting) via a network
- Systems – pertaining to a computer network or information technology (IT) set up
- Facilities (room) – the area dedicated to storing items and control systems related to the physical operation of a building
- GDC – Game Developers’ Conference
- Effects artists – the graphic artists who create the visual effects (e.g. explosions, water, weather effects, etc.) for a game

- Level builders – the graphic artists who build and/or put together 3D objects and the game scenery
 - Amiga 3000 – a model of computer sold by Commodore in the early 1990s.
 - Hardware – computers and physical periphery devices (mouse, monitor, printer)
1. Phil wanted to help make *MasterCrime*, his dad’s game. Instead he’s going to be working with the marketing person at Motive Games. How do you think this makes him feel?
 2. What might explain Charles’, Kate’s, Robert Ganel’s and Mac’s strong reactions to seeing Phil for the first time (or the first time in a while).

Chapter 5

Friction

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Friction map – a 2D image which is applied to a 3D object (aka ‘texture’ or ‘map’) but instead of defining the object’s colours, it defines its levels of friction (in various areas)
 - Passive rigid body – dynamics simulations primarily make use of two types of objects: soft body and rigid body; passive rigid bodies are hard objects that are not affected by the other objects in the scene, but can still influence the other objects (e.g. the ground, which can have things bounce off it)
 - Midi files – electronically composed music is generally captured in this form of digital file
 - C++ – a common professional programming language used in the creation of complex software applications
 - C# and IronPython – less common, newer software programming languages
 - Mr. Torvalds – Linus Torvalds was the creator of the Linux operating system
1. What are Phil and Oliver planning to do together in the future?
 2. What reason does Oliver give Phil to go back to school next year?
 3. Do you know anyone who left school for a job they wanted? Are they still happy with this decision? Why or why not?
 4. The title of the chapter, *Friction*, can refer to the physics problem Phil has hit with his simulation. What is another meaning for the word friction? Where else is Phil experiencing friction at the moment?

Chapter 6

Mission Two

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Render Preview – a quick preview of a 3D scene
- Normal maps – a 2D image which is applied to a 3D object (aka ‘texture’ or ‘map’) but instead of defining the object’s colours, it defines the direction in which light reflects off the surface of the object (in various areas)
- Resolution – the degree of detail visible in an image, generally measured in pixels
- Hardware shading – Using specialised computer processors to generate sophisticated 3D imagery in real-time (e.g. 24-30 frames per second and faster)
- Rig (v) a character – setting up a 3D character with a sophisticated framework that can be easily manipulated, with the result that a character animator can quickly achieve natural-looking motion
- 2K – 2000 pixels; 2K by 2K is very high resolution for an image

- Polygons – 3D models (the basis of all 3D objects in a game) are made of numerous small, flat pieces of geometry called polygons; a 3D model (of a head) made up of many polygons can be seen at the start of each chapter
 - Texture – a 2D image which is wrapped around (or projected onto) a 3D object
 - DSLR (camera) – digital single-lens reflex; i.e. a high-end camera
1. In order to get a really good photograph that would impress Paul, Phil does something that he knows he shouldn't. What was the result of that? What could have been the result? Can you think of a better way Phil could have dealt with his problem?
 2. What new information does Robert Ganel give Phil? Do you think this is important information?

Chapter 7

Bonus Objective

1. Phil mentioned to Oliver in Chapter 5 that he'd like to give the police a list of suspects as well as showing them his simulation. Who is on your list of suspects at the moment?
2. In your opinion, should Phil show his simulation to the man visiting Charles or take it to the police? Should he act immediately or wait until he's got a list of suspects?

Chapter 8

Detective Turpin

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following terms:

- Pincushion distortion – a lens effect which causes images to be pinched at their centre
 - Deposition – a formal, written, statement to be used as evidence in court
 - Metadata (of a file) – extra information about a software file (e.g. author, date, etc.), which is not part of the main contents of the file
 - Page – a boy (in training for knighthood) in the personal service of a knight
1. What clues do we have that this former detective, Mr. Turpin, is an unusual person?
 2. What clues do we have that he might actually be a more competent investigator than Detective Laughton, the man who originally looked into Marc Roland's death?
 3. If you were Phil, would you trust Turpin to help you with your investigation or would you go to the police?

Chapter 9

Email Evidence

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Public share – a file directory on a computer to which a number of people have access, via a network
- Email logs – records of email messages sent and received, kept on the same server as the email itself
- IT – Information Technology; used synonymously with system (i.e. computer network) administration in many settings
- Design log – a digital diary kept by the designer(s) of a game outlining the overall plan, documenting the experimentation process, keeping track of decisions, etc.
- Hacker – a person who uses a computer to gain unauthorised access to data in a system
- Key loggers – computer software or hardware that records the keystrokes typed on a keyboard surreptitiously; often used by hackers to learn the password(s) for computers they wish to steal information from

- Filter (image) – a computer program that performs a process (e.g. blur or sharpen) on a digital image
 - Networking utilities – computer software used to facilitate communication between two or more computers
1. There's a great deal of discussion about email and network security in this chapter. Do you agree with Phil that, 'you never discuss anything private over work email'? Are there reasons to be concerned about what we say in email or is Phil just being paranoid?
 2. Do you know of any game companies that have had their source code stolen? (Possible answer: Valve, with *Half-Life 2*)

Chapter 10

About Allan Roth

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following terms:

- Email client – computer software that allows people to receive, read, compose and send email
 - Encrypt (v) – convert information into a coded form to prevent unauthorised access
 - Filter – a computer program that takes input data and transforms it into some other form of data (e.g. a spam encryption program)
 - Perl script – a computer program written using the Perl programming language, a language commonly used for system administration tasks
1. Phil and Charles have a fairly intense discussion about first-person shooters and other videogames with violent themes. What is Phil's opinion about the relationship between games and Allan Roth's actions? What is Charles'? What is your opinion?
 2. Who do you think won the argument (if anyone did) and why?
 3. At the end of their conversation Phil says that he agrees with Charles that making games is more fun than playing them. Even if you have never made a game, list some reasons why that might be true.

Chapter 11

The Keys to the Case

1. Why does Phil's simulation *not* prove that his dad's death was anything other than an accident?
2. What *does* prove that Marc Roland didn't slip and fall on the stairs at Motive?

Chapter 12

The Briefing

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following terms:

- SPVM – Service de Police de la Ville de Montreal (the police service of the city of Montreal)
1. How does Phil feel initially about being told he can't come into Motive the following week? How does he ultimately feel about it?
 2. What do you think Turpin is planning to do during their visit to Roy Marsile?

Chapter 13

Serial Assault

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following terms:

- Homicide (n) – an archaic synonym for 'murder'

- Moderate (v) – to oversee and edit an online forum
 - Date stamps and timestamps – information recorded by a computer about the date and time at which a particular file or other piece of data (e.g. a blog entry) was last modified
 - Linux (box) – a computer running the popular, low-cost, open-source Linux operating system
 - Shell or command shell – also referred to as a command-line interface; an interface to an operating system that only takes text inputs
1. How does Phil feel about having to confront Marsile about his blog?
 2. Have you ever stood up for yourself or someone else to a person who has insulted or bullied you? If yes, how did you feel about the situation after? About yourself?
 3. Did Phil ‘win’ the confrontation with Marsile? Why or why not? How would you define ‘winning’ in a situation like this?
 4. In what ways is the chapter name appropriate?

Chapter 14

Natural Alibi

1. What does ‘tedium’ mean? What is Turpin saying is wrong with Marsile’s games? What does he say is the source of the problem?
2. How do Turpin’s views about life after death make Phil feel?
3. Who do you now think killed Marc Roland?

Chapter 15

Calculating Homicide

1. Name two reasons why Turpin (and Phil) wanted to meet with Henri Boulanger.
2. What do you think Phil has concluded about Mr. Boulanger’s involvement in his dad’s murder? How do you know that?
3. What important clues, if any, do you think Phil and Turpin found examining the roof and talking to Mr. Boulanger? Do you know *why* these clues are important yet?

Chapter 16

Mt Tremblant

Enrichment activity:

Have students do a study of the Canadian province of Quebec. They should find Montreal and the Mt Tremblant ski resort (near the town of Tremblant) on a map. Older students could do a study on the culture, history, economic and/or political climate of Montreal. Younger students could look up statistics for Montreal (population, size, geographical features, location of ‘Old Montreal’ and Dollard-des-Ormeaux) and Tremblant (how many visitors per annum, how many ski runs, geographical features).

1. Phil says he feels torn about spending time in Tremblant when he could be in Montreal helping Turpin. In what ways (if any) is it probably good for him to be in Tremblant? (hint: discuss how taking a break from a tough problem or intense situation can sometimes help people work through it more efficiently when they go back to it).
2. Do you think Allan Roth’s brother killed Marc Roland?

Chapter 17

Who, What ... Why?

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Script – a simple computer programme typically used to automate tasks
 - Flag – each typed command (for use in a shell) has many possible (typed) ‘flags’; the flag being an addition to the command which will modify it in some way
 - Webmail – email that is available for use online and stored in an internet server mailbox and that is not downloaded to an email programme or used offline
 - HRV – heat-recovery ventilation
1. Turpin said earlier that murder involves a ‘who’, a ‘what’ and a ‘why’, where ‘who’ means who committed the crime and ‘what’ means ‘what’ the murderer did to his victim. Which of those questions does Phil feel he’s answered now? Which question did he answer first and how did it lead him to an answer for the second question?
 2. Can you think of reasons why Phil might be wrong?

Chapter 18

The Hacker

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Command shell or shell – also referred to as a command-line interface; an interface to an operating system that only takes typed text inputs
 - Grey-hat hacker – a skilled hacker whose activities fall somewhere between white and black hat hackers; for example they may sometimes break the law, but not for their own gain
 - Hactivist – a computer hacker whose activity is aimed at promoting a social or political cause
 - Black-hat hacking – a hacker who violates computer security for little reason beyond malice or personal gain
 - VNC – virtual network computing; software which displays the screen of one computer on a second computer (via a network) for the purposes of monitoring or controlling the first computer
1. Turpin says, ‘I would like to advance your theory a bit further now by considering the arguments against it.’ Discuss how, in preparing for a debate or other type of two-side discussion, we can think of arguments against our own position.
 2. What do you think Ganel’s motive might have been for killing Marc Roland?

Chapter 19

Tactical Retreat

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Unix – a multi-user computer operating system first developed in the late 1960s; it was a fundamental technology in the development of the internet and is the inspiration and/or basis for Linux, Mac OS X and other modern operating systems
 - SSH server – Secure SHell server: software that allows remote access to a computer over an encrypted network connection
1. What did Phil do when Mac caught him sneaking spy software onto Ganel’s PC? Was that a wise decision or not?
 2. Do you think Phil should have agreed to Mac becoming involved in the investigation? Why or Why not?

Chapter 20

Player Versus Maker

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following term:

- Physics engine – the component of a game engine responsible for performing the physics calculations while the player interacts with the game
1. Why is Phil beginning to doubt that Ganel is the murderer? Do you think he was wrong about Ganel? Why or why not?
 2. Why did the first potential game publisher turn down *MasterCrime*? Do you think this sort of thing really happens? If yes, then would it only happen in the game development industry or elsewhere?
 3. What in particular about *MasterCrime* was going to be different from any other video game? Why did the second potential game publishers not support that difference?
 4. What theme of the book does the term 'Player versus Maker' refer to? (Answer: creativity vs. consumerism)

Chapter 21

MasterCrime

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronym:

- CG – Computer Graphics
1. What is Phil thinking and feeling at the beginning of this chapter? By the time he confronts Ganel in his office? What do you think caused the change?
 2. Phil says that the Allan Roth incident was not his dad's fault. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
 3. Look up the word, 'atonement'. Why might Marc Roland have felt the need to make an atonement?
 4. The tagline of the book is, 'The only way to win is to live the game'. What did you think that meant when you first saw it? What do you think it means in light of this chapter?

Chapter 22

To Live ... Win the Game

1. Phil admits that he's scared about this final confrontation with Ganel, but he's trying to act confident anyway. Is he doing this just to appear cool or is there an unselfish motivation as well? Discuss why it is we frequently try to hide the truth about our feelings from our friends.
2. What do you think the secondary tagline for the book, 'the only way to live is to win the game', means, in light of this chapter?

Chapter 23

To Win ... Live the Game

1. 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley' (i.e. often go awry), wrote Scottish poet Robbie Burns. What things happened that Phil and his friends had not planned?
2. What does Phil do in response to these unexpected events (note: more information about how Phil helps signal his team is explained in the following chapter).

Chapter 24

Mission Debrief

Vocabulary

Students may wish to familiarise themselves with the following acronyms and terms:

- Fog of war – limiting the players’ view of the map to areas where they have game units positioned
 - LAN party – Local Area Network (party): a (physical) gathering of people to play a multiplayer game together over a network
 - God Mode – a cheat mode (often included in a game and activated by a code) in a game whereby a player’s character cannot be killed
1. How did Charles get the idea to ram the gangsters’ car?
 2. Why is *MasterCrime* now going to be finished the way it was planned originally? Why did Phil’s mom change her mind about preventing *Serial Assault II* from being made?
 3. List the three reasons given by Mom, Turpin and Phil that *MasterCrime* might be more successful than *Serial Assault II*.
 4. Discuss whether you feel Phil is more at peace about his Dad’s death at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. If so, why?

After Reading Questions

Give students background information on *La Chanson de Roland* (*The Song of Roland*). Information should include its significance in European literature, character names and a plot summary. This information can be found on Wikipedia or in a print encyclopaedia.

Questions on *La Chanson de Roland* and *Motive Games*

Does knowing that this story was inspired by *La Chanson de Roland* explain:

- some of the characters in the story?
- some of the plot of the story?
- some of the themes of the story?

If yes, which ones?

For Discussion: Do you see any similarity between people’s interest, during the Middle Ages, in military campaign/hero stories such as *The Song of Roland*, and people’s interest, today, in violent videogames? What are the similarities (if any) and what are the differences?

For Discussion: *The Song of Roland* was used, some historians conjecture, to help recruit people to join the Crusades. Why might it have worked? Why might it have failed? Do you feel this is ethical? Why or why not? Have you heard of any power today using videogames in a similar way? (note: have students research the game series *America’s Army*).

Character Study

Phil

1. What emotions dominate Phil’s life early on in the book? How has that changed by the end?
2. What factors in Phil’s life were causing pain and grief?
3. What character traits and skills did Phil possess that helped him to remain hopeful despite his pain?
4. What choices did Phil make that helped him deal with his grief? His anger?
5. What traits and skills help Phil to find his dad’s murderer?
6. Phil has a good friend in Oliver at the beginning of the story and develops strong friendships with some of the adult characters as the book progresses. Do you see these friendships as playing a part in helping Phil overcome his anger, despair, grief etc.?
7. Is Phil a ‘player’, a ‘maker’ or both?

Setting

1. Does the geographical location play a significant role in the story? Does the fact that the action takes place in a game development studio impact the story?

Plot

1. Review the 'rules' of detective fiction, as set out by the Detection Club (Pre-Reading Discussion Questions). Did *Motive Games*' plot follow those rules?
2. Did you ever feel you were playing a game as you tried to figure out who killed Marc Roland, how he was killed and why?
3. Modern mystery stories are almost always 'plot-driven', i.e. the development of the plot takes precedence over the development of characters, or the exploration of setting or themes. However, in the golden era of detective fiction, the stories were more literary (more character development, etc.) than today. Which style do you prefer: the modern or the classic? Which style, in your opinion, does *Motive Games* follow?

Themes

1. What do you think are the main themes of the novel?
2. As part of the 'player versus maker' theme of the book, a number of the characters conclude that making is better than playing, or another way to say this could be that creating is better than consuming (entertainment). Do you agree with their view? In what ways could creating be better?
3. What did you think the tagline for the book, 'The only way to win is to live the game', meant when you first read it? What do you think it means now that you've read the book and have discussed its themes? (hint: 'live the game' could refer to making it a part of one's life, i.e. making the game, rather than just playing it)

General Discussion Questions

1. What is Phil's main talent? Do we see him working to develop this talent during the story? What benefits does this talent bring to his life? (hint: also consider emotional benefits as seen at the end of the story and in chapter two)
2. What is one unique talent or interest that you have? Do you work on developing this talent/interest regularly? Do you feel you get any emotional benefit from this talent/interest? Other types of benefits?
3. Would you say Phil developed persistence over the course of the story? How easy is it to develop the persistence to do hard things by ourselves? Do you have people in your life who challenge you to persevere when something is difficult or painful? Do you ever encourage someone else to persevere?
 - Optional:
 - o Do you think it is normal for people to think about God at times of grief and stress (especially if related to a death)? Do you think it helps us when we try to connect with God in hard times? In what ways? Does Phil seem less cool for his openness to there being a God and an after-life? Why or why not?