

X-BOX 1 (AVENGER)

Stimulus

Marco had an X-Box. And on it he played a game called Avenger. In this game he was a soldier who had a choice of all different kinds of weapons, including: a semi-automatic rifle, a sniper's rifle, a grenade-launcher and a pistol. He had a knife too but that was pretty useless. His mission was to destroy and kill. He was attacking an army who had killed his best friend, and this was his revenge. Along the way, he could pick up ammunition for his weapons, and medical supplies which helped to heal his wounds. And if he did get killed, he had two more lives. And if he lost all his lives, he could go back and start again.

One evening, his mum told him to turn his X-Box off and go to bed. He did what he was told, and turned out his light. But as soon as his mum had gone, he switched the game back on. The screen lit up the dark room. Marco slid a pair of earphones onto his head so that his mum wouldn't hear the sounds of gunfire. But then, as the game started, something different happened.

Instead of the menu that he always saw at the beginning, there was the face of a soldier - sweaty, dirty and with a smear of blood on his cheek. The soldier beckoned.

'Come on in, Marco' the soldier barked. 'We sure need you. We need your guts. And your firepower.'

Marco just stared in amazement. The soldier leaned forward, and his arm came right out of the screen. The sleeve was ripped and grimy. Again, his hand beckoned Marco in.

'Just climb through. It will all be real. Don't you want it to be real? My name's Travis, I'll be your buddy.'

Marco put down the controls, took off the headphones, and tested the screen with his finger. It went straight through. There was a wind on the other side. Then he put his head through. He could feel the wind in his hair now, and hear it whistling through the bombed up buildings, and smell the smoke of gunfire. He felt a helmet on his head. Excited, he climbed all the way through and lowered his feet to the ground. He was wearing a thick green uniform and there was a gun in his hand. He shot into the ground to see if it worked. The gun shook hard against his body. He could feel its power. Marco walked forward into the battle and started to shoot all the enemies he could see.

For the next hour, Marco fought with all his strength and concentration. He sneaked up on gun placements and threw grenades in to kill all the men operating the gun. Travis helped by firing on them. Then the two buddies surprised four enemies who were running round the corner and shot them to pieces. One of them got away, but he was injured in the leg, so Marco caught up with him easily. To save ammo on his favourite gun, he swapped it for the pistol and finished off the injured man with that.

And that was the end of the level. It was time for a rest. He turned round and hi-fived Travis. Behind him, he saw a rectangle. What was it?

'That's the screen,' shrugged Travis. 'I guess you gotta head back and rest.'

Marco climbed out of the screen. When he got back to his bed he was so tired that he fell asleep straight on top of the duvet, without even climbing under it.

The next day, Marco could not think about anything else except playing Avenger. His school uniform looked stupid and he wished he was back in his army uniform. His school bag felt light and unimportant. And when the teacher made him pick up his pen, Marco longed to feel a trigger under his finger instead. He wrote nothing. In the playground, he stood at the side dreaming about Avenger. His friends asked if he wanted to join in with their game, but the only friend he wanted now was Travis. In the noisy dining room, he put the food in his mouth but wished it could be like Avenger, where you didn't have to waste time eating.

As soon as he got home, he was back on the X-Box.

'I'm sure glad you're back, Marco' said Travis. 'We've been waiting for you so we can start the next level. It looks pretty tough. It's like walking through hell.'

Travis and Marco both laughed. Marco looked back at the rectangle behind them. There was a question he was dying to ask:

'When this level is over... do I have to go back?'

Travis shook his head. 'You can stay here for ever. You can completely forget about what's on the other side, if you want.'

Task Questions

- ✓ Will Marco go back?
- ✓ Should he go back?
- ✓ What would you do and why?
- ✓ Does Marco enjoy killing people?
- ✓ Is Marco a violent person?