

X-BOX 1 (QUEST)

STIMULUS

Lara had an X-Box. Her favourite game was called Quest. In the game she was a wizard who had to fight evil enemies and help innocent people. She was a hero. Some of the levels were really tricky. You had to be clever and skilful and really use your brain. She loved the game.

Lara didn't love school. She didn't like the lessons because she couldn't think quickly enough, or write quickly enough. She felt as if she was always last. If she could just stop and think a bit longer, she was sure she could get the answers right. But the time always ran out.

And it wasn't just the lessons she didn't like. She didn't like the breaks either because she had no friends. Whenever anyone spoke to her she took too long to answer. So people thought she was ignoring them or didn't understand what they were saying. She did understand, but just needed a bit of time to get her answer together in her head before she started speaking. And it was the same with games - she was slow to react to what was happening. So she would lose, so she wouldn't want to play.

What she wanted to play was Quest. The great thing about Quest was that when there was a big moment in the game she could press Pause. Then the game would freeze and she could relax and think about what to do next. When she was happy with her idea she could restart the game and see what happened.

One morning, Lara's Mum dropped her off at the school gate as usual. And as usual, Lara waited until the last possible moment before going in. She was hungry. She had taken so long to eat her breakfast that morning that she hadn't had time to finish it. She decided to eat the apple from her packed lunch now. So she opened her backpack and delved inside. Instead of the apple, her hand touched something unfamiliar, which she took out straight away. It was a tiny miniature X-Box control. It didn't have any cable to connect it to the box, but it had the X logo in the middle and all the usual buttons, including the coloured ones - A,B,X, and Y. It was just very small. She had no idea how it had got there. She pressed some of the the buttons. Nothing happened. Then she pressed the Pause button.

Everything was silent. The whole world was suddenly silent. The shouts of the children and parents were gone. The voice of the traffic was gone. The birds singing in the trees - all gone. And nothing was moving. The people on the pavement and in the playground were like statues. The cars and buses were stationary. The lollipop lady at the zebra crossing was frozen still, with one arm up to stop a car and her face smiling at a girl crossing the road with one foot in the air ready to take another step.

Then came a voice: 'Hello Lara. I think you need this.' It was Anastasia, a good wizard from Quest, Lara's favourite game. She was hovering in the air a few metres away and pointing to the tiny controller. Lara had lots of questions forming in her brain, but as she always did, she was taking a bit of time to organise them into a sentence. Anastasia waited patiently.

'Why?' mumbled Lara, finally. 'What does it do?'

'Only one button works,' said Anastasia, 'but it's a very helpful one. Whenever you want, you can press Pause, and this will happen. Everything will stop while you have time to think. Then you can restart by pressing the same button - when you are ready.'

Before Lara could ask anything else, Anastasia vanished. Once again, there was total silence and stillness all around. For a while, Lara couldn't decide what to do. But in the end, she figured that nothing else was going to happen until she restarted. So she pressed the button. Immediately, everyone and everything went back to normal. All the noise and movement started again. Apart from Lara, no-one else had any idea what had happened. They didn't notice a thing.

For the first time in a very, very, long time, Lara walked through the school gates with a smile on her face.

[You could stop the story here and ask the class what will happen]

Later, in maths, the teacher asked the class to look at a problem on the board. It was multiplication: 13×9 . Lara looked at it. She had learned her times tables. But only up to 10. So 13×9 was too high. She sighed and gave up, and waited for someone smart to get the answer. After that all the others would get it. It was easier just to wait until the teacher told them at the end. But then she remembered the Controller. She reached into her pocket and pressed Pause. The classroom froze. The teacher was pointing. Some children had their hands up. Others were frowning at the board, or staring at their hands, trying to work out how to do it.

Now Lara could take as long as she liked, so she started to think. After a while she realised that she could split it. 13 is made of 10 and 3. So she could times each of those by 9 and then add the answers together. The first part was easy because she knew her times tables: 10 times 9 is 90. And 3 times 9 is 27. Now she knew she had to add those two answers, 90 and 27, together. She wasn't sure how to do that. Normally she would have given up, but she realised that if she kept going she could do it before anyone in the class. So she thought, 'If it was 100 plus 27 it would be easy - 127. But it's not that, it's 90 plus 27. Because 90 is 10 less than 100 then the answer will be 10 less than 127: 117. $13 \times 9 = 117$. She had the answer.

This was cool. She could restart now and beat everyone to the answer. Then she had a moment of doubt - what if she was wrong? There could be a mistake in her calculations. If she'd got even one bit wrong then the whole thing would be messed up. Lara hesitated. Then she thought: 'I could do it another way to check.' So she looked to see if there was another way, and almost immediately she thought of one. She could pretend it was 13×10 to begin with. That was easy, she thought, because she just needed to add a zero to make 130. And the real answer would be 13 less than that, because you're only supposed to multiply nine 13s, not ten. So she took away 13 from 130: first take away 10 to make 120, then take away 3 to make 117.

Again, the same answer! 117! She felt confident. Her hand shot up and she pressed Pause again to restart. Everyone unfroze as if nothing had happened. The teacher was surprised to see Lara's hand up. He wasn't sure whether to pick her because he thought she couldn't possibly have got it right - not so soon. But because she didn't usually try to speak, he decided to choose her.

When she got the answer, everyone was really surprised. The teacher asked her to come to the front and explain how she had done it. Lara was terrified. She didn't move or speak. Then secretly, she pressed Pause again. She took some deep breaths. When she had plucked up enough courage to do it, she pressed restart and stood up.

School was going to be different from now on. Everything was going to be different from now on.

Task Questions

- ✔ Is Lara going to be more clever now? Will she do better in tests?
- ✔ Is that fair?
- ✔ What else could she use the 'Pause' button to help with? Is there anything she shouldn't use it for?
- ✔ Are there any other buttons/functions on the controller you would want to use in real life?
- ✔ What if you could press Save every now and then so you could go back to where you saved and do things again?