

2. *Get Out* takes a historic injustice and gives it a modern expression. How are the various theories of justice outlined in the text reflected in the film?
3. If you were unaware of racial exploitation before seeing the movie, what is your responsibility given your awareness of Peele's interpretation of America?

CASE 10-E

TO DIE FOR: MAKING TERRORISTS OF GAMERS IN *MODERN WARFARE 2*

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The scene on the screen is brutal. Bullets fly indiscriminately. Bodies fall to the floor. An airport terminal becomes a killing field for Russian terrorists who want the massacre to incite a US–Soviet war. Fortunately, it's only a game—*Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*—but one with very real decisions that have to be made by the viewer/gamer.

At the beginning of the mission, entitled “No Russian,” the player is only a bystander as Russian terrorists fire randomly and ruthlessly into crowds at a fictitious Russian airport terminal. But the player quickly discovers that he or she can fire as well—only not at the perpetrators, but at the civilians. In one of the most controversial “first-person shooter” gaming decisions of all time, *Modern Warfare 2* (MW2) allows players to decide whether to join in the carnage.

First-person shooter (FPS) games had been a staple of video gaming since the earliest days of the industry, beginning with *Maze War*, released in 1974. Today, FPS games are the most commercially viable of all video games, accounting for 27 percent of all video game sales in 2016, according to statista.com. But prior to MW2, the target of the shooting had been enemy combatants, fleeing criminals, zombies, and the like. Few FPS games and no bestsellers had featured the gamer firing at innocent bystanders.

MW2 challenged that convention. Here is a description of the gamer's option according to a reviewer for the gaming website kotaku.com:

Bullets unload on an unsuspecting crowd, and the body count quickly begins to rise. Most players, thinking they needed to play along, probably decided to start shooting—at the time, I did. But the

game never forces you do *anything*, and it's entirely up to the player whether a single shot is fired from their gun. Dozens of people will die, regardless of what you decide to do, but active participation is left to the player. (Klepek, 2015)

In some locations, becoming an active shooter was *not* left up to the player. In Japan and Germany, if a player attempted to join the shooting, he or she was met with a "mission failed" screen, the game having been altered at the insistence of the government. The entire segment was removed from versions released in Russia.

One of the game's designers, Mohammad Alavi, said in an interview that he took pride in forcing players to make an uncomfortable decision, telling interviewer Matthew Burns (2012), three years after the release of the game:

In the sea of endless bullets you fire off at countless enemies without a moment's hesitation or afterthought, the fact that I got the player to hesitate even for a split second and actually consider his actions before he pulled that trigger—that makes me feel very accomplished.

Despite the controversies surrounding the game—or perhaps because of them—sales were brisk. The game grossed \$310 million on Nov. 10, 2009, the first day of its release, and has since earned more than \$1 billion. It was well reviewed, including winning "Game of the Year" honors from several retail and fan sites online. Eight years after its release, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* ranked as the 24th best-selling game of all time, selling nearly 23 million units. Industry estimates placed the cost of developing *MW2* at \$40–\$50 million along with a marketing budget of \$200 million to launch the game.

Knowing that some players would choose not to shoot at the civilians in the terminal, the designers of *MW2* allowed players to bypass the "No Russian" segment and still move on in the game. Before starting the game, players were shown a screen that read:

Disturbing Content Notice

Some players may find one of the missions
disturbing or offensive. Would you like to have
the option to skip this mission?

[You will not be penalized in terms of Achievement
or game completion]

The options given the player were these:

Yes, ask me later

No, I will not be offended

All “unlockables” were removed from the segment and a player could reach the highest levels of the game and earn the highest rewards even if they chose to either skip “No Russian” or not participate as a shooter in the segment.

One of the detractors of the civilian violence in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* is Walt Williams, lead writer for the 2012 game *Spec Ops: The Line*. Williams, who would write the killing of civilians into his war game (crossing “the line” in the game’s title), criticized the “No Russian” sequence of *MW2* for its “clumsiness” (Hamilton, 2012). In commenting on the civilian violence in that earlier game, he told a reviewer for *kotaku.com*:

The thing that got me the most was that you could opt out of playing it. And that struck me as saying, “We wanted to do something that would cause controversy, but it’s actually not necessary to the game, which is why you don’t have to play it.”

FPS games are often debated in the aftermath of mass shootings such as one in Las Vegas, Nevada, in the fall of 2017. In that event, a lone gunman shot into a crowd of 22,000 outdoor concertgoers from a high floor of a nearby hotel, killing 58 of them and injuring 546. While no direct evidence links FPS games to events such as Las Vegas, researchers note the similarities of such random shootings to FPS games and claim that hours of playing such games can desensitize the player to real-world violence.

In the case of *MW2*, the controversy is not merely a hypothetical debate. On July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik, a far-right Norwegian terrorist, killed eight persons in a car bomb in Oslo and then killed 69 participants of a Worker’s Youth League summer camp at an outing on an island 24 miles away. He would later claim to have been motivated in the attack by the game, but no evidence has been produced that supports the claim. Though he is still alive in prison today, he has been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic and has never been questioned further about the relationship of the game to his actions.

Micro Issues

1. Should FPS games be regulated? If so, in what way?
2. Should the killing of innocent bystanders be banned in FPS games?
3. The game was modified in Japan and Germany and banned in Russia. Critique the actions of these countries in their actions toward this game.

Midrange Issues

1. What does the decision by the developers to make the segment optional say to you?
2. Critique the claim of Breivik above. Is it credible to you? Does it have any bearing on whether FPS games should be regulated?
3. Critique the remarks of Williams above. He allowed the killing of civilians in his game while criticizing the violence of *MW2*. Do you see a difference in the two games?

Macro Issues

1. Violence has long been a part of art and entertainment. What standards, if any, should we place on the artist in terms of how much violence we wish to see in our art?
2. Do you place any credibility in the research that indicates that violence in games, on television and movie screens, and so forth, desensitize the audience to violence in real life?

CASE 10-F

THE ONION: FINDING HUMOR IN MASS SHOOTINGS

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A lone gunman opened fire Oct. 1, 2017, during the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas, killing 58 and injuring 546. News coverage was nearly around the clock, mostly following a similar, well-rehearsed playbook, according to the *Washington Post*:

Deploy reporters to the scene quickly. Interview eyewitnesses and families of the victims and the shooters. Check social media for clues to the attackers' identity. Bring on the law enforcement experts for comment. (Farhi, 2015)

Coverage was a bit different, however, for one "news" organization. In *The Onion*, readers were greeted with a familiar headline: "'No Way to Prevent This,' Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens." The full text of less than 200 words reads:

LAS VEGAS—In the hours following a violent rampage in Las Vegas in which a lone attacker killed more than 50 individuals and seriously