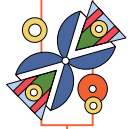


Play Theories Gameshow

Playful Learning Activity Card



Purpose

- ▶ For students to apply their understandings about a variety of play theories and theorists to interpret video examples of children's play.

Materials

- ▶ 3-4 selected examples from the video library of children playing in a range of contexts. Select examples appropriate for your teachers (e.g., early childhood, middle childhood, or older learners)
- ▶ Slides or a handout with play theorists and guiding questions (see [next page](#) for example questions)

Process

- 1. Introduce several different theories and theorists about learning through play, along with some questions that students might ask about each.**
- 2. Divide the students into teams of 3-4 students.** Each team represents a theorist (e.g., Team Vygotsky, Team Bruner, Team Paley...) or theory/ perspective on play (e.g., Team Constructivism)
- 3. Introduce the process for the gameshow:**
 - ▶ Teams take turns being Play Analysts or Judges.
 - ▶ Play Analysts: Work with your team to come up with the most convincing in-character analysis of the play episode. You have 90 seconds to prepare each round. Share your response (in character, of course).
 - ▶ Bonus point in each round for correctly identifying the type of play (see [Mraz et al., 2016, Chapter 2](#))
 - ▶ Second bonus point for making a substantive connection to the neurology report
 - ▶ Judges: award a point to the team with the most theoretically sound and in-character response.
 - ▶ Winning the game: The team with the most points at the end of the game wins fame and fortune (or at least a fun applause of their choice)
- 4. Give each team access to the guiding questions that they should use in their analysis of the videos.** See next page for some example questions
- 5. Play the game!**

Guiding Questions Examples

Bateson – play frames

- ▷ What roles are children taking on? Is there role flexibility at play?
- ▷ Do the events in the play frame relate to their real world? How?

Vygotsky – play as a ZPD

- ▷ What pivots (play objects) are involved?
- ▷ In what ways do adults scaffold play?
- ▷ How is play socially constructed?

Piaget – play as assimilation

- ▷ How are children acting on objects to assimilate knowledge?
- ▷ Are children transforming objects or themselves during play?

Bruner – problem solving (see e.g., [Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2012, p.40](#))

- ▷ What domains of learning are children developing in this play?
- ▷ Are children acting in ways that minimize consequences, compared to actions in the real world?
- ▷ Are tools being used to solve problems?

Corsaro - peer culture and play talk (see e.g., [Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2012, p.45](#))

- ▷ What types of play talk took place in this play episode?
- ▷ What do you think about the social dynamics/ power relationships here?

Paley – storytelling, culture, and language development

- ▷ What stories are children telling during their play?
- ▷ As a teacher researcher, what are you learning about these children by observing their play?

More than One Way

There are many other ways you could use this play activity with your teacher education students. Some other examples:

- ▷ Adjust the theories/theorists to be appropriate to your context, including those that are most relevant for your learners
- ▷ In remote learning contexts, use breakout rooms for students to meet with their teams and do the play analysis

Notes

- ▷ Frost, Wortham, & Reifel (2012) Theory as Lenses on Children's Play in Play and Child Development (4th ed). New York: Pearson, p. 27-59.
- ▷ Mraz, K., Porcelli, A., & Tyler, C. (2016). Purposeful play: A teacher's guide to igniting deep and joyful learning across the day. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.