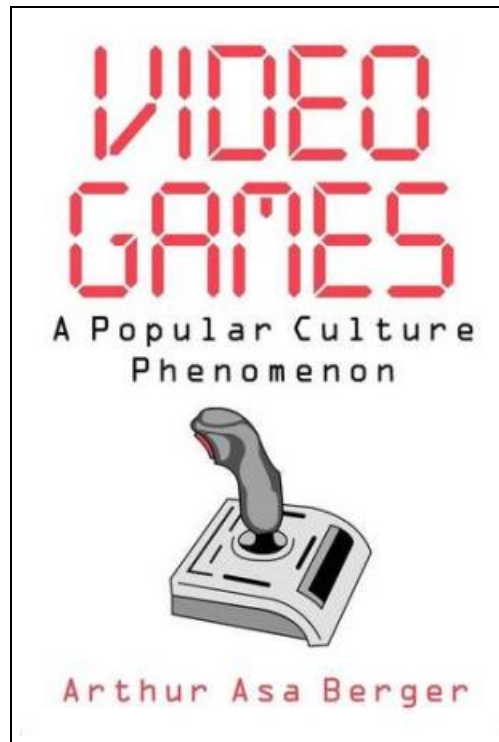# Video Games: A Popular Culture Phenomenon



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## Reviews

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*(Lula Graham IV)*

# VIDEO GAMES: A POPULAR CULTURE PHENOMENON



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Transaction Publishers. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 119 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.0in. x 0.4in.From their inception, video games quickly became a major new arena of popular entertainment. Beginning with very primitive games, they quickly evolved into interactive animated works, many of which now approach film in terms of their visual excitement. But there are important differences, as Arthur Asa Berger makes clear in this important new work. Films are purely to be viewed, but video involves the player, moving from empathy to immersion, from being spectators to being actively involved in texts. Berger, a renowned scholar of popular culture, explores the cultural significance of the expanding popularity and sophistication of video games and considers the biological and psychoanalytic aspects of this phenomenon. Berger begins by tracing the evolution of video games from simple games like Pong to new, powerfully involving and complex ones like Myst and Half-Life. He notes how this evolution has built the video industry, which includes the hardware (game-playing consoles) and the software (the games themselves), to revenues comparable to the American film industry. Building on this comparison, Berger focuses on action-adventure games which, like film and fiction, tell stories but which also involve culturally important departures in the conventions of narrative. After defining a set of bipolar oppositions between print and electronic narratives, Berger considers the question of whether video games are truly interactive or only superficially so, and whether they have the potential to replace print narratives in the culture at large. A unique dimension of the book is its bio-psycho-social analysis of the video game phenomenon. Berger considers the impact of these games on their players, from physical changes (everything from neurological problems to obesity) to psychological consequences, with reference to violence and sexual attitudes. He takes these questions further by examining three...

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