



November 2016

**CRAZE OF THE MONTH:**

# POKÉMON GO



## What is Pokémon Go?

Few will have managed to escape the Pokémon Go craze which swept the nation after the game was launched in the UK in July. Chances are many of your pupils will have been playing the game over the summer and will be keen to chat about it.

The app is free to download to smartphones, and players go out into the real world to catch Pokémon, which appear at random. (It's actually a pretty smart piece of technology, and very addictive – I'm on Level 20.) Real locations are "Pokestops" where players can collect Pokeballs to catch their Pokémon as well as other essentials. Players choose to join one of three teams (go Team Mystic!) and there are "Gyms" where you can battle Pokémon from other teams for control of the gym.

## How can Pokémon Go be used for literacy teaching?

We know that tapping into children's interests is a great way of engaging them in learning. Our research shows that children who enjoy writing are six times more likely to write at levels above expected for their age compared with those who do not enjoy writing. Similarly, students who write outside of school are six times as likely to be above their expected level when compared to those who don't write outside of school<sup>1</sup>.

Our Craze of the Month taps into children's and young people's interests to improve outcomes in literacy. The activities featured here relate to the English Programmes of Study from the National Curriculum in England<sup>2</sup>:

### Spoken language

Pupils should be taught to:

- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.

### Writing – composition

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by:
- writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)
- writing about real events
- writing for different purposes.

<sup>1</sup> Clark, C. (2015). **Children's and Young People's Writing in 2014**. Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey. London: National Literacy Trust

<sup>2</sup> DfE (2013). The National Curriculum in England. Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document.

## Using it in the classroom

Pokémon Go offers a number of opportunities to promote learning and there are already several [blogs](#) and [TES resources](#) using the game. Here we'll focus on how the app could be used to promote literacy. Activities are listed from simpler ones that could be used with Key Stage 1 pupils up to more complex ones that could be used in Key Stage 3/4.

### Design your own Pokémon

There are over one hundred different named Pokémon to catch, categorised by type, with their own stats and fighting/defence techniques (a bit like Top Trump cards). Challenge pupils to create their own Pokémon and think about its characteristics. They could sketch this and then write sentences to describe it. What type of Pokémon is it? Where would it be found? Does it have any special moves?

### Pokémon review

There is a lot to discover when playing the game and few instructions given. Ask those students who have played the game to write a review. What did they like/dislike about it? Did it live up to expectations? What improvements could be made? Those students who haven't played could write about what they have heard about it and what makes them want/not want to play it.

### Pokémon story

Challenge students to create an original story featuring their favourite Pokémon or what happens when a game takes an unexpected turn. You could give them a story starter for them to continue, encouraging them to use descriptive language and build tension. E.g. *It was a glorious evening and I was engrossed in a hunt for Pokémon on my way home. I was down to my last Pokeball when suddenly Pikachu appeared on Mr Hall's perfectly manicured front lawn. This was the one I'd been waiting for! I could feel my heart pumping in my chest as I took aim and threw. All of a sudden...*

### Pokémon debate

There have been numerous articles written about the app and its perceived benefits and drawbacks. Some have lauded it as a great way of getting young people outside, exercising (you have to walk 10km to hatch the best eggs!) and exploring new places. However, there have been criticisms that gamers are engrossed in the app rather than their surroundings and several locations such as the Holocaust Museum have asked for Pokestops to be removed from their location.

Ask students to research the app and its pros and cons and then write an opinion piece with their views. This could also work as a class debate where pupils are randomly assigned to teams.

## Further reading

Encourage pupils to read through enjoyment and try some of these Pokémon books:

- *The Official Pokémon Handbook* by Maria S. Barbo
- *I Choose You* (Pokémon Chapter Books: Book 1) by Tracey West
- *Pokémon: Mega Essential Handbook* by Cris Silvestri
- *Pokémon The Official Guide* by Simcha Whitehill
- *How to Draw Pokémon* by Tracey West

### By Gemma Niebieszczanski

#### Network and Competitions Manager



The **National Literacy Trust Network** supports schools to develop outstanding literacy provision by providing literacy leaders with tools, resources and inspiration. [Join now](#).