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What We're Watching



# Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

## Teen Transmitters Takeover!

For eight weeks, What We're Watching is being taken over by the Paley Center's Teen Transmitters internship cohort!

Each week a different pair of interns will share their thoughts on the 2023 media landscape along with personalized recommendations. This week we hear from **Owen Carlin**, a junior at CSI High School for International Studies, and **Ravin Parikh**, a junior at Brooklyn Latin High School. Enjoy this unique educational opportunity to hear directly from young voices about media that impacts them!

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at [eduny@paleycenter.org](mailto:eduny@paleycenter.org).

Happy viewing,

**Rebekah Fisk**, Director of Education

**Carlos Pareja**, Manager of Education

**Joseph Cupo**, TT 2023 Summer Educator

## What We're Watching: Video Game Adaptations in Film and TV

Video games are a staple of every childhood. We all played one game or another for hours trying to reach the next level, or beat our friends. We dressed up as our favorite character for Halloween and begged our parents to buy the latest add-ons. Adapting a video game into a movie is a very significant endeavor, whether a person played yesterday or the disk is collecting dust in their parents' attic, entire communities come alive with anticipation. Doing it right can gain you the appreciation of entire generations of gamers.

## This Week's Recommendations:



### **The Super Mario Bros. Movie (2023)**

*Age Recommendation: 8+*

*Where to Watch: Peacock*

The *Super Mario* franchise houses many of the most iconic characters in all of gaming. Everyone knows who Mario, Luigi, and Bowser are. *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* takes our beloved characters on a whole new adventure. Before the release of the new film, there was another *Super Mario* movie that came out in 1993. It received terrible reviews because the people making the movie didn't fully understand the source material and how to build on it. They didn't understand what made *Super Mario* special and Nintendo considered the movie a failure.

Nintendo decided to dip their toes into the film industry once again this year with *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*. Illumination, the studio that animated the movie, adapted the series into an action-adventure film and got it right! Illumination was able to fully boil down what made the Mario franchise what it is; fun. This understanding of the Super Mario series wasn't the only thing that contributed to its success. The timing of the release had much to do with this. People who grew up playing the classic games are now much older and can go on a nostalgia trip when they see this movie. Even younger fans of the series get to see a movie based on a game they have grown to love. It is this reason why the movie grossed \$1.3 billion worldwide. The success of *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* displays the influence of video games in modern media. Video game movies done correctly are able to appeal to both old fans of a series and the new younger fans as well.



### **Uncharted (2022)**

*Age Recommendation: 12+*

*Available on Playstation*

*Uncharted* is a game developed by Sony. It takes inspiration from the *Indiana Jones* series and has many similarities. The game *Uncharted* follows a treasure hunter named Nathan Drake and his quest to find ancient artifacts from all around the world. The movie takes the ideas of the four *Uncharted* games and makes its own story. Sony was able to create an *Indiana Jones*-like experience and produced an engaging action-adventure film with twists, betrayals, and well-choreographed fight scenes.

The casting choice of Tom Holland as Nathan Drake was perfect. Holland was able to display Nathan Drake's most distinctive traits, his love of history, quick thinking, and naiveness. Tom Holland accurately displays why people love the character and the series. *Uncharted* is a beloved series for many fans. Getting a movie adaptation was a perfect way to introduce many to a great series of games and a way to give fans of the series some extra content. *Uncharted* is a good watch. I recommend it to any fan of *Indiana Jones* and those who love a bit of adventure in their movies.



### **Arcane (2021)**

*Age Recommendation: 14+*

*Where to Watch: Netflix*

*League of Legends* is one of the most popular video games in the world, with millions of players around the world. Its extended universe features comic books, music videos, spin-off games, and the animated streaming series *Arcane*. This gripping political drama between two cities on the cusp of war is filled with suspense and political intrigue. *Arcane* centers around two sisters from the *League of Legends* universe: Powder and Vi. The plot follows multiple story lines with a multitude of characters centered in the worlds of Piltover and Zaun. While immersed in either gameplay or the series, media consumers will experience these world's own unique technology, drugs, gangs, and architecture.

*Arcane* is filled with epic magical fights and genetically mutated superheroes, however what makes it stand out is its startling humanity. We see the emotional instability, motivations, and development of the characters, in a way that differs from many fantasy series. The series is a masterpiece of animation, using 2D hand drawing and 3D computer generated animation to forge a new brand of animation that blurs the line between cartoons and realism. Every landscape is intricately designed with color and details. Every character is digitally hand drawn and intricately crafted, allowing for a wide emotional range that many animated programs fail to have.

Members of the *League of Legends* fan base will find them immersed in something that soars past their expectations, and those who have never

played the game will become avid watchers. I strongly recommend this series for connoisseurs of animation as well as all who enjoy the thrill of a fantasy drama. *Arcane* is streaming on Netflix, with a second season planned to release next year.



### **The Last of Us (2023)**

*Age Recommendation: 16+*

*Where to Watch: Max*

When *The Last of Us* was released my expectations were low, a video game adaptation of a painfully overdone post-apocalyptic genre? Pass. However, what *The Last of Us* may lack in originality, it makes up for tenfold with quality. The post-apocalyptic drama is based on the hit game of the same name that came out in 2013, amassing millions of players across the globe. The story follows the same ensemble of characters in both, centering primarily around Joel (Pedro Pascal) and Ellie (Bella Ramsey) as they attempt to cross a danger-infested America post-catastrophe. The show doesn't lean too heavily on the game, instead, it freely explores new avenues and ideas. Most notably in the third episode where the show pivots entirely to depict the life of Bill, in an almost stand alone story. While Bill (played by Nick Offerman) is a minor character in the video game, the episode delves into his surprisingly romantic and feel good story. This episode firmly detaches the show from the narrative delivered in the brute force and full on action video game.

Another stand out feature in *The Last of Us* was the cinematography. The breathtaking scenes of a dystopian world twenty years after an apocalypse

gives a new depth to the viewer's experience. As Joel and Ellie cross America, we see a world that has a beautifully unsettling mix between past humanity and the nature that has reclaimed it. While at first, the threat and fear stems from the obvious source, the fungal infected zombies, the show also explores the depths of society. We see how quickly civilization and morality can collapse in disaster, and explore what true human nature is. The show questions what humanity is, whether it's a code of morality and ethics, or a carnal, savage, instinct. All in all, *The Last of Us* weaves a masterpiece through a post-apocalyptic America, through its breathtaking landscapes, frightening humanity, and in-depth characters.

Enjoy,  
**Owen and Ravin**

Photos—*The Super Mario Bros. Movie*: Nintendo; *Uncharted*: CTMG; *Arcane*: Netflix; *Last of Us*: HBO Max

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