

Review of *Libraries Got Game: Aligned Learning through Modern Board Games*

Christine Baker, MLS (chbaker@mines.edu)

Special Formats Cataloging Librarian, Arthur Lakes Library, Colorado School of Mines

Libraries Got Game: Aligned Learning through Modern Board Games is a wonderful resource for both school librarians and classroom teachers. This informative book focuses on incorporating modern board and card games into preschool and K-12 school libraries and classrooms as curriculum-aligned resources that foster student learning. The authors, Brian Mayer and Christopher Harris, are school librarians who have backgrounds in gaming. Mayer and Harris begin their book with a description of how modern board games (also called designer games) differ from and provide more engaging experiences than mainstream American board games or conventional educational games. The authors state that “with a variety of mechanics going well beyond the traditional roll-and-move, designer games force players to explore, inquire, interpret, and act upon information gathered from many sources” (p.10). Examples of specific games are showcased throughout the book. The authors offer suggestions for establishing a curriculum-aligned game collection and provide information about their school district’s game library as a model.

Mayer and Harris do an excellent job of presenting the many features of designer board games, through the inclusion of numerous and specific examples. Furthermore, they explain how these games support learning by creating experiences that require higher-order thinking skills, decision-making, and strategy. Readers will learn how these games can be linked to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the Twenty-First-Century Learner as well as to state and national curriculum standards in the following content areas: English and language arts, social studies, math, and science. Opportunities for student collaboration, cooperation, and social

skill development are also examined, and the authors touch upon the ways in which designer games are beneficial to English language learners.

As part of the process of developing their own game library, the authors describe the “top-down approach” they used to gain support and, ultimately, adoption of designer games as legitimate instructional resources. Mayer and Harris include ideas for selection criteria as well as information about training librarians and teachers who would like to employ these games in their classrooms or libraries.

The final section of the book, organized by grade-level range, highlights “top recommended” games and notes curricular areas covered by each game. Helpful logistical information for teachers and librarians is also included here; e.g., the amount of playing time required and whether or not the game can be adapted for a large group.

The book is divided into four sections: Reintroducing Board Games, Games for Twenty-First-Century Learners, Games in School Libraries, and Great Games for School Libraries. Additionally, this book includes a list of games discussed by the authors, an index, a list of game publishers, and a glossary of designer board game terminology. Whether looking to incorporate fun and intellectually engaging activities that will enhance instruction and student learning, or developing a game library or collection, this book will serve as a valuable guide.