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## **Tekst 10**

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### **THE LOADED WORD**

## **Put That Book Down!**

May 14, 2005

Children do some of their best learning through play. Still, it's disconcerting at first to find that boys of a certain age know more about Reynauld de Chatillon's vicious Crusade-era attacks against Mecca and Medina from the computer game "Age of Empires II" than from their history classes. (In the movie "Kingdom of Heaven," Reynauld is the laughingly cruel nobleman with wild red hair.)

The public schools' curricular skim through the Crusades leaves students with a rudimentary understanding of what the point was (go fight for Jerusalem), and a vague memory of guys called Richard the Lionheart and Saladin. The particulars quickly fade from memory.

In the Microsoft computer game, players generally take the side of Muslim sultan Saladin to construct defenses, deploy troops and embark on campaigns – defending against Reynauld or claiming victory at the Horns of Hattin, precursor to the Muslim recapture of Jerusalem. Between fights (low on graphic violence), they're shown maps, historical information and vocabulary. (And how many of you know the word "trebuchet"? It's a sort of catapult.) Or they can join with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, whose hasty dive into a river killed him during the Third Crusade. Other "Age of" games plunge into the Roman Empire, Mongol invasions, Greek myths and so forth.

The games tap into two elements key to learning: they get kids personally involved, and they drill players on facts. A child who relives Saladin's campaigns over and over is memorizing them.

"Age of Empires II" is in its present state just a battle game with touches of history and strategy. Yet it could be a baby step toward a yet-undeveloped genre that marries shoot-'em-up video games and educational software. With deeper games tied to curriculum, players might easily memorize complex geography, engage with fascinating personalities, fathom politics or figure out how to get troops across the European land routes that were fatal to so many Crusaders.

Tell our children to stop fooling around and go play their Xbox for a couple of hours? It affronts our cherished notions of academic excellence.

Get over it.

*Los Angeles Times*

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## **Tekst 10 Put that book down!**

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- 1p 41 “it’s disconcerting ... history classes” (eerste alinea)  
In welke zin benoemt de schrijver de reden voor deze verontrusting?  
Citeer de eerste twee woorden van deze zin.