

Materials:

- Access to selected, age-appropriate cutscenes/gameplay segments from "The Last of Us Part I" video game.
- Access to selected, age-appropriate scenes from "The Last of Us" HBO series (suggestion: focus on early episodes like 1-3, pre-screened by educator).
- Notebook or digital document for notes and writing.
- Pen/Pencil.
- Optional: Venn Diagram graphic organizer (can be drawn).

Introduction: Surviving the Story (10 mins)

You're a fan of "The Last of Us" – the intense world, the characters like Joel and Ellie. Today, we're diving deep into *why* this story is so powerful. We'll look at it like detectives, examining the characters, the tough choices they make, and the big ideas (themes) the creators explore. We'll compare how the story is told in the game versus the show.

Activity 1: Meeting the Survivors (20 mins)

Let's look at how we first meet Joel and Ellie. Watch the introductory scenes for each character, first in the game (cutscenes) and then in the show (selected scenes).

- How is Joel introduced differently in the game versus the show? What does each introduction tell us about him immediately?
- How is Ellie introduced? What are your first impressions of her in the game compared to the show?
- Which introduction do you find more effective and why?

Take notes on similarities and differences.

Activity 2: Thematic Threads (15 mins)

"The Last of Us" isn't just about action; it explores big ideas. Let's brainstorm some themes:

- **Survival:** What does it take to survive in this world? What lines do characters cross?
- **Loss:** How do characters deal with grief and loss? How does it shape them?
- **Morality:** Are actions 'right' or 'wrong' in this context? Discuss a specific difficult choice made by a character (e.g., Tess's sacrifice, Bill's choices, Joel hiding the truth about the Fireflies - choose based on student's progress/maturity).
- **Found Family:** How does the relationship between Joel and Ellie develop? How do they come to rely on each other?

Discuss examples of these themes from scenes you've watched.

Activity 3: Game vs. Show - Narrative Choices (15 mins)

Think about a specific event or section present in both the game and the show (e.g., the museum sequence, the encounter with Bill and Frank, reaching the Fireflies).

- What significant changes did the show make compared to the game in this section?

- Why do you think the creators made these changes? Did it improve the story, change the focus, or affect character development?
- Use a Venn Diagram (draw one if needed) to compare/contrast the handling of this event in both mediums.

Activity 4: Writing Response (15 mins)

Choose ONE of the following prompts and write a paragraph or two in your notebook:

1. Describe Joel's motivation. What drives him throughout the story, and how does it change (or not change)? Use specific examples.
2. Analyze Ellie's character arc. How does she change from when we first meet her to later in the story (based on scenes viewed)? What experiences shape her?
3. Compare how the theme of 'found family' is shown in a specific scene from the game versus the same (or similar) scene in the show. Which portrayal did you find more impactful?

Conclusion: Debrief (5 mins)

What did you find most interesting about looking at "The Last of Us" this way? Did comparing the game and show change how you think about the story or characters? Great job analyzing today!