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PROFESSOR: OK. I'm just going to get started. First, a little administrative stuff, definitely fewer people signed in on Monday than actually showed up in class. So there were a bunch of people who just forgot to sign in. I tried to check off people that I remembered being in class. But if you were in class and you think that you may not have signed in, I have Monday's sign up sheet here.

So this is up front. I'm not going to pass it around. You can just come up here and sign it if you need to. The actual attendance sheet is, I believe, on the table right there now. Yeah. So make sure that gets handed off to anybody who comes in later.

And I'm going to start off talking about the reading. We're going to play some games that are related to that reading. And then we're going to take a break, do your set up, and then you'll be play-testing with each other. All right, who is on a team who doesn't have a game yet? You're waiting for team members to bring it in. You don't think you're going to have a game ready today.

STUDENT: We don't have a game.

STUDENT: We don't have our board, but we can do it on tiles again.

PROFESSOR: You can do it on tiles?

STUDENT: So far we've only play-tested in the hallway.

PROFESSOR: OK.

STUDENT: We actually bought a board, which is on its way.

PROFESSOR: OK. On its way is fine, because we're going to do play-testing in the second half of class. But on its way, you mean like US Postal--

STUDENT: On its way as in on a truck.

PROFESSOR: Oh.

STUDENT: We've only played it on tiles. So far it's worked. So we can just do it on tiles.

PROFESSOR: On tiles? You mean--

STUDENT: Like out in the hallway.

PROFESSOR: Oh, because it's a live action game.

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: Oh, all right. That makes sense. Actually, that will work fine. All right, so today's reading was partnered. And some of you may be surprised that we jumped all the way back to chapter 1. But it's kind of revisiting an old topic, right?

First of all, he talks about the basic concepts of games and play and sports. And I kind of want to go back to that. But I've already voiced my own opinion on "what is game" question. And I think it's not very productive to talk about what is a game, because then you now have to decide what isn't a game. But what I do like to talk about are all the different things that play and game can mean-- especially in the English language.

Even in Parlett he always talks about how it's a little weird that we have two different words with two different origins to mean very related things. But as a result of that, these two words have kind of been used and reused to describe a whole bunch of related-- but not quite the same-- concepts. And I just want to be able to run through that with you.

So we have play. We have game. We have sport. So that's let's talk about what would be like the noun definitions. Like, what are all the things that play can mean, game can mean, or sport can mean when you are using it as a noun?

STUDENT: Game as in-- I don't know. Like a fighter maybe, like to spit game.

PROFESSOR: Uh-huh. To spit-- to spit back game. So that is-- OK. I'm going to use the word swagger, because I think it gets the concept across well. Yeah.

STUDENT: Like gaming the system. You know how you're like--

PROFESSOR: Well, that's kind of verb-y, but yeah.

STUDENT: Oh yeah, that's right.

PROFESSOR: To game-- which means to--

STUDENT: Sorry?

PROFESSOR: How would you describe that concept-- to game the system? Gaming-- gaming the system.

STUDENT: I don't know. Ways to cheat, or--

PROFESSOR: Look for loopholes, exploits, you know-- exploit, maybe. OK.

STUDENT: Play-- it can be like a move, or like an action you take.

PROFESSOR: Like a baseball player. Right, you know-- that was a great play.

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: So like tactics almost, right?

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: No wonder you actually have to execute. I'm glad that you caught that. It's something that actually had to have happen.

STUDENT: Like a theater performance.

PROFESSOR: A theater performance-- so also stage, or opera, or something like that-- a stage play. What else is?

STUDENT: Play as in not that serious.

PROFESSOR: OK.

STUDENT: Playing around.

PROFESSOR: So child's play. You know, this idea of the thing that kids are doing most of the time. That's playing in some sort of general noun sense. OK. So I'm going to go an put child's--

STUDENT: Like pressing play-- for a video or starting like a game.

PROFESSOR: OK. So play as in to initiate a sequence. Sometimes overlaps a little bit with this. But yeah, you know, it will do. Because you can use play to describe something that happened in the past, or to make plays, and to start a play. All right. Or press Play to-- you know, actually, that's-- instead of initiative, maybe it's like this icon, right?

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: This icon on the VCR-- no one uses VCRs. How about on a QuickTime streaming window. All right, so what else? No one's touching sport here.

STUDENT: Sports you may like to show off. Like if you're sporting a [INAUDIBLE] thing.

PROFESSOR: OK. So like sporting your colors.

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: OK, so like a display of some sort. I'm going to put that more in the verb side of things, OK?

STUDENT: It could be like a nickname for a young--

PROFESSOR: OK. Sport. Yeah.

STUDENT: It can also be like a good sport, so like a nice game.

PROFESSOR: So some of those virtuous kind of things. Yeah. I'm not sure if I got that right, but--

STUDENT: It can mean like fun or hobby-- like you do something for sport.

STUDENT: Fishing for sport.

PROFESSOR: Fishing for sport? Yeah.

STUDENT: Like hunting for sport.

PROFESSOR: Fishing for sport as opposed to sport fishing, right? Those are, you know--

[LAUGHTER]

That's another pun, but never mind. So for fun. So I mean it's funny, because often it is used to make something sound like it's for low stakes when it actually is very high stakes. Like, you know, oh, we're going to have people for sport.

[LAUGHTER]

I just think of like 18th century literature when it comes to like, he plays at relationships for sport, or something like that. You know, it's like something that's supposed to be high stakes, but it's not. OK, so I think maybe instead of for fun, I'll say for low stakes or no stakes-- which is bizarre. Because sport is usually a very high stakes thing. What else?

STUDENT: People think sport is something athletic.

PROFESSOR: Mm-hmm. OK, so there's a whole section in Parlett where he talks about the possibility that the word game might have come from the bending of knees, because gam is a sort of Welsh root for a leg-- gam, cam. But that's nowadays more associated with some sort of-- physical activities and sport tend to go together. What else?

Like something that you hunt-- like that sort of game, like--

PROFESSOR: Like poultry? Yeah, game as in animals that you hunt. Yeah.

STUDENT: [INAUDIBLE].

STUDENT: I guess this is more of an idiomatic expression, but people tend to use game when something is also low stakes. Like, you've heard this as a phrase-- "do you think this is a game?"

PROFESSOR: Yeah. So again, something that is low stakes or is inconsequential, almost. Like there is no penalty for having done this thing. All right, what else?

STUDENT: [INAUDIBLE]. Well, along the same lines, what if you're like specifically making a joke out of something-- like you've made is a game to do that?

PROFESSOR: Um, hmm.

STUDENT: Like that's sort of like an intention of mocking or--

PROFESSOR: Oh, hmm. I feel that's related to this one.

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: Because they're kind of-- when you make a game of something, what you're really doing is kind of belittling it, right?

STUDENT: Yes.

PROFESSOR: So I think that's just a different application of the same thing.

STUDENT: But when you're making a game of something, aren't you also making a structure of it? Or is that different than what you're saying?

STUDENT: For me?

STUDENT: Yeah.

STUDENT: Well, I was saying from like the sort of a mockery sense of it. Like he made a game of our process, or something like that.

STUDENT: OK.

PROFESSOR: But I think making a structure of it is a different application, right? It's like you are applying rules to something that might have not needed it, necessarily. But, you know, now you're come up with rules. I'm going to make a game of tipping, right? Because we have five people, [INAUDIBLE]. All right.

STUDENT: It can also refer to [? hooks. ?] Like before the Superbowl, everyone talks about the big game.

PROFESSOR: Big game-- right, OK. I'm just going to say the big game, or the game.

STUDENT: And I'm also thinking of the phrase like it's all part of the game, where someone might do something--

PROFESSOR: Are they a sports lover?

STUDENT: No, isn't that skin in the game?

PROFESSOR: No, it's not that-- even in sports, it's all in the game, right?

STUDENT: Even in sports it's in the game.

PROFESSOR: But skin in the game is almost certainly a morsel of some sporting good that has--

STUDENT: It's all part of the game.

PROFESSOR: It's all part of the game, yeah.

STUDENT: Like when someone does something unexpected, or maybe you might think it's unethical, or slightly immoral, or going out of the boundaries of the--

STUDENT: Are you thinking of *Game of Thrones*?

PROFESSOR: OK.

STUDENT: I'm thinking of like a lawyer doing something backhanded. And you know, like the prosecutor is surprised. And the defense attorney is like, it's all part of the game.

PROFESSOR: Right. Yeah, so there's just sort of like this bounded space where things are permitted-- like specific kinds of things that might-- this introduces a concept that-- it introduces the magic circle. I'm not sure if we have any reading that touched on this-- but this idea that a game is this bounded space where you can do things that you wouldn't necessarily be allowed to do in real life. And, similarly, consequences that happen inside don't necessarily apply outside-- like it's incredibly important to hold it inside.

Like when the position of a ball is generally meaningless outside of the game. But inside the game, it's everything, right? But you know, you can body check somebody in a hockey rink. You know, you're not really allowed to do that on the sidewalk. So I think that gets close to what you just told about your lawyer application. You're allowed to do this within these parameters, because this is how the game is played, all right?

Whereas, I'm wondering about the game-- there's this concept of the game, as in the big game, like a Superbowl. And I'm wondering is that only used in broadcasting? Or is that--

STUDENT: So there's certain rights. So you can't say like Superbowl without getting permission of whoever has the rights to that name.

PROFESSOR: But even something like "are you going to come over to watch the game", which doesn't necessarily mean that it's the Superbowl

STUDENT: Right.

PROFESSOR: Like there's this weekly thing. But it seems to be very TV related. "The Game" as this thing that you see on TV is this event that's happening at a specific time, rather than football in general.

STUDENT: There's some crossover, then. Because like the stage aspect-- because you're watching it-- but also the athletic aspect--

PROFESSOR: Yeah it goes back to this.

STUDENT: --because it's a sport, and you watch the game.

PROFESSOR: Yeah. So I'm just going to put TV next to that. OK. You had your hand up for a moment.

STUDENT: Yeah, I was going to say games as like skill, as in like he's got game-- sort of like skill or ability.

PROFESSOR: I think that goes back to the swagger a little bit.

STUDENT: Yeah, kind of.

STUDENT: But swagger's like attitude, whereas this might be skill.

STUDENT: I guess if you go by--

PROFESSOR: The assumption, I think, is that those two are related.

STUDENT: Well, one is the appearance of skill, and the other is having skill.

PROFESSOR: Oh, spit mad game versus got mad game. OK. All right. OK, OK. So actual skill versus the portrayal of that.

STUDENT: The game, like as a pick-up artist thing.

PROFESSOR: Oh, that's sort of the dating game, basically. It's kind of like-- I know that in those books that's very specifically called a game. But I think that the use of the words "the game" to describe dating in general predates that book by far.

STUDENT: Play could also be referring to sports. Like in football, there's a certain book that you [INAUDIBLE] plays-- a play book.

PROFESSOR: Yeah. That was kind of like defense, right? But you're right. You can write these things down. You can talk about them as a library of things that you can do.

STUDENT: There's the Great Game.

PROFESSOR: The Great Game?

STUDENT: Was it the Afghan War or the Crimean War?

PROFESSOR: Oh. So now we're thinking part two.

STUDENT: Yeah. OK. So like the England versus Russia-- or Napoleon versus Russia-- I forget exactly the years and dates. But it was a social political conflict going on.

PROFESSOR: So there are specific wars that are referred to as great games. *Game of Thrones* probably is related to that, too. Although, that includes political things. I mean, even just on the noun side, we've gone through a lot.

If we include adjectives-- and we've brought up a couple of adjectives so far-- part of those to talk about how some people can say that you have a [INAUDIBLE], which means you actually have [INAUDIBLE], which is kind of weird. But it's his extrapolation of where the word game might actually have come from Celtic origins rather than from Latin origins.

How about verbs? Sporting-- to sport-- well, I guess we already did to sport. Although-- to game, to play, [INAUDIBLE].

STUDENT: Like playing [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: Yeah, exactly.

STUDENT: Like to execute. Like if you make a play, that's like you're executing it.

STUDENT: Building on that, it could be like a performance-- like to play an instrument.

PROFESSOR: OK.

STUDENT: When you play [? a part ?] you kind of execute it.

STUDENT: You're executing a series of things. You execute a stage play [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: But to play something in a game seems like a much more time-limited thing than to play a musical instrument. It seems kind of like a lifetime thing, almost. Like I play something. I play the clarinet has a very different connotation from I play this queen, or I play this card.

So those are two-- probably on the same spectrum, they're like almost on opposite ends-- closely related, but on opposite ends. Sporting? Sporting I generally associate-- again, sort of like "to be a good sport". But this is more like fairness-- sporting-- give someone a sporting chance kind of thing. If it's just to finish.

STUDENT: It actually might be.

PROFESSOR: It's funny how this seems to be like the only connotation of game as a verb, right? But gaming is also kind of associated with the gambling industry. If you go to a gaming conference, what you actually mean is that they're talking about stakes-- stake games, roulette--

STUDENT: What about like to game-- like I play games. I game.

PROFESSOR: Yeah, so that's a fairly recent connotation-- usually in association with digital games, but not always, right? So to play. So we can say to someone, I am a gamer. It's not implying that I look for loopholes in everything that I can do.

So I'm pretty sure we could keep on going for a while. I just think it's kind of neat that we have all of these different terminologies that all use the same words. It often can get confusing in sort of casual speech. Specifically, it doesn't get too confusing when you're talking to fellow designers or other people in the game industry. Because the context of which they're using any one of these words, to me, is pretty clear. And you're always thinking about the context when you say, you know, I game the system, or they've got game. You know, it makes it very clear.

But I do think that Parlett kind of slightly opens the box. He tries to cut it into a sort of a cross section of all the things that these words can possibly mean. Yet, it's even richer than that. And the reason why he does that is so that he can actually get into the topic of his book, which is board games specifically. And he starts breaking it down. He's like, all right, now that we know that games and play and sports and everything are all kind of fuzzy, and muddled, and not really very clear, how do sort of at least clarify what we're talking about when it comes to board games?

Anyone remember the five things that he ended up with-- the five categories of board games that he kind of ended up with? Four of the rhyme, one doesn't.

STUDENT: Race games.

PROFESSOR: Race games.

STUDENT: Space games.

PROFESSOR: Space games.

STUDENT: Chase games.

PROFESSOR: Chase games.

STUDENT: Displacement.

PROFESSOR: And displace, which he admits he only gave that name because it rhymes. And then number five? I think he just give up at this point. It was interesting. Because he was kind of saying like here are these four that, traditionally, other scholars like to study, because they are bereft of theme. And they look at themed games, and they say, like, that's not worthy of studying. There's this whole chunk.

And Parlett says, wait a minute. First of all, most of games that you'll buy off the shelf right now are probably themed games. And the reason why there is this interest in race games, chase games, displace games-- space games? I think I'm confused. He also describes those more as positional games. And positional games of the sort that scholars like to study tend to be folk games that have been handed down from generations.

Of course, he's narrowing it down to board games. He's not including things like card games, which are also a very rich game tradition. He has a whole separate book-- that I think we also get to in this class-- on card games. But this is just specifically his board game work. But he wants to start looking at theme games. And this was him introducing scholarship on theme games later on on his book.

I just want to make you realize that the whole idea of studying games as a product-- we already talked a little bit about how the idea of a game as a product to begin with is fairly new. We're talking about 1900s when that starts to become a thing. But then the idea of studying something like that-- I think we're talking about like '50s and '60s-- very, very recent-- the idea that games as a product is something that we can study. Whereas things like games as a sport can probably go back a little bit further than that. Statistics, for instance, has been obsessed with baseball for a long time, because it's very rich and we have good products.

So I don't want to get too much into how he arrives at those definitions. You know, he takes a couple of definitions that other people have come up with and tries to build on them. Like all scholars, he citing previous work. But what I'd like have us play today are what I feel are a couple of modern takes on those categories that he came up with.

So in the race game-- what's a race game, if you have to describe it in one sentence?

STUDENT: You get to the end point first.

PROFESSOR: Get to the end point first, right? So Cartagena-- has anyone played this? OK. So if you look at the game, it feels a little bit like a tile-laying game. Because what you're really doing is you are trying to create this path from the jail that is keeping you-- you're a bunch of pirates-- from the jail that is keeping you all the way to the boat. And then you can run off scot-free.

But one of the core mechanics is that every player controls a different set of pirates. You have a bunch of different colors. You're all trying to get to the boat first. So the first person to get your entire gang of pirates to the boat wins.

So it's a race game. You're racing against other people. It just happens to be the track that you're racing on happens to be something that you build over time rather than something that's pre-determined. So there's something they'll take I think.

Let me skip over to read the other things. For displaced games, has anyone played Twilight Struggle in this room? OK. I may need you to help explain this game to other people.

STUDENT: OK. I've played it once, like at the end of my first semester.

PROFESSOR: OK. All right. I'll just take a look at the rules again. This is unfortunately a little bit of a tall order to ask someone to pick up Twilight Struggle in class. But this was looking at ease of the design system. This is a war game. You are given a map of the world.

STUDENT: Oh, gosh.

PROFESSOR: OK? It's the Cold War-- 1945 to 1989-- and there's a whole bunch of things that come from modern game design, like you have event cards that recall important things that happened-- the Cuban Missile Crisis, Korean War, Pershing II rockets deployed, things like that.

But again, it's about influence across a space, which just happens to be laid out on top of the map of the world to regions like the United States of America, to South and Central America, to Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and so on and so forth. So you're deploying influence points, which is not all that different from deploying what he calls mans-- men-- mans-- across a space, and trying to be able to push influence towards your faction, rather than to the opposite, depending on whether you're playing the US or the soviets. So displace games-- hold on, are those displace games? Well, let me just set up this one too.

Scotland Yard-- I think this might have been-- this was what I intended to bring out as displace. But I'm not quite sure that you capture any pieces in this game. Do you recall? Do you capture things?

STUDENT: You capture influence. You trade influence back and forth over--

PROFESSOR: Right. You capture it, but then you can reintroduce it later on.

STUDENT: Yeah.

PROFESSOR: OK. So this has been displaced. Scotland Yard, which I believe we have mentioned in class before, is kind of like the evolution of the chase game. Chase games are super old. Some of the more famous ancient ones are Scandinavian in origin-- a lot of Norse-- a lot of Viking games-- where you have a King. You have a couple of bodyguards for the king. And you've got a whole bunch of low level pawns all trying to flank the king. That's the theme of a whole genre of games called Tafl, of which chase games will form a big part of.

In this game, you are a Mr. X on the run from a bunch of Scotland Yard detectives. The map is London. More importantly, it's the London public transport system. And what you're trying to do is you're trying to go underground. You're trying to grab cabs, take buses, and conceal where you are while the rest of the players were all controlling the detectives. Actually-- yeah, three to six players.

The people who are controlling detectives are basically just trying to flank you. And so-- a nice little modern evolution-- they have a neat little doodad, which is the way to be able to track the moves that you made without revealing it to your opponents.

STUDENT: Is the bad guy's position private or public.

PROFESSOR: It is private. But little bits of information pop up. So you reveal that in the public. Empire Builder is a train game which one of our grad student alums now almost exclusively studies-- but a very interesting kind of training game that you may not have heard of, called crayon rails, where you are given a big sheet of plastic laminated board-- I guess it's kind of like a jigsaw-- and a grease crayon-- a bunch of grease crayons, actually-- Crayola washable crayons. Here we go.

And you are just drawing your rails across the map, trying to establish your railroad empire. So this was the one that I was thinking of as space, because it's all about occupying space. But you're occupying space with a network, rather than occupying space with just pieces that you're placing down. You're creating lines across the United States while you are do that.

So I think this particular genre of train games are an interesting take on space games. There's a whole other genre of train games that's really more about the economics of what it's like to be a robber baron train lord. Those are really fascinating as well. And those fall kind of more on the economic sense, which Parlett doesn't really address. Or maybe those fall under his definition theme games.

STUDENT: Yeah, I think they do.

PROFESSOR: Yeah. And Power Grid is just this huge mishmash of everything. But I am using it as an example of a theme game, where if you play any of these games and you play Power Grid, you'll see their connections. It's a game where you play on a network of Germany. And you're basically trying to create efficient links between different power stations that you are building. And it's not all that different from creating a railroad empire.

You just happen to be trying to create an energy generating empire that's going to use different commodities-- like oil and-- I think you can burn refuse. Yeah, you can burn refuse. You can burn coal. And you're all playing on the same space. You can occupy space. So it's kind of like a space game, because when you take a space, no one else can take that away from you.

But most of this game is about the economy rather than about the specific positions where you place things-- although, that's going to influence your economy. So it's a complicated game. It's very well designed if you have the right set of rules. The rules that come in the box have misprints in them. Specifically, they break things into turns, phases, and steps. And then they kind of don't use those words consistently.

If you are interested in seeing how fairly straightforward rules can be really, really confusing, take a look at the rules of Power Grid, then take a look at the printed rules that I printed out from the printer. Because these are the revised rules from *Board Game Geek* that are basically translations from the German rules. And they're a little bit more consistent.

It is a complicated game. We might not be able to get through a full game and learn the game at the same time. Has anyone here played Power Grid? I encourage you to set up the game to help more people do it. All right. So what we're going to do-- actually, any questions before we break out into game groups? No?

OK. So we'll play this until about-- actually, I think all the way until 3:00 probably, or at least 2:45 or so.

STUDENT: We'll call time [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: Yeah. We'll have about 15 minutes for you to get all of your play-tests ready. And then the last hour is when you're play-testing. Cool.