



SundayReview | OPINION

**Pokémon Go See the World in Its Splendor**

By AMY BUTCHER JULY 14, 2016

IT is strange to live in a place where the skeletons of Alaskan king salmon, loosed from bald eagles’ talons, sometimes plummet to the sidewalk. It is strange to live in a place where brown bears are so populous that hikers tie bells to their dogs and wrists. Where ravens as big as house cats caw and the sun barely sets into the ocean beside a dormant volcano.

Stranger still, however, to see young people hold their phones to their faces and scan this landscape for an elusive Jigglypuff.

Bubble-gum pink, more cotton candy than animal, the Jigglypuff might lurk, my students tell me, in the woods among the scattered totem poles. Or perhaps along the harbor, where yachts and trolling boats rock between rows of barnacled piers. The shells crunch beneath their feet as the kids lift their screens into the air, scanning sky and earth and sea, ignoring jellyfish and banana slugs, saying, quietly, “It’s just another Rattata.”

I used to be obsessed with Pokémon. A middle schooler when the game was first released in the late ’90s, I beat the red version in three short days, the blue in four. I bought and ate all the candy. My companion of choice was Charmander, tiny and orange and adorable. I liked most how, like all adolescent things, he had a sweetness that quickly gave way to jutting claws, a burning tail and a glare reserved commonly for mothers.

How easily my parents bribed me in return for buying booster packs. How many weeds I pulled in pursuit of a Mewtwo. Whole rooms were vacuumed of Ritz crackers and crayon tips because of the possibility of a bumbling Snorlax, a skin-shredding Dratini.

I was, in short, enraptured. I owned three pairs of Pikachu undies and dreamed at night of Ash.

But upon the release, early this month, of Pokémon Go — the long-awaited augmented-reality iPhone and Android counterpart to the original Game Boy series — I found I had evolved to the curmudgeonly attributes of the nearly 30.

“Phones *away!”* became my mantra. I said it dozens of times a day. I was teaching at a fine arts camp in Sitka, Alaska, when the game came out — two weeks spent with talented artistic youth who had chosen to spend their summers practicing mime, ballet and photography. They were enrolled in courses in juggling, sketch comedy and opera. They were practicing the ancient Japanese pottery-making technique of raku.

But they were also playing the great Japanese time-suck of Pokémon Go, like everyone else. No longer was I enraptured. The game seemed an incredible nuisance in the classroom, but also in the cafeteria and the auditorium, at our nightly events and on the campus green. The students pointed their cameras at the blackboard, bouncing digital Poké Balls to capture creatures, laughing when a wormy Weedle landed on another student or slithered across a desk. They were respectful when class started, or when the lights dimmed for a performance, but still I resented the game and its viral international reception.

More than anything, I couldn’t understand why my students — living in pristine, picturesque Alaska — were so enamored of the invented wilderness superimposed on their screens. The real thing was all around them.

But these were primarily Alaskan students. They represented 45 Alaskan communities, several of them Native, many of them isolated, and banana slugs were not of interest.

Days later, upon return to my Ohio home, when I no longer felt I had to set an example, I downloaded the game myself.

My community came to life in vibrant shades of pastel blue and green, the grid of my neighborhood alive with magic. I caught a Bulbasaur on my comforter. A fluffy Eevee lurked within the garden. In jest, my boyfriend and I walked a block in pursuit of rustling leaves that indicated an animal not yet captured in our Pokédex. We caught him and walked the block. Then another. We walked five miles.

I moved to my suburban Ohio neighborhood two months ago, and have lived in the state for less than two years, after relocating from the East Coast. I drive to work and I come home. The restaurants I most frequently patronize are a mile away at most. My daily life occurs within a radius of 10 to 20 miles, and much of that is countryside, yellow or green but always empty.

Adventure, then, means a life outside Ohio — its many casseroles and flea markets, all those churches and ice-cream shops. It means, more generally, the world outside the United States.

But wandering my neighborhood, progressing downtown toward Poké Stops — blue diamonds scattered among communities that revitalize your avatar’s supplies — my world became suddenly foreign. I noticed everything. I stood on Sandusky Street, the town’s main drag, amassing Poké Balls, and read from a small blue bubble that on this site, 153 years ago, residents formed the Fifth United States Colored Troops. Four were later awarded congressional Medals of Honor.

“Did you know that?” my boyfriend asked. Then, minutes later, “Did you know that? Or that?”

We weren’t the only ones doing this. The neighborhood buzzed with people out exploring, an enormous uptick for a Monday evening. The whole idea of Pokémon Go is to visit where you have not been, to trace sites both new and foreign. A local Creole restaurant became a Poké Stop, unlocked only from within, and so people clustered within the lobby, waiting for tables or ordering takeout. Next to City Hall, a high school couple laughed as they caught a growling Nidoran. A man in a Slipknot T-shirt flashed his phone at me, saying, “Do you believe these Pidgeys?”

The game thrives most through collaboration. A block away, the century-old cinema glowed pink from a “lure module” another player had set, and a crowd of us shared stories until its 30 minutes of magic had dissipated.

Certainly there is the argument — already frequent, predictable and boisterous — that it is a particular brand of tragedy that leads an entire generation of American children into the great outdoors while clutching phones before their faces.

Still, fads fade. Pokémon Go will no doubt go out of style. But I’ll still feel more tethered to my community and aware of all it offers — I’ll know that the Creole restaurant is indeed very good, and that the movie theater is rather charming, and that this place of dairy and agriculture is not Alaska but is no less lovely.

In the meantime, it seems far from terrible to see a father and son racing down suburban sidewalks. To spend an evening not sitting passively before a TV, but interacting simultaneously with both our media and the world. To share in an experience, however seductive or silly, that forces us to go out and explore together.

The sun was nearly down when, for the first time in my two years here, my boyfriend and I drove out to the state park in pursuit of a water creature. I caught him, big and blue with a golden shell, at the bank of a lake, and then we put our phones away, peeled down to our bathing suits, and waded into Ohio’s green water, forgetting altogether what it was that brought us there.

Amy Butcher, an assistant professor of English at Ohio Wesleyan University, is the author of the memoir “Visiting Hours.”

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A version of this op-ed appears in print on July 17, 2016, on page SR4 of the New York edition with the headline: Pokémon Go See the World.

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***Drug Spot, Tow Lot, Entrance at Rikers: Pokémon Go’s Unlikely New York Stops***

[**Crime Scene**](http://www.nytimes.com/column/crime-scene)

**By**[**MICHAEL WILSON**](http://www.nytimes.com/by/michael-wilson)**JULY 17, 2016**

Devin Reams stepped out of the bar where his girlfriend works into the afternoon heat. He walked near the intersection of Myrtle Avenue and Broadway in Brooklyn, a hot zone for addicts whose overdoses from the drug K2 brought ambulances and the police in swarms last week.

But it was not drugs that Mr. Reams was looking for. It was something harder to find in the area — a character called a Charmander that he was trying to capture while playing [Pokémon Go](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/nyregion/pokemon-players-take-their-hunt-to-the-streets-of-new-york.html).

“It’s a nice distraction from what’s going on outside,” Mr. Reams, 22, a musician, said on Thursday.

The game has proved an instant phenomenon, sending players into the streets with their smartphones in search of creatures called Pokémon. They visit virtual Pokéstops, fixed locations, often linked to landmarks, where players can gather items used in the game, and “gyms,” where they can join teams and train and battle Pokémon.

There are Pokéstops and gyms in every neighborhood in New York City, and countless cheery little Pokémon to capture, animated and flying or bouncing on a phone’s camera screen with the real world in the background.

That real world includes spots like this corner on the border of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick, where the sight of addled men and women passed out, nodding off or stumbling has become so common that they have gotten a nickname: zombies. On Tuesday, 33 people from the area [were hospitalized](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/nyregion/k2-synthetic-marijuana-overdose-in-brooklyn.html) after overdosing on what the police described as a bad batch of K2, or Spice. The police [raided five bodegas](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/nyregion/k2-overdoses-brooklyn-police-raids.html) suspected of selling K2 the next day, but found none of the drug.

At the same time, the police [issued an advisory](https://twitter.com/NYPD78Pct/status/753696711936212993) to Pokémon Go players to be alert at all times and aware of their surroundings. The corner where Mr. Reams was on Thursday would seem like a place to be avoided if possible, but he said otherwise.

“There are a lot of Pokéstops in the area,” he said. “At night, it’s a little bit unsafe. You can find yourself in a tough situation, especially right there at that corner.”

Another player, Joshua Talton, 29, said he regularly paused outside a pizzeria near the corner to pull out his phone and collect a few Pokéballs, which are used to catch the creatures, on the way to the Myrtle Avenue subway station, a Pokéstop.

“You see people with their phones out and addicts there,” he said. “They don’t bother each other. We occupy the same space.”

Pokémon turn up in other unlikely locations.

Visitors at the police tow pound in Manhattan seeking to reclaim their vehicles may be pleasantly surprised to find that the lot, on 12th Avenue by the Hudson River, is a Pokémon Go gym as well as a Pokéstop. I was there on Friday and scooped up a creature called a Magikarp nearby.

Another place one would not associate with smartphone games, or smartphones at all, since they are forbidden: [Rikers Island](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/r/rikers_island_prison_complex/index.html?inline=nyt-org). But there is a Pokéstop at the entrance to the bridge to the jail complex, and relatives visiting inmates can pause there for Pokéballs.

There is even a Pokémon Go gym just outside the visitor parking lot. The Q100 bus stops at the lot to take visitors onto the island, and I boarded it on Thursday. I passed the time waiting for the return bus by capturing, against a background of barbed-wire fencing, a Paras and a Pinsir. (“Congratulations!” the screen read. “You earned a medal!”) I also encountered a Tentacool, a creature that loosely resembles a jellyfish. It escaped.

A Rikers employee, leaving the island, shook her head upon hearing that the entrance to the jail was a part of Pokémon Go. “People are going to be bringing their phones inside?” she said. “They’re going to get arrested.”

It is not difficult to identify people playing Pokémon Go, with their telltale start-and-stop pace and swipes on their phone screens. In Brooklyn, Vincent Nardone, 24, a concert promoter, paused at a Pokéstop at Bushwick Avenue and Jefferson Street and pointed to a creature flying on his screen, above the sidewalk. “That’s a Zubat,” he said.

A block away, a group of people had gathered outside one of the bodegas raided on Wednesday. They were not playing Pokémon Go. “No more Spice!” they chanted. “Spice kills!”

Mr. Talton, who grew up in the neighborhood and discusses current events on a podcast called [Public Service Announcement](https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/public-service-announcement/id1072224644?mt=2), said he recently saw a sort of parity on the streets he called “our skid row.”

“You see people of all different races playing Pokémon Go,” he said. “You see people of all different races passed out.”

# *Where Pokémon Should Not Go*

**By JONAH ENGEL BROMWICH**JULY 12, 2016

Are there places where Pokémon should not be allowed to tread?

The digital creatures, which appear overlaid on the real world as part of the hit [smartphone game Pokémon Go](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/technology/pokemon-go-brings-augmented-reality-to-a-mass-audience.html), have been reported at the[former concentration camp Auschwitz](http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/07/yes-you-can-catch-pokemon-at-auschwitz.html) in Poland, [the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2016/07/12/holocaust-museum-to-visitors-please-stop-catching-pokemon-here/) in Washington D.C. and the National September 11 Memorial in New York, provoking frustrated responses from the representatives of some of the sites.

A spokesman for the Auschwitz Memorial said that any presence of the game there, or at any other memorials and Holocaust museums, was “absolutely inappropriate.”

“Allowing such games to be active on the site of Auschwitz Memorial is disrespectful to the memory of the victims of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp on many levels,” Pawel Sawicki said in an email.

He added that the makers of the game had already been contacted, and asked “not to allow the site of Auschwitz Memorial and other similar sites to be included in the game.”

A spokeswoman for Niantic Inc., the gaming start-up that teamed with the Pokémon company to make Pokémon Go, pointed out that the game is not yet officially available for download in Europe.

However, some sites have posted instructions for obtaining the game in countries outside of the United States, Australia or New Zealand, where it is available. Also, someone who has downloaded it in those three countries would be able to find the creatures in Europe. Niantic’s first game, another augmented-reality app called Ingress, exists in Europe, and Pokémon Go uses information from that app to inform its digitally enhanced world.

Brian Feldman, a journalist for New York magazine, which [reported the Pokémon at Auschwitz](http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/07/yes-you-can-catch-pokemon-at-auschwitz.html), said that the person who sent in the tip was on vacation from America, and had been able to download the game from the U.S. app store.

Niantic did not have anyone available who could respond to further requests for comment.

A spokesman for the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., said that the museum was also working to be excluded from the game.

“Playing Pokémon Go in a memorial dedicated to the victims of Nazism is extremely inappropriate,” Andrew Hollinger said in a statement.

“Technology can be an important learning tool, but this game falls far outside of our educational and memorial mission,” he added.

Niantic has struggled to handle the sudden popularity of Pokémon Go, which was released in the United States on July 6. Its servers have had a hard time contending with the masses of people attempting to play, and the game’s official introduction in other countries has been delayed because of the unexpected demands.

Pokémon have also provoked criticism by appearing at Arlington National Cemetery and on the [front lines of the fight against ISIS](https://www.facebook.com/louis.park.739/posts/1068806929834227?pnref=story) in Iraq. The Marine Corps joked on Twitter that one had been spotted on a gun range, prompting some protest (and plenty of support).

A military base in Washington State, [in a Facebook post](https://www.facebook.com/JBLewisMcChord/photos/a.303359376198.152088.288818151198/10153490511346199/?type=3&theater), warned “budding Pokémon Trainers” to avoid chasing the creatures “into controlled or restricted areas, office buildings, or homes on base.”

Louis Park, the Marine Corps veteran who posted a picture of himself playing from Iraq, [used another Facebook post](https://www.facebook.com/louis.park.739/posts/1068806929834227?pnref=story) to express his disappointment that it had taken “pop culture” to draw attention to the fight against ISIS. He has since made his account, including the original post, private.

“I just made the picture post to be cheeky,” he wrote. “I love Pokémon.”

**Pokémon Has Kids on the Move — and on Their Phones**

**By**

**[KJ DELL’ANTONIA](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/author/kj-dellantonia/" \o "More Posts by Kj Dell’Antonia)**

 JULY 12, 2016 9:03 AM

Parents looking for a way to get children moving and off the couch this summer have found a surprising new ally: Pokémon.

Unlike most video and smartphone games, the [phenomenally popular Pokémon Go](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/technology/pokemon-go-brings-augmented-reality-to-a-mass-audience.html), which has been downloaded by millions in the past week, requires the player to be active. The game uses map technology and local landmarks to make it seem as if mythical cartoon creatures are lurking in the real world all around you.

As my two 10-year-olds and I quickly found, playing Pokémon Go is not sedentary. Pokémon “trainers” must search for the virtual creatures; finding more of them requires getting up and heading outside.

Other parents are reporting a similar effect.

“My 18-year-old and his friends walked and biked 25 plus miles in two days, outside, in the heat and rain,” said Lisa Romeo, a mother of two who lives in Cedar Grove, N.J.

Phil LeClare of Salem, Mass., said that after three days of Pokémon Go while on vacation in Maine, his 11-year-old son proudly said that he’d walked 30 miles.

Along with the stories of calories burned come the benefits of unexpected family time. The real-world component of walking and hunting for the creatures seems to make playing Pokémon Go alone unappealing. Instead, even teenagers are inviting siblings and parents along. Add in the likelihood of meeting other players at Poké-stops, and the game begins to feel like a social event.

“Event” is a good characterization, said Jeffrey Rohrs, a father of two and the chief marketing officer of Yext, a location data management platform. The app, he said, appears to have struck a perfect chord in our culture, making fresh use of smartphone technology while offering a way around our collective fears that smartphones make us more sedentary and connect us better to the cloud than to one another. “There’s just this euphoria around it,” he said. “It’s unique.”

But for families that have been pleasantly surprised by the action and interaction of Pokémon Go, the game has created a quandary: Do our usual screen time limits apply? Do miles logged and family togetherness really make Pokémon Go different from other screen-based distractions?

The average American child already spends more time consuming media via a screen than at school. Adults aren’t doing much better. Many of us say we spend too much time on our smartphones and the internet, and our kids think so too: In [one study](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/news/article/614/worlds_first_creche_for_technology_and_car_keys_to_get_families_connecting), about 70 percent of children under 18 said their parents spent too much time glued to the phone.

“I’m wary of promises that more technology is the answer to problems caused by the overuse of technology,” said Richard Freed, a psychologist and author of “[Wired Child: Reclaiming Childhood in a Digital Age.](http://richardfreed.com/wired-child/)” We’ve been hopeful in the past that certain games, like the Wii system, would promote family time or get kids moving, he said, but those games ultimately failed to live up to the hype.

When it comes to Pokémon Go, Dr. Freed says he is in “wait and see” mode, but dubious. His family loves to walk together outdoors. “Now you add this new wrinkle,” in the form of a game that may be more compelling than the conversation that forges bonds among them. “You have to ask,” said Dr. Freed, “will this facilitate that connection?”

As a replacement for other forms of gaming, Pokémon Go offers plenty of advantages. My two 10-year-olds and I did enjoy connecting while roaming the streets in search of creatures — but part of the pleasure, for me, was that I’d lured them away from their usual Sunday afternoon game-fest with the Wii.

For some families, the hunt has already begun to take over their travels — encouraging kids to walk and hike further, yes, but will they remember seeing the White House, or the Pokémon at its gates? On a positive note, Mr. Rohrs sees a future where the technology could be used to enhance our destinations “It’s easy to imagine a hunt for the great authors of London,” he said, rather than Pokémon.

But for now, it’s even easier to imagine getting just a little tired of children who’d rather hunt Zubats than enjoy a zoo.

Which can only mean one thing. “Part of parenting is establishing boundaries,” said Mr. Rohrs, who spent his weekend exploring New York City with his wife, two children and Pokémon Go. Although he was mostly enthusiastic about the unexpected places the game led them, “We quickly realized we needed to declare some ‘phone in pocket’ time.”

For now, many parents seem to be relishing the good in Pokémon Go, while recognizing that they will need to create limits. For some of us, Pokémon Go brings up unexpected summer memories of twilight freeze-tag and hide-and-seek. Laurel Snyder had to set a curfew for her kids, ages 9 and 10, who spent the day wandering their neighborhood in Atlanta.

“I told them they had to be home by 8, and they dashed in sweaty-faced at 7:53. It really felt more like my own childhood experience than I’d have imagined,“ she said. That early hour might even relax a little, with so much community to be found in the initial excitement surrounding the game. It’s likely that for many children, and adults too, the summer of 2016 just became the summer of Pokémon.

**Prompt: Develop a position on whether or not the release of Pokémon Go has had a positive or negative impact on society.**

Write an introduction that provides context for the prompt. Craft a thesis that directly addresses the prompt.

Write a body paragraph that supports the claim you have established. Include the opposing side and refutation in the paragraph.

Be sure to follow the Toulmin model: a topic sentence with a strong and clear connection to the claim, grounds/evidence from 2-3 sources, and warrants that strongly connects the two.

