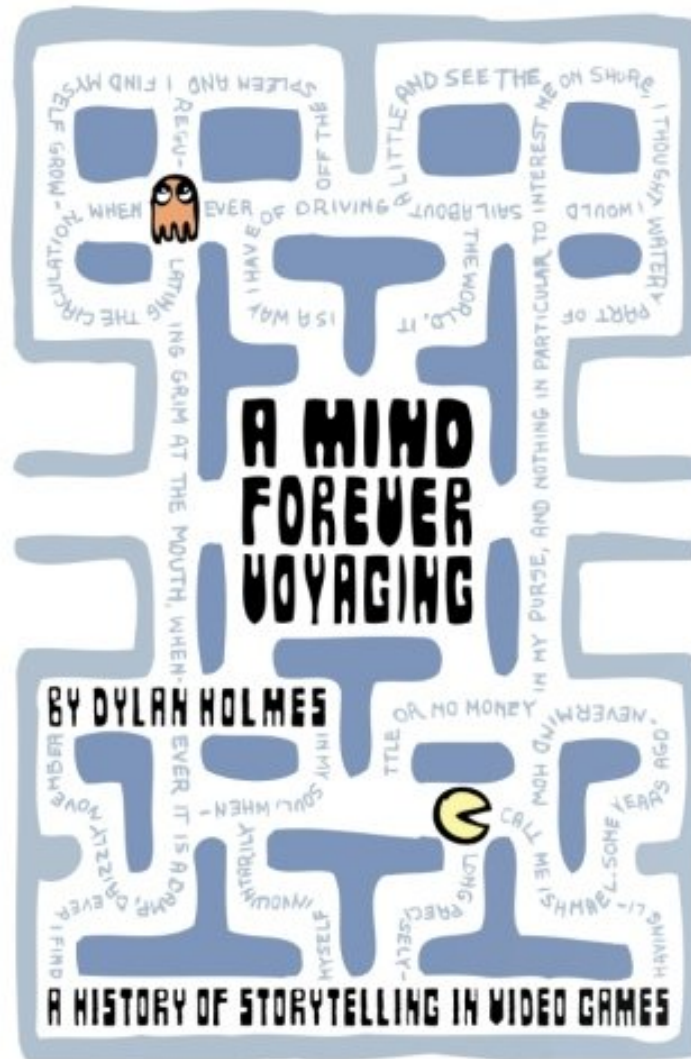


A Mind Forever Voyaging: A History of Storytelling in Video Games

Dylan Holmes

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#930041 in Books Dylan Holmes 2012-11-07Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .56 x 6.001, .74 #File Name: 1480005754248 pagesA Mind Forever Voyaging A History of Storytelling in Video Games | File size: 61.Mb

Dylan Holmes : A Mind Forever Voyaging: A History of Storytelling in Video Games before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Mind Forever Voyaging: A History of Storytelling in Video Games:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating chronicle of storytelling in video gamesBy Kaj

SotolaAs a form of storytelling, what makes video games distinct from other forms of storytelling, such as movies or books? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this form, what techniques has it borrowed from other media, and what untapped potential does it still have?A Mind Forever Voyaging: A History of Storytelling in Video Games is a book that is essentially doing two things at once. It provides a history of thirteen games that have made important contributions to the art of video game storytelling, and on the side, it also provides some commentary on more general questions like the ones above. Doing two things at once is always harder than just doing one thing, but A Mind Forever Voyaging pulls it off pretty well. One or two early transitions between the specific and the general felt a little jarring, but then I either got used to them or the shifts became more natural.The book is an interesting read in both senses. I had thought myself relatively knowledgeable about the history of video games, but until now, I hadn't known what 1983 title had been possibly the first video game in history that had managed to make its players cry. And as there several games that I had heard a lot about but never played, it was interesting to hear exactly why Half-Life, for example, had been so popular.The games that get a full chapter devoted to them are: The Secret of Monkey Island, Planetfall, Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar, System Shock, Final Fantasy VII, Metal Gear Solid, Half-Life, Shenmue, Deus Ex, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Libery, Faade, Dear Esther, and Heavy Rain. A number of others also get a couple of paragraphs worth of coverage each. As the author readily admits, this necessarily leaves out many games that would have deserved to be included, and the selection of which ones to include is a somewhat subjective one. In one case, a game was excluded from getting the full treatment because it was too good: Planescape: Torment was left out because "there was too much to talk about: it begs for in-depth literary analysis, which was beyond the scope of what I was doing".How can game mechanics and storytelling aspects be integrated so that they support each other in building a more immersive experience? How much does immersion suffer from the game being so difficult that the player must keep reloading earlier saves? If it is exceedingly hard to make conversations with other characters feel like conversations with real people, is it sometimes better to not include any other characters at all? When can a game get away with addressing the player directly, potentially breaking the fourth wall? What techniques can be used to create the illusion that the player's choices actually matter and have consequences? Such are some of the questions which are touched upon in the book, and seeing the intricacies behind some of the games I had liked made me appreciate them, and video games storytelling in general, more than I had before. If I were running my own video game studio, this book would probably be required reading for all my employees.Some of those questions get relatively superficial coverage: they're raised when discussing a single game, in the context of how that game did things, and then they're never touched upon again. Others feel like recurring themes. The book will discuss a theoretical aspect of one game, and then move on and return to the same topic from another angle when discussing an entirely different game. These interwoven threads are not always pointed out explicitly, and it remains up to the reader to notice them and put the pieces together.Although the book draws heavily upon the academic study of games, it never comes off as dry and boring: instead, it is a fast and enjoyable read. When I first started reading it, I thought that I'd read it for about half an hour before going to bed - I finally managed to force myself to put it away two and a half hours later. While this is a common occurrence with fiction, a non-fiction book that pulls this off is far more rare.As is often the case, possibly the biggest failing of the book is that even at 250 pages, it feels too short. I would have gladly read a version of the book that was twice or even thrice the length, and covered that many more games. Right now, the book feels more like a snapshot of the history of storytelling in video games, rather than a history of it.Perhaps the thing that I like the most about the book is that after reading it, I was left with a clear feeling of the very greatest video games still being ahead of us. Video games remain a young art form, and while game designers have experimented with many techniques for better storytelling, the full potential of those techniques remains untapped, waiting for someone to perfect them. We have only begun to glimpse at just how good games could be.(Full disclosure: the author is a long-time online friend of mine, which has probably biased this review a little, but I wouldn't have written this in the first place if I hadn't liked the book on its own merits.)5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. It was a great help! I really enjoyed reading it as wellBy Lee ShephardBought it for a college research paper I was doing on the history of video game storytelling. It was a great help! I really enjoyed reading it as well. It's very interesting, the author, while not a professional, is a die-hard gamer and really knows his stuff. He provides some great anecdotal stories and his passion for gaming and gaming history really shines through in the writing. If you care anything about video gaming and how it's grown over the years, I definitely suggest giving this go. It's light reading and very interesting.If it were up to me it'd be required reading for this new drove of young gamers - to show them what things were like before their Call of Duties and their Grand Theft Autos.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent study of a much ignored fieldBy AlanThis book provides a rare combination of thorough research, compelling arguments, and genuine readability. Game design theory is a nascent field, and storytelling is a topic rarely covered with much rigor. While this doesn't attempt to take sides on a some of the contentious issues (eg. narratology vs ludology), it does manage to provide a cogent history of the major developments in an entertaining way.

An engaging and entertaining read for veteran gamers and curious newcomers alike, A Mind Forever Voyaging traces the evolution of interactive video games by examining 13 landmark titles that challenged convention and captured

players imaginations worldwide. Alternative gaming blogger Dylan Holmes focuses on games that tell stories in innovative and fascinating ways and examines the opportunities and challenges presented when players are given the ability to direct how a story plays out. From the text-based adventure of Planetfall and the interactive cinema of Heavy Rain to the one-act play of Faade and the simulated world of Shenmue, Holmes showcases the diversity of video game stories that have emerged in the last 30 years. Along the way, he addresses such questions as: How did the introduction of moral choices in video games change the playing field? What film techniques have enhanced (or detracted from!) the gaming experience? Can video games aspire to be art? [Hint: Yes!] What are the benefits, pitfalls, and unintended consequences of players' "right to choose"? Will the robot Floyd make you cry? Critical analysis, historical perspective, and a gently opinionated personal touch make *A Mind Forever Voyaging* an enlightening read that captures the best that video games have to offer.

About the Author Dylan Holmes is a technical writer and independent journalist living in Seattle, Washington. His interests include gaming (video and otherwise), film, and discovering the perfect iced tea/lemonade ratio for Arnold Palmers. His writing can be found on the alternative gaming blog Nightmare Mode and at www.augmented-vision.net.