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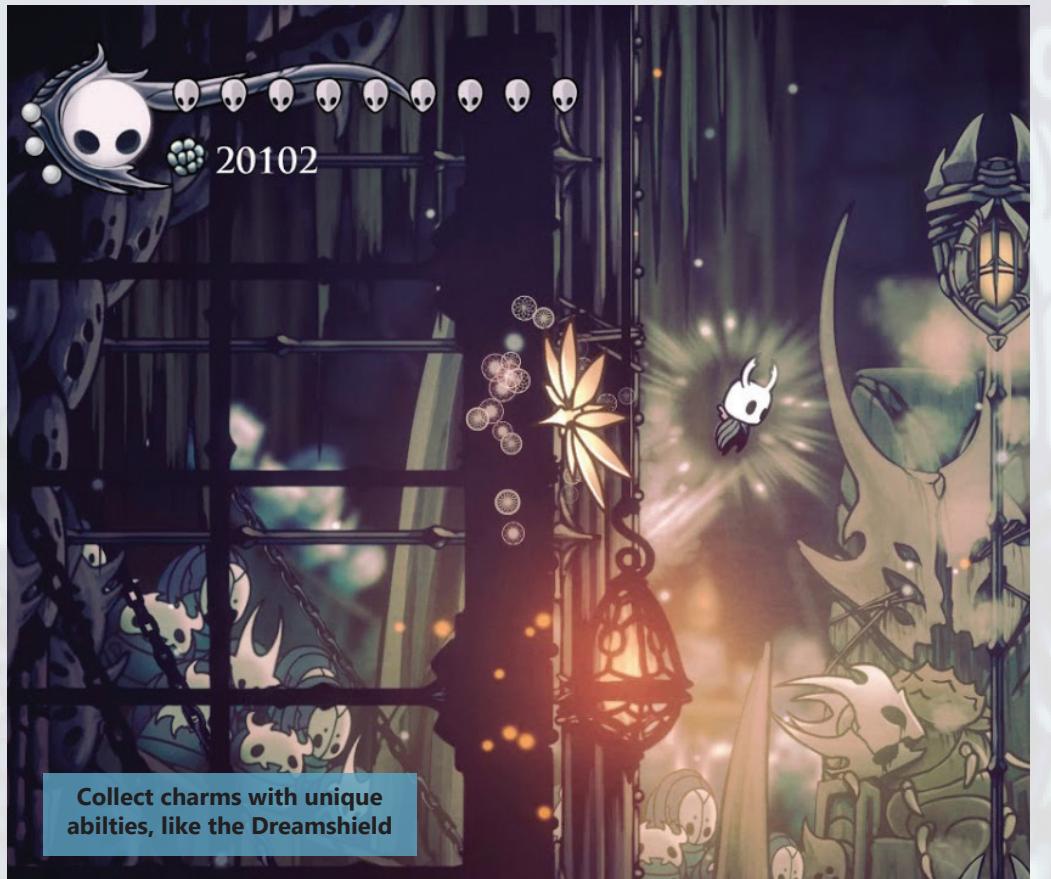


HOLLOW KNIGHT REVIEW

Hollow Knight's rich world and incredible depth of content will make you want to explore its caves for dozens of hours.

Written by Tom Marks

It's not hard to get lost in the deep, subterranean world of Hollow Knight – and I mean that in more ways than one. The expansive catacombs of Hallownest have countless paths to explore and secrets to find. But more than that, it's rich with lore, history, and purpose that drew me into a 2D Metroidvania kingdom I wanted to uncover every inch of.



World Wide Web

There are far more of these distinct biomes than I ever expected to discover, and the edges of each one blend together with the next in ways that help them make sense in the world. For example, walls on the border of the Fungal Wastes, even impassable ones in other areas, will be dotted with its telltale mushrooms. The lush environment of an area called Greenpath feels bustling and humid, a stark difference to the cold, dark caves of the Forgotten Crossroads. The bubble-filled region of Fog Canyon isn't technically underwater, but the muffled filter over all of its audio goes hand-in-hand with jellyfish enemies and a brighter blue tone.

The deeper I went into Hollow Knight, the more I was surprised at just how much content and freedom it has to offer. I could wander in basically any direction and find bosses to fight, upgrades to collect, and secrets to uncover. But what's truly captivating about the exploring this long-dead kingdom is its atmosphere. Art, music, color tone, sound, and a million other little details combine to give each area of the map a distinct sense of place, and those areas jigsaw together in a way that feels intentional and alive.



The Knight fights using a nail as a sword

Hallownest's capital city, the City of Tears, is a metropolis in a huge cave where it's always raining. But it wasn't until 10 hours after I first discovered this place that I stumbled across the Blue Lake, a massive body of serene water positioned just above the underground city. Hollow Knight doesn't shove this connection in your face, it just lets you explore its world and piece together the story for yourself as you sit down and enjoy a moment of quiet.

In fact, Hollow Knight tells you very little about what's going on, and instead sends you into a world full of monumental events that all happened long before you arrived: wars and heroes, love and culture, disease and destruction. The aftermath of Hallownest's troubled past is left for you to discover and comes through loud and clear, but only if you take the time to listen.

It's told in a very subtle way, but teaches you so much about Hallownest in the process that I feel like I could practically write a book on it.



The walls of the fungal wastes are dotted with its telltale mushrooms

It's a tragic tale, one full of fallen heroes and terrible decisions, but it still manages to make time for beautiful, calm, and hopeful moments throughout. And it's easy to enjoy those moments, because Hollow Knight's hand-drawn art is simply beautiful. It's a world that manages to feel cohesive despite its citizens being adorable bug-people in a dying cave.

The story (and your place in it) is picked up as you go. Some of it through dialogue with the adorable and quirky characters who still reside in this decrepit kingdom, some through important story events, and some just by observing your surroundings and the clues strewn about it.

"The aftermath of Hallownest's troubled past is left for you to discover"

-Tom Marks

the burden of backtracking. One early area eventually even morphs into a much harder late-game section in a way that makes it feel like your actions in Hallownest have real weight.

Hammer Meets Nail

The combat in Hollow Knight is relatively straightforward, but starts out tricky as you learn to time quick directional sword slashes with jumps and dashes. It rewards patience and skill massively — killing enemies is a matter of sharp timing, learning attack patterns, and having quick reflexes more than just the upgrades you earn along the way.

money, called Geo. Thankfully, there is also a flavor-filled quick-travel system called the Stagways. Stag stations can be found and unlocked across Hallownest, allowing you to call The Last Stag to take you between them. What could just be a jump between points instead becomes a quest in itself, and I almost always spoke to The Stag after unlocking a station not to travel, but to hear his gruff but optimistic take on whatever new stop I brought him to.

Hollow Knight's world also undergoes more concrete changes as you progress. Railways and elevators will unlock permanently, opening shortcuts that loop back to earlier sections and easing