

Stories are pivotal in human experiences, learning, and culture. They play an integral role in all aspects of life. Having great graphics and game mechanics alone is not enough for a game to be great. Only when combined with a fitting narrative does it immerse the players into another realm and give them the experience they would thoroughly enjoy. But how do you write a story that appeals to the masses and captures their attention? At the 2018 GDC, Leighton Gray shares how she wrote the narrative for the game *Dream daddy*: a dating simulator. In this day and age, the players are not just consumers of media, but they reshape media. Leighton speaks about how metamodern works resonate with the current day youth as it oscillates between sincerity and cynicism. Hence, the best way to satisfy the consumers is to make games that seem silly but are serious.

She goes on to explain the principles of metamodernism and how she applied it in her work. The success of *Dream Daddy* was because it wasn't just about dating a single dad, but it also showed what it is like growing in a household with a single parent. The characters were made vulnerable and relatable to the players through character introductions. Another way the game appealed to the masses was by making it inclusive of all communities. To do this, she spoke to many gay fathers and had their feedback incorporated into the game. Another way to attract players was to allow them to customize the player and dictate their character's past and sexuality. This allowed the players to express themselves through the game. And finally, she made sure that the game was radically optimistic; it was silly, fun, and uplifting.

Jonathan To further underlines the importance of narratives in games in his talk at GDC 2019. He speaks about how well-written characters can increase player experience while telling an important story. He outlines important storytelling features in PvP, namely: creating an appealing character for the announcer, defining their role and the relation to the player, and tailoring the character to suit the voice actor. He illustrates how improving Lord Shaxx's (*Destiny*'s first PvP announcer) interaction with the players increased the player's interest in the game. In *Destiny 1*, Shaxx had limited dialogue and interaction with the player. No information about his character was available to the player, and he lacked a signature killstreak announcement and general excitement. In *Destiny: The Taken King*, Shaxx's character was improved on, and he was given a backstory, which made him more likable among the players. The character was also given more enthusiasm, and the players started interacting with Shaxx more often. The designers also managed to incorporate him outside the crucible matches to make him more realistic. Since Shaxx was very well received, they introduced another character called Drifter in *Gambit*, who encourages cutthroat behavior among players. Drifter has different content from Shaxx but a similar narrative spirit.

Both these talks emphasize the need for immersive narratives in games. It allows the player to connect personally with the game and make them want to play more. Giving characters life and personality is also equally important, as seen in Jonathan's talk. Players often form emotional bonds with these characters, and this increases the player experience. A game I've played a lot and enjoy is *Stardew Valley*. The player, tired of monotonous city life, moves to the farm left behind by their grandfather. The player has to bring back the farm to its former glory. Throughout the game, the player encounters many characters, each having a unique personality and backstory. The player is also given the freedom to become friends with or romance these characters. Through the narrative, the player is immersed in a fictional world and can experience life in the countryside. The story, combined with the different flavors of the characters, makes the game appealing.

1. Leighton says that developers' end goal should be to make content that is spreadable instead of viral. But this, Leighton, means that the content should reach the masses. If that is the case, wouldn't virality help spreadability?
2. Having characters with a positive personality encourages players to play more and makes the game more likable. But how adversely would a negative character impact the player's motivation to play?