

Game Narrative Review

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Your name: Christopher Bucsa
Your school: George Mason University
Your email: cbucsa@gmu.edu
Month/Year you submitted this review: September 2023

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Game Title: Assassin's Creed II
Platform: Console and PC
Genre: Adventure – Action, Stealth
Release Date: NA: 11/17/09, EU: 11/20/09
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Publisher: Ubisoft
Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer:
Corey May/ Patrice Desilets/ Corey May

Overview

Assassin's Creed II revolves around the ever-growing conflict between the Templars and the Assassins. Without the Templars, the Assassin Brotherhood would not exist, who formed for the sole purpose of preventing the Templar Order from acquiring the Pieces of Eden – artifacts that grant its wielder capabilities that would allow for complete power and control.

With the help of the Animus, Desmond Miles will travel back in time through the eyes and memories of his Assassin ancestor, Ezio Auditore, in order to uncover the truths about these artifacts and where they lie. It is here, in 15th-century Italy, where Ezio must use his stealth, parkour, and combat prowess to prevent the Templars' ambitions of seizing control of Italian cities and obtaining the elusive Pieces of Eden.

Characters

- **Templars** - Faction that advocates order and peace in society by means of strict control and regulation. They want to acquire and use the 'Pieces of Eden' to manipulate human development and bend it to their will. The Templars serve as the antagonist group in Assassin's Creed II.
- **Assassins** – Second faction in Assassin's Creed II, they, like the Templars, strive to acquire the 'Pieces of Eden.' Their goal is to recover these artifacts in order to prevent the Templars from achieving their objectives and, in turn, preserve the concept of free will in society.
- **Desmond Miles** – A normal-looking and mild-mannered man who is coerced by the genetic company Abstergo to relive his ancestral past. Abstergo, the modern-day Templars, aim to use the memories of Desmond's ancestor, Ezio Auditore, to uncover the locations of the 'Pieces of Eden' and, in doing so, achieve their goals of power and control. Desmond serves as the overarching main character in the game's narrative and uses Ezio's memories to learn more about Abstergo's connections to the Templars and the locations of the 'Pieces of Eden,' effectively preserving the fate of humanity.
- **Ezio Auditore** – Assassin ancestor to Desmond miles, Ezio is a determined young man who seeks revenge for the wrongful executions of his father and brothers by the hands of the Templar Order. He wears the symbolic white and red assassin robes that were passed down to him by his father and wields two hidden blades along the length of his forearms. It is through Ezio that the majority of Assassin's Creed II's narrative takes place. He serves as the fundamental link between the locations of the 'Pieces of Eden' and the mysterious origins of their creation.
- **Rodrigo Borgia** – Head of the Templar Order and main antagonist for the Assassin's Creed II story, Borgia is directly responsible for the deaths of Ezio's father and brothers, serving as the catalyst for Ezio's path of vengeance. His lust for power and control is matched only by his desire to find and obtain the 'Pieces of Eden', for which he is willing to kill whoever necessary to acquire. Borgia is recognizable by his stocky build and hooded robes.
- **Mario Auditore** – The uncle to Ezio Auditore, protagonist of the Assassin's Creed II story. Wise, honorable, and hardened by war, he serves as the mentor who teaches Ezio the skills he needs to complete his objectives and become an assassin. Although he plays a supporting role in the game, Mario is pivotal in helping Ezio understand his family's history and the complicated dynamics that exist between the Templars and Assassins. Mario is easily recognizable from his battle scar across his left eye and long, shoulder-length hair.

Breakdown

Assassin's Creed II follows a story structure that is quite common in video games and films: The Hero's Journey. This storytelling structure can be broken down into stages, which I will use to analyze the narrative of Assassin's Creed II. Please note that I will be utilizing the Hero's Journey story structure outlined in Chapter 3 of "Interactive Storytelling for Video Games" by Josiah Lebowitz and Chris Klug.

Act I: Departure

Stage 1: The Ordinary World

In this stage of the 'Hero's Journey' narrative, the audience – those experiencing the journey firsthand - will be introduced to the protagonist (The 'Hero') and get to know a little bit about their background. This stage is the beginning of a three-part narrative (departure/initiation/return) that shows the Hero living out his or her everyday life and introducing the audience to the setting of the story.

Summary:

Here, at the beginning, we are introduced to Ezio Auditore, the protagonist. He is portrayed as a carefree young man with a knack for trouble. In this stage, we learn that he has a sister and two brothers, as well as a mother and father. Giovanni, Ezio's father, is a prominent banker in Florence with many secrets revealed throughout the course of the game. The prominent theme of good vs. evil is introduced here early on, depicted through Ezio's street fight with Templar Vieri De'Pazzi.

Analysis:

In the 2000s, when modern-day consoles lacked the mechanics and gameplay visualizations available today, creating a game with a captivating storyline was of utmost importance. One of the most crucial, and often challenging, aspects of a story is its beginning. In Assassin's Creed II, this is executed beautifully. From a gameplay perspective, this stage allows players to understand Ezio's skillset while completing missions that directly contribute to Ezio's personality portrayal and overall background. Every mission in this stage, from simple message deliveries to all-out street brawls, provides players with insights into who Ezio is as a person and his family's background. Interestingly enough, Ubisoft Montreal reveals just a taste of the story, while simultaneously unveiling one of its biggest themes in the game: the battle of good and evil.

Critiques:

My only critique of the "Ordinary World Stage" in Assassin's Creed II pertains to its pacing. The critical points and Ezio's initial character development could have been portrayed in a shorter timeframe. Nonetheless, it remains a very well-executed opening to the story.

Stage 2: The Call to Adventure

This stage is crucial to the story, and often serves as the first major turning point in the game. It can be characterized as the event which causes the 'Hero' to leave his or her ordinary world behind. More often than not, this stage is also the beginning of the main plot in the story. How the protagonist responds to this call is significant to his or her character development, as it adds more depth and understanding to their personality.

Summary:

After being betrayed and wrongfully imprisoned, Ezio's father and brothers stand by, awaiting their trials. Unaware of the circumstances warranting their imprisonment, Ezio climbs the tower that leads to their cell. It is here that Giovanni, Ezio's father, informs our protagonist of their gloomy-looking fate. In this state of uncertainty, Giovanni tasks Ezio with locating a secret chest hidden behind a concealed door in his office. Once there, Ezio discovers that inside this chest lies a pair of sharp blades and a seemingly ominous-looking robe. Unsure of their meaning but filled with curiosity, Ezio puts on the robe, thus marking a significant turning point in the narrative.

Analysis:

Ezio's discovery of the robe and assassin blades is the point of the story where our protagonist begins to question everything he thought he knew. All of the background information and character development surrounding Ezio's family from the 'Ordinary World' stage comes crashing down at this time. This moment is significant because it completely changes Ezio's perspective on his father and causes him to wonder who he really is. From a player's perspective, not only does this event fill us with curiosity, but it causes us to question everything we thought we knew about Ezio's origins, adding significant depth to his overall character arc. His discovery of the robes marks a transition from his old life to the new, foreshadowing his future role as an assassin-a key entity in the ongoing conflict between the Templars and the Assassins- and the adventures that await him.

Stage 3: Refusing the Call

This is an optional stage in 'The Hero's Journey' story structure, but it can be significant to the story if executed properly. As indicated by its name, this is the moment where the protagonist refuses his or her call to adventure from the previous stage. As a result, most times, this stage is followed by some tragedy that forces the protagonist back onto his or her path. Furthermore, this stage significantly reflects upon the hero's mindset and is a way for writers to add further depth to the protagonist's character.

Summary:

Ezio's father and brothers are wrongfully sentenced to be executed for reasons not yet known. They stand together at the gallows in Florence's main square, waiting to be hanged. By the time Ezio arrives, little can be done, but he rushes the platform anyway, hoping to save them with the little time they have left. Seeing this, an ominous figure standing on the gallows platform orders his men to capture and kill Ezio. In this haze, and with the realization that his father and brothers are beyond saving, Ezio escapes the square.

Analysis:

As summarized in the previous section, Ezio's call to adventure is an emotional and spiritual one. The discovery of his father's blades and assassin robes leads to Ezio becoming engulfed in a level of curiosity and self-doubt that causes him to wonder his very essence. Witnessing the deaths of his brothers and father completely overrides those emotions with feelings of grief, anger, and vengeance. All he cares about at this point is seeking revenge on the people who killed his family, thus diverting his focus from the mysteries surrounding the contents of his father's chest. Moreover, it is at this stage that players are properly introduced to the antagonist of Assassins Creed II: Rodrigo Borgia. The escape from his men is the culmination of all the skills that players have learned up to that point. Accompanied by dramatic music and overall fast pace, this moment in the story really allows the audience to see and feel how large of an impact the deaths of Ezio's father and brothers have on him. Thus, it allows players to connect emotionally with him.

Stage 4: The Mentor

The mentor stage is notably marked by the arrival of a major supporting character whose role is to teach the protagonist certain skills or knowledge that they will need for their journey. Notice how this stage immediately follows the call to adventure, the moment of the story when the hero's life changes. Naturally, they would need someone to help them adjust to their new lifestyle. The mentor plays a pivotal role in the protagonist's character development, as they shape the mental attitude of this new life.

Summary:

Now a wanted criminal in the city of Florence, Ezio and his two remaining close relatives – Mother Maria and sister Claudia - have no choice but to flee their beloved home. Under the guise of monks, they reach the outskirts of Florence, only to be halted by Vieri De'Pazzi and his men, all of whom are members of the Templar Order. Outnumbered and with no weapons to defend themselves, the Auditores stand helpless. This is the time we are introduced to war-hardened veteran, Mario Auditore, who appears seemingly out of nowhere and rescues Ezio and his family. With his men killed, Vieri

makes a run for it, and Mario uses this opportunity to introduce himself as Ezio's uncle. He then mentions that they can take refuge in his home in the city of Monteriggioni.

Analysis:

Mario's sudden introduction in the game catches everyone by surprise. Not because he rescues the protagonist from a completely helpless situation, which admittedly is a common cliché in all stories following this structure, but because players had no prior knowledge of Ezio even having an uncle, let alone a tough and skilled warrior. It's also refreshing to note that Mario doesn't conform to the typical 'wise old man' mentor cliché, a deviation the writers skillfully executed to minimize clichés within the narrative. Moreover, another intriguing aspect is the game's departure from the conventional use of a single mentor for the protagonist. Many mentors exist in the game to help Ezio develop his stealth and climbing skills, but Mario can be considered the 'main mentor' within the overall narrative. He imparts essential knowledge, helping Ezio understand the significance of his father's robes and the origins of the Templar/Assassin conflict. Effectively, Mario educates Ezio about the 'Pieces of Eden', which lie at the heart of the conflict between the two factions and the whole purpose of Ezio's journey – the recovery of these artifacts.

Critiques:

The abruptness of Mario's introduction raises questions. Not only is his home in Monteriggioni miles away, but how could he have known that Ezio and his family were fleeing the night that they did, which occurred mere days after the deaths of Ezio's father and brothers. This aspect somewhat affects the overall believability of the narrative.

Stage 5: The First Threshold

Stage five signifies the point of no return. It is where the Hero takes on a challenge that solidifies their new life. The ordinary world that they once knew is left behind during this time. It marks the beginning of the protagonist's new life and an end to Act I.

Summary:

Once arrived and settled in Monteriggioni, our protagonist undergoes a series of dialogues, from mentor Mario, that explain the reasoning behind the demise of his father and brothers. It is revealed that a man named Uberto Alberti betrayed them and is a high-ranking member of some group known as the Templars. That his father, Giovanni, possessed information regarding plans of theirs to kill the leader of Florence and overtake the city. Mario explains to Ezio that the Assassin brotherhood exists to counteract their plans and to prevent them from having the 'Pieces of Eden,' artifacts that allow for the manipulation of human development.

Now understanding of the circumstances, but filled with anger, Ezio decides to hunt down Uberto and bring vengeance for his family. In doing so, he also knows that this will weaken the structure of the Templars and make him a step closer to reaching its head conspirator.

Analysis:

The decision to follow-through with his plans and kill Uberto Alberti is the first threshold of the game for two reasons. First, it is indicative of the types of missions that Ezio will complete throughout this journey. That is, to find and kill high-ranking Templars and weaken their infrastructure. The mission that players receive to hunt-down and kill Alberti highlights the key aspects of Ezio's new life and demonstrate his crossover from the ordinary world to that of an assassin. His decision to kill Alberti also represents a significant turning point in Ezio's character arc. Never before has he killed a man, and his decision to do so demonstrates the crossing of a threshold, a transition that is necessary for him to align with the beliefs and purpose of the Assassin Brotherhood.

Act II: Initiation

Stage 6: The Journey

Everything between the start of the protagonist's 'new life' and their preparations for dealing with their final task occurs in this stage. As such, the vast majority of the story takes place here. This includes world exploration, fighting enemies, gaining skills, and determining goals. All the plot twists and full character development take place in the hero's journey. It serves as a preparation stage for the hero's most challenging task.

Summary and Analysis:

Objective:

After killing Uberto Alberti and fulfilling his desire for vengeance, Ezio shifts his focus to Rodrigo Borgia, the master conspirator, and head of the Templar Order. In order to reach him, Ezio must further break down their infrastructure, assassinating one Templar at a time. In the process, he will slowly gain information regarding Borgia's whereabouts and the 'Pieces of Eden.' If Ezio can recover these artifacts, he can stop Rodrigo and his men from destroying humanity, and more importantly, fulfill his destiny.

Alliances Formed:

Ezio's desire to bring down the Templars is no small task, and thus, it requires the help of other people. In his journey, he meets all sorts of characters who assist him in bringing down Templar strongholds, honing his skills, and upgrading his armory. Among the many allies formed, there are a couple worth mentioning.

- **Leonardo Da Vinci** – A family friend of the Auditores and master artist, scientist, and engineer. Leonardo is essential to Ezio's character development and goals, as he upgrades his equipment and weaponry to the standards necessary for infiltrating Templar strongholds. At times, Leonardo's inventions are even necessary for players to complete quests.
- **Bartolomeo d'Alviano** – Bartolomeo plays a crucial role in assisting Ezio in achieving his objectives. As a former military leader, he lends his forces to Ezio's cause, aiding in the liberation of various cities from Templar control.

Locations Discovered:

As Ezio progresses on his journey, he becomes aware of the pervasive influence the Templars exert throughout Italy. It forces Ezio to travel extensively across the country, liberating various cities from Templar control. The diverse architecture and unique scenery portrayed in each city not only add depth but also enrich our understanding of the world.

- **Florence:** Where the beginning stages of the game take place. Crucial in understanding Ezio's background.
- **Tuscany:** Picturesque countryside where many side quests exist for players to engage in. A portion of the main storyline occurs here.
- **Rome:** Large, architecturally significant city where players may visit, but not too significant to the main storyline.
- **Venice:** Important city in the overall narrative of Assassin's Creed II. Key features include unique architecture, canals, and major plot developments.
- **Forli:** Smaller town located in the swamplands of Italy. It is here that Ezio makes allies with its leader, Catarina Sforza to halt templar plans of expansion there.

Key Events:

- **Ezio's recovery of the 'The Apple':** 'The Apple' is one of the two artifacts sought by the Templars, capable of manipulating human development when combined with the staff. Ezio's acquisition of 'The Apple' comes after a series of challenging missions and substantial effort from the player. It severely hinders the Templars' progress and stands as a significant milestone in the game.

- **Borgia's Rise to Pope:** Rodrigo Borgia's ascension to pope grants him access to the papal staff, the second piece of Eden. With the power of this artifact, the antagonist of Assassins Creed II becomes nearly unstoppable. Coupled with his position as the head of the catholic church, Borgia wields immense influence throughout Italy, making this a standout moment in the story.
- **Ezio's initiation into the Assassin Brotherhood:** When Ezio is initiated as an Assassin, it marks the first time in his life that he becomes part of something larger than himself. This emotional moment also showcases Ezio stepping into his father's shoes. Becoming an assassin signifies a shift from personal vendetta to a broader mission of justice, freedom, and the protection of humanity.

Stage 7: The Final Dungeon

This stage encompasses all the preparations the hero makes before their confrontation with the antagonist. It doesn't focus on the final confrontation itself but rather everything leading up to it.

Summary:

At this point in the story, Ezio is ready to face Rodrigo Borgia and end his madness. To do so, he needs to be prepared, and it can even be argued that everything Ezio has done so far in his journey has been the preparation stage of the final battle. Although true, what differentiates this part of the game are the things that Ezio must do immediately preceding their confrontation. These are the components that make up stage seven of his quest.

In order to get to Borgia, Ezio must first reach him. He needs to reach his exact location inside the Vatican so that he may kill him. Getting there requires him to infiltrate the Vatican by sneaking past guards and performing a series of tricky stealth and climbing sequences. These sequences are some of the hardest in the game and require players to utilize everything in their skillset. One stealth sequence requires players to blend in with various groups of monks moving group by group across a narrow pathway that is filled with Templar guards. It's a near impossible task to do undetected given their close proximity to the monks.

Analysis:

Ezio's infiltration of the Vatican follows a very logical series of steps, which I appreciate. It's not a mission that serves no purpose; however, what I find somewhat lacking is the initial explanation for how Ezio knows Rodrigo Borgia's exact location. In fact, as you start to make your way through the Vatican, players are simply moving towards the great hall as indicated by a marker. The story could have benefitted from a cut scene or dialogue that hinted at some sort of public announcement regarding the Pope

(Rodrigo Borgia) holding a mass in the great hall that day. It would have made this stage feel more deliberate and well-planned on Ezio's part.

Stage 8: The Great Ordeal

Represented by its inclusion of the final boss battle, this stage is the culmination of everything the hero has been working towards in their journey. All the missions, skills learned, and obstacles surpassed have been in preparation for this moment. The Great Ordeal marks the end of act II and sets up the hero's 'return.'

Summary:

Legendary Assassin, Ezio, has infiltrated the Vatican. Armed with the 'Apple' and a desire to fulfill the mission of the brotherhood, he is prepared to seize the Papal staff – the second Piece of Eden. This artifact remains in the hands of head Templar and now Pope, Rodrigo Borgia. Each of them being equipped with a Piece of Eden leads to a historic and significant battle, eventually resulting in Borgia's fall. Now equipped with both the Apple and the staff, Ezio is ready to seize his prize and unveil the secrets and origins surrounding their creation.

Analysis:

The battle itself is well-designed and climactic, successfully filling all the suspense and action leading up to that point. It is, by far, the toughest opponent players have to face, as it should be. The capabilities and power of the artifacts are really displayed here, demonstrating to the audience why they have been so sought after by the Assassins and Templars. Ezio's defeat of Borgia is the culmination of all the hours and hard work players have put into the game, matched only by the following stages that tie up loose ends and reveal the purpose of the artifacts' creation.

Critiques:

The main critique I have surrounding this stage is in regard to Ezio not killing Borgia. After defeating him in battle, Ezio has the ability to do so as Borgia lies helpless on the floor. However, Ezio states that killing him is unnecessary? From a narrative perspective, I suppose that this choice could build up more tension for future encounters. Realistically, though, it makes no sense. Throughout the game, Ezio has been assassinating Templars one by one. Killing the head Templar would have seemed very logical to the storyline and Ezio's overall character arc. Also, having Ezio kill the game's antagonist would have brought a better sense of relief and justice for players, further enhancing all the hard work and effort they put into the game.

Act III: The Return

Stage 9: The Prize

This is where the hero acquires the item(s) or knowledge that they have been seeking throughout the story. Often times, it is not what the hero expects. Here, we discover the mysteries and answers surrounding the hero's overall journey in the game.

Summary:

With the Pieces of Eden in hand, it's time for Ezio to discover their origins, something only possible with both artifacts combined. The Apple and the Papal Staff, when combined, unlock a vault hidden in the depths of the Vatican where Ezio's battle with Borgia took place. Unlocking the vault reveals a room occupied by Minerva, a hologram kept by the Vatican to suppress the origins of the universe. Ezio learns that an ancient civilization – "The First Civilization" – of technologically superior beings used humans as slaves to create early human civilization. Humans were responsible for creating the artifacts and manipulating humanity for their own purposes. He discovers that a massive catastrophe wiped out most of Minerva's race, and that a second one is forthcoming - a massive solar flare. She states that this event will eradicate humanity once again and urges Desmond to prevent the oncoming disaster by guiding humanity toward a different future.

Analysis:

At this point, Ezio uncovers crucial information regarding the Pieces of Eden, the central focus of the Assassin/Templar conflict. What's intriguing is that Minerva, the holographic representation of the first civilization, speaks to Desmond Miles directly through Ezio's memories. This serves as a reminder to players that there is an overarching narrative surrounding modern-day protagonist Desmond Miles. The explanation that Desmond is the chosen 'prophet' is significant because it reveals why he was coerced by Abstergo into undergoing the process of reliving Ezio's memories in the beginning of the game. The explanation is well-presented and is certainly not expected by Ezio, further adding to the narrative of Assassins Creed II.

Stage 10: The Road Home

The "Road Home" is the segment of the story where, after accomplishing their mission, the hero embarks on their journey back to the ordinary world. This stage often involves encountering new challenges and ordeals as the hero applies their newfound knowledge and wisdom.

Please note that for this stage, I will begin with the analysis first, followed by the summary, as I believe it will aid in a better understanding of this stage in Assassin's Creed II.

Analysis:

While the traditional depiction of “The Road Home” stage may not be explicitly illustrated in Assassins Creed II, certain elements towards the end of the story can be categorized within this stage. These elements deviate from what is typically associated with this stage in other narratives that follow the hero’s journey story outline.

Summary:

After discovering his relationship to the Pieces of Eden, Desmond snaps out of Ezio’s memories and back to the present day. With his newfound knowledge regarding his role as the prophet and the origins of the Pieces of Eden, Desmond finally understands why he is pursued by Abstergo. Shortly after exiting the Animus, he must grapple with the aftermath of his discoveries. This can be viewed as a form of “returning” to the ordinary world, albeit with a transformed perspective and purpose.

Stage 11: The Return

The final stage of ‘The Hero’s Journey’ brings the game/story to a close, tying up any loose ends in the process and showcasing the protagonist’s fate to demonstrate their newfound life.

Summary:

Still pursued by Abstergo, Desmond’s hideout is compromised by the modern-day Templars. Armed with the knowledge gained through Ezio’s memories and the revelation of his crucial role in humanity’s fate, Desmond fights his way out. He and his team of modern-day assassins make a daring escape in a truck, setting the stage for Desmond’s ongoing journey in the Assassin’s Creed series.

Analysis:

Desmond’s escape is a pivotal moment propelling his story forward and connecting the events of Assassins Creed II to the broader narrative of the franchise. It conveys to the audience that all the emotions, action, and effort they experienced during Ezio’s entire journey will continue into the sequel.

Strongest Element

The strongest element of Assassin's Creed II's narrative lies in its logical coherence. The main storyline events are meticulously connected, following a clear and deliberate sequence. For instance, when Ezio assassinates a high-ranking Templar member, he gains information to locate and eliminate the next higher-ranking member. This pattern continues, ultimately leading to the order's leader. In effect, the main character doesn't immediately confront the head conspirator, seize the artifacts, and save humanity's fate. Each mission in the narrative follows a logical sequence of steps that progresses Ezio towards these objectives. As a result, the game's flow and pacing remains smooth and realistic.

Unsuccessful Element

The dual narrative that exists between Desmond and his ancestor, Ezio, stands out as the most unsuccessful element of the story. While it's an original and intriguing concept, it can be confusing at times due to Desmond's inclusion. Players only assume the role of Desmond briefly at the beginning and end of the game. Consequently, the narrative of his conflict with Abstergo doesn't significantly contribute to Ezio's character development or the challenges he faces on his journey. This is particularly important because players spend the majority of their time playing as Ezio in Assassins Creed II (except for brief moments at the beginning and end, as mentioned). Perhaps the writers intended to incorporate Desmond into future games of the series, using Assassins Creed II as some type of minor introduction. However, his presence leads to a somewhat complicated oversight for players. It would have been more beneficial, I feel, to incorporate Desmond's storyline in a way that directly impacts Ezio, other than stating that he's an ancestor of his. This would have created a more intriguing and cohesive narrative.

Highlight

Ezio putting on his father's Assassin robes is the highlight of the story for me, in terms of the narrative side of things. It marks the beginning of Ezio's transformation, foreshadows both his role in the ongoing Assassin/Templar conflict and the epic journey he is about to embark on.

Critical Reception

IGN – David Clayman – 9.2 / 10 - <https://www.ign.com/articles/2009/11/17/assassins-creed-ii-review-2>

- Assassin's Creed II ties-up loose ends, picking up exactly where we left off in the first game.
- Accurately describes Abstergo as the modern-day templars.
- Describes that his genealogy put Desmond at the center of a war between the Templars. Accurate.
- Mentions that Desmond starts out as an unlikeable character, which I disagree with, but I understand his point. (Ezio being carefree and a womanizer)

- States that the plot causes players to stick with story, which might be true. For me, it was just wanting to see Ezio follow in the footsteps of his father.
- Notes showing Ezio's birth in the beginning of the story was used to show movement controls. Interesting point.

Gamespot – Kevin VanOrd – 8 / 10 - <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/assassins-creed-ii-review/1900-6253120/>

- Makes note of game's astounding display of Renaissance Italy and how it delivers a world greatly contributing the story's narrative.
- Says story is cohesive, with character Ezio being a terrific addition.
- Comments on the dual narrative approach between Desmond and Ezio
- Makes notes of Ezio's carefree lifestyle at the beginning and how that contributes to his overall character arc.
- States Ezio isn't at the mercy of the plot, but rather, the narrative evolves from his need to uncover the truth behind his sorrows. True, but at the same time Ezio is unknowingly acting in accordance with the desire of the Assassin brotherhood, something he doesn't find out until later on in the game.

Lessons

- **The Importance of Character Development:**
The character arc of a protagonist is pivotal in establishing an emotional connection between the audience and the narrative. In a story-driven game, successfully engaging players on an emotional level significantly increases its potential for success. It is crucial to infuse believability and realism into the protagonist's action and dialogue to accomplish this. This is precisely what makes Ezio's character arc so impactful; he undergoes a transformation from a carefree lifestyle to one of maturity and honor. These traits are relatable to many individuals, enhancing the emotional investment that players have in the game.
- **Tailoring a Narrative Structure that Fits the Plot:**
Not all stories are identical, and as such, they require varying structures. Determining the most effective outline for the story is crucial. For instance, in Ezio's pursuit of the antagonist, the narrative must follow a linear sequence; otherwise, the story would lack believability. Ezio systematically eliminates high-ranking Templar members, gathering the information needed to progress to the next highest-ranking member.

Summation

Assassin's Creed II warrants a thorough and in-depth analysis due to its well-crafted story, intricate plot, and engaging gameplay. Personally, it holds a special place in my heart as it was the first game to evoke intense emotions and a strong connection within me. Furthermore, it stands out as one of the most successful games in the series, primarily attributed to its compelling storyline.