

WHAT MAKES GAMES FUN?

based on The Art of Game Design
by Jesse Schell



WARM UP EXERCISE

Exercise #1

... FAVORITE GAME

and why? (up to 3 reasons)

... LEAST FAVORITE GAME

and why? (up to 3 reasons)

10 min



IDEA #1: THE GAME IS
NOT AN EXPERIENCE

IDEA #2: THE GAME IS
MADE FOR A PLAYER

IDEA #3: THE EXPERIENCE
COMES FROM THE GAME

**3 IDEAS TO
KEEP IN MIND**

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IDEA #1: THE GAME IS NOT THE EXPERIENCE

"If a tree falls in the forest
and no one is there to hear it,
does it make a sound?"

...

ANCIENT ZEN QUOTE

MASTERING HUMAN EXPERIENCES

Understanding the human mind
& heart with 3 approaches:

PSYCHOLOGY

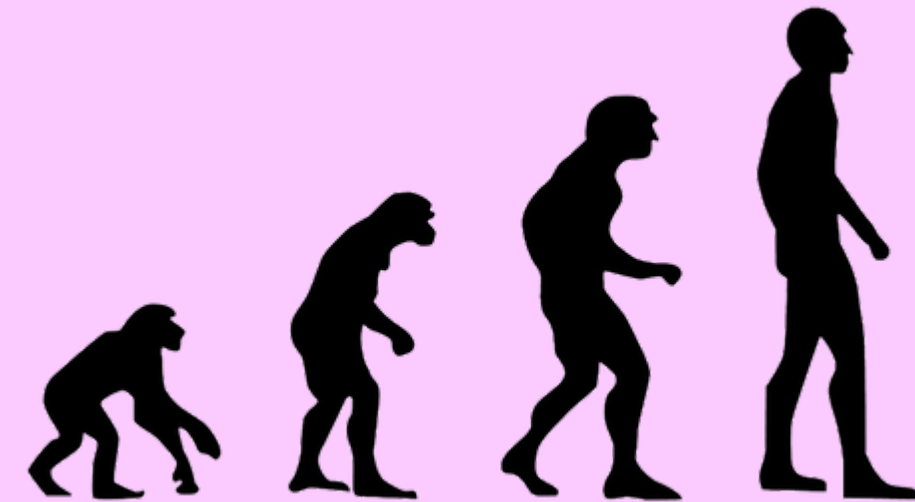
Wants to understand
what makes people
tick

ANTHROPOLOGY

Wants to understand
people on a human
level

DESIGN

Just wants to make
people happy



A TOOL USED BY ALL
3 DISCIPLINES:

INTROSPECTION

EXAMINING YOUR OWN THOUGHTS & FEELINGS



IS INTROSPECTION RELIABLE?

PERIL#1 IT CAN
LEAD TO FALSE
CONCLUSIONS ABOUT
REALITY

But games are not
reality, so
introspection is a
powerful & trustworthy
tool

PERIL#2 WHAT IS TRUE
OF MY EXPERIENCES
MAY NOT BE TRUE OF
OTHERS

"I like the game,
therefore it must be
good" is not always a
true statement

TWO MINDSETS

"I ONLY DESIGN FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME"

- Game designers have unusual tastes
- You won't design alone
- This will limit your games & audience



"PERSONAL OPINIONS CAN'T BE TRUSTED"

- You can't leave every decision to playtesting
- Players may reject the game before it's done, but not once completed
- Playtesting can only happen occasionally



IDEA #2: THE GAME IS MADE FOR A PLAYER

The experience is in the
player's mind

THE GAME IS MADE
FOR A PLAYER:
LOOKING OUTSIDE

...

USE EMPATHY TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE
PLAYER'S PLACE

- Use memories
- Spend time with your audience. Talk to them, observe them...



EXTERNAL FACTORS: DEMOGRAPHICS

Age, gender, income,
ethnicity,...



INTERNAL FACTORS: PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Bartle's 4 Player types:

1. Achievers
2. Explorers
3. Socializers
4. Killers

Interest factors



The diagram features a vertical line on the left side. Two horizontal lines branch off to the right from this vertical line. Each horizontal line starts with a small pink circle. The top horizontal line leads to the text 'EXTERNAL FACTORS: DEMOGRAPHICS' and 'Age, gender, income, ethnicity,...'. The bottom horizontal line leads to the text 'INTERNAL FACTORS: PSYCHOGRAPHICS', followed by 'LeBlanc's 8 Game Pleasures:' and a numbered list of eight items. To the right of these two branches is a large pink rectangle with a blue border containing the text 'Interest factors'. The background is split into a light yellow top half and a blue bottom half.

EXTERNAL FACTORS:

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age, gender, income,
ethnicity,...

INTERNAL FACTORS:

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

LeBlanc's 8 Game Pleasures:

1. Sensation
2. Fantasy
3. Narrative
4. Challenge
5. Fellowship
6. Discovery
7. Expression
8. Submission

But there are more...

Interest factors

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Exercise #2

... FOR YOUR SELECTED GAMES

- Target age & gender
- Player type
- Game pleasures

10 min



IDEA #3: THE GAME CONSISTS OF ELEMENTS

The experience rises out of a
game, thus of it's elements,
which a player interacts with

What are games made of?

... MECHANICS

[click for examples](#)

Describe the goal of the game, how players can/cannot try to achieve it and what happens when they try

... STORY

Sequence of events that unfolds in your game: linear and pre-scripted or branching and emergind

... AESTHETICS

How the game looks, sounds, smells, tastes & feels

... TECHNOLOGY

The medium in which aesthetics take place, mechanics will occur, and through which the story will be told

Questions to ask yourself:

The 4 elements

- Mechanics
- Story
- Aesthetics
- Technology

1. Is my game design using all four elements?

2. Could my design be improved by enhancing elements in one or more of the categories?

3. Are the 4 elements in harmony, reinforcing each other, and working together toward a common theme?



GAME ELEMENTS

Exercise #3

... FOR YOUR SELECTED GAMES

List what is used/done for:

- Mechanics
- Story
- Aesthetics
- Technology

10 min

CASE STUDY

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA





DEMOGRAPHICS

Mostly 18–24 and male
(females too, just 25%)

PHSYCHOGRAPHICS

- Pleasures: fantasy, discovery, narrative, challenge
- Player types: explorers



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

#1 MECHANICS

3 INTERESTING GAME MECHANICS:

●●● **Emphasis on time**

Time travel. The mechanics of the game change depending on how old Link is.

●●● **Variations of player character**

Each transformation brings new abilities and limitations that players must learn to utilize in order to progress in the game.

●●● **Companions**

Link's companions make it possible for players to leave the game for long periods of time without forgetting what they were doing when they last played.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

#2 STORY

ZELDA GAMES ARE WELL KNOWN FOR THEIR STORYLINES

●●● Independence & completeness

Each game has its own story, allowing players to enjoy the game with no need of prior knowledge

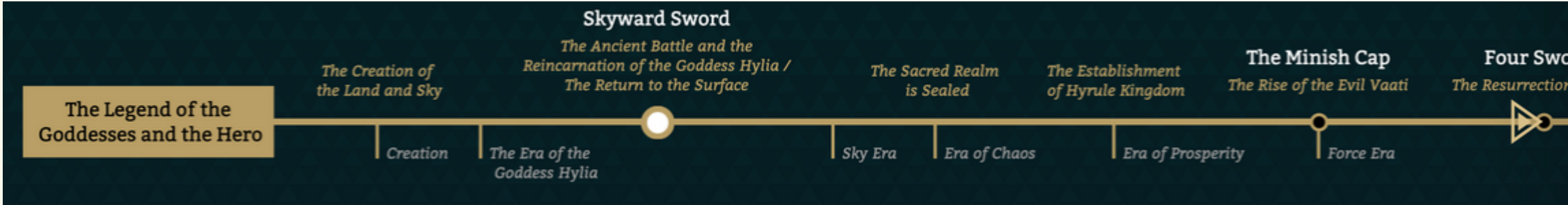
●●● The bigger picture

Each game in the series tells an important part of the history of Hyrule, making the games deeper, more realistic and more engaging

<https://www.zelda.com/about/>

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

#2 STORY



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

#3 AESTHETICS

THROUGHOUT ALL GAMES, A CONSISTENT
AESTHETICS HAS BEEN MAINTAINED

- Imagery and typography that convey the right mood
- Consistency in the look & feel of characters, objects and the environment
- Rich music that sets the scene

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

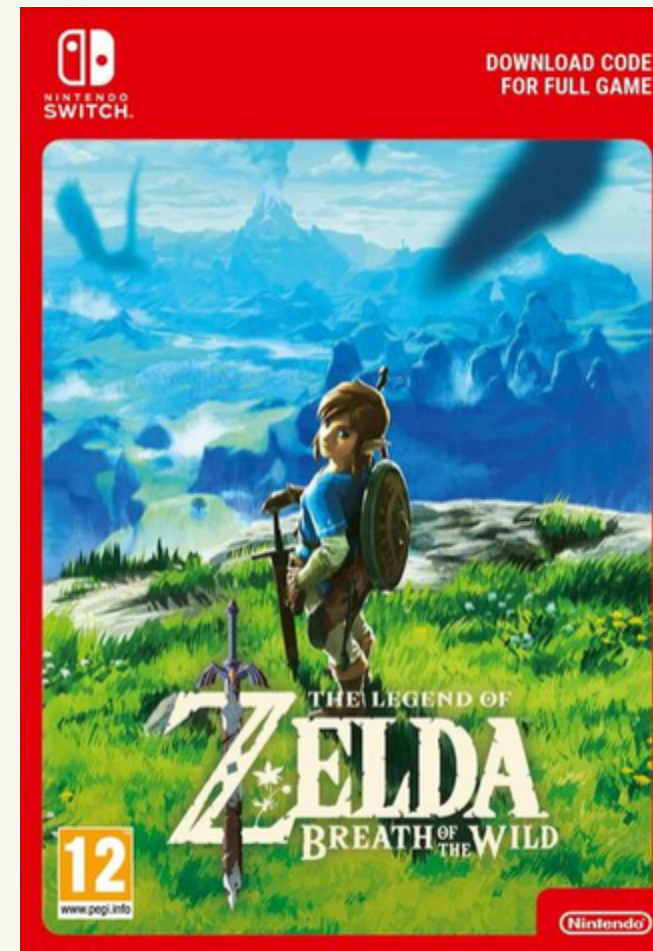
#3 AESTHETICS



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

THE TECHNOLOGIES USED ALLOWED THE
AESTHETICS, MECHANICS & STORYLINES
TO EXIST

#4 TECHNOLOGY



- NintendoDS,
Wii,
Nintendo
Switch, etc.

CASE STUDY



BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW





DEMOGRAPHICS

Mostly 18–24 and male

PHSYCHOGRAPHICS

- Pleasures: action, adventure, fantasy, challenge
- Player types: killers



BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW

EXAMPLE OF FAILED GAME DESIGN

●●● Mechanics

Confusing game play engine, repetitive mission modes, and awkward camera angles

●●● Storyline

The story was praised, but the ending is criticized because there is no direction to the "fulfilling ending" of the story, outside of another source

●●● Aesthetics

The in-game cinematics were praised

●●● Technology

Console video game exclusively for the Nintendo GameCube and Xbox systems

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Exercise

#4

... FOR YOUR SELECTED GAMES

- Are all 4 elements present in your game?
- Do they appropriately cater to the target audience?
- Do the elements work well with each other, balancing each other out?

10 min

CONCLUSION

SO, HOW TO MAKE A
GAME FUN?





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"Every truth has four corners:
as a teacher I give you one
corner, and it is for you to
find the other three"

...

CONFUCIUS



THE ART OF GAME DESIGN

by Jesse Schell

3 GROUND-BREAKING MECHANICS FROM THE LEGEND OF ZELDA FRANCHISE

<https://carolinianuncg.com/2017/04/19/the-legend-of-zelda-breath-of-the-wild-is-a-masterclass-in-video-game-aesthetic/>

REFERENCES