Standing on a steep cliff face in cold Russia, you look at your mission leader as his shadow is cast onto the white snow behind him. Then you turn to see your own- only to realize there is no shadow. However, you as the player know what your purpose is in the digital world you have been put in and are able to piece together your history from small hints and clues scattered in the surrounding environments. Throughout *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*, there are decently long yet dynamic introductions to each part of the campaign, but there are hints throughout the world such that even without a narration element, the player’s place in the game is made clear.

Somewhat unwittingly, I began playing Modern Warfare 2 (MW2) without thinking about the fact it continued off of another game. That aside, the first big story element of MW2 is how clear the story is within minutes of starting the campaign. Even without context of the prior game, you are thrown into a position not of learning but of *teaching*. You are responsible for showing new recruits how to shoot, throw a grenade, and some fairly basic tactics to the game; aiming down the sight, crouching, etc. Not only does this teach someone the controls of the game, especially for someone like me who has never played Call of Duty games, but it gives them a sense of responsibility and purpose. There’s no situation where it’s just telling you to click to shoot or ‘C’ to crouch. You are the one teaching others whilst learning yourself. Then, as you are thrown into a practice arena, the game assesses your difficulty. While at its essence this is a tutorial scene, it is not a direct tutorial- which I personally appreciated since it wasn’t a step-by-step “how to play” tutorial. Combined with the characters placed to shout at you and the surrounding atmosphere puts you in the overall game itself. For example, if you don’t aim down the sight, you get someone yelling at you, “Roach, don’t aim from the hip!” It’s a military setting, clearly, but this small line tells you your name is Roach. The small environment clues tell you where you are- and if you listen carefully, they tell you *who* you are.

In the beginning parts of the campaign, it is made apparent that you are a skilled soldier, rising up through the ranks and being put on a special task force. There’s the obvious hint where there is an intense narration scene with visuals that bring you right into the feeling you of a secret mission; reticle locating people on satellite imaging and everything. This choice to have an introduction to every level is important because it allows you to place *yourself*, as the player, into the world. You are *directly* told the mission, in such a way that you can imagine a soldier being given orders. The assignment is given directly to you, there isn’t text that says [Objective: Kill People]. You have a purpose, and thus a reason to complete the mission.

This purpose is what makes the character identity important. Personally, I was never allowed to play graphically violent FPS games, and I grew up accepting that. I had fun with friends, but never got engaged in campaigns. Having started from the beginning and realizing the purpose the game’s narrative design gives you, it’s hard *not* to get engaged with the game.