One of the beautiful things about Unpacking is that it *tells* you nothing. The game has no dialogue, the only text is the small comments at the end of each level. Instead, the entire experience is set up to *show* you who the main character is. This is done through the settings themselves, the items that you must unpack from the boxes, as well as the items that are already in the space when you’re unpacking. Alone all of these pieces paint an incomplete picture, but together they can be used not only to infer, but determine, who the main character is. I decided to analyze the level “2007,” as, in my opinion, this is the best of the early levels to learn about the character. For example, I know that the main character is female. This is an easy determination to make as during this level you will unbox both bras and tampons, as shown in Figure 1. Another obvious thing is that the character is a recent college graduate. The fact that the character graduated college is easily proven by the existence of their degree, which is shown in Figure 2. A harder thing to prove is that the character *recently* graduated. In fact, without some heavy speculation, it’s almost impossible when using just the 2007 level. If you include knowledge from 2004 however, then it becomes much easier as the degree was not present in 2004, meaning it had to be recently acquired. So far, I know that the character is young, female, and a recent college graduate. But I can go further. I also know that the character is an artist. This is relatively easy to prove as well since they have lots of art supplies, as shown in Figure 3. The final thing I can show is that the character is a nerd. There are a plethora of nerdy objects and bobbles that are unboxed in this level. From D&D paraphernalia (figure 4) to video games and consoles (figures 5 and 6). The logical conclusion from the ownership of these items is that the character is a gamer and a D&D player, which by all definitions makes them a nerd (I mean if they’re not then I guess I’m not either). So, in conclusion, our main character is a young, female nerd who just recently graduated college and either does art as a hobby or as a career.

The setting of this level requires more interpretation than the traits of the main character, but it can still be derived from the space and the objects within it. An easy thing to determine is that the 2007 level is set in a house and not an apartment. A big clue that points to this is the floor plan (figure 7), this space has 3 bedrooms and 2 entrances/exits, which would indicate that it is an actual house rather than an apartment. The second clue is that, when looking out the bedroom window, grass and a hose can be seen (figure 8), which wouldn’t be present in an apartment. Another determination I can make about this space is that it is already occupied by two other people who were likely there for some time before the main character moved in. The existence of the two different people is easily proven by the fact that in the bathroom there are already two toothbrushes on the sink (figure 9). Other things could be used to prove this but to me, this seems the most concrete. I also know that these two different people have already been here for some time because of the buildup of dirty dishes in the sink (figure 10). To me, this proves that the other roommates have been here for at least a couple of days before the main character, and probably longer. The final thing I know for sure about this space is that the people the main character is moving in with are two of their D&D friends. I know this is the case because of the various D&D objects in the dining room. Specifically, the items that are on the table (figure 11). The fact that there are character sheets and a dice tower on the table would indicate that this table is used for the actual playing of D&D, rather than just being a shared hobby. In conclusion, this space is a house that two of the main characters’ D&D friends live in, and the main character has been invited to start rooming with them.

According to Bartle’s player types, I would fall under an achiever. I tend to care about accomplishing things, I find myself prioritizing achievements over things like kills or exploration. And socializing has never been my thing. I would say that this game appeals the most to explorers. This is because, according to Bartle, explorers tend to immerse themselves in the unspoken story of games. They go looking for things in the environment that show things about the world that the average player wouldn’t catch. This is the entire point of Unpacking. The whole idea of the game is discovering things about the character and setting by interpreting the levels and objects. Explorers thrive in that environment since they look for details that other people might miss. For example, in 2007’s bathroom you can see that one of the toiletry bags has items sticking out of it (figure 12). Most players probably wouldn’t pay much attention to this but someone who is deep-diving into everything would not only notice this but also use it to make more determinations about the narrative. Unpacking is full of little details like this that add so much more depth to the overall narrative. This makes it a perfect game for explorers.

A video game of teapots on a shelf

Description automatically generated

Figure Main Character's Bras

A pixel art of a certificate

Description automatically generated

Figure Main Character's Degree

A computer screen shot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Figure Main Character's Art Supplies

A video game of a game of books on a table

Description automatically generated

Figure Main Character's D&D Books

A video game console with a blue microwave

Description automatically generated

Figure Main Character's Retro Gaming Console

A video game controller with a game controller

Description automatically generated

Figure Main Character's Handheld Gaming Console

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Figure Floor Plan of Unpacking's 2007 Level

A video game screen with a window

Description automatically generated

Figure View From Window of Main Character's 2007 Bedroom

A pixel art of a toothbrush and toothpaste

Description automatically generated

Figure Toothbrushes on sink of 2007 Bathroom

A pixel art of a kitchen sink

Description automatically generated

Figure Dishes built up in 2007's kitchen sink

A table with objects on it

Description automatically generated

Figure D&D items on dining room table in 2007 level

A pixel art of a purse

Description automatically generated

Figure Various items sticking out of toiletry bag in 2007 bathroom