Red Dead Redemption 2 (RDR2) is a narrative masterpiece produced by Rockstar Games. RDR2 is the prequal to the 2010 hit Red Dead redemption. Depicting a gang of outlaw's journey across 5 fictional states as they fight against the civilisation of the wild west. The Van Der Linde gang realises that their time as outlaws is coming to an end and as a last-ditch effort, they try to get enough money to run away and retire. The game skilfully uses the gameplay to portray the narrative that is unobtainable through other mediums.

The Van Der Linde gang is less of gang and closer to a family, being very selective of who joins and valuing loyalty over all else. As the player you spend a majority of your time in the game riding horses, to and from missions, and just generally exploring the game. Rockstar masterfully uses this game mechanic, which otherwise would be seen as tedious or just plain old downtime, to deepen the player's connection with the other gang members. Some of the most important dialogue in the game is presented in this way. The time the player spends with these characters also makes the player feel a part of the Van Der Linde family so the player is invested in prosperity of the gang. This all lends itself to one of the games main narrative themes that family does not always have to be blood. The player is also able to have unique interactions with the gang members while in camp, from the little quips as you walk past or full-blown conversations. You are able to spend as much or as little time getting to know the stories of each member. This kind of connection is not able to be built to such a high level with other mediums. Within the world of the game, you are able to take your nephew fishing or go hunting with Charles, this allows the player to decide who to spend time with and who to get to know better. The player may join the other members around the campfire and sing songs or drink booze, the gang even throws large parties for when members return safely. The player begins to treat the gang like family. This builds a bond between the player and the gang members that is unobtainable through other forms of media. Throughout the game the player uncovers Arthur's relationship with his surrogate father figure, Dutch. The player becomes very close to Dutch in the beginning with him even calling the player son which makes the ending to the game even more of a heartbreak. Rockstar uses the elements of the game to portray a stronger and more in-depth story and it pays off in a major way.

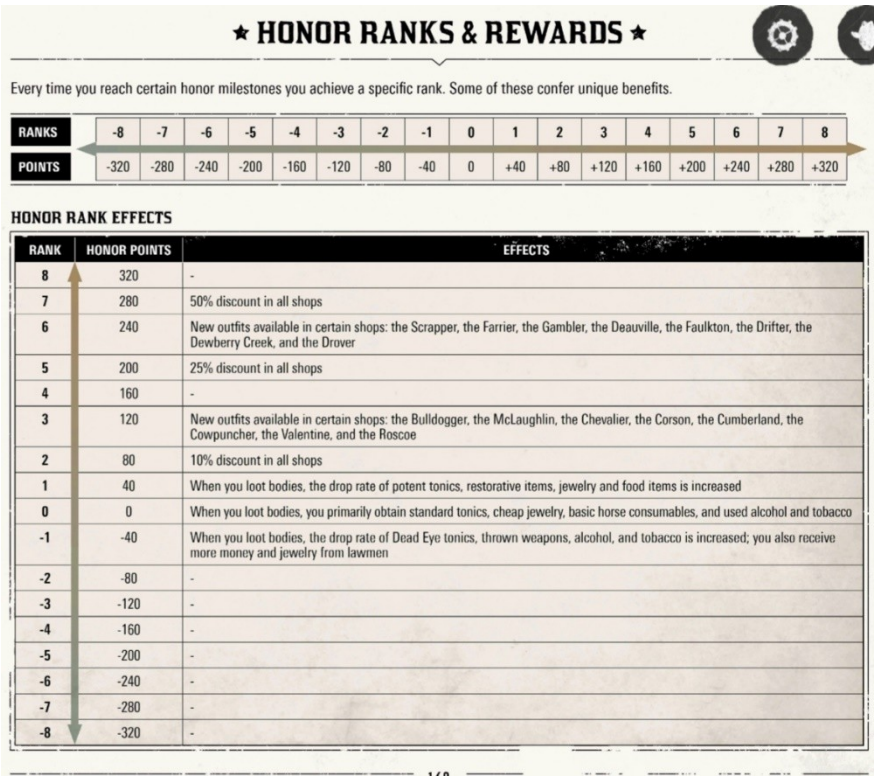
Arthur fishing with his nephew.

Screenshot of gang at campfire.

Throughout RDR2 resistance to change play a huge role in the narrative. The world is becoming more civilised, and the time of the cowboy is coming to an end. The Van Der Linde gang knows this and tries to find a way out. After their first attempt in Blackwater goes south the gang is struggling to survive while on the run from the law. The gang then gets into deeper water through a few badly thought-out plans by Dutch. The game continually shows that as the world changes and Dutch does not. Throughout the game the player goes on many optional side missions and during many of them you discover the beauty of the world, humanity, and civilisation. Both you and Arthur are urged to pursue a high honour playthrough as this unlocks the most dialogue options. The world changes how it interacts with Arthur based on the decisions made through the honour system. This is again a way the gameplay enhances the narrative; the player is able to see the other side to the outlaw life but is not shoehorned into linear gameplay. While not being forced into a particular path the player is certainly urged to follow the good honour path, following this route comes the change of Arthurs

view on the world. The honour system makes the player think twice about their decisions if they want to follow the life of an outlaw or to try and change to go live a simpler life.

RDR2 expertly encourages the player to follow a certain path. As with most games RDR2 doesn't have endings for every little thing the player wants, and with the heavy emphasis on narrative the game has only one ending. This also due to the game being a prequal so it has to follow into the next game. With the game having only one ending the player may feel like they are making decisions they don't want to but must because game forces them to, but this is not the case. The player may feel as though the best course of action for Arthur is to leave and start his own life but the loyalty that Arthur has towards the gang stops him, this also goes for the player. The play has built a huge amount of loyalty to the gang and Dutch's leadership and feels obligated to help the gang. The combat in the game is extremely satisfying with the player having the magical gunman abilities of the likes of Clint Eastwood, this gives the player the impression that they can shoot their way out of anything. This combined with the fact that living like an outlaw is just exceptionally fun the player begins to believe in Dutch's plan to shoot their way out. As a player rarely do you feel as though Arthur is making a decision you wouldn't make. The player and Arthur are highly aligned in what they are thinking/feeling about the situation so when the game does take the decision out of the player's hands it is also being forced onto Arthur. This is extremely well done by the developers to make it feel like you are making the decisions when in reality the player is being pointed that way the whole time.



★ HONOR RANKS & REWARDS ★

Every time you reach certain honor milestones you achieve a specific rank. Some of these confer unique benefits.

RANKS	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
POINTS	-320	-280	-240	-200	-160	-120	-80	-40	0	+40	+80	+120	+160	+200	+240	+280	+320

HONOR RANK EFFECTS

RANK	HONOR POINTS	EFFECTS
8	320	-
7	280	50% discount in all shops
6	240	New outfits available in certain shops: the Scrapper, the Farrier, the Gambler, the Deauville, the Faulkton, the Drifter, the Dewberry Creek, and the Drover
5	200	25% discount in all shops
4	160	-
3	120	New outfits available in certain shops: the Bulldogger, the McLaughlin, the Chevalier, the Corson, the Cumberland, the Cowpuncher, the Valentine, and the Roscoe
2	80	10% discount in all shops
1	40	When you loot bodies, the drop rate of potent tonics, restorative items, jewelry and food items is increased
0	0	When you loot bodies, you primarily obtain standard tonics, cheap jewelry, basic horse consumables, and used alcohol and tobacco
-1	-40	When you loot bodies, the drop rate of Dead Eye tonics, thrown weapons, alcohol, and tobacco is increased; you also receive more money and jewelry from lawmen
-2	-80	-
-3	-120	-
-4	-160	-
-5	-200	-
-6	-240	-
-7	-280	-
-8	-320	-

Benefits of following high honour path.

The developers have cleverly used the gameplay to enhance and already rich story. The player is able to gain a connection to Arthur, the gang members, and the overall story that is not possible in other forms of media. Rockstar have used the fact that this is a game to their advantage, and it has paid off in a major way. The player is guided to a already specified ending without feeling forced into the decisions and gameplay elements like the honour system allow the player to open their world views.

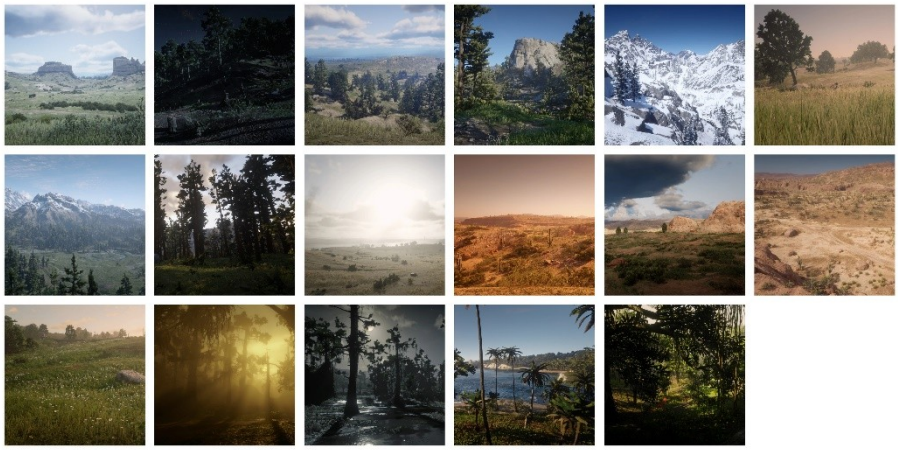
The developers also use what would normally be downtime to deepen the connection to the characters. All of this creates a deep, rich, and satisfying story that fits perfectly into a game.

The world building of RDR2 is unmatched and is leagues above competition. The depth, detail and the accuracy to the time period are all second to none. The world building not only immerses the player in the environment but also invests the player into the story and characters.

One of the main draws of the game is the realism of the world and its details. These details add to the immersion of an already expansive world and as the player the game lives and breathes around you. One example of this is the growth of Arthur's hair which grows at a realistic rate. In order to cut his hair, you must go to one of the many of the barbers. Another example of the game's great realism is Arthur's weight will change based on how much food you consume. The horse gameplay is also scattered with little details, from the horse getting dirty to the bond between the player and the horse getting stronger based on the quality of the feed. Little details like this deepen the world and the player's connection to Arthur and the environment. Through the care of Arthur, his horse, and other members of the gang the player is connected to these characters on another level that would not be obtainable without this constant interaction.

Growth of Arthur's hair.

The environment of RDR2 is also incredibly expansive containing 234 individual species of animals and biomes that range from swamps to snowy mountains to deserts and to grassy plains. With one of the largest maps in open world gaming RDR2 allows the player to explore freely for much of the game. The player can fully immerse themselves in the untamed environments of the wild west from hunting animals to foraging herbs and berries this game creates a world to live in like no other. Other games with similarly sized maps tend to lack the specific detail to fully convince the player that this place exists somewhere out there but RDR2 perfectly fills out the world to feel as real as place that exists on Earth. The realism and expansiveness of the world makes the story all the much more impactful. Actions that Arthur and the player make are felt throughout the game and the NPCs adapt, remember, and even change their behaviour based on the actions taken by the player and Arthur. One of the side missions finds Arthur teaching a solo lady in the wilderness to survive, should the player choose to help coming back to greet the woman later in the game has her reminisce about Arthur and thank him to teaching her to survive. Should the player choose to not help the women will not be able to the survive the wilderness on her own and is killed by outlaws as Arthur wasn't there to teach her to shoot. This is a prime example of the world having such complex interactions between characters despite the already large amount of content contained in the world. These interactions also go beyond just what the player does, the animals themselves interact. Wolves



All images are screenshots from the game.

Concept art for animals (more info).

attack deer, birds diving to catch fish, and scavengers showing up to a fresh carcass. The extent of this world and detail that is contained within all leads to the narrative being more impactful and the game overall just being fun.

RDR2's world does much more than just be a beautiful piece of art worthy of using the picture mode. The world builds on the story, the characters, and makes the game feel complete. Without this world building the massive map would feel empty and the narrative would suffer as a result. The detail of the world allows the player to fully immerse themselves in the game as there are no irregularities to take the player out. The profound immersion of this game allows the story to shine through and wonderfully compliments the gameplay while developing a meaningful and complex narrative.