**Research: Environmental Storytelling | Lars**

**Sources:**

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**Learnings:**

* Don’t take away control from the player
* Instead, put narrative information where it feels organic for the player to look at
* Information that had to be earned feels particularly important to players
* Allowing for multiple interpretations of the narrative content isn’t always bad
* Lay out engagement / interest curve before designing the levels
* Create meaningful metaphors by letting the literal and metaphorical overlap
* Character design has huge implications for the world design and the world’s lore
* Tying objects to vital gameplay mechanics increases their importance for the player’s perception of the game world
* Consciously hold back information to involve players in the process of building the fictional world
  + But then, be careful not to break with their intuitive assumptions
* Tell related sub-stories to convey thematic consistency
* Draw players’ attention to key narrative elements
  + Lighting
  + Movement
  + Shapes and architecture
  + Contrast
  + Symbols, icons, arrows
* Details can hide other details so be careful where to put them
* Consider what your world does not contain -> absence of things has meaning too
* Often, environmental storytelling is about presenting the effect to the player and letting them figure out the cause for themselves
* Visual detail of the world should live up to the narrative detail
  + Else, there is a disconnect
* Realism IS NOT immersion / authenticity
* Physical landscape has implications for emotional landscape when navigating through it
* Removing people from the world lets player focus on what happened to it
* “Pull stories”: Players take the information from the world itself when and how they want to -> can lead to sense of ownership and higher player engagement
* Certain elements can be associated with certain characters and positioned to establish this character has been there
* Think about connections between objects player might draw and whether you really want them to be drawn like this
* Separate between gameplay and world space -> both offer opportunities for storytelling
* Do not use environmental storytelling for information so vital you can’t finish the game without it
* Repetition of similar information can be a useful tool to make sure players will notice
* Environmental clues can be placed to foreshadow later parts of the game and already ground them in the fiction of the game world
* Objects can subtly remind player of the stakes and goals without taking away control
* Environmental storytelling works well with other modes of storytelling (e.g. NPCs commenting on an object of the scenery in dialogue)
* Presence of hostile NPCs or other dangers makes players stay away from exploration sometimes
* Subverting the audience’s expectations makes them recognize the world as unique, interesting and worthwhile
* Often, visual storytelling achieves a greater impact with less means than e.g. dialogue
* Environments can also provide resources for rich emergent narratives
* Systematic elements like quest markers take away the focus from the game world and make players less likely to notice environmental storytelling