

Why I Need Animal Crossing

THIS POST WAS MADE IN SEPTEMBER OF 2018, IT IS VERY DATED BUT I'M STILL KEEPING IT HERE FOR ARCHIVAL PURPOSES.

When I was young, between ages 7-8, I went to a Gamestop and had to make a choice. It was a choice between Katamari Damacy for PS2 or Animal Crossing for the Gamecube. I went for Animal Crossing, a decision that without realizing it, would change my life forever.

I had seen videos of Animal Crossing on old YouTube, and the one that fascinated me the most was a video of a guy pointing his camera at the TV, giving a collection of the passwords that you would tell Tom Nook (the shopkeeper and your landlord) to get free, special items. A lot of the passwords were references to other Nintendo games, my favorite being “MupersmaspbnoS SupersmashbroS.” There’s something that’s just magical about cheat codes, especially to a little kid, and that alone prompted me to get into the Animal Crossing series.

For those that don’t know, the Animal Crossing series is a Nintendo series about living a quiet life in a village populated by other animals that act as your neighbors, each with their own different personality traits and catchphrases. You interact with them and you can do little tasks with them, and they interact with other animals in the village, making it seem like a real community. You make payments on your house to expand it even larger, adding additional rooms and stories. You collect furniture to make your ideal rooms, you collect clothes to wear different outfits, you catch bugs and fish, and dig up fossils. You can send letters to your neighbors, you can design your own clothing, plant flowers across the village, and you can even do events on real-world holidays! The great thing about this though, is that none of it is required. The game moves at your own pace and you dictate how you want to play. There are no punishments, except if you don’t play for a while and your town gets filled with weeds, or if you reset the game and you get scolded for being careless. You do all this while being accompanied by the most beautiful and peaceful music I have ever heard

in my life. In my humble opinion, Animal Crossing is the perfect series to just relax to.

I poured in a couple of hours into the Gamecube game, and I was able to make my house Nintendo themed, with a Blue Bench with “Nintendo” written on it in front of a Mario Pipe, with a gold Mario statue next to it. My basement had all the NES games and arcade items so it felt like a gamer’s paradise. I enjoyed making my clothing designs pixel by pixel and I had to be patient when making them very precise. Overall, I did not invest that much time into the Gamecube Animal Crossing, I had done everything I had wanted to do in it which was to get the coolest furniture by inputting cheat codes.

Around age 9, just before I would move to America, I would go over to my neighbor's house to swim in their pool. They would also let me play their video games, and I had seen Smash Bros 64 on a real-life Nintendo 64 for the first time, and Animal Crossing: City Folk for the Nintendo Wii. They had shown me their village and house, and I was interested. So I went to YouTube again and looked at all the Nintendo themed items that you could acquire, with the coolest being a wearable Majora’s Mask from The Legend of Zelda: Majora’s Mask. The deal with the Wii version, is that you needed to earn points in order to get the Nintendo Items. So I eventually got the game and was too stubborn and impatient to grind my way up to getting the Nintendo items. I still have never gotten the Majora’s Mask on my copy of City Folk to this day.

A year passes and I had now been living in America, and been successful in making my own friends with similar game interests. I was in 4th grade when I had bought Animal Crossing: Wild World for the Nintendo DS, and I had convinced my friend Matt to buy it as well. We also had these devices called Action Replay that would insert cheats into the games we would play. Lemme tell you, I LOADED my copy with Cheats. I had gotten every impossible piece of furniture, every possible clothing piece I had wanted, any item I wanted would be mine. I made my perfect house without any effort.

Fast-Forward to 2011, and the Nintendo 3DS had come out, and I was able to get one for Christmas that year. I would watch YouTube videos about the new games that would come out, with 2 trailers in particular that had caught my eye. One was for Paper Mario: Sticker Star, which was a sequel to my favorite games ever growing up being Paper Mario, Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door, and Super Paper Mario. One could say that the Paper Mario series was my favorite in all of gaming (sidenote: I ended up getting Sticker Star for Christmas 2012, and it was the biggest disappointment of my life. While it's not the worst game I've ever played, it's definitely my least favorite game of all time because of how disrespectful it was to me as a Paper Mario fan). The second trailer that caught my eye was for Animal Crossing: New Leaf and wow, that was the best trailer I had ever seen in my life. I was never more hyped for anything in my life at that point. I remember Nintendo said it would come out June 2012, but it got delayed to November (I remember this because I knew I wouldn't be able to wait until Christmas to play it and I wanted to get it the day of release). Even when the game would get delayed for release, I would come back to that one trailer to get me all excited again.

The reason the trailer was so special was because it highlighted everything I had loved about Animal Crossing as a series, and brought a fresh new twist to the platform with you being the mayor of your village, and you could add public works projects to make your VILLAGE seem more personal. Customization is something that has always been extremely important to me in video games, and Animal Crossing caters to that desire in spades. New Leaf introduced the ability to not only customize your hat and shirt, but also your hairstyle, hair color, glasses, pants, socks and shoes! The trailer also showed off the Nintendo items that you can put in your house, with one being a replica of the Temple of Time from the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

When I ended up getting New Leaf on my 3DS, I wanted to make this my most special village yet, so I gave it a unique name that I've never seen anyone do before online: "Lunatea," named after an area in my favorite childhood game that is very obscure online: "Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil." I customized the flag to be sunset with a

purple, starry sky, and the town tune (a little jingle that plays whenever you talk to an animal) “The Sun Rises” from another favorite game, “Okami.” I was insanely invested in this game, more than I had ever been before. I would play this game for hours, and when it is past 5 PM, you can go to the special island to catch the rarest bugs to later sell, which is the easiest way to farm money in the game. I would stay up until 2 AM catching bugs on the island, all while the most somber and peaceful music would play with the sound of the tide rolling in. I would play so frequently that I would hear the music in my head when I was trying to fall asleep. It got to the point where my mom had to tell me to stop playing for my sanity.

My town had the best villagers too, I had gotten so lucky with who I had. There are over 200 different possible animals that can be chosen to live in your town. Usually, only 7 at a time can live in your village. I had insane luck, and I had amazing villagers all around. There’s one villager in particular, that I will never forget, and made my whole experience feel a million times more fun. Her name was Rosie, and she was a blue cat who was an absolute JOY to interact with. I pampered her with gifts and treated her like royalty. I planted the rarest, most beautiful flowers around her house, sent her love letters every day with furniture as a present to give which she would later put up in her own house. I changed her catchphrase to “meow mix” and her nickname for me was “pookie,” but she would also call me “cutie.” There’s no way to marry other villagers in this game, but if I could, it would be with her.

Anyways, this was the first time in Animal Crossing where I wanted to work for everything myself. I wanted to make my dream house, and my dream village. I wanted to collect every bug, fish, and fossil and donate it all to my museum. I was able to accomplish this, and my 3DS lost track of my playtime because I maxed it out and it stays at 999:59. I invested over 1000 hours into Animal Crossing: New Leaf and I was able to complete a challenge I made for myself. My main room was a Nintendo themed museum, with all the Nintendo collectables, playing the Animal Crossing theme in the background. The room to the left was a kitchen with yellow walls and every food item possible, with Bubblegum pop music in the background. The room in the back was a Halloween theme, with every Halloween themed item that

you get when playing on Halloween, this room had creepy hypnotic music playing. The room to the right was a musical instrument themed room, with my all time favorite furniture piece, the ebony piano, being in the centre (No specific music playing in the background). My attic was a collection of every rare, special item that you can only get on holidays or through special events, even holding my fishing and bug catching trophies. My basement was based around the “Modern” set of furniture pieces, being my favorite style of furniture because it was black and white and very chic.

My village was decorated with flowers across the entire village, and my public works projects included a Cafe, a lighthouse, a campsite, a Flower bed clock, and a tower with little lights around it (that was next to Rosie’s house). I even had 2 custom face cut-out stands where you could be an enemy from Earthbound (my favorite game of all time) or a Pikmin from the Pikmin games.

Animal Crossing: New Leaf is one of my most favorite games I have ever played, and I wish I could play more of it. There has not been a new main series Animal Crossing game in 6 years, which is problematic for me. Since I have completed everything there is to do in New Leaf, I don’t really have a substitute for it. I am 17 years old now, and I suffer from Bipolar disorder, and now, more than ever, I need a new Animal Crossing game. I am currently going through a low point in my life right now, combatting depression and mania from my disorder. I feel like I’ve outgrown video games, and the only game I even care about right now is Smash Bros Ultimate for the Switch coming out in December. However, if a new Animal Crossing game were to be announced, I feel like I would have something to do. When I’m home alone, I usually get my homework done, then sit on my phone for the rest of the day. I have nothing to do. I honestly have nothing to do with my time, and a new Animal Crossing game would change all that for me.

I saw a great YouTube video about Animal Crossing and Mental Health that I actually agree with many points on. The main takeaways from it were that Animal Crossing helped with the narrator’s own mental illnesses because 1). It gave him something to

look forward to every day, 2). It gave him control of something in his life, and 3). It bought him time. Right now, as someone who deals with massive amounts of stress and anxiety, I need something like Animal Crossing to relax me, instead of something negative. I want to hear relaxing music and go at my own pace. I want to feel accomplished whenever I complete a task instead of feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of future tasks.

To the outside eye, it might seem like I'm overthinking this stupid video game where nothing really matters in the end. But to me, these things mattered. Customizing my outfit and house MATTERED to me. Talking to my villagers and doing chores for them may not seem like the most fun game experience, but for me, it helped me get immersed in my own town, seeing the animals interact with one another. All the goals in the game were set by myself, which feels way more accomplishing when you complete them over being told what to do from the game itself. It felt nice having my own routine of watering my flowers, digging for fossils, hitting the money rock with my shovel every day for free money, talking to my villagers, etc. These things gave me a sense of purpose that I feel like has now slipped away from me. With my current mood swings, at times I feel like my life has no purpose, constantly feeling suicidal thoughts. If I were to have a new Animal Crossing game, I would be distracted from my own struggles.

One could say, "Just start a new game in New Leaf," but for me, I don't want to lose my memories and progress that I made myself. I don't want to delete 1000+ hours of my life and start from square one. I don't wanna play that game without Lunatea, or Rosie, because I have too many memories attached to it. Also, just booting up my save file now would be extremely boring. Sure, memories would come flooding back and it would be nice to see Rosie again, but there really isn't anything to do anymore.

A new Animal Crossing game feels like my only solution to my problems right now. If Nintendo were to introduce a new mechanic to the game, like the way New Leaf introduced being the mayor, I feel like that's all I would need to get invested and start a new town all over again. I just need more items and more things to do, and I will

play for another 1000+ hours. With the newest Nintendo console, the Nintendo Switch, being both a home console and a portable console, I feel like it would be perfect for the style of Animal Crossing. I could play it in public in handheld mode. Then, when I get home and want to relax, I could put it on the dock and play it on my bed, which, as an experience, sounds incredibly comfy.

I decided to write all this because I have a lot of special memories attached to this game series, and I've never had the opportunity to talk about it. Right now, I feel like I'm losing touch with who I once was, since I am distancing myself away from things that made me happy. I barely touch my video games at all anymore, now being more focused on music and fashion. I cannot imagine telling my younger self that I would outgrow video games, but if there's any game that would be the exception, it would be Animal Crossing. I need something to relax, and I wanna get lost in another world, because I hate the world I live in now. To be able to escape to live in my perfect town, where everyone is my friend and there's no hatred and I don't feel lonely is ideal for me. Nothing sounds more perfect to me than being stress-free, and Animal Crossing is a window into what it's like and allows me to pretend that I can live without stress, for just a small moment. While it might not be everybody's cup of tea, Animal Crossing fills a hole within me and checks off a niche that is very important to my emotions, and my life. It's the perfect game to take a break with, and tune out the horrors of real life. I'm excited to see what the future holds for this incredible game series, and my fingers are crossed for a new addition to the series as soon as possible!