

= Pillars of Eternity =

Pillars of Eternity is a role @-@ playing video game developed by Obsidian Entertainment and published by Paradox Interactive . It was released for Microsoft Windows , OS X , and Linux on March 26 , 2015 . The game is a spiritual successor to the Baldur 's Gate and Icewind Dale series , along with Planescape : Torment . Obsidian started a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter for it in September 2012 . The campaign raised over US \$ 4 million , which was the highest funded video game at the time . The game uses the Unity engine .

The game takes place in the fantasy world of Eora , mainly inside the nation of Dyrwood . The infants in the Dyrwood are plagued by a recent phenomenon in which they become " hollowborn " upon birth , meaning they are born with no soul . During the beginning of the game , the protagonist experiences an awakening of power due to a disastrous supernatural event , discovering they are a " Watcher " : a person who can see past lives and interact with souls . The objective of the game is to find out what caused their awakening and how to solve the hollowborn problem .

Pillars of Eternity received critical acclaim upon its release ; many critics praised the game for its world and immersive writing , along with the strategic combat , and also said that it is a worthy successor to the games it was inspired by . The game also won various awards and accolades , including best RPG of 2015 . A two @-@ part expansion pack , Pillars of Eternity : The White March was released in August 2015 and February 2016 , respectively .

= = Gameplay = =

Pillars of Eternity is a role @-@ playing game that features a party @-@ based real @-@ time @-@ with @-@ pause tactical gameplay , fixed isometric user interface for the game @-@ world with two @-@ dimensional pre @-@ rendered backdrops , in a similar vein as its spiritual predecessors Baldur 's Gate , Icewind Dale series and Planescape : Torment . As the player 's characters explore an area map , it is unveiled . There is a fog of war effect on areas the player has already explored and has moved away from . The character classes and game mechanics are similar to Dungeons & Dragons , but are a proprietary system created for the game . The game does not reward experience points for killing enemies , but for completing quests and discovering new areas .

The game starts with a character creation screen where the player can choose items for their playable character , such as their physical appearance , race and creed . The player can choose to play as one of the eleven available classes : fighter , barbarian , paladin , ranger , wizard , druid , monk , priest , rogue , chanter and cipher . Each of them make the gameplay different ; for example , the cipher can use the soul of an enemy in order to attack them , and druids can shapeshift into a beast and cast spells . The protagonist 's class can also influence the number of available dialogue options . The player may adventure with up to five other characters out of a total of eight that they can pick up on their travels . These are fleshed out characters with unique personalities and appearances . Additionally , the protagonist can hire party members which the player creates in local taverns , but at a monetary cost .

The game has optional side quests that do not advance the main plot , which feature fleshed out supporting characters and multiple outcomes . According to a writer for Digital Spy , most of these are not " fetch quests " . During the game , the protagonist can build up a reputation depending on their actions . Non @-@ playable characters will react differently to him or her depending on this , and it can also affect the outcome of certain events in the game . The game features a scouting mode in which the party can sneak , which allows the player to avoid being seen by enemies . During scouting , the party can spot hidden items and traps , which the player can disarm and use against enemies .

Damage from enemies to the player 's characters affect an endurance and health pool . While endurance regenerates after combat , health can only be restored by resting . The party can either set up camp , or rest in an inn . If a character in the party have their endurance drained , they are knocked out until the end of combat . If a companion has their health reduced to zero then they

become permanently dead .

The player can choose from five skills to beat situations : Stealth , Athletics , Lore , Mechanics and Survival . As the player fights more creatures , then more information is added to their bestiary . This helps the player to find out information about how to attack them effectively . Early in the game , the protagonist will take over a stronghold , that acts as the party 's fortress which can be upgraded .

= = Story = =

= = = Setting = = =

The story takes place in the world of Eora , in a region placed in the southern hemisphere called the Eastern Reach , an area roughly the size of Spain . The Eastern Reach contains several nations , including the Free Palatinate of Dyrwood ? a former colony of the mighty Aedyr Empire that won its independence through a revolutionary war ? the Vailian Republics ? a confederation of sovereign city @-@ states ? and the Penitential Regency of Readceras ? a quasi @-@ theocratic state ruled by priests of the god Eothas .

Technologically and socially , most of the civilizations in Eora are in what roughly corresponds to the early stages of the Renaissance . Firearms are still a relatively new invention and are quite cumbersome to use , and as a result their use is not very widespread . They have , however , proven quite effective against magic users .

A factor of great conflict all over Eora is the recent scientific discovery that souls are not mere metaphysical abstractions , but quantifiable , measurable objects that can be transferred , stored , or molded . Souls are the basis of magic , as accessing their power is what allows certain people to use it . Souls leave the body upon death , and go through a largely unknown process before reincarnating into a newborn body . Every soul does , however , have embedded memories from their previous lives , and through certain processes a person 's soul can be " Awakened " , meaning they gain awareness of these past lives . Though the study of souls , called Animancy , is still a young field of science , the implications for society at large has been vast , and lead to rapid advances in technology and caused several rifts and clashes in the different religious communities , which has marked the era as a time of great turmoil .

= = = Characters = = =

The player character can be male or female and one of six available races , and the game typically refers to him or her as " The Watcher " . Over the course of the adventure , the player can recruit up to eight secondary characters as companions . Available companions include : Edér , a fighter and worshiper of one of the game 's gods , Eothas ; Aloth , a wizard and child of parents who served nobility ; Durance , a priest and follower of Magran , a goddess of war and fire ; Sagani , a ranger who is on a quest to search for an elder from her village ; Grieving Mother , a strange cipher who can not normally be fully seen by other people , and has a personal connection to the hollowborn problem ; Pallegina , a paladin who works for the Vailian Republics ; Kana Rua , a chanter who was sent by his people to recover a book of sacred text ; and Hiravias , a druid who has been banished from his tribe .

= = = Plot = = =

The player is a foreigner who arrives in the Dyrwood . Their caravan is hit by a mysterious storm that kills everyone but them . Taking refuge in a cave , the player character witnesses some cultists perform a ritual on a machine that can strip souls from their bodies . Exposed to these energies , the player character becomes a Watcher , a person able to read souls . The player character also becomes Awakened , able to access memories of their past lives . This curses the Watcher with waking visions and an inability to sleep . In time , the Watcher will go mad from this , so they set out

to track down the cultists and reverse the curse .

Dyrwood is cursed by the Hollowborn Plague : children are being born without souls , leaving them unresponsive like vegetables . Many people blame animancers , the scientists who study and manipulate souls . Investigating the curse , the Watcher discovers that the Hollowborns ' souls have in fact been stolen by a cult known as the Leaden Key , led by a priest named Thaos , and that Thaos is framing animancers for the Plague . This campaign culminates in a riot where animancers are lynched and their college is destroyed .

The Watcher and his companions pursue Thaos to Twin Elms , where they finally learn the truth behind Thaos ' actions . The gods are synthetic beings created by ancient animancers to serve as a civilizing force for the world . Thaos is the last survivor of their order , and his eternal mission is to ensure that nobody ever discovers the gods ' secret . To this end , he works to discredit and suppress animancy wherever it flourishes . He stole the souls of the Hollowborn to empower the goddess Woedica , who hates animancy and would see it destroyed . Though the other gods have an interest in protecting their secret , they do not want Woedica to dominate them , and so aid the Watcher in confronting Thaos .

The Watcher slays Thaos in his lair . The ending varies depending on the Watcher 's choices in the game .

= = Development = =

Pillars of Eternity was developed by Obsidian Entertainment and published by Paradox Interactive . The game uses a modified version of the Unity game engine made specifically for Pillars of Eternity . The game was directed by Josh Sawyer . There were multiple competing pitches for Pillars of Eternity 's storyline within the studio , and the one worked on by Eric Fenstermaker and George Ziets ultimately won , after which Fenstermaker , who previously worked as a writer on the company 's Fallout : New Vegas , was designated the game 's lead narrative designer . Also involved in production are Adam Brennecke , Chris Avellone and Tim Cain . The audio director of Pillars of Eternity is Justin Bell , who also composed the game . Bell stated he was inspired by the music of Baldur 's Gate and Icewind Dale when composing the game 's music .

On September 10 , 2012 , Obsidian 's webpage began teasing about a brand new game ( entitled " Project X " ) , it initially was a number 4 encircled by an Ouroboros . The next day it was revealed to be a countdown . On September 14 , 2012 , the Kickstarter campaign went live revealing further details of the project . It completed its 1 @. @ 1 million dollars objective in just over 24 hours , and the first set of " stretch goals " were announced . Pillars of Eternity surpassed the \$ 1 @. @ 6 million mark five days after the fund @-@ raising began . It was announced an OS X version of the game would be provided together with a DRM @-@ free option through GOG.com. A Linux version was announced on September 21 , 2012 . It passed the \$ 2 million mark on September 26 , 2012 . On October 8 , 2012 , it was announced that Wasteland 2 would be offered to backers who pledged US \$ 165 ( and above ) . In the last day of the campaign , Pillars of Eternity surpassed Double Fine Adventure as Kickstarter 's most @-@ funded videogame at the time .

Feargus Urquhart , Obsidian 's CEO , explained why they chose to use a crowd funding model for Pillars of Eternity instead of the traditional developer and publisher arrangement : " What Kickstarter does is let us make a game that is absolutely reminiscent of those great games , since trying to get that funded through a traditional publisher would be next to impossible . " In an interview , Josh Sawyer said that being free of the limitations of a publisher would enable them to " delve into more mature subject matter [ ... ] slavery , hostile prejudice ( racial , cultural , spiritual , sexual ) , drug use and trade , and so on will all help flesh out the story " . Obsidian was said to be inspired by InXile Entertainment 's success of using Kickstarter to fund Wasteland 2 . Chris Avellone said during the project 's announcement that if the campaign were to succeed , Pillars of Eternity would become a franchise . He also ruled out a possible console port of the game , saying , " Those [ console ] limitations affect RPG mechanics and content more than players may realize ( especially for players who 've never played a PC RPG and realize what 's been lost over the years ) , and often doesn 't add to the RPG experience . " Additionally , he has pledged to write a novella set in the game world

On October 16 , 2012 , Pillars of Eternity 's Kickstarter funding campaign concluded with a total of \$ 3 @, @ 986 @, @ 929 , becoming the most highly funded video game on the Kickstarter platform at the time . Together with further funds collected via PayPal , its budget rose to \$ 4 @, @ 163 @, @ 208 . In December 2013 , Obsidian announced that the official title for the game would be Pillars of Eternity , dropping the working title Project Eternity . They also launched a poll asking backers whether or not they would support further fundraising .

In March 2014 , it was announced that Paradox Interactive would publish the game . It was stated that Paradox 's role would be taking care of marketing and distribution of the game , while Obsidian still retains the rights to the intellectual property . On March 11 , 2015 , a preview video of the documentary series , titled Road to Eternity , was released . It has been revealed that the money Obsidian Entertainment raised for the game through its Kickstarter campaign saved it from closure , as it had been suffering from financial problems following its cancellation of a game for the " next @-@ generational consoles " in 2012 .

= = Release = =

On March 17 , 2015 , Obsidian confirmed that Pillars of Eternity went gold , indicating it was being prepared for production and release . The game was released for Microsoft Windows , OS X , and Linux on March 26 , 2015 . Several editions of the game were released , including a Champion Edition which has a campaign almanac , a map of the game , the soundtrack of the game , wallpapers , and ringtones , and a Royal Edition which includes the Champion Edition items along with a strategy guide , concept art , and a novella which was written by Chris Avellone .

= = = Expansion pack = = =

A two @-@ part expansion , Pillars of Eternity : The White March , was announced by Obsidian at Electronic Entertainment Expo 2015 . Part I was released on August 25 , 2015 , and Part II was released on February 16 , 2016 . It extended the game , raised the level cap , and added new party members and abilities . Part I and II currently hold a score of 76 % and 79 % on Metacritic respectively , indicating " generally favorable reviews " .

= = Reception = =

Pillars of Eternity was met with positive reviews upon its release ; it is currently listed on Metacritic with a score of 89 / 100 , indicating " generally favorable reviews " according to the site . The Escapist wrote that while it caters to a nostalgic fan base , it is an " excellent " role @-@ playing game on its own merit , and also said that is the best isometric role @-@ playing game to come out " in years " . PC Gamer said that Obsidian made their best game thus far with Pillars of Eternity , and also wrote that it is a worthy successor to the games it was inspired by . IGN praised the game , saying that it is a representation of what is good about old school role @-@ playing games . Digital Spy lauded Pillars of Eternity , writing that it is a " masterclass in role @-@ playing game development " .

Game Revolution said that Pillars of Eternity 's combat is " deep and engaging " ; similarly , Metro wrote that the combat is " highly complex " . GameSpot said that the combat is the game 's best component , and also gave praise to the battle music . Gameplanet praised the game for its strategic combat and level @-@ based progression . Game Informer noted the combat 's customizability in the game , including the ability to change the difficulty and set options for auto @-@ pausing . However , the review criticized the pathfinding in the game .

Pillars of Eternity 's graphics and artwork were well received . Gameplanet called the art design in the game " excellent " . Game Informer said that the game 's maps are " thoughtfully crafted " , and that the detail on the characters and their equipment is " incredible " . Metro noted the game 's higher resolution than older isometric games such as Baldur 's Gate , saying that it benefits its "

gorgeous " artwork . The review also praised the game 's lighting and particle effects . The Escapist said that the spell effects in the game are " quite visually impressive " and that the character models are an improvement from traditional isometric games ; however , the reviewer said that the backgrounds are not as impressive as " some of the more picturesque older titles " . IGN criticized the game 's art style , calling it " dated " . Gameplanet found the game 's voice acting to be " excellent " , saying that none of it is over acted . Game Informer echoed this statement , and also wrote that the game 's sound and music is " delicate and beautiful " .

GameSpot called Pillars of Eternity 's writing " lovely " . Particular praise was given by the reviewer to the character of the Grieving Mother , whose personal story he said was intriguing and " mysterious " . PC Gamer also praised the writing , saying that it is " rich " and " evocative " . Destructoid praised the plot and the world 's reactivity to the player , writing , " the main plot is packed with twists and surprises with staggering ramifications for a world players will feel they have become part of . " IGN said that characters in the game , both major and minor , have elaborate characterization , but found the fact that only some characters have voice acting to be an annoyance . Eurogamer criticized the game 's lack of humor , with the writer of the review saying that he wanted characters in the same vein as Minsc from Baldur 's Gate and Morte from Planescape : Torment in Pillars of Eternity to " lighten the mood " . The writer further said that he found the quests in the game to be " fairly stock " and the characters " forgettable " .

As of February 2016 , the game has sold over 700 @, @ 000 copies .

= = = Awards = = =