

In terms of my gaming history, the earliest memories I have was playing New Super Mario Bros, a first party platformer for the Nintendo DS that I spent hours completing the worlds, defeating Bowser and even messing around with the minigames featured. I experienced these memories in the late 2000s, a couple years after the original Nintendo DS released in November of 2004, 3 months after I was born. It was a good time for a 5 year old me, experiencing the 3D graphics and gameplay that Nintendo managed to bring onto a handheld console and enjoying the title before moving out from Puerto Rico and losing the console in-between the move.

15 years later, my most recent gaming experience has come from Fortnite Battle Royale, a game that I've returned to playing constantly thanks to me reuniting with friends from high school who were dedicated Fortnite players. Comparing Fortnite to Mario Bros on the DS is a night and day experience, yet they do have the connection of them having a cartoony artstyle at heart, which I'll be focusing on alongside the graphical leap between a title from 2006 and a title from 2017 which keeps receiving graphical updates.

Beginning with New Super Mario Bros DS, the game is cartoonish at heart, as it features landscapes with bouncing mushrooms, enemies which featured walking turtles with boomerangs, skeletal versions of those turtles whose bones reconnect to each other after being hopped on, and goombas that jump to the tune of the level's music. Plus, the main villain is a giant turtle King whose son has decided to tag along with his father to kidnap Princess Peach and bring her to their fortress. Super Mario, as a franchise, never really focused on having a realistic graphics style and with the limitations of the DS' graphics in mind, continuing the cartoonish art style the series has used was a safe bet that worked greatly.



(Left: A Bowser Boss Fight within his castle; Right: A World 2 boss fight against a mummified Pokey)

Fortnite is a title that was released in 2017 which featured a cartoony artstyle, as to stand out within the Multiplayer space as those titles focused on realistic graphics. The graphics also helped out with expanding the player base initially but at the start of Battle Royale and Save The World, the game was a cartoonish, third person shooter whose primary mode was locked behind a paywall, that being Save the World.

As the years went on, the Battle Royale mode's graphics evolved from its cartoony origins and began making the landscape look more realistic with updated cars, props, and weaponry, leaving the cartoonish landscapes in the Save The World gamemode. But at heart, even with the graphical, model and landscape upgrades that the game has received over the years, it still has the Cartoonish style that was chosen to make the game stand out within the gaming sphere.



(Left: Fortnite's graphics from 2017; Right: Fortnite's graphics from 2024)

Comparing both games is an apples to oranges experience in terms of gameplay, concepts, and ideas but the graphical jump from the Nintendo DS to the PS4 is a massive one, and both games showcase how far video game graphics evolved from the 2000s to the late 2010s. The DS being a handheld system by design already gave it some major limitations compared to dedicated consoles, but the fact that the DS was able to put out decent looking 3D graphics is an impressive leap. Obviously, Fortnite continues to get graphical upgrades to this day, but its first few years as the cartoonish rival to the realistic PUBG made it stand out. And as game consoles improved, developers improved, and Unreal 5's potential was understood better, the game's world began looking better compared to its early days.

Overall, both titles, as far away from each other they may be, the two titles shows how much their developers were able to use the tools provided to establish an artstyle that people can remember from years to come. People remember New Super Mario Bros from it's mid 2000s 3D blockiness and gameplay, people know Fortnite as the cartoonish battle royale that's king of the battle royale mountain. The two games represent the graphics of their respective consoles, one being defined by the 3D graphics of the time and the other's ability to get better and better with time and experience from the people behind its game art and engine.