



CONCEPT

Finding themselves locked in an abandoned high school with no contact to the outside world, fifteen adolescent strangers are confronted with a chilling ultimatum: The only way to escape is by killing another “player” -- and then, following an investigation and “class trial” with the remaining survivors -- avoid being discovered.

If the group is unable to correctly deduce the culprit, the murderer goes free, and the rest of the players are... *punished*. But if the group is able to connect the dots and solve the murder, the killer alone is executed and the others continue on.

As the group dwindles, solving increasingly complex murders, the true nature of this killing game starts to reveal itself -- along with the truth about what lies *beyond* the school walls...

...as it may be even worse.

COMPS

BATTLE ROYALE • AMONG US • SQUID GAME
YELLOWJACKETS • AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

FRANCHISE SPECS

First Release: 2010 **Latest Release:** 2021

Games: 5 console games, plus various iOS and PC spinoffs

TV: 2 anime series

Books: 6 different novelization series, 25+ manga series

GAMEPLAY & STORY ENGINE

Danganronpa is split primarily between **three alternating modes** of gameplay:

1. DAILY LIFE

Essentially a voice acted, cinematic novel. These sections deliver the bulk of the story and character development, and comprise the majority of the game.



2. DEADLY LIFE

When a killing occurs, the group is given a short period to investigate the murder. During this time, the characters explore the grounds and question one another, forming suspicions.



These segments conclude when a **school announcement** is made, signaling the start of:

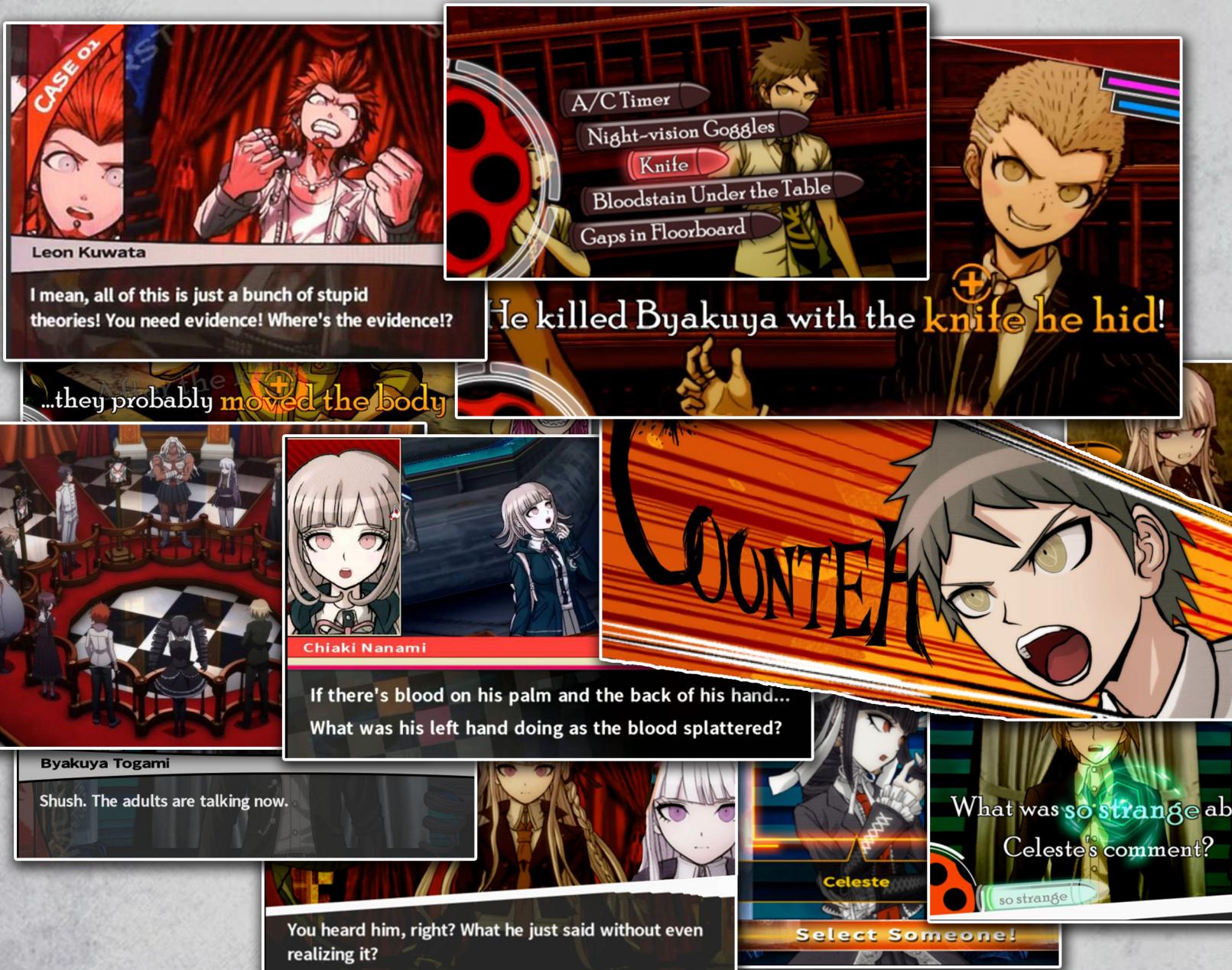
GAMEPLAY & STORY ENGINE (CONT.)

3. CLASS TRIAL

The electrifying highlights of the games, in which the prior hours' investigating culminates in accusations, twists, and psychological bombshells.

During Class Trial, the students stand in a circle and debate their theories on the murder. As accusations fly by, the player cycles through a cylinder of evidence and accounts collected for this case (called Truth Bullets) and fires them at faulty statements to object and progress the trial.

The narrative structure of the games is divided generally into 5 chapters, each one ending in a Class Trial. So for an 8 or 10 episode TV season, it divides well into 2-episode “arcs” - Murder+Investigation, then Class Trial+Aftermath.



CHARACTERS OVERVIEW

Another distinguishing element to the franchise is the thread that connects the students thrown into the killing game: they're all **Ultimates** - specially scouted individuals identified by Hope's Peak Academy for supposedly being the "ultimate" young mind in their respective field. As such, this creates an eclectic cast of players, pitting micro-celebrities, academic prodigies, and everything in-between against one another.

(Some of the Ultimate talents feel a little silly or specifically Japanese (ie: "Ultimate Traditional Dancer") but the "Ultimates" system ends up broaching an exploration of the challenges, ethics, and repercussions of branding some people "Ultimates" over others.)

The entryway into the series is MAKOTO NAEGI - an exceedingly ordinary teenage boy who's admitted to Hope's Peak after winning a nationwide lottery (making him the "Ultimate Lucky Student").

Initially at a disadvantage against the 14 more talent-based Ultimates, Makoto acts as the eyes of the player/watcher, trying to keep up with this eccentric and hyper-sharp group - and carrying the torch of hope that ultimately unifies the group against the killing game's mastermind.



MONOKUMA

Monokuma is the “Jigsaw” figure of the franchise. Appearing on monitors and various electronics/robotics throughout the facility, Monokuma acts as the anonymous mouthpiece of the mastermind, as well as the figurehead of the Killing Game. He’s obnoxiously gleeful, and figuring out who controls him becomes the overarching mystery of the story.



His signature split black & white design with the red “M” for an eye has made him the face and mascot of the franchise (and driven massive merchandise sales). Not from me, though...

IMPACT

Since its first release in 2010, Danganronpa has carved out a massively reputable fandom in the anime and gaming community. In the decade since, its popularity has grown rapidly, defying the life cycle of other comparable properties. A combination of streamers and cosplay culture the past few years has breathed incredible life into the franchise, and the iOS release of the first game has boosted its reach hugely.

Danganronpa’s success and prevalence among anime culture is unusual and hard to explain; according to Guinness, the most cosplayed video character of all time is a Danganronpa character - and not even the protagonist. Despite its humble budget and at-times blocky gameplay, the franchise’s unrivaled attention to story and character have made it an undeniable piece of the culture - and if done correctly, presents a format for a successful long-running eventized TV spectacle.

LINKS

[Sizzle / Trailer](#) •

[“Why People Love Danganronpa”](#) •