

Writing Portfolio of Neil Sears



NEIL SEARS

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OBJECTIVE

As a motivated Purdue University graduate with strong writing skills, I am seeking an entry-level position to utilize my strong work ethic and contribute to a team-oriented workplace.

EXPERIENCE

Gold Top Records

Intern | March – December, 2025

- Writing
- Blogging
- Brainstorming ideas
- Interviewing musicians
- Event planning
- Team collaboration
- Procuring sponsorships

Goodman Games

Order Fulfillment Team | Jan., 2026 – May, 2026

Packaged product, fulfilled orders, moved inventory, organized customer database

National Society of Leadership & Success

2022 through 2026

A leadership program that helps students achieve personal growth, career success, and empowers them to have a positive impact in their communities.

Other Experience – Various Retail Positions

Pinheads Arcade, The Exchange, FYE | October, 2020 – August, 2024

- Customer service
- Greeting customers and answering phone calls
- Organizing product and tracking inventory
- Product recommendations

EDUCATION

Purdue University

August, 2022 – May, 2026

English Major – Cumulative GPA: 3.29

Dean's List: Spring, 2024

Fishers High School

August, 2018 to May, 2022

Student of the Month – February, 2019

Perfect attendance – 2019-2020

SKILLS

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| • Writing skills | • Excel | • Sketch |
| • Analytical skills | • Game design | • User Research |
| • Research | • Unreal engine | • Journalism |
| • Microsoft Word | • WordPress | • Java |
| • PowerPoint | • Photo editing | • JavaScript |

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Old Boy, an Old Movie, and Old Family Values

Neil Sears

If you were to ask someone what is one of the most iconic action films ever produced in South Korea, chances are most people will tell you about Park-Chan Wook's Oldboy from 2003. An incredible feature known for its intense and gruesome action scenes, Oldboy has also been touted as one of the greatest films ever made. Despite its origins as a Japanese manga from the 1990's, this film adaptation of said book manages to showcase many aspects of Korean culture, specifically family values and how Korean people typically view them.

The story follows a businessman named Oh Dae-Su who was kidnapped in 1988 and held captive in a room for 15 years by a mysterious figure from his past. Once he's set free, he goes on a journey to discover who ordered him to be kidnapped and why exactly they did it. He meets a sushi chef who he falls in love with and helps him uncover clues to find his mysterious capture. Throughout the film he goes through many brutal action scenes, twists, and psychological mindbenders in order to satisfy his vengeance. The ending is both shocking and absolutely heartbreaking at the same time, showing how absolutely unfair and horrifying this world can be for everyone.

Oh Dae-Su discovers that the man who put him in that prison also had just manipulated him this whole time into having sex with his own daughter unknowingly, which manages to work due to him not seeing her and not knowing what she looks like after 15 years. This causes Dae-Su to go absolutely crazy in front of the main antagonist, going so far as to cut off his own tongue and beg for mercy to him. This doesn't help the fact that his mental state has deteriorated

for 15 years due to no human contact or exposure to the outside world, and the fact that at the beginning of the movie, he was brainwashed into killing his own wife.

After the antagonist commits suicide, Dae-Su gets himself hypnotized to forget she was his daughter and never tells her the truth so that she wouldn't have to live with the guilt as well. Obviously, almost everyone in the world would be disgusted by themselves committing incest like Dae-Su did, and of course feeling guilt over the fact they got him to kill his own wife, but I would say this especially resonates with the Korean audience and the people making this movie because of how important the concept of family is in their culture.

In Korean culture, caring about and taking care of one's family is a priority. Many families stay close and still interact with one another no matter how old they get. In the movie, one of the main focuses is on how what happened to Dae-Su's family was so tragic, and deeply affected him. Many movies in America and the rest of the world can involve tragedies related to family and how horrific they can be, so I am not saying this is something exclusive to Korean culture. In fact, I would say that is something that the United States have in common, how we both think about how families getting devastated can affect people deeply, despite America's focus on individualism and as much as people nowadays say that the importance of family is being ignored.

Despite everything that happened to him, Oh Dae-Su still wants to be close with his daughter in one way or another. Even with the revelation that he committed such a heinous act, he still wants to be with her because he loves her, and possibly due to the previously mentioned Korean values. After he's reunited with his daughter at the end, it's left ambiguous if the hypnosis worked or not. Either way he still wants to be at her side, hopefully not in a sexual relationship with her.

Everything, Everywhere, China, and America

Neil Sears

Previously, I was tasked with watching and writing an essay about a Korean movie and what that had to do with the culture of said respective country. When I was recently tasked with doing the same with a Chinese movie, I decided to check out the 2022 movie: Everything Everywhere All At Once. Unlike my last movie, this one was made in the United States rather than being from the country itself like with the Korean movie I had previously watched. Now why would I try watching an American movie with Chinese elements instead of just looking for one actually made in China? Well after watching it, I came to the conclusion that the film got a good amount of information about the country itself right. Not only was it directed and written by a few people of Chinese descent, but also shed light on many aspects that both Chinese people and Chinese Americans can relate to. Similar to my last movie, I realized that this movie delved into the idea of family in Chinese culture and played an important role in the plot naturally, despite it also being about something far more fantastical. Now how exactly does a movie about alternate dimensions and cosmic bagels fit in with Chinese families? Well first I'm going to describe why it's all about those 2 strange ideas first.

Everything Everywhere All At Once follows Evelyn, a Chinese immigrant who runs a laundromat along with her husband and daughter. She has a strained relationship with her own father who's come to visit her from their home country as well as one with her own daughter, who feels like she doesn't understand her. During a visit to the IRS she finds that her husband has switched minds with himself from another universe, not only discovering that the multiverse exists, but that people have developed the ability to swap minds with alternate versions of themselves from said universes. More importantly, they discover that there's an interdimensional being known as Jobu Tupaki, who later is revealed to be Evelyn's own daughter, who's become a

nihilist with godlike powers and wants to destroy reality using an everything bagel as a black hole. The movie is spent with Evelyn using these multiverse jumping powers to fight her minions by gaining the abilities of her alternate selves, and eventually facing off against her daughter. By the end, she uses her husband's advice to defeat these threats with kindness rather than killing them all, gaining back her daughter's love and ending the movie on a positive note.

Even if you don't dig too deep into it, you'll know after watching that one of the biggest aspects of the characters are their status as Chinese American immigrants and their relationship with their own family. Evelyn was born and raised in China and came to America after her future husband convinced her to. Because she left, she has a strained relationship with her own father who stayed back in China, and eventually has one with her own daughter due to life choices she doesn't approve of. She's afraid that her daughter's Chinese is getting worse as time goes on and doesn't approve of her being in a relationship with another girl, and eventually all of this overbearing causes her daughter to become the antagonist of the movie.

There's a clear contrast between Evelyn's life in China to her life in America. We see that when she's first born that the doctor says "Sorry, it's a girl", showing the issue of Chinese parents preferring male births over female ones, especially back during the period when she was born. We get to see the environment she grew up in up until she moved to America and how drastic it was to change countries. Later on during the alternate timeline shenanigans we even get to see possible outcomes in other worlds if she had never left her home country. In one timeline she gets trained in Kung Fu and winds up becoming a famous action movie star there, then in another she becomes a traditional Chinese dancer, all of these being heavily associated with Chinese culture. It's clear that deep down she has some regrets leaving her home country, but later on accepts that she's not able to change it.

Once Evelyn comes to America, she opens up a small laundromat business, typically this occupation has been portrayed as a stereotype for Chinese Americans over the years, but this movie seems to play it straight. In fact, a lot of elements of this family's life seems to have aspects associated with Asian American stereotypes such as having overbearing parents, but it ends up not being as shallow as you'd expect, and delves deeper into the characters' lives rather than playing it for laughs. There's even a part where they deal with being treated differently for their heritage when a customer refers to the family as "you people".

I actually got curious whether these were intended as stereotypes or not and found an article where one of the directors states "Early on, someone asked me, 'Why are you making an Asian American film about kung fu? Why do you have the main characters live and work above a laundromat? Shouldn't we be moving beyond that? And it struck me in a funny way. Because, yes [we should], but also this is my life! Am I going to allow a stereotype that has boxed me in my whole life — to force me off my own story? To decenter myself from this story? This is a film rooted in how I grew up, and the stories I grew up on, that almost became a call to action, a clarifying moment. After that, I decided to lean in even harder.'"(Codega) Showing that the creators wanted to show these things associated with being Chinese American in a more natural light rather than showing them off as shallow stereotypes.

In the end, Evelyn breaks the cycle of her being an overbearing mother and learns to fully love and accept her daughter, leading to both of their redemptions. Evelyn comes to terms with her life, with it previously being stated that her home timeline is the one that turned out the worst out of them all. She winds up learning to not be so overbearing, in a way breaking a stereotype in the process. The film is covered in elements of being both Chinese and Chinese American, and in the end, even shows us the importance of family and understanding one another.

Citations

Codega, Linda. "How Everything Everywhere All at Once Is about Change and Not Conflict."

Gizmodo Australia, Pedestrian Group, 11 Apr. 2022, gizmodo.com.au/2022/04/how-everything-everywhere-all-at-once-is-about-change-and-not-conflict/.

Chinese Chuckles and Korean Krack-Ups:
Traditional Forms of Comedy in China and Korea

By Neil Sears

Humanity's been through a lot since the dawn of time, we've laughed and cried, but most importantly, we've laughed. Well, there's a lot more important things but the point is I'm trying to make is that comedy's been prevalent throughout it all. Comedy's been something humanity has been trying to perfect since the dawn of civilization. From the jesters of castles to the comedians of urban comedy clubs, there's always going to be people whose goal is to cheer us up and make everyone laugh. Throughout the world, there's many ways people enjoy doing this act. It's no surprise that comedy is subjective and is different depending on where you are in the world, whether it be based on different cultural contexts or just styles of humor that work well with the respective language. Comedy is one of humanity's most popular genres and can show what a culture could find humorous or even what they want to lampoon, whether it be an aspect of society they dislike, an authority figure they don't agree with, or just everyday things that just bug them.

Standup is one of modern society's most prevalent kinds of comedy, whether you watch specials on streaming, tv, the internet, or even go and see one live in person, you probably know at least one person who's made you laugh and makes millions off this type of performance. It typically boils down to someone on stage trying to make people laugh. What's so special about comedy, in my opinion, is how such a simple concept can turn a normal person into a massive celebrity. People like George Carlin or Jerry Seinfeld in America were known throughout the country, even becoming movie stars. So while comedy may seem like a simple and easy thing to do, it takes much effort and can result in one being able to change a nation in a way. As

previously mentioned, different cultures have different senses of humor, and each one can set them apart from others drastically.

I recall throughout my exposure to Japanese pop culture, I realized how different that country's sense of humor was through watching their shows or playing their videogames. Some of these even directly referenced certain comedians or comedy groups and made me wonder who they were and what they did. Eventually, this led to me discovering the art of Rakugo. In Rakugo, one sits on a cushion along with a fan and cloth, then proceed to act out a comical story in which they portray 2 or more characters. To this day it is a very traditional and popular form of comedy still performed in Japan. I didn't really understand a lot of the performances I saw themselves, but I certainly understood how funny it was for people who knew the language and how much it resonated with people within the culture. Hearing about this got me curious, are there any other performances like this throughout the Asian continent? Doing research, I discovered much about one of China's traditional forms of stand-up, I even watched a few performances of it myself. but what about Korea's?

Rather than more modern types of comedy, I tried searching for China and Korea's more traditional style of comedy similar to how Rakugo was. In my search for one of Korea's oldest types of comedy, I ended up finding Mandam. What's strange about Mandam, however, is that I could hardly find any information about it in English, unlike with it's neighboring countries' counterparts. I thought that I would only be answering one question about Korean comedy, but it seems like I'll also be seeking an answer to and discussing yet another. Scouring the internet, I tried to find as much information in English as I could, and even translating a few simple articles and pages talking about it. So what is Mandam you might ask? What made it unique? And what ended up happening to it?

Mandam, or “comic talk” in English, is a specific type of comedy originating in Korea during the 19th-20th century. Typically, being witty and satirical, Mandam has the teller crack jokes, puns, and generally act humorous on stage, and it could even involve making remarks about ongoing things in their society. Some sources say that these typically involve 2 people, similar to the Chinese style of comedy I’ll be discussing later, although others don’t mention that aspect, and many famous performers of it seemed to have been a one-person act. Much like Chinese or Japanese styles, wordplay and puns based around the language are a common feature. What made Mandam really special during the time period, however, was the fact it was mainly popular during the Japanese rule of Korea from 1910 through 1945, and the performers certainly knew that.

Being a medium based heavily on political criticism, Mandam heavily lampooned the Japanese occupation of Korea. One of the most famous Mandam performers of the time was named Shin Bool Chool, a performer who, despite heavy censorship from the Japanese, made many critiques of their rule through his work. Throughout his career, his work was well known as a form of resistance against Imperial Japan, and after the war, even lampooned the U.S military regime. Unfortunately, not much is known about his later life due to him defecting to North Korea after the war. It was said that he was sentenced to a prison camp due to criticizing the government and was reported to have died there sometime in 1976.

Despite losing traction, Mandam was extremely popular back in its day with it being cited that “Mandam concerts were overwhelmingly popular and highly commercialized at that time. At least 500 and as many as 3,000 people went to every performance based on several news articles reporting that Mandam performances were doing a roaring business.” (You 143) Even when they were censored, Mandam performers were still able to discuss everyday topics and

used those to entertain their audiences instead. So while Mandam was able to be very political, a lot of it could still be about things not related to politics.

So whatever did happen to Mandam? Not much info can be found about it at all during the 21st century and even the latter half of the 20th century, and considering the Korean war occurring during it's waning popularity it's no wonder a lot of info was likely lost during the conflict. The sources I found during my studies point to different technological advancements as making Mandam lose traction, with You stating "After the 1950s, Mandam faced the introduction of television. Though some Mandam storytellers moved to radio broadcasting by specializing in Mandam songs, the cultural technological breakthrough weakened their cultural influence on audiences and brought about the transformation of political entertainment." (You 148)

However, Mandam appears to have survived in North Korea. Not only did one of it's most iconic performers end up living there as previously mentioned, but some records mention it still being practiced there, with a professor of North Korean studies mentioning "Comedy in North Korea is classified into satirical theatre and light comedy. In addition, hwasulsopum, which can be classified into jaedam (jokes), mandam (comic talk) and the like, is also a popular style of comedy." in a report on comedy in the country (Park). Nowadays, comedy in South Korea seems to consist of sketch shows on tv and the occasional more western styled standup.

This particular Chinese style of comedy, on the other hand, goes back even further and is still being practiced to this day. I would like to introduce you all to Xiangsheng, which can translate to "cross talk" in English, one of China's oldest and most wide spread comedic practices. Much like western styled standup, Xiangsheng is performed on stage in front of a large audience of people. It typically involves 2 people engaging in a humorous act involving either speaking, imitating, teasing, or singing. The humor usually involves either Chinese language

puns or commentary about Chinese society, so while it may not translate well into other languages, it can be very humorous if you speak the language and know the culture. The two performers in it work off one another and act out scenarios while telling said jokes. To someone outside of China, the closest example to a similar style of comedy would be the way the comedians Abbott and Costello performed their own routines where they also play off one another. But going back to earlier, when did this style of performance begin in China?

The practice is said to date all the way back to the Qing dynasty, around the 1800's, in which it was typically performed on the street. However, these humble beginnings that were initially seen as low brow soon changed once communism took hold of China. As an article from The Culture Trip says "When it began, Xiangsheng was performed on the street, thus classifying it as low-brow. However, upon the Communist takeover in 1949, its humble beginnings transformed it into a proletarian art form, and Xiangsheng moved from the street to the stage." (Deason)

Over the decades since the communist government took power, the style has gone through many periods of decline, such as when it was banned during the cultural revolution, gained popularity again a few years later, and then gained controversy after the Tienanmen Square protests. In the end, it never truly disappeared, and to this day it is still enjoyed by many despite its age, and is even performed on both TV and in person. Despite the Chinese government's guidelines regarding censorship and criticism, comedians have still found ways around these laws and still criticize certain aspects of the government.

The art has many people who pioneered it in its early years. Performers such as Zhang Sanlu and Zhu Shaowen were a few people considered the fathers of the medium, and trained many disciples in the art. One famous modern performer of the art is even a foreigner, a

Canadian by the nickname of Dashan. During his career, he has become one of the country's most popular foreign entertainers, even sharing some of the knowledge of Xiangsheng to the English-speaking world where not many people know of it. This form of comedy is even performed in other Chinese speaking nations such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, showing that it's able to have widespread appeal. While not the most popular Chinese export around the globe compared to others, Xiangsheng has proven to be an important and historic piece of Chinese popular culture that while being a little restricted by language, certainly isn't restricted by the country it's performed in.

Overall, this style of comedy sheds light on life in China and shows one aspect of Chinese culture not many people would know about. One language's comedy isn't exactly something that translates well overseas no matter where it comes from. Many comedians or their own comedy shows don't seem to get translated into other languages as much as other mediums. In a way, viewing how another nation does comedy really shows a side of a country that not many people typically see. But what specifically sets these two countries' traditional forms of comedy performances apart, and what also makes them similar to one another?

First off, only one of these seems to still be performed in its country of origin. Xiangsheng comedy is still popular in China and even gets its performances broadcasted on TV, there are definitely other types of comedy practiced there, but Xiangsheng is one of the oldest. On the other hand, Mandam seems to be almost forgotten in South Korea, although as previously mentioned, some reports claim it's survived in North Korea, still being performed. Of course, despite surely being a beloved form of entertainment, it's clear why it disappeared during the interwar period. Japanese occupation had ended meaning it had lost the aspect of it being a form of rebellion against authority, and a conflict dividing a country occurring shortly afterwards

definitely didn't help. If circumstances were different, Mandam could have evolved, survived, and might have even become an important piece of Korean soft power among K-pop or K-dramas. Although even if their levels of relevance is different, it doesn't necessarily mean that their styles aren't similar.

If you pay attention to the ways both act out their comedy, aren't there many similar things that they do? Obviously, like any form of comedy it heavily relies on talking, but it's not just any kind of dialogue, it's wordplay. Wordplay is extremely common and many of the jokes rely on knowledge and understanding of the language. That's something I noticed about both of these and the previously mentioned Rakugo, comedy across Asia seems to rely on wordplay often, making each one unique to their own respective languages. Both are performed in a similar fashion to more western styled standup comedy too, which is why I tried looking for both of them respectively. Because standup is huge here in The United States, it made me want to discover what other countries' scenes were like, and while being similar to them, they're still very different from one another.

But what's a comedy act without having a subject matter? Both heavily rely on social commentary in their jokes, and even more so in Mandam during its time. Mandam during its glory days was used to make fun of the Japanese empire occupying it and one could say that's what contributed to its popularity. Even after the war and before it's decline, they still lampooned the Korean and American governments, showing that they still had material even when their main target was gone. Xiangsheng also relies on commentary and has always been used to express the performers' beliefs, although that resulted in some controversy, especially during certain periods in modern Chinese history, but currently is legal and liked by many. They're able

to critique politicians, but are unable to say anything negative about the government itself and the way that it works.

Both these forms of comedy really do shed some light on what people in their respective countries find funny and enjoy making fun of. Not only are they able to entertain a population with clever jokes and witty writing, but they're able to help people express how they feel about the world around them. Comedy isn't just about making people laugh, it can be about sending a message, and can make an audience of people think. Both of the previously mentioned forms of comedy were able to help the people performing them show how they really felt about the world, even when it got them in trouble.

Even if you don't necessarily find them funny, checking out or reading records of these kinds of performances can really shed some light on how both of these countries are when they were performed. If you ever do learn the languages, or already do know them, it could be a fun experience trying to listen to one and understanding the jokes with your knowledge. Or you could even learn people from these countries' perspectives on these mediums, or even people who experienced the older performances. These comedy acts, while also being funny, can certainly be insightful too.

Citations

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4/25/2024

Why Focusing on Live Service Could Mean Game Over for the Videogame Industry

As someone who plays video games, I know how impactful multiplayer games can be and how ludicrously successful they can be for companies that make them. I myself, am someone who spends a lot of time in multiplayer games both old and new, such as fighting games or Fortnite. In recent years, many multiplayer games have started to be known as “Live service games”, which from my point of view, are exactly the same as multiplayer games of previous years, just with more of a focus on updating the game with new content as time goes on. While these types of games do have an audience of millions of people, including myself, I believe that videogame developers should try and focus less on them compared to single player games because I believe they are a risky endeavor. In fact, despite what many companies may say, single player games might be a better investment.

Now what exactly is a live service game? Obviously, unlike single player games, they require multiple people to play over the internet. They can be played over and over again, typically in matches and are either cooperative or competitive between players. Another word for this type of game could be called “Games as a service” or GaaS for short. For the most part, these are free to play, and make money from microtransactions, where the user spends real world money on in game items or in game currency that can buy said items. It does make sense why companies would want to make these in the first place, they entice players with a game that costs nothing to download, and then if they like the game, they’ll spend more money in order to get

more enjoyment out of it. Examples of these games include GTA online, Counter Strike, or Destiny 2, and those games have been massively successful.

These successes have made some video game companies believe that single player games are a thing of the past, and as a result causes them to place more of a priority on developing these live service titles. A little over a decade ago, EA games' president Frank Gibeau told the public that single player games were finished and was quoted saying "I volunteer you to speak to EA's studio heads; they'll tell you the same thing. They're very comfortable moving the discussion towards how we make connected gameplay — be it co-operative or multiplayer or online services — as opposed to fire-and-forget, packaged goods only, single-player, 25-hours-and you're out. I think that model is finished. Online is where the innovation, and the action, is at." (Sterling) This way of thinking, even if you don't agree with it, influenced many game companies for years to come. Many of the decisions resulting from this mindset ended with the publishers making a pretty penny, right?

If you've been playing video games for the past decade, you know the story. A big developer will put years of manpower and effort into a massive live service game, sometimes even putting their single player titles on hold or even cancelling them altogether in order to get said game done. On one hand, you could get a successful game such as Apex Legends, which the developer prioritized over making a new single player Titanfall game. Obviously for these companies, prioritizing profit over developing for a franchise that made less money worked out in the end for them. These kinds of choices sound like a no brainer investment for other companies, right? Well on the other hand, you have a live service game like Marvel's Avengers, who's development resulted in one of the studios working on it, Eidos Montreal, delaying the development of the next Deus Ex game, a long awaited sequel which may not even come out

now due to legal issues and buyouts. What happened to that Avengers game you might ask? Well it resulted in a 63 million dollar loss for the company and is now delisted from all digital stores due to it's negative reception, low income, and lack of a player base (Tabari). This is one of the many reasons why I believe that live service games aren't all they're cracked up to be, despite their profit potential.

While I do like many multiplayer "live service" games, including recent ones, I personally think that they shouldn't try and focus on them more than single player ones. In these past few years, I've seen developers say that they should focus more on multiplayer games because they will make them more money. I personally think that they're a gamble and some might not even make enough money to justify them, such as the ones I mentioned earlier. Many gamers from what I've seen have complained about these priorities and don't end up playing said titles. While I was busy writing and planning this whole assignment out, the new game "Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League" was approaching release. Being a live service game connected to a series I very much enjoy, the Batman Arkham series, I was motivated to talk about it and compare the game's reception to the other entries in the series as an example of why companies should focus more on single player. So, now that the game has come out and has reviews on it, how do people feel about it and the state of live service games, and how do companies feel about them too?

Well currently, Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League sits at a 60% critic score on Metacritic, IGN gave it a 5/10, and has displeased many fans and other critics alike. Not only is the story being criticized, but people are especially critical about the repetitive gameplay structure, shoehorned GaaS elements, and many technical issues relating to it being live service, such as servers being down for people who got the game early. Because it was live service and

online only, this massive bug left the game entirely unplayable until it was fixed. Not only did it not succeed critically, but higher ups from Warner Bros, the owner of the IP and studio, have said that the game has fallen short of their expectations financially. It even got discounted by a whopping 40% on Steam already. Despite this disaster and the fact that Hogwarts legacy, a single player game they released in 2023 became the best selling title that year, Warner Bros has said that they wish to “double down” on making live service games. Now they better have a good reason for wanting to try out this strategy, right? Why would they even try and do this despite such a massive failure?

Well it's simple, they make a lot of money for the companies making them. As I previously stated, they're built on making money even after you get the game itself through microtransactions and other in-game purchases. The new updates to the game and content additions keep players coming back for more so unlike single player games, you can keep making money off of it for years to come without people even spending money on getting the game itself. Say what you will about “corporate greed” ruining the art of video games or however you'd describe the merit of them but these companies are all about making money first and foremost. And of course, these ways of monetization are able to be predatory on purpose. One example of these ways is the concept of battle passes, where the player purchases the ability to unlock items by playing the game more, motivating them to play more often. Many of these also employ tactics found in gambling such as loot boxes, which give out different in-game items based on rarity and luck, meaning if a player wants something badly, they're going to have to keep paying until they obtain said item (Askeland 21).

Many gamers, however have realized how manipulative these tactics can be and are becoming more aware of them as time goes on. Customers can be manipulated, but they'll

eventually realize how they're getting used and what companies are using against them. All the articles discussing their tactics are clear that we as an audience are able to know how these tactics all work, it's not a big industry secret. Even the European Union themselves have gotten involved with this industry, where they, and in my opinion rightfully, have claimed that these methods are in fact predatory and are trying to take legal action against them. It's still ongoing, but who knows what kind of decision they will eventually come to (Askeland 100). If these laws come into effect and the EU completely bans loot boxes from games, that's an entire continent that you won't be able to make money off of, and will likely set the business of live service games back by a good amount. As clever as many of live service games' tactics are, they aren't completely invincible. Single player games may not generate money the same way microtransactions or loot boxes do, but the way you purchase them certainly generates less controversy.

Many companies have stated that they've wanted to move away from the production of single player games due to these trends. Of course, EA's president fully agrees with this as previously stated, especially because of how popular their sports games are, and even then, recently they lost the rights to the Fifa name, possibly putting a dent in their future sales even if they continue making football games. Despite this claim, if you compare 2 of their recently produced Star Wars games, you'll notice that their claims couldn't be farther from the truth. The multiplayer one, Battlefront 2, sold around 9 million copies, while their single player one, Jedi Fallen Order, sold almost the same amount if not more, and received far more positive reviews from critics and fans alike, with it even getting a sequel last year. "The force" may not be with live service Star Wars titles such as Battlefront 2, but it certainly is strong with its single player titles.

Now onto another brand that was not just also acquired by the Walt Disney Company, but also had its various videogame series managed by a massive videogame company. Marvel hasn't had too much of a success with its many videogame titles this past decade, especially after it partnered with Square Enix. You remember when I brought up that Avengers game that didn't do so hot earlier? Well, what happened to one of its other major characters, Spider-Man, when he was made into a single player game rather than a live service one? PlayStation studios' newest Spider-Man game, Spider-Man 2, became the fastest selling PlayStation exclusive title ever, being a major success for the company (Tabari). While I have problems with the game itself, I can't deny that many critics and gamers alike did seem to enjoy and give the game praise, not to mention it selling well.

PlayStation studios isn't exactly a videogame company known for producing big budget live service games, they typically produce single player videogames that don't have online modes. Despite that, they're massively successful, with titles such as God of War and the Last of Us series becoming bestsellers and winning countless awards from critics. Even if a publisher doesn't produce videogames with microtransactions, loot boxes, and constant updates, it's still able to earn enough revenue and praise from fans to keep itself afloat. Hell, many other Japanese publishers like Nintendo and Sega don't rely on live service too much and they're some of the biggest in their own industry. So that means PlayStation won't find any success in multiplayer games, right? Well recently, one title published by them has come along to show that just like single player games, there's still a place in this industry for multiplayer titles that fans love, and that game is Helldivers 2.

Since its release in February 2024, the same month as the failed Suicide Squad game as previously mentioned, Helldivers 2 has gained a massive player base, and sales wise has sold

over 1 million units worldwide. It even had the largest PlayStation studios launch on pc so far and is one of the most played games right now on PSN. Now this is a live service videogame after all, and it's a success despite everything I said. Why would I prove that live service games are going downhill when this game came out to praise and success?

Well as someone who's played the game, I've noticed that it contains many aspects that differ from typical live service game models, making it something more akin to how these types of games used to be. One example is the fact that the game is not free to play, being around 40\$, and knowing that games are now 70\$ in the United States makes the price not seem so stingy compared to what other companies are offering. The game also doesn't have too many in-game purchases, with only one type of currency being purchasable and them being quite generous with what you're able to purchase with it. There are also no loot boxes, meaning there won't be as much controversy with gambling laws in Europe unlike other games.

I tried to figure out why exactly it's also being treated in a positive light compared to others and found an article that answered my question. Conner Makar states in his analysis of the game that "On paper, Helldivers 2 is everything I've wanted from a multiplayer shooter for years! It's stripped out all the unnecessary BS that you see spread around in live service games these days. No needy progression trackers, no lengthy grind to unlock all the weapons and equipment I want. No crafting - thank God. There are battle passes, but they don't expire." (Makar). Again, a lot of these live service games use tactics to make you play more, but Helldivers seems to be more lenient on you with that. While live service games shouldn't all disappear, Helldivers shows that changing up how you typically release these kinds of games benefits both the players and publishers. These choices could help the genre become less stale,

maybe even having people just think of and call these types of titles regular multiplayer games rather than “live service”.

Now I’ve discussed all about live service games already but never about how single player games are played. You might be curious about why I think it’s so important to keep single player games alive. I mean, it’s just video games, right? Well of course they’re video games, but they’re also experiences too, no different from music or movies, and we don’t want those becoming oversaturated too. Legends in the movie industry and people who love film in general are worried about every big movie being about superheroes from now on and that shows oversaturation leads to dissatisfaction. Sure, there’s a place for live service games and superhero movies, but it’s never any fun when those are the only thing companies are wanting to make.

Stuff like westerns or slasher movies dying out in film because people were getting sick of them proves that oversaturation will just lead to those genres becoming not as profitable. This has even happened before in the videogame industry. To quote Rob Fahley from Gamesindustry.biz “Within a few years of the launch of the initial defining game – be it Doom, or Command & Conquer, Grand Theft Auto 3, Dark Souls, or any of a host of other widely-imitated titles over the decades – the market is awash with games replicating its ideas.” (Fahley) Copying a game idea isn’t anything new, and usually those that copy it won’t sell well and will eventually be forgotten. So, in a way, easing the production of live service games might end up saving that type of game. But why do people play single player games? You might ask “what’s so important about keeping them alive themselves?”

Single player titles have been around since the dawn of gaming, and throughout the years many of the most critically acclaimed titles have been among them, often even more so than single player games. Unlike multiplayer games, you don’t need to get or find other people to play

alongside you. You also don't need to worry about having an internet connection or having them shut down eventually if they aren't successful, if a multiplayer game shuts down, then it's mostly worthless. Single player games can also offer aspects that multiplayer games can't have due to them needing multiple people to play, such as having fight a boss or group of enemies by yourself or solving a puzzle. The feeling of beating an entire game is different from simply winning a single match that ends up blending in with the rest of the ones you play.

One game designer for a recent game discussed this in an interview. Director Kim Hyung Tae of the upcoming PlayStation title, Stellar Blade, in an interview was cited saying "'single-player games with an ending' have a 'very important value' in the grand scheme of things, making the gaming market 'healthier' overall. He says developer Shift Up 'will continue to take on the challenge of console games in the future', saying the team has a 'strong desire to continue to create games that allow many gamers to enjoy to the end and return to reality feeling good.'" Showing that finality and completion are what single player games are all about rather than having to come back for more all the time, while at the same time still being replayable if the player wants to go back to them.

Another thing single player games have is that they can tell emotional stories that people get invested in and contain characters who develop over the course of the journey you go on, whereas live service games typically need content outside of the game to do storytelling. Single player games just have an element of finality to them. Some of these experiences might even seem endless, resulting in dozens if not hundreds of hours of playtime, even if they complete almost everything in the game. If I were to compare them, multiplayer games are like sports matches, and that's perfectly okay! But single player games are like vacations or adventures, experiences that take you to brand new places that you won't ever forget about.

While there's always a place for live multiplayer games in this industry, we shouldn't forget the type of game that helped the industry become what it is today. We never abandoned traditional film for 3D movies when they got popular despite the thrill of watching them, so I find the idea of abandoning single player games to be going a bit too far. Sales prove that there's still a massive audience for these types of games, and consumers are perfectly okay with them still being around. People who still want to make live service titles, however, have to learn from titles people enjoy on how to adapt to consumers' tastes and try to not bore them with the tropes of the gaming industry we unfortunately have to deal with. Who knows what the future of live games holds, but from how they're doing currently, it would be preferable if companies tried to slow down and take it easy, and maybe even give other games a shot.

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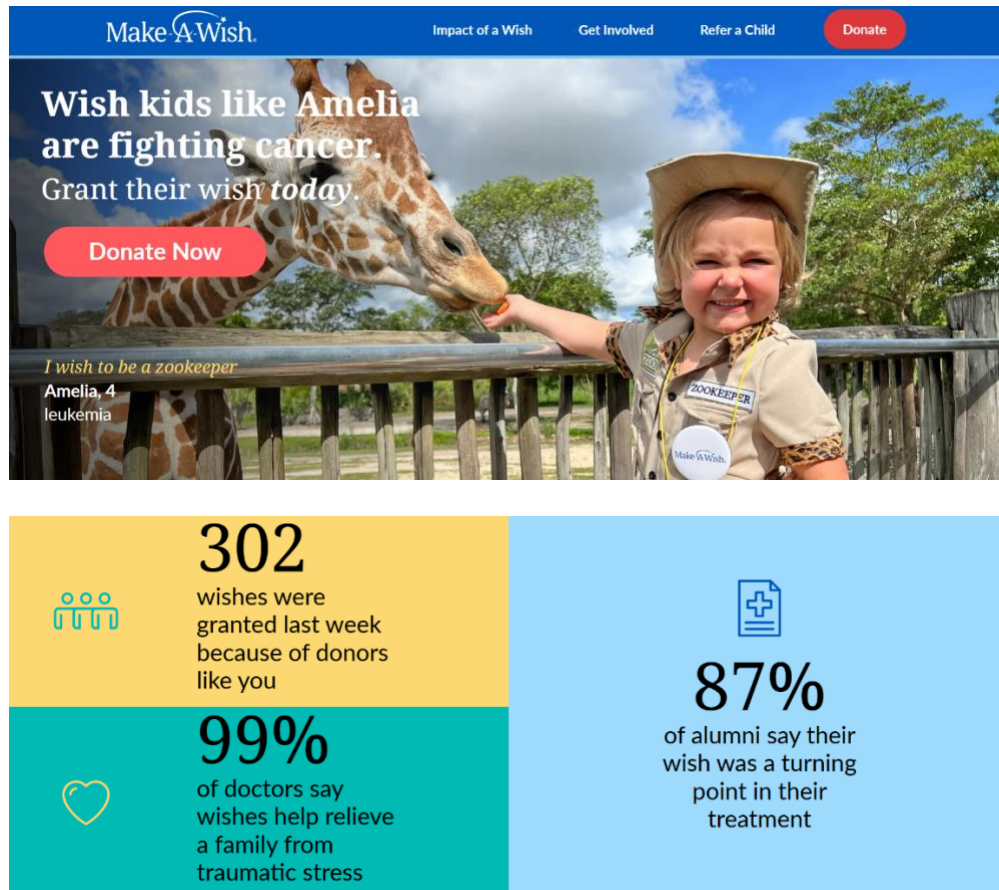
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15 September 2024

Make-A-Wish Foundation

If you've ever donated to a charity, there's a chance it might have been to the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The name's a little self-explanatory, it's a charity organization dedicated to making terminally ill kids' wishes come true (within reason, of course). From letting kids be Batman for a day, giving them trips to Disneyworld, or even letting them meet John Cena, their goal is to let kids who may not have much time left on this earth have the time of their lives. From looking at the premise of this charity, you'd think that they deliver their message with a lot of pathos involved, convincing them to donate money to a cause that most people would sympathize with. While the latter is true, one could say that they show off a great degree of credibility through different endorsements and partnerships as well, henceforth ethos.

Website

Make-A-Wish's website is one of the first things you're likely to find if you're interested in learning about the charity or want to donate to it yourself, even having the button to give money in red on the top right corner. The main focus of this page at the top is an image and description of a real child having fun during their wish experience, which I presume alternates between different kids over time. Immediately this shows the viewer what exactly they're donating to and what their cause is, giving them proof that what they do works by showing a real example.



Make a wish's website

Not only are they enticing donators through showing that they stay true to their promise, but they also give statistics. Specifically, they claim that 302 wishes were granted this past week because of donors, 99% of doctors think wishes help relieve families from trauma, and that 87% of alumni say their wish was a turning point in their treatment. Showing statistics and the credible sources behind them lets viewers know that not only are they making kids wishes come true, but that aside from making a kid happy, the organization has additional positive effects on patients' and their families' wellbeing and mental health.

At the bottom of the page when you click on "learn more", it brings you to a new section showing even more positive effects of each child's wish. They claim that x out of 10 parents,

numbers ranging from 8 to 9, believe that the Foundation's efforts had a positive impact on them and their family. These effects range from having their relationship strengthened or their child feeling empowered. These witness testimonies further show that what they do works and that the people affected by them were happy about the service. Overall, this website uses statistics, case examples, and testimonies to show that logically, this charity is effective at what it does, proving to people that it is safe to donate.

Commercials

Being a charity that requires people to know about it, Make-A-Wish obviously needs to spread the word about their existence, so that's where commercials come in. With a commercial, you have to make sure to show what the product or company being advertised does. With Make-A-Wish, you have to show the fact that it's a charity organization that helps grant children's wishes, and these commercials seem to accomplish that. However, the commercials can use a few more methods other than just spreading their message to make themselves appeal to the audience watching them. I decided to take a look at two in particular that each use different ways to communicate with the viewer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTMxYGZk1H8>

First off is this commercial titled "waiting room". In it, we see a hospital lobby full of people with fantastical occupations such as a scuba diver, a gymnast, and even a princess. This is obviously to show how the charity lets sick kids meet people they admire. It has a lightly funny tone to it in order to appeal to people's sense of humor. At the same time, they manage to keep it heartfelt and say sad yet true facts about terminally ill kids, like how many won't get to school or see their families during their treatment. These facts make the viewer sympathize with these kids,

eventually leading them to tell them that they can make these kids' wishes come true by donating and directing them to their website.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoLXTIXBIXA>

The next commercial, titled “Wishes need stars like you”, on the other hand, uses less humor but more fantastical elements. It features a girl literally casting a shooting star into the air and parading it around with a rope. Eventually, we see a kid in a hospital bed looking up at the star with a cheerful look. The narration at the end, done by John Cena, is a call to action motivating people to donate, claiming that they’ve already made over 500000 wishes come true for the past 40 years, and that you can help make every wish come true. This, as well as the other commercial show logos by bringing up the statistics on wishes granted and pathos with the heartfelt message and cause they’re making people aware of.

Both of these commercials each use different methods to invoke a reaction out of whoever watches them. While the first mixes a sad reality with the promising, playful, and upbeat solution to it, the second one goes for a more dreamlike atmosphere with a hopeful message. These two commercials, however, both use pathos to advertise their cause by showing what they’re fighting for and how emotional their cause is. Of course, another noticeable aspect of the last commercial was the added celebrity endorsement with John Cena being the narrator, which leads us to one of Make-A-Wish’s biggest partnerships.

Celebrities



Wrestlers are great with kids! (in all seriousness this was in a sprite commercial, not real!)

If you don't know who John Cena is, he's a famous wrestler and Hollywood actor associated with the WWE, he also has granted around 650 wishes for kids as of 2023. According to them, his number is even a world record for the most wishes granted by a single person. Not only does Make-A-Wish acknowledge his achievements, but they even have a partnership with WWE themselves for granting wishes to kids.

Not only does acknowledging and focusing on this aspect show people that this organization is a benevolent one, but it appeals to anyone who likes these celebrities or is a wrestling fan. Maybe they see a bit of themselves in these kids if they grew up on wrestling as well much like these patients. They even have more top wish granting celebrities who's contributions are in the dozens if not hundreds, such as Justin Bieber, Beyonce, and even Taylor Swift herself.



John Cena with various Make-A-Wish patients

These celebrities pose a major benefit to Make-A-Wish as a company. Their good deeds gain the charity media exposure due to their fame, which could result in more people discovering the organization. Their status as celebrities also provides ethos, as they are a group in the world with enough credibility for people to deem whoever they're working with as legitimate. Not only does Make-A-Wish partner with celebrities, but also with other famous companies as well.

Disney partnership

Throughout Make-A-Wish's existence, Disney has been one of their biggest partners. Being one of the world's largest entertainment companies with a massive child audience, many kids' wishes involve Disney in one way or another. They are fully aware of this partnership and even promote it on their website, noting that one out of every two wishes is a Disney related one.



Disney and Make-A-Wish

In fact, the very first wish was Disney related itself. Frank “Bopsy” Salazar, a 7 year old with leukemia, got to go to Disneyland as a part of his wish. As a result, Disney acknowledges and promotes their contributions through various means. For example, they helped create the “Give kids the world” village near Disneyworld in Florida so that sick kids could have a place to stay during their visit. They even dedicated one of their cruise ships, the Disney Wish, to all past, present, and future wish children by citing them as it’s godchildren.

Not only is this good PR for Disney, a company with many negative controversies, but Make-A-Wish is promoted by one of the biggest and most influential corporations on the planet. Despite all of it’s controversies, Disney is still a beloved company with thousands of fans across the world, so their status definitely spreads the message of Make-A-Wish far and wide. Much like WWE, many Disney fans could see themselves in these kids and sympathize with their shared interests, and want to donate to this charity.

The name Itself/branding

When you think about Make-A-Wish or any other company, the first thing that comes to mind, of course, is the name itself. It's simple, fun sounding, and easy to remember. With Make-A-Wish, they have a very distinctive name that's not only catchy, but easily describes the organization itself. The entire idea behind it is being able to grant the wishes of sick kids, which is, again, something many people can get behind. When you have a name and cause like that then it can easily become a recognizable charity.



Make-A-Wish's blue logo

The logo has a shooting star mixed with the letter "A" to represent the symbolism of wishing upon a star. There's also the simple color combination of blue and white, which they use across their websites and different media. It's an easy combination which people are able to associate with Make-A-Wish themselves. This is why it's a big part of the company's image, it's something that is able to stick in people's minds.

Conclusion

With them being one of the top ranked charity organizations in the world and having plenty of funding from donations, I would say that Make-A-Wish has made a pretty good name for itself. From it's various celebrity and company partnerships to the promotional videos they put out, they've tried their best to maintain good publicity. Their way of marketing themselves to the world has caused thousands of children to benefit from them, as well as making sure the company itself has a recognizable and positive image.

While using pathos to appeal to people's emotions, being a charity that helps sick kids, they don't just act sappy and play with people's emotions in a manipulative way. They do indeed show proof that they work, are effective, and have different famous and admired sources to back them, showing that they can have some ethos to them as well. Nobody wants to see sick kids die sad, so they use that to motivate their audience and as a result, they keep a clean image by keeping their promise and showing it. Overall, Make-A-Wish manages to keep it's public perception as an effective charity by emotionally motivating people while still being creditable, and seems to still be doing it's job effectively.

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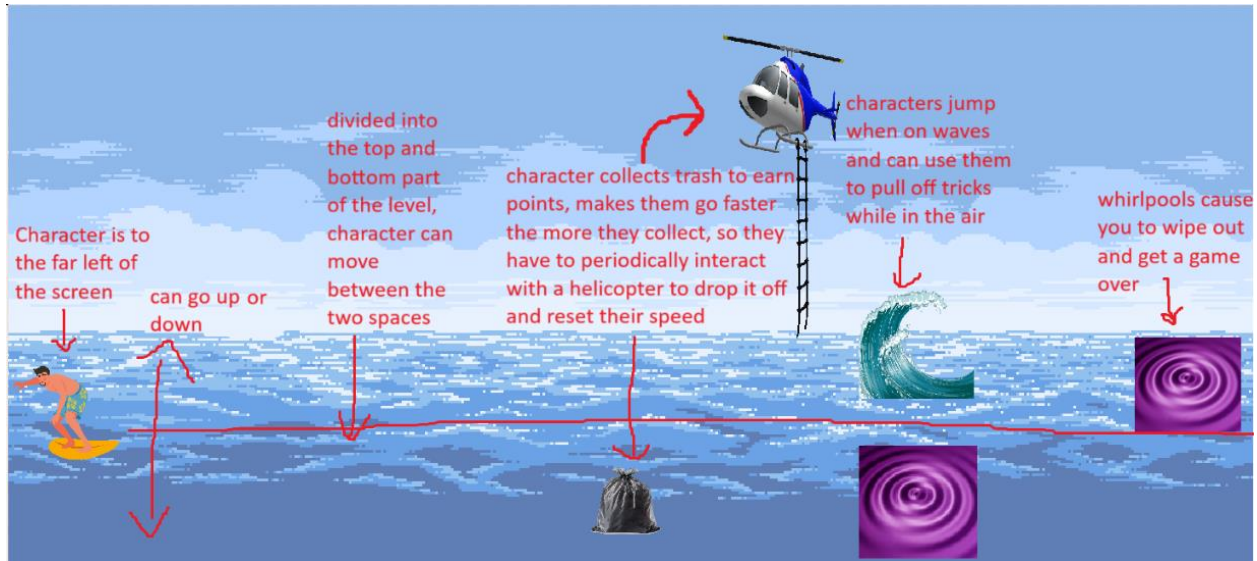
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Premise: you play as a surfer who has to pull off tricks while on waves while also cleaning up trash polluting the ocean all while avoiding whirlpools that will make you get a game over.

Controls: The controls are simple, using only either the arrow keys on a keyboard, WASD, or swiping up, down, left, or right on a mobile device. There is also a pause menu that can be opened by either tapping an icon on mobile, or hitting escape on a keyboard.

Mechanics: The game is played between two different sections of the screen, the top section and the bottom section of the sea, which the player can move between. The player can pick up trash to earn points, avoid purple whirlpools, and hop on waves to perform stunts. Unfortunately, collecting the trash makes you go faster, so you must be careful how much you pick up. Periodically, a helicopter will come by to pick up the trash you're carrying, resetting your speed to normal.

Tricks: After touching a wave, you will jump in the air. During this period you can use the arrow keys or swipe up and down to pull off various tricks to earn points. Each swipe or press of a key earns you a fixed amount of points, but only if it is different from the key or direction, as repeatedly tapping the same key will not earn you points.

Background: as the game goes on, the background keeps changing from day, to dusk, to night, to dawn, and repeat. Each cycle should last for 3 minutes. Occasionally, different kinds of Sealife will appear in the background. The more trash gets collected, the chance of them appearing increases to reflect the ocean getting cleaner.

Points:

Trash: 5 points

Touching a wave: 10 points

Each trick: 10 points

Notes to the programmer:

*Helicopter should spawn every minute and stay on screen for 10 seconds

*increase whirlpool spawn rate every minute for challenge

*trash spawn rate should remain constant

3d models needed and their animations:

*A surferboarder

- Moving up
- Moving down
- Jumping up in the air
- Trick 1(up key): Handstand on the surfboard
- Trick 2(down key): T pose
- Trick 3(left key): spin surferboarder around
- Trick 4(right key): front flip surferboarder

*trash (variants)

- Bottle
- Tin can
- Plastic bag
- Cardboard box

*whirlpool

- Spinning around

*wave

*helicopter with ladder

- Rotor spinning around

*Sealife (variants, each one would have a swimming animation)

- Dolphins
- School of fish
- Sea turtles

Background/Screens:

*a vast ocean against a sky background shifting from day, to dusk, to night, and to dawn. During the game you would also have a number in the top center keeping track of your score.

*pause screen would just be text over the paused game screen that says “paused”.

*this would also be the title screen as well with the log, a start button, and an exit button.

*the game over screen would be still 3d art of the surfer covered in water walking along a beach, drying himself off with a towel. This would have a button to exit out, a button to restart, and a number showing the player’s score that game.

Page 1: Before the assassination

(Each element is in order)

Page color: a light blue background.

3 graphics at the top of the page that the user can flip through with arrow buttons:

Image 1: The official White House photo of President Kennedy ([7c7afbda-ca81-492d-ac6a-296c0eefe795.sized-1000x1000.jpg \(1000×1276\)](#))

Image 2: JFK's official white house portrait painting ([John_F_Kennedy_Official_Portrait.jpg \(2029×3000\)](#))

Image 3: Photo from JFK's "We chose to go to the moon" speech ([800px-John_F_Kennedy_speaks_at_Rice_University.jpg \(800×1162\)](#))

Link: JFK's Wikipedia page ([John F. Kennedy - Wikipedia](#))

Text:

John F Kennedy was the president of the United States from 1961 to 1963. Being the youngest president elected at the time, he became popular and beloved amongst the public, especially

with him utilizing the advent of live television to entice the masses. Born in Brookline Massachusetts on May 29, 1917, he was apart of the Kennedy Family, a bloodline with Irish roots and strong influence in American politics. He had 8 siblings and eventually went to school at Harvard and graduated.

Once WW2 started, he enlisted in the United States Navy, serving from 1941 to 1945. During his time serving on a patrol boat, the PT-109, he and his crew had an encounter with a Japanese warship, in which Kennedy successfully saved most of his squamates lives. Soon after the war, he joined the U.S house of representatives in 1947, soon moving onto the U.S senate in 1953.

Eventually Kennedy ran as the Democrat candidate in the 1960 election. Running against Richard Nixon, he famously took advantage of the televised debates broadcasted, presenting himself as calm and composed, unlike Nixon who showed up unprepared. He eventually won, and during his presidency advocated for both the civil rights movement and funding of the space program.

As for his foreign policy, Kennedy was famously involved in the Bay of Pigs invasion, where the United States planned to overthrow Fidel Castro and his communist rule of Cuba. He even helped resolve the Cuban Missile crisis, where the Soviet Union

deployed ships with nuclear missiles near Cuba. This event ended with both powers reaching an agreement and removing the ships from the area.

Kennedy was generally well liked among the U.S public. He was praised for his charisma and political decisions. Many of which wound up benefiting the United States in the long run, such as when the moon landing occurred in the late 1960's. This period wouldn't last for long, however.

Button (center): Quiz

If pressed: go to the quiz pop up

Interactive element: quiz (new window, multiple choice with fill in bubbles)

Text: Ready to test your knowledge on what you just read?

Question 1: Who did JFK run against in the 1960 election?

A. William Taft

B. Richard Nixon

C. Jimmy Carter

If B: correct!

Else: Wrong

Question 2: What program did JFK famously help promote?

A. The computer program

B. The TV program

C. The space program

If C: Correct!

Else: Wrong

Question 3: Which country was involved in the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis?

A. Brazil

B. Cuba

C. Argentina

If B: Correct!

Else: Wrong

Display text showing how many questions the user got right.

1/3

2/3

3/3

Prompt user: Would you like to try again?

Button: yes (restart the quiz)

Button: no (go back to the text)

Bar at the bottom of the page:

Button: right arrow (leads user to the next page)

Page 2: The assassination

(Each element is in order)

Page color: a light yellow background

Interactive element: map

Description: an interactive map showing 3 points during the motorcade. The user can click on each one and get a pop-up describing what happened at that point, alongside an image. The first is at Love Field, the second is at Dealey Plaza, and the last would be at Parkland Hospital. (reference for map/trail <https://www.jfk.org/wp-content/uploads/Screen-Shot-2021-12-03-at-9.15.00-AM-2048x1256.png.webp>)

Point 1:

Image: colored photograph of JFK and his wife arriving in Dallas at Love Field ([Kennedys arrive at Dallas 11-22-63.JPG \(2672x2656\)](#))

Text: At 11:38 am, Air Force One arrives in Dallas carrying JFK alongside his wife, ready to drive through the streets.

Point 2:

Image: The famous photograph of him during the motorcade before getting shot ([1957.jpg \(1200×900\)](#))

Text: At 12:30 pm, Kennedy is shot by a Sniper rifle from the Texas School Book depository at Dealey plaza.

Point 3:

Image: The image of his car parked in front of the hospital's doors ([107504.jpg \(1280×720\)](#))

Text: At 12:40 pm, the motorcade arrives at Parkland hospital where he is rushed to the Emergency room and soon pronounced dead.

Text:

In 1963, JFK had made plans to bring the democratic party of Texas together in order to increase his chances of getting re-elected the next year. His first stop on this trip was in Dallas alongside his wife so that he could go give a speech at the Dallas Trade Mart. Once he arrived at the city's airport he would end up taking a motorcade to his destination... is what would have happened if things went well.

On 11/22/1963, JFK and his wife stepped off Air Force One after arriving in Dallas Texas at 11:38 am. They proceeded to

board their limousine which took them en route to the Dallas Trade mart for a luncheon and speech. On their way, Nellie Connally, the first lady of Texas asked him "Mr. President, they can't make you believe now that there are not some in Dallas who love and appreciate you, can they?" which he replied "No, they sure can't". Those were his last words.

At 12:30 PM, a sniper rifle shot was fired from a window at the Texas School Book depository, hitting the president in the Neck. Another shot was fired again shortly afterwards, hitting him in the head, killing him. Governor Connally, who was also present in the limo as well, was also shot, but non-fatally.

The limousine rushed to Parkland hospital, arriving at 12:40. At 1 pm, president John F Kennedy was pronounced dead. The United States as well as it's allies were shocked and horrified at what had just occurred. Soon after on the same day, the perpetrator, Lee Harvey Oswald, was apprehended.

Link (center, watch in page):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTCEkvvuPlg>

Caption below: Radio coverage of the event as it happened.

Button (center): Quiz

If pressed: go to the quiz pop up

Interactive element: quiz (new window, multiple choice with fill in bubbles)

Text: Ready to test your knowledge on what you just read?

Question 1: Why did JFK go to Dallas in the first place?

- A. To negotiate with the Texas democratic party
- B. To spread awareness of the dangers of communism
- C. To meet with Fidel Castro

If A: correct!

Else: Wrong

Question 2: What building did the gunshot come from?

- A. The Texas Cheesecake depository
- B. Texas Roadhouse
- C. The Texas School book depository

If C: Correct!

Else: Wrong

Question 3: Who killed JFK?

- A. Mao Zedong

B. Joseph Stalin

C. Lee Harvey Oswald

If C: Correct!

Else: Wrong

Display text showing how many questions the user got right.

1/3

2/3

3/3

Prompt user: Would you like to try again?

Button: yes (restart the quiz)

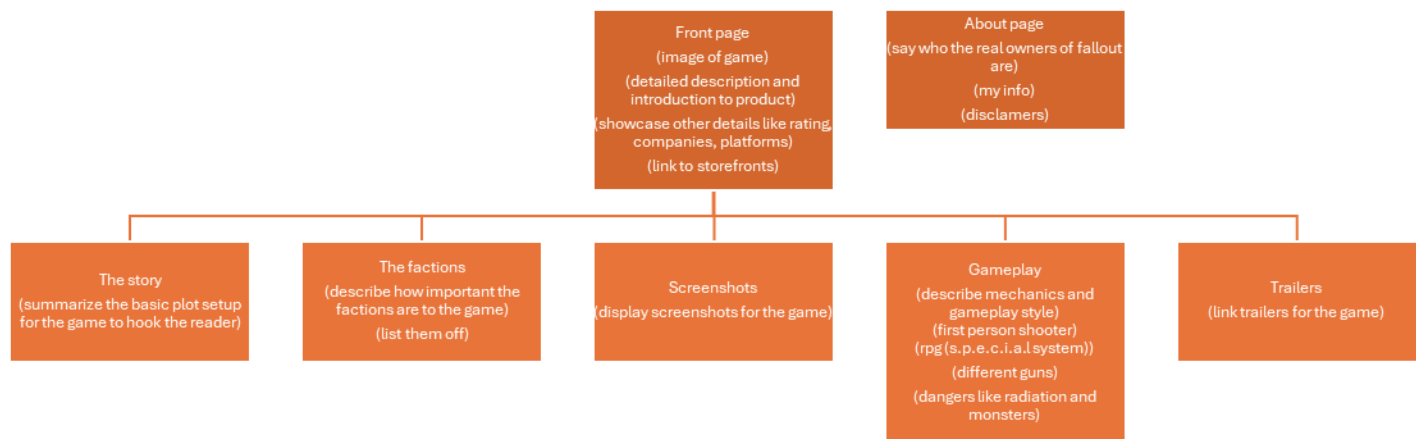
Button: no (go back to the text)

Bar at the bottom of the page:

Button: right arrow (leads user to the next page)

Button: left arrow (leads user to the previous page)

New Vegas Website



Gold Talk

With Topp Mann

Proposal:

Introduction: For my internship, I've recently been given the task of running a blog for Gold Top Records. I was told that I could write about subjects ranging from Gold Top itself to the wider music industry, giving me a wide range of opportunities for material. Now, during the meeting the first thing that came to mind was "How should I present myself?". Due to the subject matter, I immediately thought of radio hosts, how many had laid-back, cool, and hip personalities whenever they were on the mic. Through this train of thought, Gold Talk with Topp Mann was born. For this blog, I will present myself as a cool, hip, anonymous DJ-like figure known as Topp Mann.

The mystery: For this blog, I'm wanting to create an aura of mystery by going by the persona of Topp Mann. Throughout the entertainment industry, many artists and writers go by pseudonyms which not only drums up speculation, but also curiosity. In Japan, artists of some of the most popular manga titles stay anonymous, go by pseudonyms, or even use funny avatars to represent themselves. In the music industry itself, artists such as Slipknot or Daft Punk wear masks to hide their identity. While some of these examples do eventually go public, on their accord or otherwise, it really does add to the mystique of their craft, doesn't it?

The persona: Topp Mann is cool, hip, and smooth talking. They never reveal their face, or their real name, they're just Topp Mann. Topp Mann has no gender, sexuality, or race. Who knows, they might even be an alien. They are fun loving, clean, and informative. They are here to spread their love of music, teach people about the industry, and tell stories about the history of the music scene. Rather than focusing on music they don't like or spreading gossip, Topp Mann brings peace and positivity to the table. If someone has a question, request, or proposal, Topp Mann will at least look it over.

Site contents:

Platform: Gold Talk will use Blogger, a free service that lets users make their own blogs, customize them, and post there. The link to it will be shown on Gold Top's social media, and possibly its own website. The aesthetic will look retro in a way; there are a lot of free themes you can find on the internet so I'm bound to find one that will fit the bill.

Content: Articles will consist of ones requested by people on the Gold Top team in order to promote upcoming events, albums, and artists we're working with. Readers can send in requests or suggestions as well, which I will look over and consider writing articles on, within reason, of course. Lastly, I'll also write my own articles discussing things of my own too, such as albums, artists, and other music related subjects I'm interested in. I might even reach out to artists or people in the industry for interviews. One idea for a special feature I have is "Soundtrack Sundays", where I discuss a work of fiction's soundtrack.

Audience: I'm thinking of promoting this website primarily to students at PFW as well as Sweetwater. For this, I would possibly need to get permission to advertise on said grounds, such as putting up posters promoting the site. Overall, it's a very casual music website, accessible to people who aren't exactly music buffs, but I'll still give articles that could appeal to both as well. There won't be articles critiquing music, talking about music theory, or going deeper into how to compose music.

Conclusion:

Purpose: The purpose of this site is not just to write about things I find interesting, but promote the Gold Top brand, its events, and talents as well. Whatever I'm requested to write about, I'll do it.

Internship: I typically spend around 2-3 hours editing and writing a night. With this assignment, I'll likely be able to reach my required hours within the fall semester. My articles, the website itself, and other planning materials can be used as artifacts to prove I did my hours.

The Globalization of the Japanese Gaming Industry

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Fall 2025 SOC 21001-01 Modern Japanese Society

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11/23/2025

If you're someone who lives outside of Japan, what are the first things you think of when people mention Japanese cultural exports? Many people say anime, others say manga, some might say movies. One example you're likely to hear from a lot of people, however, is videogames. Japan has a massive videogame industry with consoles and franchises spanning generations at this point. The thing I would say makes it most unique is that Japanese games have been ubiquitous with gaming for almost as long as the medium has existed.

At least in The United States, anime didn't start becoming mainstream until the 90's when dozens of Japanese animated shows began airing on American networks. Manga soon followed afterwards. Both mediums existed way before then, however, so it took a while for them to pick up steam in the English-speaking world. On the other hand, Japanese games have been synonymous with the medium for as long as they've been popular. You've got stuff like Space Invaders invading American arcades in the late 70's, then titles like Donkey Kong, Pac Man, and Galaga became massive hits abroad. Then as the years went on, the big home consoles were almost exclusively Japanese brands like Nintendo, Sega, and Playstation.

Look at gaming now, those consoles are still around to this very day. Generations grew up playing Mario and Sonic titles, some even prefer games made in Japan over what their home countries offer. Japanese companies have certainly taken notice of this, and as time goes on, they've become increasingly globalized. They hire foreign workers, make games to appeal to a broader international audience, and even open up studios abroad. This all begs the question; how did Japan become such a powerhouse in the gaming industry in the first place? How has their success in gaming affected them economically and economically? And what are the social implications of this recent global approach?

To find out where the Japanese gaming industry begins, we have to go back to before videogames were even an idea in someone's brain. As bizarre as it sounds, Japan's gaming industry started with... a gaming industry, but not the kind you're thinking of. The earliest videogame companies there started out making pachinko machines and other coin slot related amusements. Sega, Konami, and Sammy all began making these types of machines, and they still release ones to this very day, with some even themed after their own game franchises. Of course, we can't forget about Nintendo, which has been around since 1889, starting out as a playing card manufacturer and eventually creating toys during the mid-20th century (Consalvo, 2009, P. 136).

This was around the time when Japan was experiencing serious economic growth post WW2 reconstruction. New tech companies like Sony or Panasonic began popping up and their products began to shape Japan's image abroad as being an economically powerful and technologically innovative country. On the other side of the pacific, American based companies began producing some of the first arcade machines like Pong or Computer Space. This was the start of companies like Atari, a company which, funnily enough, named itself after the Japanese phrase for "hitting the target". Eventually, many Japanese companies, already having experience with coin operated amusement machines, began to hop onto this new medium. Most notably, the company Taito would release Space Invaders: a 1978 arcade machine that would not just be a hit domestically but eventually release to critical and commercial acclaim in the United States within a few months after its original release.

Japan's dominance of the gaming industry continued throughout the 80's and 90's. After the video game console crash, Nintendo famously helped revive the console market in North America, eventually giving way to companies like Sega or Sony to gain prominence there. The Japanese game industry has continued to influence other parts of the world like Europe and

South America. Early on, certain titles were not released outside of Japan due to skepticism around if they'd appeal to a western audience or not, with people thinking their Japanese themes wouldn't be popular. Eventually, many series that weren't initially released, such as Fire Emblem or Animal Crossing, were released to critical and commercial success outside Japan. Remesal and Lopez even state that many people see the games' "Japaneseness" was a part of their appeal to the foreign audience.

You see, videogames from Japan have the perception of being uniquely Japanese, they're easily identified as being from said country in a way you can't really say about other nations. Americans can make a game like Elder Scrolls, a European inspired fantasy game, and the British can make a game like Grand Theft Auto, a Hollywood influenced crime drama game set in America. At a glance, you couldn't really tell which game was made by which country. A common term used to identify Japanese games in Japan is "gemu". If Japanese games are so unique that people have begun using terms to separate them from others, then what contributes to the "Japanese-ness" of Japanese games?

Japaneseness, also known as Nihonjinron, is a topic that's highly debated to this very day. Luca Paolo Bruno (2023) cites the visual design, heavily influenced by anime and manga, as being an indicator of Nihonjinron in gaming. The same article mentions videogames as being a part of the "ACG" field, consisting of anime, manga comics, and games. The interconnectivity of these unique cultural industries makes for a distinct Japanese flair in the games the country produces. Artists, writers, directors from these fields cross into each other, creating a media environment special to their country with big names gaining attention abroad (P. 92). For example, the late Akira Toriyama, author of Dragon Ball Z and other famous manga is also

notable for being the character designer of Dragon Quest, one of Japan's highest selling JRPG franchises (Navarro, 2015, P. 9).

Japanese roleplaying games, or JRPGs for short, are another thing that separate western and Japanese gaming. Despite initially being inspired by Ultima, an American computer RPG, Japanese role-playing games took a different direction and evolved differently compared to the west's offerings. Generally, western RPG's have a heavy focus on skills, offering different ways for players to complete missions and build their own character, whereas JRPGs have simpler stats, focus more on a cast of characters, and usually focus only on combat rather than multiple solutions (Navarro, 2015, P. 9).

Of course, many Japanese game franchises explore political and social problems related to the country (P. 93). There's also the subject of Japanese mythology, which games like Okami or Nioh explore. However, I'd argue one game that exemplifies Japan's unique culture is Pokémon. Like the previously mentioned games, many of the creatures in Pokémon are influenced by Japanese myth and legends, take for example Lotad: a Pokémon who's based off a Kappa. When you look into the story behind its creation, you'll see a uniquely Japanese story as well. The series was influenced by its creator, Satoshi Tajiri's childhood growing up in an increasingly urbanizing Japan, and how he used to collect bugs as a kid but moved onto arcade games after the areas he hunted in began to be built over (The Island Conservation Group, 2024). There's also the fact the series follows kid characters walking around without adult supervision, something common in Japan but less common in places like The United States.

Now how does globalization play into all of this? As I said before, Japanese games are big sellers outside of their own country. Mia Consalvo's (2009) article on the subject goes into how Americans and Europeans are constantly buying Japanese titles. However, when looking at

Japanese bestseller lists, she noticed that they're a pretty isolated market, with games made outside of Japan not selling as much as native titles (P. 138). The article was published in the late 2000's, however, and some games since then contradict that statement.

Despite having the homefield advantage, relying on only Japanese sales doesn't seem to be a sustainable option for the country's game studios. Due to a smaller population and declining birthrates, Japanese companies have begun appealing to western audiences a lot more, especially due to those countries having larger populations, therefore ensuring them higher sales overall. When Consalvo's (2009) article was released, Konami put out a statement saying that they were talking about "bolstering overseas business development" (P. 139). Now ever since then, Konami took a hiatus from prioritizing game development for a time period, infamously canning games like Hideo Kojima's Silent Hills title. Throughout its almost 30 year old history, the Silent Hill series has often been handed off to overseas developers.

While the first 4 games in the series were developed in its home country of Japan, the following games were developed by studios based in the United States and Britain. Nowadays, Silent Hill has seen a resurgence. Last year saw the release of a Silent Hill 2 remake developed by Poland's Bloober Team. This year saw the release of Silent Hill F, a game developed by Neobards Entertainment, a Hong Kong based studio. However, despite its new development team, it was still written by a Japanese writer: Ryukishi07 (a writer who uses a pseudonym). The story itself is set in Japan and deals with themes about Japanese women's rights issues around the 1960's. again, Japanese games are often unique because of them tackling issues that pertain to their home country.

As we can infer from these, Japanese game publishers for the past few decades have begun opening up and collaborating with more studios abroad. They now have entire games

developed by teams with different life experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs. However, these aren't the only foreigners in the industry. Studios within Japan have begun hiring foreign workers as well. A few of them have gotten into roles like art and programming, but a lot of them are in localization and translation.

Localization and translation are other things that have been prioritized more due to globalization. There's a difference between the two, but they're both interconnected.

Localization is more about making sure the content is understandable for a foreign audience and adheres to their culture's beliefs, while translation is more about translating menus, dialogue, and general text into another language. As games began to have more text, more translation was required, often by non-native speakers. A lot of these early translations were filled with errors, with one infamous example being the game *Zero Wing* having a line translated as "All your base are belong to us". After the new millennium, Japanese game studios began prioritizing localization even more, hiring more people for it both in-house and freelance (Mangiron, 2012, P. 6).

According to sources like Sugimoto's book (2020), many immigrants are from other Asian countries like China and Korea, and many companies that hire them are typically "lower rung" blue collar jobs (P. 474). But the videogame jobs I'm discussing are more white-collar positions, and it appears that workers look to be hired at these studios more due to the passion for their status in the game world and franchises rather than the reasons blue collar workers get hired in more essential jobs. Their desire to work here is driven more by "Cool Japan" than necessity. This leads into us talking about Cool Japan's effects on the Japanese gaming industry, as well as Japanese games' impact on Cool Japan.

“Cool Japan” is a term used to describe the ever-increasing prevalence of Japanese pop-culture media around the globe. Manga was one of the first mediums that started flourishing in Japan during the post war period, which later led to Anime, and eventually videogames. This pop-culture landscape shapes outsiders’ image of Japan, portraying it as a fun, creative, and quirky part of the world. Although it is up to debate whether people abroad have an accurate understanding of the deeper nuances of Japanese society. This industry is a huge part of Japan’s economy and has resulted in a domestic market size of 12.77 trillion yen as of 2017 (Sugimoto, 2020, P. 682). Not only has it benefited Japan’s economy, but it heavily contributes to tourism as well, motivating people to want to visit.

Among younger generations, videogames have become a huge part of Cool Japan, resulting in younger generations of foreigners getting into the country’s pop culture as time goes on. Because these Japanese games are popular, they end up contributing to Cool Japan, and Cool Japan gives people the image of Japanese games as unique and interesting, giving Japan an edge in game development that not a lot of countries have. Videogames have become a part of what Sugimoto (2020) considers a ‘postmodern Nihonjinron’. Japan now has videogames as a part of its cultural identity, so what could that mean for Japan in the future?

As a result of their popularity, Japanese games don’t seem to be going anywhere anytime soon. Even though Japan has suffered from recessions, a birthrate crisis, and other work related issues, sales from abroad will make sure that Japanese games stay afloat financially. But looking at the future, how will globalization affect the Japanese gaming industry in an age of low birthrates and the rest of the world being enamored with Japanese pop-culture?

As a result of the birthrate crisis, further immigration, and the increase of Japanese soft power, could this mean more and more foreigners are going to be working in the Japanese

gaming industry as time goes on? These companies are already outsourcing their games to overseas studios, giving them connections to their industry despite not originally being from Japan. It's no coincidence that stories like these are increasing in number due to more developers becoming jaded with the Western gaming industry.

Recently, gaming studios in North America and Europe have had an increasing number of layoffs for the past few years. The games have higher costs now, crunch time is being implemented, and studio demands are getting increasingly unreasonable. Microtransactions, bloated budgets, and other undesirable features are common in many mainstream western games, but Japanese games have tended to avoid them for the most part.

A recent article I found contained insider info from Eidos Montreal, a gaming studio based in Canada that's had an increasing number of layoffs recently due to a buyout. According to the information, the studio was hired to help develop Kojima productions' new title OD, a game already cowritten by famous American Horror Director: Jordan Peele. The partnership ended after the 20 developers involved were asked to move to Japan in order to help with development. While it wasn't stated if any of the devs took them up on the offer, it's an indicator that this practice may become more common in the Japanese industry as time goes on.

Let's think about Hollywood, one of America's largest cultural institutions. Much like the Japanese gaming industry, it's a collective of multiple studios, with numerous popular intellectual properties, and has gotten much larger over time. Being a multicultural nation, it's quite common for American films to have foreign directors or crew working on them. Many actors, writers, and filmmakers come from a diverse background, and it seems like that may become the case for the Japanese gaming industry as time goes on.

This definitely raised questions from different theoretical perspectives. From a functionalist perspective, could this end up helping out the Japanese gaming industry? More people getting involved means games can be developed faster, new techniques can be shared between developers, stories can have perspectives from people who've had different life experiences than those living in Japan. But will people have a problem with this new approach? Most likely.

From a conflict theory perspective, are there any people in the Japanese industry who might feel like foreigners are taking their jobs? I've seen people in the west who like Japanese games because they don't have much western influence. Having foreigners getting involved might make people think that Japanese games are losing what makes them unique. Already you have far right groups in Japan who oppose immigration for those reasons.

Who knows what direction the Japanese gaming industry will go in the future. It's a business operating in an increasingly globalized world and we're already starting to see its effects. Where does Japanese soft power go from here? What new ways will the government try and use this as an opportunity to strengthen Japan's image abroad? Will Japanese companies try and open up more studios in foreign countries or import more foreign workers to the country itself? How many Japan based developers will be against this approach? It's a field that's changed a lot in the past 40 or so years, but it doesn't seem like it's going away anytime soon.

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