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Slay The Dragon: Writing Great Video Games



Synopsis

Writing for the multibillion-dollar video-game industry is unlike writing for any other medium. *Slay the Dragon* will help you understand the challenges and offer creative solutions to writing for a medium where the audience not only demands a great story, but to be a driving force within it. Aimed at traditional writers who want to learn interactive narrative as well as game creators who want to tell better, more emotionally involving stories, the book is written by two creative veterans of both Hollywood and "Nerdyhood." Through lively discussions and self-paced-exercises, Bryant and Giglio step you such topics as: the "no-act" structure of video games; writing great game characters; making gameplay emotionally meaningful; and bringing your game world alive.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for *Slay the Dragon* – “A veritable treasure trove of information. A compelling look at the development and evolution of interactive narrative and an invaluable tool for anyone who loves games!” – Drew Karpysyn, lead writer, *Mass Effect*; author, the *Chaos Born* trilogy

– “Practical and original advice on narrative writing for video games that treats the world of gaming for what it is: an emerging art form.” – Aaron Bleyaert, producer, *Clueless Gamer* with Conan O’Brien on TBS’s *Conan*

– “If you’re learning how to write for games or a developer burning to create games with better stories, I can’t think of a better place to start.” – Haris Orkin, game writer/narrative designer, *Dying Light*

– “In my years of working in the industry

this is the closest thing to a bible of creative video game story creation as I have ever seen. — Larry Hryb, Xbox Live — Major Nelson — “Bridges the gap between traditional narrative and non-linear storytelling and makes it simple. A required tool in the working writer’s toolbox.” — Philip Eisner, screenwriter, Event Horizon; consulting writer for Telltale Games — Tales from the Borderlands — “A comprehensive but accessible guide for those striving to relate to the medium of video games from another entertainment medium. If you’re a writer from film or TV and want to understand more about games, this book should get you comfortable quickly.” — Dan Boutros, executive producer, The Walking Dead Assault; co-founder, Soul Arcade —

Robert Denton Bryant has worked in Hollywood in both marketing and production, and in video games as both a publisher and a developer. He has been executive producer on dozens of games on platforms ranging from CD-ROMs to the iPad, including the bestselling World Championship Poker and Pinball Hall of Fame console game franchises. He is the coauthor (with Charles P. Schultz) of Game Testing All In One. He has lectured in the U.S. and Europe on game writing, and currently teaches at The University of California, Los Angeles and at Woodbury University. Keith Giglio has worked as a screenwriter and producer on such feature and television movies as Joshua, Noah, Return to Halloweentown, Walt Disney’s Tarzan, Pizza My Heart, A Cinderella Story, and Another Cinderella Story. He has written for Paramount Pictures, The Walt Disney Company, Universal Studios, Warner Bros. Pictures, Spyglass Entertainment, Walden Media, Tokyopop, and Platinum Studios. His book Writing the Comedy Blockbuster was published in 2012. He currently teaches both screenwriting and game writing at Syracuse University.

When it comes to books on entertainment writing, I’m a tough sell with a propensity to say what I think. Here’s what I think about SLAY THE DRAGON: This fantastic new book on video game writing is now on my list of essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how video games are created, from table-napkin idea to concept to narrative to gameplay to mechanics to production and marketing. You will want to read this book ASAP if you’re a screenwriter who knows story structure but needs to learn about game mechanics; a game developer who understands gameplay but needs to learn about storytelling; a film writer or producer looking for new markets; an educator who needs the most up-to-date textbook on game writing in an incredibly fast-changing market; or a game geek who wants to know more about what you love from the inside out. Basically, this book is for anyone anywhere who has a great idea for a game and wants to actually get it in writing while

being coached by two very successful game writer/producers. The text gets its structure from a highly regarded game writing course taught by the authors, with exercises and assignments suggested at the end of each chapter, but it is by no means a dry academic read. If I had to read this book for a class, it would be the most enjoyable, practical, inspiring, informative, motivating, and frequently hilarious textbook on my shelf. For example, in a chapter on story structure:

“When stories deviate from these rules, we often find them unsettling, unsatisfying, or a Lars von Trier film. Love that. You know all of those books on screenwriting or story structure that you bought and read only to find out the author’s main claim to fame was having optioned an idea a long time ago to that one guy for a web series that was never produced? This isn’t one of those books. I actually know the authors of SLAY THE DRAGON personally and professionally. They are the REAL DEAL. They know what they’re talking about, and you should listen to them. The bottom line: Add this book to your writers’ library, and you’ll have a clear, concise, readable, and entertaining master class in the history, mechanics, language, tradition, and business of game writing and production that also manages to be extremely practical.

If you hadn’t guessed by the title this is going for a Save the Cat of video games. I found it to be a bit less dense, but possibly only because I’ve been a gamer since a young age (of both video and tabletop variety), so most of the “how games work” content was old hat for me. The book does offer you a skip option, so fair enough. After that there’s plenty of good advice to be had for all forms of interactive fiction.

This is a great book. I haven’t read the whole thing yet, but it’s been very on point so far, and helps inspire me to want to slay that all powerful dragon: writing my game’s script. I got the digital copy so I’d have it with me on my kindle and phone, but I like it well enough to consider getting a hard copy for my home library.

You’ll still have to learn to write great stories yourself, but this book takes you from the ground up on understanding the complications unique to writing for video games, as opposed to other mediums. It also gives some exercises to help you think in the right direction, with gameplay in mind for example.

Slay the Dragon is a well written insightful treatise on story writing for the video game venue. Your usable education level will be significantly increased on video game story development, interaction,

and emotional content. A complex art form has been presented in an interesting compelling readable form. If you are going to be in the story writing business, especially for video games, this book is a must read.

Indie dev here, this is near if not the most inspirational book I've ever read. I really feel like I can write a impactful game.

This is a great book for those who are considering a career in the gaming industry. But it is also a great book for people like me who are just a fan of gaming. It has made me think more about the games that I'm playing, and how they were put together. Informative and entertaining.

I knew absolutely nothing about video game writing. I didn't even know that was a category of writing. I found this book to be insightful and pretty entertaining to read. I'm now better informed about that writing style and couldn't be more satisfied!

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