



Analysis by Joseph Knezek

Overview

Kenshi is a tough-as-nails RTS RPG set in an inhospitable desert. You start as a lone wanderer that may one day form and lead an entire faction of survivors.

.. or you'll die unceremoniously and be eaten by Bonedogs, forgotten forever.

Kenshi tells the player nothing, instead opting to reveal its narrative by having the player experience it firsthand.

Themes as Systems

The difficulty of Kenshi is fundamental to its largest themes: the price of freedom, the cost of war, and how things that improve the world are so much harder than those that bring about its downfall.

In each play session, the player can take a different stance on these themes and decide for themselves if the outcome of their decisions was worth it.

Lessons Learned

1. Generate player stories by making systems that force the player to react.
2. If your game uses factions as characters, take extra care to ensure enough diversity that they don't fall into stereotypes or the Planet of Hats trope.
3. Use negative space in your story and mechanics to reinforce your game's narrative.

