

GENSHIN

IMPACT

GAME NARRATIVE REVIEW

Summary

Genshin Impact (Genshin) draws from various time periods and real-world cultures (namely European, Chinese, Japanese and most recently Middle Eastern and South Asian) to construct the fantastical world of Teyvat, where deities live alongside denizens and vision-holders (the in-game term for magic/elemental power users) are a banal fact of life. The game's overarching narrative has players travel through each region of Teyvat in search of the protagonist's twin sibling.

Features

Genshin currently offers 63 playable units (an ever-expanding roster), a robust elemental-reaction combat system to master and beautiful and memorable environments to explore. Players generally complete daily commissions for in-game gacha currency, defeat bosses and domains for character ascension material, explore areas for chests, and, if they're up for the challenge, take on the "Spiral Abyss"—the game's hardest combat content redesigned and refreshed every two weeks.

Genshin is notorious for having "non-options" when choosing dialogue responses throughout story quests: it's incredibly rare to have dialogue decisions "matter" in terms of how the story progresses. If your game narrative offers dialogue choice, it's crucial to make each option appealing and impactful, lest you shatter the illusion of agency for your player base.

For My Next Trick, Free Will!
On Dialogue Options and Non-Linearity

To Gate or Not to Gate?

On Time, Region, and Narrative Exclusivity

The existence of limited events inherently dissuades newcomers from entering into the game, as they may feel they have "missed out" on optimal resources for characters or have fallen perpetually behind as newer content continues to be released. Genshin's world-building is also incredibly linear, and arbitrarily forces players to choose between character development or narrative immersion.

A Spectrum of Stars

On Diversity, Representation and Relations

Hoyoverse's character design philosophy (e.g. culturally inspired clothing, talented voice acting, unique game-play, and friendship exclusive dialogue) creates endearing playable characters for its world-wide player base. Yet for a game which promotes the cultures of our world, skin tone diversity still lags behind in the playable cast.