

Public Abstract

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Video games have been hailed as demons in the closet, corrupting the youth of society, as well as valuable teaching tools, taking advantage of students' interest in new technology. Hidden in the background, however, less technologically based forms of entertainment, tabletop role-playing games, still have a loyal following and still provide the the statistical, and sometimes even creative, basis for many of the most popular role-playing video games. Why then, has scholarship focused so heavily on video games, to the nearly complete disregard of this related form? Certainly more people play video games than play games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, but certainly these games deserve attention, especially when scholars who study learning in video games draw parallels to role-playing games directly.

This study takes a close look at how one particular group of players of *Dungeons & Dragons* plays this game. This study pays special attention to the ways in which the members of this group create stories, stories that can tell us something about how storytelling has changed in response to changes in technology. In conducting this study, the author observed the group play and also became a participant in the experience to better understand how this group functions.

Observation and interaction with these players reveals that they create stories that are not confined by the traditional boundaries of stories, such as having a beginning, middle, and end. These stories are not confined to a single method of communication; the group takes advantage of music, films, objects, and even an online forum to expand their narratives across multiple media. The members of this group collectively and actively write their stories, all the while remaining aware that they are in fact creating a story. They challenge each other to improve and collectively work to become better, smarter role-players and narrative writers.