

The responsibilities in *Red Dead* *Redemption 2*:

An analysis of playful learning through environmental
storytelling in a videogame



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All images are screenshots taken by me during my play sessions of *Red Dead Redemption 2* on pc.

Abstract

Videogames specifically designed for education are increasingly used as a learning tool, but entertainment games are still considerably overlooked in their ability to educate. Literature surrounding discourses of learning with videogames also tend to focus on educational videogames rather than entertainment games. The educational power of entertainment videogames, notably that they can afford substantially more than only teaching factual knowledge, is in this new media day and age a power that is ought to be acknowledged and used. This thesis aims to show that players of Rockstar Games' action-adventure game *Red Dead Redemption 2* are to an extent afforded to playfully learn a sense of responsibility through environmental storytelling. To analyse this, I first discuss the concept playful learning through the articles of Marc Prensky and Jan Plass, Bruce Homer, and Charles Kinzer after describing what play is. Then, I discuss the concept environmental storytelling by Henry Jenkins based on the text of Don Carson and a refinement of that concept, indexical storytelling by Clara Fernández-Vara.

By conducting a game analysis as explained by Clara Fernández-Vara and approaching her building blocks spaces of the game and choice design as affordances as described by Ian Hutchby, I analysed to what extent players could learn from *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s environmental storytelling and how that was afforded due to the engagement of playful learning. Starting with identifying which engaging playful learning elements of Prensky are in *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s camp and analysing to what extent they connect with the game, specifically the parts that can educate responsibilities, I conclude that *RDR2*'s camp is engaging enough to afford learning a sense of responsibility, yet it is not a given that this happens to every player and to the same extent. After that, I identified which examples of the four environmental storytelling types in *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s camp can hold educational value regarding learning a sense of responsibility and analysed to what extent learning could occur. I conclude that players can choose to be responsible because of their affective connection with the camp afforded by environmental storytelling and because *Red Dead Redemption 2* nudges the player towards that choice, since it is deemed the best option in the game. The former can afford a learning experience, while the latter might only merely be performing the best option. *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s main camp can thus to an extent afford that players can playfully learn a sense of responsibility through environmental storytelling, mainly when they experience affective engagement and when they choose to do

so. Nevertheless, this is also because the game nudges players towards these responsible decisions.

Keywords: engagement, environmental storytelling, game design, indexical storytelling, playful learning, *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

Introduction

The arrival of new media and digital culture has reshaped the minds of today's youth, according to education scholar Marc Prensky.¹ Prensky argues that technology nowadays is so fast-paced that students find educational tools in schools too passive. New media are the culprit of changing students' minds but can also provide new ways of learning through playful learning. In particular, game scholar James Paul Gee argues that videogames are the ideal medium regarding learning.² Using videogames as medium for education and realising the educational power this new medium holds is especially relevant in COVID-19 times, since there is a vast increase in hours spent playing videogames and people buying videogames.³

While videogames made for education are making its way to classrooms, entertainment games with inherent learning possibilities are slowly seen as educational valuable, such as *Assassin's Creed II* being used by Simone Bregni to teach Italian.⁴ However, entertainment videogames are still greatly overlooked about their ability to educate. Notably, the way they can subtly educate players, like teaching empathy and sense of direction, instead of the more general ways of learning, such as language and factual knowledge. That is why the focus in this research lies on subtle learning, in which it is nonobvious that something is being taught and what, specifically that players gain a sense of responsibility by playfully interacting with particular environmental storytelling game design elements. A sense of responsibility is characterised in this research as being a functional member of a community by, for instance, contributing through donations and caring for fellow members while dealing with the consequences if you do not perform such actions. This is based on the definition of responsibility as described in the Oxford Student's Dictionary: "a duty to deal with something so that it is your fault if something goes wrong."⁵

The case study in this research is exemplary to analyse the phenomenon of entertainment games' ability to educate, namely *Red Dead Redemption 2*, hereafter called *RDR2*, published by Rockstar Games in 2018 and two years later still in the Steam weekly

¹ Marc Prensky, "The games generations: How learners have changed," in *Digital Game-Based Learning* (2001), 25.

² James Paul Gee, "Conclusion" in *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 199.

³ Noah Smith, "The giants of the video game industry have thrived in the pandemic. Can the success continue?," last modified May 12, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/video-games/2020/05/12/video-game-industry-coronavirus/>.

⁴ Simone Bregni, "Assassin's Creed Taught Me Italian: Video Games and the Quest for Lifelong, Ubiquitous Learning," *Profession*, March 2018; Ubisoft Montreal (2009), *Assassin's Creed II*, PC, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Ubisoft.

⁵ Oxford's Student's Dictionary, ed. Alison Waters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 595.

global top sellers list.⁶ In *RDR2* you play as outlaw Arthur Morgan, a member of the Van der Linde gang. Through stealing, murdering, and hunting but also helping and socialising, the gang tries to survive the threatening world of America in 1899. Based on the concepts playful learning and environmental storytelling, I hypothesise that this Wild West action-adventure game affords learning through its game mechanics and game environment design, in particular the main camp design. Considering everything mentioned above, my research question is: “To what extent does the environmental storytelling in the main camp design of *Red Dead Redemption 2* afford playfully learning a sense of responsibility?”

To answer this, two sub-questions are asked to structurally analyse the educational aspects in *RDR2* in relation to playful learning and environmental storytelling. The first sub-question is: “To what extent can playful learning, as described by Prensky and Plass et al., teach a sense of responsibility through *RDR2*’s game design?” The second sub-question is: “To what extent does environmental storytelling, as argued by Jenkins and Fernández-Vara, in *RDR2*’s camp design afford playful learning to occur so that a sense of responsibility is taught?”

This research adds to the debates surrounding playful learning and environmental storytelling, especially the playful learning debate, because this research analyses the subtle educational aspects of an entertainment videogame instead of going the more obvious route most scholars take. This thesis also focusses on an entertainment game rather than a game purposefully made for education. Furthermore, the debates relate to each other, since both are about playful behaviour enabling learning. Therefore, this thesis is an exemplary addition to those connected debates.

⁶ Rockstar Games (2018), *Red Dead Redemption 2*, PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Rockstar Games; “Top sellers for the week ending 24 January 2021,” Steam Database by xPaw and Marlamin, last modified January 24, 2020, <https://steamdb.info/topsellers/2021W03/>.

Theoretical framework

Playful learning

The concepts of playful learning and environmental storytelling are used in this thesis to support the analysis of to what extent *RDR2* affords subtle learning through specific game design elements.

Beginning with playful learning, there are competing definitions, but the overall agreement is that people can learn when engaging with media in a playful manner.⁷ In order to map the playful learning debate, there needs to be an understanding of the concept play first. Play can be explained by John Huizinga's definition in *Homo Ludens: Proeve Ener Bepaling Van Het Spelelement Der Cultuur*, since he was one of the first scholars to define this concept.⁸ Huizinga argues that play is an unserious activity performed outside of everyday life that captivates the player. Play encourages social interaction and is performed willingly in a temporary sphere of time and space with its own order and rules, also called the magic circle.⁹ However, Huizinga states that nothing can be gained from play, which differs from the consensus in the playful learning debate mentioned before and the argument of this thesis that play can result in acquiring knowledge.¹⁰

Jan Plass, Bruce Homer and Charles Kinzer agree with this argument in 'Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework', wherein playful learning is approached from different perspectives and are combined to see what games can fully provide for learning.¹¹ Thus, in contrast to Huizinga and in line with the overall agreement regarding playful learning, they believe that something can be gained from play. For this thesis, Plass et al.'s overarching framework consisting of a cognitive, affective and socio-cultural perspective including subtypes within each perspective and their playful learning definition are used as a lens to identify playful learning elements that can possibly afford learning to occur in *RDR2*'s camp design. It is therefore necessary to understand these theories. Firstly, Plass et al. operationally define playful learning as "An activity by the learner, aimed at the construction of a mental model, that is designed to include one or more elements of games for the purpose

⁷ E.g., Jan Plass, Bruce Homer, and Charles Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," *White Paper 2* (2014), 1-31; Marc Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," *Digital game-based learning 5.1* (2001); Maria Roussou, "Learning by doing and learning through play: an exploration of interactivity in virtual environments for children," *Computers in Entertainment (CIE) 2.1* (2004).

⁸ Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens: Proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 47.

⁹ Huizinga, *Homo ludens*, 37.

¹⁰ Huizinga, *Homo ludens*, 41.

¹¹ Jan Plass, Bruce Homer, and Charles Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," *White Paper 2* (2014), 1-31.

of enhancing the learning process.”¹² While this definition can be used in this thesis on the level of learners playing a game and learning from doing so, it is imperative to note this definition is based on the assumption that those games are purposefully designed to implement educational elements. This is not the case with *RDR2* whose main purpose is to entertain. This research can thus add to this that there is potential for learning in entertainment games too which should not be overlooked.

Secondly, Plass et al. argue that their framework grants for identification of how learners can be engaged when situated in a game environment that allows engagement through game design elements.¹³ According to them, these engagement types are the cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural perspectives.¹⁴ Physical engagement is also mentioned but seems to be regarded as unimportant by Plass et al., since it is only treated briefly. The physical engagement type is also irrelevant in relation to *RDR2* because it is only a matter of clicking mouse and keyboard buttons instead of, for example, the embodied actions in a Kinect-based game.¹⁵ The three perspectives and their in total nineteen subtypes, such as emotional design, goal orientation, and relatedness, are argued to ensure playful learning through game design elements that generate the four types of engagement. According to Plass et al., these game design elements are the building blocks of a game: game mechanics, visual aesthetic design, narrative design, incentive system, musical score and content and skills.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the socio-cultural perspective is about players’ relation to other players. This therefore does not include that, as I argue, a feeling of relatedness and being part of a community can also occur when interacting with non-playable characters (NPCs). This interaction could then afford player engagement and learning. In summation, the cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural perspectives and their nineteen subtypes are used in this thesis to identify how *RDR2* can engage to ensure playful learning. Moreover, the game design elements mentioned by Plass et al. are not used, since the focus lies on analysing educational game design and thus lack general analytical properties for *RDR2* as entertainment game.

Thirdly, Plass et al. thus note that engagement is important when playfully learning. Likewise, they argue that motivation, failure, and adaptivity are playful learning characteristics. According to them, extrinsic motivation is about achieving goals for a reward,

¹² Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, “Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework,” 6.

¹³ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, “Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework,” 6.

¹⁴ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, “Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework,” 8-9.

¹⁵ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, “Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework,” 8.

¹⁶ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, “Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework,” 4-5.

while intrinsic motivation is essential to increase interest and therefore opportunities to learn.¹⁷ It is necessary to distinguish between these two types for this thesis because it can be the reason why some players act responsible since it offers perks or others act responsible because they feel affectively connected to the game. Moreover, Plass et al. argue that failure is necessary to learn, but eventually achieving a goal is just as important. Adaptivity also increases learning opportunities, because a game then fits a specific learner which makes the educational environment more engaging. These three playful learning characteristics can be used next to engagement to analyse to what extent playful learning can be afforded in *RDR2*.

Not only the playful learning definition of Plass et al. is focused on educational games, but also the engagement types, subtypes, and explanation of game design elements. That makes Plass et al.'s article less suitable for analysing an entertainment game like *RDR2*. Therefore, this thesis benefits from the twelve engagement elements mentioned in the playful learning article of education scholar Marc Prensky, even though Plass et al.'s theory is more extensive because they cover more than solely engagement and can capture the educational abilities of a game fully with their approach using three perspectives while Prensky's theory lacks that. Prensky's article is about the engagement of videogames, whether they are education games or entertainment games, providing an educational environment. This article is used in this thesis to identify whether *RDR2* is engaging enough so it can educate and to what extent Prensky's elements afford that.¹⁸ Prensky argues that videogames are ideal for learning, since they are the most engaging medium. This engagement is due to twelve elements: fun, play, rules, goals, interactivity, adaptivity, outcomes and feedback, win states, conflict/competition/challenge/opposition, problem solving, interaction, and representation and story.¹⁹ Some of these elements are also discussed as subtypes in Plass et al.'s article, such as representation and feedback. According to Prensky, the more videogames have these elements, the more they can engage and lead to better learning opportunities. Thus, Prensky agrees with Plass et al. that something can be gained from play, unlike Huizinga, and that games are a tool to afford learning to a greater or lesser extent. Prensky starts off by discussing fun as an element ensuring engagement. According to him, fun gives enjoyment and pleasure which relaxes and motivates learners and helps in the learning process.²⁰ After discussing fun, Prensky argues that play is "the universal teacher".²¹ He says that not only

¹⁷ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," 7-8.

¹⁸ Marc Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," *Digital game-based learning* 5.1 (2001).

¹⁹ Prensky, "Fun, play and games," 1-2.

²⁰ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 1-5.

²¹ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 5.

children can benefit greatly from learning through play, but also adults, because it increases creativity and productivity.²² Prensky also agrees with Huizinga that play is chosen by one to do. Next up, Prensky discusses games and why they engage us. He argues that games have six fundamental structural elements: rules, goals or objectives, outcomes and feedback, conflict/competition/challenge/opposition, interaction and representation or story. These elements all cause effects in learners, such as rules giving structure, goals giving motivation, feedback allowing learning and problem-solving stimulating creativity. Prensky argues that the more a game has those elements, the more engagement a game has and the more playful learning can occur, but “Of course not all games have all of these elements and not all games are great. But when they do and are, watch out!”²³ Thus, Prensky’s elements can be used to examine which of those are present in the game design of the camp in *RDR2* and therefore engaging enough to afford playful learning. Specifically, subtly learning a sense of responsibility, wherein it is probable that some elements lend themselves better for that than others. For example, interaction can create an affective connection to the camp so players will feel responsible for its status. However, the goals of the game and the rewards you can earn from achieving those goals, such as upgrading the camp, can steer players away from feeling responsible, since they would be merely checking off a to-do list instead of doing it out of a sense of duty.²⁴

In summation, to analyse whether *RDR2* can be engaging enough for playfully learning a sense of responsibility, Prensky’s twelve engagement elements are the main theory used in this thesis. Plass et al.’s framework functions as support for this, complementing where Prensky’s theory is lacking. Nevertheless, the playful learning literature discussed above is still unclear how to analyse the mentioned elements and concepts, only that it can be identified through game design elements that are explained through an educational lens and are therefore not applicable to the analysis of an entertainment game. Thus, to have a more thorough examination of playful learning, environmental storytelling is used in this thesis.

Environmental storytelling

Turning now to the concept of environmental storytelling, which is used to guide and narrow

²² Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 5-10.

²³ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 2.

²⁴ It is important to note that Prensky also mentions that violent games are “not the best choice” for learning on page 27 of his article. He offers no further explanation as to why he argues that other than that it is obvious, but he does nuance his statement by saying that “what is at the core of even these games is not the violence but the action and the “gameplay.”” Since *RDR2* is rated M for language, violence, and nudity, this case is exemplary to illustrate that even violent games can be good learning environments if the game affords it.

my analysis because the game design elements and the concept of interactivity mentioned in the playful learning literature described above are too broad. For instance, Plass et al. mention, among other building blocks, the narrative design of a game providing contextual information to players from which they can learn and that narratives can motivate players into learning.²⁵ However, this is too superficial for a proper analysis. Therefore, by using environmental storytelling next to playful learning, I can better account for the instances playful learning can be present in the camp design of *RDR2*.

On top of that, environmental storytelling connects to the playful learning texts mentioned above; one explores spaces in an engaging manner when the design affords to and while doing so, players can learn from those interactions. Attraction designer Don Carson in his article “Environmental Storytelling: Creating Immersive 3D Worlds Using Lessons Learned from the Theme Park Industry” explains environmental storytelling as while one walks through a space, that space can evoke and construct a narrative.²⁶ By using one’s own previous knowledge about the real-life world, players piece together story elements that need to be clear, subjected to rules, goal-oriented, familiar, fun, not too complex and have variety for it to be successful.²⁷ Since storytelling can be a great teaching tool for enhancing learning because it subjects students to a process of sense-making and reflection on the outcome of that process, environmental storytelling fits well within the concept of playful learning.²⁸

Taking Carson’s concept as a source of inspiration, media aca-fan Henry Jenkins discusses in “Game Design as Narrative Architecture” how gameplay can turn into a narrative experience.²⁹ According to Jenkins, an immersive narrative experience can be created by environmental storytelling in four ways: through evocative spaces, enacting stories, embedded narratives and emergent narratives. First, by evoking pre-existing knowledge the narrative in a space is constructed.³⁰ Second, in enacting stories the narrative and environment progresses by playing in an interactive open-world.³¹ The narrative is divided in two kinds: overall plot and micronarratives. These micronarratives, short narrative encounters in a game “on the level of localized incident” can “shape the player’s emotional experience”.³² They evoke emotion by creating “memorable moments”, also called “attractions” and are the narrative type present

²⁵ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, “Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework,” 4.

²⁶ Don Carson, “Environmental Storytelling: Creating Immersive 3D Worlds Using Lessons Learned from the Theme Park Industry,” *Gamasutra* (2000), 1-2.

²⁷ Carson, “Environmental Storytelling,” 2-3

²⁸ Maxine Alterio, “Using storytelling to enhance student learning,” *The Higher Education Academy* (2002), 1-3.

²⁹ Henry Jenkins. “Game design as narrative architecture,” *Computer* 44 (2004), 118-128.

³⁰ Jenkins, “Game design as narrative architecture,” 123-124.

³¹ Jenkins, “Game design as narrative architecture,” 124-126.

³² Jenkins, “Game design as narrative architecture,” 125.

in *RDR2*'s camp.³³ Third, stories which are ingrained in a fictive world are embedded narratives and can be discovered by exploring the environment.³⁴ Lastly, in emergent narratives, players are given the building blocks to build their own narrative.³⁵

For this thesis, the four environmental storytelling types, evocative spaces, embedded narratives, enacting stories, and emergent narratives, are used as a lens to examine to what extent playful learning can be possible through interaction with *RDR2*'s game environment. Evocative spaces and embedded narratives ensure immersion, the submerging of players into a story world by involving gameplay, which I argue can increase players' motivation to fulfil their responsibilities for the camp and its members by creating an emotional connection.³⁶ While those spaces also provide factual information, such as facts about animals, this thesis does not concentrate on this general learning. Furthermore, using enacting stories the game narrative is examined, with a focus on micronarratives in the camp when NPCs interact with players. Moreover, the emergent narratives in *RDR2* can show how players can possibly construct their own narrative with help from the game environment. With that, it can be analysed whether it is afforded to construct a persona around the main character and a narrative around its role at the camp to playfully learn a sense of responsibility through those actions. However, Jenkins describes emergent narratives as sandbox games that are "not pre-structured or pre-programmed, taking shape through game play, yet they are not as unstructured, chaotic, and frustrating as life itself."³⁷ This differs from *RDR2*, since *RDR2* is not a sandbox game and is fairly pre-structured. For this thesis, I expand Jenkins' definition of emergent narratives to any possible narrative players can create through afforded game design elements. Thus, Jenkins' environmental storytelling types are a tool for analysis in this thesis to see whether the environment provides educational aspects in a playful manner, such as Prensky's engagement elements and Plass et al.'s framework. Carson's theory lacks these analytical properties.

Where Jenkins built on Carson's concept, game scholar Clara Fernández-Vara bases hers on Jenkins' environmental storytelling concept in "Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling".³⁸ Fernández-Vara introduces a refined term for environmental storytelling, indexical storytelling, because she argues environmental storytelling is too short-

³³ Jenkins, "Game design as narrative architecture," 125.

³⁴ Jenkins, "Game design as narrative architecture," 126-128.

³⁵ Jenkins, "Game design as narrative architecture," 128-129.

³⁶ Gordon Calleja, "Introduction," in *In-Game. From immersion to incorporation*, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2011, 2-3.

³⁷ Jenkins, "Game design as narrative architecture," 128.

³⁸ Clara Fernández-Vara, "Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling," *MIT Web Domain*, January 2011.

sighted whereas indexical storytelling is more in-depth. Indexical storytelling is derived from Charles Peirce's philosophy of language. Peirce states that there are three types of signs that are able to bring ideas about things into the mind: icons/likeness, indices/indications and symbols/general signs.³⁹ Fernández-Vara argues that when a game narrative is constructed through indices it is indexical storytelling.⁴⁰ An example of this can be road signs indicating a specific location nearby and you need to follow the sign to reach the location.

Indexical storytelling is possible when game design affords players to build their own story by perceiving relevant elements and piecing them together, which she calls the history of the game world, like Jenkins' embedded stories and Carson's environmental storytelling perspective.⁴¹ Players can also build their own story through interaction with the virtual world by leaving their own traces, if the game design allows so. Fernández-Vara calls this story type, which is constructed through indices, the history of the player.⁴²

Whereas the focus in environmental storytelling lies on telling a story, indexical storytelling focuses more on building one. It also accounts for design-related elements environmental storytelling does not consider, since indexical storytelling specifically uses indices, while environmental storytelling is broader. However, this thesis mainly uses Jenkins' environmental storytelling concept, since it is most applicable to the game design elements I analysed in *RDR2*. Still, indexical storytelling adds to the debate of environmental storytelling by refining it and being a productive device of game design. Environmental storytelling and indexical storytelling also connect to play, since Huizinga's magic circle is such a conceptual place as discussed in these concepts.

To conclude, playful learning and environmental storytelling connect to each other, while also offering analytical possibilities of their own that can aid in the examination of whether *RDR2* affords learning through its game environment. Specifically, Jenkins' environmental storytelling types are used to analyse playful learning in *RDR2*. Moreover, Fernández-Vara's indexical storytelling is used as an extra lens to empirically draw attention to environmental storytelling game design elements in *RDR2* next to Jenkins' concept and thus deepens the analysis when relevant.

³⁹ Fernández-Vara, "Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling," 4-5.

⁴⁰ Fernández-Vara, "Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling," 5.

⁴¹ Fernández-Vara, "Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling," 5.

⁴² Fernández-Vara, "Game Spaces Speak Volumes: Indexical Storytelling," 6.

Method

This research was conducted using the method game analysis as described by Fernández-Vara in *An Introduction to Game Analysis*, because I observed *RDR2*'s game design and her method offers overarching game design analytical tools that go beyond simple gameplay to do so.⁴³ She argues that a videogame is a text which can be analysed through a textual analysis approach.⁴⁴ The goal of this approach is to make sense of a videogame and identify possible interpretations of a videogame. This can be achieved by examining building blocks of three areas of analysis: context, game overview and formal elements. These building blocks are approached as affordances in this thesis. Ian Hutchby defines this as the functional and relational aspects of a technology which provide a body, but do not permanently shape, to actions an actor has in connection with an object.⁴⁵ These actions are dependent on context. Additionally, Hutchby states that humans and technology give each other shape. Furthermore, affordances are possible through the materiality of a technology: the features of a technology that limit or enable its usage.⁴⁶ Thus, Fernández-Vara's game analysis and approaching the building blocks as affordances can help me identify and interpret the ways environmental storytelling and playful learning are present in *RDR2*.

For this thesis, I analysed the spaces of the game, a building block of game overview, and the choice design of *RDR2*, a building block of formal elements, in relation to the general game design mentioned in the playful learning literature and the analytical tools within the environmental storytelling concepts discussed above.⁴⁷ This is because, mostly, a specific part of the game design which affords the learning of a sense of responsibility was examined: the Van der Linde gang camp where players can perform multiple actions and make choices that impact the camp's status, players' reputation and interaction between player and NPCs. The camp, instead of other parts of *RDR2*, is where I argue that responsibility of players is most necessary and allows best for learning a sense of responsibility. For all the sub-questions the main camp was analysed using the playful learning and environmental storytelling literature to analyse whether *RDR2* is engaging enough to afford playful learning to take place. In some instances game design parts that also exist outside of the camp are involved, since it is closely tied to camp progression and alternations, such as story line missions and the honour system.

⁴³ Clara Fernández-Vara, *An introduction to game analysis*, (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁴⁴ Fernández-Vara, *Game analysis*, 11.

⁴⁵ Ian Hutchby, "Technologies, texts and affordances," *Sociology*, 35, no.2 (2001), 444.

⁴⁶ Hutchby, "Technologies, texts and affordances," 444-445.

⁴⁷ Fernández-Vara, *Game analysis*, 100-104; 161-163.

I approached *RDR2* as a process as explained by game scholars Jasper van Vught and René Glas in ‘Considering play: from method to analysis’ because player context affects the way collected data is interpreted.⁴⁸ This entails that I looked at *RDR2* as an object through the building blocks and concepts discussed before but I also took into account that how I play the game can differ from how others do, which can influence the overall outcome of my analysis. Nevertheless, my own experience is still valuable for understanding to what extent *RDR2* can afford subtly learning players a sense of responsibility through its game design.⁴⁹

Therefore, by playing *RDR2* as the game is supposed to be played, without cheating and similar practices, analysing whether the main camp in *RDR2* has game design elements that cause engagement and inspecting the consequences of my actions and choices regarding the camp mechanics, I collected relevant data. For the first sub-question, I identified which playful learning engagement aspects of Prensky are in *RDR2*’s main camp and where possible linking them to elements that could foster a sense of responsibility. After that, I analysed to what extent those elements can engage as to see whether playful learning is feasible in the camp. This was supplemented with Plass et al.’s framework when appropriate and I therefore kept this framework in mind when analysing Prensky’s elements. For the second sub-question, I looked at Jenkins’ four types of environmental storytelling in relation to particular game design elements I deem to be relevant for teaching a sense of responsibility. Simultaneously, I analysed micronarratives because they connect to enacting stories, one of the environmental storytelling types. After that, I analysed an indexical storytelling element to deepen the analysis. Furthermore, I connected environmental storytelling with playful learning as to analyse to what extent playful learning is afforded through environmental storytelling in *RDR2*’s main camp so that subtly a sense of responsibility is taught.

⁴⁸ Jasper van Vught and René Glas, “Considering play: from method to analysis,” *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association Journal*, 4.1 (2017), 4.

⁴⁹ Van Vught and Glas, “Considering play: from method to analysis,” 13.

Analysis

The engagement of playful learning

To analyse how playfully learning a sense of responsibility through environmental storytelling can be accomplished, it must first be established whether *RDR2*'s camp is engaging enough for playful learning to occur. This is performed by identifying Prensky's playful learning elements that relate to learning a sense of responsibility present in the camp and analysing to what extent these elements are engaging.

Most of Prensky's twelve elements accord with what I found in *RDR2*'s camp although there are nuances that deviate from Prensky's theory. First, Prensky argues that games are a type of fun and play, respectively providing players with "enjoyment and pleasure" and "intense and passionate involvement".⁵⁰ These two elements are found in *RDR2*'s camp and are the basis of players' engagement in the camp. Exemplary for fun in *RDR2*'s camp is that players can upgrade their camp. To be capable of upgrading, players must earn money through playing missions or even winning poker games in the camp. These activities are designed to be enjoyable, considering *RDR2* is an entertainment game and players freely choose to play to experience fun. Prensky argues that players' fun can create relaxation and motivation which can enable players to learn better.⁵¹ Nevertheless, when discussing motivation, Prensky mentions that it "enables them to put forth effort without resentment".⁵² It seems here that the focus lies more on players playing a game specifically to learn and that they are conscious of them learning. I argue, however, that motivation for learning a sense of responsibility can simply be feeling motivated to keep playing because subtle learning occurs more unwittingly. Players can also be motivated through fun because of rewards, completing achievements or even checking off a list. However, this extrinsic motivation can keep players from learning, as Plass et al. argue.⁵³ Thus, fun can engage players in learning a sense of responsibility, specifically on a more subtle level, but it can also inhibit learning.

Turning to play, Prensky describes this as immersive, creating social interaction, and performed out of free will which I already established is true for *RDR2* as an entertainment game.⁵⁴ Play in *RDR2*'s camp is exemplary present in the camp environment and

⁵⁰ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 1.

⁵¹ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 5.

⁵² Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 5.

⁵³ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," 7-8.

⁵⁴ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 6.

micronarratives, which I analyse more in-depth in the environmental storytelling analysis. The camp is situated in an open-world environment that appears to accurately represent the Wild West and can therefore afford players to submerge in that environment. Prensky also mentions representation as a separate engagement element eliciting emotion. Both Prensky and Plass et al. mention the importance of game design affording an affective response from players for learning.⁵⁵ Moreover, while the social interaction, described also as a separate element, in Prensky's article is focused on player-to-player interactions, I argue that the micronarratives between player and NPC is real enough to affectively involve players in the camp. Prensky mentions that AI is not developed enough for this to occur, but his article is from 2001 and *RDR2* was released in 2018 when technology was much more advanced. Play can thus involve players immensely, enabling them to learn easier and better. This can lead to learning a sense of responsibility, when players are so affectively involved they want to ensure the camp's welfare is up to par. Of course, not every player experiences such a connection and they can play to simply only play. However, the possibility to learn a sense of responsibility is available.

Second, according to Prensky, engagement comes from rules providing structure.⁵⁶ *RDR2* also has rules that are reviewed in the beginning so that players know what they are. It is forbidden to bring dead or hogtied people, enemies, carcasses aside ones that are from a legendary animal or ride your horse into the camp. *RDR2* will enforce following these by placing players outside the camp if they break a rule and camp members may comment on your rule breaking action. Players also cannot run inside the camp, but that rule cannot be broken since *RDR2* has made running in the camp impossible. *RDR2* thus ensures that players follow the camp rules simply by enforcing them. Limits are imposed on the player and this can nudge them in the direction of being a responsible camp member, especially when you do not have the option to act irresponsible by breaking rules.

Third, Prensky argues that motivation also comes from achieving goals.⁵⁷ In the camp, these goals can be upgrading your camp to the maximum, presenting yourself as a nice person by only interacting kindly with other camp members, ensuring the camp supplies are full, and having high honour which means they act like a respectable person. Rewards for this can be respectively having a great camp, being treated nicely by camp members, getting compliments, and getting discounts. The compliments are also feedback for players, another

⁵⁵ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," 14; Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 1.

⁵⁶ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 12.

⁵⁷ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 12-13.

engagement element of Prensky, because they then know when they act according to their duties or if they lack when camp members remark negatively. This can make players more engaged with the camp to achieve these goals and get positive feedback. Moreover, the benefits nudge them towards acting responsible. Yet, players might not care and being forced into acting responsible can result in simply doing and not actually learning.

Fourth, Prensky argues that conflict/competition/challenge/opposition gives players adrenaline.⁵⁸ However, the only challenge when focussing on learning a sense of responsibility in *RDR2*'s camp is being a successful member of a community, while the only conflict arises when camp members put players in their place when they do not fulfil their responsibilities. This does not provide the adrenaline as Prensky intends. However, the possible feeling of guilt when players experience the consequences of not performing their duties, such as negative comments, can keep them engaged. Being a successful member and fulfilling responsibilities can also be identified as a win state. According to Prensky, this element ensures ego gratification and can thus motivate players to be responsibly engaged with the camp. Nevertheless, win states and their gratification of ego can be exclusively a goal for some players and no educational takeaways can be derived from this engagement.

Fifth, players' creativity is boosted by problem solving, Prensky argues.⁵⁹ Referring to responsibilities, players must figure out what appropriate actions are in relation to NPCs, what they can do to increase camp morale and welfare and what they cannot do. In *RDR2* it is not solving a literal puzzle, like Prensky means, but a social one. Players are not alone in this, the choice design of *RDR2* directs players into performing the right actions: being kind and taking care of the camp and its members. However, players can still act unrighteous, but *RDR2* then conveys a narratively unwelcome tone towards players and there are virtually no rewards.⁶⁰

Sixth, Prensky argues that games are interactive which gives players something to do.⁶¹ This type of interactivity is separate from the feedback interaction and social interaction mentioned before and relates to Plass et al.'s physical engagement. Therefore, I categorise it as a more superficial way of engagement that is still true for *RDR2* as a game but does not directly aid in learning a sense of responsibility.

Lastly, there are two elements that are barely present in *RDR2*'s camp concerning learning a sense of responsibility: flow and adaptivity.⁶² Flow is provided to players through

⁵⁸ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 14.

⁵⁹ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 1.

⁶⁰ The only reason one might want to act improper is because when one antagonises camp member John too much, he will hit Arthur which some might find funny to experience.

⁶¹ Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 17.

⁶² Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 15-16.

the adaptivity of a game. Flow can help players learn because they will stay in the same mental state: not frustrated but also not finding the gameplay too easy. This flow can be preserved by the game through automatically adapting to a player's skill level. Plass et al. also mentioned adaptivity as helpful for learning. However, difficulty level is irrelevant regarding responsibility tasks in *RDR2*. Therefore, this element is insignificant for this thesis.

In conclusion, many of Prensky's engagement elements are present in *RDR2*'s camp and upon analysing their level of engagement I argue that they are engaging enough for playfully learning a sense of responsibility to occur. It should be noted, however, that while *RDR2*'s game design nudges players towards acting responsible, it does not mean they necessarily have to be responsible, which is analysed more in-depth in the next section. It is also a matter of a responsibility spectrum, instead of the binary that players are responsible or irresponsible. The next section presents what and how players can playfully learn through the educational properties of environmental storytelling in *RDR2*'s camp.

Educational environmental storytelling

When one first enters the story world of *RDR2* expectations are already put upon them.⁶³ The gameplay makes players responsible for maintaining the camp and helping NPC camp members. For this thesis, the focus lies on responsibilities players have in the camp and whether they can learn a sense of responsibility from playing in that environment. Through Jenkins' four environmental storytelling types and Fernández-Vara's indexical storytelling these responsibility elements are identified and analysed to what extent they afford teaching players a sense of responsibility. I observed two main ways how players could possibly learn a sense of responsibility: from an affective connection with *RDR2* and choosing to be responsible as part of the gameplay, occasionally as guided by the gameplay.

Starting with the emotional connection, playful learning in the camp can be corresponded to the affective and socio-cultural engagement type of Plass et al. and Prensky's representation and feedback engagement elements. These engagement elements could, as Prensky and Plass et al. mention in their articles, lead to playful learning, in this case at least to a degree learning a sense of responsibility. First, the evocative space in *RDR2*'s camp can afford educating a sense of responsibility to players who are affectively connected and intrinsically motivated. The affective connection between player and game is created through its evocative space design of a stereotypical representation of America's Wild West.⁶⁴ One's submersion in the story world can make players embody the hardships of that time and feel like a member of an actual outlawed community. This affective connection is possible because one can evoke their earlier memories, as Jenkins argued, of Wild West images since these have been represented in media objects for a long time.

Furthermore, I found that the possible affective connection created by the evocative Wild West space can increase players' intrinsic motivation, as Plass et al. mentioned in their framework, to thoroughly take on the responsibilities of the camp, such as donating supplies and performing tasks. However, the tasks can also be performed out of extrinsic motivation, which Plass et al. argue is less beneficial in learning than intrinsic motivation, since players get rewarded with extra Dead Eye ability and honour points after completing a task. Both make gameplay easier. The affective evocative space and game mechanics can therefore lead to players being responsible in *RDR2*, but they might not bring what they have learned in-game to their non-digital lives when they acted responsible purely for the rewards. Prensky

⁶³ See example 1 in appendix II to read how *RDR2* creates expectations of being responsible from the beginning of the game.

⁶⁴ See figure 1 for a screenshot of Horseshoe Overlook, one of the Van der Linde gang camp locations, in which the Wild West setting is depicted.

does not distinguish between motivation types and he argues that reaching any goal can give players motivation. However, taking into account Plass et al.'s theory, this does not seem the case in *RDR2*. In sum, the evocative space can create an affective connection that can engage players in learning a sense of responsibility, but the degree of learning depends on whether players had intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.



Figure 1: Horseshoe Overlook, one of the Vander Linde gang camp locations.

Second, the embedded narratives in *RDR2*'s camp can afford learning a sense of responsibility to players who are feeling relatedness towards NPCs. Relatedness is one of the subtypes of Plass et al.'s socio-cultural perspective they argue emotionally engages and is beneficial for learning. They say that for interaction between players, like Prensky did for his social interaction element, but as I argued before, this can also be possible for player-to-NPC interactions. Through the optional interaction with the embedded narratives photographs and books, players can become affectively invested and can cause their actions to be responsible, such as attending to NPCs' needs.⁶⁵ Mainly because photographs and books can humanise an NPC and elicit compassion.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, context is necessary to afford this and *RDR2* provides this via dialogues during quests outside the camp. The embedded narratives can thus construct an affective connection between player and NPC when players feel relatedness through their emotional investment with the photographs and books. Naturally, however, the sense of relatedness the embedded narratives can afford depends on the player; some might not feel relatedness and are then not affectively engaged.

⁶⁵ See figure 2 for a screenshot of Charles' photograph and see figure 3 for a screenshot of the two available pages of the book *An American Eden* by Evelyn Miller.

⁶⁶ See example 2 in Appendix II for the context of an emotionally designed photograph and an example of a book showing the ideological thoughts of an NPC because the book connects to him.



Figure 2: Charles' photograph depicting his father, his mother and Charles as an infant

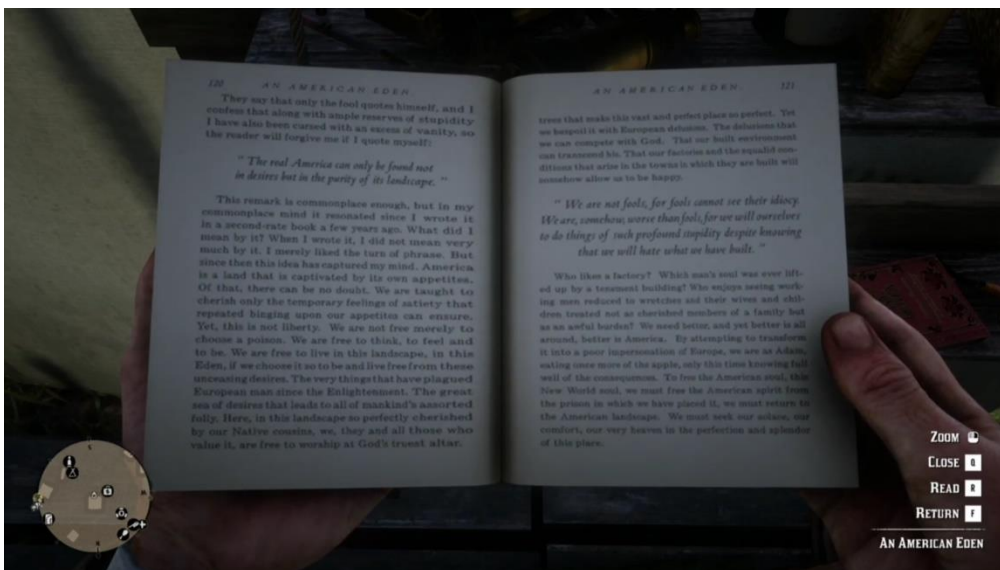


Figure 3: *An American Eden* by fictive *RDR2* author Evelyn Miller in Dutch vander Linde's wagon at the camp

Third, learning a sense of responsibility can be afforded through the enacting stories in the camp by engaging through feedback and affective narrative design. The enacting stories hold people accountable for when they fail their responsibilities, but players can also receive praise when they fulfil their role in the camp. This is evident through Jenkins' micronarratives present in the camp as dialogues, comments, and requests. When players ignore their duty to donate food or money, NPCs notice that and address this to them.⁶⁷ These negative comments are common and mostly trigger a dialogue. Praise, however, is scarce and narratively short or

⁶⁷ See example 3 in Appendix II for an example of a camp member holding the player accountable when the food supply is low because they have not donated food for a while and for the leader Dutch emotionally appealing to Arthur to donate money when players have not done that for a while.

in the form of receiving honour points when donating money.⁶⁸ How *RDR2* focusses more on guiding players to act responsible by guilt-tripping them via negative micronarratives contrasts with how playful learning theories suggest learning can best happen. Both Prensky and Plass et al. mention that being rewarded for good actions increases motivation, thus learning a sense of responsibility would likely be more effective when players get more narrative praise.⁶⁹

Furthermore, as the embedded narratives, the micronarratives create social interaction opportunities between player and NPC. This can produce a feeling of relatedness to those NPCs, as Plass et al. partly argue since they discuss player-to-player interaction, and thus affectively engage players. For instance, players can hold lengthy conversations with NPCs in which feelings are shared.⁷⁰ Moreover, when walking through the camp most NPCs talk to players who can respond by greeting, antagonising, or diffusing.⁷¹ NPCs can also make requests and play various games with players. In these social interactions, the micronarratives can afford affective engagement, but it is a player's choice to what extent they want to act responsible. This choice can be intrinsically motivated, because players receive positive feedback, which Prensky argues is an engaging playful learning element, when they reply kindly in dialogues. It can also be an illusion of choice: *RDR2*'s choice design nudges players towards positive greet encounters by making it the best narrative option and not rewarding bad behaviour. Choosing responsible just because it is favourable in the game does not necessarily teach someone why being responsible is a good trait to have and therefore might not last as a learning experience.

All in all, one way of learning a sense of responsibility in *RDR2* relies on players' possible affective connection with the game setting and the NPCs. The evocative space, embedded narratives, and enacting stories can all affectively engage players in different ways: increasing their intrinsic motivation, making them feel relatedness, and providing positive narrative feedback when players perform responsible actions. However, players can also act responsible because the game nudges players towards a responsible path by extrinsically motivating them with rewards that make gameplay easier and making positive encounters with NPCs the best narrative option. This, and the lack of narrative praise, can cause the learning experience to be only in-game and not in real life because players are not engaged

⁶⁸ See example 4 in appendix II for camp members' possible reactions when players donate food or money.

⁶⁹ Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," 4-5; Prensky, "Fun, play and games: What makes games engaging," 13-14.

⁷⁰ See example 5 in appendix II for an example of a conversation between player and NPC in which views about the world and other feelings are shared.

⁷¹ See example 6 in appendix II for a couple examples of short dialogue in the camp between camp members and player.

enough.

Turning to the second way how players could possibly learn a sense of responsibility: choosing to be a responsible person. Emergent narratives can afford players to construct a persona around the main character. Through that, players can to an extent with what is afforded by the existing game environment choose their goal: to be a responsible or an irresponsible person. Both Plass et al. and Prensky mention the importance of goal orientation. Plass et al. name it as an important affective aspect of playful learning wherein agency plays a big role in meeting a goal.⁷² Prensky, as mentioned before, argues that achieving goals is an engagement element and gives players motivation to playfully learn.

Players can choose to act responsible or irresponsible through three game design elements: hygiene, honour system, and donating at the ledger. First, players get dirty which causes people to be less fond of them and camp members to react negatively to.⁷³ However, when you are clean, people respond kindly to you. The camp provides interactable game design elements that can help you stay clean and be responsible about your personal hygiene: a shaving kit and wardrobe at your wagon and a place to bathe.

Second, the honour system mentioned briefly before can be a reason why players choose to act responsible. Your honour rank will go up when doing good, such as helping others, completing camp tasks, donating, and sparing people.⁷⁴ Honour decreases when robbing and unnecessarily shooting and killing. Having high honour has more positive gameplay effects than having low honour. Moreover, it affects dialogue: low honour players are treated badly while high honour players are not. Arthur's dialogue changes too: with high honour Arthur acts selfless but with low honour Arthur is represented as egocentric. It thus pays to be a good person with high honour in *RDR2*.

Third, the ledger can motivate players into choosing responsibility through the history of the world as discussed in Fernández-Vara's indexical storytelling. The history of the world is observable through camp members' donations of money and valuables to the camp funds noted down in the ledger, such as camp member Karen donating reading glasses.⁷⁵ What is evident from the ledger is that NPCs donate little and not often, while players must donate most of the camp funds. This is because *RDR2* places the responsibility of upgrading the camp on the player which can be done through camp funds.⁷⁶ To not let NPCs do everything

⁷² Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, "Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework," 15, 20.

⁷³ See example 7 in appendix II for a situation that can arise when Arthur is in the camp with poor hygiene and a camp member intervenes.

⁷⁴ See example 8 in appendix II for an example of what can positively happen when Arthur spares someone.

⁷⁵ See figure 4 for Karen's donation.

⁷⁶ See figure 5 for a screenshot of the upgrade section of the ledger.

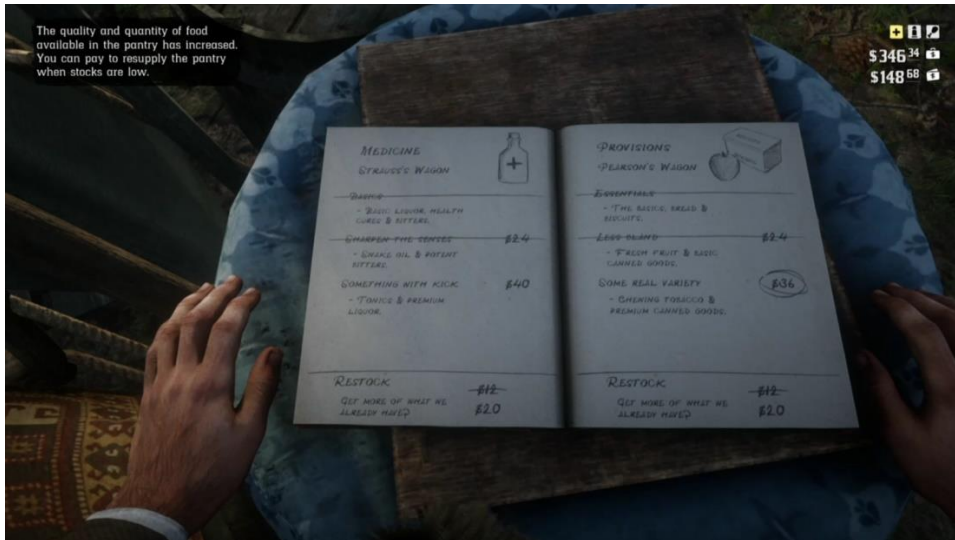


Figure 5: Camp's ledger showing part of the possible upgrades

Conclusion

RDR2 can afford subtly playfully learning a sense of responsibility through engagement and interaction with specific environmental game design in the main Van der Linde camp. Playful learning is possible because the player is engaged, especially responsibly engaged, due to many of Prensky's engagement elements. While not all elements are equally engaging, present, or engaging how Prensky argues, it is enough for players' engagement and makes learning a sense of responsibility possible. The analysis of indexical storytelling and the four types of environmental storytelling showed that mostly the socio-cultural engagement in terms of relatedness and the affective engagement both Prensky and Plass et al. discuss, accounted for the potential of educating responsibility. This does imply that players who are not affectively connected to the game through feeling relatedness with NPCs, feeling submerged in the game setting, and feeling the need to choose to be a responsible person, probably do not experience learning that lasts. To subtly learn a sense of responsibility also depends on whether motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic. The former allows for lasting playful learning and the latter for temporary playful learning guided by rewards from game design. Moreover, *RDR2*'s game design tends to nudge players towards responsibility, thus choosing to be responsible can merely be an illusion. Nevertheless, the basis for playfully learning a sense of responsibility is available in *RDR2* and a learning experience is always at the fingertips of players.

This research shows that an entertainment game like *RDR2* can do more than only entertain. While it is not intentionally designed to be educational, educational properties can be present and afford learning to occur. This ability is too overlooked in playful learning literature because it is often focused on educational games. Furthermore, this research shows that learning can happen more subtle and unconscious than playful learning literature suggests. Plass et al. do mention life skills can be educated through games but again they argue so for educational games. As this research shows, entertainment games have far greater potential than what is commonly believed, such as them leading to violence, addiction, and other negative connotations.

However, there are limitations to this research that future research can explore. First, by conducting a game analysis relying on my personal experience with *RDR2* this research is based on only one experience. Someone else's observations, analyses, and conclusions can differ from my research and therefore lead to a different answer to the hypotheses. This limitation can be solved by conducting surveys that can account for the experiences with learning a sense of responsibility in *RDR2*'s camp of many players. Second, this research focused on *RDR2*'s main camp but there are also game design elements and game mechanics outside the camp that can aid in educating players a sense of responsibility. This was, however, outside the scope of this thesis and could be investigated in future research. Third, *RDR2* also has a multiplayer online role-playing game mode different from the singleplayer story mode. It would be interesting to analyse whether this mode, especially the social interaction between real players instead of NPCs, can also afford learning to be responsible and wherein probable differences lie. For now, this research shows that *RDR2* is not just the bad and the ugly of the Wild West. It is also the good of possibly learning a sense of responsibility.

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Appendix I: screenshots

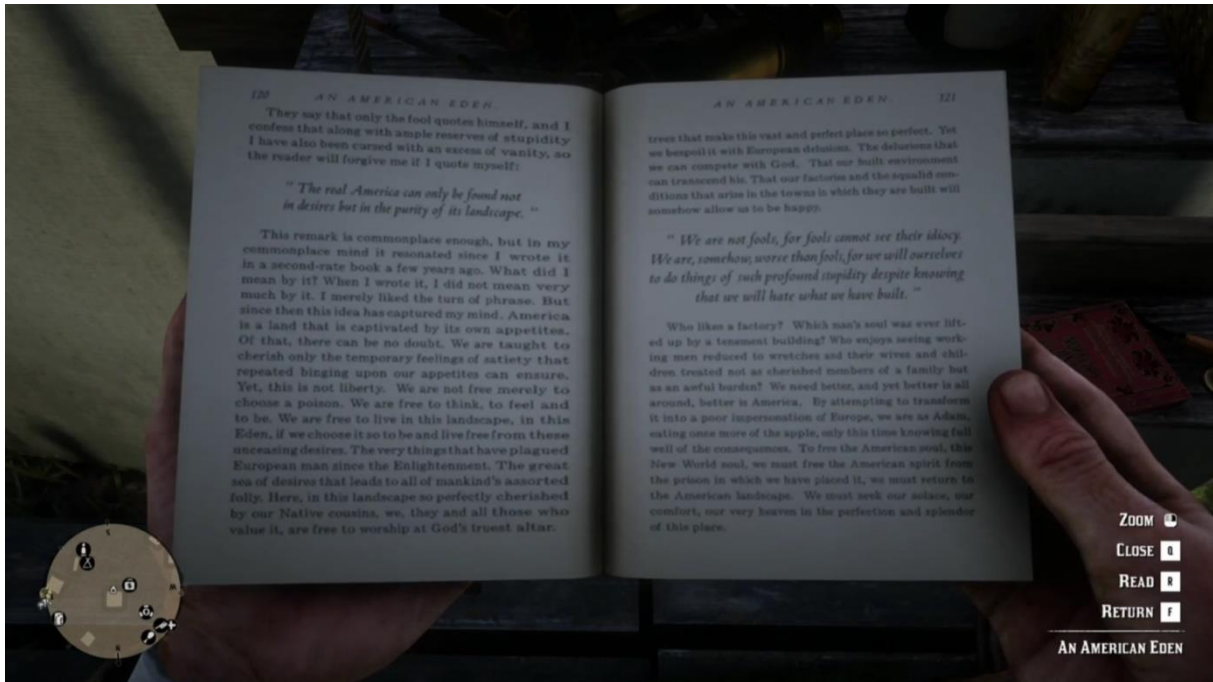
Figure 1: Horseshoe Overlook, one of the Van der Linde gang camp locations.



Figure 2: Charles' photograph depicting his father, his mother and Charles as an infant.



Figure 3: *An American Eden* by fictive RDR2 author Evelyn Miller in Dutch van der Linde's wagon at the camp.



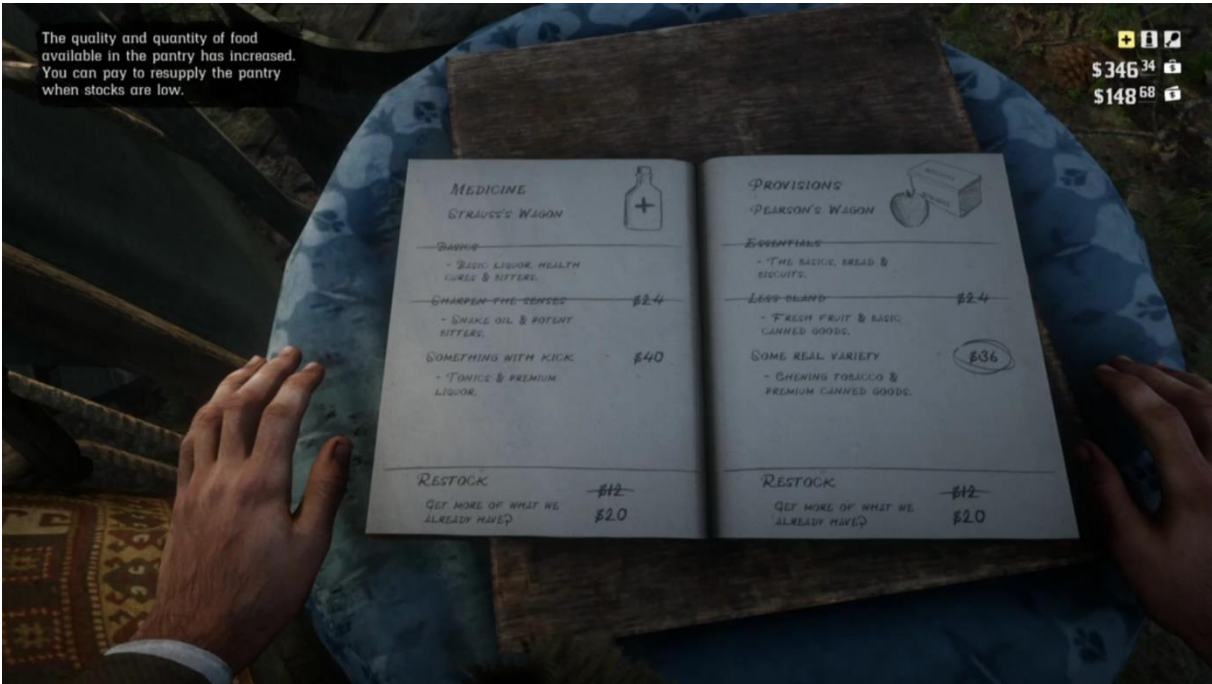
This is what is written:

They say that only the fool quotes himself, and I confess that along with ample reserves of stupidity I have also cursed with an excess of vanity, so the reader will forgive me if I quote myself:

"The real America can only be found not in desires but in the purity of its landscape."

This remark is commonplace enough, but in my commonplace mind it resonated since I wrote it in a second-rate book a few years ago. What did I mean by it? When I wrote it, I did not very much by it. I merely liked the turn of phrase. But since then, this idea has captured my mind. America is a land that is captivated by its own appetites. Of that, there can be no doubt. We are taught to cherish only the temporary feelings of satiety that repeated binging upon our appetites can ensure. Yet, this is not liberty. We are not free merely to choose a poison. We are free to think, to feel and to be. We are free to live in this landscape, in this Eden, if we choose it so to be and live free from unceasing desires. The very things that have plagued European man since the Enlightenment. The great sea of desires that leads to all of mankind's assorted folly. Here in this landscape so perfectly cherished by our Native cousins, we, they and all those who value it, are free to worship at God's truest altar. The Altar of the actual America. The soil, rock and trees that make this vast and perfect place so perfect. Yet we

Figure 5: Camp's ledger showing part of the possible upgrades.



Appendix II: examples

Example 1: In the first four main story missions Arthur is expected to risk his own life to go out looking through a snowstorm for a missing camp member because their wife asked Arthur to, Arthur has to go out looking for food in the same snowstorm because the leader Dutch asked him to, he has to take out O'Driscolls because the leader asked him that too and he has to go hunting to make money for the camp from sold pelts because that is part of your role at the camp.

Example 2:

Photograph: Charles Smith, recent recruit to the Van der Linde gang and one of the major characters in RDR2, has a framed photograph at his sleeping spot. In this photograph Charles' African American father, his Native American mother and himself as an infant are depicted. During America in 1899, racism towards African-Americans and Native Americans was very prevalent and it becomes clear via conversations with Charles while on a mission that his mother was captured by US Army soldiers and never seen again, while his father became a depressed alcoholic because of that.⁷⁹ After losing his parents, Charles was on his own from the age of thirteen until he found his home at Van der Linde's gang.

Book: Dutch van der Linde has a couple of books in his wagon, one being *An American Eden* by Evelyn Miller, a fictive author in RDR2 and admired by Dutch as becomes clear through mission dialogue. When interacting with this book, players can read two pages of philosophical thinking about how America should be and what needs to change for it to be ideal. It can be deduced that Dutch shares these ideological thoughts for a better America.

Example 3:

Low food supply: When the food supply is low, Simon Pearson, the camp's cook, holds players accountable by walking up to Arthur while in the camp and saying: "They're getting hungry, Mr. Morgan." Arthur responds automatically with: "Who is?" Pearson then remarks: "The people you haven't fed." Arthur questions this as he says: "Me? When did that become my job?" To which Pearson comments: "Others are pulling their weight."

Little money: Dutch emotionally appeals to Arthur if he has not donated money for a while: "No money in the box for ages, come on, son, you're the best man amongst us. Don't go weak

⁷⁹ Of course, racism towards people of colour is still very much an issue in today's society and is not merely a thing of the past.

on me now... please.” Arthur promises that he will “get back to it”

Example 4:

Donating food: When players donate food, they get a simple thanks from Pearson and they only receive more praise, also from other camp members, when the donated food is of high quality. When the food is of low quality, however, camp members complain.

Donating money: Sometimes when Dutch is at his spot, where the contribution box is located, he comments on a donation, such as “Keep it coming.”, “Good work, Arthur.” Or “That’s my boy.” However, this is rare, and he is the only one giving some kind of praise about donating money or valuables.

Example 5: When camp member Mary-Beth invites Arthur to a conversation: “Why don’t you sit, Arthur?” Players can accept or reject this. When players accept, Arthur sits down next to Mary-Beth and she asks: “You okay, Arthur?” Arthur then replies: “I guess.” Mary-Beth notices that Arthur seems worried, so she comments: “You seem kind of... worried.” Arthur agrees to that: “Course I’m worried.” Mary-Beth asks more details: “What about?” This prompts Arthur to share his thoughts on current situations: “Whole world’s changing... even I see that now. Our time... has pretty much passed. They don’t want folk like us no more. It’s their rules or be damned with you. No more outlaws... No more killers. Now it’s us being hunted. Oh they ain’t stopping. We went and made our choices a long time ago, so I guess we gotta pay for our sins.” Mary-Beth responds with: “Oh Arthur, what a sad world we live in.” To which Arthur replies: “Well I ain’t sad Mary-Beth, just... I’m realistic, about what’s coming. Keep thinking I should help folk, but... ah I don’t know.” Mary-Beth shows sympathy by touching his leg and saying: “Arthur, oh Arthur, you’re the only one of these fools knows just how lost he is.” Arthur agrees to this: “Ain’t that the truth... Ain’t that the truth.” They both chuckle at this and Arthur leaves.

Example 6: Arthur gets greeted a lot with variations on “Hello, Arthur.” Players can then greet them back, which is a positive interaction, or antagonise them by making a snarky remark but this option is not always available. An example of this is when camp member Uncle says: “Hey, Arthur” and Arthur responds with “Uncle.” Furthermore, an example of a dialogue when a camp member approaches Arthur is when camp member Kieran approaches Arthur and says his thanks: “Thank you, Mr. Morgan... for sparing me like that... I’ll work hard, I am not a bad feller... you’ll soon warm to me.” Arthur responds: “Just see that I do.”

Kieran answers: “Oh, you will!” Arthur then expresses his own gratitude: “And boy... thank you... for saving my life.” Kieran replies to that with: “Well yeah, of course.” Kieran then leaves the conversation.

Example 7: When Arthur is dirty in the camp, camp member Susan Grimshaw will walk up to you and say: “Mr Morgan... you’re quite a sight.” Arthur responds with: “I’m fine.” Susan, however, does not let it rest and replies: “You’re revolting and you’ll get all of us sick. Come with me.” After she says that, she slaps Arthur in the face. Arthur chuckles to that while saying: “I’m sort of busy right now!” Susan does not take no for an answer: “I wasn’t asking. I’m telling! My camp, my rules. Come on!” She then escorts him to a barrel of water and makes him wash himself. After that, Susan and Arthur are at his wagon after he put on some clean clothes. Arthur offers Susan money: “Ah, here’s some money for your troubles...” Susan accepts this and thanks him: “Why, thank you, kind sir.” The dialogue and cut scene end there.

Example 8: When you are travelling outside of the camp and hear the cries of a man who is bitten by a snake. Players can decide to suck out the venom, give a health cure or leave them be. When they decide to help it increases their honour rank. Later, another interaction with this man is possible when Arthur comes across him outside of a gun shop. As expressing gratitude for saving his life, “the kind soul”, as that man calls Arthur, may pick out a free gun at this shop.