

scavenged scrap from far-away places to make something new.

So learn from Geary, and appreciate wit.  
Learn from Geary on how to develop it.  
It may seem like we're fighting and being  
mean when we spar  
through a play on words,  
but in truth we're *understanding*, we're  
coming together from afar  
and making meaning through words in  
play.

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—Mark Chen, *University of Washington, Bothell, WA*

**The Psychology of Zelda:  
Linking Our World to The  
Legend of Zelda Series**

*Anthony M. Bean, ed.*

Dallas, TX: BenBella Books,  
2019. Foreword, introduction,  
acknowledgments, and about the editor.  
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The games in The Legend of Zelda video game series typically follow the journey of the silent hero Link in his quest to save the Kingdom of Hyrule from the evil power-hungry Ganondorf, often at the behest of the pseudonymous Princess Zelda (although some of the games deviate from this format). *The Psychology of Zelda: Linking Our World to The Legend of Zelda Series* is a collection of essays written by a group of mental health professionals discussing the various ways in which the games in the Zelda franchise reflect human experience in the stories they tell and the characters who populate them.

These essays stand alone and can be read in any order, which is both a strength and a weakness of the book. Each author takes the time to explain concepts that sometimes have been explained in previous chapters, all of which can get repetitive. However, clearly—and refreshingly—this book was a collaborative process and the reader gets a wide range of perspectives. For example, across chapters, we find a heavy emphasis on Jungian psychology, and several authors explore how players can psychologically project themselves onto the hero Link and effectively experience his journey as their own. Nevertheless, the authors each have their own take on this projection and a distinct way of communicating information to the reader. A chapter that may not speak to me personally for one reason or another, may speak to someone else deeply—and vice versa.

Many find it difficult to understand the importance video games can assume for those who play them. Throughout this book, nearly every author takes the time to explain why video games matter to people, and—more importantly—how they can affect individuals personally and emotionally. One chapter stands out in this regard. In “Unmasking Grief: Applying the Kubler-Ross Five Stages of Grief Model to *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*,” authors Larisa A. Garski, Emory S. Daniel Jr., and F. Cary Shepard walk the reader through the story of Link, who—after losing both a close friend and a purpose in life—progresses through the stages of depression, denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance. It is not difficult to see how Link's emotional journey during the course of the game closely parallels phases

that many readers will have experienced themselves or how players can use this vicarious experience to process their own emotions. Moreover, the authors provide a nuanced and clear overview of the five stages of grief and how individuals may (or may not) get through them.

Although the stories in *The Legend of Zelda* franchise largely focuses on Link, Princess Zelda is always part of them. Her role in the franchise has evolved over the years, and this development is discussed in the chapter, “The Legend Herself: From Damsel in Distress to Princess of Power,” by Melissa Huntley and Wind Goodfriend. The authors address the ways in which sexism seeps into the characterization of Zelda throughout the series and instances when the characterization of Zelda was ahead of its time and confronted sexist expectations head on. In the early games of the franchise, Princess Zelda was portrayed as a classic damsel in distress who needed a male hero to save her. In *The Ocarina of Time*, Zelda lives and dresses as an androgynous warrior named Shiek, with the intention of appearing male to hide her identity. In *The Wind Waker*, a pirate queen named Tetra turns out to be the long-lost Zelda. The authors dig into the social psychology literature to explore real-life gender stereotypes and how they have changed and evolved over time and how this relates to the development of Zelda.

This book is intended for a lay audience rather than for graduate students or researchers. In many ways, this book reads as a love letter to fans of *The Legend of Zelda* games. It is clear that the authors themselves care deeply about the franchise and that the games have significant

meaning to them personally. Indeed, anyone who is a fan of *The Legend of Zelda* franchise will enjoy the book. Moreover, I think that parents who want to understand why video games mean so much to their children would particularly benefit from reading it. Personally, I enjoyed the book and I look forward to seeing more from these authors.

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—Brandon K. Ashinoff, *Columbia University, New York, NY*

**Fun, Taste, & Games:  
An Aesthetics of the Idle,  
Unproductive, and  
Otherwise Playful**

*John Sharp and David Thomas*

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019.

Preface, notes, bibliography, and index.

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Is it fun to review a book about fun? This latest in MIT’s *Playful Thinking* series comprises a series of essays and provocations that address fun through a composite lens and allows readers to challenge their own, possibly rather staid, idea of what it means to have fun while being playful.

Given that the authors seem fairly sure fun is frequently lost or ignored in the serious business of games design—often because they see fun as too nebulous and too subjective to be useful—they manage to assemble several persuasive conjectures about it. In a series of essays, mediations, and provocations, including a deep dive into the history of aesthetics