

Essay #2: Gone Home and Shared Experiences

Set up:

In their chapter on walking sims and *Gone Home*, Reed, Murray, and Salter discuss exclusionary practices in video game design and play, noting some of the gamergate-style claims about what counts as a “real game,” which typically, Reed et al. argue, excludes games by or “about the disenfranchised” like women and queer people (118). In response to this kind of reactionary rhetoric about “real games”, Reed et al. explore how walking simulator games (themselves a marginalized genre in the gaming world) allow for immersion and exploration and “often center interiority in a way that more mainstream genres struggle with” (123).

Also writing about ideas of “interiority,” Bonnie Ruberg brings the concept and experience of so-called “empathy games” under scrutiny. In their article, Ruberg investigates the term “empathy” itself and questions the degree to which games offer authentic understandings of others’ experiences, especially the experiences of marginalized people.

Your intervention in this discussion:

Add to this discussion of interiority and empathy by composing an analysis in which you explore the design and story of the Fullbright Company’s *Gone* considering particularly how the game represents others’ experiences and/or the concepts of inclusion, allyship, family, or community.

Your analysis should set forth a relationship between form and content; that is, you can consider aspects like game mechanics, multimodal features, interactive features, or digital composition as well as story, plot, and character. In other words, an effective argument will focus on a relationship between narrative, interactive design, and play procedures and explore the meaningfulness of that relationship.

Because this is *your* intervention and contribution to an ongoing discussion, you should bring in your own experiences of play. Use the subjective pronoun “I” and consider how you negotiate ideas of interiority and/ or empathy as you play the game.

Requirements:

Secondary source material: You should integrate concepts and ideas from at least one of the two critical essays assigned in class:

- Reed, Murray, & Salter, “Gone Home: Walking Simulators and the importance of slow Gaming”
- Ruberg, “Empathy and its Alternatives”

All summaries, paraphrases, and quotations must be correctly formatted and cited in-text. Include a works cited list. *Be rigorous in citing others’ ideas and words.*

Images: Include at least 2 carefully selected and appropriate screenshots from *Gone Home*. These need labels and captions.

The full essay project includes: 2 notetaking assignments, a draft submitted on time and participation in Peer Review, as well as the final paper and reader’s note. Point distributions are noted in Assignments.

□ **Length:** 5 pages (including the 2 images but not the works cited page)

***Note:** you can set up an appointment with a WRC consultant or with me at time in your writing process from formulating ideas to editing the draft.

Due dates:

Draft 1.0: Friday, 10/10, by the end of the day (send to Canvas and to your peer group)

Peer Review Meeting: Tuesday, 10/14, in class, peer review sheets and marginal comments due by class time

Final Submission: Thursday, 10/16, by end of day

*Revisions to this essay after grading are optional and due within 3 weeks of the date I post the grade. I recommend that you meet with me or with a WRC consultant to talk about your essay. Note that higher marks are not guaranteed.