

Dystopian and Post-Apocalyptic Video Games for Young Adults

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Video games are a massively popular form of entertainment. As seen in Figure 1, the gaming industry eclipses all other entertainment industries with regards to revenue. Additionally, while other industries are seeing declines in revenue the gaming industry continues to thrive (Reuters, 2018). Recent data shows that 89% of Canadian kids and teens ages 6-17 play video games (Entertainment Software Association of Canada, 2020). Among this population of gamers, the most popular types of games are action/adventure games (33%), puzzle/word games (24%), and first-person and team-based games (21%) (Entertainment Software Association of Canada, 2020).

Figure 1.

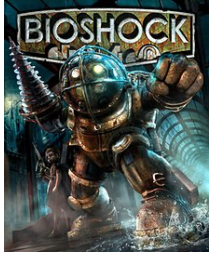
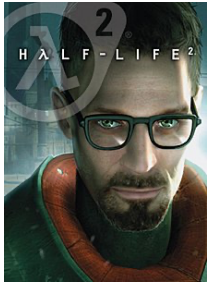

Comparative Gaming Revenue



In addition to being massively popular, video games also benefit from being an effective storytelling medium. This effectiveness comes thanks in large part to the interactivity of video games as this element helps immerse the player in the environment and story by allowing them to be active participants rather than passive recipients. Some games are structured much like novels with linear narratives whereas others are less structured and allow for branching narratives, clean slates where the player can create their own story or a mixture of these. A popular genre within games is that of post-apocalyptic and dystopian fiction. Some of the most popular titles and series within this genre are highlighted below.

Post-Apocalyptic and Dystopian Game List

 <p><i>The Last of Us (2013) and The Last of Us Part II (2020)</i></p>	<p>Naughty Dog's extremely popular post-apocalyptic masterpieces of storytelling take place in a world where planet earth has been overrun by the cordyceps fungus which turns people into ravenous monstrosities. In the first game, the player takes control of Joel as he escorts Ellie, a 14-year-old girl across brutal post-pandemic America in a story of love and redemption. In the second game, the player takes control of an older Ellie who takes off on a journey after suffering a tragic event in what at its core is another story of love and redemption but also revenge, obsession, and empathy.</p>
 <p><i>Fallout (1997-2018)</i></p>	<p>Fallout is a highly popular post-apocalyptic action role-playing video game series that takes place in a world that has been decimated by nuclear warfare. Typically, within the games the player creates their own unique character and ventures out into a world full of side quests, things to do, places to explore, and foes to vanquish while following a main storyline.</p>
 <p><i>Horizon Zero Dawn (2017)</i></p>	<p>Unlike most other post-apocalyptic games, the world of Horizon is vibrant, beautiful, and teeming with life. The catch, humans are back to living in tribes while the world is overrun by dinosaur-like machines. The question, what happened to the prior human population who had the wherewithal to create this kind of technology? To uncover this mystery the player takes control of Aloy a tribal outcast who ventures on a quest to discover who she is and what happened to the world that existed before.</p>
 <p><i>State of Decay (2013-2018)</i></p>	<p>This is an open-world zombie survival game where players must explore the world to collect resources to build up their base. In playing the game the player can control several different characters some of which they will have saved by completing quests throughout the world. When venturing out in the world players must proceed with extreme caution as dying while playing as a character leads to that character's permanent death.</p>

 <p><i>Detroit: Become Human</i> (2018)</p>	<p>In this allegory to the civil rights movement that takes place in a future where machines have become more intelligent than humans the fate of both humans and androids is put into the players hands after for an unknown reason the androids start to become conscious. Within the branching narrative of the game the player takes control of three androids, Kara, Marcus, and Connor. Every decision the player makes as these characters will affect how the story unfolds and what the future holds.</p>
 <p><i>BioShock</i> (2007)</p>	<p>BioShock takes place in the Rapture an underwater paradise that started as a utopia free from the constraints of oppressive governments. Like many utopias, the Rapture quickly turned into a dystopian nightmare full of violence and mayhem due in large part to human greed. The player takes control a Jack who finds himself stuck in this nightmare of a place after his plane crashes into the ocean.</p>
 <p><i>Half-Life 2</i> (2004)</p>	<p>After the events of the first game the human race finds itself under control of the Combine, a multidimensional empire that has conquered the planet and turned it into a police state. To battle this oppressive regime and free humanity the player once again takes control of physicist Gordon Freeman. As Freeman the player must fight alongside a variety of companion characters and solve intricate physics-based puzzles to progress the games narrative.</p>
 <p><i>Tom Clancy's The Division</i> (2016)</p>	<p>This game is set in a dystopian version of New York City that has been ravished by a smallpox pandemic. In the game, the player takes on the role of a division agent tasked with rebuilding strategic homeland operations in Manhattan, investigating the nature of the outbreak, and dealing with the influx of criminal activity. The player is not alone in this task as The Division features a collaborative online multiplayer mode when the player can team up with three other individuals.</p>

References

Entertainment Software Association of Canada. (2020). *Real Canadian Gamer Essential Facts*

2020. https://essentialfacts2020.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/RCGEF_en.pdf

Reuters. (2018, December 13). *Investing in the soaring popularity of gaming.*

<https://www.reuters.com/sponsored/article/popularity-of-gaming>

Game Images Used

- The Last of Us Cover Art: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_of_Us
- Horizon Zero Dawn Cover Art: <https://www.artstation.com/artwork/0dKg4>
- Fallout Cover Art: <https://www.mobygames.com/game/windows/fallout/cover-art/gameCoverId,282438/>
- State of Decay Cover Art: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Decay_\(video_game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Decay_(video_game))
- Detroit Become Human Cover Art: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit:_Become_Human
- BioShock Cover Art: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BioShock>
- Half-life 2 Cover Art: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Half-Life_2
- The Division Cover Art: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ca/p/tom-clancys-the-division/brgpd72kkm3q?activetab=pivot:overviewtab>

