

Discovering Super Mario Galaxy: A Textual Analysis

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Super Mario Galaxy has been almost universally lauded as an enchanting, almost magical game, but what meaning is there to be found within the text? What does the entire experience actually represent and communicate to the player on the whole? With many now wondering what more could possibly be done to advance the classic 3D platformer, this paper aims to examine in depth what transforms Super Mario Galaxy from a collection of rules and code and into something that transcends its immensely competent mechanics, inspiring wonder and excitement in all who experience it through the power of its own discovery.

Through a textual analysis exploring everything from visual to audio design, level structure, narrative and even the game's unique gravity model I aim to show that the entirety of Super Mario Galaxy is focused on eliciting a single, concentrated emotion within the player from which all others will follow; a sense of discovery. I explore how this manifests itself not only as a deep rooted design philosophy, extending its influence to all aspects of visual, sound and game design, but also in every incidental detail, every unassuming object masking some delightful secret. I come to the conclusion that Super Mario Galaxy, obsessed with its own ability to present the new and fresh, constantly pushes the player forward through both subtle coercion and the removal of obstacles so that there is no barrier whatsoever to a sense of discovery which is perpetually renewed throughout the entire length of the game.

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