

English Teachers as Narrative Designers?

I have to admit that while I was an English teacher, I never thought that I would be able to change careers to my true passion of game development, specifically narrative design. I was never the best at coding, but I knew that I could write and teach others how to write. That was until my wife showed me that former teachers could achieve truly great things. She went from an English teacher to a cyber security specialist within a year, and she also landed herself an extremely respectable career with a well known company. After watching her success, I knew the time had come for me to make my move, but transferring skills from the teaching world to the game development world seemed like such a daunting task.

I was wrong. In reality, the game development world and AAA studios have an untapped talent pool in the teaching world.

Crafting and Understanding the Narrative is Tantamount to Breathing

The general misconception about teaching English in high school is that we simply teach students to read and write; however, that couldn't be further from the truth. We teach the analysis and purpose of literature across the span of roughly 2000 years worth of human history. We study the genesis of the hero with Beowulf to Hamlet's Renaissance-Man ways while moving through the Enlightenment, Victorian, Neoclassical, Romantic, and Modern eras. We know, love, and understand plot and story structure beyond that of even the best script writers. We've read hundreds of books hundreds of times, and our writing is reflective of that.

While writing for games is different from other mediums, the essence is the same: telling a story that is memorable and helps to solve the mystery of life that is the human condition. Instead of simply watching a movie or reading about Redcrosse fighting Error, a game can tell the same story by putting the outcome of the battle in a player's hands. Interactive storytelling is the future of literature; Netflix continues to develop interactive storytelling through movies like "Bandersnatch" and "Escape the Undertaker," but in reality, games have been lightyears ahead of the curve as are English teachers when it comes to understanding the art of storytelling.

We teach students to critically think and to pick apart characters to see what lies beyond the word on the page. Whom else would a game development studio want to help craft a narrative if not someone who knows over twenty centuries worth of literature?

Effective Communication

On average, a teacher must instruct roughly 150 or more students a day. Each student has a learning style that is unique to them, and they each have their own methods of thought and obstacles that prevent them from learning as efficiently as parents think they do. Teachers must be able to deliver the same message to each student within a 45-50 minute class period.

Not to mention that teachers receive roughly 200 emails a day that we must find time to quickly read, synthesize, and reply to while maintaining our other duties. Effective Communication is the

name of the game when it comes to teaching.

Management of Teams

Do you have kids? Do they ever drive you beyond the edge of sanity? Well, imagine 30 students in a classroom where ten students have ADHD, one student has oppositional defiant disorder, five students suffer from clinical depression, nine students are English Language Learners, and the rest are standard issue. Now teach them how “A Modest Proposal” by Johnathan Swift is a masterpiece of satire about the exploitation of Ireland by England over the course of eight hours. Teachers, and not just English teachers, don’t put up with nonsense in the classroom and certainly don’t in the workplace. Teachers are the managers of the future! Work will be completed, and it will be completed on time. We expect results!

Constant Feedback

Teachers are being evaluated constantly through informal and formal evaluations, walkthroughs, and student data. Teachers are imbued with the might of Hercules when it comes to receiving feedback from administration, stakeholders, and even parents or students. The point I’m trying to make is that if an English teacher writes for a company, an employer doesn’t need to sugar coat any constructive feedback.

Ever Changing Deadlines and Directives

Schools can’t have seniors take senior photos without changing the day it happens. Lesson plans are constantly evolving; they’re essentially living documents. The game industry is as fast paced as a school. Teachers are always in a “crunch time,” so little will change when moving into the gaming industry. We welcome the challenge of the ever changing deadline.

In the end, teaching is a difficult profession that teaches a great many skills that are often taken for granted. I know that my passion is writing, storytelling, and games, so why not take a chance on a teacher. We may just surprise you.