

Review: The World of Darkness

Cassiopeia | April 15, 2023



Hello, hello, lovers of fantastic worlds and adventures! Today we're going to talk about role-playing games — the kind where you don't even have to leave your house to become a true hero (or a villain, if it comes to that). We'll examine the most popular games in "The World of Darkness" genre and how to use them to create your own text-based role-play.

If you're still feeling lost in the world of RPGs, our Mr. Lizard will be happy to offer his support and help. In short — players create their own characters and set off on exciting adventures where they can do whatever their heart desires (within the boundaries of the game world, of course). So, if you've always dreamed of becoming a hero or a dark lord, role-playing is definitely your choice.

So, our beloved Mr. Lizard has prudently selected the best games from this universe that you can and should rely on. For example, *Vampire: The Masquerade* was the first tabletop game released that truly revolutionized the RPG genre. Instead of relying on dice rolls and character stats, it put the emphasis on storytelling and lifelike dialogue. The game allowed players to become actual vampires — powerful and nearly immortal creatures of the night. All of this made it one of the best CRPGs in gamedev history, and its setting became a cult classic among horror and dark fantasy fans.



Greetings, fellow Kindred



viva2007

u let a blonde man speak to you like that?



Backstory: The Universe of the World of Darkness

I hope you've already prepared some delicious tea or coffee, my friends, because now we must lean back in total comfort and take a full dive into the fascinating World of Darkness. After getting to know this universe, you'll forget all about *Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and other implausible heresies in this beautiful genre.

The World of Darkness gathers the entire bouquet of the paranormal; nothing was overlooked or forgotten: vampires, werewolves, mages, demons, ghosts, fairies, and even mummies (yes, you heard that right). All of them struggle for power and survival in a grim atmosphere that fully permeates this world.

Generally, the universe is focused on vampires (but not entirely — not just them). Even though they are immortal, they can still be torched with a flamethrower or ripped apart by explosive rounds (or you can even drink them dry, if you – Darwin forbid – happen to be a fan of cannibalism). Therefore, they are forced to hide from humans and adhere to **The Masquerade** — a code of conduct for a "Kindred" from polite vampire society — to avoid being exterminated. But each vampire clan — yes, they are divided into specific clans — views this differently, which creates a bit of a "conundrum": some believe they should live secretly among humans, while others think vampires should rule them. Meanwhile, the independent *Inconnu* simply despise everyone. In short, the hierarchy of these undead guys is defined with colossal precision.

Every game has one.



The fan favorite.



Made to be hated.



The hot one.



The only normal person.



“Uhh.....what's your name again?”



The gremlin.



“Mmm.....society.”



Just straight up evil.



No screen time. All the plot relevance.

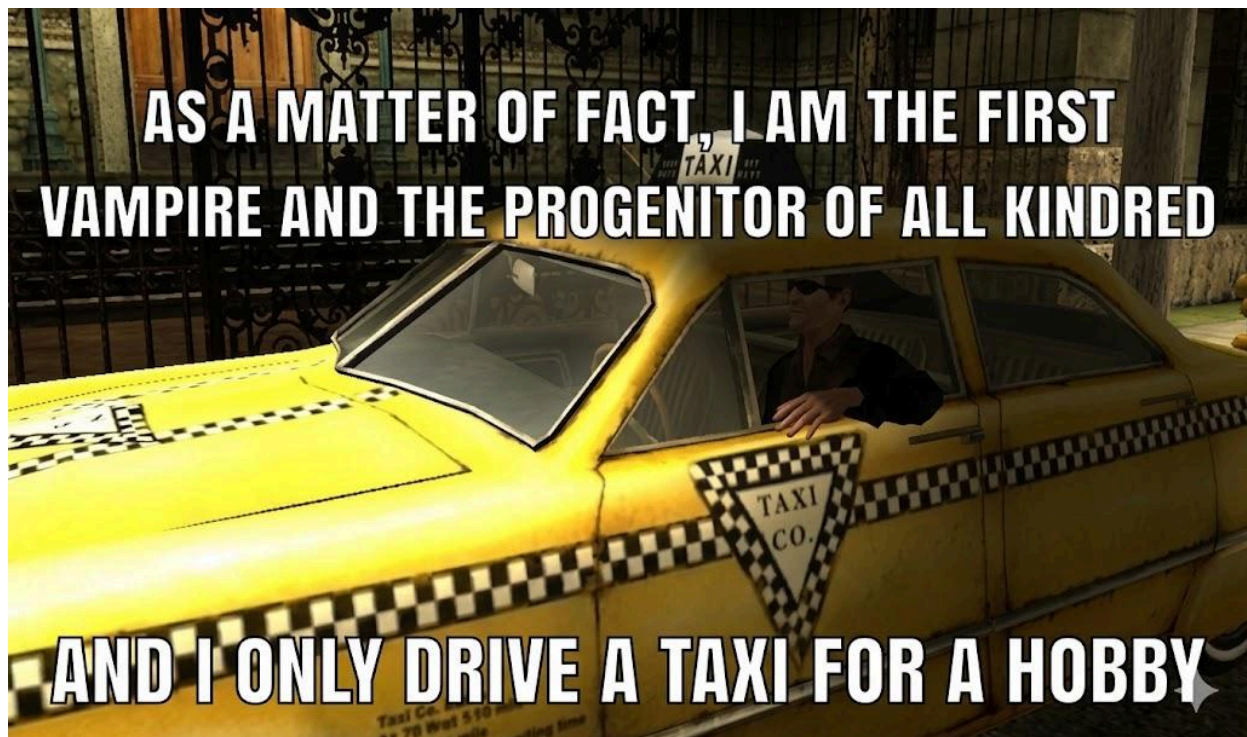
If we talk about the history of *The World of Darkness*, it began back in 1991 when White Wolf released the first edition of *Vampire: The Masquerade* (VtM). This game was so successful that the company decided to create even more games in this universe. And so appeared *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, *Mage: The Ascension*, *Wraith: The Oblivion*, *Changeling: The Dreaming*, and many others.

But let's go back to *Vampire: The Masquerade* itself. Here you play as a vampire forced to hide in human society. The game is distinguished by the incredible depth of the characters and the influence of their actions on the world. After all, when you are immortal, your actions have long-term consequences. But what makes this universe so special? Perhaps it's the specifically dark atmosphere, or the unpredictability that can strike characters at any moment. It could also

be the vast, multifaceted, multi-layered world that you can explore for years and never stop being surprised.

VtM, unlike DnD, is not about the hero's development, but about their **degradation**. Vampires here don't gain new skills as much as they become increasingly cruel and ruthless. And this happens because every vampire struggles with their **Inner Beast**, which constantly tries to take over. This gives you the chance to create not just some cardboard devils, but real, deep personalities. You can choose your motivation, which implies anything: a thirst for power, the desire to find true love, or simply the desire to survive in this dangerous world. Accordingly, motivation will influence how your character makes decisions and how they interact with other characters — in this regard, the game is incredibly detailed.

The world of the next, even more popular game, *Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines*, which was released fully on PC, is full of engaging characters, such as the eccentric Voerman twins (girls with a surprise! :)) or the arrogant but magnetic vampire Prince LaCroix, a former soldier in Napoleon's army. And for the eccentric connoisseurs, there is the choice to play as a "crazy" vampire from the **Malkavian** clan; special conditions were created for them: a changed game mechanic, as if you were placed in the dead body of a schizophrenic, and a unique opportunity to chat with a telephone pole. Originality and unpredictability are at every step: looking for a way to get around Los Angeles? You can boldly ask **Caine** — yes, the very first biblical killer, and now the first vampire — to take you in his taxi. Though, surely, this older gentleman has other, more extravagant activities, but who knows, maybe the guy just found himself an extra source of income.



In addition to unique abilities and stories, the heroes in this game often have many complex relationships with each other. For example, it gets very "stifling" for two vampires from different clans with conflicting interests in a tight space. You can create your own nightmare where characters face their darkest fears and desires. And believe me, this is much more interesting than just fighting dragons in DnD!

Actually, what I'm getting at... if you haven't played *Vampire: The Masquerade* or aren't familiar with *The World of Darkness*, you simply need to fix this situation :). This is a universe that can make you reflect and think about many things, including what it means to be alive and what is valuable in life. So join the grim vampire party, and let's find out who the real Kindred is here!

Application

How can you use this explosive "World of Darkness" cocktail to create your own text-based role-play? Fasten your seatbelt; now we're heading on an exciting journey through our own world of fantasies and sleepless nights.

First, we need to study the basic mechanics of the games described above. Let's try to determine what makes these games unique and how we can use these elements on our platform.

1. Characteristics and Skills

In the World of Darkness, characters have attributes and skills that determine their abilities. Attributes include physical, social, and mental skills such as strength, charisma, and intelligence. Skills include combat, theft, deception, and others. The set of skills depends on the chosen clan. Moreover, instead of a dry list of skills, the creators decided to present us with a more original list and combinations. For example, skill values are set based on the character's **profession, past, and hobbies**. A Tremere vampire (blood sorcerers), who was a fortune teller in life, will be a more talented blood mage but less physically resilient or strong, etc. Try to take into account as many aspects and factors influencing your characters and the world as possible. Don't forget about experience and leveling: this can be the characters' progress in any sense, their personal evolution or degradation.

*If we go back to vampire clans and **Disciplines** in more detail — Disciplines are unique abilities inherent to each clan, allowing characters to perform actions such as: blood manipulation, mind reading, telepathy, persuasion, teleportation, etc. This is another feature of the universe; they didn't reinvent the wheel but simply used ready-made templates, cleverly mixing the abilities of conventional superheroes with the undead.*

2. Choice System

In *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Bloodlines*, players often face choices that affect the outcome of the game. For example, a player can choose how to treat other characters or how to solve a quest. These choices affect the course of the game and can have consequences for the

character. In other words, the more freedom—or even the illusion of it—in the gameplay, the better.



3. Unique World

The World of Darkness is unique for its atmosphere, combining elements of horror, sci-fi, gothic aesthetics, and mysticism. I would like to note that it uses the well-known **"fictional reality"** technique, where the author uses real-life elements to create a more convincing fictional universe. In literature and film, this technique is often used to increase realism and create a strong bond between the work and the real world. For example, biblical themes are widely used

in WoD, which adds depth, and historical/popularized figures such as Rasputin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Louis XIV, Caesar, Baba Yaga, Dracula, and Caine are used.

4. Quests and Tasks

Make your players act and fight for their goals. Create numerous quests and tasks that will distract them from routine activities and force them to make difficult decisions.

! TRADE OFFER !

i receive:
-the ankaran
sarcophagus

you receive:
-a nice
apartment



5. Learn from Mistakes

Pretty mediocre advice, but it's often forgotten nonetheless. No one was born an expert in role-playing games. Errors and failures are an integral part of the game. Study your mistakes, gather feedback, improve your game, and develop along with your characters.

6. Listen to Your Players

Players are the main characters of your game. Listen to them and learn from them. Find out what they like and what they want to see, and apply it in your work.



I would also like to emphasize that in text-based RPs, the focus is shifted primarily to the **craft of writing and literature**. Among the literary techniques used in creating "The World of Darkness," you can borrow the following:

- **Descriptiveness:** The authors of WoD often use this to create vivid images and realistically recreate the details of the game world. Metaphors are especially effective for full immersion, making characters and the world around them literally come to life on the ink-stained pages. The power of metaphors is that they create images in the reader's imagination, increase the emotional strength of the text, and evoke an emotional

response. Neglecting them is the same as cutting off your readers' emotions and impressions — the very reason for the whole party.

- **Symbolism:** This universe contains many symbols representing ideas and concepts. Authors use symbolism to convey these ideas and enhance the emotional impact on readers through the text.

Don't be afraid to raise and touch on complex topics. In WoD, philosophical themes such as the essence of human nature, morality and ethics, free will, and more are often raised. Agree, it's always nice when there's some food for thought. In addition, you can use many cultural references and links to real historical events.

Well, now, I think you are more than ready to create your own text-based role-playing world! Use the experience of *The World of Darkness*, get inspired by its unique style, and create your own fantasy world. Be creative, experiment, and don't be afraid of atypical templates! And remember that the beginning doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to *be*.



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