

ESCAPISM THROUGH



By Brahmjot Kaur



CUNY announced the closings of all CUNY campuses citywide in mid-March, days after private universities like Columbia, NYU, and Fordham shutdown. Since then, CUNYs have transitioned to distance learning and students have been gathering for classes through online platforms like Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. With a lack of personal schedules and the deterioration of everyone's emotional and mental health, it comes to no surprise that everyone is looking for their personal form of escapism during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, released on March 20, 2020 from Nintendo for the Nintendo Switch, has served as the perfect tool for escapism during the quarantine.

What is Animal Crossing?

For those who are confused about the references that have suddenly began sweeping the internet, Nintendo explains the premise of New Horizons as an “escape to a deserted island [where you] create your own paradise as you explore, create, and customize.” Your purpose in the game is to turn a deserted island into a flourishing home and travel experience for other islanders in the game. Previous versions have been popular on different consoles like the Nintendo Cube and the Nintendo DS. New Horizons requires more effort to have resources like the Abel Sisters, Nook’s Cranny, and even the museum on your island. Previously, most of those landmarks were already there when you moved in. Now, you have the opportunity to pick a location for each establishment. There is no end to any Animal Crossing video game. Unlike other

games that require you to complete levels that would allow to win the game, Animal Crossing is a life simulation. As you play, your island (or village if you are playing New Leaf) will continue to flourish, but there is no “The End” or final mission.

Why is Animal Crossing a Good Choice for Escapism?

Watching the news, reading headlines, and even seeing memes about the pandemic has personally affected me horribly. It is stressful knowing what is going on globally. Sometimes, I just want to go somewhere else and forget about current state of our world. Animal Crossing allows me to do that for as long as I want every day. Animal Crossing forces a routine that many of us are lacking. Every day, the game enlists you with tasks you need to complete. You have to check into the Nook Terminal for your daily points, hit rocks with your shovel to find bells (the currency in Animal Crossing) and other resources, shake trees, pull weeds, interact with all of your islanders, fish, catch insects, and sell items to continue paying your mortgage and the construction of bridges and inclines on your island. As you catch new species of fish, insects, and fossils, you can donate them to Blathers at your island’s museum. Along with your personal list of catches, you can go and see the specimen any time at your museum.

When you begin the game, you pick your islander’s name, what they look like, the map of your island, and finally the name of your

island. Animal Crossing is in real time so it is a great game to start when all we have is time. When you arrive, you will also learn what fruit is indigenous to your island. If your friend has different fruit, you can visit them and bring back fruit to plant on your island. My island, JuniperLux, has cherries. I recently planted oranges and coconuts, too.

Due to my parents’ health and age, I leave my house as little as possible. I was feeling bored and lacked motivation to do anything. I cannot see my friends, and even Facetiming was starting to bore me. With Animal Crossing: New Horizons, your friends can visit your island and vice versa through online play! You can have multiple people at your island and you can visit random islands to find different resources your island may not have.

As you read this, you might realize how invested I am in Animal Crossing. Like for many, it is a game for me that lets me look at the wholesome and happy things in life. It lets me feel proud of my accomplishments and gives me purpose to wake up. I want JuniperLux to look great and I want my islanders to appreciate the effort I put into the game. Lately, it has felt a lot better to be on a deserted island than in whatever mess is going on right now in the world.

Stay safe, stay inside, and play Animal Crossing!