

## From Player to Page Competition Entry

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Class and Form: 5E

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Category: Category A (Game Review)

Game Title: Half-Life 2

Number of Words: 570 words

Rating: ★★★★★

Game genre: FPS

Publisher: Developed and published by Valve

Release date: November 16, 2004

Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox, Xbox 360, Windows, Mac OS X, Android, Linux

Since 2004, many games focusing on story and world-building have been released. These games have revolutionised what it means to be realistic and innovative. They have not used voice lines; instead, they used visuals to dazzle the players and silent storytelling to get the player's attention. While I have enjoyed games like Cyberpunk 2077 and Journey, they have never enthralled me as much as Half-Life 2.

Half-Life 2 is the sequel to Half-Life, a game that revolutionised story-driven games. The original game utilised background storytelling and showed players that events can happen outside their point of view and only be observed by chance. Half-Life 2 not only improves the problems encountered in Half-Life due to game engine limitations but also continues the previous game usage of events unfolding around the player. It also uses clever lighting and in-game events to teach the player about the mechanics of the story.

Half-Life 2's story picks up 20 years after the first game's story ends. After the disaster at Black Mesa, the world was conquered by the Combine. There is a group attempting to free the world from their dictatorship - a resistance consisting of ordinary people. Gordon Freeman, the main character of the previous game, arrives in City 17 and experiences the civilians' oppression. This leads to him trying to contact his former colleagues in Black Mesa, who survived, to stop the Combine. Gordon's adventure leads him through a high-security prison, a zombie-infested city and a drive across several highways. Needless to say, the game has very diverse gameplay.

Gameplay-wise, Half-Life 2 is a mix between a first-person shooter and a first-person physics engine sandbox. Between each level of the game, another gameplay mechanic is introduced to the player. This includes being able to interact with objects within the game since the game runs on the source engine. In later stages, it introduces a weapon called the gravity gun. This gun allows players to grab small and medium-sized objects and either move them or hurl them at enemies, expanding on the game mechanics.

Although the game's difficulty cannot be changed, the real difficulty of the game is in ammunition management. As I have an aggressive playstyle, I experienced many situations where I ran out of ammo for most of my weaponry, leaving me with only a crowbar. However, it can easily be circumvented by using the gravity gun since everything around the player is a weapon - even a toilet! All of these combined elements create a game where you never have a dull moment, even if you don't enjoy the game's storyline.

I would like to encourage gamers not to judge a game by its age. Although Half-Life 2 came out over a decade ago, in my opinion, it does not show its age. Valve's source engine makes the game feel like it came out only a couple of years ago. Half-Life 2 also led to the creation of other games. The

Stanley Parable is a witty commentary on a player's tendency to ignore game mechanics and instruction, which originally started as a Half-Life 2 mod. Garry's Mod also fully embraces Half-Life 2's game engine and allows for creativity. Overall I recommend this game to all players interested in dystopian futures and imaginative gaming.