



# WHY AREN'T YOU PLAYING JRPGS?

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Among gamers, Japanese role-playing games, or JRPGs as they are colloquially known, hold a divisive status. One sect of fans adore them, often intersecting with anime fans, these fans are more open to giving chances to JRPGs since anime-esque tropes and designs fill the genre. Another sect hold the opposite belief, that JRPGs are inherently inferior and 'too otaku' for their taste, dismissing it upon face value.

Before we get into what makes JRPGs worth your time, let's do a quick breakdown on what a JRPG typically entails. One of the main defining features is turn-based gameplay, lots of party gathering and dungeon crawling. The usual RPG tropes of character customisation in terms of skills, weapons and classes exist, but the other usual RPG non-linear narrative is traded for a more linear story with more 'established personality' characters. Of course, this doesn't mean that they aren't story focused, in fact one of the main draws of the genre is a heavy focus on story. They also usually tend to be console-based games, and less on PC, although that's starting to change now.

But why should you consider playing a JRPG? Like stated earlier, you're gonna get a lot of heavy story focused elements, a lot of character focus, JRPGs place a lot less emphasis on their combat but like to sell the story more. People who also like the D&D aspect of character classes will also enjoy JRPGs more, considering many of them offer a lot of class systems that still let you immerse yourself in some aspect of role-playing despite having a 'fixed' character.

JRPGs also tend to have an amount of exotic world-building to them as well, with fanciful locales and monsters and very pretty cities on a world map that wouldn't be amiss in a fantasy novel. The Tales series is a perfect example of how flashy JRPG character and world design can be. But of course, they don't always have to be full of anime spiky haired heroes with big swords in some fan-



tasy medieval setting, and for proof look no further than last year's biggest JRPG (and one of the most well received games in the same year as well), Persona 5, which was set in a school and its surrounding city.

Persona 5 is an example of everything the genre checklist does right, from great turn-based combat to a lovable cast with great designs, interesting personalities, and a great linear storyline gripping enough to make even Western RPG fans reconsider their stance on the genre. While certainly a lot less outlandish than many of the

other games in the genre, Persona 5 is a great entry point for people looking for a JRPG.

Of course, if someone wants to find something better for a starting point, there's nothing wrong with the quintessential Final Fantasy or Dragon Quest, the latter basically founded the modern JRPG. Sure, they're a lot more cliché with the usual tired tropes of friendship equals power and big swords and a lot of god slaying by teenage heroes, doesn't mean they aren't popular for a reason. Despite the many entries in both franchises, it's easy to look around and then decide where to start. If you're afraid of grinding or clichés, you can always hop on over to a more modern title, like The Legend of Heroes: Trails in the Sky, despite the bland sounding title, is an absolutely fantastic narrative experience.

The Tales franchise isn't bad either, with Tales of Berseria being new enough to attract people, and classics like Symphonia are now ported to the PC. Mother 2, or better known as Earthbound (which inspired Undertale) is a lot different from the usual JRPG, relying a lot on the wacky and meta, will definitely surprise you. For people who want something on a handheld, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance and Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis, are also great forays that are casual enough while displaying how good the genre can be. And of course, while not entirely JRPGs, Fire Emblem and Pokémon are also large franchises that have elements of the genre, and one couldn't go amiss playing those.

All in all, JRPGs are a fresh breath of air from the Western RPG experience. For people looking for alternative experiences and a different style of game that they're not used to, a JRPG is the perfect type of game to look into.

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