

The activity of play has accompanied mankind ever since it exists. Playing games is fun. Children naturally start playing games already as toddlers. But games do not only absorb children with the prospects of an enjoyable time - adults participate in ludic (i.e., playful) culture as well. Ludic culture refers to the cultivation of play, the development, fostering and the pursuit of play. MMORPGs offer new possibilities for players to participate in a ludic media culture. We play popular media culture. Popular media culture is not a stagnant environment, but a flexible and constantly evolving sphere of active engagement realized by the player. In this book, the example of gameplay in World of Warcraft is used to illustrate our engagement with popular media culture. A combination of ludology and virtual ethnography provides insights into how we reconnoiter culture by playing and how we attach meaning to our sociocultural environment by abiding by the rules of the game. Accordingly, the new medium of the Internet, ubiquitous and overarching as it were, opens up a whole new space of enquiry and reconnaissance for its players, who make use of the technology in different ways.

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