



Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture (MIT Press)

T. L. Taylor

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In *Play Between Worlds*, T. L. Taylor examines multiplayer gaming life as it is lived on the borders, in the gaps -- as players slip in and out of complex social networks that cross online and offline space. Taylor questions the common assumption that playing computer games is an isolating and alienating activity indulged in by solitary teenage boys. Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), in which thousands of players participate in a virtual game world in real time, are in fact actively designed for sociability. Games like the popular Everquest, she argues, are fundamentally social spaces. Taylor's detailed look at Everquest offers a snapshot of multiplayer culture. Drawing on her own experience as an Everquest player (as a female Gnome Necromancer) -- including her attendance at an Everquest Fan Faire, with its blurring of online -- and offline life -- and extensive research, Taylor not only shows us something about games but raises broader cultural issues. She considers "power gamers," who play in ways that seem closer to work, and examines our underlying notions of what constitutes play -- and why play sometimes feels like work and may even be painful, repetitive, and boring. She looks at the women who play Everquest and finds they don't fit the narrow stereotype of women gamers, which may cast into doubt our standardized and preconceived ideas of femininity. And she explores the questions of who owns game space -- what happens when emergent player culture confronts the major corporation behind the game.

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