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What can People Learn About the American Revolution
through *Assassin's Creed III*?

A Research Paper by Katie Kitchell

Introduction

Video games have been a source of entertainment for people of all ages since the creation of the first video game, *Pong*, in 1958. Over time, video games have been improved upon to provide better graphics, better stories, better gameplay, and more fun for the family. Careers are now based on the creation of video games and their development, leading to the rise of companies such as Ubisoft, Nintendo, Electronic Arts, Sony Computer Entertainment, and many others who base their entire company on the creation and selling of video games. Today, they have been integrated as an almost essential part of life, usually for younger generations but sometimes for older generations as well, some even basing their whole career on the playing of video games as game testers or online streamers. Media platforms have evolved to specially accommodate video games, such as game trailers or streamers uploading their videos to share with viewers, which in turn may inspire those viewers to go and purchase a game to play themselves.

Video games today are not just about entertainment. Many of the large companies also incorporate a feeling of “experiencing” a game, immersing the player in the game’s story and characters, nurturing a connection between them to provide an in-depth experience. By connecting the gamer to the game, it provides an in-depth feel that stays with the player longer, because they might feel as though they were actually there with the character or as the character of the game, experiencing all that they go through. I personally have fallen victim to a deep connection with a character, where different events or happenings in a game were powerful enough to sway my emotions – sadness to the point of crying, anger, confusion, disbelief, excitement, happiness. If developers are able to construct these connections into the

game, it makes people more likely to buy it to experience it themselves, which then turns the player into a walking advertisement for friends and family or fellow gamers on different platforms or even social media.

Video games can span many categories, such as arcade, simulation, sandbox, action and many more. Ubisoft started producing games relevant to history during the late 1990's, but in 2007 decided to "step up" their gaming experience. In 2007, Ubisoft released *Assassin's Creed*, the first installment of the hit series that remains popular even today; however, *Assassin's Creed* and its games have occasionally been the source of debate in regard to historical accuracy. The development team and Ubisoft stand by the accuracy of the game but do admit to some altering or adding of content for the sake of entertainment.

The *Assassin's Creed* series encompasses many games. This paper focuses on *Assassin's Creed III*. With the defense of historical accuracy in mind, it begs the question if the game is truly accurate. Whether it is or not, what does *Assassin's Creed III* teach us about its time period? The game is centered around the event of the American Revolution, which has been highly documented and speculated over. The paper will discuss the main events of the game, along with analysis on those events and compare them to as it happens in the game. The paper will then discuss any inconsistencies between the game and actual history.

Game Events

Assassin's Creed III pays homage to many key events during the American Revolution.

All of the events have been tweaked in some form to allow the player a place in the sequence, because otherwise there wouldn't be a game. How much is tweaked is varied among the events, with some being incredibly inaccurate and some only minimally different.

Boston Massacre

The first main event in the game is the Boston Massacre. According to the game, the protagonist "Connor" becomes wanted by the Templars, framed in connection with the massacre. This is a minor event in the game, but an important and highly debated one in actual history. In the game, Connor assassinates the man who was given the order to fire upon the crowd gathered in front of the customs house in hopes of stopping a riot from breaking out, only to realize that there were actually two British soldiers charged with the same act. By being noticed atop the roof, he was charged as the possible culprit for instigating the massacre. Later, the game purposefully adds speakers addressing crowds with details about the Boston Massacre, saying "None can say for certain who fired the first shot."¹ The details of the massacre are noticeably left out – Connor is forced to run and hide but the game does not show or say how many died when the British opened fire on the crowd of rioters. In history, the actual cause of the massacre is unknown, but there are debates among historians among

someone in the crowd possibly shouting “fire,” which the soldiers mistook as a command from their captain and thus opened fire; another theory is that the captain actually told the troops to fire, although this theory does not receive much support; yet another theory is that the troops simply panicked amongst the hurling of insults, threats, and projectiles from the rioters, leading to one troop firing and the rest following suit.² If you were to know nothing about this event and accepted what was presented as true, you would understand that people died in the Boston Massacre, but not the true horror of it, how it actually started, or what it meant for Boston; however, based on the game you might be willing to accept that a soldier opened fire, causing others to fire, only in this case the first shot caused no harm and was only meant to instigate the massacre.

Boston Tea Party

The second main historical event in *Assassin's Creed III* is that of the Boston Tea Party. This particular event may be the most disputed one, and least accurate of events of the game. In this section, Connor and allies, including John Revere, board two boats loaded with crates of tea and dump it into the harbor, surrounded by a crowd cheering them on while they dump the tea. There is an excess amount of redcoat death in this section as well. The only thing historically accurate about the game version is the planning by Samuel Adams, the dumping of the tea and Paul Revere's role in the dumping, and the lack of disguises worn by the perpetrators.³ According to historical accounts, there were three ships, the *Beaver*, the *Dartmouth*, and the *Eleanor*; there were no British killed during this event; and the men wore

dressed as Native Americans to disguise themselves. The Boston Tea Party in this regard means that it is highly dramatized, because otherwise it might not make for an exciting event considering there was no death or violence, just some guys throwing tea some ships, so of course the developers tweaked it so it would be a better fit for an assassins character determined to get justice. The takeaway from this event would be that there was a lot of bloodshed amidst the dumping of the tea, there were 2 ships docked in the harbor that night, and the crowd watching was wild and loudly supportive – none of this is correct, except the presence of the crowd.

Battle for Lexington and Concord

The third event begins less exciting and much less eventful than the previous ones – the famous riding of Paul Revere to warn others that “the Regulars are coming out.” The good thing is that the only tweak here is the presence of Connor, leading Revere to the houses to warn others. It is also good to note the authenticity of what Revere says: “The Regulars are coming out.” Revere never said, “The British are coming.”⁴

The game then flashes forward to the confrontation at Lexington, if only briefly. In this short scene, however, we encounter a twist in the depiction of the encounter at Lexington, prior to the battle. According to *Assassin's Creed III*, Major Pitcairn says “Disperse, you damned rebels! Lay down your arms and disperse!” Immediately after saying this, British troops

opened fire on the minutemen, which although is correct that they shot first, it is incorrect as to how this scene actually happened.

According to Elias Phinney's book titled *History of the Battle at Lexington*, (portrayed in many different ways in different interviews of both former minutemen and spectators), it was actually Lieutenant Colonel Smith who ordered the men to disperse and not Pitcairn as depicted in the game. Aside from Lt. Col. Smith just being absent in the scene, his words according to Phinney's accounts are all varying: "Lay down your arms and disperse, you damned rebels!" "Lay down your arms, you rebels, and disperse!" "Lay down your arms, and disperse you rebels!" The British troops, according to these accounts, also did not immediately fire. According to a newspaper article publishing interviews from different British troops at the skirmish, no one knows who fired the actual first shot, and there was actually a lot of confusion at the scene.⁵ There can be several reasons for this: the minutemen prior to the "battle" were holed up in the tavern, waiting for the regulars to come to them. The seventy militiamen in Lexington had spent the last night drinking for over three hours, along with no sleep, leading to disorientation. On top of that, Captain John Parker was suffering from tuberculosis (caused most likely from drinking too much) and was hard to hear, so amidst the continuous shouting from the British he was nearly impossible to be heard or understood. In the scene where the minutemen stood against the British redcoats, it is important to note that Parker coughs frequently (and quite violently) to portray his signs of illness. He ordered the militiamen to disperse, but the disorientation and soft tone of Parker led to confused, slow disbursement. The suspense threw the British soldiers into a rage, and since they were ordered prior not to

fire, the anonymous shot sent them over the edge, leading to firing lines and British troops outright charging the militiamen.⁶

Coming back to the game, Connor is sent by Captain John Parker from the Lexington confrontation to meet up with James Barret. Upon meeting up with Barret, there is some mild tension between him and Connor which is quickly alleviated, and right after we learn that Revere has been captured. Barret then instructs Connor to take charge of his men in the Concord battle. What might prove to be a shock to the player is how unlike a “battle” that this scene is. Connor and the minutemen are charged with protecting the bridge into Concord, from which many of the redcoats assemble into firing lines. Redcoats also assemble on both sides of the bridge, so Connor must ride back and forth between the companies to give firing orders to the minutemen in order to fend off the opposing British forces. Timing is crucial during this phase – a perfectly executed command would lead to none of the minutemen missing their targets. Eventually driving off the redcoats, the minutemen rejoice and give chase, ending the event in a cutscene containing a somber (and somewhat angry) moment between Connor and Barret – Connor is angry for missing his chance at Pitcairn and ultimately leading to the deaths of many (redcoats and minutemen); Barret acknowledges Connor’s feelings, saying “[It] takes a true monster to do something like this.” Connor makes a motion towards the dead redcoats saying that doing the best with what they’ve got “isn’t enough,” leading to Barret somberly saying “Hm.... It never is....”

When one thinks of the “Battle of Lexington and Concord,” one thinks of a full-on battle, which in both cases turns out to not be as glorifying an encounter. Instead, the actual “battles” are more of skirmishes. I appreciate this lack of glorification of fighting, as it portrays a more

accurate representation of what battles (and skirmishes) during the American Revolution actually looked like. I also really appreciate the mood after the skirmish, as it relates to the experiences of the soldiers. The player is forced to adjust to this display, as it shows an attitude not normally portrayed in battle scenes – sadness for those that have lost their lives. Connor clearly empathizes with them, and the underlying question in this scene is “Did they have to die?” It would be my question as well. Moving on, I also appreciate the depiction of the accuracy of the American Long rifle, employed by the minutemen against the platoons of British redcoats. If the command by Connor was given at the right time, not a single bullet was missed and a whole platoon of redcoats was eliminated, whereas the damage done by the redcoats to the minutemen proves minimal because of the inaccuracy of the musket.

Appointment of George Washington as Commander-in-Chief

In this scene, we witness George Washington giving his speech after having been appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the Patriots. It is very brief before the game moves towards the Battle of Bunker Hill, but it is very important. Your typical player wouldn't know the importance of this scene or the importance of what is missing from the speech that Colonel Washington was giving upon. A historian, or a student majoring in historical studies, would know the importance of the first couple of sentences of this acceptance speech.

Colonel Washington's scene begins his speech at "... for support of the glorious cause. I beg they will accept my most cordial thanks for this distinguished testimony of their approbation. But, lest some unlucky event should happen, unfavorable to my reputation, I beg

it may be remembered, by every Gentleman in the room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the Command I am honored with.” The speech continues of course but is no longer the focus as Connor begins to confront Charles Lee, who is right behind him. What is missing from Washington’s speech that is important to note is the sentences prior to where the game picks it up: “Tho’ I am truly sensible of the high Honour done me, in this Appointment, yet I feel great distress, from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important Trust: However, as the Congress desire it, I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their service...” where it then picks up in the game.⁷ I appreciate the brush of greatness with George Washington, but Washington was very humble and a rather unsuspecting person. In this scene constructed by the developers, George Washington already looks like a hero – not just from his speech, but even the outfit he wears is quite gaudy and already makes him appear as an important figure (more so than he is to become).

Aside from meeting George Washington, what is even more important about this scene is when Connor speaks with Samuel Adams after the speech. Adams mentions having a lot of work for he and Connor to do, specifically mentioning working on a “message,” which he explains in further detail that is essentially contacting all the news outlets of the time to report that “it was the Loyalists (redcoats) who fired first in Lexington.” Connor of course is unsure about this and responds, “But no one knows who fired first....” If you’ll go back to section specifically where I talked about Lexington, you’ll notice that I mentioned about the cutscene that the redcoats fired immediately after being ordered to disperse. Comparing what Samuel Adams says to the portrayal of the skirmish, it almost seems like a direct conflicting contrast

between these two scenes. Adams also makes it known that he wants this news put out quickly to “determine public opinion,” essentially pitting the local communities against the Loyalists. Connor immediately doesn’t agree that this is a moral act, saying “this seems... dishonest,” which is quickly refuted by Adams, who says “Perhaps. But so what? People must believe we acted in self-defense. Else, we’ve committed treason.” Connor still isn’t satisfied with this answer, and retorts “but you have,” which really seems to hit a nerve with Adams, who sharply replies, “Better to bow and scrape before a tyrant than? Is that what you suggest?” Connor of course refuses such an idea, and Adam then explains that “this is a war fought not just on the battlefield, but within hearts and minds as well. There’s nothing wrong with a bit of theater – especially if it saves lives.”

Battle of Bunker Hill

Connor is told to find General Israel Putnam at Bunker Hill. Prior to finding him amidst the fighting, Connor first speaks with a scout that leads him to Putnam. Connor immediately notes that the fighting isn’t actually on Bunker Hill, to which the scout confirms saying that it’s Breed’s Hill.

Upon approaching Putnam, Putnam is busy arguing with one of the Patriots, who is quite angry that they have set up their defenses (while closer to the city) so close to the British artillery. Upon entering Putnam’s cutscene, you immediately get a sense of just how dangerous the British bombardment is (too gory for this paper, I’m afraid). Since Connor’s ultimate goal is

to find Pitcairn, Putnam says that stopping the British bombardment might force Pitcairn to move out of the protection of the city. Connor thus takes it upon himself to “silence” the ships. Between Breed’s Hill and the ships turns out to be a very short distance, so it’s no wonder as to why the ships would be giving the Patriots trouble, but to get to them Connor must avoid falling buildings, flying debris, cannonballs, and avoid fighting on the docks between Loyalists and Patriots. Upon boarding the two ships, Connor must then blow up the ammunition – to do so, he plants timed bombs above the firing cannons. To signal his success back to Putnam on Breed’s Hill, Connor replaces the British flag on one of the ships with the flag of the colonies.

After returning to Breed’s Hill, Putnam is giving an inspirational speech to the Patriots, saying “The enemy advances and you tremble. They’ve better numbers, you say. Better weapons. Better training. But I do not fear. And neither should you. For what they have in material, they lack in conviction and care. But not us. We have discipline. We have order. And most importantly, we have passion. We believe! So maintain vigilance, conserve your ammo. Ensure a proper line of sight. And above all else, men: do not fire until you see the whites of their eyes.” A cutscene ensues after the end of the speech, to which Putnam admits that all of his speech was a lie. Connor learns that Pitcairn has left Boston for Moulton Hill, which happens to be directly across the battlefield. In order to get to Pitcairn, Connor decides to use the “direct approach,” which entails speeding through the battlefield and using large rocks and other forms of cover to avoid the firing lines of the Loyalists.

Eventually he assassinates Pitcairn on his horse, to which there is another cutscene of Pitcairn’s last words. Connor says that Pitcairn had to die to protect Hancock and Adams and the others from being killed by him. Pitcairn is shocked, saying, “Kill them? Are you mad? I

wanted only to parlay. There was so much to discuss. To explain. But you've put an end to that now." Connor offers to take his last words to Hancock and Adams, to which Pitcairn says the obvious, to "lay down their arms. Stop this war." Connor of course retorts "Why them and not the Redcoats?" Pitcairn answers "Do you not think we asked the same question of the British? These things take time. And it would have succeeded, had you let me play my part..." Connor cuts him off, calling him a puppeteer, to which Pitcairn snaps "Better we hold the strings than another." Connor, quite heatedly, says "No. The strings should be severed. All should be free." Sarcastically, Pitcairn answers "And we should live forever on castles in the sky. You wield your blade like a man, but your mouth is like a child. And more will die now because of that," and then dies.

Upon returning to General Putnam, Connor is told that Putnam is ordering a full retreat, and that the British can have the hill if they want it so badly. Putnam says, "We have lost too many in exchange for too little... the real prize is Boston." Connor says, "We have bigger problems," and hands him the note that he took off of Pitcairn's body. Putnam reads it and says, "This can't be right. It says they plan to murder Washington!" and the Battle of Bunker Hill officially ends.

This section contained quite a lot more action than previously seen almost throughout the game. Compared to previous crucial figures in the game, General Israel Putnam is made out to be quite a hot head with seemingly little faith in his men (or maybe it was just little faith in Connor). This is for a reason – General Putnam was known to have a temper and very willing to lash out with his anger. General Putnam's speech is quite closely modeled after the original, although more translated to modern English. His original speech is described as: "Powder is

scarce and must not be wasted. Do not fire at the enemy 'till you see the white of their eyes, and then fire low, take aim at their waistbands. Reserve your fire, and the enemy will be destroyed. Aim at the handsome coats, pick off the commanders."⁸ This speech contains one of the most quoted (and perhaps most famous) lines in military history: "Do not fire 'till you see the white of their eyes." Of course, this is an idiom, but unfortunately some may take it seriously. If the Patriots were to literally wait until they saw the whites of the Loyalists' eyes, they would no doubt have been wiped out. Next, I'd like to address the scene where Connor is on his way to subdue the ships. As mentioned, Connor has to avoid a lot of havoc trying to get there, but the fact that cannonballs somehow make it between buildings and into the streets is somewhat ridiculous and highly dramatized. There is no way a cannonball that is aimed for Breed's Hill would somehow manage to land anywhere near Connor, or have any effect on the buildings below Breed's Hill unless one of the ships was aimed directly at the city that the British were wanting to protect and capture. Could there be one or two stray cannonballs? Sure, but otherwise the almost 20 that Connor must avoid is beyond realistic and is simply meant to input more action into the Battle of Bunker (Breed's) Hill.

Plot to Murder Washington

Moving on from Bunker Hill, Connor is introduced to a man named Benjamin Tallmadge, who gives him a lead on stopping the plot to kill George Washington. They both head for New York, where he must find a man named Thomas Hickey, who is said to be running a counterfeit operation in the city. It may seem like a far-fetched idea that a counterfeit operation would

also be involved in the murder plan, but after finding Hickey in the counterfeit act and then catching him after an escape attempt, Hickey does confess that he is part of the plot in order to assure that Charles Lee would be appointed instead. If you'll remember, Charles Lee is the one who led British soldiers to burn and destroy Connor's tribe and led to the death of his mother. Unfortunately, Connor and Hickey are apprehended together on charges of counterfeit. Even more unfortunate, Hickey is retrieved from jail by Lee and Connor's father. Worse yet, Connor is identified as an assassin and recognized by Lee, who then comes up with a plan – "two birds, one stone." Through this scene, we get a tiny glimpse of the conditions of prison life – small cell, barred windows, and what appears to be a wood slab for a bed. We are also given the sense that a crime such as counterfeiting meant imprisonment.

Presumably, the next day, Connor is led to the prisoner common area, where he finds Mason Weems. Connor assumes that Weems knows a way out of the prison based on rumors that he's picked up in the prison, but first must play a game called Nine Men's Morris with him before Weems will tell him anything. Eventually, Connor tells him how he ended up in prison (trying to stop the assassination of George Washington), to which Weems responds to quite angrily, defending Washington's character, assuming that Connor is making a joke of him. Finding that Connor is serious, Weems tells him to find a man named Finch and steal back his key. Connor of course succeeds, after which we transition to the next day.

Connor finds that the key he stole doesn't work on the prison door locks. Weems informs him that instead of actually working, it's meant to act as a replacement for the real key, which he needs to get from the Warden. Weems also informs him that the only way to reach the Warden is to get thrown in the pit by way of starting a large fight. Obviously, Connor does

and finds himself thrown in the pit shortly after. In the pit, the Warden walks about the block, telling the prisoners that New York is forced to pay for those imprisoned, such as clothing, food, the prison itself, and the wages of those soldiers who work there. Connor swaps the keys and escapes the pit, finding Weems waiting by the block separating the “important” prisoners from the common prisoners, and notably where Connor will find Hickey. Connor quickly makes his way up to the room where Hickey is being kept, and instead finds an unknown dead body, where he is then found by Lee and Hickey. Of course, there is heated social exchange between Connor and Lee, but most notable of this conflict is what Lee says about Washington: “The man is weak. He stumbles and stammers through each engagement, making it up as he goes along. His pedigree is pathetic, his military record even more so.” Hickey then continues to tell Connor what they plan to do to him and the events that will take place – Connor will go before the court the next day on charges of plotting to kill George Washington and also accused of killing the Warden, which will then lead to execution by hanging. Lee then identifies Connor as the boy he spared in the forest, just before he burnt down Connor’s village.

Almost as planned, the next day Connor is led out of the prison to a prison carriage. Instead of finding himself before a judge, though, Hickey tells him instead that he will be immediately hanged because there are no trials for traitors. He also tells him that Lee and Haytham (Connor’s father) ensured he was labeled as such. As Connor is paraded through the city streets to the gallows, it is to be noticed that George Washington is in attendance amongst the masses of people that have gathered in an uproar against Connor; however, Connor also has friends which show up here and there in the cutscene disposing of (assassinating) watchmen. His mentor Achilles is in the crowd and lets him know to call when he needs help.

Standing on the platform of the gallows, Connor has a sack put over his head as Lee tells the crowd of his “crime” for plotting against Washington and dramatizes the whole scene to portray Connor as a cold-blooded killer. The platform under Connor comes open, essentially hanging him but Connor whistles for help, which immediately cuts him loose to find Achilles underneath the platform, who then hands him an axe. The crowd is in a rioting frenzy, and through this Connor chases Hickey before he can reach and kill Washington. Hickey is then disposed of, which leads to the death cutscene. Unfortunately for Connor, Hickey holds no information and was only supporting the side that was more profitable (British) and cared nothing for their ideas or goals. Upon coming out of the death scene, Connor finds himself surrounded by soldiers with their weapons pointed at him. General Putnam comes forth and tells the men to be at ease, and informs Connor that Washington is most likely back on his way to Philadelphia.

There is not much to say about this section on terms of historical accuracy – this section is highly dramatized and centered almost completely on Connor. What can be said though is Hickey’s role in the plot against Washington, the role of Mason Weems, and the truth in the words spoken by the prison warden. There is a split between historians about if Hickey actually tried to kill Washington. Supposedly he attempted to do so with by poisoning his peas while at a tavern. He was caught and the peas were fed to the chickens in the garden, where (supposedly) one of them died shortly after. At Hickey’s trial, however, there was no mention of that incident. It is true, however, that Hickey only favored the side that had more to offer, and even then, only played a minor role.⁹ As for the presence of Mason Weems in the Bridewell Prison, there is no record of him having been there or ever having been imprisoned at

Bridewell Prison. The prison warden spoke truly of the fact that the citizens of New York are forced to pay for the prison. It was considered an expense that sometimes was too great in comparison to the crime committed.¹⁰

Battle of Monmouth

The layout of this battle is similar to the one seen in the Battle of Concord (specifically). Connor is put in charge of a group of Patriots and his objective is to take out platoons of British redcoats. The back story here is that Charles Lee ordered the original army assigned to retreat, hoping it would lead to their deaths and ultimately dishonorable discharge of Washington as commander, since Lee was Washington's subordinate. Instead of giving firing orders like that in Concord, Connor is in charge of a cannon, which he uses (but doesn't reload himself) to take out the platoons. This is a timed event, which makes the wave of Loyalist redcoats seem infinite – when time runs out, Connor signals for the remaining Patriots to retreat back to meet back with the body of the Patriot army. Along the way, Connor prevents executions of cornered Patriots by a firing squad of Loyalists. Upon Connor's return, he informs Washington of Lee's actions and warns him that Lee is not an ally and not to be trusted. Washington had long trusted Lee, so it at first is hard for him to accept, but ultimately Washington plans to investigate the matter, and upon Connor's angry backlash comments, "This must be done properly, else we are no better than those we oppose. Never mind the political ramifications of such an act."

The battle by this scene is very short, just a couple minutes long in its entirety; however, the actual battle lasted the entire day. In historical accounts, Lee retreated because he perceived six thousand British troops marching against his handful of battalions – it was a wiser choice to retreat than hope for reinforcements, which ultimately would have led to Lee's demise and also the demise of those he was in charge of. There is documentation that there were cannons present, although not an exact number. Units posted on the left and right of Lee's position took up the fight, but eventually were forced to also retreat to Washington's main army, just a few miles away.¹¹

Battle of Yorktown

The Battle of Yorktown features naval battle action with French support against British fleets. In the game, this is a plan devised by Connor in order to infiltrate Fort George and get to Charles Lee, his target. The naval battle lasts longer than any of the previous battles featured in the game, namely because of the mechanics of sailing in the game. Connor intends to use the bombardment of naval vessels on the fort as a distraction while he maneuvers his way through the underground tunnels of the fort. To do so, Connor commands the naval fleet he's employed to wave British flags to get close enough for when he gives the signal to attack. Unfortunately, Connor gets caught in the cannon fire, barely missing death in two instances – Lee manages to escape, while Connor is found by his father Haytham and they fight, ending in Haytham's death.

Well there is less content and more action in this edition of the Battle of Yorktown (also known as the Siege of Yorktown), there is still some accuracy here, although not much. It is correct that there was indeed a French bombardment against the military district of Yorktown. The plot in the game's version is severely dramatized and twisted to the game's protagonist, however. In the actual siege, George Washington and the Comte de Rochambeau planned to attack Yorktown – the French fleet defeated the British fleet there, and Washington gave the order for the bombardment, which lasted for almost a week. Together, the Patriots and the French stormed and took control of Yorktown. Instead of Charles Lee being the hiding prize, it was British General Charles Cornwallis, who surrendered two days later and ultimately ended the battle and handed the Patriots a sizeable victory.¹²

The Aftermath

After killing Lee, Connor later joins the rejoicing crowd as they watch the British fleets sail off. As is the trend in the game, there is a tense moment where one of the retreating ships fires a cannonball at the crowd, only to narrowly miss and the cannonball falls into the harbor instead. He eventually makes his way back to his tribe, where he finds that they are gone and converses with a man sitting at the village campfire, who tells him that the people of the tribe had been gone a while and moved west. The land now belonged to the government, which was then sold to someone in New York. Connor is stunned by this news, as it was to protect his people and his tribe's land that he was fighting for, only to have it taken from him by the very people he had sided with during the war. From this point, the story of the game ends.

It is true that many Native American tribes suffered from the conclusion of the American Revolution – the colonies were granted the land east of the Mississippi River aside from British claims in Canada and the Spanish colonies. Native tribes had hoped that by playing the French against the British, they might protect their land from trespassing American colonists. Unfortunately, Britain no longer could uphold protection over their lands and ultimately the Native Americans were forced westward as they were displaced from their homelands by colonists.¹³

Interpreting Inaccuracies

Assassin's Creed III, as I've pointed out throughout the Game Events section, has historical flaws. The American Revolution is a well-documented time period, with enough information to possibly encompass another *Assassin's Creed* game based in the same time period, although that would seem more like a cash grab on the company's part since *Assassin's Creed III* covers all the main points of the American Revolution and the events leading up to it.

The developers place high praise on themselves for the work that they put into *Assassin's Creed III*. In an interview with a few of the developers, they all stress just how important historical accuracy was (and still is) important in the content creation, not just to *Assassin's Creed III* but to all of the games in the series.¹⁴ The team stressed that while their main intention is to create an entertaining game, they wanted to also immerse the player in a historical setting, surrounded by historical figures events unfolding through the storyline. To ensure the best quality of historical information presented in the storyline of *Assassin's Creed III* and the rest of the games in the series, the development team's writer Corey May

acknowledges the presence of on-site historians working with them in the creation of the game, and even have their work double-critiqued by an anonymous professor.¹⁵ The team historian, Maxime Durand, has also stood for a few interviews. In each one he points to “old maps, texts, books, paintings, anthropology” and the topology of Boston, and mentioning the research the team did just on the story of different buildings of Boston. Durand also mentions that the team basically built the game from the ground (historical research) up (adding in the fantasy aspect of the assassin and Connor).¹⁶ Who isn’t explicitly mentioned in this interview is the cultural liaison Thomas Deer who played a central role in ensuring an accurate representation of the in-game tribe’s language and culture, along with preserving certain cultural aspects and negating stereotypes in the original gameplay before release.¹⁷ Ubisoft wanted to approach cultural representation of the Mohawk tribe without asserting or creating any stereotypes. They do so successfully with the help and critical eye of Deer, who instructed them on do’s and don’ts throughout the development process of Connor’s character, who was also a cultural construction – Connor’s Mohawk name is Kanien’kehá:ka; Mohawk names are all unique to an individual and therefore must not overlap a name already bestowed upon another Mohawk member.¹⁸ An example of one such stereotype included scalping, which was originally implemented into the workings of the game but Deer insisted it be removed because it “was not a Mohawk practice.” Deer also ensured the protection of the Mohawk’s culture by preventing a showing of ceremonial masks and dances that are private to the tribe.¹⁹

As I have pointed out, there are many inaccuracies in the game, some of which are horrendously so (the Boston Tea Party being the main one) and some not so much. So how do we get past the inaccuracies? Do we dismiss the game altogether as merely that, a video game

created for the sole purpose of entertainment, and therefore dismiss the Ubisoft development team's words as folly?

Author Joanna Wojdon in her book *E-Teaching History* attests that inaccuracies in a historically representative video game can actually be a good teaching moment for students. Wojdon specifically mentions the Boston Tea Party scene from *Assassin's Creed III* and claims that such inaccuracies challenge perspectives.²⁰ I agree with this practice, but only under the assumption that the students know indefinitely the actual events that transpired in order to effectively compare reality to dramatization. Typically, video games are used for the sole purpose of entertainment, which is why their industry is continuously growing, but what many people don't realize is that video games can essentially be anything that a person wants to develop – it's just interactable data. This means that a video "game" can cover a wide range of categories: drama, action, strategy, simulation, etc. In implementing Wojdon's account on using video games for learning, it's an excellent thought that I feel isn't utilized enough. *Assassin's Creed III* is not 100% historically accurate, but it brings good education and critical-thinking prospects to the classroom, opening up discussion on why the developers of *Assassin's Creed III* chose to portray the events the way they did or perhaps even a compare and contrast situation between historical accounts and the game.

Concluding Thoughts

My stance prior to starting this paper was that *Assassin's Creed III* was a highly credible source of historical authenticity; however, based on my breakdown of each major event, that turns out not to be the case. The game does provide a unique experience and perspective, especially from the viewpoint of a Native American (even a fictitious character), which I find is often missing in historical reports although not unexpected from the portrayed time period.

The game itself contains much more content that is portrayed in this paper – however, I would say that it is not crucial enough to be included as it does not follow the main story or have any impact on the main story. Ubisoft may employ historians, but I would not want *Assassin's Creed III* or possibly any of the other games in the series to be warged as historical accounts; there are too many faults, modifications, and adjustments to be claimed as such.

My goal in this research paper was to find out what someone can learn about the American Revolution from *Assassin's Creed III*. Overall, it is a great game, and anyone not fully educated on the American Revolution down to the minute details might accept the actions and events (aside from the presence of Connor, of course) as true happenings. Some may even believe that there is an on-going battle between Assassins and Templars, if that is what they choose. What can be said faithfully about the game is that it provides a historical experience that otherwise would be deemed boring if read from a textbook or heard in a lecture. It also provides a role in the war for Native Americans, who did have a presence but are neglected in the signing of the Treaty of Paris and therefore are not recognized by it. *Assassin's Creed III*

provides an emotional account as well of the events, which is also left out of learning institutions – how did the people feel?

So, what can you learn from *Assassin's Creed III*? As it turns out, there isn't much to learn that is correct. The developers of the game acknowledge that they had a lot of information and historical accounts to use, but the timeline has to be modified so much to allow for Connor's role in it that it's no longer the same timeline. The dates and places may be correct, but overall, the events and the people are not.

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