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The *Helldivers 2* Community and What Their Genres Say About Them

This paper analyzes the Helldivers 2 community, two written genres, the goals these genres serve, and how they reflect on the larger community. But to understand the context of these genres, it is important to know about *Helldivers 2.* As a game, it is fairly new and follows the events of the prequel *Helldivers,* which is a satire of fascism, militarism, war propaganda, and extreme nationalism. In *Helldivers,* Super Earth refers to a unified Earth against three alien factions in a Galactic War. Throughout the Galactic War, the community regularly interacts with two main genres. The first genre is the Major Order, which serves as the main campaign element and also brings the community together in the game. The second genre is the wartime propaganda Super Earth spreads throughout most of the game, which the community uses to learn about Super Earth culture and to show the values of the people within that culture.

The most prominent of these genres are Major Orders. These typically follow a structure where rewards are clearly shown in the middle of the screen, while the campaign event reads as a communication from Super Earth. After setting the context this way, Major Orders progress toward a specific goal and deadline, and are rewritten to reflect the outcome after the deadline. The most recent example is the ongoing Memorial Eternal campaign's first major order (see

Excerpts 1 & 2). Note that all Major Orders include a call to action, refer to the community as Helldivers rather than individuals, and attempt to maintain morale after a failure.

Ongoing Status (Excerpt 1, quoting the *Memorial Eternal's* first major order.)

"Liberty Day approaches, and with it, the responsibility to honor the memories of fallen heroes. The Super Earth Government has passed a bill authorizing the construction of a memorial worthy of their sacrifices: the Malevelon Creek Memorial & Interrogation Center for Human Rights.

As the name implies, the Memorial would honor the fallen not just in thought, but in action: through enhanced interrogation of dissidents and enemies of Freedom.

However, wanton aggression from all 3 enemy factions threatens this project. Their occupation of Super Earth territories rich in rare metals, crude oil, and radioactive isotopes, among others, steals from the prosperity of all. This is an insult to the memory of our heroes. The Helldivers are ordered to liberate FURY, ESKER, and ZEA RUGOSIA."

Outcome (Excerpt 2, quoting the communication of *Memorial Eternal's* first Major Order failure)

"FAILURE. Enemy aggression has denied the rightful return of certain territories to Freedom's embrace. Their material avarice sucks the raw resources of the galaxy's

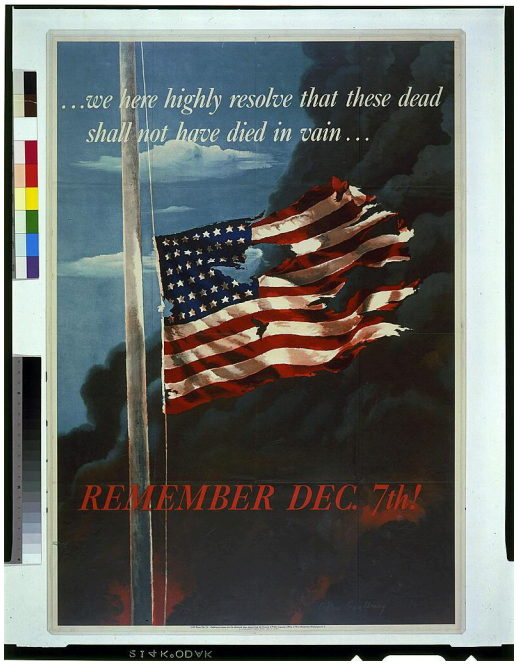
> *planets dry, stealing the future of Democracy's children and besmirching the memory of the heroes who fought and died to protect them.*
>
> ***The Malevelon Creek Memorial & Interrogation Center for Human Rights*** *project is on rocky ground—a consequence that Democracy's enemies doubtlessly celebrate with glee. So long as our resources remain stolen, our fallen heroes will suffer grave insult."*

Major Orders generally follow this same format by giving the community context, a motive, and a goal for the remainder of the Order. After 2 years of Major Orders, the community that gathered around *Helldivers 2* ultimately reflected values of cooperation and teamwork through their need to work together to achieve each goal, rather than everyone focusing on their own personal contributions. This recurring value in the Helldivers 2 community is reflected in its members. When the Major Order fails, communication often blames the *enemy* rather than the community. This choice in language shows an intent to keep morale up by appealing to the value that there will be other chances, not only the ones in front.

Another written genre that *Helldivers 2* often uses is wartime propaganda posters. Players often find these posters around the game or in Helldiver Ships. They often give the community insight into Super Earth's values or motivate it by reminding players of previous crises Super Earth has faced. Super Earth wartime propaganda was also influenced by propaganda used by other countries during periods of war (see Figures 1-3).



(Figure 1, showing a propaganda poster prompting viewers to remember the events of Malevelon Creek)



(Figure 2, showing a similar propaganda poster used to reflect on the events of Pearl Harbor)



(Figure 3, shows a similar propaganda poster related to the Automaton front)

Helldivers 2 uses wartime propaganda posters to present a satire of real wartime propaganda; however, it does so in a way that provides more immersion for the community by sharing these values. And for the writers of *Helldivers 2's* storyline, knowing the goals of real-world wartime propaganda heavily influenced what they wanted to achieve with their own Super Earth propaganda; "in other words, knowing what [the] genre is used for [helped them] to accomplish goals" (Dirk 253). Super Earth's propaganda is ultimately based on real-life examples, and it succeeds because the genre appeals to emotion and the community's need for social cohesion. In Helldivers 2, this genre is especially important because it makes Super Earth's goals indistinguishable from the larger community's. This propaganda is regularly updated with Major Orders that the community has played through. One example is Malevelon Creek, the site

of the earliest campaigns that began in 2024 and led to the creation of the present-day Malevelon Creek Memorial & Interrogation Center for Human Rights institution (the name is also satirical). *Helldivers 2*'s use of wartime propaganda as a genre is also shaped by its target audience. Namely, people who are attracted to militaristic games and people who are located in, or know the history of, the United States. This is also why the propaganda posters used by Super Earth resemble U.S. wartime propaganda, and why one of the main factions, the Automatons, directly represents the spread of communism through the color and stylistic choices used to depict them.

Both genres can also be simplified to two goals: calling the community to action and bringing the community together through teamwork. Major Orders, although more unique, primarily motivate the community to complete certain tasks by an assigned deadline. These tasks always require teamwork and incentivize interactions with other community members, and even when they penalize the community for failing Super Earth, they do not blame the community. In this way, Major Orders also reference U.S. wartime communications and attempts to keep morale up. Super Earth's wartime propaganda is more closely based on real-life propaganda by the United States of America, using the United States' propaganda as a guideline for its own, with similar intent. The intent of wartime propaganda is to make people feel included or that their feelings are shared by the majority, while also motivating the community to focus their efforts on a common goal.

How both genres are used gives new members an idea of what the rest of the community is like. Specifically, it shows the value the community places on teamwork and not letting temporary losses get to them. Through these values, new members can have an idea of the

community's expectations and know that other members will generally try to help each other because they share similar values, as their genres show. New members may also get the idea that the community doesn't make competitiveness a focal point for how they handle themselves. The idea that knowing genres and their goals within certain communities can help outsiders learn more about members may also be universal. For example, in *Helldivers 2,* the emphasis genres place on teamwork and cohesion reflects on the community; but in another community around Valorant, where the main written genre is individual character backstories, the expressed values focus on individualism, which reflects on the community's competitiveness. Understanding how these individual genres appeal to people will also help explain to new members how a community's main genres bring people together, and how those genres' goals and characteristics align with the community's values. For new members, background knowledge of these different genres and their goals can provide insight into what a community wants to accomplish through them. This is especially useful for determining which values different communities hold and which audiences these genres appeal to.

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