

Game Narrative Review

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Your name (one name, please): Julian Buettgenback

Your school: Dakota State University

Your email: Julian.Buettgenback@trojans.dsu.edu

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Game Title: Doki Doki Literature Club!

Platform: PC

Genre: Visual Novel/Dating Simulator/Horror

Release Date: September 22, 2017

Developer: Team Salvato

Publisher: Team Salvato

Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer: Dan Salvato.

Overview

Hi, my name is Monika and as president I would like to welcome you to Doki Doki Literature Club! In this game, you will play as your wonderful self. Seeing you struggle to find an after-school club to join due to lack of ambition and interests, your childhood friend, Sayori, takes advantage of this opportunity to pull you into the literature club which she is vice president of currently (she must be awful fond of you).

Upon joining the club, you will be greeted by myself, Sayori, and the other two club members Yuri and Natsuki. Join us as we revel in our passion for literature through reading, writing stories, and my personal favorite--poetry. I hope everyone will be open to sharing their poems. Just think how much we can learn about one another. As you settle into life here in the literature club, something strange starts happening to my friends. They all start to fall in love with you based on the words that you pick for your poems...But there aren't any options for me, which is fine I guess. (Although, I can't see why there wouldn't be since we're perfect together. Wouldn't you agree?) I'm just glad that all of them are happy! Okay, maybe I am a little jealous. But who wouldn't be? I feel as though I'm captive in this world, and the only thing keeping me together is you. I never want to be without you and I'll stop at nothing to bring about the perfect ending.

After all, not all good times must come to an end.

Characters

- **Monika** – Hi, Monika here! You probably already knew this, but I'm the President of the Literature Club. I try to expand everyone's love for literature, while providing fun activities for us to do. Sometimes it's tough trying to

figure out things to do, but I never give up, because you're here, and I love you. More than any of the other girls ever could. **I'll delete them all, then we can be together always.**

- **Sayori** – Hi! I'm Sayori, the Vice-President of the Literature Club. I love my bed, fireflies, and singing out-loud! Recently I've developed feelings for my best friend, and as much as I try to ignore them, I just feel empty without him. We've been friends since childhood, so it makes sense for me to feel a special connection with him. I just don't think I'm good enough for him...I have depression, which is why people see me as being so lazy...I barely have the motivation to get out of bed some days, but he's my ray of sunshine. Maybe I should confess my love to him...maybe **GET OUT OF MY HEAD BEFORE I SHOW YOU HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU. GET OUT OF MY HEAD BEFORE I FINISH WRITING THIS POEM.** Wait...what was I saying?...Aahaha...
- **Yuri**– Um...Hi, my name is Yuri. I'm a member of the Literature Club...I'm usually pretty reserved, and keep to my books instead of dealing with the judgement of other people. They just think I'm some kind of freak. I'm really into this one horror book where a character feeds on the crimson flesh of the people she's killed...I'm not into that sort of thing, but the book has so many vivid words, I can't help but love it. Sometimes when I get too excited I get the urge to hurt myself to feel the rush. Do you ever get that urge? **I can't convince myself to go to therapy when I'm the happiest I've ever been. I'd rather keep this up until I blow my cover and someone takes me to the emergency room.**
- **Natsuki** – Hi, dummy. I'm Natsuki, and I'm also in the Literature Club. I may be small, but I speak my mind and don't mind if I hurt your feelings. I have been called cute my whole life, which I hate, hate, hate when people can only see me as a bubbly ball of marshmallows that thinks I'm only worth my size. Just because I don't use big words when I write, and I read manga does not make them or myself any less expressive and meaningful! Sorry...I get angry about stuff like that. Anyway, the Literature means the world to me, so you better take this seriously and not bring it down. This isn't Nap Club where you can goof around. Here...is more home to me than my actual home. I can get lost in my manga, and not get judged by other students, or my dad. **My dad would beat me if he found my manga**

Breakdown

Doki Doki (which translates to “sound of a heart beating at a quickened pace”) Literature Club is a Romance visual novel and dating simulator turned dark faster than you can say “get out of my head get out of my head get out of my head get out of my head”. The game has you build a relationship with one of three different girls. **M** You can choose

from Sayori, who is your childhood friend, Yuri, the timid bookworm, and Natsuki, the cute one who packs a punch. **C** There is another girl names Monika, but she is a side character who you cannot romance. Although, she does seem to show interest in spending time with you. The game starts out light hearted, as you find yourself being coerced into joining the Literature club. I, myself first tried to woo a girl name Yuri. You attempt to do so by choosing from 20 unique words out of 200. Each word corresponding to one of the three club members. Progressing through, Yuri becomes more vibrant as she spends more time with you. All seems to be going well, until the end of Act I. Sayori, is becoming overwhelmed by her feelings of worthlessness and affections toward you. Monika says she will talk to her, but that weekend she confesses her love to you. She doesn't turn up at the Literature Club on Monday, and that makes you worried. You rush to her house and into her room...she's hanged herself. **N** ("I told Sayori I would be there for her...It's my fault...") The game then resets itself, all your save files are gone, and all traces of Sayori are gone. As if they she never existed. You must keep playing while knowing your best friend has ended her life.

When restarting the game, there are distorted images of where Sayori used to be. Going onward, Yuri is in a state of disarray, and has an aura about her that screams unstable, as she gets inches away from your face, her eyes widen and start to twitch. **I** ("I'm addicted to you. I just want to pull open your skin and crawl inside you") It also becomes clear that Monika doesn't like you spending so much time with Yuri, or any of the girls for that matter. She tells you that when Yuri gets too excited, she has a bad habit of cutting herself. This habitual cutting goes to the extreme after she confesses her love for you, and ends up pulling a kitchen knife out of her uniform and stabbing herself multiple times with a smile on her face. As she lay dying, you must stay there staring at her dead corpse for the whole weekend. **K**

The game resets once more, but this time you can't choose Natsuki or Yuri. Monika won't let you. She has had enough playing a support character. She deletes them both, and transports you to a void where she reveals that she has been pulling the strings since the beginning in order to achieve her own perfect ending. Monika is in love with you, not the character you play, but "you" in the real world, and now that you are both alone, she can live happily writing poems for you, and you for her. You then have to delete her from the game by going into the games downloaded files on your computer and remove her permanently from the software. She of course is hurt that you could do such a horrible thing, but realizes she loves you, her friends, and the Literature club too much to destroy them, so she resets the game once again. It starts out normal, but Sayori becomes the President and gains the knowledge that Monika had acquired. She wants you all to herself, and begins to delete the game files, but Monika won't let her hurt you. She deletes Sayori once again, and says **A** "No...I won't let you hurt him. I'm sorry...I was wrong. There's no happiness here after all..."

Strongest Element

The twist in the narrative was exceptional. The theme as a whole was spot on. You've got this cute game, where you start to build a relationship with these three characters, but then they start dying, and you can't go back because the save files are corrupted, so you have no choice but to continue and hope that maybe this time you can prevent it. But nothing you seem to do can stop their inevitable deaths. (excluding Natsuki who does not get a unique ending) The characters start to break, the screen goes darker at certain spots, the music distorts, and you become genuinely concerned and unsettled. Not only can you not save any of them from dying, but then you discover Monika has been the cause of it, and that she is self-aware??? Even after you delete Monika and you think you are in the clear, Sayori gains this knowledge and tries to keep you for herself. Finally, the game ends, and you can no longer play it without reinstalling it. This is truly the first time I've seen something this unique in a game.

Unsuccessful Element

As great as this game was, and the element of being helpless is a good one, there was a point of annoyance during the second playthrough. While trying to see if Natsuki had a unique ending like Sayori and Yuri, the game pushes you to Yuri's path, even though during the process of picking the words for the poems, all of them were favored by Natsuki. Upon reading the poem, Yuri loved it, and Natsuki was meh about it. This gave the feeling of helplessness that wasn't useful and did not coincide with the choices, as a player.

Highlight

Sayori's death. This by far has the biggest impact in this game. After finding her hanging from the ceiling in her room...eyes lifeless...body pale... fingers bloodied from clawing at the noose while she suffocated in a state of panic, the game crosses into uncharted dating simulator territory. This triggers the events to come in the game, and gives a new tone to the once bright and cheerful Literature Club. From there on, nothing feels the same again. It leaves arguments that had been resolved in the first act unresolved, and darker poems in place of the lighthearted ones in the beginning.

Critical Reception

A review by Dakota Gordon of keengamer.com had nothing but positive things to say about Doki Doki Literature Club. "the game exudes a professional touch the likes of any other competitor with names weighted in respect and authority". He mentions how well fleshed-out the characters are, and the amazing attention to detail the game has.(9.9/10)

Next, a review by Kevin Mai of RockmanDash Reviews. He seemed to enjoy the game through and through, with little to no negative comments about it. The only notable one is that he says it is a bit too short, which can kill the depth of the game and make you want more in the end. He states, "It also has a huge effect on the cast of the characters: these characters are boring and never really leave the archetypes that they have been cast into sans one of the characters." (no score given)

