

# Game Narrative Review

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**Game Title:** Final Fantasy X

**Platform:** Playstation 2

**Genre:** RPG

**Release Date:** Dec 17, 2001

**Developer:** Square Soft

**Publisher:** Square EA

**Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer:** Uncertain

**Author of this review:** Christopher Krawczyk

**Email:** [ckrawczy@digipen.edu](mailto:ckrawczy@digipen.edu) | [ChrisKrawczyk85@gmail.com](mailto:ChrisKrawczyk85@gmail.com)

## Overview

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Final Fantasy X was one of the first to bring real-time, interactive storytelling to a 3D platform and succeed. One could only achieve such success with an excellent narrative, full use of symbolism, and decision based game play. Furthermore, Final Fantasy's narrative was designed to establish an emotional connection between the player, story, and main characters. The writers used subtle symbols, interesting character quirks, and relatable scenarios to draw the player in. Even the environment itself sets the mood of the story, through the use of colors, music, and even the weather (elements).

Final Fantasy's narrative is an epic one in which the main character Tidus is torn from the world he knows, a world where he lives a comfortable life as a Blitzball (underwater soccer) superstar. When chaos strikes his home town of Zanarkand, Tidus is confronted by an ethereal being, Sin, which offers to save him. With Zanarkand crumbling around him, Tidus reluctantly allows himself to be consumed by Sin and the offer of truth and salvation. Sometime later, Tidus awakens from a coma like state to a strange world around him. Struck with amnesia, Tidus only recalls his name and pieces of his past life as a famous Blitzball player. Eventually, Tidus is rescued by a group of locals who take him in. He later joins his new found friends, on a pilgrimage to Zanarkand, with the hopes of returning home. However, what Tidus doesn't know is the world he's in, Spira, Zanarkand has been destroyed for hundreds of years and is no more than an ancient relic. Along the pilgrimage relationships are formed, most notably that of Tidus and Yuna, the girl whom the group is aiding to Zanarkand. Tidus later discovers that Yuna's pilgrimage is a self sacrificing one to stop Sin from destroying Spira. Ultimately, at the culminating point of the story Tidus must choose to sacrifice himself and kill his father, who has become Sin, in order to save the world and the girl he loves. This gripping, emotional, game uses a variety of symbols, elements, and quandaries to create an authentic, interactive storytelling experience.

## Characters

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1. **Tidus** – The main character. The story revolves around Tidus, a famous Blitzball player from Zanarkand. His hometown is attacked by Sin and he is transported to the world of Spiria. In Spiria Tidus meets his travel companions and the Summoner, Yuna, who he falls in love with. He joins Yuna on her Pilgrimage to put an end to Sin and the cycle of death for Spiria. Tidus is a youthful young man with an almost zealous demeanor. However, he is very carefree, upbeat, and helpful. Tidus also has a sensitive side that surfaces from time to time. As a child Tidus' father Jecht was hard on him, causing him to think lowly of Jecht, which in turn gave Tidus the motive to do better.
2. **Yuna** – Beautiful determined young Summoner. She is the daughter of the well known High Summoner Braska who died fighting Sin. She sets out on a Pilgrimage to defeat Sin with her Guardians and a new found friend, Tidus. Throughout the story Yuna and Tidus grow closer and eventually fall in love. Yuna is a kind hearted and compassionate young woman with a nearly unbreakable devotion to her task. She has a unique trait that her left eye is blue and her right is green. She has chosen to follow in her father's footsteps and become the next great Summoner.
3. **Auron** – Becomes like a father figure to Tidus. He was a friend of Tidus' father Jecht and former Guardian of Yuna's father Braska. He promises to show Tidus the way and help him find his father. Auron wields a large and powerful sword and tends to be the muscle of the group. He sets out on the Pilgrimage with Tidus, Yuna, and the Guardians to defeat Sin. A quirk of Auron's is that he always wears his arm in a sling, except when he is fighting. Auron is the strict, strong, and silent type. When Auron does speak, he often says something important. Auron is often unconcerned with his own well being and seeks to protect his friends.
4. **Wakka** – He is a good friend and mentor to Yuna and his fellow Guardians. He is an islander with a happy go lucky attitude, always willing to help. Wakka always tries to cheer up the group. He too sets out on the Pilgrimage with Yuna and her Guardians to defeat Sin. Wakka shares common interest with Tidus and becomes like a brother to him.
5. **Lulu** – Becomes like a mother figure to the group and an older sister to Yuna. She is the wisest and most mature of all the Guardians. Lulu can seem insensitive at times, but is gentle underneath. Lulu also partakes in the Pilgrimage to defeat Sin, where she plays a vital role helping Tidus adjust to Spiria.
6. **Rikku** – Is a kind hearted, upbeat girl who is quick to befriend Tidus. She becomes a valued friend to all of the Guardians and later turns out to be Yuna's cousin. Rikku also takes part in Yuna's Pilgrimage where she attempts to stop her multiple times; knowing that Yuna would eventually die summoning the Final Aeon. Rikku has a quirk where she's afraid of lightning. She eventually looks up to Tidus as a brother.
7. **Kimahri** – Is a Ronso, part man part beast. He is shunned by many of his people because he is smaller than average and has a broken horn. He is one of Yuna's first Guardians. He becomes a valued protector of the group. Kimahri rarely talks, but when he does it is usually of importance.

8. **Seymour** – Is one of the game's primary antagonists. He is a Guado human half-breed and a Maester in the church of Yevon. He has a large influence over the people of Spiria. He spends much of the game using his power to attempt to destroy Spiria, believing its destruction will free the people. He has such an interest in Yuna that he attempts to force her into marriage. Seymour always has a dark, ominous, and stern presence.

## Breakdown

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Final Fantasy X is a powerful epic narrative that comes full circle, making excellent use of symbolism, environment, time, foreshadowing, and character quirks to weave its tale. In order to fully understand how powerful these narrative elements are, much of the plot will need to be revealed.

Immediately, from the opening scene, Final Fantasy X sets the tone with excellent use of environment, time, and symbols. The first and most evident symbols are those of fire and spirit, which are carefully placed throughout the environment. The player is presented with a gathering of characters around a campfire at sunset with whirring Pyreflies (spirit particles) in the background; all the characters' weapons are supporting each other, centered on the sunset. Additionally, the game makes use of slow panning camera movements and vast vistas to slow time to an almost momentary pace. On the horizon there is a ruined city covered in glimmering light. From the symbolism in this scene, it is apparent that this is a strong emotional (spiritual) moment in which the characters are supporting one another. The multitude of narrative components work together to draw the player in, at which point, Tidus, the game's central character, then begins telling the story of how he came to be at this place; his story becomes the game.

Tidus' story begins in the city of Zanarkand, a futuristic city filled with technology beyond imagination. It is here that we are first exposed to one of Tidus' character quirks; his zealous, can-do attitude. In this city Tidus is a famous Blitzball (underwater soccer) player of the Zanarkand Abes and is not afraid to show it when he greets others. It is important to note Blitzball's relation to water is only the first of many water symbols surrounding Tidus. Amidst one of Tidus' Blitzball matches, a dark ominous wave enters the city; another symbol of water in the form of his rebirth. The wave wreaks destruction upon the city, destroying the very stadium Tidus is playing in. Fleeing from the destruction, Tidus runs into a man named Auron, who has served as his apprentice since the disappearance of his father Jecht. Oddly, Auron seems to be the only one that is undisturbed by the chaos. Auron then reveals to Tidus that the dark wave destroying the city is no mere wave, but a being of destruction named, "Sin." Tidus and Auron fight through the city until time itself stops for Tidus; another excellent use of narrative time and space. In this suspended moment, Tidus encounters a young boy in robes who speaks words he does not understand; this encounter was skillfully planted as a symbol for use later in the game. Once the boy disappears and time is returned to normal, Tidus and Auron fight on to the summit of Sin itself. Upon reaching the summit, Tidus and Auron are consumed by Sin in an effort to escape the destruction. Tidus loses consciousness and enters a dream-like state where he sees images of his father.

Tidus awakens from chaos and fire to find himself in a place of water and earth, the underwater ruins of a temple; this is symbolic of his rebirth from fire (spirit), through water (rebirth), to the physical realm (earth). This also marks the beginning stages of

Tidus' explosion, rebirth and discovery of self. Confused, Tidus spends the night in the temple alone, reflecting on his path to this point. The next day Tidus finds himself captured by a passing ship. On this ship Tidus befriends an upbeat girl, Rikku, who is a member of the Al Bhed faction. She takes care of Tidus for a short while, but it is not long before the waters of Sin return and throw him from the ship.

The narrative continues to make good use of symbols when Tidus awakens once more to an unknown location. This time he finds himself on a dry, sunny beach; symbolic of his complete transition to the physical realm. On this beach he is taken in by a group of islanders playing his famed game, Blitzball. The leader of this group is Wakka, who is authentically portrayed as a helpful laid back islander; from the use of bright yellow wardrobe, to his chipper attitude, to his island accent. Wakka explains to Tidus that he is on the island Besaid, in the land of Spira. When Tidus explains that he lost and wants to return home to his city of Zanarkand, Wakka is taken aback. Furthermore, Wakka explains that Tidus' encounter with Sin must have messed with his head, thus amplifying the fact that he has been reborn. Wakka goes on to say that Sin is a monster which came about over a thousand years ago and destroyed the city of Zanarkand. Now confused, Tidus now has a motive to explore this strange world; he must find himself and his way home.

The game seeks to build more authentic character traits when Wakka leads Tidus to the town center to meet his Blitzball team, the Besaid Aurochs. Tidus' begins telling stories of Blitzball fame, characteristic of his usual zealous manner. After some time, Wakka offers Tidus a position on the team. Here we have more authentic relationship building as Wakka lets Tidus in on the fact that he desperately needs his help since their team hasn't won a match. Wakka goes on to tell Tidus that he is planning to leave the team to become a Guardian and would like to win a game before he retires. After some thought, we see the helpful side of Tidus, when accepts Wakka's offer and joins the team. Tidus then spends some time wandering the town meeting and building more authentic relationships with other characters, Lulu, a powerful mage, and Kimahri, a Ronso (part man part beast).

We are then exposed to yet another interesting character quirk; Tidus' desire to help another no matter what the consequence. While wandering the town, Tidus learns that a Summoner, Yuna, has begun her trial (rite of passage to become a Summoner) and is taking an unusually long period of time to return. Despite the orders not to interfere, Tidus enters the Temple's Cloister of Trials with the hopes of rescuing the Summoner. When Tidus arrives at the Cloister of Trials he is confronted by Wakka, Lulu, and Kimahri, who he learns are Yuna's Guardians. Before Tidus has a chance to precede any further, the exhausted Summoner, Yuna, returns from the Chamber of the Fayth (inner sanctum of the temple). Immediately, Tidus is struck by her beauty, foreshadowing the beginnings of a relationship.

Upon exiting the temple, Yuna summons her first Aeon (god like, spirit creature), Valefor, who emerges from the clouds in blinding light; a symbol of power borrowed from the gods. Yuna embraces the Aeon upon its arrival, symbolizing that Aeons are more than lent power, but friends as well. After the Aeon is dismissed, the townspeople gather in celebration of their new Summoner. In this scene game does a good job of emphasizing the symbol of hope that a new Summoner brings to Spira. During the celebration more critical relationship building takes place as Tidus strikes up a

conversation with Yuna who takes interest in the story of his origins in Zanarkand. After a somewhat lengthy conversation, Tidus returns to bed where he overhears Lulu confronting Wakka about his interest in Tidus. She believes he is only interested in Tidus, because he resembles Wakka's dead brother, Chappu. Lulu was not far from truth when saying this, as the next day Wakka gives Tidus, Chappu's former sword. Appropriately named Brotherhood, the sword is a symbol of exactly that, Wakka's acceptance of Tidus as a brother.

Shortly after, Wakka tells Tidus he, Yuna, and the rest of her Guardians must set out on a Pilgrimage; a sacred journey across Spira to attain the Final Aeon (summon), the only weapon powerful enough to defeat Sin. He invites Tidus to come along in the hopes that someone along the way will recognize him and he'll be able to return home. Tidus agrees to go with them, and at their first stop Tidus gets another chance to talk to Yuna. In the moments that follow, the game successfully builds Yuna's character, showing her as more than a Summoner, but as a compassionate, kind hearted, person, on a journey to do good for her people. Yuna reveals to Tidus that she believes his story, and also that she knows of his father. She goes on to say that Tidus' father Jecht had arrived on Spira ten years prior with the same story. Even more astonishing, she reveals that Jecht was friends of her father Braska, and together with the help of Auron they defeated Sin. Tidus and Yuna continue to talk into the sunset; it becomes apparent that they are both caring people interested in helping one another. Here we see genuine emotions that make the characters believable and keep the player engaged.

After a nights rest, the group presses on to Kilika, a small island town, where they are presented with the destruction of Sin once more. In this scene, another critical symbol is presented in greater detail. The symbolic importance of Pyreflies (spirit particles) is explained by Yuna and her guardians as the souls of those who have died. They go on to say that if these souls are left alone and not properly sent by a Summoner, they will become Fiends (monsters). Yuna is asked to perform a sending on the souls lost in the wreckage from Sin at Kilika. An entrancing scene follows, making excellent use of the environment, by intersecting water and fire to symbolize the transcendence of spirits from chaos and wreckage to peace and oneness. Yuna dances delicately above the water at sunset sending the Pyreflies to the afterlife. It is both a horrific and beautiful moment that is meant to stick with the player throughout the story.

In the next segments Yuna is presented with the challenge of attaining a new summon by way of increasingly more difficult trials. Her determination to save her people, despite immense difficulty, helps to make her character that much more authentic. Furthermore, it helps build authenticity of her companions and their desire to help her along the way.

Shortly after, Yuna's pilgrimage is delayed as the Blitzball tournament Wakka previously asked Tidus to join takes place. Despite the story related elements that take place here, much of the narrative momentum built prior is stalled. This is mainly because the Blitzball tournament itself can take hours to complete for an inexperienced player. Even so, some important new characters are introduced in the following scenes, most notably, Seymour, a young and popular Maester and Summoner. Yuna's importance to Tidus is confirmed when he is disturbed by her admiration for Seymour. Upon completion of the Blitzball tournament, the narrative resumes to an epic battle against invading Fiends. During this battle the game successfully plants another seed of

foreshadowing when Auron tells Tidus, "Sin is Jecht." Although Tidus immediately dismisses the idea as impossible, it leaves the player questioning its authenticity.

Following the battle, the game does a good job of bringing Tidus and Yuna closer to each other. A distraught Tidus seeks out Yuna to confide in her about what Auron had said. Yuna comforts Tidus and tells him to smile and to laugh even if he's not really feeling it. They both force a smile and a laugh, but it is not long before they break out into real laughter. Seeing that Tidus is feeling better, Yuna asks him to become her guardian. Tidus happily accepts her offer, further strengthening their bond. After a brief moment, the party departs in search of the next Aeon.

The game re-enforces the power of Sin is once again when the party reaches Mi'ihen Highroad. A group of Crusaders under the command of Seymour are attempting an operation to defeat Sin using unorthodox methods; the power of machines and weaponry instead of Aeons. Tidus, always willing to help, convinces the group to join the battle despite the impending threat. In the battle that follows hundreds of Crusaders are killed. Ultimately, the operation fails miserably, showing just how ruthless Sin can be. The game environment does a great job of setting the tone for this tragedy. At this point the game alludes to the foreshadowing from earlier. Auron reveals to Tidus that the only reason Sin came to Mi'ihen was to so see his son. Unsure of how to feel, the party continues on in silence to collect the next Aeon, Ixon.

On their journey, the party runs across the girl that rescued Tidus from the water temple, Rikku. Surprisingly, Rikku turns out to be Yuna's cousin, which serves to bring the group even closer together. This new development is used to lighten the mood from the tragedies prior. Yuna and her Guardians continue on, in better spirits, with their newest member.

The game throws an interesting plot twist upon entering Guadosalam, the city where Seymour is leader. Seymour invites Yuna and her Guardians into his mansion where he attempts to woo Yuna by showing her a Sphere recording (ancient video recording) of Tidus' Zanarkand. Seymour goes on to ask Yuna to marry him, saying that it will give her people something positive to look forward to in this time of tragedy. As expected, Tidus is outraged at how this could possibly be a viable option. He goes on to say that Yuna needs to continue her pilgrimage, not waste time with marriage. However, the story has successfully built the foundation for us to understand the truth, that Tidus has feelings for Yuna.

In the scenes that follow, the game keys the player in on more important story elements. The most important being the Farplane, where dead Pyreflies gather to form images from the memories of lost loved ones. Tidus follows Yuna inside where she plans to think over the marriage proposal. Tidus is secretly hoping to find his father there. The game accentuates the foreshadowing from earlier when Tidus is unable to call forth images of his father, but instead only summons his mother. To Tidus, this means Jecht may very well be alive as Sin. While leaving the Farplane Yuna discovers that Seymour's father Jyscal is an Unsent (ghost of a person who dies an unfair death) and performs a Sending. During the Sending, Auron falls to his knees, yet another carefully placed use of foreshadowing. After the Jyscal is sent, Yuna picks up a Sphere recording where Jyscal once stood, then announces that she will accept Seymour's offer.

Another plot twist is revealed when the party heads to Macalania temple to gain the next Aeon and prepare for Yuna's wedding. Inside the temple, the party comes across

the Sphere recording Yuna picked up from Jyscal. The plot twist comes when Yuna's Guardians discover what's contained on the video is Seymour's betrayal, murdering his own father for rights to the throne. Rather than attend a wedding, the party moves to confront Seymour outside the temple, where a battle ensues. During this battle Yuna is unable to forgive Seymour for his crimes and dispatches him with her Aeons. However, before Yuna is able to perform a Sending Tromell appears and steals away Seymour's body. The party then flees the scene with soldiers in pursuit when they happen upon Sin, who knocks them unconscious.

When the party awakens they find themselves in the desert and Yuna missing. Luckily Rikku is familiar with this desert as it is where her people reside. Along the way Tidus discovers the truth behind a Summoner's Pilgrimage and is confronted with a terrible quandary. He learns that once a Summoner attains the final Aeon and calls it forth, they will die. Realizing that the Yuna will meet the same fate if he continues to help her on the journey, he must choose to help her. This is troublesome because he cares too much to let her die, and yet understands her desire to continue and help her people.

Ultimately, we see Tidus' unwavering dedication to Yuna as both a Guardian and friend as he moves quickly to find and rescue her. After some deliberation Tidus and the rest of the Guardians end up on Cid's (Rikku's father) airship to plan a rescue mission. They find that Yuna is being held captive at the capital city Bevelle, where she will be forced to wed the Unsent Seymour. Upon entering the city Tidus and the Guardians fight hard against the armed soldier guarding the wedding. It is obvious from the ferocity of the fight that Tidus couldn't be happier to rescue Yuna from Seymour. The chaos caused by the Guardians intrusion allows Yuna to escape with the aid of one of her Aeons. After a lengthy escape through an underwater labyrinth and the defeat of the now Unsent monster, Seymour Natus, the group leaves for Macalania Woods.

The following moments in Macalania Woods are critical to the relationship of Tidus and Yuna. The game environment successfully sets the tone with glowing Pyerflies spanning a lake on a moonlight night. It is here, alone, in the waters of the Macalania Woods that Tidus confesses to Yuna that he knows the truth behind the Final Summoning, and apologizes for talking about life after defeating Sin. At this point all of the work the narrative has done comes together creating a deeper emotional connection to the characters and their story. Desperately trying to avoid his horrible quandary, Tidus attempts to persuade Yuna to quit her Pilgrimage. Yuna entertains the thought, but resolves that she mustn't allow Sin to wreak destruction across the world. By now there are Pyerflies swarming about and it is clear the deep emotional burden Yuna has been carrying; she would like nothing more than to have a normal life and be with Tidus. Moments later, Yuna uncontrollably breaks down into tears. Tidus moves to comfort her and they embrace with a passionate kiss. This important moment solidifies any doubts about Tidus and Yuna's love and compassion for one another. Upon returning to the party, Tidus swears to find a way to save Yuna.

In the next few segments Yuna and her Guardians spend time preparing for Sin and gaining strength. They struggle through many Fiends and even encounter Seymour once more. With each encounter Seymour grows stronger, however he is again defeated. After this battle the foreshadowing from earlier comes full circle as the identity of Sin is confirmed to be Jecht.

When the party comes upon a fountain of Fayth (spirits lost in dream) Tidus learns more about his true self. The Fayth are authentically presented as a collection of spirits, shrouded in glowing, wispy particles; a watery ethereal mass. Using the same techniques as before the game slows time to a momentary pace followed by a literal stop. In this suspended moment Tidus is met with the boy in the symbols he saw on the onset of his journey. This boy now reveals himself to be the Fayth of Bahamut. The ultimate plot twist takes place when Bahamut's Fayth presents Tidus with shocking revelations. He informs Tidus that Sin's only purpose for existing was to leave Spira in chaos so that Tidus' Zanarkand could live forever without being detected. He goes on to show Tidus that the Zanarkand he hails from is nothing but a dream created by the Fayth, brought to life only by the power of spirit. He tells Tidus that he, Jecht, and everyone he knows from his past life, are nothing but dreams that will cease to exist once Sin is truly defeated. Tidus is then presented with one of the biggest quandaries of the game when Bahamut's Fayth asks Tidus to defeat Sin so that the Fayth can be freed of the burden of keeping the "Dream Zanarkand" alive. Tidus accepts his fate, even knowing that doing so will mean death for Zanarkand and himself. The game then ends the vision, transitioning back to the current time and space, where Tidus keeps the vision to himself.

After passing through Mt. Gagazet, the party comes to the summit of the real Zanarkand, where all things must come to an end. Here the game story comes full circle to the beginning, and Tidus' retelling of the events that led him here stops. It is at this point that all of the symbols told from the beginning come together in perfect harmony. We now understand the Pyreflies, the environmental symbols, the symbols of water, the symbols of fire, the slowed effects of time, and the characters loving support of one another. All of the narrative elements are tied together with the addition of a beautiful, heavyhearted soundtrack. By now the game has done an excellent job of gripping the player emotionally, which enables the climax to be that much more impactful.

More heartfelt moments are presented as the party watches Yuna's Sphere recording containing key bonding moments of the parties' journey up to this point. This scene was carefully planted to strengthen the point that these characters have grown together and deeply care for one another. Knowing this, the player can begin to feel the emotions the characters are feeling. Additionally, when the party passes through the thick Pyreflies of Zanarkand they see visions of past Summoners come to defeat Sin. They see a vision of Seymour as a child, whose mother gives up her life to become his Aeon, Anima (Aeon of Pain).

The party finally reaches Zanarkand Dome where they meet Yunalesca, who is Unsent after her battle with Sin. Yunalesca informs them that in order to create the Final Aeon, a Guardian must be sacrificed as its Fayth. The game successfully uses a flashback to confirm events past, in Braska's Pilgrimage, where Jecht decided to give up his life to become the Final Aeon. Returning to the present, Yunalesca reveals to the party that the Final Aeon can only defeat Sin for a short time. She goes on to say that after the old Sin is destroyed, Yu Yevon, the evil Summoners spirit that controls Sin and the Fayth of Dream Zanarkand, will possess the Final Aeon and use it to recreate Sin. Thus it is revealed that whoever becomes the Final Aeon will eventually become Sin, continuing the cycle.

More is revealed as the party resolves to defeat Sin without the Final Aeon. They have no desire to take part in the cycle, nor do they want to lose any friends. Yunalesca



believes in the Final Summoning and will not let them leave before they attain it. Yuna's party is forced into a battle, however just before the battle takes place another flashback is carefully placed. This time we see Auron, from the past, horrified, having seen the death of his friend Braska during the Final Summoning and the transformation of his friend Jecht. He confronts Yunalesca and is killed, making him an Unsent. Returning to the present, the party understands why Auron was weakened by Yuna's sending and why he remained an Unsent, to avenge crimes past. After a long battle the party prevails, forever destroying the Final Aeon.

Without the Final Aeon the party derives a strategy to beat Sin. They plan to distract him using a song symbolic to his past life, "The Hymn of the Fayth." This is the song Tidus' mother sang to him when he was a child; it has meaning to both Tidus and Jecht. They hope that if any part of Jecht is still human he will hesitate when he hears the hymn, thus allowing the Guardians to attack.

The party commandeers Cid's airship to begin their attack on a now flying Sin. The plan goes off without a hitch and Sin falls to the earth. However, their victory is short lived, as a now enraged Sin surfaces once more and consumes the air ship. The party passes through Sin where they are taken into another dimension, a place of dream and spirit. However, by this point the game has prepared us for the fact that Sin is a dream created by the Fayth, he is spirit, everything and nothing.

In the epic conclusion the party finds themselves deep inside Sin's dream world, in a place that looks strikingly similar to the Blitzball Stadium from Dream Zanarkand. Finally, Tidus is reunited with his father in a heartfelt moment. Jecht's humanity is almost spent and he only has a short time before he fully becomes Sin. However, he is able to spend this moment catching up with his son. Before Jecht can turn back to Sin, he asks his son to end the nightmare, begging his son to kill him. The game couldn't feel more authentic when every heart wrenching quandary Tidus has been presented culminates at this point. A tearful battle commences, ending in the death of Jecht. However, before Jecht's life is completely spent, he returns once more to say goodbye to Tidus. He even scolds Tidus for crying, assuring him he did the right thing. Even so, all is not over.

Yu Yevon, the evil Summoner emerges from Jecht's body to inhabit Yuna's Aeons. The party is faced with the remaining quandaries, Yuna must resolve to kill her Aeons, who have symbolized hope and have become valued friends along their journey. Tidus must resolve to finish the battle defeating Yu Yevon and ending his own life in the process. Even the game environment supports the emotions taking place at this point, sad music, whirring Pyerflies, and diminished colors. When Yuna tearfully dispatches her last Aeon, Yu Yevon presents himself having no further Aeons to possess. Finally, the party defeats Yu Yevon and Sin dissipates for the last time. They have ended Spira's cycle of death.

Having completed his mission Auron request that Yuna now Send him, which she does with a heavy heart. The game environment queues an appropriate disheartening soundtrack and a glowing sunset background. In this background we can see Tidus starting to disappear as well. He never did tell Yuna of his fate for fear that she'd stop him. However, with Sin defeated and the Fayth returning from their thousand-year dream Tidus will fade from existence. We see visions of the Fayth returning from dream as the fountain of water they once embodied dissipates into nothingness. Yuna, having caught

on to what has happened tries to embrace him, but she falls right through him. Standing up in tears, Yuna proclaims her love for Tidus, and though he's fading away, he tries to embrace her. Tidus regrettably says goodbye to his beloved friends, and accepting his fate, lunges off the edge of the airship into the clouds. As Tidus falls, he sees Braska, Auron, and Jecht waiting for him. Reaching the end, Tidus hi-fives Jecht, symbolizing that they have reconciled and all is well.

In the end, Yuna makes a final speech to the people of Spiria in the Blitzball stadium. She says the eternal calm has begun and right before the credits roll says, "The people and the friends that we have lost, and the dreams that have faded, never forget them." After the credits roll to the soundtrack symbolic of Tidus and Yuna's relationship, we see a vision of Tidus waking up underwater. Upon waking up he swims to the surface with a smile on his face.

Not enough can be said about the excellence that is the epic narrative Role Playing Game, Final Fantasy X. It is a powerful narrative that weaves symbolism, environment, time, and foreshadowing together into a heartfelt experience. Many of the symbols and relationships formed in Final Fantasy X are so powerful in fact that they will remain with the player long after they've completed the game. If a game can make a long lasting and emotional impression on its audience, then it is no doubt a game worth of recognition.

## **Strongest Element**

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The single best element of Final Fantasy X is the deep emotional plot, which connects the players to the characters as well as the story. It does so with interesting and unique characters that have many relatable qualities; love, hate, desire, emotion, needs, wants, and many more. Furthermore, the characters in Final Fantasy have quirks that make them identifiable and believable. Tidus is overly courageous and goofy, he insists upon everything. Yuna is timid, but compassionate, and almost always too concerned for her companions. As the player, you learn what makes these characters happy or sad and what their wants and needs are. It is the relationships built within the game that make the story so gripping and authentic. When Tidus must choose to fight and kill his own father who's been turned into Sin, you empathize with him. You feel for Yuna when she decides to sacrifice herself to save the land of Spria and the boy she loves, Tidus. Ultimately, a lot of thought was put into the plot and characters, which make this game an emotional and unforgettable experience.

## **Unsuccessful Element**

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Though there were not many unsuccessful narrative elements in Final Fantasy X, an obvious one was the Blitzball tournament that interrupts mid game. While it does add to the progression of the story, it distracts from the flow of the narrative. The story builds nicely up to this point, via character relationships, symbols, and decision based game play, but they are de-railed for a short time by a Blitzball mini-game and then resume some time after. Furthermore, the Blitzball mini-game has no symbols or narrative elements to it and is quite difficult; many players spend hours trying to win this mini-game in order to continue the story they were once absorbed in. Ultimately, it can be quite distracting and in some cases ruin the game play experience. To fix this blemish, Blitzball should be

made easier to win, thus keeping the player absorbed in the plot and decision making parts of the game.

## Highlight

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The dramatic moments in Final Fantasy X are what make it stand out from the other titles in the RPG genre. It is hard to think of a more touching, memorable, or impactful sequence of events than the ending of Final Fantasy X. The key components to making this ending so impactful are genuine emotions portrayed by the characters, coupled with the strength of the relationships formed throughout the game. In the end, Tidus, the game's central character, is re-united with his long lost father in for a heartfelt moment. However, this moment was too short, as Tidus' father begins to transform back into Sin, he begs Tidus to end his suffering, to kill him and save the world. Not only must Tidus choose to kill his own father, but he must also accept the fact that he will lose his own life and everything he cares for in the process. The tragedies continue as, Yuna, another key player, must choose to kill her beloved companions, the Aeons, in order to end Spira's cycle of death. After an epic battle that pulls at your heartstrings, the game queues the ending cut scene. Tidus then begins to fade away, having defeated Sin, his existence in the world can no longer be sustained. Yuna realizes what has happened tries to embrace him, but she falls right through him. Standing up in tears, Yuna proclaims her love for Tidus, and though he's fading away, he tries to embrace her. Tidus regrettably says goodbye to his beloved friends, and accepting his fate, lunges off the edge of the airship into the clouds. In the end, the player is left such an impactful and emotional experience that the feelings will linger long after the credits roll.

## Critical Reception

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One of the more reputable video game review sites, GameSpot, gives Final Fantasy X a well deserved 9.3 out of 10. They go as far as to say, "If you've been waiting for the definitive role-playing game for the PlayStation 2, here it is." The review rated all aspects of the game high quality, from the game play, to the narrative, to the visual effects. In closing, GameSpot says, "The difference between Final Fantasy X and other games is in the sheer scope and undeniably impressive production values. The ambitious design of Final Fantasy X ultimately pervades in every aspect of the game."

Another reputable review site, IGN, gives the game 9 out of 10 or better in all categories. They explain how Final Fantasy X has taken a different direction in terms of character development as well as game play. IGN goes on to say, "There's nothing wrong with doing something different, as long as it's done well, and Final Fantasy X is certainly done well, in almost every area."

## Lessons

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1. Future Role Playing Games should strive to use symbolism as well Square Soft has with Final Fantasy X. One of the best examples of this is the symbols surrounding the main character, Tidus, which are built up from the beginning and grow throughout the game. Specifically, the symbols of water and fire transitioning him through rebirth into the physical realm. Even more so in the end

- when Tidus resolves his exposition returning full circle to the water as his spirit, his dream, fades.
2. Final Fantasy X does an excellent job telling a story through the use of environment and sound track. Not only does the dialog and symbolism drive the story, but the tones set by the environment. They achieve such success by using the camera, colors, music, and scenery to amplify the happenings on in the narrative. Furthermore, a game that can re-iterate emotions through the environment will serve to create a much more alive and authentic story.
  3. Few games us time and place as often or as well as Final Fantasy X does. An obvious example is how they used time and place to bring the story full circle from the beginning, where Tidus is telling his story, to the end, where he is now creating (within) the story. There are also numerous examples of time and place shifting found throughout the story in the form of flash backs, flash forwards, and visions. All of these techniques work together to strengthen the story and create a much more engaging, authentic, experience.
  4. One thing Final Fantasy X has assured us not to do is interrupt an engaging plot with meaningless, story-less, game play. Square Soft unsuccessfully planted a difficult Blitzball mini-game in the middle of a character and plot development sequence. Therefore, disrupting the flow of the narrative, enough in some cases that players put down or outright quit the game. It is not that we should exclude mini-games all together, but we should take time to evaluate their placement within the narrative as well as their difficulty.
  5. One of the biggest lessons we can learn from Final Fantasy X, is to create characters with as much attention to detail as they have. In Final Fantasy X the characters are developed early on, with enough attention to detail, that the player has reason to care what happens to nearly every one of them. They do a phenomenal job building authentic relationships and believable scenarios between the characters. In doing so, Final Fantasy X creates an emotional attachment between the player, the characters, and the story. Having drawn the player in, Final Fantasy X is able to weave an emotionally gripping tale they won't soon forget.

## **Summation**

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Final Fantasy X is worthy of analysis because it has done a phenomenal job tying together symbolism, foreshadowing, time, and place into an emotional and unforgettable story. The creators have put a solid effort into developing characters, relationships, and powerful symbols early on in the narrative. Throughout the game these symbols and relationships are built upon creating an authentic world the player actually feels like they are a part of. Once the game has successfully drawn the player in on an emotional level, it enacts one of the most heartfelt endings seen in a role playing game to date. In closing, the player is left with a touching experience they will remember long after the game has ended. Therefore, if a game that can create such a powerful and lasting impact on its audience, it is without a doubt worthy of recognition.