

# Game Narrative Review

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**Game Title:** Monster Hunter: World  
**Platform:** PS4, Xbox, PC  
**Genre:** Action Role-playing  
**Release Date:** PS4 and Xbox on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018; PC on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
**Developer:** CAPCOM Co., Ltd.  
**Publisher:** CAPCOM Co., Ltd.  
**Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer:** Yuya Tokuda, Teruki Endo, Yugo Togawa

## Overview

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Monster Hunter: World (MH: W) is a third-person action role-playing game with the storyline set in a New World. The player is a member of the Fifth Fleet departing on the voyage to the New World. Following the migrating traces of Zorah Magdaros, an Elder Dragon, the player embarks on an adventure to find out the reasoning behind the migration of Elder Dragons to the New World every decade.

After exploring the New World through different landscapes and hunting down powerful monsters, the player is able to collect items and monster parts and use these items to craft weapons, armours and other usable items. By honing the player's skills and practicing with different weapons, the player will become the top hunter in the Commission's base, Astera. The storyline ends when the player discovers the story behind the Elder Dragons moving to the New World every 10 years. The player discovers that this was all a trap set by Xeno'jiiva, the emperor of Elder Dragons, who lured other Elder Dragons over to the New World and took their energy so that it could become stronger and more powerful. Upon realizing this, the player successfully slays Xeno'jiiva in its cave. This complete the main story. However, the game doesn't end here -- more and more building methods and new monsters are available to the player after this point. With a narrative supported by excellent visuals and environmental storytelling, MH: W shows the hero's journey with a simple and straightforward storyline.

## Characters

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- **Hero (user-defined)** – The player in MH: W. Players have the ability to customize their own characters' traits, including the character's gender, appearance and name. This character is set to be the A-list hunter on the Fifth

- Fleet to unravel the mysteries behind the Elder Dragons' move every 10 years. They are as brave as the other hunters, but much more talented. They are always on the front line when battling powerful monsters and successfully slaying them at the end of each fight. No one contributes more to the rapid progress of investigating the New World than this character.
- **Palico (user-defined)** – A cat companion of the player avatar. Players can create their own Palico and customize their Palico's color pattern and name. It follows the main character during every fight and provides great assistance when hunting the monsters.
  - **The Handler** – Since A-list hunters of the Fifth Fleet are always pairs, the Handler is the player's partner. She is an enthusiastic and reckless hunter, but is not responsible for combat at all. Instead, she follows the traces of monsters and does research in various landscapes to provide hints and clues on the side to aid the player in slaying the monster. She is very curious about the truth behind the Elder Dragons. Because of her curiosity, the Handler always faces danger in the process of researching so that the Hero can save her each time. Her job is to handle quests and will follow the Hero to every field. Her motto is: "When in doubt, take a bite!"
  - **Commander** – An enthusiastic old man who is a member of the First Fleet. He is the second ranked hunter in Astera and takes care of operations while the Admiral investigates the New World. He is also the grandfather of the Field Team Leader. He draws up the most of the investigation plans.
  - **Field Team Leader** – The Commander's grandson. The Field Team Leader was born and raised in Astera. He is an enthusiastic and experienced hunter who will support the Hero tremendously during the first few assignments when the Fifth Fleet first arrives.
  - **Admiral** – Primary leader of the whole Research Commission. He is a very strong old man who investigates the New World alone and leaves the Commission to the Commander to take care of. He is a member of the First Fleet. Later on in the story line, the Admiral comes back to the Commission Base and stays in the watchtower. He knows a lot about the Elder Dragons and can provide information to the player. He finally accepts the strength of our main character and inviting her for further research about Elder Dragons.
  - **The Seeker** – The Seeker is a member of the First Fleet and a rare Wyverian race hunter in the Commission. The Wyverian race has super senses, so The Seeker combines his Wyverian senses with his experiences as a hunter. He was appointed to research the Ancient Dragon crossing. In the storyline, he assists the player in unfolding the mystery of the Elders Crossing.
  - **The Tracker** – The Tracker is a member of the First Fleet as a hunter and a compiler of ecological information. After years of research, she comes up with a theory of how Coral Highlands and Rotten Vale formed. In the storyline, she is an restless old woman who is eager to share her research. She saves the player when the player faced imminent danger from Odogaron, a powerful monster that lives in Rotten Vale.
  - **The Huntsman** – The Huntsman is a member of the First Fleet who never shows his face because he wears a mask all the time. He has a remote and detached

demeanor, but gives the player important advice in crucial moments. He is a first rank hunter in fighting skills and loves using old equipment because he said, “It’s too late for things I doesn’t understand.”

- **Second Fleet Master** –Leader of the Second Fleet. He is a strong old man with a black beard and is good friends with the Commander. He is in charge of the Smithy, a forge and workplace for Hunters with equipment-related questions, and takes care of anything related to the Hunter’s equipment. The Second Fleet Master is responsible for forging equipment, upgrading equipment, setting decorations, using pigment and later on, augmenting equipment. He sometimes gives advice to the Hero and posts new quests for earning special equipment.
- **Third Fleet Master** –Leader of the Third Fleet. She is another Wyverian race hunter. With help from the Tracker and her fleet after her airship malfunctioned, The Third Fleet Master is able to continue her mission, which is to research the Coral Highlands and the Rotten Vale. She becomes an important point of contact after the player reaches the Coral Highlands and the Rotten Vale.
- **The First Wyverians** – The First Wyverians are the first Wyverians to come to the New World. Because of their longevity, they know more secrets about the New World than any of the other groups. They provide clues on the potential consequences if Zorah dies.

## Breakdown

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The core of the MH: W story is an exploration of the New World. Hunting down monsters is one of the main parts of the game, but if we look deeper into the storyline, the monsters can also be seen as different obstacles and hurdles that limit us as we come closer to the final truth. Player can either enjoy the process of finding out the truth about the Elder Dragons or gloat in their sense of achievement after successfully hunting the monsters. As the game proposed in the beginning, the character we created is not only a hunter, but also a truth seeker.

From the gameplay perspective, MH: W (for those who love to grind) can be split into four parts, each part generating a different stage of a player’s hunter rank (HR). The MH: W narrative (for those who love a good story) can be split into three parts, each part corresponding to a different stage of a hunter’s growth. For the first three parts of MH: W, both gameplay and story lovers overlap while the fourth stage of the game is really just meant for players who love to grind. Before continuing with the breakdown, I must say that the entire story is very flat and boring, but this doesn’t mean it’s not a good game.

**Stage 1, Beginning.** MH: W begins with a brief narrative telling the player the final destination of the ship after boarding. With an introductory conversation between the members of the Fifth Fleet, the player creates and customizes their own character. Back into the game, the Fifth Fleet meets the target they’ve chasing after, Zorah Magdaros. Zorah Magdaros collides with the ship and the game then begins a tutorial on climbing and using the Slinger, a shooter, to grab onto Mernos, a small flying dragon that clever hunters use to travel around. After entering Astera, the player will start a few tutorial quests to collect resources, find traces of monsters and hunting small monsters in

the Ancient Forest. After completing those assignments and hunting down Pukei-Pukei, a bird Wyvern, the scholars find the traces of Zorah Magdaros and introduce the Hero into a new hunting map, Wildspire Waste.

In the process of protecting scholars to gather Zorah Magdaros' traces, the hero sees a few local monsters and gets to know the Seeker, who is a professional in Elder Dragon crossing. In the process of protecting the scholars, the player must hunt down two larger monsters that live in Ancient Forest, Tobi-Kadachi and Anjanath. After defeating these two monsters, the scholars gather enough traces to ensure Zorah will appear in a vale by dawn. The entire Commission posts the capture mission of Zorah and attempt to ambush Zorah at that vale. However, another Elder Dragon, Nergigante, interferes with the ambush and the mission fails. Even the Huntsman couldn't stop Nergigante and the Commission faces its first failure since the arrival of the Fifth Fleet. This marks the first turning point in the entire story.

**Stage 2, Growing.** After experiencing the first failure upon the arrival of the Fifth fleet, the Commission decides to research more deeply about the New World, the Rotten Vale, and the Coral Highlands. In the process of investigation, the Hero meets the Tracker in Rotten Vale and the Third Fleet Master in the Research Base. The Tracker saves the player from Odograon, a powerful monster that lives in Rotten Vale, and explains her research about the Vale and the Highlands. The Vale the where the monsters go to die, which gives the Highlands nutrients to flourish, and Elder Dragons are the catalyst of this vast ecological system. But Zorah is nowhere to be found, so the Tracker suggests the Hero to visit the First Wyverian since they've lived for much longer than anyone else in the New World.

The First Wyverian requests that the player hunt down Rathalos, the King of the Skies, and Diablos, the King of the Sands, in order to prove the player's strength before he divulges further information. After hunting the two monsters and listening to the explanation from the First Wyverian, the Commission now knows Zorah is gathering energy and preparing to die down here. However, if Zorah dies there, the energy it has stored will wipe out the New World and the research from all these years will mean nothing for the Commission. Thus, the Commission has no choice but to start the Lure Operation to lure Zorah out to the sea. To prevent the interference of Nergigante, the Commission is well prepared this time and included a "Big Gun", Dragonator. They succeed this time and this marks the second turning point. .

**Stage 3, Truth.** The entire Commission thought everything was over, but it's not. The scholars find traces of Pink Rathian, a subspecies of the Rathian flying wyvern on the Coral Highlands soon after the Lure Operation. This was highly suspicious because Pink Rathians should only grow in a place with rich nutrients. This could only mean the research of the New World needs to continue. When the scholars have no idea, the Admiral comes back to Astera and brings a clue: where the Commission lured Zorah, there is actually a tunnel loaded with high-energy crystals. Because of the Hero and the Handler's excellent performance, the Commander recommend them to go and conduct research with the Admiral at that place, which comes to be known as Elder's Recess.

After investigating the Elder's Recess, the player, Handler, and Admiral conclude that only extraordinary monsters can grow in this area and begin to question why Zorah chose to enter the Elder's Recess instead of dying in the Rotten Vale. The three concluded there must be something to lure Zorah inside and Nergigante would be an important clue that would lead to a new breakthrough in their research because the two monsters are always together. After tracking down and hunting the Nergigante, they come to realize that Nergigante is actually eating other Elder Dragons. One piece of the mystery was resolved, but there is still another piece missing: How could this place with such high energy to lure Elder Dragons be formed in the first place? This is highly unlikely to happen naturally, so the player decides to track down other Elder Dragons to seek the final truth. The player tracks down Kushala Daora, Dragon of the Steel; Teostra, Dragon of the Flame; and Vaal Hazak, Dragon of the Dead.

With the help of the Seeker tracking the Elder Crossing and Zorah clearing out the paths, the Hero, Seeker, and Admiral find the nest of Xenojiiiva, the Emperor of the Elder Dragons. The Seeker gets severely injured by the first beam of Xenojiiiva and the Admiral brings him to safety, leaving the Hero to slay the Emperor of the Elder Dragons alone, becoming the real hero of the Commission. The Commission finally figures out that it's actually Xenojiiiva who lures the Elder Dragons every ten years for a feast. The Commission holds a party and the storyline ends here.

The stage 4 MH: W set is for players who love to grind and fully complete a game. This stage has players hunting down more and more monsters, clearing out every side quest, crafting every piece of equipment, unlocking every single achievement, collecting all rare decorations, and getting higher hunter rank.

We can see from the entire story, the narrative is about a hero's journey in a new land and the obstacles that arise in this new land. In the process of seeking the truth about the Elder Dragons, the player becomes a more powerful hunter because they begin to contribute to the missions more and more. After the Lure Operation, the Huntsman said he had waited 40 years for this success, suggesting that the Commission had waited for this player for 40 years.

## **Strongest Element**

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The single best thing about the storyline is the failure of the Capture Operation of Zorah. If that operation succeeds, the entire story of a hero's journey will be destroyed. Everything about the growth and achievements of the Hero is smooth and very successful before that point, and we can't see a hero if the job can also well done by the ordinaries. As we know, the difference between heroes and ordinaries is when the failure block the way, heroes can still move forward. When I was playing the game, I thought it would be a game of Overcoming Monsters as this series before, but I notice it truly tells a hero's journey when I reach to that failure.

## Unsuccessful Element

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As a fan of Monster Hunter series, there are several points I need to complain about/want it to improve, but the most unsuccessful element I think is its design of multiplayer mode. Both in storyline and free hunting, multiplayer mode has drawbacks.

MH: W is a game that aims to gather players from all over the world. While this is a good idea, the game didn't implement this well. In the storyline, taking the quest with other players as a team is forbidden. Every player need to see the story alone before other players can get into the map and hunt monsters. I guess the game wants to show the idea that "there's only one hero", but if everyone is watching the same cut scene, it's very clear that this ideology doesn't hold. Gathering people to complete quests together simply feels like recruiting sidekicks instead of finding people who can also shine equally when doing the quest together. The multiplayer compatibility can be improved for future iterations of this game.

For free hunting, every player needs to create an online session or get into other players' online sessions, which the game calls a gathering hub. Players can only see other players' avatars in the gathering hub and nowhere else. Furthermore, the number of players for each hub is only 16 and every quest is restricted to 4 player at most. I really love playing games with friends and having a big mission without a cap on the group size. There is another Monster Hunter series game called Monster Hunter Online public in China that handled this multiplayer situation really well. All players in the same server can see other players in the base. Players can gather as a team before taking the quest or match with other players on the same quest before accepting the quest. And it even has a marketplace for trading rare resources between players, which fared excellently in online mode. For a game like this, I think the multiplayer aspect should be a bigger aspect and this game would be much better with an improved multiplayer system.

## Highlight

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The best moment for me from entire game narrative was the celebration after the Lure Operation. I was especially captivated by the conversation held between the Commander and the Huntsman. "It's over," the Commander said. "Yes. It's only taken 40 years." "Yeah." It would have been such an emotional moment but the two characters had no signs of happiness saying this. From the expressions on their faces, I could see nothing but sorrow and melancholy. The story as we know, starts at the embarkation of the Fifth Fleet, but consider how many hunters had gone on this journey before we did and the price the Commission had to pay prior to this success. Even more so, this success is not representative of the truth they were hoping to find. They were only able to stop Zorah but weren't able to find the actual cause of the Elder Dragons' migration (they do later, thankfully). The Commander and the Huntsman's words made me realize a key detail that I didn't realize before. In the Astera, most of the hunters are from the Fifth Fleet. The Third Fleet is in the Research Base and few members of the First and Second Fleet are scattered around. However, I never saw a hunter from the Fourth Fleet, meaning there was a high possibility that they all sacrificed themselves in the investigation.

Coupled with the Commander and the Huntsman's strong words, I felt as if I could really sympathize with their pain and the sacrifices they had to give as well as the price they had to pay to come to today's success. It was at this moment that I felt the game narrative really spoke to me and allowed me to almost feel as if I were my character.

## Critical Reception

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**IGN – Joe Skrebels – 95/100:** Joe Skrebels from IGN praised this game a lot in different perspectives. In the playing status, the game created 14 different kinds of weapons with around 20 upgrading trees/modelings for each. MH: W also provided different hunting grounds, each with separate ecosystems. And the open area hunting is fantastic for modeling a real ecosystem. For monsters, there are plenty of parts and traces the player can collect of different rarities. The only drawback Joe points out is the Game is lack in narrative storytelling, but overall, this is an excellent game.

**SOFTPEDIA – Cosmin Vasile – 90/100:** Cosmin Vasile from SOFTPEDIA conclude MH: W as a must-play title that shouldn't be skipped by veterans of the franchise. The game is easy to pick up by newcomers and has an easy to learn combat system. It has massive upgrade trees for weapons and armors. Offering higher rewards for those who take higher risks, this game has endless replay ability. However, Cosmin thinks the graphics needs more work and the story needs more explaining for the inexperienced.

## Lessons

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- **The environment tells a story in gameplay.**

Every piece of the environment should appear for some reason, or it should not exist on the screen. Many environmental elements can affect elements of gameplay. For example, players can set up traps in MH: W using the elements of the environment at their disposal. Using some stones that are hanging or a place with massive thorns, player can knock down monsters by implementing a dropping stone trap or lure the monsters into thorns so that they can be trapped. The environment is always changing so that the same traps cannot be easily implemented again – the fallen stones can't be rehung naturally and the broken thorns can't trap any new monsters.

- **Story can be simple and straightforward (better that it's not), but needs to full fill with logic and turning points.**

As every player knows, the storyline for MH: W is very flat and straightforward, and is very repetitive since it's just hunting different monsters. However, as simple and straightforward as the story is, it still needs to make sense. For instance, the Tracker's explanation of how the ecosystems in MH: W form is cohesive and fits into the realm of the world. This doesn't mean the explanation cannot be fictional, rather, the core point is the story needs some rules that can be accepted by the audience easily. However, all this logic really just creates a frame for this world in the game. The real magic behind good stories is turning points. Turning points can catch audiences' eyes

easily and can be “a success in tons of failure” or if not implemented correctly, “a failure in tons of success”.

## **Summation**

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MH: W is a masterclass in the environmental telling and building of a hero’s journey. Although the storyline is quite flat and players may think it’s boring, the setting of the New World can be easily accepted by all the players, no matter if they have previous exposure or not, and the extraordinary fighting experience and well thought out combat system attracts tons of players. Furthermore, the story can provide joy for hundreds of hours for story players and diverse builds and side quests also provide joy for thousands of hours for grinding players. It absolutely is a milestone in the Monster Hunter series and holds the potential to make better games.