

Game Design & Dev - Game Designers - Brief Bios

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A collection of brief bios for key game designers.

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Intro

With the advent of the first video games, games such as Pong, Space Invaders, and Super Mario Bros., game designers have continued to play a crucial role in the domain of game design and development.

Shigeru Miyamoto

Miyamoto has been at the forefront of game design since he joined Nintendo in 1977.

Nintendo's legendary game designer is rightly regarded as one of the most important and influential game designers of all time. He's best known for designing games and series such as

- Donkey Kong
- Mario
- Zelda
- Mario Kart
- Star Fox
- F-Zero

Many of his games can be seen to draw from a sense of child like exploration and simple creative wonder. He has also noted the influence of childhood, and a child like perception of the world, on his concepts for game designs.

"When I traveled around the country without a map, trying to find my way, stumbling on amazing things as I went, I realised how it felt to go on an adventure like this."

David, S. *Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World*. Vintage Books. New York. 1994. P.51.

Peter Molyneux

Peter Molyneux is a well known example of a designer who pushed the boundaries of what we perceive as a game. His breakthrough moment came with the design of the game **Populous**. This game effectively created the **god** gaming genre.

It was released in 1989 by his company **Bullfrog**, and went on to sell over 4 million copies. The best version was available on the Commodore Amiga.

In **Populous**, a player is able to adopt the role of a deity, competing against another deity, and control and lead followers on each of the game's levels. These followers may be guided using standard direction, manipulated as necessary, and coerced or influenced by divine intervention. The simple goal is to eliminate any followers of the opposing deity. It has since spawned a series of games, and created the genre itself.

Bullfrog was later acquired by Electronic Arts in 1995, before Molyneux went on to found Lionhead Studios in 1997.

In 2001, after three years of development led by Molyneux, Lionhead Studios went on to release the much anticipated **Black and White** game for Windows PCs.

It was known for its unique design and gameplay, and its overall depth and scope. It was particularly renowned for its creatures' artificial intelligence, which set a new Guinness World Record for its overall complexity.

He also created game series such as **Dungeon Keeper**, **Theme Park**, **Fable**, and the recent mobile game **The Trail**.

However, he's also had his fair share of issues and criticism concerning games such as **Godus** and **What's Inside the Cube**. Each of these titles became problematic for Molyneux, to say the least.

Will Wright

Will Wright is a veteran American game designer, best known for his work on *The Sims*. Originally released in 2000, *The Sims* has now led to countless versions, spin-offs, and driven a genre that is more interested in participation than a definitive win.

As a co-founder of *Maxis*, and then later part of EA, Wright also developed the well-known game *Spore*.

He's often referred to as a designer of *software toys* instead of traditional games. A nod, of sorts, to the non-traditional structure employed for many of his games.

He's also been a passionate developer of, and advocate for, emergent and adaptive systems. Wright has continued to develop this concept for many of his games, and this legacy is evident in games such as *Spore* and *The Sims 3 and 4*. In effect, he tries to use these emergent systems, with their simple rules and definitions, to provide the possibility for the development of complex, detailed outcomes.

Jenova Chen

Jenova Chen is a Chinese game designer and director, now based in LA, USA.

After creating an experimental game called *Cloud*, whilst a student at USC's Interactive Media Division, Chen briefly worked on *Spore*.

He's best known for games such as *Cloud*, *Flow*, *Flower*, and most recently *Journey* for the company he co-founded, *ThatGameCompany*. His company was fortunate to land a three game deal with Sony, which included *Flow*, *Flower*, and *Journey*. However, these games became exclusive titles for the Playstation consoles.

His games are known for experimental use of narrative, structure, and attempts to simply push what we perceive as a game. This was one of the underlying forces that drove the creation of the game *Cloud* with Kellee Santiago.

For example, his close collaboration with Austin Wintory on the music for *Flow* and *Journey* represents a desire and commitment to integrate various dramatic elements into the overall gaming experience.

In various biographies, a recurring theme tends to emerge for the type of game Chen is trying to develop. With a foot in both Chinese and Western US culture, he tries to make games that don't fit cultural preconceptions. Instead, he's interested in sparking universal emotions and feelings that are free of such cultural baggage.

Rob Pardo

Rob Pardo is best known as the lead designer of Blizzard's **World of Warcraft**.

He enjoyed various positions at Blizzard, including *lead designer* and *Executive Vice President* of Game Design, before becoming *Chief Creative Officer* until the middle of 2014.

His best known games include,

- World of Warcraft
- WarCraft
- StarCraft
- Diablo
- Mortal Kombat

Whilst designing WarCraft, for example, Pardo was instrumental in pushing the game more towards what we now consider traditional *RPG* games. With the introduction of 3D for WarCraft III, for example, they tested various options for camera usage in this type of game. After experimenting with different angles and perspectives, including a lower shooting position, they settled on the now familiar, traditional isometric view as used and derived from technical drawings. This assessment of camera options became a key factor in driving many of the early 3D prototypes for this game.

This prototyping also allowed Pardo and his design team to iteratively determine the nature of units and heroes in the game. These concepts and designs helped shape the nature of the game's story, and its possible objectives.

One of the outcomes of this process was the development of WarCraft's races, which initially included nine possible options. This gradually reduced to six, and then five. The fifth perceived race, *Demons*, was finally dropped before the initial release. Their role was scaled back to simple enemies as testing helped to shape the story and roles of game characters and objects.

References

- [Cloud](#)
- [fIOw](#)
- [Flower](#)
- [Journey](#)
 - [Journey - Wikipedia](#)
- [Maxis](#)
- [The Sims](#)
- [Spore](#)
- [StarCraft](#)
 - [free download](#)
- [ThatGameCompany](#)
- [World of Warcraft](#)