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Home >> Xbox >> PlayStation >> Nintendo >> PC >> News

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Review: *Star Pioneers*

Star Pioneers is the latest strategic simulation game from Big Universe Studios, known best for city-builder *Micro-World* (2010). *Star Pioneers* has similar gameplay to *Micro-World* but takes the graphics, sound and sheer size to a whole new level. The result is an immersive, addictive game with lots of replay value.

This time the setting is space. You've been forced to abandon your home planet after a devastating natural disaster. You escape to a new world on a mothership loaded with survivors, technology and supplies, including animals and plant life. The aim is to keep as many survivors as possible alive and build your tiny colony into a thriving settlement.

At first, the emphasis is on basic survival and you can assign survivors to tasks such as exploration, farming and construction. More activities open up as the game progresses, and your focus shifts to contacting alien races, expansion and trade.

Like *Micro-World*, gameplay is mouse- or touchscreen-based, and pleasingly instinctive, making this a versatile game that can be played on either a desktop or tablet device. For those who enjoy quest-oriented gaming, *Star Pioneers* includes a narrative – assigning you a series of missions via some beautifully produced cut-scenes – that gives the game a definite end point. Or, you can ignore the missions and play in sandbox mode to see just how big you can grow your new civilisation.

Score: ★★★★★

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Tasks

Complete an extended piece of writing that is in the style and format of a Text Response.

A Text Response gives a personal opinion of another text, event or experience.

You are going to write a review of a computer game. Work through the steps and then write your own Text Response.

Glossary

action verb: A verb that indicates an observable action or happening. For example: The animals **are fed** every day.; The birds **fought** over the last crumbs.

audience: The 'ideal' or intended group of readers, listeners or viewers that the writer, designer, filmmaker or speaker is addressing. For example: students in the classroom, an individual or group, the wider community or some other implied audience.

descriptive language: Language that is used to describe or evoke images in the mind of the listener or reader. For example: The looming trees became a dark blur as we hurtled past them.

evaluative language: Language that contains a positive or negative value judgement about something. For example: His **unruly** behaviour let down the whole team.

sensing verb: A verb that indicates someone's thoughts, feelings or perceptions. For example: I **think** he's wrong.; Most people **believed** that the disaster was caused by human error.; As a child, I **despised** broccoli.; I **saw** a rainbow in the distance.

technical language: Language that is used to speak and write about specialised topics or disciplines so that people can share knowledge precisely and efficiently. For example: the language of science, music or sports.

Step 1: Title

1 Write the title of your Text Response. Use a title that identifies the focus of your Text Response.

Step 2: Background information

Before you start writing, you need to know some information about the computer game you have chosen to review. Use these questions as a starting point for your research.

1 What is the name of your chosen game?

2 When was the game released?

Step 2: Background information continued

- 3 Which company produced the game?
- 4 Describe its target audience.
- 5 Describe what type of game it is. Is it a strategic simulation game or a role-playing game? Is it a multiplayer game?
- 6 Describe the aim of the game. Does it have a particular storyline or setting?
- 7 Describe how the characters or features are manipulated. Do you use a mouse, keyboard, joystick or touch screen? Is there more than one option?
- 8 Is the game open-ended, or is there a clear finishing point?
- 9 If the game is a sequel, describe how it compares to the original. Is it better or worse? In what ways has it improved or not improved?

Step 3: Language features of Text Responses

Find one example of each language feature used in *Review: Star Pioneers*.

- 1 technical language:

Step 3: Language features of Text Responses continued

2 evaluative language:

3 descriptive language:

4 sensing verb:

5 action verb:

Step 4: Technical language

List five examples of technical language that you could include in your review.

Step 5: Structure

Text Responses have three stages: Context, Description and Judgement. Describe what happens in each stage in *Review: Star Pioneers*. Write one or two sentences for each stage.

1 Context – the writer makes it clear what text, event or experience they are responding to, and gives a brief statement of their opinion

2 Description – the writer briefly describes the focus text, event or experience

3 Judgement – the writer expresses their opinions in more detail

Step 6: Create your own text

You are now ready to write your Text Response. Follow the structure in **Step 5**. You should include your own opinions, but make sure you provide reasons for them. Use the background information you collected in **Step 2** and the language features from **Step 3** and **Step 4**.

If you are unsure about where to start, take another look at *Review: Star Pioneers*. Remember to use full sentences, and correct punctuation and spelling!

Teacher comments