

Game Narrative Review

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Game Title: *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity*

Platform: Nintendo Switch

Genre: Musou

Release Date: November 20, 2020

Developer: Omega Force

Publishers: Nintendo, Koei Tecmo

Creative Director: Ryouta Matsushita

Overview

Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity is an alternate-timeline retelling of events from Nintendo's 2017 Nintendo Switch title *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. The narrative subverts the status quo established by previous *Legend of Zelda* entries by framing Princess Zelda as the story's central protagonist. The events of the game follow Zelda's transformation from a princess who doubts her ability to live up to fate's demands to a hero who takes fate into her own hands to save her kingdom. However, this transformation does not come easily; despite her devout efforts, Zelda doubts herself every step of the way in a struggle to awaken her divine powers until finally her failure is realized. At this point, after her worst fears have come true and Calamity Ganon has returned, she chooses to press on and take command of her fate, eventually coming to awaken her powers, unite all of Hyrule, and prevent Ganon's century-long reign that preceded the opening of *Breath of the Wild*.

Characters

- **Zelda** – Burgeoning Scholar, Princess. With the blood of the goddess flowing through her veins, Zelda is prophesied to use her divine sealing power to prevent Calamity Ganon's reign. However, Zelda struggles to awaken her sacred power as the Calamity draws near. More than anything, she fears that she will fail to awaken her power in time to save her kingdom from destruction, despite her relentless devotion to training. To make up for her anticipated shortcomings, Zelda sets out to learn more about Hyrule's ancient Sheikah

technology and assemble a team of Champions to take on Ganon in hopes that she will awaken her dormant power along the way. This incarnation of Zelda- the *Legend of Zelda* series' namesake princess- is the same Zelda from *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.

- **Calamity Ganon** – Hatred and Malice Incarnate. Calamity Ganon is the spirit of a primal evil that has attempted to ravage the land of Hyrule across innumerable generations. In *Breath of the Wild*, Ganon brings Hyrule to ruin upon his successful return. When Terrako travels back in time to warn Zelda of Ganon's takeover, Ganon sends a wave of his power- called Malice- through the time gate. The Malice takes control of the Terrako of the past, who becomes a vessel for Ganon's power known as Harbinger Ganon. Astor, a dark seer, and the Yiga Clan, an organization devoted to Ganon's return, attempt to use Harbinger Ganon to expedite the great Calamity, but Zelda is ultimately able to unite Hyrule, awaken her powers, and seal away Calamity Ganon's spirit, preventing his reign of destruction.
- **Terrako** – Guardian of Time. Terrako is a miniature Guardian, a droid-like protector built by the ancient Sheikah tribe. When Zelda was a child, Terrako would comfort the princess by emitting a lullaby. However, King Rhoam locked Terrako away so that Zelda would focus on awakening her powers. When Zelda finally does awaken her powers in *Breath of the Wild*, Terrako is reactivated. Upon witnessing the destruction caused by Calamity Ganon, he opens a time gate and travels back in time to warn Zelda and the others of the impending Calamity, setting the events of *Age of Calamity* into motion. Once he arrives in the Hyrule of the past, the timeline immediately diverges from that of *Breath of the Wild*, as evidenced by the butterflies that greet him in reference to the butterfly effect.
- **King Rhoam** – Defier of Prophecy. King Rhoam is the ruler of Hyrule and Princess Zelda's father. He is determined to stop Calamity Ganon's return. He is emotionally distant from Zelda and pushes her to work tirelessly to awaken her sacred power, claiming that all is for naught if she fails to do so. He commands the Hyrulean army until Zelda steps up to take his place after his supposed death.
- **Impa** – Royal Advisor, Loyal Friend. Impa is Zelda's retainer and advisor to the Royal Family of Hyrule. Despite her youth, she is a prominent figure within the Sheikah tribe, known for her diligence and loyalty. She accompanies Zelda on all of her missions, and she is the first to encourage Zelda when things are looking bleak. Her sister is Purah, one of the lead researchers aiding Zelda's effort to utilize ancient Sheikah technology in the fight against Ganon.
- **Link** – Silent Knight. Link is appointed to be Zelda's personal guard by King Rhoam after proving particularly proficient on the battlefield. Although unknown to Rhoam and Zelda at the time, Link is also an incarnation of the Hero's spirit, prophesied to wield the Master Sword and aid Zelda in sealing away Calamity Ganon. Link is the main protagonist of *Breath of the Wild* and other mainline *Legend of Zelda* entries.

- **Urbosa** – Gerudo Tempest. Urbosa is the Champion selected by Zelda to pilot Divine Beast Vah Naboris in the fight against Ganon. She is the chief of the Gerudo tribe and also Zelda’s late mother’s close friend. As is such, Urbosa and Zelda have a close relationship, with Urbosa referring to Zelda as her “little bird.”
- **Mipha** – Zora Wellspring. Like Zelda, Mipha is a princess, the daughter of the King of the Zora race. Gracious and kind, she is the Champion selected by Zelda to pilot Divine Beast Vah Ruta, and she is Link’s childhood friend.
- **Daruk** – Goron Stalwart. Daruk is revered among the Goron people for his incredible strength, will, and fortitude. He is the Champion selected by Zelda to pilot Divine Beast Vah Rudania.
- **Revali** – Rito Warrior. Revali is an egotistical but highly skilled archer from Rito Village. He is the Champion selected by Zelda to pilot the final Divine Beast, Vah Medoh.
- **Others** – *Age of Calamity* features a slew of additional playable and non-playable characters, including Hestu, the Great Fairies, and the Great Deku Tree. Some of these characters play small roles in Zelda’s journey, but they are not individually important for the purposes of this analysis.

Breakdown

Premise

While *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* is Link’s journey of growth, experienced by regaining memories, completing trials, and earning hearts and stamina in the wake of Calamity Ganon, *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity* is Zelda’s story- it is her growth that is chronicled from beginning to end.

Strong Elements

Age of Calamity’s story structure, employment of cinematic techniques, and character roster makeup effectively bolster Zelda’s story and call attention to the shift in protagonist from Link to Zelda.

Story Structure

The structure of *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity*’s story itself is the greatest telltale that Zelda is the main protagonist. As previously noted, it is Zelda who must learn to overcome her insecurities in order to save Hyrule. She is central to all of the major narrative shifts and plot points, and both major turning points revolve around her ability to overcome fear and insecurity and her commitment to leading Hyrule and saving her loved ones. The entire game’s timeline-altering plot is even set into motion by Zelda’s boldest action in *The Legend of Zelda:*

Breath of the Wild- the moment at which she awakens her powers in an effort to protect Link. In *Age of Calamity*, this awakening allows Terrako to travel back in time and forewarn the heroes of the impending doomsday, ultimately leading to Ganon's suppression and the heroes' victory. In essence, Zelda's power is the only reason Hyrule can be saved in this timeline, and players are privy to this from the start. Because of the game's opening scene, the audience already knows that Zelda can awaken her powers, even though Zelda herself is unsure. This establishes narrative warrant and quickly lays the groundwork for one of the game's major turning points- the point at which Zelda awakens her powers in the altered timeline. In a moment that is all too familiar for *Zelda* fans, Link stands alone to face a version of Ganon while Impa urges Zelda to flee. Rather than abandoning Link, Zelda defiantly turns back to rescue him. After spending the entire game unsure of her ability to live up to her fated role, she takes fate into her own hands, awakening the sealing power that the audience knew was deep within her all along.

While Zelda, Impa, Link, and the other Champions all undergo mechanical progress by leveling up throughout the game, only Zelda undergoes a significant transformation of character, blossoming into a confident leader after a journey of self-doubt and perseverance. This fact is acknowledged in the game's dialogue, during a conversation between Zelda and Urbosa. When Zelda confides in Urbosa about her insecurities, Urbosa responds; "Perhaps you are missing the point, comparing your progress to Link's. He is the same boy he was before acquiring that sword."

Cinematography

Alongside story structure, cinematographic techniques successfully reinforce the idea that Zelda is the driving agent of the narrative. While the aforementioned scene between Zelda and Urbosa clearly depicts Zelda as the subject matter, even scenes that seem to focus on other characters subtly shift the player's attention to Zelda through framing and composition. One of the most telling and significant examples of this shift of attention is the cutscene following the moment Link draws the Master Sword from its sacred resting place. Zelda- not Link- is the focus of the shot, during which the Great Deku Tree explains the importance of the Master Sword and Link's status as its wielder in preventing the Calamity. The framing of the scene works to heighten Zelda's own struggle to awaken her powers rather than emphasize Link's importance, despite the scene's verbal content. This is subtly although particularly effective, as psychological studies show that visual information dominates viewer memory over aural information when the content of the two stimuli are in opposition.¹ Furthermore, at the end of the cutscene, the Deku Tree proclaims; "Hyrule's fate is in your hands." Both Link's hand, clutching the Master Sword, and Zelda's hand, where an insignia of her power is to appear once awakened, are in shot, but only Zelda's hand is in focus. Not only does this maneuver of composition shift attention from Link to

¹ Lang, Annie. (1 February 1995). Defining Audio/Video Redundancy From a Limited- Capacity Information Processing Perspective.

Zelda, but it also subverts precedence in the *Legend of Zelda* series in a major way. In all *Zelda* games past, the scene depicting the retrieval of the Master Sword has been, first and foremost, unequivocally about Link as the wielder of the divine blade. Seldom do other characters even appear during this rite, let alone draw attention away from the legendary Hero and the Blade of Evil's Bane as Zelda does here. By commanding the visual focus of this momentous scene, Zelda attempts to leave no doubt that *Age of Calamity* is her story.

This scene, although particularly noteworthy, is not the sole example of this framing device, which is repeated numerous times throughout the game's many cinematics. For instance, when Mipha is recruited as the pilot of Divine Beast Vah Ruta, the shot extends over Mipha's shoulder and focuses in on Zelda as the scene comes to a close. In fact, a considerable number of the cutscenes preceding and following the playable battles begin and end with lines from and shots of Zelda, more so than any other character throughout the game. Wouldn't it be most important for players to glean the subtleties of the main character's reactions over those of the supporting characters? It further stands to reason, then, that Zelda is the main character.

Meanwhile, in ensemble shots, Zelda is often seen leading the pack of heroes, physically positioned before the others. Even when she's not in front, she's typically in the center of the group and the frame. Furthermore, Zelda is almost always the subject of the loading screens' heavy narration, which frequently uses verbiage like "Zelda and the others," and "Zelda and her party."

As evidenced by the cutscenes' focus, composition, and frequency at which Zelda is highlighted, Zelda is the most pivotal agent within *Age of Calamity*.

Cast

The supporting characters are primarily Zelda's as well. King Rhoam is her father, Impa is her retainer and loyal friend, Urbosa is her beloved mother-figure, Terrako is her childhood companion, and Link is her guard. She is the glue to which the band of heroes adheres. Even Mipha, a love interest for and childhood friend of Link, is a fellow princess to whom Zelda can relate, which she does in multiple cinematics. The antagonists are more personally significant to Zelda as well. While Calamity Ganon is a threat to all of Hyrule, the Yiga Clan attempts to assassinate Zelda specifically in order to hasten Ganon's return, just as the Yiga Clan targets Link in *Breath of the Wild*, in which he is the protagonist. Astor does the same by ordering his Malice replicas to kill Zelda, not Link. The antagonists clearly understand that the success or failure of their plan hinges on Zelda's power, a sentiment which King Rhoam, Impa, and Zelda herself echo numerous times. Because awakening Zelda's power requires a transformation of character, unlike the powers of Link and the other Champions, it is blatant that Zelda is the

story's focus and that her power is a product of narrative growth, not a mere macguffin to advance the plot.

Weak Elements

Considering the evidence presented, one may believe that Zelda's status as the main protagonist would be anything but revelatory. Isn't it obvious that Zelda is the main character? If one were to watch *Age of Calamity's* cutscenes alone, it would be, and it wouldn't appear that Link was much more significant than the other four Champions, especially during the game's first two acts. In fact, the elements that would call the most attention to his character would be his relationship with and foil-status to Zelda. However, due to a sometimes narratively disparate relationship between *Age of Calamity's* cutscenes and gameplay, Link is positioned as much more significant when the game is taken as a whole, which muddles the obviousness of Zelda's protagonistic status.

Imbalance within Gameplay

Stated simply, Link's importance is disproportionately represented between the gameplay and the cutscenes, emphasized far more in gameplay than in the narrative of the cinematics, which focus first and foremost on Zelda as the protagonist. This is not to suggest that Link is not important to the story of *Age of Calamity* or that he should be presented as unimportant; as the bearer of the Master Sword and one of Zelda's most reliable companions, Link is and should be important to the story. This is simply to state that *Age of Calamity's* gameplay presents Link as more important than the narrative would require, particularly to the point that Zelda's own story is hindered.

The line between important and overemphasized is thin when it comes to a character that has been exclusively featured as the main protagonist in series entries past, save for a few Tingle-centric spin-offs. Considering Link is the main character in both *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* and the original *Hyrule Warriors*- the two games upon which *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity* is based- featuring Link so prominently reinforces the status quo of the *Zelda* franchise. This is the same status quo that the narrative presented by *Age of Calamity's* cutscenes works so hard to subvert- one that assumes there is a protagonistic Hero and a supporting Princess, not a protagonistic Princess who is the Hero. As is such, Link's amplified presence within gameplay does not prime players to consider that *Age of Calamity* is Zelda's story, and it actively works against the subversive effects of the narrative.

Mechanically, Link outshines Zelda (and all of the other playable characters) in every way. He is the only character with three combat styles- one-handed, two-handed, and spear- each with close to twenty cosmetic weapon variants. Zelda has two weapon types, with only three variants each,

and all other characters wield one weapon with three cosmetic variants or fewer. Consequently, Link also boasts the greatest number of upgrades- several for each combat style. Since upgrades are acquired by doing deeds for the people of Hyrule on the map interface and accompanied by story blurbs, Link is therefore the most chronicled character in this largely passive but undeniably narrative portion of gameplay. Additionally, Link boasts 63 selectable costume pieces. Zelda has three. All of these imbalances in Link's favor suggest to the player that Link is the main character, despite the fact that Zelda's journey is the one chronicled by the cutscenes and the overarching story structure.

Ludological Error

In addition to this imbalance, *Age of Calamity* is plagued with ludological errors, some of which cause dissonance between Zelda's depiction in the gameplay and the overarching story. In essence, the narrative demands that Zelda is seen as weak in the story's early stages, while the hack-and-slash, *Dynasty Warriors*-inspired gameplay demands that she is formidably powerful throughout.

Early on in the story, the player, as Link, must save Zelda from an onslaught of attackers. The notion of Link protecting Zelda is nothing new. In fact, Zelda's story arc benefits from her presented state of weakness in the beginning of the game, giving her character plenty of room to grow. The ludological error arises from the fact that Zelda, like all playable characters in *Age of Calamity*, is perfectly capable of decimating thousands of enemy units with ease on her own, and the player knows this from their experience playing as Zelda. Players will not forget the moment that they, as Zelda, single handedly destroyed a wave of moblins with flashy displays of power and grace, even if the cutscene they're watching depicts Zelda's sudden struggle to take down just a few of Ganon's grunts, requiring Link's intervention. In fact, discrepancies such as these are likely to pull players out of the story in a moment of cognitive dissonance and draw attention to the game's conflicting presentations of story and gameplay. This is far from an isolated incident of oversight, as Zelda is shown as defenseless in cutscenes on several occasions.

In some missions, Zelda is even relegated to a non-playable status under the premise that she is in need of escort by the other characters, despite how clearly and abundantly powerful she is shown to be when the player actually does assume control of her. Furthermore, this error begets the simple fact that the player is often forced to play as Link in scenarios that, given the framing of the overarching narrative, feel more potent and consequential for Zelda. This undercuts not only Zelda's status as protagonist but also the player's gameplay experience, which should align with narrative rather than work against it.

However, when the game's mechanical favor of Link is taken into account, it's not difficult to see why the game forces players to spend more time playing as Link than Zelda; Link demands more

playtime in order to keep the gameplay experience fresh, since he is the only character with 50+ weapons and three combat styles to upgrade.

Taken together, these imbalances and ludological errors work to emphasize Link and his strength while confusing players about Zelda's strength and her status as main protagonist. Between the two characters, players will default to Link based on precedence. Link's positioning as a more significant character does seep into the cutscenes occasionally in the seldom few POV shots from his perspective, which feel very out of place when taken without the context of the gameplay. However, the vast majority of the cutscenes clearly present Zelda as the main character, a novel concept that the clashing gameplay experience undercuts severely.

Strongest Element

Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity's strongest element is the cinematography of its cutscenes. As noted in the breakdown, framing, focus, and composition are all employed to emphasize Zelda as the protagonist and convey her transformation. While the examples included in the breakdown are isolated, these techniques are also repeated across related cutscenes to mirror important moments and highlight Zelda's growth throughout. The strongest example of this employment of mirroring cinematography is a scene directly following the second turning point at which Zelda saves Link and awakens her powers. In this scene, Zelda stands atop Fort Hateno, overlooking the battle-worn soldiers of Hyrule. She inspires her troops with a call to action from the parapets—mirroring the very first scene of the altered timeline, wherein King Rhoam did the same from the parapets of Hyrule Castle. The latter sequence mirrors the former down to the shot in the case of several lines, and it works to emphasize both Zelda's newfound confidence and her new position as leader of Hyrule following Rhoam's supposed demise. Potently underscored by the mirroring cinematography, Zelda's rally marvelously accentuates her growth: “Everyone. You are mine to lead now. Calamity Ganon... will be sealed away forever with the power I possess!”

Unsuccessful Element

Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity's weakest element is the relationship between narrative and gameplay, which is plagued with ludological errors that cause dissonance in the player experience. These discrepancies are most offensive when counteracting the played experience of Zelda's power, as described in the breakdown. However, several other examples persist, each causing clashes between the constructed narrative and the played experience of the game.

In an instance that echoes the game's inconsistent portrayal of Zelda, Link must step in and save Impa from a few measly bokoblins during an early cutscene. Only seconds later, Impa is shown to be more than capable of slaughtering thousands of monsters on her own during gameplay, causing the preceding plotpoint to feel forced and nonsensical.

The controllable Divine Beasts, used as giant mechs of mass destruction within gameplay, provide another point of ludological error. Considering the clumsy, inconcise, button-mashing gameplay sequence, there is no possible way that, for example, Divine Beast Vah Ruta could have destroyed invading monsters discriminately without simultaneously vaporizing the entirety of the Zora population. Yet cutscenes following the Divine Beast battle show the mech carefully targeting monsters only feet away from Zora allies, who remain unharmed.

As a final example of the many inconsistencies between the played and viewed experiences of *Age of Calamity*, there is a moment where Purah discovers that the Sheikah Slate can teleport wielders from one location to another. This revelation comes much to Link and Zelda's awe, despite the fact that the player, as these characters, have already used this teleportation mechanic numerous times over the past several hours of gameplay.

In line with good-faith criticism, a certain level of suspension of disbelief is to be expected of players, but the ludological errors in *Age of Calamity* are numerous, and many are significant enough to pull players out of the story in a moment of confusion. To alleviate this effect, a narrative designer could more closely track the abilities of each character and machine throughout the game's progression and pinpoint any logical inconsistencies within cutscenes for revision.

Highlight

The most powerful moment in *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity*'s narrative is Zelda's first turning point, at which she resolves to be the Hero of her own Legend. After several chapters of struggling to believe that she can successfully awaken her sealing powers, this scene begins with Zelda's lowest point; the Calamity has arrived earlier than expected, her father has seemingly been killed, and the Divine Beasts have been overtaken by Calamity Ganon's Malice. After a moment of sorrow that the failure she always feared had finally come to fruition, she defiantly looks toward Hyrule Castle, shrouded by Calamity Ganon. "Can we still do this?" she asks herself. In resolve, she holds up her right hand- the hand upon which the insignia of her power is meant to appear- and then nods in determination. This is the moment at which Zelda takes control of her own story, evidenced literally as she henceforth assumes the role of narrator during the story-packed loading screens. The assumption of this narratorial role, previously held by her father, powerfully marks a shift in Zelda's agency and sets the groundwork for the second turning point, after which Zelda rallies the Hyrulean troops as their new leader in succession to King Rhoam.

Critical Reception

Source: Kotaku

Reviewer: Ash Parrish

Score: N/A

Interestingly, Parrish refers to Zelda quite literally as “the macguffin princess with an as-yet-unmanifested power to save the day.” In fact, it doesn’t seem to register to Parrish that Zelda is the main protagonist (even though the narrative structure clearly indicates that she is) due to the large cast of playable characters to select from and the disproportionate gameplay to narrative ratio. Parrish fondly describes playing as her favorite characters Urbosa and Impa but waves away the significance of Zelda and even Link in this tale. This is a poignant example of *Age of Calamity*’s failures regarding the narrative’s overshadowing by dissonant gameplay; Zelda’s story is not reinforced in the vast majority of the hack-and-slash title’s many battles, in which players can opt to (and sometimes must) forego playing as Zelda altogether. Ultimately, Parrish praises how unique each character feels during gameplay but criticizes the game’s lack of story, which is heavily outnumbered in playtime by gameplay that doesn’t progress the narrative, and the decision to include an altered timeline. Although, it is important to note that Parrish admits to skipping the narrative blurbs attached to the game’s many fetch quests.²

Source: Electronic Gaming Monthly

Reviewer: Michael Goroff

Score: 4/5

Goroff praises how well the game translates the personalities of the characters and the gameplay mechanics of *Breath of the Wild* to the *Dynasty Warriors* hack-and-slash style. While he ultimately finds the title to be fun and exciting for *Zelda* fans, he too criticizes the colossal amount of battles that do not advance the story. “The good news is that, if you never get bored of hacking and slashing, *Age of Calamity* is constantly giving you excuses to partake. But if you’re simply playing for the story, you might hit a wall 20 hours in.” Furthermore, he sees the inclusion of time travel and alternate timelines as a cop-out that cheapens the game’s potential to fill in the gaps that *Breath of the Wild* left.³

Source: Screen Rant

Reviewer: Scott Baird

Score: 4/5

² Parrish, Ash. (18 November 2020). *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity: The Kotaku Review*.

³ Goroff, Michael. (18 November 2020). *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity review*.

Like the others, Baird praises the combat system, which he claims “never feels dull” due to the unique character playstyles. Baird’s main point of criticism is with the lack of enemy variety, although he describes the time travel-induced plot points of the later game as akin to fanfiction. However, Baird praises the game’s character development and the ominous tone of impending calamity, describing *Age of Calamity* “a fascinating look into the world of *Breath of the Wild*.” Baird also cites the game as an improvement upon Zelda’s portrayal in *Breath of the Wild*, which he describes as “wimpy.” Interestingly, Baird is one of few reviewers who does not take issue with the many side-battles that do not advance the narrative.⁴

Lessons

Narrative and gameplay should align, not clash. This is the greatest lesson *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity* offers, from which other takeaways stem. A narrative is more effective when supported by gameplay, and gameplay is more meaningful when mutually informative of and informed by the narrative. When the two are closely constructed with the other in mind, the game becomes a unified story told through gameplay and cinematics. When the two are developed without emphasis on mutual cohesion, gameplay and narrative each risk undermining the meaning and effectiveness of the other. This is seen in *Age of Calamity* in regards to Zelda’s portrayal, muddling perception of her power and reducing her protagonistic status. As noted by reviewers, if direct narrative presentation (cutscenes) is dwarfed in playtime by gameplay sequences that are non-contributive to the narrative, the finer points of the narrative can be lost upon players altogether.

A story must commit to subversion on all levels if that subversion is to be successful. Stemming from the above point on mutually informative gameplay and narrative, *Age of Calamity* also shows that, when the two do not both work to advance a subversion, the subversion’s effectiveness is tarnished, and players will default to the status quo. This is exemplified by the perception that Link is the central character in *Age of Calamity*, an idea supported by gameplay but in opposition to the narrative structure, which clearly poses Zelda as the central protagonist.

Ludological errors take players out of the moment. The presence of ludological errors in *Age of Calamity* calls attention to the disjointed relationship between narrative and gameplay and brings players out of the story. Narrative designers would benefit from tracking logistical information regarding what characters can and cannot do in gameplay and when in order to poise gameplay to serve the narrative and avoid contradictions to it.

Film techniques can be effectively applied to video games. Due to the clashes between narrative and gameplay, Zelda’s protagonistic status would have been far less apparent if not for the masterful employment of cinematography in the game’s cutscenes, which highlight Zelda

⁴ Baird, Scott. (18 November 2020). *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity Review - War of the Wild*.

specifically and repeatedly. Cinematographic techniques can be used to effectively direct the player's attention to key details in such a way that allows the game to "show, not tell."

Summation

The Legend of Zelda is one of the most successful video game franchises in history, and it has earned its success by relying on new iterations of the same, repeated tropes. As *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* broke away from several of the traditional *Zelda* hallmarks, *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity* expands upon that legacy by shifting focus onto Zelda herself. The successes and failures of this subversion of a tried-and-true narrative warrants exploration, providing insight into the importance of developing the narrative and the gameplay experience as complementary and mutually informative parts of a unified whole.