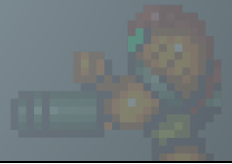


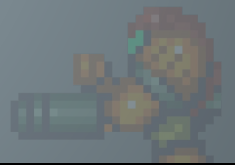
# Metroidvanias

How is Innovative Movement Important?

By Tim Carbone

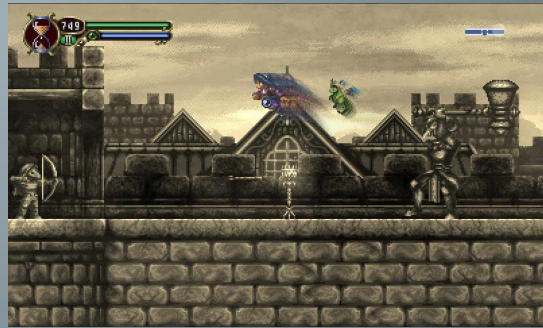


# Narrowing It Down



# Narrowing It Down

How is innovative world traversal important to Metroidvania players?



- Previously, I've discussed Metroidvania games and how my lens is to focus on their movement and world traversal systems.
- However, to narrow this research down even more, I want to ask a question:
  - How is innovative world traversal important to Metroidvania players?
- Picture:
  - *Timespinner*

# Narrowing It Down

How is innovative world traversal important to Metroidvania players?



- To go into the word “innovative” specifically, it essentially means that the player has more in their arsenal of getting around than just the standard Mario conventions of platforming that this genre finds itself utilizing so often.
- Those standard conventions are really at the crux of most Metroidvanias, so when talking about movement, it’s important to look at the games that are standing out.
- A game like La-Mulana 2 moves in much more of a standard platformer way than Hollow Knight, and it’s evident when traversing the large world.
- However, we’ll talk about more specific mechanics moving forward.
- Pictures:
  - *La-Mulana 2*
  - *Hollow Knight*

# Narrowing It Down

## Metroidvania Movement



- So before, we were stuck with just the broad term of “Metroidvania movement”, but we’re gonna break it down into three groupings to better analyze the different facets of each.
- First, we have the games that stick to traditional platformer standards with very few changes to the movement or a lack of focus on movement. These are games like *Axiom Verge* that have you running and jumping, and the only movement change does not fundamentally shift how you move around the areas. You simply are moving around, shooting stuff, and solving puzzles.
- Next, we have the games that use unconventional platformer standards in the sense that the player character’s moveset has something so different about it or has upgrades that focus on movement that the game feels entirely separate from the first group. A game like *Dandara* is the extreme of this category, where the player literally can’t move normally and has to teleport to surfaces to traverse the world. However, a game like *Ori and the Blind Forest* also fits here because the Bash move is much more than a double jump in terms of how it’s used in the game, and the upgrades of the game change how the player moves around the world.
- Finally, we have the games that have movement systems outside of traditional platforming movement. A game like *Aquaria* has the player swimming around freely in the water which may share similarities to platforming but is obviously separate from it, while *Yoku’s Island Express* is literally a pinball game but your ball is the character that moves around the world.
- Pictures:
  - *Axiom Verge*

- *Dandara*
- *Aquaria*

# Narrowing It Down



- From my point of view, there are two levels to why innovative world traversal is important to these games.
- On the surface, movement that feels good and is fun to use continually is important for a game that has such a huge world that needs to be navigated because it helps to engage the player as they backtrack and explore, which can get repetitive easily if the path is retread often with no changes. (Source 15)
- In addition, cool movement is a pretty good selling point for a game as seen with games like *Mirror's Edge*.
- However, below the surface, as the player character levels up by getting upgrades and new abilities, the player also levels up by mastering the movement systems, which feels satisfying.
- For example, players of *Super Metroid* are able to gain movement abilities like the high jump, but they also can learn advanced techniques like the wall jump to help them get around the world much easier. When a player masters this difficult-to-execute technique, it feels infinitely gratifying and actually helps the player take on certain scenarios in a different and easier way.
- Pictures:
  - *Super Metroid*

# Audience Nuances





# Audience Nuances



- Adventure
- Mastery



- The common traits amongst what Metroidvania players want in their experience is mastery and adventure.
  - Using Jason VandenBerghe's 5 Domains of Play, we were able to determine in the last milestone that these were 2 large motivations for players in these games because they desire high Novelty and Challenge. The former is tied heavily into freedom, exploration, and immersion, while the latter lines up with players enjoying overcoming obstacles and progressing in tangible and intangible ways. (Source 14)
- Players appreciate the sense of adventure that brought them along this journey. They are motivated by the challenges that await them at every turn. So these motivations really tie into the beginning, middle, and end of the journey of playing these games.
- They also really love starting out with nothing and ending the game as veterans forged in flames who can make jumps and kill enemies by muscle memory alone
- Bruno Dias of Waypoint said of the core of a Metroidvania experience: "Metroidvanias are all about slowly mastering the environment, not just opening new segments of the map but new paths and strategies as you gain new abilities." (Source 7)
- *Ori and the Blind Forest's* escape sequences are true tests of players' mastery of the game's mechanics up until that point.
  - I've already mentioned this game twice, so you *know* I'm gonna be bringing it up a lot because it brings home a lot of my points.
- However, each of these three groupings that we just defined also brings

- something that players go to them for specifically
- Picture:
  - *Ori and the Blind Forest*

# Audience Nuances



- Player character progression



- The first grouping of Metroidvanias definitely appeals to an audience of gamers who love to make their player character feel like a suped-up walking arsenal.
- Most of *Shadow Complex*'s upgrades have to do with weapons that make the player character more capable of taking down different foes in progressively easier ways.
- While the games of the other groups can obviously have combat, the focus on player-character combat strength makes these games perfect for those who love to go through obstacles rather than around them.
- There's less of a focus on giving the player a skill with movement and more on giving them a variety of options to bring into combat that are easily switched between.
- Picture:
  - *Shadow Complex* has a clear purpose when it comes to upgrades and progression, and that is making the player character strong and stronger. While the Foam ability is pretty cool and could've been super innovative, it wasn't used much in the general world traversal

# Audience Nuances



- Player skill mastery



- The second group is the one that will satisfying the other side of the progression-loving gamers.
- The design of these games is inherently tied to what makes their movement so unique, and the player has to slowly gain the knowledge and dexterity to get from point A to point B in the way they deem best.
- These players love being able to keep the flow going and navigate their worlds fluidly and with versatility. (Source 9)
- *Guacamelee!* features upgrades that not only open up access to new areas and add moves to combat, but they also give the player a variety of ways to move around the world. All of the upgrades in the game have pretty much been seen before in other games, but they evolve the player's moveset considerably.
- Picture:
  - *Guacamelee!*

# Audience Nuances



- Breath of fresh air



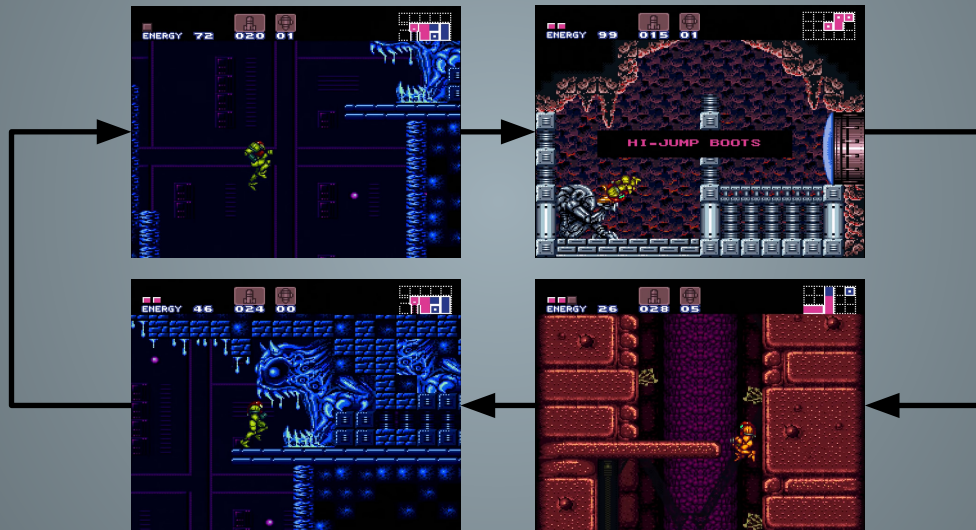
- The final group is much less black-and-white to decipher than the last two groups, and that pattern will remain throughout this analysis, and that's because the games in this group don't fit as nicely as the other two. They're just games that don't have standard platforming movement.
- One thing is certain, though, and it's that players of these games love the breath of fresh air that their movement allows them. A good majority of the games in this genre are 2D sidescrolling platformers, so it's nice to put some variety in there.
- So if they like the structure of these games but are sick of that, these games fill that slot well.
- *Owlboy's* movement, for example, allows the player character to simply fly around the world with extreme ease. This feels wildly different from the norm, but the game still holds that exploration and progression players yearn for.
- Picture:
  - *Owlboy*

# Gameplay Loop





# Gameplay Loop



- Seeing as a lot of my arguments involve the challenges and progression of these games, I figure it makes sense to talk about one of the core loops to a Metroidvania game, which is the item backtracking loop. This loop is pretty heavily tied into the movement of the games, but it also doesn't vary much between groups.
- We'll use *Super Metroid* as a model, because what else *could* we really use?
- So throughout a Metroidvania game, the player will come across an obstacle of some sort that they cannot overcome yet. Oftentimes there will be something notable about the obstacle, like how in this room in lower Brinstar there's a big scary face, to stick the obstacle in the player's mind for future reference.
- The player will continue on with their journey through Zebes until they eventually find the Hi-Jump Boots. This upgrade lets the player jump higher than before.
- Hopefully, the landmark from before was noticeable enough that the player remembers not being able to jump up there, and they make their way back. The player finds a different route back with their new power that makes backtracking much more manageable and empowering.
- Finally, the player reaches that landmark from before and is able to jump up onto the platform and continue forward towards a boss.
- This loop repeats with most upgrades and abilities in Metroidvania games and shows the core progression of beefing the player character up as they move through the world.
- (Source 3)

- Pictures:
  - *Super Metroid*



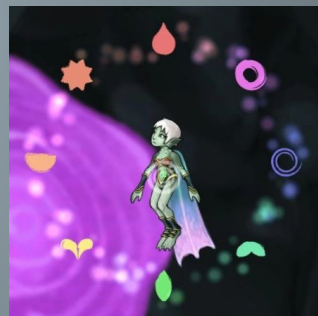
# Challenges



# Challenges



- Based around the upgrades



- The biggest similarity you can see between the three groups in terms of their challenges is that they are all based around the upgrades that the player character is given throughout the adventure.
- The games mostly have combat which rises in difficulty, but the challenges the players faces will correlate to the upgrades they find, such as having to defeat a boss in *Aquaria* with the shield form by bouncing fireballs back at them.
- Pictures:
  - *Super Metroid*
  - *Ori and the Blind Forest*
  - *Aquaria*

# Challenges



- Standard platformer challenges



- In traditional platforming Metroidvanias like *Symphony of the Night*, the challenge is similar to standard platformers. The player has a limited moveset of jumps and abilities like grappling, dashing or bouncing to overcome challenges like perilous leaps and quick reaction-based jumps. Most of the challenge in these games are seen in balancing the platforming and combat, like in this screenshot of Alucard fighting a knight and skeleton.
- The smaller added mechanics that a developer includes will usually build off of these base challenges, such as gliding challenges in *The Messenger* or avoiding explosive plants while digging your own paths in *Steamworld Dig 2*.
- Traditional platforming Metroidvanias will often not increase their platforming challenge too much because there's very little they can do to iterate on the limitations of jump and climb, and they will just give situational upgrades like new weapons or grappling hooks. I can get the Shinespark in *Super Metroid*, but it doesn't really change how I move around the world beyond the places it's necessary and it is never really asked of the player to master it in different ways.
- Picture:
  - *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*
  - *Steamworld Dig 2*



# Challenges

- Leans into the new mechanics



- Challenges in these nontraditional platforming types of games tend to lean fully into the mechanic they change up. The challenges are more focused on this interesting new mechanic, such as here in VVVVVV where the player's ability to use the flipping mechanic is challenged in this room where they have to bounce between white bands without touching the spikes.
- Nontraditional platforming Metroidvanias, in comparison to traditional platforming ones, increase their movement difficulty later on because the player is gaining upgrades and experiencing more complex challenges that expand this interesting new moveset. *Ori and the Blind Forest* starts as a game of a few jumps and dashes, but grows into a string of wall climbs, glides, and Bashes with nowhere to land.
- Picture:
  - VVVVVV
  - *Ori and the Blind Forest*

# Challenges



- Different emphasis on avoidance



- Finally, there are games that completely change how movement works in ways that can't be seen reasonably as platformers. This group is a bit all over the place, and it goes on a game-by-game basis. Challenges in terms of movement are sort of similar to normal platformers, but there's a much heavier emphasis on avoidance and a much different sense of precision. The laws of movement change in a game like *Aquaria*, where you no longer think about how far of a gap you can jump and instead have to focus on how fast you can avoid an oncoming enemy.
- It's something that's harder to write down than it is to feel when playing. Playing a traditional platformer has inherent feelings of gravity and just going through the obstacles in your way, but these games actually feel like they're really about moving *around* obstacles in some way. It's a tangible thing.
- The level of challenge really shifts around, because a game like *Owlboy* feels tight, but *Song of the Deep* is much more challenging to maneuver in because of the underwater physics. In addition, *Owlboy*'s upgrades are very similar to a traditional platformer's because they are mostly about progression and combat, with a bit of utility for movement, while *Aquaria*'s upgrades are centered around both combat and traversal, so the challenges are often very different between these games.
- Picture:
  - *Song of the Deep*

- *Owlboy*

# Challenges



- Test movement mastery
- Navigational skills



- The similarities between these three groups, though, are pretty easy to see. They all focus on testing the player's mastery over their movement systems to better navigate the world as they continue to gain upgrades and find easier ways to make it around.
- In addition, all of the games in the genre try and test a player's general navigation skills to varying degrees. Players need to remember the locations of things and know the proper way to get from point A to point B. Games will vary this challenge by giving players maps like in *Insanely Twisted Shadow Planet*, telling them where the next objective may be found, and giving them pins to place on a map to denote interesting places to remember. However, all Metroidvanias require some knowledge of the world map and how to navigate it.
- Picture:
  - *Insanely Twisted Shadow Planet*
  - *Shantae: Risky's Revenge*



# Challenges



## Adventure



- Exploration
- Challenge



- The challenges of these games lead mainly into the Adventure motivations of the player. By exploring the world and being challenged by it, the player feels like they're on a journey they'd never be able to take in real life. They are pulling off impressive sequences of jumps and dashes and getting stronger in ways that feel fantastical and adventurous.
- A game like *Salt and Sanctuary* gives players brutal fights that require tons of patience to overcome in an immersive world, fulfilling a player's sense of adventure.
- Picture:
  - *Salt and Sanctuary*



# Progression and Rewards





# Progression and Rewards

- Gatekeeping
- Combat

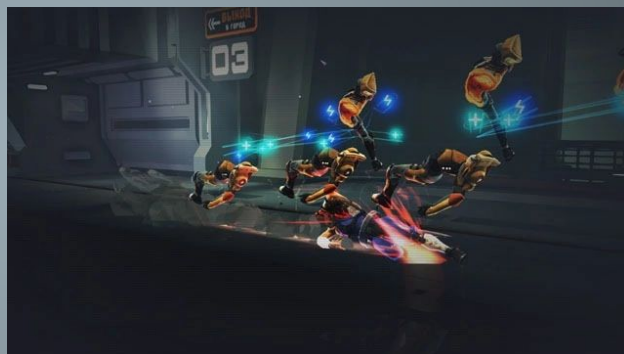


- Traditional platforming Metroidvanias have upgrades that tend to focus on combat abilities and lock-and-key upgrades that simply allow access to a new area without giving the upgrade a good deal of depth.
- Since this group tends to keep the challenges in line with these upgrades, the sense of movement progression is minimal in these games. I may be able to navigate the world of *Metroid Prime* better than I could at the beginning because I've had lots of time with the jumping and hovering, but the challenges late game are more about incorporating the various abilities and beams into the platforming and exploration, rather than changing how to move around the world.
- Picture:
  - *Metroid Prime*



# Progression and Rewards

- Make traversal and combat easier and faster



- Nontraditional platforming Metroidvanias, however, will show a distinct difference between the player's skill early game and late game. The way a player moves around in *Strider* completely changes throughout the game as they begin to master the slide, wall jump, flip, and other movement skills.
- These upgrades also do a lot to speed up combat and keep the player character's momentum going, which is very rewarding. The player feels better and more capable because they can now traverse the world easier than before, which means backtracking is less of a chore because there are new, stronger tools to play around with. (Sources 9 and 15)
- Picture:
  - *Strider*

# Progression and Rewards



- It's a mixed bag!



- Lastly, as with before, the third group is a bit all over the place because it is such a mixed bag of upgrades. *Song of the Deep* has RPG-like upgrading in addition to the normal Metroidvania upgrades, which make for some interesting changes to the player's exploration like when the main character can leave her sub to swim around with more precision. *Yoku's Island Express* genuinely changes the things the pinball paddles can do as the player moves on, and it keeps the game exciting and fresh.
- However, because these types of games are so rare and the basic movement is so different from the traditional Metroidvania formula, it's much more instantly gratifying to play around with for a player. It might not develop as nicely as group 2, but it definitely feels more exciting to a player that's used to just walking and jumping.
- Picture:
  - *Yoku's Island Express*

# Progression and Rewards



- Make the avatar stronger
- Open new opportunities



- So the upgrades and areas of mastery are pretty varied across the genre, but it's clear that mastery of the mechanics is the major reward for the player in all of them.
- The avatar becomes stronger and has more options, which in turn open new opportunities for both them and the player to continue learning and improving.
- Picture:
  - *Momodora: Reverie Under the Moonlight*

# Progression and Rewards



## Mastery



- Reaching milestones
- Getting stronger



- This goes without saying, but the progression and reward system of Metroidvanias mainly ties into the motivation of Mastery that players crave. Players will feel more powerful both as players of the game and as avatars in the game world as they continue playing and continue getting rewarded for the challenges they overcome.
- Picture:
  - *Steamworld Dig 2*

# Thank you!

## Bibliography

1. Arguello, Diego. "Combining Pinball with Platforming to Build the Levels of Yoku's Island

Express." *Gamasutra Article*, 25 June 2018,  
[www.gamasutra.com/view/news/319656/Combining\\_pinball\\_with\\_platforming\\_to\\_build\\_the\\_levels\\_of\\_Yokus\\_Island\\_Express.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/319656/Combining_pinball_with_platforming_to_build_the_levels_of_Yokus_Island_Express.php).

This article describes the basic process that Villa Gorilla, developers of *Yoku's Island Express*, went through when designing the game. The team started with a pinball game but decided to flesh it out into a Metroidvania-style game in order to stand out from other pinball games. The source of the article is a freelance journalist who interviewed the development team for the article. The multitude of quotes used throughout makes the source seem very reliable. The source itself will be extremely helpful to my research given how unique of a movement system the game uses compared to other Metroidvania games.

2. Bitmob. "Metroidvania: Super Metroid and the Definition of a Genre." *VentureBeat*, VentureBeat,

24 April 2010,  
[venturebeat.com/2010/04/24/metroidvania-super-metroid-and-the-definition-of-a-genre/](http://venturebeat.com/2010/04/24/metroidvania-super-metroid-and-the-definition-of-a-genre/).



This article quickly recaps what defines the Metroidvania genre and its history in terms of the two games that defined it: *Super Metroid* and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*. It discusses how there's more to the genre than the nonlinearity and abilities, and how it all comes together to create a niche type of game that's hard to strong in many areas. The source of the article seems to be a journalist for a website formerly known at Bitmob that now became VentureBeat, and finding the original journalist is difficult. However, the recap of information seems to be very simple and easily proven. This source is helpful to my research because it takes on the definition of the genre from both a traditional and different perspective.

3. Brown, Mark, director. *The World Design of Metroid 1 and Zero Mission | Boss Keys*. YouTube,

YouTube, 31 July 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUT60DKaEGc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUT60DKaEGc).

Brown, Mark, director. *The World Design of Super Metroid | Boss Keys*. YouTube,

YouTube, 3 September 2018,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nn2MXwplMZA>.

These videos highlight the level design and use of upgrades in the first 2 major entries in the *Metroid* franchise. They specifically talk about how the games, while not being the first games of their style, have become the standards and what made them such remarkable templates. Mark Brown is a journalist and YouTube creator who focuses his writing and production on videos that analyze games, game design, and other related topics. His video essays include many sources and research, which makes the videos he makes fairly credible. These videos are helpful because they are essentially about what I'm trying to study: the core of Metroidvanias and how their movement can affect things like other upgrades, combat, and level design.

4. Brown, Mark, director. *Do We Need a Soulslike Genre? | Game Maker's Toolkit*. YouTube,

YouTube, 12 July 2017, <https://youtu.be/Lx7BWayWu08>.

This video is mainly about whether coining the "Soulslike" genre is good or bad for the development of the genre. Mark covers various genres spawned from a game like roguelikes, first-person shooters, and (most notably) Metroidvanias in order to juxtapose those to the current situation involving *Dark Souls*. Mark Brown is a journalist and YouTube creator who focuses his writing and production on videos that analyze games, game design, and other related topics. His video essays include many sources and research, which makes the videos he makes fairly credible. This video was helpful in figuring out what really is the process of developing a genre, as well as helping me realize what basing a genre off a single or few games does to innovating a genre.



5. Busby, James. "How Video Game Movement Makes Us Feel Powerful." *AllGamers*, AllGamers, 31 May 2018, [allgamers.com/article/4306/how-video-game-movement-makes-us-feel-powerful](http://allgamers.com/article/4306/how-video-game-movement-makes-us-feel-powerful).

This article discusses a few examples of how games use their movement to enhance the experience and make us feel closer to our game, from the freedom of exploration in *Breath of the Wild* to the limitation and fear of *Alien: Isolation*. The source is an opinion piece from a more unknown gaming news site, so its credibility is not very high, but it does talk about easily-relatable emotions evoked when playing these games. The source is extremely helpful to my research because of its focus on movement, but this quote is really helpful: "Traversing through virtual worlds shouldn't just be a dull and laborious affair, it should be interactive, something that has a positive impact and rewards player creativity and mastery. But more importantly, having fun movement systems can help us experience things we can't usually do."

6. Bycer, Josh. "The 3 Essential Elements of Metroidvania Design." *Game Wisdom*, 17 Oct. 2017, [game-wisdom.com/critical/metroidvania-design](http://game-wisdom.com/critical/metroidvania-design).

This article discusses the three major factors to think about when designing a Metroidvania game. The player should start off the game with a gameplay loop that is solid and doesn't rely on getting into the late game to feel good, the upgrades should not just unlock new areas but should fit into the player's routine and enhance their abilities, and the world should be attractive and "invite the player to explore and return to" it. The author, Josh Bycer, is a freelance writer and creator of the website Game Wisdom, dedicated to examining game design across the industry. The article is an analytical piece based on what the writer thinks is necessary for a good Metroidvania. It's helpful to use this source because it not only talks about what makes a Metroidvania, but also what makes a *good* one.

7. Dias, Bruno. "This Tiny Metroidvania Game Is the Real Witchy Shit You Crave." *Waypoint*, VICE, 25 Oct. 2017, [waypoint.vice.com/en\\_us/article/mb3vb8/this-tiny-metroidvania-game-is-the-real-witchy-shit-you-crave](http://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/mb3vb8/this-tiny-metroidvania-game-is-the-real-witchy-shit-you-crave).

This article highlights a short and unknown Metroidvania game called *Witch - A Special Delivery* and it talks about how it really understands the feeling of a Metroidvania and utilizes it in a very short game. The game exudes charm but also lets players evolve at a rapid pace. This source is credible because it is a writer of a popular gaming journalism site that gains nothing from posting a story about a game he enjoyed playing. The source is helpful because it talks a lot about what the essence of a Metroidvania could hold, and it does seem to line up with my research.

8. Francis, Bryant. "Iconoclasts Developer Talks Making a Game That Just 'Feels Right'."

*Gamasutra Article*, 24 Jan. 2018,

[www.gamasutra.com/view/news/313638/Iconoclasts\\_developer\\_talks\\_making\\_a\\_game\\_that\\_just\\_feels\\_right.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/313638/Iconoclasts_developer_talks_making_a_game_that_just_feels_right.php).

This article discusses the designer of *Iconoclast*'s general philosophies when designing and creating the game, while also distinguishing what makes it like a Metroidvania but still keeps it out of the genre. He says because the game is mostly linear that it shouldn't be considered a Metroidvania, but *Iconoclasts* was heavily influenced by *Metroid Fusion* and the minute-to-minute gameplay was very movement-focused and upgrade-based. The author is the designer himself, so he is an educated source on the matter. I think it's important, in order to fully understand the genre, to look at a game that is similar to Metroidvania games but specifically talks about why it doesn't fit the description perfectly. I also think the movement in *Iconoclasts* is helpful to look at for this project.

9. GameSpot, director. *Mirror's Edge and Games About Movement*. YouTube, 16 Apr. 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pATPUKGYYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pATPUKGYYY).

The video uses the upcoming (at the time) release of *Mirror's Edge: Catalyst* to discuss the wider topic of games that make their movement systems as shining, major mechanic of the gameplay. It discusses why players enjoy the enhanced movement in games, which majorly comes down to a sense of personal progression as the player gets better at mastering the mechanics, making their ability to traverse the world and explore easier and more satisfying. The video is an opinion piece by a popular video game news website, so it must be taken with a grain of salt, but as an opinion piece that simply uses a lot of games as examples, it's easy to see it all as credible. The source is helpful because it ties into my larger understanding of movement in games and why a player or a developer might enjoy these mechanics in a game.

10. "Metroidvania." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 Sept. 2018, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metroidvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metroidvania).

This page is a fairly detailed summary about the entire genre and its history. It gives a good definition for what really makes a Metroidvania, and briefly discusses how it evolved. The article is from Wikipedia, meaning it is can be edited by anyone, but the moderation team of the website cleans up any inaccurate or or unprofessional edits, meaning it's a good source to take, but still with a grain of salt. It's a good reference to have because it not only leads into many other helpful articles but also summarizes the topic well.

11. Milner, David. "The Making Of Hollow Knight." *Game Informer*, Game Informer, 15 Oct.

2018, 08:43, [www.gameinformer.com/2018/10/15/the-making-of-hollow-knight](http://www.gameinformer.com/2018/10/15/the-making-of-hollow-knight).

This article is a dive into the development of *Hollow Knight* via the two developers of the game. From failed game jams to massive success, the two devs go in on the process of making the game, what they really wanted to make, what was cut, and more. The source is credible because, while written by a journalist at a credible news outlet, the developers are most often used as the sources. This article is helpful to me because it discusses one of the most recent examples of a Metroidvania that holds the heart of the genre close. It also discusses getting the initial movement of the player character right, which is important to note for my research.

12. Nutt, Christian. "The Undying Allure of the Metroidvania." *Gamasutra Article*, 13 Feb. 2015,

[www.gamasutra.com/view/news/236410/The\\_undying\\_allure\\_of\\_the\\_Metroidvania.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/236410/The_undying_allure_of_the_Metroidvania.php).

This article dives deep into why developers are continuing to make Metroidvania games and why people keep playing them. The major reasons are that the Metroidvania framework is not very restrictive and allows for a lot of creativity, it follows a progression that appeals to a wide audience, and developers find a lot to enjoy when developing immersive worlds and interesting gameplay. The source is very reliable because the author of the piece is the main editor for Gamasutra's blog as well as a season journalist for games, and he was able to interview a variety of developers making games in the genre. This is easily the most important source I've found, as it is incredibly detailed about the genre and why it is so appealing to play and develop for.

13. Testasecca, Josh. "Why I Hate 'Metroidvania' Style Games." *GameZilla Media*, 2 July 2018,

[gamezillamedia.com/mcg-blog-main/why-i-hate-metroidania-style-games](http://gamezillamedia.com/mcg-blog-main/why-i-hate-metroidania-style-games).

This piece is about how the writer dislikes most Metroidvania games. He cites the slow-moving narrative, lack of direction, and necessity for a good spatial memory as reasons to not enjoy the games in the genre. This author is someone writing for the website he works for, a gaming site that is not very popular. There is no clear reason for the author to say he dislikes the genre besides that it is his opinion. This article is helpful because it helps pick out parts of the Metroidvania formula that don't jive with every gamer. It's important to see why people like these games and why people don't like them.

14. VandenBerghe, Jason. "The 5 Domains of Play: Applying Psychology's Big 5 Motivation

Domains to Games." Game Developers Conference. Game Developers Conference, 27 Sept. 2018, San Francisco, California.

This talk from GDC is about how Jason has been trying to find a more modern and detailed way of figuring out what kind of games people like based on their motivations in real life by converting the Big 5 from psychology to domains for game players. The 5 domains are broken up even further and then averaged out and they seem to be able to define what aspects of games certain players enjoy. The creator of the talk, Jason VandenBerghe, is a seasoned Ubisoft developer, as well as someone who cited his sources and clearly did a lot of research about the topic. The talk is extremely helpful when it comes to defining what kind of player wants to play Metroidvanias and why they actually like them.

15. Wahlberg, Tobias. "Blockades in the Metroidvania Genre of Games - a Examination of

Backtracking." *Uppsala Universitet*, 21 Sept. 2015,  
[www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:862195/ATTACHMENT01.pdf](http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:862195/ATTACHMENT01.pdf).

This thesis is about backtracking in Metroidvania games and in what ways players enjoy backtracking more than others in these games in comparison to games of other genres. It comes to the conclusion that players enjoy backtracking when something has changed on the return visit, whether it's enemy placement or abilities. This thesis is mildly credible because it is a thesis by a game design student backed up by many references, but a lot of it seems based on limited data and a few pieces of evidence. This source is helpful because it's one of the few studies I've seen into a topic that ravages discussion about movement and exploration in Metroidvanias. It's nice to be able to reference something when stating that changes make backtracking more manageable.