



Representing LGBT+ Characters in Games: Two Case Studies

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE

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Who I Am

- Writer/Narrative Designer
 - Spellbreak, Elder Scrolls Online, Backbone
- 2019 GLAAD Award for Outstanding Video Game

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How can we ensure respectful LGBT+ representation in games?

What is LGBT+ Representation?

- Characters in media who have a minority sexuality and/or gender
 - Troubled History
 - Lack of Representation
 - Stereotypes, Harmful Tropes, etc.

Broadcast television								
Year	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual Women	Bisexual Men	Transgender Women	Transgender Men	Expected Series Regular LGBT Characters	Expected Recurring LGBT Characters
2012–2013 ^[42]	10	30	7	2	1	0	31 or 4.4% of all characters	19
2013–2014 ^[43]	14	21	8	2	1	0	26 or 3.3% of all characters	20
2014–2015 ^[44]	18	35	10	2	0	0	32 or 3.9% of all characters	33
2015–2016 ^[45]	23	33	12	2	0	0	35 or 4.0% of all characters	35
2016–2017 ^[46]	12	35	16	5	3	0	43 or 4.8% of all characters	28

What does respectful LGBT+ representation look like?

Realistic - Is this portrayal accurate?



Considerate - Is the narrative considerate of past and current LGBT+ issues?



Explicit - Are characters explicitly stated to be LGBT+?



Respectful - Is the character's LGBT+ identity respected by the narrative?



Elder Scrolls Online



Alchemy

- First openly transgender woman in Elder Scrolls
- Respected by her society



"Manor of Masques" Quest

"Rinyde has asked me to find her brother Larydel and stop him from joining the House of Reveries. I must audition as well in order to figure out who he is."



Is this Realistic?



Famil
Acceptan

New
Identity

Fleshed Out
Character

Community
Support

Is this Considerate?



Identity
Reveal

Hero
to Ally

Society
Acceptance

Family
Acceptance

Is this Explicit?



Worldbuilding

Openly States
Identity

Transgender
Community

Is this respectful?



No Jokes

Marketing
Materials

Social
Media

Representation Concerns

Stereotypes



Appearance



Resolution



One & Only



naernon:

i need to play that quest immediately. do u know how much this changes esp for estryon? all my characters? im such a weak ass bitch but im crying zenimax .. trans elves. i owe you my life im weeping

and according to the tags of OP it's implied it's not uncommon for p dying. zenimax has killed me.

2 hours ago * 5

#summerset spoilers

It's probably because the theme I went with my main characters is identity, but man, I am really loving the House of Reveries.

#elder scrolls #summerset #teso #the whole quest is great I love it #but my Khajiit is technically underage so some of the questions asked uncomfortable lol

1 note



Confirmed Trans Woman in Summerset!

ly crap holy crap! We have confirmed transgender representation in Summerset! Including a conversation with a trans woman transitioning in the Summerset Isles and a coming-out-to-parents ending! And I managed to screenshot the entire thing leading up to it!

ES #ESO: Summerset #Summerset #Summerset Isles transgender Representation #I'm freaking out right now! would I post the quest? #Maybe I should wait a few weeks anybody wants to know the name of the quest

... See all

notes



imperilius:

transgender elves ;u; and using magic to transition being an option confirmed!

2 hours ago * 25

& / reblog?

#summerset #eso #i just burst out in tears oh my god #oh . my god #the bar is so low but zenimax im crying i owe you my life

I m a mes s my souls belong to Zeni now, this entire quest???? It was SO WELL WRITTEN I was so scared that they'll do the dragon age "why are you pretending to be a man, Krem?" Thing again but this????? I,,m... validated

#ishdkjkd oh??? my god?? #im gonna delete this later jm just!?!vkdkejfjfk #summerset spoilers

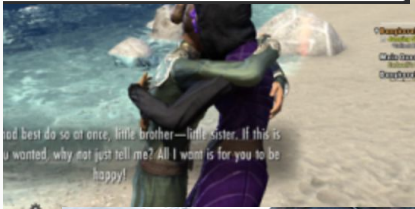
2 notes



TRANSELVES

#summerset spoilers #im crying?????? #summerset #this entire quest is so fuckinf good oh ky for #sjdgsfkfjk

12 notes



able to stop thinking about it since; im trying to wait to do any sidequests or other questlines other than the mainline but im so gsdighsdghsuighsdugds gosh. it's so wonderful

wake-forest

could you send me the screenshots?

sapphicboethiah

ja-khajay:

ja-khajay:

thanks to zenimax no greasy nerd boy can use the "but it's not canon" excuse against me makin trans characters anymore

sotha sil is a trans man

2 hours ago * 36

& / reblog?

#hope its ok to rb but true fucking that

i need to play that quest immediately. do u know how much this changes esp for estryon? all my characters? im such a weak ass bitch but im crying zenimax .. trans elves. i owe you my life im weeping

2 hours ago * 5

#ramblings #summerset spoilers

reblog

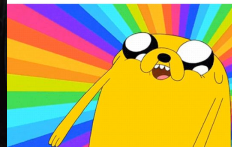
transgender elves ;u; and using magic to trans

POSTED 31

#the elder scrolls #eso #elder scrolls online #summerset #i on died (:c) two childhood friends who i'm almost sure s prosecution and they had a messy breakup #and now this alchemy here says

commander-kulan Follow

ing I just finished the best quest so far at ending was so cute and sweet and I re inswoman accepted by her big sister th an adorable hug



so #summerset #spoilers

notes



rimjuusto Follow

happy to have canonically trans ter in my favorite game series. And r her talk about how transitioning is on in this world! No joke, I started during that quest, I'm just so so

you Zenimax #Eso #Summerset



sasquach-likest

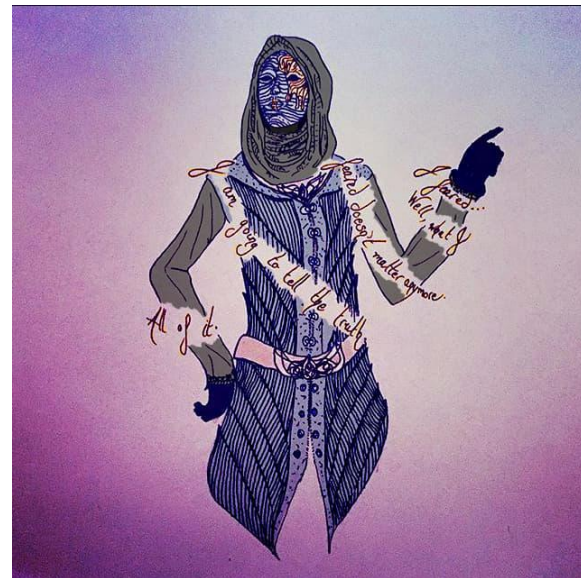
Ah! I heard about it but wasn't sure if it was true or not. Haven't found it myself yet but I'm so happy. :D

angelfxck

I haven't been on ESO because I've been busy with uni but I seriously need to get Summerset after exams!

sergeiboobtitsky

Can you pm me the quest? I'm at work and wanna run thru it when I get home

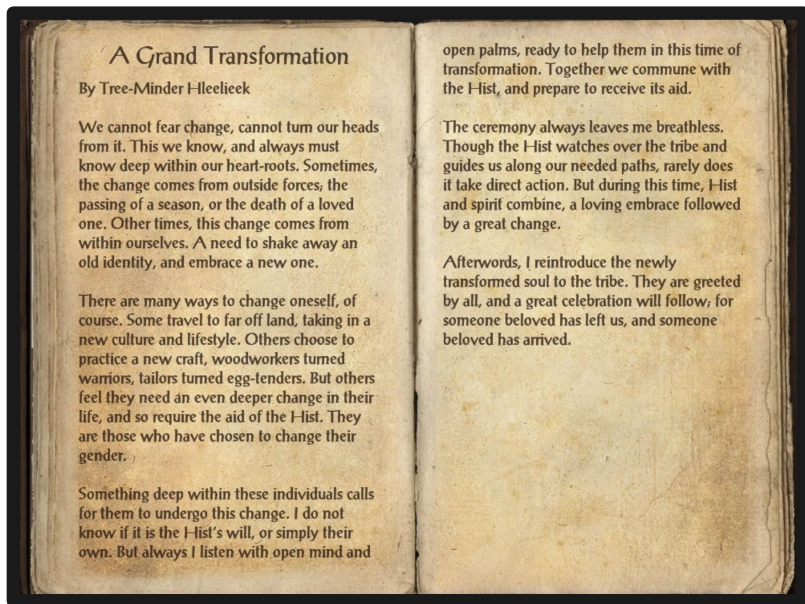


"... In *Summerset*, players undertake a prominent questline entitled Manor of Masques to reunite a transgender woman with her estranged twin sister. The story deals with the difficult topics of coming out and acceptance in a way that reflects the lived reality of many transgender people today."

- **GLAAD Awards**



Building on Representation



Backbone



Sophia

- Lesbian NPC
- Rejected by her society & family
- Forced into homelessness



Is this Realistic?



Personality
& Opinions

Lack of
Status

Fleshed Out
Character

Is this Considerate?



LGBT+
Voice

Sympathetic
Character

Victim of
Society

Is this Explicit?



Brutally
Honest

Openly States
Identity

Shares
Her Story

Is this Respectful?



No Jokes

PC is
Respectful

Avoidance
of Tropes

Representation Concerns

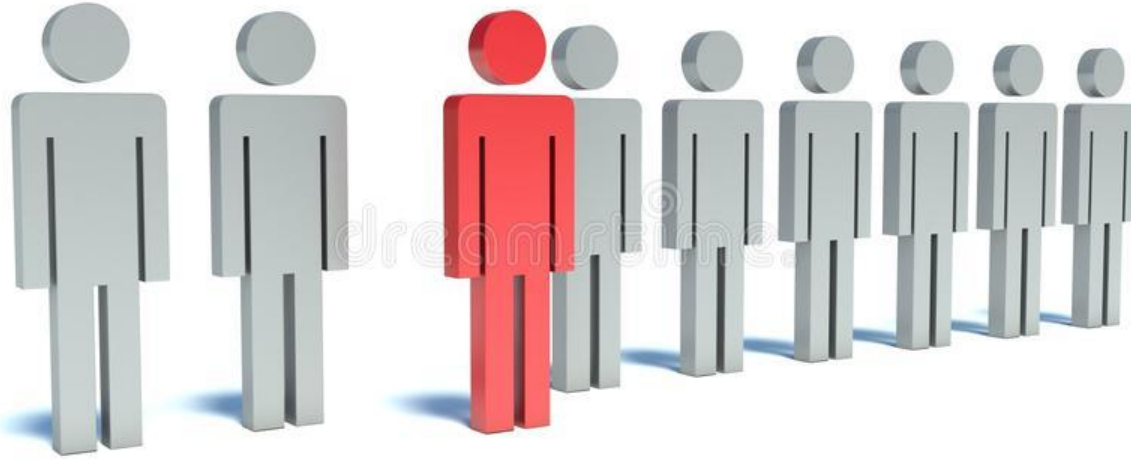
Tragic Backstory



Mouthpiece



One & Only



How can we ensure that our games have respectful LGBT+ Representation?

- Research
- Hire for Diversity
- Studio Initiatives
- Social Media Presence
- Consult the Experts
 - GLAAD, GaymerX, Queerly Represent Me



Let's work together to ensure that every game has respectful LGBT+ representation

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