

## INTRO:

I never thought I'd be reviewing Gen 1 again to be honest. I thought that 25 years on, I and everyone else have probably had said all that there was to say about these games. Most people have already made up their minds about them anyway. There have been enough memes, enough infographics, enough popular folklore and criticisms that everyone has seen for there to be two commonly accepted assessments of these games. They are simultaneously extremely overrated and easily the worst of all Pokemon games by most of the fandom's estimates, and at the same time such a reliable way to grab back the OG fans no matter what stage of life we're at that they get used this way by GameFreak over and over and over again. And it's not like I don't see why people are fed up with them. In a lot of recent Pokemon games and media we can't seem to stop getting a lot of pandering to the crowd that for the most part only interacts with Pokemon when it references the most heavily nostalgic aspects and then refuses to stick around for anything else. So most people are sick to death of Pokemon Red and Blue and tired of them being brought back up constantly, and I get it. At the same time there's a large group of people who obviously see them as a point of nostalgia and can really only look at them through the lens of childhood and how we experienced them back in the day. That's honestly kind of sad, because it means that despite being easily the most discussed Pokemon games over the last two and a half decades, ultimately what isn't being talked about is content of the games themselves removed from dumb genner war discourse. No one is really looking at what they were trying to accomplish with the set of mechanics they chose and how the formula they were building from scratch came together. So I guess that there is still a little more to add to the conversation, and I've been thinking about these games a lot lately. People have decided they know these games and that they're not worth another look, or that they don't deserve another look because of how many times the same story has been revisited now. But I don't think that's true, so I guess it's up to me to school you dummies.

When you cut through all the hype and the hate, what is Gen 1 like really? Well actually, and stick with me here, they're actually pretty well designed games. Sure they're a little rough around the edges, but what's at the core is good traditional RPG inspired game design. They have clear themes which are supported by the mechanics, and even the much maligned "poorly balanced" battle system makes much more sense than it appears to from the surface. What we have here is actually a pretty good game, not just good "asterisk" but actually really solid game design.

\*laugh track\*

What?

\*laughter escalates\*

Some of this is gonna sound familiar to you if you've seen my Gen 2 video, but I find that the Gen 1 games are somewhat unfairly maligned in similar ways to those game. The generation 1 Pokemon games are enduring for a reason, and much like Gold and Silver, this doesn't all just boil down to nostalgia. The early Pokemon games lean much more heavily on classic JRPG game design than the later games and as a result offer something uniquely fulfilling and increasingly rare in current day. There's something fundamental about its subtle themes and solid game design that have kept it relevant for 25 years at this point. Like remember, they started a franchise that has endured its fad status and continued on to become a main stay in our collective consciousness. I'm not giving Gen 1 credit for the entire franchise and things that came after it and improved on the things it originated, but remember there was no blue print. They were starting from scratch and built so many successful concepts in one game from the ground up. And while these ideas might seem old hat or taken for granted now, they still deserve some credit for getting it all so right the very first try. Of course Red and Blue are not perfect games, far from it, but I don't think a lot of the criticism it gets is coming from people who are keeping the context of what games were like at the time in mind, or really looking at why some of the decisions they disagree with were made in the first place. So get ready for some hot juicy analysis you nerds.

PART 1:

In my last video about FireRed and LeafGreen I talked about how Kanto is mostly perfunctory, a lot of the space for world building is used teaching the player how mechanics work and big picture stuff about the world that Pokemon takes place in. They were the first games in the series, they had a lot to set up and not a lot of room to do that, so it makes sense that they are fairly basic in that regard. In case you missed that video, what I mean is compared to later games in the series, most of the dialogue given to NPCs around the Kanto region mostly exists to teach you basic things about the world of Pokemon, how the mechanics work and what different stats do. Whereas other Pokemon games might use this space for world building or to elaborate on the theme or message in some way, Kanto has to use this space to get everyone on board with the premise and set up a basic framework for a bigger universe to be built upon. In future installments we have benefitted from Pokemon being established as a franchise with material in other mediums that might supplementarily teach the player about this stuff, the gyms, the typings, the different creatures, things like that, but at the beginning there wasn't anything they could rely on that could be used to do that job. Red and Green, the very first iteration of Kanto on which all other gen 1 games were based, were built before the anime and the bigger franchise existed where kids might be exposed to some of these concepts in other places. So Kanto

has a specific job to do and it does it well for the most part, and that was the point I made the last time I talked about it. But I didn't go a step deeper and really ask a lot of questions about what kind of framework it does set up. What is the very essence of the world that Pokemon, the entire series but especially Pokemon Red & Blue, takes place in?

Well the first thing to consider is what kind of perspective we are taking this information in through. I'm far from the first person to notice this, but Red and Blue establish that Pokemon takes place from a child's perspective, not just in that it is designed to be played by children but also in the way the world is set up. It's sort of a subtle thing, but there are some ways in which the game is framed that indicate we're seeing the world from a kid's point of view. Children seem small from an adult's perspective but in Pokemon, children are roughly the same size as adults, the way we see ourselves at that age. Just as capable and with as much ability, blind to our own inexperience and limitations. Things like the government, the economy, are largely absent from this world because they're not things that children really understand as part of their daily life. If you have ever wondered what the system is, why there are gyms, how you become a gym leader, who is in power, you can keep wondering, because your perspective is the same as a kid that doesn't understand the broader world yet. Kids are still asking these kinds of questions too. The only times these things are relevant is when they intersect with your daily life. If there is a cop in your way, there is evidence of the state. If there is something you need to buy, there is evidence of money. But the larger systems that produce these things are absent, abstract, undefined. So whatever age the player is, the game is experienced through the lens of childhood, and that's important to how the game handles its conflict.

All Pokemon games since the very beginning also more or less center around the same conflict set up in this one, which is human progress versus preservation. What things of value are lost or left behind when we advance as a society? As we all know very well by now, the concept of Pokemon was based on the loss felt when Satoshi Tajiri's home in the Tokyo area became urbanized in the 80's and all of the natural scenery he grew up in and experienced childhood in was paved over. The social and economic progress during that time period created more room for people in the crowded city of Tokyo to live, but at what cost? In the past we examined this conflict through Hoenn, which represents this through the lens of preservation of natural resources versus expanding space for a growing society. But there are less on the nose ways this theme appears in the series as well. In Sinnoh this conflict was represented by preservation of spirituality and tradition vs scientific progress and the ability to "play god." What can we learn from traditions and how can science be a tool we use to help ourselves rather than harm ourselves? And of course, Kanto, even with limited traditional story and character dialogue does

introduce this conflict for the very first time.

It's interesting, looking back through development information about Red and Green, while games like Gold and Silver would see extensive map overhauls throughout its development cycle, the region of Kanto was more or less already decided on in the first original pitch for what was then called Capumon. It is after all based on the real life greater Tokyo area and Kanto region of Japan, which is the area where the staff grew up and lived and worked. There were a few areas that never got worked into the final game or changed shape in one way or another, but Kanto itself is very much the bedrock that the rest of the game was molded around, staying consistent throughout development. Telling the story of Tokyo was obviously very important to them, it was their home, where they experienced both loss and success. And it ends up being basically the most important character in the game, telling the story that dialogue and scripting alone could not.

Kanto takes you through an increasingly urbanized landscape. In Pallet Town buildings are spread out and sparse, there are long empty routes with few people, and nature is evident all around in woods and mountains. As you progress, you start to see more and more buildings rubbing up against the natural landscape, and more of the dungeons move indoors. More towers and underground hideouts and abandoned buildings contrasted to the natural woods and caves earlier in the game. The routes get denser and full of people. And as that happens you start to see the ways in which nature is lost or destroyed. Pokemon themselves are creatures that kind of personify nature in a way, and help illustrate the way that the environment is being impacted by human presence. Earlier in the game there are more natural, animal-like Pokemon in the wider less urban spaces. Bugs, rats, birds, rocks, bats, snakes, all with very basic designs that are familiar to us as wildlife and natural scenery. But then as you get into the grass around the densely populated areas like Celadon City or Fuchsia City, Pokemon start looking more like monsters or have man made appearances. Doduo with two heads, Magnetron with its metal body, ghosts made of poisonous gas, whatever the hell Ditto is. Some of the only natural looking Pokemon in the late game are in captivity in the Safari Zone. Why would there need to be a nature preserve like the Safari Zone unless nature itself is threatened?

And if Pokemon themselves are emblematic of nature in this story, they're also the vehicle through which human characters directly interact with nature. Humans have a relationship with Pokemon that can either be beneficial or parasitic, and Pokemon don't really get a say in that. It is up to us to decide what role nature plays in humanity. I think that could be one of the reasons that the relationship between Pokemon battling and consent is left so vague early on, it sets up a parallel to the ethical dilemma we face in real life when it comes to existing as a species of consumers. We are

designed to consume, it is our nature, and yet unchecked it causes ecological damage. So much like in real life, in Pokemon all people use nature for different ends. Some to get richer, some to live side by side in harmony, and some study it. Team Rocket is a stand in for humanity's greed and how it disrupts and destroys in the name of capital. They're obsessed with using nature to become more wealthy, even to the point of blatant destruction, hurting people and Pokemon, best illustrated by the Marowak in Pokemon tower that is straight up killed by Team Rocket, or the hostage situation and takeover at Silph.

It's actually kind of interesting to think about Mr. Fuji in this context. He's found at Pokemon tower and living in Lavender Town caring for orphaned Pokemon, and that's how he's first introduced to you, working to help heal nature damaged by humans. But there is text indicating that he founded the Pokemon lab in Cinnabar, which implies that he may have once owned the abandoned Pokemon Mansion, which has journals talking about the discovery of Mew and creation of Mewtwo. At some point the mysterious Mr. Fuji may have abused human progress in science to try to synthesize a powerful Pokemon, presumably in the pursuit of power itself. Though Mewtwo is never explicitly referred to as a weapon, it does have some parallels to the kaiju stories that inspired GameFreak originally. Godzilla for example is a narrative metaphor for man's hubris in creating the atomic bomb. Perhaps Mewtwo is a smaller version of the same concept. Mr. Fuji atones for what he did by leaving his past behind and in the present trying to protect threatened natural life. But the lab itself still runs.

And speaking of Mr. Fuji, the incompetence of adults is everywhere in this game. It's in your parents that let you wander into strange cities far from home all alone. It's in your teacher who asks you to do work that he can't do because he's too old. It's in Giovanni and Team Rocket and how their misguided plans are foiled by just one kid. And it's in the largely absent state that does not hold bad people accountable for doing bad things, leaving the job up to the very type of person it should be protecting in the first place. At the very beginning of the game, you are not asked to collect all the badges and become the champion. Instead, Professor Oak asks you to help him study nature. Remember how we established you're playing from the viewpoint of a child? Well, he asks you, the next generation, to become curious, explore and understand the world. In a way the very game itself is built that way, to force you to use the part of your brain that learns about things, takes in information and solves problems.

It's simple but it is a story from a child's perspective after all. One in which the child grows and gains more understanding of the world they live in than even the destructive adults around them. The game asks you to be curious, learn, grow and discover adults aren't always right even in positions of authority. Learn how to be better than the adults that raised you. That's what makes this story, which

in a way is part of all Pokemon games, so timeless and why we keep coming back to it despite its simplicity. Learning to be a better person than the example you were molded by is difficult and it's something you never stop learning to do even in adulthood.

## PART 2:

Kanto is not only the basis for storytelling through its environment but also a big player in the flow of the game and even how the game is balanced. After all, once the Team Rocket stuff is resolved, the game doesn't end. There's still a lot more to discover through exploration and getting into every nook and cranny to find every Pokemon. Remember, your job isn't actually to solve the problems of incompetent adults, that is just dumb adults doing what dumb adults do and wasting your time by making their problems your problems. Your job is to learn about Pokemon and to do that you have to find them all, and that doesn't end once Team Rocket is out of the way. This game did take collection much more seriously than the rest of the series, they really wanted players to try to catch them all.

As you're exploring Kanto and looking for all those hidden mons in crevices and caves, you might notice that there are actually more dungeons in this game than there are gyms, and it feels fitting to call them dungeons because the traditional JRPG influence is more strongly felt here than anywhere else in the series. Gen 2 may have perfected this concept by really tying all of the ideas together and presenting them more neatly than before, but Gen 1 was very heavily inspired by the games that the developers enjoyed playing and they wanted to throw in as many traditional elements as they could fit. You might have multiple different areas to clear before you can even move on to the next city, and though not all of them have Pokemon to catch they do all have their own puzzles and gimmicks. Most dungeons will have a unique environmental obstacle like darkness or spinning floor tiles or mimics and almost all of them have an item hidden inside them that you need to collect to get access to other parts of the same dungeon or even access to other dungeons entirely. For example the whole middle of the game revolves around getting up to the top floor of Pokemon Tower. You need the Silph Scope to get past the ghost that is blocking your way to the top floor, so you have to go to the neighboring city Celedon, find a secret switch to open a door to Team Rocket's Hideout in the Game Corner, then navigate the environmental puzzle of the spinning floor tiles. Then you need to find a key to the elevator in order to get to the deepest level and battle Giovanni, who gives you the Silph Scope you need to get through the tower. What's your reward once you finally get to the top of the tower? A Pokeflute, used to wake up sleeping Snorlax's that block your path to the West and South. Keys to keys to keys to keys. You know how in later games there's a section of the bag called "key items?" Well in this game you understand why, because if you don't drop a ton of items off in your PC after you finish each area you are going to be carrying a ton of

literal keys around with you and not have room for loot.

One thing I often hear people say when discussing difficulty in Pokemon games is the idea that "Pokemon games were never difficult, you only found them difficult because you were a kid." And actually, they kind of have a point, but they're missing something too. Pokemon games, most of them anyway, are designed to be intentionally difficult for their assumed audience, children. But that is actually really important for them to do, because the whole point of Pokemon is to encourage kids to learn, and designing your game specifically to be challenging for children accesses the part of their brain that is learning how to solve problems. Kids need games that are designed to challenge them specifically, to push them and help them learn important deductive skills and reasoning, and even open their minds to broader ideas about the world, but not be completely inaccessible. And keep in mind, kids aren't stumped by everything, they're very sharp because a lot of these skills are fresh and being used all the time, but they probably don't want to play something that is designed to be difficult for adults either. If all games for kids were designed to not be challenging for kids at all, or if all difficult games were designed to appeal to only adults, kids would miss out on this important opportunity to grow these skills. So it's actually pretty important to have games that are difficult specifically for kids, and Pokemon does this really successfully. I'm sure every single one of us can remember being stumped by something in one of these games as a kid AND figuring out how to overcome it, either by finding the knowledge in a resource like a guide book or the internet or a schoolmate, or by just trial and erroring your way through it. It also gave us opportunities to fail and get comfortable in the idea that you can keep trying again if you don't succeed at something, like trying to beat Brock with Charmander. I tend to forget this as an adult and wish that Pokemon games still challenged me in the same way, but they fill an important role in the lives of the children that play them. I know they did in mine.

So while this game is not difficult necessarily for an adult, it is a difficult game for children, and leans harder on the problem solving than pretty much any other Pokemon game, isn't afraid to make you stop and grind even as early as the first gym, and wants you to get stumped and slow down pretty often. There are so many dead ends in this game, virtually every location becomes important because you have to spend so much time in each space trying to figure out the one thing that will open up your next path forward. I often forget playing through as an adult how much time I had to spend solving these problems and getting past each roadblock on my first playthrough. For a game that is asking you to learn about the world around you by introducing obstacles that you have to think about and overcome, it does a good job of mounting a challenge that a kid can figure out by exploring enough and gathering enough context clues. Exploration is the answer every time, and it's how the themes and the game mechanics

really come together into a solid cohesive design.

The world you live in is full of obstacles and things to learn and the only way forward is to do just that. As you travel there are item balls, areas, secrets that are just out of reach everywhere, and the world wraps around so you often find yourself re-exploring these areas you traveled through earlier before you found the tools to help you progress, to overcome these things that were once dangling just out of reach. It rewards you for coming back to acknowledge how far you've come and celebrates your progress with you.

Of course your reward for beating the Elite Four might be bragging rights and a credits roll, but your actual in-game reward is access to yet another final dungeon, one so confusing to navigate that they had to redesign it three times. At the very end of this dungeon is that powerful Pokemon Mr. Fuji made, Mewtwo, the Pokemon that was made out of a selfish lust for power. So Mewtwo has to be super powerful somehow to drive that point home, and this is where the game's balance comes in. You see, having typing was actually a unique idea that Pokemon introduced to the genre at the time, most other JRPG series focused on building up a small set of party members through better gear and leveling up. But this game had so many different characters and party options that each needed some unique role in a party. One way they accomplished that was by giving each Pokemon a type that would be strong against and weak against other types. So try to keep in mind that this system was designed from a single player standpoint first, that they wanted each Pokemon to have a role in your journey, not necessarily just multiplayer. And they needed some types to be stronger than others as a whole to accomplish that.

See, the two most overpowered types on paper compared to the rest in the game are set up basically solely as boss encounters. Before you fight Lance at the Elite Four with his Dragonites, you have scant few opportunities for an ice type. They are only available in Seafoam Islands, a completely optional dungeon that some players might skip, or you are given a single underleveled Lapras that is so far below you by the time you get it that it is basically unusable without deliberate effort. You also have very few opportunities to ever see a Dragon type before the end of the game, and both of the chances you do have are non-traditional encounter types, there's one you buy at the Casino and the other you can catch in the Safari Zone. I know this is hard to imagine now, but in these days before everyone knew what Dragonite was, they really set it up perfectly as a surprise boss and went out of their way to make it unlikely that you would know how to counter it. It resists the strongest attacks of every starter and the game makes it so that you'd have to have gone out of your way to have raised an ice type by this point for 4x damage. Dragon might be in theory stronger than other types in the game but it is that way on purpose. Imagine what a shock the Elite Four Lance fight would have been in 98 before anyone knew anything about Pokemon.



And Mewtwo is much the same. There's nothing to counter it because it is supposed to blow you away, it is the tragic atomic bomb Pokemon, created by man and hiding away as far from civilization as it can get. The only other Pokemon that can manage to live near it are strong Pokemon that you also can't find in the wild anywhere else. Psychic is a slightly more common type than Dragon but there aren't actually a ton of really big powerhouse Psychic types in the main story of the game besides Mewtwo, and almost none of them learn the really hard hitting moves by level up. I will say that this is more true in Red and Blue than it is in Yellow though, since Yellow gave enemy trainers access to TMs and arbitrarily beefed up the levels on a bunch of later gyms, so Psychic being more OP is much more of a problem there than in the other gen 1 games.

Of course some might argue that since multiplayer battling was designed as part of the original pitch, they should have taken it into account when designing the types and that it's still bad game design to have an unbalanced game. And I guess that is a fair complaint, but as someone who has spent a lot of time battling in Gen 1 outside of the main story, I don't ever notice the typing being a serious issue. What is more of a realistic problem someone might have are some of the mechanics like how critical hits work, some unfair or poorly implemented move mechanics like Hyper Beam, Toxic, Leech Seed, or things that were seemingly designed to be bullshit on purpose, like 1 hit KO moves and wrap.

But in my opinion, there's actually something fun about how bullshit the battling is. Sure not everyone will feel that way, and that's understandable, but after playing through all of Stadium 1 with my in-game teams, including Round 2, it has unique strengths compared to later games. For starters, it is super lethal because of the way crits are tied to speed and the fact that so many of the best Pokemon have heavy hitting moves but low defenses. That's exacerbated by the fact that special is a single stat, so any Pokemon with high special, like the scarier Pokemon like Alakazam, are typically super weak physically, which is what every single other Pokemon you're likely to use is good at, because almost all of the Pokemon with high enough speed to crit are physical attackers. It's all about speed really, and because of this battles tend to move really fast unless you get tangled up in someone's intentionally irritating stall gimmick. It almost ends up playing out like a stand off in a western movie, where the goal is to be quicker to the draw.

Crits and 1HKOs make speed management essential, so you end up needing a decent electric type to spread Paralysis, and with some of the most reliable and hardest hitting physical moves being ground types that also means you have a good reason to carry a grass type or water type to counter. To deal with the inevitable grass type you'll need a flying type, and so on. So though the objective "best team" is

6 Mewtwos, take a look at some of the teams that ranked in regional contests in Japan at the time or even some of the prime cup teams in Stadium. There's a surprising amount of variety in top teams for something so "badly balanced." Sometimes gimmicks are fun to use and while they're not fun to be on the receiving end of, they really spice things up in what would otherwise be just a slamfest. There are a ton of different strategies to take advantage of here, and while a lot of it is still bullshit and unfair and that might not be everyone's thing, in my experience it's the perfect mix of simple hard hitting fun and variety in strategy that makes for a great time, while still being designed first and foremost to set up some memorable challenges in the single player story. This battle system accomplishes a lot all at the same time, and I feel like a lot of people overlook that. I don't think that they weren't thinking about it or totally inept buffoons that don't know how to balance a game, I think that the final outcome is working pretty much as designed, with the exception of some glitches...

### PART 3:

For example, let's address the most often repeated line I hear about these games, which is that they were held together by "duct tape and wishes." Some internet famous boy must have said this somewhere because of how often I hear this exact phrasing regurgitated. Of course I have to acknowledge that this is pretty true, this is an extremely buggy game, but I do think that it is unfair to pretend that the bugs ruin the game in any meaningful way or that it ended up this way out of sheer incompetence. Sure GameFreak were inexperienced, and had a very small staff to be working on something of this scale at this point, but a lot of people who played these games either did so as their first video game ever or are returning to an era just for this one title that they otherwise have no experience with. So no one is really looking at the context of what games were just like back then when they call these games the buggiest ever.

When you consider the platform as a whole, the GameBoy library is actually kind of insanely buggy, especially other games of similar scope. Legend of Zelda Link's Awakening is an extremely buggy game that I never hear anyone give it shit for the same way people rag on about Pokemon being buggy. I even ran into some glitches in the DX Version, the re-release on the GameBoy Color that was supposed to be designed to patch out most of the really egregious bugs, without even looking for them. The Final Fantasy games for the GameBoy, which would arguably be Pokemon's closest peers, also have serious glitches that can according to this wiki, "render the game unplayable." The reason for the prevalence of glitches in more complicated Gameboy games of this era was that they were all coded in Assembly, a programming language that is heavily dependent on where things are stored in memory and programmers have to be very careful in how each bit of data is routed and how much memory is used when they had so little to work

with. So yeah the GameBoy Pokemon games were buggy, but it is actually kind of a miracle that a) most of the glitches you have to really go out of your way to find and b) almost none of them have any potential to softlock your game or damage your save data, again unless you really go out of your way to accomplish that. The average player in 98 had no idea how buggy the games were until Missingno. became a playground and internet rumor, because you can play the whole game without ever realizing something isn't working as intended. Of course when people did find out, it was pretty much just fun and games trying to see how far we could push it and how much we could exploit each opening.

It actually makes the Gen 2 games even more impressive in hindsight with how many of these holes they were able to close in the code and how few glitches there are compared to the original games considering they were running on a modified version of the first engine. I don't think these games ended up this way out of a lack of care or effort, just that what they were trying to do was really difficult with what limited resources they had to work with. It says something that instead of continuing to release buggy unpolished games forever the same way other developers like Bethesda have, they immediately made a concentrated effort to make the follow up games cleaner, to the point that the bugs from that point on have been even more minor and out of the way. There might even be more documented glitches for Pokemon than other titles on the same system just because by now there have been hundreds of people dedicating decades to finding and documenting every possible unintended outcome and oversight in the game. No one gives a shit about anything else on the GameBoy anymore so nobody is spending this amount of time and energy digging up every broken thing they can find in every other game.

Now when people say that the games have aged poorly on the basis of quality of life and graphical polish, that is really the only one of these arguments that holds any water. The monochromatic color scheme, the simple sprites, things just barely graphically representing what they're supposed to be in the overworld, that sort of thing can be off putting if you are used to more modern games, even other 2D games. Things like having to open the menu to use items or HM abilities, not being able to tag anything to the select button, having very limited bag space and the PC menus being kind of confusing, I get it. Even going back to these games if you just played Gold and Silver, you notice things like not being able to just walk up to water and press A to Surf. Obviously I can't claim that I am in no way influenced by nostalgia or have no bias, because I played these games extensively during a period of time in my life where I had the patience and time to deal with some of their more "poorly aged" aspects, those things aren't going to be a roadblock for me the same way they would be for a newer player. I tolerate them now just as well as I did back then because I know what to expect. This sort of thing is ultimately just subjective in the end. I guess actually all of this

is subjective. But this is especially the sort of thing that is going to be impacted by what your experience of gaming was formed by and what your expectations are and is going to vary from person to person. When I played these games as a kid, I had no expectations. I started here. If you started somewhere else it makes sense that you might prefer something a little prettier or less tedious. Or maybe even if you started here and then saw how much more improved a lot of this stuff got it is fine to prefer modern installments. But in my subjective experience there are a lot of games that are much harder to go back to than this, and there's a lot of value here if you can cut through some of the discomfort that you can't get by playing games with a more modern design ethos in mind. Let's go back to that theme again. As I said earlier, Pokemon games are asking the question "What things of value are lost or left behind as we advance as a society?" These games were made in and for a slower moving and less connected world. A time where we didn't have nearly as many constant demands on our attention or intense information fatigue on a daily basis. And sometimes that slower pace is nice to go back to, for a little break from all the demands of today. Sometimes it is good for your brain to get some perspective on where we have been and where we are going, even if it isn't always comfortable.

But even if these games are showing their age now, in so many ways they were actually ahead of their time. They found a way to make those connections, to cross borders and cables and break boundaries. To really push what the original GameBoy could do to its limits. It's not quite so much of a "stop and stay a while" game as Gold and Silver, but it is still a solid take on some traditional JRPG tropes, and if you set out to really do all it has to offer and beat Stadium 1, you're looking at at least a hundred hours of content to enjoy. Maybe modern games emphasize quality of life and online play, but they definitely don't offer quite as focused an experience as games designed from this era.

#### CONCLUSION:

The reason I've been thinking so hard about Gen 1 lately is that when I started writing this video in... November of last year, I had just released my FireRed and LeafGreen video, in which I'm very harsh on those games. I got a lot of comments from people saying things like "well it's absolutely necessary that they made these remakes because the original GameBoy games are bad and now we finally have a playable version of Kanto." And I was torn on that because while I don't think that I could fault anyone for not wanting to play 25 year old GameBoy games in 2021, or enjoying a game with a much faster engine and prettier graphics that keeps a lot of the same content from these games intact, I actually can't agree that these are the worst or even a worse version of Kanto. Now Kanto itself is not my favorite region to revisit so many years on as we discussed at length

last time, but if I have to play a Kanto game, I pick Red or Blue every time. To me the simplicity of the mechanics and being able to see the bare skeleton of what the rest of the franchise would be built on means it offers a completely unique experience from every modern iteration. It's a perfect time capsule of what was important to the people who made it when they made it, and it's nice to see a game aimed at children that doesn't pull all its punches and just trusts them to learn and overcome everything thrown at them. It's actually ironic that Kanto is one of the most remade regions because attempting to bury the past is precisely the opposite of what the themes of Kanto advocate for. I guess it may not be the perfect RPG experience for everybody but it is the game that taught me to love RPGs and all of the crunchy rough edges that sometimes come with them. So even if I would prefer not to play them again in particular just because I think in my lifetime I have gotten my fill, I don't think they belong in the garbage or that all of the things they have to offer have been made obsolete.

Or I could just be turning into a boomer.