Nanci Santos, "Entry on: Bioshock: The Collection by Irrational Games [2K Boston] ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1554. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Irrational Games [2K Boston]

Bioshock: The Collection

Worldwide (2007)

TAGS: Aphrodite Athena Atlantis Dionysus / Dionysos Hercules Minerva Neptune Persephone Poseidon Prometheus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Bioshock: The Collection
Studio/Production Company	Developed by Irrational Games and 2K Australia. Published by 2K Games.
Country of the First Edition	Worldwide
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2007
First Edition Details	The first *Bioshock* game was released in 2007 (August 21), followed by *Bioshock 2* in 2010, and *Bioshock Infinite* in 2013. The games were later remastered during the PS4/Xbox One generation and released on September 13, 2016, on consoles and PC.
Running time	44.5 hours (Based on Howlongtobeat.com)
Platform	Microsoft Windows, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, OS X, iOS, Linux, Shield Portable, Shield Tablet, Shield Android TV, Nintendo Switch
Official Website	Bioshock-the-collection at 2k.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).
Available Onllne	*BioShock: The Collection Launch Trailer* at BioShock YouTube channel (accessed: September 22, 2022).

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Awards	***Bioshock*** 2007 – Game of the Year, Best X-Box 360 game, Best Original Soundtrack at Spike TV Video Game Awards; 2007 – Best game award at 2007 BAFTAS; 2008 – Best Visual Art, Best Writing, Best Audio at the Game Developers Choice Awards; 2008 – Guinness World Records awarded the game a record for "Most Popular Xbox Live Demo" in the Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition 2008. ***Bioshock Infinite*** 2013 – Best visual design at the Golden Joystick Award; 2013 – Best Shooter, Best song in a game, Character of the year at the Spike VGX; 2013 – Best Visual Art, Best audio at the 14th Annual Game Developers Choice Awards; 2014 – Outstanding Achievement in Original Music Composition, Action Game of the Year at the 17th Annual D.I.C.E. Awards; 2014 – Excellence in art at the SXSW Gaming Awards; 2014 – Original Music at the 10th British Academy Video Games Awards.
Genre	Action and adventure video games*, FPS (First Person Shooter) video games*, RPG (Role Playing Game)*
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Nanci Santos, OMC Contributor, nancisantos@hotmail.co.uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Irrational Games [2K Boston] , 1997 - 2017
(Company)

Irrational games (1997–2017) is a video games company, based in Massachusetts, created by Ken Levine, writer and creator of the *Bioshock* series, as well as other popular video games such as *System Shock and Thief: The Dark Project*. The company operated between 1997 and 2007, and then again between 2009 and 2017, prior to being rebranded to Ghost Story Games. During its operations, Irrational Games developed *System Shock 2, Tribes: Vengeance*, and *SWAT 4*.

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Novelization of the series as a prequel:

Shirley, J., *Rapture*, London: Titan Books, 2011.

Summary

First released in 2007, the *Bioshock* series is a collection of dystopian and utopian First-Person Shooter games set in the underwater city of Rapture and the sky city of Columbia. The first two games accompany "Jack", a shipwrecked man who comes across the ruins of the city and explores its secrets left behind. *Bioshock Infinite*, on the other hand, is a prequel and explores the days before the city "Rapture" was created.

Within the city of Rapture, each area is named after a Greek or Roman deity, such as the Hephaestus core level. This level contains the main power station for the city and a connection to an underwater volcano. Other areas of note in the first two games include: Arcadia – an underground botanical garden; Poseidon's Plaza – a shopping district; Neptune's Bounty – Main port and access to fishing; Mercury's Suites & Athena's Glory – a set of luxury apartments situated in Olympus' heights and in the Adonis Luxury Resort; Apollo's square – working class residential district which includes the Hestia Chambers; Dionysus Park – an area of the city that celebrated art and culture; Persephone – a prison complex and former psychiatric prison hospital; and Point Prometheus – a genetic research facility.

Analysis

The game itself is heavily influenced in a variety of philosophers and modern-day pop culture, with all kinds of Easter eggs found throughout the game – from references to other games to posters referencing films. The game is influenced by Ayn Rand, and whose philosophy of "objectivism" and whose books *Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* are played out in the game.* What is perhaps most striking is despite the fact Rand's book is titled *Atlas Shrugged*, the story makes no mention of Greek mythology, barring a reference of Atlantis in passing, by one of the characters. Bioshock, on the other hand, is filled with references to the ancient world.

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Beyond the nomenclature of the areas relating to Graeco-Roman deities, the areas also contain little links to each god. For example, the Dionysus Park, besides being a cultural space, also contains little references to the god, including the panther, which Dionysus is often associated with. Meanwhile, Persephone Prisons also borrow the idea from its mythological links, and from Persephone having been imprisoned in the underworld. The prison complexes in Rapture hold that parallelism built as they were built inside a cave system that extends to the edge of an oceanic trench.** Moreover, Point Prometheus is a research facility where the game's "Big Daddies" were created, in a similar manner to how the Prometheus of classical myth created humans from clay.***

Bioshock does not only have mythically inspired locations but also alludes to deities themselves, such as in a subtle reference to Aphrodite during the first game, whereby Dr. Steinman mentions his obsession with Aphrodite.**** The game also contains a small reference to Hercules at one of the vending machines, a whole multiplayer add-on to the second game titled "Minerva's Den", and references to Julius Caesar's "Veni, vidi, vici", the latter appearing in the *Bioshock Infinite* game. Minerva's Den from *Bioshock 2* is a high-tech laboratory area where the city's main technology is created. The name is quite apt as Minerva was the goddess of intellect and academic activity.*****

One of the main characters in the game is named Atlas, inspired not only by the *Atlas Shrugged* novel, but also on the Atlas statue outside the GE building, in New York City.****** Much like the mythical version of the character who led the Titans in the war against Zeus,******* the in-game Atlas was responsible for inciting a revolt against Andrew Ryan. He also gently persuades the player throughout the game to follow his commands against the founder of Rapture, Andrew Ryan.********

In its third game, the game introduces the "DLC" content (downloadable content) "Burial at sea, parts 1 and 2" through the means of short 1 min. 30 clips of fake documentaries, in a 60s/70s style. It refers to Rapture as an Atlantis and connects the sky city of Columbia to the myth of Icarus, making various references to the "songbird" (a mechanically propelled flying bird). These trailers are quite curious in themselves as the game is comparing itself to the Platonic myth of Atlantis and the myth of Icarus.*********

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Bioshock and Atlantis

As briefly discussed previously, despite Rand's books having quite a noticeable lack of myths and Greek and Roman deities, *Bioshock* does not follow the same trend. Therefore, it is fairly unsurprising that Rapture has been associated with Atlantis, which the game developers appear to be aware of and have used it as a marketing strategy.

The underwater city of Rapture shares more than its location with the Platonian city of Atlantis. Plato tells us in his *Timaeus* and continued in *Critias*, of a mythical city, which the titan, Atlas, founded, and which was later ruled by various kings, all sons of Atlas. These kings lived peacefully, and the land prospered. However, as the years went by, and the kings drew away from their divine origin, they became arrogant and attempted to invade and enslave all of the Mediterranean lands. Because of their hubris, Poseidon decided to destroy the land and sink it to the bottom of the sea. Rapture also shares some similarities with this. Originally built with the purpose of giving to all the chance of becoming anything they want in this land, without the interference of religion and political motivations.********** Rapture soon thrived as a city. Quickly, the inhabitants surpassed the technological advances of the world above water and created genetic enhancements. However, much like in Plato's myth, the city soon began to decline. What was once a utopia for all, quickly became a dystopia, and Rapture became full of genetically enhanced monsters, and social disorder.

Other similarities with Plato's myth include the heavy referencing and reliance on the gods: Athena, Poseidon, and Hephaestus, all gods found within the Atlantis myth, with a noticeable lack of other well-known deities such as Zeus, Artemis, Hera, and Ares, in both the Greek pantheon as well as their Roman counterparts.

Classical reception and impact in young adults

Despite its ESRI rating of 18, the *Bioshock* games are a collection of games well known among young adults and teenagers due to its critical acclaim within the video games community. Since its release, Bioshock has been widely regarded as one of the first video games to be considered art due to its complex storytelling, themes approached, and game design in itself.**********

Perhaps it was a tribute to the early 20th century interest in the

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classics, also known as the Classical revival period,********** it was a time where the Graeco-Roman traditions were revived.********** With particular interests in the myths of Arcadia, amongst other mythologies and traditions, art from some of the most famous painters, pay tributes to the Classical gods.********** This movement was not only in art, but also architecture, music, and writing, with works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Fernando Pessoa *Mensagem* (1934)**********.

But it might also derive from, or be inspired by the use of Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, and the Atlas statue outside the GE building in New York City.********** Whichever cultural inspiration is the most prevalent one, *Bioshock*'s heavy use of Greek and Roman mythology will leave an imprint on young adults' myth reception. Its critically acclaimed status and recognition of video games as art has rendered the *Bioshock* series one of the most popular video games of the PS3/X-box 360 era, reaching millions of players.********** With it, also the various mythological, philosophical and pop-culture references spread throughout the game.

Ongoing relevance

The game continues to have relevance, even though it was released for an earlier generation of games consoles, which, in the world of video games, quickly becomes less relevant as graphics and gameplay further evolve with new console releases. The *Bioshock* collection was re-mastered and released on the PS4 and X-Box One consoles. Netflix has recently also acquired the rights to make a film/series, due to be released in the upcoming years.**********

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* See *Bioshock Cultural References* at bioshock.fandom.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

** See *Persephone* at bioshock.fandom.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

*** See *Point Prometheus* at bioshock.fandom.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

**** See *Aphrodite Walking* at bioshock.fandom.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

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***** *Penguin Reference Classic Mythology*, Penguin books, 2011, 275.

****** See *The Making Of: Bioshock* at edge-online.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

******* See *Atlas* at Theoi Project (accessed: September 22, 2022).

******** See *Atlas* at bioshock.fandom.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

********* See *Bioshock Infinite - "Truth from Legend" - Columbia: A Modern Day Icarus* at G247.com YouTube channel; *BioShock Infinite: Truth from Legend: A Modern Day Icarus? Part 2* at IGN YouTube channel; *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea - Fact from Myth Trailer* at GameSpot YouTube channel (accessed: September 22, 2022).

********** See *Welcome to Rapture: Andrew Ryan's Monologue - BioShock Remastered at Cornelix YouTube channel* (accessed: September 22, 2022).

*********** *Bioshock: Beauty in experience* at Redbull.com; *8 Games That Could Be Considered "Art"* at gameskinny.com; *Bioshock proved that video games could be art* at vox.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

************ *Classical Revival Style 1895–1950* at phmc.state.pa.us (accessed: September 22, 2022).

************* *The Classical Revival in Modern Art* at visual-arts-cork.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).

************** Museo CarmenThyssen Malaga, *Mediterraneo. An Arcadia Reinvented. From Signac to Picasso* at carmenthyssenmalaga.org (accessed: September 22, 2022).

*************** Fernando Pessoa himself is quite an interesting portrayer of this Neoclassicism movement, with some of his heteronyms being neopagan, worshippers of the classical deities, and having been in charge of various Portuguese magazines with classical titles including “Athena”, “Orpheus”, and “Icarus”. See *MODERNISMO Arquivo Virtual da Geração de Orpheu* at modernismo.pt (accessed: September 22, 2022).

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	********** See *The Making Of: BioShock* at edge-online.com via archive.org (accessed: September 22, 2022). ********** Makuch, Eddie, *BioShock Franchise Still "Really Important," Publisher Says* at gamespot.com (accessed: September 22, 2022). ********** See *Netflix's BioShock Movie Gets a Director* at ftw.usatoday.com (accessed: September 22, 2022).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Athena Atlantis Dionysus / Dionysos Hercules Minerva Neptune Persephone Poseidon Prometheus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Philosophy Utopia and dystopia

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