

Throwback Thursday: Pokemon Red and Blue (1996, 1998)

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Everyone still remembers Pokemon, right? Come on, Ash and Pikachu and the incompetent antics of Team Rocket all set to a cheery theme song and other Saturday morning breakfast cartoons – bah! I’m talking about the games that spawned such a huge pop-culture phenomenon.

Before Ash was the player-character called Red, and his rival Blue, before Pikachu was your starter Pokemon (mine was always Charmander), and before the cheery theme song, you and millions of other kids were humming along to Pokemon’s original bicycle and surfing themes in their 8-bit GameBoy glory. Bluntly, the bike theme was awesome.

For reasons that have been over-analyzed by geeks like myself for more than ten years, you, an eleven year-old with nothing but your first Pokemon are sent on a months-long quest for the local authority on Pokemon to research all 150 Pokemon in the world.

Your journey, Red’s journey, and other romanticization given to the plot of the game, usually takes place over 16 hours of game-play and in the Kanto region of the Pokemon world – not to be mistaken for the Kanto region of Japan, on which the region is partly based.

The popularity of the first Pokemon games reached an unprecedented scale. No one could have imagined in 1996 that this strange bug-catching-influenced game could have become what it is today. But there are several features of the game that won the public over:

The world is of a dozen unique cities, the game holds more than 150 separate species of beings, and the game mechanics, while not the odd mathematical magic they are today, were one-of-a-kind for the time and gave way to multiplayer battles and trades that persist in modern games.

Although many fans remember the original games and dislike the most recent generation of Pokemon, the first installment of this series was not without its faults. Of the many glitches and programming errors in Pokemon, there were those we hated for deleting our game without

warning or mercy, and those we abused for infinite numbers of Rare Candy items or the highest tier of capture device, the Master Ball.

In the end, for all of Pokemon Red and Blue's game mechanics, the complexity of the world, story, and replayability, these games have earned 4 out of 5 Hats.