

METROID®

The Novel

To translate Metroid to another medium, we need to first understand what the series fundamentally is. Metroid at its best is a series of lonely, quiet games where you explore hostile alien environments. Progress is made by simply looking around, fighting creatures as they appear, and earning new abilities which then promotes further exploration. In its most well-beloved iterations (*Super Metroid* on Super Nintendo Entertainment System and *Metroid Prime* on the Nintendo Gamecube), you're not necessarily talking with non-playable characters or looming about well-populated science-fiction cityscapes in the style of *Blade Runner* or *Altered Carbon*. You're isolated in a world that does not care about you, as in *Alien*.

As such, Metroid can very often be a quiet game. It's an action series which nonetheless primarily takes place in the player's head due to the need for the player to create a mental map of the overworld to succeed in successfully finding all of the world's secrets. The novel is a medium which is entirely about the reader translating the written word to a mental image in a fashion similar to internalizing the passageways and shortcuts of a Metroid level in one's mind. Thus, the fundamentals of Metroid would work excellently in the format of a novel.



Samus Aran, our protagonist and narrator

It makes sense to ground the reader in the novel through the first-person perspective of player-character Samus Aran. Descriptions of the strange alien planets she inhabits like Zebes and SR388 would all reflect Samus' personal experience of navigating them to reach her goals, and would give the novel a darker sci-fi tone and mood which is reminiscent particularly of the atmosphere of *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Prime*. Using Samus' interiority as a lens into the world of *Metroid* would also give the reader more of a feeling of personal stakes in the storytelling and bring them closer to her as a character.

The goal of playing *Metroid* is usually to find upgrades on your own and thereby feel intrinsically rewarded. This notion doesn't translate well to the literary world because the reader isn't personally making these discoveries, so they wouldn't be as satisfying. As such, the crux of the 'content' of the novel would instead be in exploring Samus' interiority as she immerses herself in these strange places, coming across ancient Chozo ruins and skirmishing with space pirates and Metroids. The prose quality would be relatively high and something adults who grew up playing *Metroid* could enjoy, perhaps in the vein of something like *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer, but not too flowery or obtuse so as to isolate younger readers.



Ridley, our antagonist established early on who sets the course Samus takes

Also depicted are a series of battle sequences involving a selection from Samus' signature arsenal of missiles, power beams, morph ball bombs, etc. This arsenal should be limited at first to make Samus feel not particularly powerful, giving battles higher stakes and making them more memorable. Later on, she'll find a small handful of gadgets and weapons which when found are explained by Samus to ground these objects within the world and help the reader better understand their function so that they can better conceptualize in their head how they might actually work in practice by Samus later on. By limiting the size of her toolset, the reader won't be overwhelmed by a surplus of weapons and gear types that they have no visual concept of within the confines of the novel itself. There will also be one or two space battles from Samus' gunship for the sake

of variety. It's important to have combat sequences in the novel in part because they're something the player does in the Metroid games pretty frequently, meaning longtime fans of the series will come to expect them. As well, since the novel would be an adaptation of a Nintendo game, the novel will inherently attract a younger audience who might be coming to a book like this for action scenes like that.

The lack of many characters or any sort of focus on things like the intergalactic political structures which proliferate through some of the later Metroid games inherently means that this Metroid novel would not be particularly plot-heavy in the same way that the original games are not. The high-level premise of the novel reflects the core narrative of the games: Samus Aran is a bounty hunter whose rival is the leader of the space pirates, Ridley. The instigating incident for our novel is a distress signal from a derelict space station Samus intercepts which brings her in contact with her nemesis Ridley once again. Ridley kills the person who sent the distress signal and in the process damages Samus' critical suit functionality. Samus decides upon revenge for the death of the civilian, chasing Ridley with her ship to a nearby planet. We later find out she has other personal motives for hunting down Ridley.



Samus meeting Ridley as a child, the backbone of our novel

Ridley works well as a recurring adversary figure to center the novel around since in canon he murdered Samus' parents when she was but a child. Employing this canonical material into the DNA of our novel both rewards long-time fans of the more obscure parts of the Metroid lore established in comics and other ancillary materials released throughout the years while also more importantly serving to immediately connect the reader to Samus. This lust for revenge becomes a topic of contemplation for her which the reader would be privy to. The search for Ridley brings her to strange alien places

which are made more tantalizingly colorful and profoundly weird by omitting any sort of visual accompaniment.

Honing in on Samus' interiority also helps to make the novel feel particularly distinct from the games. This sort of thing does exist in several of the later games such as *Metroid Fusion* and *Metroid: Other M*, but the dialogue usually feels fairly flat and lifeless, making Samus seem boring. Since she no longer needs to serve a dual purpose as a cypher for the player to inhabit, Samus in this novel can be crafted to feel more compelling to listen to and would thereby be imbued with more distinctive and memorable personality traits.

Re-crafting the character of Samus Aran to be more compelling could help to revitalize the Metroid franchise—which hasn't seen a mainline title since 2010 (aside from the 2017 remake of *Metroid 2: Samus Returns*)—by expanding the reach of potential customers beyond merely those who are already familiar with the games. It would do this by first and foremost being a good novel that people want to read. In turn, this would bring more people back to the original games, many of which are available to play on the current Nintendo platform, the Nintendo Switch. In doing so, you prime a whole new audience of people for the impending release of *Metroid Prime 4* which is currently in development. This novel could also particularly serve young women interested in science-fiction by offering them a character that they're able to more personally identify with in a revitalized Samus Aran.

