

## I Hate Everything!



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“**Everyone is essentially** either sad, angry or afraid,” Mike, my best friend, said. We were sitting on the linoleum floor in my college dorm room. It was 1990. It was 3:45 in the morning. We were down to brass tacks.



“I’m definitely sad, then,” I said.

“Well, I’m angry,” he said.

As a dutiful sad person, I felt instantly defeated. Anger seemed like something that lean, focused, going-places people had, especially men — rage and fury and indignation. Anger meant glory. Where depression would just mean shame and Dove Bars. How horrible to be essentially sad. Why couldn't I be essentially angry?

Enter the Finnish video game Angry Birds. Angry Birds HD for [iPad](#) has finally filled my life with the wrath I've long aspired to. Or no, it's maybe a little more complicated than that. To stay on course: I graduated from college in 1991. Sega, Nintendo and PlayStation came to power, but in those days I didn't have enough floor space for console games. Later I thought the Wii might be bad for my kids. Then last month I downloaded Angry Birds.

Maybe Angry Birds was inevitable. It reached No. 1 among paid apps in the United States last spring. By September, the full-featured version of the app had been downloaded more than seven million times. Angry Angry Angry Birds.

Angry Birds is a chuckle-inspiring game about a gang of wingless birds who have been wronged by a gang of pigs. In Angry Birds, according to [Wikipedia](#): "Players take control of a flock of birds that are attempting to retrieve their eggs from a group of evil pigs that have stolen them. The pigs have taken refuge on or within structures made of various materials, including wood, glass and stone, and the object of the game is to eliminate all the pigs in the level. Using a slingshot, players launch the birds at the structure, with the intent of either hitting the pigs directly or damaging the structure, which would cause it to collapse onto the pigs."

That description seems to have come straight from the Finnish developer, Rovio. I like to think of Rovio as the Tolstoy of avian rage-based gaming. The idea that the pigs — how I loathe them — "have taken refuge on or within structures made of various materials" is just superb. Just reading Rovio's summary of Angry Birds made me long to play it again.

*Refuge on or within!* That's exactly right: sometimes the pigs are lined up unprotected, and sometimes they lodge themselves in strongholds made of stone, glass or wood. They've taken refuge in these spaces, as in "refuge of a scoundrel," and the refuges are maddeningly difficult to penetrate or topple.

In Angry Birds, as so often in life, the material world has conspired to favor the jerks, endowing them with what look like breastworks, berms and parapets, as if they were the beneficiaries of some grim foreign-aid package. Those gross, smug, green pigs stole my

flock's *babies*, and they're sitting pretty in stone fortifications that they didn't even build themselves. And the looks on their fat faces? Perfectly, perfectly self-satisfied.

Think you're too good for me, eh? That you'll rob me and I'll just be *polite about it*? You have your elaborate forts and your snorting equipoise. I have nothing but my sense of injury. My rage. And so I take wobbly aim at them, the pig-thieves, in Rovio's world without end, in which there are hundreds of levels to master and the game gets bigger and bigger with constant updates.

Angry Birds is a so-called physics game, which suggests education, and also a puzzle in reverse, as you must destroy something by figuring out how its pieces come apart. Your tools are these birds — the victims of the theft, but also your cannon fodder. Each bird that is launched dies. Though there's no blood, as it is death by cartoon *poof*, every mission is a suicide mission.

And so I must say that as much as I both pity and need the angry birds (they are the pretext for my anger and the expression of it), I hate them too.

I hate everything! I play Angry Birds! Sure, I have no excuses for being consumed with anger, finally, at this late date in my emotional evolution. I will say that it makes me happy. Images of pigs and splintering ice structures pervade my dreams. I see built things like capitol buildings and fantasize about how easily they could — and *should* — fall apart. Is this what it's like to become not only an angry bird but also a *bad* bird?

Throwing child-development caution to the wind, I have even introduced my 5-year-old son, Ben, to Angry Birds. We play with the sound off and cover the pigs' faces when, having survived an attack, they grin hideously and gloat. Ben says he feels the gloating is a touch too infuriating. He even came up with a great way to use the green boomerang birds: shoot them backward, tap to turn their direction and watch them whirl, hard and straight, toward the miserable pigs.