

Dark Souls II: Scholar of the First Sin Game Review

Lauded for its punishing difficulty, rewarding exploration and incredible sense of accomplishment, the *Souls* series continues its smooth and steady ascent to becoming one of the most successful franchises ever created. Like its predecessors, *Dark Souls II* establishes dark themes of despair and desolation ever present in its dismal atmosphere and the dark, beautifully realized world of Drangleic. The original *Dark Souls II* is a hard game

to venture into. The updated version, *Dark Souls II: Scholar of the First Sin*, however, is a tougher entry point in the series for newcomers.

The *Scholar of the First Sin* edition boasts of updated visuals locked in native 1080p resolution and 60 fps that rarely drops. Packaged within is the previously released downloadable content *Lost Crowns*' trilogy, making this edition the definitive one to go for. Reshuffled enemy positions and item locations make for a tougher experience for newcomers, and for a fresh adventure that caters to veterans of the original edition. Also, added to this edition is Aldia, the Scholar of the First Sin himself, who appears at different stages throughout the story, as well as becoming the 'true' final boss of the game, after which you are now offered two different endings, rather than just the one. Adding all of this together makes *Scholar of the First Sin* the ultimate experience for *Dark Souls II*.



The downloadable story chapters of the trilogy offer a plethora of new enemies to vanquish, weapons, rings and armor sets to collect, and magic spells to master. Each chapter brings in loads of new content pertaining to its particular area in Drangleic. The *Crown of the Sunken King* invites players to venture deep into the bowels of the earth and explore the crumbling, forsaken Sanctum City. Brand new puzzle mechanics, twisted passages and new poisonous enemies distinguish the first chapter from the rest, helping it make its own unique memorable mark.

The *Crown of the Old Iron King* takes the player to a world plunged in dying embers and ash. The Brume Tower completely redefines the concept of verticality, and its devious ledges and play-dead enemies add new twists to the experience. As it is, the Brume Tower is easily one of the most challenging and dangerous areas in the entire game.

Lastly, the *Crown of the Ivory King* introduces the first snowbound environment in the franchise. Snow plays a crucial part in this chapter, creating scenarios with poor visibility from where hidden enemies can ambush the player.

As always, *Dark Souls II* prides itself on its cooperative and invasion modes that seamlessly adjoin to its single player story mode. Numerous armor sets and various weapon types make for an unlimited assortment of customizations to personalize your character to your own whim. Whether you go for physical protection, unique weapon or armor perks, or pure fashion, *Dark Souls II* offers it all.

Dark Souls II improves upon its predecessor on some regards such as mobility and combat, though it falters on some others. Level design is not as strong as previous titles, though the game more than makes up for it in the downloadable chapters of the *Lost Crowns*' trilogy. *Scholar of the First Sin* is truly one game you will not want to miss, if you haven't had the

chance to play it. If you're a returning veteran, there's new content for you, but whether it is good enough for you or not, that's for you to decide.

I impatiently await the inevitable *Dark Souls III*.

