Genre Reaction Papers

GAM 224, Prof. Robin Burke
Winter 2005

Due: Weekly, starting 1/17
Grade value: 10%

What is it:
Each week, each student will write a one-page 2-3 paragraph paper describing their interaction with and impressions of a particular game title. A list of the games in the CTI Game Lab and their respective genres is available on the course web site.

What to do:
1. Choose a game to play. This can be any game on the genre list or another of the same genre if you otherwise have access to it.
2. Games not on the list require prior approval from the instructor – send email no later than Wednesday before the reaction paper is due.
3. Play the game for at least an hour.
4. Write a one-page reaction paper describing your interaction and your impressions of the game.
5. Turn in the harcopy paper at the start of class.

You will draw on experience in this exercise for the genre discussion in each class. Therefore, students without their game reaction papers will get no credit for course participation for that day.

The reaction paper should only briefly describe the premise and scenario of the game. It should

- Log your time spent playing the game.
- Describe your experience of playing the game:
  - Level of difficulty
  - Attractive / interesting aspects
  - Annoying / distracting aspects

Focus on one or two areas and write a paragraph about each. See example on following page.

If you used any aids, such as FAQ files, walkthroughs or the advice of others, these should be noted.

Rubric:

+ = Very Good
- Is very well written and proofread with few to no errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
- Describes the interaction with the game clearly.
- Briefly makes and supports one or two points regarding the gameplay experience.

✓ = OK
- Is well written and proofread with few errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
- Describe the interaction with the game.
- Makes but does not adequately support claims about the gameplay experience.

- = Minimal
- Is poorly written and proofread with many errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, etc.
- Summarizes game premise without describing particular instance of use.
- Does not make any analytic claims or does so without support.
Example:

I played Astro Boy: Omega Factor on the GameBoy Advance SP for about two hours over two days. It is an action-oriented side-scrolling type game with some adventure aspects, set in an animated world in which robots and people are struggling for power. The game begins with a brief tutorial episode that covers the use of the controls. There wasn't sufficient practice given on some of the more difficult techniques, like dashing: it was possible to make it through the tutorial without actually using these. Also, as I discovered later in a FAQ file¹, combinations of attacks are also important. These were not covered in the tutorial.

Despite being a GameBoy game with limited display to work with, I found the visuals very appealing, in a Sunday-morning cartoon kind of way. (Appropriately so, since the game is based on a cartoon.) AstroBoy is supposed to be a robot, but he looks like a boy and can display a variety of emotions. There are a number of other characters, both attackers and helpful characters, all done in a colorful anime style. The cut-scenes in which Astro Boy converses with various characters are not overlong and make good use of comic-book conventions. The backgrounds are two-dimensional, but use multiple layers to give the impression of depth.

I played on the easy level of difficulty, so I progressed through the game pretty quickly. The primary reward system has to do with powering up each of Astro Boy's special moves. When another game character is added to Astro Boy's "Omega Factor", a power-up token is available. It can be added to any of the moves, however. So, the player can choose how and when to enhance Astro Boy's abilities. I chose to enhance the laser gun most often because it is the most powerful weapon, but later I wished I had spent more on the machine gun because of its "stun" effect.

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¹ http://db.gamefaqs.com/portable/gbadvance/file/astro_boy_gba.txt