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ENGL298

“Letter Writing”

<https://www.github.com/KaceCottam/EnglishProject> - Source Code

<https://KaceCottam.github.io/EnglishProject> - The Game

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My analytical project is a web-based typing game (only on computer) where the “player” (aka whoever is controlling the program) is a soldier from World War 1 writing letters to his wife who he calls “Sweetie”. There are many elements of the game which contribute to the final effect of being in the mindset of someone who is in a war, the main ones being the gameplay, the text, and the plot

The most important part of a game is the gameplay. In this game, you type the blue (or red, more on that later) colored letter of the highlighted word in order to progress. It is very simple to do, like writing a letter. In World War 1 and 2, many soldiers wrote letters back home that had to be censored by the government (for safety reasons) to tell their loved ones what their current situation was. Of course, someone would want to know their loved ones are safe, so the soldier would have to be careful to not worry their family and to not have their letter classified or heavily censored. This is the reason that some text appears as red and shakes when the player is typing it, and other text gets blacked out after the player is done writing it. Red text shakes, which confuses players initially. The red text is usually also more morbid, and the red is a similar color to blood. This is meant to confuse the player and to make them say “Is this supposed to be

this way?” Blocked text happens suddenly and can go on for unknown periods of time. This is significant as, to the player, they think about what “they” said to make the information classified, and they wonder if the letter will still be readable. Players are also forced to type the letters exactly as they see it. This makes the gameplay slow as if a player is not good at typing, they may consider the words more carefully. If a player is fast at typing, they are limited by what is revealed. They can only see explicitly what they have to type next, so if they go too fast, they may end up making errors. Other typing games may allow a player to press whatever key they want, and it will be correct, but if this game were created like that, there would be a disconnect between what the player types and what they see. The goal of this game is to be immersed in the mind of a soldier, so it is necessary that their hands match what the soldier wants to write.

The text contains various references to the letters I have read at the Washington State University MASC by Russell Miller (1913-1928). Sometimes the text is exactly as it would appear in the letter, but many times it is changed to align with the game’s plot. This is cited in the source code of the game (right-click and view source code on most browsers) as citing it in place would confuse the players and take them out of the game. The text is very vague in order to keep the letter from being censored. It depends on if the player is analytical, but if they notice this it is very apparent how vague the descriptions of the soldier’s current location is. The text also details a lot of seemingly random things, such as recounts of what the soldier ate and rumors. Some might notice that this is because the soldier does not want to write to his wife about some of the horrors that they face or will be facing, so they must fill the space. A soldier often goes through thoughts such as “Will I live today?” and they would not want to have their lovers experiencing the same level of worry. The folks back at home must worry about keeping up the war effort and making sure the soldiers have gear and that the children are taken care of.

The text even has instances of the soldier writing “I can’t say that” to show how blatant the censorship is.

Lastly, the plot. The plot of the game is very simple. It starts out with a soldier that is going to the front and misses his wife and kid, then is afraid to going to the front, then transitions to being traumatized by combat (In the third letter) and being wounded, then being relieved to go back home. The player, being immersed in the mind of the soldier, is taken on this emotional journey as they finish the game. They even get to know what the soldier is feeling but can’t say to his wife. This brings the game world to reality- a player may wonder what they would really say if they were in the soldier’s position. The soldier must admit to the wife how they were wounded but must do it in a way that the wife is not worried, and they must spin it into good news. This is the effect of the soldier staying hopeful about getting home alive and keeping the wife’s hopes up as well.

In conclusion, it is a simple game that stirs the emotions of its players to immerse them into the world of war. They must stay positive in a time of strife, even when wounded so that their loved ones can keep supporting them. War is terrible, but the people in War have to stay positive if they want to get out alive.