

Analysis of Mechanics

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Title: *[Oxenfree]*

Released: *[2016]*

Author: *[Night School Studio]*

Primary Genre: *[Narrative Adventure]*

Secondary Genre: *[supernatural/ psychological horror, puzzle]*

Style: *[combined cartoon and hand-painted style]*

Analysis

Oxenfree is a supernatural themed game about a group of friends that take a trip to an eerie island, where they accidentally open a mysterious rift. After that, strange things start to happen and they try to find a way to flee the island and escape whatever entity is causing these anomalies.

0.1 Primary genre

The game is mainly focused on telling a compelling story and exploring the island (game's environment) is the main thing that causes the plot to move forward. The game's genre is also reflected in its interactive dialogue, always giving player multiple response choices during conversations between characters. Those choices further affect their relationship and can influence how the story will end as well. Interactive dialogue also allows for the player to connect with the characters more and makes them want to see how their story will end. Throughout the game, player can also look for hidden frequencies on the radio and find letters around the island to learn more about its secrets and backstory. All these elements make the narrative adventure genre fitting for the Oxenfree.

0.2 Secondary genre

The horror genre is reflected in the game's environment, overall atmosphere and the dark mysterious story that is gradually unveiled. It unfolds on a creepy, mostly desolate island which used to be an ex-military base. The events of the game take place at night, adding to the uneasy feeling. Player is on the edge throughout most of the game, expecting something bad to happen at every step. Oxenfree uses things like time loops to make the player doubt what is actually real and what is not. There are also elements of puzzle-solving, which is demonstrated when player has to use a radio and try to find the right frequency to open multiple rifts.

0.3 Interaction between genres

The interaction between primary and secondary genre elevates the gameplay, the supernatural and horror elements adding tension and evoking curiosity in the player, making them more interested in the story. Player wants to know what the mysterious ghostly entity is and how it came to be, they want to find out what will happen next. The radio puzzle mechanic adds an element of anticipation while the player is looking for the right frequencies.

0.4 Style

Oxenfree's art style consists of 2D painted-like background art combined with 3D environments, while the characters have a simple cartoon design. It supports gameplay with its gloomy visuals that add to the eerie atmosphere. Warm light is used in important emotional scenes to contrast the otherwise cold blue lighting. It overall compliments the atmosphere of the story.