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# Homework Assignment #4

## Companion Analysis

Play a game with a strong companion, like *Portal* or *ICO*, and answer the following questions.

**How does the designer make you want to help/use/stay with the companion?**

In test chamber 17 of the game *Portal*, the designers do several things to make you want to help the Weighted Companion Cube. Upon entering the test chamber, GLaDOS informs you that the Weighted Companion Cube will “accompany you” and asks you to “please take care of it”. This request is further supplemented by a suggestive graphic on the floor showing a person holding the Weighted Companion Cube with a heart between the both of them. The Weighted Companion Cube itself, while very similar to all Weighted Cubes, features this heart with a soft pink color to help it stand out and reinforce this bond between it and you.

**How did mechanics play a role in the relationship?**

The mechanics involving the Weighted Companion Cube and yourself deliberately help to make you appreciate and need the Weighted Companion Cube. Immediately upon receiving the Weighted Companion Cube you need to use it as a platform to help you reach a ledge you otherwise couldn't reach. After this, you need to hold the Weighted Companion Cube in front of you to protect yourself from dangerous energy orbs that would otherwise kill you and use it as your only method for activating buttons without having to stand on them yourself.

**How did visuals or dialog play a role in the relationship?**

The slight variation of adding a soft pink heart on the design of a regular Companion Cube makes the Weighted Companion Cube stand out enough to feel important. If this were not enough, the Weighted Companion Cube is featured in a secret room where a previous test candidate has written lovely sentiments about the Weighted Companion Cube along the walls. GLaDOS' dialog throughout the test chamber also builds up the Weighted Companion Cube to be important, right up to the end of the level where she forces you to destroy the Weighted Companion Cube to move on.

**What did the designer do that you were NOT aware of until you really looked at the design?**

I never really thought too hard about the symbol choice of the heart for the companion cube and how it is used on the Weighted Companion Cube and graphics involving receiving the

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Weighted Companion Cube and also the graphic involving the destruction of it. The heart is a perfect choice to represent companionship and the literal heartbreak of sacrificing your companion. This simple icon choice is so poetically perfect for the goals of how GLaDOS manipulates the player.

**What did the designer do that was so obvious that you were irritated, at least at first?**

Test chamber 17 is so short that I feel like if there were more voice lines from GLaDOS establishing how the Weighted Companion Cube is so great and loves you that I feel if there were any more of that I would've been irritated, like they were beating the idea over and over again. Fortunately, I feel like the designers at Valve got it right.