Game Engagement Analysis

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Name of game: Celeste
URL: Link
Platform: Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, GNU/Linux, macOS, Microsoft Windows, Xbox One, Google Stadia, Mac OS (I played it on Microsoft Windows)
Why did you choose this game?: Because I believe it has perfect examples for most elements to be analyzed and is one of my favourites

1. Gameflow Analysis
This part describes the results of the gameflow analysis of the chosen game.

1.1 Gameflow score
The spreadsheet analysis of the game is (check the appropriate one):

	Available in the appendix
x	Provided as a separate file

1.2 Comments on Gameflow analysis
Please give short comments on how the chosen game addresses the following elements:

Element	Comment (maximum 100 words per element)
Concentration	Attention is grabbed since the beginning and held throughout the gameplay. Celeste is a quite challenging game, as will be analyzed in the next part, so in order to continue in the story it is absolutely necessary to stay focused. You have one main objective: to keep going and getting higher up in the mountain, and the moments when you are not doing that don't feel distracting. You have a lot of stimuli going on and they are all elements you can use or need to take into account to get to the next level.
Challenge	This is not considered an easy game. Challenge is the main reason players keep playing. Since the beginning, you die a lot, but the frustration you can feel is carefully managed by the developers. The game makes sure that you feel you are getting closer every time, and that your skills are getting better. It also offers many levels of difficulty. You have a whole menu where you can modify some character's statistics (like stamina, invincibility…) if you want to make it easier, and a lot of hidden levels or challenges for more skilled players.
Player skills	Learning to play the game is not hard at all. New skills are introduced slowly and in different parts of the game, and the first levels where you have learnt a new skill are easier so you can get used to it properly. It doesn't have a lot of online help, just some videos from the community so that you can see an example of

	strategies other users have used, but in the end it's a matter of skill. This skill is improving continuously, and the game makes you notice it from time to time, which makes it really rewarding.
Control	In this kind of game it is compulsory you feel in control of the character. You can choose the way you want to play the game in every way. You can modify the difficulty, decide to play with different kinds of controllers or keyboards, modify what buttons do, and decide which strategy do you want to use in each level with the skills you have learned. How you play it, though, doesn't really affect the game's storyline. *The only impact you make is on yourself (both the character, Madeline, and you) and how you face challenges*. The game has an automatic saving system which can be a little bit inconvenient if you want to go back to another level before continuing, but otherwise it is comfortable.
Clear goals	Since the very beginning of the game, the main objective is explained to you. You need to climb a mountain, as a way of representing getting over depression and anxiety, which the character, Madeline, has. The goal is then clear, and as you try to get there you have sometimes subgoals related to the story which are always linked to personal improvement and getting over fears. So even if some subgoals are making you stay behind from continuing climbing the mountain, the bigger and more abstract goal is still there.
Feedback	Feedback is not really explicit in Celeste. There is not a better way of playing the game, so mostly the feedback you have is when you are doing things wrong (you die). But then you always know then when you are doing well and never confused about if you are going the right way. You also receive some feedback in the storyline with characters like Theo, who assures you that you are doing great. A way of making you feel better, while it's supposed to be inspirational and helpful to Madeline's anxiety.
Immersion	Because of the concentration it requires, the game makes you feel really immersed. You forget about time and your surroundings while playing it, with the perfect balance of story fragments and scenes and actually playing. It keeps you both emotionally and viscerally involved. Viscerally, as you physically react to tension, relieve and nervousness when trying to get through a level. And emotionally, as you feel the frustration, sense of accomplishment and empathy for Madeline. Even more, everyone can relate at least partially to what she goes through, so the parallelism of her emotions to yours throughout the game is really interesting.
Social Interaction	Celeste doesn't really have a lot of social interaction. It's a game about personal improvement, about a lonely journey through yourself, so it makes sense it doesn't. But also, being such a

	challenging game, it offers you ways of competing by giving you achievements and very detailed stats that you can then compare with other users.

1.3 Overall comment (text)

Please give an overall comment about to what extent the chosen game produces gameflow (max 150 words):

I had other games in mind when thinking about this assignment, but when gameflow was explained, I instantly thought of Celeste. I think it has a really good combination of challenge and story, and the fact that you can easily relate or empathize to the main character makes you stay hooked. The story, the characters, the soundtrack, the controls, the pixel art look and the challenge makes the game perfectly balanced and immersive. The thing is, you can really play for as long as you want. The flow is just interrupted when you feel the challenge may be to hard for you, but even then, you have options to reduce the difficulty without making you feel bad about it.

2. Intrinsic Motivation Analysis

This part describes the results from analyzing the game design of the chosen game using Malone's model.

2.1 Challenge

Use table to describe how *challenge* is used in the game design (comment all items).

Item	Comment (max 150 words per item)
Goal:	As said in 1.2. Clear Goals, Celeste has a very clear main goal since the beginning. If somebody asks you what the game is about, you just say "climbing a mountain" even though it is much more than that. This main goal, though, feels too big, so the game encourages you by setting some subgoals that get you closer to the end and at the same time are rewarding enough by themselves (like saving your friend Theo along the way, or helping Mr.Oshiro cleaning the resort).
Uncertain outcomes: -Variable difficulty -Multiple level goals -Hidden information -Randomness	As is best according to Malone, it is a basic goal, but it gives you the uncertainty of outcome "will I make it?". You always know that you can easily do it with Assist Mode, but it is the challenge itself of the difficulty that **you set yourself** that makes the game engaging. You have multiple level goals. You can just get through the level, or maybe do it getting all the strawberries (collectables), or maybe with the golden strawberry (without dying), or maybe in record time. This helps players with different skills and motivations to stay in the game. In terms of hidden information, there is not much. Some plot details like the blue bird or what will Badaline (the bad version of yourself) do next keeps curiosity flowing, apart from hidden strawberries (collectibles) that keep you alert to everything in the screen. And there is not randomness in the game, it's just you, your feelings and their consequences.
Self-esteem:	Self-esteem is a very important topic in this game. It's the main objective, in a way. It's what it is trying to make you learn. Success in any challenge makes you feel better, so that is what Madeline tries by climbing the mountain. And that is what the game is doing to you in each level. Making you realize that you have mastered some skills and prove to yourself that if you try hard enough, you can do it. And if you can't, you can always ask for help. The game makes sure you feel both the frustration of trying again and again and then the boost of self-esteem when you get it right.

General comment on how **challenge** has been used in the game design:	I believe challenge is the main component in Celeste. The developers intended it that way, together with the emotional message it transmits. How good it is managed is the cause of the big place it has occupied in indie videogames. How it offers you a challenge that you can adapt to every kind of player is the key to the success of this game.

2.2 Fantasy

Use table to describe how **fantasy** is used in the game design. Explicitly describe if extrinsic, intrinsic or both types of fantasy are used (max 150 words).

Fantasy (Intrinsic/Extrinsic):	In this game, fantasy and skill are directly connected, which then can be encapsulated into intrinsic fantasy. This happens at both the physical skills and the emotional journey. The jumping, climbing and dashing apply physics (skills) to go through the mountain (fantasy). And at the same time Madeline's personal growth and resilience (fantasy) are directly connected to the frustrations of mastering the game mechanics (skill). The whole story develops through the gameplay and there are no rewards that are disconnected to the plot, as could happen in an extrinsic fantasy. The player's skill development in overcoming obstacles that are more and more challenging is an actual narrative device. This, as said in the paper, makes a way more immersive environment that helps make the game more engaging and personal. You feel as Madeline's journey is your own.

2.3 Curiosity

Use table to describe how *curiosity* is used in the game design.

Item	Comment (max 150 words per item)
Sensory curiosity: -Decoration -Enhance fantasy -Reward -Representation system	As mechanics throughout the game don't change that much, and you can be stuck in some levels for a long time, sensory curiosity is important to keep the player immersed in the game. Decoration is important: the setting, soundtrack and colors of each chapter of the game keep the player curious in the first levels. For example, seeing Mr. Oshiro's Resort for the first time, or the mysterious Temple of Mirrors. An example for enhancing fantasy details is the stamina diamonds and the sound they make, or the fact that Madeline's hair gets pink when getting the "extra dash" diamond. Reward sensory curiosity is included with the sound of catching a strawberry or the way the game slows and darkens, only leaving the heart of the end of the chapter glowing. All these examples work as well as representation systems. Even though you have a narrative experience in the game, most details (like Madeline's panic attack) are better represented with the tentacles, eerie sounds and dark colors.
Cognitive curiosity:	This kind of curiosity also arises in Celeste. Since the beginning, you don't really know Madeline's story. Why she is there? What exactly does she have to prove to herself? These are questions that leave you curious, and which are just answered through hints throughout the game. Why is Mr. Oshiro acting weird? What does Granny mean when she talks to Madeline? How can Madeline help Theo when he is captured? Even more, what is the underlying message of every level of the game? All these questions arise from time to time, making you continue through the game. What will happen when or *if* I get to the top of the mountain? The uncertainty of outcome discussed before can even be bought into scene here.
General comments on how *curiosity* has been used in the game design:	I believe curiosity was not the main focus of the developers. You can find examples of everyone of them, making it clear that it has the perfect level to getting the players immersed enough, but it is not the main objective. You may keep playing a little bit for the

	curiosity, but the thing that really keeps you going is the challenge. But without the decorations, plot questions, collectibles and representation, the game wouldn't be as engaging and popular as it is.

3.Reflection

Describe briefly (max 150 words) experiences from analyzing the game using gameflow and Malone's model on intrinsic motivation.

I found analyzing this game really interesting. I've always considered it an amazing game in many ways, but I guess I didn't realize how well designed it is. I played it many years ago and I continue playing it to this day, as the challenge never ends. It can always be harder.

As I said, I had other games in mind for the assignment but I think it was a great idea to talk about Celeste. It has the perfect combination of traditional components and emotional burden. I am quite an emotional player, so without a real plot I usually don't enjoy games. Getting to discover even more about the developing and underlying messages of the game while I was informing myself for the assignment has been really enjoyable. And with it as an example, I was able to understand more deeply the elements of gameflow and Malone's model.