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Stanley Parable Analysis

In *The Stanley Parable*, players are presented with a variety of choices that shape their experience within the game. One of the first and most straightforward decisions is choosing between two doors, left or right. However, as the game progresses, choices become more complex. Some paths lead to further restrictions, while others open up overwhelming possibilities, such as the "Confusion Matrix" ending, where an excess of doors and endless hallways disorients the player. Another significant choice lies in how the player interacts with the narrator, whether to obey or disobey instructions. This decision can further split into variations, such as obeying first and then rebelling, or vice versa. The pace at which a player progresses is also a factor; for instance, in one playthrough, when we bypassed the narrator's intended instructions by quickly inputting a passcode in the boss's office before he finished speaking, the game forced us to listen to music before continuing, acknowledging our attempt to rush through the experience.

The choices available in *The Stanley Parable* directly influence the story, allowing for branching paths and multiple endings, which significantly enhance replayability. Players experience a sense of agency, shaping their playthrough by deciding whether to follow the intended path or deviate from it. If a player fully obeys the narrator, they are guided to a structured, linear ending, with narration that describes both Stanley's thoughts and surroundings in a straightforward manner. However, acts of defiance alter the narrative, causing the narrator's tone to shift in response to the player's disobedience. The game world also changes accordingly, reflecting the player's choices and the narrator's reactions. The more the player resists, the more the narrator adapts, adding layers of complexity and unexpected twists to the story.

The interactive nature of *The Stanley Parable* differentiates it from traditional, non-interactive storytelling by creating a dynamic and immersive experience. In a linear narrative, the audience follows a predetermined path, passively absorbing content. However, in this game, the ability to make choices encourages players to explore multiple outcomes, fostering curiosity and engagement. The dual presentation of choices, visual and auditory, adds to the experience; while the player sees multiple possible paths, the narrator typically presents a single directive, subtly influencing decision-making. This dynamic allows players to experience both compliance and rebellion, finding satisfaction in defying the narrator's instructions and observing his increasingly frustrated reactions. The narrator even breaks the fourth wall, questioning game mechanics and inserting the player into other games, such as *Minecraft* and *Portal*, when they exhibit dissatisfaction with *The Stanley Parable*'s default gameplay.

Decision-making in *The Stanley Parable* is heavily influenced by the narrator's presence. The game offers various approaches, including full compliance, total defiance, or alternating between the two. In our initial playthroughs, we often chose to disobey, curious to see how the narrator would react. This led to a range of outcomes, from humorous moments to disastrous endings, such as falling to our death. Over time, our approach shifted as we experimented with different strategies, discovering new endings and unraveling the depth of the game's design.

While playing, we primarily engaged in two modes: exploratory play and analytical play. Initially, we adopted an exploratory approach, testing the game's boundaries and seeking out hidden possibilities. For example, during one playthrough, we deliberately jumped off a moving lift to see if the game had anticipated such an action. This resulted in an in-game death, but it reinforced our appreciation for the designers' attention to detail. After uncovering multiple endings, we transitioned to an analytical mindset, deliberately following the narrator's instructions to experience the game as intended. This shift allowed us to reflect on the game's meta-commentary regarding player agency and decision-making in interactive media. Emotionally, exploratory play was more enjoyable, as the unexpected outcomes and humorous situations kept us entertained. A prime example of this was the "games ending," where our choices led us into *Minecraft* and *Portal*. In contrast, our analytical approach, while still intellectually stimulating, lacked the same excitement, as it required viewing the game from a design perspective rather than embracing spontaneous discovery.

Ultimately, *The Stanley Parable* offers a unique experience by granting players the freedom to make choices that directly impact both the narrative and their personal engagement with the game. The interplay between obedience and rebellion, combined with the game's witty and reactive narration, makes every playthrough distinct. Whether exploring the game's mechanics or analyzing its deeper themes, players are continuously drawn into its thought-provoking design, proving that the power of choice is what truly shapes the experience.