Process & Decision Documentation

Side Quest Week 3

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Primary responsibility for this work: Build an interactive story that unfolds through multiple game states and files, branching like a small decision tree..

Goal of Work Session

Briefly describe what you were trying to accomplish during this phase of the assignment.

- Inspired by the game "Life is Strange", I created an interactive story where the choices the user makes branches off into different outcomes and endings.

Tools, Resources, or Inputs Used

- GenAI
- Example code from week 3

GenAI Documentation

Date Used: February 2, 2026

Tool Disclosure: ChatGPT 5.2

Purpose of Use: brainstorming, debugging, wording support).

Summary of Interaction:

- Helped solve coding issues such as why the mouse wasn't detecting the correct button.
- Helped solve coding issues where the choice is skipped if accidentally clicked anywhere on the screen
- Helped with brainstorming game plots, choices, actions to branch the story.
- Provided suggestions for the description of my game in the README file

Human Decision Point(s):

- I overruled some of the story text to keep it simpler, but also informative so the user understood the plot of the game, as well as what their choices led to.

- I added descriptions of the karma points to the instructions for clarity.

Integrity & Verification Note:

- Verified Gen AI output by testing each function in the game, making sure buttons responded correctly, and reviewing the narrative to fit my wishes on the story.

Scope of GenAI Use:

- GenAI did not write the full code independently
- All integration, testing, debugging, story, descriptors were done by me

Limitations or Misfires:

- First, GenAI suggested using a random outcome function, which I rejected to ensure choices directly impacted the story, making it more intuitive and reactive
- Some text required human judgment to make it more relevant to my inspiration of "Life is Strange".

Summary of Process (Human + Tool)

- Iterated through multiple versions of the game logic and story text
- Used GenAI to brainstorm choices, outcomes, and debugging
- Tested button detection and game state transitions repeatedly
- Refined story and descriptive text for clarity and engagement

Decision Points & Trade-offs

- Options considered: Adding a health bar, including three or more choices per scene, or expanding to multiple scenes for a larger branching tree.
- What changed: I decided to keep the game simple, with two choices per scene and only two main scenes. I chose Karma points instead to show the user the consequences of their choices.
- Why that choice was made: A simpler structure creates a more direct and straightforward story line. This ensures that the user clearly understands the impact of their choices without getting confused by too many options or complex branching.

Verification & Judgement

- Playtested the game multiple times to verify proper scene transitions and karma calculations.

- Compared implementation with course concepts on interactive branching and button handling. Following closely to the example given for this week's side quest.
- Ensured accessibility by including keyboard navigation and visual hover feedback.

Limitations, Dead Ends, or Open Questions

- The game currently only supports a simple two-scene branching structure for simplicity. Expanding the tree would require additional state management.
- No randomized events: All outcomes are deterministic based on karma points; the game doesn't include random events, which could make the story feel less dynamic.
- Simplified scoring: Karma is only tracked as 0 or 1 per choice
- User guidance: The game relies on text descriptions for choices. There's no tutorial or tooltip system for first-time players.
- Future enhancements: Could include multiple endings, a deeper story following Life is Strange, or a more complex karma system, but that would require redesigning the decision tree.

Appendix

1. Issue: Brainstorming game plots, choices, and branching

" I want to brainstorm ideas for choices in each scene of my game and I want it to be inspired by *Life is Strange*. How should the player decisions affect the story?"

ChatGPT: Sure! Let's start by thinking about each scene and the kinds of decisions the player could make. I'll give you several options for each, with potential consequences or karma outcomes.

Scene 0 (Hallway incident):

- Choice 1: **"STEP IN"** → +1 karma → move to Scene 1 (player intervenes to help the classmate)
- Choice 2: **"IGNORE THEM"** → 0 karma → move to Scene 1 (player walks away, neutral choice)
- Choice 3: **"TAKE A PHOTO"** → 0 karma → move to Scene 1 (document the bullying but don't intervene directly)

- Choice 4: **“JOIN IN”** → -1 karma → move to Scene 1 (player acts badly, could affect ending later)

Scene 1 (Teacher asks what happened):

- Choice 1: **“TELL THE TRUTH”** → +1 karma → improves chance of positive ending
- Choice 2: **“KEEP QUIET”** → 0 karma → may lead to neutral or negative ending
- Choice 3: **“BLAME SOMEONE ELSE”** → -1 karma → increases risk of negative outcome
- Choice 4: **“MAKE UP A FUNNY STORY”** → 0 karma → could avoid conflict but doesn’t improve karma

Scene 2 (Friend asks for advice later):

- Choice 1: **“Encourage them to speak up”** → +1 karma → increases positive outcome
- Choice 2: **“Tell them to stay quiet”** → 0 karma → neutral outcome
- Choice 3: **“Give conflicting advice”** → -1 karma → risk of negative consequences
- Choice 4: **“Ignore the conversation”** → 0 karma → neutral outcome

Scene 3 (End-of-day reflection):

- Choice 1: **“Write in your journal about what happened”** → +1 karma → reflects on your choices, better ending
- Choice 2: **“Play a video game to forget”** → 0 karma → neutral outcome
- Choice 3: **“Gossip about the incident”** → -1 karma → negative outcome

ChatGPT: This way, you can see how each decision can branch off, giving more depth to the story while still keeping it understandable. You could implement just a few of these branches or use all of them depending on how complex you want the game to be.

2. Issue: Mouse not detecting the right button

“The instructions button on my start screen isn’t clickable. I can click anywhere and nothing happens. What’s wrong?”

ChatGPT: Let’s check your code in startMousePressed().

You shared:

```
else if (isHover(isntrBtn)) {
  currentScreen = "instructions";
}
```

ChatGPT: I see the issue — isntrBtn is a typo. It should be instrBtn. Corrected code:

```
else if (isHover(instrBtn)) {
  currentScreen = "instructions";
}
```

ChatGPT: Once you fix the variable name, the instructions button will respond correctly.

3. Issue: Choice skipped when clicking anywhere on the screen

“ In the game, during scene 1, if I click anywhere (even outside the buttons) it jumps to the lose screen. I only want clicks on buttons to trigger choices.”

ChatGPT: That happens because you update currentScreen outside of your hover checks. Let’s fix it.

Original gameMousePressed():

```
else if (scene === 1) {
  if (isHover({ x: 400, y: 500, w: 260, h: 90 })) {
    karma += 1; // TELL THE TRUTH CHOICE


  } else if (isHover({ x: 400, y: 600, w: 260, h: 90 })) {
    karma += 0; // KEEP QUIET CHOICE
  }
  currentScreen = karma >= 2 ? "win" : "lose";
}
```

ChatGPT: The currentScreen line runs no matter where you click. Wrap it inside the hover checks:

```
else if (scene === 1) {
  if (isHover({ x: 400, y: 500, w: 260, h: 90 })) {
    karma += 1; // TELL THE TRUTH CHOICE
    currentScreen = karma >= 2 ? "win" : "lose";
  } else if (isHover({ x: 400, y: 600, w: 260, h: 90 })) {
    currentScreen = karma >= 2 ? "win" : "lose";
  }
}
```

ChatGPT: Now, clicking outside the buttons won’t advance the scene or end the game.

4. Suggestions for the README/game description

“ I also want help writing a description for my README file so people understand the game.”

ChatGPT: Here’s a draft you can use:

“This p5.js project is a simple multi-screen interactive game. It uses a state-based approach to manage a start screen, instructions screen with a back button, a branching game screen, and win/lose outcome screens. Player choices affect a tracked stat, **karma**, which determines the ending. The project demonstrates clear file organization, simple UI elements like buttons and keyboard controls, and a straightforward way to implement branching game logic, showing how small decisions can impact the story.”