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Writing Games

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Project 4 Reflection Essay

My project 4 is a game focused around the first episode of the popular British drama, *Sherlock*. The first half of the game is told through the eyes of Beth Davenport, a woman working for the British government. Over the course of the game, the player realizes that they are being targeted by a serial killer and can leave clues behind in the hopes that she might stop the killer. By the end of Beth’s story, however, the player will eventually be killed. The second half of the game is told from the perspective of Sherlock Holmes. Depending on the clues that were left behind during the first part of the game, the player might or might not be able to solve the case and stop the killer before they escape.

This was probably my favorite project to work on out of all of the games we made this year. I think that I have a fairly strong grasp on inform at this point, and so coding was much less frustrating than project two. For this project, there were obviously many problems and coding techniques that required work, but the majority of the time was spent actually making the game, rather than searching the documentation for a solution to some error that popped up while attempting to compile the code. It made me feel accomplished and proud for having learned a coding language well enough to make a game as complex as this. Also, I much prefer doing solo projects over group projects. I enjoy being able to work on my projects at my own pace, and organizing group work is often frustrating. One part of the game creating process that I feel I did well was manipulating the game and writing a story to create a certain feeling in response. Every person that played my game during the testing period told me that their first time playing through the game gave them a feeling of dread, which is exactly the feeling I was trying to instill with my storytelling.

The main message that I was attempting to get across to players is twofold. First, I wanted to make a point that the game is unwinnable if not for the actions performed by the female character. I believe that this is shown during the second half of the game, and in the multiple playthroughs. Any player going into the game blind will likely have to play the game multiple times to get a good ending, and as they go through, they will hopefully realize that all important choices are made during the first half of the game. The second point that I was trying to make is a satire on the “damsel in distress” trope discussed by Sarkeesian earlier in the semester. I wanted to shed light onto the trope that no matter how useful the female character is, she is often left helpless or, in this game’s case, dead. The first half of the game demonstrates this by putting the player in a timed situation, rather than an open room. The biggest roadblock that I had with this point, and still have some reservations about, is that I want to make the satire clear, so that my game is not mistaken for falling into the same trope that I am attempting to critique. I tried to put in some objects and references that would help with this, and I hope the message is clear. I feel that the first time the player plays through the game, it may seem that it falls into the trope, but as they continue to try and try again, I hope the player will realize that they are giving the female character more agency, and that every important choice happens from her perspective.