

Research of Character Design in Side-scrolling Horror Puzzle Games

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Abstract

The third-person side view game perspective of side-scrolling games makes playing such games a completely different gaming experience from other traditional games. Nowadays, many game elements are combined with each other, and horror and puzzle elements are often combined to appear in side-scrolling games, bringing players a unique gaming experience. In such games, players seem to be watching their own manipulation of characters. The performance is the same as a stage play, so how to let players better experience such a horror and puzzle-solving stage play through the design of the characters is a key point. However, it is often difficult to accurately classify only from game elements, so first of all, the author will explain the game division of the side scrolling horror puzzle game. After that, this article will analyze the character designs in the three works with high sales and good reputation on Steam, and then draw conclusions.

Keywords: *Side- Scroll game, Horror, Puzzle, Character design*

1. Introduction

After classifying and analyzing the TOP8 games released in 2018, Gamelook believes that game types and game elements such as adventure, horror, and puzzle solving are all positive growth, especially for adventure games, both in terms of distribution and sales. Although the distribution of puzzle games is small, the sales volume is very good, ranking fourth; although the sales and production of horror games are not very high, the sales growth rate is more than 20% compared with 2017, and the future prospects are good. In addition, the 'Steam Comprehensive Analysis Report' also believes that 'it can be found that players are keen to buy multiplayer competitive, chicken-eating, side-scrolling and role-playing games, and like to interact with games such as animation, development, side-scene clearance, and Roguelike.' And With the gradual increase in the share of side-scrolling games in independent games in recent years and the reputation accumulated by many excellent works in the past few years, side-scrolling horror puzzle games have a good market prospect.

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2. Side-scrolling horror puzzle games

Side Scroll Game is one of the most classic game types, in which the player's perspective is fixed and only the side of the manipulating character can be seen. Because the game screen will change as the player controls the left and right movement of the character, like a rolling scroll, it is called a side scrolling game.

2.1 Features of side scrolling games

The feature of the side-scrolling game is its third-person side view perspective. Of course, many games have added the Z-axis to make the game space a space that can move up, down, left, and right, but this is not the mainstream, and this game mode is now seen. There are also many disadvantages. Under the influence of the third-person side view perspective, the distance between the player and the game character is further widened. The player is actually the manipulator and bystander of the game, just like watching the character he controls to complete a stage play. Acting the same.

2.2 Classification of side-scrolling horror puzzle games

In this type of game, game elements such as adventure, shooting, and puzzle solving can be perfectly combined with it. The combination of horror elements and puzzle elements is a common combination of game elements. But since the classification of the game field is now very confusing, especially when it comes to classification according to game elements, it is necessary to briefly describe the horror puzzle games studied in this article. The horror puzzles in the game are generally divided into two categories. One is a detective game. You look for useful clues in the game scene, and use the clues given in the game to find the next clue, and then complete the puzzle of the whole plot. As shown in Figure 1, in 'Octave', players can obtain clue-related items by picking up items, and use the items to complete the puzzle. The row of icons shown at the top of Figure 1 (left) are items picked up by the player. In Figure 1 (right), we can see that the locker in the upper left corner has been opened by the player, which means that the player has found the clue item in the locker. Another type of game has many levels. These levels require the player to manipulate the character to perform certain actions or behaviors to complete the puzzle and pass the level. This article discusses the second type of game. For example, in 'inside' (Figure 2), the player needs to control the character to move according to the rhythm of others walking in order to pass the level.

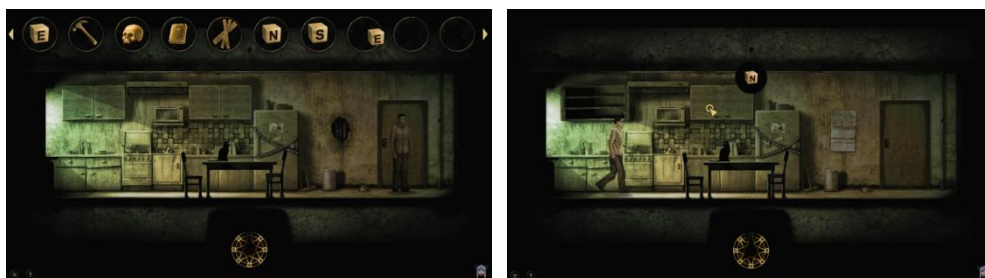


Figure 1. 'Octave'



Figure 2. 'Inside'

3. Source of horror

Due to the diversity of horror, physiology, psychology, philosophy, religion and other disciplines have all interpreted horror from the perspective of their own disciplines.

At the physiological level, horror often refers to the state of panic and emergency that people or creatures are in when faced with real dangers and things they hate. Darwin explained it physiologically as 'open eyes or mouth; raised eyebrows; motionless; holding breath, curling up, crying, racing heartbeat, pale face, sweating, hairy hair, rapid breathing, salivation disorder, mouth. Dry tongue; shivering; loss of voice; dilated pupils; platysma constriction.'

On a psychological level, 'the word 'horror' is derived from an Old Saxon word that sounds a lot like a cry, and in addition to the meaning of fear and worry, this Old Saxon also implies that something unknown awaits us. Indeed, all horror emotions are mixed with a feeling of being ambushed, a fear of what will happen.' It can be seen that 'horror' is a kind of psychological activity of human beings or creatures, a kind of psychological awareness of danger and emotional responses, which appeared long ago, mostly in the form of fear of the unknown. Jung, in *The Archetype of the Collective Unconscious*, provides some explanation for the inheritance of this sense of horror, arguing: 'There is no doubt that the surface of the unconscious is more or less personal; I call it the personal unconscious. But The personal unconscious depends on a deeper level; this level is neither derived from personal experience nor acquired by the individual, but innate. I call this deeper level the collective unconscious.' Jung argued that The 'collective unconscious' is universal and exists in human beings. The emotion and feeling of horror have actually been passed down from primitive society along with the environment in which primitive humans lived.




In the category of aesthetics, 'sublime' is a concept that is very close to horror. Kant divides the sublime into the sublime of mechanics and the sublime of mathematics. He believes that the sublime of mechanics is caused by 'absolutely great' things. Resist the thrill of horror, but this absolutely large thing must be moderated, 'if we feel that our ability to withstand this disaster, it is an object of fear'. In Kant's view, the real sublime is not in nature, but in people's hearts. The value of horror in sublime sense is to make people feel the intellectual and rational aspects of human beings that surpass nature, thereby producing pleasure. The British aesthetician Edmund Burke believes that 'self-preservation' is the basis for people to feel sublime, and those things that can arouse people's horror will arouse people's 'self-preservation' instinctive response, and will resist In the process of grief, fear and other pain and gratitude send out a sense of pride, pleasure, and achievement.

To sum up, horror is a kind of emotion that can make people have a certain physiological reaction. It is a priori and hereditary. In many cases, it is accompanied by people's subjective assumptions about ignorant things. What makes people feel terrified are often negative emotions such as 'disgusting' and 'fear', and these things have far beyond human ability, and make people think of 'self-preservation'.

4. Character design features in side-scrolling horror puzzle games

This article will analyze 'Little Nightmare', 'Inside' and 'Limbo'. These three games have received more than 90% praise rate on Steam, the world's largest game platform, and the praise rate of 'Inside' has even reached 96%. The sales of 'Little Nightmare' and 'Inside' on Steam are both around 160,000. Due to the early release time of 'Limbo', the sales volume is relatively low, but it does not affect the quality of its games.

Table 1. characters in the 'Little nightmare' 'Inside' 'Limbo'

Little Nightmare	Inside	Limbo
		

4.1 Character's age

The main characters of these games are children, as shown in Table 1. The traditional reason for choosing children is that they are weak, small groups that need to be protected and survive under the protection of adults. They do not have the ability to fight against evil or danger. So when children are placed in a situation where their lives are threatened with a strong sense of oppression, their helplessness, fear, and anxiety about death are bound to create a strong atmosphere of fear because they are not capable of resisting. Moreover, the weak body of the child often forms a strong contrast with the tall body of the monster in the game, and this contrast can also cause a philosophical 'sublime' response, which in turn triggers people's fear. Such as the fat, tall, ugly, greedy 'eater' in 'Little Nightmares' and the giant spider in 'Limbo' (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Monsters and characters in 'Little Nightmare' and 'Inside'

Secondly, when the player learns that the child he controls is actually the biggest demon or turned into a monster, this strong contrast will bring more intense stimulation. For example, in Little Nightmares, the end of the game is that the little girl controlled by the player kills and eats the boss, kills everyone on the ship, and in the Inside, the little boy turns into a meatball monster with many hands and feet (Figure 4). The reason for

this result is psychological contrast. This is why abandoned amusement parks have always been a frequent scene in horror movies, because amusement parks are full of laughter, colorful lights, and colorful fairy tale worlds in people's impressions. The psychological contrast is too great, and the bustling amusement park in people's hearts has become a quiet and desolate place, which always reminds people of bad things. It is probably a scene that is completely inconsistent with people's original impression, and it will make you feel the fear of the unknown. The essence of this fear comes from your inability to use your worldview to explain it, to understand it. Children are supposed to be innocent, naughty, and vivid images, especially little girls. In the eyes of adults, children are innocent and thin and need protection. Therefore, in order to create psychological contrast, many horror works will endow little girls with images of horror and brutality.

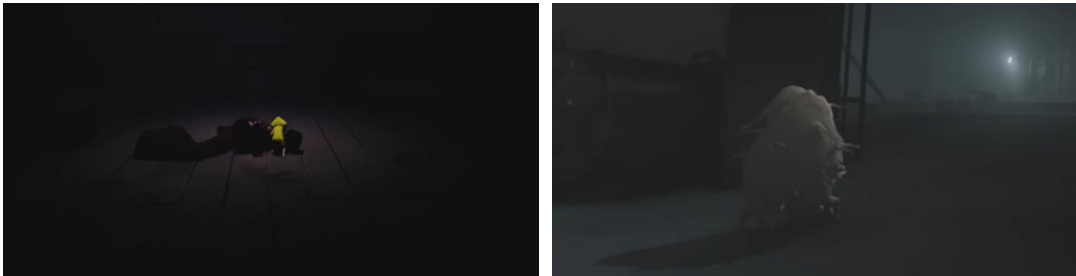


Figure 4. Character becomes monster in 'Little Nightmare' and 'Inside'

4.2 Character's face

The characters in these games have no facial features. In Little Nightmares, the character wears a certain hat and can't see his face at all. In Inside, the character's face is not depicted at all, while in Limbo, the character can only see the eyes and no other facial features at all. There are several reasons for this design.

First of all, the master of horror Lovecraft once said that 'the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest fear is the fear of the unknown'. So when players can't see the facial characters, they will feel horrible, just like the female ghosts in horror movies often cover their faces with long hair, and they can't see the faces and expressions at all, so its sense of unknown is even more. strong. So in 'The Ring' the audience will be terrified of Sadako with her hair down.

Secondly, this design style will make the player's attention more focused on the environment of the game, rather than by some minutiae to attract attention. In addition, I have to say that the scenes and scene sound effects of these three games are well done. They grab the player's ears all the time, so that the player can go back and forth between high concentration and mental relaxation, and such character design does not It will attract too much attention of players, so that players can better experience the game and feel the terrifying game atmosphere.

4.3 Character's cloth

The design of clothes is consistent with the design ideas of facial details, so as to avoid players' attention being attracted by these unimportant details. I hope players will focus on the experience of the game, so in the design of clothes Basically there isn't much detail. Although there are quite a lot of details on the character's clothes in 'Little Nightmare', the folds of the clothes and the physical swing of the clothes are very realistic,

but these details do not attract our attention. Because the clothes of these characters are all solid-colored fabrics. The most important thing in our human vision is color, and in the design of these game characters, the material of clothes is quite simple. The characters in *Limbo* are all black, the characters in *Little Nightmares* are wearing yellow raincoats, and the characters in *Insider* are wearing red long-sleeved shirts and black pants. These characters do not have any other decorative patterns or patterns on their clothes. or other details. In addition, this kind of vague design is also a kind of ‘unknown design’, because this kind of vagueness is actually an unknown, so it can lead to more imagination and association of players, and even lead to ‘I seem to have dreamed about this scene’ and bring yourself into this character without any detailed features, thus triggering more fear.

5. Conclusion

There are two types of side-scrolling horror puzzle games, one is detective puzzle adventure, and the other is level story puzzle adventure. The object of this article is the latter. After analyzing the three games ‘*Little Nightmare*’, ‘*Limbo*’ and ‘*Insider*’ on the market, the following conclusions are drawn. First of all, the characters are usually children. First of all, the weak image of the child is in sharp contrast with the tall and mighty monster image in the game, which will make people feel ‘sublime’ and cause terror. Secondly, when the child controlled by the player turns into a monster or villain with the reversal of the plot, a psychological contrast will be formed, which will trigger a sense of terror. In addition, secondly, the facial features of the character are deliberately omitted, because on the one hand, it can arouse the player's curiosity and fear of the unknown, and on the other hand, it can prevent the player from being drawn too much attention by these details, which can make the player pay more attention. In the experience of the scene and the atmosphere of the game, more horror can be obtained. Finally, the player's clothes are simple clothes made up of color blocks. There is no exaggerated shape, nor too much detailed design and decoration. This is also because the player's attention should be focused on the game scene and game atmosphere so as not to attract attention. Scattered and deliberately designed.

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