Critical Play: Firewatch

What I think about it?

I think Firewatch is a rather interesting game, as it allows you the flexibility to roam around the world. There is a clear approach in terms of the things to do, but there are times that I forgot about the goal I have to accomplish. The emotions that I felt were mainly thrilled (in a negative manner), scared, curious. The emotions were evoked because of the combinations of audio creating the suspense, as well as being the "only one" in this universe.

The game has goals that are given sequentially. However, these goals are only mentioned once when the goals were given to the players. This would be hard to keep track or remember since there might be quite the walk to get to the mission. Additionally, players might stop playing after one mission, and might have forgotten the mission.

The game has simple, minimalistic style graphics, with beautiful colors. They tried to capture the beauty of Colorado as much as possible, which is worth commending. The graphics of the game were also easily distinguishable. Anything that has a lower resolution were deemed as unimportant or out of bounds, while anything that has a higher resolution is part of the game play.

The game also allow the player to interact with components and placed them in their desired location. However, the game could not accurate place the components as to how it was placed initially, or in their desired placement. Small details like these are critical in making the story personalized.

Why is the game compelling?

1. The game offers small personalization of the story. The user would be more engaged with this ability, since it would be uniquely their game.
2. The game offers some freedom, which allows you explore the world.
3. The game offers great graphic style, which might increase the user experience while playing the game. Having unreal and highly pixelated graphics might repel people to play as they are not aesthetically beautiful.
4. The game offers multiple storylines, so that users would not get too bored in it. However, there is a fine line between too many and too few, which they balance well enough.

Why the game might not work for everyone?

1. The game is somewhat scary. I got freaked out a few times because I am "all alone in the world".

2. The audio is great, but to the point that it scare the living hell out of me. Audio is one of the most engaging elements in movies and interactive stories, although it is usually not highlighted. (Not a bad comment, just a little too freaky)
3. Being slightly more specific in terms of finding certain things would be helpful. For example I was trying to find wooden blocks to fix the window. However, I travelled to the other side of the map to find it, only to find out that it is at the base of the watch tower.

What can be improved in terms of experience?

In my opinion, having another character would be great. Since this game can be a lot more immersive with the current technology, feeling like you are all alone in the world can be quite scary to be immerse, especially since it's the summer, and it offers human like experiences. In games that are more abstract, which you would be more likely to be alone, in those scenarios, I would be willing to be alone in the game play.

Having different modes of difficulty can enhance the experience as well. The initial game play can be very hard to navigate, since it is a large map. I think having an easy mode might soothe players like myself in easily. In different modes, perhaps a different storyline would be good to entice players to play the game over and over again (it is like reading the story 1/4, 2/4, 3/4 or all the way through)