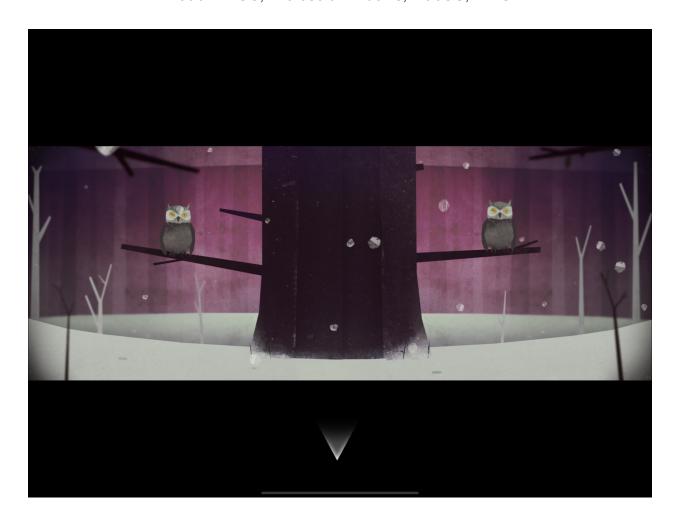# Critical Play: Year Walk

Creator: Simigo
Platform: iOS, Microsoft Windows, macOS, Wii U

How is narrative woven into the mystery?

At the beginning of the game the player is introduced to a very ominous and generally spooky and broad slideshow of text. The text sets up the upcoming gameplay by providing a spooky introduction to the main mechanic in the game. Summarized, the text roughly notes that individuals can wander in the forest in search of many things for years. Following this introduction, I was left to wander the somewhat confusing forest embedded with mystery. Had I not been introduced to this narrative I don't think I would have much motivation to keep exploring. The initial text only gives the player a taste of the narrative. The narrative continuously gets revealed as the player uses the mechanic of walking through the forest. Walking through the forest involves a layer sliding their finger in a permitted direction. Certain parts of the forest reveal spirits, new buildings,

spooky writing on trees and more. The mechanic of walking through the forest also seems to give the user more options for exploration as the game goes on. This builds the narrative slowly but continuously.

Target Audience

I would say the target audience can be 10 and up. The game has some spooky components such as a hanging doll that has a spinning head. This could be too spooky for young children. This was probably the spookiest scene I explored so I think older children could handle it without too much fear.

Formal Elements

The main formal elements of this game are the boundaries and objectives. The objective of this game revolves around revealing the mystery. This motivates players to explore new places, examine new artifacts and engage in the setting. The boundaries of this game are very apparent as a player can only explore areas that have paths. This focuses the player on certain settings and can influence which scenery the player explores.

Type of Fun

The main types of fun present in this game are narrative and discovery. The game definitely achieved the discovery type of fun as I thought exploring different scenes was super engaging. I also thought discovering the secret message embedded in that one rock was super rewarding. The narrative to me was not as apparent. Because this was a mystery game I might have not played the game for long enough to fully grasp the narrative, but the narrative in my opinion was revealed slowly. T

Success/Fails/Things I Would Change

I felt more engaged when the game diverged from its main mechanic of walking through the forest. I passed through the rock with the finger prints multiple times, but when I stopped and placed my fingers on the prints it gave me a cryptic message. This moment was super rewarding because before then I was just exploring. At this moment, I realized there was more than just walking around. I thought *What other places/artifacts can give me more hints like this rock?* At the same time, I disliked the cryptic message of the rock. It was too ambiguous and I had no idea how to process its message. I think providing more clarity on hidden messages like these would benefit the narrative exploration. Another moment I enjoyed was discovering the spirit. When I decided to follow the spirit, I understood that the spirit was creating new pathways in the map. Furthermore, when it disappeared it left me in a unique location to explore. One thing I would change regarding the exploration of the map would be a little more guidance on where the player should go. I felt like I kept walking past the same scenes in confusion. The map wasn't that well connected and exploring often seemed like random choices of moving left, right, up or down. Giving more hints for new unexplored areas would help guide confused players. .