

The game I want to analyze is Braid. It is a side-scrolling platform action game with time reversal as its core gameplay. The levels in Braid are very clever, each chapter introduces an element related to time and teaches the player all the relevant mechanics within that chapter, then provides corresponding challenges for the player to overcome. For this case study assignment, I want to analyze how the first chapter of Braid teaches players to play the game. Upon entering the first level (01:07), the player is first presented with the title of the level, "three easy pieces," and the silhouette of the character crossing platforms. The level straightforwardly tells the player from the beginning that this is a tutorial level with the purpose of teaching the player the basic gameplay of the game **【efficient】** . Moving right a few seconds later (01:11), the player encounters the first tutorial within the level, a wooden sign embedded in the scene, with "space bar" written on it to remind the player to press the space bar to jump over the platform gap that cannot be traversed by moving horizontally **【explicit tutorial】** . After going through a basic movement tutorial (01:30), the player encounters the first puzzle and the first platform. In the center of the platform is a stone block. Experienced players may instinctively jump over the stone to reach the other side, but for novice players who have never encountered this type of game, this stone serves to cultivate the habit of jumping when encountering platform gaps. After crossing the stone, the player has the power to choose a path for the first time in Braid, either continue to the right to complete the level, or go down to the lower platform and walk left to reach the puzzle floating in mid-air. This seemingly simple design also tells the player that obtaining the puzzle and completing the level sometimes requires making choices **【fun to navigate】** . After crossing this platform, the player encounters the first enemy in the game that poses a threat (01:45), and the sign at the bottom explains that stepping on the enemy's head will defeat it and apply a force in the opposite direction to make the player jump higher **【constantly teaching】** After defeating this enemy, the player sees a moving enemy on the platform to the right and a very high puzzle. To obtain the puzzle, the player's first reaction is to jump after defeating the threatening enemy. However, the height cannot be reached by jumping, so the player recalls the earlier sign explaining that defeating enemies allows for higher jumps, and uses this to obtain the puzzle **【tells what but not**

how】 . On the platform to the right, there are two enemies and a puzzle higher than before. In the previous two guides, the player has pondered and understood the method of obtaining the puzzle. But being attacked by enemies in practice leads to the core mechanism of the game, time reversal (01:59). After death, the game pauses, and a prompt for the "shift" key appears in the lower-left corner. Holding down shift activates time reversal, releasing shift stops the reversal. This mechanism ensures that every failure in the game does not bring frustration to the player because they understand that they can simply reverse time to the moment before the failure and have another chance to try again. 【empowering】 For players who die for the first time in the game and witness this ability, it is definitely an experience that is both novel and fun. 【create emotion】 These are the tutorial levels in the first chapter of Braid. Through the solutions to each puzzle in the subsequent 3 levels of the first chapter, players have already been taught in the tutorial levels. However, the players may not realize that they have already mastered these skills. Although there are many obvious hints in the tutorial levels, the players have already unlocked all the abilities the moment they enter the level. 【empowering】 In this brief minute-long level, the creator, Jonathan Blow, teaches players how to manipulate the character, use the character's abilities, understand the mechanisms surrounding the character's abilities, and how to use these mechanisms to solve puzzles. 【driven by mechanics】 Similarly, at the beginning of the second level, players understand the core gameplay of this level—picking up a key to open the door, and then passing through the cloud bridge (02:35) 【implicit tutorial】 . This level is particularly brief, and after opening the door and passing through the cloud bridge, the end point is reached. However, players will find that they cannot obtain the two puzzles at the bottom of the level no matter what (03:07). This level forces players to learn to let go. As always, when entering the third level, the name "hunt" accompanied by moving enemies directly tells the player the gameplay of this level. The easy gameplay, combined with soothing music, effectively alleviates the players' feelings of frustration from being unable to obtain the puzzles at the bottom of the previous level. 【create emotion】 On the platform at (03:52), the player encounters the only puzzle in this level. The two platforms are too far apart, and the player cannot jump across no matter what. The player must use

the ability learned earlier to jump higher after defeating the enemy to pass the level. In the beginning of the fourth level (04:25), the player immediately sees a puzzle on top that cannot be reached by jumping. **【implicit tutorial】** This inevitably reminds people of the puzzle in the second level (03:17). Continuing to the right, players will see a mechanism and a cannon that continuously shoots enemies onto spikes. By controlling the platform, players can bring the enemy to the ground, where the enemy walks directly below the puzzle, allowing the player to obtain the puzzle by using the additional kinetic energy from stepping on the enemy (04:40). **【constantly teaching】** Once players understand how to obtain this puzzle, they will realize that the previous puzzle can be obtained in the same way **【implicit tutorial and fun to navigate】** . Returning to the second level, players will realize that even though they have learned to use platforms to bring enemies to the ground, there are no platforms for players to use in the second level, so the player can only interact with the puzzle in the second level (05:12). After assembling the two platform-shaped puzzles, players discover that this puzzle has the characteristics of both a platform and a puzzle (players/enemies can stand on the platform, and the puzzle can move freely within the frame). By using these two characteristics, players can bring enemies to the ground and can also stand on the puzzle to ascend in place. **【surprising】 【driven by mechanics】 【fun to navigate】 【tells what but not how】** There is also an interesting Easter egg-like collectible in the second level (03:08). A cloud in the upper right corner slowly drifts to the left. After waiting for about 100 minutes, players can collect a star by riding the cloud. After unlocking eight stars, a hidden ending can be unlocked **【surprising】 【easy, medium, hard】** . Although Braid's levels have many rich mechanisms and interesting puzzles, all of these are not necessary for completing the game. All the mechanisms I mentioned earlier are used to collect puzzles. If players just want to walk to the finish line and do not care about collecting other elements, they do not even need to know that they can jump higher by stepping on an enemy's head (easy, medium, hard). In addition to the game's mechanics, there are also many Easter eggs, such as the fact that enemies move only vertically, have no attack, and die with a single stomp, all of which pay tribute to the classic side-scrolling platform game, Mario. At the end, reaching the flag and a character running out of the castle to tell

you that the princess is not here is also a classic design from Mario 【surprising】 .

Unfortunately, the first chapter, which includes a large number of tutorial elements, has almost no narrative elements (this level has almost no narrative element, and it is all told by words). The only spoiler related to the narrative; in the level, players need to rely on enemies' multiple times to successfully obtain the puzzles. Regarding this, at the end of the game, players can interpret the story as Tim (the character controlled by the player) being able to rescue the princess with the help of the enemies encountered along the way
【SOMEHOW does not rely on words】