Identifying literary devices with The Stanley Parable

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	Students should have received a previous explanation and examples of literary texts employing the literary devices they will work with during this sequence. In addition, the educator should be familiar with the narration of the game.
Learning objectives	To identify and assess literary devices during gameplay. To create literary texts to express realities, fiction, or feelings.
Subjects	Literature, English as a Foreign Language (the game is only available in English and has subtitles in a few other languages). (Optionally: Philosophy.)
Recommended Age	10-18. (The literary devices and the depth of the discussion can be adapted to the level of the group).
Material needed	Computers
Sequence duration	2.5 - 3 hours (over 1-3 classes)
Individual or group activity	Individual
Skills developed	Storytelling, Critical thinking, Creativity, Problem-solving
Price range of the game	< 20 €
Similar games to use with the approach of the sequence	This War of Mine

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

- **Step 1: Introducing the literary devices (10 - 15 minutes)**

To begin, the educator should review some of the literary devices students have previously studied in class, specifically including some of the devices used most often in video games: point of view, tone, dynamic characters, inciting incidents, etc. The students should keep these (and others) in mind to identify them in the game used later on.

In "The Stanley Parable", one especially important element is the narrator's **point of view** and how it affects the story. Depending on how the player advances in the game, the point of view changes drastically, as do the tone and the events of the storyline.

Optionally, the educator may also take advantage of the game's **philosophical subject matter** in this introductory step. In addition to discussing literary devices, they may choose to explain the concepts of existentialism and free will. If so, they might find the following articles and videos useful:

- **On existentialism:** How philosophy made the Stanley Parable great and Existentialism: Crash Course Philosophy #16
- **On free will:** Determinism vs. Free Will: Crash Course Philosophy #24

- **Step 2: Free play (50 - 60 minutes)**

Now that the students are attuned to the presence of literary devices (and, optionally, philosophical concepts), it is time for them to play the game individually. They should make sure to listen carefully to the narrator while playing and then make their own decisions, which will affect the progression of the story. Since there are several possible evolutions and outcomes, each student will have a different experience.

- **Step 3: Discussion (30 - 45 minutes)**

After having played until the end of at least one of the possible outcomes of the story, students can then discuss their experiences with the whole class. First, the students should identify some of the possible story progressions and summarize what happens in each of them.

Next, the educator should guide them to answer some questions regarding the narration. For example: How did their actions as players change the game? How did the voice of the narrator influence the story? Regarding the literary concept of point of view, how/where did they identify it in the story? How did it condition the tone and the development of the storyline?

- **Step 4: Write your story, with a literary twist (50 - 60 minutes)**

Following the previous discussion, the educator should highlight what they consider to be key concepts for the following exercise. These could include narration, tone, point of view, and any other relevant literary devices that came up in the discussion.

In this final step, students should write their own story, finding inspiration wherever they want, but they have to do it with a specific challenge that implies a radical change —a twist— in one of the elements of narration: point of view, tone, voice, theme, etc. For example, students may change the narrator's point of view in the middle of the story, change from third person to first person narration, or change the theme or tone after a certain event occurs in the story. If you have opted to include the philosophical material in this lesson, students should incorporate at least one event that illustrates a character exercising their free will or navigating an existential crisis.

References

Crash Course. (6 June 2016). Existentialism: Crash Course Philosophy #16. [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaDvRdLMkHs

Crash Course. (15 August 2016). Determinism vs. Free Will: Crash Course Philosophy #24. [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCGtkDzELAI

JamesInternetEgo. (2016). How philosophy made the Stanley Parable great. *Destructoid.com.* Retrieved from: https://www.destructoid.com/how-philosophy-made-the-stanley-parable-great/

Wreden, D., Pugh, W. (2011). The Stanley Parable [Computer software]. Galactic Cafe. www.stanleyparable.com