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Game: Photosynthesis

1. Was it fun?

Yeah, it was fun and vastly different from other games I have played. I liked the challenge of planning for the sun's position around the board.

2. What were the player interactions?

Players interacted by placing and planting trees to block the sunlight from other player's trees. They then have the option to harvest their trees for points and must compete for the highest point tokens before the sun makes three full rotations around the board.

How long did it take to learn?

It took between 45 minutes and an hour to learn the game, which is a very long time. This did not, however, impact how we felt about the game after having finally learned it. Watching the video was incredibly helpful.

3. What was the most frustrating moment or aspect of what you just played?

Having to buy a seed or tree for my next turn, while being unable to make a move during the current turn. The game still functioned well with this rule in place, I just became impatient.

4. What was your favorite moment or aspect of what you just played?

Planting a seed on the center space of the board, which ultimately helped me to win the game. I really enjoyed the dynamic environment of the game.

5. Was there anything you wanted to do that you couldn't?

I was mostly limited to my area of the board when planting seeds and almost wish I could acquire trees of another species in play.

6. If you had a magic wand to wave, and you could change, add, or remove anything from the experience, what would it be? -

As I alluded to in my previous answer, I'd add a little more variety. Maybe a wild card element or event card that would shake things up when someone has a significant advantage.

7. Is this a game you would play again? Yes X No      Why?

I would play Photosynthesis again! I am curious about what the gameplay experience would look like when it's repeated. Specifically, I would like to see how a game would play out had we set up our initial pieces differently, and maybe what would have happened if I had focused more on harvesting points earlier in the game. It seems to be very replayable once everyone understands the mechanics.

8. Analyze the game using the 3 act structure.

Act I is the setup of the game in which everyone plants their first trees, figuring out how sunlight points work. Players establish their first spots on the outer edge of the board.

Act II is player confrontation. As the sun starts rotating, planted trees block the sunlight from reaching other trees in play, and everyone is competing for the best spots on the board. Once a tree is fully grown, the player must decide whether or not to keep it in play, or harvest it for points. Point tokens get lower in value as they are claimed by other players in exchange for harvest throughout the game.

Act III is the game's resolution. Once the sun makes 3 complete rotations around the board, players count their points and add an additional point for every three sun points they have left by the end of the game. Whoever has the most points wins.

9. What are the collaborative and or competitive aspects of the game?

The game is purely competitive, but you do have to pay attention to what others are doing in order to win.

10. What is the game's metaphor and which of the game's mechanics stand out?

The metaphor for the game photosynthesis is pretty obviously, the stages of photosynthesis. Players go through the cycle of planting, growing, and harvesting trees while competing for sunlight. The standout mechanic is the rotating sun, which makes the board dynamic and forces you to think multiple turns ahead.

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Game: Dominion

1. Was it fun?

I joined the game late, so it was a little frustrating at first. I thought the mechanics made it very unique and fun to play by the end of the game though.

2. What were the player interactions?

Players are indirectly interacting with opponents when competing for the best cards, and buying up the estates before the others have an opportunity to.

Apparently you can play attack cards that mess with the decks of your opponents, but the situation did not arise for this to play out during our game.

3. How long did it take to learn?

This game took me a little longer to learn since I joined mid game. It took about three turns around to really understand how building a deck works in this game. Another player and I had accidentally shuffled our entire deck after our turn when we were supposed to maintain a discard pile.

4. What was the most frustrating moment or aspect of what you just played?

Getting stuck with too many weak cards during a turn, like Copper and Estate cards, was frustrating. Sometimes my hand just felt useless, and I couldn't do much with it.

5. What was your favorite moment or aspect of what you just played?

Somehow winning this game as well. It was super fun collecting valuable cards once I understood the rules of the game.

6. Was there anything you wanted to do that you couldn't?

There were moments I wished I had a better hand so that I'd have more opportunities to buy during a turn, but that's the point of the game. Also, there were a couple of cards in the supply I never got to experiment with.

7. If you had a magic wand to wave, and you could change, add, or remove anything from the experience, what would it be?

I'd probably make the beginning of the game go a little faster, because the first few turns feel repetitive until everyone builds their deck more.

8. Is this a game you would play again? Yes X No     Why?

Yes, I wish I had an opportunity to play again actually. I liked how it's designed to be entirely different each time it is played depending on the cards supplied. It engages players because they never know what cards they will be working with during their turn.

9. Analyze the game using the 3 act structure.

Act I is the setup of the game. Everyone starts with a deck of Copper and Estate cards, slowly progressing until they are able to buy better cards and take various actions.

Act II is the confrontation where players compete for province cards and exchange any copper cards for cards of a higher value. This increases one's likelihood of having better cards in their hand during their next turn. This is also when attacks can take place.

Act III is the game's resolution. The game ends when Provinces, or any other pile of cards, run out. At the end of the game, each player counts the score in their deck, as the objective is to have the highest number of province cards.

11. What are the collaborative and or competitive aspects of the game?

It's competitive for sure. Players fight over the limited cards in each pile and try to buy up the valuable cards before anyone else can. Some cards also directly attack other players, but we did not experience this in our game. Mostly, the competition is in who can build the most powerful deck the fastest.

12. What is the game's metaphor and which of the game's mechanics stand out?

The game's metaphor is playing to build a kingdom, which includes expanding your resources, and power through cards in your deck. The standout mechanic is

the deck building. It was so interesting to start out with almost nothing and be able to then shape our individual deck.