

GAME JAM 3 - TEAM 1

Roles & Tasks:

- Angel: Programming and Minor UI Design
- Alex: Level Design, Sound Design and 3D Assets
- Percy: Character Design & Animations, UI Design

3Cs - Character, Controller, Camera

- Character: buddhist cat trying to reach Nirvana
- Camera: isometric perspective that moves to the current floor



- Controller:
 - W, S, D, A to move,
 - SPACEBAR to jump,
 - Q to open up the skills menu and 1, 2, 3 to choose the appropriate skill.

Concept

Buddhist Cat struggles through the puzzles of lives in its quest to attain Nirvana.

“Nirvana, the state to which all Buddhists aspire, is **the cessation of desire and hence the end of suffering and rebirth**. Nirvana in Sanskrit means “the blowing out.”

This cat character was chosen for our group's mutual love for cats. Buddhism, on the other hand, was chosen for its cycle of rebirth which goes well with the theme. Together, they make a strange, though original concept

- Cats players are trapped in samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth. They must navigate through a set of puzzles to reach nirvana, ending their samsara and suffering.
- Players navigate through a set of puzzles and find a way to climb up top to reach Nirvana
- Each floor has a checkpoint/respawn point symbolized by a gong. Jumping out of the platform or the current floor results in respawn.
- The puzzle requires a total of 6 lives, sparing 3 lives for mistake

Puzzle

- Unreachable platforms that are only accessible to the black cat who can jump
- Ladder that may be climbed with the white cat
- Heavy objects that may only be pushed by the yellow cat

Gameplay

- Players must go up through all 4 floors to reach nirvana within 9 tries/9 lives, indicated by the red paws icon top left. The game ends and returns to the menu, representing the end of the rebirth cycle.
- Failure to do so will result in the game restarting and the player replaying from the bottom floor.

Art Style:

- Low poly models for simplicity and appropriate scoping for this ambitious project
- Red and Yellow colors to reflect buddhism values

Characters Variations

- The Black cat with long feet can **jump**
- The White cat with gloves and shoes can **climb**

- The strong Yellow cat with big arms and big legs can **push**
- Characters are built and drawn differently to showcase their ability. For instance, the yellow cat has a pattern around its arms, the black cat wears shoes while the white cat has gloves and shoes.
- All characters have the same animations with the exception of their ability
- These colors are also inspired by colors of cats in real life!



Playtest feedback:

Professor:

- Falling off doesn't convey danger since due to the unthreatening height & the atmosphere of a cat protagonist
- Changing character doesn't reflect reincarnation -> undermine plot
- Why should I change skin
- Confused by an overwhelming amount of instructions
- Confusing UI, missing current skill, menu not closeable
- Confused of when lives are lost
- Thought the gong was a part of the puzzle

- Disliked the steepness of the ramp
- Disliked unclarity of current skill > Suggest more visual feedback for both model & UI for each cat
- Suggests faster movement
- Disliked Camera movement and placement

Che:

- Confused about the skill change mechanic
- Struggled, though eventually understood he lost life by changing characters
- Disappointed by the lack of sound
- Felt clunky changing character, might be better to use a wheel
- Hard time with depth of field with the top platform
- Color coating to the different characters

Patrick:

- Could use instructions during gameplay
- Understands puzzle dynamics immediately
- Disliked automatic climbing
- Understands relationship between lives and skills change
- Suggest mapping skills to specific key
- Prefer instant respawn for skill change
- Liked character design

Owen:

- Pushing track is a good hint
- Didn't notice that changing skill causes losing lives
- Loved the checkpoints added to the change character mechanics
 - Adds consequence to changing
- Suggest adding decorations to the scene
- Bit slow walk, but alright for precise jump

Lilia:

- Instructions are not clear, too dense
- Disliked the placeholder UI for changing skill
- Wants acoustic & visual feedback for losing lives
- Changing character is interesting but inaccessible
- Prefer cursor hidden
- Liked character design, though suggest they should also reflect their ability

Common feedback and suggestions:

- Confusing and complicated UI - lack of info
- Character Design does not reflect their ability
- Slow character movement
- Want cues to understand the relationship between lives and skill changes
- Camera angle, placement and bad lighting and shadow make it difficult to navigate through
- Positive feedback for original mechanic of the game
- Ending is underwhelming and does not represent nirvana

Changes brought after the playtest:**Mechanics:**

- With an overwhelming amount of support for respawning on skill change, characters now play a death animation and respawn on skill change.

Level Design:

- An additional level has been added up top for more gameplay
- Nirvana is now represented by a white path and a fade out for more symbolism

UI:

To resolve the unclear and annoying UI, we have:

- Created new set of UI buttons for any interaction and to avoid text
- Assigned Q to open the menu, 1 2 3 to change skill, Q again to close the menu.
- Displayed current skill as an icon bottom right corner for clarity

Character Design:

To explain why each character possesses certain ability and not others, the following have been implemented:

- Models implemented with a wide array of animations: walking, idle, death, and ability
- Each character has their distinguished model with different features.
- Addition of texture emphasis on relevant limbs to reflect each cat's ability

Lighting:

- No harsh lighting to avoid casted shadow which adds more confusion
- Yellow light at gong to distinguish it from the rest of the interactable objects

Ambience:

- All walkable surfaces are in yellow for pattern recognition
- Removal of
- All interactable objects now have a mix of saturated yellow and brown
- Colors are inspired by the flag for Buddhism. The path to nirvana at the top, the only white component of the game suggests liberation (Nirvana).



Camera:

- Camera now zooms closer and changes to a new view whenever a new floor is reached. Though not perfect, it provides a better perspective and less confusing gameplay.

Post-Mortem:

- This project is undoubtedly quite ambitious. We would have loved to be further advanced in the playtesting build for more precise feedback on the overall current state of the game at the time. Perhaps the character design and animations could have been made simpler to allow more time for early UI design and feedback.
- Although communication between team members was positive and beneficial, there was sporadically a lack of constant communication and feedback from all parties.
- While the first level design was nicely executed, well explained and uploaded timely, the second level design and its relevant assets were available quite last minute, resulting in very little time to implement it into the game.

- One of the obstacles we met was brought from mis-communication from the puzzle and level design. As the level was designed, the assets and the structure were sent to be assembled in the game engine. Unfortunately, documentation of the design decisions were not attached with them. When the level was assembled in unity, some of the design choices were lost and had to be reworked later on, giving a heavier workload to them and wasting time. A better way would be to attach a step by step of the puzzle demonstrating how the level worked.
- We also spent a short time during the conception stage and focused on the production part early during development. Doing this, we had to do a lot more back and forth towards developing the world and atmosphere of the game since we needed to develop it at the same time as we were setting it up in the game itself.