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CLASS: GAME DESIGN

UNIVERSITY: WITS UNIVERSITY

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GAME: SPELUNKY

ASSIGNMENT: MDA FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

DUE DATE: 12 APRIL 2021

Plagiarism Declaration and Assignment Cover Sheet

ESSAY COVER SHEET

Name: Kamogelo

Student Number: 2103503

Course: Game Design

Due date: 12 April 2021

Topic: MDA Analysis Essay

Plagiarism declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own.

2. I have used the author date convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this essay from the work or works of other people has been acknowledged through citation and reference.

3. This essay is my own work.

4. I have not submitted this work, or a substantial portion thereof, for assessment previously.

5. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

6. I have done the word processing and formatting of this assignment myself. I understand that the correct formatting is part of the mark for this assignment and that it is therefore wrong for another person to do it for me.

Signature: K.Maimela

Date: 12/04/2021

Introduction

Spelunky is a 2D side-scrolling platformer with procedurally generated hostile terrains in which the player needs to traverse through in order to discover secrets and progress further. The game was created and released by an independent developer, Derek Yu in 2008 and was initially released for Microsoft Windows and remade later for the Xbox 360 in 2012 (SPELUNKY, n.d.).

Mechanics

The game includes a variety of mechanics, such as:

1. Moving left and right

Players have the ability to move left and right and explore what the game world has to offer.

2. Jumping

Players can jump from platform to platform or jump from high ground to low ground and vice versa.

3. Throwing objects

Players can carry and throw objects around the game world. These objects vary from bombs to vases.

4. Buying items

Each level has shopkeepers which sell items that the player might need in order to advance through the level.

5. Stealing

The player has the ability to steal items from shopkeepers but do so at a life threatening price.

Dynamics

Table 1: Dynamics that arise from the game's mechanics.

Mechanic	Dynamic

1. Moving left and right	Left and right movement provides the player with the affordability to move around and discover new spaces within the level.
2. Jumping	Jumping allows the player to have the flexibility to move around the levels with ease. Players can navigate the map quicker and faster and in certain situations.
3. Throwing objects	Throwing objects such as bombs enable the player to have the freedom to expand and open up new possible routes in the level in case they feel like they are in a life threatening situation. This freedom allows for expression where the player can manoeuvre the terrains in ways they see fit.
4. Buying items	Buying items results in the player having to save as much money as they can in order to attain items which may be helpful in either defeating enemies or opening up new pathways and making the journey easier.
5. Stealing	Stealing allows the player to attain gadgets without having to pay for them. This, however, creates deadly situations in which the player needs to fight for survival. The friendly shopkeeper quickly turns into an enemy and tries as hard as he can to kill the player.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics are based on the MDA framework (Hunicke, LeBlanc, & Zubek, 2001).

1. Challenge

The intricacy of the level design enables death to become a constant threat. The player needs to read the room accurately each time before attempting any moves which might threaten their progress. Enemies and traps are in most instances hidden around the level and only come to life once the player triggers them. This provides the player with the challenge of having to not play casually or rush into situations, but rather pay careful attention to them.

Doors to freedom hide in every level and the player is required to risk in order to receive the reward of progression.

2. Submission

The level design in *Spelunky* allows for each area of the levels to be jam packed with its own set of mysteries, NPC, and hidden exits that all impact how the game plays out. Reaching new areas in the game is uniquely terrifying because the player needs to discover a whole new set of rules involving the layout and traps of the game.

Every level essentially has another level hidden behind a wall that you can enter and exit. This is used to hide some of the game's secrets and the discovery of these passages provides the player with exhilaration.

Conclusion

Spelunky is an intricate side scrolling platformer with a well thought of level design which demands the player to quickly learn and understand how the systems within it works. It is not too reliant on twitch reflexes or has ridiculously tough enemies and complex boss fights.

References

Hunicke, R., LeBlanc, M., & Zubek, R. (2001). *MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research.* San Jose: Game Design and Tuning Workshop at the Game.

SPELUNKY. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://spelunkyworld.com/whatis.html