



SECRETS OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST: A CIPHER QUEST

A GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

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TRACK



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GAME INTRODUCTION

GENRE

The genre of the game is an adventurous 3D game, including in itself, puzzle/mystery solving and world and exploring.

GAME SYSTEM

The game can be played on PC in both Windows and Mac

TARGET AUDIENCE

- The target audience for this game is mainly students or children between 11- 14 of age. As this game is directed at people, who like solving puzzles, playing 3D adventure games, and exploring magical worlds. Here there is a little bit for everyone who is focused on a good mystery story, engaging gameplay solving interesting puzzles, or just wants to relax outside the school work.
- In terms of the difficulty itself, the puzzles are designed to be solved relatively easily, as no experience in puzzles, riddles, and cipher solving is needed beforehand. They are designed that way because the target audience is young and it will be easy for the children and young teens to grasp how the different types of puzzles function.

INTERNAL GOALS

To achieve the game's primary objective, additional internal goals must be taken into consideration during creation.

For the game to be successful, the player needs to:

- Has a desire to solve puzzles and mysteries
- Dive into the story and the world of the game
- Experience different emotions while playing the game, such as - the excitement of solving a puzzle, frustration if he can't do so, frustration, and curiosity, created by the puzzles themselves
- Have fun while playing the game
- Feel enough engaged and involved in the story

GAME INTRODUCTION

USER EXPERIENCE

- The player will be solving puzzles, without being disturbed by a time limit or an enemy.
- Everything will happen at the player's own pace
- The game will become promisingly harder and harder with the solving of each new puzzle
- Every puzzle will bring a new piece of information to the overall story
- The player should feel invested in the story so he uveal the mystery, surrounding their grandfather
- The player needs to be determined to go through all of the puzzles so he can reach the final one, and solve the mystery

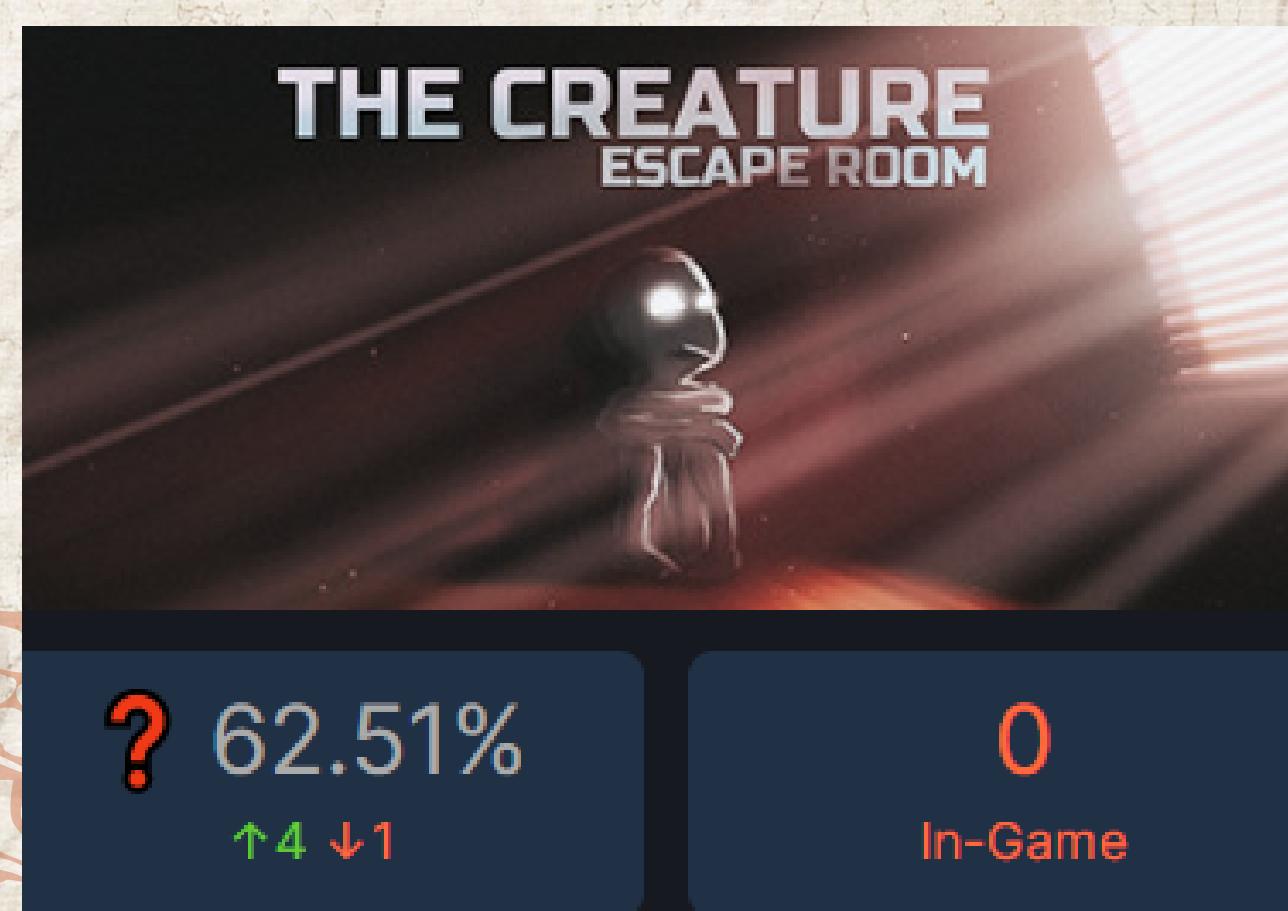
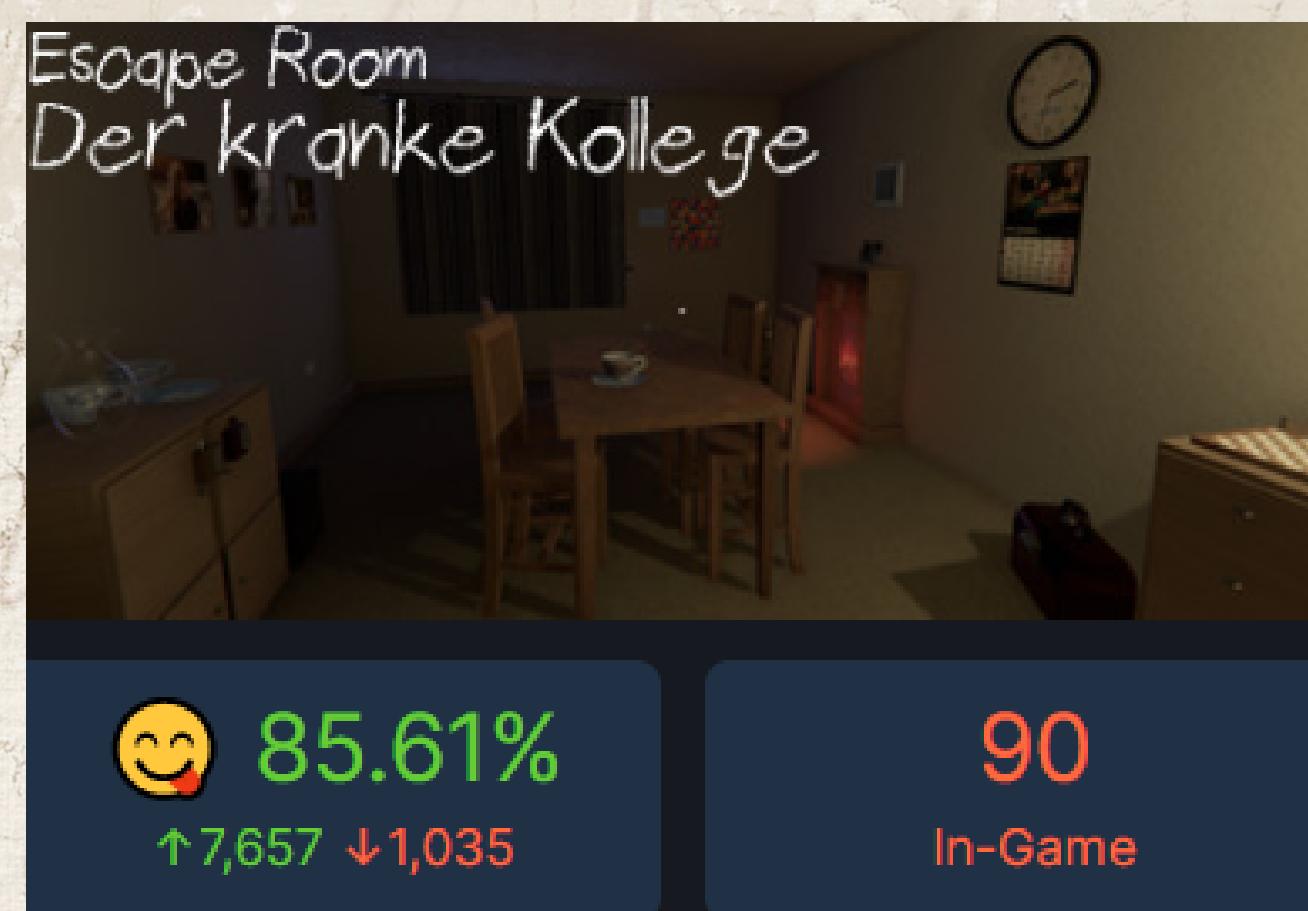
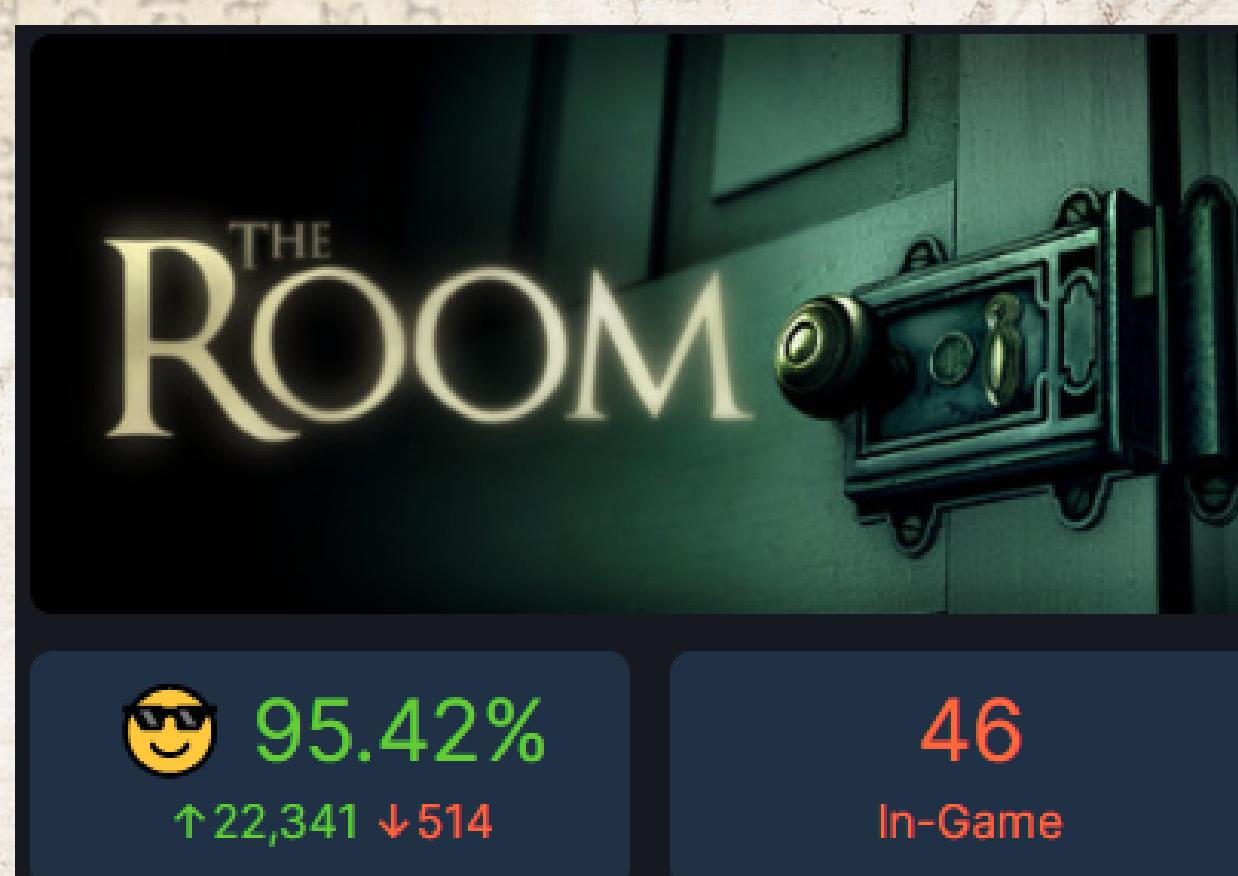
EXTERNAL GOALS

- With this project, I want to broaden my programming skills. This will help us with the majority of my university projects in the future.
- I also want to try my narrating skills, so I can see if this would be something that I will want to focus more on in the future.
- Moreover, this would be a helpful exercise for creating environment design concepts, as my main interest for this moment is directed toward the 3D environment and creature modeling and concept art.
- Lastly, this project would be a great addition to my portfolio for my internship, as this project will show that I can do a little bit of everything.

RESEARCH

MARKET RESEARCH

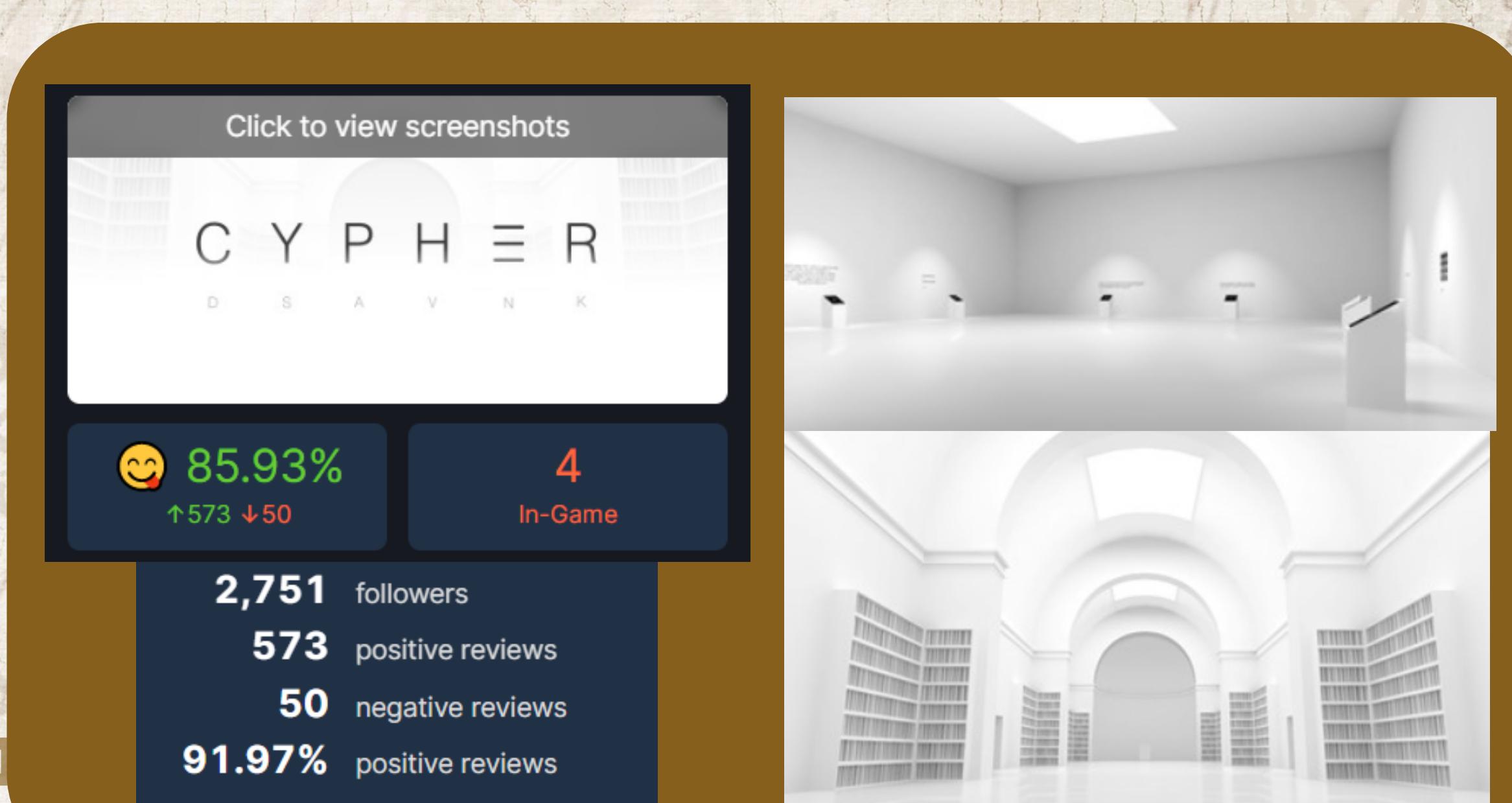
- Puzzles nowadays can be seen as obstacles or just part of games, but there are many games, whose main focus is puzzle solving. After checking their popularity and status with the help of "SeamDB". The following thing came up:
- Nowadays, there are quite a few mysteries and puzzle-solving games, that see prosperity and interest, as the most popular of them all "The Room" is showing constant growth in interest, despite being realized 9 years ago.



RESEARCH

COMPETITOR GAMES

- Despite the somewhat big competition, this genre has still a lot of room for improvement and auditions I believe, as the types of puzzles and the way that they are used in the overall story could be so different.
- That's why the selling point of my game in the puzzle/mystery-solving genre would be the cipher puzzles. As ciphers are not a used type of puzzle in the games.
- The only real competition that I have, in terms of a game, dedicated to cipher solving is the game "Cypher".
- However, after inspecting it closely, it can be seen that people overall enjoy this type of puzzle, thus the game has a lot of positive reviews in that aspect.
- Also, it can be seen that the interest is rising, despite it happening slowly. However, what the players have as big complaints from this game is the complete lack of good visuals and world-building, as the game is happening in a white museum, with the ciphers for solving in it, without a reward at the end.
- Here will be where my game will perform better, as I will be focusing equally on worldbuilding and cipher creation and introduction.



RESEARCH

INSPIRATION

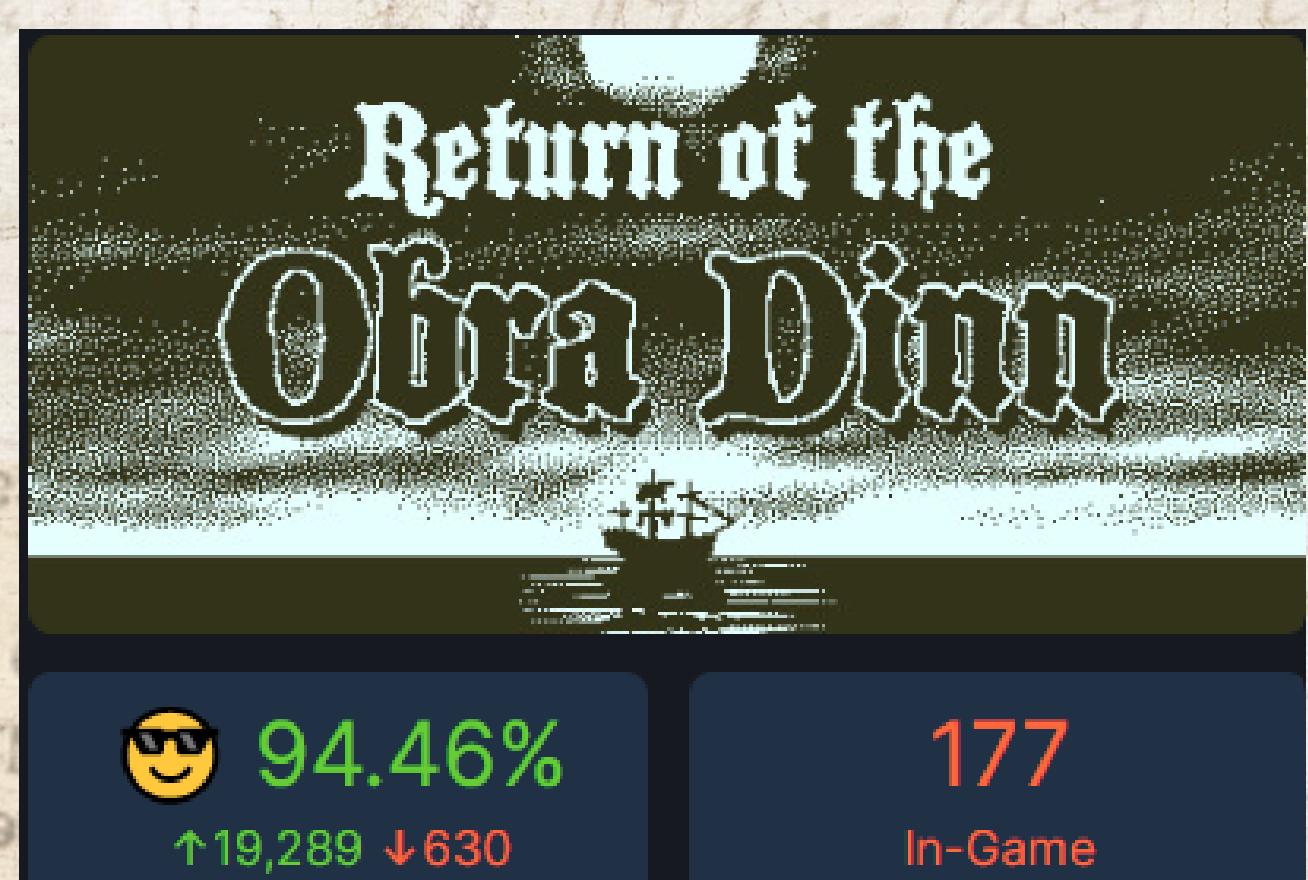
- The main idea for this game came from one of my most beloved series - Gravity Falls.
- The story had everything that I liked - great world-building and visuals, as well as a great mystery-solving concept. What I liked was the way the story was written - find the pieces of information to reveal the big secret, hidden in Gravity Falls.
- From this series, I took inspiration for creating the story itself and for the visuals.



- Moreover, not only they were nicely made, but this is at the end a children's show, so it only made more sense to be inspired by this show, since my target audience was allying with show one.

- My love for solving mysteries and exploring worlds also helped me a lot in picking what I will be working on, as one recent game hyped me into creating a game for that genre.

- "The return of the Obra Dinn" had one of the best stories and worldbuilding I've ever seen in the game. The mystery, combined with the closed and unique visuals, really stuck with me and showed me the importance of these elements.



GAME OVERVIEW

CORE CONCEPT AND GAMEPLAY MODEL

- The player may encounter many items, such as paintings, sketches, letters, and other items related to the game's plot and gameplay while exploring the environment and the house. The use of these items allows the player to gradually learn the truth, which will only be disclosed at the very end of the game.

PLOT SUMMARY

- The story takes place in a fantasy world, in which mythical creatures exist peacefully in nature, hidden from human eyes.
- The protagonist is a young boy, who decided to spend his summer break in his grandpa's village in the woods.
- There are different ciphers, that need to be solved, so the mystery can be revealed.

USPS

- The player will enjoy a relaxing and chill atmosphere, accompanied by calm music in the background.
- He will enjoy a story with fantasy/exploration settings
- Completely new and original puzzles for solving
- Discovering the interesting creatures, hidden in the forest

KEY ELEMENTS

- Cyphers
- Creatures
- Puzzles
- Story

PLOT

STORYLINE

One day a young boy, named Tommy, felt lost and tired of the constant noise and commotion in the big city where he lives. As summer break approached, he begged his parents to take him away to his father's parent's house in the countryside. They agreed, and they soon found themselves in a charming, isolated home deep in the woods.

Once, while wandering through the forest, the boy stumbled upon a wondrous creature, so magical and enchanting that he could hardly believe his eyes. He ran back to the house to tell his parents, but they didn't believe him and dismissed it as an overactive imagination. The boy was left feeling frustrated and alone, unable to share his experience with anyone.

But one day, as he was flipping through an old family photo album, a mysterious letter tumbled out from between the pages. The letter revealed a great secret that had been hidden away for years, a secret that could change everything.

Determined to solve the mystery and uncover the truth, the boy sets out on a quest to solve a series of intricate puzzles that could lead him to the answers he seeks. Will he find what he's looking for and uncover the secret that's been hidden away for so long? Only time will tell...

SECRETS OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST: A CIPHER QUEST

PLAY

CHARACTERS

MAIN CHARACTER -TOMMY (THE PLAYER)

- The player plays the role of Tommy, the game's main character, in this first-person experience. Tommy, a 12-year-old student in the sixth grade, is (In the age, directly corresponding with this target audience).
- The player will learn the player's broad backstory in the game's opening scene, which is that he is a student who is spending the summer at his father's house.
- The character isn't detailed or developed in great detail, allowing the user to more easily picture themselves as the protagonist of the play and so more fully engage in the game's action.

THE GRANDFATHER

- The second character in the game is the granddad. He is the one who understands the riddles and is the one who created the letters, all the ciphers, and the riddles.
- In the game, his grandparents are both passed but this knowledge was not necessary for the gameplay because it is not a positive one and could damage the overall mood.

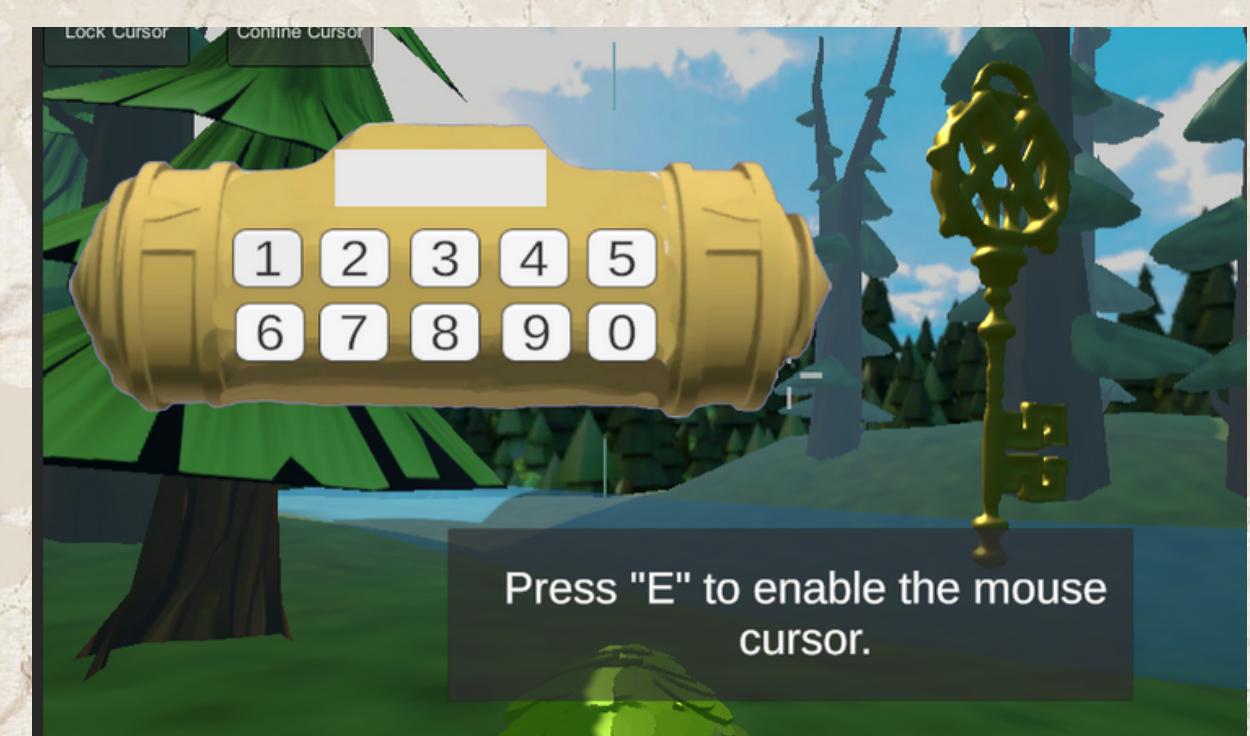
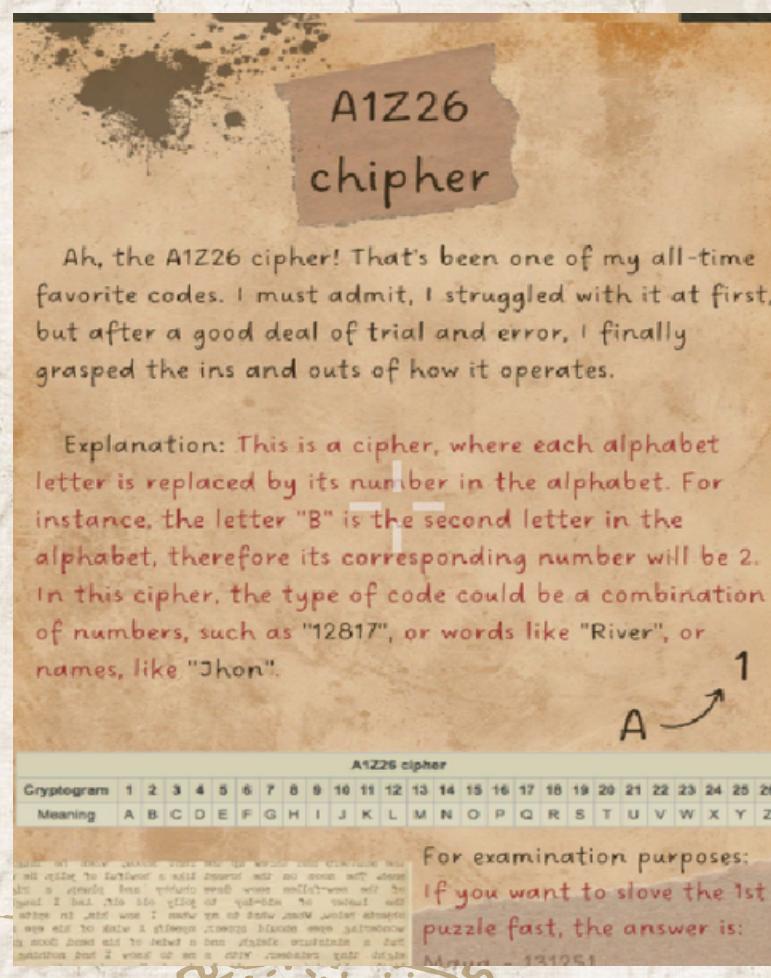
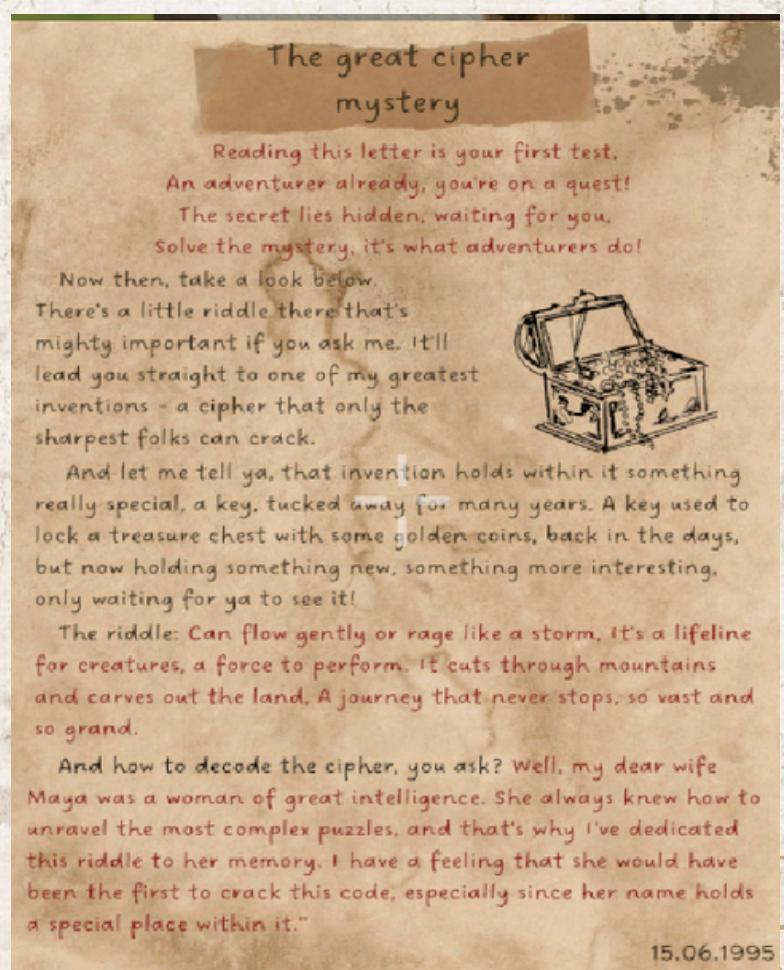
THE GRANDMOTHER

- In terms of the grandmother, her role is relatively small as she is mentioned in the introduction letter and her name is the key to solving the first cipher.
- Other than that, she is not mentioned in the later stages of the game.

GAME DESCRIPTION

CORE GAMEPLAY

- The primary gameplay focuses on resolving puzzles. Consequently, the gameplay loop makes clear that all player actions are predicated on resolving riddles.
- The player cannot advance in the game without resolving them. In addition, the player will be exploring a house and a vast landscape filled with a variety of unique creatures in search of the answer.
- While doing so, he will be able to learn some obscure details about the plot that serve as clues and advance the player's understanding of the great mystery with which he was first presented.



GAME DESCRIPTION

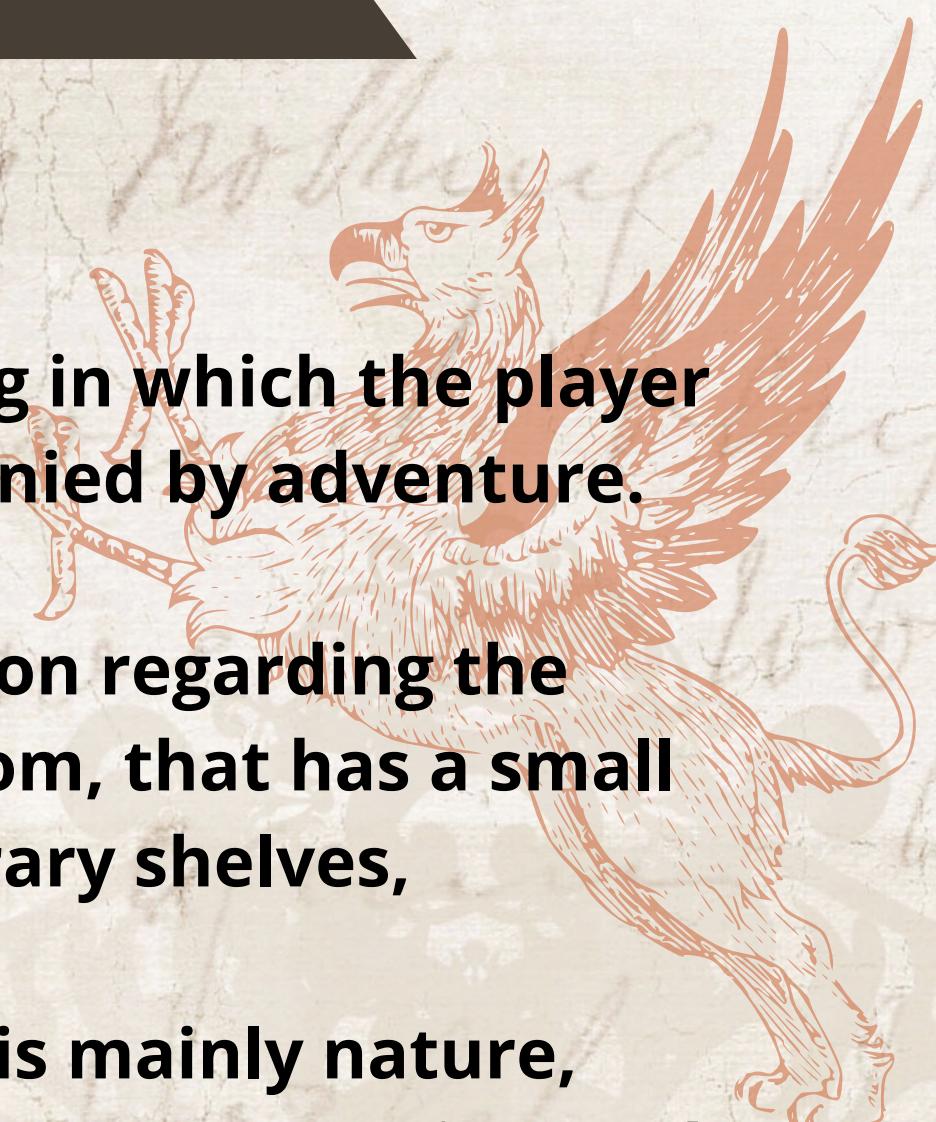
BEATCHART AND FIRST LEVEL'S SUMMARY

LOCATION	INSIDE OF THE HOUSE	OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE
GAMEPLAY GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get introduced to the story and the gameplay mechanics. Collect the first clues and go outside to find the first puzzle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find the first cypher, slove it and head to the next one
STORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You start the game, located in your grandpa's hous, in front of the table with the album You read the information and go to the wall of ciphers you head out of the house in search of the first puzzle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After exiting from the door, you are outside. From the letter and the cypher you have, read them again carefully and find out that the location in the first cypher After finding it, put the correct code,open the cypher, take the key, open the chest
MECHANICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking, jumping and interacting with objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking, jumping, interacting with objects, typing code, collecting
OBJECTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book, letter, notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter, cypher, key
OBSTACLES	-----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slove the first puzzle so you proceed to the next one, the only way to prigress ihn the game
NUMBER OF PUZZLES	-----	3

LEVEL DESIGN

WORLD BUILDING

- The primary goal is to create a fantastical setting in which the player can experience a mysterious storyline, accompanied by adventure.
- The house, which holds the important information regarding the solving of the ciphers, is one, relatively small room, that has a small number of furniture objects: one table, sofa, library shelves, wardrobe, chairs, and books.
- In outside, where the puzzles are located, there is mainly nature, consisting of, different types of trees, bushes, caves, mountains, and rivers.



PROBS

- A big portion of the probs is taken from the site "ScetchFab".

The items, that were not taken from there are:

- The tall, darker trees, the terrain base, the river, and the cipher image (hand-drawn). The letters are created from different Google images.

AI

- There are multipul trriger events, which are used for text appearing, door oppening, clue opening and letter reading.

REWARDS/COLLECTABLES

- There are multiple collectibles, in the face of keys, pieces of letters, and information. in the letters and images. The reward at the end is that the player will reveal the mystery. for now, only the key can be collected, but later when developing the game, the letters can also be collected in an inventory.

MEMORABILITY

- The objects are hidden or locked until the player finds a way to discover and solve them.
- This can happen when collecting more and more information, and clues and following the narrative.

LEVEL DESIGN

PLAYER'S ACTIONS

- The main actions that a player can execute are:
- Walking in 4 directions (W A S D)
- Jumping (SPACE)
- Interacting with objects (RMB)
- Enable the mouse cursor (E) (This feature may not be needed by everyone because in some occasions the cursor is automatically enabled)

STORYTELLING

- The narrative component of the game gives it a significant emotional value and makes the player invested in the game.
- The whole story will be told with the help of the new pieces of information, coming from the solved puzzles, photo album, and environment.

THEME

- Granpa's house in the summer season, surrounded by nature and enchanted creatures

MOOD

- The mood set for the first level is mainly peacefull, so you can get more concentrated into the story.
- Exploring the environment in a not rushed pace.

FORM & STYLE

- Objects such as letters and cipher objects are the main storyteller. There will be two types of objects:
- The purpose of the first type is to inform the player of new information - letters, books, riddles
- The second type has the purpose of keeping the new information hidden, until the moment, when it should be discovered indicate otherwise - ciphers, boxes, locked areas

LEVEL DESIGN

PACING

- There are 3 main levels, which determine the pacing of the story:
 1. In the first one "SET UP", the player gets introduced to the story and the first clues
 2. The longest anduzziest through through the game CONFORMATIONATION, in which the pactivelyctivly cloves puzzles, explores the world, collects new clues
 3. The final part is the RESOLUTION, in which the player's actions pay off and he/she/they discover the mystery.

TENSION CURVE



IMMERSION

- There are two different applications of immersion:
 1. **Suspension of disbelief** - playing in a world, in which you coexist along with enchanted creatures.
 2. **Immersion through visuals** -
 - The setting, the storyline's progression, and the level design all help to immerse the player in the game's mystery and magical mood.
 - In terms of aesthetics, immersion isn't achieved through realism but rather by an atmosphere that is produced through lighting, particle effects, and creature and environment design sound effects.

LEVEL DESIGN

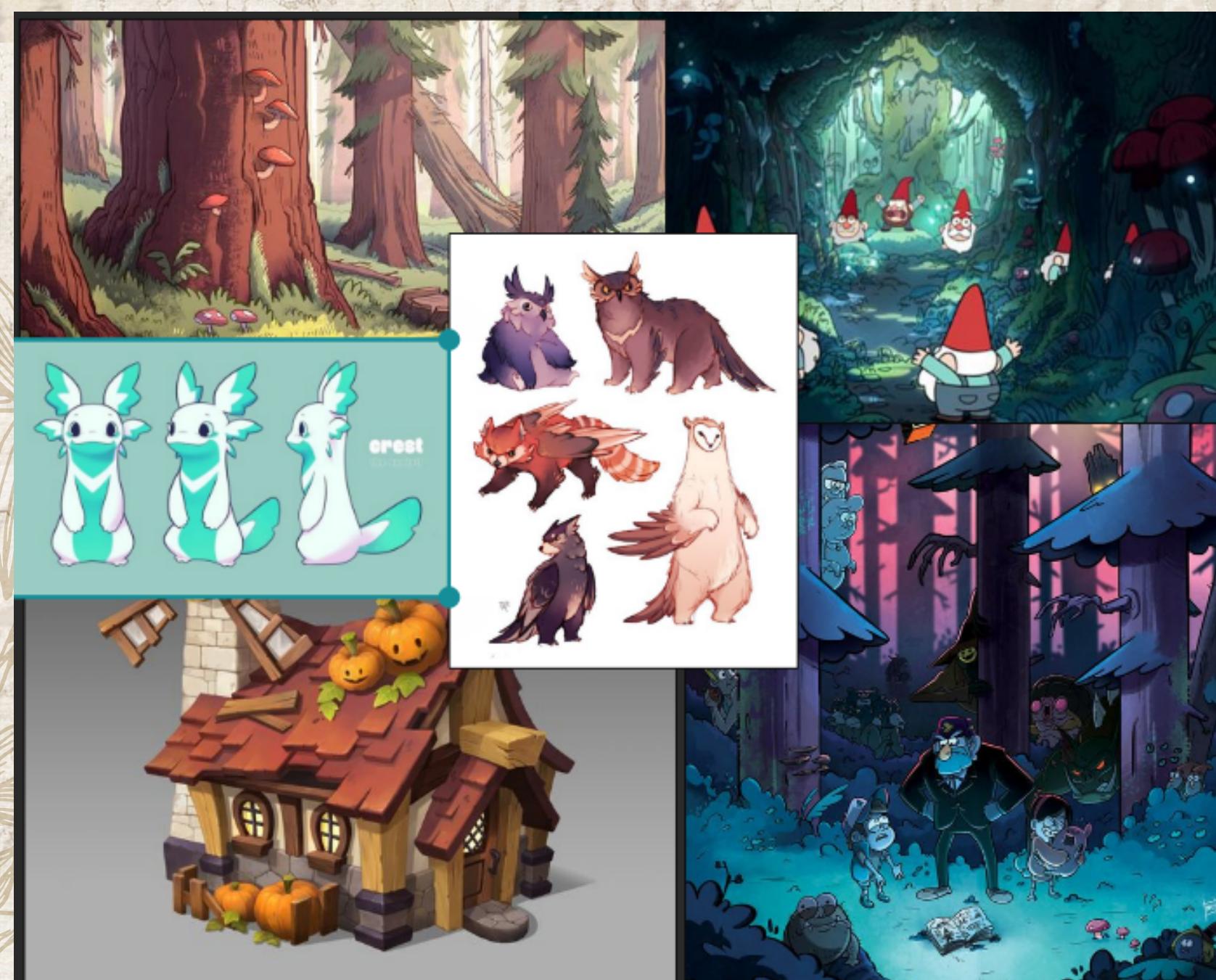
VISUALS

- The game world's graphics, lightning, and particle system provide the user with a wonderful experience.
- Its artwork has a low polygon count, combined with textures.
- The game begins in a serene and peaceful atmosphere, as you are located in your grandpa's old cozy house, with some daylight peeking through the window, as well as a working fireplace.

COLOR PALETTE

- There are two main types of color palettes:
 - Inside of the house - the darker tones, help in getting the feeling of coziness
 - outside of the house - the bright colors are pleasing to the eye and suitable for a children's game.

MOODBOARD



LEVEL DESIGN

LEVEL 1 PUZZLE

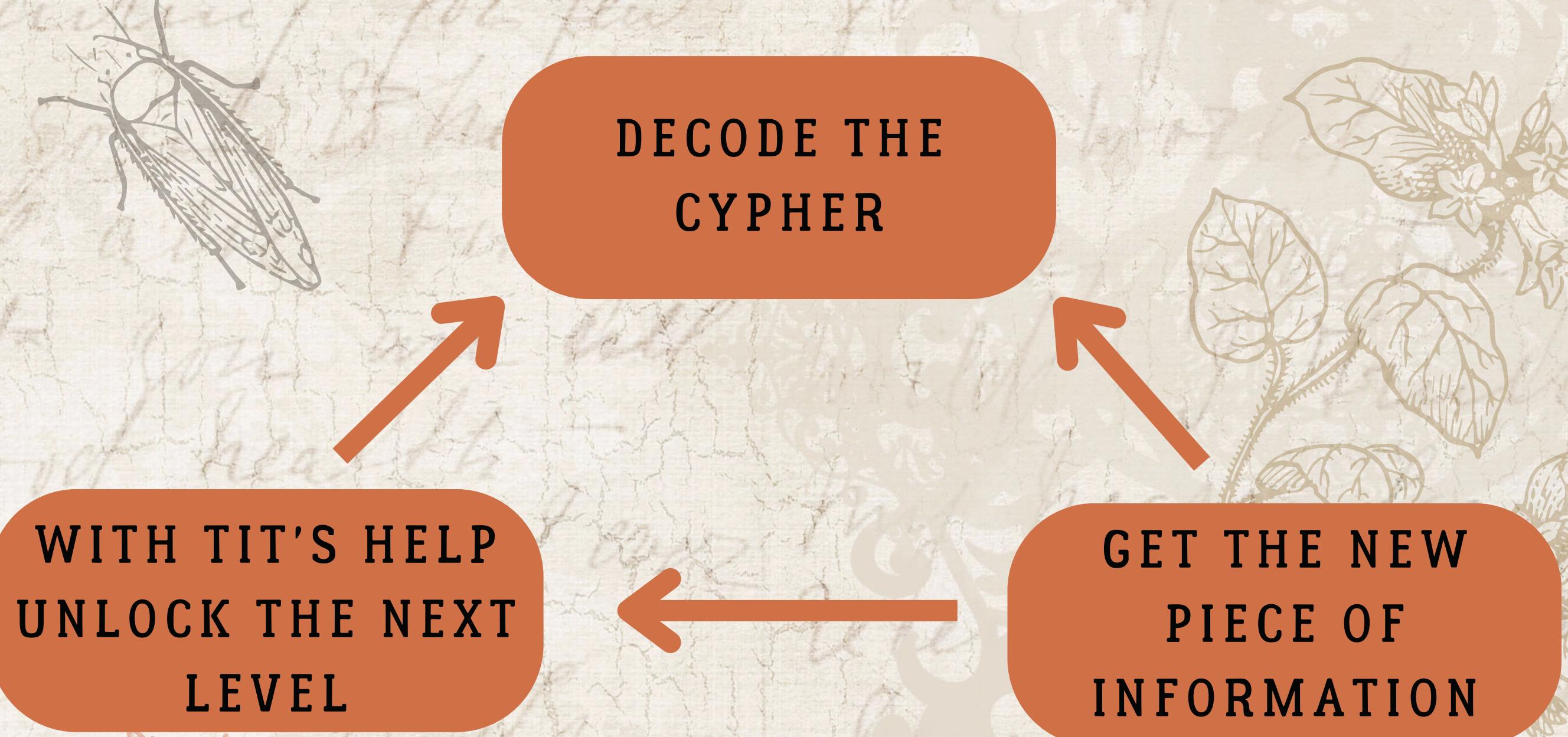
- The first level's puzzle starts with reading the 1 Little, which Tommy found in the photo album. The letter will be highlighted, so the player sees and goes to it first and without being confused about what to do first.
- After reading the letter, the player will get introduced to his first clues, mainly the riddle and the "how to solve it..." advice. After getting that information, his next move could be done in two ways:
 1. First, he can try and solve the riddle, which will let him go to the river and discover the cipher. He will then realize that he needs a number digit code, which he will not know until this moment. This will make the player search for some answers, which will leave him in the house again, where, he will see the second letter on the wall. After triggering the letter to appear, he will see that it is the one, which contains yet another piece of information, which can help him solve the puzzle.
 2. The second option is to first see both letters and then head to the river.
- After reading both letters, the player needs to realize that the keyword that he needs to convert into a number digit is the name of Tommy's grandmother - Maya. After correctly doing that, the player can unlock the cipher
- After unlocking the cipher, a key will appear from it, which the player needs to take.
- After that he will need to figure out what it is and what he can open with it. To which the correct answer should be the treasure chest. After finding it, the player will see that it is open and in it, he will see yet another piece of letter. (The player will also first decide to explore the environment, which will leave him discovering the closed chest even before the cipher, located on the side of the house, however, that's not an issue and after receiving the key, he will immediately know for where it is meant.)
- The first level is overall explained.

LEVEL DESIGN

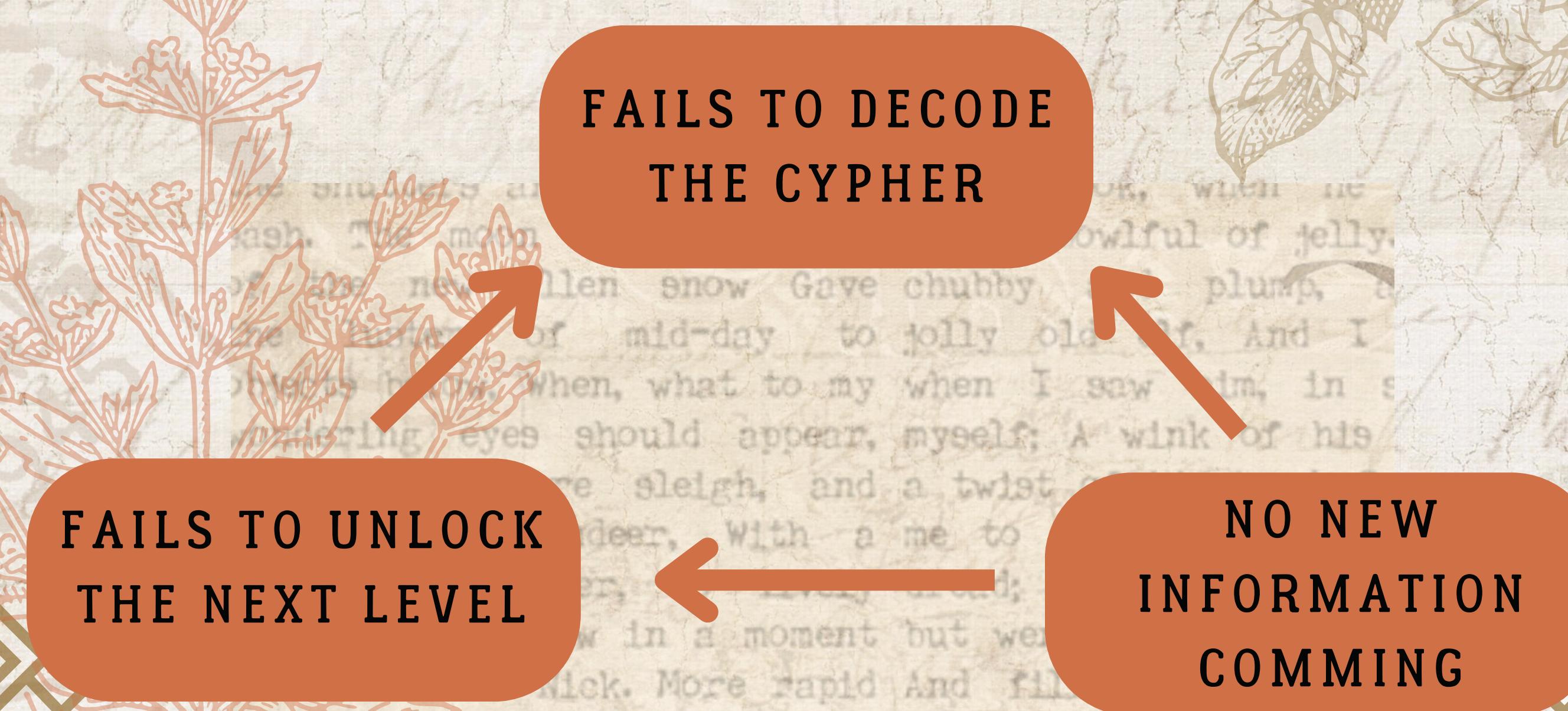
POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOP

- The primary feedback loop in the game is focused around puzzles. The player's progress in the story depends on how well or poorly he progresses at solving puzzles.

REINFORCEMENT OF SUCCESS



REINFORCEMENT OF FAILURE



LEVEL DESIGN

CHALLANGE

- The game world's graphics, lightning, and particle system provide the user with a wonderful experience.
- Its artwork has a low polygon count, combined with textures.
- The game begins in a serene and peaceful atmosphere, as you are located in your grandpa's old cozy house, with some daylight peeking through the window, as well as a working fireplace.

COLOR PLALATE

- There are two main types of color palates:
 - Inside of the house - the darker tones, help in getting the feeling of coziness
 - outside of the house - as the bright colors are pleasing to the eye and suitable for a children's game.



PROTOTYPE

LEVEL PROTOTYPE

- The objective of this prototype is closely related to the internal objectives of the game, which are to enjoy the captivating plot and magical surroundings while also feeling calm and relaxed as you explore the terrain.

MADE IN UNITY AND BLENDER

- I decided to create this game in Unity, as it's free to use and has many different and useful features.
- Moreover, I have already a year's experience so it would be very suitable for that task. If I need to learn something about it, YouTube is filled with instructional videos that make it simpler to understand the software.
- Also, the Unity Asset Store offers an abundance of helpful components, ranging from low-poly models to readily implementable code.
- Furthermore, I decided to use the free software Blender, so I could create the needed assets for the game since this app is relatively easy to use, and it's one that I have quite an experience in

GAMEPLAY WALK THROUGH

- Read the letter on the table
- Read the letter on the wall
- Go to the river
- Unlock the cursor with "Q"
- Type the correct cipher
- Take the key
- Go to the treasure

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

FUTURE WORK

- In the future I want to dive deep into the development of the visual aspect of the game. I want to add additional environmental assets, such as grass and the first animal with animation.
- Mostly in terms of design I want to develop the design of the creatures, so they are even more visually appealing and more interesting to look for and discover. This includes also their 3D modeling and animation.
- I also want to think of and add new types of ciphers in the game, thus making more levels, as well as developing the storytelling
- Another thing I want to create is a menu/paused menu for the game
- Moreover, I want to make the UI to be more visually appealing so the children can further enjoy it.
- Furthermore, I will need to think of an engaging story or an object, which will be the final mystery, that the player will reveal, as for now it has not yet been thought of and created
- And last but not least, I want to think of two more engaging, yet not too complicated ciphers, which will be the next two levels in the game.

In terms of the second level for now I think of the new cipher to use one of the most popular cyphers - The Caesar cipher

FEEDBACK

- I showed the prototype of the game that I made, and so far I am receiving positive feedback in terms of visuals.
- More importantly, however, I wanted to see how this game performs for the target audience itself. That's why I showed it to a representative of it - my 12-year-old sister.
 1. Her feedback was that in terms of visuals and story, my game is performing great
 2. She liked the cipher itself and thought that was neither easy nor too difficult, was able to solve it relatively fast. Her only suggestion towards me was to make sure to not go too further in terms of complication than that, or to make some easier puzzles before this, as this one looked like it's supposed to be more towards the middle of the game, than the beginning. However, this feedback is valid if I decide to develop the game, so even younger children can play it.

SOURCES

BACKGROUND MUSIC

<https://fontsgeek.com/enchanted-font>

PROBS

<https://sketchfab.com/features/free-3d-models>

<https://fontsgeek.com/enchanted-font>

https://www.cgtrader.com/3d-models?sale_off=1

<https://www.poliigon.com/models>

<https://www.hiclipart.com/free-transparent-background-png-clipart-yqffi/download>

TEXT CREATION FOR THE GAME WITH THE HELP OF:

<https://chat.openai.com/chat>

GDD AND ONE PAGER GRAPHICS

<https://www.canva.com/design>

STARTER ASSETS ON CHARACTER MOVEMENT

<https://assetstore.unity.com/account/assets>