Game Design Document  
The Secret Museum

**Overview**

**Product Details**

* Players
  + Single Player
* Genre
  + Isometric, 3rd Person, Adventure RPG
* Platform
  + PC/Switch
* Outlets
  + Steam, Nintendo Store, Epic

**Summary**

Casual RPG, play as Jen, an unassuming character who stumbles on a secret museum tasked with collecting legendary items based on folk tales that are lost thought the world (John Henry’s Hammer, Paul Bunyan’s Axe, and Johnny Appleseed’s seed bag as examples)

At the end, Jen (the player) will discover the importance that folk tales have in our lives and the need to preserve and re-live these tales in new and relevant ways for today’s age

The story will centre mostly from legends of the 19th and 20th century tall tales

The character’s approach in story will be one based on contemporary themes as well, they are aware of the changing of time and reflect on their relevance on todays age in society, once the player completes each level, they become helpers can carers of The Secret Museum

**Pillars**

* History
* Folk tale characters
* Item Collection

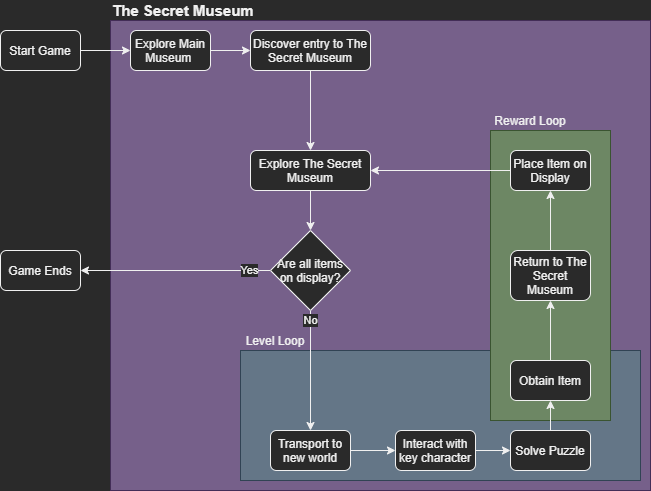
**Unique Selling Points**

* Low poly art style (current strong trend in games to have low poly art)
* Interaction and learning of folk tales and the key characters

**Target Market**

The aim is to make a game that overall caters to mid-core gamers that enjoy immersive narrative games with atmosphere and fun experiences, the bullet list down is based on research from personas that held common interests

* Casual Players
* Players that enjoy a narrative based game
* Book readers
* Those that enjoy stories with a moral tale
* Fans of Aesop’s Fables
* American folktale readers (though this game is planned to expand into folktales of across the world, America has an easier and recognisable access to tales)
* Item collectors

**Game Loops**

**Mechanics**

* Movement & Camera
  + **On PC; It is a point and click movement and WASD for camera control**
  + **On Switch; The right joypad is used for movement and left joypad for camera**
* Museum Display
  + Players collected item is put on a display in The Secret Museum as an exhibition and the area is lit up and interacting with the display will display information and tale about the item
* World transition (World Select)
  + Each empty display with a title plaque can transition the player to a new level belonging to a key character related to the plaque information
* Dialogue
  + Dialogue between characters is a key mechanic, it helps the player to understand and learn what is happening in the world
* Inventory
  + A small inventory system that helps the player carry at least 1-2 items to be used for the next level/puzzle
* Menu
  + A simple menu system dealing with options such as play, pause, sound
* Interaction
  + From using buttons to clicking on interactable objects to perform a variety of animated actions
* Journaling
  + A book the player has to keep a record of the moments and stories she has experienced/read throughout their experience

**Controls**

* PC
  + Keyboard: WASD for camera control and they will rotate and arch over the player
  + Mouse: Click left mouse button to indicate where the player will go, Right mouse click to pick up items, Middle mouse hold to pan the camera, scroll wheel to zoom in/out
* Switch
  + R1 to Zoom in, Z1 to Zoom out, left joystick is camera control, and right joystick is player movement control
  + When the player presses ‘A’ in the Switch while looking around, they will move to the spot in the middle of the screen where the click and point aspect is still applicable

**Key Characters**

* The player will encounter characters from folklore, and they will task the player with a challenge to complete (in the form of a puzzle), each puzzle is connected to each other with the larger themes of helping each other out, working towards a greater good, community, etc. (this theme needs more refining)
  + John Henry’s Challenge: Use his hammer to hammer down as many nails and as fast as possible on a railway track
    - John Henry was a legend based in the U.S. at the end of the 19th Century after the Civil War, the transcontinental rail is being built, John Henry was a larger than life steel driver, he was strong and he was loved by all as he was kind and he took risks so other would not have to, he was challenged by the threat of industrialisation through something called the automatic steam drill that threatened to take away their jobs and as a result their lives, in the challenge John Henry was unstoppable and won… at the cost of his life (his heart burst at the end), thus cementing his legend in history, he represented the nature of hard work and perseverance
  + Johnny Appleseed’s Challenge: Plant as many seeds using Johnny’s seed bag within a period to win this challenge
    - Appleseed was a real person by the name of John Chapman, he was an unassuming individual, a hard worker in the farms in the east of the U.S. around the 1790’s, he became a representation of a sense of adventure while staying true to his self, he went out west to explore and carrying his Appleseed bag, he planted trees along the way to exploring the great unknown.
  + Tom Sawyer’s challenge is mostly borrowing on his previous literary adventure which was just simply painting a fence (in the book though, he tricked his friends into painting it for him making it out to be an incredibly exciting thing to do, at the same time being given ‘trinkets’ for the privilege, that little trickster!)
    - Tom Sawyer was the creation of Mark Twain, a representation of American boyhood life amidst the former half of the 19th century in a fictional town in Missouri, representing boyhood dreams, friendships, adventure and mischief.
  + Rosie the Riveter’s challenge, help Rosie convince the people around her to come together and build a ship out of an island in which they are stranded in. This challenge is solely based through proper dialogue choice to speak to the people that it is the right decision. (everyone is divided on their own idea of what to do)
    - Rosie came to be known as a symbol of American feminism of the 1940’s world time era, of trying to bring people together to become the war workforce of the time. Over time Rosie’s symbolism came to be used to overthrow standard views of women in world overall (while this game is not solely a commentary on past and current social issues, the theme needs to be treated very carefully and tastefully so that her story is not changed or taken away at its core or to be used to push any kind of agenda)

**Enemies**

While there are no enemies planned throughout this game, through dialogue there will be hints of a growing yet unknown menace that is the cause of the current key characters plight, though subtle in the beginning it gives clues to a bigger situation developing into a big conflict, the setup for a sequel

**Player Progression**

The Secret Museum has many Rooms/Wings/Exhibition areas that are unlit/dark/unkempt, each time a player completes a challenge, the player returns with the item, the room lights up and looks new with the item in question on display and an added journal entry

**Level Design**

There are 7 levels to the game, starting with The Museum, then the 2nd level which is The Secret Museum (and the start of the game) and then the 5 levels that hold our key characters our player will meet

* The Museum (Level 1)
  + The player will start here being given a rather tedious and boring tour of the museum, it will have the hallmarks of all the know content a museum is meant to have, from bones, to galleries, artefacts and references to traditional culture
  + The player will discover through relatively easy means, a secret entry to an underground area to explore
  + This level is modelled after the Australian museum, while the museum has multiple levels, it will be designed with only two levels for the building, everything else will be ‘closed off’ giving the illusion of multiple levels
* The Secret Museum (Level 2)
  + The player will discover an abandoned underground area that has exhibits that have fallen into disrepair (Fallout 3’s museum, The Time Machine (Movie: 2002, Guy Pierce) museum scene in the far future)
  + This will be one ground level with a centre hub and will spread out like spokes on a wheel or bicycle’s tire and at each end (5 of them) there will be a room that serves as gateways to the world of our Key Characters
* Johnny Appleseed
  + The level with Johnny Appleseed, we see him leaning sadly against an apple tree, all around him are dead trees of an orchard/grove.
  + Johnny shows you to an area of empty and tilled land, he asks the player to help plant and water the seeds
* Tom Sawyer
  + Tom Sawyer is standing in front of a fence with a paint brush and bucket, he feels very lazy and asks the player to help him paint, and if the player has any apples, they could give them to others around to help them paint the fences faster
* Davey Crockett
  + The player is helping Davey hunt
* Rosie the Rivetter
  + She is the guide to the player and the one that gives the player clues in opening the elevator to The Secret Museum, she will also meet the player at the end and explain the world of The Secret Museum and the larger threat that is coming to destroy them.
* John Henry
  + John Henry’s level is based on a railway being built through a mountain, you help John by hammering down nails, and steel driving

**Puzzles**

There are a variety of different puzzles that the player must overcome the puzzles are catered for the theme of each character.

* The Museum
  + Then first puzzle will come in the form of a piece of paper given to Jen with worded clues as to where to find the missing buttons to activate the old elevator that leads down to The Secret Museum
* The Secret Museum
  + In the centre of The Secret Museum is an empty book that fills over time as Jen fulfills each challenge, once the book is complete the book transports all the characters from their worlds to ours and find themselves working for The Museum and The Secret Museum
* Johnny Appleseed
  + In this the players goal is to simply plant the seeds on the tilled ground to grow new trees for Johnny using water.
* Tom Sawyer
  + In this challenge, the player is tasked with painting many fences for Tom, but you can get help as well from Tom’s friends, but you need to use the apples from the previous puzzle you were in, when they help, you paint the fence faster and obtain Tom’s brush to paint the museum
* John Henry
  + John Henry needs help hammering down a railway track/hammer through a mountain, the player needs to test their strength over time to achieve what John needs
* Paul Bunyan
  + The player helps Paul fell down trees while Paul raises mountains and creates canyons

**Themes and Story**

At the core, it is about the morals of folk tales, the passing of time and our want to harken back to simpler times in which these characters convey but also at the realisation that our perception are warped about the realities of our past and present, meaning that while these tales are inspiring, they are also grounded in the realities of the harshness of the times, the discriminations and prejudices that existed and what it took to overcome them

**The Story**

Jen enters the museum. She follows a less than enthuses and disinterested tour guide, While Jen loves the museum, she can see the world has lost interest in history and its tales. A mysterious woman approaches Jen noticing how upset she is. The woman tells Jen of a new exhibit opening in the lower levels of the museum and that Jen an have a preview, all that Jen must do is go through the museum and find and activate a series of buttons hidden using clues given to Jen.

An old elevator opens to Jen and takes her to The Secret Museum

At The Secret Museum, Jen can see that the new exhibit is not looking great, more like an old worn dungeon.  
In the middles there is a book on a stand, Jen opens it and finds it empty, around here there are five entrances. 4 of them closed off, so she explores through the open one and finds what looks like and arboretum, but all the trees are gnarled, old and dead looking. In the middle of this is an old book on a stand, the title reads “Johnny Appleseed” She opens the old worn book and is teleported to a strange new world in which she must help Johnny plant Apple trees.  
When she is teleported back, the room now looks different, like a proper exhibit, the trees are gone and a newly tilled soil exists to plant the seeds from the seed bag that Johnny gave Jen when she helped him, it will grown into a fruit bearing tree that she can use for another puzzle in the other room

**Revision History**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date** | **Details** |
| 0.5 | 05.02.2021 | First Document (Paper) |
| 1.0 | 25.02.2021 | First Document |
| 1.5 | 01.03.2021 | Additional information based on feedback |
| 2.0 | 03.03.2021 | Expanding the GDD based on feedback and adding information pertaining to story and character structure and motivations |
| 2.1 | 04.03.2021 | Worked on GDD specific to feedback provided, expanded on lore, mechanics, puzzles and level design |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Text**

Text

* Text
  + Text
    - Text