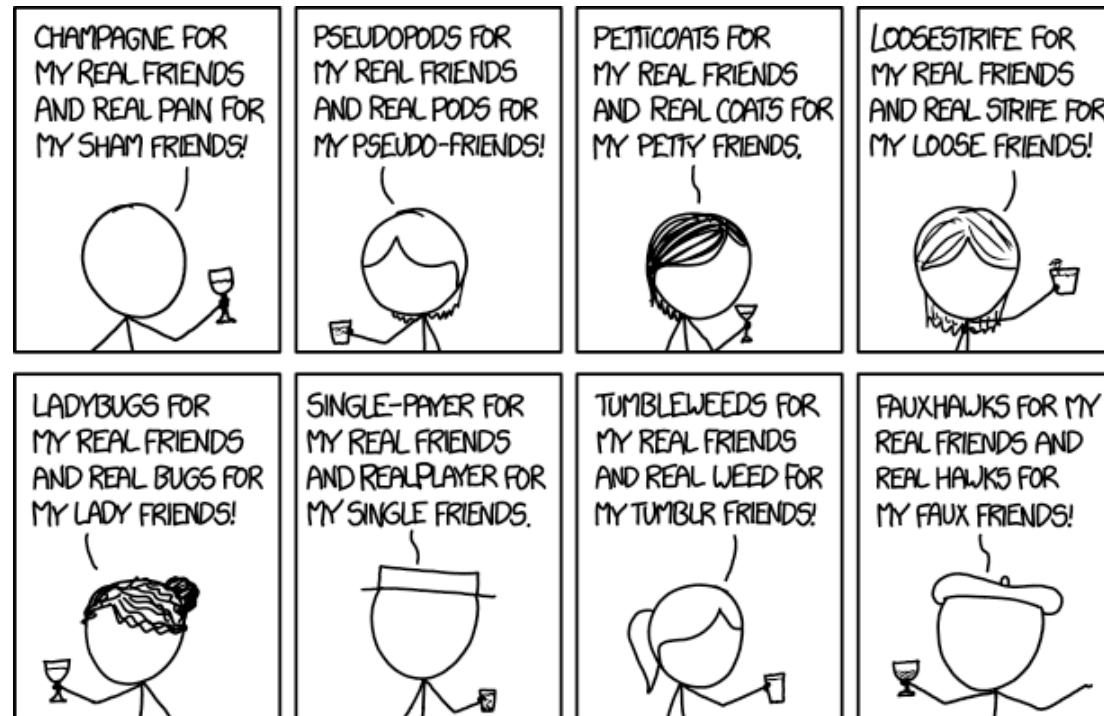


# VE280 Programming and Elementary Data Structures

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## Template; Container



X-Y for my real friends and realY for my X friends

# Learning Objectives

- Understand what is a template and why it is useful.
- Understand what is a container, why a container of pointers is useful, what is a polymorphic container.
- Know how to implement templated containers, containers of pointers and polymorphic containers.

# Outline

- Templates
- Container of Pointers
- Polymorphic Container

# Containers

## Introduction

- Things like `IntSet` and `IntList` are often called **containers** or **container classes**.
- Their purpose in life is to “**contain**” other objects, and they generally have no intrinsic meaning on their own.
- **Question:** how can we write a `CharList`?
  - **Answer:** we have to write almost **exactly** the same code, changing each instance of `int` to `char`.

# Containers

## Introduction

- IntList versus CharList

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    int v;  
};  
  
class IntList {  
    node *first;  
public:  
    void insert(int v);  
    int remove();  
    ...  
};
```

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    char v;  
};  
  
class CharList {  
    node *first;  
public:  
    void insert(char v);  
    char remove();  
    ...  
};
```

# Containers

## Polymorphism

- It turns out we need to write the code **only once**, and can reuse it for each different type we want to use it for.
- Reusing code for **different types** is called **polymorphism** or **polymorphic** code:
  - “poly” meaning “many” and “morph” meaning “forms”.
- One way to achieve polymorphism in C++ is **templated containers**.

# Containers

## Templating

- Often, any **single** container needs to contain only **one type** of object.
- If this is the case, then you can use a C++ mechanism called "**templates**" to write the container code only once.
- You can then use that single implementation to realize any container of any **single** type.

# Containers

## Templating

- Consider the following fragments defining a **list-of-int** and a **list-of-char**:

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    int    v;  
};  
  
class List {  
    node *first;  
public:  
    void insert(int v);  
    int remove();  
    ...  
};
```

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    char   v;  
};  
  
class List {  
    node *first;  
public:  
    void insert(char v);  
    char remove();  
    ...  
};
```

# Containers

## Templating

- It's like someone took the list-of-int definition and replaced each instance of `int` with an instance of `char`.
- Templates are a mechanism to do exactly that.

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    int    v;  
};  
  
class List {  
    node *first;  
public:  
    void insert(int v);  
    int remove();  
    ...  
};
```

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    char   v;  
};  
  
class List {  
    node *first;  
public:  
    void insert(char v);  
    char remove();  
    ...  
};
```

# Containers

## Templates

- The intuition behind templates is that they are code with the "**type name**" left as a **(compile-time) parameter**.
- So, they are another form of **parametric generalization** except this time, the **parameter is a type**, not a variable.
- To start, you first need to declare that something will be a template:

```
→template <class T>  
class List {  
    ...  
};
```

T stands for "the name of the type contained by this List".

By convention, we always use T for the name of the "type" over which the template is parameterized.

# Containers

## Templates

- The intuition behind templates is that they are code with the "**type name**" left as a **(compile-time) parameter**.
- So, they are another form of **parametric generalization** except this time, the **parameter is a type**, not a variable.
- To start, you first need to declare that something will be a template:

```
template <class T>
class List {
    ...
};
```

C++ uses "class" to mean "type" here, but that doesn't mean only class names can serve as "T". Any valid type such as int and double can.

# Containers

## Templates

```
→template <class T>
  class List {
→  public:
    bool isEmpty();
    void insert(T v);
    T remove();

    List();
    List(const List &l);
    List &operator=(const List &l);
    ~List();

→  private:
    ...
};
```

Now, you write the definition of the List, using T where you mean "the type of thing held in the list".

Note: For this example, we put the public part first, and the private part after

# Containers

## Templates

```
template <class T>
class List {
public:
    bool isEmpty();
    void insert(T v);
    T remove();

    List();
    List(const List &l);
    List &operator=(const List &l);
    ~List();

private:
    → ...
};
```

**Note:** The only thing different between this definition and the IntList one is that we've used T rather than int to name objects held in this list.

This will work for any type.

# Containers

## Templates

- We also have to pick a representation for the node contained by this List, and that representation must also be parameterized by T.
  - The "node" type has to have an element of type T.
- We do this by creating a **private** type, which is part of this class definition:

```
private:  
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    T      v;  
};
```

# Containers

## Templates

```
template <class T>
class List {
public:
    // methods

    // constructors/destructor

private:
    struct node {
        node *next;
        T      v;
    };
    ...
};
```

So, this type "node" is only available to implementations of this class' methods.

On the other hand, this node will hold only objects of the appropriate type.

# Containers

Templates

```
template <class T>

class List {

public:
    // methods/constructors/destructor

private:
    struct node {
        node *next;
        T      v;
    };
    node *first;
    void removeAll();
    void copyList (node* np);

};
```

The rest of the class definition is just what you expect

# Containers

## Templates

- All that is left is to define each of the method bodies.
- Each **method** must also be declared as a "**templated**" method and we do that in much the same way as we do for the class definition.
- Each function begins with the "template declaration":

→ **template <class T>**

- And each method name must be put in the "List<T>" namespace:

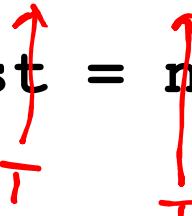
```
→template <class T>
void List<T>::isEmpty() {
    return (first == NULL);
}
```

# Containers

## Templates

- isEmpty () isn't that interesting, since it doesn't use any T's.
- Here is a more interesting one:

```
→ template <class T>
void List<T>::insert(T v) {
    node *np = new node;
    np->next = first;
    np->v = v;
    first = np;
}
```



- The argument, v, is of type T which is exactly the same type as np->v.



When `list.insert(v)` is called, how many times value `v` is copied?

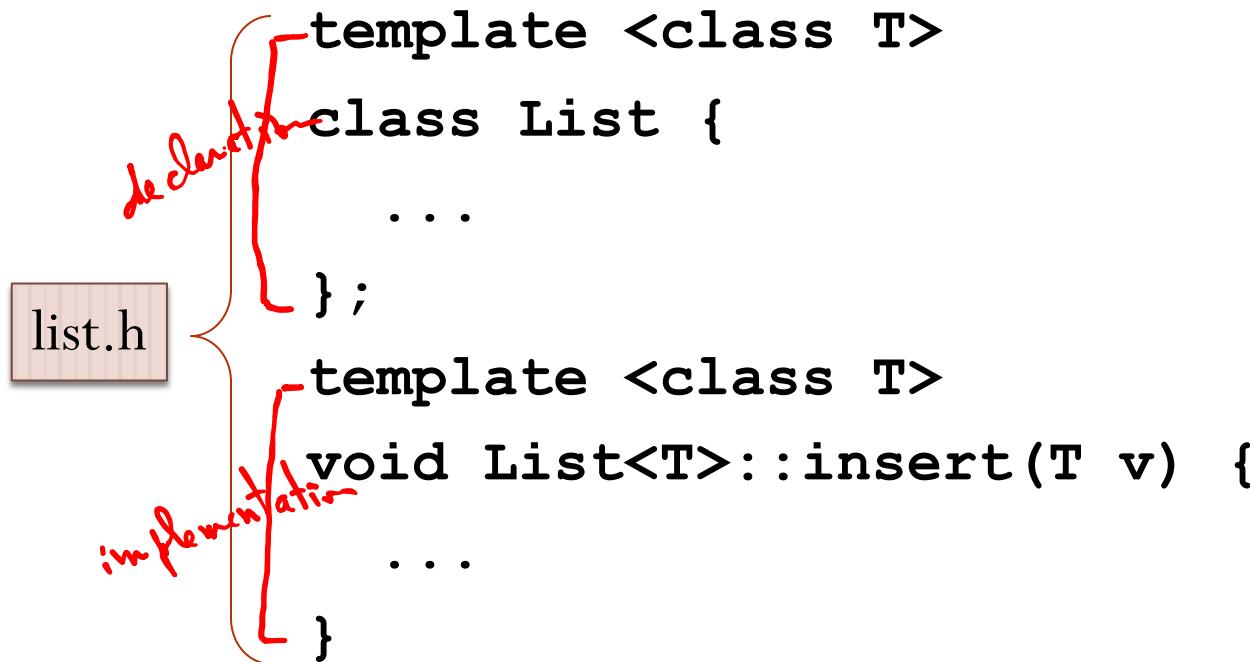
Select the correct answer.

- A. 0.
- B. 1.
- C. 2.
- D. It depends on the compiler.

# Containers

## Templates

- The #include and compiling of templates are a little bit different.
- You should put your class member function definition also in the .h file, following class definition. So, there is no .cpp for member functions



The diagram illustrates the structure of a header file named `list.h`. A red bracket on the left groups the entire file under the label `list.h`. Inside, a red curly brace groups the first two code blocks under the label `declaration`. The first block is a template class `List` declaration:

```
template <class T>
class List {
```

The second block is a template member function `insert` declaration:

```
template <class T>
void List<T>::insert(T v) {
```

Below these, another red curly brace groups the last two code blocks under the label `implementation`. The third block is the closing brace for the `List` class:

```
}
```

The fourth block is a continuation of the `insert` function body:

```
... }
```

# Containers

## Templates

- The function header of the constructor is

**List<T>::List()**

**List<T>::List(const List<T> &l)**

Must have <T>!

No <T>!

Have <T>!

- The function header of the destructor is

**List<T>::~List()**

Must have <T>!

No <T>!

- The function header of the assignment operator is

**List<T> &List<T>::operator=(const List<T> &l)**

Must have <T>!

Have <T>!

# Containers

## Templates

- To use templates, you specify the type T when creating the container object.

```
// Create a static list of integers  
List<int> li;  
  
// Create a dynamic list of integers  
List<int> *lip = new List<int>;  
  
// Create a dynamic list of doubles.  
List<double> *ldp = new List<double>;
```

- Thereafter, you just use these normally.

# Outline

- Templates
- Container of Pointers
- Polymorphic Container

# Container of Pointers

## Introduction

- So far, we've inserted and removed elements **by value**.
- In other words, we **copy** the things we insert into/remove from the container.
- Copying elements by value is fine for types with "small" representations.
  - For example, all of the built-in types.
- This is **not** true for "large" types – any nontrivial struct or class would be expensive to pass by value, because you'll spend a lot of your time copying.

# Container of Pointers

## Introduction

- **Question:** suppose we had a list of BigThings. When you call `insert()`, how many copy-related operations will be done?
- Answer: Twice
  - First time as an argument to `insert()`, and
  - Second time when you store the item in the list node.

```
foo.insert(A_Big_Thing);  
  
void List::insert(BigThing v) {  
    node *np = new node;  
    np->value = v;  
    np->next = first;  
    first = np;  
}
```

This is  
unacceptable!

# Container of Pointers

## Introduction

- Instead of copying large types by value, we usually insert and remove them **by reference**.
  - The container stores **pointers-to-BigThing** instead.

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    BigThing *value;  
};
```

- So, if we have a BigThing list, its `insert` and `remove` methods have the following type signatures.

```
void insert(BigThing *v);  
BigThing *remove();
```

# Container of Pointers

## Introduction

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    BigThing *value;  
};  
  
void ListBigThing::insert(BigThing *v) {  
    node *np = new node;  
    np->next = first;  
    np->value = v;  
    first = np;  
}
```

# Templated Container of Pointers

Practice: when we define templated container of pointers, we do NOT

- define a template on **object**
- and define

~~List<BigThing \*~~ ls;

```
template <class T>
class List {
public:
    ...
    void insert(T v);
    T      remove();
private:
    struct node {
        node *next;
        T      o;
    };
    ...
};
```

# Templated Container of Pointers

Instead, we

- define a template on **pointer**
- and define

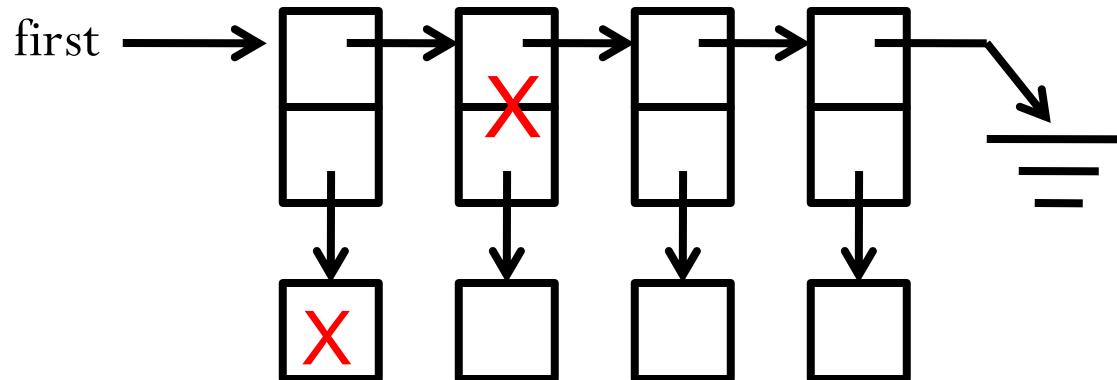
```
List<BigThing> ls;
```

```
template <class T>
class List {
public:
    ...
    void insert(T *v);
    T      *remove();
private:
    struct node {
        node *next;
        T      *o;
    };
    ...
};
```

# Container of Pointers

## Templates

- Containers-of-pointers are subject to two broad classes of potential bugs:
  1. Using an object after it has been deleted
  2. Leaving an object **orphaned** by **never** deleting it



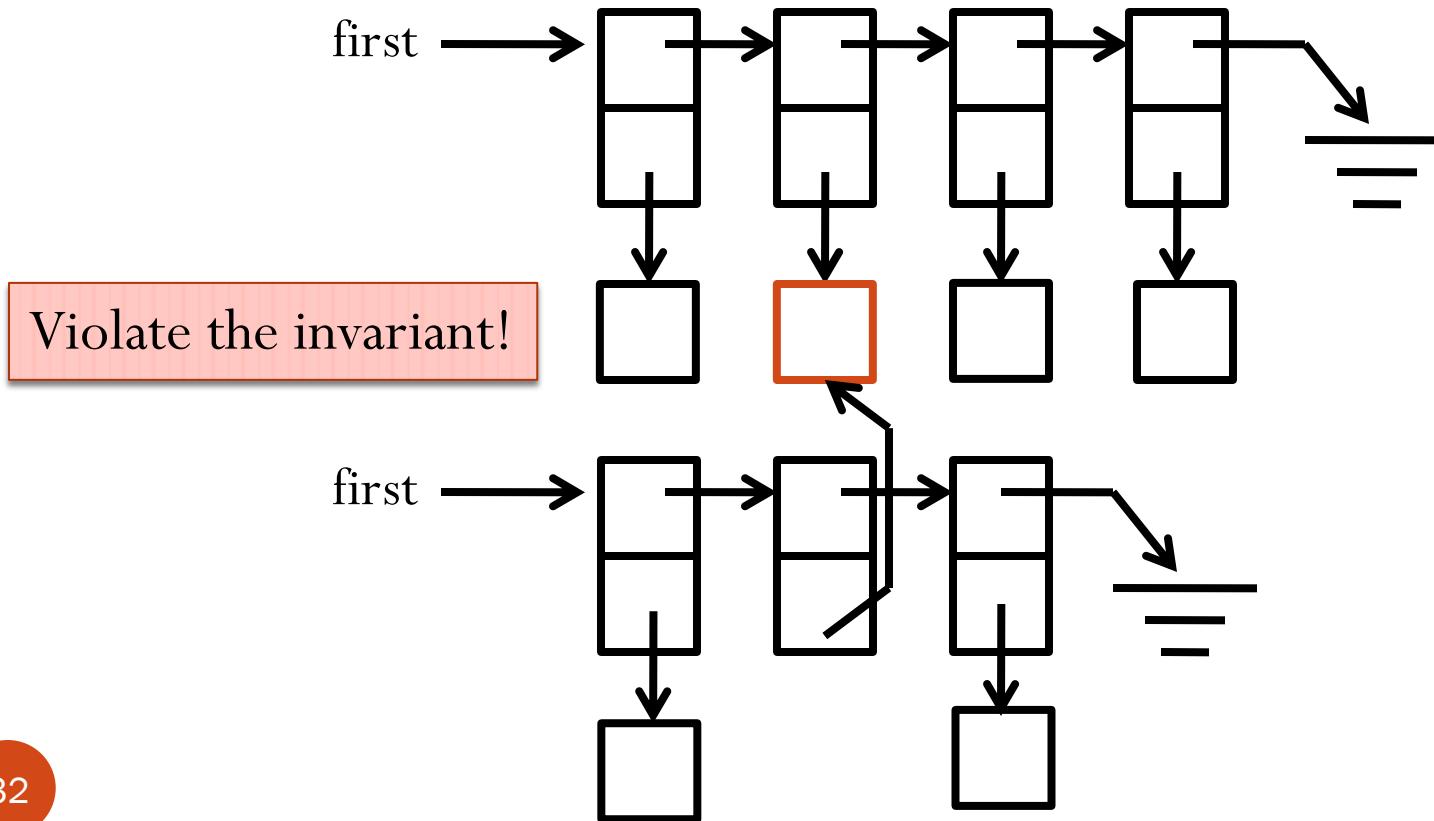
# Container of Pointers

## Use

- To avoid the bugs related to container of pointers, one usual "pattern" of using container of pointers has an **invariant**, plus three **rules** of use:
  - **At-most-once invariant**: any object can be linked to at most one container at any time through pointer.
  - 1. **Existence**: An object must be **dynamically allocated** before a pointer to it is inserted.
  - 2. **Ownership**: Once a pointer to an object is inserted, that object becomes the property of the container. No one else may use or modify it in any way.
  - 3. **Conservation**: When a pointer is removed from a container, either the pointer must be inserted into **some** container, or its referent must be **deleted**.

# At-most-once Invariant

- Any object can be linked to at most one container at any time through pointer.



# Existence Rule

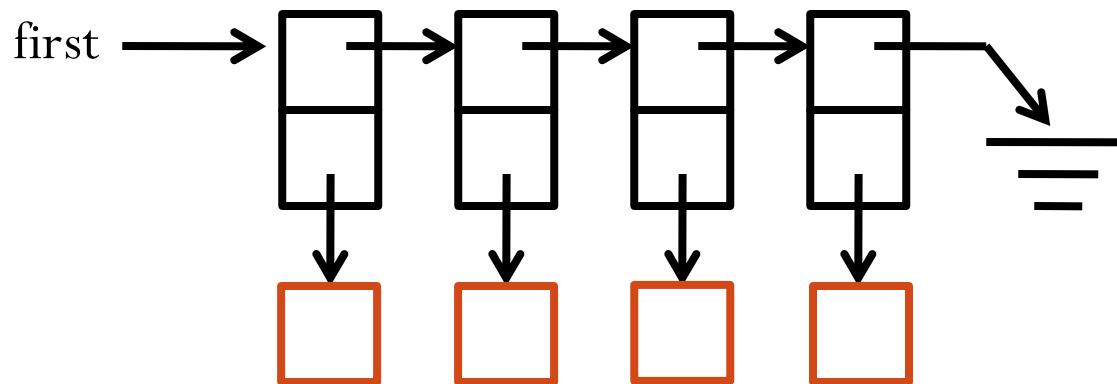
- An object must be **dynamically allocated** before a pointer to it is inserted

```
List<BigThing> l;  
// l: container of pointer  
BigThing b;  
l.insert(&b); X
```

```
List<BigThing> l;  
// l: container of pointer  
BigThing *pb = new BigThing;  
l.insert(pb); ✓
```

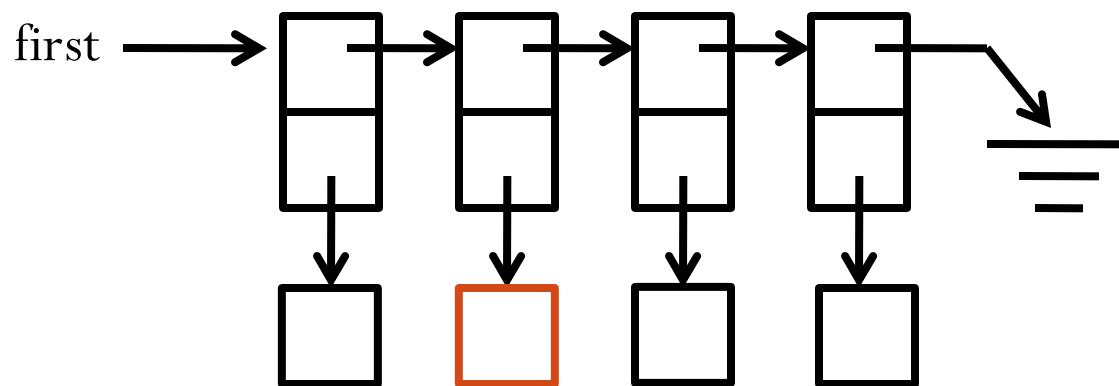
# Ownership Rule

- Once a pointer to an object is inserted, that object becomes the property of the container. No one else may use or modify it in any way.



# Conservation Rule

- When a pointer is removed from a container, either the pointer must be inserted into **some** container, or its referent must be **deleted**.



- Either be inserted into another container
- Or delete the object

# Container of Pointers

## Templates

- These three rules have an important implication for any method that **destroys** an existing container.
  - When a container is destroyed, the objects contained in the container should also be deleted!
- There are (at least) two such methods that could destroy a container:
  1. **The destructor:** Destroys an existing instance.
  2. **The assignment operator:** Destroys an existing instance before copying the contents of another instance.



# Which rule is violated?

Consider the following implementation of the destructor for a singly-linked list, using the interface we've discussed so far:

```
template <class T>
List<T>::~List() {
    while (!isEmpty()) {
        remove(); ✓
    }
}
```

```
int *
```

```
struct node {
    node *next;
    T* value;
};
```

```
template <class T>
T* List<T>::remove() {
    node *victim = first;
    if(isEmpty()) {
        listIsEmpty e;
        throw e;
    }
    T* result = victim->value;
    first = victim->next;
    delete victim;
    return result;
}
```

Select **the** correct answer.

- **A.** At-most-once invariant.
- **B.** Existence.
- **C.** Ownership.
- **D.** Conservation.

# Containers

## Destructor

- To fix this, we **must** handle the objects we remove:

```
template <class T>
List<T>::~List() {
    while (!isEmpty()) {
        T *op = remove();
        delete op;
    }
}
```

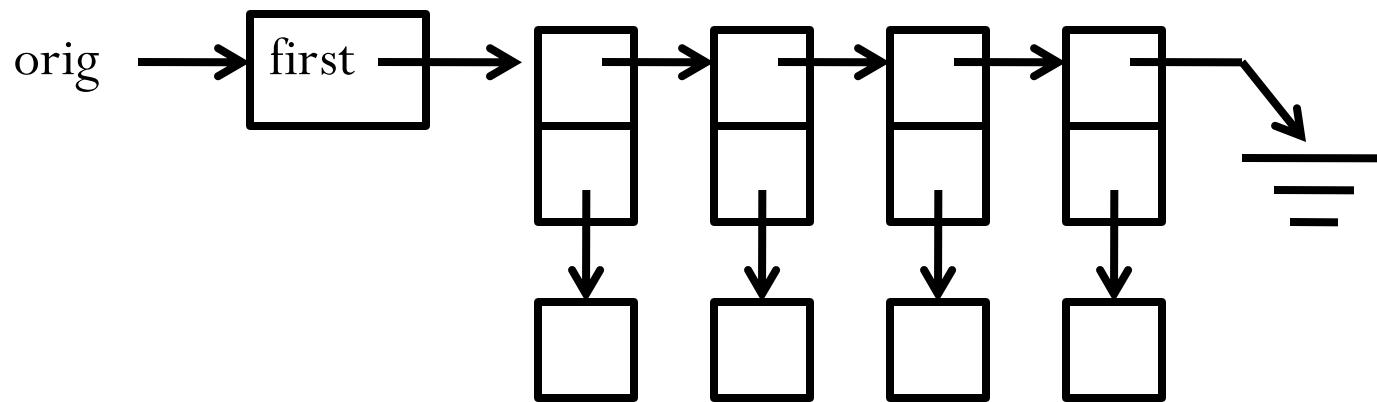


This keeps conservation rule.

# Container of Pointers

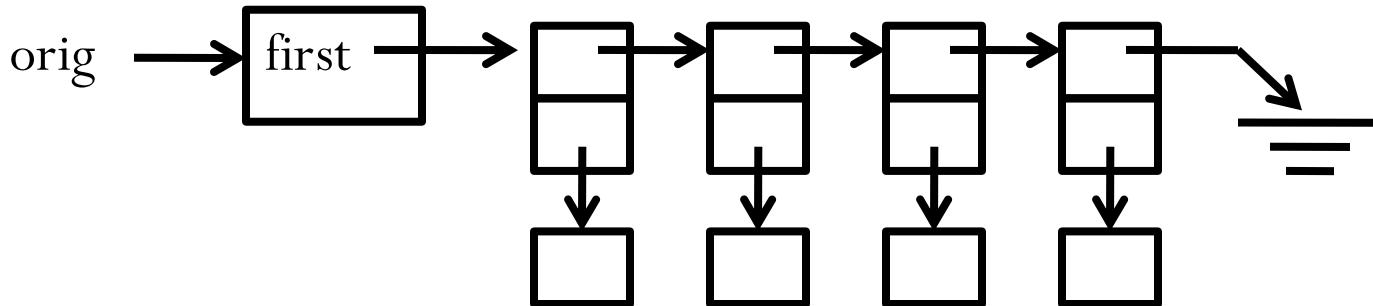
## Copy

- Copy is also tricky for container of pointers.
- Here is the original singly-linked list of  $T^*$ 's :





# Does it violate any invariant or rules?



- Here is the old copy constructor and utility function:

```
template <class T>
List<T>::List(const List &l) {
    first = NULL;
    copyList(l.first);
}
```

```
template <class T>
void List<T>::copyList(node *list) {
    if(!list) return;
    copyList(list->next);
    insert(list->value);
}
```

T \* type

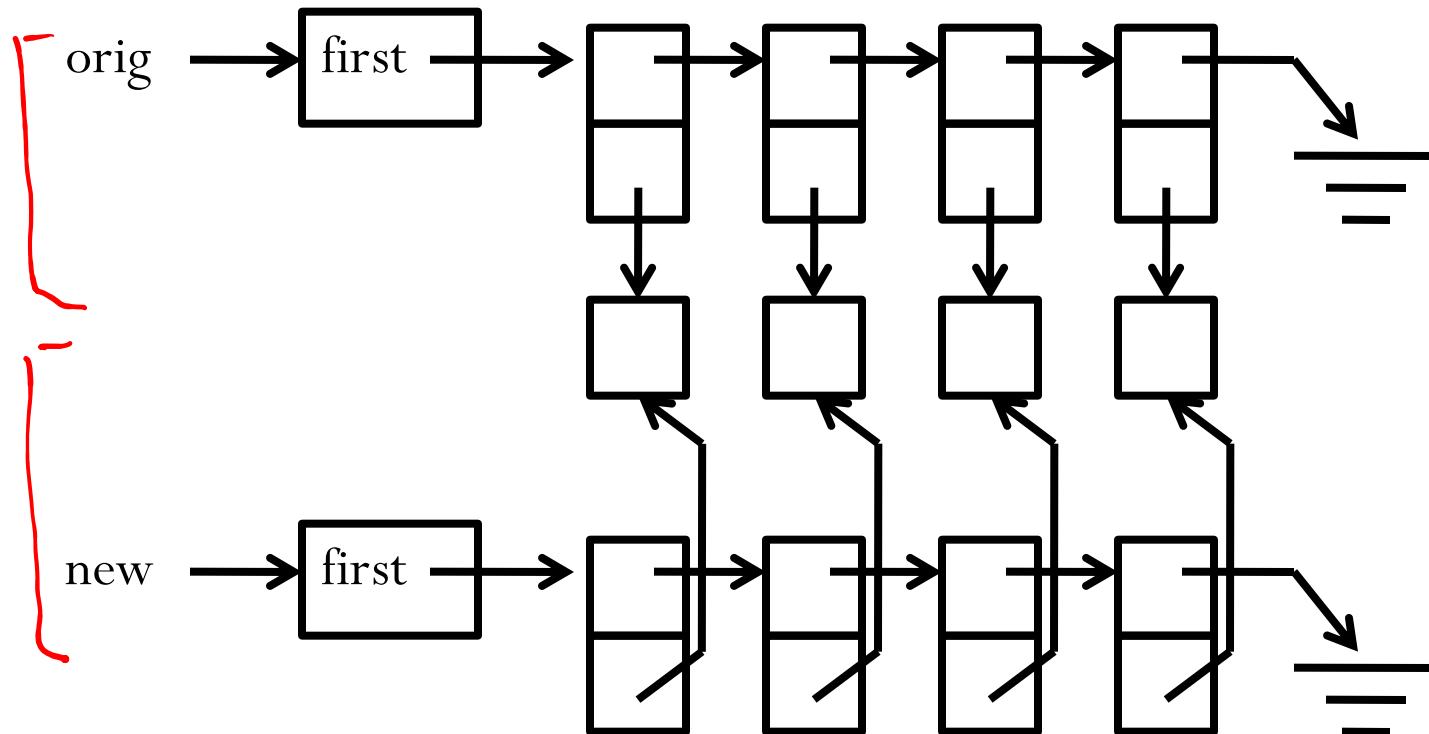
Select **the** correct answer.

- A.** At-most-once invariant.
- B.** Existence.
- C.** Ownership.
- D.** Conservation.

# Container of Pointers

## Copy

- The list we would end up with is:

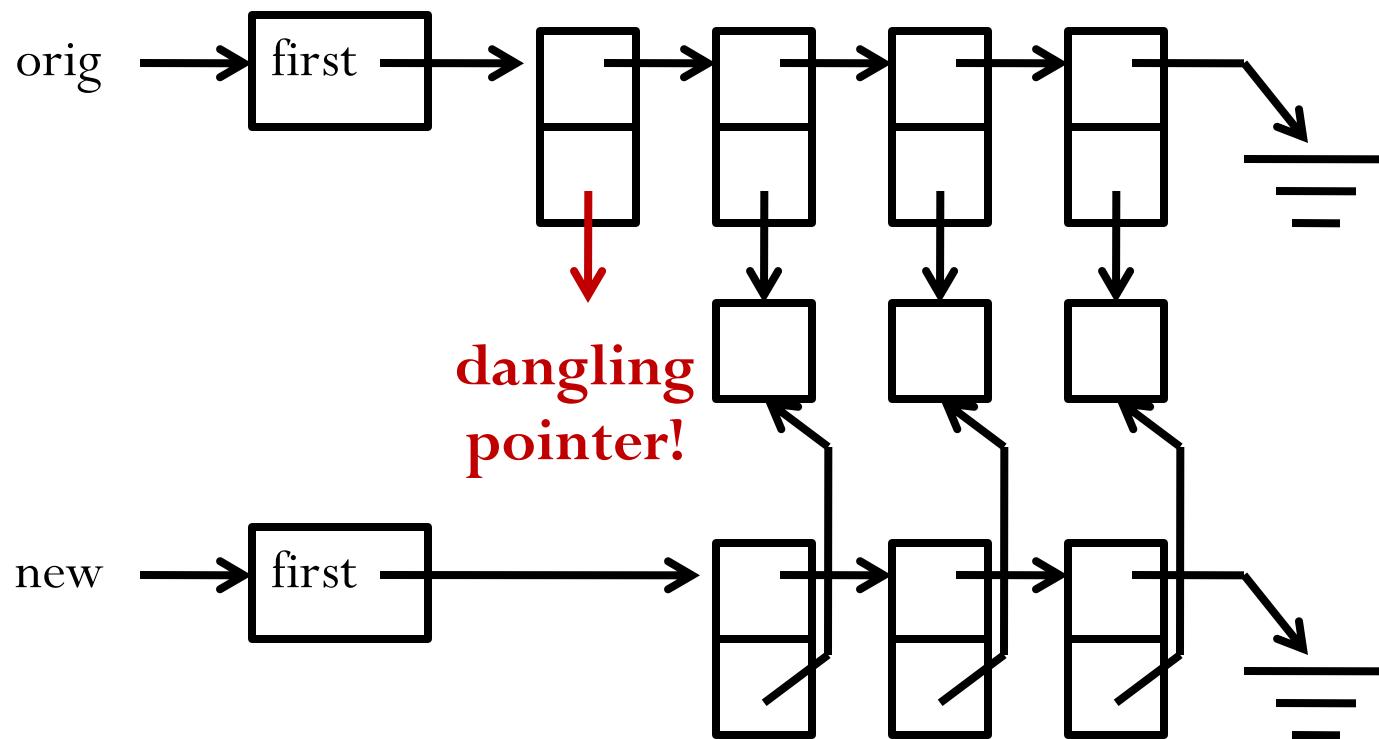


This violates the at-most-once invariant

# Container of Pointers

## Copy

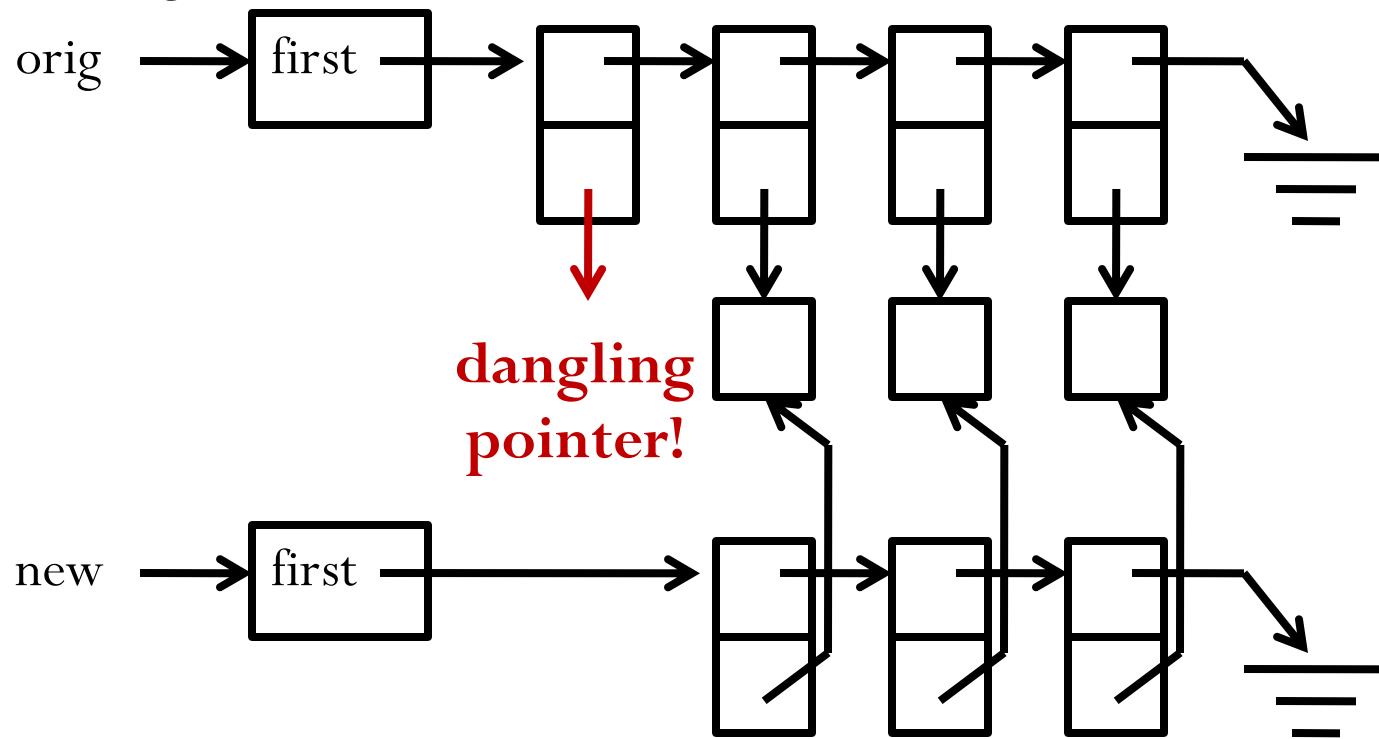
- Now, if we remove the first item of the new list, we delete the first node, and return a pointer to the item.
  - The client will use the item and delete it (Why?).
  - Leaving us with this:



# Container of Pointers

## Copy

- Clearly, this is not a good thing because we aren't doing a "full" **deep copy**.
- The list nodes are duplicated, but the Ts are not since we are copying the pointers, but **not** the objects they point to.



# Container of Pointers

## Copy

- Fix:

```
template <class T>
void List<T>::copyList(node *list) {
    if (!list) return;
    copyList(list->next);
    T *o = new T(*list->value); value of type T
    insert(o);
}
```

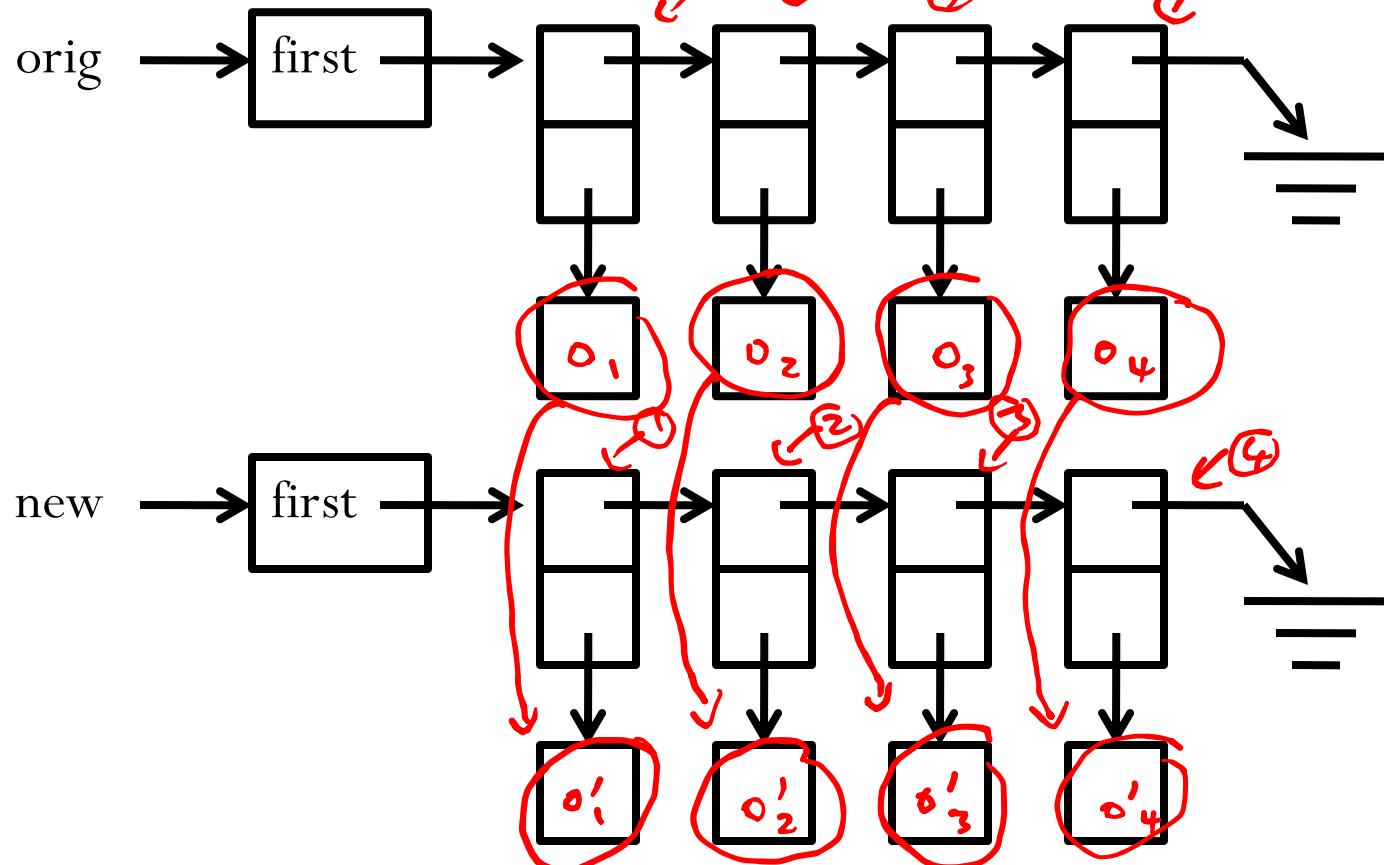
*-> binds tighter than \**

What does the blue statement mean?

# Container of Pointers

Copy

- The list we would end up with is:  

# Templated Container of Pointers

- Given container of pointers, the `List` template **must know** whether it is something that holds `T`'s or “pointers to `T`”.
- The former **cannot** delete the values it holds, while the latter **must** do so.
- So, if we want to write a template class that holds pointer-to-`T`, we should provide a version based on pointer.

# Containers

## Templates

```
template <class T>
class PtrList {
public:
    ...
    void insert(T *v);
    T *remove();
private:
    struct node {
        node *next;
        node *prev;
        T *o;
    };
    ...
} ;
```

```
template <class T>
class ValList {
public:
    ...
    void insert(T v);
    T remove();
private:
    struct node {
        node *next;
        node *prev;
        T o;
    };
    ...
} ;
```

# Containers

## Templates

- This means that if we create two lists of BigThings:

```
ValList<BigThing> vbl;  
PtrList<BigThing> pbl;
```

- Then the first list takes BigThings by value:

```
BigThing b; _  
vbl.insert(b) ;
```

- But the second list takes them as pointers:

```
BigThing *bp = new BigThing;  
pbl.insert(bp) ;
```

This technique is preferable if you expect most (or even some) of your Lists to hold BigThings.

# Containers

## Templates

- This means that if we create two lists of BigThings:

```
ValList<BigThing> vbl;  
PtrList<BigThing> pbl;
```

- Then the first list takes BigThings by value:

```
BigThing b;  
vbl.insert(b);
```

- But the second list takes them as pointers:

```
BigThing *bp = new BigThing;  
pbl.insert(bp);
```

However, it is **impossible** to have only a **single** implementation of List that can correctly contain things either as pointer or by value.

# Outline

- Templates
- Container of Pointers
- Polymorphic Container

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- Templates are checked at compile time, but when used straightforwardly, they cannot hold more than one kind of object at once, and sometimes this is desirable.
- There is another kind of container, called a "**polymorphic**" ) container, that **can** hold more than one type at once.
- The intuition behind polymorphic containers is that, because the container must contain **some** specific type, we'll manufacture a **special "contained" type**, and every real type will be a **subtype** of this contained type.

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- We are going to use derived class mechanism

```
class bar: public foo {  
    ...  
};
```

- Recall: a `bar*` can always be used where a `foo*` is expected, but not the other way around.

```
bar b;  
foo *pf = &b;
```

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- We can take advantage of this by creating a "dummy class", called `Object`, that looks like this:

```
class Object {  
public:  
    virtual ~Object() { }  
};
```

- This defines a single class `Object` with a virtual destructor.
- Remember that if a method is virtual, it is also virtual in all derived classes.
- Why we need this? Because when a base-class pointer to a derived-class object is deleted (for example, in function `removeAll()`), it will call the destructor of the derived class.

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- Now, we can write a List that holds Objects:

```
struct node {  
    node *next;  
    Object *value;  
};
```

```
class Object {  
public:  
    virtual ~Object() {};  
};
```

```
class List {  
    ...  
public:  
    void insert(Object *o);  
    Object *remove();  
    ...  
};
```

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- To put BigThings in a List, you define the class so that it is derived from Object:

```
class BigThing : public Object {  
    ...  
};
```

- By the derived class rules, a BigThing\* can always be used as an Object\*, but not the other way around.
- So the following works without complaint:

```
BigThing *bp = new BigThing;  
l.insert(bp); // Legal due to  
               // substitution rule
```

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- However, the compiler complains about the following because `remove()` returns an Object \*; we cannot use a base class pointer when a derived class pointer is expected:

```
BigThing *bp;  
bp = l.remove();
```

- However, we can do this:

```
Object *op;  
BigThing *bp;
```

```
op = l.remove();  
bp = dynamic_cast<BigThing *>(op);  
...
```

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- The `dynamic_cast` operator does the following:

```
dynamic_cast<Type*>(pointer);  
// EFFECT: if pointer's actual type is either  
// pointer to Type or some pointer to derived  
// class of Type, returns a pointer to Type.  
// Otherwise, returns NULL;
```

- So, after this cast, we `assert()` that the pointer is valid:

```
Object *op;  
BigThing *bp;  
op = remove();  
bp = dynamic_cast<BigThing *>(op);  
assert(bp);
```

**Note:** This only works for classes which have one or more virtual methods. That's okay, because `BigThing` will always have at least a virtual destructor.

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- Even with this, there is still one problem.
- This is a **container of pointers**, so we need **deep copy** for copy constructor and assignment operator
- The copyList() below just does shallow copy

```
List::List(const List &l) {  
    first = NULL;  
    copyList(l.first);  
}
```

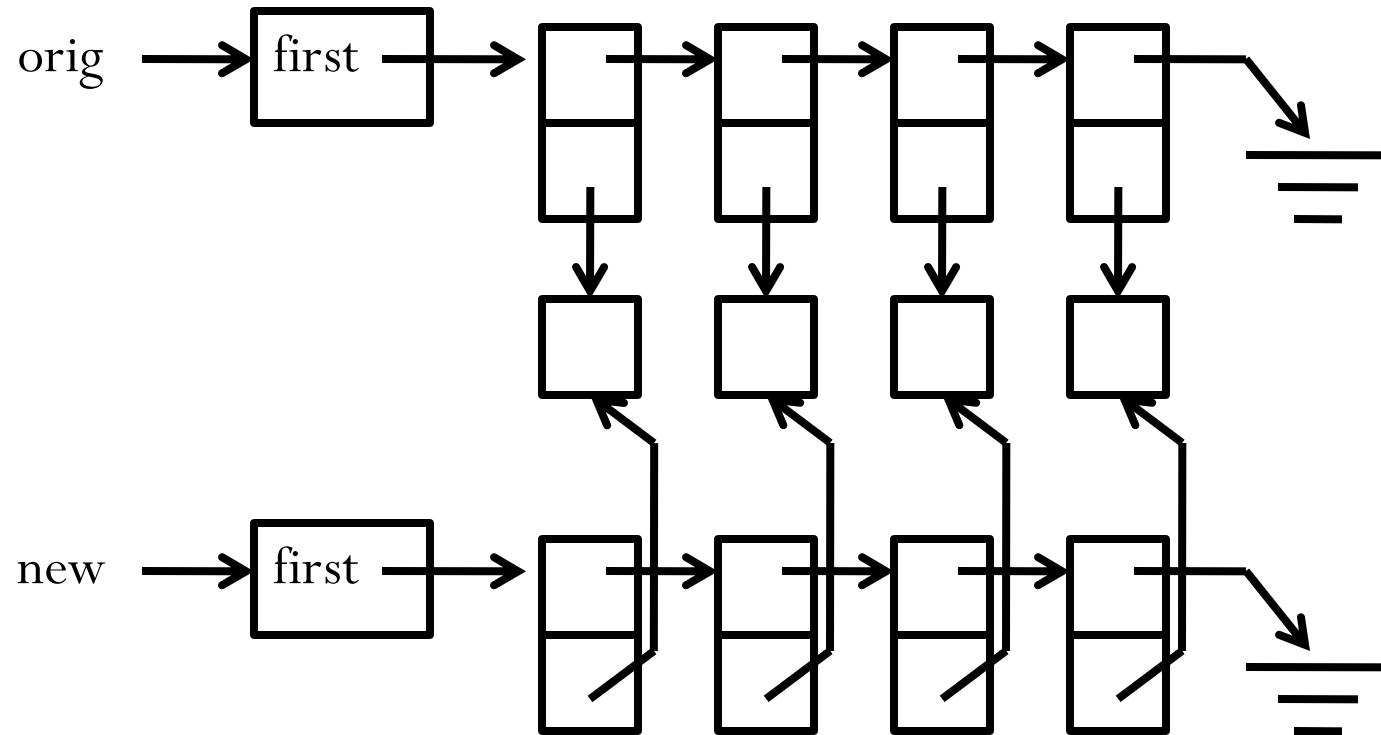
```
void List::copyList(node *list) {  
    if (list != NULL) {  
        copyList(list->next);  
        insert(list->value);  
    }  
}
```

Object \* type

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

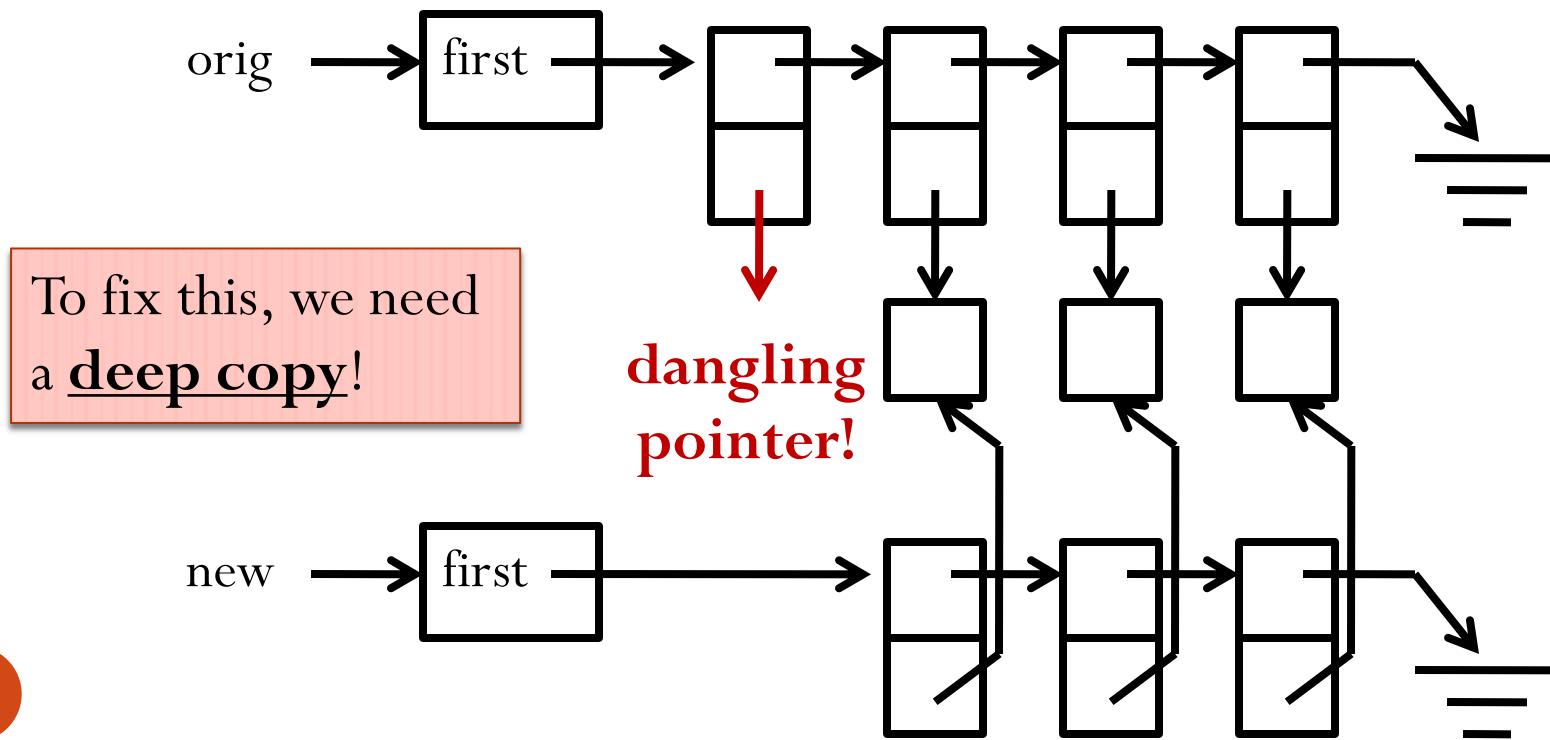
- Using the previous copyList(), the list we copied will be:



# Containers

# Polymorphic containers

- Now, if we remove the first item of the new list, we delete the first node, and return a pointer to its `Object`.
  - The client, after using that `Object`, will delete it.
  - Leaving us with this:



# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- To fix this, we might be tempted to rewrite the copyList function to create a copy of the Object, as follows:

```
void List::copyList(node *list) {  
    if (list != NULL) {  
        Object *o;  
        copyList(list->next);  
        o = new Object(*list->value); ]  
        insert(o);  
    }  
}
```

A BigThing object

- Unfortunately, this won't work, because Object does not have a constructor that takes BigThing as an argument.

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- The way to fix this is to use something called the “**named constructor idiom**”.
  - **named constructor**: A method that (by convention) copies the object, returning a pointer to the "generic" base class.
- The name of this method (again, by convention) is usually “clone”.

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- Modify the definition of Object to include a pure virtual **clone()** method:

```
class Object {  
public:  
    virtual Object *clone() = 0;  
    // EFFECT: copy this, return a pointer to it  
    virtual ~Object() {}  
};
```

- Declare that method **clone()** in BigThing, which also has a **copy constructor**:

```
class BigThing : public Object {  
    ...  
public:  
    Object *clone();  
    ...  
    BigThing(const BigThing &b);  
}
```

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- `BigThing::clone()` can then call the correct copy constructor directly, and return a "generic" pointer to it:

```
Object *BigThing::clone() {  
    BigThing *bp = new BigThing(*this);  
    return bp; // Legal due to substitution  
              // rule  
}
```

# Containers

## Polymorphic containers

- With this, we can finally rewrite copyList to use clone:

```
void List::copyList(node *list) {  
    if (list != NULL) {  
        Object *o;  
        copyList(list->next);  
        o = list->value->clone();  
        insert(o);  
    }  
}
```

*Object*

- This gives us a true **deep copy** ☺



# Select all the correct statements about polymorphic containers.

- ~~A.~~ In the implementation just described, a polymorphic container can hold any type.
- ~~B.~~ A polymorphic container could be specialized to only hold subclasses of a class A.
- ~~C.~~ A templated container could also hold different objects.
- ~~D.~~ A container of pointers could also hold different objects.  
*if we add virtual methods (destructor, clone)*

# Reference

- **Problem Solving with C++ (8<sup>th</sup> Edition)**, by *Walter Savitch*, Addison Wesley Publishing (2011)
  - Chapter 17 **Templates**
  - Chapter 18.2 **Containers**
- Course notes, pages 108-129