

COMP2150 Assignment 1 Level Design

Name: Ambra Vladone

Student number: 46503595

Level 1

Level one was initially designed to give the player a sense of achievement without overburdening them with lots of encounters. Therefore, the player's experience should be inquisitive, and the player should be able to naturally flow through the level without evident physical instructions. The player will learn most of the basic mechanics in Level 1. This has been designed to keep the learning curve interesting, applying pressure and combining mechanics into the later levels as the player manages to progress through. The player should learn that this game requires patience and perseverance. Players that have low emotional intelligence and are unable to control their emotions will find the overall game frustrating. The intensity curve of Level 1 is created, using a small number of obstacles which allow for the dramatic arc to culminate followed by moments of respite where the player is in a safe section at the end of a tunnel. The intensity curve of the Level and overall game has been designed to create these moments of anxiety, followed by moments of relief upon conquer. The main challenges of Level 1 rely on the emotional ability of the player to steadily progress through the game. Checkpoints have been placed to ensure that players do not get severely punished if mistakes are made, which tries to prevent the player from abandoning the levels due to emotional frustration. Further basic challenges of gameplay include the ability to make simple jumps, jumps on moving platforms, passthrough platforms mechanics, introduction of weapons and the ability to jump whilst aiming at an enemy later in the Level. The overall aesthetic of the level is designed to contain enclosed spaces, to provide a safe environment for the players, however it is designed to also more open space, providing the players the ability to easily discover and prepare for challenges they will have to face.

The gameplay elements include nonlinear gameplay, different passages the player can take leading to hearts. This also includes the freedom the player is given to explore the map, as there is more than one way to complete this level.

The intent of each part of the level is to build the player's skills, test and then expand on that. For example, in the beginning scene where the player begins the Level, they are found on a platform where they must proceed straight ahead. This is then followed by a small pit in the ground where the player can interact with in any way desired. They can choose not to jump which will lead to the player falling into it, and then jumping will be the only way the player can proceed ahead, teaching them the mechanic in an indirect way. The player can also choose to jump, jumping too early and land in the pit. Finally, the player can correctly jump and proceed ahead to be greeted by a bigger jump, which will further demonstrate the player the limits the jump mechanic (6 block maximum) and further build the player knowledge.

There are a couple of things the player might have difficulty with, for example, the spikes placed just before the first key. This has been added to create a sense of challenge and I do expect some players to fail that challenge which will then indirectly teach them the health and spike mechanics of the game. A chest has been placed after the player retrieves the key for that purpose, and this has been placed to also encourage further player exploration within the levels, beyond the keys. Failing these challenges will not be much of an issue as the Level has been divided into 3 sections, by two checkpoints placed after each major encounter has been successfully completed. The player might lose a life when they first experience the acid mechanic, the first or the second time. However, this experience will not be frustrating due to

the choices made in layout and placement of checkpoints. The difficulty curve of the game evolves through indirectly teaching players how to use the verbs of the game, testing the player, and then further building on player knowledge. This cycle is repeated and aims to prepare the player for following levels where safe spaces of the game and breaks between encounters will not be spread out as pleasantly or generously.

Level 2

The overall experience of this level aims to provide the player with a little bit more freedom in terms of exploration and to build on previous knowledge of verbs use within the first level. The player experience will be different based on the path the player chooses to take. This level increases the challenge and difficulty by incorporating design choices such as: decreasing the number of places the player can jump onto, increasing the difficulty and the volume of enemies, increasing jump obstacles (jumping onto platforms with spikes, taking in account the roof height when jumping etc). The level was broken into three parts, for example, there is the left-hand side challenge, followed by a two-story option, where the player can choose to further explore the path situated above the path they have just cleared or return the same way. The right-hand side challenge similarly works in that way, however, further connects to the third section of the level which leads to the sky section and the main door used to proceed onto the next level. This design has been created to build on increasing player freedom. Whilst the player will still interact with the main verb of this game, the jump ability, the players choices, and ranges in how they interact with this verb are what creates new experiences. This can be seen by the layout on the bottom left-hand section where three lava pits can be seen, followed by three jumps that must be made by the player. Starting off, the player must jump over a spike, then, jump over an enemy and an acid platform at the same time, while landing correctly. Furthermore, the player will then have to jump onto the next platform whilst the roof has shortened, and the platform is also increased in height. Lastly, the player must jump down onto a platform, ensuring they correct control of their jump is high enough to make it to the next platform, but low enough to avoid the spike on the roof. This can further extend the encounter without making the encounter feel easy or boring. The aesthetic design choices included changing the sky from a nice morning blue sky to a darker sunset, depicting the increasing difficulty of the level, whilst creating background 'window' sections throughout the game to drive away from the player feeling claustrophobic or enclosed.

Level 3

The player's main experience of this level should include challenge, triumph, and a feeling of unease due to the level design. The gameplay elements are as of previous levels. This level can be completed in any number of ways; however, the level includes mores difficult aspects of the mechanics by the combination of two and even three mechanics throughout the level. The levels are once again broken into three main areas and interconnected by a set of tunnels which act as safe spaces. Building on the previous design element of Level 1 and 2 and using the sky to build onto the player experience, this sunset has officially set, and items can be seen as dark in the background. This is meant to build on the player experience of darkness and difficulty of this level, implementing encounters such as short falls after respite areas, creating a sense of anxiety for the player as they are unsure where they are falling. The fall is

then interconnected to another section of the safe space, allowing the player to loot, heal or rest if needed. Further design choices such as one block spaces have been added to the map, where they player can choose to land on, to loot a chest. This is a gamble for the player and the players can choose to alternatively ignore this area if they feel as though they do not want to risk falling into the acid, however the heart chest is there to act as an incentive for a player to further test their skills then required. This level contains a lot more restricting tunnels, often pushing a player into different encounters, such as close battles with monsters, where in previous levels they might have been able to shoot safely from a distance. In open areas this has been implemented by simply placing a block, or a spike in front of the enemy to prompt the player to think of different resolutions other than long range. To ensure the player keeps their focus on the task at hand and does not give up, there are certain moments encounters with the door where the reveal and deny approach is being used to advise the player that the task is achievable and that they are not far off from finishing the level. One design example for that, was placing a gun pick up in a section just above the gate, and so the player would have to drop down to pick the gun up, seeing the gate (goal) is within reach.

Reflection

The design goals achieved by each of the levels, personally for me were achieved. I understand however that I do require some further training and developing in that area and that they might not be perfect. I do believe level 1 worked well in demonstrating the player and teaching them the core verbs of the game and I do think player learning took place at a good pace throughout the level. I aimed to ensure the levels flowed cohesively together however there are different aspects where the game might be a bit repetitive if they player feels they have mastered the skill early or vice versa. I believe in the design what initially did not work was creating everything look pretty and symmetrical. If you inspect my first Level 3 Plan, this can be clearly seen and instead of looking at each room of the game to be the same number of squares as the other room I should have focused more on ensuring that space made sense to add, without adding it just because it made things even. I did try to fix that and make the game look less perfect by removing random squares from the background, this can be seen in Level 2 and trying to show where the different “biomes” or different sections of the game transitioned. This can be seen in Level 2 and 3 where I combine the two different backgrounds, to create a transition between the grass and the stone section of the level. Final notes, to further improve on this game, I do require some further insight into gaming development and further play testing. I tried using my partner as a play tester and I would get him to describe to me the overall experience of a level, however this can only be done for a short amount of time before the play tester becomes aware and even bored of the game mechanics.