LEVEL DESIGN & THE PLAYER EXPERIENCE - SEMESTER 1, 2022 ASSIGNMENT 1A: DESIGNER'S STATEMENT

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Level Theme: Abandoned Treehouse

Level Theme

The theme for my level was Abandoned Treehouse. The Treehouse aspect was the main aesthetic for the level, utilising tree-like textures and backgrounds; like wooden platforms and a snake tile which looked similar to pixelated tree leaves.

The abandoned half of the theme was done less obviously. I decided to not include any definitive humanoid enemies, including only dangers that would be considered "The defence mechanisms that still run, long after the treehouse was inhabited." Enemy types include the totem pole enemy, cockroaches, robots and spikes.
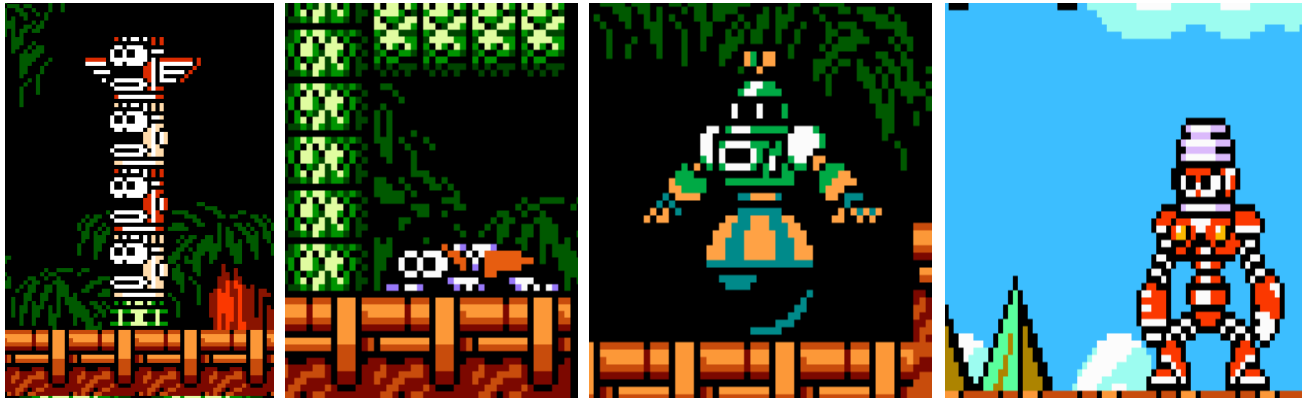

Figure 1. Enemy Types and Blocks used throughout the level

Level Pacing

The level starts off fairly simple, introducing the main mechanics of the level, mainly verticality by way of drop platforms. These drop platforms are first introduced in a way that wont outright punish/kill the player for failing. Then the difficulty slowly increases by adding spikes below that kill the player if they don't jump off the platform in time. After ascending the tree, the stakes are raised even further with tighter platforming of this mechanic, and a fatal fall should the players skills not be up to par.

Then, once ascending to the treehouse, the player is given a new mechanic, a tornado weapon that acts as a second chance for failed platforming. This also allows me to tighten the platforming even further. Introducing the mechanic, I put treasures just out of reach to allow players to use the new weapon safely. Then, I use the weapon as a means of survival, with spikes that the player must avoid. All of these mechanics culminate in a gauntlet of sorts, that has the tightest platforming in the games, utilising the drop platforms and the tornado weapon to weave their way through spiked walls and to the last treasure of the level. Checkpoints and Weapons canisters are placed in particular moments to aid in learnability, mostly at points of deadliness.
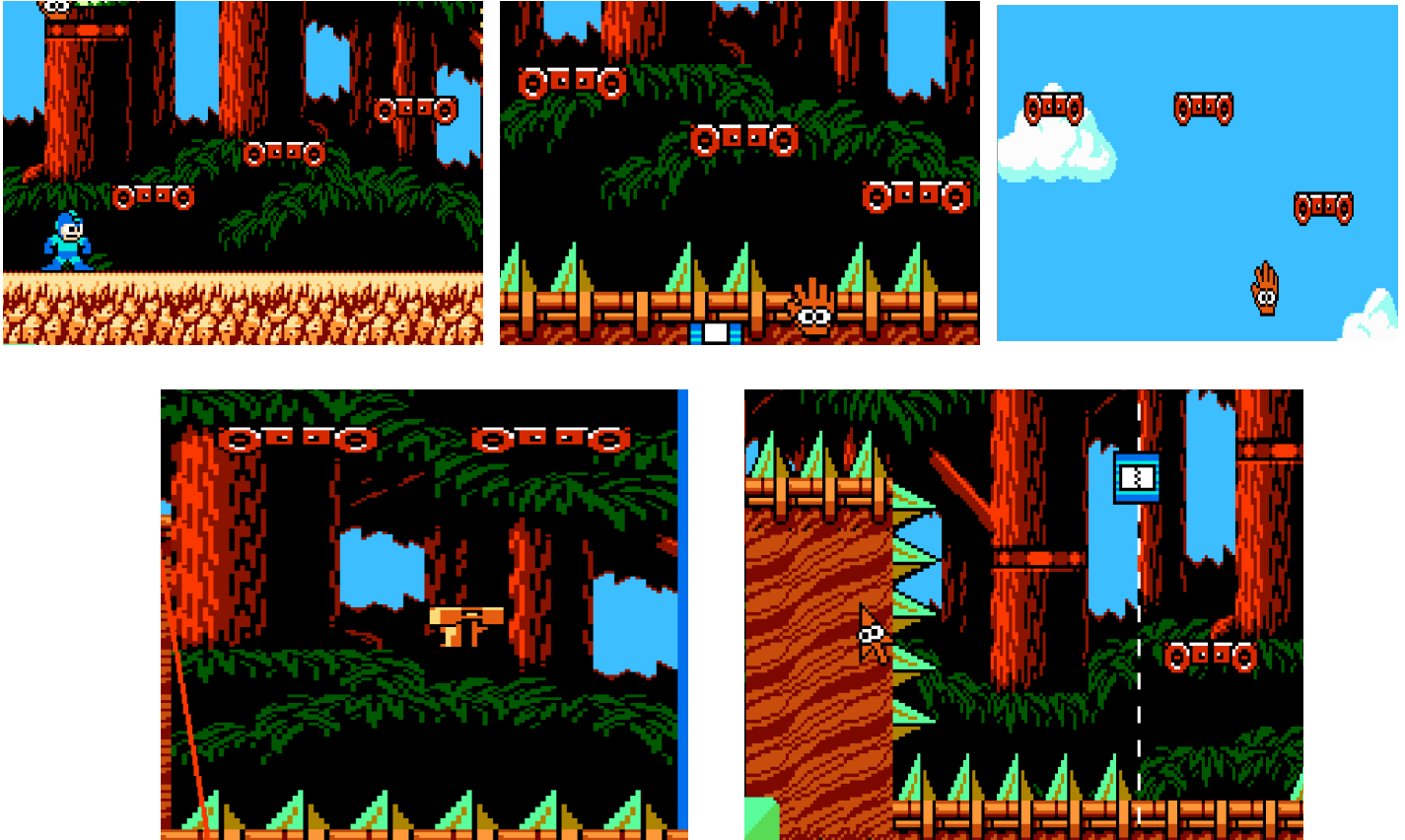
Figure 2. The Increasing Difficulty of the drop platforms utilised in the level.

Level Moments

There are a few memorable moments that players get to enjoy throughout the level. These include:

- A bridge walks against a backdrop of the clouds.
- A free fall platforming section against the clouds.
- A Treehouse with lush foliage, flowing waterfalls, many dangers, and branching paths.
- A descent into the treehouse's lower levels, with secret waterfall paths, and a boss fight with a roving robot that drops the key to the treehouse's top floor.
- A highly difficult gauntlet of spikes and drop platforms that puts all the players tools and skills to the test.
- A climb into a waterfall respite with a reward for players who managed to gain all 9 orange keys.
- A final boss fight with a springing robot with falling platforms and deadly spikes.
- A free fall down a waterfall that leads back to the ground floor, and the end of the level.