

Rick Smith

CS 1010 – Intro to Interactive Entertainment

Cody Squadroni

12/03/2024

## **Module 10 – Final – Game Design Document**

### **Executive Summary:**

*Shadow Realms* is a 2.5D action-platformer with deep RPG elements, set in a sprawling, gothic world filled with danger and mystery. At its core, the game offers players tight, responsive combat mechanics and metroidvania-style exploration. Players will control a customizable protagonist and their shadow, unlocking new abilities and discovering hidden paths as they progress. With a mix of melee, ranged, and magic-based combat, *Shadow Realms* allows players to tailor their playstyle to suit their preferences, ensuring every encounter feels both challenging and rewarding.

The narrative unfolds in a dark, interconnected world. The player's actions (such as sparing or killing certain bosses and completing NPC storylines) directly shape the story's outcome, leading to one of several unique endings. The game balances exploration and combat with environmental puzzles and subtle storytelling through NPC interactions, item descriptions, and cinematics. With its hand-drawn art style, haunting atmosphere, and dynamic progression, *Shadow Realms* offers a highly immersive experience that blends discovery, danger, and player-driven decision-making.

### Character Design:

The player will create their own unique protagonist, choosing from distinct classes, such as Knight, Mage, or Archer, each offering a unique playstyle. This customization allows players to personalize both the appearance and the abilities of their character to suit their preferences. These classes are designed to provide distinct strengths and weaknesses, encouraging varied strategies and replayability.

**Knight:** With high strength, this character type excels in melee combat, wielding most weapons and armor. They are ideal for players seeking a powerful, close-quarters playstyle.



**Archer:** Agile and precise, Archers rely on dexterity to deliver rapid, accurate bow attacks. Their fast-paced playstyle is perfect for players who enjoy mobility and precision.



**Mage:** Focused on intelligence, Mages cast devastating spells, offering immense magical power at the cost of physical vulnerability. This class rewards players who favor strategic, ranged combat.



**World Design:**

The world of *Shadow Realms* is a 2.5D, interconnected space divided into distinct zones, each with its own atmosphere and challenges. Players will navigate through environments such as eerie ruins, dense forests, and decaying castles. Each zone is further segmented into smaller areas that players transition between by reaching the edge of the screen. While the game world feels expansive, it is carefully bounded by impassable walls indoors and natural barriers like thick woods, cliffs, and mountains outdoors. Parallaxing effects add a sense of depth to the environment, making the 2D space feel immersive and dynamic. Movement mechanics remain consistent across all zones, ensuring seamless exploration throughout the game.

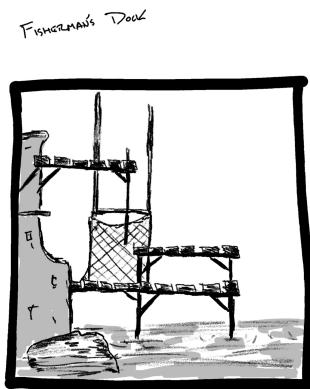
Set in an alternate reality inspired by the European Middle Ages, *Shadow Realms* replaces advanced technology with magic. This grim world lacks organized society, leaving individual merchants and small groups struggling to survive. These nomadic merchants offer players items in exchange for gold collected from defeated enemies, and their personal stories unfold alongside the main quest. The game also includes religious characters, such as clerics, who provide aid and narrative depth, particularly for players pursuing magic-based builds.

The world's atmosphere is grim and foreboding, designed to evoke tension and isolation as players explore its dangerous and decaying landscapes. Subtle narrative elements hidden in the environment, item descriptions, and NPC dialogue provoke intrigue, encouraging players to uncover the world's secrets. Success in combat and puzzle-solving fosters a sense of accomplishment, while the overall design creates a compelling balance of challenge, discovery, and immersion.

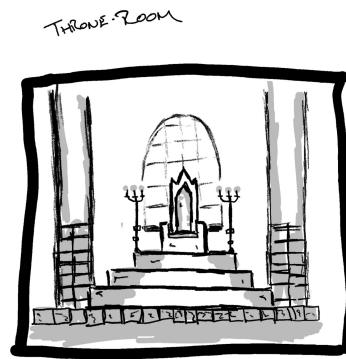
### Game world scene examples:



CASTLE BRIDGE



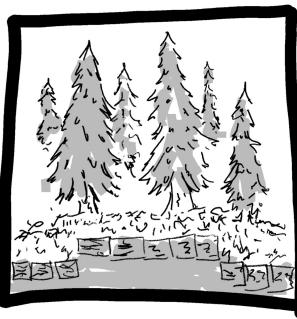
FISHERMAN'S DOCK



THRONE ROOM



TILE OF EXAMINING GAME WORLD.  
-Double Jump / Wall-Jump Required  
TO REACH HIGHER AREAS.



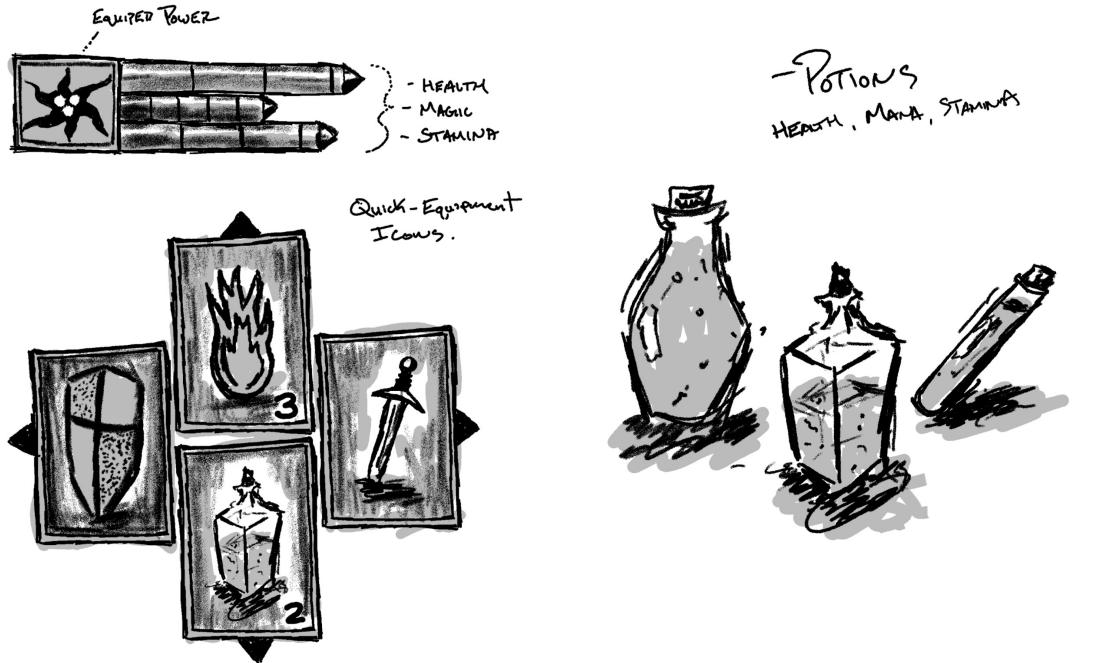
FOREST AREA

### User Interface Design:

The user interface is designed to provide essential information without breaking. The HUD includes health, magic, and stamina bars, along with a quick-select bar for equipped weapons, consumables, and magic. These elements follow genre conventions for action-platformers, ensuring clarity and accessibility. Occasionally, on-screen text highlights locations, boss encounters, and NPC dialogue, with

localized options for accessibility. Icons for equipped items are visually distinct and easily recognizable, aiding players in quickly identifying weapons, potions, or spells during combat.

#### UI Element Examples:

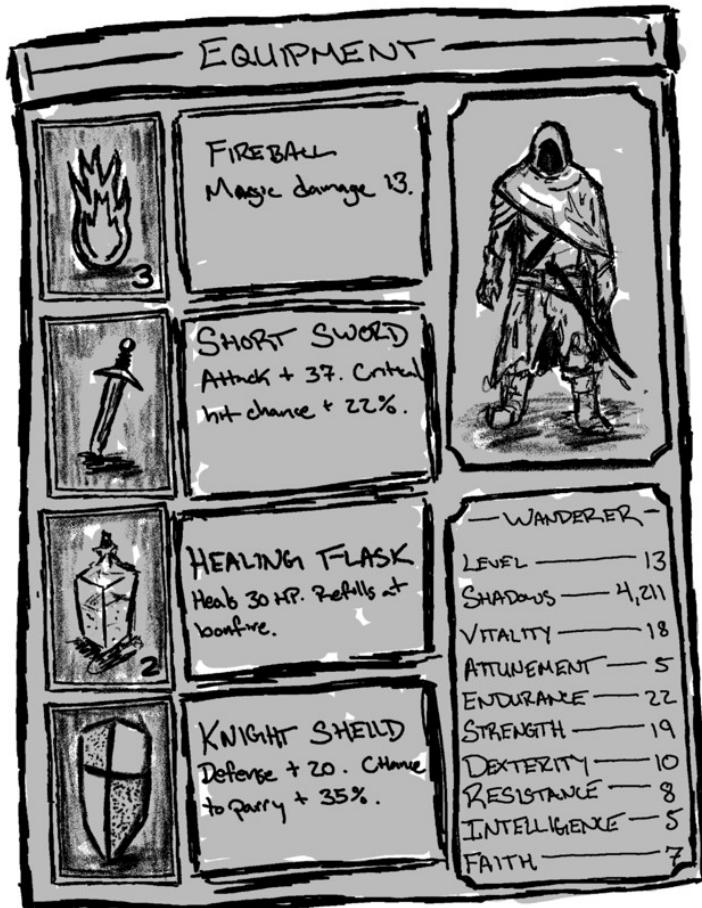


Menus in *Shadow Realms* are narrow but deep, offering intuitive navigation through submenus for character stats, lore, and inventory management. A side-scrolling camera with dynamic zoom supports exploration and combat, while limited player control allows slight camera adjustments for better visibility. Audio cues for attacks, interactions, and item usage complement atmospheric sound design.

and dynamic music that shifts during tense combat or quiet exploration. Together, these elements ensure the UI enhances the gameplay experience while blending seamlessly into the game's aesthetic.

#### Equipment Menu Example:

The Equipment Menu (below) displays the character on the right side, showcasing their equipped gear in a standing pose. On the left side, the player can see currently equipped items in detail, including left-hand, right-hand weapons, armor, and accessories. On the bottom right, key stats such as vitality, strength, dexterity, and other stats are shown. This should all be able to be navigated with the d-pad of a player's controller.



## Story and Level Progression:

The story in *Shadow Realms* unfolds as players explore the vast world, uncovering its secrets and progressing through increasingly challenging zones. Each area introduces new environmental hazards, puzzles, and enemies, culminating in unique boss battles. These bosses serve as key milestones, unlocking new abilities and access to previously inaccessible areas, driving both the narrative and gameplay forward.

## Key Levels and Bosses:

**Shadow Hawk:** A massive, shadowy bird that stalks the skies above a crumbling tower. The battle emphasizes aerial movement and ranged combat. Defeating it allows the player to perform a high jump, reaching elevated areas.



**Giant Cobra:** Deep in a forgotten temple, the cobra strikes with venomous attacks and cunning speed. Victory grants poison resistance and access to swampy, toxin-filled zones.



**Five-Armed Abomination:** Found within a haunted fortress, this grotesque creature attacks with unpredictable reach and devastating strength. Overcoming it rewards the player with enhanced stamina for extended dodging and climbing abilities.

FIVE-ARMED MONSTER



**Demon of the Abyss:** A hulking, fire-wielding demon encountered in the depths of a volcanic cavern. Defeating this boss grants the player the ability to withstand extreme heat, opening paths to magma-filled regions.

-REACT DEMON



**Corrupted Guardian:** The final boss and a pivotal moment in the story. Mounted on a shadowy steed, the Guardian combines powerful melee strikes with shadow-based magic. The outcome of this battle leads to one of the game's branching endings.



## Narrative Progression:

- The game's story is revealed gradually through NPC dialogue, item descriptions, and environmental storytelling.
- Players are encouraged to revisit earlier areas with new abilities to uncover hidden secrets, mini-bosses, and lore.
- The choices players make (such as sparing or killing certain bosses and completing NPC arcs) impact the ending they achieve, ensuring replayability and deeper engagement with the world.

## Key Story Elements:

The Shadow Realm is revealed to be a vast, interconnected prison for an ancient evil sealed centuries ago. The Corrupted Guardian, a once-noble protector, has succumbed to madness over centuries of isolation, destabilizing the balance of the world.

Currently, there are three endings planned for *Shadow Realms* which will happen after defeating the final boss and prior actions taken throughout the playthrough:

1. The player assumes the Guardian's role, maintaining balance at the cost of the protagonist's freedom.
2. The player defeats the Guardian, leaving the throne empty and the realm descending into chaos, potentially freeing the ancient evil.
3. The player frees the ancient evil, which dooms the world, but restores peace to the Shadow Realm.

**On-Screen Text and Audio Dialog Script:**

In *Shadow Realms*, NPCs are fully voiced-acted, immersing players in the game's world through authentic and varied performances. The protagonist's voice is limited to combat gunts and yells, but their role will be defined by player actions. Dialogue with NPCs will feature on-screen text, offering players multiple-choice responses to guide interactions. These choices can shape relationships and reveal key lore.

**Example NPC Dialogue:**

*Cleric:* “The gods have not abandoned us, even in this cursed realm. Do you believe the light can still guide us?:”

*Response options:*

1. “Faith is a comfort I cannot afford.”
2. “Perhaps the light will lead me to salvation.”
3. “Your gods are silent, just like mine.”

The game will also feature a voiced-over narration in an opening cinematic to introduce the Shadow Realm's history and protagonist's journey. The closing cinematic varies based on the chosen ending, which will provide a reflective summary of the player's impact on the world.

## The Game Script:

In Shadow Realms, players begin by selecting a starting class—Warrior, Mage, or Archer—each with higher base stats in strength, dexterity, or magic, respectively. This choice determines the player's initial gear, which includes base weapons with their own damage and critical hit chances. As the player levels up, they gain points to allocate into attributes such as health, stamina, or their primary stat, allowing for a tailored playstyle. Damage taken from enemies is influenced by the type of armor the player wears, with heavier armor offering more protection but impacting movement speed, roll effectiveness, and jump height.

Combat relies on stamina management, with attacks, dodges, and blocks draining stamina. Stamina recharges automatically when the player is not actively taking action, but depleting it entirely forces the player into an exhausted state until it recharges to 25%. Weapons and armor have weight, and exceeding certain thresholds slows the player and limits their effectiveness in combat. Consumables for restoring health provide a base amount of healing but can be upgraded to improve their potency. Enemies in the game scale in damage and health as the story progresses, with key narrative events unlocking new and more challenging movesets, keeping combat engaging and dynamic throughout the game.