

Assignment - 1 Design a digital game

Silver City Game Studio

30 / 01 / 2024

Whispers in the valley

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Game pitch:

Our game idea: Embark on a journey of tranquility-turned-horror in *Whispers in the Valley*, a 2D top-down pixel art game that combines the allure of peaceful escapism with the chilling discovery of a sacrificial cult. Players control Alex, a man seeking solace in a serene, far-away village only to unravel a dark secret that threatens to consume him. Upon being warmly welcomed by the villagers and especially the charismatic Victor, Alex settles in a rustic cabin and discovers a hidden diary detailing the harrowing experience of the cabin's previous occupant. It becomes apparent that time is dire lest Alex is to face the same horrible fate. As night descends, Alex realizes that his only means of escape - his car keys - have gone missing, setting the stage for a suspenseful journey of stealthy navigation, a climactic confrontation of the cult and a final escape.

Our games Selling point/ points: Our game is a combination of immersive storytelling, puzzle-solving and exploring the adventures of a village. If you are interested in escaping to your own serene valley, cultivating a unique homestead, forming bonds with quirky villagers and unraveling hidden mysteries. Your rural retreat awaits in this captivating RPG adventure.

Our game is targeted towards ages 15 or older; primarily young adults and adults who are interested in single-player RPGs, pixel art, storytelling, horror/thriller aspects and puzzle games. The genre of the game is ARPG (Action Role Playing Game), and it will be implemented on the PC platform.

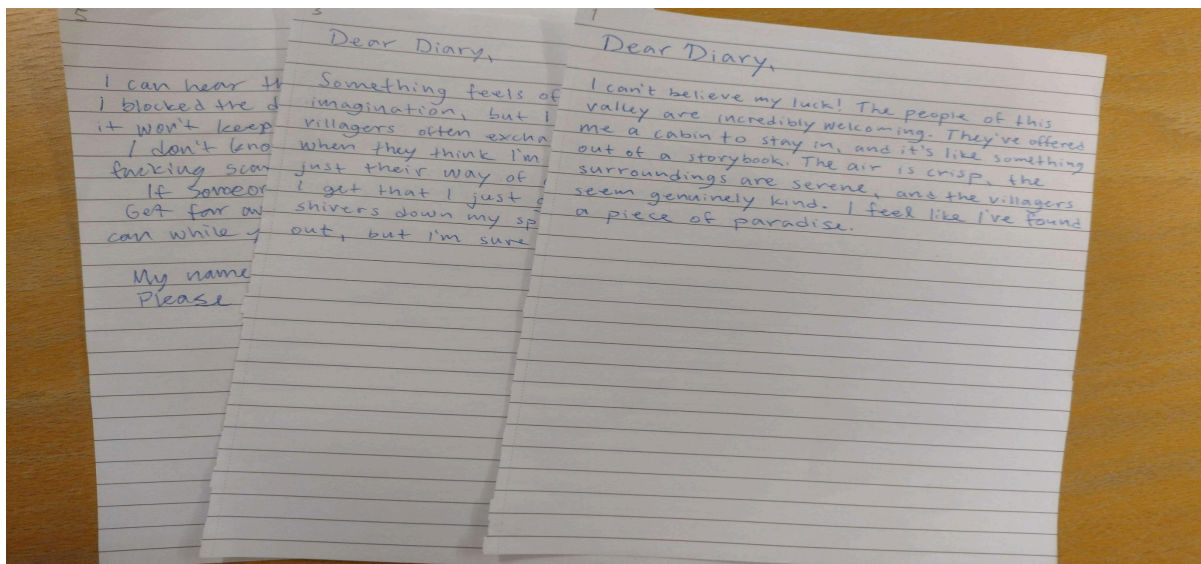
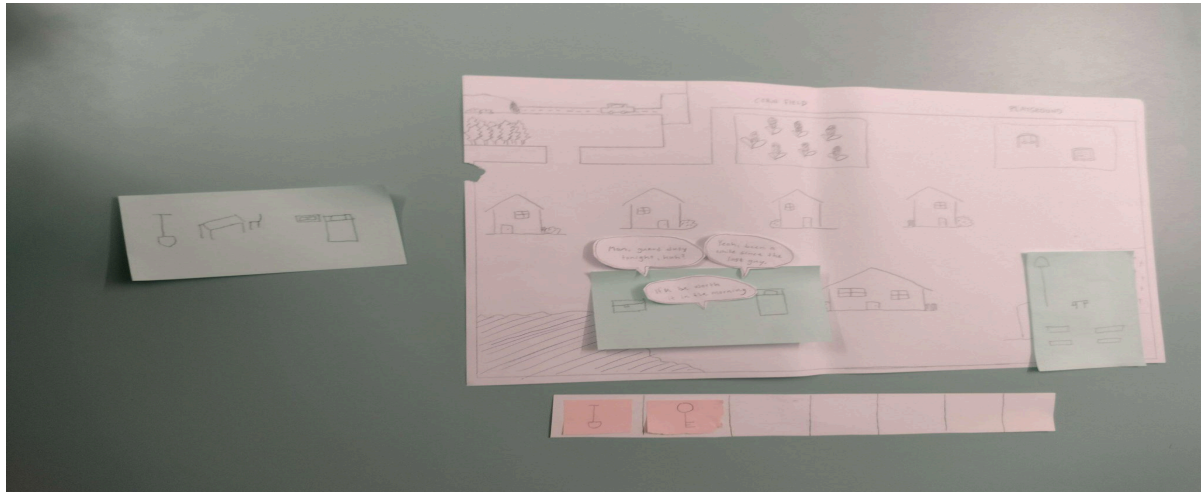
The art style of the game is top down 2D pixel art, heavily influenced and inspired by Stardew Valley, old school Pokemon and The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past. The aesthetic we wished to achieve is a picturesque rural Americana landscape and vibe along with some gothic influences. We felt that this would achieve an unsettling juxtaposition between the - at first glance - humble, sweet village and occupants and the dark nature of the sacrificial cult.

The core gameplay loop of Whispers in the Valley involves free exploration of the village environment, collection of tools and clues to progress through the game while you are avoiding NPCs who will try to catch you during the night. It will be a small village with only a few buildings and other places to explore but rich with detail. The game should take around 15 - 30 minutes to complete depending on how much the player wants to explore.

From the perspective of accessibility, this game has its advantages and drawbacks. Playing this game involves reading quite a bit of text, which can be challenging for certain groups of people. This challenge can be partially circumvented by allowing the player to read at their own pace, only progressing through the text by clicking a button to continue. Using a large font or using more contrast will also improve the readability. This is more accessible for people who, for instance, have reduced vision or dyslexia. The audio components of the game are for embellishment and immersion exclusively, not for in-game cues or anything related to progression, which makes it accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing as well. There are, however, some limitations. While it would be *possible* to implement text-to-speech for all dialogue, monologue and inventory text etc as well as add NPC audio cues for the stealth segments, this is not something we believe is realistic for us within the time scope of the project to develop. As such, this game will not be accessible to people who are blind.

Paper prototype and test cases:

Story and progression

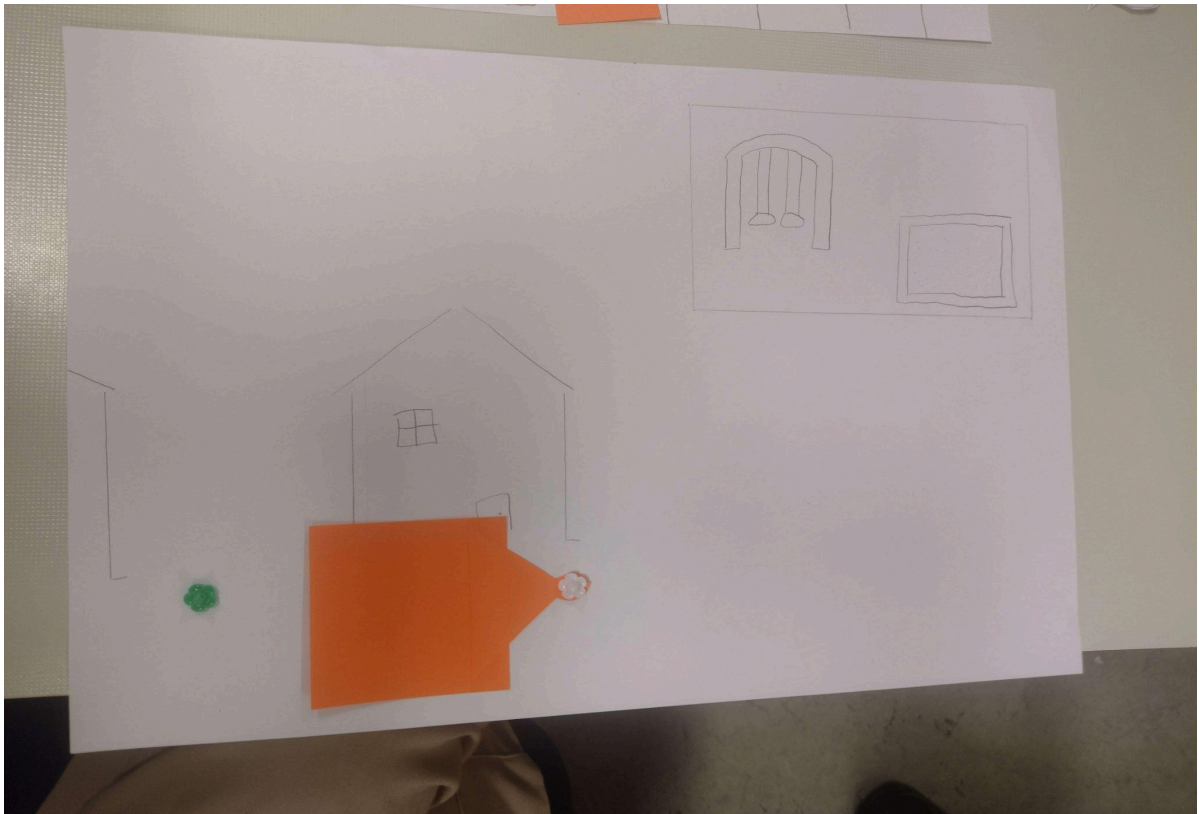


[Story and progression video](#)

For our first prototype we tested if the story was compelling and how the progression in the game felt. The map of the village was created and the interior of 3 buildings. The plan was to go through a small portion of every part in the game except stealth to get a feeling for the game. A limitation of the prototype is that it is missing a lot of the content we plan to have in the game.

During the progression of the game it was hard for the player to know where to go and there was not a lot to do in the village. This is something we were aware of due to the limitations of the prototype. We think this problem will get solved if there is more to do in the village by making it less boring to look for the next part of the story but finding the next part easier should be taken into consideration. Other than the absence of content in the village the story was interesting to the player.

Stealth



[stealth video](#)

For our second prototype we tested how the stealth system should work. This was a challenge because we wanted the stealth segments to be done in real time and it is very hard to control the players speed with the paper format.

What we learned during the testing was the NPCs' vision range is very important for how difficult it was to avoid them. The game should have some way to show how far the NPCs' can see, otherwise it will feel very unfair if the player gets caught.

Requirements list:

Must have:

- **Graphics:**

- Character sprites
 - Character sprites for the player character and Non-playable characters (NPCs).
- Environment structures
 - Building structures: church, NPCs' cabins. Other: a lake.
- Interior
 - Interior of buildings the player can interact with, this includes church, player's cabin and NPCs' cabins.
- Tools
 - A set of tools that players can use in different states of the game, all tools will serve a purpose in the game mechanism.
- Inventory system
 - Show the contents of the player's inventory.

- **Movement:**

- Basic character movement
 - Basic character movement controls using W key for up, A key for left, S key for down and d key for right.
- Collision detection
 - Collision detection to prevent the character from moving through obstacles or walls.

- **Sound:**

- Background music
 - A main theme that sets the tone for the game and loops throughout the duration of the game.

- **Behavior:**

- Day
 - During the day there will be some NPCs standing outside their houses. They will talk to the player if interacted with.
- Night
 - At night there will be NPCs patrolling the town with flashlights. They will have set paths they follow. And will have a visible cone in front of them.
- Getting caught
 - If an NPC sees the player at night, if the player is inside the light from the flashlight, the player will get a message that they were caught and then teleported back to their house.

- **System**

- Checkpoint
 - When the player enters their house the state of the game gets saved. The player will be informed of the save through a text bubble. Information to save: Collected items.
- Day and night cycle
 - The game is a one-day and one-night experience where the player needs to accomplish certain tasks during the day, which turns to night when the player returns to their cabin and reads the diary.
- Interaction
 - When the player is close to an entity that can be interacted with they can press the 'use' to interact. 'use' will be bound to the 'E-key'. When the player interacts with an NPC they will start a dialogue, when they interact with a closed door they will open it and walk inside. If they interact with an entity that requires an item they do not have, a small text-box will appear near the entity informing the player that they need an item.
- Inventory
 - A simple inventory system that saves the items the player has picked up. The items can not be selected manually. The Items are only saved for interaction purposes.
- Progressing the story
 - We will use items as a means of progressing through the story.

Should have:

- **Effects and animations:**

- Cutscenes
 - Cutscenes with/without animations and graphics to convey the game narrative.
- Protagonist narrative
 - At the start of the game the protagonist tells the backstory of the player and at the end of the game the protagonist narrative talks about where the player ended up.

- **Movement:**

- Variable movement speed
 - Allow the player to have a variable movement speed like walking and running depending if the player holds down the shift button.

- **Sound**

- Sound effects
 - Include distinct sounds for various in-game interactions, such as opening the door, interacting with other NPCs, alarm sound and other relevant mechanisms.
- Music loops
 - Seamless loops for background music to provide a continuous and uninterrupted listening experience during extended gameplay sessions.
- Different music
 - Different music during the day and night in the game for example a more spooky music during the night and neutral music during the day.

- **Information and messages:**

- Controls explanation screen, implement one of the ideas below
 - A screen that shows how the controls for the game are laid out. This screen should show up when the player first gets control over their character.

- **Graphics**

- Terrain
 - Terrain at the border of the map to make it look more appealing That may include different landscapes, dense forest or other relevant terrains.
- Interior of buildings
 - Make unique layouts for the player cabin and NPC player cabins.

- Decorative elements
 - Decorative elements such as trees, rocks, flowers and other aesthetic items that can contribute to the overall visual appeal of the game.

- **More developed story / world building**

- Story
 - Different parts of the story's lore can be found around the world in the form of dialogue or letters.

Could have:

- **Systems:**

- Saving
 - When the player reaches a checkpoint the checkpoint information will be saved to a file. If the game is closed and opened again the player can choose to return to that state.

- **Behavior:**

- Emotes
 - NPCs can emote by pop-up bubbles when in proximity with the player during the day
- Chase
 - After the final confrontation NPCs will chase the player around the village until the player reaches the car or gets caught
- Death
 - During the final chase the player can get caught by the NPCs and gets a “death screen” telling the player that they were caught and then sacrificed by the cult. The player can restart from the last checkpoint.

- **Movement**

- Character facing direction
 - Update character facing direction based on the movement input to give players a visual indication of where they are heading.

- **Effects and animations**

- Movement animation
 - Ensure that character movement animations are smooth and responsive, providing visual feedback to the player.
- Enhanced visual effects
 - Visual effects like dynamic shadow or screen shaking when the player is in or near danger to make the game more engaging.

- **Graphics:**

- Interactive props
 - Interactive props such as signposts, benches, road lamps that players can interact with for added immersion.
- Public spaces
 - Public spaces like an inn that contribute to the atmosphere and make the game feel more alive.
- Environmental reactions:
 - Environmental reactions to the character’s movement, like footsteps marks on the ground which provide a visual trail of where the character has been.

- Structures
 - Add a playground and a cornfield

- **Sounds:**

- Footstep sounds
 - Different footstep sounds based on the NPC's movement like running or walking phase.
- Environmental sounds
 - Ambient sounds to immerse players in the game world, like birds chirping, flowing water, or rustling of leaves.

- **Side mission/ quests/ activities**

- A part of the main mission
 - The game should include some activities or side missions to make the game more interesting.

Won't have:

- **Realistic physics simulation:**

- Highly realistic physics simulations for the character movement, such as the character loses speed when it is on a different terrain texture.

- **Farming:**

- A mechanism where the player can grow some vegetables which can help the player to boost its running.

- **Weather system:**

- Different weather conditions
 - The weather in the game should change according to which season of the year it is or where the valley is located geographically. The weather could be rainy, cloudy or sunny.