

Game Design Document



[Metanarratroid]

Table of contents

1. Introduction
 - 1.1. Scope of the document
 - 1.2. Elevator pitch
2. Game overview
 - 2.1. Game concept
 - 2.2. Audience
 - 2.3. Genre
 - 2.4. Setting
 - 2.5. Game structure
 - 2.6. Player
 - 2.7. Game flow summary
3. Gameplay
 - 3.1. Objectives
 - 3.2. Progression
 - 3.3. Play flow
 - 3.4. Difficulty
4. Mechanics
 - 4.1. Rules
 - 4.2. Physics
 - 4.3. Character movement
 - 4.4. Player interaction
 - 4.4.1. Game menus
 - 4.4.2. Saving
 - 4.4.3. Game options
 - 4.5. Assets
5. Graphics and audio
 - 5.1. Visual system
 - 5.1.1. Player camera
 - 5.1.2. Landscape
 - 5.2. Interface
 - 5.3. Audio system
 - 5.3.1. Game music
 - 5.3.2. Audio look & feel
6. Story and narrative
 - 6.1. Backstory
 - 6.2. Main plot
 - 6.2.1. Plot progression
 - 6.3. Cutscenes
7. Characters
 - 7.1. Main characters
 - 7.1.1. Appearance
 - 7.1.2. Abilities
 - 7.2. Enemies
8. Game world
 - 8.1. Levels
 - 8.1.1. Tutorial level

1. Introduction

1.1. Scope of the document

A semi-technical document to be read by the Dev Team, their advisor and the professor.

1.2. Elevator pitch

Metanarratroid is a 2D side-scroller where the player upgrades not just themselves but the entire world around them, restoring reality after an apocalyptic eldritch entity destroyed it. The player restores sound and color and restarts the world's stopped clock on their quest to defeat the entity. It fulfills a niche genre of games with a theme of "meta narratives" combining with overall upgrades to the game itself making it appealing for fans of upgrade styled games, meta narratives and metroidvanias.

2. Game Overview

2.1. Game concept

At its heart, Metanarratroid is a project that allows the player to build up the world around them. Whereas traditional Metroidvanias focus on upgrading the character, we plan to take this design ethos and expand it further, pushing it in new directions: instead of just upgrading the character, Metanarratroid will allow players to upgrade the *world*. In this way, we can more fully leverage the possibilities of intertwining game mechanics with narrative, creating, as our title suggests, a meta *Metroid*. It is this innovative potential which has motivated our foray into game design and into Metroidvanias specifically, and which will be central to our game's development and impact.

2.2. Audience

Our audience is existing gamers and fans of the Metroidvania genre, with a focus on fans of metanarratives.

2.3. Genre

The genre of our game is a 2D Metroidvania.

2.4. Setting

Our game takes place in a post-apocalyptic real world with Eldritch Fantasy elements.

2.5. World structure

Players navigate the world in a loosely linear way according to which regions of the world are accessible via the unlocked upgrades.

2.6. Player

It will be a singleplayer experience and the player will play as a robot/android/suit.

2.7. Core loop

Moving between rooms, shooting enemies and bosses, jumping over obstacles, interacting with puzzle elements using the aforementioned.

3. Gameplay

3.1. Objectives

The main objective is to beat the final boss located in the starting area after collecting all meta upgrades.

Secondary objectives are collecting the extra health upgrades spread throughout the map.

Tertiary objectives would be exploring the depths of the map.

3.2. Progression

Players progress through rooms/areas to reach upgrades which allow the player to reach previously in-accessible rooms through the world. Due to the expansiveness of metroidvania games, the intention is there is plenty for the player to explore. These upgrades also change aspects of the world visually, as the game starts out looking “incomplete” and gets put back together through the upgrades. Weapon and character upgrades can be found as well. The game will also get more difficult through unlocking of paths and increasing potential enemies, to match the new upgrades given.

3.3. Play flow

Players will be traversing through a 2D scroller world and able to “upgrade” the game through collecting objects that will trigger for better visuals, music, and ambiance throughout gameplay. Players will also be able to slay eldritch world-eating entities that devour the game and work on cleansing concepts of the game that have been plagued with these beings.

The player progresses linearly from start of game to finish with optional side-tracking to reach optional upgrades in the form of health upgrades. The side tracking will be expansive enough that players will have optional enemies to fight as well.

Players will begin in the tutorial and make their way to the first upgrade, which will upgrade the game to include music and sound. The second expansive area will eventually lead the player to the first boss, where the second upgrade will be obtained. This will enhance the game to include color. In the third area, after the second upgrade, the player will traverse to the second boss. After the second boss, the third upgrade will be found and the player will then need to backtrack to the beginning of the game where the final boss is.

Gameplay flow:

- Tutorial → upgrade 1 (sound) → Second Area → first boss → upgrade 2 (color) → Third Area → second boss → upgrade 3 (time) → backtrack to first area → final boss

3.4. Difficulty

The overall difficulty of the game will be very normal and nothing too difficult for the average player. We want to give new players to the metroidvania genre a chance to experience the game without too much frustration as popular metroidvanias can be seen as too difficult for the average player.

4. Mechanics.

4.1. Rules

The player cannot pass through walls or enemies or jump while in the air, touching an enemy or their projectiles causes damage to the player.

4.2. Combat

The player engages enemies through their ranged projectiles, when an enemy's health reaches 0 they die in an animation potentially leaving a health pickup behind. When an enemy touches the player they take 1 heart of damage, the same is accomplished if the player touches an enemy projectile.

4.2.1. AI

AI in the game represents enemy behavior patterns, each enemy type has specified behavior patterns they follow and each boss has random attack patterns from their attack pools, potentially escalating to weighted randomization to prevent move bias.

4.3. Physics

The physics of the game focus on being a 2d semi-realistic replication of physics with gravity similar to common 2d platformers.

4.4. Character movement

The player can move in 8 directions up, right, down and left and the combinations thereof and jumping.

4.5. Player interaction

The player can interact with doors between rooms, buttons, and other puzzle elements.

4.5.1. Game menus

The game will feature an escape menu, where the player can access options or quit the game. The game will also have an inventory menu to view upgrades and collectible items. There will also be a map menu to view the current location of the player.

4.5.2. Saving

There will be locations throughout the map where the player can save their game. This will refill player health and serve as a respawn point should the player be killed.

4.5.3. Game options

From the menus, the player can change video settings (screen resolution, fullscreen mode, brightness), audio settings (music volume, effects volume), control settings (customizing movement and interaction keybinds).

4.6. Assets

Current plans are to create our own assets without relying on outside ones, unless there comes a point where we need to, at which point we will look for assets to aid us in our project.

5. Graphics and audio

5.1. Visual system

Primarily the game is 2D and minimalistic, though because our bosses are eldritch entities, they will be rendered either nearly photorealistically or in 3D (demonstrating how they don't fit in our pixelated reality).

5.1.1. Player camera

Our game will be a 2D platformer so the player will view the game as a 2D side-scroller.

5.1.2. Landscape

We will include 3 different landscapes throughout our game. The beginning area will be a fallen, broken-down city. The next will be an underground clockwork-style gem mine featuring numerous cave systems, and the final area will be a strange underground wasteland, a kind of void desert (the sands of which are used in our Hourglass of Time meta-upgrade).

5.2. Interface





We will implement two different primary UIs: a) a design for the map interface and b) the player inventory. The map UI will allow the player to move and drag the map around to get a better visualization of where they are and the destination they want to reach. The inventory UI will aid the player in keeping track of their progress (e.g. number of hearts, what artifacts they've picked up, different weapon upgrades that have been scattered around the map). Further, small summaries of these (the map and the hearts) will be provided overlaying the main gameplay screen, similar to the “energy” and map provided in *Super Metroid* (figure 3 above).

5.3. Audio system

When the game begins there is no audio system until the player is able to retrieve one of the meta upgrades that allows for game audio to happen. The reason for this has to do with our plot where the player's world is completely stripped of its natural aspect like sound and color.

5.3.1. Game music

Each level will have its own theme, which will become garbled and warped during boss fights (to communicate the eldritch, reality-warping nature of these creatures). The music for the dead cityscape will be dreary, vaguely futuristic, dystopian. The music for the clockwork caverns will be somewhat metallic with a regular rhythm, reminiscent of machinery and ticking clockwork. The music for the void desert will have a kind of synthetic feel, like hollow chimes.

5.3.2. Audio look & feel

The game's audio should convey tension and even dread as the game progresses. At the beginning of the game, before the player restores sound to the world, there will be no audio at all. After restoring sound but before restarting time, the diegetic audio will be minimal, restricted to player interactions with the world (e.g. blaster sounds). After restarting time, the amount of diegetic audio will increase, so that enemies that had been frozen before suddenly make sounds and there is environmental noise (e.g. wind, machinery, ticking clocks, etc.—depending on biome).

6. Story and narrative

6.1. Backstory

In a world already ravaged by an apocalypse, two archaeologists have come across an alien artifact that can save civilization. However, upon touching the egg-shaped crystal, it splits open, revealing a dark void—welcoming an eldritch being into their reality which begins to consume everything (including sound, color, and time itself).

6.2. Main plot

The game begins with the player waking up in the ruins of the city after this eldritch incursion. First they battle to restore sound to the world. Then they travel deeper into the clockwork mines below the city, ridding the world of eldritch servants they find along the way, before they come across the artifact that restores color to the world (battling past the entity fragment that's guarding it).

Afterwards, the player must once again travel deeper still, into the void wasteland that's opened up beneath the human world, where the sands of time have been stilled. The player battles the entity that guards the Hourglass of Time in order to restart the flow of time, and then must travel back through all they've passed through in order to battle the brain of the entity to restore reality entirely. (It is only after winning this battle and seeming to return the entity through the break in reality whence it came that we learn that the player character was one of the original archaeologists that had gotten subsumed by the entity upon its release... and there's a curious void crawling up into their eyes...)

6.2.1. Plot progression

The plot progresses loosely, in line with the character exploration. The plot primarily revolves around fighting the entity and collecting the artifacts it is guarding (which restore sound, color, time), and so is directly tied with gameplay. It is only the beginning (establishing backstory) and the ending (after defeating the final boss) that advances the plot beyond “defeating boss, restoring world” piece by piece.

6.3. Cutscenes

The only cutscenes are an opening and ending cutscene, framing the narrative for the game.

7. Characters

7.1. Main characters

The Player Character

7.1.1. Appearance

The player appears as an Android/robotic suit visually specific design not yet specified.

7.1.2. Abilities

- Winds of Sound: Allows players to begin listening to game sound and audio queues, and for accessibility purposes, acts like a radar. This allows the player to be able to hear creatures that were previously silent and hear bells-like sounds that can be used to complete puzzles.

- Gem of Color: Allows for color to be implemented visually and this unlocks seeing new puzzles that will unlock previously hidden locations.
- Hourglass of Time: Allows for time to begin again and this unlocks ice to melt to allow the player to swim through water and certain “elevators” to begin functioning again, allowing more areas to be accessible.
- Hearts: Allows player to unlock more health, these will be gained by fighting each boss and then found around the map. The player will be able to have a maximum of 10 hearts.
- Charge Railgun - Player finds this weapon around the map, holding down the shoot button will allow the player to fire a stronger blast
- Double Shot Blaster - Upgrade found somewhere in the map, transforms the normal blaster into one where instead of firing one blast it does two at the same time

7.2. Enemies

- Bosses
 - Color Boss
 - Time Boss
 - Final Boss
- Shadow Creatures
 - Servants of the entity that have spawned across the ruined world
- Normal Creatures
 - Animals that populate the broken city, frozen (and thus unable to damage the player) before time is restarted

8. Game world

8.1. Levels

8.1.1. Tutorial levels

Broken City, the starting location of the player initially acts as a tutorial to the game with simple enemies upon completion rewards the first meta-upgrade without a boss fight to introduce the player to their overall goal.

8.1.2. Main levels

Clockwork Mines, the first main level of the game which houses the first boss and the second meta upgrade, has a theme relating to a mineshaft fused with clockwork machinery.

Void Desert, the second main level of the game housing the second boss and final meta upgrade, has a theme of a barren desert stranded in a dark void twisted by the power of the artifact that started the world's destruction.

Broken City (Part 2), a return to the starting point of the game for the final confrontation, the way backwards changes due to the last upgrade gotten and many more enemies appear (e.g. enemies that had been visible but frozen before have now unfrozen since time has resumed) making the trek far more difficult than the first time and reaching it houses the final boss for the ending confrontation.