**Immersion Write-up**

Immersion is a fragile tool when creating a game. It is easy to break and take the player out of the game (and their enjoyment of the game), but when utilised correctly it is one of the most important aspects of level design. As with my previous research, I studied 2D platforming games, though this time I researched less but more in-depth so that I could focus more on how the levels are designed on a core level instead of trying to find multiple examples of different level designs.

**1: *Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze* (Wii U/Switch)**  
Context can be given to the design of a level. Platforms, for example, could be natural formations of the environment, not just floating blocks in the air. Outcroppings on cliffs, crates, scaffolding and other similar objects can make the game world feel more ‘organic’ as everything the players interacts with is part of the surrounding area and not a convenient and out of place magical object that exists just to help the player.  
  
Additionally, levels can have “narratives,” that allow for a smaller story to play out entirely contained within one level. For example, in *Donkey Long Country*, one level has you waking up and subsequently being chased by a giant octopus to progress, and another level has the player trying to traverse the ocean in the middle of a war between two naval factions of penguins and walruses. The narratives of these levels have no further bearing on the plot as a whole other than giving the player a reason as to why they have to complete the level to progress; despite this the uniqueness of each level’s ‘plot’ keeps the player engaged and immediately makes every level distinct and recognisable from each other.

**2: *Super Metroid* (SNES)**

*Super Metroid* has one large interconnected map that is sectioned off into separate sub-areas that individually need to be completed, however a lot of this completion involves visiting other sub-areas, progressing slightly further to get a specific item, then going back and completing the area the player was in previously. This means that the player is always on the move, and can also beat the game much faster on a second run of the game now that they know where all the items they need are (the game also encourages this as it shows your completion time and percentage of items gathered on the end screen, with bonus illustrations depending on how well you did). This type of level design encourages exploration and relies heavily on environmental clues-as well as the player’s ability to problem solve-to give the player non-verbal hints about how to progress.

*Super Metroid* also uses mini-narratives in each of these sub areas to provide context for boss battles and such. The best examples of these is a boss named “Crocomire” who the player kills by dropping into a pit of lava. The unexpectedly detailed animation of his skin melting off in a game full of otherwise mildly creepy and unsettling imagery comes as shock to the player, and is a great example of how the environment and player’s expectations can be used and subverted to provide emotional responses that keep the player engaged.   
  
When it comes to creating an immersive experience for the player, the questions I will ask myself are: How does this area fit into the context of the game as a whole? What reason would the player have to visit this area? Is it thematically in line with the surrounding areas? When should the player be able to access this area? What sort of emotions should the player feel in this area? These are all vital aspects to my level design.