

# Game Look and Feel

CIS 487/587  
Bruce R. Maxim  
UM-Dearborn

# Look and Feel

- Many times game designers start only with trying to achieve a certain look or feel in their game
- There are some things that game designers need to think about to promote the player's feeling of total immersion in the game world

# Ambience

- Everything that contributes to the innate look and feel of a game
  - Sound
  - Vision
  - Touch
- Ambience all about figuring out how to tell a story without full motion videos or cut-scenes

# Sound

- While the player is engrossed in gameplay music adds to the player's sense of atmosphere
- Sound effects can also be used to foreshadow action as well as reward player actions
- Sound (esp. spoken words) can be used for comic relief in games

# Vision

- Concept art is used to set the general style of the game's appearance
- Concept artists provide ideas and inspiration to the computer artists who produce the computer images used in the game
- Creating concept art early in the design process helps convey a shared game vision to the entire team

# Touch

- Touch refers to the game developers' handling of the game
- It is important to convey the physical feeling of the game environment from the player's perspective

# Interface – 1

- Game interfaces should not interfere with the player's game experience
- A good user interface is easy to learn and easy to use
- A realistic user interface mirrors controls familiar to players in the real world

# Interface - 2

- Game controls should not intrude into the game display
- Game controls can be designed so that they are context sensitive and “second” guess what the player want to do
- Alternatively the “guess” for control behavior could be based on what the player has done in the past



# Storyline

- Pick a game that does a good job of melding its story with the gameplay.
- Why does this game succeed?
- How does the plot unfold as the game progresses?

# Story Telling Techniques - 1

- Obstacles
  - Make players work to get story elements by meeting a challenge or solving a problem
- Foreshadowing
  - Use in the story introduction to show players what is to come
- Personalization
  - Getting the player to internalize the game goals by making the initial challenge a personal one

# Story Telling Techniques - 2

- Resonance
  - When story elements get close enough to get a spark that illuminates the story
  - Player is sometimes left with a feeling of deja vu
- Resistance
  - The unwilling protagonist sucks players into rooting for the story before the main character
  - Helps enable “willing suspension of disbelief”

# Story Telling Techniques - 3

- Plot Points
  - Pivot the story line around new and surprising directions (even when players know the outcome)
  - Aristotle's plot point types
    - The reversal
    - The discovery
    - The calamity

# Story Telling Techniques - 4

- Suspense
  - Allows you to create fear and expectation without forcing the player to rely on trial and error
  - Hitchcock was a master at doing this
- Dialog
  - Don't use dialog to convey something done better with pictures
  - Make sure characters reveal something interesting each time

# Story Telling Techniques - 5

- Theme
  - The inherent question posed by the story but left unanswered for the player to discover
- Resolution
  - Hard won victory
  - Non-obvious ending
  - Satisfying to reader
  - Consistent
  - Achieve closure

# Story Telling Techniques - 4

- Change
  - The interest value in a story lies in the fact that something has happened to force a change in the “status quo” – nothing new is boring.

# Pick a Game with a Story

- How is exposition handled?
- Who is the protagonist?
- What is the main conflict?
- When is it introduced?
- What does the protagonist do to resolve the conflict?
- What causes story tension to rise?



# Pick a Game with a Story

- What deciding factor brings the story to a climax?
- What happens in the resolution?
- What game play elements support the plot points?
- How is the exposition handled?
- Is the game goal integrated with story main conflict?

# Pick a Game with a Story

- How does gameplay cause tension to rise?
- What deciding factor brings the game to a climax?
- Do the dramatic and gameplay elements help or hinder progress toward resolution?
- How might they be better integrated to make the game work from an emotional perspective?