

Change of Fate Research and Analysis

Game Design

The game I will design, called “Change of Fate”, will be a unique crossover between puzzle games and action/skill games. The central theme is placing down tiles strategically on a top-down grid to change the course of a ball that is initially set on a path that is nowhere near its goal. The twist comes in after the player solves the puzzle by placing the tiles in the correct positions: instead of just watching the ball roll to the finish after the “Go!” button is pressed, the player must use keyboard commands to change the speed of the ball and use the left mouse click to activate other objects in the level. These abilities will help the player avoid traps and cross paths that would otherwise be impossible to traverse.

Tile Factory

After performing some research, I came across 3 free online games whose gameplay feels somewhat similar to the design I’m looking for in “Change of Fate”. The first of these is called “Tile Factory”. The goal of “Tile Factory” is to change the color and design of 5 initially white tiles. This is done by placing down conveyor belts, color sprayers, sensors, walls, etc. to maneuver the white tiles to certain areas of the level where they can be manipulated. The player must also wire sensors to different objects such as conveyor belts to activate them when a tile traverses the sensor.

One major design difference between this game and “Change of Fate” is the number of allowable actions. In “Tile Factory”, the player may place down as many tiles as they like, and create as complicated a network of wires as they desire. This leads to the existence of many, many solutions. However, the solution space is still limited due to the lack of room to place objects in each level. This allows the player to think more creatively instead of logically in certain cases, because deductive processes don’t work quite as well when there is a wide range of possible solutions. Also, in some of the later levels, a correct solution requires the use of nearly each of the 12 parts (conveyors, sensors, walls, etc.), at least 10 wires, and at least 2 different patterns for the tiles. Each of these is displayed in a menu at the bottom of the screen with tabs are used to organize these objects into “Parts”, “Wires”, “Dyes”, and “Tiles”. This helps simplify the actions for the player, but the overwhelming amount of objects can easily make the player frustrated when attempting to devise a solution. I plan to introduce the player in “Change of Fate” to about 5 different types of tiles, and their only actions in the puzzle portion of each level will be to simply place the tiles they are given. This will make for an understandable yet tricky puzzle design.

Something else I should point out about “Tile Factory” is that fixing a broken solution in the game is especially difficult due to some counter-intuitive elements of the game’s design. For example, the start of a conveyor belt looks different yet acts the same as the rest of it, and sensors placed on conveyor belts completely cover up the conveyor belt sprite for that square yet do not deactivate the conveyor there. Because this created a negative gaming experience for me, I will make sure to avoid creating problems like this in “Change of Fate”.

Level Editor

One online game whose gameplay fits more with the action style of the game I will create is called “Level Editor”. In this platforming game, the player uses the WASD controls to move around, and places down different types of platforms using the left mouse click. These platforms can be used to reach distant areas and block enemies.

While “Change of Fate” is going to be more focused on the puzzle elements, “Level Editor” spends more time on the platforming level design. Because of this, the player does not need to put much thought into where they will place the tiles they are given, especially because the tiles are provided in a set order. This does not detract from the gameplay experience, however; it merely changes where the difficulty is located. For example, the player must time their keyboard inputs with their mouse movements/clicks to create and jump onto a platform that disappears after 1 second. This adds to the technical/multitasking skill that is built as the game progresses. On the other hand, “Change of Fate” will have some technical elements to it, but most of the player’s time will be spent devising a solution to each puzzle. Neither game should be considered better than the other simply on the basis that one has more platforming elements or puzzle elements, because those two things are incomparable.

Don’t Save the Princess

Compared to the two games discussed so far, “Don’t Save the Princess” is the most similar to my idea of “Change of Fate”. In “Don’t Save the Princess”, the first level has the player crossing a bridge to save the princess (from what appears to be boredom).

In the remaining levels, the player must guide the knight through a maze to get eaten by a monster (instead of saving the princess) by placing down tiles that blast the knight in one of four directions.

Unlike “Tile Factory”, the player’s options in “Don’t Save the Princess” are much more restricted. The player can only place down tiles that blast the knight right, down, left, or up, and they are given a limited number of tiles for each level. This makes the game relatively easy for the most part, but the level design makes it difficult at times. However, I think the game is overall a bit lackluster given that there aren’t too many choices for the player to make, there is basically no music/sounds, and the only interesting thing introduced in the game are buttons that create and destroy walls. I will be sure to add more depth than this into “Change of Fate” to make the game much more engaging and interesting.

There are two other special elements of “Don’t Save the Princess” that are worth mentioning. All tiles that blast the knight must be placed on the adjacent square to which the knight will be launched as if the tiles were massive box fans. In “Change of Fate”, the ball will change direction as soon as it is centered on the placed-down tile. I chose to design it this way because I think of it more as a ball rolling over a magical tile rather than being blown by wind, but both design choices can make for equally entertaining games. Lastly, the humorous element generated by a knight flying through the air, blowing up box fans, and being eaten by a monster adds a nice touch of playfulness to “Don’t Save the Princess”. This humor can make the game much more enjoyable despite its simple design.