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CART 263

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Final Project Proposal

Overview:

    Think (working title) is a point and click RPG which is experienced from the main character's POV. The story and concept was first developed for a project in 2023 for ENGL 255, and we've decided to take the first steps in bringing it to life. The mechanics of this JavaScript web game focus on a 'menu based' style of gameplay, meaning that key actions and story routes will be accessed through a list in the 'brain' menu as depicted in the included illustrations. Through character interactions, item collecting and simple exploration the player will discover more about the characters around them as well as the main character's struggle with their mental health. Ultimately, the player's decisions will affect how the NPCs feel about them, having new options unlocked which open different avenues for the game's ending. As the scope for the final version of this project would be quite large, the goal for CART 263 would be to develop key visuals and mechanics, resulting in a short demo of one chapter, presenting the game's potential.

Visuals:

    The game's visuals will be hand drawn, 2D representations of the world. We aim for a bold, comforting style, yet one that will be able to convey feelings of unease when the story calls for it. A 90's 16-bit oriented aesthetic will feed into this, yet also allow for ease of creation in the workflow. Because we will be importing all of the assets, it will be important to have a sprite-creating process readily in place.

<u>Mechanics:</u>

As mentioned before, the heavy lifting of the gameplay will be under the 'brain' menu, and will change the story's trajectory based on the decisions done there, much like a visual novel. However, it is important to note that there are a number of unique mechanics also involved. For example, the main character's notebook can be accessed after each interaction, giving the player insight on how the interaction went and on how to proceed. The journal will be a simple image that the player can flip through, updating with text. Furthermore, the player can collect items through limited exploration or character interactions. The limited exploration will be the ability to click right or left while in a room, allowing for the camera to scroll farther right or left on the background image. If an item is able to be collected, the player can click on it, adding it to their inventory to be used later.

Some further mechanics would include a level system, which would display the character's stress level rather than the player's proficiency, and a map of the main character's college that the player can use to access different locations or 'rooms'. Because the scope must be kept small, we will limit ourselves to two locations and only have the player level up once if a stressful option is chosen, only to demonstrate the potential mechanic.

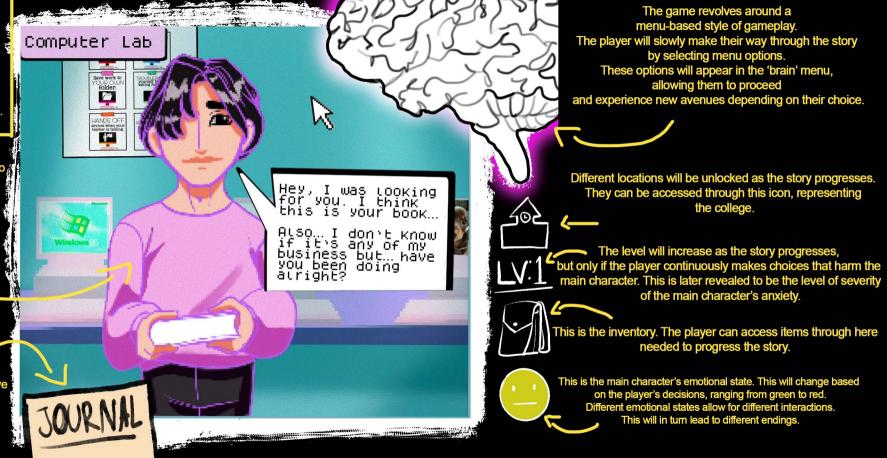<u>Technical aspects and potential problems:</u>

Think has multiple different mechanics which will need to be sorted out. Though none of them are particularly complicated in concept, extra care will be needed in order to make sure that each interaction properly leads to the right outcome, and that each consequence is properly recorded in the right order. As well, it is possible that due to the amount of drawn assets that will need to be imported, an external JavaScript library may be of help. Although p5 may be a good option, there may very well be others which are more efficient, like p5 play if we decide to use animations. Research will have to be done on that. That being said, optimization will have to also be a priority considering the amount of images that will need to be uploaded to the browser.

Overall, «Think» takes inspiration from the 16bit game aesthetic. The playful colour scheme is contrasted with its more serious themes. It also includes some parts that are obviously out of place, such as the puppy on the screen on the right, to enhance a subtle feeling of uncannyness. The elements that do not quite fit grow in frequency as the game progresses.

Say hi! This is an example of a character the player may need to interact with. Because of his dialogue, new options have appeared in the brain, indicated by the glow. The player will need to judge which option seems best (or most entertaining!)

The main charatcter will often write in her journal. This will give the player more insight into her story and her opinions of the various characters in the game, as well as offer some clues into how to proceed.

The game revolves around a menu-based style of gameplay. The player will slowly make their way through the story by selecting menu options. These options will appear in the 'brain' menu, allowing them to proceed and experience new avenues depending on their choice.

Different locations will be unlocked as the story progresses. They can be accessed through this icon, representing the college.

The level will increase as the story progresses, but only if the player continuously makes choices that harm the main character. This is later revealed to be the level of severity of the main character's anxiety.

This is the inventory. The player can access items through here needed to progress the story.

This is the main character's emotional state. This will change based on the player's decisions, ranging from green to red. Different emotional states allow for different interactions. This will in turn lead to different endings.

Computer Lab

Save work to YOUR OWN folder.

HANDS OFF devices when your teacher is talking.

Windows 95

Hey, I was looking for you. I think this is your book...

Also... I don't know if it's any of my business but... have you been doing alright?

JOURNAL

LV:1

- Don't trust him
- Trust him?
- He hates you
- Ignore him

This is what the brain menu looks like once opened. Choices based on the main character's emotional state will appear in the emotional state's corrsponding colour. The options are based on what one may imagine a personification of anxiety would say.

In this example, the option «Trust him?» has appeared in yellow, due to her «neutral» emotional state.