

## Project #2 : Proposal and prototype

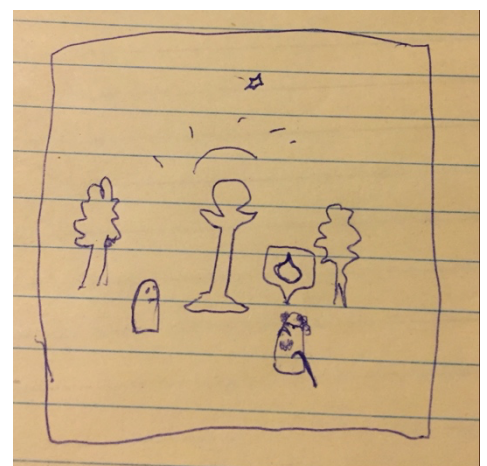
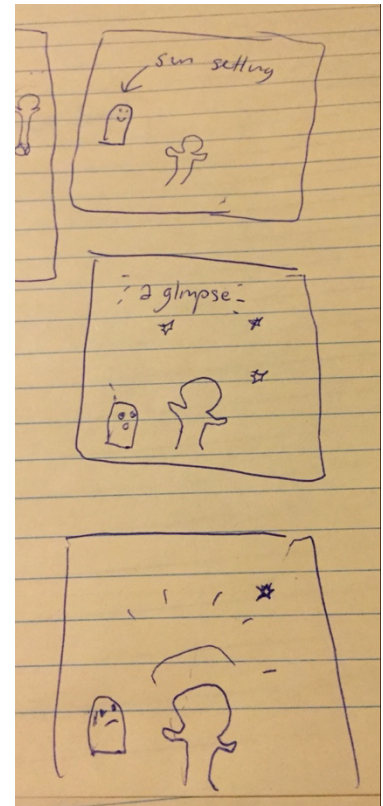
Artist vision and technical challenges

I have chosen to try my hand at creating a videogame, almost from scratch (I am going to use many assets, thank you to all the artists). It is a simple trading sequence game where the player encounters other characters, and by trading with them the different items in the game (items trigger the NPCs in different ways) the player succeeds, along with the last trade, the arc of the main objective: turn out all the lights. In *Interrupting Sky Glow*, the main character Dolly is taken by the shimmering charm of a constellation as the sun sets, but she is quickly taken out of her reverie as the city lights turn on and most of the stars all but vanish. That night, she makes it her purpose to take out all her little town's lampposts. She must find the way to influence the people of her town and get them on her side in her campaign against urban light pollution.

What will be special is that when Dolly succeeds at extinguishing a streetlamp, a constellation is revealed in the sky. This will be the part I will be most contemplative about. After all I am making a game about stars because I have a fascination for them. I am afraid of what it could mean if the cosmos reflects our lives on Earth and we are artificially disconnected from it. I want to know more about the stars, perhaps, understand the universe a little bit better, and understand myself in the process. This part is super deep, but I am exploring it in a very light fashion as a friendly game. I will try to have fun in the last phases of design working on the constellation effects. I am hoping to come up with a way to surprise the player at the end. We'll see what I can achieve there.

I have been thinking of this game idea for a while as a relatively easy videogame to design for a beginner. I also love story-based videogames and simulations, contemplative pieces, with a lot of potential for roleplaying. I feel like very good games of the sort are few. I'm thinking of *Animal Crossing* to compare the game style that I wish to explore, but I like when there is a story driving the exchanges of items, adding some stakes. In the manner of the item exchange sequence in *The Legend of Zelda*:

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<sup>1</sup> These quick sketches show my idea for an introduction to the game: Dolly sees the stars at sunset, then the lamp turns on. The last sketch represents Dolly, an NPC asking for an item, and the lamppost between them.

Link's Awakening, trading seemingly useless items through a chain of characters, solving each of their problems along the way.

For this project I will start a little bit smaller scale, focusing on simple collection and exchange of items. In fact, there is a precise game that is my inspiration for this game, it was a browser-based game called Cartoon Cartoon Summer Resort on the cartoonnetwork website back in the days (there are gameplay videos on YouTube).

My ambition to have a brief plotline might be a little challenging. The exchanges (i.e., the way the player collects items, the different events that are triggered through item use or exchange) must take place in a setting. It will be challenging to design that setting, setup walls where the player cannot pass, and make it decent to look at (or at least comprehensible). I'm thinking about the technical challenge of either having the whole setting on one canvas, or have different sets, how to code that.

In this prototype I have stayed very basic. I am trying to achieve the archetypal exchange between the player and the item and the player and the NPC. The NPC has three different states: (1) displays text when the player does not have the item in their inventory, (2) displays text demanding item in player's inventory, (3) displays text when the NPC's received desired item switch is toggled.

The hardest technical challenge is to code the array that holds all the items that exist in the game so that the ones that exist on the map to be collected by the player are displayed, so that they can be stored inside NPCs to be traded for by items in the player's inventory (which is also an array). I am trying hard to get this together for this prototype so that I can concentrate on setting up the different NPCs, setting up the plot through the item trading sequence, and then working on harmonizing the visual effects and making the project as nice as I can.

For the sound, I was able to get most of what I want to see in the final project in the Make-some-noise exercise. I will want to have sounds when revealing constellations, maybe unique to each constellation or one generic theme. I kind of want this ascending feeling to the revealing of each constellation. My objective is for there to be three lampposts to extinguish and 3 constellations to reveal. As well I am aiming to create an exchanging sequence between around 5 items and 5+ NPCs (including interactive non character NPCs such as the lamppost the player can break with the slingshot).

In my own little way, with this game I am trying to trigger a re-enchantment of the night as Dolly is trying to do in her town. Urban darkness in this game will be represented as enchanting, a recovery, rather than as dangerous and scary.



This image gives an idea of the layout I would like to create as the town of Sky Glow. I would like to have the simulation setting split into three different sets (if I tried to fit everything in one canvas it would be too much). In this image the black icons stand for NPCs and the white icon is the player.