Cost Function

We can measure the accuracy of our hypothesis function by using a **cost function**. This takes an average difference (actually a fancier version of an average) of all the results of the hypothesis with inputs from x's and the actual output y's.

$$J(\theta_0, \theta_1) = \frac{1}{2m} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \left(\hat{y}_i - y_i\right)^2 = \frac{1}{2m} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \left(h_\theta(x_i) - y_i\right)^2$$

To break it apart, it is $\frac{1}{2}\,\bar{x}$ where $\bar{x}$ is the mean of the squares of $h_\theta(x_i) - y_i$, or the difference between the predicted value and the actual value.

This function is otherwise called the "Squared error function", or "Mean squared error". The mean is halved $\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)$ as a convenience for the computation of the gradient descent, as the derivative term of the square function will cancel out the $\frac{1}{2}$ term. The following image summarizes what the cost function does: