

Proposal

Hikikomori is a Japanese term used to describe people who have withdrawn from society and confined themselves in their houses/rooms, usually for at least 6 months. Reasons such as bullying, shame, and even a lack of motivation can push one to become a *hikikomori*. While some people view them as outcasts, others believe that they are not receiving the necessary help to reintegrate into society.

The topic I am focusing on is *hikikomori* in the Japanese context. Although there are people in other countries who are also considered *hikikomori* (also called NEETs, “Not in Education, Employment, or Training”), I felt that it would be too much to cover in such a short time frame. I also planned to do more research on *hikikomori* but never got around to it, so I felt that this would be a suitable topic for my final project.

The premise of the project is that the user is looking through the computer screen of a *hikikomori*. My current idea is that the character has failed their entrance exam to a top university and feels shameful. As a result, they begin to lose their sense of purpose and stay in their room all day, documenting their experiences through journal entries. The user reads the journal entries to understand what the character is going through.

One main aspect that I want to emphasize in my project is interactivity. The user should be able to move the mouse around and click on things. The journal entries will be located in folders, and I am thinking about adding images and music as well if I have time. However, I don't plan for this to be a game where there is a reward for reading through everything. The main takeaway is seeing from the point of view of a *hikikomori*.

[301 words]

(Rough) Timeline

- Sunday, May 22
 - Write the proposal
 - Gather content and technical sources
 - Design the prototype
- Wednesday, May 25 ~ Friday, May 27 (Check-in #1)
 - Finish desktop screen - add images for folders and apps
- Sunday, May 29
 - Set up all of the scenes
 - Make bars and folders into classes
 - Finish text for journal entries
- Wednesday, June 1 ~ Friday, June 3 (Check-in #2)
 - Add functionality to each scene
 - Finish text for articles in the browser scene
- Sunday, June 5
 - Fix any small details
 - Add music if there is time
 - Submit the project

Content Sources

Kato, T. A., Kanba, S., & Teo, A. R. (2019). *Hikikomori: Multidimensional understanding, assessment, and future international perspectives*. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 73(8), 427–440. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pcn.12895>

- This article provides a brief history of *hikikomori* and its relation to psychiatric disorders and mental health. *Hikikomori* is not something straightforward to diagnose. I plan to use some of the themes mentioned in this article (e.g. shame, overdependence) to add an emotional component to my project.

Miyakawa, T., Morita T., & Suzuki, F. (2021). *Dying Out of Sight: Hikikomori in an Aging Japan* [Film]. NHK.

- This documentary discusses how *hikikomori* is not only a younger generation phenomena but one that affects the elderly as well. I may take some elements from the *hikikomori* mentioned here to make the character's experience more authentic (since younger and older *hikikomori* share some parallels).

Rubinstein, E. (2016). Emplotting Hikikomori: Japanese Parents' Narratives of Social Withdrawal. *Cult Med Psychiatry*, 40(4), 641–663. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-016-9495-6>

- Many *hikikomori* rely on the generosity of their parents who feed and shelter them. This article talks about how parents feel about their *hikikomori* children, which are conveyed in group meetings and interviews. I think this is a good resource since I want to add a mother character in the character's journal entries.

Teo, A. R. (2009). A New Form of Social Withdrawal in Japan: A Review of *Hikikomori*. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 56(2), 178–185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764008100629>

- There is a case study of a 19-year-old hikikomori mentioned in this article. I believe it will be useful for writing the character's experiences, who is also at a university-level age.

Technical Sources

Processing. *Clock*. (n.d.). <https://processing.org/examples/clock.html>

- I am planning to use the concepts in this example (i.e. `minute()` and `hour()`) to update the time on the screen. This will reflect the time that is on the user's computer, making the experience a bit more immersive.

Processing. *Scrollbar*. (n.d.). <https://processing.org/examples/scrollbar.html>

- When the text in the browser is longer than the window, I can use the scrollbar to fit the rest of the text. Having a scrollbar mimics the experience of browsing the internet.

Processing. *SoundFile*. (n.d.). <https://processing.org/reference/libraries/sound/SoundFile.html>

- If time permits, I would like to add music in my project. I have been wanting to try it out for some time, and I think it could give more depth to the character's feelings (i.e. the character could make music to release angst).