

Chapter 13 Concurrency

1 Introducing Concurrency

Concurrency

Concurrency is whenever things are happening "at the same time" or in parallel.

JS is a single-threaded language, and it can only execute one task at a time.

The quick switching between tasks can give the illusion of concurrency, even though the single-thread characteristic.

- e.g. Ask the browser to get the user's geographical location while continue console log messages.

Asynchronous Programming in JavaScript

Asynchronous programming is a programming paradigm that allows a program to perform tasks without blocking the main thread.

- The program can continue to execute other tasks while waiting for the async task to complete.
- The async task is executed in the background by the browser.
- The JS engine will continue to execute the next task in the main thread.

Example 13-1: Get the user's geographical location

An example of async programming: getting the user's geographical location.

```
console.log('Start');  
// get the user's geographical location  
navigator.geolocation.getCurrentPosition(  
  position => console.log(position),    // callback function invoked by the Web API  
  err => console.log(err)  
);  
console.log('Finish');
```

When you run the above code in the browser, you will see the following output:

```
Start
Finish
// the user's geographical location or an error message
```

while the `navigator.geolocation.getCurrentPosition` function run in the background, the JS engine continues to execute the next task in the main thread.

```
> console.log('Start');
// get the user's geographical location
navigator.geolocation.getCurrentPosition(
  position => console.log(position), // callback function invoked by the Web API
  err => console.log(err)
);
console.log('Finish');
```

Start

Finish

< undefined

► *GeolocationPositionError {code: 1, message: 'User denied Geolocation'}*

2 JS Engine and Browser

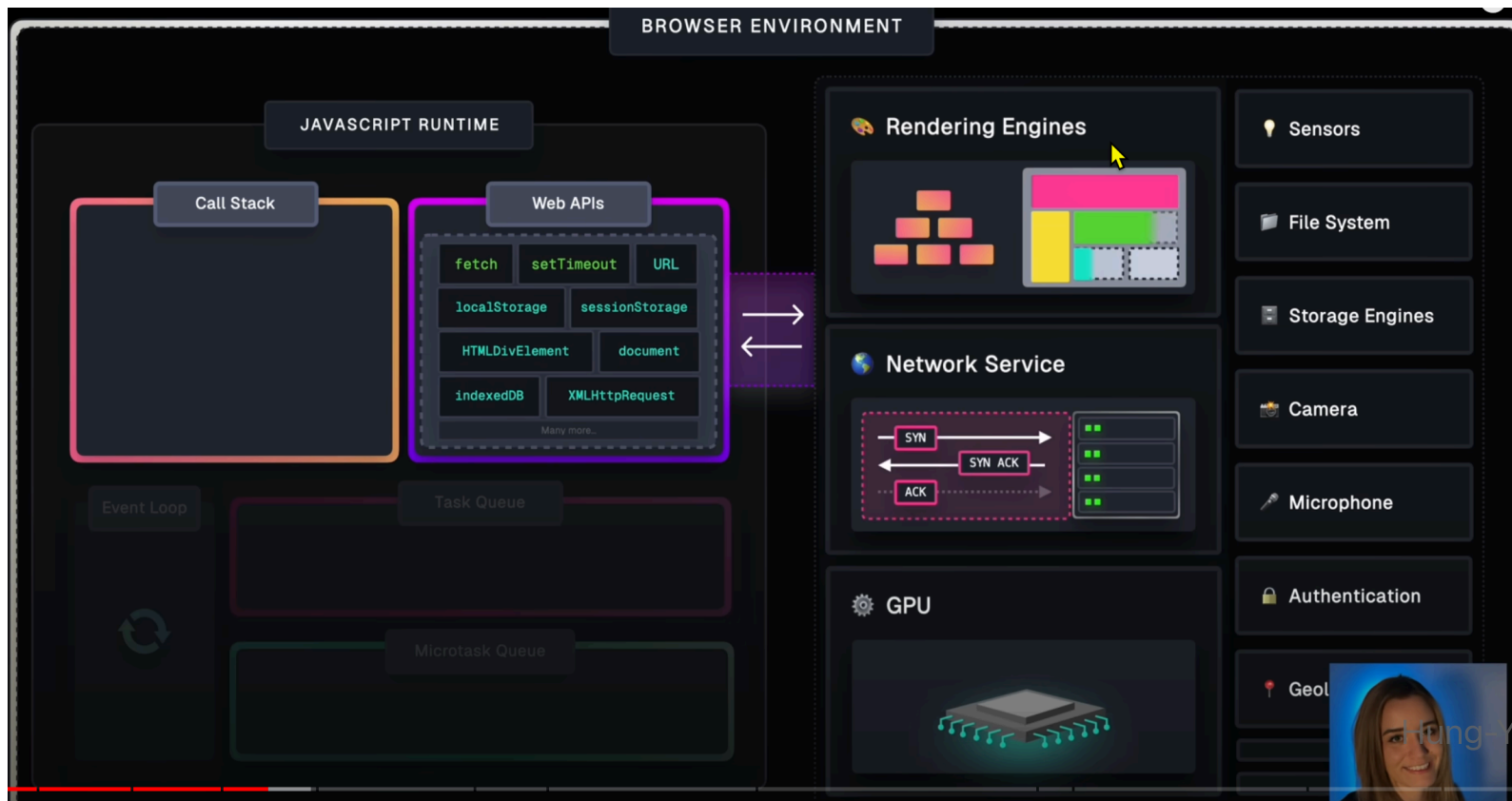
An interesting question arises from the above example:

- Who executes the task of getting the user's geographical location?
- Is it the JS engine or the browser?

3 JS engine and the browser are two different runtime environments.

A browser contains multiple engines to handle different tasks.

JavaScript Engine use Web APIs to use the services provided by the different engines.



The browser is implemented to have the multi-threaded capability.

So, the important concept to keep in mind:

- JS engine and the browser are two different runtime environments.

4 Asynchronous Programming

In JavaScript, concurrency is achieved through the use of asynchronous programming.

There are three ways to write asynchronous code in JavaScript:

- Callbacks
- Promises
- Async/Await

We will discuss each of them in the following slides.

5 Callbacks

Callbacks are functions passed as arguments to other functions.

- They are invoked by other functions.

An typical example of using callbacks is the `setTimeout` function.

- the `setTimeout` function is a Web API provided by the browser.

Example 13-2: Use the `setTimeout` function to delay the execution of a function

While the `setTimeout` function is running in the background by the browser, the JS engine continues to execute the next task in the main thread:

```
console.log('Hi there!');  
function greeting(waitTimeSeconds) {  
    console.log(`Sorry for the wait ${waitTimeSeconds} seconds.`)  
}  
setTimeout(greeting, 2000, 2); // async call; Execute the greeting function after 2 seconds  
console.log('Please wait');
```

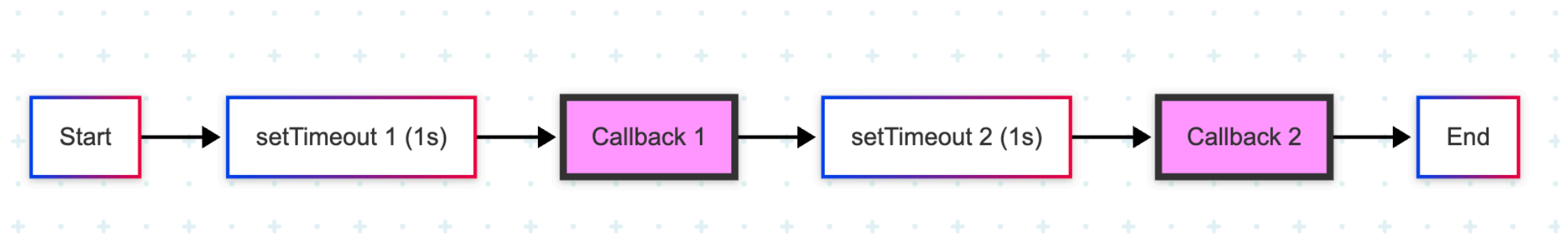
The outputs of the above code are:

```
Hi there!  
Please wait  
Sorry for the wait 2 seconds.
```

Callback Hell

When you want to execute multiple async tasks in a sequence by using callbacks, you need to nest the callback functions.

- The first callback function calls the second callback function.
 - The second callback function calls the third callback function.
 - continue nesting...



The nested callbacks leads to a problem called **callback hell**.

- make the code **hard to read and maintain**.

Example 13-3 : Logs messages every second for four seconds.

```
// ex_13_03.js
setTimeout(() => { // first callback
  console.log('First timeout');
  setTimeout(() => { // second callback
    console.log('Second timeout');
    setTimeout(() => { // third callback
      console.log('Third timeout');
      setTimeout(() => { // fourth callback
        console.log('Fourth timeout');
        // Continue nesting if needed
      }, 1000);
    }, 1000);
  }, 1000);
}, 1000);
```

The output of the above code is:

```
First timeout  
Second timeout  
Third timeout  
Fourth timeout
```

To avoid the callback hell, we can use Promises or Async/Await (covered later).

6 Lab 13-1

Lab: Understanding Callback Hell in JavaScript

7 Why Promises?

Promises are a better way to handle asynchronous tasks than callbacks.

- avoid from the callback hell.

8 Promises: How do they work?

An async function returns a **Promise** object when it completes its task.

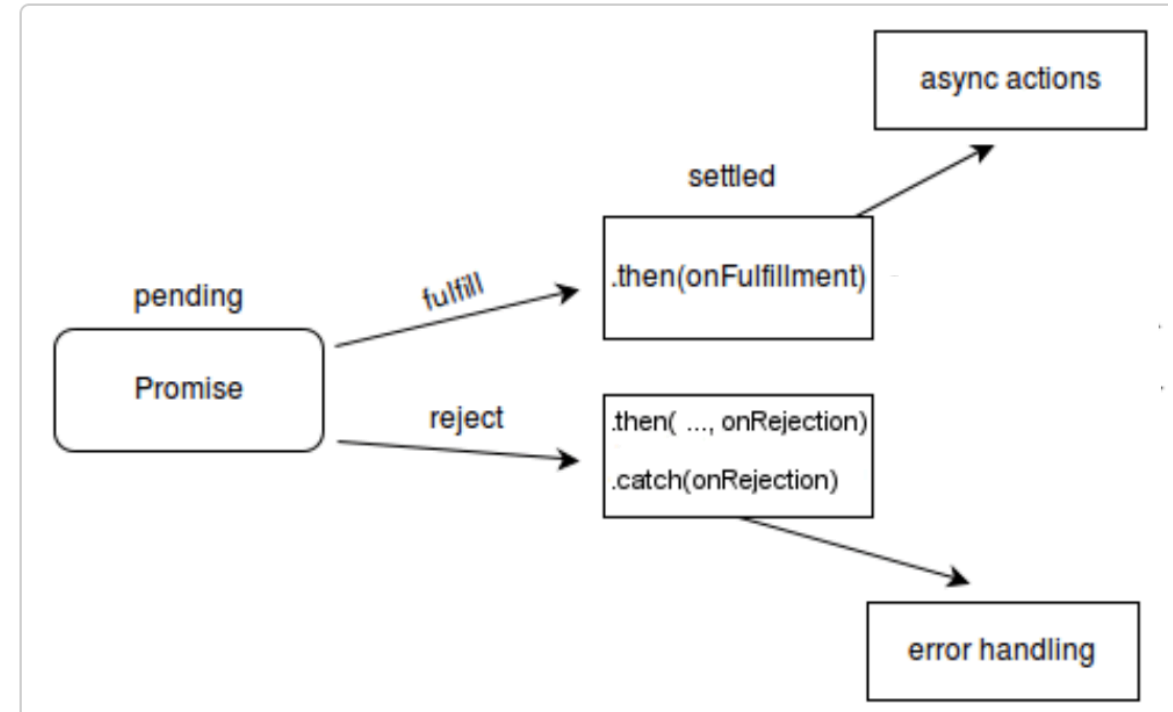
- (or the async function resolves the task and return the promise object as the result.)
- Then, the Promise object is placed in a special place called the **Microtask Queue** in JS engine.
- The **JS Engine** will find a suitable time to execute the callbacks associated with the promise object.

Recall the async function runs in the browser.

9 Use the Promise object

A Promise object has the following possible states:

- Pending
- Settled
 - Fulfilled or Rejected



- Pending: The initial state of the promise object.
 - imply the async task is not completed yet.
- Settled: The promise object is either fulfilled or rejected.
- Fulfilled: The promise object is resolved.
 - imply that the async task is completed successfully.
- Rejected: The promise object is rejected.
 - imply that the async task is failed.



10 Pattern to write an async function using the promise

1. Create a function that returns a new Promise object.
2. Pass an executor function as the argument to the `Promise` constructor.
 - the executor function will be called when the the JS engine construct the new Promise object.

3. The executor function has two parameters: `resolve` and `reject` .

- `resolve` is a function that resolves the promise object.
- `reject` is a function that rejects the promise object.

```
function asyncOperation() {  
  return new Promise((resolve, reject) => {  
    // code to execute the async task  
  
    // call resolve(value) to resolve the promise object  
    // call reject(reason) to reject the promise object  
  });  
}
```

4. Call the `resolve(value)` function to resolve the promise object.
 - The `value` can be another promise object.
 - The promise object will change to the fulfilled state after the `resolve` function is called.
5. Call the `reject(reason)` function to reject the promise object.
 - The `reason` is usually an error object.
 - The promise object will change to the rejected state after the `reject` function is called.

Example: Create a custom timeout function

You can also use the previous pattern to warp a non-promise function to a promise one:

```
function startTimeouts(msg) {  
  return new Promise((resolve, reject) => {  
    setTimeout(() => {  
      console.log(msg);  
      resolve();  
    }, 1000);  
  });  
}
```


11 How to handle the returned promise: the promise handler

- The async function returns a promise object.
- We need to register a (promise) handle to handle the settled promise (either resolved or rejected).

Register the resolved and rejected handlers

Resolved Handler:

- Use the `then` method of the Promise object to register the handler for the fulfilled promise.

```
promiseObject.then(onFulfilled_callback);
```

Rejected Handler:

- Use the `catch` method of the Promise object to register the handler for the rejected promise.

```
promiseObject.catch(onRejected_callback);
```

Example 13-4: Register a callback to handle the fulfilled promise

```
let fulfilledPromise = startTimeouts(2);  
fulfilledPromise.then(() => startTimeouts('Second timeout'))
```

Or, combine the two statements:

```
startTimeouts(2).then(() => startTimeouts('Second timeout'))
```

Note: the `startTimeouts` function is wrapped in a lambda function.

Example 13-X-3 Rewrite the nested callbacks using the Promise object

```
startTimeouts(2)
  // return a promise object
  .then(() => startTimeouts('First timeout'))
  // return another promise object
  .then(() => startTimeouts('Second timeout'))
  .catch(error => console.error('An error occurred:', error));
```

Lab 13-2

Lab: Rewrite the code in Lab 13-1 using the Promise object

12 Interacting with the browser with APIs

Fetch API

Use the [Fetch API](#) to fetch local or remote resources.

- e.g. get the data from a URL.
- The `request` object represents a resource request.
- The `response` object represents the response to the request.
- The `headers` object represents the HTTP headers of the request or response.

Syntax of the `fetch()` function

The syntax of the `fetch()` function is as follows:

```
fetch(url)
fetch(url, options)
```

- The `url` is the URL of the resource to fetch.
- the `options` is an optional object that contains the request options.
 - e.g. method, headers, body, etc.

Return value:

- The `fetch()` function returns a Promise object that resolves to the `response` object.

Example 13-5 : Use `fetch()` web API to get the data from a URL.

`fetch()` return a Promise object.

We register the handles using the `then` and `catch` methods of the Promise object.

```
fetch(url)
  // resolve the response object from the resolved promise object
  .then(response => {
    console.log("First handler for the fetch()'s promise")
    if (!response.ok) {
      throw new Error('Network response was not ok');
    }
    // response.text() is async fun.
    // It returns a promise that resolves with the response body
    return response.text();
  })
```

Continue from the last `then` method:

```
// resolve the response body from the promise object
.then(data => {
    console.log("Second handler for the response.text()'s promise");
    // data is the response body
    console.log('Data fetched:', data);
})
// catch the error from the promise object
.catch(error => {
    console.error('Error fetching data:', error);
});
```

Test your code with the url: `https://jsonplaceholder.typicode.com/posts/1`

The above code will print the response body of the URL to the console.

```
Fetching data from https://jsonplaceholder.typicode.com/posts/1
Please wait for the data to be fetched...
First handler for the fetch()'s promise
Second handler for the response.json()'s promise
Data fetched: {
  userId: 1,
  id: 1,
  title: 'sunt aut facere repellat provident occaecati excepturi optio reprehenderit',
  body: 'quia et suscipit\n' +
    'suscipit recusandae consequuntur expedita et cum\n' +
    'reprehenderit molestiae ut ut quas totam\n' +
    'nostrum rerum est autem sunt rem eveniet architecto'
}
```

13 Lab 13-3:

Fetch data from a URL and show the first N characters of the response body

14 Chain Promises

Promise objects are **thenable** objects

- Each Promise object has a `then` method that can return a new Promise object.
- The `then` method returning a new Promise object can be chained with another `then` method.
- This allows developers to control the flow of the asynchronous tasks.
 - Think the chained `then` method as a sequence of operations on returned Promise objects.

Patterns to chain Promise objects

Two patterns to chain Promise objects:

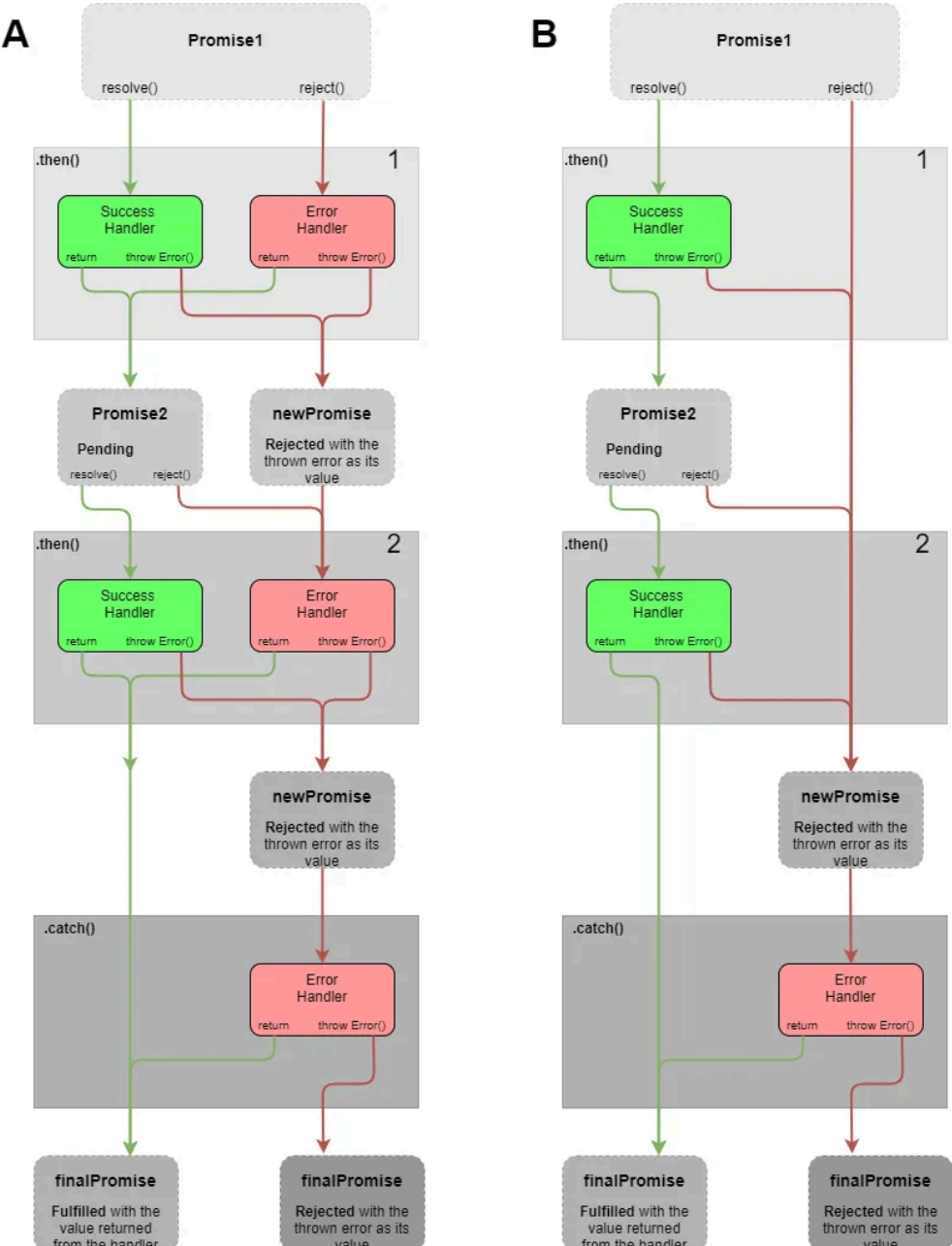
- Pattern A: Separated error handler for each Promise object.
- Pattern B: A single error handler for all Promise objects.

Pattern A: Separated error handler for each Promise object.

Feature:

- Go through all the `then` methods even if a Promise object is rejected.

```
promiseObject
  .then(onFulfilled_callback1, onRejected_callback1)
  .then(onFulfilled_callback2, onRejected_callback2)
  ...
  .catch(onRejected_callbackN);
```



- Rejected Promise object are handled by the `onRejected_callback` function in the `then` method.
 - must return a resolved Promise to continue the chain.
- The `catch` method is used to handle the rejected Promise object that is not handled by the `then` method.
 - The last barrier in the chain.

Example 13-X-1: Separated error handler for each Promise object

Assume there are three async functions: `firstTask`, `secondTask`, and `thirdTask`.

The `secondTask` function returns a rejected Promise object.

We want to run the three tasks in sequence and handle the errors separately.

```
firstTask()
  .then(result => secondTask(result),
        () => {
            console.log('Error in second task');
        }) // The anonymous function returns a promise
  .then(result => thirdTask(result), error => {
        console.log('Error:', error);
        // return a resolved promise for the next then
        return Promise.resolve(error + 1);
    })
  .then(result => {
        console.log('All tasks completed, final result:', result);
    }, error => {
        console.log('Error in third task', error);
    })
  .catch(error => {
        console.error('Final catch:', error);
    });
```

The output of the above code is:

```
'First task: resolved.'  
'Second task: rejected'  
[ 'Error in second task:', 2 ]  
[ 'The last then, final result:', 3 ]
```

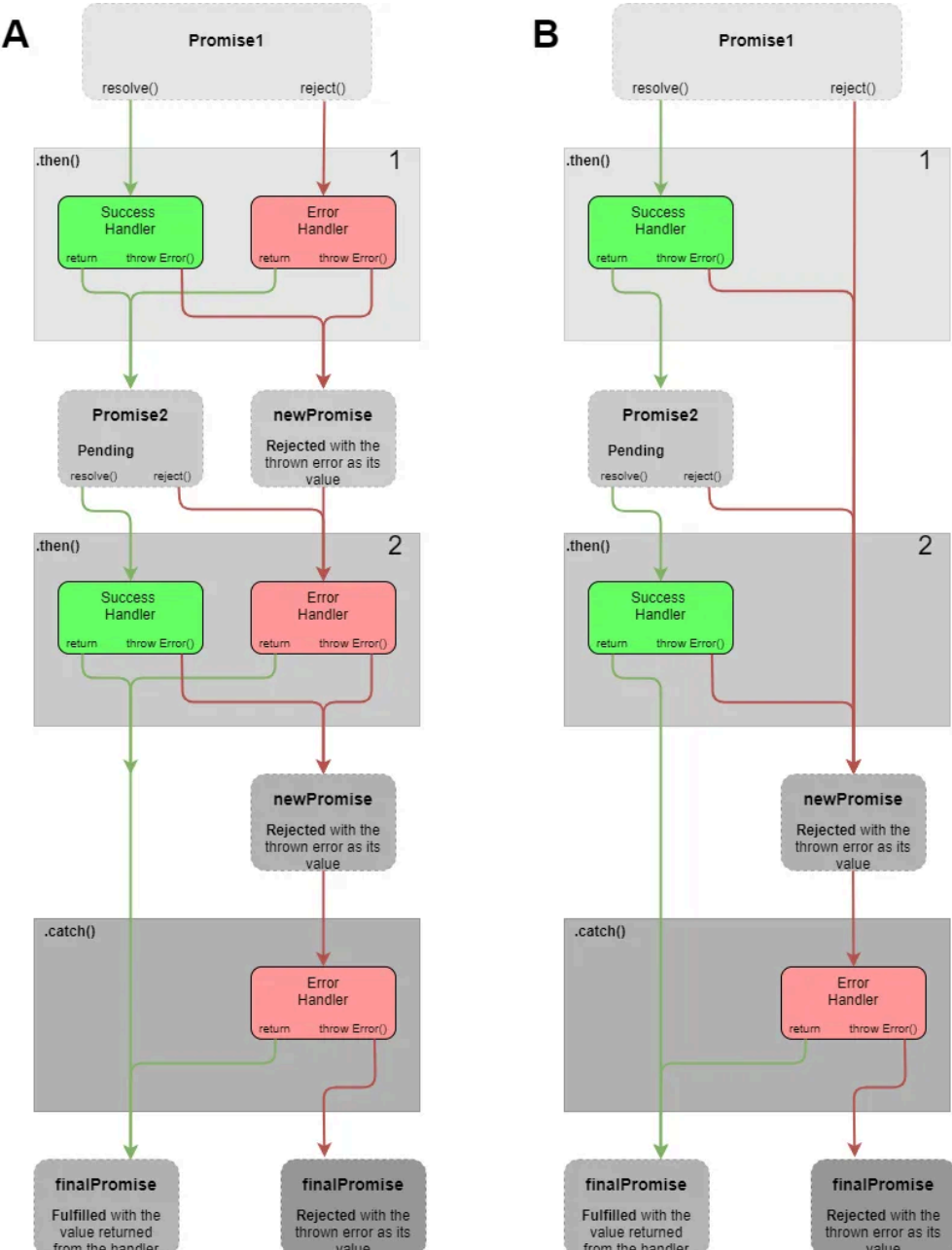
See example: [promise_chain_pattern_A.js](#)

Pattern B: A single error handler for all Promise objects.

Feature: Any one of the rejected Promise objects stops the whole chain.

```
promiseObject
  .then(onFulfilled_callback1)
  .then(onFulfilled_callback2)
  ...
  .catch(onRejected_callback);
```

- The rejected Promise object go to the `catch` method directly.
- The `onRejected_callback` function is skipped in the `then` method.



Example 13-X-2: A single error handler for all Promise objects

Assume there are three async functions: `firstTask`, `secondTask`, and `thirdTask`.

The `secondTask` function returns a rejected Promise object.

```
firstTask()
  .then(result => secondTask(result))
  .then(result => thirdTask(result))
  .then(result => {
    console.log('The last then. final result:', result);
  })
  .catch( error => {
    console.error('Final catch:', error);
  });
```

The output of the above code is:

```
'First task: resolved.'
'Second task: rejected'
[ 'Final catch:', 2 ]
```

15 Summary

- JavaScript is single-threaded but achieves concurrency through asynchronous programming.
- Asynchronous programming allows tasks to run without blocking the main thread.
- Callbacks are the basic way to handle async tasks but can lead to "callback hell" due to nested functions.
- Promises provide a cleaner, more manageable way to handle asynchronous operations and avoid callback hell.
- Promise objects have three states: pending, fulfilled, and rejected.



- The `then` and `catch` methods are used to handle fulfilled and rejected promises, respectively.
- Promises can be chained to control the sequence of asynchronous tasks, with different patterns for error handling.
- The Fetch API is a modern way to interact with remote resources and returns a Promise.
- Understanding the difference between the JS engine and browser environment is crucial for working with async code.
- Using Promises and chaining improves code readability and maintainability in asynchronous JavaScript.

References

1. [Promise\(\) constructor - JavaScript | MDN](#)
2. [async function - JavaScript | MDN](#)

