

Project 1, Part 2 – Game Design Document

Title: The Vault

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Genre: Puzzle, Adventure

Player mode: Single

What is the goal of the game? Explore a dungeon to find keys to open doors and progress.

Describe the game “board” on which this game will be played: The game consists of 4 main rooms with locked doors connecting them. In each room there is a key that unlocks the door to another room. Ultimately, the player will find all four keys and can unlock the final door, which ends the game.

Describe the initial set up employed by this game: The player will start in a central room with 4 locked doors leading off in different directions. There is a single key in this room as well as in the other rooms. There is also a torch in the eastern room, which enables the player to see hidden keys.

Describe the rules of the game: The player can freely move around each room by clicking the left mouse button and inspect objects by hitting the ‘E’ key. This key also enables the player to pick up objects and enter passageways.

What scoring system will be used by the game? There is no quantitative scoring system. The player progresses by finding keys and unlocking doors. Finding all the keys, however, can be thought of as achieving the highest score.

Will time be a factor in this game? No, the player has no time restriction to move about each room.

What will constitute a win in this game? A win is currently escaping the dungeon by finding all the keys and unlocking the final door (north of the player’s initial position).

What will constitute a loss in this game? Currently, there is no loss condition.

How long should each playing session of this game last? Ideally the game would propose more of a challenge from room to room, with the player having to search various objects or solve some sort of trivial puzzle. However, in its current state, a run though should take merely a few minutes or less.

What will a player gain from playing this game? Ideally the game will provide some sort of immersion for the player to imagine their surroundings and feel an aspect of mystery. This will promote a want to explore and “beat” the game, ultimately providing satisfaction if they can accomplish this. This is accomplished with the introduction text as well as the win condition text, but ideally there would be more venues to express the environment and story.

What will draw the player into the game and keep them playing? At the moment, honestly, there isn’t much to hook the player besides the aforementioned mysterious nature of the game’s setting. Ideally, after further development, each room would provide an interesting challenge that is enjoyable to overcome.

List games that are similar to this game: Diablo (random floor spawn, dungeon-crawling), Any escape mini (Flash) game (puzzle solving, creative thinking), Zork (text adventure), Any adventure games (using items).

Production Notes (Problems with development):

I’ll admit that I’ve overlooked gameplay by focusing more on graphics and building a platform to improve upon. With the time I’ve spent on the game, which has not been trivial, I’ve set up an environment which is largely unpopulated by gameplay elements and constructed a small set of original artwork. The code would support relatively easy addition of more item types, rooms, events, and content. What I failed to realize in the beginning is that each of these entities takes a while to construct with little payoff to the core gameplay. As an example of this, I spent many hours trying to develop a player character sprite with walking animations. Ultimately, it looked terrible, the animations did not perform correctly, and the gameplay was not improved at all (with or without a player graphic).

I should have focused more on a fun game mechanic which would be easy to implement, and then add additional frills later. Instead I got caught up in the trying to invent an interesting story and environment where ultimately there wouldn’t be much of a “game” to play. I do believe that with more time, this could become an interesting “short story” of a game, but it may be more beneficial to spend that time on a new project.

With this knowledge, I am excited to begin on the next project and I can develop a more fun game to play.