**Final Portfolio Webpage: Design Process**

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When I was first thinking about this portfolio project, I knew I wanted to do something involving online mysteries and hidden secrets. The goal was to have the user interact with a series of pages that connected to reveal something hidden. As I mentioned in my project proposal, I was inspired by online puzzle games like Notpron as well as hypertext narratives like 17776.

My first iteration of the website was all about how to make that “puzzle” aspect work. Some of the ideas I chose not to implement included:

* Leaving hidden messages that required the user to highlight over them
* Putting messages in HTML code that would require the user to access inspect element
* Using JavaScript to report hidden codes to the inspect element console
* Making long chains of hyperlinks, almost like a maze of sorts

Ultimately, while many of these ideas were fun to mess around with, they all hindered user accessibility significantly and would make it harder to generally navigate. This isn’t inherently a bad thing, depending on the context; however, I didn’t think I would be able to pull it off very well within the scope of this class.

Instead, I decided to go with a flashlight on hover effect on the main webpage in order to create a feeling of discovery while also leaving a hidden code using the website’s page title/title tag. A user would be able to discover this code by revealing a hidden message that encouraged the reader to check out the title of every webpage they found.

The first draft of the website is very similar to the final draft, albeit much less polished due to not knowing about P5JS at the time. The flashlight effect was pretty much just copied and minimally changed from a JavaScript tutorial and did not work very well with different browsers. Additionally, the input box on the main page did not allow you to press enter to proceed.

The biggest revision by far was the flashlight. My second iteration also used copied P5JS code, although I was able to modify it more since I knew what I was doing the second time around. This iteration used the “spotLight()” function along with a black rectangle to reveal text in a similar but much more fluid manner. There was only one problem: *The text wasn’t getting revealed when hovered over*. I spent a total of about 5 or 6 hours just tweaking this only for it to not work. So, I decided to start again from scratch and try making a successful flashlight effect myself.

My third and final iteration used the erase() function to delete a circular portion of the canvas, revealing text underneath (which worked this time). Additionally, I added two white circles with varying transparency to simulate a flashlight. Finally, I added a set of variables and conditions to check if the user’s cursor was on the canvas element. If so, it would allow them to enable/disable the flashlight by clicking; otherwise, it would prevent the flashlight function from running. This means that if a user wanted to click the input bar to type text, the flashlight effect would not toggle outside of the canvas itself.

The biggest issue with this third iteration of the flashlight was that the canvas element would not load before the HTML text, resulting in everything being clearly seen for the first few seconds while the website was loading. I was able to fix this by adding a gray loading screen for a few seconds so that the canvas element would have enough time to load.

Finally, I did a bit of cleanup and beautification to the input box and button on the main page but chose to leave the other pages alone for the most part. I also added some periods to simulate stars/specks so that the darkness of the page was a little less overbearing. Overall, I felt that these additions really helped refine the final design and improve the user experience.

Looking back on the project, I think I did well for someone whose first foray into HTML/CSS/JS was this class. My only prior experience had been casually messing with website elements as a kid by editing words in inspect element just for fun. If I do decide to continue working with these tools, I definitely want to try making a hypertext narrative or puzzle using what I know.