

Mnemosyne

CRWR 310 Narrative Design Slide Deck

Premise

Mnemosyne is a stylized 3D platformer, where the player is a **prisoner who wakes up in Mnemosyne**, the prison of memory.

They remember nothing, though they suspect they had a life outside of Mnemosyne.

Afraid of dying, they try to escape, regaining their lost memories as they do.

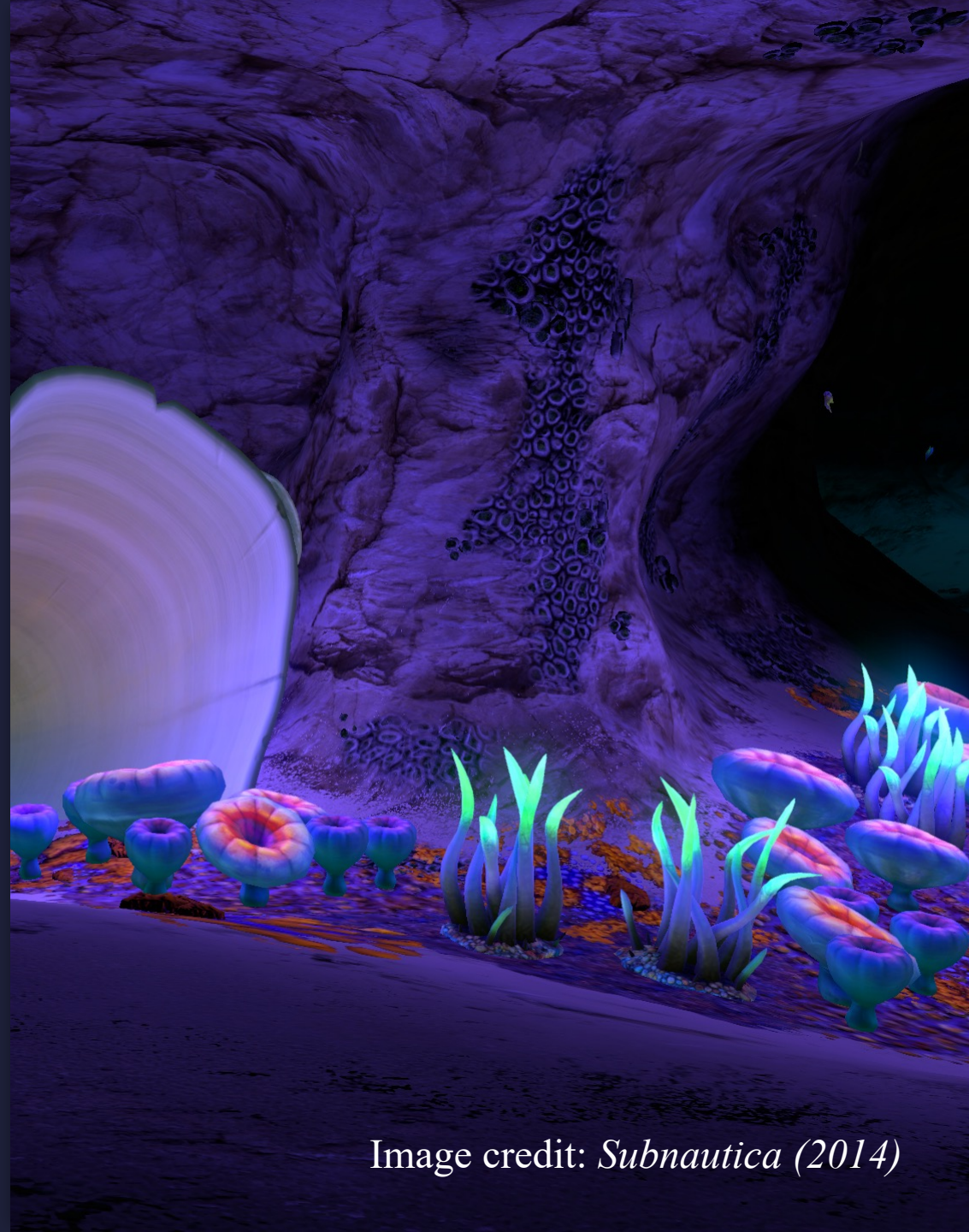


Image credit: *Subnautica* (2014)

”Mnemosyne ”

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Setting and Antagonist

- **Mnemosyne** is a sentient prison looking like a **massive trench in the deep sea**.
- Incoming prisoners are stripped of their memories, eventually fading due to lack of memory.
- Memories are scattered throughout Mnemosyne as glowing fish.
- Prison patrolled by the **Benthos**, twisted monstrosities shaped like deep-sea organisms that act as Mnemosyne’s wardens.
- The prison can take control of them and does later in the game as it tries to stop the player.
- To access later areas, players must:
 - Obtain a certain amount of memories in the previous area.
 - Complete a special quest where they get a particular memory while trying to cross the barrier between the layers.

Themes and Concept

- Game explores topics of **identity loss, complex morality, and how to cope with an imperfect self.**
- Escaping the prison by ascending towards the surface = metaphor for self-discovery (recovering memories) and becoming better (moving towards light).
- Deep sea and surface = “unconscious” and “conscious” mind.
- Intended as psychological horror (i.e. deep sea and darkness, horrifying sea monsters, prison as uncaring authoritarian force).

Player Character - “The Prisoner”

- Has no name, is simply called “the prisoner.”
- Before the prison, was a parent of two children who fished to support them.
- Murdered both their children to spare them from dying of hunger during a famine.
- One day, while out fishing, was caught in a massive storm, where two Benthos appeared to bring them to Mnemosyne as punishment for infanticide.
- **Tool – Fishhook**
 - A manifestation of their will to escape.
 - Can break objects, grapple onto certain points, disorient enemies.
 - Two main upgrades:
 - Grapple hook - obtained from the Angler Guide in the Deep Dark.
 - Disorient enemies - Obtained from Sias in the Twilight Zone. Grapple hook needed to access

Plot Part 1 – Deep Dark

- The protagonist wakes up in Mnemosyne. They're rescued from Benthos by the Angler Guide, who explains they will die because they have no memories. The protagonist resolves to escape by gathering enough memory to carve a passage to the Twilight Zone.
- They encounter a child prisoner with no memory like them. The child doesn't want to leave, but the protagonist doesn't want to leave them behind, so they bring him with them.
- As the protagonist is carving the passage, Mnemosyne sends more Benthos to stop them, but they're able to escape just in time.

Plot Part 2 –Twilight Zone

- The protagonist moves through the Twilight Zone, seeking their lost memories as they do.
- They find another memories, but the child doesn't want to go after it because of the Benthos surrounding it. Desperate, the protagonist ignores him and rushes for it. In trying to reach them, the child is killed.
- The protagonist discovers the memory is them with their own children.
- Heartbroken, the protagonist lets the memory go. It turns into a glowing fish and swims away. They're compelled to follow it; it reveals a small passage, made by escapees before them, towards the Sunlit.

Plot Part 3 – The Sunlit

- The protagonist holds a funeral for the child.
- They find another two memories – them killing their children and their imprisonment in Mnemosyne. They resolve now to escape in memory of their children.
- Mnemosyne wakes up fully to stop the protagonist. They use their rediscovered memories – as well as the memories of their allies and experiences – to counter the final stretch towards the top of the prison.
- At the end of it all, the player breaks through the surface of a massive sea. With no sight of land, the player picks a direction and begins swimming with purpose.

NPC 1 – “The Angler Guide”

- Found in the **Deep Dark**.
- Saves player from pack of Benthos after they leave tutorial area.
- **Gives info about Mnemosyne and helps the player discover their tool.**
- **Doesn’t remember anything about who they were** and is slowly crumbling as a result. However, they’re not upset about their imprisonment.
- Before sacrificing themselves for the player to escape, they confess they feel they deserve their imprisonment, encouraging the player to do better and escape.





NPC 2 – “Sias”

- Found in the **Twilight Zone**.
- Has regained some memories about who he was, hence why he knows his name.
- He and his lover tried to escape Mnemosyne but were stopped by a pack of Benthos, which were controlled by the prison itself unbeknownst to Sias.
- Lover was murdered and Sias was thrown into the depths, his leg broken, rendering him unable to climb.
- Retrieving his lover’s corpse grants the player the disorient enemies tool upgrade. Sias will also invite the player to mourn his lover with him in a funeral together.

NPC 3 – “Blinder Grunt”

- Found in the Sunlit.
- A low-ranking member of the Blinders, a cult in the Sunlit layer who “enforce” Mnemosyne’s will by throwing people who want to escape into the Deep Dark.
- Doubts the cult’s ideology, followed it because it made sense given their own memory loss.
- Feature in a quest where the player can work to throw the Blinders into the Deep Dark themselves.
- Later thanks the player for helping them realize it may be worth escaping Mnemosyne themselves.