Purpose and Description:

Sanzu is a 2.5D video game where the player plays the role of an investigator who is trying to locate and resolve a spiritual disturbance at a Japanese shrine near the legendary Sanzu River. Upon finding a mystic orb in the heart of the shrine, the player is transported to the spirit realm. There, they must use the orb to defend against waves of vengeful spirits who propel tiring negative energy as well as solve tricky puzzles to return to the mortal realm. Throughout all of this, the player uncovers the whereabouts of the mysterious Dr. Mori whose research notes offer both guidance towards the player and clues towards the hostile state of the spirit realm.

The ultimate goal of Sanzu is to interest players in Japanese culture and mythology via the familiar medium of an adventure video game. Aspects of that culture such as shrines and the afterlife are not only depicted but also integrated into the core of the game. The Sanzu River for example is a key part of the story as the removal of its bridge leads to the hostile spirits found within the game, and the gameplay itself is heavily influenced by the Japanese Danmaku genre. Overall, this game aims to inspire the player to learn Japanese culture through motivated investigations of their own.

Target Audience:

Our target audience centers around those from older generations who grew up with old-school adventure games on consoles like the Nintendo DS or the Game Boy and younger audiences who enjoy such a style. As such, our game mirrors much of the stylistic choices of the era such as the top-down perspective the player sees the game at and the pixel-art graphics. This is in order to replicate this older style to give older players nostalgia for the experience that they might have had decades prior.

How to Play:

The game consists of three levels. In each, spirits will attempt to hit the player using balls of negative energy in various ways. In order for the player to defend, they can dissipate the energy using their Yin-Yang orbs as shields or by hiding behind objects placed within the levels. If the player is hit by too much negative energy, they must restart at the latest Save Statue. The player can also expel the spirits by throwing the orbs at them until their spirit energy depletes. Orbs must be picked back up once thrown by moving near them or by using a Recall Statue. Once all spirits in an area are removed, barriers obstructing the path will be lifted, allowing the player to continue down the level (although select areas allow the player to bypass the spirits).

Level Specific Gameplay:

In the first level, the courtyard immediately outside the shrine will contain too many enemies to effectively defend against. Thus, the player must run through the courtyard (using SPACE) to exit the level instead of attempting to throw orbs at the enemies.

In the second level, puzzles are additionally present. These contain buttons that can be pressed using thrown orbs and bridges that activate when a button of the same color is pressed. The player must cleverly use their two orbs to activate bridges and use Recall Statues to reach the exit of each puzzle with both orbs in tow.

At the end of the third level, the player must defeat the Core's self defense mechanisms. The Core uses many forms of energy to weaken the player. The player also must throw orbs at the Core to disable its self defense mechanisms.

Control Functions:

Movement:

This game uses standard WASD controls for movement. The "W" key moves the player up, the "A" key moves the player left, the "S" key moves the player down, and the "D" key moves the player right. The player can move faster by holding SPACE or SHIFT.

Yin-Yang Orbs:

To aim the Yin-Yang orb, put the CURSOR in the direction that you want the orb to be facing (additional orbs revolve around the player). Holding down LEFT-CLICK on the mouse charges up the orb in order to throw it. Subsequently releasing the LEFT-CLICK button throws the orb in the direction of the CURSOR with the speed and power of the orb increasing the longer the button was held down. A small, pink indicator shows where the orb will land. Once the player has no more orbs, orbs must be picked up by walking near them in order to be thrown again.
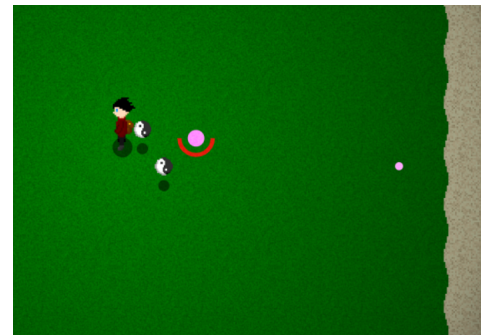
Far-Sight:

To turn far-sight on, press "X". Then using the WASD keys allows for the screen to be moved in order to see far away areas with ease. While far-sight is enabled, the player is still able to throw orbs using the mouse, but is unable to move. Pressing "X" once more turns far-sight off.

Dialogue/Statues/Notes:

To advance the dialog text, press "E". The "E" key is also used at Save Statues to set the place at which the player respawns when they lose, at Recall Statues to retrieve all orbs, and at Notes to read them.

PRESS X TO TOGGLE FARSIGHT MODE