

Playtesting Log

07/03/2024

- Found that we needed a designated home space to start as there was none on the board
- The game board needed labelled spots for the card placements since it was confusing where all of the suits were when they are all face down
- Decided we needed territory cards to make the counting and exchanging of territories easier and reduce the number of cards in a player's hands. We also found it confusing exchanging pairs of numbers and keeping them together.
- Players can only use two heart cards during a battle. Otherwise, the heart cards are way too powerful and players were only going for them instead of the diamonds for the shop
- The loser of a battle takes a heart card from the winner and discards it from play. This adds a bit more luck to the game as the loser could potentially pull the highest value heart card from the winner, significantly reducing their power in later turns.
- Decided it made more sense that clubs were armour/weapons and not armies and are to be purchased from the shop. This was partially a thematic change but also helped clarify and separate the territories from the clubs. Also we did not believe it made sense for a player to be able to buy an army or territory.
- Instead of having fixed prices for the weapons, you can just exchange an x of diamonds for an x of clubs or a z of diamonds for a z of clubs but not a z of diamonds for an x of clubs. This makes diamonds significantly more valuable as long as players are able to land on the shops since it can bolster their forces greatly
- Decided to make the world more fictional rather than inspired by the real world since thematically the game was getting mixed up and the game already has very colonialist rules so making the world fictional would lessen the moral concerns as well
- roll the two battle dice twice for a total of 4d6 to make the battles more chance based and to make it possible for the underdog to pull through
- You can use as many clubs as you want so that the diamonds and clubs are worth more
- The plague card was changed to minus 10 since minus 5 didn't feel like it made enough of a difference, especially when rolling 4d6 during combat
- players cannot battle a player immediately after losing as they are already in a weakened state and battling them immediately would be far too punishing and could lead to 'bullying'
- Gameplay lasted around 90 minutes but could easily go faster if we weren't spending as much time discussing rules and making changes

07/10/2024

- Gameplay changes made in the last playtest session were put into use during this playtest
- Decided to tell the players in the rules to discard the jokers to avoid confusion down the line during play
- Because we only had one regular sized deck of cards, we had to use a spare mini deck which surprisingly did not affect gameplay too much which means that in the event that cards are lost or damaged, substitutes can be used without much change in the gameplay.
- Some clear dominant strategies revealed themselves during play, primarily the goal of collecting as many heart cards and diamonds/clubs as possible before initiating battles.
- Despite the dominant strategies being used, the gameplay was still relatively balanced and some players who had become very powerful were still able to be beaten and made less powerful
- Luck definitely played a large part in the outcome of the game however keen players could remember what cards were being used and if opponents were consistently using their most powerful cards, they could strategise and collect more/better cards before taking them on in a battle.
- Luck was seemingly offsetted by the inclusion of two decks during play as it increased the likelihood of players getting strong cards. Some players started very weak and then got much more powerful as the game progressed while others started very strong but got weaker over time.
- Half to 3/4 of the way through the game we ran out of hearts and diamonds which meant that the only available options for players was to battle each other. If we had placed discarded cards back into play the game could last significantly longer. Running out of cards puts a needed time constraint on gameplay length.
- Game went much smoother during this round of play, many of the changes made in the last session were effective at reducing complexity and made the game more fun.
- Gameplay lasted around 90 minutes again but it seems that depending on the strategies used and more importantly, the luck of the draw, the game could have lasted much longer (despite running out of hearts and diamond cards), or been much shorter.