

COMP2012 Object-Oriented Programming and Data Structures

Topic 10: rvalue Reference and Move Semantics

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Standard for Programming Language C++ Section 3.10

- An Ivalue (so called, historically, because Ivalues could appear on the left-hand side of an assignment expression) designates a function or an object.
 - Example: If E is an expression of pointer type, then *E is an Ivalue expression
 referring to the object or function to which E points. As another example, the result
 of calling a function whose return type is an Ivalue reference is an Ivalue.
- An xvalue (an "eXpiring" value) also refers to an object, usually near the
 end of its lifetime (so that its resources may be moved, for example). An
 xvalue is the result of certain kinds of expressions involving rvalue references.
 - Example: The result of calling a function whose return type is an rvalue reference is an xvalue.
- A glvalue ("generalized" lvalue) is an Ivalue or an xvalue.
- An rvalue (so called, historically, because rvalues could appear on the right-hand side of an assignment expressions) is an xvalue, a temporary object or subobject thereof, or a value that is not associated with an object.
- A prvalue ("pure" rvalue) is an rvalue that is not an xvalue.
 - Example: The result of calling a function whose return type is not a reference is a prvalue. The value of a literal such as 12, 7.3e5, or true is also a prvalue.

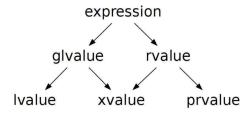
Review: Ivalue & rvalue of a Variable

- A variable is a symbolic name assigned to some memory storage.
- The difference between a variable and a literal constant is that a variable is addressable. E.g., x = 100; x is a variable and 100 is a literal constant; x has an address and 100 doesn't.
- A variable has dual roles, depending on where it appears.

$$x = x + 1;$$

- Ivalue: its location (read-write)
- prvalue (pure rvalue) [C++11]: its value (read-only)

```
int x;  // OK
4 = 1;  // Error! Why?
(x + 10) = 6; // Error! Why?
```



Part I

Temporary Objects and rvalue References



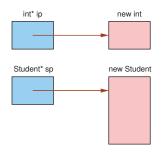
Unnamed Objects I: Dynamically Allocated Objects/Values

Syntax: Pointer Variable Definition

T* <variable> = <dynamic object>;

Examples of Pointers

int* ip = new int;
Word* wp = new Word;
Student* sp = new Student;



Dynamic objects allocated and returned by the new operator are unnamed. You need to use pointers to hold them.

- Dynamic objects are managed by the heap.
- If you lose all pointers to a dynamic object, you lose the object resulting in a memory leak.

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Before C++11: const T&

Syntax before C++11

const T& <variable> = <temporary object>;

- In the past, you may prolong the life of a temporary object by assigning it to a const reference.
- You can't modify a temporary object through its const reference because a temporary object is considered as an rvalue.
- Now C++11 allows you to create a rvalue reference to hold temporary objects so that you may explicitly manipulate them in some safe ways.
- Once created as an alias of a temporary object, an rvalue reference variable is just like a regular lvalue variable: it has both the roles of lvalue or prvalue of the temporary object, depending on where it is used.

Unnamed Objects II: Temporary Objects/Values

Syntax: rvalue Reference Definition

T&& <variable> = <temporary object>;

Temporary objects/values are another kind of unnamed objects/values created automatically on the stack during

{TO1} const reference initialization

{TO2} argument passing (e.g., type conversion)

{TO3} function returned value (by copying)

{TO4} evaluation of expressions (e.g., result of sub-expressions)

- Temporary objects are managed by the stack.
- They are destructed automatically by the stack when they are no longer needed.
- An rvalue reference is an alias of a temporary object/value.

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Temporary Values 1, 3, 4 with Basic Types

```
/* File: TO-int.cpp */
    #include <iostream>
    using namespace std;
    int square(int x) { return x*x; }
    void cbv(int x) { cout << "call-by-value: " << x << endl; }</pre>
    void cbr(int& x) { cout << "call-by-ref: " << x << endl; }</pre>
    void cbcr(const int& x) { cout << "call-by-const-ref: " << x << endl; }</pre>
    int main()
9
10
        int a = 3;
11
                                    // Error! Why?
12
        int \& b = 4;
13
        const int& c = 5;
                                    // T01: const ref initialization
        int d = square(3);
                                     // TO3: function returned value
14
        int e = a + c + d;
                                     // TO4: result of sub-expression
15
16
        cbv(a):
                                     // OK: int x = a
                                    // OK: int& x = a
17
        cbr(a):
        cbr(8);
                                    // Error: int& x = 8
18
        cbcr(8); return 0;
                                    // T01: const int& x = 8
19
20 }
```

- Ivalue reference only binds to another Ivalue.
- const Ivalue reference accepts an rvalue because a temporary value is created which can be referenced (lines #13, #19).

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Class Word: word h I

```
#include <iostream>
                              /* File: word.h */
    #include <cstring>
    using namespace std;
    class Word
      private:
         int freq = 0;
         char* str = nullptr;
10
11
      public:
         Word() { cout << "default constructor" << endl; }</pre>
12
13
         Word(const char* s, int f = 1) : freq(f), str(new char [strlen(s)+1])
14
             { strcpy(str, s); cout << "conversion: "; print(); }
15
         Word(const Word& w) : freq(w.freq), str(new char [strlen(w.str)+1])
             { strcpy(str, w.str); cout << "copy: "; print(); }
18
19
         ~Word() { cout << "destructor: "; print(); delete [] str; }</pre>
20
21
         void print() const
22
23
             { cout << (str ? str : "null") << " ; " << freq << endl; }
24
```

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Temporary Objects with User-defined Types: TO-word.cpp

```
#include "word.h"
                            /* File: TO-word.cpp */
    void print_word(const Word& x)
        cout << "<<\n"; x.print(); cout << ">>>\n";
    int main()
9
        const Word& w1 = "batman";
                                       // T01: const ref initialization
10
        w1.print();
11
        print_word("superman");
                                       // TO2: argument passing
12
13
        Word w2 = w1.to_upper_case(); // T03: function returned value
14
        w2.print();
15
        ((w1 + " or ") + w2).print(); // TO4: result of sub-expression
16
17
        cout << "\n*** It's all destructions now ***" << endl:</pre>
        return 0;
    } /* g++ -std=c++11 -fno-elide-constructors TO-word.cpp */
```

Class Word: word.h II

```
Word operator+(const Word& w) const
26
            cout << "\n~~~ " << str << " + " << w.str << " ~~~\n";
            Word x;
                            // Which constructor?
            x.freq = freq + w.freq;
31
            x.str = new char [strlen(str) + strlen(w.str) + 1];
            strcpy(x.str, str);
            strcat(x.str, w.str);
                             // How is x returned?
35
            return x:
        }
36
37
38
        Word to_upper_case() const
40
            Word x(*this); // Which constructor?
41
42
            for (char* p = x.str; *p != '\0'; p++)
                 *p += 'A' - 'a';
                            // How is x returned?
            return x;
46
47
   };
```

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TO-word.cpp Output

```
~~~ batman + or ~~~
conversion: batman; 1
batman ; 1
                               default constructor
conversion: superman; 1
                               copy: batman or ; 2
<<<
                               destructor: batman or ; 2
superman; 1
                               ~~~ batman or + BATMAN ~~~
destructor: superman; 1
                               default constructor
copy: batman ; 1
                               copy: batman or BATMAN; 3
                               destructor: batman or BATMAN; 3
copy: BATMAN ; 1
                               batman or BATMAN : 3
destructor: BATMAN ; 1
copy: BATMAN ; 1
                               destructor: batman or BATMAN; 3
destructor: BATMAN ; 1
                               destructor: batman or ; 2
BATMAN: 1
                               destructor: or ; 1
conversion: or ; 1
                               *** It's all destructions now ***
                               destructor: BATMAN ; 1
                               destructor: batman ; 1
```

Temporary Objects of User-defined Types: Remarks

- Temporary Word objects are created on lines #10, #12, #14, and #16.
- On lines #10 and #12, C-strings are converted to temporary Word objects which are then bound to the const Word&.
- w1.to_upper_case() returns a temporary Word object that is copied to w2.
- (w1 + " or ") returns a temporary **Word** object which is added to w2.
- ((w1 + " or ") + w2) returns another temporary Word object which calls print().
- The lifetime of a temporary Word object is at the end of the expression that creates it unless it is held by a rvalue reference or const reference.
- A temporary object that is held by a rvalue reference or const reference dies as its reference variable goes out of scope, or until the completion of the full expression containing it.

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rvalue Reference && to Hold Temporary Objects

- The term rvalue reference sounds contradictory as it seems to be a reference to an rvalue! In the past,
 - A reference (alias) can only be created for an Ivalue which is mutable.
 - Temporary objects are treated as rvalues as they are not supposed to be changed. Why would you want to modify a temporary object which will disappear soon?
- An rvalue reference allows you to give a name to a temporary object, manipulate it, and modify it if it is safe to do so.
- rvalue references are mainly used for real "objects" to improve code efficiency in certain scenarios (e.g., move operations).
- Like its Ivalue reference counterpart, an rvalue reference
 - must be initialized when it is created
 - once bound, cannot be re-bound to another temporary object
- An rvalue reference cannot be bound to an Ivalue but only to a temporary object.

rvalue Reference && (C++11) for int

```
#include <iostream>
                             /* File: rvalue-ref-int.cpp */
    using namespace std;
    int square(int x) { return x*x; }
    int main()
   {
        /* rvalue reference with values of basic types */
        int a = 8;
                             // Error: rvalue ref must be initialized
        int&& b;
                             // Error: rvalue ref can't bind to lvalue
        int \&\& c = a;
12
        int&& d = 5; cout << d << endl;</pre>
14
        int&& e = square(5); cout << e << endl;</pre>
15
        d = e = 10;
                                                  // d, e used as lvalues
16
        cout << d << '\t' << e << endl << endl: // d. e used as rvalues
        return 0;
19 }
```

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Temporary Word Objects and rvalue Reference

```
#include "word.h"
                             /* File: temp-word.cpp */
    void print_word(const Word& w) { cout << "print const Word&: "; w.print(); }</pre>
    void print_word(Word&& w) { cout << "print Word&&: "; w.print(); }</pre>
    int main()
    {
         /* Use const Word& to hold a temporary Word object */
         Word song("imagine"); cout << endl;</pre>
         const Word& w1 = song.to_upper_case(); cout << endl;</pre>
         song.print(); w1.print(); cout << "\n******* << endl;
10
11
12
         /* Use Word&& to hold a temporary Word object */
         Word movie("batman", 2); cout << endl;</pre>
13
         Word&& w2 = movie.to upper case(): cout << endl:</pre>
14
15
         movie.print(); w2.print(); cout << endl;</pre>
16
         print_word(song); print_word(movie);
17
         print_word(w1); print_word(w2); cout << "\n******* << endl:</pre>
18
         /* Directly pass a temporary Word object to a function */
21
         print_word(movie.to_upper_case()); cout << endl;</pre>
         print_word("Beatles"); cout << "\n******* << endl; return 0;</pre>
    } /* g++ -std=c++11 -fno-elide-constructors temp-word.cpp */
```

Temporary Word Objects and rvalue Reference: Output

```
conversion: imagine ; 1
                            print const Word&: imagine ; 1
                            print const Word&: batman ; 2
copy: imagine; 1
                            print const Word&: IMAGINE ; 1
copy: IMAGINE; 1
                            print const Word&: BATMAN ; 2
destructor: IMAGINE; 1
                            *****
imagine; 1
                            copy: batman; 2
IMAGINE ; 1
                            copy: BATMAN ; 2
                            destructor: BATMAN ; 2
*****
                            print Word&&: BATMAN ; 2
                            destructor: BATMAN ; 2
conversion: batman; 2
copy: batman ; 2
                            conversion: Beatles; 1
copy: BATMAN ; 2
                            print Word&&: Beatles ; 1
destructor: BATMAN; 2
                            destructor: Beatles; 1
batman; 2
                            *****
BATMAN; 2
                            destructor: BATMAN ; 2
                            destructor: batman; 2
                            destructor: IMAGINE; 1
                            destructor: imagine ; 1
```

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const Ivalue Reference vs. rvalue Reference

Similarities:

- Both **const T&** and **T&&** can be bound to a **temporary** value/object.
- Both are references and must be initialized when they are created.

Differences:

- const T& can't be modified but T&& can be. In fact, once created, an T&& can be used like a regular variable.
- f(const T&) can take almost any arguments: (const) rvalue/lvalue, temporary value/object, and even rvalue reference!
- f(T&&) can take only temporary value/object.
- If you have both f(const T&) and f(T&&), and the input argument is a temporary value/object $\Rightarrow T\&\&$.

Temporary Word Objects and rvalue Reference: Quiz

Will the program still compile and if it will, what is the output if

- 1. the function print_word(const Word&) is removed?
- 2. the function print_word(Word&&) is removed?
- 3. "temp-word.cpp" is compiled without the compilation flag "-fno-elide-constructors"?

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Part II

Move Semantics



The move Trick with rvalue References

- A temporary object is not supposed to be used after it is read.
- Trick: So we can cheat while reading it and steal its resources.
- However, there is a <u>catch</u>: since the temporary object will be destructed after it is used, it must be left in a state where its destructor can be safely called.
- Example: instead of implementing deep copy in a copy constructor, we now may have a move constructor which will simply move (sometimes swap) resources from its input argument if it is a temporary object of the same class.
 - ⇒ more efficient as no memory allocation is needed.
- Similarly, the trick may be used to define a move assignment operator instead of a copy assignment operator.
- The normal copy constructors and copy assignment operators are still useful if the input argument must be preserved and cannot be modified on return.

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Move Constructor and Move Assignment II

```
27
         void print() const
             { cout << (str ? str : "null") << " ; " << freq << endl; }
28
29
30
         Word& operator=(const Word& w) { // Copy assignment
             if (this != &w) {
                                           // No assignment for the same Word
31
                 delete [] str;
32
33
                 str = new char [strlen(w.str)+1];
                 freq = w.freq; strcpy(str, w.str);
34
                 cout << "copy assignment: "; print();</pre>
35
36
37
             return *this:
38
39
         Word& operator=(Word&& w) { // Move assignment
40
             if (this != &w) {
41
                                        // No assignment for the same Word
                 delete [] str;
42
                 freq = w.freq; str = w.str;
43
44
                 w.freq = 0; w.str = nullptr;
                 cout << "move assignment: "; print();</pre>
45
46
47
             return *this;
48
    };
49
```

Move Constructor and Move Assignment I

```
#include <iostream>
                             /* File: word-move.h */
    #include <cstring>
    using namespace std;
    class Word
      private:
        int freq = 0; char* str = nullptr;
        Word() { cout << "default constructor" << endl; }</pre>
11
        Word(const char* s, int f = 1) : freq(f), str(new char [strlen(s)+1])
             { strcpy(str, s); cout << "conversion: "; print(); }
12
13
        Word(const Word& w) : freq(w.freq), str(new char [strlen(w.str)+1])
            { strcpy(str, w.str); cout << "copy: "; print(); }
14
15
        Word(Word&& w) : freq(w.freq), str(w.str) // Move constructor
16
             { w.freq = 0; w.str = nullptr; cout << "move: "; print(); }
17
         ~Word() { cout << "destructor: "; print(); delete [] str; }
18
        Word to_upper_case() const
20
21
            Word x(*this);
            for (char* p = x.str; *p != '\0'; p++) *p += 'A' - 'a';
22
            return (x); // If there is no move constructor, RBV is done by copying
23
24
                        // Now, is done by move!
25
                        // (Actually another requirement is that x is not global)
```

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Move Constructor and Move Assignment ..

```
/* File: "word-move.cpp" */
     #include "word-move.h"
    void print_word(const Word& w) { cout << "print const Word&: "; w.print(); }</pre>
    void print_word(Word&& w) { cout << "print Word&&: "; w.print(); }</pre>
    int main()
         cout << "*** Copy Semantics ***" << endl;</pre>
         Word book {"batman"};
         Word movie(book);
11
         Word song("imagine");
         movie = song;
         print_word(book); cout << endl;</pre>
         cout << "*** Move Semantics ***" << endl;</pre>
         Word novel {"outliers"}; cout << endl;</pre>
         Word novel2 = novel.to_upper_case();
17
                                                   // move constructions
         cout << endl; novel.print(); novel2.print(); cout << endl;</pre>
19
20
         Word band = "Beatles"; cout << endl;</pre>
                                                    // move construction
21
         band = "Eagles"; cout << endl;</pre>
                                                    // move assignment
         cout << "*** It's all destructions now ***" << endl;</pre>
         return 0;
    } /* g++ -std=c++11 -fno-elide-constructors word-move.cpp */
```

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Move Constructor and Move Assignment: Output

```
*** Copy Semantics ***
                                   outliers ; 1
conversion: batman: 1
                                   OUTLIERS: 1
copy: batman ; 1
conversion: imagine ; 1
                                   conversion: Beatles; 1
copy assignment: imagine ; 1
                                  move: Beatles ; 1
print const Word&: batman ; 1
                                   destructor: null; 0
*** Move Semantics ***
                                   conversion: Eagles; 1
conversion: outliers ; 1
                                   move assignment: Eagles; 1
                                   destructor: null; 0
copy: outliers; 1
move: OUTLIERS; 1
                                   *** It's all destructions now ***
destructor: null; 0
                                   destructor: Eagles; 1
move: OUTLIERS; 1
                                   destructor: OUTLIERS; 1
destructor: null; 0
                                   destructor: outliers; 1
                                   destructor: imagine ; 1
                                   destructor: imagine; 1
                                   destructor: batman ; 1
```

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std::move() — Casting Into rvalue Reference

Syntax: Casting into rvalue Reference

std::move(Ivalue object) = rvalue reference of the object

- A standard C++ library function.
- The function std::move() actually does NOT move anything.
- It only does static casting.

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std::move() Example: word-pair.h

```
#include "word-move.h" /* File: word-pair.h */
    class Word Pair
      private:
         Word w1; Word w2;
      public:
         // Pass by const&, construct by copying
         Word Pair(const Word& a, const Word& b) : w1(a), w2(b)
             { cout << "-- Copy inputs --\n"; a.print(); b.print(); }
10
11
         // Pass by &, construct by moving
12
         Word_Pair(Word& a, Word& b) : w1(std::move(a)), w2(std::move(b))
13
             { cout << "-- Move with inputs --\n"; a.print(); b.print(); }
14
15
         // Pass by rvalue reference &&, construct by moving
16
         Word_Pair(Word&& a, Word&& b) : w1(std::move(a)), w2(std::move(b))
17
             { cout << "-- Another move with inputs --\n"; a.print(); b.print(); }
18
20
         void print() const
21
22
             cout << "word1 = "; w1.print();</pre>
             cout << "word2 = "; w2.print();</pre>
23
24
    };
25
```

std::move() Example: word-pair1.cpp

```
#include "word-pair.h"
                                /* File: "word-pair1.cpp" */
    int main()
        cout << "\n*** Print the book's info ***" << endl;</pre>
         Word author { "Stephen Hawking" };
        Word title { "Brief History of Time" };
        Word_Pair book { author, title };
        book.print();
10
         cout << "\n*** Print the book2's info ***" << endl;</pre>
11
        Word_Pair book2 { book }; // Really memberwise copy
12
        book2.print();
         cout << "\n*** Print the couple's info ***" << endl;</pre>
        Word husband { "Mr. C++" };
        Word wife { "Mrs. C++" };
        Word_Pair couple { std::move(husband), std::move(wife) };
        couple.print();
         cout << "\n*** It's all destructions now ***" << endl:</pre>
    } /* g++ -std=c++11 word-pair1.cpp */ // What is the output?
```

std::move() Example: word-pair1.cpp Output

```
*** Print the book's info ***
                                       *** Print the couple's info ***
conversion: Stephen Hawking; 1
                                       conversion: Mr. C++; 1
conversion: Brief History of Time; 1 conversion: Mrs. C++; 1
move: Stephen Hawking; 1
                                       move: Mr. C++ : 1
move: Brief History of Time ; 1
                                       move: Mrs. C++ ; 1
-- Move with inputs --
                                       -- Another move with inputs --
null; 0
                                       null; 0
null: 0
                                       null; 0
word1 = Stephen Hawking ; 1
                                       word1 = Mr. C++ ; 1
word2 = Brief History of Time ; 1
                                       word2 = Mrs. C++ : 1
*** Print the book2's info ***
                                       *** It's all destructions now ***
copy: Stephen Hawking; 1
                                       destructor: Mrs. C++ ; 1
copy: Brief History of Time ; 1
                                       destructor: Mr. C++; 1
word1 = Stephen Hawking ; 1
                                       destructor: null; 0
word2 = Brief History of Time ; 1
                                       destructor: null; 0
                                       destructor: Brief History of Time ; 1
                                       destructor: Stephen Hawking; 1
                                       destructor: Brief History of Time ; 1
                                       destructor: Stephen Hawking; 1
                                       destructor: null ; 0
                                       destructor: null; 0
```

Summary: Compiler-generated Member Functions (Again)

Unless you define the following, they will be implicitly generated by the compiler for you (under some conditions):

- 1. default constructor (but only if you don't define other constructors)
- 2. default copy constructor
- 3. default (copy) assignment operator function
- 4. default move constructor (C++11)
- 5. default move assignment operator function (C++11)
- 6. default destructor

C++11 allows you to explicitly generate or not generate them:

- to generate: = default;
- not to generate: = delete;

word-pair1.cpp Output Explained

```
Word_Pair(const Word& a, const Word& b): w1(a), w2(b) ...
Word_Pair(Word& a, Word& b): w1(std::move(a)), w2(std::move(b)) ...
```

- word-pair1::line#8: the construction of **Word_Pair book** has 2 choices above, but the 2nd constructor has a higher precedence as the arguments match exactly.
- word-pair1::line#12: Word_Pair book2 is created by the compiler-generated copy constructor of Word_Pair, which will do memberwise copy for each of w1 and w2.
- word-pair1::line#18: by converting the arguments **husband** and **wife** to their rvalue references, Word_Pair couple is created by the 3rd constructor in word-pair.h.
- Temporary objects are destructed at the end of the expression creating them unless they are held by rvalue/const references.
- Non-temporary objects are destructed in the reverse order of their constructions.

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Further Reading



rvalue Reference && (C++11) for string

```
#include <iostream>
                            /* File: rvalue-ref-string.cpp */
    using namespace std;
    string wrap(string s) { return "begin." + s + ".end"; }
    int main()
        /* rvalue reference with user-defined objects */
        string s1 {"w"};
        string&& s2;
                            // Error: rvalue ref must be initialized
10
        string&& s3 = s1; // Error: rvalue ref can't bind to lvalue
11
12
        string&& s4 = "x"; cout << s4 << endl;
13
        string&& s5 = wrap("x"); cout << s5 << endl;
14
15
        s4 = "z";
                            // s4 used as lvalue
16
        cout << s4 << endl; // s4 used as rvalue
17
                            // s5 used as lvalue
18
        cout << s5 << endl; // s4 used as rvalue
19
        return 0:
20
21 }
```

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std::move() Example: word-pair2.cpp

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```
*** Print the synonym's info *** **** Print the const name's info ***
conversion: happy; 1
                                 conversion: Albert ; 1
conversion: delighted; 1
                                 conversion: Einstein; 1
move: happy; 1
                                 copy: Albert ; 1
move: delighted; 1
                                 copy: Einstein ; 1
-- Another move with inputs --
                                 -- Copy inputs --
null; 0
                                 Albert ; 1
                                 Einstein ; 1
null; 0
destructor: null; 0
                                 word1 = Albert ; 1
destructor: null; 0
                                 word2 = Einstein ; 1
word1 = happy ; 1
word2 = delighted ; 1
                                 *** It's all destructions now ***
                                 destructor: Einstein; 1
                                 destructor: Albert; 1
                                 destructor: Einstein: 1
                                 destructor: Albert: 1
                                 destructor: delighted; 1
                                 destructor: happy; 1
```

That's all!

Any questions?

