Pacificka

Final Report

Artist Statement

Pacifika is a top-down puzzle-explorer with a horror theme. Our goal is to provide our player with an embedded narrative mystery as a player slowly uncovers a mystery happening many years before in a town slowly uncovered.

We wanted to give the player the feeling of actually being a detective while they are not only uncovering secrets about the world around them, the objects that create it, but also the past and the player themselves.

Our player is constantly on their toes trying to figure out what item works with what, and inspecting every corner of the world, just like a true detective, and on his way uncovering bits and pieces about how the world works.

In our design, a theme was cognitive management. We wanted to manage how the player is conceptualizing the world around them through the items and scenes and sound. When the player is in the introduction section, we want them to feel they are groping around in the night, until they feel a brief moment of power after obtaining a slingshot to break their way into the manor. However, we then take this moment of power away from them as they are once again thrust into the mystery of the world.

The player is also forced to grapple with elements of dealing with limited light and putting themselves into the minds of the characters in the past as they are trying to figure out where everything is.

We incorporate the elements of Fantasy, Narrative, Challenge, and Discovery in our game to give a diverse set of reasons for the player to keep coming back to it.

Example Screenshots:

Core Loop: The core loop of our game is teaching players to interact with the environment to receive objects or information that they can use to unlock more environmental interactions. We have primary object-based puzzles, and players learn to use the controls to apply the correct object to an element in the environment to unlock a new secret or new map area.
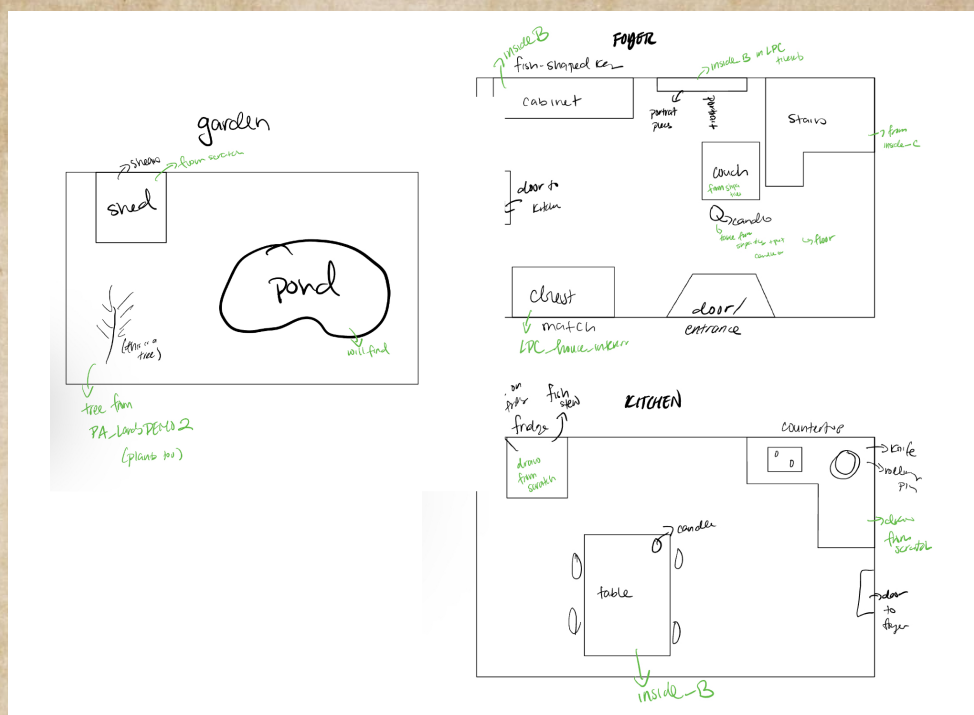
The players first learn to use W, A, S, and D to move around as they walk through the street. They then learn to use E to interact with various things in the environment. The main interaction loop of the game centers around simply walking around and using E to interact with the environment to learn more about your surroundings. Learnings from the environment translate into the next primary interaction loop, which is solving object puzzles.

The first puzzle they interact with teaches them to collect objects, specifically a branch, rock, and rubber band. The player then learns to use I to open their inventory to combine the items, and then use them to break open a window,

Design:

Every decision relating to the formal elements were carefully thought through and planned. Below we list the formal elements and then considerations we made in deciding these elements.

Formal Element and Implementation	Reasoning
Target Audience: Horror and mystery players. Resident Evil/ Undertale. Pre-teen and Up.	We wanted semi-experienced players that could pick up the mechanics and get going quickly. However, the mechanics are simple enough that new players could pick up the controls fairly quickly. Additionally, we wanted to lean into the tonal elements of horror and mystery, so we aimed towards a slightly older audience so that we could have the option of incorporating more creepy elements.
Players: 1 (Fullerton: Single Player Versus Game)	We chose one player because we wanted to focus and manage the experience of a single person as they went through the game. Often when solving puzzles, players can discuss how to get through problems with others.
Objectives: Explore to the end of the manor and uncover the mystery.	The embedded narrative allows the player to sink their teeth into the feeling of discovering a world larger than them. The exploration aspect allows the worlds music and sound to affect the players experience of play
Rules: Use W, A, S, D to move up, left, right, and down respectively. Use E to interact with objects Combine items in inventory Inspect items in inventory mm	A simple movement system makes it easy to navigate the world around them. The interaction system makes the player a mouse in a labyrinth trying to examine every nook and cranny. Inspecting & Combining items adds depth to the world by allowing the player to apply the story of the game and their knowledge of the protagonist to make new items.

Procedures:
    ● The player begins with an empty inventory at the start of a street.
    ● The player can use inventory items to solve puzzles and advance to the next section of the game
    ● The game takes place in the Pacific Northwestern town of Pacificka, the items in the world come from a
	The puzzles are meant to tell the games story, provide evocative immersion as the detective protagonist, and immerse the player in the world.

much older time however.	
Resources **A Web Browser**	Making the game available on the web makes it easily playable by anyone with an internet connection. No special equipment is necessary.

Concept Doc (5/9)

Original Artwork + Sketches:

V1 map

V2 map with puzzles and objects marked with sticky notes

V3 map focusing on exact layout of the rooms and narrowing down assets. We had to strike a balance between only adding things that were necessary for the player to proceed and/or to set a visual theme, but also having enough items so that we evoked the discovery type of fun.

Puzzle Design:
Original Ideas
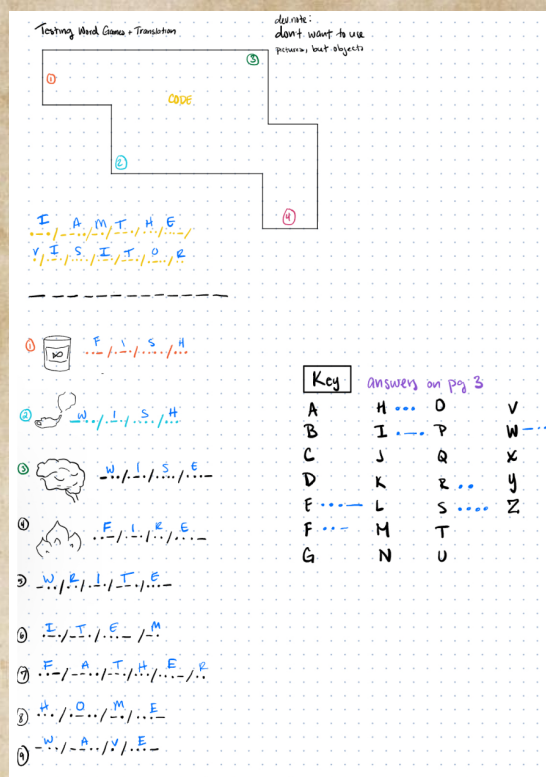
Word-based puzzle
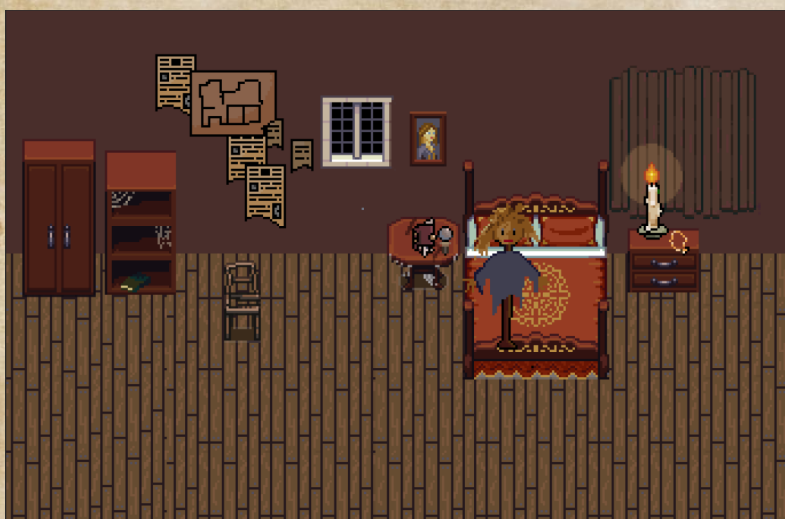*Candle-Placing Puzzle*

Original Layouts:

Foyer
Assets handdrawn, from szadiart.itch.io, and Sharm on OpenGameArt.org

Kitchen

Mayor's Bedroom

Character sprites from sanderfrenken sprite generator on GitHub.

Color

  Since we were also going for a horror and dark mood, we were inspired by the *Closure* example from lecture 8A. However, we didn't want a complete lack of color. In lecture, we also recognized how in the *Assassin's Creed III* example from the same lecture used various shades of brown to create a historical feel. Combining these, we settled on a color scheme of mostly dark browns and blacks. We wanted the setting to be bleak and abandoned, so we used destroyed and dully-colored assets to reflect this. The player character's design was then made darker and more in line with the color scheme of the environment.

  We also used color to point the player toward certain decisions. Candles are intentionally lighter and more distinct in color so that they stand out. This way, players feel compelled to inspect them and possibly get a hint as to what item to look for first.

Grids

  Since *Pacificka* is a pixel game, the grid aspect is almost inherent to its design. However, we decided to deliberately break the typical grid structure for certain objects to emphasize their importance. For example, the first candle that the player encounters does not fit into the 32x32 structure of the other items. Players instantly are drawn to it.

Ephemera

Pacificka is story-based, but this is hard to get across in a slice. To try to remedy this, we used a lot of ephemera, most notably in the form of notes left behind and diary entries.

A note behind the completed portrait in the foyer gives insight into the Mayor's family.

Another note on the old fridge gives insight into the Mayor's relationship with his daughter.

Audio Design:

- Music
  - Paying attention to the lectures from Juicy week, we used ambient nature sounds in the beginning street level to give the player a sense of patient exploration, while later having a more ominous music design in the foyer and kitchen to make the player feel as if they were under pressure.
- Sound Effects
  - We added sound effects to picking up items and solving puzzles to provide the player with more feedback they could rely on. Following playtesting feedback, we particularly added the sound effect for picking up items so players would know that they have a new inventory item and it feels more significant.
  - We chose the specific sound of a camera shutter to fit with the character being a journalist investigating the manor, since cameras are associated with reporters and we thought the inventory as a metaphor for a camera (though that's not exactly how it functions) was a fun way to incorporate that element.
  - The puzzle achievement sound effect needed to be slightly more intense and fit the darker mood of the game, so we found something — https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UCubUwOW4eIGavxQPByrtUND1ZHdu67E/view?usp=sharing

Iterations
First Playtest – Testable Core (5/18)

Features of Playtest:

This version of the game was one dimly lit, maze-like room. The player character was surrounded by a small radius of light as they walked around the dark room, picking up portrait pieces on the ground by walking past them. There are several unlit torches around the room that can be interacted with. Without the required item, the interaction would tell the player the object was a torch that could use a match. At the end of the room, there is a chest containing a match. With the match, when interacting with the torches, they will light. Once the player has lit all the torches, they have solved the first part of the puzzle. At the back of the room, their is an empty interactable frame that the player can interact with. When they have all the portrait pieces, the frame is filled with the portrait after they interact with it. Once the torches are lit and the pieces are in the frame, the player gains information about the room they are in from the portrait. Some of the playtests are here:

- Player can move around digital environment
- Environment is maze-like
- Player can interact with elements
- Player picks up objects they cross in their path with no interaction necessary
- Initial puzzles
    - Lighting up torches in a room
    - Putting portrait pieces in a frame to form a picture
- Music
- Interactions in walls to provide story

Learning/feedback from Playtest:

We had three different people playtest this version of the game. We found that while one person very quickly walked past all the portrait pieces and solved the puzzle with the torches quickly, the other two were more confused about what they needed to do to complete the puzzle. These playtesters noted that it was unclear they needed to light up all the torches to see the portrait,

since some torches were very far from the portrait frame. All playtesters also reflected that the fact you just picked up portrait pieces while walking was surprising and somewhat confusing, since they couldn't actually see where they were due to the darkness in the room so it felt totally random. They also noted that the boxes in the room(walls of the maze) being interactable with some dialogue was a confusing interaction. Finally, a major note we received was that music seemed unnecessarily intense and threw players off on how severe the vibe of the game was.

- Picking up objects without interaction/more visual and audio feedback was jarring
- Music was extremely intense, some players found it off-putting
- The dimness of the environment(small radius of light) around the player made it hard to see all of the objects in the room which made it difficult to solve the puzzle
- Some puzzle elements felt unnatural/not in line with the innate logical assumptions of the playtester(needing to light all the torches to see the portrait, even if the torches are very far away from the portrait itself)
- Interaction with walls was somewhat confusing
- Mood was clearly conveyed
- Puzzles were fun when players could see all elements and for the most part made logical sense

Second Playtest – Updated Refined Core (6/1)

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Features of playtest:
- Added inventory with inspectable items

- Added basic crafting system.
- Added prior street level with a 3 item shear crafting minigame
- Combine items to get into Foyer

Learning/feedback from Playtest:
Players had lots of trouble crafting the shears. There was a glitch in crafting the painting that lead lots of players astray.
If a player missed an item toward the beginning, it was annoying backtracking to find it. Players often got lost walking in circles for several more minutes than expected.
Small glitches with some items.

Struggles & Triumphs:
Players really enjoyed crafting the items and figuring out what to do. They made up narratives on how things worked.

Final Playtest: 6/6/2023:

Features of playtest:
- Added new rooms: Garden, kitchen, Mayor's room, hallway, mayor's room
- New player character

Learning/feedback from Playtest:
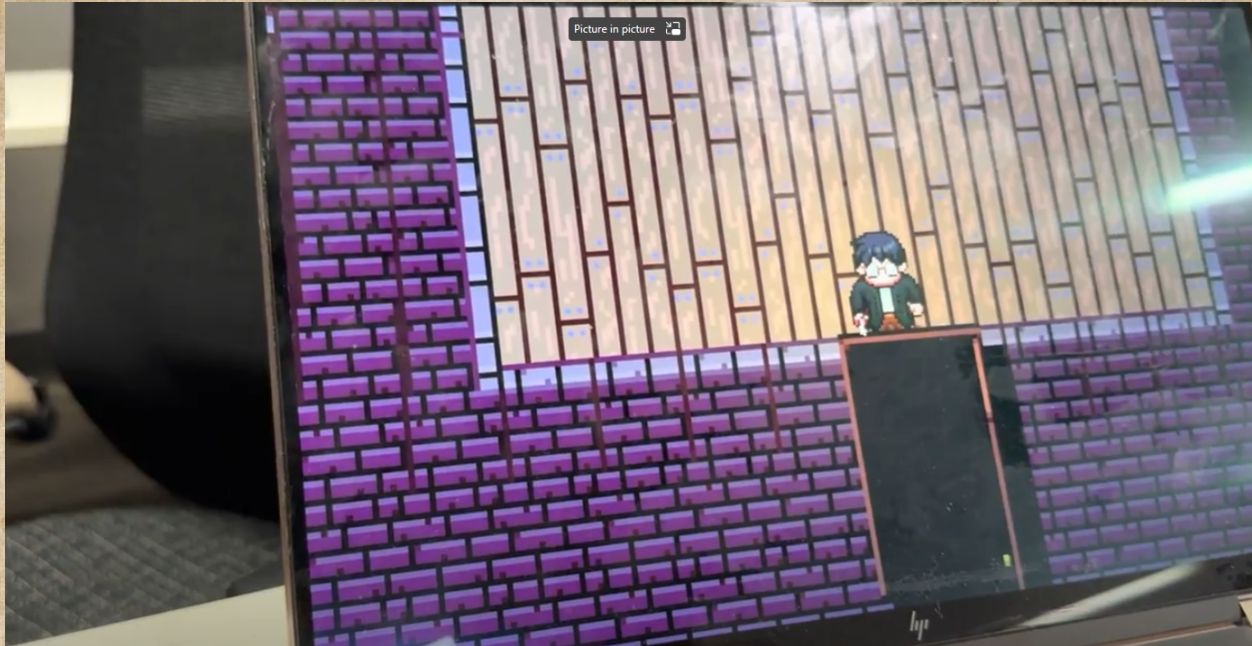People got a bit stuck on what to do next.
Players would reopen items that were supposed to be done and backtrack to rooms they weren't supposed to in order to get to the next area.

Struggles & Triumphs:
Players got extremely excited when they began to figure things out. Players loved reading flavor text and figuring out how to combine new items to get through to new areas.
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https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cCkYnuahu7GtmVpAvBqd8PL-eVf07JT5/view?usp=sharing

Walkthrough:

Starting in the street, go to the hedge with the branch up and to the left. Press E to interact and click on the branch to receive a branch. Go far to the right and go to the crate surrounded by hedges to receive a rubber band. Go up to the top right to pick up a rock. Go into the inventory using I and combine all three items to create a slingshot. Use the slingshot to break through the window. Go through the window to the foyer. In the foyer interact with the cabinet on the right and click the second drawer to get a matchbox. Open the chest to the right to receive a matchstick. Combine the matchbox and matchstick to create a match and light the candle in the room. Collect the portrait piece in the bottom right of the room. Go to the drawer on the top left to get a fish-shaped key. Go up and to the right to enter the kitchen. Use the match to light the candle. Interact with the stove to get a portrait piece. Go on the fridge and take the note off of it. Go around the side of the table to get a Rolling pin. Use the rolling pin on the fridge to open it and get the fish stew from the inside. Go back into the foyer and over to the Garden to get another portrait piece and open the shed to get the shear handle and blade. Craft the two together to make shears and use the fish stew on the pond to get the heart shaped key. In the Foyer, combine the portrait pieces to make a finished portrait and then place it in to get a hint to combine the keys. Use shears on the stairs to get into the final hallway, and use the combined key to get into the Mayor's Room and read the information there to finish the game.

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