(Dal) Game Design Document

Overview

Pitch

Dal (Moon) is a third person RPG set in a fantastical universe shrouded in Korean folklore. Play as *Han* - the newest recruit in a long line of moon stewards and help him on his quest to join his ancestors and fulfil his duties. Like all new recruits however *Han's* first day isn't quite going to plan.

Synopsis

Throughout Asian folklore the rabbit has been long regarded as a symbol of fertility, longevity and abundance. In Korean folklore specifically there are tales of the rabbit who offered himself up as a meal for The Great Emperor, who disguised himself as a beggar to test loyalty. The rabbit was rewarded with guardianship of the moon - watching over harvests and inspiring hopes of prosperity. It is said that on a full moon you can see the outline of the rabbit on the moon, living under a gyesu tree and making rice cakes.

As with all duties however someone new must rise up and take over. That's where *Han* comes in, a small friendly jade coloured rabbit, who has been selected as the successor and must continue the legacy and watch over the lands. *Han* is however extremely new to the job, and a little clumsy, having managed to misplace all of the moon fragments needed to join his ancestors he could really use some help. The player must help *Han* to traverse through lands and collect up the fragments he so desperately needs. Also in the way are mischievous *Dokkaebi* - goblin-like tricksters who would much rather keep the fragments for themselves to earn some kind of reward or leniency with the Gods.

Cultural/Narrative Contexts:

[The Moon Rabbit (Daltokki, 달토끼)](#)
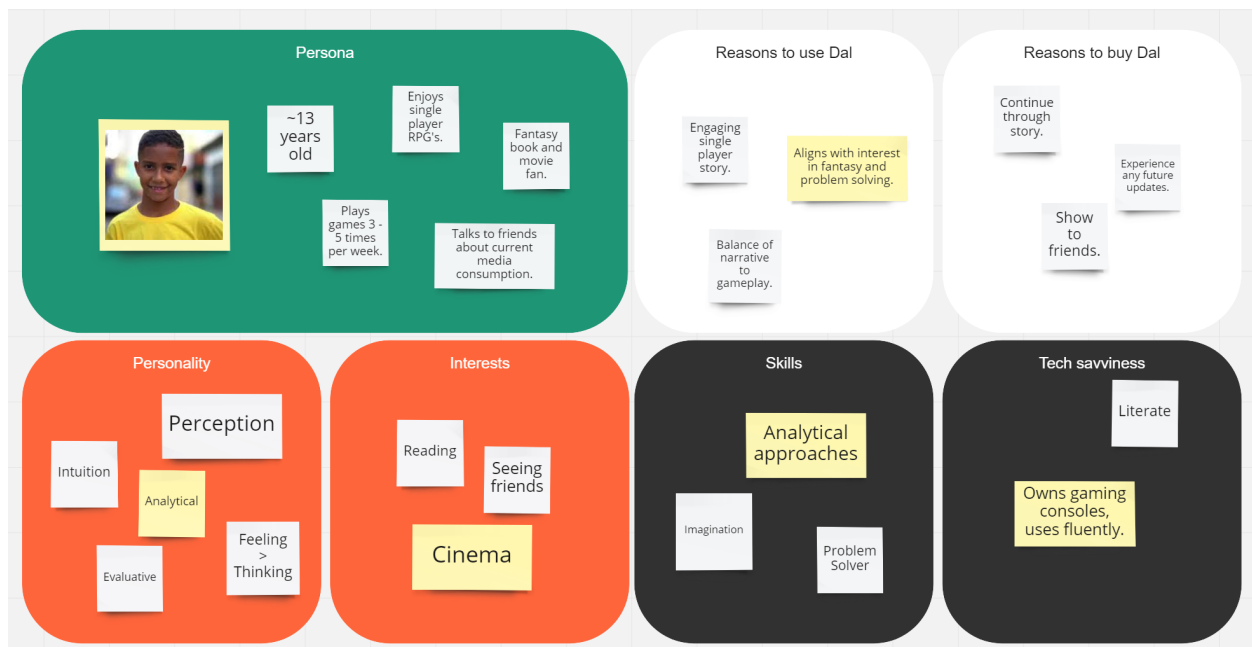
[The Moon Rabbit and the Chuseok Celebrations](#)

[The Story of the Dokkaebi](#)

Audience

Dal is a game designed for anyone to enjoy. A specific user profile would be a child - young adult (9-16) with an interest in folklore, culture and casual gaming. Being on PC initially, Dal won't be accessible to its full intended demographic until there is a future console release.

The theme, although rooted in Korean folklore, is relatable to a worldwide audience where most children have looked at the moon in wonder of what could live there. Dal is intended to evoke the nostalgic feelings of childhood imaginations whilst also inspiring education of different cultures. Dal is also for escapism, so no realism or human-like characters will exist in this world.

Below is a user persona to illustrate the kind of player that Dal may appeal to:

[Link to full board](#)

[fig. 1] *Animal Crossing: New Horizons, 2020*

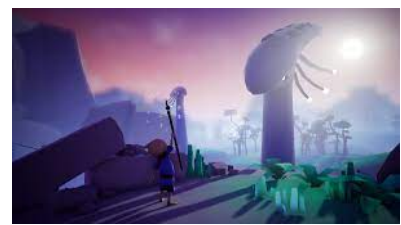[fig. 2] *Yooka Laylee, 2017*

[fig. 3] *Wytchwood, 2020*

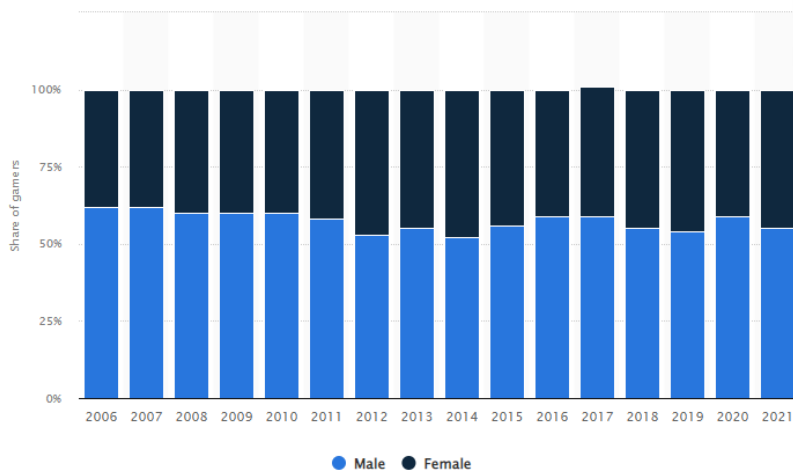

[fig. 4] *Cozy Grove, 2021*

[fig. 5] *Sky: Children of the Light, 2019*

[fig. 6] *Omno, 2021*

This collection of recent games prove Dal's viability by enforcing the recent demand for a more stylised, fantasy based gaming experience. There has also been a trend of moving away from human based characters to more cute and colourful animal representations. This has proved relatable and successful amongst the communities for each game respectively.

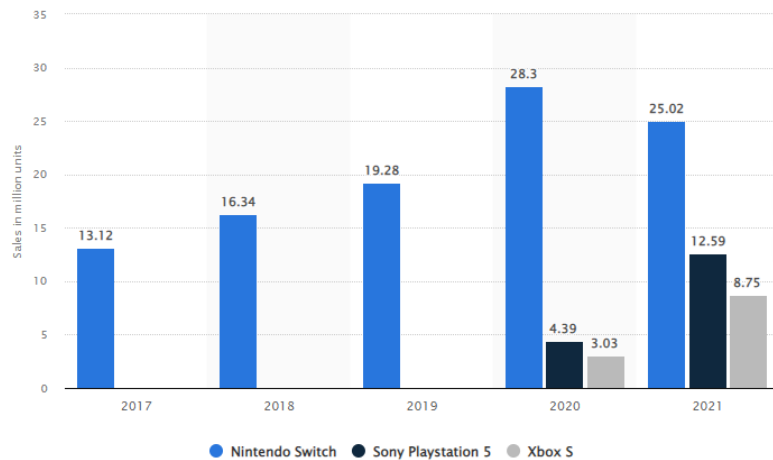

This chart shows the distribution of video gamers in the United States from 2006 to 2021, by gender. Dal is designed for any gender to enjoy as aiming to only one omits half of the potential users. [fig. 7]

The next chart shows current generation video game console unit sales worldwide from 2017 to 2021 (in million units). Market trends are showing a favourable amount of users own a Nintendo

Switch, the most prominent handheld console currently. A full year after release of the next generation home console systems the Nintendo Switch is still the highest selling console by almost double.

[fig. 8]

Another notable adjustment in games right now is the influx of popular 'cosy' games. More casual experiences, favouring a fantasy aesthetic. Most notable recently was the success of Animal Crossing: New Horizons, a game with already a huge fan base welcomed a surge of new players across the Covid-19 lockdowns with many turning to their life in game to keep some routine in uncertain real world times. With over 60 million units sold and around 11 million monthly players, Animal Crossing: New Horizons is a huge success both for sales and player retention.

Guardian Article Exploring this success further.
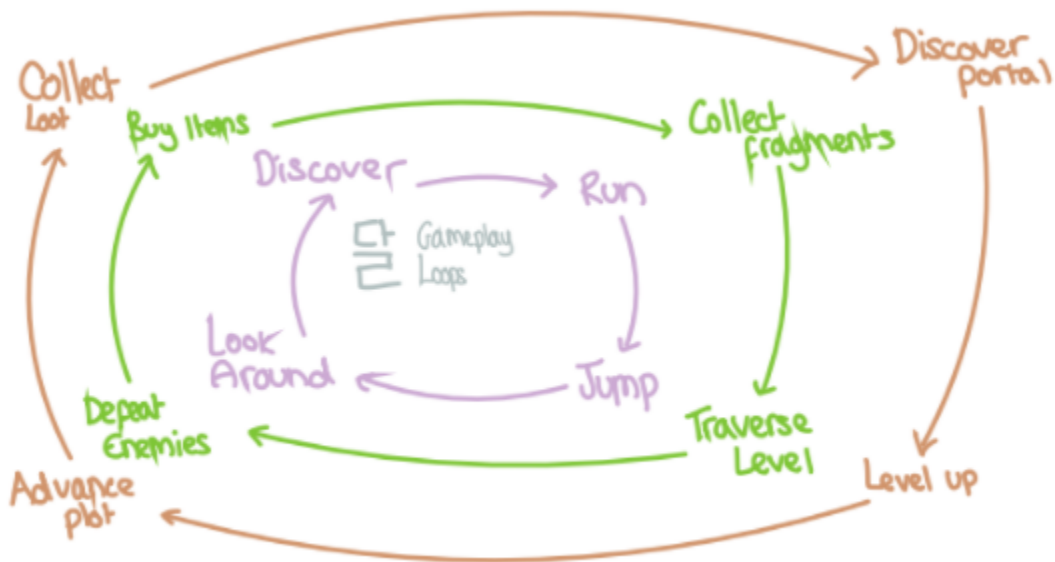
Platform

Dal will be initially released as a PC prototype with controller compatibility. There will be no touchscreen elements although a Switch release would be targeted in response to market trends and stylistic games being so successful there. With future console ports localisation would be implemented to reach the full audience outreach potential.

Stardew Valley was initially a PC project that received great success from subsequent console ports. For this reason the playtesting and prototype phases will be PC based.

Gameplay

Below shows the primary, secondary and tertiary gameplay loops. The player is encouraged to explore and discover at their own pace and is introduced to enemies and obstacles along their path.

Below is a gameplay flowchart showing the players journey of processes and plot discoveries. Link to full board to see the games pacing can be found here. Game win = enough fragments ended and level 4 finished, player will be notified of success along progression route.

Player

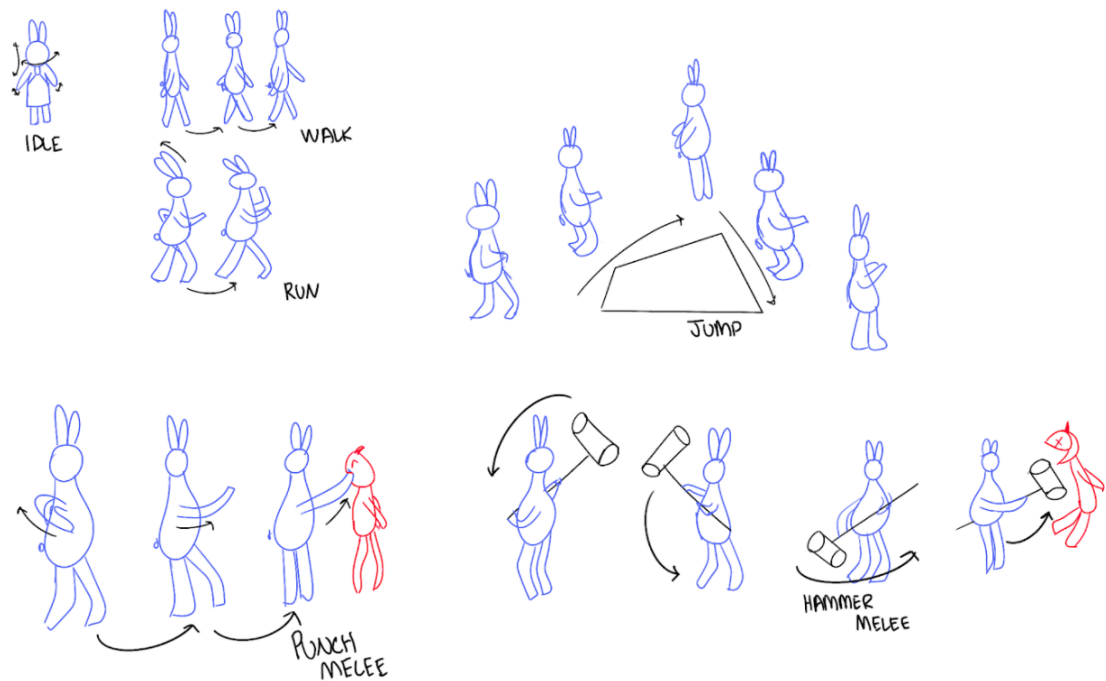*Han* employs a traditional gameplay skillset - able to walk, run, jump and melee attack. He travels slightly slower than enemies but has a great jump ability making him agile yet tough.

Abilities

As well as the abilities listed above *Han* can upgrade his melee attack by purchasing the Hammer weapon. This weapon can be bought from the shop in level 1 and upgraded in level 3. Here is a design of how the animations may look.

IDLE

WALK

RUN

JUMP

PUNCH
MELEE

HAMMER
MELEE

Statistics

The player will have to aim to collect as many fragments as possible in order to continue. When arriving at the portal they will be told if they have enough so it is in their best interest to collect as many as possible from the outset.

Aside from currently the only other manageable statistic is health. Falling into water and taking enemy hits will damage *Han*. Falling off the map will result in death and a level restart. Lost health will regenerate over time.

Progression

Fragments can be found in the first level in order to spend in the shop and get the hammer, in level 3 more fragments can be used to upgrade the hammer.
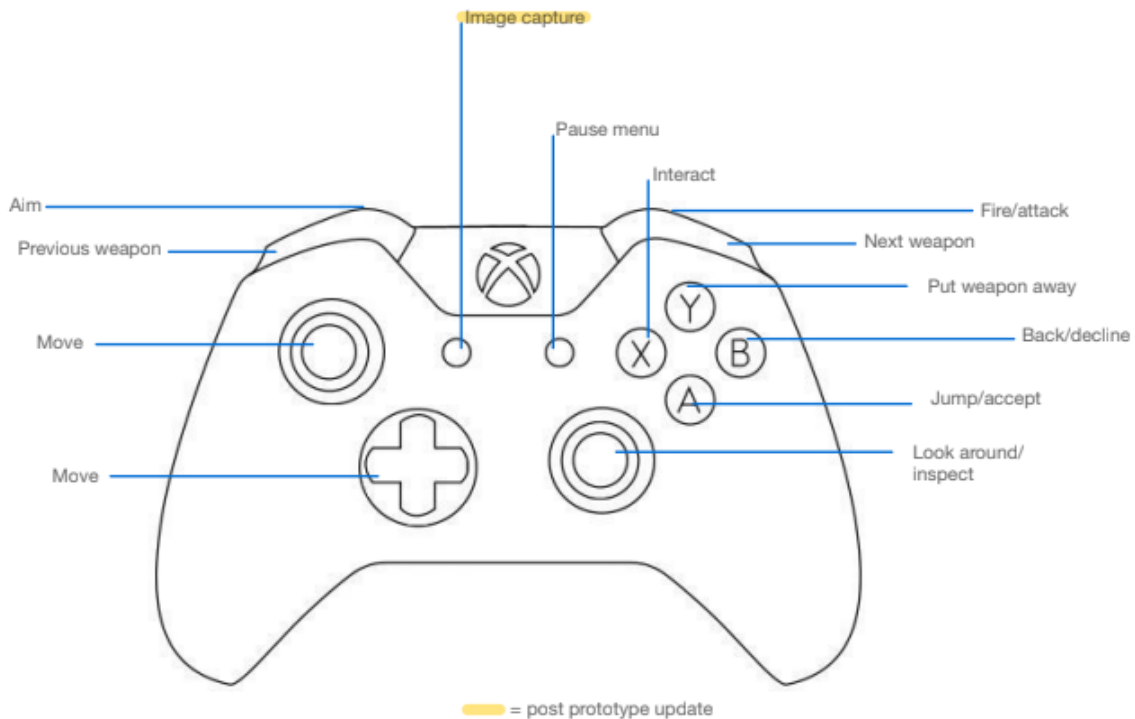
Rules & Objectives

There are no hidden objectives in Dal, however the shop will stock more cosmetic items in future updates and offer things such as personalised Hammers. The only limitation the player

will face is Fragments - needed to buy a weapon or advance to the next level. It is up to them if they choose to buy a weapon or continue with a basic melee attack only.

In future updates a secondary objective will be introduced where the player will be rewarded extra Fragments for successfully defeating waves of *Dokkaebi* in certain areas.

Controls

Below is the controller schema for Dal, this layout is applicable to any console controller and also the Switch. The Nintendo Switch would use the respective buttons on their Joy-cons, touch screen capabilities would be added to menus only for ease of use, the core gameplay controls would remain buttoned.
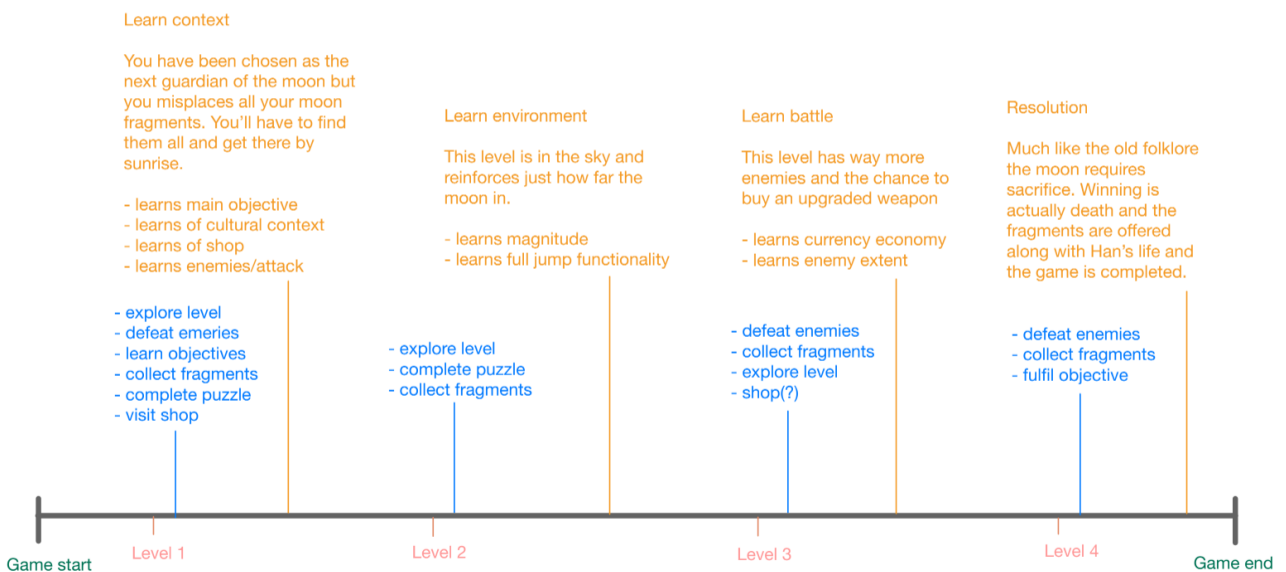

Story

The gameplay will begin with some context given to the player by an NPC, there is also emerging narrative to discover within the environment - such as a Korean Chuseok setting, an animal populated world, the shop discovery and moving parts within the environment.

The first NPC *Han* meets will remark on his resemblance to the famous rabbit, before offering an explanation to what they are referring to. The player doesn't have to take this explanation but it will give more context to their quest. If accepted, the NPC will briefly explain the tale of the test from the Great Emperor and how the rabbit sacrificed themselves and was rewarded with the guardianship of the moon. This will prompt an 'oh yes, I'm the next one!' response from *Han* and the NPC will end by beckoning him to hurry as night is approaching.

Below is a timeline showing the levels, player itinerary and plot points. Although a smaller prototype the pacing is still considered across all levels to build up to a conclusive ending with the player having enough narrative context.

As the timeline shows the game ending is effectively *Han's* death, but rather than a solemn ending it's a happy one as the duty can now be fulfilled and harvests will remain prosperous.

Learn context

You have been chosen as the next guardian of the moon but you misplaces all your moon fragments. You'll have to find them all and get there by sunrise.

- learns main objective
- learns of cultural context
- learns of shop
- learns enemies/attack

Learn environment

This level is in the sky and reinforces just how far the moon in.

- learns magnitude
- learns full jump functionality

Learn battle

This level has way more enemies and the chance to buy an upgraded weapon

- learns currency economy
- learns enemy extent

Resolution

Much like the old folklore the moon requires sacrifice. Winning is actually death and the fragments are offered along with Han's life and the game is completed.

- explore level
- defeat emeries
- learn objectives
- collect fragments
- complete puzzle
- visit shop

- explore level
- complete puzzle
- collect fragments

- defeat enemies
- collect fragments
- explore level
- shop(?)

- defeat enemies
- collect fragments
- fulfil objective

Game start   Level 1   Level 2   Level 3   Level 4   Game end

World

Contextually the world sits in Korean Folklore however it bears some similarities to western culture. For example, media such as the Clangers (TV Show) and Sylvanian Families (Toy) both illustrate animal-like creatures living on the moon or in forests, respectively. For this reason Dal

is anchored toward Korean folklore but not cemented there and the world will be a nostalgic and relatable place to players of any background.

The world will reinforce and help illustrate the story of Dal but will not be restrictive for players who are not as invested in the story element.
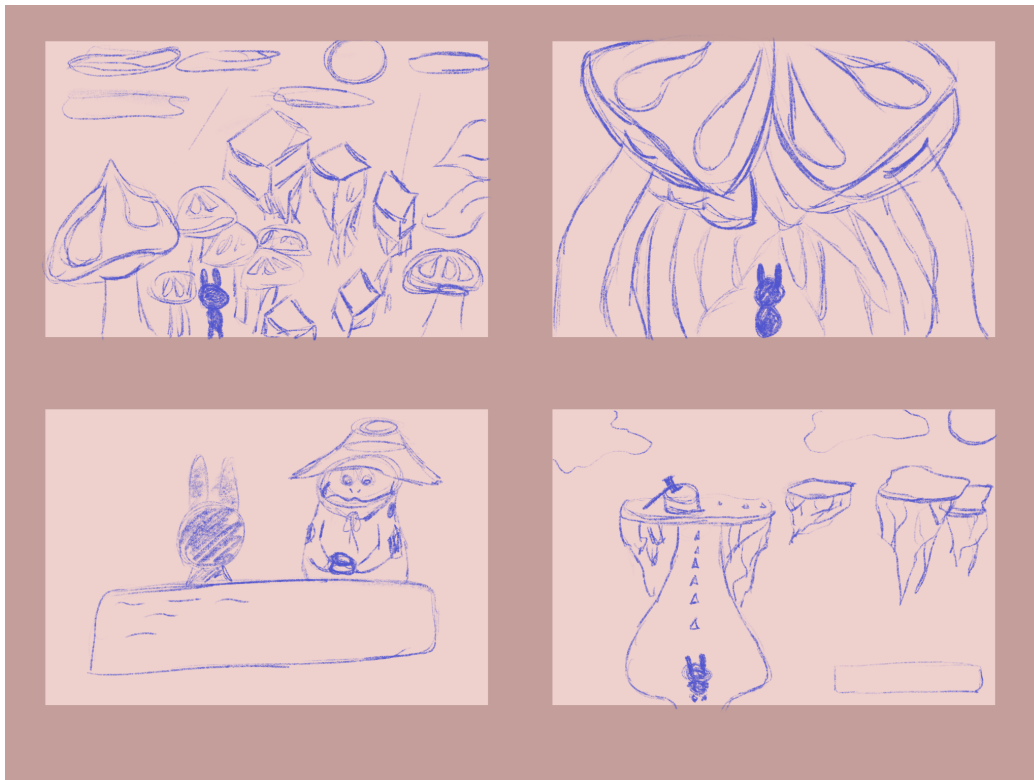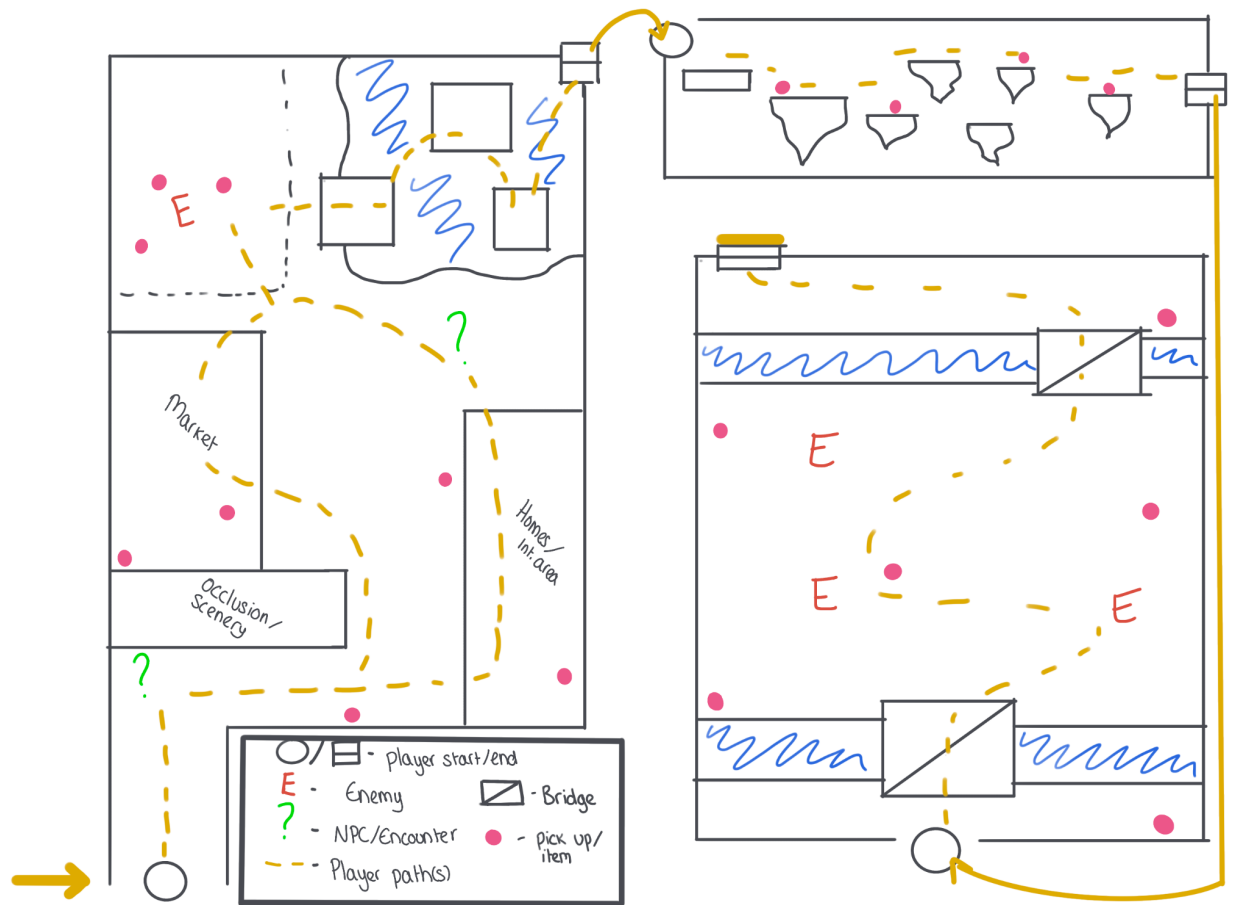

[fig. 9]

[fig. 10]

[fig. 11]

[fig. 12]

Playspace

Below is a preliminary sketch of possible scale/environment ideas. The player will have agency over all available space and is encouraged to explore and jump between sections.

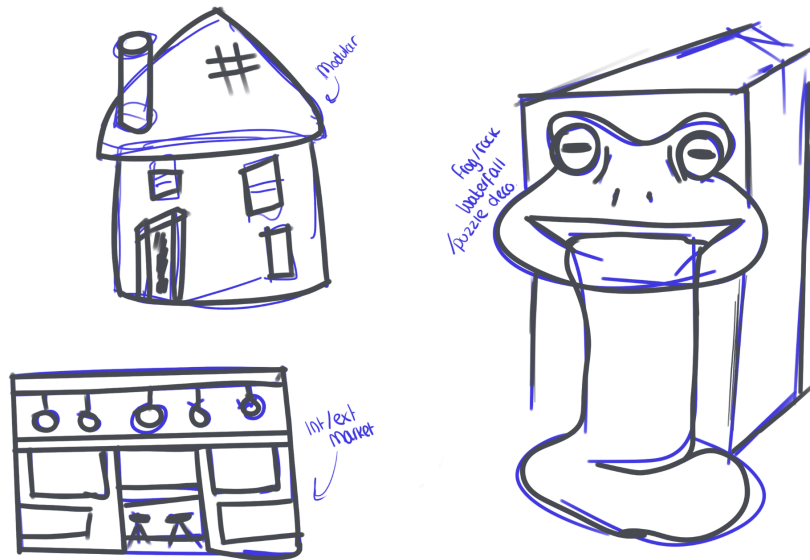Next is the level design diagram which shows the first 3 areas:

1. *Market Town* - opening level, shown top down to illustrate possible NPC and enemy locations.
2. *Sky Jump Puzzle* - shown in a side on view, a jumping puzzle level.
3. *Open Plains* - shown top down, a fight through level to test the players abilities and weaponry.
4. (Not Shown) *Market Town Night* - a nighttime replica of level 1 - this is where the final battle is and the game will conclude.
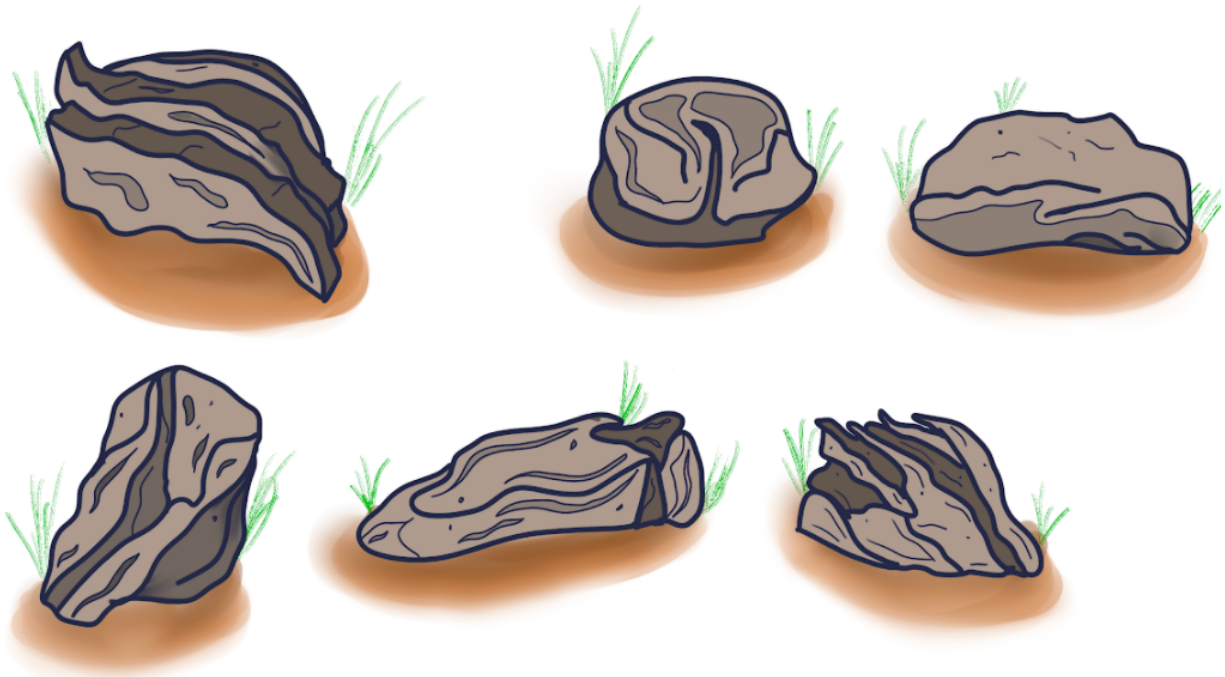
The level layout may be amended slightly throughout development but the overall structure and placement of opposition will remain.
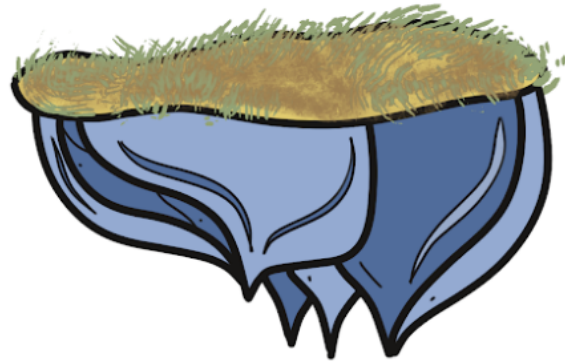
Environment Objects

As well as enemies water will also damage the player as rabbits hate water, below are some mock ups of elements for level 1. They include a simplistic modular townhouse, an open front food market stall and a frog faced waterfall which will be placed by the initial jump puzzle. Further environment items may include a chest and a modular environment kit.

Next are examples of rocks and moving platforms. Rocks - environment objects only and used to mould the player's path. Moving Platforms, one version will be in level 1 and an alternate version will be in level 2 - this is to use the environment to reinforce to the player the change in altitude as *Han* traverses the levels.

From L to R: Initial *Han* character ideation, a moon NPC idea - not interactable but idly animated, gems/crystals to be used as the *Fragment* pickups and finally toads, toadstools and a cheerful rabbit that are all possible NPC characters.
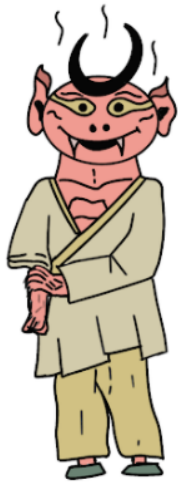
Characters

한 (Han)

- First day on the job
- A little clumsy
- Great with his hammer

Kor → En.
Han ~ Hana 하나
means 'one'

This is an initial model of *Han*, a simplistic design still in his work apron and his bio. 'Hana' means one in korean - signifying that *Han* is now the chosen one. With his Hammer and new job opportunity he's not going to let much get in his way.

영혼 (yeong-hon)

- Toad-like traders
- Kind and wise
- Amazing Chefs

Kor → En.
Yeonghon means 'spirit'
*toads are seen as the spirits of the moon

The *Yeonghan* are friendly townsfolk who love nothing more than a good meal, they love to gossip about tales of old and are particularly interested in their new arrival, *Han.*

도깨비 (Dokkaebi)

- Nature spirits with extraordinary powers
- Think they're misunderstood
- A bit greedy

Kor → En.
Dokkaebi - Goblin
Usually seen in Hanbok

Finally we have the *Dokkaebi*, goblin folk who can be mysterious, shy or even angry.

Often appearing unassuming their greed usually gets the best of them and hearing of Moon Fragments laying around town has sent them into a frenzy. In

Fact they told all their friends, who then told theirs too..

Art Style

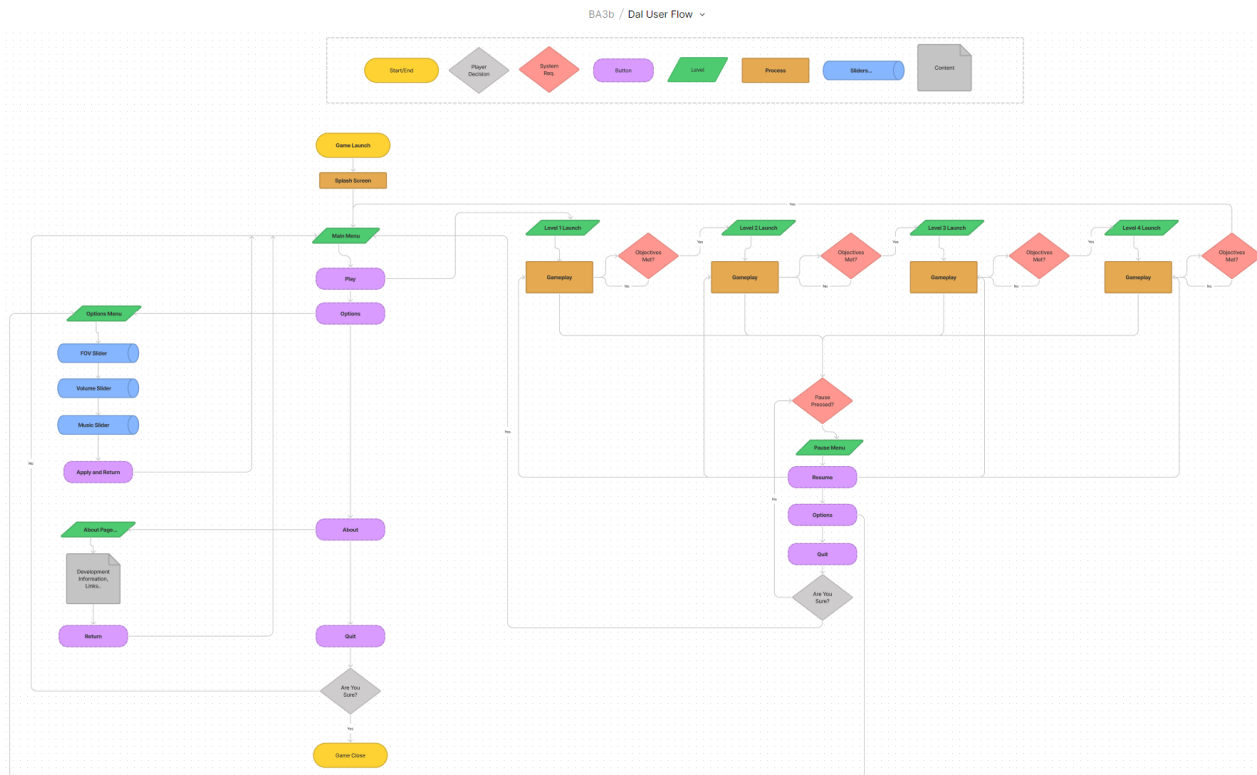General Moodboard depicting initial ideas and references for Dal, including cinematic and real world inspirations. Below is a colour palette with warmer and cooler tones for use in game.

Dal is also set in the times of Chuseok, the Korean festival celebrating harvest and the full moon. For this reason some common Chuseok motifs such as the persimmons tree and popular food dishes may appear in game.

Stylistically Dal is colourful, with a simplistic low - poly art style. In future updates more detail may be introduced but the colourful, simple elements will remain. This is similar to the case study games from the market research and also appealing to the target demographic.
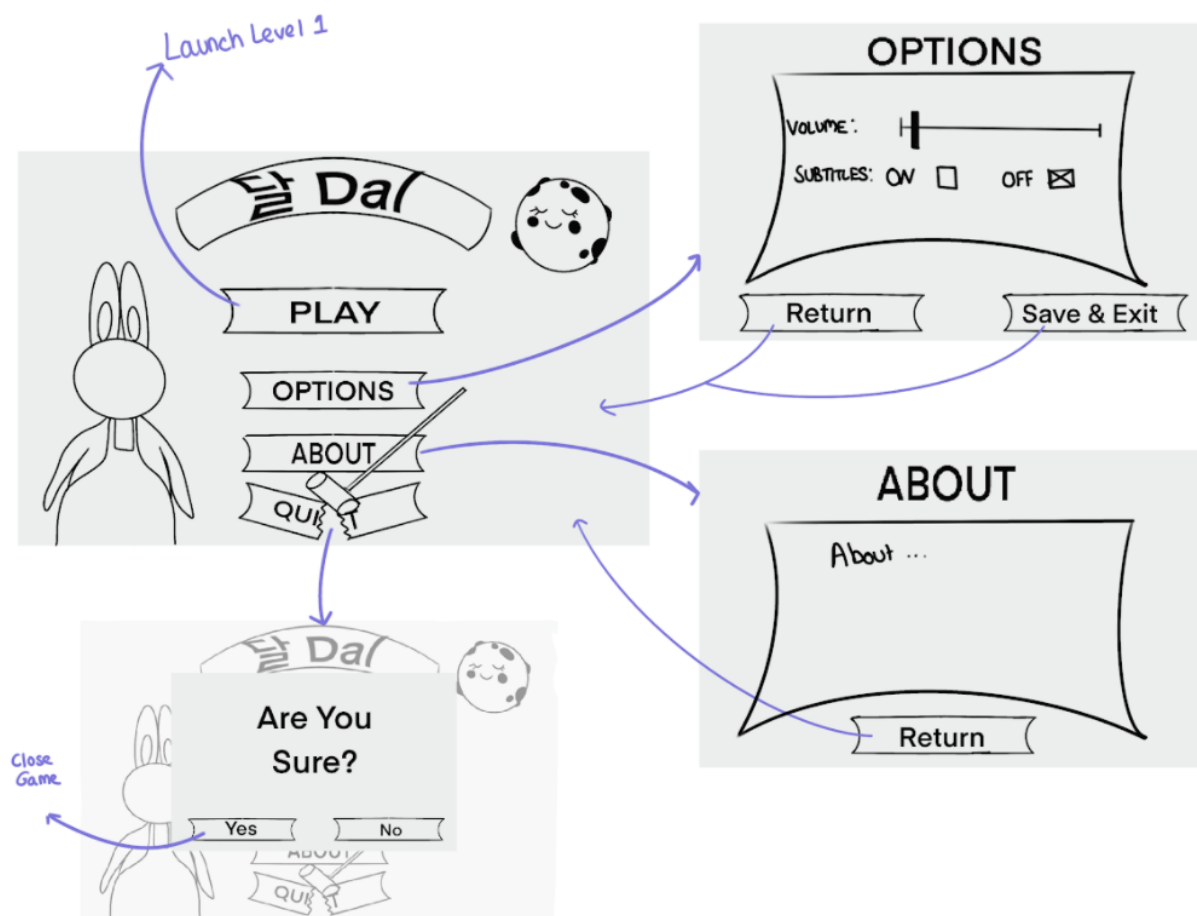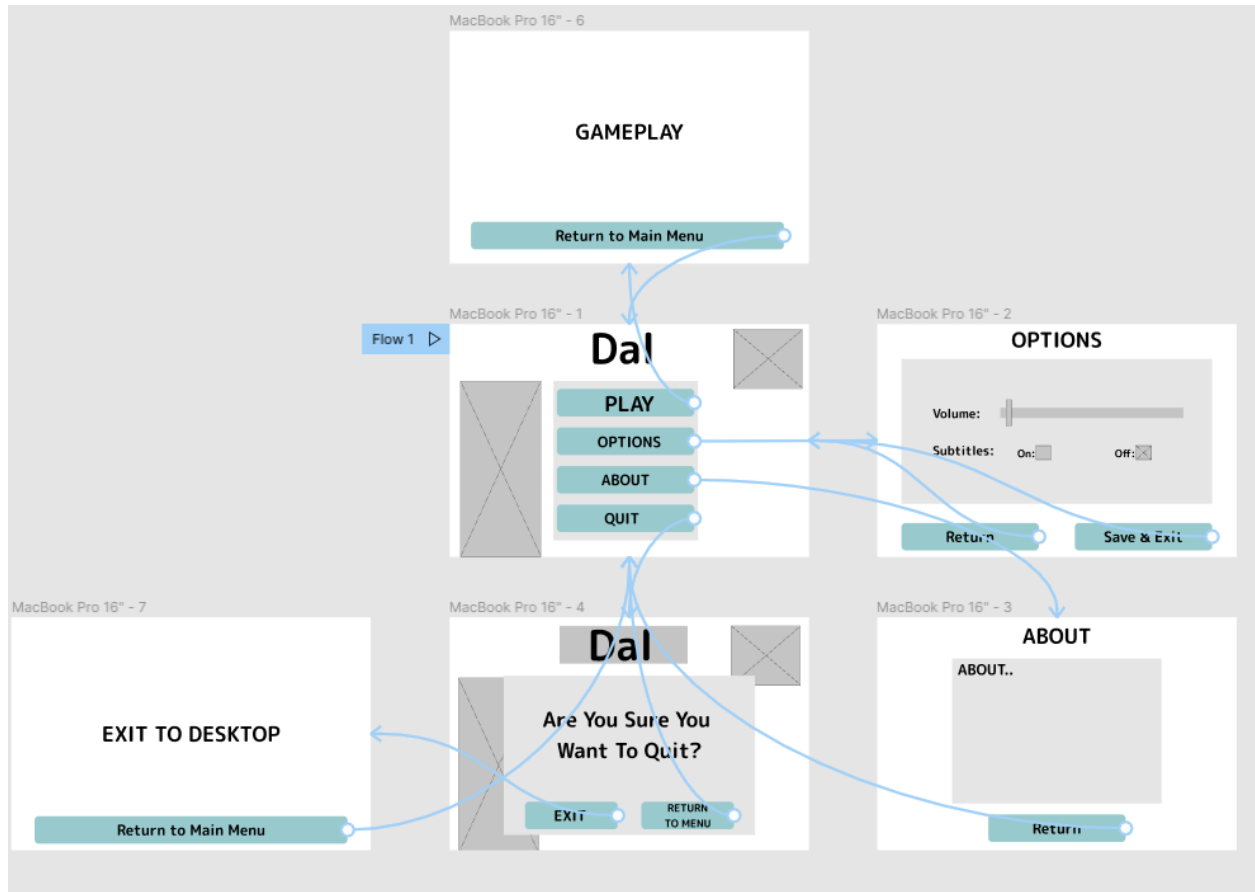
UI/UX

User flow for the prototype version, built in Figma for easy expansion or amendments.

Making an approachable game is an important part of Dal's goal. Initially traditional controller function, subtitles and volume controls will be implemented with a look in future to adding colour blind friendly options, controller customisation etc.

Localisation is also a future goal, as the game centres around Korean folklore being able to localise the game for a Korean audience would be a post-release goal, as well as adapting it to a multitude of languages.

Prototype link

Audio

Dal will be uniform in its audio but each level will require a different atmosphere, for that reason the references are split across levels. The overall mood of the game is hope, calm and progression so music with a suitable feeling and BMP(beats per minute) will be used.

Level 1: Market Town

Atmosphere: calm, jolly, cheerful, social.

Reference: Wytchwood - The Cavern

Level 2: Sky Jump Puzzle

Atmosphere: ambient, dreamlike.

Reference: Journey - Apotheosis, Ghost of Tsushima - Komoda Beach

Level 3: Open Plains

Atmosphere: treacherous, hectic, bombardment.

Reference: Zelda:BOTW, Yooka Laylee

Level 4: Market Town Night

Atmosphere: climatic, battle like.

Reference: Lord of the Rings - Minas Tirith, Hollow Knight

Other Audio

Menu Screens will have their own background audio, a calm ambient track so as not to distract the player if they are in settings or paused the game.

Dialogue will use a tone rather than spoken words, much like the Animal Crossing style.

Pick ups will give the player a rewarding feedback chime or bell to connote success.

Enemies will have a series of grunts and giggles to reflect their animalistic, trickster ways.

Table of Illustrations

*All unreferenced imagery is my own.

- Figure 1, Animal Crossing: New Horizons https://animalcrossingworld.com/guides/new-horizons/
- Figure 2, Yooka Layee https://www.epicgames.com/store/en-US/p/yooka-laylee
- Figure 3, Whytchwood https://blog.playstation.com/2021/08/05/bewitching-crafting-adventure-wytchwood-comes-to-brew-on-ps4-ps5-this-fall/
- Figure 4, Cozy Grove https://www.pcgamesn.com/cozy-grove/version-2-0-update
- Figure 5, Sky: Children of the Light https://developer.apple.com/news/?id=zm47it7t
- Figure 6, Omno https://mobile.twitter.com/studioinkyfox

- Figure 7, Gender split in the US

  https://www.statista.com/statistics/232383/gender-split-of-us-computer-and-video-gamers/
- Figure 8, Console Sales

  https://www.statista.com/statistics/276768/global-unit-sales-of-video-game-consoles/
- Figure 9, Dal Tokki https://gwangjunewsgic.com/arts-culture/korean-culture/daltokki/
- Figure 10, Sylvanian Families https://johnlewis.scene7.com/is/image/JohnLewis/233816585
- Figure 11, Moomins https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moomins
- Figure 12, The Clangers https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/mediapacks/clangers