

Mousemare



Game Design Document

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-Project Description-

In this project we were asked to independently design and make a playable game from our own brief. We needed a playable build of the game along with documentation and the design process.

My initial idea was to make a Twine narrative with a unique take on mixed media.

-Summary-

My game is a text based, visual narrative which revolves around a child who is scared of the dark. One night they fall asleep and meet a paper mouse who isn't what it seems.



-Story-

My story revolves around a child who is scared of the dark. They go to sleep one night and encounter a paper mouse in their dream called Peri. Peri shows them around this dream world before mentioning the "darkness". The child is wary and untrusting, but Peri reassures them it's going to be alright.

Through lollipop trees and bubble gum lakes, they eventually find a broken watch in a bush, this portal allows them to travel back to their bedroom.

They go back to sleep and carry on with the dream, eager for something exciting to happen. Along the way they encounter the seemingly friendly sheep, with their cute yet coarse steel wool coats. Soon it starts to get darker and the child's anxiety increases. Peri explains that there is a way to prevent the darkness enveloping them, he explains that the moon requires something sparkly to substitute the missing stars, this would in turn quell the darkness. Peri explains that blood in this dream world sparkles like the stars in the night sky do in the real world.

This poses the child with a choice- kill the sheep, kill something else or wait and kill nothing...



-Gameplay-

The goal of the game is to attempt to achieve one of the 'good' endings - one where the player is able to wake up in the safety of your bedroom. With the 'bad' endings there is an emphasis on the idea that the player is trapped in the dream, to escape they replay the dream in order to achieve the desirable ending.

There are certain tactics the player needs and clues will be given if they read all the text. They need to be quick at certain parts of the game but wait at others in order to continue the game.

The gameplay is heavily reliant on text which the player needs to read, but with the interspersion of images and animations they get an insight into the dream.

-Mindset-

The narrative was written to give an unexpectedly dark and somewhat uncomfortable feel. The focus on child-like, innocent characters and images that take a darker turn ensure an uneasy experience. There is also an element of the unknown, with the lack of images on some pages the player isn't entirely sure what is happening or what they're going to see next.

With the sheep battle scene there is also the feel of death and urgency.



-Targeted Platforms-

The main platform for my game was PC since it's the main platform for Twine. But it would be interesting to look at it from a phone or tablet as a digital book.

-Controls-

The controls are limited and simple. The player uses only the mouse to select their option or the link to the next passage. These links are either displayed within the text or there are also buttons in the side bar that the player can interact with.



-Screens-

Start Screen

Mousemare



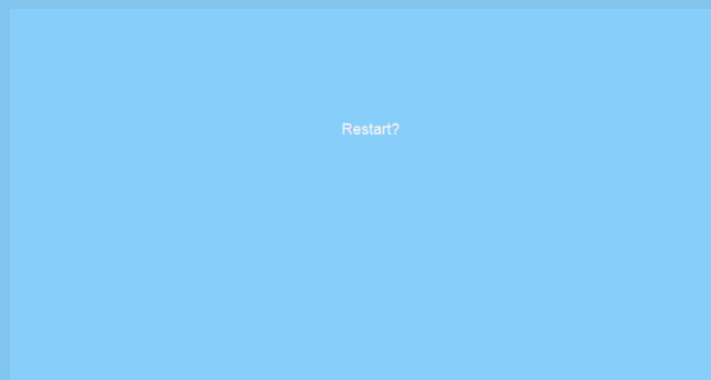
Tutorial

Links appear large and pink when hovered over.
Some of these will move the story on, others
represent choices which can change the course
of your story...

So chose wisely!

Ending

My ending is simply a restart button as my
credits are in the sidebar



-Mechanics-

Being a Twine game, my mechanics are relatively simple.

My main macros come in the form of timed events. There is a macro which only displays text after a certain number of seconds. For example, when the player is asked what they want to kill if they wait the option to kill nothing is displayed.

There is also a macro which forces the player onto the next passage. For example, when they are battling the sheep if they are not quick enough to pick an option they are forced onto a passage which gives them a bad ending.

The linkappend macro is used to link within passages, so the player has to click a certain word to progress.

Timed passages are also used for animations. For the "going to sleep" and "waking up" animations the player is taken to a new passage and then to the next passage once the gif has finished.



Level Design

-Influences-

For my game I took influence from the literature and films of 'Alice in Wonderland' and 'Coraline'. These both have dark themes where the main character is taken to another world and must find their way back.

This also inspired me to use the surreal, dream-like styles, both visually and within the story line.



'Coraline' especially influences my narrative with the idea of it being a children's film yet taking dark, unexpected twist and turns.



Visually, I was also heavily influenced by artists like Carmen Cardemil, who use mixed media to create artwork.



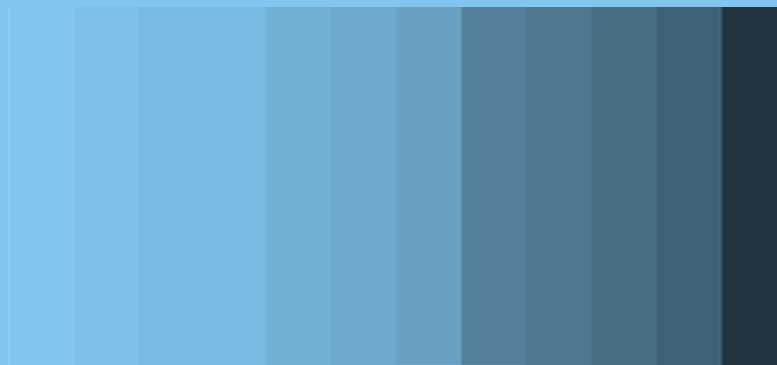
-Visual Style Attributes-

The colour scheme is consistent with brighter shades, at least at the beginning of the game.



But the further into the game, the darker the images become with overlays to ensure consistency.

Blue was an important colour within my game to represent the sky and illustrate the darkness. Below are the shades of blue I used within the background on my Twine passages.



My chosen style was heavily mixed media with the idea of using craft materials and textures to create the dream world.



-Game Flow-

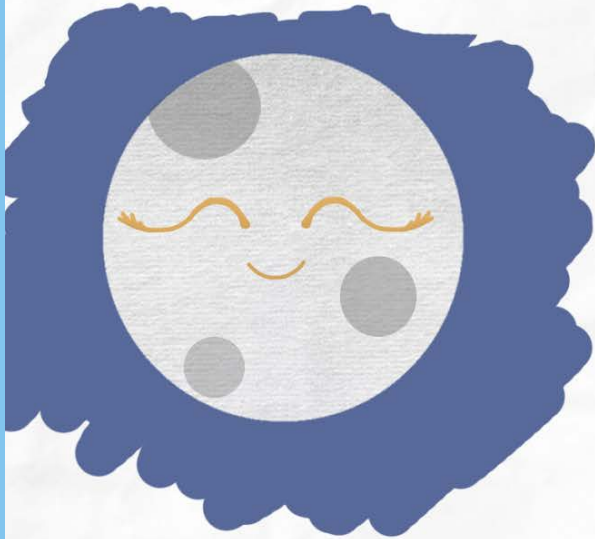
- 1- Player starts in their bedroom (optional exploration)
- 2- Player falls asleep, wakes up in the dream world
- 3- Peri introduces itself
- 4- Peri shows the player around
- 5- The player finds a watch (option whether or not to take it)
- 6- Watch allows them to travel back to their room
- 7- Player meets the sheep
- 8- Either gets hurt or is unscathed
- 9- Peri mentions it's getting darker – the only way to stop it is to kill something
- 10- Player must make a decision whether to kill something
- 11- If they kill something the moon is unhappy and won't help
- 12- They find out that Peri was using them and it sends them back to a purgatory version of their room
- 13- If the player has a knife they can then kill Peri and wake up
- 14- If the player decides not kill anything they see the moon
- 15- If they trust the moon over Peri they can return after running from the darkness
- 16- If they trust Peri they get stuck in purgatory



Assets

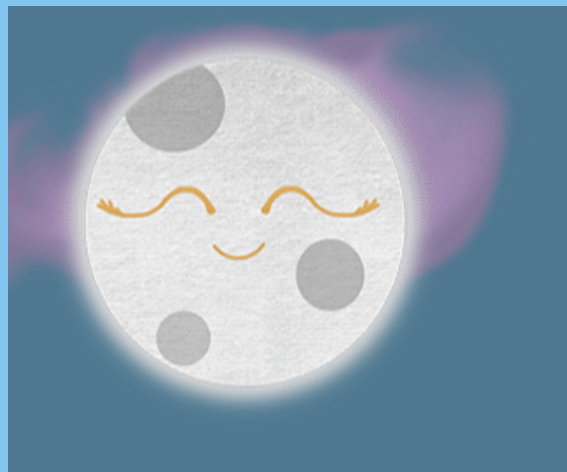
-Characters-

THE MOON

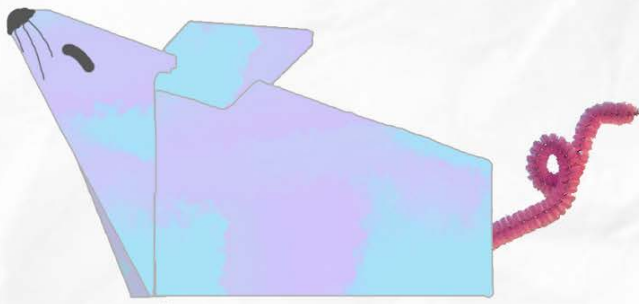


THE MOON IS A HAPPY CHARACTER, SWEET AND ALWAYS SMILING. SHE LIKES HER JOB OF LIGHTING UP THE SKY- AND THE PLAYER LIKES HER FOR IT. SHE IS THE ONLY CHARACTER TO OPPOSE PERI, GIVING HER A SENSE OF POWER WITHIN THE STORY LINE. SHE CALLS IT OUT AS IT IS USING HER AS AN EXCUSE FOR THE DARKNESS IT TURNS OUT IT IS BRINGING ITS SELF. SHE'S MORAL AND TELLS THE TRUTH. WHEN SHE FINDS OUT THE PLAYER HAS KILLED ANOTHER CREATURE IN ORDER TO GIVE HER SOMETHING SHE DOESN'T NEED, SHE TURNS HER BACK. BUT WHEN THEY LISTEN TO HER AND TRUST HER THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO WAKE UP.

SHE IS MADE FROM A PAPER TEXTURE WITH CUT OUT CIRCLES AND HAND-DRAWN FEATURES.



PERI



PERI, OR PERIWINKLE IS YOUR MOUSE COMPANION. YOU PROBABLY MADE IT ONCE IN SCHOOL, PROBABLY SOMETHING TO DO WITH HICKORY DICKORY DOCK. IT TAKES THE FORM OF AN ORIGAMI MOUSE WITH A PIPECLEANER FOR A TAIL

IT IS THE FIRST THING THAT THE PLAYER MEETS WITHIN THE DREAM, AND THE FIRST TO TELL THEM ABOUT THE DARKNESS.

PERI INITIALLY APPEARS FRIENDLY, DEPENDING ON HOW THE PLAYER DECIDES TO ACT TOWARDS HIM, BUT THIS MOUSE HAS ULTERIOR MOTIVES. IT'S POSSESSED BY SOMETHING THAT FEEDS OFF NEGATIVE EMOTION, PRIMARILY FEAR AND GUILT— THESE ARE GAINED THROUGH EXPLOITING THE PLAYER'S FEAR OF THE DARK AS WELL AS GETTING THEM TO KILL SOMETHING.

ITS GUISE AS A MOUSE IS PURPOSEFUL AS IT APPEARS SMALL AND WEAK, A MOUSE IS AN ANIMAL ASSOCIATED WITH WEAKNESS AFTER ALL. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO GET THE PLAYER TO TRUST IT AND LET IT INFLICT THESE EMOTIONS. IT IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DARK SINCE IT CAN MANIPULATE THE DREAM WORLD TO ITS LIKING.

MALICIOUS AND EVIL LITTLE MOUSE.



THE SHEEP



THE SHEEP ARE THE FIRST 'ENEMY' THE PLAYER ENCOUNTERS IN THE DREAM WORLD. THEY STICK TO A FLOCK ALL PURPOSEFULLY PAINFULLY SIMILAR THEY FOLLOW EACH OTHER AIMLESSLY. THEIR WOOL IS MADE FROM STEEL WOOL AND IS HARMFUL, THEY MEAN NO HARM THOUGH.

THEY DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE, BUT THEY CAN'T HELP IT. THE PLAYER FINDS THIS UPSETTING, THEY LIKE THEM AND FIND THEM CUTE. BEING SHEEP, THEY ARE SEEN AS GENERIC AND UNIMPORTANT— BUT THE PLAYER FEELS ATTACHED TO THEM.

TOWARDS THE END THE PLAYER HAS THE OPTION TO KILL ONE, THEIR ATTACHMENT SHOULD MAKE THIS DECISION HARD.

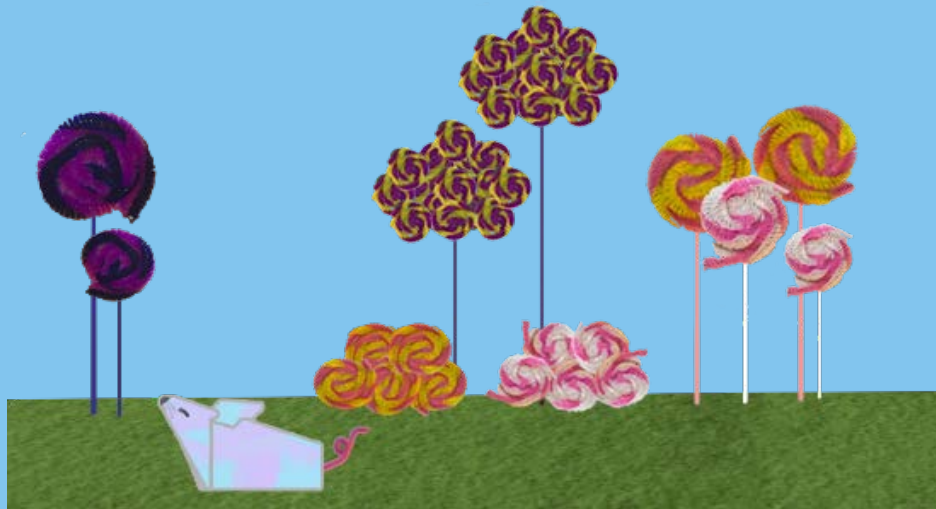
THEIR SKIN IS MADE OF FELT, WHILST THEIR WOOL IS ROUGH STEEL WOOL.



-Environment-

With all my assets I went with a heavily mixed media theme to represent the fact it was a child's dream. I used children's craft items like felt and pipe cleaners in order to make some of my assets. My aim was to keep it simple, considering it was mimicking a child's dream, so the player only see things that are important.

Dream world

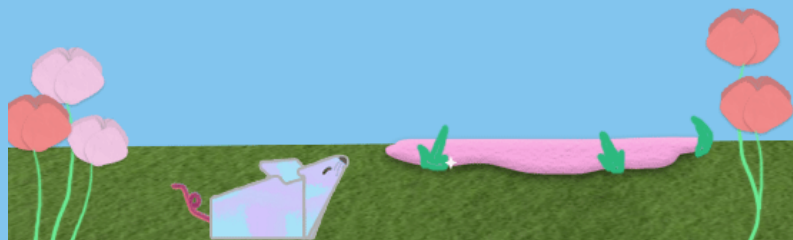


Trees - twisted pipe
cleaners

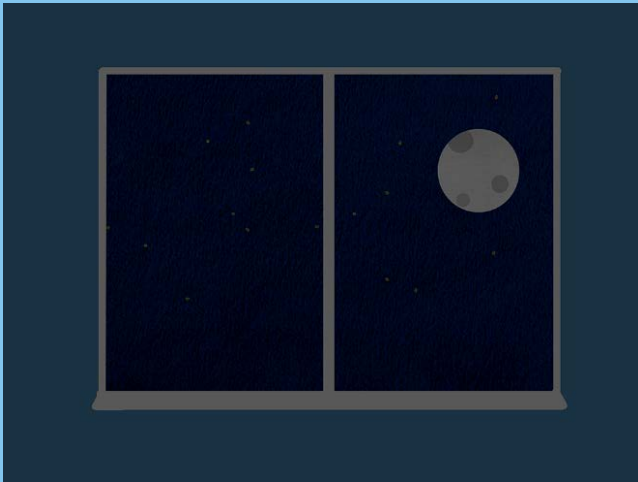
Grass - felt texture

Poppies - paper

Watch - digital art



Bedroom



Sky - felt

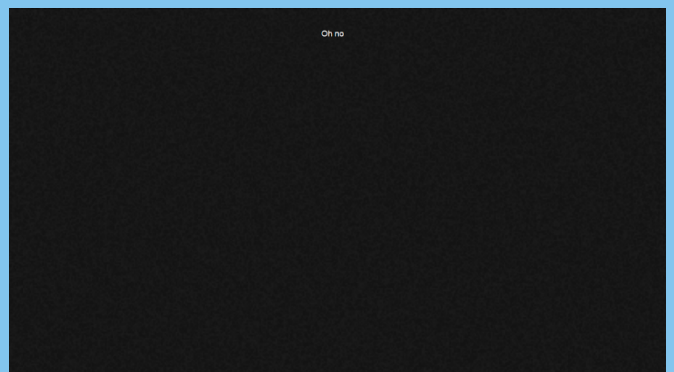
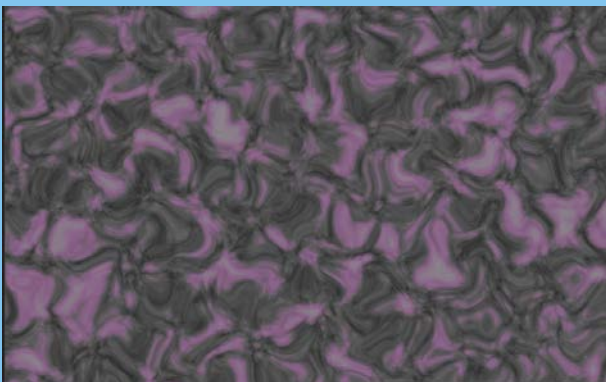
Stationery - photos

Carpet - photo

Doors - photo texture



-Animations-



The other animations were transitions, simulating going to sleep and waking up, and the static to show the darkness winning.



-Code-

Macros for time - These, as described in the mechanics section added an extra element of gameplay to the narrative. They either forced the player onto another passage or only showed text after a certain number of seconds

```
What will you kill?  
  
[[Sheep|Sheep]]  
[[I- I don't know|option 2]]  
  
<<timed 3s t8n>>[[Nothing|Nothing]]<</timed>>
```

Variables - The variables in my game are used for if statements to determine where the player can go based on their gameplay

```
<<if visited("Right")>>  
<<if visited("Sheephurt")>>  
You try to active the watch, but your hand, it's bleeding,  
you can't get to the buttons,  
[[Oh no|Endingbad]]  
<<endif>>  
<<endif>>  
  
<<if visited("Sheepgood")>>  
You get to the watch in time, it's screen cracking as you fall  
[[back home|Endingbad]]  
<<endif>>  
  
<<if $watch eq 0>>  
You have no where to run, you can't fight the[[dark  
|Badending2]]  
<<endif>>
```

CSS - I used CSS for my style sheet, which controlled the background colours and the text colour

```
}  
  
html.bedroomlight body {  
  
    background-color: #4381ac;  
  
}  
  
body.sleep {  
    background-image: [img[sleep_1.gif]];  
    background-attachment: fixed;  
    background-repeat: no-repeat;  
    background-size: cover;  
}
```



-Schedule-

Objectives

1- Decide on brief

2- Research - Look at existing Twine games, children's book illustrators and narrative influences

3- Group Crit - Ideas and feedback from game idea

4- Writing Narrative

5- Storyboards for Narrative

6- Narrative created in Twine

7- Style Creation - Static images and characters

8- Animations done

9- Testing



