

Hearth

Design Document

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Foreword

The game design document here wouldn't even exist if it weren't for the talents of the original team during Global Game Jam '19.

I hope to see them as contributors on this project, but special thanks goes to them here as well.

(In alphabetical order)

Jess Graziani

Will Johannesen

Spencer Melnick

William "Berry" Soto

Thanks also goes to The University of the Arts for hosting the game jam where this idea began.

Concept

Hearth explores what it means to grow up and leave home, through the metaphor of a long-lived fire, that eventually will go out regardless of the player's action - they must instead seek out a new home and start a new hearth before theirs dies.

Based on the Global Game Jam '19 [game](#).

Basic Gameplay Summary

The player is in the wilderness during winter and must keep their fire going. In order to fuel the fire, they must go out and explore, looking for more fuel. Eventually, the fire can no longer be fueled, and they must set out to find a new fireplace, using the remaining days that they have and the abilities/equipment they were able to gather.

Inspirations

Many of the ideas in this game are inspired by other games, but I hope to put them together in a new way that is interesting and stays true to the initial game we made for Global Game Jam 2019.

The Legend of Zelda Series

The player will interact with the world similar to how Link does in *The Legend of Zelda* (1986) or *A Link to the Past* (1991). New areas will be unlocked as they gain new pieces of equipment, and other equipment will allow them to travel the world more easily or more safely. For example, the player can find a insulated coat, extending how long they can stay in the cold.

Don't Starve

The cold system is familiar to that of *Don't Starve* (2013), but the player will not have to manage any other systems.

Resident Evil Series

Like in *Resident Evil* (2002), the player will need to plan their route and inventory carefully, so that they can survive until their next day. Keys or other important objects can be found to unlock new areas as well. Exploration will also be important and some days will need to be

used only to explore new areas so that the player can decide what they want to bring with them or how to get there.

Pikmin Series

Hearth's daytime exploration management is similar to that of the *Pikmin* games, and I imagine the days remaining system to be most like that of *Pikmin 3* (2013), where the player can extend their remaining days by discovering fruit - although Hearth will not allow for the fire to be extended indefinitely.

Gameplay

Overview

Top down perspective, with only about 2 buttons and directional pad are to be used for most parts of gameplay.

First Day/Tutorial

Game Loop

Every game day, the player will awaken at their fire, and decide what things they want to take from their campsite, limited by their inventory space. Then, they begin a journey, with the coldness meter displayed somewhere on the screen (When it reaches zero, the player will die).

Phase I - Hearth can be extended

Phase II - Hearth cannot be extended

Systems

Different systems in the game, like inventory or coldness are here. Each system can interact with one another, but should work fairly modularly from a coding standpoint, in case we ever decide to add/remove a core system from the game.

Inventory

The inventory is size limited, but can increase in size through upgrades. If the player has a full inventory but needs to pick up an item, they can drop one of their held items. Items can only be set on embarking from the campsite, or by picking them up in the wilds.

Freezing

After leaving the campsite, the player will have a limited amount of time that they can stay outside, otherwise they will freeze. If the player freezes, they will fall unconscious in the snow, like in the original, but eventually they will wake up at the

campsite on the next day, with the same inventory as before they left.

Fuel

Fuel can be collected out in the wilds and used to extend the lifetime of the hearth, in days. Different fuel items have different values and can be deposited back at the campfire at the end of the day. Eventually, fuel won't be able to be added to the hearth anymore, but the player will be notified that this happens.

Upgrades

Permanent equipment like a backpack or coat can be upgraded through finding items in the world. These upgrades do not take inventory space and cannot be dropped. Maybe different options for upgrades instead of linear path?

Tools/Equipment

Like *The Legend of Zelda*, tools and equipment can be found throughout the world and allow for the player to access new areas. These do take inventory space and can possibly be improved upon?

Environmental Puzzles

Example 1. A steep cliffside - the player must make their way down. To solve this, they find a rope at an old campsite, but the player may only collect this if they use a knife or sharp object on an abandoned tent.

Example 2. A mountain pass - the valley is bitter and chilled, with the steep cliffs on either end forming a wind tunnel. In order to cross to the other side, the player must find some type of coat or other equipment to keep them warm. This can serve as a soft-gate in addition to the limited heat capacity/freezing mechanic.

Engine

Hearth will be built on Godot, being rebuilt from the ground up to fix some of the spaghetti areas in the current code.

Graphics

Lighting Engine - Support for shadows and depth sorting

Particle Effects

- Footprints in the snow, can be used for finding the way home or just seeing where you've been. Disappears at a cap (to prevent overloading computer) or when the day changes.
- Breathing mist, especially when standing still.
- Snow, increases in speed and amount depending on intensity of environment

Art

All art will be hand-drawn (so far) including animations. The campfire will feature a somewhat static screen and special environment art. Graphics will be somewhat top down, in a 2.5d perspective and most snowy objects will be based on a purplish-blue indigo or a very light blue color, to contrast with warm oranges and yellows for warm and safe areas. World art will mostly be full resolution tiles.

Music

Narrative

Hearth will feature minimal dialogue, as there is only one character so far. I'd like to focus on the interaction between the character and their environment rather than other people. Perhaps certain items or setpieces can serve as analogues for the people and communities that make up their home. If these become too direct, the theme may become too much of our own experiences, and become wholly unrelatable.

Aside from developing personality through animation and behavior, limited dialogue or reactions written from their point of view may help the player empathize with and further the meaning of the game. With the abstract representation of these ideas, I believe that the team can fine tune them to the point where they effectively communicate the tone, while still allowing the player to interpret and relate to their own experiences.

Setting

Hearth is set in a frozen wasteland, there may have been abundant life here at one point, or simply wayward fauna trying to survive.

Whatever the case, the **hearthlands** do not have any real mysteries to be solved or clear-cut ruins. Some remaining vague places or ruins may appear as a means to provide some puzzles or challenges, but very little details will be provided, because the mystery of the ruins could be disappointing when it doesn't impact the narrative at all.