

A SOUL'S JOURNEY

Game Design Document

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Section I – Overview

1.1. ID card

Name – A Soul's Journey

Genre – 2D Puzzle Platformer

Platform – PC

Target Audience – Puzzle Game enthusiasts

Engine Used – Unity 2019.2.0f1

1.2. High Concept

A Soul's Journey is a Puzzle-Platformer where the player has to place different kinds of platforms from his/her inventory at pre-defined locations to help the soul reach its goal.

1.3. Story

A child is crossing the road and is suddenly met with an accident. While he is lying on the ground, he enters this near death situation where his soul leaves his body. The boy is quickly taken to the hospital and this is where the first sequence of the game happens.

When the player completes 10 levels, the next cut-scene takes place where the doctor gives the first defibrillation shock. Since the soul is somehow still connected to the child, it regains one of its colours and the next sequence (Level 11 to 19) of puzzles start.

After this sequence, the second cut-scene takes place, where the doctor gives the second defibrillation shock and this time the soul regains another colour and the final sequence (Level 20 to 28) of puzzles start.

After all 28 levels have completed, the final cut-scene plays which shows the doctor giving the third defibrillation shock which this time lead to the lost soul finally being able to return to the child's body and the next morning, the child wakes up and is healthy once again.

1.4. Gameplay in a Nutshell

A Soul's Journey is a puzzle-platformer game where the player is given an inventory of platforms at the start of the level which he/she is allowed to place at certain pre-defined locations of the level. After placing these platforms, the player has to play through the level and try and get the soul to its goal (portal at the end of each level). If the player fails to do so, he/she can change the placements of the platforms according to his/her new strategy and try again.

1.5. Genre

A Soul's Journey is categorized as a puzzle game as the gameplay revolves around problem solving and strategical thinking. The complexity of the puzzles in the later part of the game will provide a good amount of challenge to any player.

1.6. Target Audience

The target audience for this game are puzzle game enthusiasts since this game is heavily dependent on the solving skills of the player. It also adapts the “learn through punishment” technique which can be found in games like Limbo and INSIDE where the player has to learn to cross the level by dying multiple times due to wrong placement of platforms, wrong movements, miscalculated jumps, etc.

1.7. Feature Set

28 Levels

9 types of platforms

Variety of puzzles in different levels

Section II (A) – Gameplay

2.1. Objectives

There are two primary objectives in the game:

1. Placing the platforms strategically around the level.
2. Play the level after placing the platforms and help the soul reach its goal.

2.2. Core Mechanics

2.2.1. Preparation Sequence

The preparation sequence requires the player to place platforms from his/her inventory into the level at pre-defined locations in the level. This can be done by clicking the desired type of platform and then clicking the bubble-like thing in the level which does a “breathing effect” when any platform is selected in the inventory. This will result in the platform being placed in the level. After the player has completed placing all the platforms, he/she has to hit the “Tab” key on the keyboard to switch to the playing sequence.

2.2.2. Playing Sequence

After the player has completed placing his platforms, he/she may play the level to try and get the soul to its goal. The player is faced by platforming challenges through the level by means of different kinds of platforms such as a **rotating spikes platforms, gravity inverting platforms, triple jump platforms, different coloured platforms (purple, white & pink), weak platforms & fast platforms.**

2.3. Types of Platforms

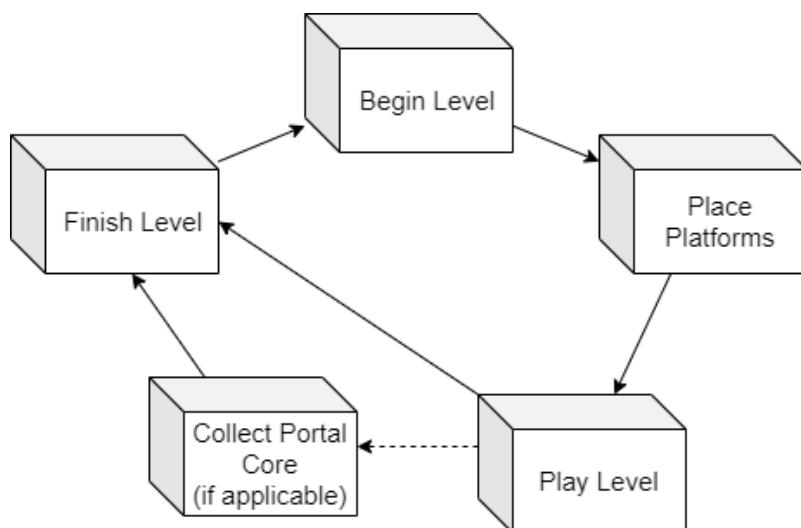
- Normal Platform: This is just a normal platform that does nothing special like the following platforms. Its sole purpose in the game is to provide some resting time to the player in the middle for some challenging platforming sequences.
- Rotating Spikes Platform: This platform has deadly spikes on one side and has a plain surface on the other side. The player can only walk on the plain side of the platform. Stepping on the spiky side of the platform results in an instant death of the soul. This platform rotates every time the player jumps.
- Gravity Inverting Platform: This platform has two portions to it where one portion covers $\frac{3}{4}$ of the entire platform and the other portion takes the rest of the $\frac{1}{4}$ of the platform. The longer portion of the platform, holds the player on the platform with its high gravity and prevents the player from jumping. The other part of the platform, inverts the gravity of the player.
- Triple Jump Platform: This platform isn't always active. It activates itself for every third jump the player makes. To give a clue to the player that the platform is going to get activated in the next jump, a faded out version of the platform appears on the screen.

- Purple Platform: This platform is introduced in the second section of the game where according to the story, the first defibrillation shock has just taken place and the soul is slowly gaining its colors back. At this point, the soul has attained its purple colour back and the soul can stand on this platform only when it is purple in colour, otherwise it will just go right through this platform as if it never existed.
- White Platform: The soul may stand on this platform only when it is white in colour. Otherwise it will just go right through this platform as if it never existed.
- Weak Platform: The weak platform, like the name suggests, is weak in nature and hence tends to break shortly after the player steps on it. This makes the player think and take quick actions and decisions.
- Pink Platform: Like the purple and white platforms, this platform is colour specific. The soul can stand on this platform only when it is pink in colour, otherwise it will just go right through this platform as if it never existed.
- Fast Platform: Whenever the player is on this platform, it increases the player's speed astronomically which enables the player to make huge jumps and move swiftly.

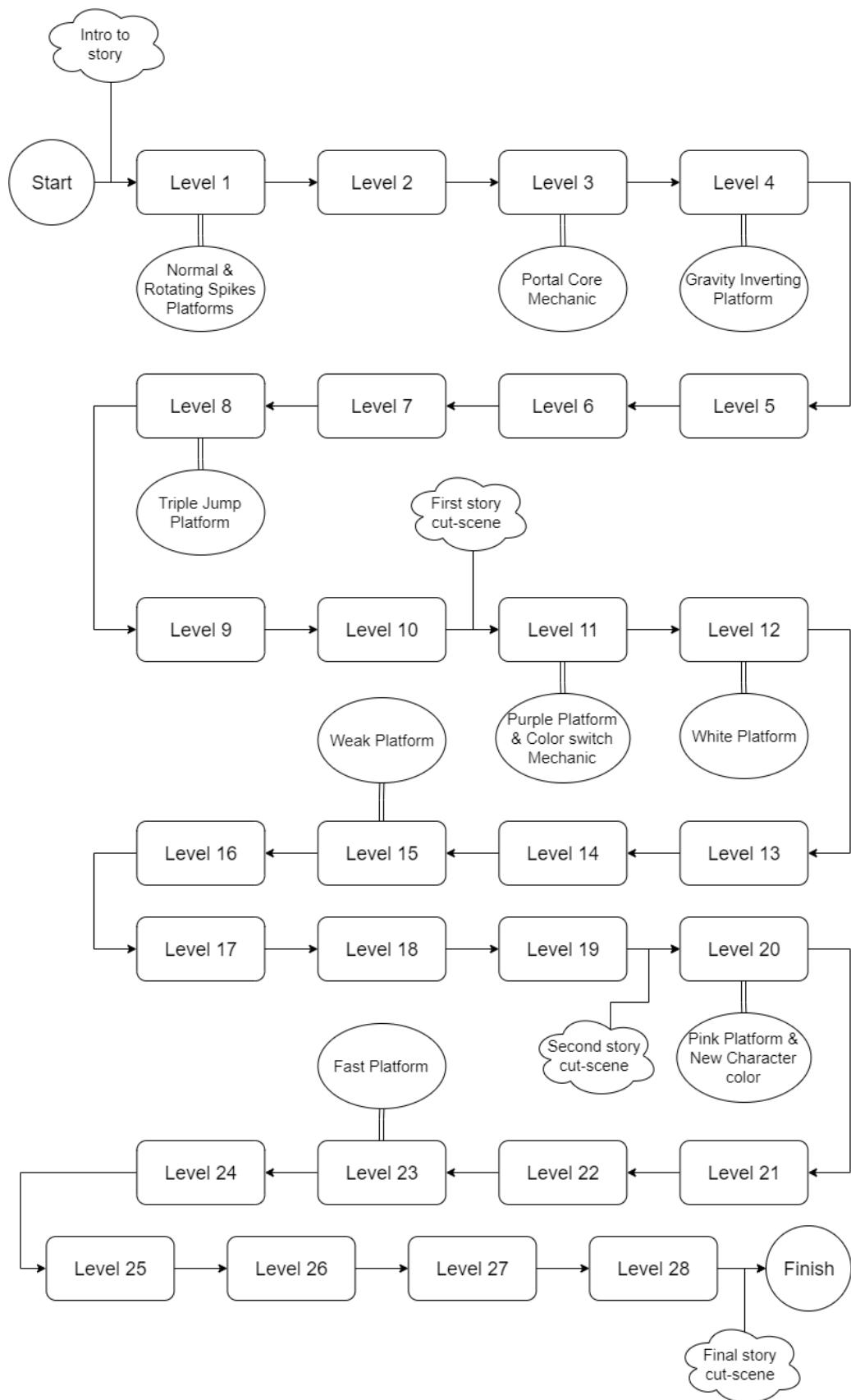
2.4. Structure and Progression

The game is spaced out through a sequence of 28 levels. Each level consists of platforms which the player utilises to escort the soul to its goal. There are platforms introduced at regular intervals with relatively easy sequences in the beginning for the player to learn and understand what each of the platforms do. The sequence of the introduction of each platform can be found in 2.6. *Game Flow*.

2.5. Game Loop



2.6. Game Flow



2.7. Controls

Preparation Phase:

Click on platform in inventory → click on the platform placer to place platform.

Playing Phase:

A → Move Left

D → Move Right

Tab → Switch between play phase & preparation phase

Space bar → Jump

E or Enter → Change colour

Section II (B) – Level Design

2.8. Principles

A Soul's Journey will incorporate the Kishōtenketsu philosophy in the Level Design process.

Kishōtenketsu

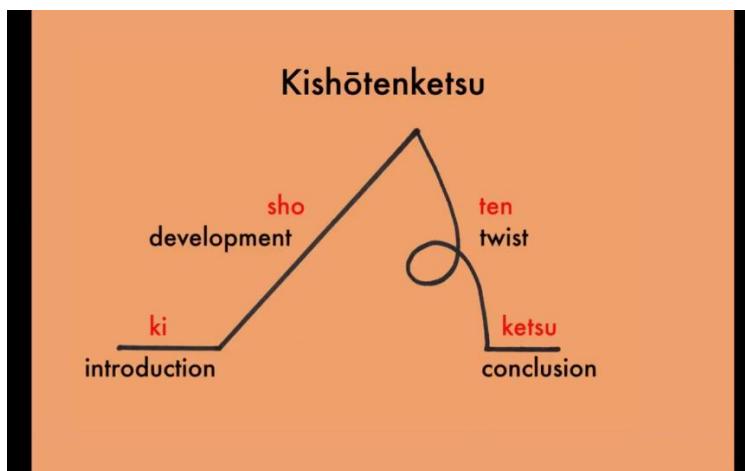
Kishōtenketsu is a 4-part structure and development of classic Chinese, Japanese and Korean narratives, it is used in 4-line Chinese poems and 4-panel Japanese comics, in each of these stories the 4 parts are –

ki – Introduction

shō – Development

ten – Twist

ketsu – Conclusion



Adaptation

In Level Design, levels are 4-part self-contained showcases, where a mechanic can be successfully taught, developed, twisted and then concluded in a short-time;

Introduction (ki) – Every time a new mechanic is introduced, it will be introduced in a safe environment, where the player can learn the mechanic and mess around with it.

Development (shō) – After the mechanic is introduced, it is established further and developed by adding challenges and the safety-net being removed.

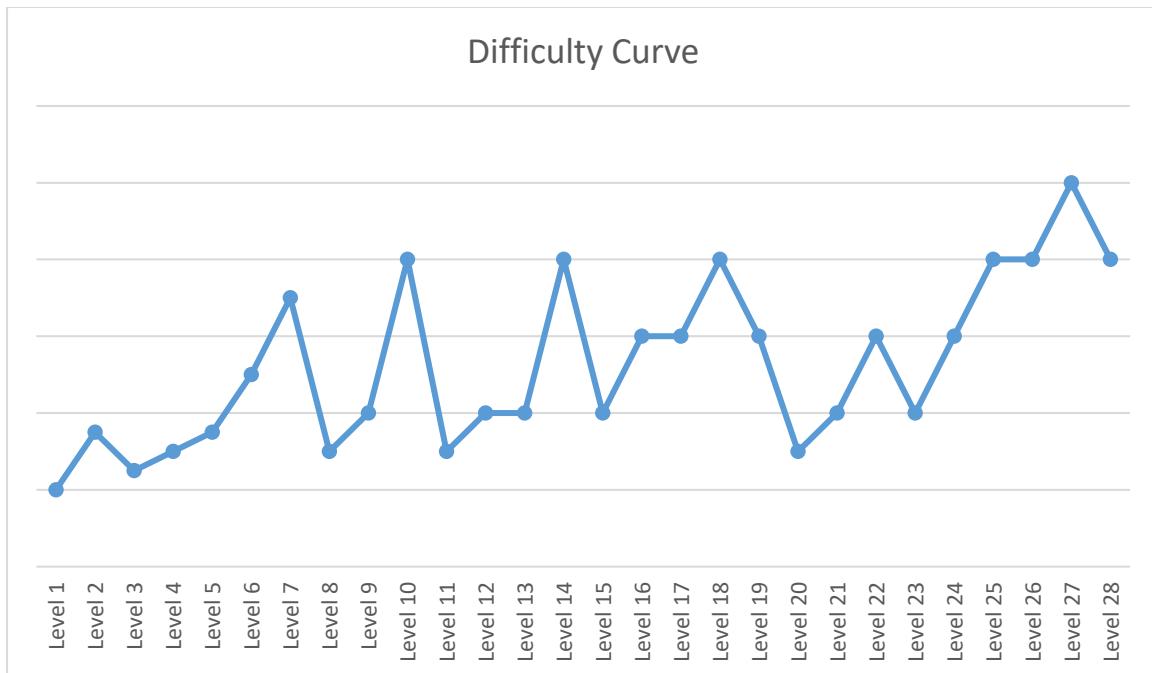
Twist (ten) – After a while, when the player understands the mechanic, the mechanic will be turned around on its head with a twist, by pairing it with a new mechanic or a previously learned mechanic or implementing it in a fairly difficult sequence, to challenge the player or to offer a fresh perspective.

Conclusion (ketsu) – Finally, the conclusion where the player will be tested to show-off what they have learned over the course of the previous levels with relatively harder sequences.

Justification

Koichi Hayashida over a course of a few Mario games, adapted and developed the Kishōtenketsu philosophy for Level Design. This is how Nintendo manages to fit multiple mechanics in a game without making it bloated or full of tutorials. Tutorials often break the flow of the game, teaching the mechanics through action and gameplay can be fruitful. If ever mechanics are re-introduced in further levels, we can be confident that the Player knows them as they encountered and learned them in earlier levels, this will offer for interesting gameplay.

2.9. Difficulty



This is the kind of difficulty curve that is expected off the game. All the 'peaks' in the difficulty curve occur only after the player has had a sufficient amount of the 'rest period' where the player is introduced to new mechanics and is allowed to play with them in different ways through the levels leading up to the difficult levels.

After a relatively difficult level, the player is awarded with some resting time by introducing a new mechanic and also allowing him to play with this new mechanic with other mechanics previously introduced in the game.

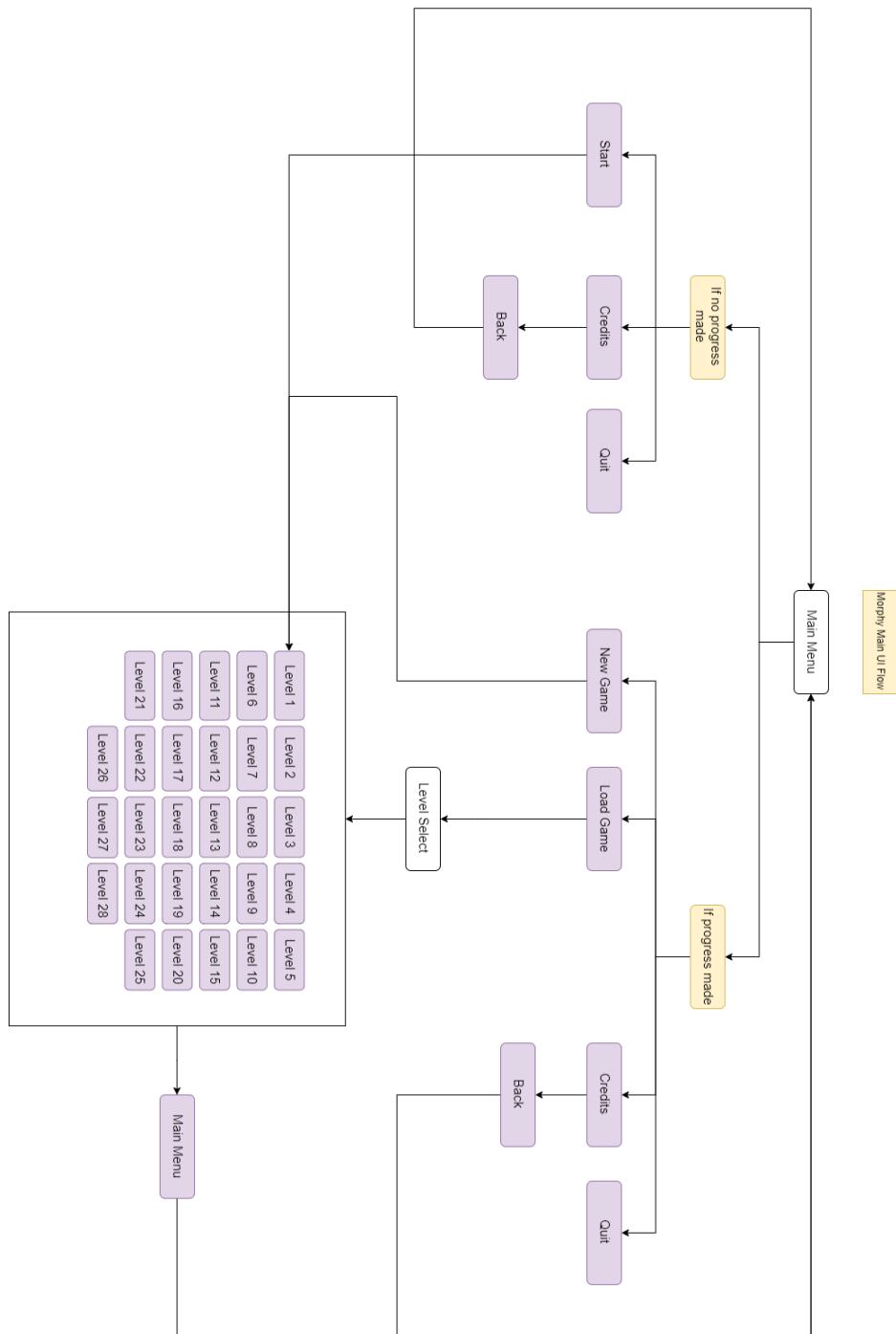
This kind of difficulty progression perfectly falls in place with the level design philosophy that mentioned above.

Section III – User Interface

A Soul's Journey is aimed to have minimal and simple UI. The buttons and aesthetics of each screen will be vibrant and easy to understand. The number of screens and options available will be minimal, but still flexible enough to let the player have a comfortable experience while interacting with the interface.

3.1. Game Screen Flow

Following is the game screens flow, the buttons each screen will have as well as the transitions for one screen to the other:

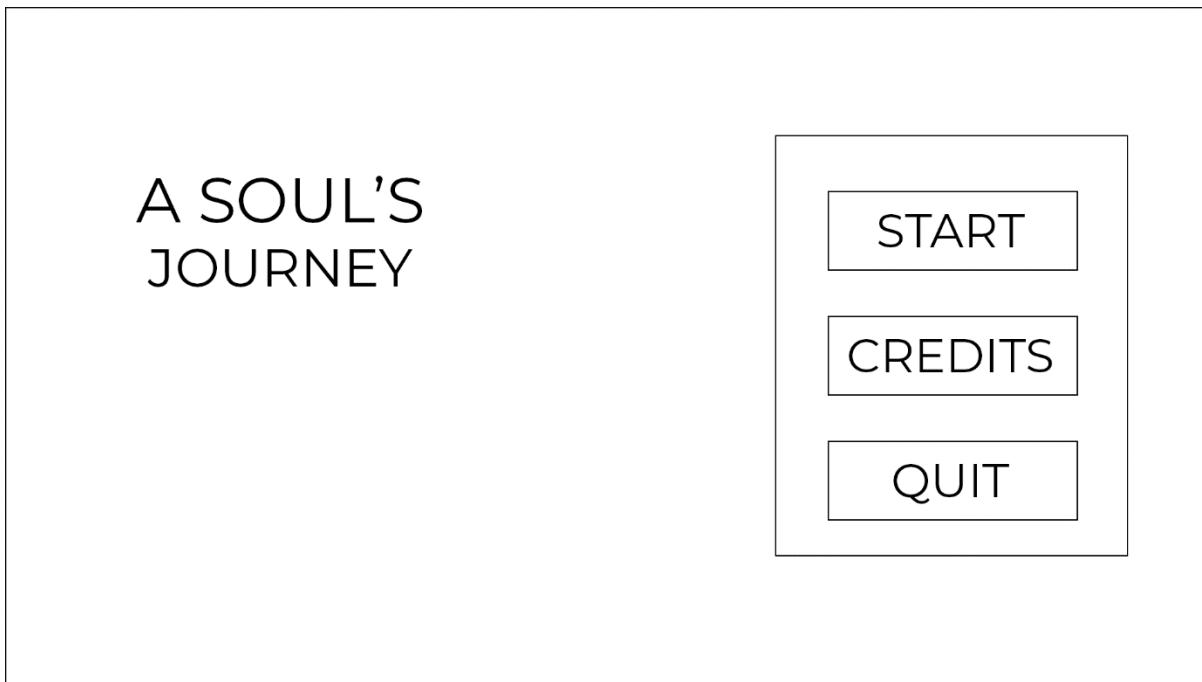


3.2. Screens

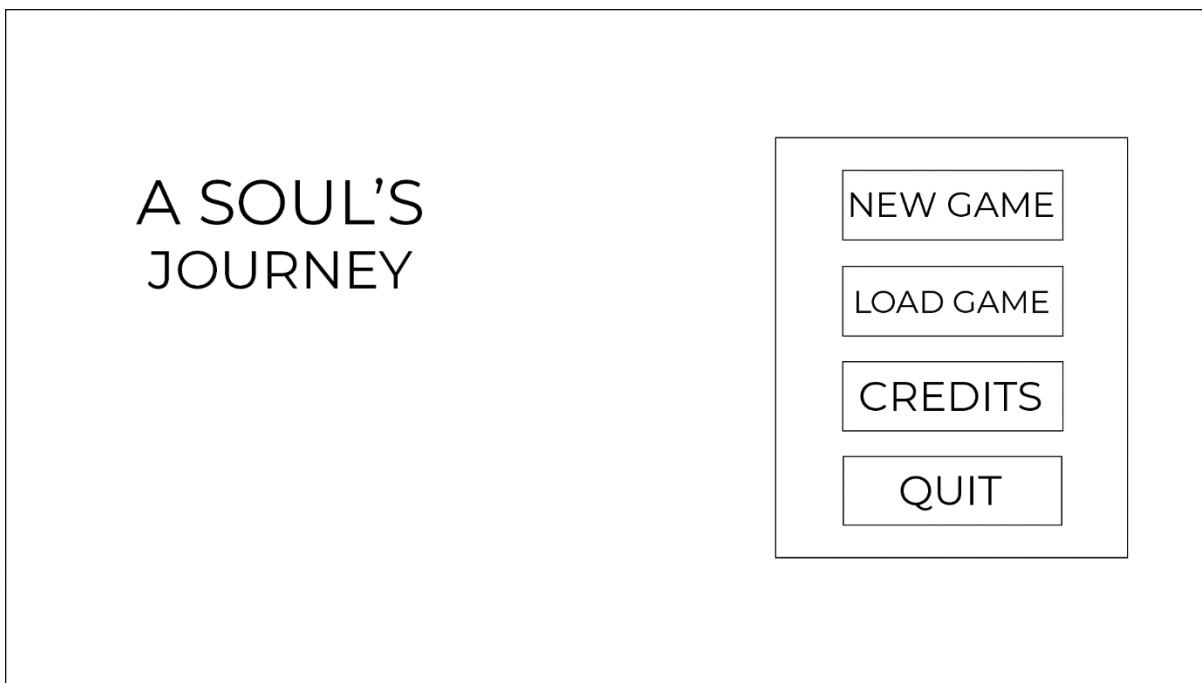
The following screenshots will showcase the menu structure and the general ideology of the way menus are designed for the game.

Main Menu

If progress is not made:



If progress is made:

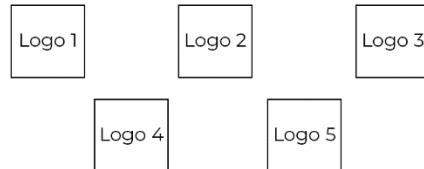


Credits

CREDITS

A game by Anuj Patwari

SOFTWARE USED



Website: <https://anujpatwari.com>

Level Select



BACK

On this page, the player will be able to see that a few levels are “greyed out” compared to the other levels. This is because the levels that the player hasn’t yet reached/completed while playing through the game are still locked and hence un-interactive.

In-Level UI

Inventory	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Deaths: 03	Level: 01
	Quantity	Quantity	Quantity		

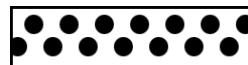
Section IV – Art

I am going to be making all the art for this game myself and will be going for a very simplistic art style, something like what the game, Thomas was Alone followed. Very simple shapes with simple and solid colours.

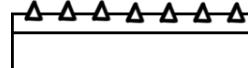
4.1. Platforms

The platforms are all going to be mostly outlined boxes with different shapes in the centre animated with Shader Graphs which were very recently introduced into Unity. This would help to bring a bit more life into the scene.

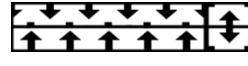
Normal Platform



Rotating Spike Platform



Gravity Inverting Platform



Triple Jump Platform



Weak Platform



Coloured Platforms (White, Purple & Pink)



Fast Platform



All of the above platforms are subject to change. These are just illustrations to give a simple idea of what the platforms should or could look similar to.

4.2. Character Animations

The character is set to depict a soul and hence a ghost like character would do great justice to the look of the soul. Hence the animations are also going to be something of that of a ghost. While moving, the character will leave a trail of its body behind for a fraction like a ghost.

4.3. Environment & Background

Since the story is based on a kid's soul, having an environment that has various elements of things that kids like in general would suit the game. But since the story is about also a sensitive thing, a near death situation, it would not be appropriate to have a very colourful and joyful background. Therefore a plain background with some faded out elements on them like crayons, teddy bears, stars, etc. would suit the look and feel of the game.

4.4. User Interface

Upon doing some research I realised that kids spend a lot of their time near books, for example, while studying, while drawing, while colouring, etc. So a UI that would surround the environment of paper would look very good for this theme.

Section V – Music

All the music in the game will entirely be written, played and recorded by me. The game being set in a near death situation, would follow a slow melody for the most part of the game.

5.1. Levels 1 to 10

Since this is the very beginning of the game and this is where the character is supposed to feel lost and confused, it would be very appropriate for the music in this section to be very slow and have a lot of bass.

5.2. Levels 11 to 19

When these levels are in the picture, the character is supposed to have an idea of what is going on around it and hence the music would start getting a bit faster and have more melody to it rather than bass.

5.3. Levels 20 to 28

This being the final section of the game, the character is determined to get back to the kid's body and therefore the music here would get the fastest, thus encouraging the player to go on till he/she reaches their goal.

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