

Course: Computer Games Production

Unit: Games Design

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Assignment Number: 3

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Design Documentation

Introduction:

For this assignment we were asked to deconstruct a retro game based on one “design framework”, and with the resources available reconstruct it as either a board, or card game. To this end we chose the game Altered Beast, first created for the Sega Megadrive, and decided upon creating a card game due to the common interest in them that we share. In addition the mechanics we are focusing on lend themselves more easily to this format.

Deconstruction Research:

Björk, S et al, **Game Design Patterns** *“Our method for harvesting consists of five iterative steps: recognize, analyze, describe, test and evaluate. The recognition phase creates a quick pattern candidate collection around a certain idea or interaction area. The next step is that the collection is analyzed by describing how the pattern is used in example games and then trying to remove the pattern from the games and explaining how it would change the game play.” (p4)*

While researching deconstructive game design methods, we came across the above paper. This enabled us to use the “Game Design Patterns” framework to deconstruct our game, resulting in us developing the three main themes of Power ups, Bosses and Lives.

Deconstruction:

For the deconstruction of our game we chose the game design patterns framework, as we felt this best represented the features of Altered Beast.

This design framework allows us to look at our game from an abstract perspective, from this we are able to see reoccurring elements, which are our game design patterns, we found three main patterns within our game:

Power Ups:

One of the key features of the game is power ups, in order to progress the player must collect three orbs, which eventually lead to them taking their altered beast form, and being able to face the boss. If the player does not gain all three orbs then they must repeat the level.

Bosses:

After the player has collected all three power ups they are able to face the level boss, the game has five levels, each with a different end boss. These are end game conditions, which allow the player to progress.

Lives:

The player has three lives with which to complete the game, when these lives are spent it is game over. Each life consists of a set amount of health points, so the player can take so much damage before death.

Application of Framework:

After we deconstructed the game we looked at how we could apply the gathered elements to help designing our game:

Power Ups:

Power ups are an integral part of our game design, as the player gains more they are able to use more abilities, making it easier to defeat the enemy due to increasing strength.

Bosses:

We introduced this element into our game by producing two decks of cards, the Zeus, and Hades decks. This gives the player two options, either to play as the hero, or the enemy, much like the Zeus deck uses power ups to transform into the altered beast form, the Hades deck does the same to use the boss form.

Lives:

Lives in our game are in the form of the card deck, as the player loses health points they discard cards from their deck, once all cards are gone the players life is depleted and the last player with cards remaining in their deck wins.

Conceptual Design:

Initially we took the elements derived from the original game, and worked out a way to implement them into our game design. We also looked at a range of other card games such as Magic The Gathering, Pokemon, etc in order to work out what elements are required to make a good game.

Prototyping:

We gathered together in order to create our initial prototype in which we created two basic decks. Creature cards were created with their own abilities and health. The player was to have hit points which they could defend with creature cards. This was initially very similar to Magic The Gathering, and because of this our beta testers found it quite difficult to pick up the game and start playing.

While we had already created the cards designs for the first two decks, we decided to re-evaluate our game design. We went back to the drawing board because of this and built the game from the ground up. Instead of basing it upon an already existing card game, we were able to create a quite simple design, which from testing we found to be well balanced, and easy to play.

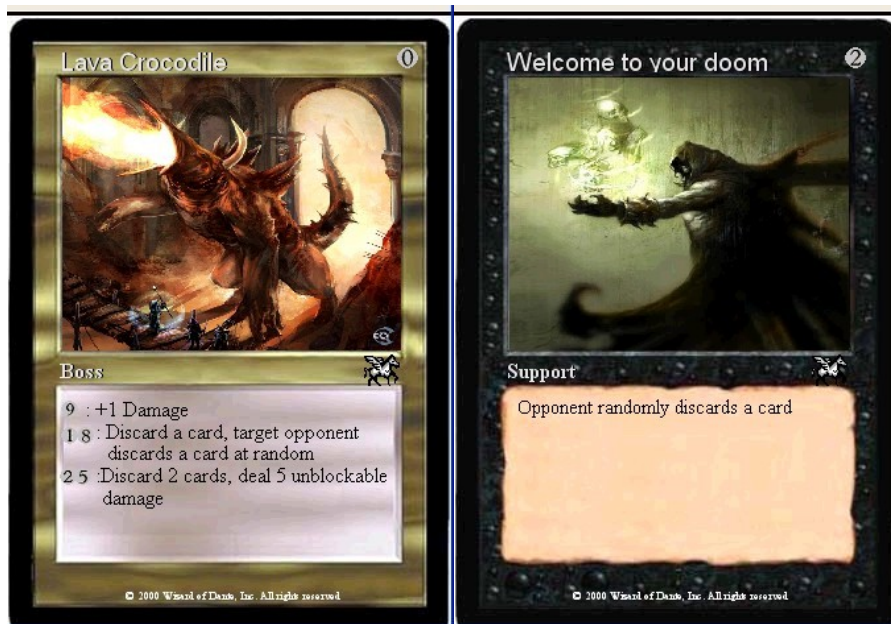
Testing:

Once we had created the initial design of our cards, we began testing. We created two of each deck. Testing both against one another and against the opposing deck. This enabled us to determine if the game was balanced or not. We found it not to be, so made several adjustments to both decks, and repeated this process until we found the game to be balanced.

We arranged external testers to play our game and give feedback on there thoughts and opinions on all aspects of the game. This resulted in feedback which indicated the game to be too complicated and to similar to other card games available on the market. We then attempted another design concept taking these opinions and ideas into consideration. The second design was then subjected to the same testing process.

We then created the cards and tested them with 3 different beta testers, finding that they thought the game was too difficult to pick up.

Because of this we went back to the drawing board and created our game again, performing the same processes, however this deck was much more balanced from the off ergo it required much less work to produce.

Structure Of Game:**Visually:**

We created these concept cards based on the themes within the original game, unfortunately it was hard to find materials for the Zeus deck, this affected the game considerably in terms of visual appeal, having to replace Centurions with boxers etc.

The cards themselves contain several pieces of information, the name of the card, its type, i.e. Boss card, Support card, etc as well as the power up cost to summon a creature. We also gave specific card types different colour themes in order to make them easily recognisable.

Structually:

Our final game design included all three elements talked about previously, powerups, bosses and lives. It works like so:

Initially the players each draw 6 cards from the deck; the players need to decide who takes the first turn. The player is able to place simple attack cards onto the field in order to inflict damage to the other player's deck. When this happens the player discards x amount of cards depending on how much damage was done. The more cards that are in play the more power ups a player has, this is based on the number of attack damage each creature performs, as the player gains more power ups they level up into different forms, altered beast, and boss being the eventual outcome. When all but one player has depleted their deck of cards then the remaining player wins the game.

Gameplay:

As talked about in the testing section, we put our prototype design through extensive testing to ensure that it was a balanced and fun game. Incorporating the original Altered Beast elements to allow the player a similar experience but in a different format.

When designing the game we took into consideration the average amount of time someone spends playing a game, finding that our initial prototype was also flawed because it took upwards of half an hour to finish one game. Due to this we redesigned the game to make it much quicker to play.

Bibliography:**Quotes:**

Björk, S et al, **Game Design Patterns** *“Our method for harvesting consists of five iterative steps: recognize, analyze, describe, test and evaluate. The recognition phase creates a quick pattern candidate collection around a certain idea or interaction area. The next step is that the collection is analyzed by describing how the pattern is used in example games and then trying to remove the pattern from the games and explaining how it would change the game play.” (p4)*

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