

Game Design Document

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Overview

Genre:

2D Pixel Art Narrative-Driven Platformer (Adventure)

Visual Style:

Retro pixel art featuring sepia-toned cityscapes, brass pipes, ticking gears, and foggy alleyways.

Core Concept:

In a city where citizens' time is absorbed by their clockwork hearts, mirroring modern society's obsession with digital devices, the player is the only one without a mechanical heart. They must steal time to survive, save citizens to restore their organic humanity, and choose the city's fate.

Core Gameplay Mechanics

1. Platforming

Basic platforming with jumping (Space) and moving (WASD). Platforms are static or move in predictable patterns (e.g., gears rotating slowly).

2. Time Stealing

The player has a depleting "Time Gauge" (their life force). To survive, they must steal seconds from environmental objects.

Sources of Time:

Decay Clocks: Scattered across the city, symbolizing wasted time, yielding 5-15 seconds when interacted with (press E).

3. Time Manipulation

Slow Time: Spend 5 seconds to slow environmental hazards (e.g., spinning gears, falling debris) for 3 seconds, allowing safe passage.

Rewind Platforms: Use 10 seconds to rewind the state of a crumbling platform or gear mechanism, allowing safe passage.

4. Puzzle-Platforming

Environmental Puzzles: Time enemy patrol patterns to sneak past or steal time.

Dynamic Environments: Crumbling structures, shifting platforms that activate/deactivate based on player actions.

5. Narrative Exploration

NPC Interactions: Engage with citizens whose clockwork hearts reflect their addiction to digital-like routines, draining their organic humanity. Dialogue choices (via E) advancing the storyline and revealing the city's history.

6. Saving NPCs

Mechanic: Use stolen time (15-20 seconds) to repair an NPC's clockwork heart, partially restoring their organic humanity (e.g., regaining emotional awareness or memories of nature).

Rewards: Some NPCs grant items (e.g., Time Shards to extend the Time Gauge, Gear Keys to unlock story areas).

Others provide story fragments or nothing, emphasizing risk/reward.

Storyline Progression

Structure:

A single, interconnected cityscape and underground with no distinct levels. Progression is driven by story milestones, unlocked through NPC interactions, time shards, and simple exploration.

Story Arcs: The narrative unfolds based on saving NPCs and stealing from the environment, reflecting modern time management struggles.

Exploration: Players explore with basic platforming, meeting NPCs to earn Gear Keys (unlocking clock towers) or save NPCs.

Narrative Outline

Premise:

Citizens' clockwork hearts absorb their time, fueling mechanical routines that strip their organic humanity, mirroring modern society's addiction to digital devices. The player, without a clockwork heart, must steal time from the environment to survive and can save citizens to restore their connection to humanity and nature. The Central Clock Tower hoards this time to sustain the city's rulers.

Act 1: The Outcast

Setting: Cityscape streets and alleys.

Story: The player learns to steal time from broken clocks to survive while evading patrols. They meet a malfunctioning NPC (a librarian) whose memories reveal the clockwork hearts' drain on humanity, with the Central Clock Tower as the system's core. Saving her (15 seconds) grants a Gear Key to a clock tower;

Gameplay: Basic platforming (jumping gaps, climbing platforms), time-stealing, and slow-time to avoid sentinels. Players hide in sewers to escape patrols.

Act 2: The Rebellion

Setting: Sewer tunnels.

Story: The player discovers a sewer where NPC resisting their clockwork hearts, seeking to rediscover organic humanity. A key NPC (an artist) offers a Time Shard (extends Time Gauge) if saved, restoring their ability to feel nature's beauty.

Gameplay: Simple platforming (navigating wide platforms, avoiding steam vents) and slow-time or pause-time for stealth. No complex puzzles, focusing on NPC interactions and exploration.

Act 3: The Reckoning

Setting: Central Clock Tower (a massive gear-driven chamber).

Story: The player uses the Gear Key to enter the Central Clock Tower. Without the Gear Key (from saving the librarian), the game defaults to Ending 2. The player confronts the rulers, choosing to save NPCs or steal time, leading to two endings:

Ending 1 (Sacrifice): Destroy the Central Clock Tower, using all stolen time to free citizens, restoring their organic humanity (regaining emotions and nature's connection). The player dies as their Time Gauge depletes, symbolizing sacrifice for collective freedom.

Ending 2 (Betrayal): Steal time from all NPCs to survive, escaping alone as the city collapses, reflecting personal survival over collective good.

Gameplay: Simple platforming to reach the core (jumping platforms, avoiding sentinels with slow-time), culminating in a final interaction to destroy the Tower or steal time for escape.

Setting

1. Cityscape (Street View)

A sepia-toned steampunk city with brass towers, foggy alleys, and ticking clocks. Streets are littered with broken clocks and gears, representing wasted moments.

2. Underground (Sewers)

A damp, gear-driven sewer network beneath the city, accessible via grates.

Inspirations

RECUR



Timelie



Visual References

