

Design Journal
1110GFS Principles of Game Design 2

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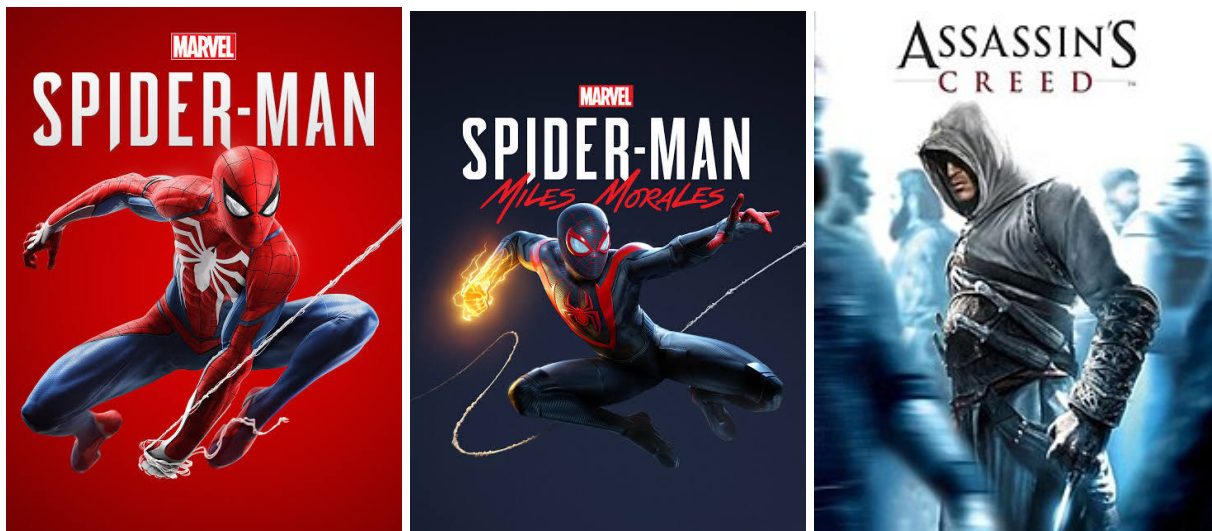
Week 5

For Assignment 2, we were tasked to create a proposal for a single-player video game based on our own original concept, applying your understanding of game design conventions within one of the following game genres: Action (includes action adventure, stealth and action subgenres e.g. roguelike, metroidvania); Immersive simulation; RPG; Strategy; Tactics; Horror; Shooter; Brawler; Simulation (sim) game.

Right off the bat, I knew that I wanted to create an open-world game as those were always my favourite kind of games. I loved the idea of shaping a game however I wanted and that I have the freedom to explore and make different choices each time that I play it. I also wanted to challenge myself to create a interesting narrative for such a game that includes both action+adventure. Furthermore, these kind of games usually fall into the action-adventure genre, therefore, I will be focusing on this genre for my proposal.

Game Comparison

For week 5, we were tasked to watch/play three games from our chosen genre and analyse the similarities and differences between the games. I decided to focus on Assassin's Creed, Marvel's Spider-Man, and Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales since I've played them all and have a good idea of how each game plays out from start to finish. And of course, all of these game fall into the action-adventure genre.



Even though all these games are categorised in the same genre, they all have their own distinct differences and similarities:

Similarities

1. **Open-World Exploration:** All three games offer open-world environments that players can explore at their own pace.
2. **Action-Adventure Genre:** They all belong to the action-adventure genre, combining elements of action, exploration, and storytelling.
3. **Character Growth:** The games often explore the personal growth and development of their respective protagonists.

Differences

1. **Setting:** "Assassin's Creed" primarily features historical settings, whereas the Spider-Man games are set in modern-day New York City.
2. **Gameplay Style:** "Assassin's Creed" leans more toward stealth and parkour, while the Spider-Man games emphasize web-swinging and superhero combat.
3. **Story Themes:** The narrative themes vary; "Assassin's Creed" explores historical conspiracies, while the Spider-Man games focus on superhero adventures and personal growth.

Despite their differences, all three games are beloved for their immersive worlds, engaging gameplay, and captivating narratives, making them standout examples of the action-adventure genre. This comparison gave me a clearer idea of what I wanted to create for my game proposal and solidified my plan to create an open-world action-adventure game.

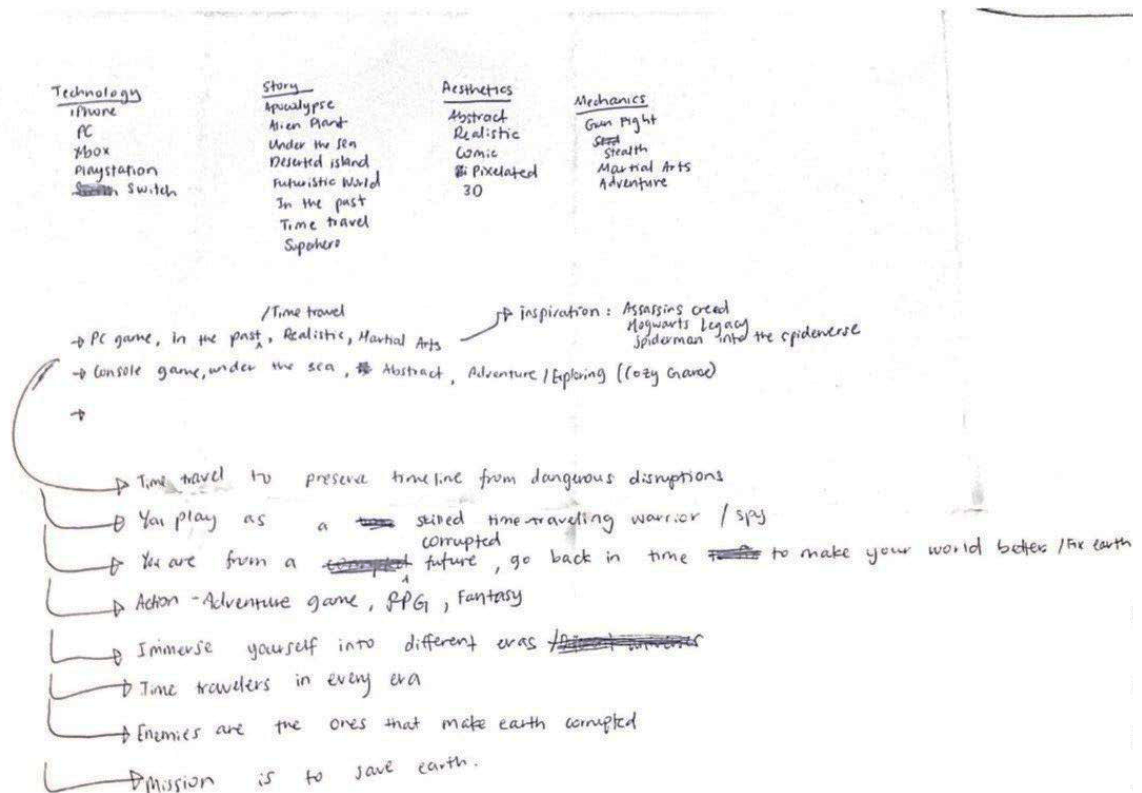
I began brainstorming the storyline for my game and pondered the type of game I've longed to experience but haven't encountered often. An idea struck me: to craft a narrative involving time travel and exploration across multiple timelines, rather than confining the gameplay to a single time or dimension. This creative spark was largely ignited by the animated film "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse." Since viewing that movie, I've been captivated by the concept and have yet to come across an open-world game that effectively captures the essence of such a multi-dimensional gaming experience.

Week 6

By Week 6, I had conducted research on inter-dimensional travel and the multiverse. However, I discovered that this concept was too broad and somewhat ambiguous. It became apparent that crafting a narrative that effectively interlinked and one that made sense of all these dimensions would demand a significantly greater amount of time and research. As a result, I made the decision to pursue a more manageable approach by opting for time travel as the central theme. Time travel retains the essence of inter-dimensional travel but simplifies the complexities associated with it.

Brainstorming

During the tutorial class, I started my narrative brainstorming by spontaneously jotting down key categories: "Technology," "Story," "Aesthetics," and "Mechanics." At that initial stage, my goal was to keep my creative process unrestrained, ensuring I didn't box myself in. I also experimented with an alternate game concept. This approach proved to be really valuable in the development of my ideas, ultimately helping me to finalise and refine my final concept.



At its core, my vision was to give players the ability to time-travel and immerse themselves in diverse historical eras, engaging in battles against a wide array of enemies from different timelines. Yet, I recognized the need to link all these experiences into a coherent narrative, one that could logically justify the presence of mythological creatures and anomalies. This was when the idea of introducing an "ultimate boss" into the storyline took shape. Drawing inspiration from villains like Thanos in the Marvel's Avengers franchise, this antagonist aspired to seize all the powers in the world, aiming to reshape it to fulfill their malevolent ambitions. Introducing this character serves a crucial role in the narrative, providing a clear mission for the time-traveling adventures: to safeguard the timeline from interference by the evil "final boss."

Following my discussion with my lecturer in class, she offered valuable guidance and affirmed that I was on the right path. She emphasized the importance of thoroughly researching the genre to ensure that it

harmonizes with the narrative I had crafted. After class, I took her advice and delved into a deeper exploration of the genre. Here's what I found during my research:

Genre Analysis

Definition of Action-Adventure Genre	Specific Elements of an Action-Adventure Game
A video game hybrid genre that combines core elements from both the action game and adventure game genres. Action-adventure games may feature open-world environments, character progression, and often include elements such as platforming, stealth, and combat mechanics. The genre is known for its diversity, allowing players to immerse themselves in a wide range of settings, stories, and gameplay mechanics.	Narrative-driven Gameplay: A strong emphasis on storytelling and character development, often with a central quest or mission. Exploration: Players are encouraged to explore open-world environments or interconnected levels to discover secrets, items, and new areas. Puzzle-Solving: Integration of puzzles and challenges that require problem-solving skills, logic, and critical thinking. Combat: Frequent combat encounters against a variety of enemies, with an emphasis on combat mechanics and tactics.

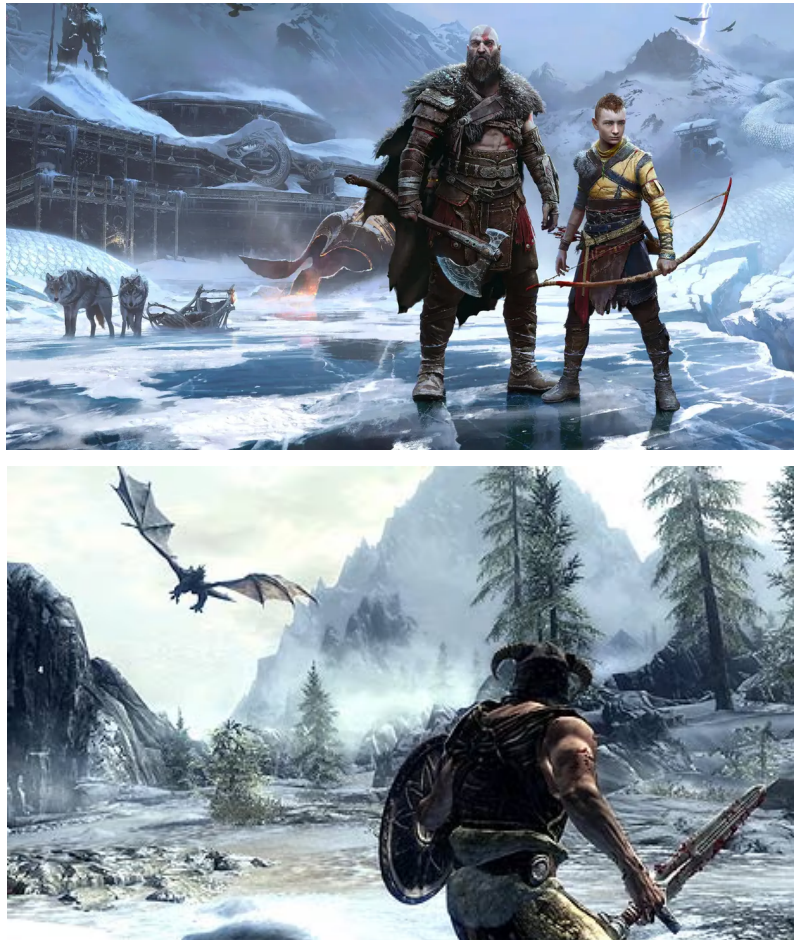
At first, I contemplated whether my game could be classified as an RPG. However, considering the inclusion of action-packed sequences and a non-linear storyline, it became evident that the most appropriate classification for my game would be within the action-adventure genre, which is now further backed by my research on it.

Week 7

By Week 7, I had made significant progress in solidifying my story concept, incorporating more intricate details the central purpose and goal of the game. In the realm of time travel, there are typically two contrasting views: one emphasizing the dangers of meddling with history and the potential for dire consequences, while the other holds that time travel can be used to rectify past events. My game was designed to align with the latter perspective. However, instead of allowing the player to alter history, their role focused on safeguarding the course of history and preserving it in its original form, while the main antagonist was the one responsible for the disruptions and alterations.

Aesthetics

Moreover, I had a well-defined vision for the visual elements of the game. I aspired for a high degree of realism and historical accuracy in the game's visuals. Following the trend of many open-world titles, I aimed to take a realistic approach to immerse the player completely in the game world and storyline. However, due to my limited artistic abilities, expressing the visual concepts I envisioned proved challenging. Therefore, I turned to AI-generated images to help bring my creative vision to life. The aesthetic direction I aimed to replicate drew inspiration from the games I had previously referenced in Week 5, such as Assassin's Creed, Marvel's Spider-Man, and Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales, as well as from other renowned titles like Skyrim and God of War.



Week 8

In Week 8's tutorial class, I spoke with my lecturer to provide an update on the progress of my game proposal and to reiterate the storyline I had developed. At this stage, I had already crafted a

comprehensive backstory for the game, including details about the main character, as well as a broad outline of how the game's narrative would unfold.

Recognizing the need to infuse the main character with a compelling drive and motivation to participate in the mission of saving Earth's fractured timeline, I decided to weave a backstory into his narrative. Given that the player's character hails from another planet, it became crucial to establish a connection and genuine care for Earth. To achieve this, I introduced a personal element by revealing that the main character's parents had gone missing, and that their grandparents were among the last few humans who resided on Earth. This familial tie created a deep and meaningful connection between the character and the mission to save Earth's timeline.

2 examples of games that have featured main characters with personal connections to their goals are:

1. **The Last of Us**: In this game, the protagonist, Joel, has a personal connection to the goal of protecting and caring for Ellie, a young girl who represents hope in a post-apocalyptic world. The emotional bond between Joel and Ellie drives the narrative forward.
2. **God of War (2018)**: Kratos, the titular character, is driven by his desire to protect and mentor his son, Atreus. The game explores the father-son relationship and the personal growth of both characters.

Furthermore, creating a personal connection between the main character and their goals is a powerful narrative tool as personal connections make the player **emotionally invested** in the character's journey and the outcome of the story. When players care about the character's motivations and relationships, they are more likely to be engaged in the game. It also can evoke a wide range of emotions, from empathy and sympathy to joy and sorrow. This emotional resonance can deepen the player's connection to the game and its characters.

I received feedback to conduct in-depth research on existing time-traveling games within the industry and to take down what i liked about each game. This task was aimed to create a more profound comprehension of the time-travel theme, while enabling me to identify and consider aspects that I may have overlooked in my initial exploration, potentially enriching my game development process. I did this on Milanote as seen below.

Exploration

Inspiration

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Final Fantasy XIII-2: The sequel promotes Noel and Serah as protagonists and follows them as they travel through different time periods in search of Lightning, who disappeared after the events of the first game.

Likes:

- There isn't a specific period to go back to, they are traveling through time different times to search for Lightning.
- Non-Linear Narrative:** the game offers a non-linear narrative, allowing players to make choices that impact the story's direction. - consider giving players agency in shaping the game's narrative through their time-traveling actions and decisions.
- Time-Traveling Companions:** the player character is accompanied by various companions, including a time-traveling companion named Noel. - game can feature AI or human companions who assist the player in their mission to restore Earth's history.
- Collectible Artifacts:** Consider incorporating artifacts or relics that players can collect and use to unlock new abilities, access hidden areas, or interact with the timeline in unique ways.
- Time-Gated Exploration:** The game features time gates that restrict access to different areas. - can use a similar mechanic to control players' progression and encourage exploration as they unlock new time periods by resolving anomalies and meeting specific conditions.



Singularity is a first-person shooter built around time manipulation. The game is set on an island in Russia called Katonga-12 where experiments with a substance called E99 have gone wrong, causing time anomalies and mutations. Players use a device called the Time Manipulation Device (TMD) to navigate the island and manipulate time in various ways, such as aging or reversing objects and enemies.

Likes:

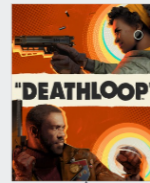
- Go back in time to change history, stop something from happening. - by returning to 1955 and blowing up Katonga-12 with an E-99 bomb, the material responsible for the catastrophe in 1955).
- Uses Time-Altering Technology:** features a time-manipulating device that allows players to age or de-age objects and enemies. - can incorporate a similar concept where the player's advanced technology enables them to manipulate time in various ways, such as slowing down time to dodge attacks, creating time bubbles, reversing time to undo actions or heal enemies temporarily to gain an advantage.
- Temporal Consequences:** the game explores the consequences of tampering with time, resulting in alternate timelines and unexpected outcomes. - can similarly emphasize that every action in the past has consequences in the future, whether positive or negative. Players' decisions and interventions influence the course of history.



Timeshift is an FPS where players control a soldier who is equipped with a suit that allows them to mess around with the fabric of time. The game involves navigating through various environments and using time itself to solve puzzles and defeat enemies.

Likes:

- Time-Traveling Gear:** the protagonist wears a time-traveling suit. - can incorporate something similar in my game, the player character's futuristic equipment and technology can play a central role in their ability to navigate through time and confront challenges.



Deathloop is a first-person action-adventure game that incorporates time-loop mechanics, where the player character must explore an island, assassinate specific targets, and solve puzzles while being trapped in a repeating time cycle.

Likes:

- Time-Loop Gameplay:** the game centers around the concept of a time loop, where the same day repeats. - can incorporate a similar time-loop mechanic in my game, possibly for a certain mission, allowing players to revisit historical events or events, make changes, and learn from each cycle.



Radiant Historia: Perfect Chronology is a role-playing game known for its time-traveling mechanics, intricate narrative, and strategic turn-based combat.

Likes:

- Side Quests and Exploration:** the game offers side quests and opportunities for exploration. - create a rich and immersive world in different historical eras for players to explore, with hidden secrets, side quests, and unique challenges.
- Time-Related Puzzles:** incorporates time-related puzzles and challenges that require players to use their time-traveling abilities to progress. These puzzles can serve as obstacles or opportunities for discovery.
- Temporal Abilities:** The protagonist gains time-related abilities, such as the ability to switch between timelines or alter events. - create a diverse set of time-manipulation abilities that players can acquire and master, each with its own strategic applications.

Gaining insights into the key focus areas and elements that contribute to the success of time-traveling games has undoubtedly provided me with a clearer direction. Understanding these components guided me in honing my game's unique features and enhancing its potential for success within the genre.



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Week 9

During Week 9, my attention shifted towards the development of combat skills for both the protagonist and antagonist in my game. Given the central theme of time traveling and time manipulation, it was only natural that both characters would possess time-based abilities and gadgets. Additionally, for the antagonist, I opted to infuse his skill set with powers related to his native planet, thereby giving him with capabilities like dark magic and mastery over elemental forces. This creative approach allowed for a

diverse and dynamic range of combat skills that would add depth to the gameplay and confrontations within the game's narrative.

In my exploration in Week 8 for “Timeshift” I stated that I liked the idea of having a “Time-Travelling Gear”, therefore, I have considered giving my protagonist a watch/bracelet or necklace, something that would enable him to transverse time but would not be obvious to others. That’s when I came up with the idea to have him wear a time-travelling suit under his clothing. The decision to utilize a time-traveling suit as the protagonist's chosen gear for time travel, as opposed to more traditional items like a necklace, watch, or bracelet, can be reasoned out based on several factors.

1. A suit allows for the integration of various time-related abilities, allowing more diverse gameplay mechanics and interactions compared to a smaller accessory.
2. The use of a suit will hopefully be an element of immersion and realism to the game, heightening players' engagement with the narrative.
3. Lastly, the option of a time-traveling suit allows unique and visually striking design choices, much like Spider-Man’s suits, enhancing the overall aesthetics of the game and distinguishing it from other narratives centered around time travel.

Going back to the game's narrative, I made the decision to introduce a partner character who accompanies the protagonist on their journey, essentially a friend and companion in the game world. The reasoning behind this decision extends beyond merely having an additional ally in combat. It is rooted in the understanding that solo gameplay can occasionally create a sense of isolation. Thus, the inclusion of an in-game "friend" is not solely about combat assistance but also about fostering a sense of companionship and camaraderie, which can greatly enhance the player's overall experience. The inspiration for this also came from my own experiences playing Halo campaigns with my brother during my youth. While not the same as multiplayer, it still offers players a sense of companionship and shared adventure. Games such as the Monster Hunter titles and The Elder Scrolls Online, have successfully implemented this feature with largely positive player feedback.

Week 10

In Week 10, my primary aim is to meticulously curate the historical eras to be featured in the game, come up with mission concepts that would align with each era's unique attributes, and crafting a specific mission that exemplifies the game's unique mechanics and narrative. This process marks a critical juncture in transforming my vision into a compelling and meticulously detailed game concept, one that can be effectively presented to potential collaborators, stakeholders, and investors.

Chosen Eras

The eras I have chosen to include in my game are:

1. Ancient Kyoto
2. Ancient Athens
3. Ancient Egypt
4. Victorian London
5. Future Megalopolis

Why I've chosen to focus on these 5 eras is because through my research I have found that these eras hold significant importance to history (excluding the future megalopolis).

Ancient Athens, Greece	This era offers a rich historical backdrop known for its contributions to philosophy, democracy, and culture. It provides an opportunity to explore ancient Greece's intellectual and societal developments.
Ancient Kyoto, Japan	Ancient Kyoto, Japan, boasts a unique blend of traditional Japanese culture, architecture, and history. It allows players to immerse themselves in the world of samurais, geishas, and historical Japan.
Ancient Egypt	Ancient Egypt is renowned for its mysteries, grand architecture, and intricate mythology. It offers a good setting for exploration and intrigue.
Victorian London, England	The Victorian era in London is synonymous with industrialization, social change, and gothic atmosphere. (It lends itself well to mysteries and adventures)

As for Future Megalopolis, I am able to incorporate science fiction elements, such as advanced technology and urban dystopias, offering a contrast to the historical settings. The reason I excluded the current 21st century from the list of eras is because I wanted to provide players with a more distinct contrast between the past and future. While a contemporary setting could be relatable, it may lack the historical or futuristic intrigue found in other eras. By offering a range of diverse settings, the game would provide a unique and engaging time-travel experience, each era offering its own distinct challenges and mysteries, which can make the gameplay more interesting.

I also went on to ideate for specific missions for each era. My aim was to ensure that they align with the historical accuracy I previously mentioned. To justify the choice of missions, I conducted research to establish a strong connection between the gameplay and the era it represents.

Ancient Athens, Greece	Drawing from Greek mythology, players confront mythological creatures to mend disruptions in this era. This mission remains historically accurate by taking inspiration from ancient Greek legends and creatures chronicled in classical texts.
Medieval Kyoto, Japan	Focusing on elemental spirits, this mission seamlessly fits with the spiritual and naturalistic aspects of feudal Japan. Players not only engage in combat but also immerse themselves in the cultural and mythological elements unique to this era.
Victorian London, England	Missions revolving around historical figures like Jack the Ripper pay homage to the dark and enigmatic facets of the Victorian era. Players become part of the era's crime-solving culture, preserving its historical authenticity.
Future Megalopolis	The introduction of futuristic elements in this era, including rogue AI and cybernetic adversaries, aligns with the sci-fi elements associated with a megalopolis setting. This combination of advanced technology and action sequences befits a future time.
Ancient Egypt	In this era, the mission's focus on sorcerers and elemental creatures pays homage to the mythology and mystical aspects of ancient Egypt. It provides players with challenges deeply rooted in the spiritual beliefs of the time.

Mission Example

In Week 8, during my exploration, I expressed interest in the "Time-looping" concept in the game "Deathloop." Drawing inspiration from this, I aimed to develop a unique and unconventional mission, departing from traditional battle-centric quests. Instead, I aimed to emphasize puzzle-solving elements of the genre and integrate a time-looping mechanism into the gameplay. This approach would challenge players to navigate a mission within a repeated time-loop scenario. I chose to implement this mission in the first era, which, chronologically, is set in Ancient Athens, Greece. Through the mission, players not only engage with a historically accurate setting but also experience the consequences of their choices, effectively intertwining gameplay, narrative, and historical accuracy.