Level Design Workshop

Section One: Components of Level Design

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE™ CHINA
SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER
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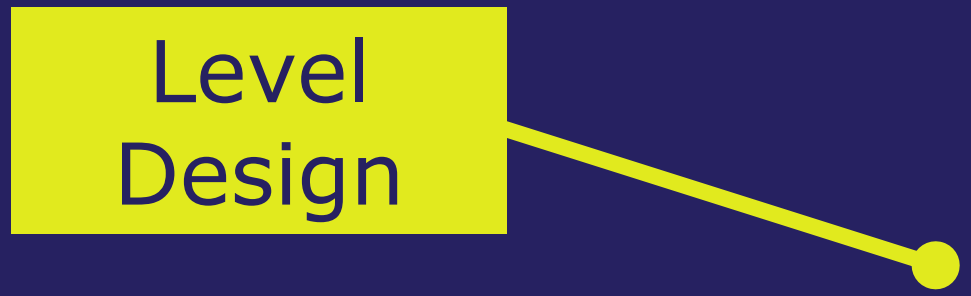
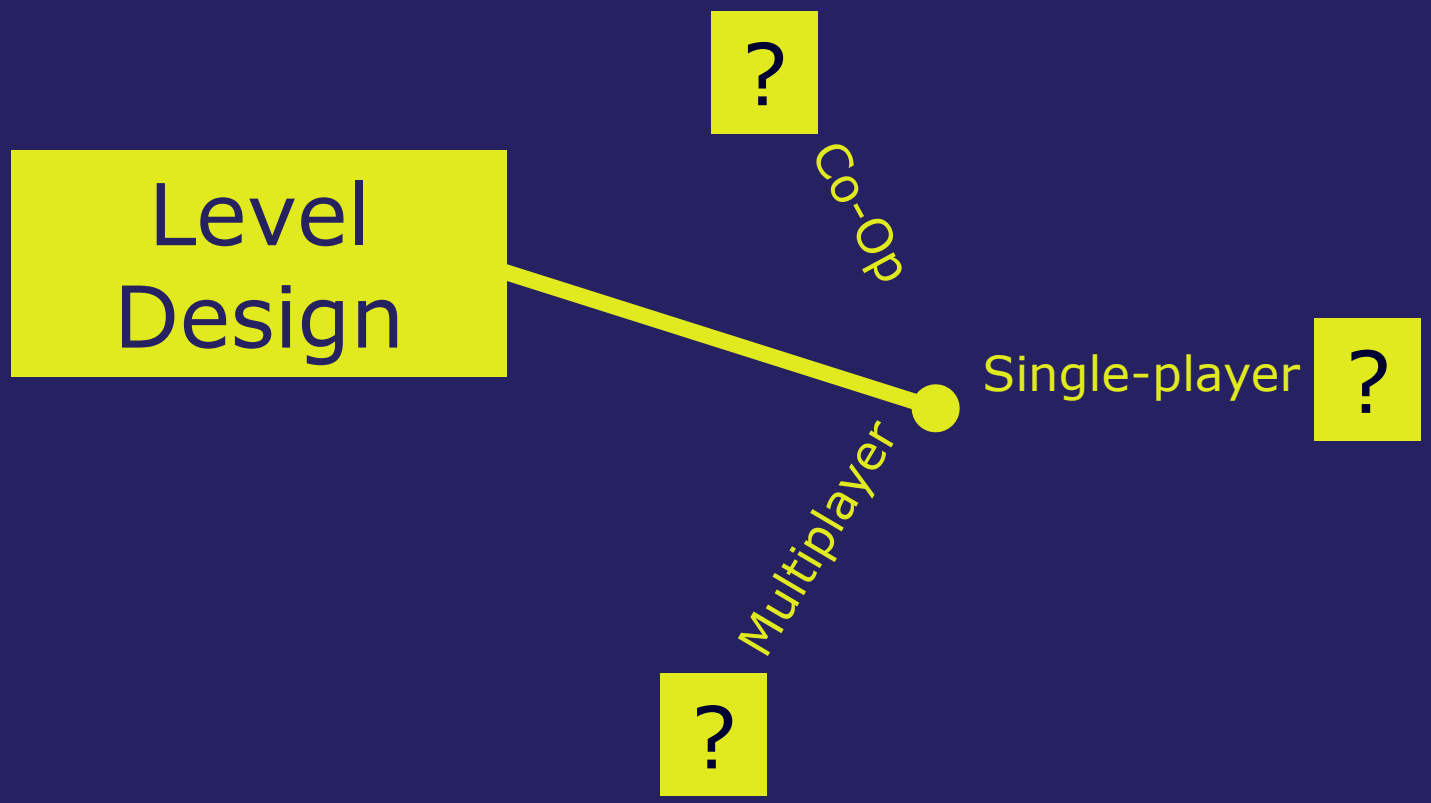
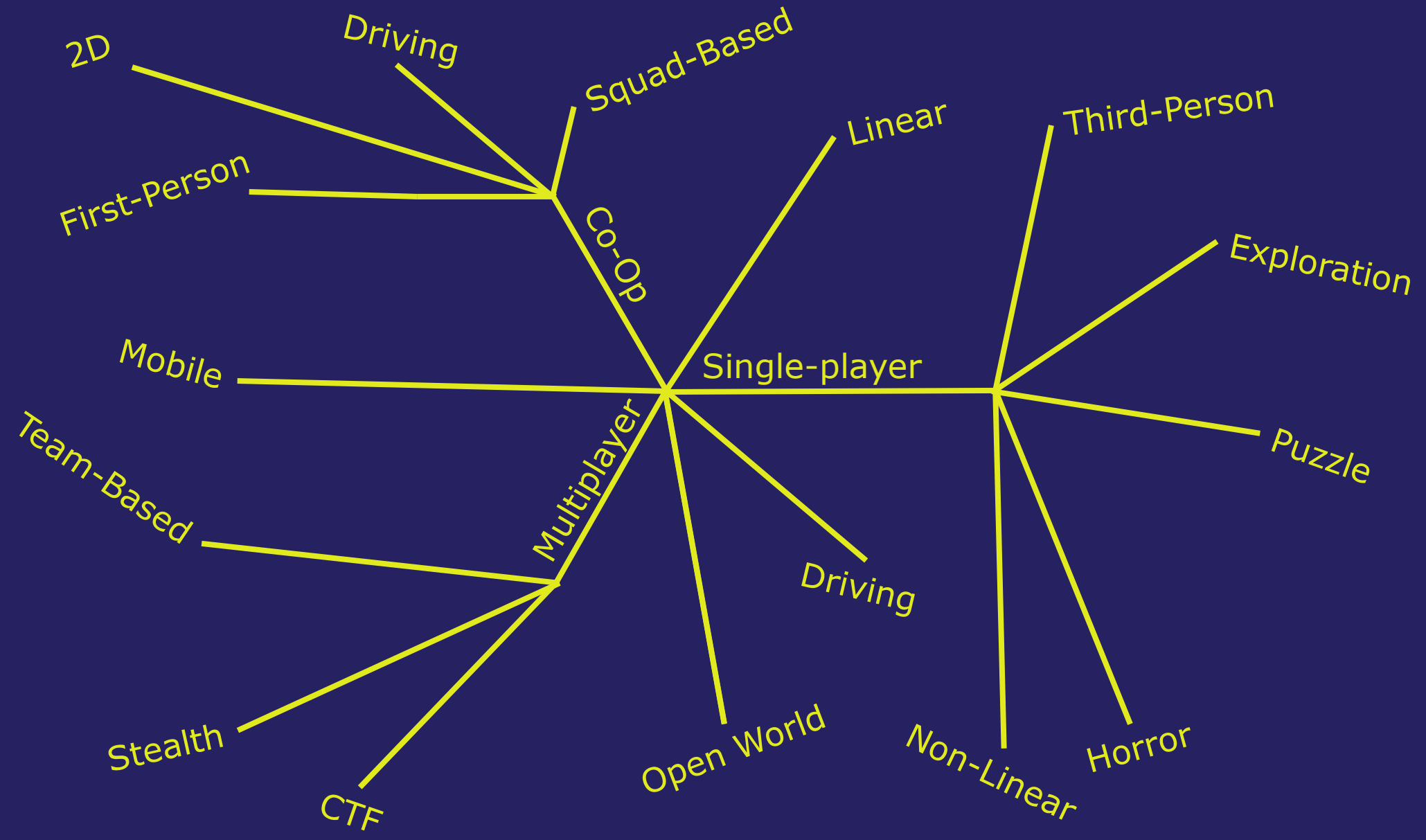
DEFINING LEVEL DESIGN

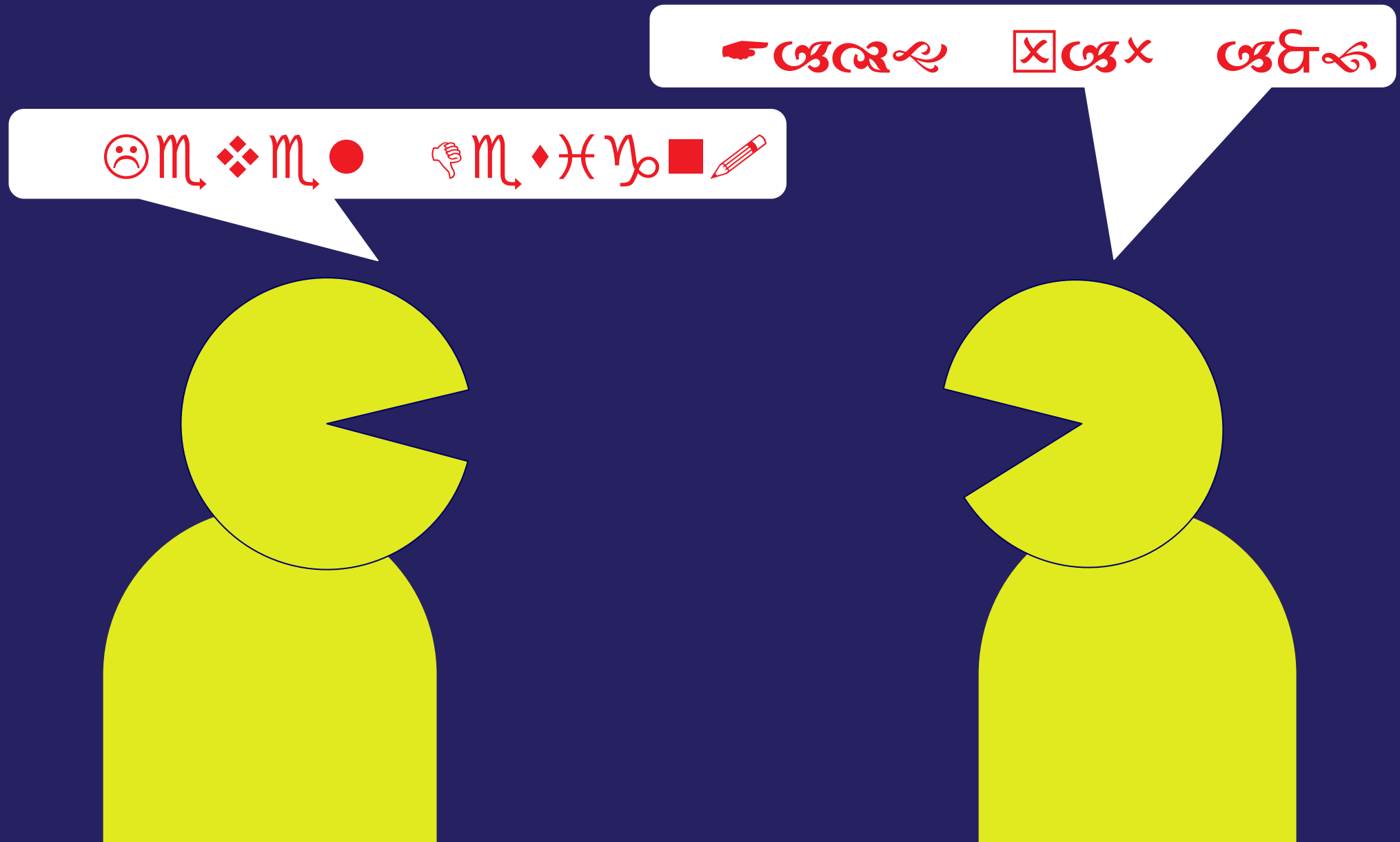
Defining Level Design

- Broadly defined discipline
- Needs change per studio/project/genre
  - Often one face of a multi-role job
  - Not a universally agreed-upon term


Level
Design


Level Design
?
Co-Op
Single-player
?
Multiplayer
?


2D
Driving
Squad-Based
First-Person
Co-Op
Linear
Third-Person
Exploration
Mobile
Single-player
Puzzle
Team-Based
Multiplayer
Driving
Stealth
Open World
Non-Linear
Horror
CTF



One Language, Many Dialects

- Discuss Level Design in Broad Terms
  - Seek Common Ground
  - Extrapolate from Specifics to Generalities
  - Find Lessons We Can Apply to Our Work

- So – **What is a Level**, really?

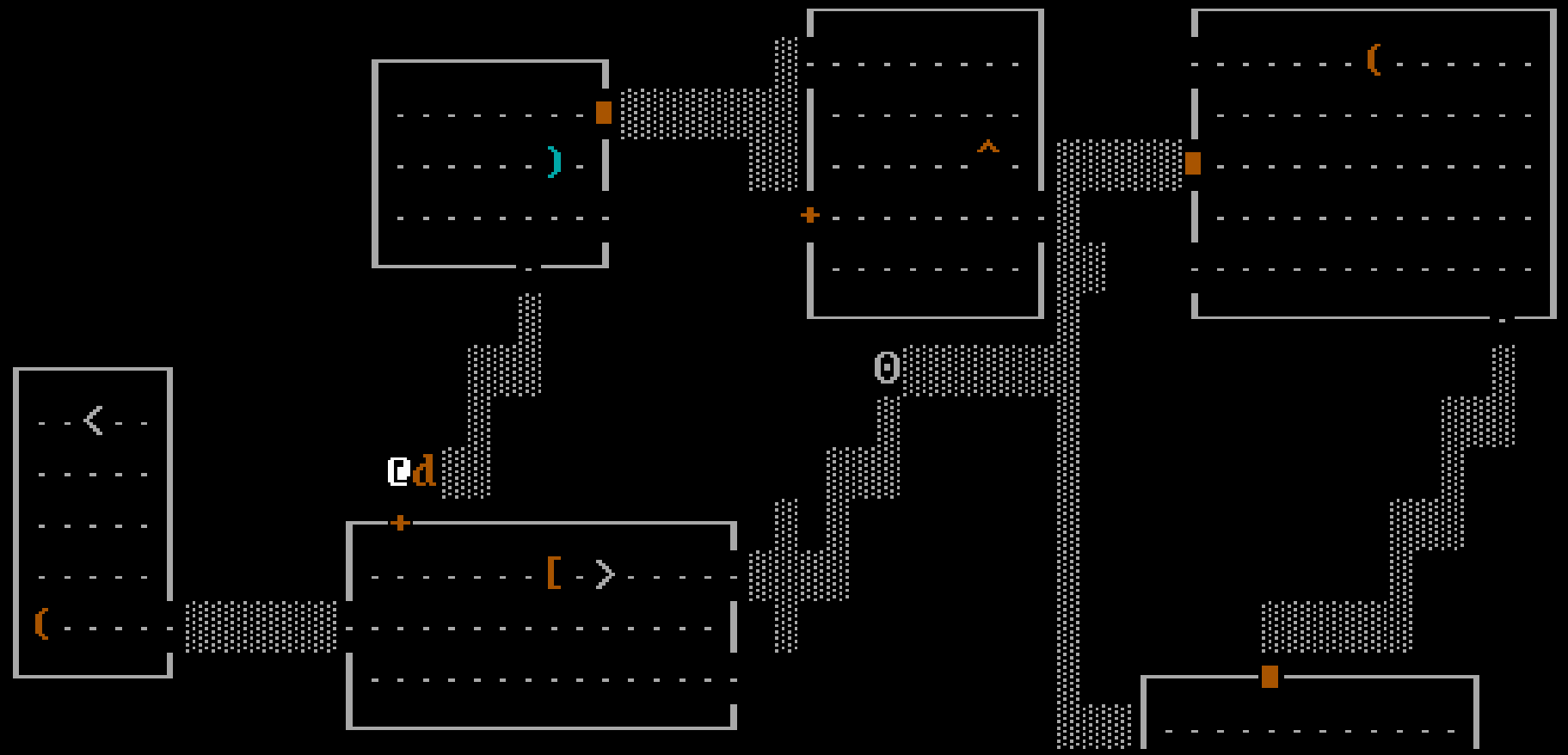
Defining Level Design

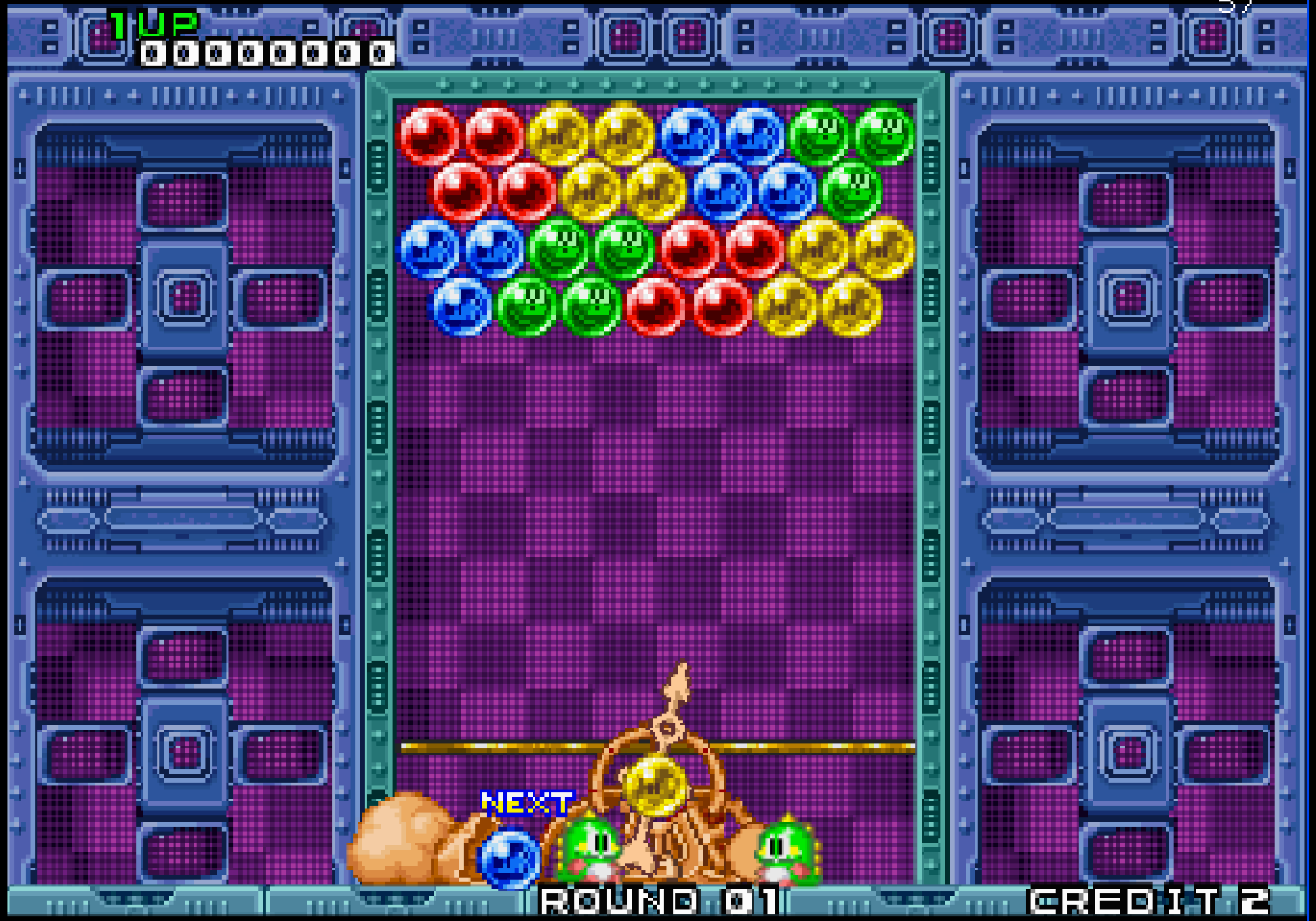
Levels are the space in which player actions happen

- By this definition, every game has levels
- Role of Level Designer varies by:
  - Game/Genre/Perspective
  - Technology
  - Team Culture
  - Designer Skillset

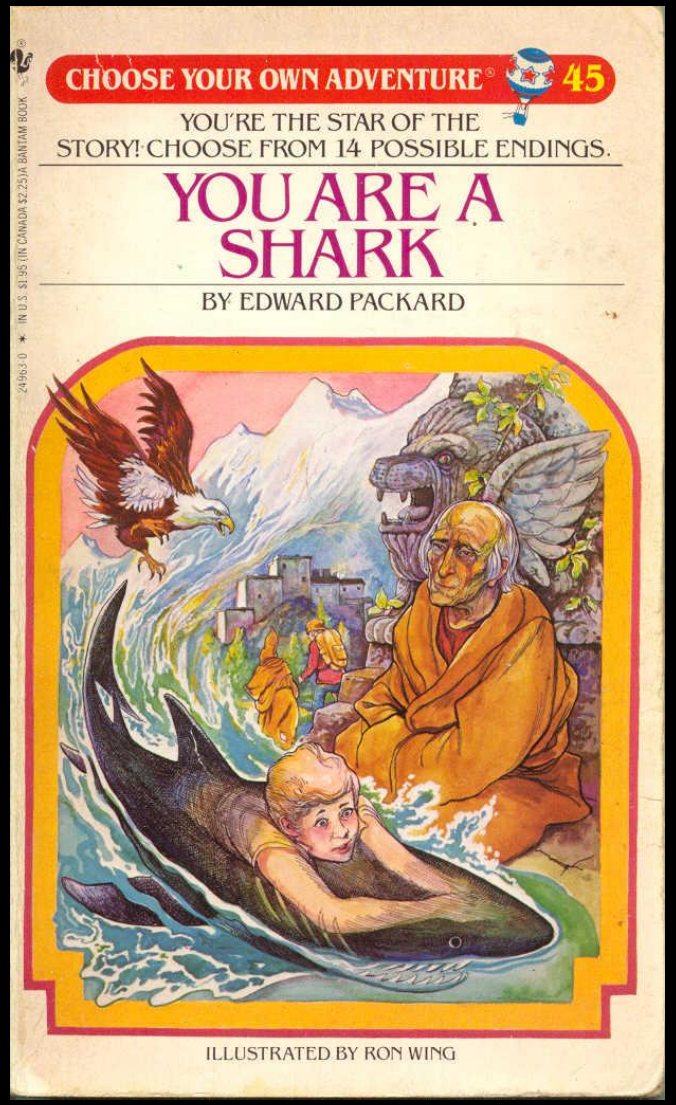
B Doors
B
A
$4000
6:55
3
2
Enemy: SKI
100
0

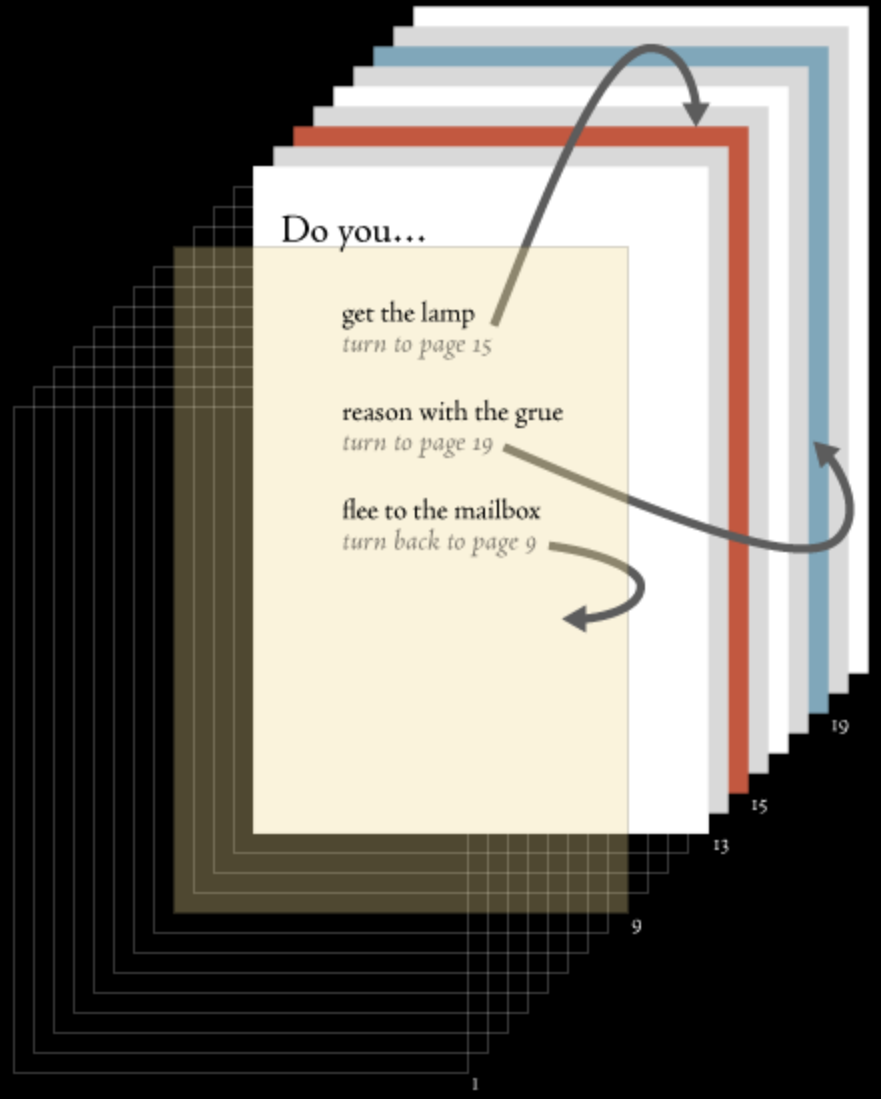
50
0
15/20
Terran Vulture
Sergeant
Kills: 0
80/80
0
0
1
MENU




1UP
NEXT
ROUND 01
CREDIT 2

1
STAGE
1st
2
PERFECT!!
116
combo
PERFECT!!
116
combo
EXPERT
0957677
EXPERT
0957677


CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE®
45
YOU'RE THE STAR OF THE STORY! CHOOSE FROM 14 POSSIBLE ENDINGS.
YOU ARE A SHARK
BY EDWARD PACKARD
ILLUSTRATED BY RON WING
24963-0 ★ IN U.S. $1.95 (IN CANADA $2.25)A BANTAM BOOK


Do you…
get the lamp
turn to page 15
reason with the grue
turn to page 19
flee to the mailbox
turn back to page 9
19
15
13
9
1

Level Design is…

- Level Design is defined by your game
- Your level design can define your game
- Your role? Whatever it needs to be.

ROLE OF A LEVEL DESIGNER

Level Design Job #1

Create Circumstances which invite players to engage in the activities the game models well

- Showcase the art, code and systems
  - Duty to the Team and Game
- Build Player Trust
  - Duty to the Player

Universal Design Concerns

- Concerned with physical space
  - Aesthetic Component
- Conduit between Player and Mechanics
  - Psychological Component

Level Design Aesthetics

- Level Design != Creating Art Assets
  - Though it is tied up very much with this!
  - Level Designers Can be Non-Artist Developers
- Level Design Thrives on Visual *Composition*
  - As Opposed to Visual Finish
- Levels are Art In Motion
  - Gameplay is rarely visually static

Level Design Psychology

- Understanding Player Emotional State
  - Catering to Play Styles
  - Meeting Expectations
- Gameplay As Active Expression
  - Level Design As Player Collaboration
- A Predictive Discipline
  - Building Systems And Circumstances
  - Designer/Player Authorship Relationship

CORE CONCEPTS

Core Concepts

- Layout – Morning Session (Joel)
  - Understanding How We React to Space
  - The Many Approaches to Layout

Core Concepts

- Gameplay & Pacing – Afternoon (Matt)
  - Defining Gameplay Goals
  - Understanding and Use of Pacing

Core Concepts

- Narrative – Late Afternoon (Steve)
  - The Many ways Level Design Tells Stories
  - Explicit, Implied and Environmental