

Killing Time

Premise

The world has broken. Time no longer flows in one direction. You are trying to survive this world gone mad and maybe fix it.

Overview

Killing Time is a game intended to be entertainment only. It will contain some historical facts, so there is an element of education in this, but it is not intended. This game will be developed for the PC, and is a real-time survival mystery game.

Our target demographic will be for 15-25 years of age, both males and females. There will be some expectation of experience with games. The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating intended for this game will be Teen (T) or Mature (M). The game will be single player, and 3rd person view.

Player

The player will be able to choose if their avatar will be an active or passive participant. This will be achieved through decisions made through the story. The choices will determine how the game will end, and what options are available later in the story.

To the player, the goal is to survive until all events have happened. This is the minimum that the player must achieve during the game. Acting passively through the game will achieve this. This will not provide the most interesting ending and it will feel more like the game was lost instead of won. The act the player is in the world, the more interesting the story will be, and it will change with the actions. So the role of the player in this world is as an observer or a participant.

Avatar

The player will design an avatar. This avatar is specified by a gender, some physical characteristics, and a skill set. At the start of a new game, the player will select these characteristics of their avatar, and these choices will affect how the game can be played.

Example: The player selects for the skill sets: music, photography, and computer literacy. This means that at some point in the game, if the player wants the avatar to use equipment associated with music, photography or computers, the avatar can use the equipment. But if the player wants the avatar to fix a car, because the player did not select a skill associated with knowing how to fix a car, the avatar will not be able to fix the car.

This is intended to make the game more interesting and challenging. Based on the number of skills chosen, the difficulty of the game will increase or decrease.

Non-Player Characters (NPC)

The computer will be controlling a set of characters. These will include: innocent bystanders, potential allies, and enemies. The enemies will vary from animals to machines, to other humans either associated with the organization that broke the world, or humans that are taking advantage of the state of the world.

World

There are time bubbles in the world where time flows backward, where it's ancient times or the future. The bubbles are sometimes very localized (the size of a small room) or much larger (the size of a country). The player will have to navigate through these bubbles to survive. The bubbles are not stationary and have a distinct visual shape and emit a sound.

Different areas that the player can reach are towns, large cities, research facilities, and locations contained within the time-bubbles. Currently, the location of these towns and cities is not determined. They could potentially be in the USA, or in some other country.

Story

The game starts after a catastrophic event has wracked the world. Time has broken. The player starts at home trying to survive the new world s/he finds her/himself in. Something like the following would introduce the world:

“2 weeks ago... the world broke... what has always been accepted as fact, is no longer true. Time strays from the expected path. Sometimes going backwards. Sometimes not moving at all. I don't know what happened. Only that it did... It seemed safe here. Away from all the large cities and the disasters that have happened... But no place is safe for long...”

The player will have to survive leaving this town and reach somewhere that they can gain some knowledge about what has happened. Through scripted events, the player will be moved between locations. The locations will be determined by actions taken by the player. If the player is passive, they will not reach the research facility that caused the world to break. If they are more active they may reach it and potentially fix what happened.

The story will be determined by the actions that the player takes. Here is an example:

The player saves Alex from a time-bubble. Alex helps the player enter a building (he had a key). Inside this building, the player finds information that gives the location of a research base that could be the one that caused the world to break. With Alex's help, the player travels to this base to investigate.

If the did not save Alex, this research base may not have been reachable by the player.

Scripted events that will happen regardless of the player's actions would be global events. An example would be some part of the world gets accidentally destroyed due to a time-bubble appearing in a bad place. This can limit where the player may go (if that part of the world was reachable) or it can just be an indication that the world is changing around the player.

The passive ending may be when the player reaches a new “safe” place, with the implication that it won’t stay safe. The “best” ending would include fixing the world. Each of these endings would be achieved through navigation of different areas and a deviation in the story at some point. This means that if the player is passive in the beginning, potentially due to getting used to the game, they can become more active later and still achieve a more active ending.

Game play

The key to finishing the game will be navigation of a challenging environment. This can include killing of enemies, or solving the mystery of what happened to break the world. Navigation of the environment will involve running, jumping, moving items (large barrels), using weapons, and interactions with NPCs.

Inventory

Inside this world, the player can acquire certain items. Some items will have no purpose, while others may enable the player to reach new areas or interact differently with the world. Some of the items would include:

- weapons
- keys
- first aid materials
- food
- tools
- puzzle pieces
- knick-knacks

Displayed Information

An important element of the navigation will be a health bar. As certain events happen, this bar will increase and decrease. It will decrease if the player is injured by a NPC or from interaction with the environment (example: falling out of a second story window). It will increase if first aid materials are used. This health bar will also effect how well the player moves through the world. As the player becomes more injured (a low health bar), the player will move slower and not be able to do as much (jump as high, run as fast) as before.

Along with the health bar, there will be other possible information displayed on the screen. This will include information about location, weapon status, timer (if during a time constraint segment), and other optional information. Through one menu, the player will be able to add or remove information from the screen.

Time

At different times, there will be time constraints. Some of the time constraints will be fatal. Example: not leaving an area before it is destroyed or flooded. Others will cause the player to take a different path. Example: the player did not reach a specific door before it was locked, so the player must go a different path to get to where they were heading.

Navigation

The player will control the avatar primarily through a keyboard and mouse. The default settings will have movement and item use controlled with the keyboard, while the mouse will be used to adjust the camera view and to interact with the environment (pick-up items).

As the story progresses, the reachable areas will change. The player will start in one location, a small town, and eventually travel to another town. Once the first town is left, it will no longer be reachable. New areas will be available in the new town, and new areas will become reachable as time progresses in the new town, either through events that are scripted, or through actions taken by the player.

Knowledge

Knowledge is not required to survive. It will enable the player to reach a different ending than the passive ending. Using knowledge gained from NPCs and from the environment (example: books and files), the player can change the world, possibly fix some of the bubbles or rescue NPCs. These will enable the player to gain access to different areas. All of the information found will be recorded to a log. This log will be accessible from a menu. This will enable the player to review information that they found previously.

Video

Much of the game will be taking place in a world much like our own. It will have the same or slightly more advanced technology. This will require some photo-realism. Some parts of the game will be taking place in other times, past and future. For the future and past portions, imagination will be needed to create a feeling of being in the future or past. It will be necessary to use color and lighting to create this feeling of not being in the present. Lighting would be used to do this by making interior lighting more inconsistent, to simulate lighting fixtures that are candles or gas lanterns. While in the future portions, the lighting could be brighter, more indirect, and different. This is assuming that the future portions are looking at a brighter future, but if we use a darker future, then the light may be consistent, but shining on a bleaker future.

Audio

Sound will play an important role in knowledge of the surroundings. There will be clues in the audio about what is around and what is approaching the player. This means that while the player cannot see a time bubble due to obstructing terrain, s/he could hear it, and either avoid or approach the bubble. Audio will help provide the mood of parts of the game, and heighten emotion. The voice of the avatar will be chosen at the beginning, and will speak from a script. This script will be based on what dialogue the player selects for the avatar.