The Twelve animals: An Interactive guide to the Chinese zodiac signs

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THE 12 ANIMALS
An Interactive Guide To The Chinese Zodiac Signs

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May, 2011
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee members, Professor Chris Jackson, Professor Daniel DeLuna and Professor Nancy Doubleday, for their invaluable guidance and advice.

I am especially grateful to Jingbo Yu, who not only provided critical assistance in the functionality of the game section but also stood by me through the good times and bad times.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents for their unconditional love and support in every way possible throughout the process of this thesis, studying abroad and beyond.
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Abstract

The Chinese Zodiac signs are determined by the lunar year in which you were born. The Chinese believe the animal ruling one’s birth year has a profound influence on personality, and destiny. Unlike Western astrology, which is based on the months of the year, the Chinese Zodiac, traditionally referred to as the Sheng Xiao, is based on a twelve-year cycle with each year represented by an animal. The twelve animals are: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. The Chinese Zodiac is found in several East Asian countries besides China.

My thesis is an exploration in designing an interactive application that utilizes multimedia components to present the twelve Chinese Zodiac signs. This project will vividly explain the origin story behind the Chinese Zodiac and demonstrate the attributes of the twelve animal signs. It will also allow users to find out what animal sign they were born under and to discover how a person’s birth sign can influence his/her personality, love life, career, lifestyle and health. This interactive application will essentially be a promotional and educational guide for people who want to learn about the Chinese Zodiac.

Keywords

Twelve/Chinese Zodiac/Animal Signs/Interactive

Thesis Project URL:

http://the-12-animals.com/
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INTRODUCTION
Culture is often defined in the aspects of history, social, spiritual and as a lifestyle. As one of the four ancient civilizations, China has a glorious history and traditional culture. Traditional Chinese culture is profound and has the richest historical records. Because of its diversity and uniqueness, traditional Chinese culture presents itself an invaluable asset to the world.

Being Chinese, I am proud of my Chinese culture and I always want to promote it to the world. In recent years, traditional Chinese culture has aroused intense interest of people from other countries.

However, traditional Chinese culture is one of the world’s most complex cultures. It can be reflected by the history of China, Chinese arts, Chinese music, Chinese language and many more. It’s hard to provide people with all aspects of traditional Chinese culture. So I had to narrow my topic down.

Many Chinese restaurants in America like to use red and white paper placemats with the 12 zodiac animal signs on them. It inspired me to choose this specific subject as the topic of my thesis. Additionally, the Chinese Zodiac and the Western Astrology share many similarities. They are both made up of twelve signs. So I believe it is an appropriate and interesting topic of the traditional Chinese culture for people from other countries to learn about.
RESEARCH
Background Information

Unlike the Western Astrology which is divided into 12 months and mainly based on the movements of the planet, Sun, the Chinese Zodiac is divided into 12 years, determined by the Chinese lunar calendar and symbolized by the 12 animals. In China, instead of asking your age, people may ask you “what animal you were born under?” The Chinese believe the animal ruling one’s birth year has a profound influence on personality, career, love life, health, lifestyle and destiny. The saying is: “This animal hides in your heart.”

Although the exact origin of the system is unknown, there are many legends to explain the beginning of the Chinese Zodiac. One of the most popular stories says that the Buddha decided to give every year a name so it would be easy to tell one year from another. And he sent three apsaras (flying women with magical powers) to invite all animals of China to visit him. Only twelve animals actually showed up. As a reward, the Buddha promised to name a year for each one in order of their arrival. These were the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

Additionally, the system can further be refined by studying a person’s birth month and even birth hour, but for most casual use, the Chinese Zodiac is used with just the year.

After understanding the Chinese Zodiac, I started to search for online applications and websites which are related to this topic. Those online sites are all heavy-text with static images. It isn’t an ideal way for users to learn about this topic. I feel that most websites lack in animation and interactive content. Therefore, I believe computer graphics design can create an interesting and playful experience in order to make people have fun in learning about the twelve Chinese Zodiac signs.
Case Studies

- Simple Machines
  
  http://www.msichicago.org/fileadmin/Activities/Games/simple_machines/

  Description:
  “Simple Machines” is an effective, relatively quick game created by the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. In the game you control a charming little red creature named Twitch, as it collects four robot parts. You try to choose the variant of lever or other simple machine that will allow Twitch to expend the least effort. Aimed at children in grades 3-6, the game is colorful, engaging and well designed.

  Relevance:
  This game is designed for K-5 kids. It allows kids to explore in science. Instead of abstract text and static images, it uses cartoon character, animation and sound effects to catch young users’ eyes. This game is a successful example of how to convert the abstract knowledge to a playful flash-based game.

- Color in Motion
  
  http://www.mariaclaudiacortes.com/

  Description:
  “Color In Motion” is an interactive flash site created by Claudia Cortes. There are 6 animated figures explaining how you can use colors to communicate and how colors symbolize certain emotions and events. There are activities such as a kaleidoscope and a scene maker where you can design a still scene based upon a word given to you.

  Relevance:
  It’s a very interesting and simple approach to the topic. It is an excellent precedent of how to interpret the complicated theory in a playful and interactive experience. Besides, the clean and effective interface design and interactive multimedia components definitely create a good
balance in between functionality and aesthetic value.

**Men vs Women**

*www.trivialpursuitexperiment.com*

**Description:**

“Men vs Women” is an online trivia game. Players can participate in this game by entering your gender and selecting the category they believed they would have the most success. Each time you get a question correct you gain a point for your gender. The website tracks the number of unique users and keeps a running tally of the points, which are displayed at the top of the page.

**Relevance:**

This online trivia game is a valuable resource for me in terms of applying trivia questions to my game section and keeping a running tally of the points. What’s more, those two animated characters enhance the game experience dramatically. I would like to create my own animated characters for my project.

**Create Your Chinese Zodiac**

*http://vanda.airside.co.uk/*

**Description:**

“Create Your Chinese Zodiac” is an application in which people can create and customize your own animal character based on your Chinese Zodiac sign.

**Relevance:**

My thesis project has the same subject as this application does. I am very impressed with those simple and vivid Zodiac signs. The application successfully maintains a consistent visual style. But it provides few information related to the Chinese Zodiac Signs. Therefore, I think I should make an effort to improve visual performance, as well as provide users with the useful and relevant content.
PROCESS
**Thesis parameters**

- **Target Audience**
  
  Gender: male and female
  
  Age: 16 years old and above
  
  Educational level: high school and above
  
  Computer equipment profile: PC or MAC with Flash Player 10.0 or higher version plug-in required
  
  Experience with thesis subject matter: educational and entertainment
  
  Motivational level: interested in the traditional Chinese culture
  
  Language: English

- **Flowchart**
• Content Structure

1. HOME section
An animated Buddha figure with a speech bubble appears on the home page. The ORIGIN button is placed on the figure’s left hand and the CONTEST button is placed on the figure’s right hand. Users will understand how to navigate through the content through these buttons and their positions on the stage.

2. ORIGIN section
It consists of three different scenes. Three apsaras (flying women with magical powers) with three buttons show up on the screen. After clicking on one button, one of apsaras will lead users to the relevant scene. 13 animated Zodiac signs are available in those three scenes. Each sign will provide users with its unique information.

3. CONTEST section
You can participate in this trivia game by entering your birth year. Your mission is to make your birth sign be the smartest one. Each time you gain 10 points for your birth sign if your answer is correct and you lose 10 points if your answer is incorrect. The project tracks and keeps a running tally of the points and ranks the 12 animal signs in order from highest to lowest current points. All questions in this section demonstrate how your birth sign impacts on the personality, career, love life, health, lifestyle and destiny.

4. HELP section
You will find some guidance and information, such as what is this project, how does it work, who made it and credits.

• Branding
I would like to keep the number “12” in the title, because it is the most important information for the Chinese Zodiac. And I know a straightforward title referring to the application’s content would be easy for users to remember. So I decided to title this application, The 12 Animals. I think it can directly express the main topic of this application.
A good logo helps set the stage for the development of a successful and long-lasting brand. Great logo design lies in the art of coming up with an image that is so simple, unique and memorable. When creating the identity for “The 12 Animals”, I created couple variations of the number “12” and tried to combine the title with “12”.

• Color Scheme
The colors selection in my thesis project is associated with ancient Chinese and Buddhist arts. The color scheme also features earth tone and warm colors. It has been mainly applied to the background, environment, characters and text. Additionally, I attached a paper grain texture to the background image and some environmental elements in order to enhance the old time feeling.
Design Approach:

- Sketches

Sketching is great for rapid idea generation. So I started out with a pencil and paper. My aim was to keep all graphics simple, clear and visually consistent. I generated a variety of initial sketches, and then got the shape and details just right before jumping into Illustrator to finalize the artwork and colors.
sheep

Monkey

Tiger

horse

Pig

Dragon

Cat
• Illustrations

Then I brought my sketches to the computer and illustrated them using Adobe Illustrator. I saved and sliced each illustration as PNG file in order to animate them in Adobe Flash.
THE 12 ANIMALS
• Interface design

I was looking for an interesting and effective way to organize my project that allows users to navigate around and find things. Therefore, I put a navigation bar at bottom of the screen and added one more set of buttons to the stage. Users will view the animated transition between two sections by clicking one button on the stage. The navigation bar won’t show up until users move their mouse cursors over it. The buttons on the navigation bar can directly lead users to the selected section without any animated transition.
The Chinese Zodiac is based on a 12-year cycle with each year represented by a different animal. They are in order as follows: the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. People born under each sign are said to exhibit sets of personality traits unique to that sign.

Buddha decided to give every year a name so it would be easy to tell one year from another. One day he had an idea and wanted to invite all the animals of China to visit him. China is an enormous country with the tall mountains, the long rivers and the thick jungles. Many animals live there. Because China is so vast, he sent three apsaras to carry his message to those animals. Apsaras are fairy women with magical powers, and they reached China flying down through the clouds.
My mission is to find 6 candidates at this place.

OX PROFILE & BEST ASSOCIATIONS

Sign Order: 2nd
Direction: North-Northeast
Allegiance: Rooster, Snake
Western Counterpart: Capricorn
Famous Oxen: Johann Sebastian Bach, Vincent Van Gogh, Charlie Chaplin, Adolf Hitler, Walt Disney, Vivien Leigh, Barack Obama, Jane Fonda
• Trivia game

One of my case studies, "Men Vs Women" inspired me to create “THE CONTEST” section. After selecting this section, you will see 12 small boxes with zodiac signs ranked from highest to lowest score in the clockwise direction. The application keeps a running tally of the scores. The current score and rank of each sign can be checked if you move your mouse cursor over each box. One big box with more options at the center of the screen allows you to learn about the rules and start this two-level trivia game. After activating the game, you will find out your birth sign and the personality traits by entering your birth year. In level 1, one question related to your birth sign will be generated by the system. Your birth sign will earn 10 points if your answer is correct and your birth sign will lose 10 points if your answer is incorrect. In level 2, you will know which Zodiac sign you should avoid. Your mission is to answer one question related to your opponent. Your birth sign will earn 10 points and your opponent will lose 10 points for correct answer. Otherwise, your opponent will get 10 points and your birth sign will lose 10 points.
THE 12 ANIMALS

PROCESS

THE CONTEST
the smartest zodiac sign

INSTRUCTIONS
START

YOU WERE BORN IN
Year 1984

NEXT
3 PROCESS

LEVEL 1 QUESTION

Please click one small box

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

GOOD LUCK

OOPS

Incorrect answer.
You just lost 10pts for the rat sign.

NEXT
Coding

- ActionScript 3.0

In order to decrease the loading time for this application, I put all the objects in the Library rather than on the Stage. Every object was converted into a Movie Clip and given a class name in the Linkage Properties. And I used codes to add these objects to the stage.

```java
var goBack_mc:MovieClip = new goBack();
var cloud1_mc:MovieClip = new cloud1();
var cloud2_mc:MovieClip = new cloud2();
var cloud3_mc:MovieClip = new cloud3();
var cloud4_mc:MovieClip = new cloud4();
var cloud5_mc:MovieClip = new cloud5();
var cloud6_mc:MovieClip = new cloud6();
var frontHills_mc:MovieClip = new frontHills();
var backHills_mc:MovieClip = new backHills();
var centralSceneContainer_mc:MovieClip = new centralSceneContainer();
var southwestSceneContainer_mc:MovieClip = new southwestSceneContainer();
var northernSceneContainer_mc:MovieClip = new northernSceneContainer();
var helpSceneContainer_mc:MovieClip = new helpSceneContainer();
var gameSceneContainer_mc:MovieClip = new gameSceneContainer();
var centralScene_mc:MovieClip = new centralScene();
var southwestScene_mc:MovieClip = new southwestScene();
var northernScene_mc:MovieClip = new northernScene();
var orderScene_mc:MovieClip = new orderScene();
var gameScene_mc:MovieClip = new gameScene();
var helpScene_mc:MovieClip = new helpScene();
var pink_mc:MovieClip = new pink();
var purple_mc:MovieClip = new purple();
var red_mc:MovieClip = new red();
var northernMission_mc:MovieClip = new northernMission();
var centralMission_mc:MovieClip = new centralMission();
var southwestMission_mc:MovieClip = new southwestMission();
var originText_mc:MovieClip = new originText();
var buddhaAll_mc:MovieClip = new buddhaAll();
var navigationBar_mc:MovieClip = new navigationBar();
```

// Layers Order Definition

```java
function layerOrders() {
    container_mc.addChildAt(cloud6_mc, 0);
    container_mc.addChildAt(backHills_mc, 1);
    container_mc.addChildAt(cloud6_mc, 2);
    container_mc.addChildAt(frontHills_mc, 3);
    container_mc.addChildAt(cloud6_mc, 4);
    container_mc.addChildAt(purple_mc, 5);
    container_mc.addChildAt(red_mc, 6);
    container_mc.addChildAt(pink_mc, 7);
    container_mc.addChildAt(centralSceneContainer_mc, 8);
    container_mc.addChildAt(northernSceneContainer_mc, 9);
    container_mc.addChildAt(southwestSceneContainer_mc, 10);
    container_mc.addChildAt(cloud3_mc, 11);
}
```
The navigation bar won’t show up until users move their mouse cursors over it.
Small triangles on the navigation bar indicate which section you are in.

Users can click on each animal. The screen will become dark and a small speech bubble above the animal will become enlarged.
In “THE CONTEST” section, I integrated Flash with PHP and MySQL in order to store data and update the score and rank. The sample below shows how to send the data to PHP and how to get the data back from PHP.
PHP was used to connect to a MySQL database and return the results. After creating PHP scripts, I uploaded them to my Web server. So my Flash file is able to read them. Here is the sample script called "parse_my_points.php".
```sql
$sql1 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='1' and points='10'");
$sqlCount1 = mysql_num_rows($sql1);
$sql2 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='1' and points='10'");
$sqlCount2 = mysql_num_rows($sql2);
$sql3 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='2' and points='10'");
$sqlCount3 = mysql_num_rows($sql3);
$sql4 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='2' and points='10'");
$sqlCount4 = mysql_num_rows($sql4);
$sql5 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='3' and points='10'");
$sqlCount5 = mysql_num_rows($sql5);
$sql6 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='3' and points='10'");
$sqlCount6 = mysql_num_rows($sql6);
$sql7 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='4' and points='10'");
$sqlCount7 = mysql_num_rows($sql7);
$sql8 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='4' and points='10'");
$sqlCount8 = mysql_num_rows($sql8);
$sql9 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='5' and points='10'");
$sqlCount9 = mysql_num_rows($sql9);
$sql10 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='5' and points='10'");
$sqlCount10 = mysql_num_rows($sql10);
$sql11 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='6' and points='10'");
$sqlCount11 = mysql_num_rows($sql11);
$sql12 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='6' and points='10'");
$sqlCount12 = mysql_num_rows($sql12);
$sql13 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='7' and points='10'");
$sqlCount13 = mysql_num_rows($sql13);
$sql14 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='7' and points='10'");
$sqlCount14 = mysql_num_rows($sql14);
```

Section 2

IF POSTING A USER'S CHOICE

```php
if ($_POST['userChoice']) {

// Create local variable from the Flash ActionScript posted variable
$userChoice = $_POST['userChoice'];
$userPoints = $_POST['userPoints'];
$sql_insert = mysql_query("INSERT INTO dataPoints (sign, points) VALUES ('$userChoice', '$userPoints')") or die (mysql_error());
```

```sql
$sql1 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='1' and points='10'");
$sqlCount1 = mysql_num_rows($sql1);
$sql2 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='1' and points='10'");
$sqlCount2 = mysql_num_rows($sql2);
$sql3 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='2' and points='10'");
$sqlCount3 = mysql_num_rows($sql3);
$sql4 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='2' and points='10'");
$sqlCount4 = mysql_num_rows($sql4);
$sql5 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='3' and points='10'");
$sqlCount5 = mysql_num_rows($sql5);
$sql6 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='3' and points='10'");
$sqlCount6 = mysql_num_rows($sql6);
$sql7 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='4' and points='10'");
$sqlCount7 = mysql_num_rows($sql7);
$sql8 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='4' and points='10'");
$sqlCount8 = mysql_num_rows($sql8);
$sql9 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='5' and points='10'");
$sqlCount9 = mysql_num_rows($sql9);
$sql10 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='5' and points='10'");
$sqlCount10 = mysql_num_rows($sql10);
$sql11 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='6' and points='10'");
$sqlCount11 = mysql_num_rows($sql11);
$sql12 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='6' and points='10'");
$sqlCount12 = mysql_num_rows($sql12);
$sql13 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='7' and points='10'");
$sqlCount13 = mysql_num_rows($sql13);
$sql14 = mysql_query("SELECT id FROM dataPoints WHERE sign='7' and points='10'");
$sqlCount14 = mysql_num_rows($sql14);
```
I set up a new database on my web server called “yanziche_thesis”. It allows me to create a new table in the MySQL database. Here is the sample table of my database.
Usability Testing

I did the usability testing on different types of people. My aim was to improve the content, visual design, navigation system and the functionality of the trivia game. The users completed the evaluation forms and gave me plenty of helpful feedback.

The charts below show 16 participants’ profiles.
There are total 10 questions in the questionnaire.

Q1. The purpose of this application is clear.
Q2. The content is easy to understand.
Q3. The information is well organized.
Q4. The application is easy to navigate around.
Q5. The function of each button item is easily understood.
Q6. The application is visually professional and appealing.
Q7. The illustrations enhance rather than distract from the application.
Q8. The rules of the trivia game are easy to understand and follow.
Q9. The trivia game is interesting and engaging.
Q10. You would recommend this online application to other people.

The chart below shows the questionnaire results.
(1 strongly disagree/2 disagree/3 neutral/4 agree/5 strongly agree)
CONCLUSION
The 12 Animals is designed to explain the story behind the Chinese Zodiac, the attributes of the 12 animal signs and how your birth sign influences your life. The main goal for this project was to explain and demonstrate the story behind the Chinese Zodiac, the attributes of the 12 animal signs and how an individual’s birth sign influences his/her life. Based on feedback and usability testing, I am confident that I achieved that goal.

Overall I think I was successful in using multimedia and interactive design to develop an online application of the Chinese Zodiac. I have shown that computer graphics design is capable of creating an interesting and interactive learning experience for the traditional culture. A very noticeable feature of this project is that it utilizes the animated illustrations to introduce the Chinese Zodiac instead of heavy text and still images.

One of the biggest challenges that I had while developing this application was how to optimise swf file size. Users tend to get frustrated with a webpage which takes longer to load. By decreasing the application load time, I had to redo all illustrations in Flash and deleted a lot of PNG files. I also divided the whole Flash file into two separated files in order to import my main file dynamically to my index file. The other major problem I ran into during the creation of the game section was how to integrate MySQL data into Flash with PHP. In order to achieve the functionality, I sought guidance from my professors, friends and online tutorials. I am pleased that I overcame this block, as well as improved my programming skills.

In the future, I would like to expand my thesis topic by including the five elements theory that is directly associated with the Chinese Zodiac. Also, if I learned more programming skills, I would try to incorporate multiplayer game into the game section of this project, allowing users to play against others in the same game environment at the same time.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
Books:


Online Resources:

Abstract:

The Chinese zodiac signs are determined by the lunar year in which you were born. The Chinese believe the animal ruling one’s birth year has a profound influence on personality, and destiny. The saying is: “This animal hides in your heart.” Unlike Western astrology, which is based on the months of the year, the Chinese Zodiac, traditionally referred to as the Sheng xiao, is based on a twelve-year cycle, each year represented by an animal. The twelve animals are rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. The Chinese Zodiac has wide currency in several East Asian countries besides China.

My thesis is an exploration in designing online content that uses multiple media formats to support the twelve Chinese Zodiac animal signs. This thesis will offer general information about the Chinese Zodiac, explain its origin stories and the attributes of the twelve animals, provide interactive games and tests, discover the interesting differences between Chinese and American culture in animal idioms, and interactively allow the user to find out what animal sign he or she was born under and the influences on the personality and characteristics.

Problem statement:

The Chinese Zodiac is an important part of the traditional Chinese culture. Promoting traditional Chinese culture to the world is the main reason for me to choose this topic. According to my research, I discovered that this area is lacking in animated and interactive web content. My thesis will explore how computer graphic design can create an intriguing experience in order to make people have fun in learning about this topic. And I will prove that Flash interactivity is a good way to help people understand this topic vividly. The Chinese Zodiac is a complex and wide-ranging culture. It not easy to explain all details clearly. I will narrow down my topic and only focus on the stories behind the twelve animals, each animal symbolizes certain character traits and the interesting differences between Chinese and American culture in animal idioms.

Being a Chinese, I am proud of my traditional culture and hope to promote it to the world. The Chinese Zodiac is an important part of the traditional Chinese culture, so I decided to develop my thesis on this topic. During my research, I found several websites on the Chinese Zodiac which consist of basic text information and static pictures. They are all badly designed and not interesting at all. People can’t learn this culture well by viewing those websites. Therefore, I will try to use my design skills to help improve the Chinese Zodiac websites by creating an animated and interactive website. If Flash interactivity were used in this field, it will be the best choice for people to vividly understand the twelve Chinese Zodiac animal signs.
Literary reviews:

- **Sources of the animal of the Chinese Zodiac**
  *The Animals of the Chinese Zodiac (Hardcover)*
  Susan Whitfield (Author), Philippa-Alys Browne (Illustrator)
  Crocodile Books
  March, 1998
  This book provides fundamental knowledge about the Chinese Zodiac for kids. A history of the development of the Chinese zodiac follows the story, as does an interpretation of the attributes of each animal’s qualities. It will be very helpful in learning the culture and translating it into English language.

  *Cat and Rat: The Legend of the Chinese Zodiac (An Owlet Book) (Paperback)*
  Ed Young
  Henry Holt and Co. (BYR)
  November 15, 1998
  This is a wonderfully charming and beautifully illustrated children’s book explaining the legend of how the Chinese years came to be named for animals. The content and illustrations of the book will help me use a fun and interesting way to introduce the culture.

  *Why Rat Comes First: A Story of the Chinese Zodiac*
  Clara Yen (Author), Hideo C. Yoshida (Illustrator)
  Children’s Book Press (CA)
  June 1991
  The Chinese-American author tells us the folk tales about the Chinese Zodiac she heard from her father when she was a kid. The Japanese-American illustrator’s stylized art is lively and colorful. Details on the Chinese lunar calendar are included. I think the illustrations in the book will inspire me to create the characters of those animals.

  Retrieved on Sep. 21
  China.com.cn
  This is a resource in Chinese detailing the background of the Chinese Zodiac and related stories for each animal. It may not help me in the actual creation of my website. But it gives me the reliable and authentic information about the culture.

- **Sources of techniques**
  *Learning ActionScript 3.0: A Beginner’s Guide*
  Rich Shupe and Zevan Rosser
  O’Reilly/Adobe Developer Library
  1st edition
  January 4, 2008
  In this book, authors share the knowledge they’ve gained from their years as multimedia develop-
Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts Degree

The Twelve: an Animated and Interactive Website of the Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animal Signs.

By Yanzi Chen

ers/designers and teachers. The authors do more than just give me a collection of sample scripts. The book describes how ActionScript and Flash work, giving me a clear look into essential topics. I think this book is a good ActionScript 3.0 gallery for me to help my interactive and animated project.

How to Cheat in Adobe Flash CS4: The art of design and animation
Chris Georgenes
Focal Press;
Pap/Cdr edition
April 16, 2009
The book offers the reader a wealth of traditional Flash animation techniques; however, what makes this book even more valuable is the knowledge he offers of ways to use the latest features in the current tool. The author’s approach to designing animations with flash will help me create animations for my topic.

http://www.republicofcode.com/
Retrieved on Sep. 21
Republic of code
It's an online resource for Flash development. This site provides many tutorials and updates frequently. Also its forum is a good place to discuss code problems with others. It will be helpful in developing my code.

Beginning game programming with Flash
Prayaga, Lakshmi
Boston, Mass.: Thomson Course Technology
c2008
The book is a pretty gentle introduction to programming games, specifically simple 2D arcade games, in Flash. It covers all the essential elements of game programming, making it a comprehensive and fun guide for beginning game programmers. I think it will help me create flash games especially on the technical aspect.

• Sources of design issues
It’s all about the User: How to create a user-centered Web site
Jones, Katie
AALL Spectrum
December 2006
This article points out some tips- Identify audience, borrow from popular sites, how to design search box, keep simplicity and consistency, avoid common mistakes, accessibility, testing and evaluation to get basic usability design principles. It thoroughly describes these techniques to stress the importance of user-centered design. It's geared towards interface and web designers, and is a useful study of how to create a user-centered website. The article will help me create a user-centered website. I can follow those usability design principles during my web design process.
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*When GUIs and cultures collide*

Heichler Elizabeth  
Computer world  
Sep 25, 1995

This article discusses how to steer clear of cultural pitfalls and taboos. The author lists some examples of objects and images that cause cross-cultural confusion. It's a useful study of how to consider culture elements in user-centered interface design and metaphor use. The article will help me avoid any collide between GUIs and cultures.

*Web Design: Working with Graphics*

Vogiatzis, Zino  
Crafts Report  
Jan, 2004

This article advises craft artists to use graphics on their web sites. It discussed interchange format when creating graphic, elements of creating graphics on the web, and the importance of visual consistency and spare use of graphics. It's a useful study to emphasis the value of graphics. Based on the article, I will focus on the visual elements in order to make my web design more attractive.

*Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*

Steve Krug  
New Riders Press; 2nd edition  
August 28, 2005

2nd Edition

The book is written for web designers, usability professionals and software engineers. Topics such as layout design, usability tests, information architecture and software engineering are given adequate treatment. It provides answers to questions about the right way to design web sites by focusing on usability issues. This book presents principles that should be kept in mind when evaluating site usability and are based on user research. It's great at explaining why usability needs to be the primary concern in developing any sort of interface. The way a user looks at a site is very different than the way a designer does. This book will guide me how to organize and layout a web and how to make it more logical and informative.

*http://johnnyholland.org/*  
Johnny Holland blog  
Retrieved on Sep. 21

Johnny Holland is an open collective exploring the interactions of experience design. It has 8 categories under MAGAZINE section: digital interaction, featured, future & trends, methods & theory, physical interaction, psychology, reviews, stuff. And cool video about many interactive projects under Johnny section. I can find a lot of inspired interactive works here. The site will help me in developing an interactive part for the thesis.
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http://www.smashingmagazine.com/
Smashing magazine
Retrieved on Sep. 21
Smashing Magazine is an online magazine and blog dedicated to all things design. It delivers useful and innovative information for designers and Web developers. The frequently updated site covers everything from lists of inspirational design to HTML tutorials. The forums cover a variety of topics from typography to Blogging Software. I believe the site will help me design a good web interface with its fantastic resources.

http://www.colourlovers.com/
Lord IV.
Retrieved on Sep. 21
COLOURlovers is a resource that monitors and influences color trends. COLOURlovers gives the people who use color a place to check out a world of color, compare color palettes, submit news and comments, and read color related articles and interviews. The COLOURlovers community is regularly updated with information and examples of the way colors are used in the real world. It will be helpful in planning the color palette for my thesis project.

• Sources of inspiration
  http://www.mariaclaudiacortes.com/
  Color in motion
  Claudia Cortes
  Retrieved on Sep. 21
  Color in Motion is an animated and interactive experience that explores color communication and color symbolism. It's designed by Claudia Cortes for her MFA Thesis in Computer Graphics Design at RIT. She introduces color in a fun way. There are animated figures that explain how you can use colors to communicate and how colors symbolize certain emotions and events. There are activities such as a kaleidoscope and a scene maker where you can design a still scene based upon a word given to you. It's an excellent thesis project. I think the fun way she introduces the topic will be helpful in developing my topic. And the structure of the site also will help me divide my website into several applicable sections.

  http://thebestdesigns.com/
  The best design
  Retrieved on Sep. 21
  It features a gallery of selected Web designs updated weekly, design resources and articles. I believe it will be helpful in developing layout, navigation and wireframe for my project.

  http://www.fncgamesblog.com/
  FNC game blog
  Retrieved on Sep. 21
  FNC games blog collects the newest videos walkthroughs on Youtube for games. Most of games I have watched are funny and creative. The site will inspire me to create some interesting games
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using animals as the main characters.

http://www.thefwa.com/
Favorite Website Awards
Retrieved on Sep. 21
FWA features interviews and articles with designers and developers of winning websites, including the established and well known and the new generation, the future of the web.
FWA showcases one site every day. All awarded websites are full of creations and cutting-edge design styles. It’s a good resource to get inspiration about design style for my interface and graphics.

http://www.typographyserved.com/
Typography served
Retrieved on Sep. 21
The site steadily supplies top quality creative work in specific categories(e.g. fashion, industrial design, photography...). It combs through projects from the portfolios of the most talented creative people and teams around the world. I think it will help me design and choose typography for my project.

http://vanda.airside.co.uk/
V&A Chinese Zodiac
Retrieved on Oct. 1
The Flash interactive piece was to be based on the Chinese zodiac and offers visitors the chance to create and take away their own content. It is a good example which is related to my thesis topic. But the piece only focus on customizing user’s own character based on his/her Chinese astrological sign. It doesn’t offer basic information about Chinese Zodiac and people couldn’t know the origin story behind each animal by this work.

Approach:

My thesis project will consist of animation, interaction, motion graphics and sounds. It will be divided into four sections plus an introduction page which contains an animated preloader. I would like to infuse one other art form into this project, such as Chinese paper cuttings for window decoration, shadow play, paper critters or marionettes. It will be used in the main homepage as the visual style for 2 minutes motion graphics. Simple but vivid animation (5-10 seconds each) will be presented to describe 12 animal idioms. Interactive test will cover the influences of birth sign on personality, love and career. Flash game will allow user to have fun with those animals.

Flash CS4 and Actions scripts 3.0 are my main tools to design animation and interaction. I will use After Effects CS4 to deal with motion graphics. All images will be processed in Photoshop CS4 and Illustrator CS4. I will edit music and sound effects in Cool edit Pro 2.0. Although I used to work on PC, the final thesis show will use Mac for the best display solution. So I will work on this project in both PC and Mac.
First, I will look through books and articles related to my topic in order to collect current information. Also, I will search the internet for websites that have similar topics and get inspiration from websites that use the same techniques. Second I will divide all information used for my thesis into several sections and create a flowchart. Sketches will be drawn in order to roughly describe how my thesis project will look. Then I will meet with my committee to determine the final visual style and develop the storyboards. After that I will start to work on the prototype and complete the beta version of my thesis. The final stage is to do usability testing and collect feedback in order to make the project functional. It will take me about five months to complete this thesis project, from December 2009 to April 2010.

Examples:

Visual style:

Case study:
http://www.msichicago.org/fileadmin/Activities/Games/simple_machines/

Flowchart:

1. This section will offer an animated preloader. User can get the main idea about the subject matter of my project.
2. This section will consist of navigation bar and motion graphics (mock shadow play). User can understand the origin story of the Chinese Zodiac by watching 2 minutes shadow play. Navigation menu will guide user to go into other sections.
3. This section will be divided into two subsections: American idioms and Chinese idioms. There will be 12 idioms related to 12 animals, 5-10 seconds animation for each idiom. User will discover the interesting differences between Chinese and American culture.
4. This section will allow user to choose one animal as the character in game. Each animal has specific attributes which also will become the corresponding character’s skills. The mission is to defeat other animals and create a new order for those 12 animal signs (Why rat comes first? It can be changed!).
5. This section will offer the practical applications of the Chinese Zodiac in user’s personal life.

Sketch:

Implications of the Research:

My thesis is an exploration in designing online interactive content that uses computer graphics to promote Chinese traditional culture. The aim of this thesis is to discover how flash interaction as a visual communication tool can increase people’s interests in promoting traditional culture.
People will understand what the Chinese Zodiac is through experiencing my thesis project. Moreover, my thesis project will offer a brand-new way to promote traditional Chinese culture by modern technology.

Most of the resources available are limited in terms of what they offer about the definition and stories about the Chinese Zodiac. I will need more resources about the practical application of the Chinese Zodiac in order to create an interactive game and test. I also plan to explore other art forms and find out the best one to be used in my thesis.

Target Audience

- Gender
  - Male and female
- Age:
  - Not required
- Educational level:
  - Not required
- Computer Equipment Profile:
  - PC or MAC with flash player 10.0 or higher version plug-in required
- Experience with Thesis Subject Matter:
  - Educational and entertainment
- Motivational Level:
  - Interested in Chinese culture and interactive experience
- Language:
  - English

Personas

Serena
- Female.
- 19 years old.
- Knows she was born under horse.
- Comes from Chicago, IL.
- Is a sophomore at RIT in Chinese history major.
- Is a nostalgic person.
- Goes to gym four times a week.
- Loves travelling around the world.
- Likes animals.
- Enjoys Chinese food.
- Is Buddhist believer.
- Is interested in the Chinese traditional culture.
- Uses the internet a lot.
- Watches CNN news everyday.
- Wonders the person under which animal is the best choice of her boyfriend.
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By Yanzi Chen

Otis

- Male.
- 50 years old.
- Comes from Greek.
- Adopts a Chinese child.
- Owns a pet shop.
- Knows little about Chinese Zodiac.
- Has three dogs.
- Loves drawing animals.
- Likes cooking at home.
- Uses Skype to contact with his son who is studying in USA.
- Is interested in the high-tech products.
- Is volunteer for the acropolis Museum.
- Has a MacBook Air.
- Wonders which animal he and his family were born under.

Marketing plan:
When completing this thesis project, the following committees will be addressed to submit my final interactive piece to them:

- 2010 Adobe Design Achievement Awards
- FWA
- SIGGRAPH
- Digital Artist 2010 competition
- Creativity 40
- HOW Interactive Design Awards 2010

Thesis project budget:

- Books $50
- Hosting service for a website $90
- Competition entry fee $100
  Total $240

Software and Hardware Requirement:

- PC with 2.26 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo, 4GB ram memory and NVIDIA GeForce 9600M GT
- iMac with 3.06 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo, 4GB ram memory and ATI Radeon HD 4850
- Internet connection
- Flash CS4
- Photoshop CS4
- Illustrator CS4
- After Effects CS4
- Cool edit Pro 2.0
**The 12 Animals** will interactively present the origin story behind the Chinese Zodiac and explain the attributes of the twelve animal signs. It will also allow you to find out what animal sign you were born under and to discover how the Chinese Zodiac signs can influence your personality, relationships, career, lifestyle and health.


**Evaluator Profile:**
- **Age:**
  - [ ] 16-20
  - [ ] 21-30
  - [ ] 31-40
  - [ ] 41-50
  - [ ] 51-60
  - [ ] 60+
- **Gender:**
  - [ ] Female
  - [ ] Male
- **Work / study area:**
  - [ ] Art/Design
  - [ ] Other

**Project Evaluation:**

1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

2. The content is easy to understand.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

3. The information is well organized.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

4. The application is easy to navigate around.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

5. The function of each button item is easily understood.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

6. The application is visually professional and appealing.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

7. The illustrations enhance rather than distract from the application.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

8. The rules of the trivia game are easy to follow.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

9. The trivia game is interesting and engaging.
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4
   - [ ] 5

10. You would recommend this online application to other people.
    - [ ] 1
    - [ ] 2
    - [ ] 3
    - [ ] 4
    - [ ] 5

**Other Suggestions:**

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Thank you for taking the time to give me your feedback. Yanzi Che
The **12 Animals** will interactively present the origin story behind the Chinese Zodiac and explain the attributes of the twelve animal signs. It will also allow you to find out what animal sign you were born under and to discover how the Chinese Zodiac signs can influence your personality, relationships, career, lifestyle and health.

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Work / study area:  
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**Other Suggestions:**

---

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   - 4  
   - 5

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   - 2  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5

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    - 1  
    - 2  
    - 3  
    - 4  
    - 5

**Other Suggestions:**  

Thank you for taking the time to give me your feedback. Yanzi Che
The 12 Animals will interactively present the origin story behind the Chinese Zodiac and explain the attributes of the twelve animal signs. It will also allow you to find out what animal sign you were born under and to discover how the Chinese Zodiac signs can influence your personality, relationships, career, lifestyle and health.


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Project Evaluation:
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
2. The content is easy to understand.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
3. The information is well organized.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
4. The application is easy to navigate around.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
5. The function of each button item is easily understood.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
6. The application is visually professional and appealing.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
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   ① ② ③ ④ ■
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   ① ② ③ ④ ■
9. The trivia game is interesting and engaging.
   ① ② ③ ④ ■
10. You would recommend this online application to other people.
    ① ② ③ ④ ■

Other Suggestions: Add more levels to game!
The 12 Animals will interactively present the origin story behind the Chinese Zodiac and explain the attributes of the twelve animal signs. It will also allow you to find out what animal sign you were born under and to discover how the Chinese Zodiac signs can influence your personality, relationships, career, lifestyle and health.


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Project Evaluation:
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   1  2  3  4  ☑
   5
2. The content is easy to understand.
   1  2  3  4  5
3. The information is well organized.
   1  2  3  4  5
4. The application is easy to navigate around.
   1  2  3  4
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   1  2  3  4
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   1  2  3  4
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    1  2  3  4

Other Suggestions:

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Project Evaluation:
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Neutral [x] Agree [x] Strongly Agree
2. The content is easy to understand.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Neutral [x] Agree [x] Strongly Agree
3. The information is well organized.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Neutral [x] Agree [x] Strongly Agree
4. The application is easy to navigate around.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Neutral [x] Agree [x] Strongly Agree
5. The function of each button item is easily understood.
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6. The application is visually professional and appealing.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Neutral [x] Agree [x] Strongly Agree
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Other Suggestions: 

Amarey

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Project Evaluation:
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   1  2  3  4  5
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    1  2  3  4  5

Other Suggestions: ____________________________________________

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Project Evaluation:
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   - ☐ 1
   - ☐ 2
   - ☐ 3
   - ☐ 4
   - ☐ 5

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    - ☐ 1
    - ☐ 2
    - ☐ 3
    - ☐ 4
    - ☐ 5

Other Suggestions:


Thank you for taking the time to give me your feedback. Yanzi Chen
The 12 Animals will interactively present the origin story behind the Chinese Zodiac and explain the attributes of the twelve animal signs. It will also allow you to find out what animal sign you were born under and to discover how the Chinese Zodiac signs can influence your personality, relationships, career, lifestyle and health.

Thesis Project URL:  

Evaluator Profile:  
Age:  ○ 16-20  ○ 21-30  ○ 31-40  ○ 41-50  ○ 51-60  ○ 60+
Gender:  ○ Female  ○ Male
Work / study area:  ○ Art/Design  ○ Other

Project Evaluation:  
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
2. The content is easy to understand.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
3. The information is well organized.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
4. The application is easy to navigate around.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
5. The function of each button item is easily understood.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
6. The application is visually professional and appealing.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
7. The illustrations enhance rather than distract from the application.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
8. The rules of the trivia game are easy to follow.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
9. The trivia game is interesting and engaging.
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤
10. You would recommend this online application to other people.
    ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤

Other Suggestions:  

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- Gender:  ○ Female  ☑ Male
- Work / study area:  ☑ Art/Design  ○ Other

**Project Evaluation:**
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   - 1 Strongly Disagree
   - 2 Disagree
   - 3 Neutral
   - 4 Agree
   - 5 Strongly Agree

2. The content is easy to understand.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

3. The information is well organized.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

4. The application is easy to navigate around.
   - 1
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   - 1
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   - 1
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   - 1
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   - 2
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10. You would recommend this online application to other people.
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
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**Other Suggestions:**

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- Gender:  ☐ Female  ☐ Male
- Work / study area:  ☐ Art/Design  ☐ Other

Project Evaluation:
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. The content is easy to understand.
   ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. The information is well organized.
   ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

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10. You would recommend this online application to other people.
    ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐

Other Suggestions:  Navigation system wasn't instantly understandable to me

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Other Suggestions:

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Project Evaluation:
1. The purpose of this application is clear.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly Agree
2. The content is easy to understand.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly Agree
3. The information is well organized.
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly Agree
4. The application is easy to navigate around.
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   [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ] Disagree [ ] Neutral [ ] Agree [ ] Strongly Agree

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Other Suggestions:
It would be nice if you add some background music to game section.

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**Project Evaluation:**
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   - 1
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**Other Suggestions:**

Thank you for taking the time to give me your feedback. Yanzi Chen.