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Robot Rescue

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
in candidacy for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Robot Rescue
An Interactive game
by Hui Yu Ruan

Nov 02, 2006

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Abstract

Recently, it is very common in Asia that people put little toys on their office desks. It doesn't mean they sometimes have their kids visiting them nor they are not grown up yet. These are toys, which can soothe their stress from work. I am always attracted by toys and also animations designed or directed by many artists and designers. In this fantasy world of toys, there may not be only human beings. As in Hayao Miyazaki's animation "Spirited Away," where there was a magic world ruled by a witch; and there was also an old spider man, a frog manager and even coals that were animated into cute little creatures. Imagination is unlimited; we can even fly or speak animal language in this world.

In this fantasy world, figures and stories are not only just imaginations, but sometimes they become ideas for new technology. I believe imagination provides diversity and introduces more surprise and joys in our lives.

With this magic of our minds, I intended to create a fantastic environment. At first I had created a planet and also some creatures. While I was creating these characters, there was a story coming up as if I was reading a storybook. The characters had their personalities and different missions to achieve. These became the opening animations of this project and then came the game. I was hoping users would feel more familiar to this environment in the game and closer to the creatures and the space I had created.

Thesis Website: www.rit.edu/~hxr9249

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1. Introduction

This is a flash based game combined with animated characters and an illustrated story. With a hand drawn illustration style in the game, I tried to present a playful and joyous feeling.

1.1 Keywords

Animation

Fantasy

Flash Game

Illustration

Interactive

1.2 Content

My main idea is to create a world from my imagination.

At the very beginning, there were floating seeds in space and a deserted planet; and it looked like they had no connections to each other until one day an accident happened. A spaceship crashed on this planet and changed everything.

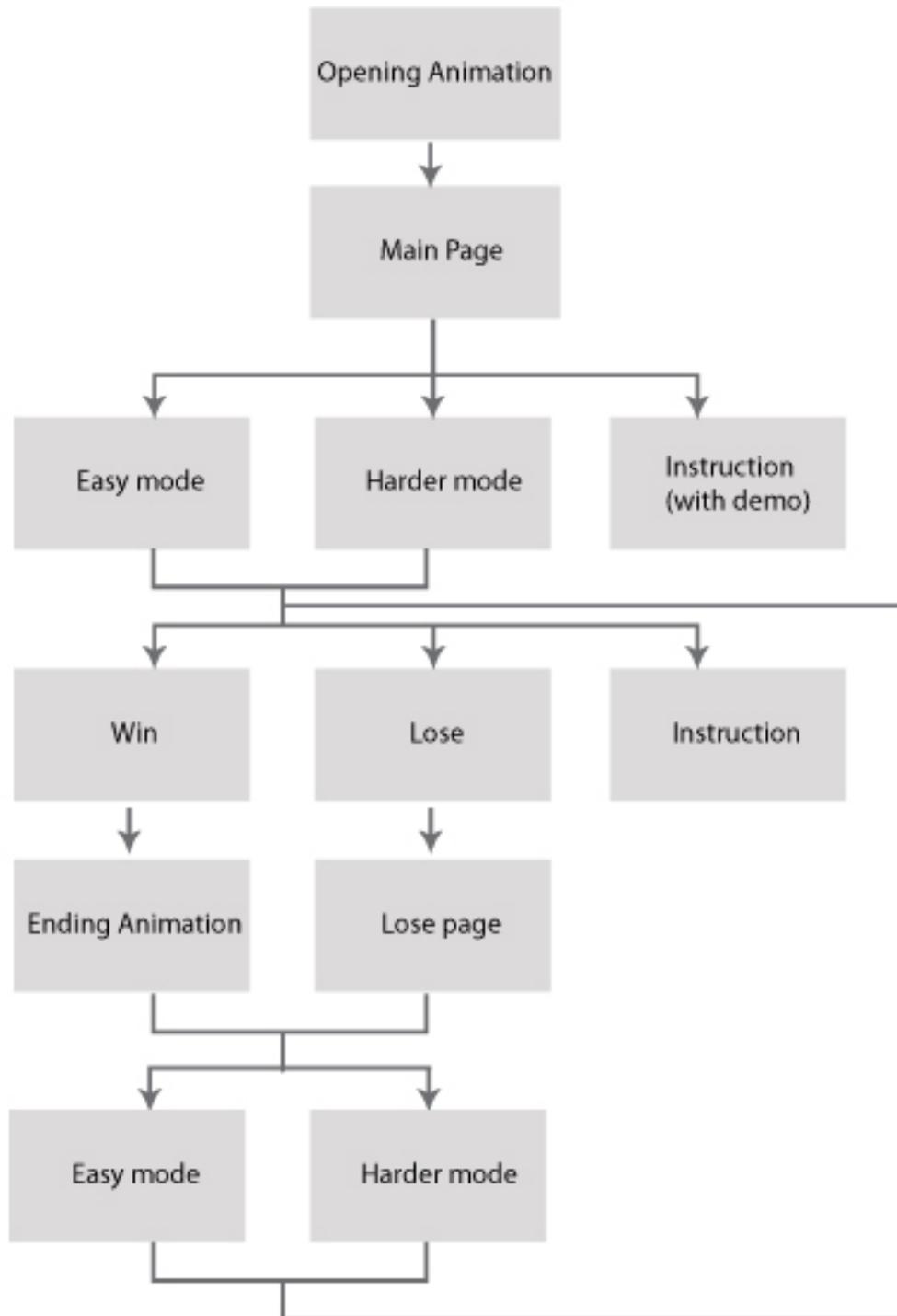
Robot and his spaceship crashed on this empty planet on his way home. There was nothing on it and his spaceship had lost several propellers. These propellers were scattered in the space; Robot needed to gather the propellers to fix his spaceship. Without the spaceship, he was trapped; the only way to reach the propellers was to move the planet. Therefore, he found out that by planting the seeds on the planet would disrupt the balance of the planet, and then he would have the chance to reach the propellers that he had lost.

In order to complete this mission, users have to help the Robot catch the seeds in space, plant them in the crater, and put the propellers back in the right place.

1.3 Art style

The game is engaged with lots of movements: the seeds are constantly moving, and the planet is rotating. Lots of stuff will be moving around at the same time. File size will be an important task I need to manage for this web output flash game. After some considerations, using vector-based graphics is the best way to present this game. File size can be condensed and the movements in the game would be smoother; and at the same time users do not have to waste their time loading the game.

1.4 Flow Chart



2. Process

2.1 Character setting

I mainly used Adobe Illustrator to design the characters in this project. All the characters were modified a few times before they became what they are now.

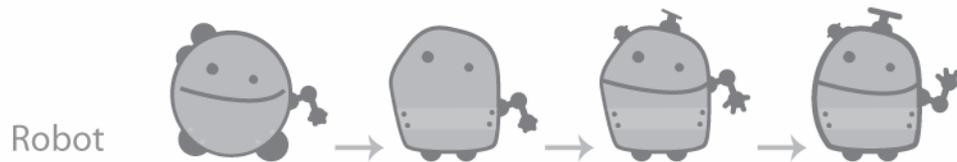


Figure 01. The process of setting up the “Robot”

I hope that the Robot can bring very peaceful feelings to us, so he shouldn't hold any weapons. He is just like a gardener alien, so he has a little sprinkler system hidden on his left side. With a little propeller on his head, he can travel within short distances; and also he can move around with wheels very well. The Robot was first designed as a round shape, but I felt he was not special enough. With some modifications, he looked more like a pentagon shape with a round head; (See Figure 01) and then I had made its edges smoother as the final setting. After the Robot was designed, it was easy to create the mother character. In my opinion, typical mothers usually have curly hair and they prepare our meals; therefore, if the mommy Robot has a spatula in hand that would be ideal for me. (See Figure 02)



Figure 02. The process of setting up the “Robot’s Mommy”

It would be too boring if the spaceship looked just like an ordinary spaceship, so I made mine with a whale appearance. (See Figure 03) With the propellers, this spaceship can travel both in space and deep under the ocean.

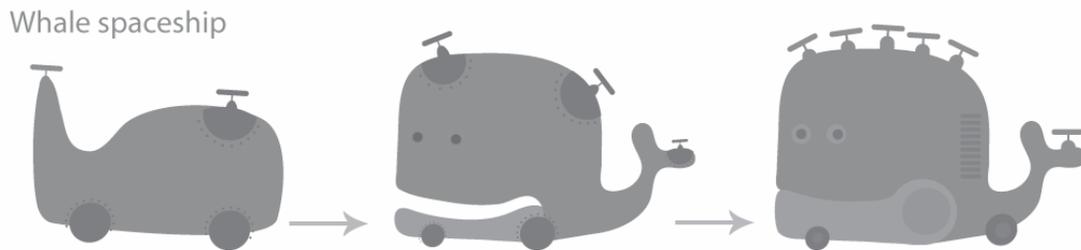


Figure 03. The process of setting up the “Whale Spaceship”

Since the game takes place in a fantasy world the planet should be a little peculiar: it is a round cornered cube with many craters.

The seeds would grow into different plants: some of them appear like mushrooms, some are squared flowers, and others are even odder-looking plants. (See Figure 04)

The Planet and the Plants

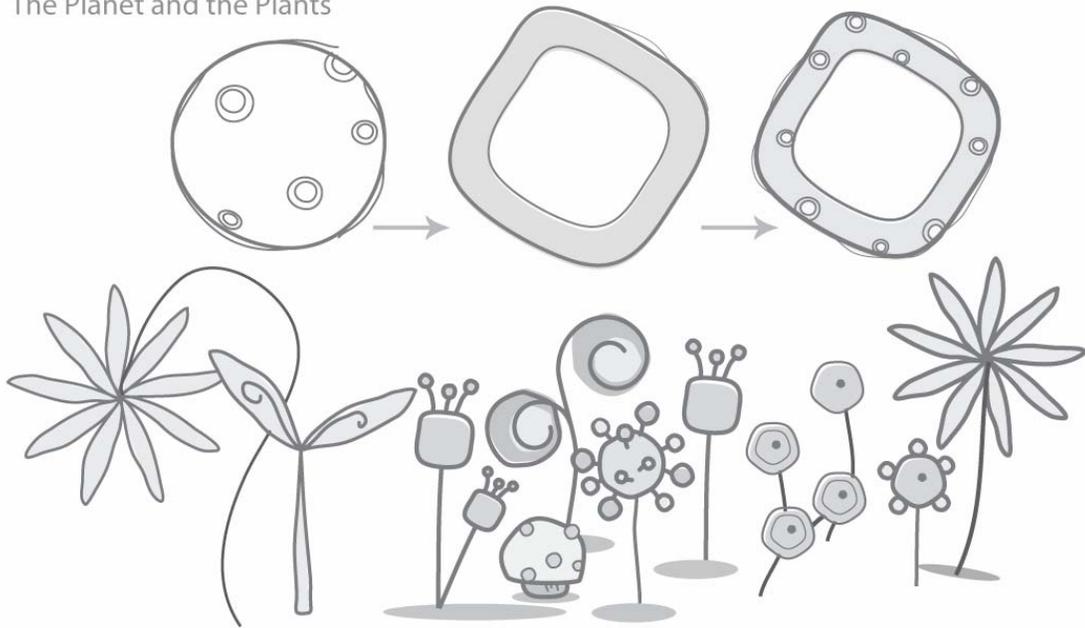


Figure 04. The process of setting up the "Plants"

2.2 Game play

Robot

Lead character of the game.

Users will help Robot to catch the seeds and fix the spaceship.

When users plant a seed into a crater the Robot will go and take good care of it.

Planet

Where the spaceship crashed and where the Robot was trapped. There was nothing on the planet.

Seeds

Floating and moving in space, users can drag these seeds into the craters on the planet and there will be some mysterious plants growing up. The seeds will float around faster when the time is counting down, and it will be more difficult to win the game. And if users choose different levels, the number of seeds will be different. In easy mode the game will start at 15 seeds; as in the advanced mode, users will have only 9 seeds at the beginning.

Spaceship

The spaceship was out of control and crashed on the planet. Users need to drag the seeds to the crater in order to break the balance of the planet, which cause it to move toward the propellers in space.

Propellers

Robot lost five propellers from his spaceship; there was no way to fly again without these propellers. Users have to collect them all and put them into the right place on the spaceship in order to make the spaceship work again.

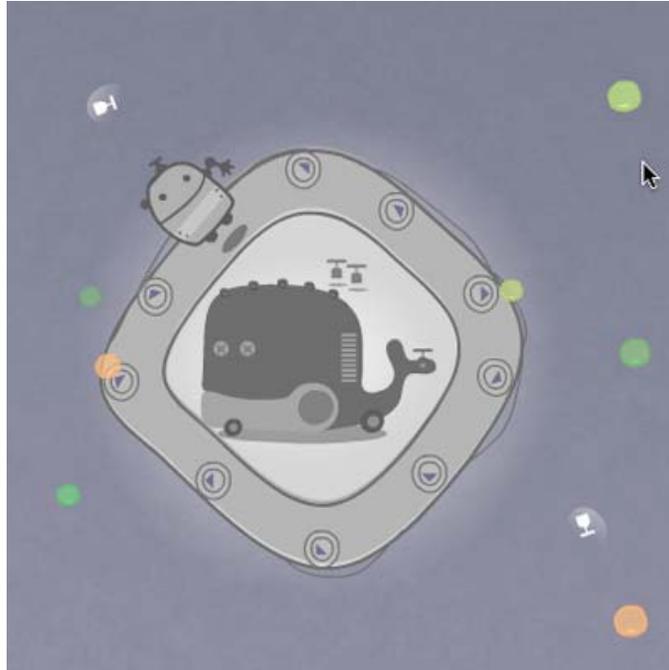


Figure 05. Two different conditions with propeller

Propellers are in two different conditions. (See Figure 05)

A. Because of the crash, the propellers are scattered in different places in space. Users have to collect them by moving the planet. When a user collects one propeller, five seconds are added and three new seeds appear as a reward.

B. When users make the planet move and catch one propeller, the original white propeller turns gray and appears on the planet. At this time, users can easily drag and drop the propeller onto the whale spaceship. There will be a thunder ball appearing as a reward when users put the propellers into right places.

Thunder ball

The powerful thunder ball can create thunderstorms and kill any plant. This is another way to make the planet move.

Timer

The game has a time limitation: in the easy mode there are 95 seconds to complete the mission; and in the advanced mode there are 60 seconds. The game is over when the time runs out.

Robot Mommy

Beside the timer, Robot's mother is waiting for him. As time passes, mom loses her patience and waves her spatula and becomes really angry.

2.3 Demonstration

There are two different ways to demonstrate game play. The first one uses animation to introduce how to play the game. (See Figure 06.1) Some description shows up to explain how the game works. I hope by running through the demonstration, users will understand the game faster.

During the game, if users have any questions, they can always click on the question mark and the game will pause. An instruction page will show up with full explanations of everything about the game. (See Figure 06.2)



Figure 06.1 Instruction with animation

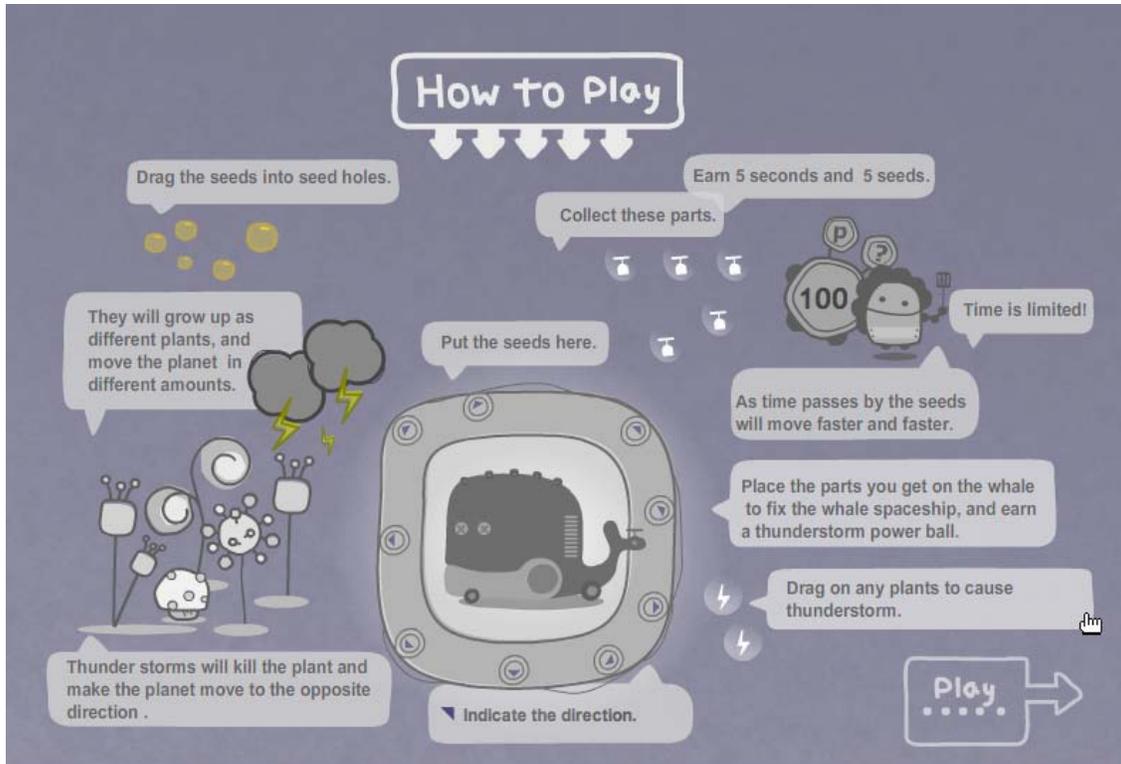


Figure 06.2 Instruction page

2.4 Programming

There are many steps to accomplish this project, and I planned my coding task as following:

Setting environment

1. Make the planet spin around constantly.
2. Let the propeller show up at different locations every time.
3. Create borders to keep the planet on the stage.
4. Set timer and angry mommy animation
5. Have different level with the game.

Connect the game with the seeds

1. Create seeds and let these seeds move in the space.
2. Make the seeds and the thunder ball draggable.
3. Have different speed of seeds.
4. Have the random plants grow up while user puts the seed in the crater.
5. Add five seconds and 3 more seeds while user puts the propeller on the spaceship.
6. Make the planet move toward a direction when user puts the seed in the crater.

Other effects

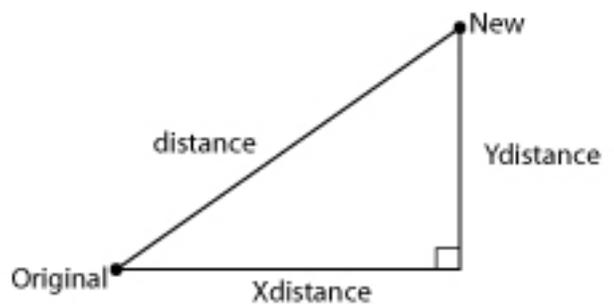
1. The thunderstorm killed the plants occasionally.
2. Create the thunderstorm while user puts the propeller onto the spaceship.

3. Make the thunderstorm occur while user puts the thunder ball on the chosen plant.
4. Activate the spaceship while the user finishes putting all propellers back on the ship.

There are many tasks during game creation. Imagination is very important for story and artwork, but when it comes to programming, logic is the key to making the game work.

I have faced some difficulties while coding the game, and when I finally solved them, it became a very valuable experience for me.

The first difficulty is how to make the planet move smoothly toward the right direction. By setting the position after the user puts the seed in the crater, it creates a distance between the original position and the new position. After research, I found out that by knowing the X distance and Y distance I can use trigonometric function to calculate how far the planet should move. (See Figure 07)



$$\text{distance} = \sqrt{\text{Xdistance} + \text{Ydistance}}$$

Figure 07. Trigonometric function

Second, functions about craters are complicated. While the user puts the seed into the crater, I need to make a plant grows up from there and move the planet toward the new location while disabling the crater so the user cannot plant another one. At the same time, I need to randomly call the thunderstorm function to make the thunderstorm happen. There are more than four different functions happening at the same time, and I was coding poorly with the order, so even though there is no error with the function itself, the game still could not work properly. After spending time cleaning up nasty code, the game runs much better than before.

Last but not least, because I am using “as” files to control different elements of the game, such as controlling seeds with one “as” file and propellers as another, having too many different files in hand sometimes caused them to miss communicate, so I had to check all the relate file again to find out where the problems are. After this project, I learned that it is better to have a memo to record functions I need to use in different files and name the functions and files properly.

3. Usability

When the project was nearly completed, my committee and friends tested it. Most of them liked the characters and were also quick to understand what was going on with the story. I gathered feedback from them: as the time was passing by, the speed the seeds were moving was too fast and it made them too difficult to catch; and some people said they were just waiting to lose the game. For some of the users the seeds were too little for them to catch. In the first version of the game, when users put the seeds in the craters, it was very difficult to know or predict the direction the planet would move. Overall, most of the people liked the characters and the moving sound effect; also they thought the instruction page helped a lot.

With all this feedback in mind, I had modified the project. If the seeds were too hard to catch, then it would be no fun to play. After a few more tries, many people were really frustrated with the seeds. So I had made it more reasonable by slowing down the seeds' moving speed when the time was running out, and also the hot spot for catching the seeds larger.

4. Conclusion

Before the project, I had no idea that making a game would require this much energy.

There were so many different things I had to take care of: from creating, planning and achieving, and fixing thousands of little bugs that showed up every time I tested it.

Actually I am not a very careful person. I easily forget some of the little things that are behind me. So dealing with all the problems really challenged me a lot. It was not only finishing a project, I also improved myself as a person who can take care of details.

From coming up with ideas, sketching, planning, processing and trouble -shooting, I had gone through it step by step. However, standing back and looking at my project, I feel I can still make a lot of improvements. It is a project that can be done more: with more characters or different ways to play with, or even expand the space. A lot more places can be enhanced. If possible I can always modify this project.

5. Appendix

5.1 Sketches

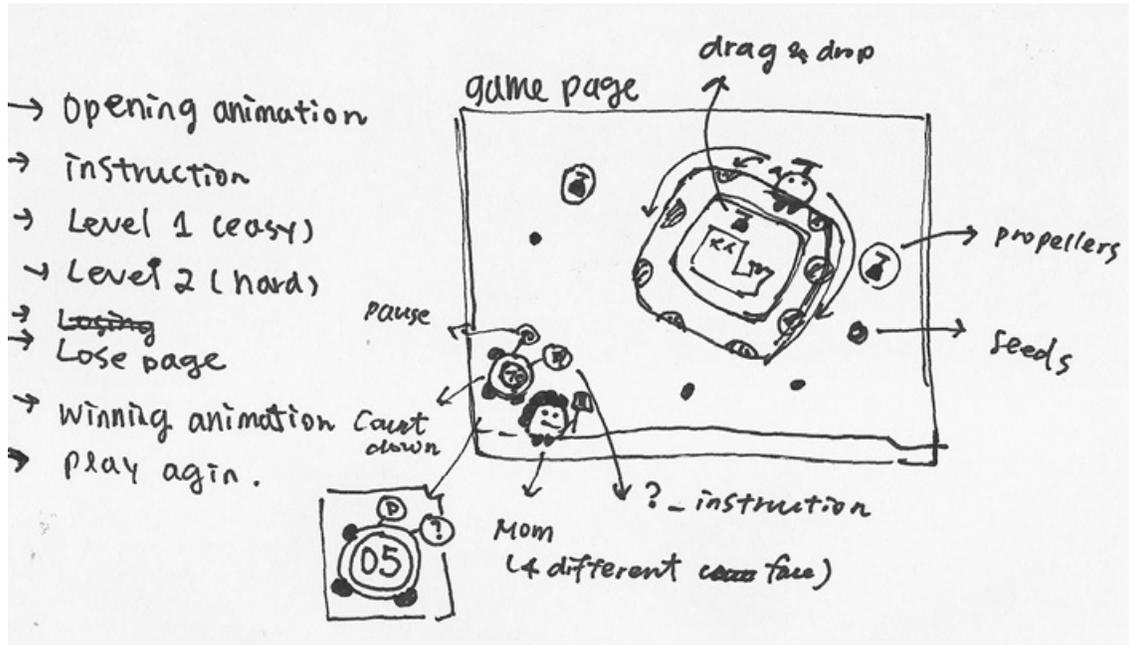


Figure 08.1 Environment setting

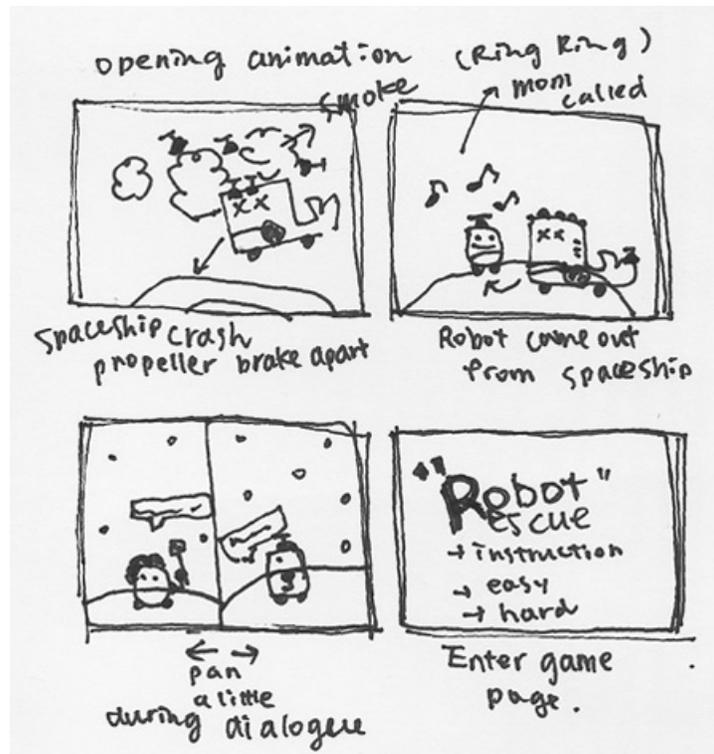


Figure 08.2 Storyboard for opening animation

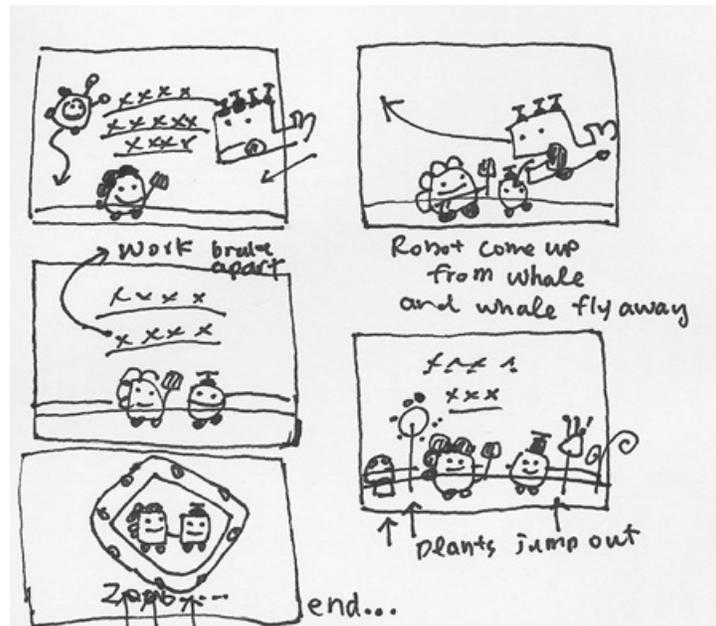


Figure 08.3 Storyboard for ending animation

5.2 Programming

These are functions that would make the thunderstorms to blow occasionally. "come" makes a random number that calls the function to start the storm.

```
function Weather()
{

    j=random(6)+1
    trace(_root.planet._x+", "+_root.planet._y)
```

```

come = 17000+(random(10)*1000)
_global['setTimeout'](gogo, come);
_global['setTimeout'](clean,come+2000);

function gogo(){
    _root.planet.sh01.p01.play();
    trace("thunderStrom")
}

function clean(){
    doMove("_root.w", _root.w._x+(j*15), _root.w._y+(j*10),luckN);
doMove("_root.planet", _root.planet._x+(j*15), _root.planet._y+(j*10),luckN);
    _root.planet.sh01.p01.removeMovieClip();
    _root.seed01 = 0
    _root.planet.a1._visible = true ;
}
}
}

```

This function controls every seed that is floating in the sky. With dragging and dropping, the code will detect if the seed was dropped at any crater. And then it will randomly attach a new movieclip and make a new plant grow if there is no other plant on it.

```

function Movearound(){

this.onPress = function(){
    startDrag(this);
this.swapDepths(_root.getNextHighestDepth());
this.ySpeed =0

```

```

this.xSpeed =0

PressM = true
}

this.onRelease =this.onReleaseOutside = function(){

_root.w.hint.n12.gotoAndStop(1);

PressM = false

stopDrag();

this.xSpeed =( Math.random() *6) ;

this.ySpeed =1;

this._x += this.xSpeed ;

this._y += this.ySpeed ;

allplant = ["01","02","03","04","05"]

i = allplant.length;

k =Math.floor(Math.random()*i)+1;

g = (k/2)+3

if ((this.hitTest(_root.planet.sh01)) && _root.seed01 == 0){

_root.seed01 =1

_root.planet.a1._visible = false ;

_root.popN-=1

_root.planet.gotoAndPlay(2);

_root.mc.attachMovie("alien02", "a02",_root.mc.getDepth())

_root.planet.sh01.attachMovie("plant0"+[k], "p01",_root.getNextHighestDepth())

doMove("_root.w", _root.w._x-(g*10), _root.w._y-(g*25),luckN);

doMove("_root.planet", _root.planet._x-(g*10), _root.planet._y-(g*25),luckN);

```

```
Weather();  
this.removeMovieClip();  
  
.....  
  
.....  
  
}
```

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Adobe - Flash Support Forums

<http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/webforums/forum/index.cfm?forumid=15>

Flash Kit <http://www.flashkit.com/index.shtml>

FlashGuru Consulting <http://www.flashguru.co.uk/>

Kirupa.com <http://www.kirupa.com/developer/actionscript/hittest.htm>

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