Free Ink

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High Concept

A colorful, whimsical adventure game where a small ink man must bypass obstacles and puzzles to find a key item within environments themed after classic literature.

Features

The player views the game in the third person, allowing a wide view of puzzles.
The player's avatar is a nameless, blobby humanoid creature made of iridescent black ink.
The avatar's inken consistency allows movement like a liquid (such as through a tube via capillary action, or a grate).
The avatar is quite small, initially about three inches in height relative to real-world objects. He can change size by gaining or loosing liquid, allowing passage over large chasms or through tight passages.
The game world's color palette is soft, almost a pastel, but color is everywhere, giving a peaceful, whimsical look. Objects are slightly stretched vertically to emphasize the avatar's small stature.
The first area of the game is an anonymous home study featuring well-stocked bookshelves and a partially-complete Rube Goldberg machine.
To enter a level the player activates a book, which wicks the player into a world themed after that book's contents. Each level focuses on exploring the world to locate an item, which transports the player back to the study with the item.

Player Motivation

The player seeks to complete the Rube Goldberg machine in the study in order to gain freedom from the room.

Genre

A puzzle-heavy adventure game.

Target Customer

A puzzle game player who desires a game with more of a storyline.

Competiton

Machinarium is an adventure game with a strong atmosphere.
World of Goo is a 2D puzzle game with a whimsical aesthetic that features numerous creatures made of "goo".
LittleBigPlanet features Rube Goldberg machines, though it is more focused on allowing the player to create.

Target Hardware

Cross-platform PC game targeted at hardware up to four years old.

Design Goals

Simple: The controls and mechanics themselves are easy to learn.
Compositional: Increasingly complex puzzles are created from the same building blocks over time.
Calm: A peaceful game that serves well to distract the player from life for an hour or two.

Level Themes

- *The Swiss Family Robinson* --- scale the family tree house in search of an ostrich egg.
- *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* --- explore Nemo's office to find a seashell.
- *The Time Machine* --- venture inside the time machine itself, looking for a cog.
- *Et cetera.*