SpellBound: Novel Ink

Game Treatment

Maintainer:
Michael LESTER

Editors:
Greyson BOND
Cari HARPER
Tom MOST

Contents

Chapter 1

Executive Summary

- Puzzles are based on scale. Some passages may be to small for you to fit through, some gaps too large to cross.

- Defeating enemies allows you to grow in size. Your size is like a health meter, taking damage will cause you to shrink.

- Enemies grow larger and become more powerful when they defeat you. Learn to destroy them efficiently before they become too strong!

- Split yourself into smaller pieces to access small places and solve puzzles. But be careful, combat is more dangerous when you're small!

- Control multiple pieces of yourself in parallel to solve complex puzzles.

- The world is heirarchical. The area you awaken in may have several accessible levels, but each of those levels may contain many others. Use smaller pieces of yourself to explore everywhere.

- Reunite with other pieces of yourself to regain your size. Return from a level larger than you left to grow in size and access more areas.

- Explore carefully, secrets could be anywhere. A tiny hole might

Chapter 2

Game Overview

2.1 High Concept

An ink-based character awakens into a world full of possibilities. Explore your new world by growing to massive proportions, or shrinking to a minute scale. Familiar environments suddenly become extraordinary when you simply change your perspective.

2.2 Genre

Spellbound is primarily an Adventure game, with small elements of Action and Platforming. It is most akin to Tim Schafer's *Psychonauts*, or the Legend of Zelda series. The main difference being that our game is primarily focused on solving discrete puzzles, rather than platforming or action.

2.3 Gameplay Synopsis

The game is a third-person, over-the-shoulder, 3D platforming game that follows the exploits of the main character, our hero, a small humanoid magic ink blob. Although small (about the size of a Lego character) the hero is fiesty and extremely motivated. He *will* accomplish his task. Despite his tenacity, the natural world around him seems very large. Objects such as Books, the Wizard, or a bookshelf on the other side of the library will seem very out of focus in order to emphasize this since of scale. The world of the library (the real world) will be rendered in a slightly stylized, yet still realistic, look; while the world of the books (the magic world) will be extremely stylized, featuring saturated colors and artistic, ink-like themes (similar perhaps to *Okami*).

Our hero's challenge is to recover all of the spilled ink that has escaped into various books in the Library. These ink masses, without the Wizard's direct input as the main character had, have become somewhat evil, and are reeking havok in the books they inhabit. It is your job to stop them and return the magic ink to the Wizard. The player will traverse the libary (similar to the player's exploration of the world in *The Legend of Zelda* series) in order to discover and explore the possessed books.

Only upon freeing all of the infected books from their possessive ink can the player return with honor to the Wizard, his creator. But there may be one final battle that still lays ahead for our hero...

2.4   Hooks

Color-based Powers provide the potential for many interesting puzzles. Use blue to 'water jet' and put out a fire, or create steam to spin a paddle wheel, unlocking the door to the boss!

Stylish and Distinct Levels abound so the player will never get bored. Many contemporary games fall into the trap of bland, monochrome environments. A library full of magical books ensures this never happens. An Ageing Forest, a Shimmering Ocean, a Dark City, the possibilities abound!

Unique Boss Fights challenge the player to think in new ways. Just granted a new power? Perhaps it could be used to defeat this boss in an interesting way. No, that's been done before. In Spellbound, Boss Fights are cumulative! Use all the powers you have access to, do whatever needs to be done to take this guy down!

Extreme Visual Contrast emphasizes the best in both worlds. Jumping from the plausible, but quite magical library, into a whimsically-styled book world illustrates just how magical Books can be. Returning to the library, the player realizes just how special our hero is. He's the only one that remains stylized!

2.5   License

This game is an entirely new universe. We have complete freedom over the worlds and characters we create. Thankfully, this means there is no need for licensing fees.

2.6   Highlights

2.6.1   Gameplay

Stylized Graphics provide a unique look to the game.

Unique Levels books from a magical library provide limitless possibilities for level design.

Complex Animations the character is made of ink and will deform as you would expect him to.

Unique Boss Fights cumulative boss fights require the use of previously learned skills.

Varying Styles books vary in color and theme, keeping the look fresh.

Interesting Puzzles many colors provide many powers with which to solve puzzles.

Combine Colors to form new powers which might help the player reach new locations.

Mysterious Secrets can be found in every level. Explore thorougly to unlock everything.

Sense of Scale as a tiny ink blob, even everyday objects seem extraordinary.

Contrasting Styles returning from a highly stylized Book to the realistic library can be an exciting shock.

2.6.2 Online

Spellbound is committed to providing a strong, worthwile single-player experience. As such, that is our main focus, and an online component would only detract from goal. While many games offer multiplayer in an attempt to reap the potential sales benefits, we feel that a strong single player game covers an almost complete different audience. Providing the best single player experience means we dominate the single player market, without competing with multiplayer games. As an added bonus, there is absolutely no extra cost to keep a maintenance, security, or PR team around after release.

2.6.3 Technology

Depth-of-Field truly emphasizes the sense of scale. When your tiny, practically everything is *awesome*, be it a Book, a Spider, a Cat, not to mention everything *else* our hero will find in a magical library.

Blobular Animations allow your ink-based character to look, and feel, like an ink-based character. Run into a wall? You splatter and flatten into the wall. Fall off a cliff? You're a puddle until you can reform yourself. New physics systems make these incredibly complicated animations possible.

2.6.4 Art and Audio

Stylized Graphics set the world of Books apart. Stylized rendering offers Spellbound the chance to differentiate itself from the competition. This game will look like no other before it.

2.7 Hardware

Our target platform is the PC. But because there is no hardware specific technology integrated into the game, it could easily be ported to other platforms. This would open our game to a much wider audience, in addition to appealing more to casual gamers.

Figure 2.1: A stylized character from the game *Okami*.

Chapter 3

Competition

3.1 The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

Nintendo's next iteration of their legendary series. With a tentative release date of Dec 31, 2011, Skyward Sword will be released as a Wii exclusive title. As a big influence on our game, the next Zelda adventure will naturally be a definite competitor. Its main features include:

Painterly Art Style based on the work of French Impressionist Paul Cezanne.

Wiimote-based Swordplay with a Wii MotionPlus extention gives the player ultimate control during battles.

Two Worlds: Sky and Land keep the environments and challenges fresh.

However, Spellbound differs from Skyward Sword in that we are much more focused on the Adventure and much less on the Action. While one of Sword's main features is its wiimote swordplay, we avoid battles altogether in exchange for pure puzzle-based action. We believe this suits our target audience more closely and will result in higher sales.

3.2 de Blob 2

Blue Tongue Entertainment's sequel to their 2008 Wii platformer, *de Blob*. It will be released on Febuary 22, 2011 for all major consoles (Wii, PS3, Xbox 360, and even the DS). Its main features are:

Spread Color to return life to your city. Mix colors in order to paint objects and unlock new areas.

Upgrade your Blob by earning Inspiration Points to unlock new abilities like defensive shields.

Co-op enlist the help of a friend to defeat more difficult challenges.

While this game is very similar to our color-based domain, there are some key differences. Above all, while the goal of *de Blob* is to spread color, it does not grant you powers. Instead, it is used to unlock new areas. In Spellbound, the

player must go one step farther, getting the color to where it needs to be, then using the power it grants them to complete the puzzle. We believe this extra step will provide the necessary challenge to bring in older players, rather than just casual gamers.

Chapter 4

Game World

4.1 Backstory

The Wizard is a powerful magicien working on his latest spellbook in a dusty, yet powerfully magical study. One day, while out running errands, his mischevious Cat knocks over his bottle of magic ink, spilling it all over the Library. The spilled ink blobs have taken on a life of there own, infecting books throughout the library and uprooting the lives of its residents. With his spellbook incomplete, there is little the Wizard can do. With the last drop he creates you... the *Magicien's Hero*, the last hope. Your mission: traverse the magical Libary, explore the infected Books, and conquer the Ink Blobs within. Only then, once the Library has been cleansed, can you return to your creator.

4.2 Game World Description

The game world can be split into two general forms: Books, which serve as self-contained levels; and the Library which acts as an overworld, providing access to the individual books. Each of these will be described in the following sections.

4.2.1 The Books

Each level is 3 dimensional and should take advantage of vertical space as well the traditional horizontal. Each level is an individual stage and self-contained; as such, it should be well bounded. The player should not be able to escape from the constraints of the environment. Accuracy of scale is arbitrary as the style can, and should, change for each book.

Every level in the game should have a consistent style, but each book should have its own distinct theme. Each theme will be dominated by a particular color. Since our game associates color with particular powers (for instance, yellow::flying), each book is essentially dominated by a power. The main goal of each level is to redirect the flow of this color (or "power") in order to be able to use it when and where it is needed. This "redirection of power" can take many forms, it is not limited to a simple, pipe-like puzzle. It may require several secondary puzzles to be solved, or for the player to complete a platforming section, etc.

In addition to the book's primary ability, there may also be the opportunity for the player to use secondary abilities.[1] However, these abilities may need to be "unlocked" by having the player use his primary ability in an interesting way, or by solving an additional puzzle.

Secrets are an integral part of each book. There should be several for each level. Secrets may require the player to deviate the flow of power to an area of the level which is not on the main path to the objective, in order to use the player to solve a secondary puzzle. Upon gaining access to a secret area, the player must defeat a "quasi-boss", using the primary power of the level. These enemies should be relatively easy to defeat, their primary purpose is to encourage the player to use the power in interesting ways. The player is rewarded for finding and defeating these secret enemies, both traditionally with power-ups, but also with increased knowledge about how to use the power which may help them defeat the final boss. This is the game's only form of traditional "combat" besides the boss battles.

These levels are devoid of characters. The only conscious beings are the player, the boss, and the secondary "quasi-bosses" which are hidden throughout the level. The personality of the level comes from the interactive objects, the puzzles, and the beauty or uniqueness of the environment. For large or confusing environments, small black splotches of ink on the landscape can be used to direct the player in the right direction. Once the path to the boss has been unlocked, the player must channel this ability to defeat the boss. Upon their defeat, the player is returned to the overworld.

Once the boss of a book has been defeated, the primary color (and hence its ability) becomes available in all other books. This is represented visually by using color saturation. For example, a level may have a section where the grass is green, but is very desaturated. This shows the player that they will not be able to use the green ability at that time. But once they defeat the Green Boss, they can return and the grass will be a bright, saturated green color.

Example

Picture a meadow with a river running through it. This meadow is bounded on two sides by rocky escarpments, behind by a steep hill, and in front by a sharp cliff featuring a dried up waterfall. Small splotches of black ink point the player in the direction of the waterfall. Being in the water (being "blue") provides the ability for the player to act as part of the liquid, and to redirect its path. Rocks and other obstacles are used to change the path of a river. The player uses his "blue" ability to redirect the flow from one trench to another.

Against one of the rocky escarpments to one side of the meadow is a patch of dead grass. Redirecting the flow of water close to this patch, the player squirts water on the dead grass. It then recovers to a bright, saturated green, illustrating to the player that that patch now contains the Green power. The player stands on this newly empowered grass, which allows them to climb walls, and climbs to a small grotto where a "quasi-boss" is waiting. They run to a saturated blue puddle in the back of the cave and use the Blue power to squirt the enemy, defeating him.

Returning to the primary task, the river is eventually redirected to flow over

---

[1]See Section 4.2.1 for an example of a secondary power

a waterfall which was once active, restarting a waterwheel which opens a door to the cave where the boss resides. When battling the boss, the player must actively direct the flow of water in the cave so that he can use his liquid abilities to climb up the boss (using capillary action) and damage him. Upon the boss's defeat, the player captures his essence and is returned to the overworld.
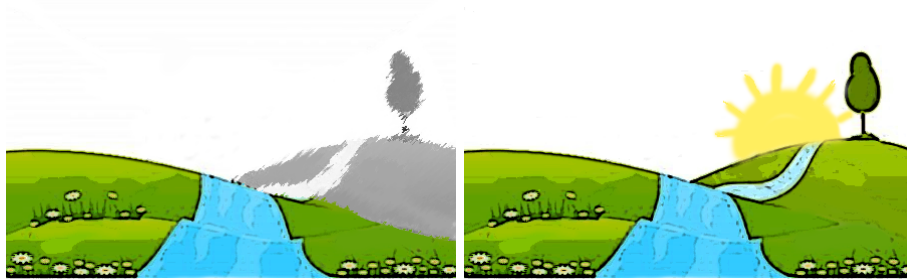

Figure 4.1: An example of controlling the flow of color in order to saturate the tree and far hill with color.

4.2.2   The Library

The Library, or Study, is the Wizard's primary place of residence. He's a quite a busy magician, so he doesn't have much time to keep his study clean and tidy. As such, and right underneath his (rather large) nose, a whole world of creatures has moved in. Among the bookshelves and furniture of this magical library, creatures have constructed tiny villages, temples, passageways, etc. In other words, they've been busy.

The Library is obviously a three-dimensional environment. More so than in individual books, the vertical dimension plays a huge role. Because of the vertical nature of bookshelves, the player must use his abilities and the constructions of the Library's residents in order to climb the shelves and access new books.

The scale of the game is also extremely important. As an ink based character, you stand just an inch or two tall, perhaps about the same size as a Lego character. The other inhabitants of the world are about the same size as you, though some, such as the Wizard's cat, can be much larger. Accuracy of scale is not terribly important, since this is not a particularly realistic game, and the world has a whimsical quality to it. For instance, Bookworms may be about the same size as your character, even if they may be smaller in the real world.

Time passes only when the player returns to the Library after successfully completing a level. Upon their return, the player may find that the state of the world has changed. This is most noticeable by watching the actions of the wizard; while he may have been stargazing before entering the book, he is sitting thoughtfully upon their return. The state of the inhabitants may also have changed, for instance, the spiders may now be threating the cockroaches, where once there was peace. This presents the player with new opportunities for interaction with the game world based on their progress through the game.

The inhabitants of the Library are divided by race. Most of their societies are tribal in nature. Small groups live together under a religious rule. This leads to interesting relationships between the communities, such as the Spiders

threatening the cockroaches. Each race has a very distinct building style, which gives the Library quite a bit of variety. They consider the Wizard to be their god, though their perceptions of him differ. As such, each group has their own temple which always holds a special significance for the player. These temples are built around a particular book, their holy book. These books, or levels, are very large and contain many puzzles and secrets. Most of the secondary puzzles and secrets will not be accessible the first time the player enters, they will have to return after defeating Bosses and unlocking new powers.

The "rogue ink", which has escaped and entered certain books, has upset the religious balance of the Library's inhabitants. These inhabitants provide the player's primary access to the books. Through interactions with their cultures, the player learns of the books which he needs to enter in order to continue.

Concerning visual style, very large objects such as the wizard, his cat, or distant shelves should appear to be out of focus. Consider that the camera is focused on your tiny character, while the large world behind him is far away. This will emphasize your tiny stature as well as direct the player to the areas which are actually accessible. The library should have a magical feeling: dust motes glittering the air, interesting objects sparkling, and unusual things littering the environment.

As a Magician's Library, one should not be surprised to find floating platforms or other such strange occurrences. These challenge the player with interesting platforming sections, but the player should always be presented with an easier alternative route upon completing the challenge.

4.3   Gameplay

Our hero's challenge is to recover all of the spilled ink that has escaped into various books in the Library. These ink masses, without the Wizard's direct input as the main character had, have become somewhat evil, and are reeking havok in the books they inhabit. It is your job to stop them and return the magic ink to the Wizard. The player will traverse the libary (similar to the player's exploration of the world in *The Legend of Zelda* series) in order to discover and explore the possessed books.

In order to accomplish this task, our hero must delve into the books, reach the end, and defeat the boss. Each book will act as an atomic puzzle with the primary goal being to reach the boss. Gameplay is centered around color and there powers. The primary gameplay element is thus:

> If the player is standing in an area that is saturated with a certain color, he gains the ability to use that color's power.

For instance, standing in an area of saturated Blue, such as a stream, will grant the player the ability to squirt water (similar to *Super Mario Sunshine*), while standing in an area of saturated green such as grass or a leaf will grant the player the ability to grow vines in order to climb walls or break up stone.

The main challenge of each level is to control the flow of *color*, in various ways, in order to get the *power* where you need it. When the Ink Blobs infect a book, they drain some of its color in order to become more powerful. It is the players job to spread the saturated color to areas of the map where they need to use a specific power. For an example, see Section 4.2.1.

4.4 Objective

The Magicien's Hero has a strong, and well-defined objective. He must cleanse the Library of the mischevious magical ink which has infected a number of books. The Wizard requires the ink in order to finish his spellbook, and the Ink Blobs are disrupting the lives of the Library's inhabitants. You're the Library's only hope.

4.5 Characters

4.5.1 The Magicien's Hero

The character is a happy-go-lucky and innocent protagonist, thrown into a magical world to do a job, and will embark on an epic journey under the noses and floorboards of a human-sized society. He will jump across shelves, squeeze between pages, and encounter many unique characters in The Wizard's study.

For detailed information, see Appendix **??**.

Figure 4.2: Concept art of the Magicien's Hero, featuring customizable Hats.

4.5.2 The Wizard

The Wizard is a colorful, eccentric old man who spends most of his time in his study, be it conducting alchemical experiments at his workbench, writing at his desk, or napping on his couch. Due to extreme nearsightedness he wears thick glasses, and on his face he bears a formidable white moustache to match his long hair. He is the benevolent creator and occasional benefactor of the player's avatar, though he regards the avatar as more of a tool than a person. Being nearsighted he is wholly unaware of the miniature societies his magics have created in his study and his position within them. Were he aware, however, he would respond with bemusement and interest. Due to this lack of awareness he is as much scenery as character, his activities and appearance lending color to the study.

For detailed information, see Appendix **??**.

4.5.3 The Societies

The societies presented within the game give depth, immersion, and interaction to what would otherwise be a lonely world. It is the portrayal of these detailed

societies which should elevate the game from a simple child-accessible exercise to an artwork appreciable by teenagers and even adults. The hope is to create a game a child will return to when older, and see anew for the social depth and societal commentary. The subtleties of each society must be portrayed rather than stated. No creature in the library truly speaks, but much like in Okami there is some garbling of various pitches for different characters and the translated text is displayed below. As a final note, societies are representative of a whole rather than an individual with the exception of the bookworms; most spiders spin orb webs (such as the garden orb weaver), but another is a rogue of a society and prefers to hunt his prey (such as the daring jumping spider).

None of the societies can remember a time when they did not live within the library. In fact, they do not even realize that there is a much larger world outside of the study. The magic within the study has gradually infused within all of the inhabitants, elevating their consciousness and resulting in a need to explain their respective situations. Each has shaped their world based upon what they have perceived and know to be true, and are thus both justified in their convictions and at least partially incorrect. As most occupy different areas of the library inter-society interaction is limited.

The main societies which the hero will interact with are:

Bookworms a hivemind-based colony of disgusting, scary worms. They care only for themselves and destroy knowledge in their pursuit of books to eat. They are also the main antagonists of the story, but this is not learned until late in the game.

Mice The mice are foils of the cockroaches and socially similar to the worms. The mice are the epitome of right wing authoritarianism in a theocratic society.

Cockroaches The cockroaches see the wizard as a purely benevolent deity, as he is the source of food and they rarely fall victim to the cat as the mice do. Because they see the world as an inherently good place they seek to reflect that positivity, and demonstrate compassion to their fellow roach and even the mice (though they see them as misguided and uptight.)

Spiders The spiders are the epitome of individualism. Completely self-reliant, bold, even arrogant each individual is aware that the webs they create are beautiful. They lack any sense of community, in contrast to the cockroaches, and thus never seek to help each other, though a spider that struggles is a rarity.

Dust Bunnies Dust bunnies are less of a society and more a fact of life in the study. Whenever the wizard's robes sweep the ground a cloud is generated, spawning new dust bunnies and sending existing ones spiraling like tumbleweeds. Lacking any natural predators the bunnies have found their way into every level of the study, hopping about and slowly munching on the dust as a hare grazes on grass.

For detailed information and descriptions of each of the societies, see the Characters Document.

4.5.4 The Cat

The cat is a formidable obstacle early in the game. She eagerly patrols the Library floor, waiting for the player, or any other character (especially mice) to venture down to her level. She is dangerous, crafty, and is not limited to the floor alone. She has been known to paw at creatures who wonder too close to her favorite perching spots.

She is a pure white, crafty, slinky cat who is quite adept at hiding and watching. If the player looks closely around the Library, the may be able to spot her sharp green eyes peeking around a corner. Venture to near to the floor and, after hearing a terrifying growl; let's just say the cat won't be hungry for long.

For detailed information, see Appendix **??**.

4.5.5 Secondary Characters

The only other characters in the game world are the Bosses and Quasi-Bosses which exist inside the books. The bosses, or Ink Blobs, can best be described as *mischevious*. They are not quite evil, but are definitely up to no good. Please refer to the Game World Document for further information.

Figure 4.3: Concept art of an Ink Blob

Chapter 5

Story Progression

When the story begins, the Magicien's Hero will no nothing of the societies inhabiting the library. As the player explores the Library he will discover them, one at a time, linearly. Before the player meets a new society several books may be open to him, depending on the level of exploration that has been achieved. These are seperated into distinct sections by the societies. For instance, we could classify each Book which is accessible before the player meets the Mice (the first society) as A, while Books after the Mice and before Spiders will be labeled B. So there are 6 books labeled A1 - A6, the player may choose to enter these in any order. But he will not be able to access any B Books until our hero has met the Spiders.

Each society has its own *holy book* which basically serves as a foldback point for our story. These holy books will be somewhat longer and more challenging than the typical book, as well as push the story along significantly. Relationships between the player and the society, as well as inter-society feelings, will change upon completion (usually for the better). Once the player has completed this Book, they have essentially *met* that society and may continue on in the story. As the player progresses through the societies, the inter-society relationships, both friendly and insidious, will be revealed. Eventually the Bookworms will be exposed as the antagonists, and the player will have to deal with that.

But he will have help! A significant turning point of the game is the taming of the Cat. Once the player has become powerful enough, gaining enough gameplay experience and gaining more real world abilities from the ink which has been recovered from Ink Blobs, this previously antagonistic beast may be bested, and tamed. What results is an instant friendship. The Cat is now your greatest ally; only with her help can you hope to save the Library, The Wizard, and everything you know and love from the threat of the Bookworms.