

Dot – Dot – Dash

The hypothesis for this experimental game was to use pointillism to help in looking at the bigger picture and finding patterns. My interpretation of the given theme was that pointillism involves looking at the bigger picture. We see the pattern in the dots of the image and start seeing what they represent. I decided to gamify this interpretation by creating a game where the player gets a choice to make at the end of every page of a comic they read. The correct choice is encoded into the comic itself. There are dots and dashes of the Morse code hidden between the panels of the comics. For every decision, the player would have to decode the code and make the correct choice.

This interpretation of the hypothesis was a bit too subtle to notice at first. While presenting the game, I had to explicitly tell others that there is Morse code hidden in the comic page. Maybe designing the panels in such a way so that they represented the code would have made a better sense. Also, the current choices can be bypassed by selecting a choice at random, and clicking on the back button on the browser to select another choice if the initial decision was not a good one. A better system would have similar to what “Phonopath” uses is the password entry box. After decoding the puzzle in the game, the player has to submit the word by typing it into an input box at the end of the page. This would deter anyone who wants to brute force his way through the game. It is good that I learned all these design mistakes I did in the game, so I can improve and avoid doing them again for the future games.

For this game, I used CoreDraw X6. Being an engineer, this was an opportunity for me to learn more about some art creating tools. I had to create the art for the comic and then also hide the Morse code in between the panels. To ease the work which will be required, I decided to make the art style for the game be grey-scale and make the character as a stick figure. This made things a lot easier. Making this game also required some form of narrative with multiple options and decisions to be taken. For this I took inspirations from an iOS game I had recently played called Lifeline. It had a similar system where the player can select one of two choices. While deciding on the story, I realized that I also need to consider the clues I have to encode in the comic, and they have to be relative to what is happening in that page. Also, the decisions should matter but still the next decision should be fairly similar regardless of the last decision taken.

Overall, the game did well to prove the hypothesis. Although, the mechanic of the game was not immediately clear to the player and the art did not look quite as good, it fulfilled its role as being an one week prototype game about pointillism.