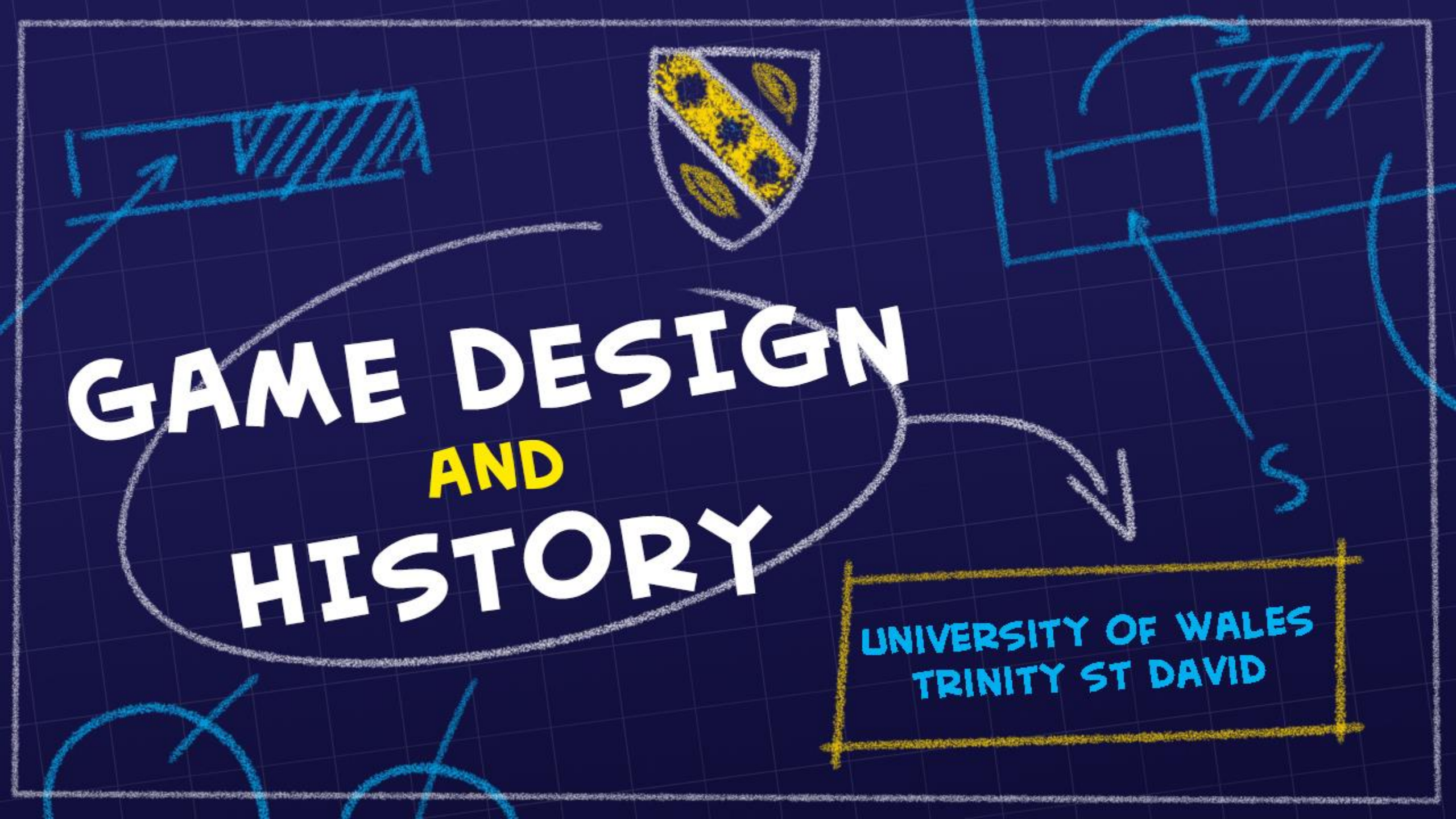




GAME DESIGN AND HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF WALES
TRINITY ST DAVID



Idea Generation

- Knowledge, Passion and Escapism
- Age and Demographic
- Discussion: What Inspires you?
- Tips for Idea Generation
- Breaking Writer's Block
- Activity: Inspiration using visuals
- Activity: Inspiration using audio

**IDEA
GENERATION**

**KNOWLEDGE,
PASSION &
ESCAPISM**

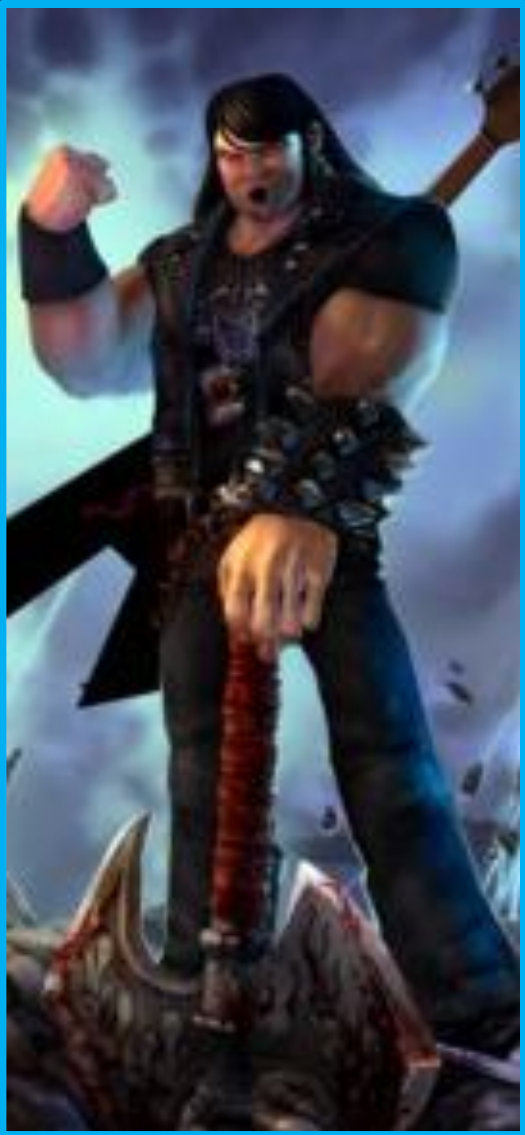


“I believe that most gamers don’t know what they want until it is shown to them.

That is why it is important for game designers **to have ideas born from passion.**

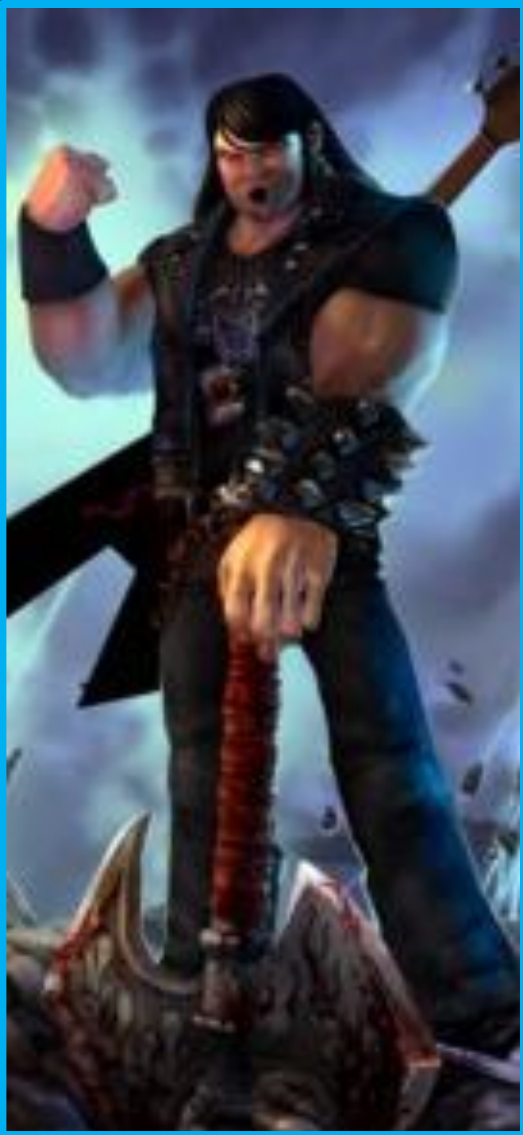
To have a vision of what their game is supposed to be.”

- Scott Rogers, Level UP! (2010)



Tim Schaefer, designer of *Psychonauts* and *Brutal Legend*, says that **all good game characters are wish fulfilment.**

They give the player a chance to be something they aren't in the real world.



Scott Rogers believes that the same is true about games in general.

Games should **make players feel something that they aren't in the real world:** powerful, smart, sneaky, successful, rich, bad, or heroic.



Jesse Schell suggests that a well-rounded game designer understands:





Jesse Schell suggests that a well-rounded game designer understands:

- Animation
- Anthropology
- Architecture
- Brainstorming
- Business
- Cinematography
- Communication
- Creative Writing
- Economics
- Engineering





Jesse Schell suggests that a well-rounded game designer understands:

- Animation
- Anthropology
- Architecture
- Brainstorming
- Business
- Cinematography
- Communication
- Creative Writing
- Economics
- Engineering
- History
- Management
- Mathematics
- Music
- Psychology
- Public speaking
- Sound Design
- Technical Writing
- Visual Arts





Information and knowledge can of course be garnered **over time**.

You will not become an expert in all of these fields overnight!





You should **open your mind and try to broaden your horizons** by looking into these areas and much more from time to time – the knowledge can be applied in unusual ways or circumstances.





You should **open your mind and try to broaden your horizons** by looking into these areas and much more from time to time – the knowledge can be applied in unusual ways or circumstances.

You never know when it may come in handy!



**IDEA
GENERATION**

**AGE &
DEMOGRAPHIC**



As you are developing your ideas, **you need to know this:**



As you are developing your ideas, **you need to know this:**

What audience is my game for?



You need to decide who your game idea is for.

You can **rule out certain design decisions early on** by setting the audience in stone near the beginning of the idea development process.





Don't forget to ask this important question too:

What is the age of my audience?



Developers, especially ones who have never made a game for kids before, tend to **oversimplify** and talk down to younger audiences.

Don't make the mistake of watering down challenges for younger players. They are smarter and more adept at playing games than many people think.



Developers, especially ones who have never made a game for kids before, tend to **oversimplify** and talk down to younger audiences.

Don't make the mistake of watering down challenges for younger players. They are smarter and more adept at playing games than many people think.

Often, they pick up on concepts faster than many adults.



There are some considerations that have to be made with **younger audiences**:





There are some considerations that have to be made with **younger audiences**:

- Smaller hands make complex control schemes difficult or impossible to use





There are some considerations that have to be made with **younger audiences**:

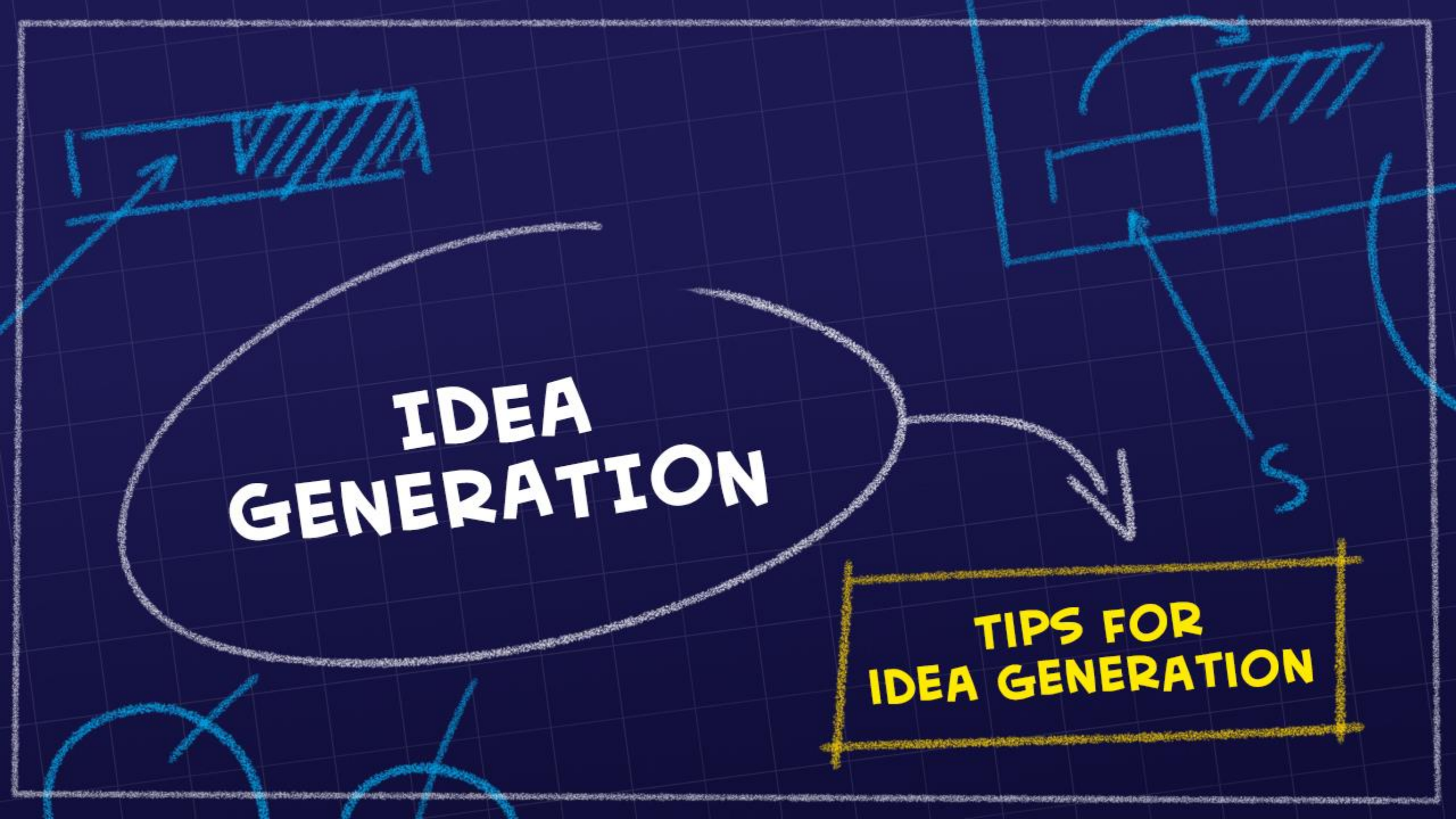
- Smaller hands make complex control schemes difficult or impossible to use
- Very young audiences may not be able to read complex words or long amounts of text





Discussion:

What inspires you?



IDEA GENERATION

**TIPS FOR
IDEA GENERATION**



“Every good idea borders on the stupid.”

- Michel Gondry

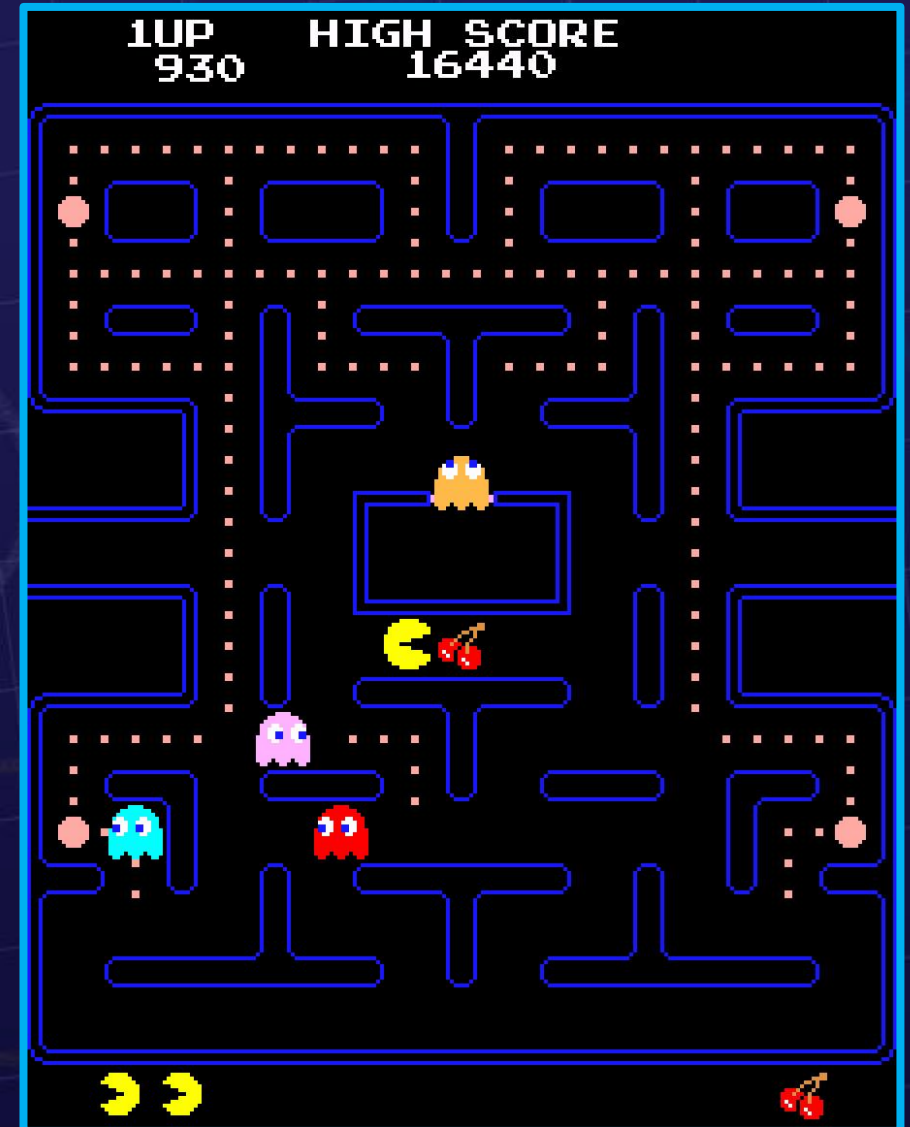
- A yellow creature eats dots while being chased by ghost monsters



“Every good idea borders on the stupid.”

- Michel Gondry

- A yellow creature eats dots while being chased by ghost monsters





“Every good idea borders on the stupid.”

- Michel Gondry

- A plumber jumps on the heads of mushrooms to find his girlfriend



“Every good idea borders on the stupid.”

- Michel Gondry

- A plumber jumps on the heads of mushrooms to find his girlfriend





“Every good idea borders on the stupid.”

- Michel Gondry

- A prince rebuilds stars by rolling balls of junk into bigger balls of junk

“Every good idea borders on the stupid.”

- Michel Gondry

- **A prince rebuilds stars by rolling balls of junk into bigger balls of junk**



A good game idea can come from anywhere. Suggestions for sources of inspiration include:

- Read something you wouldn't normally read
- Take a walk, drive, or shower
- Play a game – preferably a bad one
- Follow your passion



Read Something You Wouldn't Normally Read

One of the reasons why video games sometimes feel the same is that many game developers have similar interests.

There's nothing wrong with liking video games, comics, and movies; however, when developers all get their inspiration from the same things, games start to feel the same.

(Rogers, 2010)



Read Something You Wouldn't Normally Read

Take the time to expand your horizons:

(Rogers, 2010)



Read Something You Wouldn't Normally Read

Take the time to expand your horizons:

- **Look through a magazine or two**

(Rogers, 2010)



Read Something You Wouldn't Normally Read

Take the time to expand your horizons:

- **Look through a magazine or two**
- **Research something new on the internet**



Read Something You Wouldn't Normally Read

Take the time to expand your horizons:

- **Look through a magazine or two**
- **Research something new on the internet**
- **Spend an afternoon in the library**



Read Something You Wouldn't Normally Read

Take the time to expand your horizons:

- **Look through a magazine or two**
- **Research something new on the internet**
- **Spend an afternoon in the library**

Else you run the risk of only ever creating unoriginal, derivative ideas and content.

(Rogers, 2010)



Derivative Content

When popular movies come out, their themes start to show up in games.



(Rogers, 2010)



Derivative Content

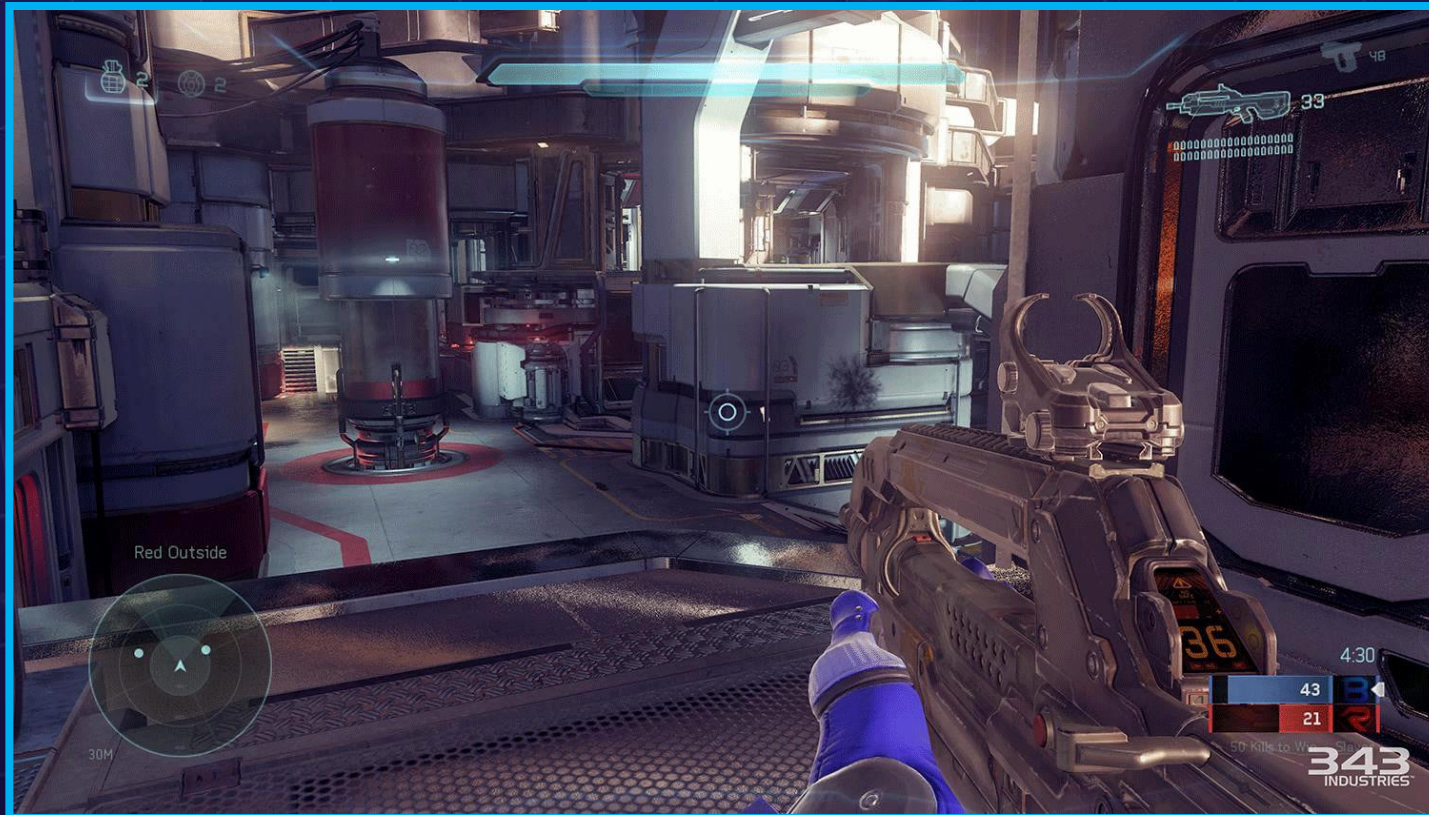
When popular games come out, you find their mechanics being used in *other* games.





Derivative Content

This leads to many games feeling **derivative**: Their content feels derived from existing work.





Take a Walk, Drive, or Shower

When the active part of your brain is being occupied by a familiar activity like walking or driving, your subconscious is free to start wandering and making connections it would normally never make.





Take a Walk, Drive, or Shower

When the active part of your brain is being occupied by a familiar activity like walking or driving, your subconscious is free to start wandering and making connections it would normally never make.

These connections often lead to great ideas.



Play a Game – Preferably a Bad One

As you play a game, look at the things in it that were implemented poorly.
Then think about what **you** would do to improve them.





Follow Your Passion

If you really love something, that love will shine through in your work.
If you follow your passions, designing games won't feel like work.



Follow Your Passion

If you really love something, that love will shine through in your work.
If you follow your passions, designing games won't feel like work.

- **Satoshi Tajiri** designed *Pokemon* as a game version of his love for collecting insects.



Follow Your Passion

If you really love something, that love will shine through in your work.
If you follow your passions, designing games won't feel like work.

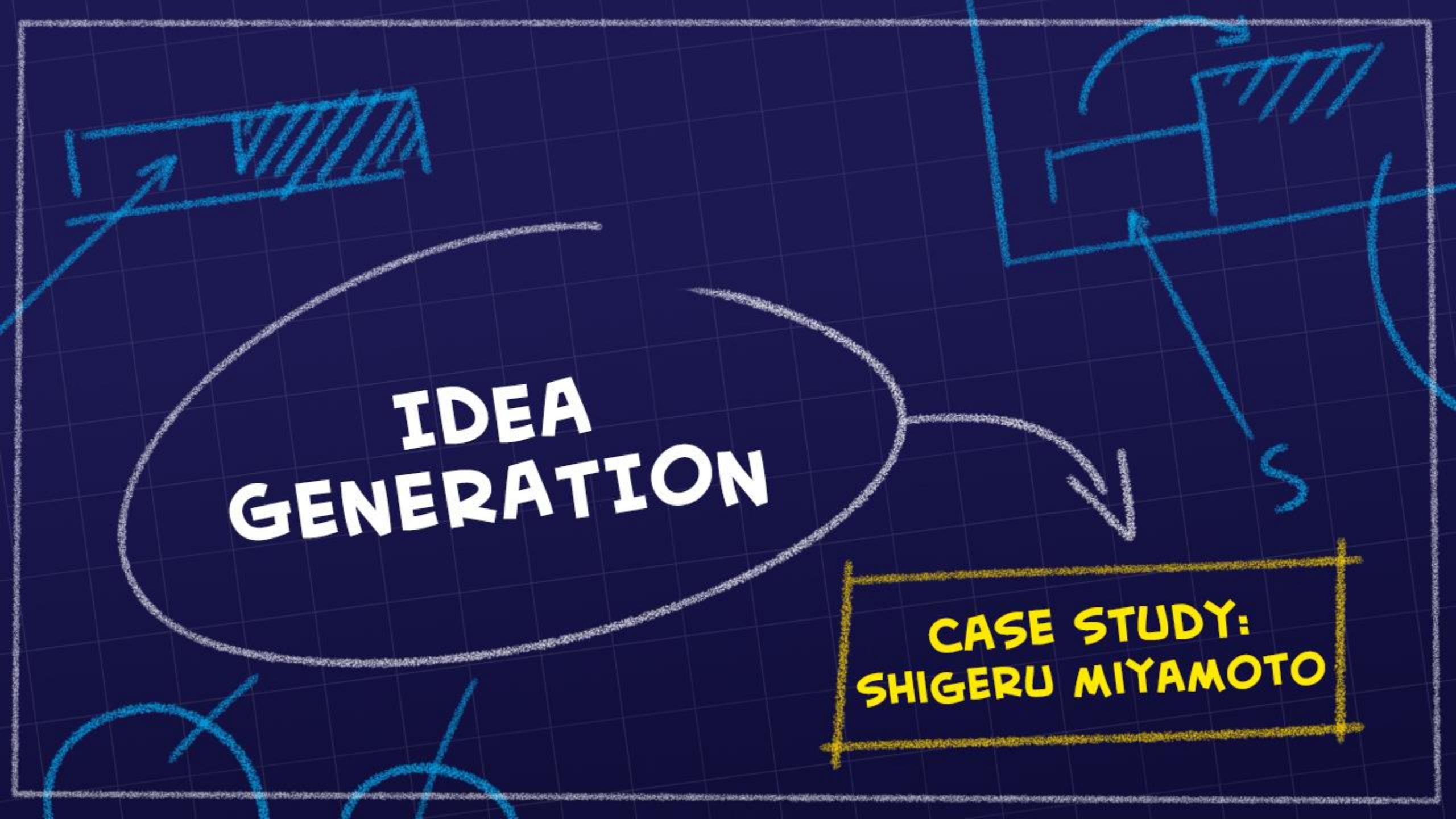
- **Satoshi Tajiri** designed *Pokemon* as a game version of his love for collecting insects.
- **Dave Jaffe** turned his love for Ray Harryhausen movies into *God of War*.



Follow Your Passion

If you really love something, that love will shine through in your work.
If you follow your passions, designing games won't feel like work.

- **Satoshi Tajiri** designed *Pokemon* as a game version of his love for collecting insects.
- **Dave Jaffe** turned his love for Ray Harryhausen movies into *God of War*.
- **Shigeru Miyamoto** often turns his real-world hobbies into game designs.



IDEA GENERATION

**CASE STUDY:
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO**



“What if you walk along and everything that you see is *more* than what you see – the person in the T-shirt and slacks is a warrior, the space that appears empty is a secret door to an alternate world?

What if, on a crowded street, you look up and see something appear that should not be there, given what we know?

You either shake your head and dismiss it or you accept that there is much more to the world than we think.”

(Miyamoto, cited in Sheff 1993:39)





Miyamoto borrowed freely from **folklore, literature, and pop culture** – warp zones from *Star Trek*, empowering mushrooms from *Alice in Wonderland* – but his most captivating ideas came from his unique way of experiencing the world and from his memories.



(Sheff 1993:51)



“When I was a child I went hiking and found a lake. It was quite a surprise for me to stumble upon it.



(Miyamoto, cited in Sheff 1993:51)



When I travelled around the country without a map, trying to find my way, stumbling on amazing things as I went, I realised how it felt to go on an adventure like this.”

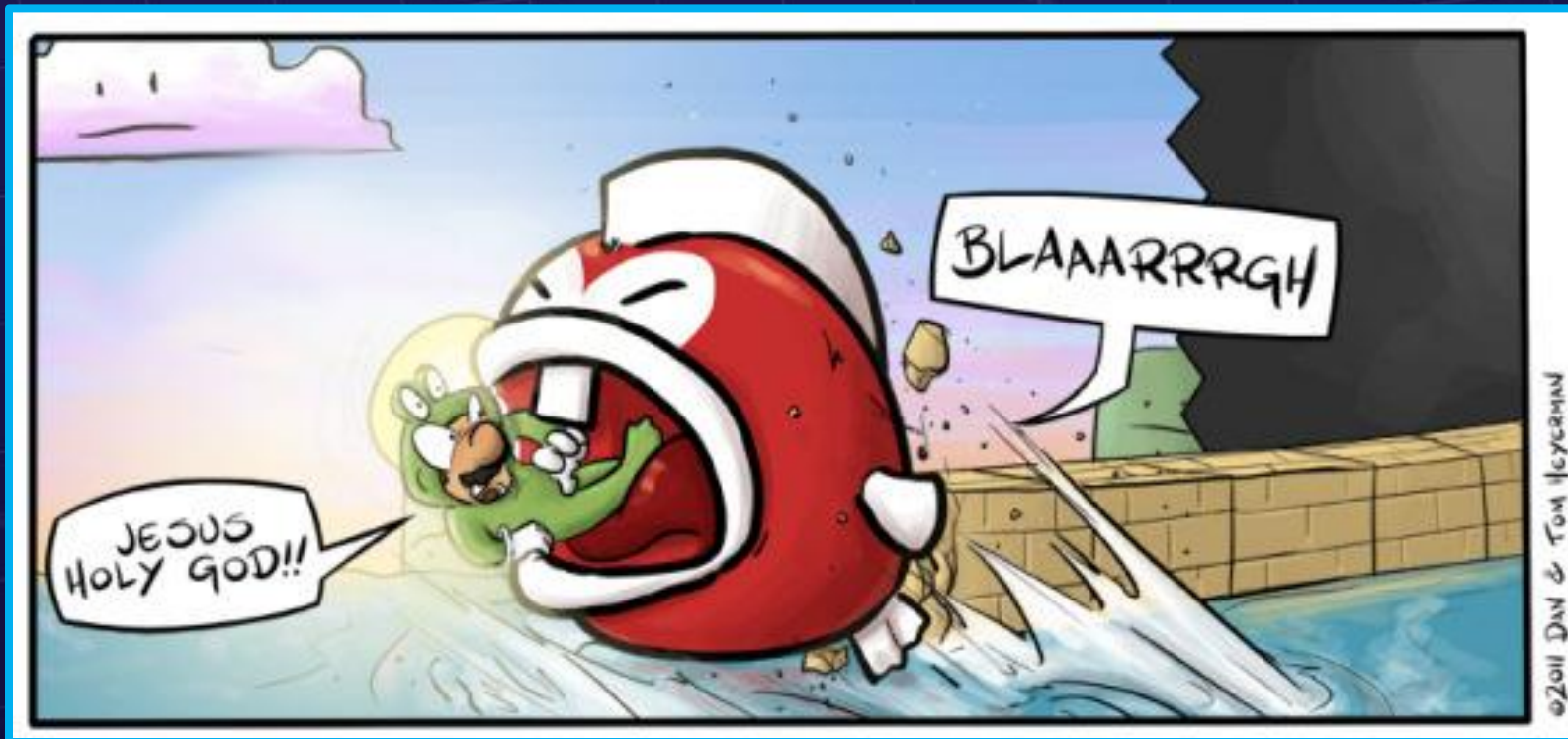


(Miyamoto, cited in Sheff 1993:51)



Once, while fishing when he was a young boy, Miyamoto reeled in a bony, grotesque little fish with snapping jaws.

Mario encounters the fish that Miyamoto as a child *imagined* it had looked: a monstrous creature that would happily devour him.





The memory of being lost amid the maze of sliding doors in his family's home in Sonobe was re-created in the labyrinths of the Zelda games, while in the Mario series Miyamoto made safe places that felt like the haven of his parents' attic.

The dog that had terrorized him when he was a child attacks Mario.

The diagram is drawn on a dark blue chalkboard with a light blue grid. A large, hand-drawn white oval in the center-left contains the text "IDEA GENERATION" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. A curved white arrow points from the right side of this oval down to a yellow-outlined rectangle in the bottom-right corner. This rectangle contains the text "BREAKING WRITER'S BLOCK" in yellow, bold, sans-serif capital letters. In the top-left corner, there is a blue-outlined rectangle with diagonal hatching and a blue arrow pointing towards it from the left. In the top-right corner, there is a blue-outlined rectangle with a blue arrow pointing towards it from the right. A blue letter "S" is written near the arrow pointing to the bottom-right rectangle. At the bottom-left, there are two blue circles, each with a diagonal line through it.

**IDEA
GENERATION**

**BREAKING
WRITER'S BLOCK**



Rogers provides a few tips to try when dealing with writer's block:

- **Narrow your focus**
- **Take a walk or exercise**
- **Deal with something that may be causing a distraction**
- **Jump ahead to the good stuff**
- **Change your environment**



- **Narrow your focus**

Tackle your problems one by one by making an outline or breaking tasks down into components.

Give yourself a timeline to complete each task but don't take days – try to get jobs done in hours.



- **Take a walk or exercise**

Get the brain working and blood circulating by moving around.

Additionally, when the active part of your brain is being occupied by a familiar activity like walking, your subconscious is free to start wandering and making connections it would normally never make.



- Deal with something that may be causing a distraction

Sometimes when you are stuck it is due to worrying about something else.

Take a break and deal with whatever is bothering you to stop it being a concern.



- Deal with something that may be causing a distraction

Sometimes when you are stuck it is due to worrying about something else.

Take a break and deal with whatever is bothering you to stop it being a concern.

NOTE: Be wary that this does *not* lead to endless procrastination!



- **Jump ahead to the good stuff**

Some ideas you have to generate may not be as exciting as other parts of the overall game idea.

If these are slowing you down, move on to something that does to keep your motivation and interest up.



- **Jump ahead to the good stuff**

This action should really only be considered a last resort, as games are built on tight schedules, deadlines and budgets.

Misuse of this approach can lead to procrastination and failed milestones. Time management is extremely important – so be responsible!



- **Change your environment**

You may find your work space is full of distractions. Internet, email, games consoles, toys, books, etc.

If you find yourself distracted, go somewhere else to work for a while that minimises these distractions!



Idea Generation

Idea generation comes very early in the game design process, though one question should always be asked even at the preliminary stages:



Idea Generation

Idea generation comes very early in the game design process, though one question should always be asked even at the preliminary stages:

WHAT DOES THE PLAYER DO?



Idea Generation

Idea generation comes very early in the game design process, though one question should always be asked even at the preliminary stages:

WHAT DOES THE PLAYER DO?

Remember games are an **interactive medium** that revolve around an experience for your audience where they expect to participate.

Games = Interactive **Movies** = Passive

IDEA GENERATION

ACTIVITY 1

**INSPIRATION
USING VISUALS**















IDEA GENERATION

ACTIVITY 2

**INSPIRATION
USING AUDIO**

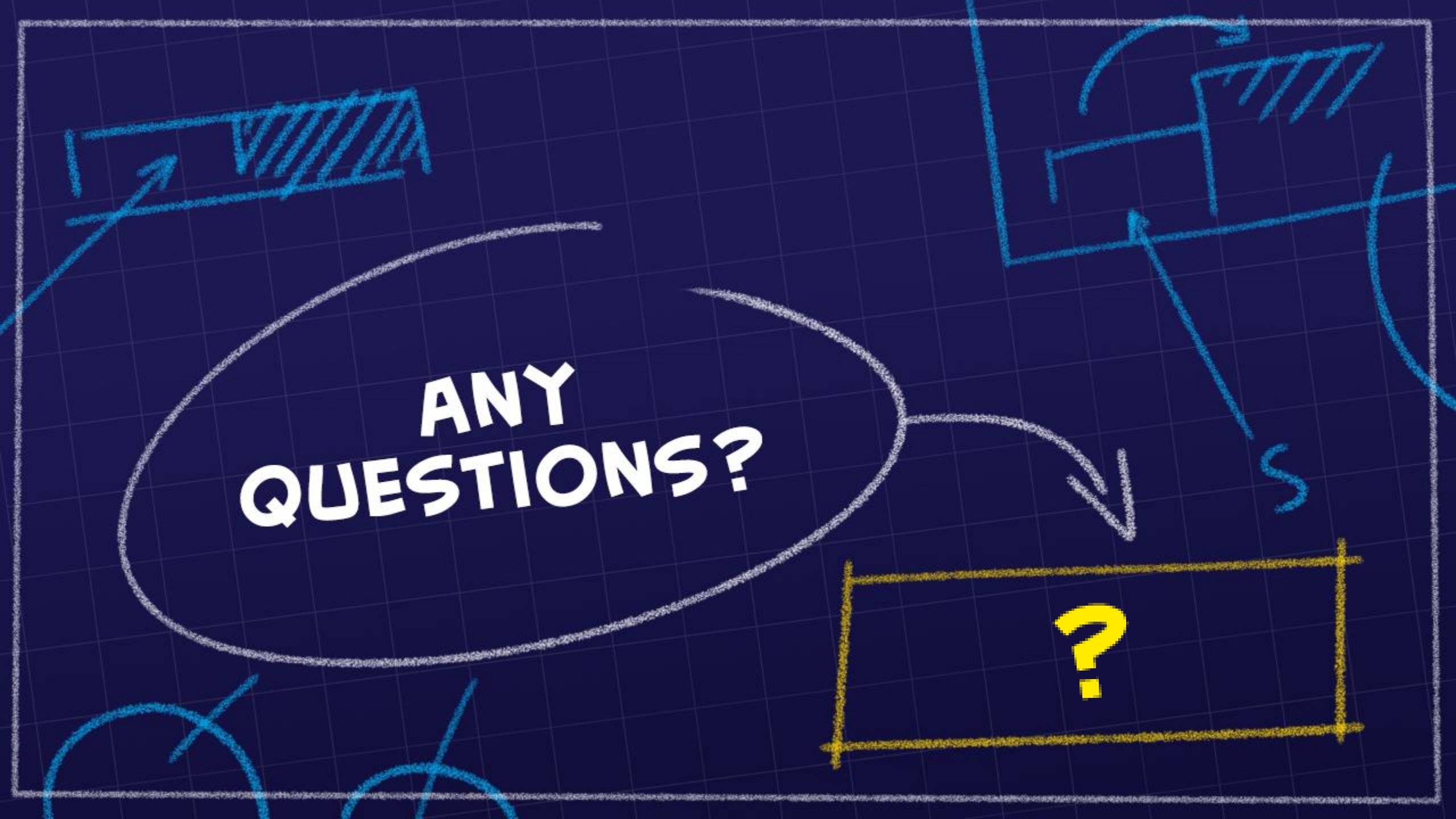


Listen to the following audio clips.

What do you think of when you hear them?

What images, scenarios, feelings or thoughts enter your mind while they are playing?





**ANY
QUESTIONS?**

?



Books

**Sheff, D. (1993). *Game Over: The Maturing of Mario*.
Random House, USA.**

Rogers, S. (2010) *Level Up!*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd., USA

GAME DESIGN AND HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF WALES
TRINITY ST DAVID