

**LEVEL DESIGN
DOCUMENTATION
TEMPLATE**

Celeste – Castle Walls

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High Level Overview

Design Goals

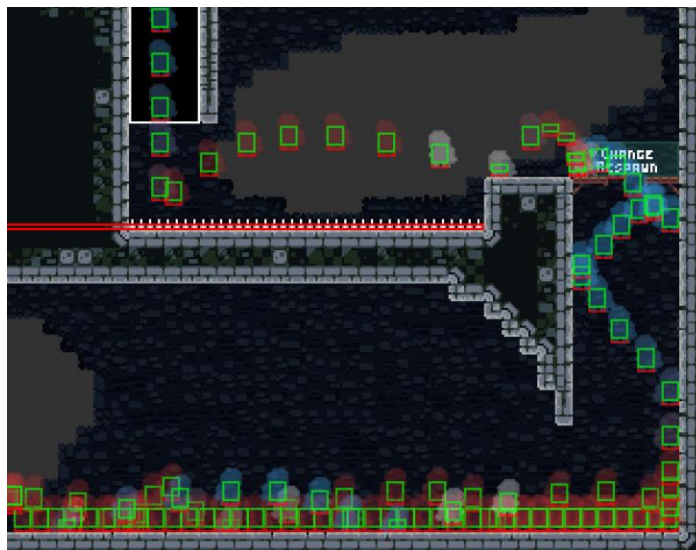
This level is made to show off some of the unique tech around dashes in celeste – mainly wavedashes which is the mechanic which this level is designed around. It will also put these mechanics into application and show how it can be used to traverse the level in different ways. This level is designed to be in the intermediate, red category of difficulty meaning it will have super, hyper, and wavedashes while still being relatively lenient. Difficulties are explained [here](#). The level will be around 5 minutes in total, not factoring in the player dying and there should be a good flow to the gameplay.

Level Goals

The player's objective is to reach the end of the level. The map structure is linear with some hidden rooms which are not optional. When the player reaches the final room, the level will end when the player dashes through the crystal heart. There are 9 strawberries in this level which are all optional collectables and once the level is completed, it will say how many strawberries have been collected. There are two other optional goals which Celeste has built into it. One is to Complete the level in the fewest number of deaths as there is a death counter, and the other is to speed run the level as it will record the fastest time with the built in speedrun clock.

Design Considerations

The conventions to consider are all to do with Madeline's precision. She can jump 4 tiles, dash 7, and wavedash around 16 tiles horizontally on flat ground. She looks 2 tiles tall but is only about 1.5 tiles tall hitbox-wise. There are various other numbers which I could list down but using the Auroura's Loenn Plugin, I can use a silhouette trail to see how far the player can go.



Key Elements

NPCs



NPCs are characters in Celeste which communicate with Madeline in different ways. This can be either having a proper conversation with her or just shouting information.

- Bird – A blue bird which caws information at Madeline for tutorial purposes. Usually this is pictures of buttons and directions but can also be words.
- Theo – A fellow traveler who has quit his day job to climb mountains. He keeps up morale with Madeline through not-so-witty one liners and selfies.
- Granny – An experienced mountaineer back in her day. She likes to rile Madeline up while also teaching her important lessons.
- Badeline – The inner manifestation of Madeline's feelings, they didn't always get along but now that they do, they are inseparable.

Obstacles

- Spikes – Hazardous spikes which stick to surfaces, touching them will kill Madeline will die and respawn if she touches these.
- Spinners – Like the spikes, but they can float and spike in all directions. They can also be connected to walls or other spinners.
- One-way platforms – Platforms which Madeline can pass through in one direction but block her in the opposite direction.
- Dream blocks – Dark masses of tiles which when dashed into, will pull Madeline through the block to the other side. If she hits a wall before popping out, she will die. Successfully popping out will refund her dash.
- Boost bubbles – Green bubbles which give Madeline dash momentum without being classed as a dash. They will refund a dash if Madeline doesn't have one and can be used in all 8 directions which Madeline can dash. Once used, stays inactive for 2 seconds until returning.
- Crumbling platform – A platform which once Madeline touches, disappears and becomes inactive for 4 seconds before respawning.
- Switch/Dash blocks – Blocks which travel along a track once Madeline dashes. They move fast on the way there and slowly to return. They give Madeline lots of momentum if she is on top of or clinging onto one and jumps off it mid movement.
- Clouds – Trampolines which float in the air. When Madeline is on one, she will bounce softly unless she holds the jump button, which will result in her being shot upwards.
- Dash crystals – Green crystals which will give Madeline her dash back when she runs into one. It takes 3 seconds to be respawn.
- Breakable blocks – Blocks which break when Madeline dashes into them. These blocks don't respawn.



- Traffic block – Blocks which move along a track when Madeline is touching it. Gives her large amounts of momentum if she jumps off it mid movement.
- Badeline boost – A purple orb which launches Madeline straight up if she touches it.
- Feather – Turns Madeline into a flying ball of yellow light for a few seconds while giving her 360-degree movement.

Other

- Binoculars – Allows Madeline to view the entire room without having to go there herself.
- Checkpoint – Once reached, allows the player to start from there the next time they open this map.
- Strawberries – Collectables, when Madeline comes into contact with a strawberry, it will follow her until she touches safe ground which it will then collect. If she dies before reaching safe ground, it will return to its original position.
- Winged Strawberry – Similar to a strawberry but if Madeline uses a dash before collecting it, the strawberry will fly upwards, becoming unobtainable until the room is reset.
- Crystal heart – A blue heart which is collected once Madeline dashes into it. Ends the level.

Map Overview

Map Structure

Layout

The layout of this level is progressing each room going right and upwards as Madeline is supposed to be climbing. Each room has secret optional rooms which contain strawberries and divert from the main path but aren't required.

Beats & Pacing

The level starts off slowly with moderate challenge and short rooms and slowly introduces more application of the techniques shown until the end of the level which has complex longer rooms which

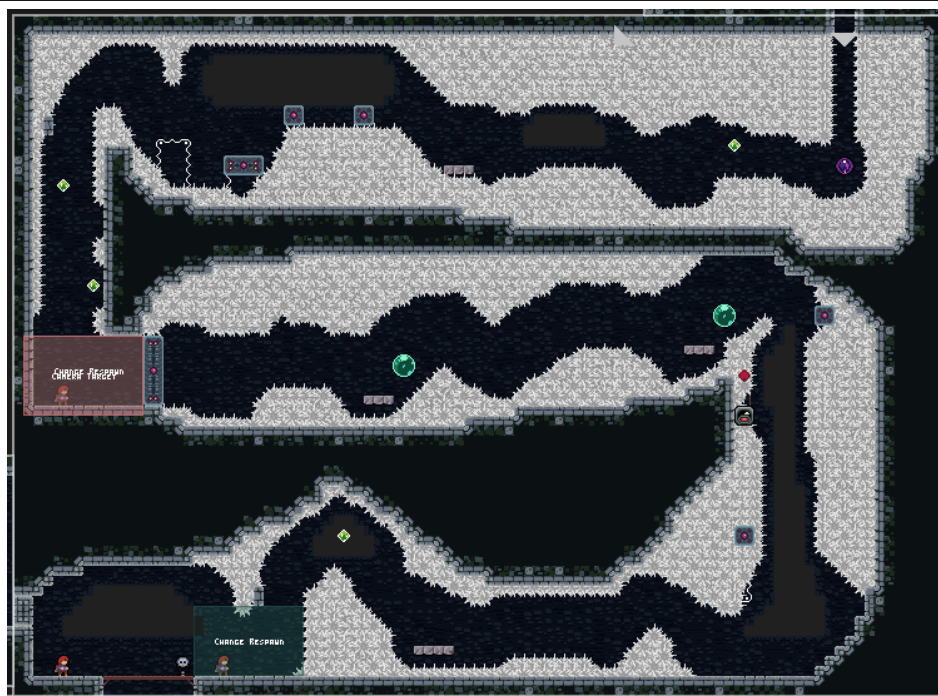
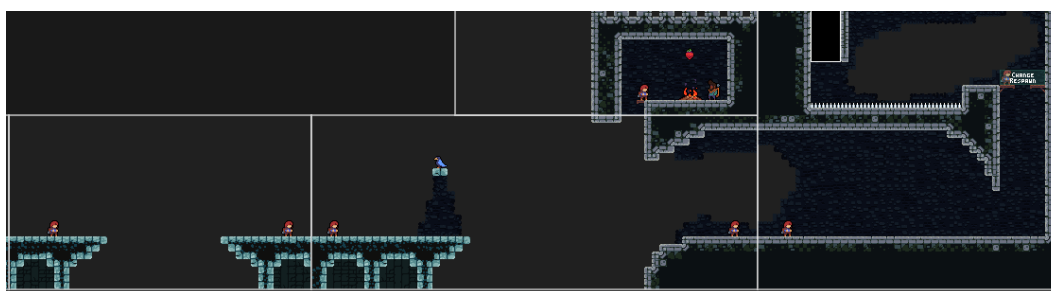




requires faster gameplay. Strawberry rooms are usually more challenging than the room connected to it as they are there to provide the player with a challenge.

Spatial Design

The rooms in the level are quite open to begin with, and when the level ramps up the pacing, the rooms are narrower and more cramped. The room which has Theo in it is quite small but poses no harm which creates more of a safe, homely feeling. The final room of the level is really big but requires traversing through tight spaces which not only increases tension but also guides the player a bit as there is fewer ways they can complete the room. Compared to the first room where the player can do any number of dashes to clear the first few gaps.

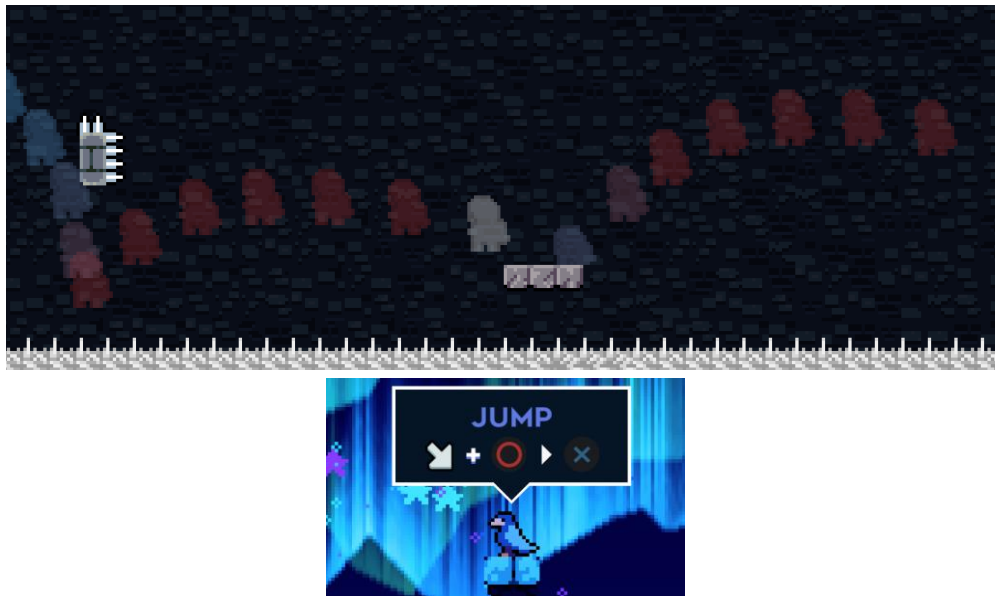


Affordance & Guidance

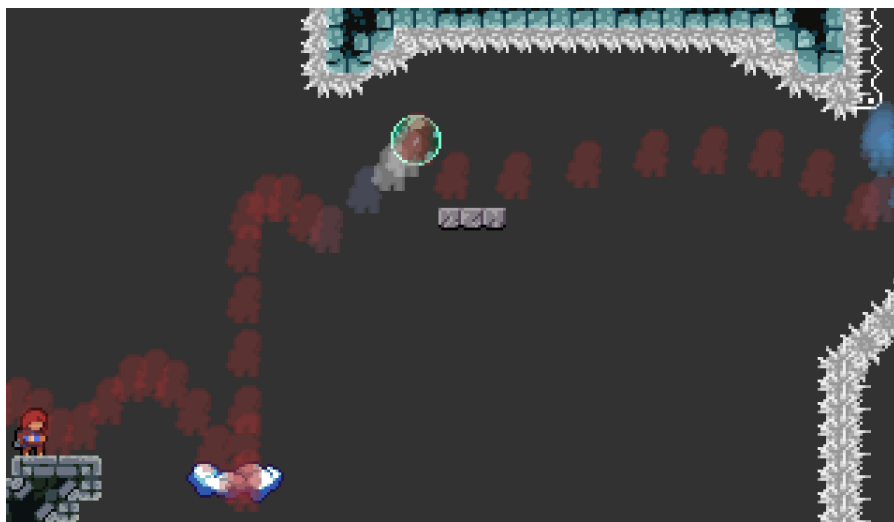
Celeste entities usually have built in affordance to get players to interact with them as intended, but there are a few setups in my level which you need to rely on widely agreed upon affordance to trust in the Celeste community.



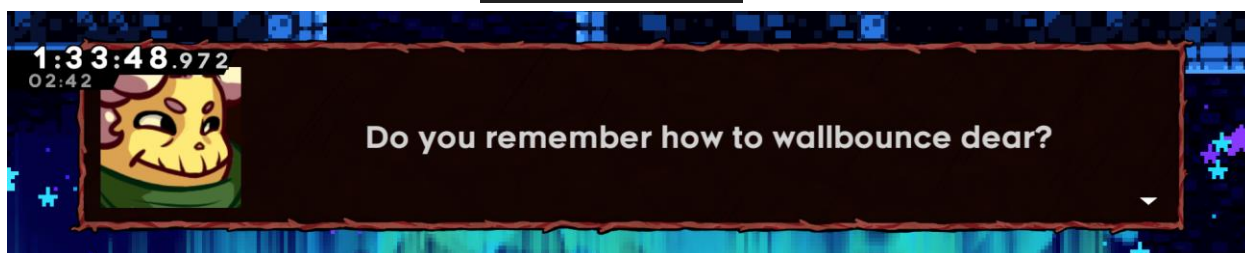
Wavedashes are usually indicated with player intuition when a jump is too far to reach with a normal jump and dash but can also be indicated with crumbling platforms as they create urgency to jump soon. At the start of the level, I used an old bird tutorial to remind the player how to wavedash.



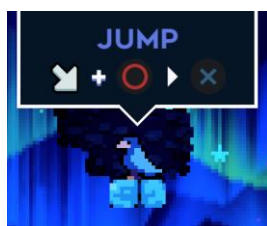
Bubble wavedashes are indicated exclusively with crumbling platforms close to boost bubbles as the only way to travel in the bubble is diagonally down and like with regular wavedash affordance, you need to jump quick off the platform before it disappears.



Wall bounce indication is with a two-block wall with spikes on the top and opposite side to the side you need to wall bounce off. I also mentioned wall bounces in the NPC interaction with Granny to remind the player that they exist before the first required wall bounce so that it is fresh in their mind that it'll be required.



There is a setup mid-level where the player must get momentum off a switch block while also getting wavedash momentum to cross a large pit. To guide the player to figure out what to do, I made sure to introduce both wavedashes and switch blocks beforehand as well as adding a bird to instruct the player specifically to wavedash. As well as this, there are spikes that force players to jump into the switch block which puts them in an optimal angle to wavedash off of the block.



Resources & Pick Ups

There are 9 strawberries to pick up in the level. Three are just hidden and dont have an elaborate room that the player must traverse through to get the berry and five are hidden but also have a room which the player must beat to grab it. The last strawberry is not hidden but requires the player to lose some progress and complete the same room twice to get it.



Dash crystals are mostly put in spots to extend rooms to make Madeline stay airborne longer. There are a small handful of crystals which not only give Madeline a dash back but also poses as a rest point mid room where she can cling to a wall while figuring out what to do next as the crystal will refill stamina when it is empty.



There is a single feather at the end of the level which the player must use to get up to the Crystal Heart. There is no threat posed, and the feather is only used for stylistic purposes as it doesn't actually fit the dashing nature of this level.

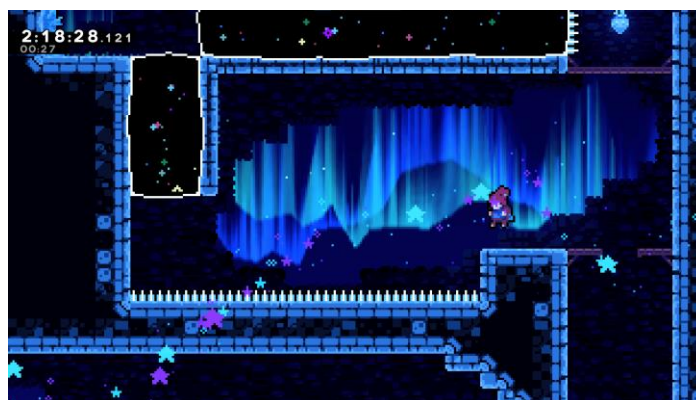


Points of Interest

Theo room – The Theo room is moderately hidden and contains a strawberry, Theo and a campfire. The room is supposed to be a cozy room to chill in before starting the main bulk of the level. Talking to Theo will present humorous dialogue while also revealing some exposition to the level and Madeline's motives.



Wavedash practice – This is the first required extended wavedash and is only that jump required. After making it, the player has the option to redo the jump without having to die for it. There is a spawn point at the beginning of this jump and a strawberry to motivate the player to do this at least more than once. The bird is also here to point out that this section can be used for practice





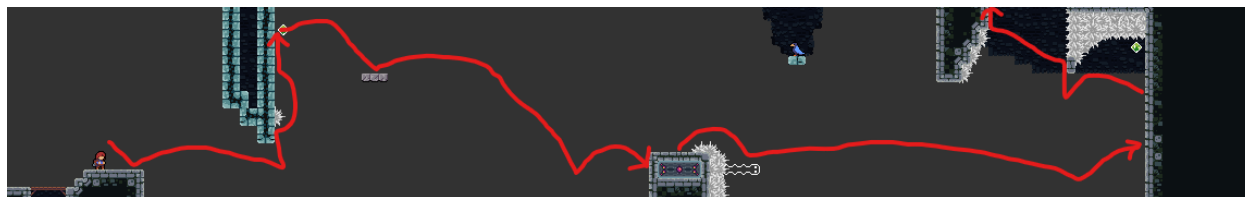
End of the level – The level practically ends once they hit the Badeline boost in the final room. This will bring the player into a non-hostile room where the music is toned down. The player can talk to Badeline here who will congratulate you and you can complete the level.



Challenges & Obstacles

Room Design

Simple rooms are designed to have one to 2 tricks strung together to complete it while Complex rooms are designed to have 3 or more tricks.



The room shown above requires a wavedash into a wall bounce around the spike. Then you need to jump off the wall into a wavedash onto the platform. Then you need to momentum wavedash off the swap block and climb to grab the crystal where finally, you need to jump off the wall and dash up, wall bouncing to climb up to the next room. This room is complex.

Balance

The level is designed with intent that the player knows how to complete intermediate red levels as stated earlier. The Celeste wiki states both maps that I took inspiration from



(Chapter 9: Farewell and Temple of a Thousand Skies) as intermediate difficulty while defining it as

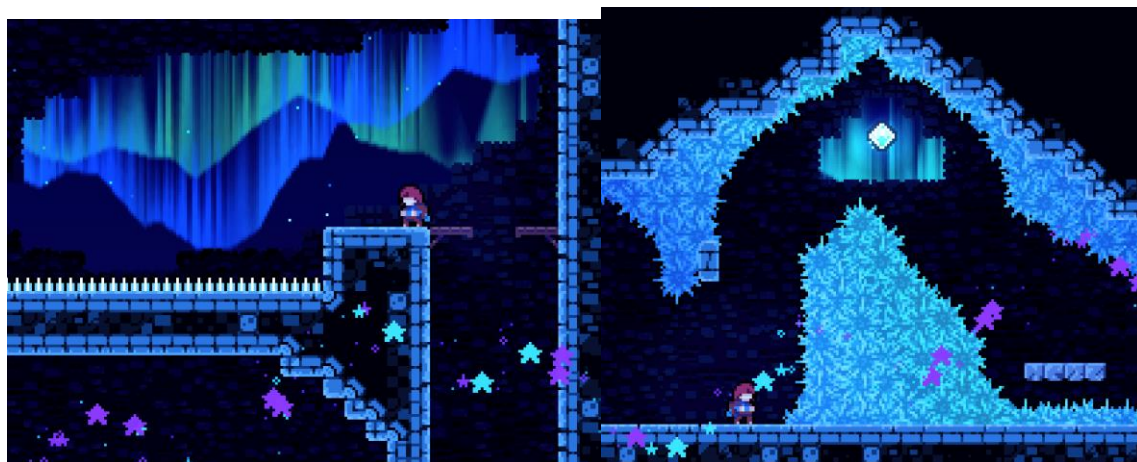
“Intermediate-difficulty maps often feature **supers**, **hypers** and **wavedashes**. The precision needed is higher than in beginner maps, but it is still relatively lenient compared to higher difficulties. C-Sides and most B-Sides fall into this category, alongside Farewell.”

My level does not qualify for advanced and does qualify for intermediate.

Mission & Narrative

Theme & Visuals

The theme of this level is an old, cold castle which Madeline must climb. The tiles used are mainly cement and rock foreground, and brick and brick-ruined background tiles. The styleground (back and foreground) used for this level is an aurora borealis background with pink and teal stars in the foreground. There is also a cold filter on the map which will make Madeline sneeze when she is inactive. When inside rooms, there will often be holes in the brick wall showing off the background. To fit with the colourful northern lights and stars, I have used rainbow spinners which with the cold background, transitions between shades of blue.



The music for this level uses Summit Remix “No more running” as I feel it best encapsulates the energy and difficulty of the level.

Narrative Story

The narrative of this map is pretty simple: Madeline wants to climb the castle. She has realized after climbing Celeste mountain, she enjoys climbing weird and wonderful landmarks this is exposed when talking to Theo. Upon collecting the Crystal Heart,



Madeline is appointed the “King of the Castle” (gender doesn’t change to queen because it is quoting a common phrase).

Expected Player Experience

Players who are at the correct skill tier to play this level should be able to clear it with around 100 to 200 deaths. The player should be able to find all the strawberries and complete it in under an hour with deaths being accounted for. It should be completeable in one to two sittings.