

Environmental Writing Sample – Hades Creative Briefs

Purpose in Portfolio:

This piece highlights an ability to combine gameplay mechanics, worldbuilding, and environmental details into a cohesive narrative experience. It demonstrates how a single character's story can permeate a level, providing players with both emotional depth and engaging gameplay.

Enemy

Game	Hades
Asset Type	Enemy
Asset Name	Myra
Asset Description	A corrupted Nymph trapped in the underworld by Hades to provide a garden to his palace. Myra seeks freedom, by means of revenge. Her target is Zagreus. If Hades continues to refuse to return her to the surface, she will kill his son. Myra has special earthly abilities with a dark twist. She can trap Zagreus in the ground with branches and continue to sink him further if he doesn't free himself on time. She can shoot poison flowers at him to slow down his health and energy. She can also move the ground underneath Zagreus so that he gets closer to her. Myra also calls on reinforcements in the underworld. She creates "mud monsters" and commands them to attack Zagreus. This will cost little in Zagreus's health, but it can make a big impact with multiple of them.

Arena

Game	Hades
Asset Type	Arena
Asset Name	The Garden of Regret
Asset Description	The Garden of Regret is a once-beautiful oasis in the underworld, corrupted by Myra's anguish and rage after her betrayal by Hades. This level is an intricate maze of lush yet haunting flora, where Myra's influence transforms natural beauty into deadly hazards. Players must navigate treacherous terrain filled with interactive environmental storytelling elements that unravel her tragic backstory.

Visual Design:

- **Aesthetic:** A blend of vibrant greens and shadowy blacks, the garden looks alive but unnatural. Vines pulse with faint red light, flowers exude dark mist, and the air shimmers with an eerie glow.
- **Central Feature:** A massive, ancient oak tree stands in the garden's heart, its branches twisted into claw-like shapes. This tree is bound by heavy black chains—a symbolic representation of Myra's imprisonment. As players progress, they notice the chains tightening and creaking ominously, tying her rage directly to the environment.
- **Subtle Details:** Statues of nymphs, cracked and overtaken by vines, hint at Myra's former role as a protector of nature. Players might also notice decayed offerings at the base of these statues—wilted flowers and empty bowls—further reinforcing the garden's fall from grace.

Interactive Environmental Elements

1. **Grasping Vines:**
 - *Mechanic:* Vines lash out at Zagreus if he lingers too long in one spot, forcing constant movement.
 - *Narrative Tie:* These vines reflect Myra's desperation to hold onto what she's lost—her freedom, her purpose, and her place in the natural order.
2. **Poisonous Blossoms:**
 - *Mechanic:* Glowing flowers scattered across the level release toxic clouds when struck, damaging Zagreus and slowing his movement.
 - *Narrative Tie:* These blossoms symbolize Myra's bitterness and growing toxicity after centuries of captivity.
3. **Shifting Ground:**
 - *Mechanic:* Portions of the ground ripple and shift unpredictably, pushing Zagreus closer to environmental hazards or Myra's minions. This mechanic amplifies the feeling of being manipulated by her power.
 - *Narrative Tie:* The unstable ground mirrors Myra's inner turmoil and her increasing control over her corrupted domain.
4. **Mud Monsters:**
 - *Mechanic:* Mud pits spawn small, fast-moving enemies. While individually weak, they can overwhelm Zagreus in groups. Destroying the pits permanently stops their spawn.
 - *Narrative Tie:* These creatures are extensions of Myra's will—manifestations of her anger given form by the underworld's energy.

Environmental Storytelling Elements

1. **The Overgrown Shrine:**
 - Located near the entrance, players encounter a crumbled shrine with faded carvings depicting Myra as a serene figure surrounded by blooming flowers and grateful worshippers. Now, the vines encasing the shrine have overtaken her image, leaving only faint traces of her former self.
 - *Optional Interaction:* Examining the shrine reveals dialogue from Zagreus, such as:

- *“This must be her... Before Hades got to her. What did he do to deserve her loyalty?”*
- 2. **Hades’ Chains:**
 - Scattered throughout the garden are fragments of black chains embedded in the earth, hinting at how Myra was physically and metaphorically bound to the underworld. These chains subtly guide the player toward the central tree.
- 3. **Myra’s Voice:**
 - As Zagreus ventures deeper, he hears faint whispers in Myra’s voice:
 - *“Why does he still protect you?”*
 - *“Freedom is worth any price.”*
 - These whispers grow louder and more desperate near the arena, building tension before her confrontation.
- 4. **Corrupted Offerings:**
 - Players find remnants of offerings once made to Myra—shattered vases, dried-out flowers, and tarnished jewelry. Interacting with these triggers Zagreus’ reflections or adds small fragments to the Codex:
 - *“Once, she must have been adored. Now she’s just another prisoner of this place.”*

Boss Area Design

- **Location:** The battle takes place beneath the central oak tree, where the ground constantly shifts under Myra’s influence. The chains binding the tree animate during the fight, lashing out at Zagreus to complicate the encounter.
- **Phase Transitions:** Each time Zagreus depletes a portion of Myra’s health, the environment reacts:
 - Phase 1: Vines grow thicker, reducing safe areas to stand.
 - Phase 2: The oak tree’s roots burst through the ground, creating new hazards and limiting movement.
 - Final Phase: Myra summons multiple mud pits, forcing Zagreus to balance offense and defense.

Post-Battle Narrative Reward

After defeating Myra, Zagreus gains a deeper understanding of her plight. A glowing seed drops from her remains, symbolizing her lingering connection to nature. Players can choose to:

- Plant the seed in the House of Hades’ garden, unlocking a new Codex entry and dialogue with Hades.
- Or, give the seed to Nyx, who provides insight into Myra’s fall and Hades’ role in her corruption.