

# Zelda : A link to the past – Dungeon

## Level Design Document

Joseph ROOL – ISART Digital – 2026

# I – Level overview



## Pitch

### Context :

Ancient necropolis of knights who died during the War of the Seal. Corrupted by Ganon's magic, their spirits prevent the release of a descendant of the sages trapped inside a crystal.

World: Dark World

Location: The most corrupted area of the Ghostly Garden (an alternate version of Hyrule's Graveyard in the Dark World)

Time: After Link's arrival in the Dark World, before Ganon's Tower

### Desired experience :

#### - Atmosphere and visual identity :

The atmosphere is dark : the dungeon is set within a gigantic crypt, giving it a funerary tone. The music is heavy and stressful, with very limited lighting. The goal is to evoke horror and dread, while still staying true to the universe of The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past.

#### - Narrative goal :

The dungeon's purpose is to :

- Free the spirit of the knights' captain
- Recover a crystal containing a descendant of the sages
- Show the tragic consequences of the war

# I – Level Overview

## Pitch

### Desired experience :

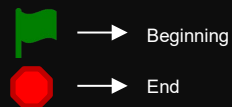
#### - Mechanical objectives:-

- Assess the player's mastery of the game before the endgame (high difficulty)
- Test the player under stressful conditions (low health/hearts)

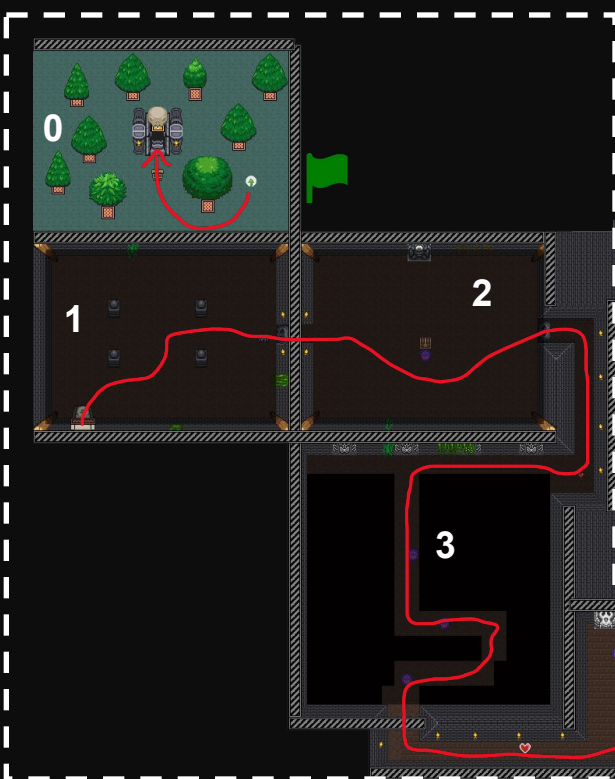
### Challenges :

Players will face several challenges in this dungeon, primarily focused on combat. They will have to fight a wide variety of enemies, mastering both their timing and movement. Some sections will also require careful thinking, especially when dealing with traps that must be analyzed in advance in order to navigate them optimally while losing as few hearts as possible. Finally, they will confront a very powerful final boss, whom they can only defeat through cunning and skill.

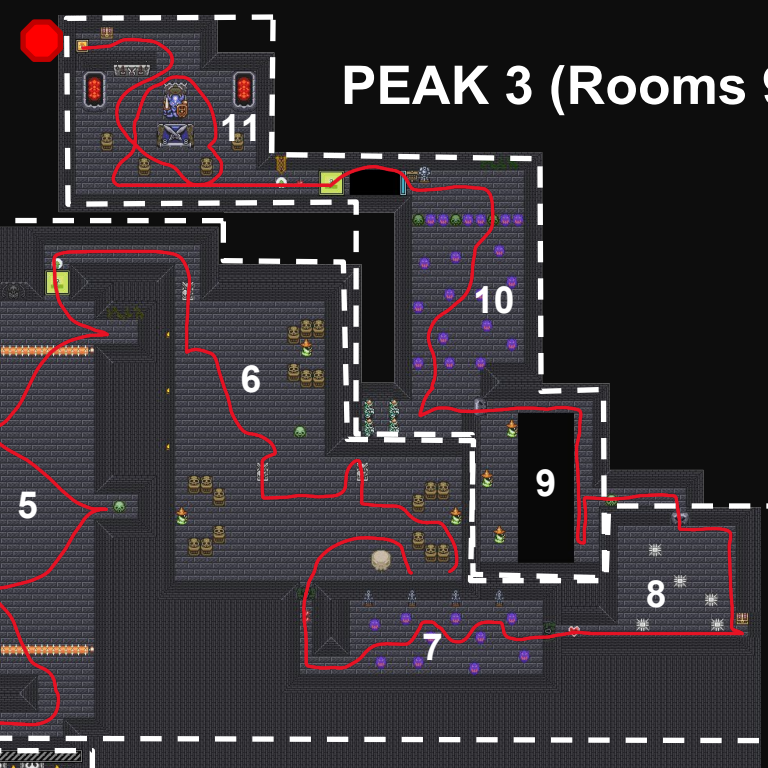
# I – Level Overview



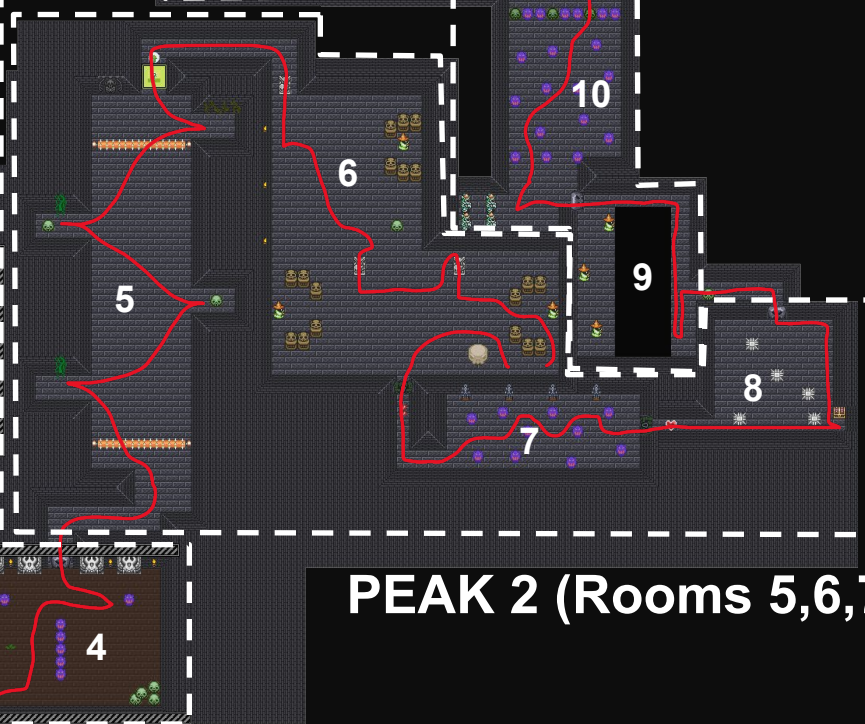
**PEAK 1 (Rooms 0,1,2,3,4)**



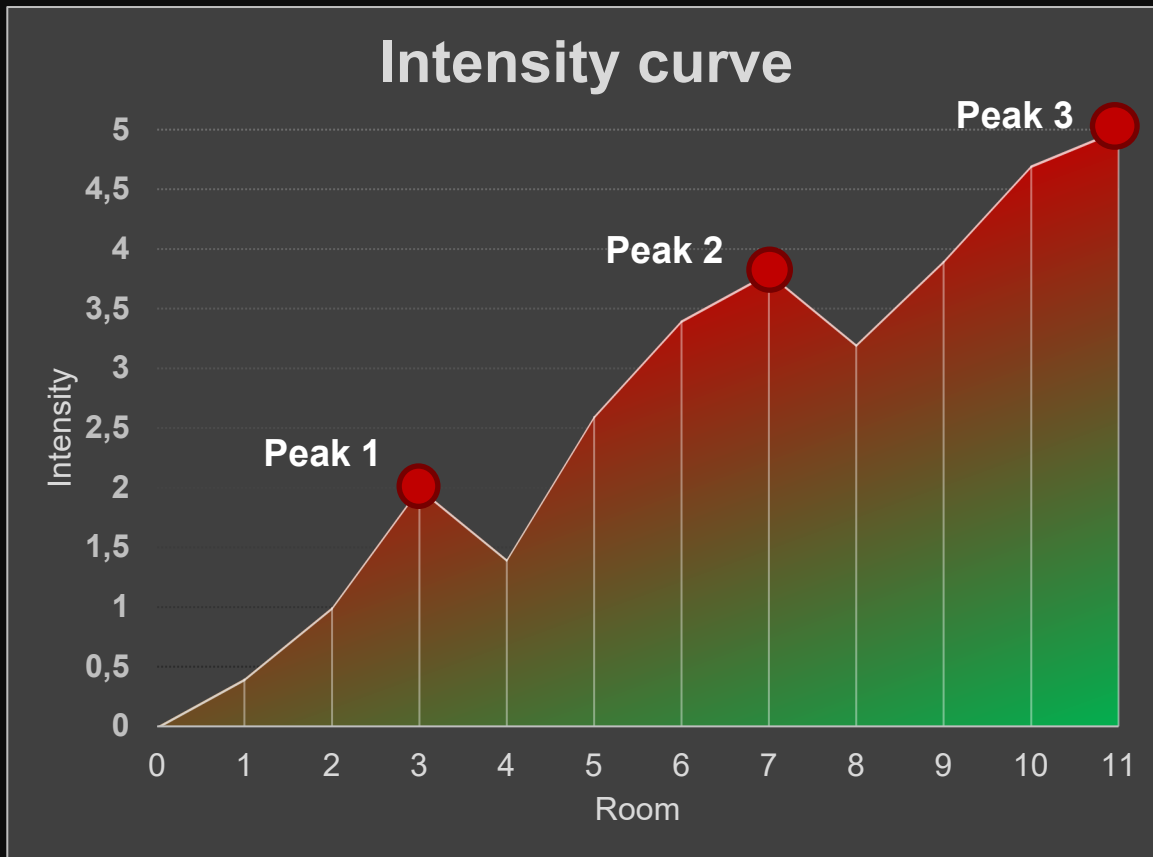
**PEAK 3 (Rooms 9,10,11)**



**PEAK 2 (Rooms 5,6,7,8)**

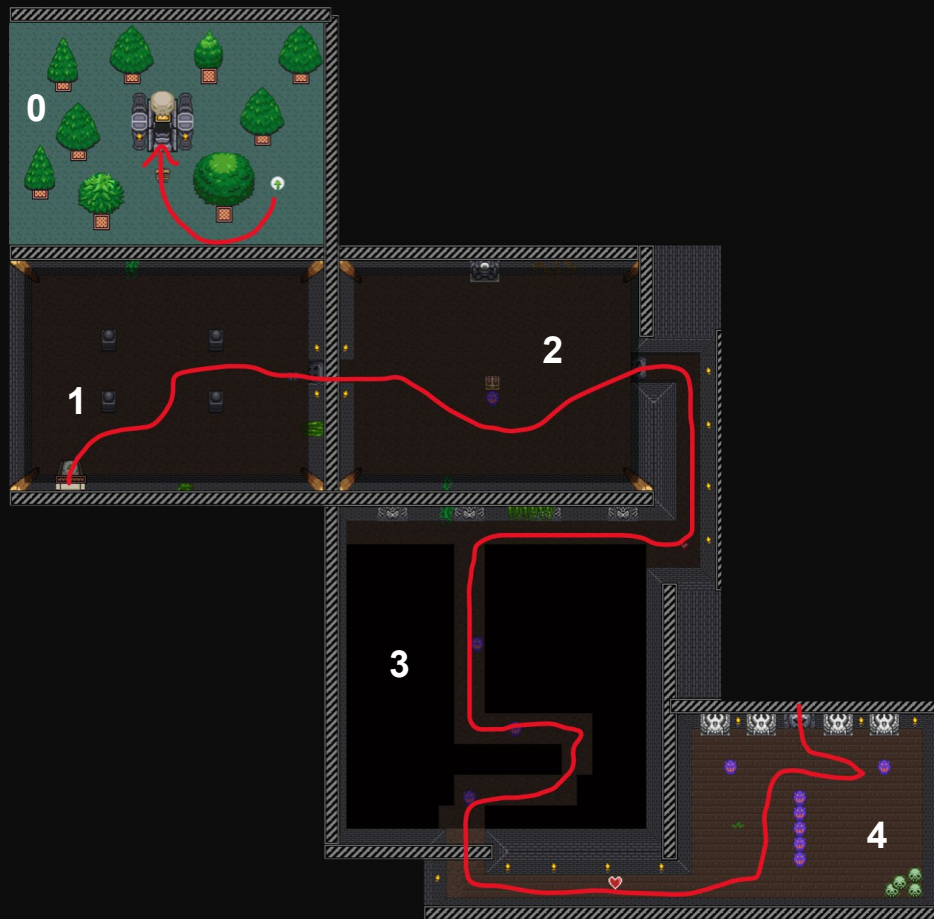


# I – Level Overview



Note : The intensity is assessed relative to the dungeon itself, not the game as a whole!

## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 1



## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 1

Minimum intensity : 0

Average Intensity: 0,96

Maximum Intensity : 2

Narrative and/or aesthetic intention : The dungeon is introduced via its entrance, located in the forest near the Ghostly Garden in the Dark World. A sign at the crypt's entrance reads: "Here lies the soul of Hyrule's knights," subtly referencing the War of the Seal and the game's backstory. The first intensity peak then begins in darkness, emphasizing the dungeon's anxiety-inducing atmosphere and inherent danger. The ground in this section is made of earth, and the walls are covered in ivy, suggesting that the crypt has been abandoned for a long time and that nature is gradually reclaiming its place.

Difficulty : 1/5

This first intensity peak is relatively light. The rooms are fairly large, with few enemies that are relatively easy to defeat (especially at this later point in the game). The main purpose here is to introduce the dungeon and allow the player to acclimate to this new environment, while still gradually challenging them toward the end of the section.

Special elements : A heart is placed in the rest area between Room 2 and Room 3. An extra life (which adds an additional heart container slot and fully restores the player's health) is placed between Room 3 and Room 4, with Room 3 being highly likely to cause the player to lose at least one heart.

## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 1

Walkthrough : Peak 1 begins with “Room 0,” which serves as the crypt’s entrance.

Players are expected to read the sign, then descend the staircase.

They are then plunged into darkness, where two torches near a door subtly indicate the path forward.

Players move toward it but are immediately confronted by a bat that attacks them.

Although it deals very little damage, players are required to defeat it to obtain the key that unlocks the door.

In the next room, they come face to face with a flying slime. This enemy prevents access to a chest located in the center of the room, with no other obstacles present.

To reach the chest’s contents, players must wait until the slime stops pushing them back with its ultrasonic waves by retreating, then rush in and strike it to break its wings and finish it off. However, they must remain cautious of the eggs it may lay, which spawn additional slimes.

Afterward, the player can rest in a corridor.

The main challenge of this peak then arrives : the bat bridge. Players encounter a very narrow bridge with a bottomless pit on both sides. They must carefully avoid bats attempting to push them off while moving with precision to avoid falling. The bats do not need to be defeated to proceed, as doing so would make the challenge too difficult for the start of the dungeon.

This is followed by another corridor, this time better lit with torches, leading to the end of the peak.

The final situation is less intense than the bat bridge but introduces the remains of Hyrule’s knights, possessed by Ganon.

Two skeletons throw their heads and bones toward the player character, who must dodge them while also avoiding the flames placed in the center of the room.

The combination of two enemies and the central fire increases player stress, even though the room remains relatively manageable to complete.

## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 2



## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 2

Minimum Intensity : 2,6

Average Intensity : 3,25

Maximum Intensity : 3,8

Narrative and/or aesthetic intention : From the second intensity peak onward, the player character delves deeper into the dungeon and discovers more sophisticated structures, less worn by time and more densely populated. Graves become increasingly numerous, clearly reinforcing the dungeon's nature as a necropolis for the player. Ivy on the walls becomes rarer, and the ground shifts to stone paving, indicating that nature has not yet managed to penetrate the deeper layers of the crypt. Lighting also becomes stronger, suggesting a higher presence of enemies. The inclusion of mechanical traps (without enemies) in half of the rooms (2/4) further emphasizes the dungeon's hostility, while also referencing adventure films and games set in cursed tombs such as *Tomb Raider* and *Indiana Jones*.

Difficulty : 3/5

In this second intensity peak, the challenge truly begins to be felt, with traps requiring real thought and/or reflexes from the player.

Enemies are also more dangerous (dealing more damage) and appear in greater numbers.

Special elements :

Skulls can be moved and thrown in Room 5. A checkpoint is located after Room 5. Hearts are placed between Rooms 6 and 7. An extra life (+1 heart container slot & full health regeneration) is placed after Room 7.

## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 2

Walkthrough : The dungeon continues with Room 5, where the central corridor is crossed by fast-moving rows of spiked logs.

The player must hide in alcoves while the logs pass, then quickly move to the next alcove until reaching the first checkpoint of the level.

Next comes the dungeon's first "puzzle-combat" encounter: the statues and mages.

The mages launch powerful ranged attacks that deal significant damage to the player.

To progress, players must push statues in order to deflect the projectiles back toward the mages, ultimately defeating them.

The player then faces a major challenge: a cramped room filled with flying skulls and fire.

The presence of flames and numerous airborne enemies creates a strong visual and gameplay pressure, significantly increasing the intensity.

To proceed, players must eliminate all flying skulls, as only the last one drops the key needed to unlock the next door.

Finally, the last room of Peak 2 is a trap-based section.

Moving spikes rapidly cross the room in intersecting patterns, deliberately making safe paths difficult to read. However, a chest placed on the right side of the room subtly suggests a possible route.

Players move toward it, open it, then head toward the door.

Upon opening it, they see a spike moving toward them.

They must step aside, let it pass, and then quickly enter the corridor and move through it before the next cycle begins.



## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 3

Minimum Intensity : 3,9

Average Intensity : 4,5

Maximum Intensity : 5

Narrative and/or aesthetic intention : Located at the end of the dungeon, Peak 3 is the deepest part of the crypt. Players discover the mummified bodies of Hyrule's knights just before entering the boss room.

The boss is the knights' captain, now bewitched by Ganon's magic. He has a large amount of health and is visually very imposing.

His arena is also highly cinematic, with the knights' tombs arranged around his throne and lava pits on both sides.

Difficulty : 4,5/5

In the third and final intensity peak, the challenge reaches its climax. Enemies are more dangerous (dealing higher damage) and appear in greater numbers. The spaces are either cramped or hazardous (with flames on the ground).

Special elements :

A throwable skull is placed just before Room 9. An extra life (+1 heart container slot & full health regeneration) is located between Room 10 and Room 11.

## II – Explanation of peaks: Peak 3

Walkthrough : The dungeon concludes with Peak 3, which begins in Room 9.

In this room, the player is separated from sorcerers by a bottomless pit.

The intended mechanic reveals that if the player attempts to go directly through the upper path, they will not reach the door in time and will be hit by the sorcerers' high-damage projectiles.

Players must instead reposition the character in front of the enemies and reflect their projectiles using their sword in order to eliminate them one by one. Once cleared, they can safely cross to the other side.

Room 10 follows, featuring the mummified bodies of Hyrule's knights. The player must dodge them in a space where movement is hindered by flames on the ground. They must quickly progress toward throwable skulls to deal with the remaining mummies.

Next, players encounter a bottomless pit with a sign reading: "It's a leap of faith. That's all it is Link, a leap of faith." This is a direct reference to *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, while also evoking *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, where one of the trials involves crossing an unseen bridge over a void. Players must therefore step forward into the gap and are immediately propelled to the other side.

They then arrive in the final room: the boss chamber. Here, they face the captain of the knights, now bewitched by Ganon. The fight requires alternating between movement and attacks, while also using the environment to their advantage by positioning the boss between tombs, since his large size allows him to be partially trapped, enabling faster defeat.

After defeating the boss, a crystal located in the chest behind the arena allows players to free a descendant of the sages.

The character is then instantly teleported back to the dungeon entrance, allowing them to continue their journey.