

Game Design Observation: Monster Train

- Monster Train is a deckbuilding dungeon crawler roguelike with meta-progression. (Yes, the same as Slay the Spire)
- The gameplay gimmick is that you are on a train from hell, which has frozen over, and your task is to guide the train through the Nine Rings of Hell and relight the Pyre.
- Before the game starts, you have to choose what clan you are going to play as. There are 6 clans in total with completely different playstyles and cards. You actually have to choose a main clan and a secondary clan. The main clan determines your starting Champion card, which can be upgraded throughout the run. You can also choose the base Champion or the Exiled Champion in each clan. These clans determine what kind of cards you get in your run (each clan has their unique cards, units and gimmicks). There is so much variety even before you start a run (it's actually insane and makes my head hurt).
- The gameplay consists of protecting the train from enemies sent from heaven. The train has 3 lanes where you can place units. Each turn you can play cards and afterwards the units fight.
- I have played roughly 25 hours so far and I have observed a good balance of the cards and units you can use (some are much stronger than others) as well as the enemies.
- A couple times I managed to completely break the game with some unique synergies (stacking infinite health and damage on a single unit, tank with a hundred of spikes which killed every enemy that attacked it etc.)
- An average run takes around 40 minutes to complete, and after you win for the first time you can unlock a Covenant Rank, which increases the difficulty of subsequent runs. There are 25 ranks in total.
- Once I reached Covenant Rank 10 I felt a big spike in difficulty and I am not so sure I can reach Covenant Rank 25 anymore.
- I really like this game, it really scratches my itch for deckbuilding roguelikes. The game is definitely addictive and cutting into my school schedule, I should drop out.