

Memory Allocation III

CSE 351 Summer 2018

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IN CS, IT CAN BE HARD TO EXPLAIN
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EASY
AND THE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE.

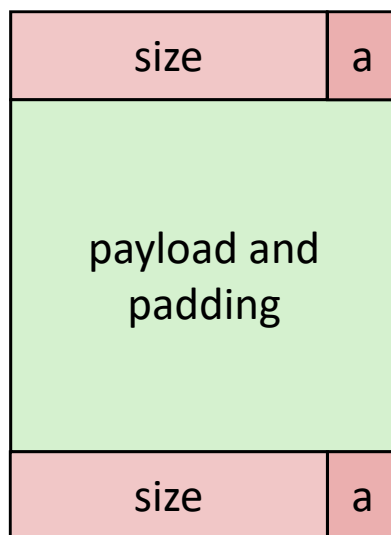
<https://xkcd.com/1425/>

Administrivia

- ❖ Homework 5 due tonight
- ❖ Lab 5 due next Friday (8/17)
 - Aim to finish Wed; no late submissions allowed
- ❖ **Final Exam:** Friday, 8/17 in lecture
 - Review Session: Wed, 8/15 @ 5:00 pm in EEB 045
 - NOT cumulative
 - You get ONE double-sided handwritten 8.5×11” cheat sheet
 - Look for extra office hours next week

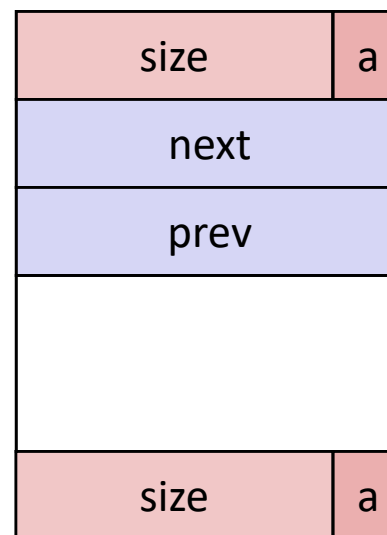
Do we always need the boundary tags?

Allocated block:



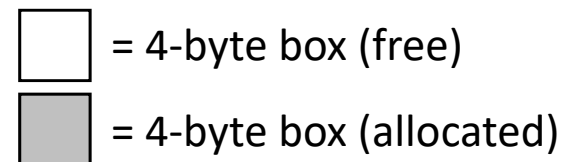
(same as implicit free list)

Free block:



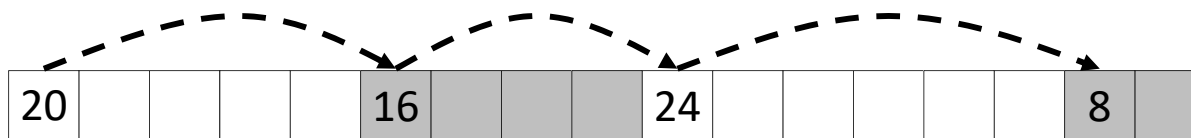
❖ Lab 5 suggests no...

Keeping Track of Free Blocks

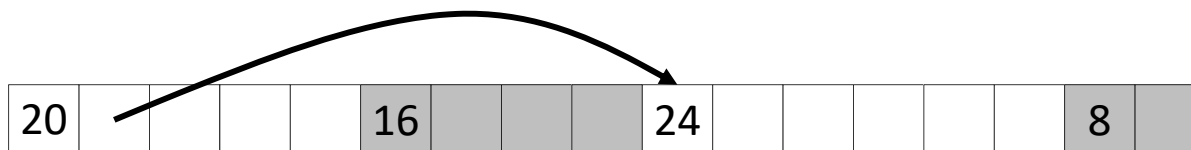


1) *Implicit free list* using length – links all blocks using math

- No actual pointers, and must check each block if allocated or free



2) *Explicit free list* among only the free blocks, using pointers



3) *Segregated free list*

- Different free lists for different size “classes”

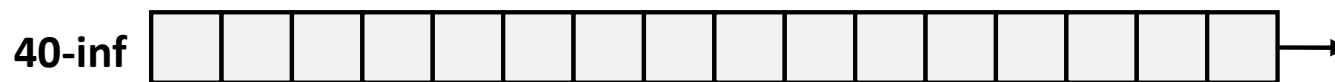
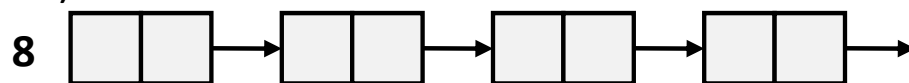
4) *Blocks sorted by size*

- Can use a balanced binary tree (e.g. red-black tree) with pointers within each free block, and the length used as a key

Segregated List (SegList) Allocators

- ❖ Each *size class* of blocks has its own free list
- ❖ Organized as an array of free lists

Size class
(in bytes)



- ❖ Often have separate classes for each small size
- ❖ For larger sizes: One class for each two-power size

Allocation Policy Tradeoffs

- ❖ Data structure of blocks on lists
 - Implicit (free/allocated), explicit (free), segregated (many free lists) – others possible!
- ❖ Placement policy: first-fit, next-fit, best-fit
 - Throughput vs. amount of fragmentation
- ❖ When do we split free blocks?
 - How much internal fragmentation are we willing to tolerate?
- ❖ When do we coalesce free blocks?
 - **Immediate coalescing:** Every time `free` is called
 - **Deferred coalescing:** Defer coalescing until needed
 - e.g. when scanning free list for `malloc` or when external fragmentation reaches some threshold

More Info on Allocators

- ❖ D. Knuth, “*The Art of Computer Programming*”, 2nd edition, Addison Wesley, 1973
 - The classic reference on dynamic storage allocation
- ❖ Wilson et al, “*Dynamic Storage Allocation: A Survey and Critical Review*”, Proc. 1995 Int’l Workshop on Memory Management, Kinross, Scotland, Sept, 1995.
 - Comprehensive survey
 - Available from CS:APP student site (csapp.cs.cmu.edu)

Memory Allocation

- ❖ Dynamic memory allocation
 - Introduction and goals
 - Allocation and deallocation (free)
 - Fragmentation
- ❖ Explicit allocation implementation
 - Implicit free lists
 - Explicit free lists (Lab 5)
 - Segregated free lists
- ❖ **Implicit deallocation: garbage collection**
- ❖ **Common memory-related bugs in C**

Wouldn't it be nice...

- ❖ If we never had to free memory?
- ❖ Do you free objects in Java?
 - Reminder: *implicit* allocator

Garbage Collection (GC)

(Automatic Memory Management)

- ❖ *Garbage collection*: automatic reclamation of heap-allocated storage – application never explicitly frees memory

```
void foo() {  
    int* p = (int*) malloc(128);  
    return; /* p block is now garbage! */  
}
```

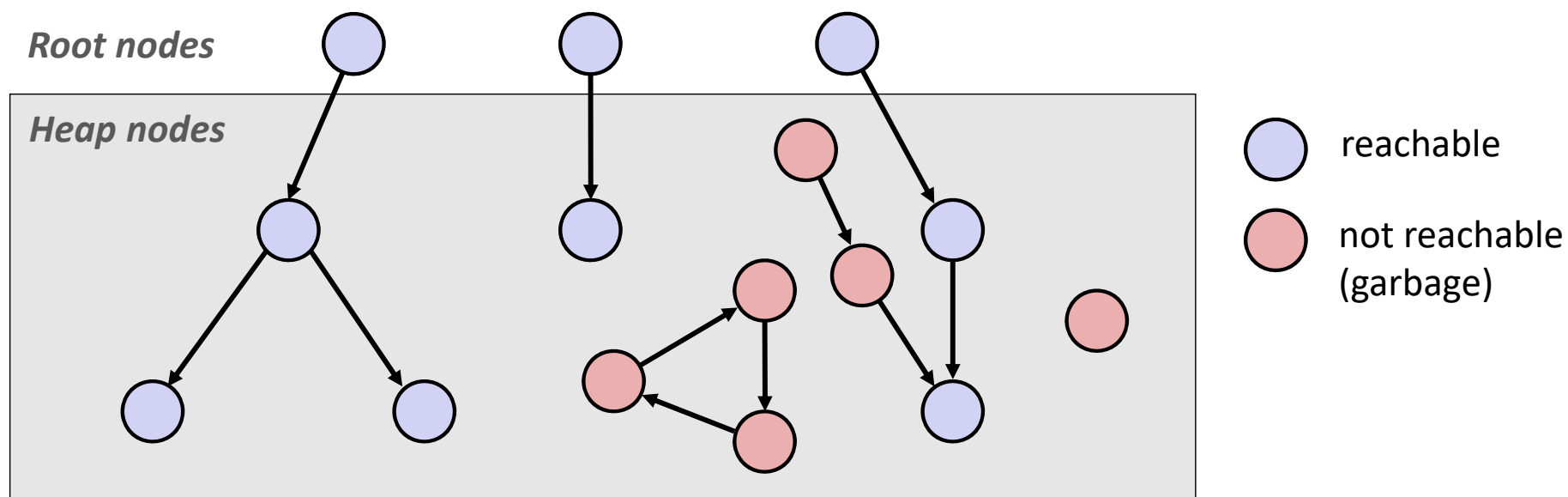
- ❖ Common in implementations of functional languages, scripting languages, and modern object oriented languages:
 - Lisp, Racket, Erlang, ML, Haskell, Scala, Java, C#, Perl, Ruby, Python, Lua, JavaScript, Dart, Mathematica, MATLAB, many more...
- ❖ Variants (“conservative” garbage collectors) exist for C and C++
 - However, cannot necessarily collect all garbage

Garbage Collection

- ❖ How does the memory allocator know when memory can be freed?
 - In general, we cannot know what is going to be used in the future since it depends on conditionals
 - But, we can tell that certain blocks cannot be used if they are *unreachable* (via pointers in registers/stack/globals)
- ❖ Memory allocator needs to know what is a pointer and what is not – how can it do this?
 - Sometimes with help from the compiler

Memory as a Graph

- ❖ We view memory as a directed graph
 - Each allocated heap block is a node in the graph
 - Each pointer is an edge in the graph
 - Locations not in the heap that contain pointers into the heap are called **root** nodes (e.g. registers, stack locations, global variables)



A node (block) is **reachable** if there is a path from any root to that node
Non-reachable nodes are **garbage** (cannot be needed by the application)

Garbage Collection

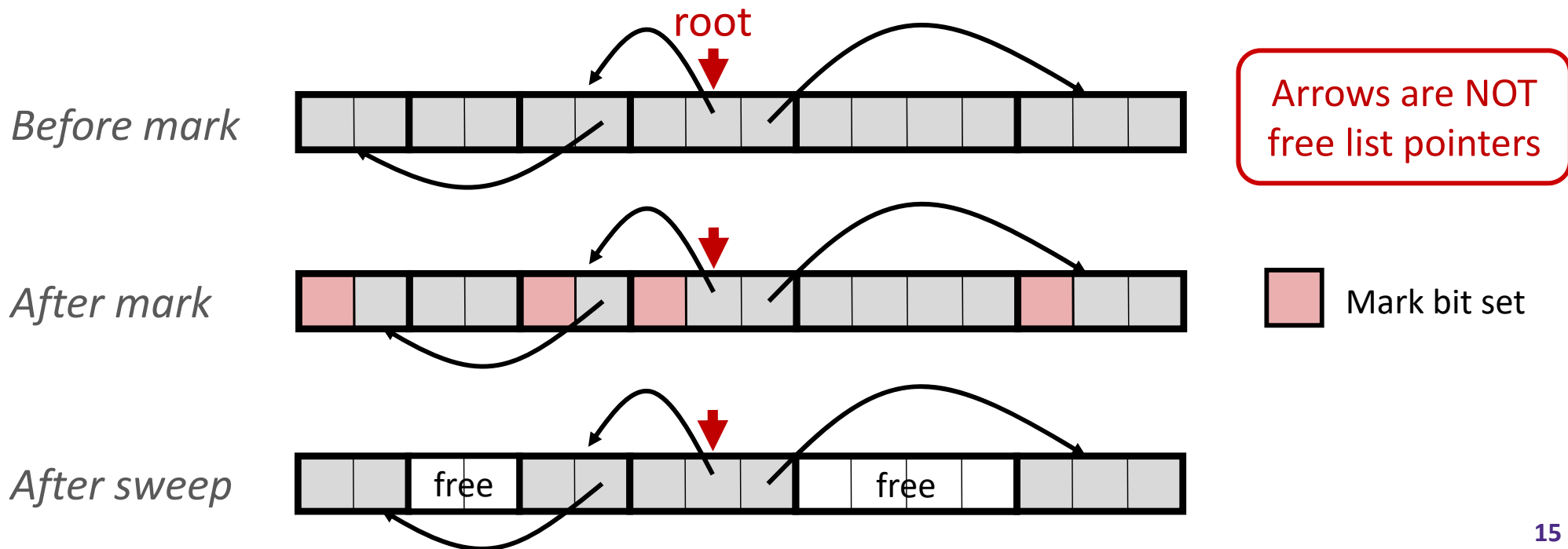
- ❖ Dynamic memory allocator can free blocks if there are no pointers to them
- ❖ How can it know what is a pointer and what is not?
- ❖ We'll make some *assumptions* about pointers:
 - Memory allocator can distinguish pointers from non-pointers
 - All pointers point to the start of a block in the heap
 - Application cannot hide pointers (e.g. by coercing them to an `int`, and then back again)

Classical GC Algorithms

- ❖ Mark-and-sweep collection (McCarthy, 1960)
 - Does not move blocks (unless you also “compact”)
- ❖ Reference counting (Collins, 1960)
 - Does not move blocks (not discussed)
- ❖ Copying collection (Minsky, 1963)
 - Moves blocks (not discussed)
- ❖ Generational Collectors (Lieberman and Hewitt, 1983)
 - Most allocations become garbage very soon, so focus reclamation work on zones of memory recently allocated.
- ❖ For more information:
 - Jones, Hosking, and Moss, *The Garbage Collection Handbook: The Art of Automatic Memory Management*, CRC Press, 2012.
 - Jones and Lin, *Garbage Collection: Algorithms for Automatic Dynamic Memory*, John Wiley & Sons, 1996.

Mark and Sweep Collecting

- ❖ Can build on top of malloc/free package
 - Allocate using malloc until you “run out of space”
- ❖ When out of space:
 - Use extra **mark bit** in the header of each block
 - **Mark:** Start at roots and set mark bit on each reachable block
 - **Sweep:** Scan all blocks and free blocks that are not marked



Assumptions For a Simple Implementation

Non-testable
Material

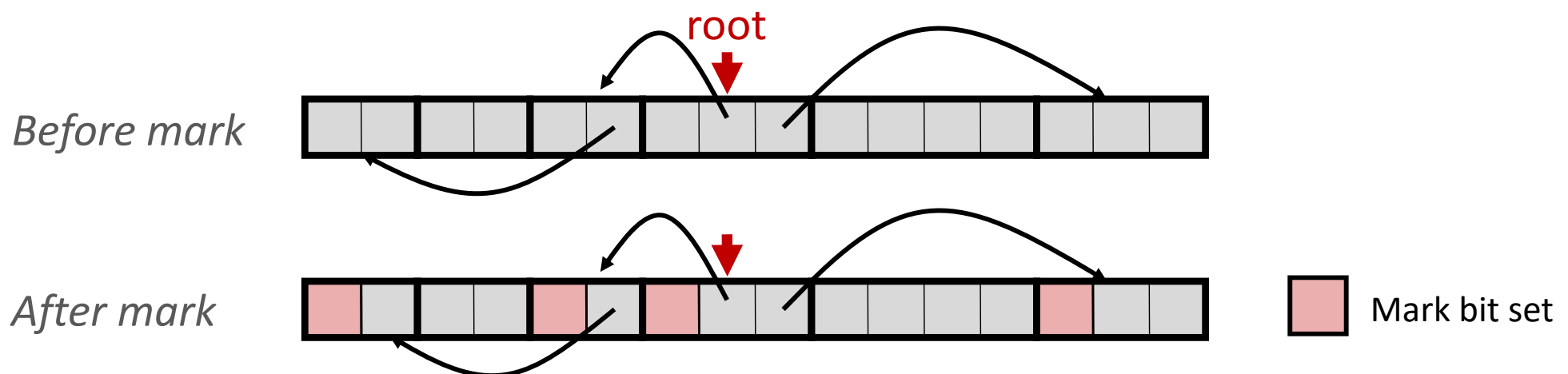
- ❖ Application can use functions to allocate memory:
 - `b=new(n)` returns pointer, `b`, to new block with all locations cleared
 - `b[i]` read location `i` of block `b` into register
 - `b[i]=v` write `v` into location `i` of block `b`
- ❖ Each block will have a header word (accessed at `b[-1]`)
- ❖ Functions used by the garbage collector:
 - `is_ptr(p)` determines whether `p` is a pointer to a block
 - `length(p)` returns length of block pointed to by `p`, not including header
 - `get_roots()` returns all the roots

Mark

Non-testable
Material

- ❖ Mark using depth-first traversal of the memory graph

```
ptr mark(ptr p) { // p: some word in a heap block
  if (!is_ptr(p)) return; // do nothing if not pointer
  if (markBitSet(p)) return; // check if already marked
  setMarkBit(p); // set the mark bit
  for (i=0; i<length(p); i++) // recursively call mark on
    mark(p[i]); // all words in the block
  return;
}
```



Non-testable
Material

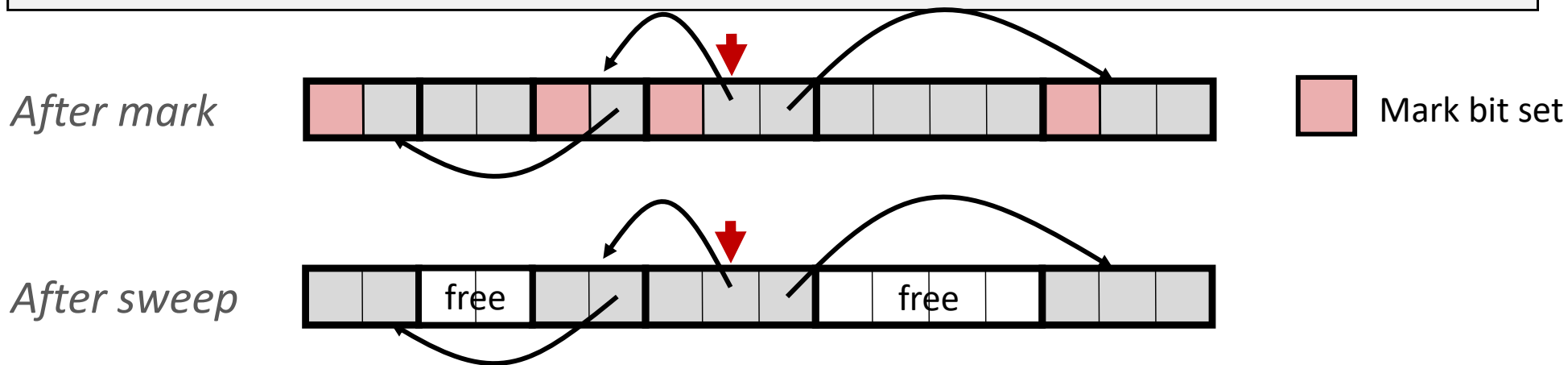
Sweep

❖ Sweep using sizes in headers

```

ptr sweep(ptr p, ptr end) {
    while (p < end) {
        if (markBitSet(p))
            clearMarkBit(p);
        else if (allocateBitSet(p))
            free(p);
        p += length(p);
    }
}
    
```

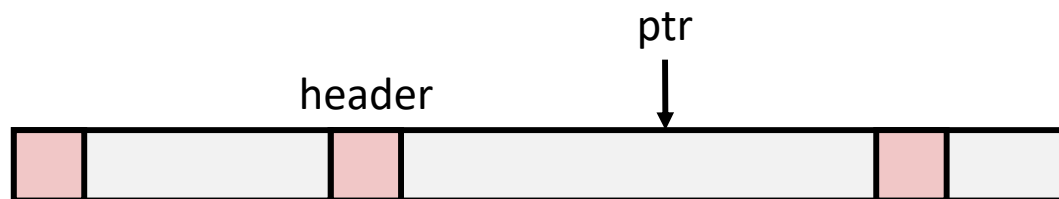
// ptrs to start & end of heap
// while not at end of heap
// check if block is marked
// if so, reset mark bit
// if not marked, but allocated
// free the block
// adjust pointer to next block



Conservative Mark & Sweep in C

Non-testable
Material

- ❖ Would mark & sweep work in C?
 - `is_ptr` determines if a word is a pointer by checking if it points to an allocated block of memory
 - But in C, pointers can point into the middle of allocated blocks (not so in Java)
 - Makes it tricky to find all allocated blocks in mark phase



- There are ways to solve/avoid this problem in C, but the resulting garbage collector is conservative:
 - Every reachable node correctly identified as reachable, but some unreachable nodes might be incorrectly marked as reachable
- In Java, all pointers (i.e. references) point to the starting address of an object structure – the start of an allocated block

Memory-Related Perils and Pitfalls in C

	Slide	Program stop possible?
A) Bad order of operations		
B) Bad pointer arithmetic		
C) Dereferencing a non-pointer		
D) Freed block – access again		
E) Freed block – free again		
F) Memory leak – failing to free memory		
G) No bounds checking		
H) Off-by-one error		
I) Reading uninitialized memory		
J) Referencing nonexistent variable		
K) Wrong allocation size		

Find That Bug! (Slide 21)

❖ The classic scanf bug

■ `int scanf(const char *format)`

```
int val;  
...  
scanf("%d", val);
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 22)

```
/* return y = Ax */
int *matvec(int **A, int *x) {
    int *y = (int *)malloc( N*sizeof(int) );
    int i, j;

    for (i=0; i<N; i++)
        for (j=0; j<N; j++)
            y[i] += A[i][j] * x[j];

    return y;
}
```

- A is NxN matrix, x is N-sized vector (so product is vector of size N)
- N defined elsewhere (`#define`)

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 23)

```
int **p;

p = (int **)malloc( N * sizeof(int) );

for (int i=0; i<N; i++) {
    p[i] = (int *)malloc( M * sizeof(int) );
}
```

- N and M defined elsewhere (#define)

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 24)

```
int **p;

p = (int **)malloc( N * sizeof(int*) );

for (int i=0; i<=N; i++) {
    p[i] = (int *)malloc( M * sizeof(int) );
}
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 25)

```
char s[8];  
int i;  
  
gets(s);  /* reads "123456789" from stdin */
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 26)

```
int *search(int *p, int val) {  
  
    while (p && *p != val)  
        p += sizeof(int);  
  
    return p;  
}
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 27)

```
int* getPacket(int** packets, int* size) {
    int* packet;
    packet = packets[0];
    packets[0] = packets[*size - 1];
    *size--;    // what is happening here?
    reorderPackets(packets, *size);
    return packet;
}
```

- ❖ ' -- ' happens first

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 28)

```
int* foo() {  
    int val;  
  
    return &val;  
}
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 29)

```
x = (int*)malloc( N * sizeof(int) );  
    <manipulate x>  
free(x);  
  
...  
  
y = (int*)malloc( M * sizeof(int) );  
    <manipulate y>  
free(x);
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 30)

```
x = (int*)malloc( N * sizeof(int) );  
    <manipulate x>  
free(x);  
  
...  
  
y = (int*)malloc( M * sizeof(int) );  
for (i=0; i<M; i++)  
    y[i] = x[i]++;
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 31)

```
typedef struct L {
    int val;
    struct L *next;
} list;

void foo() {
    list *head = (list *) malloc( sizeof(list) );
    head->val = 0;
    head->next = NULL;
    <create and manipulate the rest of the list>
    ...
    free(head);
    return;
}
```

Error
Type:

Prog stop
Possible?

Fix:

Dealing With Memory Bugs

- ❖ Conventional debugger (`gdb`)
 - Good for finding bad pointer dereferences
 - Hard to detect the other memory bugs
- ❖ Debugging `malloc` (UToronto CSRI `malloc`)
 - Wrapper around conventional `malloc`
 - Detects memory bugs at `malloc` and `free` boundaries
 - Memory overwrites that corrupt heap structures
 - Some instances of freeing blocks multiple times
 - Memory leaks
 - Cannot detect all memory bugs
 - Overwrites into the middle of allocated blocks
 - Freeing block twice that has been reallocated in the interim
 - Referencing freed blocks

Dealing With Memory Bugs (cont.)

- ❖ Some `malloc` implementations contain checking code
 - Linux glibc malloc: `setenv MALLOC_CHECK_ 2`
 - FreeBSD: `setenv MALLOC_OPTIONS AJR`
- ❖ Binary translator: `valgrind` (Linux), Purify
 - Powerful debugging and analysis technique
 - Rewrites text section of executable object file
 - Can detect all errors as debugging `malloc`
 - Can also check each individual reference at runtime
 - Bad pointers
 - Overwriting
 - Referencing outside of allocated block

What about Java or ML or Python or ...?

- ❖ In *memory-safe languages*, most of these bugs are impossible
 - Cannot perform arbitrary pointer manipulation
 - Cannot get around the type system
 - Array bounds checking, null pointer checking
 - Automatic memory management
- ❖ But one of the bugs we saw earlier is possible. Which one?

Memory Leaks with GC

- ❖ Not because of forgotten `free` — we have GC!
- ❖ Unneeded “leftover” roots keep objects reachable
- ❖ *Sometimes* nullifying a variable is not needed for correctness but is for performance
- ❖ Example: Don't leave big data structures you're done with in a static field

