

Memory Allocation III

CSE 351 Spring 2021

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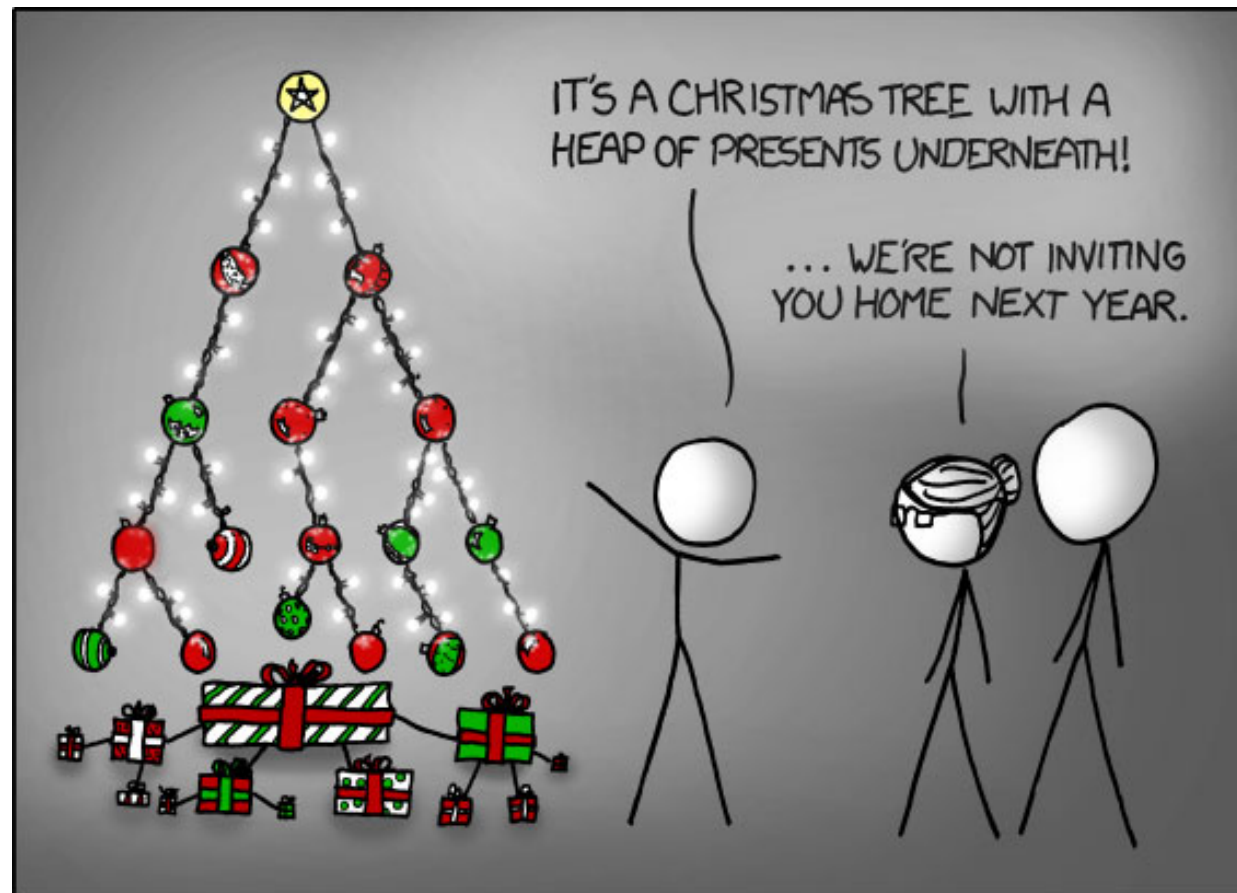
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<https://xkcd.com/835/>

Administrivia

- ❖ Unit Summary #3 – due Friday (5/28)
- ❖ Lab 5 (on Mem Alloc) due the last day of class (6/04)
 - Understanding the concepts *first* and efficient *debugging* will save you lots of time
 - Light style grading
 - Can be submitted at most ONE day late. (Sun 6/06)
 - hw25 – Do EARLY, will help with Lab 5
- ❖ **Questions Docs:** Use @uw google account to access!!
 - <https://tinyurl.com/CSE351-21sp-Questions>

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

we've assumed this up to now

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**

Reading Review

- ❖ Terminology:
 - Garbage collection: mark-and-sweep
 - Memory-related issues in C

Wouldn't it be nice...

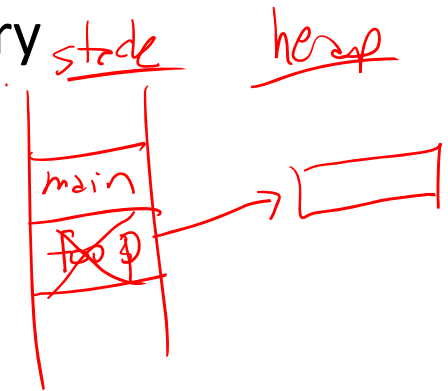
- ❖ If we never had to free memory?
- ❖ Do you free objects in Java?
 - Reminder: *implicit* allocator

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! */  
}
```



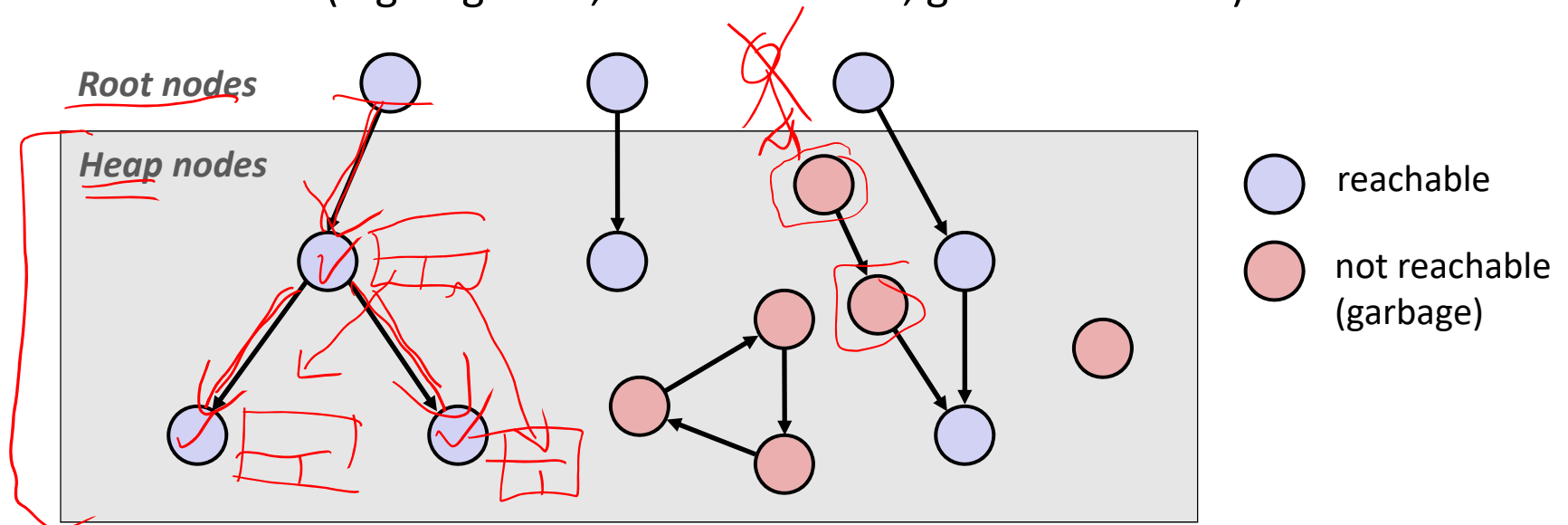
- ❖ Common in implementations of functional languages, scripting languages, and modern object oriented languages:
 - Lisp, Racket, Erlang, ML, Haskell, Scala, Java, C#, Perl, Ruby, Python, Lua, JavaScript, Dart, Mathematica, MATLAB, many more...
- ❖ Variants (“conservative” garbage collectors) exist 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

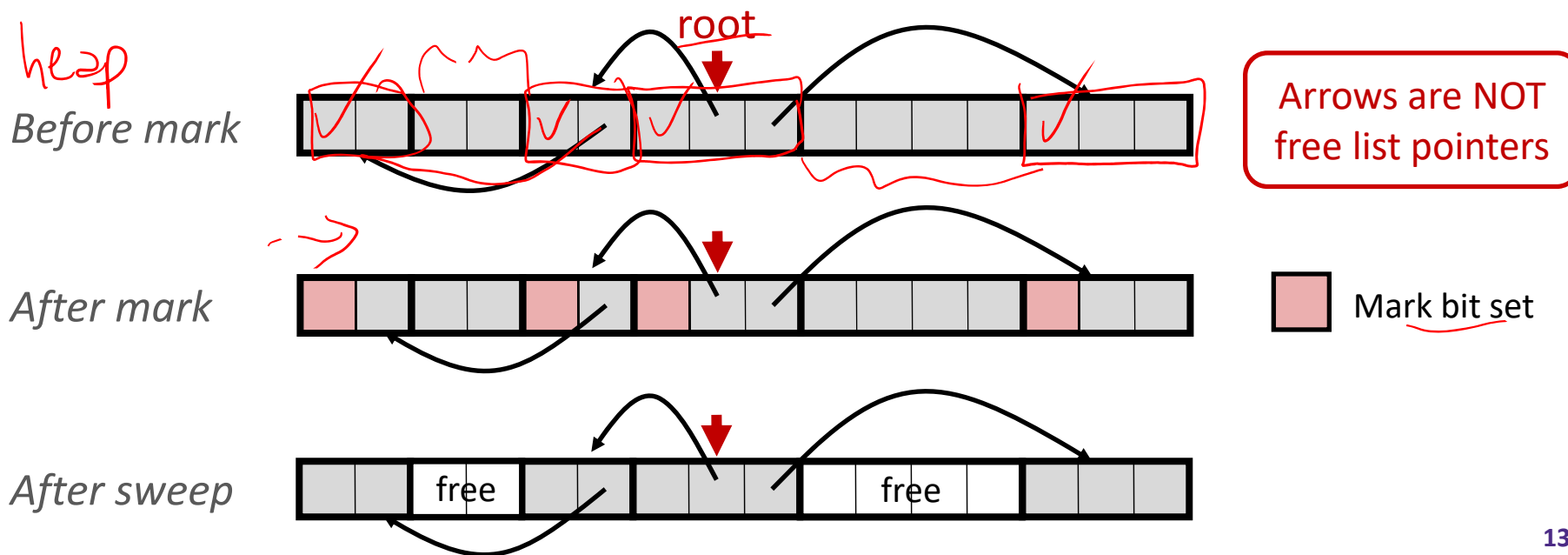
- ❖ Dynamic memory allocator can free blocks if there are no pointers to them
- ❖ How can it know what is a pointer and what is not?
- ❖ We'll make some *assumptions* about pointers:
 - Memory allocator can distinguish pointers from non-pointers
 - All pointers point to the start of a block in the heap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

*x = get_roots();
for p in x:
mark(p)*

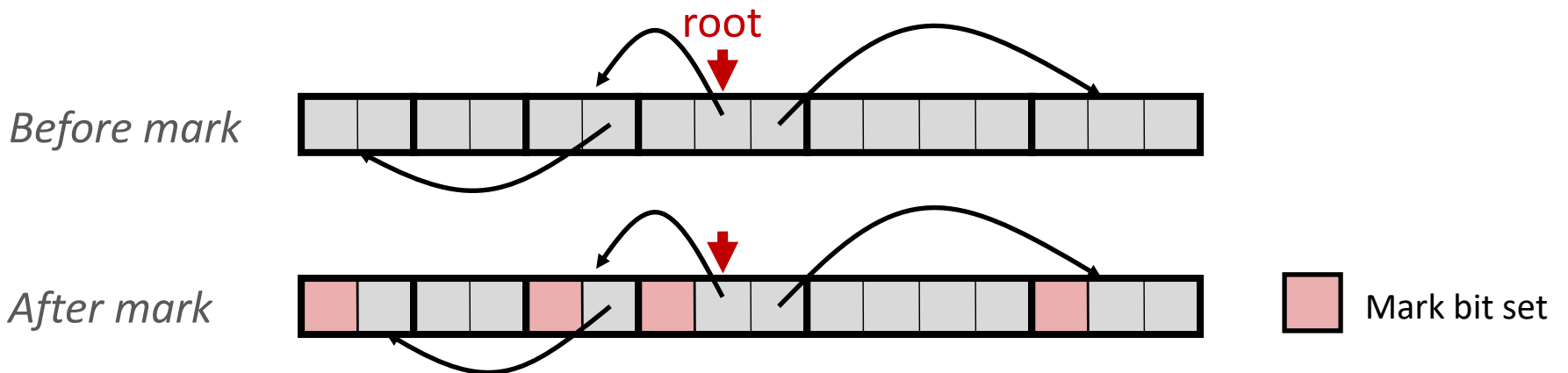
Non-testable
Material

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

```

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

↑ avoids graph cycles and presumably already traversed



Non-testable
Material

Sweep

❖ Sweep using sizes in headers

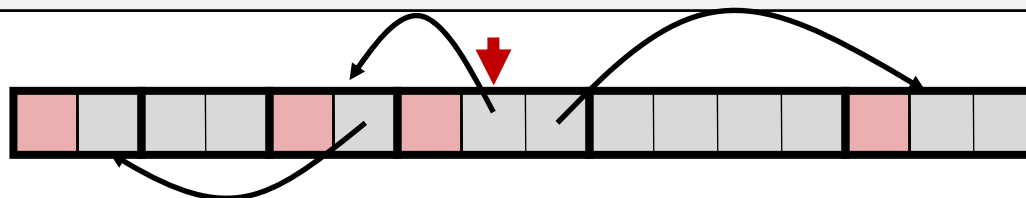
```

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

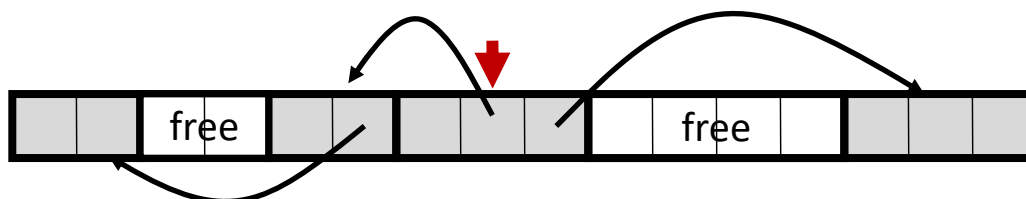
next block →

After mark



Mark bit set

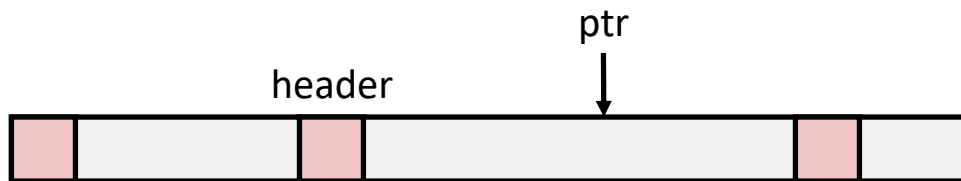
After sweep



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?	Fixes:
A) Dereferencing a non-pointer			
B) Freed block – access again			
C) Freed block – free again			
D) Memory leak – failing to free memory			
E) No bounds checking			
F) Reading uninitialized memory			
G) Referencing nonexistent variable			
H) Wrong allocation size			

Q1: Find That Bug! (Slide 19)

```
char s[8]; //small buffer
int i;

gets(s); /* reads "123456789" from stdin */
```

no bounds checking

Error Type: E

Prog stop Possible? Y

buffer overflow!

Fix: `fgets(s, 8)`

Q2: Find That Bug! (Slide 20)

```
int* foo() {
    int val = 0;
    return &val;
}
```

↑ can't be in a register



referencing nonexistent variables

Error Type: **G**

valid address on the stack

Prog stop Possible? **N**

Fix: *pass-by-reference to foo or use malloc instead*

Q3: Find That Bug! (Slide 21)

```

int** p;

p = (int**)malloc( N * sizeof(int) );
                                ↑ allocates N ints = 4*N bytes
for (int i = 0; i < N; i++) {
    p[i] = (int*)malloc( M * sizeof(int) );
}
    ↑ writes to N int* = 8*N bytes

```

- N and M defined elsewhere (#define)

wrong
allocation
size

Error Type: H

runs off end
of allocated
block

Prog stop Possible? Y

Fix: $N * \text{sizeof}(\text{int}^*)$

Q4: 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;
}

```

*y[i] = y[i] + A[i][j] * x[j];*
↑ reads uninitialized values!

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

reading uninitialized memory

*just using uninitialized values
- runs fine but get weird results*

Error Type:

F

Prog stop Possible?

N

Fix:

calloc (N, sizeof(int))

Q5: Find That Bug! (Slide 23)

❖ The classic scanf bug

▪ `int scanf(const char *format, ...)`

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

← reads input, parses int, stores into location val

See: <http://www.cplusplus.com/reference/cstdio/scanf/?kw=scanf>

dereferencing
a non-pointer

Error Type: A

segfault if val
does not contain
a valid address

Prog stop Possible? Y

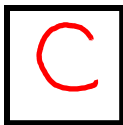
Fix: `scanf("%d", &val);`

Q6: Find That Bug! (Slide 24)

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

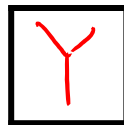
free again

Error
Type:



undefined behavior
(some systems will segfault)

Prog stop
Possible?



Fix:

free(y)

↑ probably a typo

Q7: Find That Bug! (Slide 25)

```
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]++;
```

access freed memory

undefined
behavior

Error
Type:

B

Prog stop
Possible?

Y

Fix:


free(x) later
(at bottom)

(Not in Ed) Find That Bug! (Slide 26)

```

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

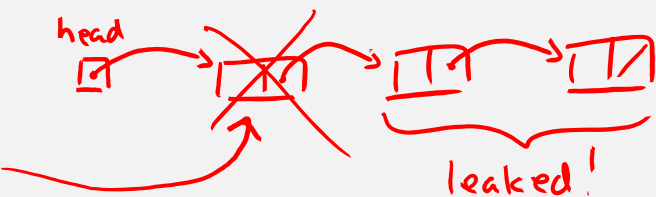
void foo() {
    list *head = (list *) malloc( sizeof(list) );
    head->val = 0;
    head->next = NULL;
    // create and manipulate the rest of the list
    ...
    free(head);
    return;
}
    
```

node: 

mallocs here (pointing to the `malloc` call)

only frees first node! (pointing to the `free(head)` call)

leaked! (pointing to a diagram of a linked list where the first node is crossed out and the rest remain)



memory leak

Error Type: D

Prog stop Possible? N

Fix: recursive/iterative free over list

how do you detect?

Non-testable
Material

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.)

Non-testable
Material

- ❖ 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 ...?

Non-testable
Material

- ❖ 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

