Memory Allocation III

CSE 351 Winter 2021

Instructor:

Mark Wyse

Teaching Assistants:

Kyrie Dowling

Catherine Guevara

Ian Hsiao

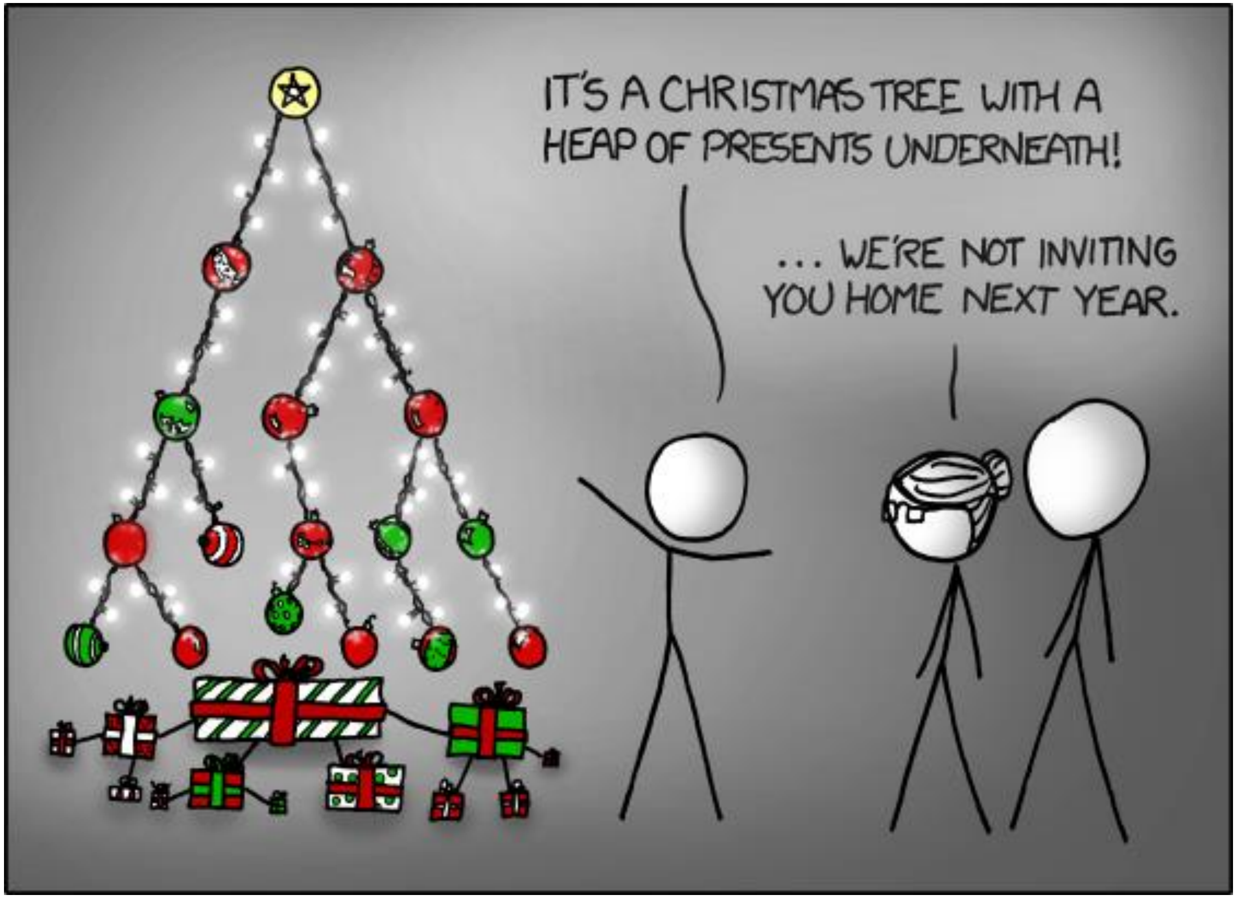
Jim Limprasert

Armin Magness

Allie Pfleger

Cosmo Wang

Ronald Widjaja



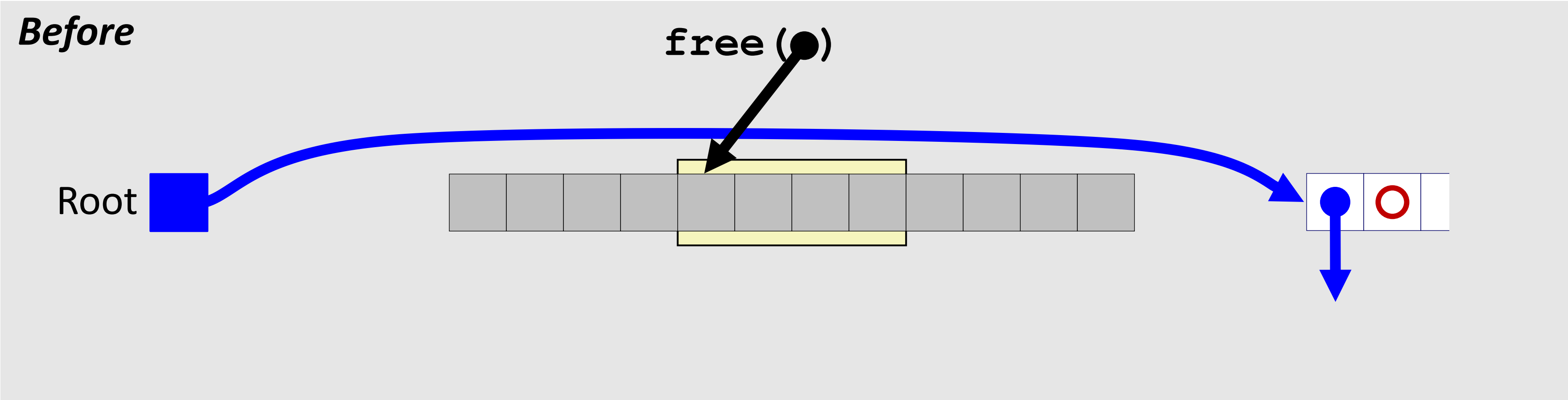
https://xkcd.com/835/

Administrivia

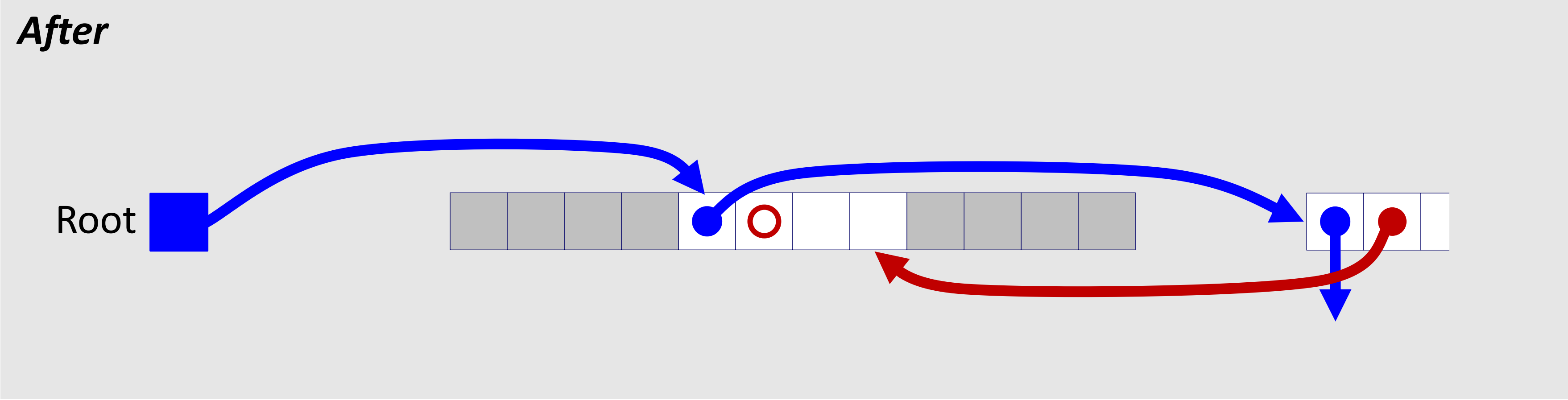
- hw21 due Tonight!
- hw22 due Friday
- Study Guide 3 due Wed March 17
  - Note: 1 page max for Task 1
  - No Late Submissions
- Lab 5 due Wed March 17
  - No Late Submissions

Freeing with LIFO Policy (Case 1)

Boundary tags not shown, but don't forget about them!

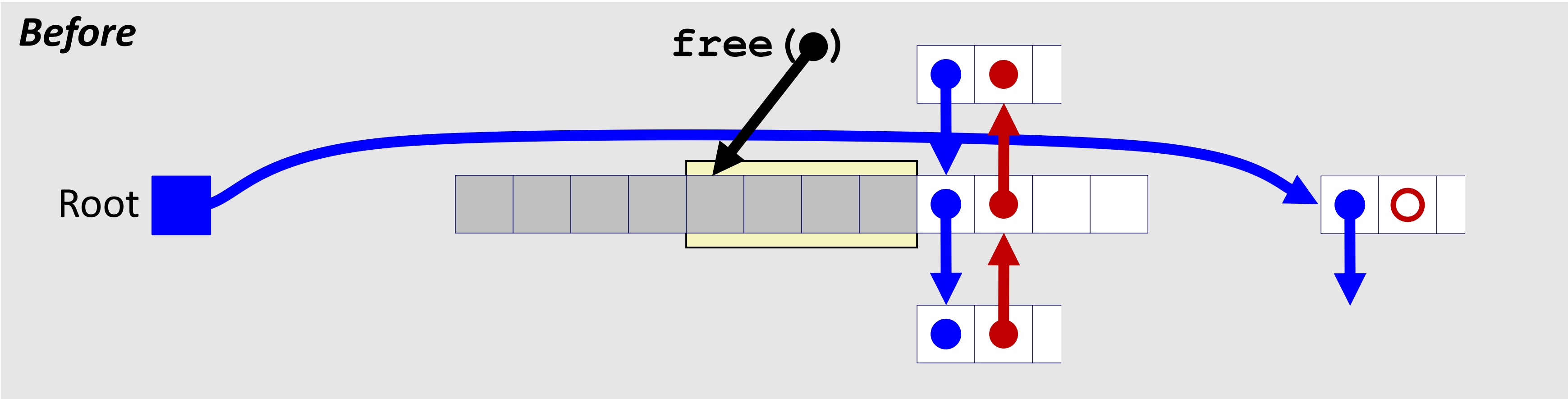


- Insert the freed block at the root of the list

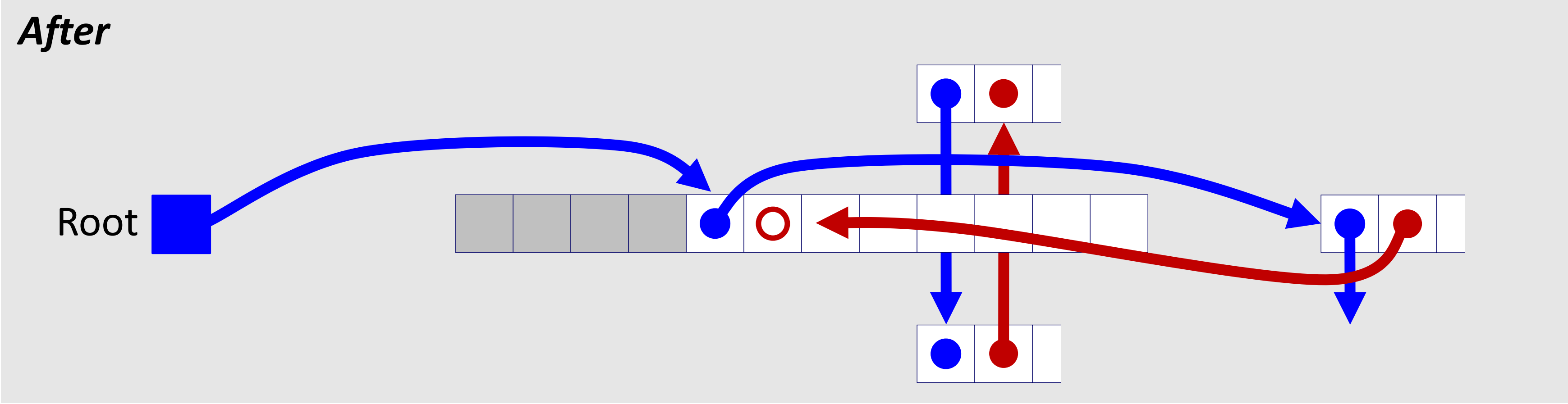


Freeing with LIFO Policy (Case 2)

Boundary tags not shown, but don't forget about them!

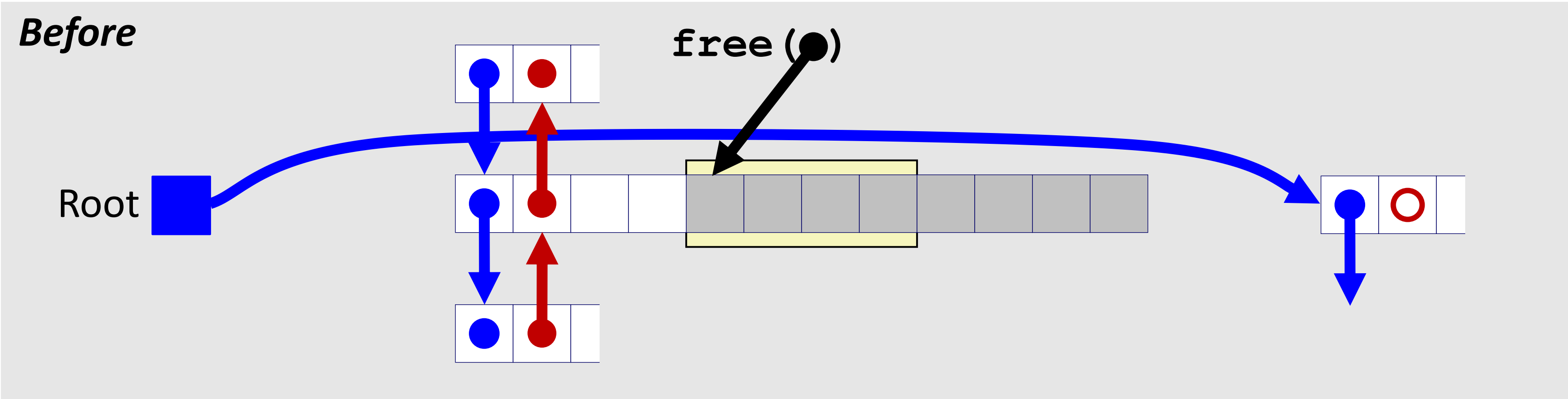


- Splice *following* block out of list, coalesce both memory blocks, and insert the new block at the root of the list

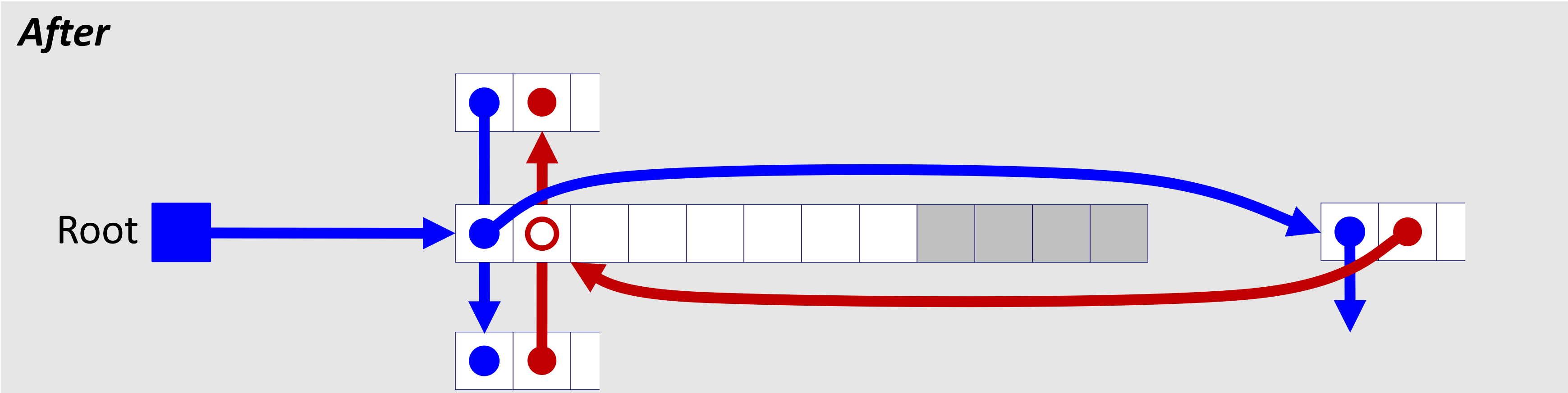


Freeing with LIFO Policy (Case 3)

Boundary tags not shown, but don't forget about them!

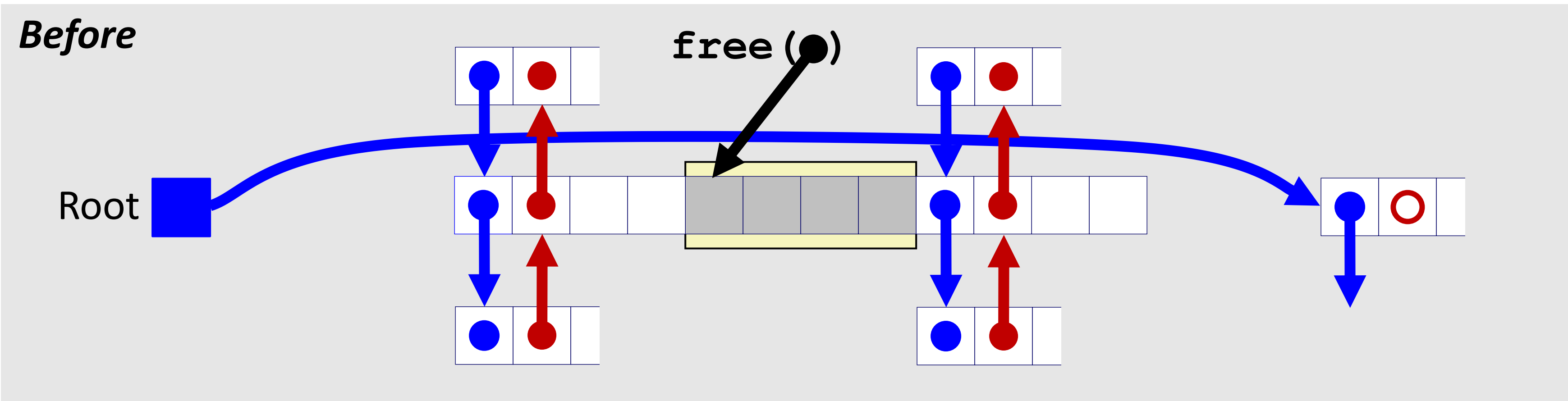


- Splice *preceding* block out of list, coalesce both memory blocks, and insert the new block at the root of the list

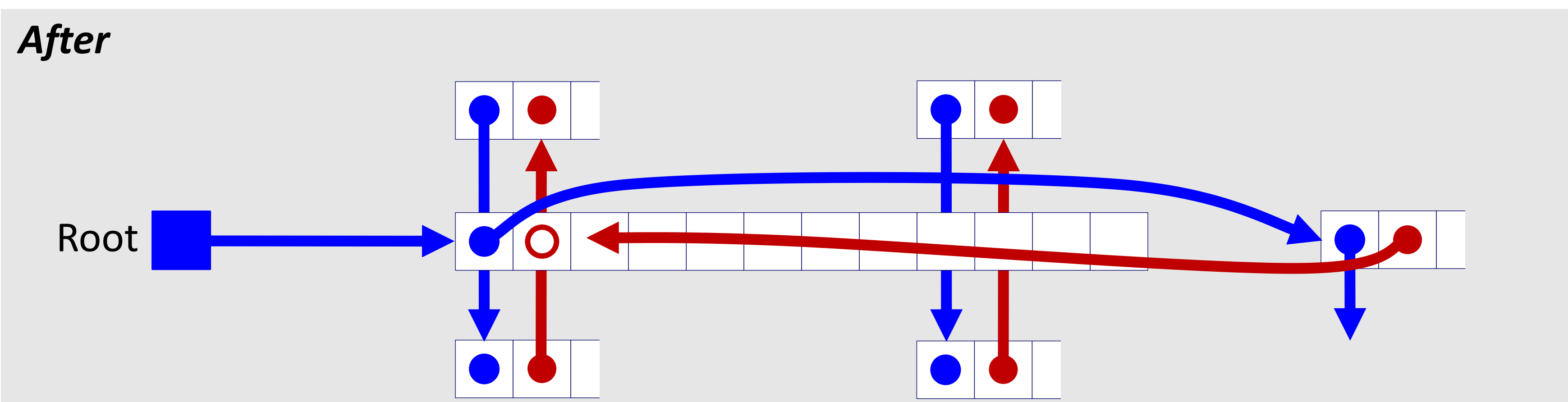


Freeing with LIFO Policy (Case 4)

Boundary tags not shown, but don't forget about them!



- Splice *preceding* and *following* blocks out of list, coalesce all 3 memory blocks, and insert the new block at the root of the list



Explicit List Summary

- Comparison with implicit list:
  - Block allocation is linear time in number of ***free*** blocks instead of ***all*** blocks
    - ***Much faster*** when most of the memory is full
  - Slightly more complicated allocate and free since we need to splice blocks in and out of the list
  - Some extra space for the links (2 extra pointers needed for each free block)
    - Increases minimum block size, leading to more internal fragmentation

- Most common use of explicit lists is in conjunction with *segregated free lists*
  - Keep multiple linked lists of different size classes, or possibly for different types of objects

Lab 5 Hints

- Struct pointers can be used to access field values, even if no struct instances have been created – just reinterpreting the data in memory
- Pay attention to boundary tag data
  - Size value + 2 tag bits – when do these need to be updated and do they have the correct values?
  - The `examine_heap` function follows the implicit free list searching algorithm – don't take its output as "truth"
- Learn to use and interpret the trace files for testing!!!
- A special heap block marks the end of the heap

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

Non-testable / Reference Material

- 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 de-/allocation: garbage collection**
- **Common memory-related bugs in C**

Reading Review

- Terminology:
  - Garbage collection: mark-and-sweep
  - Memory-related issues in C
- Questions from the Reading?

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

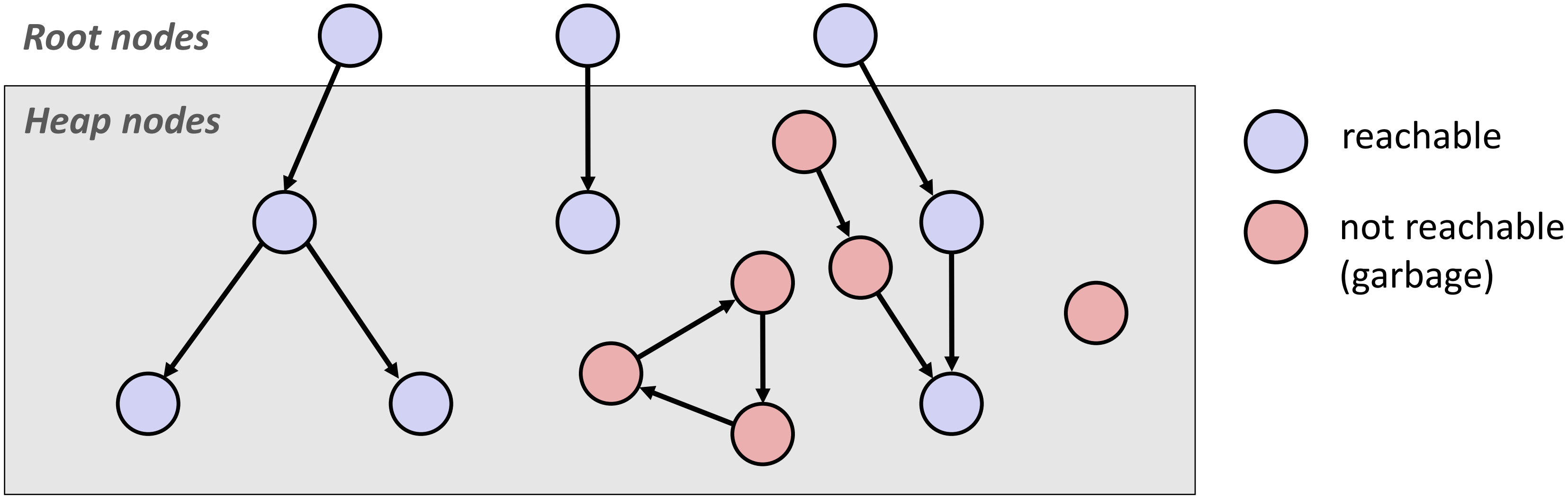
Garbage Collection

- 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

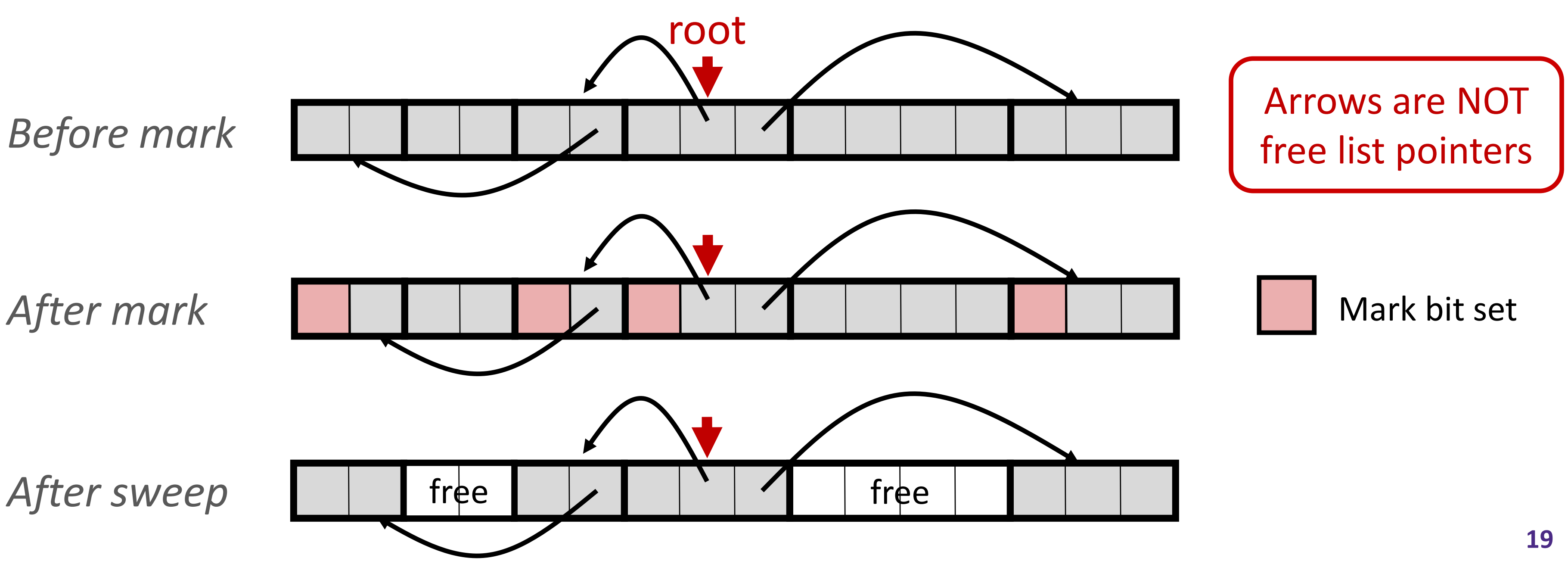
- Dynamic memory allocator can free blocks if there are no pointers to them
- How can it know what is a pointer and what is not?
- We'll make some *assumptions* about pointers:
  - Memory allocator can distinguish pointers from non-pointers
  - All pointers point to the start of a block in the heap
  - 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
  - ***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]`)

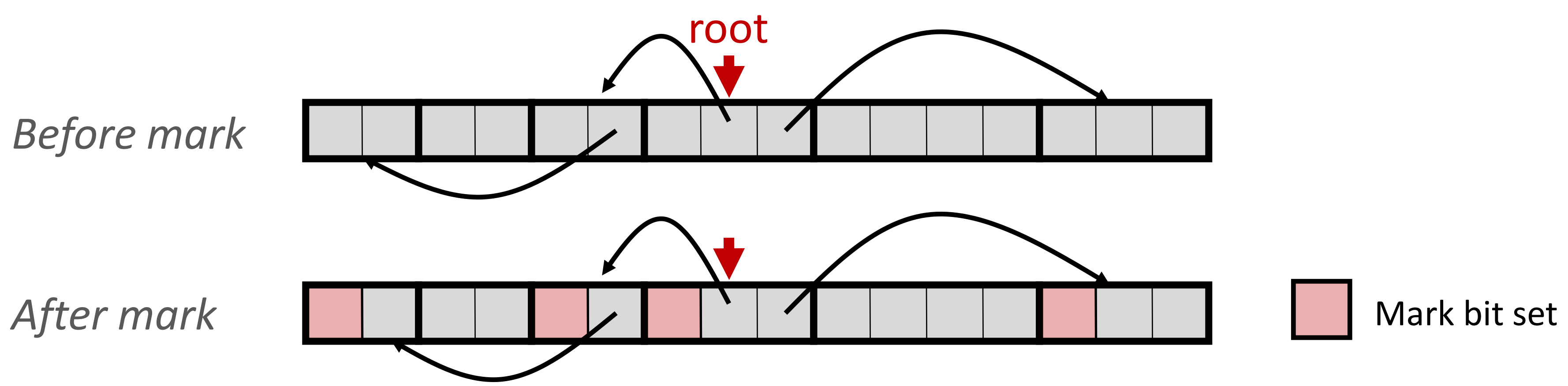
- Functions used by the garbage collector:
  - `is_ptr(p)` determines whether `p` is a pointer to a block
  - `length(p)` returns length of block pointed to by `p`, not including header
  - `get_roots()` returns all the roots

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;
}
```

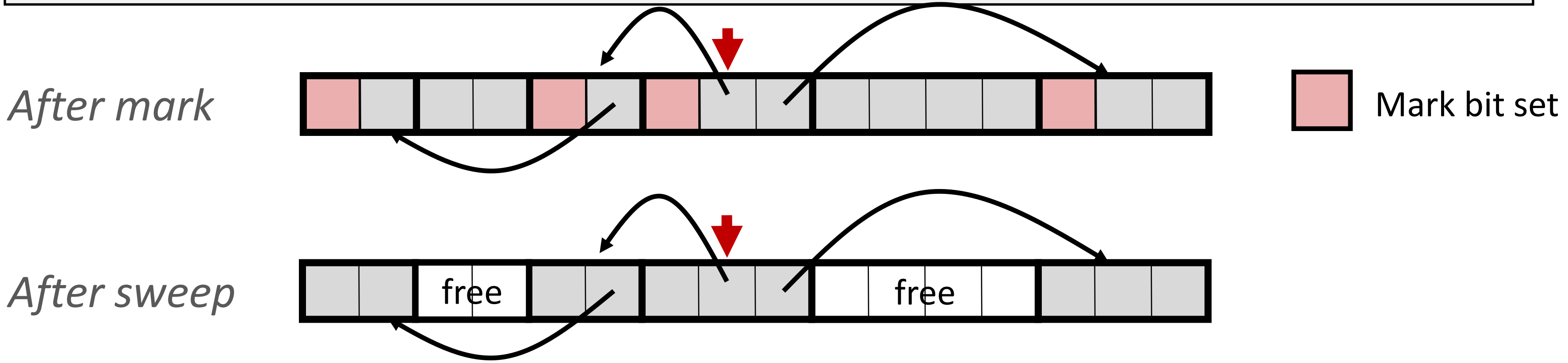


Sweep

Non-testable Material

- Sweep using sizes in headers

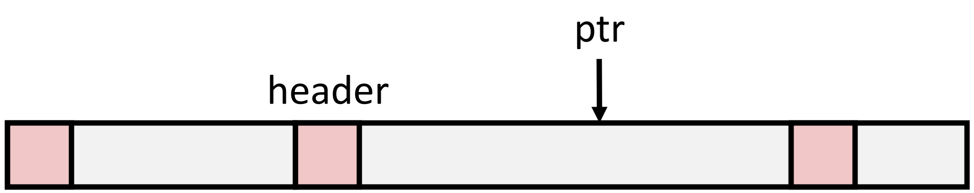
```
ptr sweep(ptr p, ptr end) {           // ptrs to start & end of heap
    while (p < end) {                  // while not at end of heap
        if (markBitSet(p))             // check if block is marked
            clearMarkBit(p);           // if so, reset mark bit
        else if (allocateBitSet(p))    // if not marked, but allocated
            free(p);                   // free the block
        p += length(p);                // 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?	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			

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* foo() {
    int val = 0;

    return &val;
}
```

Error Type: ☐ **Prog stop Possible?** ☐ **Fix:**

Find That Bug! (Slide 27)

```
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 28)

```
/* 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 29)

- The classic `scanf` bug
  - `int scanf(const char *format)`

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

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) );
   // manipulate y
free(x);
```

Error Type:

Prog stop Possible?

Fix:

Find That Bug! (Slide 31)

```
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 32)

```
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

Non-testable Material

- 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