Java-C++ Comparison

- A refresher in OO language features
- Ask questions!

Differences at a Glance

Java eliminates some of the C++ complexities

- No preprocessor (\#define, \#include, \#ifdef)
  - no biggie? (cpp -P and some shell stuff)
- No direct memory access (pointers to existing storage)
- No multiple inheritance
- No operator overloading, no implicit conversions
- No goto, free, typedef
- No unions
- No stand-alone functions, global variables
- No templates

Differences at a Glance

Java adds some things to C++

- Interfaces
- Garbage collection
- Object, reflection
- Threading (and monitors) in the language
- Bound/cast checking

Java does many things differently

- Packages, inner classes
- Arrays
- Incremental compilation
- Virtual machine and bytecodes

Interesting Changes: Packages

- Java has no global variables and functions
  - everything is part of a class
- Java packages are a module mechanism, like C++ namespaces
  - unlike modules in other languages, namespaces and packages are open
- Access specifiers:
  - for packages, public or private (by omitting public)
  - for classes, private, public, protected, or package-protected (by omitting all access specifiers)
References

- Java has no pointers to memory—objects and arrays are always passed “by reference-value”
  - “by reference” is another term used, but it’s overloaded (e.g., C++ reference types have the textbook “by reference” semantics)
  - what is the difference? How do C++ references and const references work? How are Java primitives passed?

- This has some side-effects:
  - copying can be done only with the clone method (on Cloneable types)
  - deep equality can be tested only with the equals method (or equivalent)
  - no direct access to memory, no pointer arithmetic, reference types treated differently than primitive types

Garbage Collection

- Java has no explicit free statement, memory is reclaimed automatically
- A “finalizer” may be called
- What’s wrong with never reclaiming any memory?
  - address space “real estate” is cheap, isn’t it?
- Does this mean there can be no memory leaks?
  - Swing/AWT listener that is not removed after it is no longer needed (either by fault of user code or by fault of system code)
  - a field is not set to null, expecting to be overwritten in the future
  - a local variable is not set to null, expecting to go out of scope soon
  - a problem in long-running methods
  - caching strategy makes objects become unreachable more slowly

Arrays

- No support for multidimensional arrays: they are just arrays of arrays
  - this is not the same in C/C++, despite the similar syntax: an array of pointers to arrays is what’s closest to Java
  - think of the memory layout and recall that multidimensional arrays is where the array/pointer duality breaks in C

- Interesting syntax:
  - byte f[][] = new byte[128][16]
  - int i[][] = new int[100][]

- Arrays are covariant:
  - if the following is legal,
    B b; A a = b;
  - then the following is also legal
    A a[] = new B[];

Threads and Monitors

- Monitor-style concurrent programming:
  - using mutexes for exclusion from a critical section
  - using conditions (i.e., wait statements) for protected waiting
    - used for inclusion in a critical section
    - this is hard: ask me if you are not familiar

- Java supports concurrent programming with threads and monitors at the language level
  - synchronized keyword
  - “friendly” thread library
Method Overriding

• A method with the same signature can be defined and it overrides the superclass method - the new method is called for objects of the subclass

  (what’s the difference with “overloading”?)

• The overriding method needs to have the exact same signature as the original (non-variance)

• In C++, the return type can be more specific (covariance)

Interfaces

• Interfaces partially describe the signature of a class
  - not sufficient for static type checking, unfortunately: no nested classes, no constructors, no final attributes, etc.

• Interface conformance needs to be explicitly declared (named, not structural conformance)

• Interfaces used to eliminate a common need for multiple inheritance

C++ Templates (10 mile-high view)

• Class templates:
  template <class E1, class E2>
  struct Pair {
    E1 fst;
    E2 snd;
    ...
  };

• Function templates:
  template <class T>
  const T& max(const T& e1, const T& e2) {
    if (e1 > e2)
      return e1;
    else
      return e2;
  }

C++ Operator Overloading and Implicit Conversions

• Very advanced features from a language design point of view
  - they are essentially extensibility features for C++ compilers
  - can be used to redefine the syntax and the type system of the language

• Overloading:
  struct F {
    ...
    int operator[] (int index) { ... };
  };

• Implicit conversion:
  class F {
    operator int() const { return 1; }
  };