

Panorama Cotton FAQ

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Panorama Cotton FAQ v0.85

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Display Test: If the following row of numbers (79 total) wraps to a second
line, this FAQ will display incorrectly:

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Version History:

0.75 - First release

0.85 - Cleaned up spelling and grammar

- Added Boss Strategies

- Added more tips

- Rearranged some sections

- Added small intro

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III. Introduction

Panorama Cotton is a late-era Mega Drive/Genesis game released exclusively in Japan. It is a shooter modeled closely off of Sega's famous Space Harrier, but with more diversity in graphics and gameplay. It is also one game in a series starring the same loveable anime witch. See "The History of Cotton" below for more details.

The purpose of this FAQ is to act as a detailed instruction manual. Few people own the real manual that came with the game, and ever fewer understand it. This guide will offer little beyond that, however, and it is up to the player to really learn the game for themselves. Don't worry, though, figuring out the game for yourself is half the fun.

II. Getting the Game:

Part of the reason why Panorama Cotton is so obscure is because it's so hard to get a hold of. Not only was it released exclusively in Japan, but in remarkably small numbers; I've heard only 5,000-10,000 copies were ever produced. Needless to say, 10 years later, it's become incredibly rare.

If you want a legit copy, your best (and pretty much only) bet is to go on Ebay, where you'll probably wind up paying a princely triple digit sum for yours. You might luck out and get one for less than \$100, like a cart only, but don't count on it. If you happen to be in Japan, you just might score a good deal at a used game store somewhere...but don't count on that either.

However, those of us who don't find that appealing have other options. The first and most likely is emulation. An in depth explanation of how emulation works is beyond the scope of this FAQ, and I cannot give you a location of the ROM, either. I can only tell you that this game can be emulated with no problems on a capable PC. Gens and Kega Fusion are the emulators of choice.

Finally, in the past year, Genesis flash carts that allow one to upload a ROM to a cartridge and play on a real system have become available. Panorama Cotton works with these carts. They are pseudo-legal by nature, so I cannot give any more information about them.

Users of genuine hardware will be pleased to know that there is no region protection in the software. However, it will run at reduced speed in a PAL machine.

III. The Options Menu:

Select "Option" at the title screen to enter the options menu (duh). Starting from the top, here is what you'll see:

Select: Original/Score Attack

Score Attack differs from the Original game in two main ways: First, you will see a timer in the lower left hand screen, where it normally just says

"Cotton". This is your game time, off which your time bonus is based. In Score Attack mode, you'll presumably get better time bonuses with this thing on, although I think the bonus rates are the same. The other big difference is that the yellow crystals give points when you get them, but they no longer give experience for your main shot power. Thus, the only way to advance your power level is to destroy enemies.

Level: Easy/Normal/Hard

Fairly self explanatory. However, what this doesn't tell you is that the only difference this makes is in the amount of damage Cotton will take after being hit. This will always vary anyway, depending on what hit you. Enemy patterns, bullet speeds, boss behaviors, and everything else stays the same throughout.

Life: 6/3[+100,000]/1[+200,000]

When you begin the game, the first number here will be how many blocks of health you start out with. Also, if you die and continue, you will resume from the last checkpoint with this number again. The numbers next to 3 and 1 in the brackets are bonus points that you get if you choose those options. Regardless of how many health blocks you start out with, your life meter always has the same maximum limit.

Up ~ Down: Normal/Reverse

Panorama Cotton puts you behind Cotton as you play. With this option on normal, pressing up will move Cotton up on the screen, just like you would expect. Reverse gives the player the "cockpit effect"; by pressing up, Cotton will move down, and vice versa. There is no particular advantage to either one, so it's all about what you're more comfortable with.

Control: Type [1]/Type [2]/Type [3]/Type [4]/Type [5]/Type [6]

This refers to the 3 action buttons in the game, and which button on your controller they correspond to. The actions are explained in greater detail in the gameplay section. I recommend Type [1] or [2], since they put the Shoot button in the middle, which offers faster access to the other 2 commands.

Type [1]: A = Speed - B = Shoot - C = Magic

Type [2]: A = Magic - B = Shoot - C = Speed

Type [3]: A = Shoot - B = Magic - C = Speed

Type [4]: A = Speed - B = Magic - C = Shoot

Type [5]: A = Shoot - B = Speed - C = Magic

Type [6]: A = Magic - B = Speed - C = Shoot

Panorama Cotton is compatible with 6 button controllers, but it makes no use of the additional buttons.

BGM/Voice/SE

Complete sound test, with all the music tracks, voice clips, and sound effects from the game. Selecting 0 under any heading will stop all sounds.

Voice [BGM Cut]: On/Off

This allows the enabling and disabling of Cotton's voice effects in the game. With this on, as she says something, the background music is cut out momentarily. After that, the music resumes where it left off.

IV. The Gameplay: How It All Works

Overview:

If you've ever started this game up, you've most likely captured the essence of

how Panorama Cotton functions as a game. On a fundamental level, it's quite simple: this is a chase-shooter, putting the player and the shooter vehicle itself in a forward-moving, into-the-screen perspective, where enemies zoom in from a distance. Cotton has full maneuverability in 2 dimensions, while enemies and bullets work within a confined 3 dimensional zone in front of you. You've almost certainly seen this kind of game before.

Panorama Cotton is still a mostly a 2D game, and can be thought of as such. The bottom line with the gameplay is where you place Cotton on her 2D plane. Also, unlike similar games such as Star Fox on the SNES, there is no action outside of the area on the screen. That is to say, if you can't see an object, it doesn't exist and you don't need to worry about it. Like in its ancestor Space Harrier, all of the objects in the playing field will displace slightly according to your movements, but this is natural, and it feels that way.

A. Shooting

Your primary means of destroying enemies in Panorama Cotton is with your one main weapon: your shot. If something can be destroyed, these can do the job. Tap the button (default B), fire a shot, and watch a bullet zoom straight off into the distance in front of you. Learn to aim at enemies, and you've just mastered 2/3 of the gameplay in Panorama Cotton. There's even a small sight to help you aim, if you need it. As easy as this is, there are quite a lot of details.

The power of your main shot is determined by a weapon level. You start at level 1, the weakest, and can go as high as 5. There is a small meter in the lower left of the screen with your weapon level number to the side of it. Every time this meter fills, you go up a level, and with each level the meter empties and grows in size. The experience needed to fill this meter is gained mostly by destroying enemies. Large chunks of experience can also be made by collecting yellow crystals. When you are at level 5, the meter can still fill, and when it does all the way, you get a nice 10,000 point bonus. The meter simply resets, and you'll still be at level 5.

Taking damage reduces your weapon experience and you can drop right through entire levels quickly, so watch out.

One way you can fire your weapon rapidly is by taping shots off one at a time as quickly as you can. This will kill your thumb in about 10-15 minutes, but it is the way that requires the least thought. Holding the fire button down will let Cotton shoot off bullets automatically, but after about 4 seconds your fairy friend silk will start circling around you, and your shots will become far less frequent until you release the button. This action is related to the use of certain magic spells, which I'll explain later. What this means here is that if you want to use the game's built-in auto-fire, you'll need to develop a rhythm for pressing the fire button for 1-3 second intervals, with releases in between. This isn't very hard, and becomes natural quickly. Obviously, if you've got a controller with auto-fire you can use it instead, but in my experience that kind of auto-fire doesn't shoot as rapidly.

B. Using Magic

Panorama Cotton utilizes a simple yet effective magic system, and using it intelligently is the key to having a good game. In the lower right hand area of the screen, you'll see a row of 6 boxes. At the game's start, you'll see 3 of these boxes filled, each with a different symbol. These represent the 3 basic types of magic. You start with one of each, and each grants one cast of a

spell. The furthest box on the left with a special frame around it contains the magic you have "on deck", and it is the one that can be used when you cast a spell. After it is used, all the remaining symbols will slide over one to the left, placing the next spell in line in the on deck box. When a spell is obtained by collecting a colored crystal, the new magic will cut in line and put itself in the on deck box. When the line exceeds 6 spells, the last one on the right will drop off and disappear.

Spell casting always involves pressing the magic button (default C), but it's a little complicated. Each of the 3 magic types actually enables two spells that can be cast. In other words, any time you have a magic symbol on deck, you can cast one of two spells. The first type can be fired instantly by Cotton when the magic button is pressed, and a second type is a fairy support magic that requires "activating" Silk first. Remember how when you hold down the shot button for a few seconds, Silk starts circling around you until you release? Well, fairy support magic is used by getting Silk into this circling mode, and then pressing the magic button while still holding the shot button. You'll have to get used to this, and it is a bit inconvenient, but it's a fair trade for Silk's handy spells.

C. 3 types of Magic

1. Red Magic:

Cotton's main spell: Fire Dragon

Activating this magic will release a segmented red dragon on the screen, which happens to look like a scaled down version of the first boss from Space Harrier. The Fire Dragon will zoom all over the screen randomly, starting in the foreground area where Cotton is located, then slowly wandering off into the distance in front of you until it fades out. Any enemies unlucky enough to be in its path are likely to get chomped on and destroyed. Possibly the prettiest spell, this one is actually somewhat impossible to apply to any direct purpose, and should never be relied upon to get you out of a jam. Instead, it's just a handy thing to toss out there in hopes of snagging a few extra enemies.

Silk's fairy support spell: Fire Fairy

Silk either calls up some friends or duplicates herself, and suddenly a swarm of fairies appears on the screen. Each one lights up like a candle, then like a swarm of locusts, they seek out enemies on the screen, homing in on them and doing damage. Individually the fire fairies are quite weak; if they are spread thin between too many enemies, they will only weaken and not kill them. Together, however, they can pack a considerable punch, which makes them ideal for some boss fights. Very useful.

2. Blue Magic:

Cotton's main spell: Thunder

The primary blue magic spell will start by encircling you in a ring of electric balls. This ring will rotate around you clockwise 1 full time, and then blast off down the play field, destroying all but the strongest enemies in its path. This spell can be used as an offensive shield during it's first phase, although Cotton can still take damage during that time. You'll quickly discover that this spell is incredibly effective for directly and intently destroying large amounts of enemies. It's the spell I seek and use most.

Fairy support spell: Barrier and Thunderball

Silk wraps Cotton in a little blue shield reminiscent of one from Sonic the

Hedgehog. This shield will remain active for about 25 seconds. If you get hit during that time, you will take no damage, but as soon as contact is made, the shield will discharge into the Thunderball. A bolt (har!) floats into the center of the screen, and erupts into a bomb damaging everything in the play field. This is basically your full-screen bomb, but it is fairly weak. Cotton will remain immune to damage until the Thunderball is finished.

3. Green Magic:

Cotton's main spell: Boxtree Fruit

...Or at least that's what the manual calls them. Really, these are just homing missiles. Unfortunately, these aren't even as good as the Fire Fairy spell, because although they are reasonably powerful, they need you to have your sight set on the enemy as you fire for them to work. They will then lock on to the enemy and follow it until they hit it. As the easiest spell to collect and initiate, it shouldn't be a surprise that this is probably the worst one.

Fairy support spell: Fairy Launcher

This one takes a moment to start. Silk inflates a little bit and starts spinning around, and one by one, little green balls appear from various angles and start revolving around her. Any enemy that comes in contact with one of these balls takes damage, and is probably destroyed. Silk and these balls will always remain in the same range as Cotton on the play field, meaning enemies are in peril if they come close enough to you to bump into you. It also means that this spell is 100% useless against bosses, which all remain at a distance. Like the Fire Dragon spell, this one shouldn't be relied upon for any specific purpose, but rather to pick off extra enemies.

D. Magic Crystals

These have been mentioned several times by now, and you're probably wondering what they are all about. In case you didn't read the other parts, magic crystals are the source of your magic spells, as well as a great boost for your main weapon experience. Here's how they work.

A magic crystal will appear after shooting an enemy under the right conditions. What exactly these conditions are is unclear, since crystals often appear inconsistently from game to game. Totally random factors may be involved. However, it's fair to say that in general, crystals come after shooting a certain number of enemies, often after destroying an entire grouping of a given type.

A crystal always first appears as yellow. It will start at whatever distance away the enemy it came from was, and it will float towards you. It will gravitate towards you as well, but you still have to take some care to get it. Simply let them hit you to collect them. By shooting at a crystal you will stall it, and once it resumes coming towards you, it will do so faster.

More importantly, when you hit a crystal 3 times regardless of your shot level, it will change color. It usually starts with green, and it will alternate between yellow and the other two magic colors with each change. The progression of the colors always goes green, red, blue, green, red, blue, with yellow in between every time. Even though the first color up may be any of the 3 magic colors, green is the most common, and blue the least. Now you know why blue magic is so good.

Small crystals, the more common type, award one magic spell of its color or a small shot experience bonus upon being collected. Larger, fatter crystals award

two magic spells of its color or a large amount of weapon experience.

Be careful, though, after a crystal goes one color past a full cycle, it will break. If you shoot beyond the magic type you needed to get, just settle for a yellow.

NOTE: If you play in Score Attack mode, yellow crystals will award points instead of weapon experience. Small crystals give 1000 points, large gives 2000.

D. Health and Lives/Continues

The health system in Panorama Cotton is fairly straightforward. In the top-center area of the screen you will see a row of blocks, and from the left some of those blocks will be filled with yellow. The yellow blocks are your remaining health. When Cotton gets hit, the first yellow block on the right will shrink or disappear, depending on what hit you and how big the block was in the first place.

In general, running into an inactive object in the environment will do the least amount of damage to Cotton. Getting hit by an approaching enemy does more, and by an enemy's weapon does more still. There is a lot of variation, however, and you'll just have to learn what to look out for.

Every 50,000 points you earn, Cotton will receive a full block of health.

When a hit empties Cotton's health meter, she will lose a life, or rather a broom. Then comes the continue screen, where you can resume up to 6 times before getting a game over. Choosing to continue will send Cotton back to an unmarked checkpoint somewhere in the level you were playing, or to the beginning if you didn't make it very far in. You will have however many health points you chose to begin with replenished in your health meter (see the options menu section). Unfortunately, your points will be reset.

Finally, if Cotton happens to get hit while she is low on health and has a low shot-level, she might actually dodge the offending object. However, she will bounce around the screen for a few moments, and during that time it is impossible to shoot or use magic.

E. Speed

In the lower middle portion of the screen, you'll see a box conveniently marked in English "Speed". In it, there are 3 overlapping imprints of Cotton, and one of them is always illuminated with green as an indicator. This is your "broom speed", and not surprisingly, it controls the rate at which you fly through the levels. The left imprint is illuminated by default from the beginning, and it marks the slowest speed. Press the button (default A) to move over to the middle imprint and speed, and again to go to the right imprint and high speed. One more press brings you back down to low speed. Simple, eh? This can be done at any time. Along with moving forward at variable rates, Cotton's 2D movements will keep a relative speed as well.

The main purpose of speed adjustment is to effect your time bonus, explained in greater detail later on. In general, as you increase your speed, you increase the difficulty of the game; you have to react faster and more precisely. However, there are a few areas where higher speeds are to the player's distinct advantage. Also, during most boss fights you don't move forward at all, and the speed of the bosses actions remains the same regardless of where your speed is

set (their projectiles can be faster, however). Thus, higher broom speed often just means faster maneuverability, which can be a great asset.

V. Points and Bonuses

A. Tea Time

After beating a level boss, you will be rewarded with a Tea Time. Large numbers of tea cups will fly forward towards you, instead of vice versa. You must try to collect as many as possible before they stop. Just get in front of them and let them touch you, and you'll hear a little chime. Brown cups with a black kanji are worth 100 points, plus one attack bonus point. Lavender cups with light blue kanji are worth 500 points plus 2 attack bonus points. Both cup types can be shot for extra points, but collecting a cup is worth more than shooting it.

The amount of tea cups available is partially determined how many enemies you destroyed in the level. There will always be some tea cups, but there will be more if you take out lots of enemies.

B. End of Level Bonuses

After beating the main boss of a level and having "Tea Time", you will go to a screen where all of your bonuses for the level are counted up and added together. There are 3 bonuses:

Magic Bonus: This is based on how many spells you have left at the end of the level. You can have up to 6, and that number will be multiplied by 3000. Thus, you can get up to 18,000 points from this bonus.

Attack bonus: Added up based on the number of teacups you caught during Tea Time. Remember that there will be more cups available if you kill lots of enemies, and that the cups with the blue characters are worth 2. Here, the total number you received will be multiplied by 500, and you will receive that many points.

Time Bonus: Every level has a limited amount of time you can take to beat it before this bonus becomes nullified. For example, in Stage 1 the limit is 5 minutes. Taking longer than 5 minutes to beat this level will mean you get no bonus. However, if you took less than 5 minutes, then the seconds you had remaining will be multiplied by some number, which I cannot determine, and your bonus will be the two number's product. Thus, the faster you go through a level, the greater the time bonus will be. This can be your biggest bonus, getting up to 40,000+ points on certain levels.

Remember, every 50,000 points will get you an extra block of health. Take these bonuses seriously not only for your score, but because doing well guarantees extra health before the start of the next level, and that can really save your bacon sometimes.

C. In-Game Bonuses

1. Bonus orbs:

Scattered throughout all the levels are orbs with stars in the middle. There are two types: Blue and rainbow-flashing, although both have white stars. Blue orbs get you 500 points, flashing ones get you 1000. Collect them by flying into them. Sometimes you have to shoot them out of a fixture, from which they will fly to wherever you were when you hit them.

2. Kangaroo cards and Jizo:

At various points in the game, you will come across sets of cards with kangaroos on them. By shooting them, you can make them change color, between blue and orange. After they change color 4 times, they will blow up, giving you 1000 points each. However, the wiser thing to do is not destroy them, but make all the cards in the set the same color. If you pull this off, you will be rewarded with an opportunity to get bonuses from Jizo, who happens to be the guardian spirit of children in Japanese mythology. Once he appears, shoot him, and he will spout bonuses until he is destroyed. Interestingly, his health seems to replenish slowly, meaning you can draw quite a lot of bonuses out of him if you take care. He'll spit any of the following at you: Small and large crystals, bonus orbs, blue-kanji tea cups (added to your tea time bonus), and occasionally he'll throw out a golden tea cup, worth 10,000 points. With the exception of one place in stage 4, this is the only way to get golden tea cups that I know of.

D. Silk's Dream

If you manage to have over 1,000,000 points at the game's end, you will be able to enter "Silk's Dream". This is simply the same game, except you play as a human-sized Silk, with a miniature Cotton floating around you. Nothing is really different, although Silk's hit area seems to be a little smaller than Cotton's.

----- VI. Boss Strategies -----

----- Stage 1: The Land of Cotton -----

Midboss: Piyo Piyo

This isn't really a boss. Instead, waves of those crazy-eyed yellow enemies from earlier in the level bounce towards you in mass numbers. They're not especially difficult to deal with, because you'll pass them as long as you don't die. As long as you keep firing and don't suddenly move in front of one of them, you'll probably be just fine. This is a great place to pick up magic crystals.

Tip: Raise your speed to full and fire off a Thunder spell to take out huge numbers of these guys.

Boss: Mr. Corgen

Notice the bridge in front of you. In the center there is a block that can be shot out to reveal a magic crystal, which will always be there. As for the rest

of the bridge, you'll see that you can destroy it all, starting with any of the stuff on top and then in from the center for the base.

Mr. Corgen will pop up and start roaming around in the distance, but you can't hurt him yet. Don't worry, he won't attack you until you can attack him. Peeps will start coming one by one from each side of the bridge, and they'll eventually jump at you, so try to take them out quickly. Once Mr. Corgen changes colors he becomes vulnerable, and you'll want shoot him as much as possible from then on. It will be easier to do this if the bridge is mostly gone. If Mr. Corgen doesn't die quickly enough, you'll see several objects start revolving around him, and moments later they will start spinning out towards you. After a while he'll bring them back in, but the cycle will restart after only a few moments. Hopefully you will be able to kill him before he starts in the first place.

Tip: Destroy either side of the bridge entirely, and you'll be able to shoot at some blocks underneath on each far side, making them rise up and fly across the screen. When one lands on the other side, you'll get a 1000 point bonus.
Woohoo!

Stage 2: The Way of the Clouds

Midboss: Direct Maime

This boss will appear in a random place somewhere near the center of the screen. Luckily, right before he pops out you'll see this place marked by a dot that is inconsistent with the background yet colored similarly. This boss has a primary head with many body segments, and the head is what you are aiming to destroy. As he appears, get in a couple quick shots before he flies off into the background. Once he does that, his body segments will break off and the head will begin exploding them into blossoming bullets coming straight at you. Out of all the parts swimming around in the distance, the head is the largest, so keep aiming for it as best you can. If you don't kill him quickly enough, the head will fly towards (but not necessarily at) you and off the screen, and it will fly back from an unpredictable angle. You should be able to destroy him before he gets around to doing anything else.

Boss: Undala

In the center of the screen you'll see a small guy with a turban pop up, and if you don't shoot him quickly enough he will send off a shot at you. Throughout the real boss fight, these little guys will be popping out of the clouds below and popping shots at you. It's a good idea to take them out fast, especially since they give 500 points apiece.

The real boss will appear shortly after that first little guy. He'll have two shields in his hands, and he won't take any damage as long as he is holding them. Moments after he appears his head will spout lots of strange yellow creatures, which will rain down on you from above and should be avoided. Waste no time blasting the shields into pieces, and then be sure to blow up all the pieces. If you don't do this fast enough, then by the time all the pieces are destroyed, he will begin his palm-slap attack. Be aware, his palms are big, fly straight at you very fast, and do big damage. Just keep hitting him until there is a small explosion sequence and he turns invisible.

If you managed to completely destroy his shields fast enough, and then do some

extra damage to him, he will skip straight to this part. Once he is invisible, he'll start roving back and forth across the screen horizontally. The only time you'll be able to see him is when one of your bullets makes contact with him, which will make him flash with rainbow colors. He'll keep up with his palm attack, but it will be much slower and easier to dodge, not to mention he will be aiming randomly. He'll stick with this pattern until he is dead.

Tip: If you don't kill him quickly enough, some holes in the wall behind him will open up and spout enemies at you. Keep your guard up, but you can destroy the holes when they are active for points.

Level 3: The Great Gallery

Mid-Boss: Alabbin

The third stage has many alternate paths, and it is actually possible to skip this boss entirely. He appears in two places: at the beginning if you choose the right path at the first split, and if you first choose left but then right at every other split he'll appear towards the end.

At this time I have not figured out exactly how this boss works. I suspect it involves rock-paper-scissors, but I'm not sure; I usually skip him. He's easy to beat, though. Do not shoot his body, your bullets will just bounce off. Instead, watch him hold up his hands and put them behind his back. He will wink and a tear will come off his face, then he'll bring out his hands. You'll see three symbols appear in front of him at the same time, and you have to choose one of them to shoot. One will damage him, one will release some enemies, and one will do nothing. I just pick randomly. Contact me if you figure this one out.

Tip: This boss will act the same no matter what your speed is, so if you do run into him, go ahead and kick into medium or high speed.

Boss: Circus Cherri

Boost yourself up to high speed as soon as the boss chime sounds.

Once this guy lands and his arms connect up, do not shoot at him, because you cannot damage him at this time. Watch for a card to appear near the center of the screen, and start blasting it right away. It will come forward, and then reveal about a dozen other cards that will spread themselves around the screen. One or two will stop face up, and then they'll shoot projectiles at you in sets of four. Shoot the face up cards, and avoid the projectiles with circular maneuvers. The cards will gather into one again, and keep shooting it. If you don't do enough damage it will repeat the last pattern, otherwise it will morph into a strange little guy that looks like an upside-down top riding a unicycle. It will bounce around in and out of shooting range, but try to hit it as much as possible.

Notice the little statues turning yellow in the background. You may have seen these in the main level. They'll jump out and into the foreground area, whereupon you can damage them. Kill them as quickly as possible, because they will throw lion-head balls at you for big damage. Once they die, you'll see the main boss change colors. I strongly recommend you shift down into slow speed at this point.

The boss's body is made up of many complicated parts, all of which can be destroyed. Here's a breakdown of it:

Head: Shoots a stream of white shots at you, although they don't come directly at you. They are easy to dodge, but they hurt really bad. Stay away from the center except to shoot the head.

Shoulder Stars: Once the head is destroyed, these will start releasing rings of six sprites with bonus orbs in the middle. Don't do anything stupid just to get the orbs. If you destroy a shoulder star, it will stop releasing these.

Arms: Like the shoulder stars, these only activate once the head has been knocked out. Periodically you'll see them straighten out and launch some projectiles at you. Shoot them or dodge them carefully.

Hand-Sphere's: These start up after the arms are taken out. They'll float around the screen randomly, and they'll fire much more menacing shots at you. If you destroy the arms, it's a good idea to destroy these as quickly as possible. 3000 points apiece for their destruction isn't bad.

Legs/Unicycle: These don't fire at you at any time, they just allow the boss to move horizontally. If you destroy them, the boss will probably be easier to deal with, but don't go out of your way if you have better things to shoot at.

Body Armor: The most of the boss's body is covered in an orangish brick. Shoot it off in pieces to reveal things inside the boss. Note that every piece you shoot off gives points, so blast away

Gears and Cogs: These are behind the body armor in upper regions of the boss. There are lots of them, and they give decent points for shooting them off. They don't seem to do anything else, however.

Operators: These are what you must destroy to beat the boss. Remember the weird little thing that the card turned into in the beginning? Well, there are two more sitting down in this thing's belly, one on each side of him. As soon as these are both gone, regardless of how many other parts of the boss you have destroyed, the fight will be over. Shoot off the body armor around them and go for it.

Protector Cards: OK, I lied, you can't destroy these, but they may or may not appear in the first place. These show up sometimes when taking shots at the operators, especially if you took a while taking out other parts of the boss. There is one for each operator. Normally they will just float around, but when you shoot an operator one will rush in to protect it, during which time you will not be able to do damage. At all times, when you shoot a card, it will return exactly as many shots right back at you. When they get in front of an operator, just don't fire at them until they leave.

Tip: All the junk on this boss's body is worth good points. Don't go in for the kill right away unless you are concerned about the amount of health you have left.

Level 4: Deep Sea Cave

Mid boss: Hula Hoop

Very simple. When the giant chicken flies into the picture, wait for it to

extend it's neck, then shoot at it. It may release some fish inside bubbles at you, but they are easily dealt with. Unless you're lucky enough to deal lots of damage, it will bring down its neck and start hovering back and forth. All of the enemies anchored to the ground will lean left or right while it does this. When it stops, it will repeat its cycle.

Boss: Angry Dish

This guy isn't too hard, but he has lots of health and will take a while to kill. Stay in front of him and keep on firing as much as possible, which will be most of the time. Aim for his pillbox-shaped head.

He'll start by releasing little black faces at you, just like the ones you probably saw earlier in the level. You shouldn't have to worry if your shot level is 5, because most of the little guys that get in the cross-fire will be hit and destroyed. The rest will just fly off, but be careful for ones coming from the side.

Next, the boss will literally reach out and try to grab you. Use quick left-right moves to avoid his grapplers, and keep shooting. You get damaged twice if you gets you.

Now he'll sink down into the water, where he will still be vulnerable, and release a little helper. He'll rise up, and eventually the helper will come forward and begin swinging his arms at you. The main boss will simply start his attacks over from the beginning. Hopefully he'll be dead about now.

Level 5: Cotton Road

Midboss 1: Return of the Angry Dish

The first thing you'll see in stage 5 is the boss from stage 4, with a little bandage on his head :). He'll first launch lots of weak little fish at you instead of those black faces, and then he'll go for the grab. He will be much faster this time around, but he'll also be so weak that he'll be dead in no time with good shooting.

Midboss 2: Cookie

The infamous kangaroo of this game, Calmin's sidekick, and a boxing champ. Aim for his lower belly. At first he'll just jump around, but before long you'll see lots of little cards with Calmin's face on them spring up from below. Shoot these for points, but watch out. Kookie will start launching literally a dozen fists towards you, knocking the cards forward. Both can do damage to you. Once he's done, he'll start throwing wide punches with deadly precision. Dodge well, or suffer major damage. They'll come from the sides and from below. Hopefully you'll have him destroyed before long, otherwise he'll just repeat everything.

Final Boss: Calmin

As soon as Kookie is K.O., shift into high speed. This is essential here. Calmin will appear and the screen will go hazy, and when it refocuses you'll be up in the clouds. You'll see lots of happy-face platforms flying towards you, but they cannot touch you. Instead, you'll see Calmin bounding forward on them, trying to outrun you. Fire away. Calmin is fast and jumpy, and he'll spit out various enemies at you, all of which can be quite harmful yet are

easily dodged and/or shot down. With good aim he'll be toast in no time. Enjoy the ending, hopefully ;).

VII. Endings - Spoiler Free!

I won't give away the ending, although it's my goal to translate the text for a later revision of this guide, or maybe a separate guide altogether. I just wanted to explain that there are different lengths to the game's ending based on which difficulty level you chose. Easy is the shortest, Medium is longer, and Hard is the longest, just as you would expect.

VIII. Tips

The safest place to be at most any time is the center of the screen. If you don't have a particular reason to go off from the center, you probably shouldn't. The center gives the best maneuvering options, and enemies coming in from the rear will very rarely collide with you if you are in the center.

Remember, even as you cast a spell, the symbol in the left slot will remain there, blinking, until the spell is entirely finished. All this means is that if you have 6 spells and you cast one, and collect another magic crystal while casting, you will still bump the last spell off the line, and still wind up with 5 spells when the first one is done casting.

The fire fairies are good for more than just dishing out damage. Because of the way they home in on enemies, they can be helpful for identifying things that can be damaged. You'd be surprised how many things are vulnerable...and worth points.

Even after it leaves you, the Thunder spell will always stay in front of Cotton until it disappears.

During tea time, don't be too zealous to get the light blue kanji cups. They're so scattered that you'll wind up missing more normal black kanji cups than you can make up for with the more valuable ones. Just forget that there is a difference, and try to get as many cups as possible.

If you don't get at least 30 tea time cups, you're not trying hard enough.

If you don't want to collect a magic crystal for whatever reason (it happens), try maneuvering in a circular fashion as it nears you. Broad lateral movements work as well, but they're not always convenient. Quick movements to the side right as the crystal closes in can work, and won't put you in as much danger of being hit, but you're more likely to accidentally collect the crystal anyway.

In every level except stage 4, you will need to spend at least some time going at medium or high speed to get a time bonus. There are stretches of every level that can be done at higher speeds without having to compromise your safety or the number of enemies you can take out.

Get your main weapon level up to 5 by the end of level 1's mid-boss, and aim to keep it there the rest of the game.

Remember, no matter how much life you have, it's always better to avoid getting hit. You'll get more experience bonuses this way, and at 10,000 a pop, they can add up.

I. A Lengthy Introduction to the World of Cotton:

The end of the 80's saw the long overdue birth of the 16-bit video game generation. The ensuing console war would be fought fiercely between Nintendo and Sega for a number of years, but they weren't the only companies involved in home console gaming at the time. NEC, the Japanese equivalent of General Motors, released a system called the Turbo Grafx-16 right alongside Nintendo's SNES and Sega's Genesis/Mega Drive. Technological shortcomings and lack of marketing would doom the TG-16 to failure in the US, but thanks to a reasonable amount of success in Japan, the system would continue to see support from NEC for years. In 1991, they released an add-on CD-ROM drive for the TG-16, creatively titled the TG-16 CD, which happens to be the first CD-ROM based home video game platform in all gaming history. A 3rd addition in the form of extra RAM soon followed, and the games that needed it became known as Super CDs. It was on this obscure, rare and expensive console that gaming company Success released a side-scrolling shoot-em-up called Cotton: Fantastic Night Dreams, one of the first Super CD titles, a port of a 1989 arcade game on Sega's System 16 board.

Cotton is what is known as a "cute-em-up", a shmup with a lighthearted fantasy oriented theme featuring anime-style characters, usually female. Its gameplay was straightforward, and admittedly rather mediocre, but the design of Cotton's world set the game apart from its peers and established it as one of the best on the system. A short-tempered, red-haired, eternally hungry young witch named Cotton encounters a fairy named Silk, who begs Cotton to rid the fairy kingdom of monsters, eventually to wake the land from an eternal night. In exchange, Cotton is promised a willow, a candy of legendary deliciousness and magical power. That's all she needs to hear, and the two set out across a beautiful realm of mystery and wonder, casting spells and blasting monsters all the way. The game's wild creativity earned it a high status among TG-CD owners, and earned its producers the credit to keep producing Cotton games. Unfortunately, the failure of the Super CD in the US meant that Cotton never had any real popularity there, which is why every other Cotton game ever made saw release in Japan only.

A true sequel to the original Cotton didn't come about for a long time. Shortly after Cotton's original release on the Turbo-CD, Success teamed up with Datam/Polystar to release a Super Nintendo episode of the series titled Marchen Cotton 100%. This edition of Cotton was made out of recycled and shrunken sprites from the original, set with architecturally similar levels with new graphics. Enemies followed patterns almost exactly like they did during the original, and the new stage bosses required similar tactics for their defeat. While this odd chapter in Cotton displayed a couple of interesting artistic ideas in the new levels, it was really a step back in almost every way. The gameplay was even less creative than the original, made worse by the sprite limitations of the SNES. The music was especially bad; the title theme was a direct rip-off of the melody from Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" combined with Cotton's theme. This was quite a disappointment after the original's surprisingly good soundtrack. Cotton 100% leaves the impression that perhaps the creators of the original didn't really have anything to do with it. That would certainly make sense considering how spectacular the next Cotton would be.

In August of 1994, a surprisingly small team of Cotton's core designers at Success released Panorama Cotton, the feature game of this guide. Where and how does this title fit into the general scheme of the Cotton cosmos? It's hard to say. Unlike the previous side-scrollers in the series, Panorama Cotton is a chase-shooter, modeled very closely off Space Harrier, and fittingly released on the Sega Genesis/Mega Drive. It makes references to the original Cotton, uses the same two main characters, and of course it involves willows, but that's just about where the similarity of its theme to all others in the series ends. The enemies, bosses, chief villains and other support characters of this game are unique to it, and the mildly melancholy, loveably haunting theme of the other games is wholly absent here. Instead, Panorama Cotton gives us a very different take on Cotton and her world altogether. It's difficult to describe, but it's exactly why Panorama Cotton is so great to play: here is a game that possesses all the originality and creativity of the others in the series, yet with an air of cheerful intensity. The graphics and music of this game possess a unique and gloriously psychedelic style that will always be impressive and enjoyable, no matter how dated the game becomes. All of this is laid over a foundation of gameplay more rock-solid than that of the other titles in the series. Panorama Cotton is arguably the zenith of an entire era of 2D chase-shooters.

It wasn't until 1996 on the Sega Saturn and it's arcade equivalent, the ST-V Titan, that a game titled "Cotton 2: Magical Night Dreams" was released. Returning to the side-scrolling formula, this addition to the series coupled new and totally unique gameplay elements with Cotton's classic theme and world, and served as a splendid sequel to the first game, not to mention a gorgeous example of the Saturn's 2D power. Cotton 2 was very well received in Japan, prompting Success to release a remix of it using mostly the same sprites and game engine, titled Cotton Boomerang. Both of these games are quite a lot of fun, and very much worth looking into.

Woefully, Cotton's legacy came to a end on the Dreamcast with a game called Rainbow Cotton. Ironically, this one was a chase-shooter just like Panorama Cotton, although it doesn't borrow any other elements from the Mega Drive classic, and it's distinctly much more 3D. The game's creators did well with the visuals of this one, just as they had with the others, but the gameplay was horribly flawed. The control was so poor that it earned Rainbow Cotton the reputation of being a bad game. In fact, it's even been said that the failure of Rainbow Cotton marked the death of 2D gaming. Whether or not that's true, the Cotton franchise has seemingly come to a halt, and it's unlikely that we'll ever see a new Cotton game ever again.

Somehow, you've come across Cotton yourself, and she's sparked your interest. Maybe you won't ever like her as much as I do, but that's not my concern. I know after having played this game for some time that Panorama Cotton is actually fairly complicated, and whether or not you have the Japanese manual, you just might be missing some vital elements of the gameplay. I've made it my task to reveal and explain all the mysteries behind Panorama Cotton, so that you get the most out of it you can. I can only hope that you'll have as much fun with it as I do.

IX. A little plea:

At this time, to my knowledge, there is no good ROM dump of Panorama Cotton in existence on the internet. The current two ROMs have minor data corruption, although one has its checksum fixed to hide this. They are very playable, but there are strange graphical errors in a couple places that would likely be fixed by a clean copy. If you have an original cartridge of Panorama Cotton and

the means to dump it, please do so, for the sake of all who can't afford or can't find this ultra rare game and want to experience it to the fullest.

X. Future additions

I would like to add:

Complete story translation

Names of everyone in the credits

I will consider adding:

Stage overviews

X. Special Thanks and Credits

First and foremost credit goes to Success for making this game and series.

Jedi Master Thrash: My biggest personal thanks goes to him, who so generously provided scans of the manual for me. His contribution has been indispensable to the creation of this guide, and will continue to be for all future revisions. Thank you, my friend :)

And a last little thanks to whoever it was on the GameFAQs.com Genesis message board who mentioned this game as being cool, prompting me to find it.

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