Chapter 27: Heapq

Section 27.1: Largest and smallest items in a collection

To find the largest items in a collection, `heapq` module has a function called `nlargest`, we pass it two arguments, the first one is the number of items that we want to retrieve, the second one is the collection name:

```
import heapq


numbers = [1, 4, 2, 100, 20, 50, 32, 200, 150, 8]
print(heapq.nlargest(4, numbers))  # [200, 150, 100, 50]
```

Similarly, to find the smallest items in a collection, we use `nsmallest` function:

```
print(heapq.nsmallest(4, numbers))  # [1, 2, 4, 8]
```

Both `nlargest` and `nsmallest` functions take an optional argument (key parameter) for complicated data structures. The following example shows the use of `age` property to retrieve the oldest and the youngest people from `people` dictionary:

```
people = [
    {'firstname': 'John', 'lastname': 'Doe', 'age': 30},
    {'firstname': 'Jane', 'lastname': 'Doe', 'age': 25},
    {'firstname': 'Janie', 'lastname': 'Doe', 'age': 10},
    {'firstname': 'Jane', 'lastname': 'Roe', 'age': 22},
    {'firstname': 'Johnny', 'lastname': 'Doe', 'age': 12},
    {'firstname': 'John', 'lastname': 'Roe', 'age': 45}
]

oldest = heapq.nlargest(2, people, key=lambda s: s['age'])
print(oldest)
# Output: [{'firstname': 'John', 'age': 45, 'lastname': 'Roe'}, {'firstname': 'John', 'age': 30,
'lastname': 'Doe'}]

youngest = heapq.nsmallest(2, people, key=lambda s: s['age'])
print(youngest)
# Output: [{'firstname': 'Janie', 'age': 10, 'lastname': 'Doe'}, {'firstname': 'Johnny', 'age': 12,
'lastname': 'Doe'}]
```

Section 27.2: Smallest item in a collection

The most interesting property of a `heap` is that its smallest element is always the first element: `heap[0]`

```
import heapq


numbers = [10, 4, 2, 100, 20, 50, 32, 200, 150, 8]

heapq.heapify(numbers)
print(numbers)
# Output: [2, 4, 10, 100, 8, 50, 32, 200, 150, 20]

heapq.heappop(numbers)  # 2
print(numbers)
# Output: [4, 8, 10, 100, 20, 50, 32, 200, 150]
```

```python
heapq.heappop(numbers)  # 4
print(numbers)
# Output:  [8, 20, 10, 100, 150, 50, 32, 200]
```