Chapter fifteen

* Interactive stories are fundamentally different from non-interactive stories, because in non-interactive stories, you are completely passive, just sitting there, as the story plods on, with or without you.
* In interactive stories, on the other hand, you are active and involved, continually making decisions. You are doing things, not just passively observing them. Really, interactive storytelling is a fundamentally new art form, and as a result, interactive designers have little to learn from traditional storytellers.
* The first and most dominant in videogames is commonly called the “string of pearls” or sometimes the “rivers and lakes” method. It is called this because it can be visually represented like this:
* A good game is a machine that generates stories when people play it. To make sure your story machine is as productive as possible
* Good stories should have unity. Imagine an interactive Cinderella story. “You are Cinderella. Your stepmother has told you to clean out the fireplace. Do you: (a) do it or (b) pack your bags, and leave? If Cinderella leaves, and say, gets a job as an administrative assistant, it isn’t the Cinderella story anymore. The reason for Cinderella’s wretched situation is so that she can rise out of it dramatically, suddenly, and unexpectedly. No ending you could write for the Cinderella story can compare with the ending that it already has, because the whole thing is crafted as a unit — the beginning and ending are of a piece.
* One thing that interactive storytellers like to fantasize about is how wonderful it is that a story can have multiple endings. After all, this means the player will be able to play again and again with a different experience every time! And like many fantasies, the reality tends to disappoint
* The things that videogame characters spend their time doing are very different than the things that characters in movies and books spend their time doing:
* **Videogame Verbs:** run, shoot, jump, climb, throw, cast, punch, fly
* **Movie Verbs:** talk, ask, negotiate, convince, argue, shout, plead, complain
* Videogame characters are severely limited in their ability to do anything that requires something to happen above the neck
* A goal with no obstacles is not worth pursuing.

*Story Tip #1: Goals, Obstacles, and Conflicts*

It is an old maxim of Hollywood screenwriting that the main ingredients for a story are (1) A character with a goal and (2) obstacles that keep him from reaching that goal.

*Story Tip #2: Provide Simplicity and Transcendence*

One thing that game worlds and fantasy worlds tend to have in common is that they offer the player a combination of **simplicity** (the game world is simpler than the real world) and **transcendence** (the player is more powerful in the game world than they are in the real world).

*Story Tip #3: Consider the Hero’s Journey*

Because so many videogames revolve around a theme of heroism, it is only logical that the hero’s journey is a relevant structure for a powerful videogame story.

*Story Tip #4: Put Your Story to Work!*

As we discussed, it is possible to start a design in any corner of the tetrad — story, gameplay, technology, or aesthetics. And many designs begin with a story. Following that story too slavishly, at the expense of the other elements, is a common mistake — and an especially silly one, since story is, in some ways, the most pliable of all the element.

*Tip #5: Keep Your Story World Consistent*

If you have a set of rules that define how things work in your world, stick with them, and take them seriously.

*Story Tip #6: Make your Story World Accessible*

There are times, though, that your story requires something strange that the player has never seen before, that can’t be made readily accessible. In these cases, it is very important that you call special attention to that thing, and make the players under- stand what it is, and how it works.

*Story Tip #7: Use Clichés Judiciously*

One criticism videogame story seem unable to escape is overuse of cliché. After all, you can only save the world from evil aliens, use your wizardry against an evil dragon, or fight a dungeon full of zombies with a shotgun a certain number of times before it becomes tedious.

*Story Tip #8: Sometimes a Map Brings a Story to Life*

Most videogames do not happen in world of words, but in a physical place. By making sketches and drawings of this place, often a story will naturally take shape, as you are compelled to consider who lives there, what they do, and why.

*Lens #67: The Lens of Simplicity and Transcendence*

To make sure you have the right mix of simplicity and transcendence, ask yourself these questions:

● How is my world simpler than the real world? Can it be simpler in other ways?

●  What kind of transcendent power do I give to the player? How can I give even more without removing challenge from the game?  ●  Is my combination of simplicity and transcendence contrived, or does it provide my players with a special kind of wish fulfillment?

*Lens #68: The Lens of the Hero’s Journey*

Many heroic stories have similar structure. Use this lens to make sure you haven’t missed out on any elements that might improve your story

*Lens #69: The Lens of the Weirdest Thing*

Having weird things in your story can help give meaning to unusual game mechanics — it can capture the interest of the player, and it can make your world seem special. Too many things that are too weird, though, will render your story puzzling and inaccessible

*Lens #70: The Lens of Story*

Ask yourself these questions:

●  Does my game really need a story? Why?

●  Why will players be interested in this story?

●  How does the story support the other parts of the tetrad (aesthetics, technology, gameplay)? Can it do a better job?

●  How do the other parts of the tetrad support the story? Can they do a better job?

●  How can my story be better?