

School of Design & Media  
DM1374

# Game Story Creation

*Branching Narratives*

# Interactive Storytelling

1. Interactive storytelling is the art of telling stories enhanced with technological, social or collaborative interactive features to offer content adapted to new behaviours in a rapidly changing cultural ecosystem
2. A form of digital entertainment in which the storyline is not predetermined
3. The user experiences **a unique story based on their interactions and choices** with the story world

# Interactive Movie / Movie Game

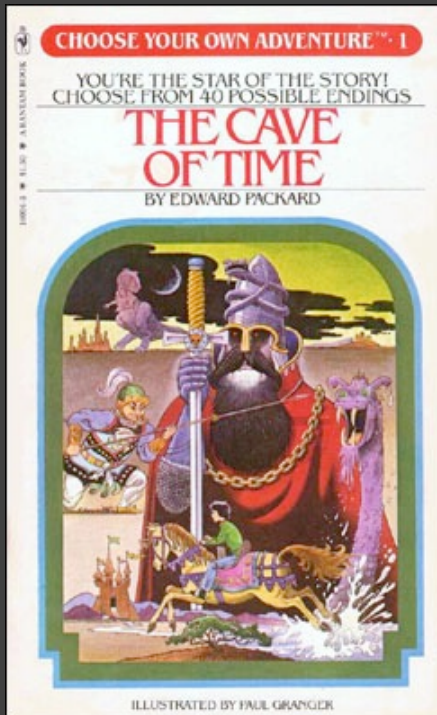
1. Video games that have a large **emphasis on story**
2. Adventure Games provides the most direct way of **narrative implementation** into a play
3. Notable games:
  - Heavy Rain  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVYiJ3VSp60>
  - The Walking Dead  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N40uY51s5Z0>

# Gamebooks

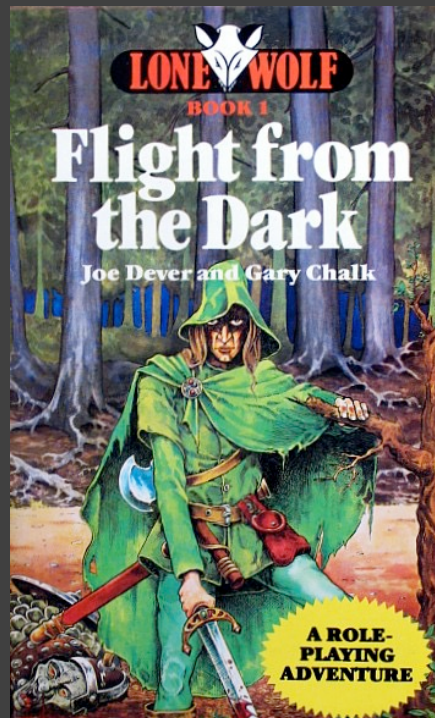
1. Gamebooks were popular before the advancement of technology made Interactive Movie / Movie Game readily accessible
2. A gamebook is a work of **printed fiction** that allows the reader to participate in the story by **making choices**
3. The **narrative branches along various paths**, typically through the use of numbered paragraphs or pages

# Gamebooks

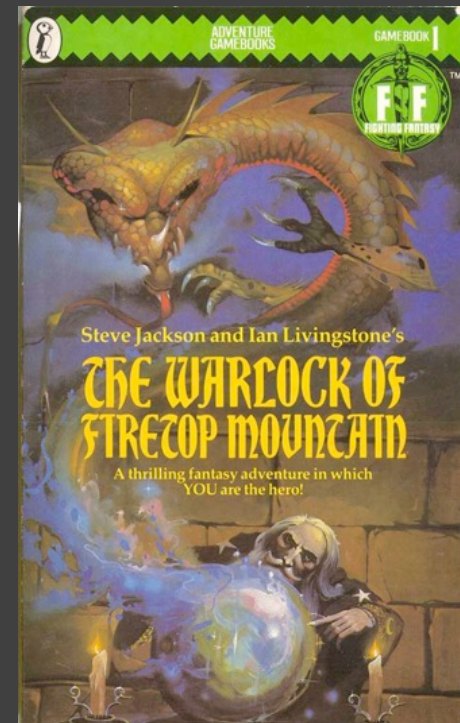
Popular gamebook series include:



Choose Your  
Own Adventure



Lone Wolf



Fighting Fantasy



# Gamebooks

# Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks

1. Created by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
2. The popularity of the series led to the creation of merchandise such as action figures, board games, role-playing game systems, magazines, novels and video games



# Gamebooks

## Pages from Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks:



You grip the handle, turn it and slowly pull the door open. The noise of the storm raging outside becomes louder. You start to talk

### House of Hell

through the doorway, but stop and gasp, your eyes frozen wide open! Standing in the doorway before is a hooded figure! But its face is not human. Instead, the head is that of a goat and its mouth is red with blood, which is dripping to the ground. Its dead eyes stare vacantly upwards. The sight is terrifying and you gain 3 FEAR points.

You slam the door in its face and turn around. Where will you run?

Through a door on the right? **Turn to 353.**

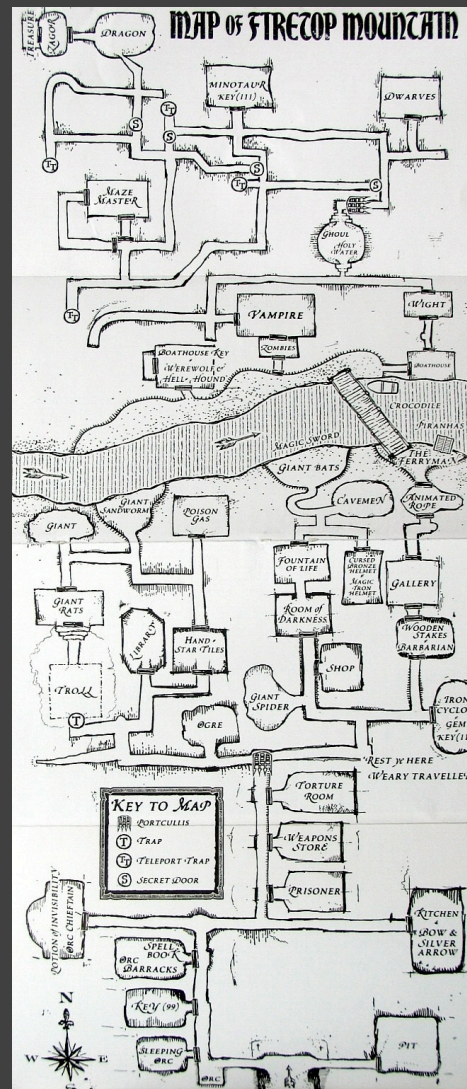
Through a door on the left? **Turn to 285.**

Or back down the hallway? **Turn to 108.**





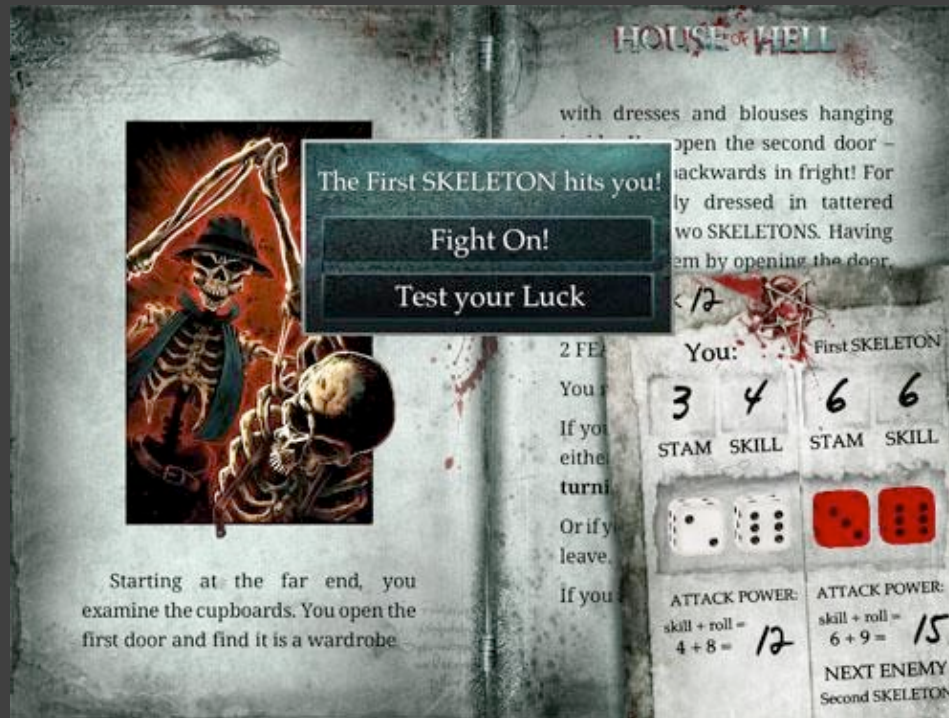
# Pages from Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks:





# Gamebooks

## Fighting Fantasy Video Games:

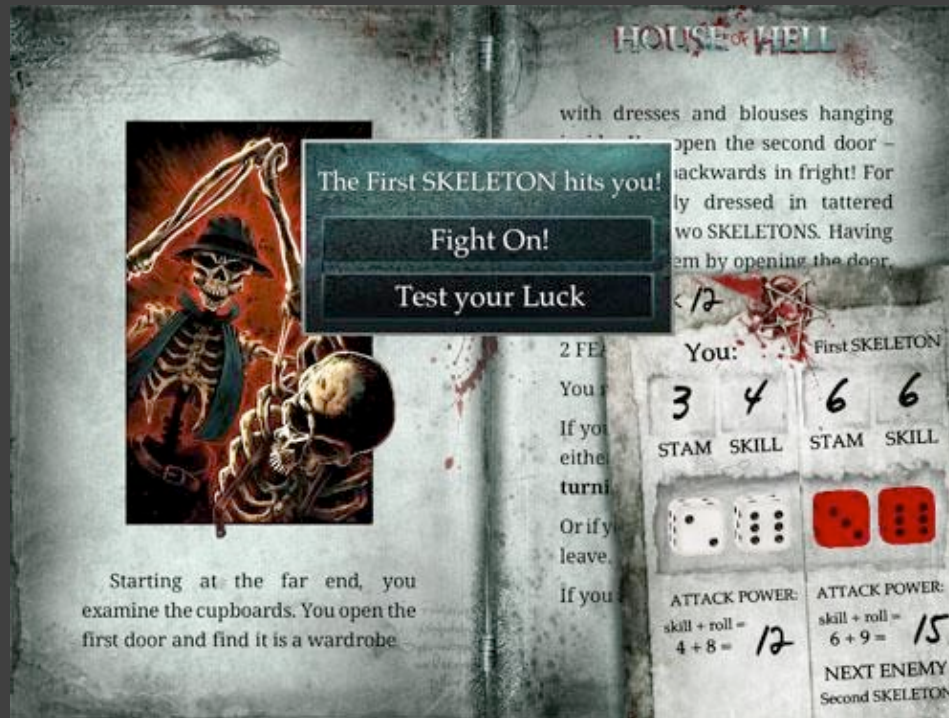


[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnSvw50\\_zZQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnSvw50_zZQ)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFKx8oaNHX4>

# Gamebooks

## Fighting Fantasy Video Games:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnSvw50\\_zZQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnSvw50_zZQ)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFKx8oaNHX4>

# CYOA

- Consider cause and effect in the story
- Decision-making
  - Simple paths? (east/west)
  - Moral decisions?
  - Clue-based decisions?
  - Decisions of 'equally attractive'?
  - Decisions of 'equally important'?
  - Decisions of 'the lesser evil'?
- How 'branchy' is the plot i.e. How many 'possible worlds' are we talking about here?

# Branching Narratives

## How to Start

1. Create the synopsis for the **grand storyline**
  - Any of the 7 basic plots may be utilised
  - Three-act structure (or other structure) may be utilised
2. Using basic descriptions, plot out all the basic **events / story blocks**, in the form of **a flowchart**
  - Numbering the events will help
  - The events serve as **chapters** in a story
  - GAME OVER conditions (protagonist gets killed and story ends abruptly) should not be considered as an event!



# Branching Narratives

1.1 On a nice sunny day, your friend met up with you for lunch.

1.2 As both of you are walking along the street, a suspicious character sneak up on both of you.

1.3 The suspicious character points a gun at you. You are being robbed!

2.1 You're not letting the robber take your hard earned money! You have to fight him!

2.2 But the robber is too strong, you cannot win the fight!  
You should have visited the gym more often!

2.3 You scored mostly As and Bs in Secondary School,  
you know you can outsmart the robber!

3.1 You snatch the gun away successfully and is now in  
control of the situation!

3.2 The robber runs away in fear! The streets are safe again!

# Branching Narratives

## How to Start

3. Decide on **key events** in your story where
  - Player needs to **make a decision** which results in 2 or more branches (possibilities)
  - OR**
  - 2 or more previous branches **lead back to a critical moment**

# Branching Narratives

1.1 On a nice sunny day, your friend met up with you for lunch.

1.2 As both of you are walking along the street, a suspicious character sneak up on both of you.

1.3 The suspicious character points a gun at you. You are being robbed!

2.1a You're not letting the robber take your hard earned money! You have to fight him!

2.1b You decide to run away as fast as you can!

2.2a But the robber is too strong, you cannot win the fight!  
You should have visited the gym more often!

2.1b But the robber easily caught up with you! You should have visited the gym more often!

2.3 You scored mostly As and Bs in Secondary School, you know you can outsmart the robber!

3.1 You snatch the gun away successfully and is now in control of the situation!

3.2 The robber runs away in fear! The streets are safe again!

# Branching Narratives

## How to Start

4. Using basic descriptions, plan out which **events / story blocks**, both key and normal ones, can be expanded to allow even more **events / story blocks**
  - One event can become 2 or more events



# Branching Narratives

1.1 On a nice sunny day, your friend met up with you for lunch.

1.2 As both of you are walking along the street, a suspicious character sneak up on both of you.

1.3a You think that you're being overly sensitive and choose to ignore it

1.3b You're not taking any chances, you whisper to your friend what you noticed

1.4 The suspicious character points a gun at you. You are being robbed!

2.1a You're not letting the robber take your hard earned money! You have to fight him!

2.1b You decide to run away as fast as you can!

2.2a But the robber is too strong, you cannot win the fight!  
You should have visited the gym more often!

2.1b But the robber easily caught up with you! You  
should have visited the gym more often!

2.3 You scored mostly As and Bs in Secondary School,  
you know you can outsmart the robber!

# Branching Narratives

## How to Start

5. Write the full story for each event or chapter  
(Full story is not required for assignment, but these guidelines can apply to event descriptions too)

- When decisions need to be made by players at the end of an event, provide some basic information for **players to make informed choices**
  - Instead of “*choose the path on the left or the right*”, use “*choose the path which has the trail of bloodstains or the path where the screams are coming from*”
- When the story is read in sequence for each possible path, the story should flow

# Branching Narratives

## How to Start

6. Conditional events can be included where **an event is available** only if **a specific choice was made previously**

- Rewards players/readers, making the experience feel unique and that the choices made affects the outcome
- **Increases replay value**, as it encourages players/readers to go through the story again, making different decisions the next time

# Branching Narratives

1.1 On a nice sunny day, your friend met up with you for lunch.

1.2 As both of you are walking along the street, a suspicious character sneak up on both of you.

1.3a You think that you're being overly sensitive and choose to ignore it

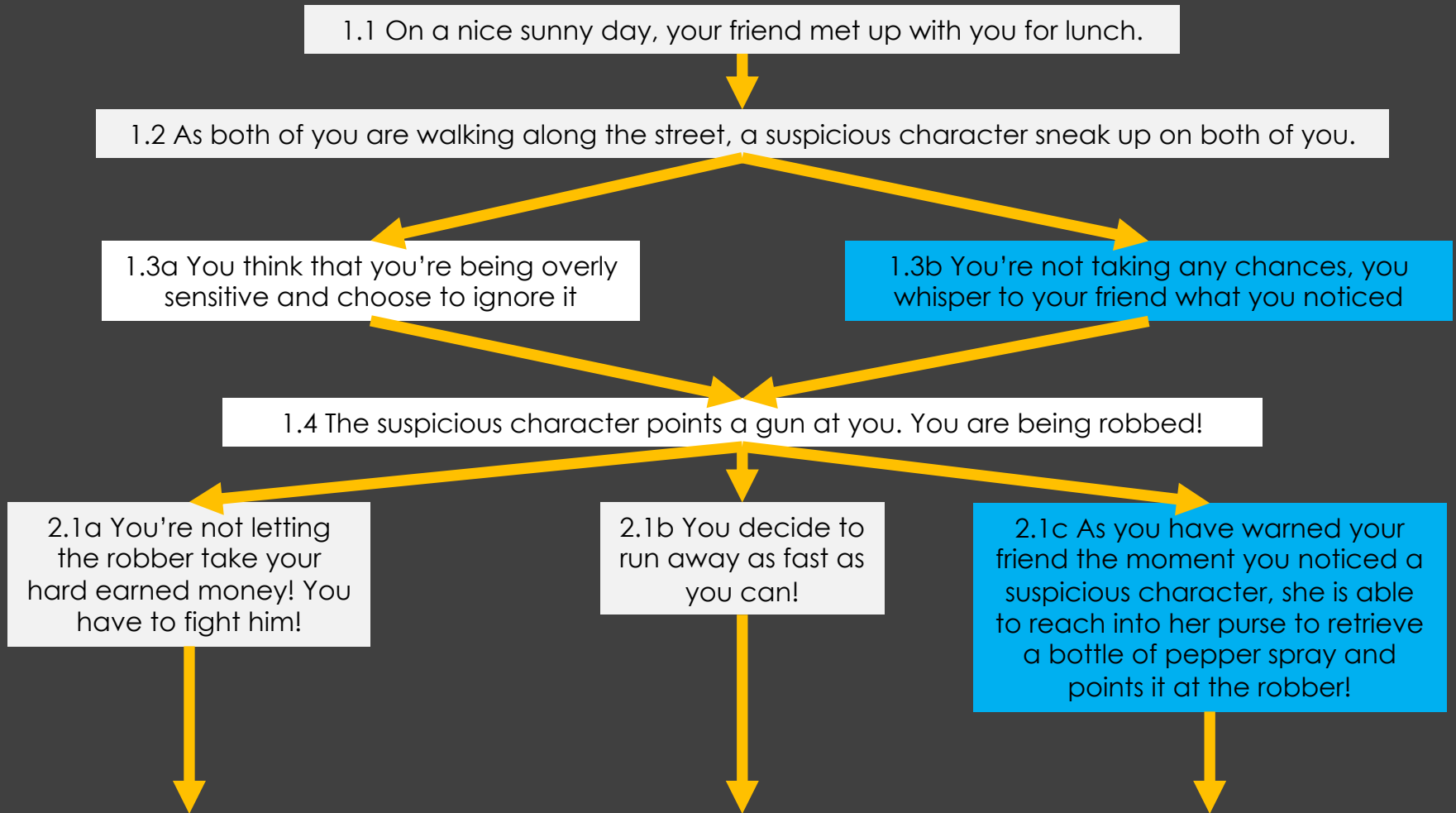
1.3b You're not taking any chances, you whisper to your friend what you noticed

1.4 The suspicious character points a gun at you. You are being robbed!

2.1a You're not letting the robber take your hard earned money! You have to fight him!

2.1b You decide to run away as fast as you can!

2.1c As you have warned your friend the moment you noticed a suspicious character, she is able to reach into her purse to retrieve a bottle of pepper spray and points it at the robber!





# Branching Narratives

## Point of View

1. Write in present tense
2. Write in second person
3. Use “you” and “your” instead of “I” and “me”, unless you’re quoting someone
4. To create an authentic experience, make sure you describe all sights, sounds, smells, tastes, physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts that only your hero experiences, leaving everything else out

# Branching Narratives

## Branches

1. Some decisions will be quite mundane, while others may be life altering for your hero. Make sure you provide a good mix so that the reader doesn't get bored.
2. Not every real-life decision is limited to two choices

# Branching Narratives

## References

ChooseYourStory.com

<https://chooseyourstory.com/>

Black Mirror: Bandersnatch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNw9DAwp2Kk>

You vs. Wild

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwcr3cc0LZM>

# Branching Narratives

## Exercise

Using the template given, fill in or create new **events / story blocks** to complete the flowchart.

Submit the exercise by the end of class.