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Prototype 1 Reflection

*Proposal Idea: A prototype of a story writing mechanic that allows players to shape the bias of a message.*

Overall, I feel that the prototype achieves this in a basic scene. I can see how the use of deeds and conditions will shape the larger story at hand and as the story grows, it will become more apparent the effect the choices and Rue’s writing will create. In Unreal, it will look something like this. Diagram

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With each writing choice by Rue, a deed is added, which then influences NPCs they encounter later. Which then can be applied to a condition within the dialogue tree.

The deed: News.SceneXXX.InformationXXA.Given will appear in their journal for them to choose what to put into their next news story. This is an iteration of the current journal within Season, a letter to the future. Instead of “Keepsakes”, there will be a tab for “Notes” where the player can select from the list of found information, pictures, or items.A picture containing graphical user interface

Description automatically generatedGraphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

As for the questions I posed to myself,

* Are players inclined to create news articles that follow their own bias?
* Will players understand how their choices for what goes in the news will impact how NPCs interact with them?
* Can games that exploit media bias be used to teach or introduce lessons in media literacy?

I am currently unsure if my prototype does these things because I feel like I posed complex questions about understanding media literacy that my simple prototype doesn’t have the scope for. I can imagine how the stakes would be higher in a larger game for making the right choices. Once a player is punished or rewarded for the choices in the story they made before then, I believe the questions could begin to be answered. But at this point, there’s no pressure on the player because there are no emotional or gameplay stakes that they will experience.

In addition to making the prototype larger, I do feel that I need to continue to work on my writing skills to make the choices more nuanced. I have set myself up as a world builder at this moment, and I can see how the larger picture will work out. Rue goes to the meeting with the leaders, sees the war start, travels around the Far Wastes, and then Tieng reports on the war efforts. Those news articles will impact the way that people speak to Rue and what information they can get moving forward, but all of this requires more nuance in writing because significant narrative plot changes are expensive; I can’t get Rue killed off or else it would ruin the rest of the story and the world of Season. So, the interactions need better writing for the news articles, so the choices don’t seem easy. I want people not to understand the weight of their words when they make a choice but then suffer for it later.

*Next Steps:*

Once I obtain feedback on the mechanic from the class, I will adjust the twine file and prepare to show my coworkers my idea in the coming weeks. It would be ideal for recreating this prototype in Unreal using the journal mechanic we already have in combination with an entire conversation with an NPC since this prototype focused on the interaction within the journal.

I am happy with the technological advances through this prototyping process, but I have realised some holes within the gameplay in terms of stakes and length. I also need to continue working with the Season writer to improve my dialogue writing and find a tone.