

VISUAL NOVELS: A PRIMER

By me, Rachel, who has played 2.5 VN's in her entire life

WHAT IS A VISUAL NOVEL?

- A visual novel, often abbreviated as VN, is an interactive fiction game, which originated in Japan, featuring text-based story with narrative style of literature and interactivity aided by static or sprite-based visuals, most often using anime-style art or occasionally live-action stills. (I took this from wikipedia lol)

SPECIAL FEATURES

- There are some special features that most visual novels have that can enhance the story you want to tell. These include:
 - 1. Stills
 - 2. Various emotionally enhancing effects
 - 3. Choices and multiple endings

I. STILLS



His eyes fly open. His hand snatches mine away.



I. STILLS

- Fully drawn out “stills” are most often used at high points in a game (for example, when two characters kiss, when an important setting is introduced, etc.)



A squat three-story building, painted so ostentatiously bright it'd be impossible to miss, sits in front of me.



2. EMOTIONALLY ENHANCING EFFECTS

- These include:

2. EMOTIONALLY ENHANCING EFFECTS

- Sound effects. These are optional, of course, depending on the mood of your game.
- (can't get video uploaded on here so just play Butterfly Soup and you'll see.)

2. EMOTIONALLY ENHANCING EFFECTS

- Music. Self-explanatory.
- (ditto go play some Butterfly Soup)

2. EMOTIONALLY ENHANCING EFFECTS

- **Sprites**
- Most times a character speaks, acts, or thinks, their sprite is shown on the screen with the corresponding emotion to the text/situation, sometimes to hilarious or touching effect

Noelle

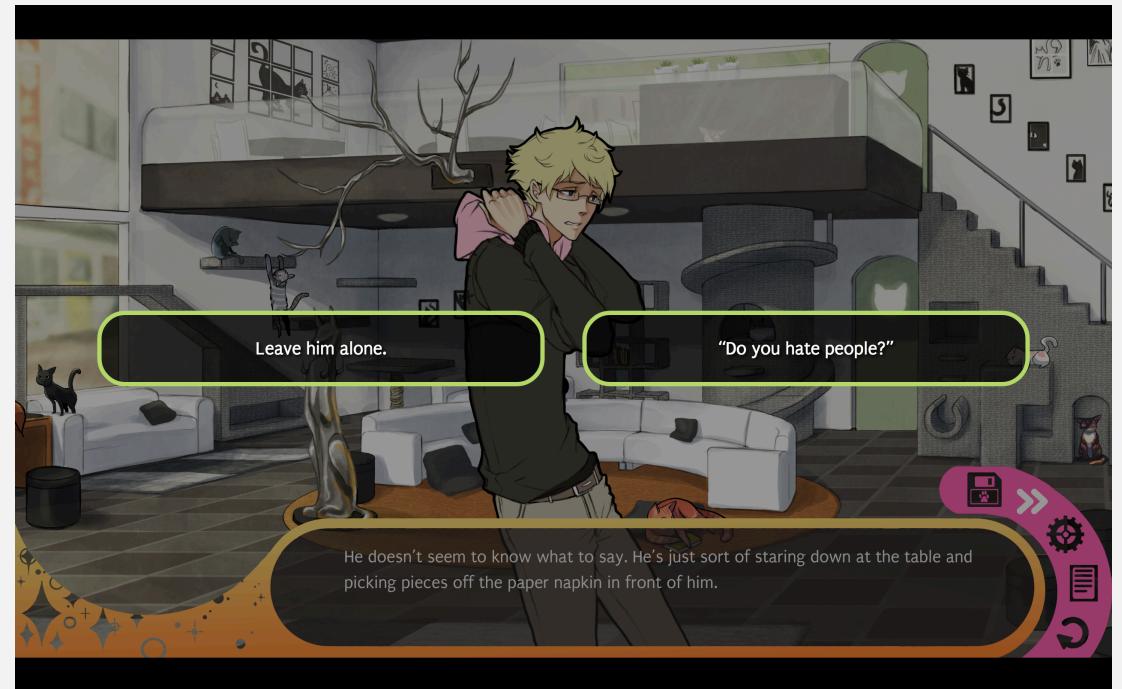
We *ALL* have black hair.

Min-seo

That's not fair! Then I won't wear skirts either, then.

3. CHOICES AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS

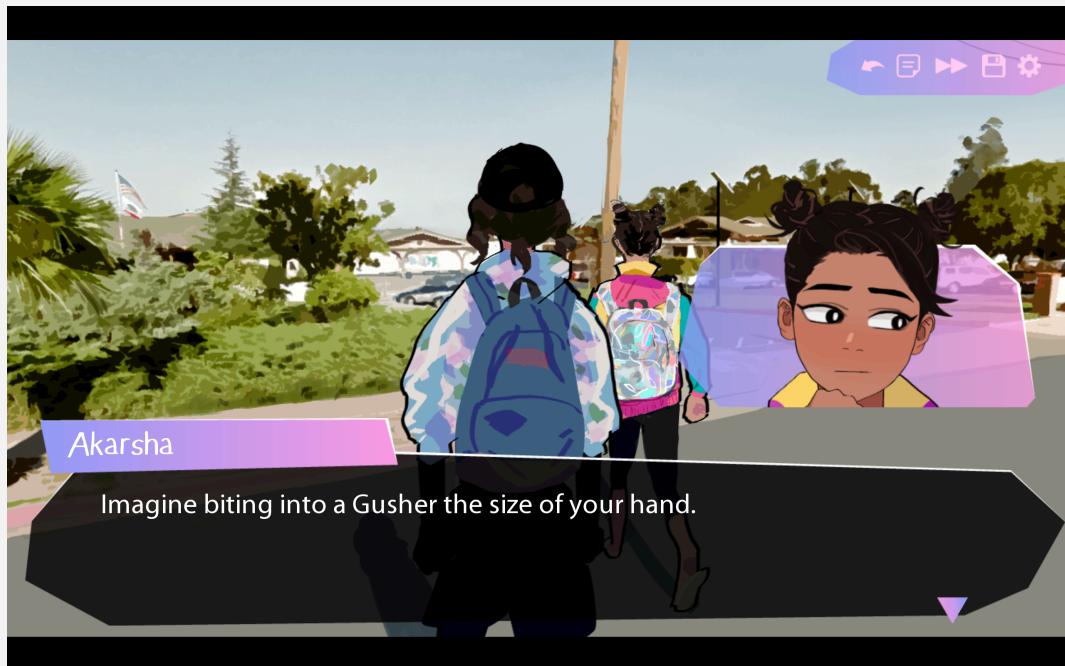
- It's possible, although not required, to write in points of the story where a character makes a decision. The decision can alter the ending of the game—for example a lot of VN's are dating sims where your choices affect which character you end up courting.



3. CHOICES AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS

- However, sometimes the decisions simply affect a small bit of dialogue while the larger story remains consistent.

3. CHOICES AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS



3. CHOICES AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS

- Some decision points even only have one option. This is kind of a fun effect, emphasizing that the character feels they have little choice but to do this one thing.



3. CHOICES AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS

- When you have story with multiple choices that affect the ending, it can get kind of big kind of fast!!
- “We Know The Devil is organized around the smallest implementation of a simple mechanic: for characters A, B, C, it is possible to choose a scene with two of these characters while leaving out the third, with a different ending for each of those possible sets. The math of it is the combinations of ABC; so AB, BC, and AC, but this is just the vocabulary we use to describe the experience of repressed young people seeking companionship, in much the same way that I described “people” with the adjectives “young” and “repressed.” The math came right after the idea, and one of the first things that the math showed us was all combinations of ABC is less than all combinations of ABCD (AB AC BC AD DB DC). Because we both wanted to actually complete this game in a month, we cut the characters from my original pitch to Mia from four to three.“ (from *How to Make a Plan To Write a Visual Novel in a Month So You Can Finish It in Three and a Half Months*)

3. CHOICES AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS

- Should you decide to use choices and multiple endings, I encourage you to keep it simple to keep the game within the 3-10 minute mark.

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- And that's about it! Let me know if you have thoughts, questions, or wanna bounce ideas with me. I'm all ears. (After I get some sleep, of course.)