

ARC DRIVER

Created by Tayruh. Copyright October 16, 2022.

Oracle inspired by *Motif Story Engine* and *Motif Character Engine* by Peter Casey.

About

The goal of this engine is to provide a self-contained framework to play through a solo adventure that adheres to something resembling classic story arcs found in popular media such as novels and movies. It can be run on its own or alongside a rule system.

Oracle

Answering an oracle question requires rolling one or more d6s. Each die may add a modifier from -3 to +3 to adjust its probability to fit the story context.

The first die is the answer. If the question requires a definitive Yes or No, count 3 and 4 as a straight No and Yes.

- 1-2 No
- 3 Maybe not
- 4 Maybe so
- 5-6 Yes

You may also use qualified answers.

- 1 No, and
- 2 No
- 3 No, but
- 4 Yes, but
- 5 Yes
- 6 Yes, and

Each additional die adds context by gauging the strength of an element on a scale of 1 to 6, usually framed as "how ___ is it?" Some examples would be: dangerous, favorable, expensive, costly, dramatic, etc. The second die usually determines how strong of a Yes or No the answer is on a scale of 1 to 6.

Example: If you ask "Is the antagonist strong? And how dangerous are they?" and roll a 3, 4, and 5, this could be interpreted as the antagonist not being very strong but dangerously crafty. This is because a 3 on

the first die (answer) and 4 on the second die (answer strength) would result in an answer like "most likely not," but a 5 on the third die (danger strength) means that they are still really dangerous.

You may also opt to use a different context for the second die instead. In fact, you may choose to use context questions for all dice, which will allow you to ask complex questions that are not reliant upon a Yes or No answer, such as how a character feels about a topic.

Example: If you wanted to know how someone regards your character, you could ask "How curious, aggressive, and cooperative are they towards me?" If you then rolled a 2, 5, and 4 for the context dice, you could interpret that to mean that they aren't all that interested in you but are fairly cooperative, however they will snap back when they feel insulted or threatened.

Random Events

When using two or more dice for an Oracle question, a Random Event will trigger when the first two dice match and are odd. When that happens, roll a Twist on the Twists Table to determine the event. Try to merge the event with the results of the Oracle.

Open-Ended Questions

Word Tables

The Word Tables are composed of nouns, verbs, and their modifiers. By combining two words from the table, you can find an interpretable answer to a question that can't easily be answered with a Yes or No, such as events or topics generated through Story Steps.

If you are instructed to roll an identical part of speech twice, such as two nouns, by a Story Step or Question Recipe and you roll the same word twice, you can either take that to mean that the strength of the word should be emphasized, or you can just roll again.

Adverb					
1	1 Anxiously	2 Awkwardly	3 Bravely		
	4 Cautiously	5 Carelessly	6 Cheerfully		
2	1 Coolly	2 Curiously	3 Dangerously		
	4 Defiantly	5 Delightfully	6 Efficiently		
3	1 Excitedly	2 Fearfully	3 Foolishly		
	4 Generously	5 Gracefully	6 Gratefully		
4	1 Hastily	2 Helpfully	3 Innocently		
	4 Intensely	5 Irritatingly	6 Lazily		
5	1 Lovingly	2 Mechanically	3 Miserably		
	4 Mockingly	5 Mysteriously	6 Powerfully		
6	1 Quietly	2 Rudely	3 Slowly		
	4 Threateningly	5 Unexpectedly	6 Wildly		

Verb					
1	1 Abuse	2 Assist	3 Atone		
	4 Attack	5 Attract	6 Control		
2	1 Create	2 Deceive	3 Decrease		
	4 Entertain	5 Fail	6 Find		
3	1 Harm	2 Heal	3 Increase		
	4 Inform	5 Obscure	6 Obstruct		
4	1 Oppose	2 Preserve	3 Punish		
	4 Pursue	5 Return	6 Recruit		
5	1 Refuse	2 Resolve	3 Restore		
	4 Reward	5 Risk	6 Seize		
6	1 Summon	2 Threaten	3 Transform		
	4 Travel	5 Triumph	6 Worship		

Adjective					
1	1 Amusing	2 Ancient	3 Altered		
	4 Cold	5 Confusing	6 Condemning		
2	1 Complex	2 Dangerous	3 Disappointing		
	4 Dependable	5 Disgusting	6 Failed		
3	1 Familiar	2 Harsh	3 Impressive		
	4 Juvenile	5 Lethal	6 Lonely		
4	1 Mature	2 Odd	3 Painful		
	4 Pleasing	5 Restored	6 Ruined		
5	1 Serious	2 Strong	3 Surprising		
	4 Suspicious	5 Tempting	6 Temporary		
6	1 Transforming	2 Thriving	3 Unique		
	4 Unreliable	5 Weak	6 Warm		

Noun					
1	1 Aid	2 Ally	3 Arrival		
	4 Art	5 Authority	6 Balance		
2	1 Community	2 Conflict	3 Crime		
	4 Death	5 Deceit	6 Devotion		
3	1 Enemy	2 Emotion	3 Failure		
	4 Goal	5 Happiness	6 Honesty		
4	1 Idea	2 Innocence	3 Knowledge		
	4 Life	5 Mystery	6 Pact		
5	1 Past	2 Power	3 Presence		
	4 Pride	5 Progress	6 Relations		
6	1 Resources	2 Rumors	3 Secret		
	4 Strategy	5 Territory	6 Travel		

Question Recipes

The following are simple recipes for answering common questions using the Word Tables.

Standard 5W+H questions

Who, Where

1-3 Adjective Noun

4-6 Adverb Adjective

What, When, Why

1-3 Adjective Noun

4-6 Noun of Noun

How

1-3 Verb Noun

4-6 Noun of Noun

Action/Event Verb Noun

Topic/Theme Noun of Noun

Character

Identity

1-3 one Noun

4-6 two Nouns

Descriptor

1-3 one Adjective

4-6 two Adjectives

Traits

three Adjectives.

Goals

three Verb Noun combinations

Identity

The character's archetype in the story—Witch, Soldier, Shopkeeper, etc. You may need to repinterpret the Nouns as an associated archetype; for instance, "Authority" as "Police Officer" or "Secret" as "Hacker." Some characters are multifaceted and are not accurately identified by just one role, so they get two.

Descriptor

Who they are at a glance. This is their defining character trait. Similar to identities, sometimes just one descriptor is not enough to describe a character's personality.

Traits

These are more traits, but they are subtle and used to add depth to the character.

Goals

These are the goals which the character would like to accomplish. They are not necessarily written in stone, but they are what the character is generally aiming for, even if it is not something that they may expect to see to the end. Their decisions will be directly affected by these.

Twists Table

Twists are generally negative events that you can add to your game to make it more exciting. They can be used in two ways: Soft moves and Hard moves.

When you proactively add a Twist to your story to make it exciting, or through a Random Event on an Oracle roll, it should be regarded as a Soft move. A Soft move is a promised threat that gives the characters time to react.

When you are instructed to add a Twist through a Story Step in the Story Framework, the Twist will always be regarded as a Hard move. A Hard move is a danger that hits without warning; there is no time for reaction and you are immediately inflicted with the danger.

To roll a Twist, roll two d6s: the first for the outer table, and then a second for its corresponding table. If you need further clarification on how a Twist connects to the current story context, roll something like a What or a Who on the Word Tables using a Question Recipe.

1-2

- 1 Someone is revealed to have an unexpected connection to another character.
- 2 Something that you have taken for granted as a truth is revealed to be false.
- 3 A successful action unexpectedly makes the situation worse.
- 4 A problem that you thought had been resolved returns.
- 5 Information is revealed that alters a perceived truth in an unexpected way.
- 6 Something that you were trying to keep hidden is revealed.

3-4

- 1 A character must choose one out of two or more equally positive or equally negative options.
- 2 A threat comes from the environment.
- 3 A character with questionable motives enters the story.
- 4 A character's weakness or mistake is exploited.
- 5 Someone or something is taken from you or becomes broken.
- 6 A character does something contrary to who they are.

5-6

- 1 A sacrifice is necessary to succeed.
- 2 A past event or action is revealed that directly affects the current situation.
- 3 Someone or something taken for granted is discovered to be unexpectedly important.
- 4 A strength becomes a momentary weakness.
- 5 A previously unseen weakness or fear is revealed.
- 6 The current path to your goal is closed off unexpectedly.

Story Framework

This is the basic framework for a standard three-act story condensed into eight Story Steps. Because stories are fractal, these Story Steps can help shape a scene, an event, an arc, or an entire campaign using the same structure and methods.

It is not required to strictly adhere to the structure step-by-step as you play; nor is it recommended to trigger each Story Step in quick succession. Instead,

let your story proceed naturally until it hits a lull, then take a look back over your story so far and determine which Story Step objectives have already been completed. Generate the event, person, thing, etc using the Twists Table or the Word Tables as instructed by the next incomplete Story Step.

Example: To generate the Catalyst, roll a d6 and look at the Generate section of the Story Step. If you rolled a 2, you would then roll a Twist on the Twists Table. If you were to have rolled a 3 instead, you would then roll an Adjective and a Noun on the Word Tables and combine them together for your meaning—such as "Unreliable Knowledge."

1. Opening

Generate Who ...this is about

1-3 Adjective Noun

4-6 Adverb Adjective

Generate What ...is happening

1-3 Adjective Noun

4-6 Noun of Noun

Generate Where ...you are

1-3 Adjective Noun

4-6 Adverb Adjective

Generate Why ...you are here

1-3 Adjective Noun

4-6 Noun of Noun

Objective

Establish the opening shot of your story. Unlike the proceeding Story Steps, this Step requires multiple questions to be answered. Some may have already been answered before you begin your story and that is okay; just roll for the ones that haven't been answered yet.

2. Conflict

Generate Action, Event, or Trait

1-2 Verb Noun

3-4 Adjective Noun

5-6 Adverb Adjective

Objective

Establish how the Hero or their environment deviates from the norm to create a looming threat that promises to disrupt the Hero's life if left neglected.

3. Catalyst

Generate Event

1-2 Twist

3-4 Adjective Noun

5-6 Noun of Noun

Objective

Define a surprising event related to the Conflict, whether by cause or effect, that prevents the Hero from returning to life as usual and forces them to respond. Examples are: entering a new world, a mystery, a desire for personal growth, or disruption by outside forces.

If the Hero does not yet have a concrete Goal, you must give them one now.

4. Antagonist

Generate Person or Thing

1-2 Adjective Noun

3-4 Adverb Adjective

5-6 Noun of Noun

Objective

Define a person or thing that prevents the Hero from obtaining their Goal.

An ideal Antagonist is after the same Goal as the Hero, but for a different reason, and/or is uniquely qualified to strike hardest at the Hero's weaknesses.

5. Revelation

Generate Event or Information

1-2 Twist

3-4 Adjective Noun

5-6 Noun of Noun

Objective

After the Hero has spent a generous amount of time making progress toward their Goal, define an event or information that reveals to the character just how out of their depth that they really are and how they are not yet ready to face the Antagonist on even footing.

The Revelation should be so disruptive to the Hero's Goal that the only way forward is to modify or replace the existing Goal.

The impact of the Revelation is so effective that Oracle rolls have a +2 or -2 modifier in favor of the Antagonist added to the answer die until the next Story Step.

6. Resolve

Generate Event

1-2 Twist

3-4 Verb Noun

5-6 Noun of Noun

Objective

After the Hero has taken a series of beatings, define an event which causes the Hero to hit rock bottom and nearly die or become broken, or perhaps someone important to them does die or becomes broken.

This event hardens a resolve in the Hero so great that Oracle rolls now have a +1 or -1 modifier added to the answer die in favor of the Hero lasting until the next Story Step!

7. Confrontation

Generate Event, Action, or Topic

1-2 Twist

3 Adjective Noun

4 Adverb Adjective

5 Verb Noun

6 Noun of Noun

Objective

Once the Hero has placed themselves in a position to face off against the Antagonist and clear the path to their Goal, define an event, action, or stake that describes how the Hero is taking the battle to them.

In this situation, Twists and events are to the detriment of the Antagonist, not the Hero. Likewise, a generated topic is considered to be what is at stake for the Antagonist, or both the Hero and the Antagonist, and is what forces them to take the Hero seriously.

8. Resolution

Generate Event, Information, or Thing

1-2 Adjective Noun

3-4 Verb Noun

5-6 Noun of Noun

Objective

Having overcome the Antagonist, the path to your Goal is clear and you obtain it easily. What the Hero gets is never exactly as expected, so define how an event, information, or thing alters the results of the Goal in a positive or negative way, depending on the context of the story.

To reflect how relieving obtaining your goal is, Oracle rolls will have a +1 or -1 modifier added to the answer die in favor of the Hero throughout the resolution of this story.

However, story resolutions work on a karmic basis. If the Hero was the direct cause of physical or emotional harm to allies through the actions taken to overcome the Antagonist, Oracle rolls will instead have a -2 or +2 modifier added to the answer die against the favor of the Hero.

That ends the Story Framework for this story. However, remember these tips:

- *Stories are fractal and larger stories are divided up into smaller stories.*
- *Seemingly unrelated stories may also run alongside sister stories.*
- *There should always be at least one story arc active at all times.*

Have fun on your adventures!