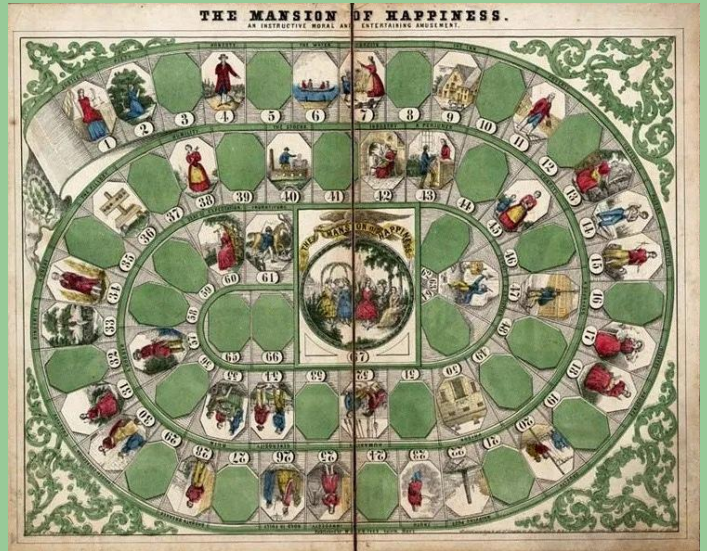



The Historical, Cultural, and Social Significance of Games:

- Early forms of play and games
- Cultural analysis of games
- Representation in games
- Impact of games on social interactions and relationships



The Mansion of Happiness was the very first board game to be produced commercially (i.e., on an industrial basis).




Johann Huizinga, *Homo
Ludens: The Play Element in
Culture*, 1938

Chapter 2: THE PLAY-CONCEPT
AS EXPRESSED IN LANGUAGE

Chapter 3: PLAY AND CONTEST
AS CIVILIZING FUNCTIONS

Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters*,
2014

Chapter 2: Playfulness



Play vs. Playfulness; Ludology vs. Narratology

Huizinga identifies 5 characteristics that play must have:

1. Play is free, is in fact freedom
2. Play is not "ordinary" or "real" life.
3. Play is distinct from "ordinary" life both as to locality and duration.
4. Play creates order, is order. Play demands order absolute and supreme.
5. Play is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it.

Sicart's 7 characteristics:

1. Play is contextual. (6)
2. Play is carnivalesque. (11)
3. Play is appropriative. (11)
4. Play is disruptive. (14)
5. Play is autotelic. (16)
6. Play is creative. (17)
7. Play is personal. (17)



Peter Bruegel the Elder, detail from Children's Games,
Tug-of-War

What is the definition of "play"? What is Huizinga's goal? What is Sicart's goal?

Play vs. Playfulness; Ludology vs. Narratology

Play, according to Huizinga:

“... play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life.’ Thus defined, the concept seemed capable of embracing everything we call ‘play’ in animals, children and grown-ups: games of strength and skill, inventing games, guessing games, games of chance, exhibitions and performances of all kinds. We ventured to call the category ‘play’ one of the most fundamental in life.” (28)



Peter Bruegel the Elder, detail from *Children's Games*,
Tug-of-War

What is the definition of “play”?

How is language related to play? Huizinga brings up the example of Greek children's games ending in -inda.

- Three words for "play," but all have different etymologies that color the meaning. One relates to joyfulness and carefree (it encompasses both children and sacred happenings), but the other term relates to things/events that are frivolous. Yet another term serves for games of wit and mastery.

"Contest" and "play," Huizinga reasons, are not dissimilar or fall into different categories.

- Sanskrit also features differentiation between types of play with different terms (4)

- Algonquin also has different terms for play—differentiating between children's games and "dallying"

Ludic (adj.) and Ludology (n.):

Of or pertaining to undirected and spontaneously playful behaviour.

1940–

1940 This excess-energy must be expended (without purpose) in some way, most usually in play-activity, called *ludic* activity.

L. E. Hinsie & J. Shatzky, *Psychiatric Dictionary* 323/2 ...

Summary

A borrowing from French.

Etymon: French *ludique*.

< **French** *ludique*, < **Latin** *ludere* to play.

LUDENS/LUDIC:

"Latin has really only one word to cover the whole field of play : ludus, from ludere, of which lusus is a direct derivative. We should observe that jocus, joci in the special sense of joking and jesting does not mean play proper in classical Latin. Though ludere may be used for the leaping of fishes, the fluttering of birds and the plashing of water, its etymology does not appear to lie in the sphere of rapid movement, flashing, etc., but in that of non-seriousness, and particularly of L'semblance" or "deception". Ludus covers children's games, recreation, contests, liturgical and theatrical representations, and games of chance." (35)

"When treating of the root of the word "play" (pflegen) we discovered that the play-term can occur in the sphere of ceremonial. This is particularly the case with the common Dutch word for marriage—huwelijk—which still reflects the Middle Low Dutch huweleec or huweleic (literally "wedding-play") . Compare also feestelic (feast, festival), vechtelic (fighting: Old Frisian fyuchtleeck). All these words are compounds of the root leuk already discussed, which has yielded the ordinary word for play in the Scandinavian languages." (41-42)

Huizinga: Play and Music? Play and Sexuality/Intimacy?

Play and sex?

"The biological process of pairing does not answer to the formal characteristics of play as we postulated them. Language also normally distinguishes between love-play and copulation. The term "play" is specially or even exclusively reserved for erotic relationships falling outside the social norm.

As we saw in Blackfoot, the same word *koani* is used for the ordinary playing of children and for illicit sexual intercourse. All in all, therefore, and in marked contrast to the deep-seated affinity between playing and fighting, we feel compelled to regard the erotic use of the play-term, universally accepted and obvious though it be, as a typical and conscious metaphor." (43)

On music:

"It is quite natural that we should tend to conceive music as lying within the sphere of play, even apart from these special linguistic instances. Making music bears at the outset all the formal characteristics of play proper: the activity begins and ends within strict limits of time and place, is repeatable, consists essentially in order, rhythm, alternation, transports audience and performers alike out of "ordinary" life into a sphere of gladness and serenity, which makes even sad music a lofty pleasure. In other words, it "enchants" and "enraptures" them. In itself it would be perfectly understandable, therefore, to comprise all music under the heading of play. Yet we know that play is something different, standing on its own. Further, bearing in mind that the term "playing" is never applied to singing, and to music making only in certain languages, it seems probable that the connecting link between play and instrumental skill is to be sought in the nimble and orderly movements of the fingers." (42)

Think: foreplay, role-play, etc.; sexual acts described in terms of sports or play. Is this actually, truly just a metaphor?

Narratology (n.):

The study of the structure and function of narrative, esp. (in structuralist and post-structuralist theory) as analogous to linguistic structure; the examination and classification of the traditional themes, conventions, and symbols of the narrated story.

1971–

1971 The typological remarks which I have just offered..pertain less to *poetics* than to a discipline which seems to me to have a solid claim to the right of existence, and which could be called *narratology*.

translation of T. Todorov in *Diacritics* vol. 1 44 ...

...

2000 In terms of *narratology*, the author is almost a pioneer of post-modernism in his use of cyclical narrative.

Guardian Weekly (Nexis) 8 November ...

Narratology vs. Ludology: it all depends on where you come from.

Narratology comes from a literary analysis tradition / semiotic / linguistics

Ludology is structural, mathematical; rules-basis.

Play vs. Playfulness; Ludology vs. Narratology

Playfulness, according to Sicart:

“Playfulness is a way of engaging with particular contexts and objects that is similar to play but respects the purposes and goals of that object or context. Colloquially, playfulness can be associated with flirting and seduction: we can be playful during sex, or marriage, or work, though none of those are play. We can be playful with language through satire and puns, and even in the way we engage with our productive labor. However, those activities are most certainly not play; they are flirting, sex, and labor, and thus they have other purposes.

“There is an important distinction to be made here. Playfulness is a physical, psychological, and emotional attitude toward things, people, and situations. It is a way of engaging with the world derived from our capacity to play but lacking some of the characteristics of play. Intuitively, we can feel the difference between play and playfulness. We can also have the vague idea that we can be playful even when playing. Somehow these two concepts are overlapping, but they are not referring to the same thing.

“The main difference between play and playfulness is that play is an activity, while playfulness is an attitude.

An activity is a coherent and finite set of actions performed for certain purposes, while an attitude is a stance toward an activity—a psychological, physical, and emotional perspective we take on activities, people, and objects.” (21-22)

Play vs. Playfulness vs. Ludology vs. Narratology

Difference between *play* and *playfulness* (Sicart):

"Play is autotelic, an activity with its own purpose. We play for the sake of playing. Since playfulness is an attitude, a projection of characteristics into an activity, it lacks the autotelic nature. Playfulness preserves the purpose of the activity it is applied to: it's a different means to the same end." (26)



Zach Gage
#fortune, 2013-2016
Postmasters Gallery



Zach Gage
Best Day Ever, 2009-2016
Postmasters Gallery

Playfulness through appropriation:
Zach Gage's Google screen-scraping experiments (2015-present)

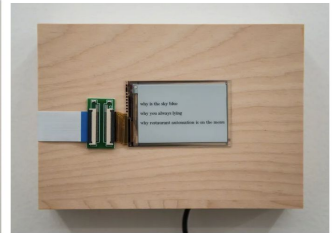
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Zach Gage
i never want to..., 2015/2016
Postmasters Gallery



Zach Gage
why..., 2015/2016
Postmasters Gallery

Playfulness through appropriation:
Zach Gage's Google screen-scraping experiments (2015-present)



The Mansion of Happiness (ca. 1850)

Narratology emphasis:

Players race about a 67-space spiral track depicting virtues and vices with their goal being the Mansion of Happiness at the track's end. Instructions upon virtue spaces advance players toward the goal while those upon vice spaces force them to retreat.

This game demonstrates how "good children" who vie for the moral way of life succeed, while those who are not lose access to the "Mansion of Happiness" (e.g., Heaven).



The Mansion of Happiness (ca. 1850)

Ludology emphasis:


The mechanics of the game are simple enough that young children can play (and thus be instructed on virtue and vice).

While virtues propel a player forward, the vile acts punish players. More libidinous/vicious acts result in more spaces being deducted.


The “random” spin of the *teetotem* (a dreidel-like spinner) results in new permutations of play, thus maintaining player interest.



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



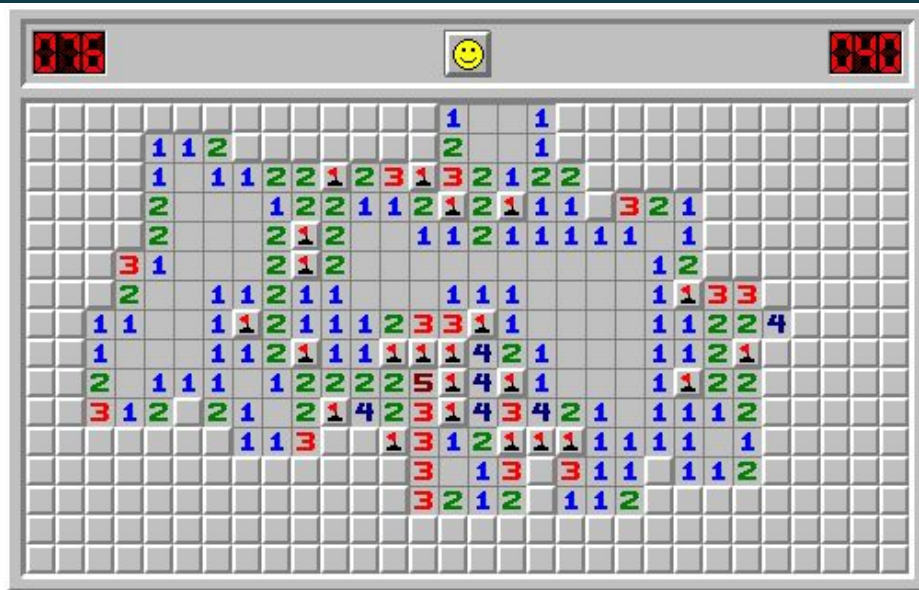
Miguel Sicart, "Play Is," in
Play Matters, 2014

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- 



Candyland, board game, designed by Eleanor Abbott in 1948, first published in 1949 by Milton Bradley

The game was designed in 1948 by Eleanor Abbott, while she was recovering from [polio](#) in [San Diego, California](#). The game was made for and tested by the children in the same wards on the hospital. The children suggested that Abbott submit the game to [Milton Bradley Company](#). The game was bought by Milton Bradley and first published in 1949 as a temporary fill-in for their then main product line, school supplies.



Minesweeper, Microsoft, 1990s

The first version of the basic game is said to be “Mined-Out” by Ian Andrew for the ZX Spectrum in 1983.

Game Analysis Presentation (Due: Week 4, 9.19.24)

Format:

- 5-10 minutes long
- use Google Slides for images
- videos less than 30 seconds (short clips, please!)

The presentation should include:

- a short introduction: how did you find this game?
Why does it appeal to you?
- a short explanation of how the game is played
- Choose three of the following of Sicart's game characteristics, and explain how your game fulfills (or thwarts!) them:

1. Play is contextual. (6)
2. Play is carnivalesque. (11)
3. Play is appropriative. (11)
4. Play is disruptive. (14)
5. Play is autotelic. (16)
6. Play is creative. (17)
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- Conclusion: is there anything you'd like to change about the game? Are there house rules you use, or rules/aspects of this game that you apply to other games?

Tips:

- Consider how language is used around the game (Huizinga, Chapter 2). How do people refer to the game (does it have particular words associated with it? Are there memes associated with it (consider "Among Us" and the word "sus", for example). Does the game have made up words or concepts? Does it have a specialized lingo associated with it?
- Consider how this game may have impacted history and/or culture (Huizinga, Chapter 3). Is there some larger concept that this game mimics/represents/parodies (example: Katamari Damacy is a commentary on capitalism).
- Examples of Game Analysis: [Game Studies: the international journal of computer game research](#)