

# Assignment 2: Interactive Story in Twine

## ***“Through Their Eyes”***

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Web-link: <https://www.scss.tcd.ie/~kandharc/twine/Social%20Anxiety.html>

## Inspiration and Themes

“Through Their Eyes” is a Twine story that explores how people with social anxiety feel.

The idea to make “*Through Their Eyes*” came to my mind after playing “*Mental Quest*,” the twine story by a former IDM student, and watching Episode 1 of a K-Drama “*Hello, My Twenties!*” on Netflix. Inspiration was also taken from the Ted Talk “Social Anxiety in the Modern World.”

The trouble of being unable to speak up that the protagonist of “*Hello, My Twenties!*” faces struck a chord with me. So, I created a game where the protagonist is constantly inconvenienced by not being able to speak up about what is on their mind.

The main aims of this interactive story are to allow people without Social Anxiety to experience what it is like and also to inspire people with Social Anxiety to find the strength to overcome their anxiety.

## Narrative Structures

I started with the idea that my story will allow people to experience what it is like to live with Social Anxiety. My initial idea was to either use the **Branch and Bottleneck** structure similar to *Mental Quest*.

A **Time Cave** or a **Sorting Hat**-like structure could be used for a larger story to inform the reader whether or not they have social anxiety. But doing so would require too much state tracking.

Eventually, I read more on the internet about Social Anxiety and decided to add an element to the story to allow the reader to overcome their anxiety. In this manner, the story can be informative to people both with and without Social Anxiety.

Consequently, I finally decided to use the **Loop and Grow** structure, similar to ‘*Switching*’ (2003) for the main story with a tiny bit of **Branch and Bottleneck** for events inside the main loop. Such that the reader continues to experience the same turn of events until they overcome their anxiety.

This structure makes sense in the story as the two primary arcs, getting on the bus and going to the class, are routine events that the reader can’t avoid.

As the story is not too large, a single sequence of events repeats until the resolution. The entire story is structured in the form of a large loop. In this manner, the story has very little replay value after finishing as they would have to experience the same things again.

The critical choice in the story is whether they want to get help from the Guidance Counsellor or not. If they choose to ignore, the story repeats itself until they do so.

## Point of View

Initially, I planned to have a third-person point of view. The story would have been written in the form of characters performing actions and the reader watching from the sidelines, having god-like control over their will.

However, I felt that using a second-person perspective would better allow the readers to imagine themselves as the protagonist. This format would be better for the reader to help them experience Social Anxiety for themselves, rather than them being told what it feels like.

## Psychology and Aesthetics

Psychology is an important aspect of the story.

Right from the starting screen, the font chosen for the title and the image of eyes looking slightly depressed is intended to inform the reader what to expect from the story ahead.

In the first sequence, gibberish characters appearing on the screen in combination with a headache-inducing sound is intended to simulate a person experiencing a panic attack.

In the following two arcs of the story, the bus animations and the bus sounds for the bus arc and the classroom chatter and the bell ringing for the classroom arc are intended to make the reader experience the trivialities of daily life.

The idea of the reader having to wait for the bus to arrive and to wait for the teacher to enter the class is from the interactivity of the iOS Game - "Florence," where the player has to perform actions similar to the mundane tasks performed by the protagonist of the story.

The cute-looking images and realistic sounds are a stark contrast to the otherwise grim mood of the story as suggested by the black background color. These little things also make the story experience less boring when these arcs are repeated.

The Guidance Counselor arc is meant to provide some narrative resolution in the form of overcoming one's Social Anxiety. The reader then unlocks the previously locked choices and can select them to give an illusion that they have overcome their anxiety.

Furthermore, to increase immersion, some details like the player character's age, gender, and location are intentionally left vague. It is also not revealed whether they are a school or a university student. All of this is left to the reader's imagination with the aim that the reader can empathize with the player character.

Another important aspect is the starting quote asking the reader to always be kind to others. This node appears again at the end of the story. This idea was inspired by movies where a scene at the beginning repeats after the climax, where it makes much more sense to the reader.

## Technology

The story is written using the **Snowman 2.0.2** version of Twine.

The images and sounds are hosted on the Trinity SCSS servers along with the story's HTML file. The Base URL for all the assets is: <https://www.scss.tcd.ie/~kandharc/twine/>

Animations are created with a combination of CSS and Javascript.

The JS code for the 'typewriter' effect for use in creating the panic-attack node is directly taken from the Twine Cookbook and its speed is increased by editing the JS function.

State tracking is done through the JS variables in the '*window.setup*' object.

They are used for tracking the name of the classmate and states like if the reader has already visited the guidance counselor and what were their choices in the story arcs.

## Sources of Images

- Main logo: Designed in Pixlr
- 47A Bus Image: Designed in Canva
- Instagram SVG image: <https://www.instagram.com>
- Design Lecture Image: Modified version of an image taken from - <https://www.ovtt.org/en/resources/design-thinking-agile-methods/>
- Questionnaire: "Free questionnaire clipart" [http://clipart-library.com/clipart/questionnaire-cliparts\\_19.htm](http://clipart-library.com/clipart/questionnaire-cliparts_19.htm)
- Healing image: <https://twitter.com/actionhappiness/status/1305938805346762752/photo/1>

## Sources of Audio files

- Panic Attack sound is a modified version of the Intense swell phasing spinning from: <https://mixkit.co/free-sound-effects/spin/>
  - It was modified in audacity to lower the volume level and add a "fade out" effect.
- Bus arrival and departure sounds: <https://mixkit.co/free-sound-effects/bus/>
- School Children Ambience Sound and Bell ringing sound: <https://mixkit.co/free-sound-effects/school/>
  - It was modified in audacity to trim the sound length and add a "fade out" effect.

## References

- Florence Game - <https://annapurnaininteractive.com/games/florence>
- “Social Anxiety in the Modern World” Ted Talk
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFhP4wP1TzU>
- Standard Patterns in Choice-Based Games  
<https://heterogenoustasks.wordpress.com/2015/01/26/standard-patterns-in-choice-based-games/>