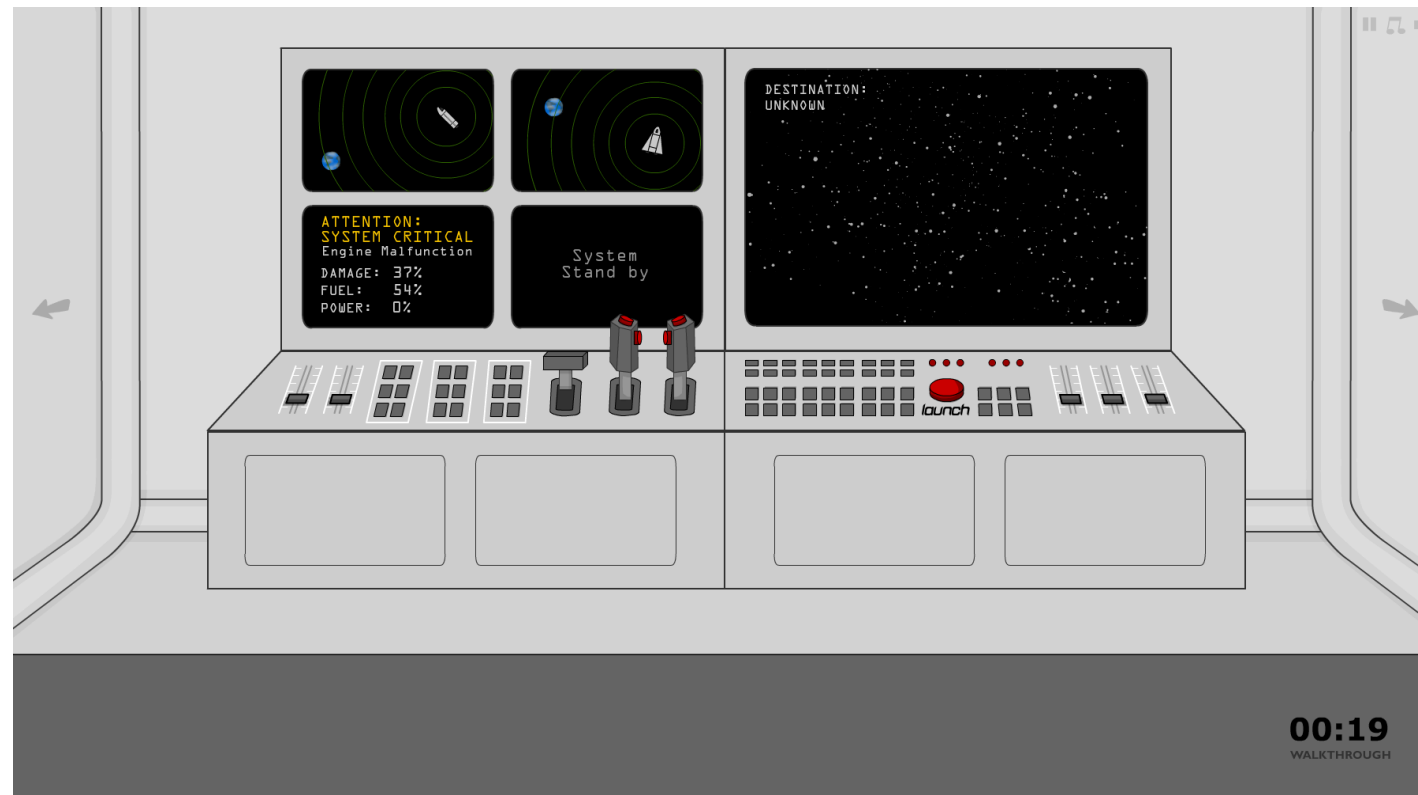


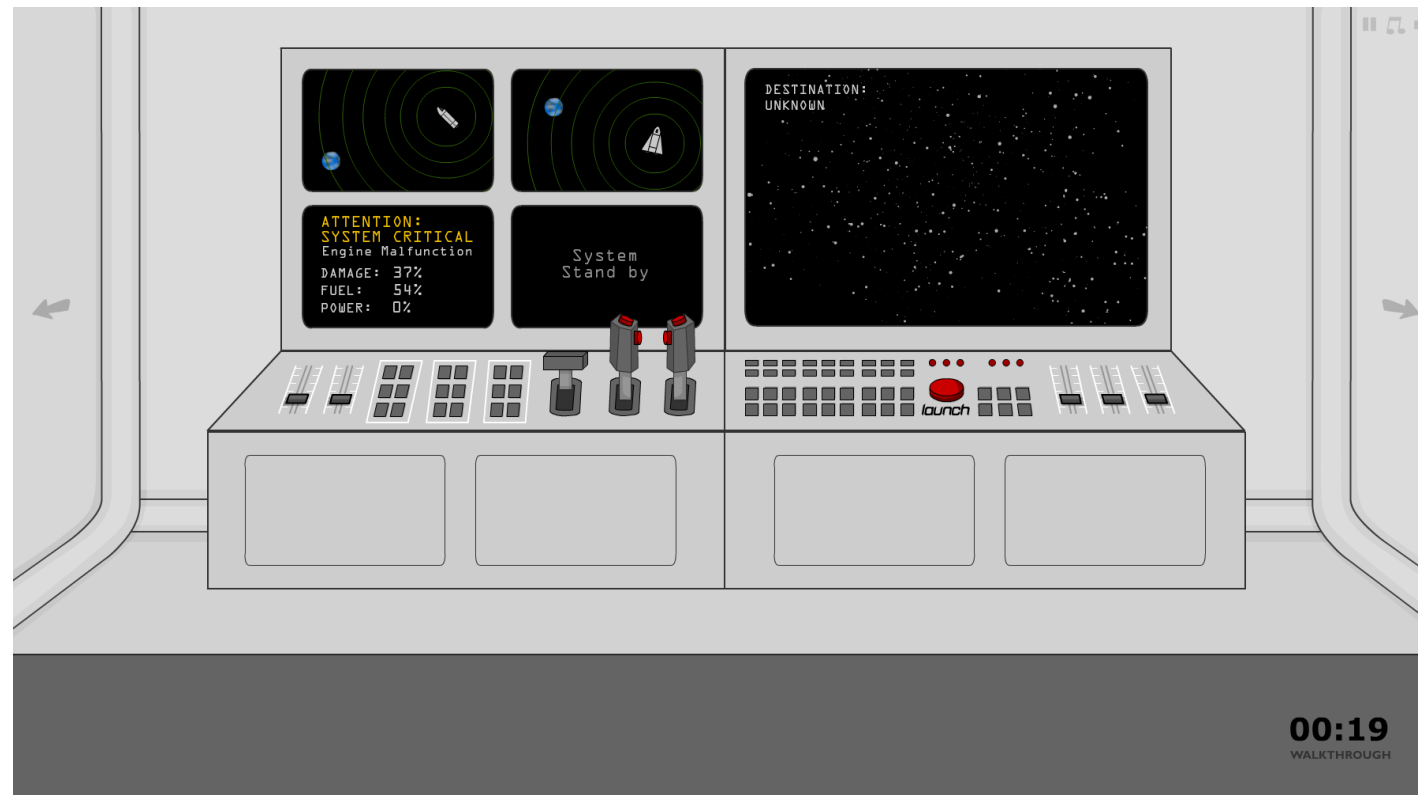
HOW TO DESIGN AN ESCAPE ROOM



Scott Lee Chua
@ The Substation
Nov 15 2016



POINT AND CLICK ONLINE GAMES



POINT AND CLICK ONLINE GAMES

"SCAVENGER HUNTS"



METAPUZZLE

**A LARGE PUZZLE CONSISTING
OF MANY SMALLER PUZZLES**

Gottlieb (1998) Secrets of the MIT Mystery Hunt: An Exploration of the Theory Underlying the Construction of a Multi-Puzzle Contest

NARRATIVE

**ESCAPE
ROOM
DESIGN**

PUZZLE

FLOW

NARRATIVE

- Connects individual puzzles thematically
- Affects the logic of the game
- More fun!

3 ESSENTIALS

1. Big Reveal
2. Players' Roles
3. Time Limit

1. BIG REVEAL

WHAT SEEMS LIKE **X**
IS REALLY **Y**



The Senate of the United States of America

To the United Nations Intelligence Division:

My name is Edward Brooke, United States Senate President. I have taken part of a grievous plot that could bring about a third world war. What follows is my full confession.

In February 2015, I was introduced to Sergio Vasquez, the CEO of the maritime conglomeration BLAZE. He shared my misgivings about the US-Cuba bilateral talks that had just begun that week. We agreed that even after decades, Castro almost undoubtedly had a hidden agenda. We developed a mutualistic relationship over the next few months; I would delay Senate votes on the matter as long as I could, and he would provide substantial funds to the education and housing programs in my home state.

On December 25, when Gemini XXII sank, Vasquez and I were both at a black-tie Christmas party. He received a phone call, but he looked neither shocked nor mystified. That was when I started having suspicions. Last Tuesday, when the Capricorn V sank, I had the NSA send me a record of his phone calls and emails.

All of BLAZE's subsidiaries -- Zodiac, Shanghai, Mumbai, Pisces -- they're all a front for international arms trades. Everything from rocket launchers to hydrogen bombs have crossed our borders in secret sections of his boats. We've been blindly fighting terrorists in the Middle East, when we were trading their supplier's stocks right in our own stock exchange.

Capricorn V, Gemini XXII, and two more that nobody knows about are carrying tons of explosives to Havana in time for this weekend. They will detonate during the signing of the historic peace treaty. In the wake of the deaths of Obama and Castro, the United States and Cuba will blame each other, and all the other countries will take their sides.

All of BLAZE's subsidiaries...**they're all a front for international arms trades.**

Everything from rocket launchers to hydrogen bombs have crossed our borders in secret sections of his boats.

[Four boats]...are carrying tons of explosives to Havana...They will detonate during the signing of the historic peace treaty...**Who profits from a world war? Vasquez.**

2. PLAYERS' ROLES

- Helps player get immersed
- Themselves?
- Famous character?*
- Role within the story?

3. TIME LIMIT

- “Escape in time, otherwise...”
- Creates consequences
- Makes the game believable

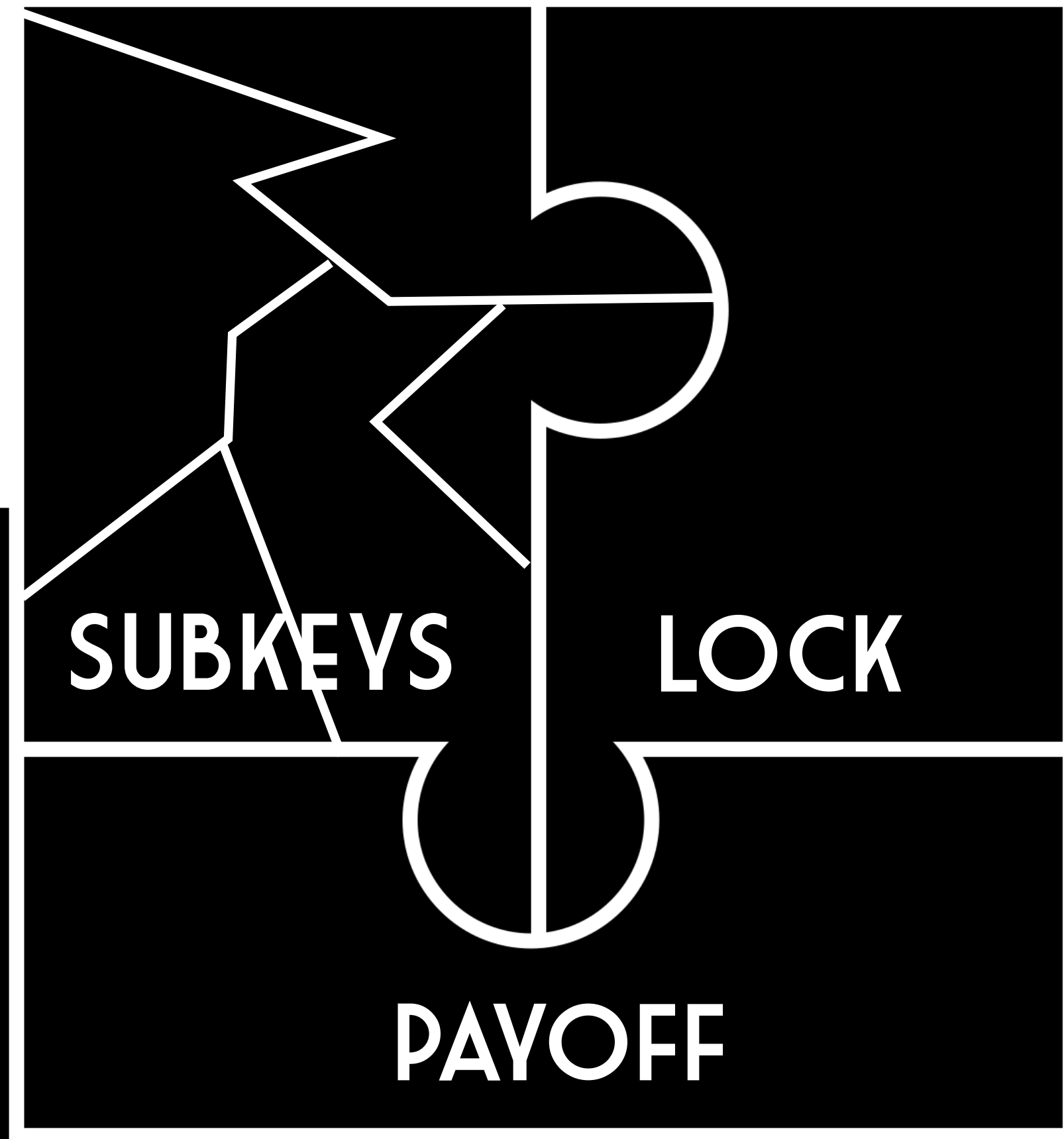
**IT'S YOUR
TURN!**

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SUBKEYS

- Individually useless parts of a puzzle
- Never provided simultaneously
- More than 2 is ok: especially endgames

LOCKS & PAYOFFS

- Rewards drive the game's momentum
- They themselves are further subkeys
- Locks restrict unattained payoffs
- Final payoff is exiting the room

Subkeys	Lock	Payoff

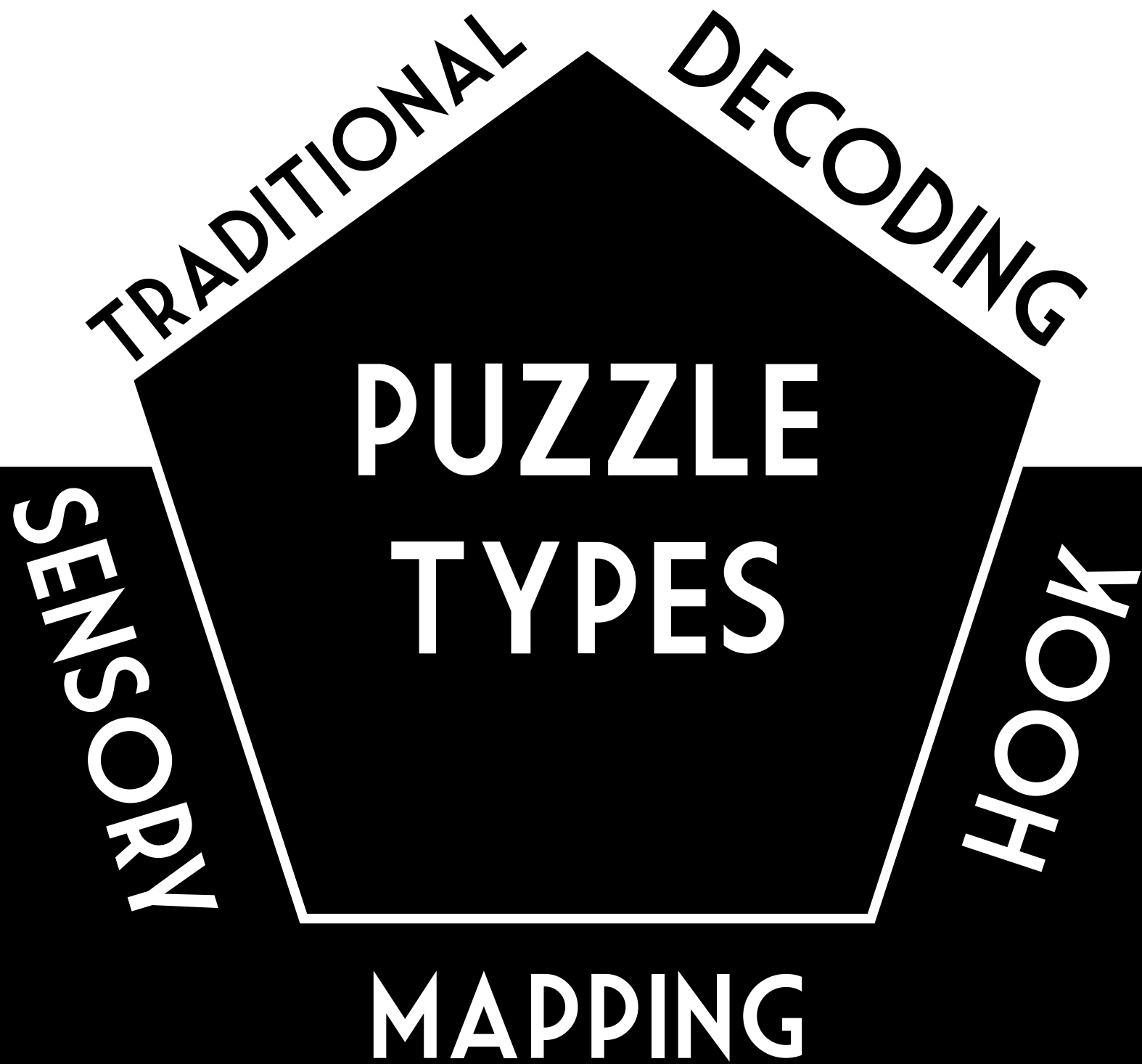
Subkeys	Lock	Payoff
manual organs lab scale	4-digit lock	periodic table

Subkeys	Lock	Payoff
manual organs lab scale	4-digit lock	periodic table
morse code decoder compass image	safe	ledgers

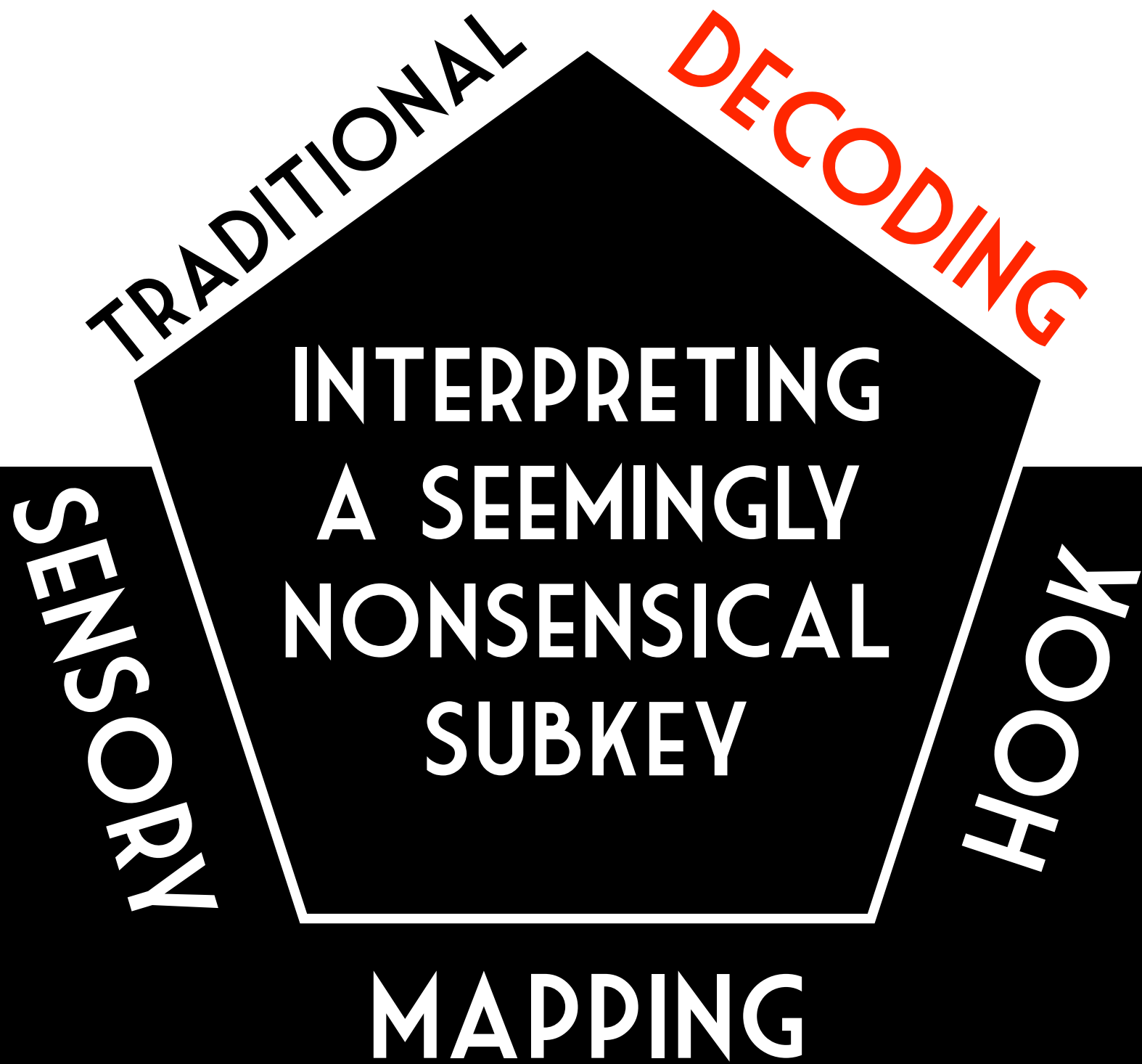
Subkeys	Lock	Payoff
manual organs lab scale	4-digit lock	periodic table
morse code decoder compass image	safe	ledgers
riddle password	inaccessible place	transcripts

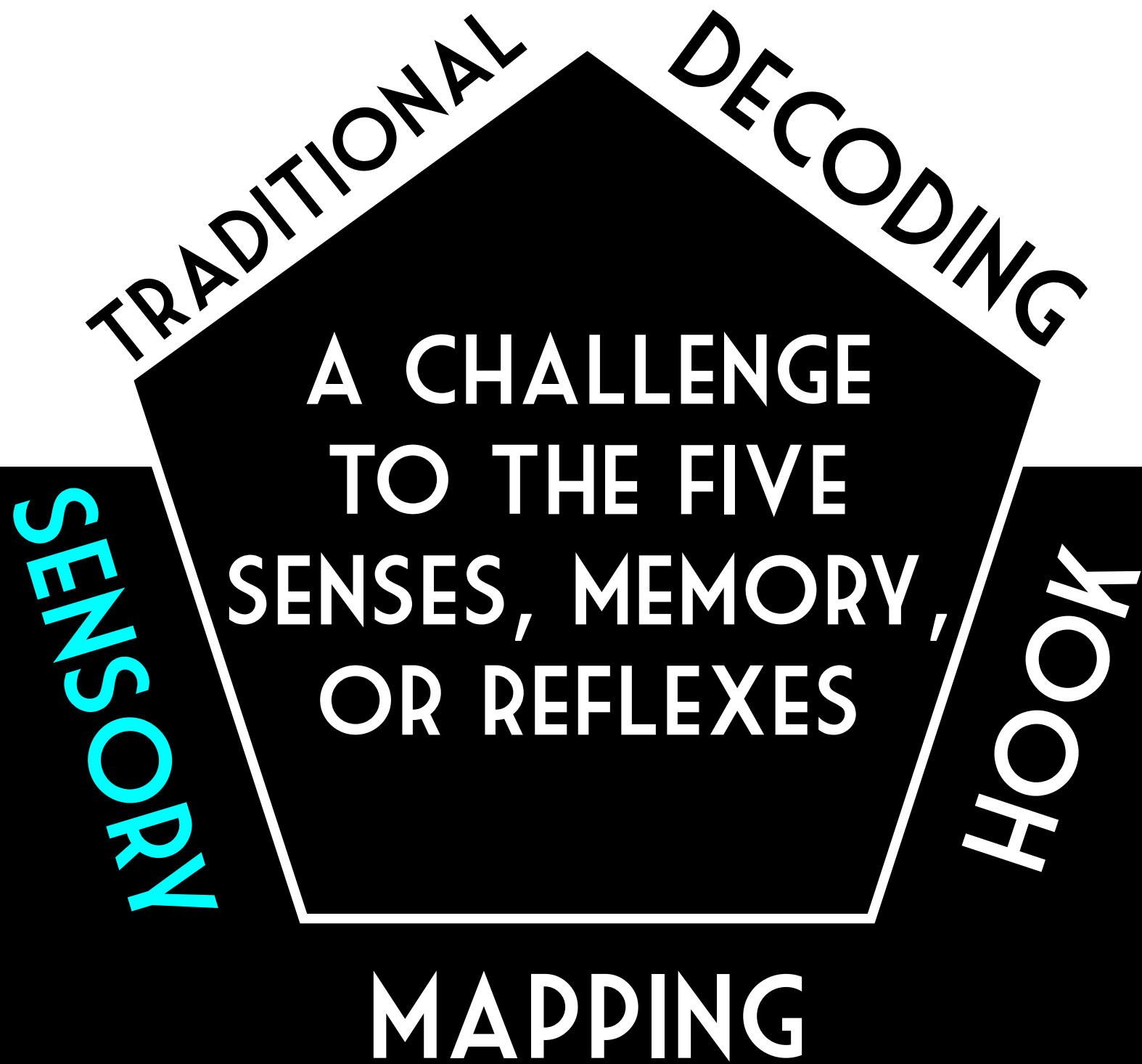
Subkeys	Lock	Payoff
manual organs lab scale	4-digit lock	periodic table
morse code decoder compass image	safe	ledgers
riddle password	inaccessible place	transcripts
artwork artwork title clipboard	obscured by art	ship name

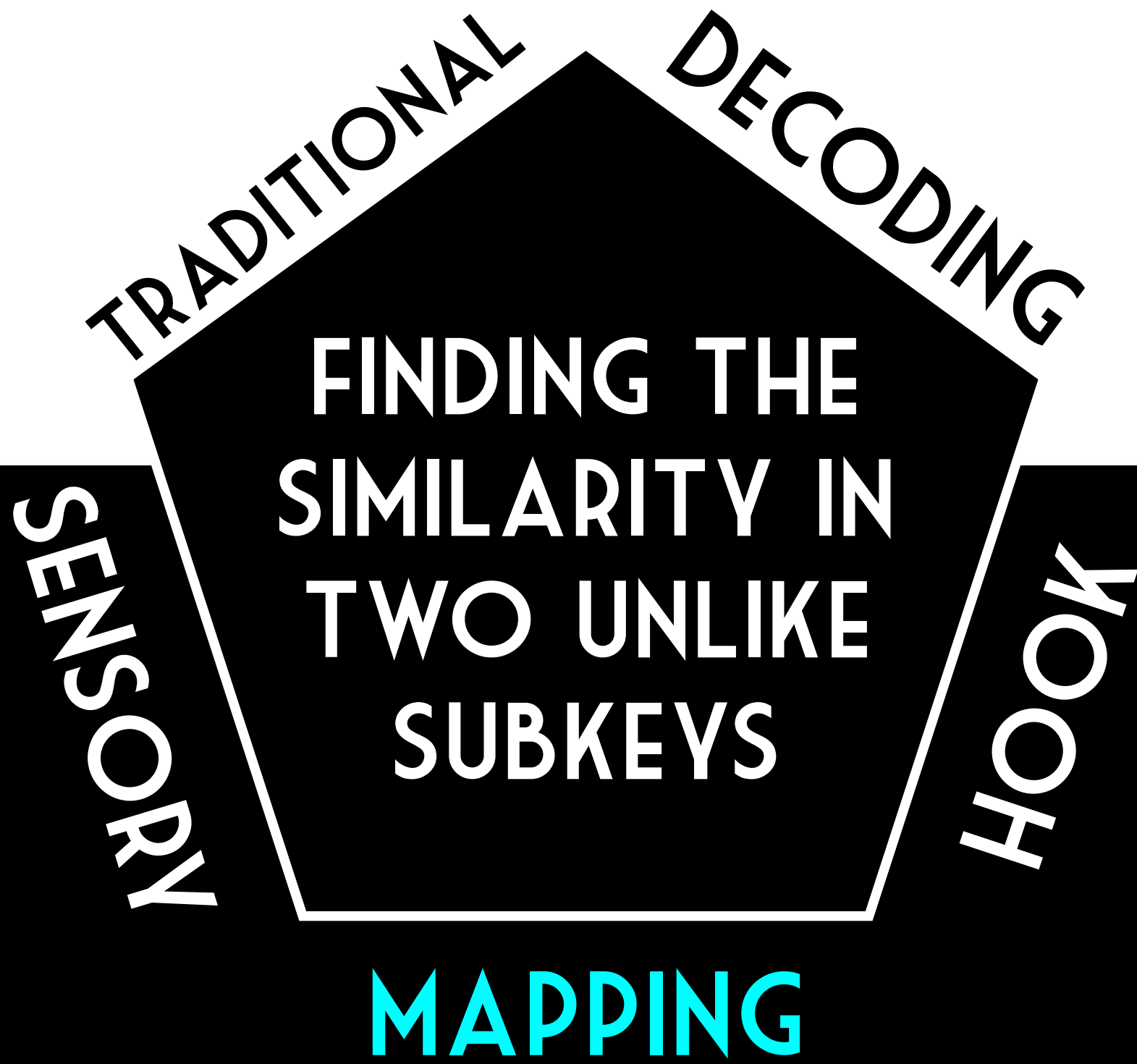
Subkeys	Lock	Payoff
manual organs lab scale	4-digit lock	periodic table
morse code decoder compass image	safe	ledgers
riddle password	inaccessible place	transcripts
artwork artwork title clipboard	obscured by art	ship name
collage/s notebook	5-letter lock	key

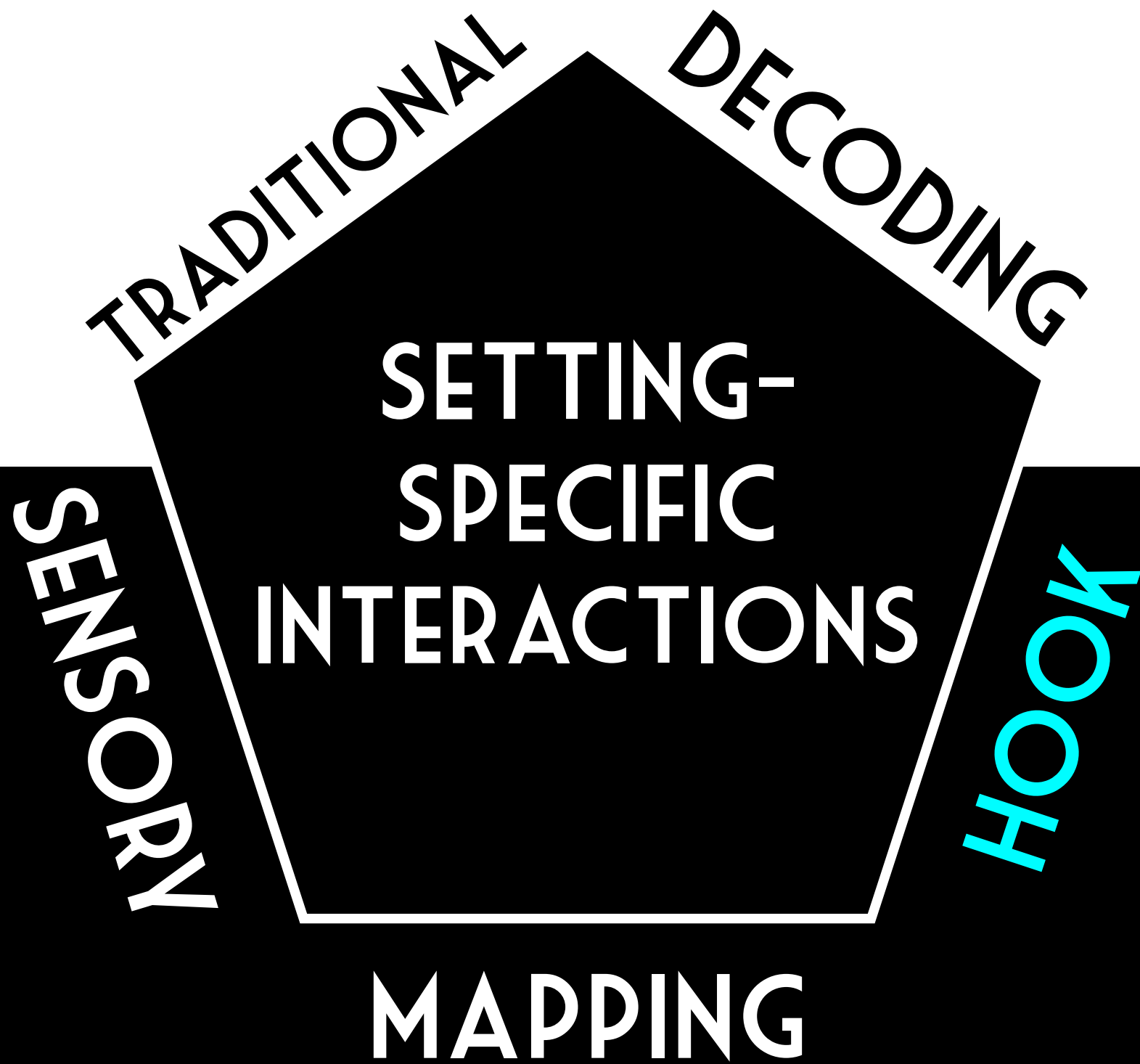












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3 FOUNDATIONS

1. Feedback Mechanisms
2. Reaching Endgame
3. Endgame

1. FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

- Notifies player whether or not she got the puzzle right
- Sensory feedback: lock opening, light/sound/movement
- Biggest issue with automatic mechanisms

2. REACHING ENDGAME

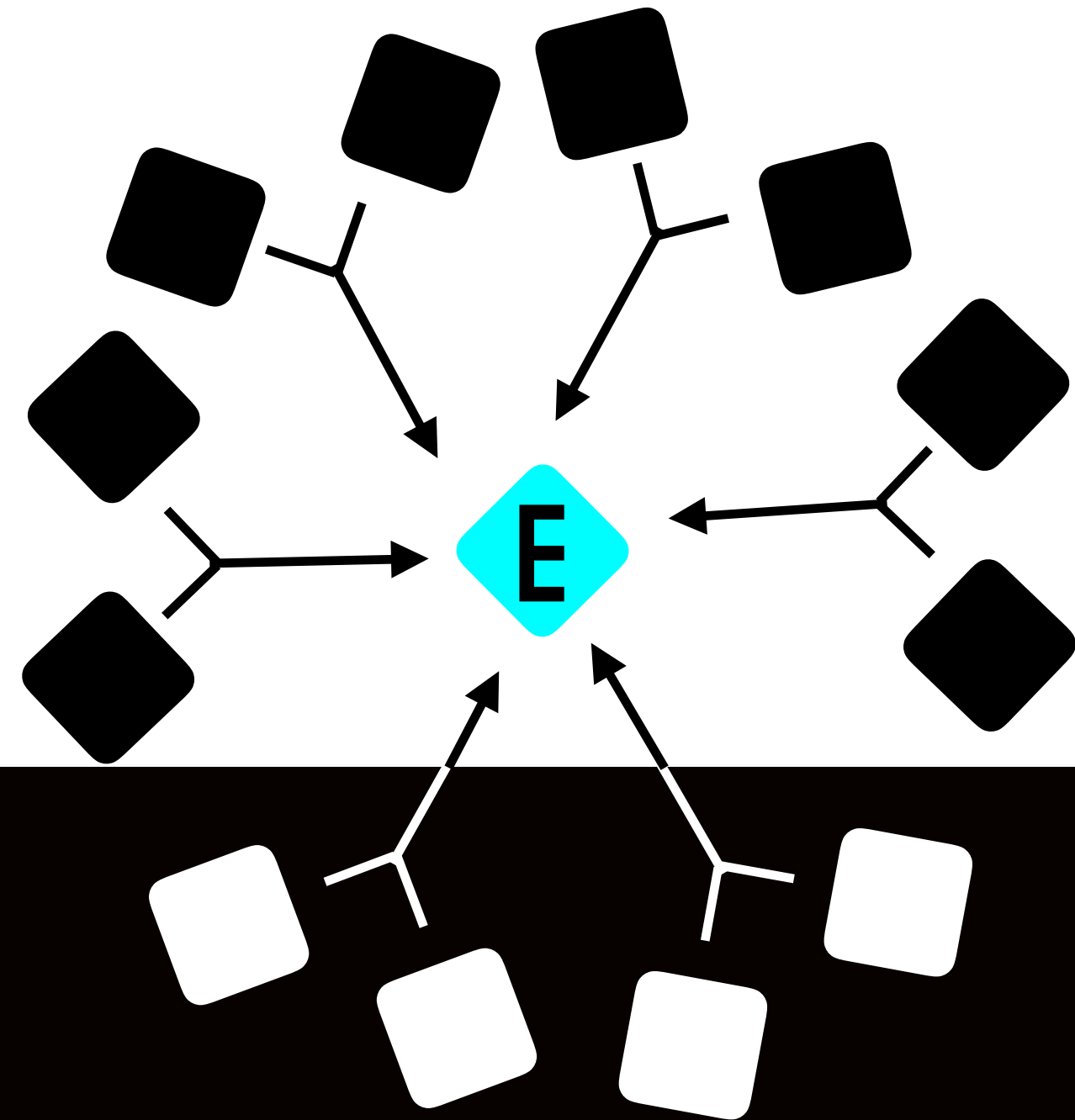
- Rule of thumb ~7 puzzles total
- Room structure: linear, octopus, or tree



simple to create

easily fits narrative

boring for many players



OCTOPUS

simple to create
good for many players
not conducive to narrative

3. ENDGAME

- Conclusion of the escape room
- Payoff must be satisfying!
- Combines previous payoffs to open the final lock

CONTAGION

Transparent plastic: PURPLE IS THE CURE

Drink me: numbered test tubes

EXIT!

LOST

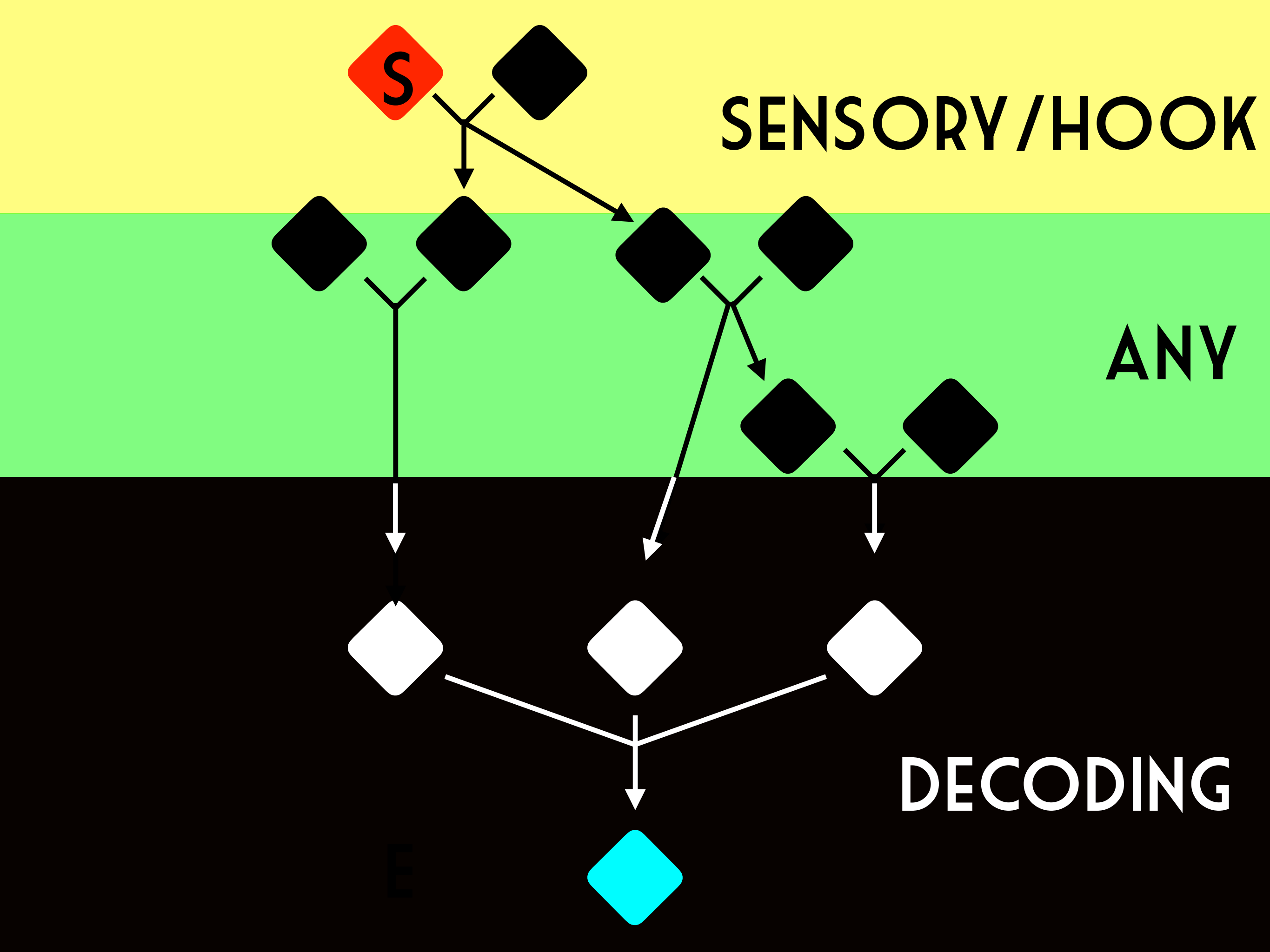
Senator's letter: 4 ship names

Decode with ship ledger

Enter serials to stop countdown

EXIT!

**LET'S PUT IT
TOGETHER!**



NARRATIVE

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