

This is Prompt 4 for English 230, "Contemporary Media and Fiction" (Fall 2021), at the University of Victoria. It is also available online at <https://jentry.github.io/engl230v2/prompt4.html>.

Responses to the prompt should be submitted via the course Brightspace. Thanks!

Prompt 4

Written on Tuesday, November 23rd

This prompt asks you to address how action and interfaces articulate play with story. You're welcome to respond to the prompt in **one** of five ways.

The Five Options

Option 1, "Choice": Use either 3-4 minutes of video or 500-750 words with 1-5 images to explain the relationship between story and choice in *Celeste* or *With Those We Love Alive*. Your explanation should attend to the game's variety of actions and the clarity of their diegetic consequences. How and to what effects are choices part of the gameplay? How and to what effects are they part of the story? Identify moments of dissonance and/or resonance between story and play. Consider whether you think the game offers too many choices or too few of them. Note how the game tracks your actions and decisions or nudges you to follow certain story beats. Your audience for this response is comprised of people who are fans of the game you selected. They know a lot about the game, and they've finished it. You do not need to summarize the game or worry about spoilers. Do *not* publish your response online.

Option 2, "Satisfaction": Use either 3-4 minutes of video or 500-750 words with 1-5 images to explain the relationship between story, action, and satisfaction in *Celeste* or *With Those We Love Alive*. Your explanation should attend to the game's predictability and uncertainty. How and to what effects can you anticipate the direction of the game's story? How and to what effects is the game's story predetermined? Identify moments of satisfying gameplay, especially as it pertains to the game's story. Consider when you think the game is frustrating or difficult, or when it's "on rails." Note what the game renders attainable or unattainable. Your audience for this response is comprised of people who are fans of the game you selected. They know a lot about the game, and they've finished it. You do not need to summarize the game or worry about spoilers. Do *not* publish your response online.

Option 3, "Comparison": Here, I am asking you to write about a game we didn't study in 230 by comparing it with *Celeste* or *With Those We Love Alive*. Use either 3-4 minutes of video or 500-750 words with 1-5 images to compare the relationship between play and story in *Celeste* or *With Those We Love Alive* and a game of your choice. Your comparison should focus on either choice or satisfaction (see above for details and pertinent questions). How do these two games similarly approach play and story? How do their approaches differ? What about situating the two of them together makes for an interesting conversation on the topic of choice or satisfaction in games? Your audience for this response is comprised of people who are fans of the two games you selected. They know a

lot about the games, and they've finished them both. You do not need to summarize the games or worry about spoilers. Do *not* publish your response online.

Option 4, "Adaptation": Use either [Twine](#) or [Bitsy](#) to adapt a scene from *The Fifth Season* into a game in order to change how people would read or interact with an aspect of Jemisin's novel and its worldbuilding. Your adaptation should experiment with predictability and even introduce aspects of uncertainty to the original text. How might players of your adaptation learn about the relationship between an action's cause and effect? How and under what assumptions might you introduce links or interaction to Jemisin's story? How might your adaptation rely on chance or hidden information? Consider the mental images that *The Fifth Season* evokes for you. How would you represent them in a game? Note what information *The Fifth Season* withholds or what it suggests without telling you. How might those "uncertain" elements be adapted in a game? Finally, consider the social and cultural dimensions of adaptation. How might your adaptation pay homage to *The Fifth Season* rather than appropriating it? How would Jemisin likely respond to it, and why is consent important for such literary adaptations? Include alongside your adaptation 75-200 words that describe your approach to it, with some attention to how you accounted for predictability and uncertainty along the way. Your adaption should be a playable prototype (rough and incomplete), and the play experience needs to be only 1-5 minutes. Do *not* publish your adaptation online.

Option 5, "CYOA": Write your own option for this prompt and email it to me by Friday, December 3rd for review. It should follow the conventions of Option 1, 2, 3, or 4 above.

Tips for Writing

- Watch / play these games multiple times. Take notes and document your experience as you go.
- Stick to thorough and detailed explanations for Options 1, 2, and 3. You can't address everything in the game. Select key moments, attend to their nuance, and give them a sense of depth. Help your audience to see them in a new way.
- Select media with which you are most comfortable *and* choose an approach that best fits the work at hand. If you need assistance to produce video, or to work with Twine or Bitsy, then let me know. I'm happy to help. I've made games in Twine and Bitsy, and I've worked with audio and video.
- Use evidence if you select Option 1, 2, or 3. Include clips or screens, quote what you read or hear, and/or describe the story and gameplay. If you need assistance with clips or screens, then don't hesitate to contact me.
- If you choose the words + images path for Option 1, 2, or 3, then integrate your images into your writing by interpreting them. "Weave" the images into your paragraphs rather than leaving them for the end.
- If you make a video or adaptation, then acknowledge your source material in some way. Also, don't worry too much about resolution or polish. This is not a video production or game development course. Your video or adaptation should focus on engaging the course material, demonstrating an awareness of audience, and showing potential for producing knowledge.

- If you're unsure which game to select for Option 3, then email me. I can provide advice and perspective on content that wasn't assigned in this course, and I'm happy to play games that are new to me.
- If you select Option 4, then consider focusing on only a page or two of *The Fifth Season*. Avoid scope creep for this exercise. Think small.
- If you're using Twine or Bitsy for Option 4, then take a moment early in the process to learn how to export your work and share it as an HTML file, which you'll need to submit via Brightspace. Drop me a line if you're unsure how to export to HTML. I can show you how.
- If you select Option 5, then ensure your option focuses on how action and interfaces articulate play with story. Don't forget about the course material, either. (Your approach should be relevant to the course.)
- Put terminology from class discussions and lectures to work in your response.
- It's the end of term, and we're all tired. Pick a topic and/or approach that interests you, or that you care about, to help keep you invested in your final response. We're almost there!
- Feel free to use first-person language ("I") where appropriate.

Assessment

I will assess your response to Prompt 4 based on the following criteria:

- Engagement with the prompt (25%): how well and to what degree the response addresses this prompt
- Awareness (25%): how well and to what degree the response demonstrates an awareness of its audience and subject material
- Quality and potential (25%): the clarity, detail, precision, and overall quality of the response, plus the potential it demonstrates to educate its audience about the primary work(s) at hand (the production quality of video and adaptations does not apply here; adaptations can be rough, and video can be low resolution)
- Engagement with course material (25%): how well and to what degree the response engages the English 230 course material, including discussions, topics, concepts, assigned works, and the class notebook

You will receive a mark for each of the four criteria, which will be tallied (.25 x 4) to result in your mark for Prompt 4. I will return marks via Brightspace. I will use [UVic's grading system](#) for assessment, according to this rubric: "exceeds and raises expectations" (A+), "exceeds expectations" (A, A-), "exceeds some expectations" (B+), "meets expectations" (B, B-), "meets some expectations" (C+, C), "meets few expectations" (D), and "no submission."

What to Submit

You may submit your response to Prompt 4 via Brightspace as a video (3-4 minutes), image (1-5 of them), word processing or PDF (500-750 words for Options 1-3; 75-200 words for Option 4), or HTML (play experience of 1-5 minutes) file. You may need to submit multiple files, and that's totally fine. Please also include references. If you have questions about how

to cite a particular work, then don't hesitate to email me. Here are MLA citations for the three works at hand (change the access dates, if you wish):

- Extremely Ok Games, Ltd. *Celeste*, 2018, <https://exok.com/games/celeste/>. Accessed 23 November 2021.
- Heartscape, Porpentine Charity and Brenda Neotemie. *With Those We Love Alive*, 2014, <https://slimedaughter.com/games/twine/wtwla/>. Accessed 23 November 2021.
- Jemisin, N.K. *The Fifth Season*. Orbit, 2015.

When to Submit It

Please submit your response by Tuesday, December 14th at 10:30am. This due date is unfortunately strict. (I need to submit marks soon thereafter.) Thank you for understanding.