

Project 2: Interactive Fiction

e249 | SP19 | Electronic Literature | Jason Loan

Your Challenge

Compose a work of interactive fiction using freely available technology such as Twine or Inform.

What is interactive fiction?

Interactive fiction is typically a text or prose-based digital work in which the writer designs for the reader a series of interactions with the story.

The [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#) traces IF's digital origin to 1975:

Interactive fiction became a digital medium in 1975, when Will Crowther wrote the first text adventure, Adventure (also known as Colossal Cave Adventure), as a gift for his children.

I just want to say that I love this origin story -- that IF has its making in a writer/programmer's gift to their children.

Note: You will often here the word "game" used in connection with IF. We'll have some conversations about this as we work.

How will we do this?

In making your own interactive story, I encourage you to use [Twine](#). Its freely available and easy to use. Twine will very much encourage you to make what is typically called a "choice-based" or "hypertext" story/game. This is a great place to begin. For some coverage of Twine and a link to sample work made with it, check out ["Twine, the Video Game Technology for All."](#)

[Inform](#) is another free IF making platform. You are free to try it out. It's not on our lab computers, but you can download it onto your personal computer if you want to experiment. Inform is more readily suited to making what are called "parser" stories/games. For a definition of "parser" games see Emily Short's [brief overview of writing IF](#).

How Long Does It Have to Be?

When developing traditional writing assignments we often use page or word counts to provide some guidance for our work. This is a little tricky with IF and these types of guidelines don't translate too cleanly.

Emily Short has created an "IF Party Game" to help people get started writing. I have adapted this game for our use. It asks you to experiment with what Short identifies as three elements of IF -- **premise**, **choices**, and **secret aims**. You can give this a try [here](#).

Another Tip for Getting Started

Set-up some constraints or "rules" for your story drafting. For example...

- A great strategy for giving your IF some initial structure/guidelines -- particularly if you are using Twine -- is to set an arbitrary number of *passages* that your story will have. For example, commit to writing a story that is 18 passages long. No more. No less. You can set the number anywhere. 12. 37. 111. This will give you some limitations to work within initially, and you can always adjust as the story begins to take shape for you.
- Another interesting constraint would be to set a word count limit for the individual passages in your story. Like -- Each passage must be 150 words. No more. No less. Or, no passage in my story can be longer than the length of a Tweet (140 - 280) characters.

These rules can help restrict, or constrain, the possibilities available to you, and thus encourage some creative thinking in response to them.

Timeline/Deadlines

Monday [May 13] -- In-progress stories DUE for some low-stakes sharing.

Friday [May 17] -- Complete drafts of stories DUE.

Submitting the project

Twine exports stories as HTML files, so you'll submit this file to me. Like our Taroko Gorge Remixes, I will build a space to publish these on the web.