

SOLARPUNK FUTURES

The social ecological storytelling game where you and your friends build a better world

More than ever we must recover the continuum between our "first nature" and our "second nature," our natural world and our social world, our biological being and our rationality. Latent within us are ancestral memories that only an ecological society and sensibility can "resurrect."

– Murray Bookchin, 01982

Table of Contents

The Free Earth Archive	3
Overview	4
Materials	4
Setup	4
Technique 001: Festival of Remembrance	5
Protecting the Assembly's Integrity	7
Lines and Veils	7
X-Card	8
Modified Consensus	8
Additional Techniques	9
About This Game	10
Solarpunk?	10
Credits & Licenses	11
FAQ	12



20 minutes

Ages 12+



1-6 players

GUIDELINES FOR REINSCRIPTION OF OUR STRUGGLE FOR UTOPIA

**As transcribed from The Free Earth
Archive by the delegates to the Assembly
for the Future**



Fig. 1. The Free Earth Archive, 02025.

Passed down to us by our Ancestors, this archive documents humanity's legacies of freedom. It is an example of an extremely durable diamond-obsidian composite cold-storage technology characteristic of the early 21st century utopians.

Overview

*[Excerpts from the Technical Manual to **The Free Earth Archive**]*

Living now, in our free society, we must honor our Ancestors for their struggle. This is not just an ethical imperative, but the only practical method for maintaining the process of utopia. For the struggle for utopia is a continuous process that demands, from any so bold as to fight for it, a memory of the joys and despairs our Ancestors found.

*The following techniques will allow future generations to remember, learn, and participate in humanity's legacy of freedom. Through these techniques, **The Free Earth Archive** grows as it is reinscribed.*

Struggle in solidarity for utopia now. Good Luck!

Materials

Along with these guidelines, you will find the following artifacts enclosed:

8 Ancestor Cards

22 Value Cards

35 Tool Cards

17 Challenge Cards

6 Cards to add your own struggles to **The Archive** (2 each of Values, Tools, and Challenges)

Setup

01. First, separate the cards into four piles, one for each type of card (Ancestors, Values, Tools, and Challenges) and place them all in the middle.
02. Grab paper and pen for each of the **Assembly Members** (players).
03. Grab a timer. A phone timer works great.

Technique 001: Festival of Remembrance

*You all have been chosen as members of this year's **Assembly for the Future**. It is your sacred task to lead the opening of the **Festival of Remembrance** where you collectively remember how each of your **Ancestors** came together to overcome the **Challenges** of the world before. **The Assembly** must project your minds backward into one of the many pivotal moments of our legacy of freedom to secure the utopia we've won.*

The goal of this technique is to collectively “remember” one of the many stories that grew into our utopia.

This technique has four phases:

01. The Challenge **02.** The Ancestors **03.** Building the New World **04.** Remembrance

01. The Challenge

Draw one Challenge card as a group.

This technique starts when someone says “When we overcame the Challenge of _____, I remember...”. Everyone goes around the circle collectively describing the nature of the **Challenge** and why it was so daunting.

The starting world is assumed to be very similar to the players' present world.

OPTIONAL RULE: If the group would like to start with a modified world (a more dystopian near future, a real historical moment from the past) and if they would like to limit their story's scope in time or space (Was it overcome intergalactically for all time, or at the national level, the municipal level, for just one sweet day of freedom, or for many years after?) The group should determine it using **Modified Consensus** during this phase.

OPTIONAL RULE: Draw a **Value** card alongside the **Challenge** and decide as a group how capitalism masks the truth of that **Challenge** behind that **Value**. i.e. Capitalism uses individualist *Responsibility* (to recycle) to mask the truth of *Landfills*.

02. The Ancestors

Each player remembers an Ancestor by drawing one Ancestor, one Value, and two Tool cards.

Each **Assembly Member** remembers an **Ancestor**, the **Values** they struggled for, and the **Tools** they brought along or created along the way.

Set a five-minute timer for each player to write down their Ancestor's details.

Use the time for each player to note their **Ancestors'** name, background, what motivates them to struggle for a better world, and how they initially approached the **Challenge** (with their **Values** and **Tools**). Since they won't fully overcome the challenge until the next phase, be sure to think about where they came up short and/or which powers opposed them.

Ancestors don't have to use both **Tools**. Many times it can be creative to find ways to combine disparate **Tools**, but sometimes one just doesn't fit.

When the timer is up, someone begins by sharing their Ancestor's story up until they meet the other Ancestors (in the next phase).

03. Building the New World

Collectively tell the story of how the Ancestors came together to overcome the challenge.

Work together to tell the rest of the story. It took everyone to overcome the **Challenge** (and many other unnamed ancestors, besides), so make sure everyone has a chance to explain the role of their **Ancestor**. It's always darkest before the dawn, so talk about what roadblocks were encountered and how you overcame them.

Here are some questions that can help guide your remembrance:

- ❖ How did your **Ancestors** collaborate with another or were inspired by one another to come closer to overcoming the challenge?
- ❖ What brought all the **Ancestors** together and what was one of the things they decided as a group?
- ❖ How did those perpetuating the **Challenge** respond to your efforts, and how did the **Ancestors** come together to counter them?
- ❖ How did the world look after your **Ancestors'** intervention?

Build on each other's ideas with consent. Build the story together: don't be afraid to "remind" or "be reminded" that something actually happened a little bit differently (i.e. modify or elaborate what someone else said). Any disagreements should be resolved in a comradely manner through **Modified Consensus**.

OPTIONAL RULE: Use a coin-flip to figure out the roadblocks. Heads and it took much longer than your Ancestor expected. Tails and some individual or organization betrayed them. Explain the details of how it was overcome.

Someone ends this phase at any time by declaring "We honor our Ancestors for their struggle". The group uses modified consensus to determine if they are finished.

04. Remembrance

In no particular order, each player answers at least one:

- ❖ What might have gone differently?
- ❖ How long did it take? Could it have taken a much longer or shorter time?
- ❖ Were you able to fully overcome the **Challenge**, or just the worst of it?
- ❖ Which group of people joined your efforts?
- ❖ What is being done today, in the utopia, to actively mitigate against it arising again?
- ❖ What risks did these ancestors have to take? Did they need to make sacrifices?
- ❖ What other **Tools** and **Values** could have been used?
- ❖ How do you think these **Ancestors** felt when they were faced with this **Challenge**?
- ❖ Do any of the possibilities you envisioned, challenge, affirm, or clarify your current real-world impact?
- ❖ Were you inspired by any of the scenarios you explored?
- ❖ Who are some real-world people today facing this same **Challenge** that you hope will be remembered by future generations?
- ❖ How would this story have been told differently if it was...a superhero action movie, a dystopian novel, a satire/comedy, a romance, another genre?

Example of Play

TKTKTK

Protecting the Assembly's Integrity

*The techniques enclosed can expose assembly members to the traumas of the broadest sweeps of history. In order to ensure ongoing integrity of each **member of the assembly**, consent and boundaries around the techniques are key.*

Lines and Veils

Lines are hard lines around themes or ideas we do not cross. These are things that are not in the technique at all. They are not alluded to or done off screen. They simply do not happen.

Veils are things that happen “off screen” in the technique. They are things that are allowed to happen, but without details, and do not occupy the focus of the technique at any time.

X-Card

The X-Card is a tool that allows anyone during a technique to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. It's possible the technique will go in a direction the **assembly members** don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise. (You can learn more about the X-card by John Stravopoulous at <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>)

Remember, the integrity of each of the **members of the assembly** is more important than any outcome in any given scenario.

Modified Consensus

Modified consensus is a simple way to make decisions while ensuring all opinions are heard and no one feels strongly against any group decision. Consensus here does not necessarily mean “full agreement”, but consent, as in “no objections”. There are more formal models, but the basic procedures are:

1. **Discuss** ideas freely and ensure everyone's voice is heard before making any proposals.
2. **Object** - Anyone can block any proposal if they feel strongly against it. (i.e. “this is not good enough for now or safe enough to try.”)
3. **Test** for consensus. Rather than taking a vote in favor, you ask if anyone objects to a proposal.
4. **Adapt** - If there is a block, the whole group searches for adaptations to achieve consensus.
5. **Vote, if needed** - If, after discussion, no consensus can be achieved, a majority vote can be used.

Additional Techniques

Technique 104: “Nail, Meet Hammer”

*This technique can be used as individual **assembly members** or as a full assembly. It is more difficult with fewer members present.*

The goal of this technique is to overcome a challenge creatively by limiting our available tools.

The assembly starts with 0 points.

Pick one Ancestor, Value, and Tool as a group. Draw 3 Challenges.

Assembly members describe to each other how they overcome each challenge using only the available **Ancestor**, **Values**, and **Tools**. If all present **assembly members** vote that the challenges have been creatively overcome, the game ends.

Players may draw additional cards. For each **Ancestor** drawn, add 3 points. For each **Value** drawn, add 2 points. For each **Tool** drawn, add 1 point. The more points, the more time it took to overcome that challenge.

Technique 759: “IRL RFN”

*This can be used as individual **assembly members**, or as a full assembly.*

The goal of this technique is to inspire ideas for facing challenges in real life, right f*kin now.**

Select a **Challenge** your community is currently facing in real life (right f'g now!). This does not have to be an existing card. Draw a **Value** to guide your way, then quick-draw **Tools** until you spark an idea. Organize a group to develop and put that idea into practice.

About This Game

This game was created by the artist collective Solarpunk Surf Club. We wanted to make a game that would create the social conditions to facilitate collective thinking toward realistic utopian futures and encourage people to engage in the real planning around what it might take to get there.

While leaving plenty of room for players, *Solarpunk Futures* is not neutral about the direction in which our utopia lies: consent, egalitarianism, direct democracy, and cooperation are all values embodied directly in the gameplay, as well as in many of the cards.

We exist in a time of deep alienation from each other and depoliticization from political ancestries we need to recapture. Whether players have known each other for a long time or they are strangers at a public game event, *Solarpunk Futures* aims to build community and fight social and political isolation through collaborative storytelling and play which allows us to let our defenses down and dream.

We hope *Solarpunk Futures* will be relevant to activists, educators and librarians, artists and performers, organizations, and existing community groups as a fun and engaging way to build teamwork and bring people together around compelling visions of the future. We anticipate the game will appeal to an intergenerational mix of teens and adults who will play with their families, in schools and other places of education, and in parks, libraries, and other public spaces.

Players can gain connections with one another and engage in fun, speculative utopianism to broaden their own ideas. Beyond the game, we hope this game inspires people to take immediate action in their communities to bring about the “solarpunk futures” they imagined.

Solarpunk?

Solarpunk is a visionary utopian politics and aesthetic that critically engages the reality of capitalist catastrophe while maintaining a radical optimism about humanity's hopes for a communal, ecological future.

It's a restorative justice process at a planetary scale — among people and between humans and non-human nature. That means reclaiming pieces of pre-capitalist culture, material accountability for old practices, and radical adaptability toward new ones, all while maintaining a utopian and ecological vision for the potentialities of our interrelations in the present.

Credits & Licenses

Solarpunk Futures was created by Solarpunk Surf Club and the following people made this game possible:

TKTKTK

Solarpunk Futures was funded in part by a grant from the Madison Arts Commission, with additional funds from the Wisconsin Arts Board.



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TheFuture.wtf



Solarpunk Futures is a game under development. If you have ideas, suggestions or want to find out when the game is released, sign up at TheFuture.wtf

FAQ

Section for back-cover after playtesting TKTKTK

Player Sheet for Technique 001: “Festival of Remembrance”

01. THE CHALLENGE

Draw one Challenge card as a group.

Someone begins with: “I remember when we overcame the worst of ____”. The group describes it in more detail.

02. THE ANCESTORS

Each player draws one Ancestor, one Value, and two Tool cards and remembers an Ancestor.

Describe the Ancestor’s name, background, and how they first approached the Challenge.

03. BUILDING THE NEW WORLD

Collectively tell the story of what roadblocks they encountered and how the Ancestors came together to overcome the challenge.

04. REMEMBRANCE

Each player answers one :

- ❖ What might have gone differently?
- ❖ How long did it take? Could it have taken a much longer or shorter time?
- ❖ Were you able to fully overcome the **Challenge**, or just the worst of it? What is being done today, in the utopia to actively mitigate against it arising again?
- ❖ What other **Tools** and **Values** could have been used?
- ❖ How do you think these **Ancestor** felt when they were faced with this **Challenge**?
- ❖ Do any of the possibilities you envisioned, challenge, affirm, or clarify your current real-world impact?
- ❖ Who are some real-world people today facing this same **Challenge** that you hope will be remembered by future generations?
- ❖ How would this story have been told differently if it was...a superhero action movie, a dystopian novel, a satire/comedy, a romance, another genre?
- ❖ Add your own questions