

VideoGameStorytelling

APPS I SUGGEST FOR NARRATIVE:

<https://obsidian.md/> (Perfect for writing, but it does not have a free cloud service)

<https://www.figma.com/files/recent-and-sharing/recently-viewed?fid=1296823467244449979> (game design in general, collaborative)

Conflicts

“The fuel of fiction is conflict”

Develop the narrative with Conflicts and Sub-Conflicts in mind.

WITHOUT an unresolved conflict fueling the experience, the audience perceives they are not in the actual story.

Conflict needs to feel huge, not to literally be huge.

What makes a conflict of any scope feel huge? *If it is important to a character we care about.*

“Story is conflict” (this advice is important when you are developing a peaceful game such as a date sim or something, it needs to have a conflict)

Act structure

Classical structure:

→ **Act 1** (introduction)

→ **Act 2** (Middle/Confrontation)

Advice: if we are burnt, split act 2 into two halves separated by a *midpoint*.

→ **Act 3** (End/Resolution)

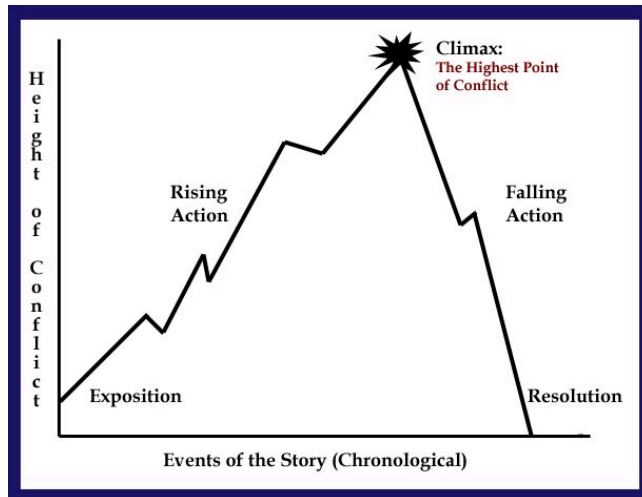
We briefly check in with various characters we met along the way to let us know if everyone got what we think they truly deserve, and it's curtains.

Transition/Plot points (Pp):

First Pp: divides Acts I and II, where the hero fully commits to resolving the main conflict.

Second Pp: separates Acts II and III, where the hero finally sees the path to victory.

Tension Map:



A lot of crises during Act II, Highest crises in Act III.

After each resolved crisis, give the audience a break.

Another type of storytelling can be developed with an in media res structure(ex. flashbacks).

3) The Monomyth

ARCHETYPES:

- 1) Hero
- 2) Herald (announces main conflict)
- 3) Mentor
- 4) Henchman (blocks hero)
- 5) Trickster (funny)
- 6) Shapeshifter (someone untrustworthy, who can be relied on)
- 7) Villain

STORY STRUCTURE:

- 1) The ordinary world
- 2) The call to the adventure
- 3) Refusal of the call
- 4) Meeting with the mentor
- 5) Crossing the first threshold (hero commits on taking on the quest)

- 6) Test, allies, enemies (increasingly challenging tests) (new friends)
- 7) Approach to the inmost cave (worst place to be in)
- 8) The Supreme Ordeal (hero fight to resolve main conflict, dead is on line)
- 9) Reward
- 10) The road back (victory has not yet been achieved, hero must escape)
- 11) Resurrection (it all seems lost, hero seemed dead, but after events he “resurrects”)
- 12) Return with the elixir (hero’s path is clear to return to the ordinary world, and he has grown)

4) Characters and arcs

THE HERO

Audience identification:

- The Player is the hero. Avoid any kind of *ludonarrative dissonance* (uncomfortable contradiction between player and hero desires).
- Most important thing is the alignment of desires.

growth:

- Hero constantly grows with change in the course of events.
- Try to sync narrative growth with increases in that character’s power.

acting:

- Hero proactively tries to resolve the conflict.

Primal stakes:

- For the audience to care, the hero needs to care. “If the player cares about the hero, the hero cares about X, so the player needs to care about X”.
- The biggest thing of investment needs to be something primal, like: *life, death, health, family, love, sex*.

Risk and sacrifice:

- Risk is what being a Hero is all about.

THE VILLAIN

Viable challenge:

- Weak villain equals a weak hero.

Blocked by henchmen

- Build anticipation between hero and villain.

Desire and motivation:

- What does the villain want or need? (they are not evil desires).

Man with a plan:

- Villain’s must have an internal logic. (what does he want, what is his plan, is it believable? Is it an evolving plan?)
- *Every action must answer: “Why did he do that”.*
- Ask ourselves:
 - What does the villain want?
 - What is his plan for getting it?

- Does this current action jibe with the previous two answers? Does it seem to be part of an evolving plan?
- Does it make sense? Is it believable?
- Does it make him look stupid, or just random?

Thinks he's good:

- AVOID self proclaimed villains.
- They think they are right.

Growth and change optional:

- Villains do not use to go through a change.

Directly confronted:

- The hero and the villain must confront themselves.

VILLAINS ARE THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE CONFLICT.

CHARACTERS ARCS

Arc: a potential resulting change of situation in a character.

EVERY ARC IS STRUCTURED WITH THE *THREE ACT STRUCTURE*.

APPLICATION TO GAMES:

- **PARTNERS/SQUADMATES/ALLIES:**
 - They need to have something to care of beside our shared goals
- **MENTORS:**
 - Might not have the best odds to survive, but a strong arc can make them more memorable.
- **NAMED ENEMIES:**
 - Every named enemy should have a little side story written.
- **QUEST GIVERS:**
 - They have some sort of arc: they want something, they ask you, they give you rewards.

5) EXPOSITION

Exposition: Information the audience needs in order to understand AND APPRECIATE the story.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

"ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS"

Darth Vader -> With his entrance we don't get to see his skills as a Sith, but with his outfit and the ENTRANCE MUSIC we can get the idea that he is a formidable enemy. He does not tell us that he is an enemy, but we get it shown.

Example: we want to establish a Hero being brave, so we Show him being brave and try it without dialogue.

First: try to find a way to let the player do it. Second choice: show it. Third choice and last resource: tell it.

SEEDING

Seeding: spreading tiny bits of exposition (like seeds), not dumping a giant pile on one spot (COMO EN METAL GEAR 2).

For each expository item we want to include we need to ask ourselves this question: does the audience need to know this right now to be entertained?

Three categories of expository facts:

- **Need to know** Are vital to the story in that moment and can't be omitted at that moment.
- **Could Wait** Are not vital to the story in that moment but can't be omitted in all the transcourse of the story.
- **Incidentals** Are not vital to the story at that moment and can be omitted.

NO SEAS CANTÓN, don't introduce expository facts that look obvious in that sentence. For instance: Snake, you know calling 492.00 saves your game?

An example of good seeding is Terminator: We know Terminator is chasing a girl that goes by the name of Sarah Connor because he asks a man and then Terminator shoots him.

PAY IT OFF

If we have been making the audience wait for the first half of the story, the second half has to be much more engaging.

PLANTING

Planting meaning: establishing something specific that will become important later on.

Example: introduce a weapon early on that will be used to kill the final boss but the audience does not know.

Our challenge is to plant these items in as innocuous a way as possible.

Planting a thing for instance an hour earlier than when it will be used, serves us to main reasons:

- PACING
- BELIEVABILITY

Make sure that our “plants” do not call unnecessary attention at the time, and allow certain time between setup and payoff for the audience to forget the original plant.

WARNING! Try to not telegraph it, it really has to be hidden, or else the audience will know for instance how the boss will die.

FORESHADOWING

Hinting at something that will either happen or will become clearer and potentially important later in the story.

Examples: Warnings (like: toxic river and the story characters do not see the sign), dreams, feelings, theories, vague predictions.

This information barely makes sense / is not relevant at the time.

WARNING! Easy to mishandle it.

6) BELIEVABILITY

“If they don’t believe it, they won’t feel it”

THE BELIEVABILITY CHALLENGE

We need the ability to present:

- An artificial, incomplete world...
- Featuring custom-designed characters...
- Who experiences carefully crafted events, actions, and reactions...

Such as:

- A real, complete world...
- Featuring genuine people...
- Who experience spontaneously unfolding events, actions, and reactions.

FOUR ELEMENTS: consistency, coincidence, spectacle, and surprise.

CONSISTENCY

- **WORLD CONSISTENCY** (basically make it physically right for the audience to make it look real)
- **CHARACTER CONSISTENCY**

Consistency in a character is basically defined on the character doing what makes more sense to do in her situation.

Han Solo example: we know his motivations are himself and money and her traits are wily, dangerous and foolhardy because we see these traits in actions such as when he kills Greedo.

Making a **shift** means change a little bit the character's behavior, doing that, is a sign of character growth.

COINCIDENCE

Not all coincidences are created equal, so it's important to know the difference.

Coincidences that get characters out of trouble are CHEATING.

- **The bad coincidence**
 - Benefits Hero/allies.
 - Result of Hero's dumb luck vs. effective planning or action.
 - Is unlikely, based on what the audience knows at the time.
 - Comes with little or no warning.
 - Seems noticeably coincidental to the audience at the time it happens.
 - Is doubted.
- **The fatal coincidence**
 - DEUS EX MACHINA (god from the machine), a god CAN'T intervene, that means that everything has to be reliable (for instance. In Jurassic Park when the T-Rex eats the velociraptors and saves the protagonists).

HOW TO HANDLE A COINCIDENCE:

1. **Change the plot**
(we can plant an element that will be used and this is better than a fatal coincidence)
2. **Retrofit**
(for instance: showing the presence of a monster before it randomly appears)
3. **Downplay**
(distract the audience from the incoming coincidence)

Bottomline: avoid coincidences or make them barely detectable.

SURPRISE

Receipt on crafting a good surprise:

1. It genuinely surprises the audience
2. It is not extremely unlikely or purely coincidental

3. It is set up beforehand
4. It makes perfect sense AFTERWARD

SPECTACLE

NEVER FORCEFULLY INSERT AN SPECTACLE ELEMENT!

“Wouldn’t it be cool if...” These types of ideas don’t usually work, because they are launched without thinking about whether any object mentioned in that idea will be used in other manners later. (example: wouldn’t it be cool if the spaceship blew up? -No, because it will be used later in the story for the characters to escape).

7) DIALOGUE

Function: to convey exposition.

PLOT EXPOSITION

Always do whatever you need to do to make sure the audience always has just enough information to be entertained!

CHARACTER EXPOSITION

Characters in a story should provide different contrasts to differentiate each other
How the character acts and speaks is defined by:

- Childhood/story
- Intelligence
- Vocabulary
- Ethnicity/accent
- Economic background
- General attitude toward life

A character's attitude towards a listener is defined by:

- The current situation
- The speaker's current emotional state
- The listener's current emotional state
- Current goals
- A change in the speaker's attitude toward the listener due to character growth or new information.

EMOTIONAL EXPOSITION

Bad emotion-conveying dialogue: “Dad, i’m scared”

Better emotion-conveying dialogue: “Dad, please don’t leave me here alone”

Final thoughts on Dialogue: ***LESS IS MORE.***

APPENDIX

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION DOCUMENT

NAME

Basic description

Name:

Sex:

Race/Species:

Age:

Intelligence:

Education Type and Level:

Economic Background:

Profession:

Vocabulary:

General attitude:

Backstory:

Deeper Dive

Desire:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Values:

Key flaw(s):

Vices:

Character Arc/Change:

Visuals

Physical Attributes:

Movement:

Clothing:

Weapons/Paraphernalia:

Casting/Audio

Voice age:

Reference actor(s):

Accent:

Other notes