

Black & White

A labyrinthine polychrome world

Stephen Yan*

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You are the protagonist in a world is divided into factions of faith and power. Unlike most games, the player will not be able to pick which cult she is born into. The general idea is that in this world, the circumstances of your birth are likely to determine your options, belief system, and cohort. The player's decisions in interactions with people in and out of her faction will dictate her narrative. Different events, dialogues, and characters will arise as a result of this. The world is divided into five groups: *RED*, *BLUE*, *YELLOW*, *GREEN*, & *BROWN* - those who do not belong to any of these groups are outcasts and referred to as *GRAY*, those without color. The game will have the overall theme of unity vs. discord and emphasizes the triviality in over-analyzing the differences in our belief systems. The game's object is to serve as an allegory for religious conflict and class discrimination.

To make poignant the permanence of the player's actions, the plot will branch off based on the user's decisions, actions, and thoughts in different contexts. To make poignant the importance of the player's circumstances, we omit the option for the player to start a new game at any arbitrary time. The player may want to do this because she was unsatisfied with her predetermined circumstances/settings and/or poor decisions. The option to begin anew will be given on completion of the game, where then the player can explore different routes and circumstances. If the player chooses a particular end decision and route, she will not be given the option to begin anew unless she chooses to sell her soul. If the player chooses this route, a BLACK mark is made across all iterations of play that affects the player's gameplay. This structure hints toward themes of reincarnation and permanence and places an even greater burden on the player's actions/decisions. *Red* is the violent oppressive regime - they rely on military power and believe in "power, justice, & victory." *Green* is the faction that generally controls the world's resources through money and labor. Their motto is "achieve, control, & dominate." *Blue* is a revolution-seeking pacifist faction. Their motto is "change, equality, unity." *Yellow* is a sedentary pacifist faction. Their motto is "peace & prosperity from patience." *Brown* is a poor pacifist faction. Their motto is "blood, sweat, & grit."

A question arises about the wayward limitations of the game, restricting the player from creating a new file until completion of the game, rather reaching the end of one story. However, because the story is defined loosely and there are not discrete good and bad outcomes, the game allows for an experience that is neither wholesomely positive or negative - just an experience overall where you don't get the opportunity to start over if you feel like you made a mistake. Furthermore, there is a niche of gamers who actively support limiting features like this, who believe that a highly penalized and stringent system is more conducive towards critical decision making and understanding of the game and its implications.

The groups are divided based on dominance and values, and each group has certain inherent powers and abilities (such as being more militant, more resourceful, or more cunning). The general economy of the game is two-fold: the oppressor vs. the oppressed. The oppressor is by default RED and GREEN and the oppressed consist of the BLUE, YELLOW, and BROWN. However, this will not necessarily reflect the actions and philosophies of individual colors that belong to a certain faction. By and large, the player may encounter friends that belong to different factions and enemies in the same faction, making it continually difficult, confusing, and real the decisions the player may have to make.

* sjyan@cs.unc.edu

While intuition tells us that graphically this universe must be realistic...the game will be visually simple (Javascript Canvas). The purpose of this is to streamline the generally convoluted philosophies and themes to be conveyed. Colors and textures are unadorned in a 3D environment and music will be similarly minimalist (however with diverse enough timbre and richness to be able to adequately evoke emotion, something that is still integral to this game) in order to juxtapose the heavier narrative themes and abstracts. The soundtrack should be diverse in order to be balanced with the variety of emotions and ambiances of the game. Music will differ between towns, character interactions, and important scenes.

A key feature to this game will be the belief score system. The player will have a five-way score grid that is affected by the player's actions and *affinity* towards a particular faction. If no faction is preferred and if a player's actions are neutral, then the player's belief system will be GRAY. It is possible to achieve a high balance in score, in which the player's affinity will be WHITE. This score/affinity determines key events and progression of the game and will ultimately decide the player's final outcome and will be referred to as the player's *affinity*.

The player doesn't have the liberty to customize her protagonist the way she likes so the attributes of the protagonist are largely determined by the player's actions. The player will have abilities and methods of resolution that are dictated by her affinity, which is itself dictated by the actions of the player and their consequences. The player will also have health, money, and an inventory of items in addition to her affinity and skill-set. The skill-set is the same across all factions - a couple examples being *{persuasion, charisma, intelligence, strength, etc.}*. The rates, however, at which these develop as the player levels up is dependent upon her affinity. All these character specs will be accessible through a toggleable menu.

The game is a role-playing game characterized by the player's interactions with NPC's, various quests, fulfillment of those quests and lack thereof - all traits of a very conventional RPG. Many RPG's give you a way to fight enemies - the system however typically stays constant throughout the entire game with the experience growing more exciting as you acquire new equipment and get stronger. Our game will however provide a unique system dependent on the player's affinity. For example, red's conflict resolution may be a traditional turn-based battle system. Green's method may be a special card game (gambling), etc. The player may suffer death or loss of money in the negative outcome of a conflict situation.

The world consists of your faction's domain and everybody else's, and the player should feel pressured into an "us. vs. them" mentality from the beginning. The player will be guided through the basic mechanics of the game by her mother in her born faction until she decides to explore the world a little more after her family dies in a tragic faction conflict. The protagonist's then goal is to unravel more about the relationships between factions in order to explain why this happened (and because she has no home to go back to).

The characters can be divided into NPCs, enemies, and "friends" who serve as your party members. These characters are typically predetermined in an RPG, but in our game almost every NPC will be a prospect for a "friend," depending on level of interaction and affinity. They may however leave you if you drastically change affinity or based on the rest of your party members. The player has the freedom to play the game without any friends or with a full cast of friends. The benefit to having friends could be having an easier time in conflict situations and for stat boosts. The player may also have access to scenes and events they never would if they didn't have certain friends at the right time! Your enemies may come in different shapes and sizes, but they are almost always outing you for being part of a faction they don't actively agree with. The important enemies vary from faction leaders and officials to hometown nobodies. The player should choose wisely to engage them or not and their actions afterward.

As the player progresses throughout the game, she will level up and develop her skill-set and make more friends along the way. There are key interactions throughout her story - with whom they happen depends on the player's affinity at that time (and possibly whom her party consists of). The consequences of these interactions and subsequent events will permanently affect the storyline regardless of changes in the player's affinity. Battles and puzzles will get gradually tougher as the player levels up while quests become increasingly more difficult to fulfill with bigger

rewards. The final interaction is a confrontation with a particular faction leader and will be dialog-intensive. Most outcomes result in the death of the protagonist as she realizes the meagerness of the details of faith and faction dividing the world from unity as she challenges the current world order. Other outcomes like the *Black* ending result in which the protagonist becomes deranged and commits to causing trouble and harm result in permanent markers across all new game files.

The player will hopefully grasp the allegorical themes of discrimination of beliefs and faiths, class privilege, and even politics. There are also themes of dystopian oppression and societal injustice. Many would think that because the game divides characters into classes that there may be a clear moral advantage to some more than others, but this is not true: no faction is inherently good or bad - in fact, the game will involve the player with instances of morally good and bad examples of characters per faction. The game's unique aspects of restricting the RPG canonical "new game" feature and cohesion over different playthroughs should encourage the player to stick with it and enjoy the experience rather than optimize play. For this genre of RPG, lessons and morals conveyed are incredibly important as well as the emotional baggage of the narrative. Its goal is to enthrall the player in a highly involved narrative where every decision matters from many different vantage points. It is a game that will be stimulating to the visceral and will have you questioning your own values and morality.