



Video Game Metadata Schema: Controlled Vocabulary for TROPES

University of Washington Information School
Game Metadata Research (GAMER) Group
and Seattle Interactive Media Museum

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Main Contributors

Jin Ha Lee, Ph.D. (University of Washington)
Marc Schmalz (Boise State University)
Michele Newman (University of Washington)
Lane D. Koughan (University of Washington)

Past Editors: Andrew Perti (Seattle Interactive Media Museum); Jill Boyd (University of Washington); Rebecca Fronczak (University of Washington); Katie Wilson (University of Washington)

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SN: Scope note

USE: Preferred term (*See*)

USE FOR: Equivalent term, lead-in term

BT: Broader term

NT: Narrower term

RT: Related term (*See also*)

Note: Our CV operates with two main buckets. The first bucket is for Character Tropes. These are tropes that appear within the characters of the game and often give the player clues to the personality types or fighting styles of the characters. The second bucket is the Narrative Tropes bucket. These are commonly used tools storytellers employ to convey a message that is understood or recognizable within one or more cultures. These tropes are not mutually exclusive. Oftentimes one trope can become another throughout the story. For example, *The Average Individual* can become *The Chosen One* by the end of the game. It is reasonable to use both tropes when describing the character. Additionally, a single game may have many tropes for the characters within the game and the narrative that drives it.

Select up to five tropes for each bucket.

Character Tropes – Archetypal Pro/Antagonists	
The Strong Female Lead	SN: A strong, independent female character that is central to the story. RT: The Affirmative Action Girl, The Femme Fatale Example: Lara Croft from Tomb Raider and Bayonetta from Bayonetta
The Ideal Hero	SN: This male character often appears the same across many different games. For example, in many games there is a white male character with a buzz-cut and a strong jawline. Example: Master Chief from the Halo Franchise
The Bold Explorer	SN: This is a character driven by the quest to discover new lands, ideas, people, and experiences. This is different from The Conquer in that they do not need to possess the new item, location, or idea. The experience is often enough. Example: The protagonists of Uncharted Waters, specifically Ernst
The Collector	SN: A character whose motivating factor is to collect all of something. Example: The main antagonist in LittleBigPlanet
The Builder	SN: A character whose motivating factor is to create or construct something, typically physical. This is often an empire or civilization that might also be for their private use. Example: Some individuals playing Minecraft and the Prince from Katamari Damacy
The Determinator	SN: A character with relentless persistence and unyielding determination, often pushing through extreme adversity or impossible odds without giving up. RT: The Revolutionary(ies) Example: Naruto from Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 4 and Phoenix Wright from Ace Attorney

The Ranger	SN: A person who spends most of their time in the outdoors and who is proficient at hunting, tracking, and wilderness survival. Example: Anden Goodmanner from A Dance with Rogues
The Hunter	USE: The Ranger
The Average Individual	SN: This character has no exceptional abilities. RT: The Reluctant Hero Example: The protagonist from Persona 3
The Ordinary High School Student	USE: The Average Individual
The Chosen One	SN: This character has been chosen by their people or divine beings to make a difference in the world. RT: The Reluctant Hero, The Sacrificial Lamb, The Vessel/Conduit, The Magic User Example: Link from Zelda
The Reluctant Hero	SN: A character that does not want to take an active role in the story, but finds they should or must. RT: The Chosen One, The Sacrificial Lamb, The Vessel/Conduit, The Magic User, The Average Joe Example: Chun Li from the Street Fighter franchise
The Secret Police	SN: Police or police-like figures that use questionable or subversive methods to investigate possible crimes against the state or the main authority. RT: The Evil Rich Person, The Spy/Spymaster Example: Any government operative in Deus X
The Spy/Spymaster	SN: An individual whose job it is to coordinate and gather information. Often an indispensable ally. RT: The Evil Rich Person, The Secret Police, The Rogue/Stealth Example: Hiram Burrows from Dishonor
The Evil Rich Person	SN: Money buys power. And power often corrupts. RT: The Fat Bastard Example: The Mario series generally features wealthy, evil royalty
The Big Bad	SN: This character may or may not have powers, but he/she/it is the main antagonist of the story. This is usually the final boss in a game. Defeating The Big Bad will make the hero triumphant. RT: The Demonic Foe, The Antichrist, The Eldritch Abomination, The Overlord Example: The Lord of Terror from Diablo
The Sadistic Instructor	SN: This character takes pleasure in making their pupil suffer. An example could be a particularly mean drill sergeant. Example: Principal Hanyu from Persona 2
The Dangerous Relative	SN: This character is someone related to the main character or a trusted family friend or advisor. They represent a threat to the main character. Example: Balin from Dragon Age: Origins

The Reluctant Villain	<p>SN: This character cannot achieve their goals within legal or moral restrictions, so they reluctantly take matters into their own hands. Conversely, they may also be following laws or moral restrictions to the letter, despite reservations.</p> <p>RT: The Cursed Beast</p> <p>Example: Daisy Fitzroy from BioShock Infinite</p>
The Outlaw	<p>SN: A character who operates outside of the law for good or evil.</p> <p>RT: The Pirates, The Revolutionary(ies)</p> <p>Example: The main character from Red Dead Redemption</p>
The Unsettling Child	<p>SN: This character is a young child or adolescent that may or may not actually be creepy, but they project a creepy or unusual demeanor. Unlike the Deadly Child, they may not be violent or skilled.</p> <p>Example: The Little Sisters from BioShock</p>
The Deadly Child	<p>SN: This character is a young child or adolescent that may not seem dangerous at first glance, but they are either formidable fighters or have supernatural powers.</p> <p>Example: The children who live in Little Lamplight in Fallout 3 and Annie from League of Legends</p>
The Convenient Orphan	<p>SN: This character has no parents or guardians to keep them in place when they are first introduced to the player.</p> <p>RT: The Chosen One</p> <p>Example: Ellie from The Last of Us, Squall from Final Fantasy 8</p>
The Amnesiac Hero	<p>SN: This character has no memory of events that took place immediately before the start of the story.</p> <p>Example: Dust from Dust: An Elysian Tail, the main character of Amnesia: The Dark Descent</p>
Character Tropes – Exceptional Beings	
The Cursed Beast	<p>SN: This character was once a human or human-like life form that was changed into an animal or monster that may be misunderstood by other characters.</p> <p>RT: The Reluctant Villain</p> <p>Example: Kronos from Kronos God of War or any werewolf characters</p>
The Demonic Foe	<p>SN: A character that is from an underworld and represents a greater evil.</p> <p>RT: The Big Bad</p> <p>Example: Magus of Chrono Trigger</p>
The Antichrist	<p>SN: The character that is the highest member of an evil hierarchy, often from the underworld.</p> <p>RT: The Big Bad</p> <p>Example: Sephiroth from Final Fantasy VII</p>
The Eldritch Abomination	<p>SN: This character is a creature that has never been seen before, like Cthulhu.</p> <p>RT: The Big Bad</p> <p>Example: The Reapers from the Mass Effect franchise</p>
The Threshold Guardian	<p>SN: This character possesses knowledge or has access to something that the main characters need to move forward in the story.</p> <p>Example: Faralda from The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim</p>

The Living Statue	SN: This is a character or characters that were once inanimate and then activated by another character. RT: Mooks Example: The colossi in <i>Shadow of the Colossus</i>
The Disembodied Voice	SN: This character may be a voice heard over an intercom or a supernatural being. RT: The Threshold Guardian Example: Ness' father in <i>Earthbound</i>
The Undead	SN: Any undead or otherwise supernaturally animated creature that was once alive. Example: This can include vampires and zombies

Character Tropes – Leaders	
The Runaway Royal	SN: A person with noble lineage who skirts responsibility or wants to be free from their responsibilities. RT: The Prince(ss) in Disguise Example: Marle from <i>Chrono Trigger</i>
The Prince(ss) in Disguise	SN: A character that may or may not be aware of their royal blood, but is hidden for one reason or another. RT: The Runaway Royal Example: Alistair in <i>Dragon Age: Origins</i> and Zelda (as Sheik) from the <i>Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time</i>
The Overlord	SN: This character may represent some sort of evil and controls a vast army of minions. They may or may not be the main antagonist. Example: Dr. Robotnik from <i>Sonic the Hedgehog</i>
The Conqueror	SN: A character whose primary objective is to possess and control lands, people, and resources in order to increase their power. RT: The Overlord Example: Walhart from <i>Fire Emblem Awakening</i>
The Commander	SN: A person in charge of a combat unit or armed forces. RT: The War Veteran Example: Commander Shepard from the <i>Mass Effect</i> franchise
Character Tropes – Allies	
The Animal Sidekick	SN: A creature that accompanies the main character throughout the story. RT: The Threshold Guardian, The Sprite Example: Cedric the Owl from <i>King's Quest V</i>
The Adorable Minion(s)	SN: An individual character or group of small creatures that work for a particular individual and their ultimate goal. RT: The Mooks Example: The Tonberry and Moogle from the <i>Final Fantasy</i> franchise
The War Veteran	SN: A character that has experienced combat and that experience of combat is formative to their personality. RT: The Commander Example: Cole Phelps from <i>L.A. Noire</i>

The Sacrificial Lamb	<p>SN: A character that is due to be sacrificed to a greater cause either by divine prophecy or as collateral damage.</p> <p>RT: The Reluctant Hero, The Vessel/Conduit</p> <p>Example: Zero from Mega Man X</p>
The Mooks	<p>SN: A commonly encountered and dispensable enemy employed by the antagonist character operating individually or in a larger group.</p> <p>RT: The Horde, The Adorable Minion(s)</p> <p>Example: The Storm Troopers from the Star Wars franchise</p>
The Hostages	<p>SN: Characters who are held captive by the antagonist in order to leverage the protagonist into doing the bidding of the antagonist. They generally require rescue.</p> <p>Example: Promo Girl from the Resident Evil 3: Nemesis during Operation: Mad Jackal</p>
The Funny Helper	<p>SN: A character that is not immediately perceived as useful and relied on by a storyteller for comic relief. However, their guidance or assistance for a quest makes them indispensable.</p> <p>RT: The Animal Sidekick, The Adorable Minion(s)</p> <p>Example: Navi from Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time</p>
The Vessel/Conduit	<p>SN: An individual chosen by divine intervention for some higher purpose. This purpose may include acting as a “fifth element” (a physical embodiment of a concept) or host.</p> <p>RT: The Reluctant Hero, The Sacrificial Lamb, The Magic User</p> <p>Example: Dorman in Shadow of the Colossus</p>
The Underworld God	<p>SN: A character who rules the underworld.</p> <p>RT: The Demon Foe, The Eldritch Abomination</p> <p>Example: The Seven Great Evils in the Diablo series</p>
The Sprite	<p>SN: A small icon or creature that assists a character throughout their story and may offer special skills to a player such as enhancing an attack.</p> <p>RT: The Animal Sidekick</p> <p>Example: Navi from Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time and Pix from League of Legends</p>
The Librarian	<p>USE: The Threshold Guardian</p>
The Morality Pet	<p>SN: A character that mediates another character's morality.</p> <p>RT: The Badass and Child Duo.</p> <p>Example: Raphael’s daughter Amy from Soul Calibur</p>
The Designated Victim	<p>SN: A character who is perpetually in danger due to their innocence or naiveté and they are usually saved by the protagonist.</p> <p>Example: Princess Peach from the Mario franchise</p>
The Good All Along Character	<p>SN: A character who is believed to be evil at the beginning of the story, though investigation or new information is actually revealed to be an ally or “good guy.”</p> <p>Example: No example provided for this due to possible spoilers. Proceed with caution when assigning this trope.</p>
Character Tropes – Philosophies and Cultures	

The Barbarian(s)	<p>SN: A group of people outside of the main society that usually live without technology and operate on a tribal system of governance.</p> <p>RT: The Mooks</p> <p>Example: Centaurs in World of Warcraft</p>
The Assimilator(s)	<p>SN: An individual or group of characters that holds a philosophical belief that everyone must be similar or the same.</p> <p>RT: The Fundamentalist(s), The Evil Rich Person, The Secret Police, The Conqueror</p> <p>Example: The Geth from Mass Effect or The Borg the Star Trek franchise</p>
The Fundamentalist(s)	<p>SN: An individual or group of characters driven solely by the strength of their beliefs in politics or religion to the point of which they try to convert anyone to their point of view.</p> <p>RT: The Revolutionary(ies)</p> <p>Example: The Qunari from Dragon Age</p>
The Heretic(s)	<p>SN: An individual or group of characters that go against the ideological flow of a larger group with possible risks to their well being.</p> <p>Example: Nero from Devil May Cry 4</p>
The Isolationist(s)	<p>SN: An individual or small group of characters that believe they must stay separate from a larger population.</p> <p>RT: The Evil Rich Person</p> <p>Example: The Mages' Collective from Dragon Age and the Gerudo tribe from Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time</p>
The Revolutionary(ies)	<p>SN: A group or individual whose primary goal is to change the status quo.</p> <p>RT: The Outlaw, The Chosen One, The Ideal Hero, The Reluctant Hero</p> <p>Example: The Alliance from the Star Wars franchise</p>
The Pirate(s)	<p>SN: An individual or group of characters that steal large quantities of goods (government or private property), usually on some sort of large transport vessel.</p> <p>RT: The Outlaw</p> <p>Example: The pirates from The Pirates of the Caribbean franchise</p>
The Otherworldly Visitor(s)	<p>SN: An individual or group of characters that come from a different world or time.</p> <p>RT: The Conqueror</p> <p>Example: The Four Masks from Shadow Hearts</p>
The Horde	<p>SN: Typically an army or gathering that has strength in numbers and are enemy or other to the main protagonists.</p> <p>RT: The Barbarian(s)</p> <p>Example: Orcs from The Lord of the Rings franchise</p>
The Swarm	USE: The Horde
Character Tropes – Fighting Style	
The Brawler	<p>SN: A character that is quick to fight and often has a short temper.</p> <p>RT: The Tank</p> <p>Example: Liquid Snake from Metal Gear Solid</p>

The Magic User	<p>SN: A wizard, witch, or other character that has supernatural powers.</p> <p>RT: The Chosen One</p> <p>Example: Vivi from Final Fantasy VII</p>
The Girly Fighter	<p>SN: A character that uses methods that are based in gendered stereotypes (i.e. fighting with a skillet). This character may also have extreme flexibility or unlikely acrobatics and may have physically revealing fighting styles that male characters would not employ in order for the storyteller or game designer to show off the female body.</p> <p>RT: The Strong Female Lead</p> <p>Example: Momoko from The King of Fighters, commonly seen in arcade style fighting games such as Soul Calibur, Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat, etc.</p>
The Tank	<p>SN: A character that is the target of assault and sustains the most damage during battle. Often they are used strategically to draw attention away from weaker characters so they can pursue their own directives.</p> <p>RT: The Badass and Child Duo</p> <p>Example: The Heavy from Team Fortress 2</p>
The Rogue	<p>SN: A character that employs stealth, dirty fighting, and agile techniques to inflict the most damage on enemies while avoiding taking damage themselves.</p> <p>RT: The Spy/Spymaster</p> <p>Example: The main characters in Assassin's Creed</p>
The Assassin	USE: The Rogue
Character Tropes – Appearance as Personality	
Aloof, Dark Haired Girl	<p>SN: A character distinguished by her dark hair, often depicted as emotionally distant and mysterious.</p> <p>RT: The Femme Fatale</p> <p>Example: Ada Wong from Resident Evil</p>
The Gentle Giant	<p>SN: This character may seem formidable based on its appearance, but it is actually an ally.</p> <p>Example: Claude from Shining Force 2</p>
White Hair, Black Heart	<p>SN: A character with white or silver hair who is ruthless and malevolent, in contrast to their striking appearance.</p> <p>Example: Sephiroth from Final Fantasy VII</p>
Blondes are Dumb/Vain/Villains	<p>SN: A character who is portrayed as stereotypically attractive but lacking in intelligence.</p> <p>RT: The Strong Female Lead, The Cute Bruiser</p> <p>Example: King Cailan from Dragon Age: Origins</p>
Fat Bastard	<p>SN: A character who is overweight and portrayed in a negative light.</p> <p>RT: The Evil Rich Person</p> <p>Example: Wario from the Mario franchise</p>
Character Tropes – Gender	
The Patriarch	<p>SN: A male head of a family or tribe.</p> <p>Example: Sun Jian in the Dynasty Warriors series</p>

The Matriarch	SN: A female head of a family or tribe. Example: Benezia from Mass Effect
The Girl in the Boys Club	SN: The female character in the story or game that embodies typically masculine traits. Example: Seong Mi-na from Soul Calibur
The Cute Bruiser	SN: A cute, diminutive character that packs a powerful punch or has a prickly personality. RT: The Badass and Child Duo Example: Kirby from the Kirby franchise and Shantotto from Final Fantasy XIV
The Burly Bruiser	USE: The Tank
The Femme Fatale	SN: A female character that is deadly and often has a tragic backstory. RT: The Strong Female Lead, The Femme Fatale Example: Maggie Chow in Deus Ex
The Affirmative Action Girl	SN: The single female character in the story or game of all male characters. RT: The Strong Female Lead Example: Of the four playable characters in Borderlands, only one is female
The Manic Pixie Dream Girl	SN: A female character whose sole reason of existence is to enliven the life of (a usually male) character. Example: Catherine from Catherine
The Ms. Male Character	SN: A female version of a character that was originally male. Example: Ms. Pac Man and Toadette from Mario franchise
The Woman as Decor	SN: When female characters are depicted in games only as objects to be rescued, sexually pursued, or protected and otherwise serves no function in the narrative. Example: Any sex worker or groupie in Saints Row or women in the Grand Theft Auto franchise
Character Tropes – Race	
The Token Black Person	SN: When there is one black person in a cast of otherwise white characters. Example: Nick Meyer from Snake's Revenge
The Asian Tech Genius	SN: When the Asian character is really good with STEM subjects to the exclusion of other skills, particularly social skills. Example: Jung Park from Rainbow Six
The Native Shaman	SN: When an indigenous character has a connection or powers relating to the Earth or animals and this is usually an inherited trait from a tribe or their ancestry. Example: Nightwolf from the Mortal Kombat franchise
The Minority Alien Stand-In	SN: When a character is of alien origins is meant to represent an analog to real-world ethnicities or races and these real-world ethnicities or races do not appear in the universe otherwise. Example: The Syreen from Star Control 2 and several races from the Mass Effect franchise
The Exotic Black Woman	SN: A form of “blacksploitation” that simultaneously sexualizes and defeminizes a black female character. Example: Vivienne from Dragon Age

Character Tropes – Teams	
The Badass and Child Duo	SN: Typically a larger individual who is paired with a young child with the “badass” providing protection and support for the child. RT: The Tank, The Odd Couple Example: Corvo Attano and Emily Kaldwin from Dishonor
The Odd Couple	SN: When two characters compliment each other in terms of physical appearance or personalities. Often one is more serious than the other. RT: The Bickering Henchmen, The Badass and Child Duo Example: Fia and Lian in Riviera: The Promised Land
The Bickering Henchmen	SN: Two to three individuals aligned with the antagonists that cannot seem to agree on anything. Example: The brothers in Myst
The Fantastic Four	SN: A team of four individuals who all compliment each other in appearance, skills, and/or fighting styles. Example: The Black, White, Red, and Yellow birds from Angry Birds
The Found Family	SN: A group of characters who, despite not being biologically related, form deep, supportive bonds that provide emotional connection, belonging, and mutual care, often overcoming shared struggles or challenges together. Example: The Straw Hat crew in One Piece: World Seeker, The Shepherds in Fire Emblem Awakening
Narrative Tropes – Mortality	
Face/Heel Turn	SN: When a character changes their alliance unexpectedly and sticks with their choice. RT: Former Friends, Now Foes
Friends, Not Food	SN: When a character struggles with the desire to connect with others despite them being a food source for them. RT: The Morality Pet
End Justify the Means	SN: When a character takes action that negatively impacts others to achieve a perceived “greater good.” RT: The Reluctant Villain, The Determinator
Too Good for this World	SN: A character so pure and perfect that they cannot live in this world and thus they get killed, often driving the main character to greater feats of heroics on their behalf. RT: The Manic Pixie Dream Girl
Sadistic Choice	SN: When a character or group of characters is presented with a lose-lose choice from their foe (i.e., choose between two loved ones). RT: The Big Bad
Narrative Tropes – Driving Actions	
Placate the Thing	SN: When a character needs or soothes a creature that would normally intend harm in order to get past them. RT: The Cursed Beast

Assemble the Thing	SN: When a character or group of characters needs to create something in order to move forward with the story. RT: The Builder
Escape the Labyrinth	SN: When a character or characters must find their way through a maze or maze-like setting.
Slay the Dragon	SN: When a character or group of characters needs to defeat a beast based on a request from the public or an individual or a serendipitous encounter.
Find the Thing	SN: When a character or team needs to locate a particular item, creature, or individual in order to move forward with the story. RT: The Ranger, The Brave Explorer
Perpetually Saving Private Ryan	SN: This trope occurs when a character or a group of characters continually rescues one particular character. RT: The Designated Victim
Narrative Tropes – Call to Adventure	
Bad Guy Done Us Wrong	SN: Sometimes unrelated characters band together because they were each wronged in a similar or different way by the same character. RT: The Enemy of my Enemy...
Destiny Reveal	SN: When a character learns something important about their future or receives a calling from a higher power. RT: The Chosen One, The Sacrificial Lamb, The Vessel/Conduit, The Reluctant Hero
Another Dimension	SN: When a character or group of characters is pulled into another dimension and needs to find a way home. RT: The Otherworldly Visitor(s), The Reluctant Hero
Resistance is Futile	SN: A large entity seems like an insurmountable foe, but a small group of resistance fighters come together to attempt to defeat them. RT: The Assimilator(s), The Revolutionary(ies), The Determinator
Narrative Tropes – Team Building	
With Our Powers Combined	SN: When two characters enhance their powers by joining their efforts or physical items to create a larger item. Sometimes this can also mean a bond of a spiritual sort. RT: The Odd Couple, The Fantastic Four
The Enemy of my Enemy...	SN: When two characters or teams from opposing sides join forces to defeat a common foe. RT: The Odd Couple
Former Friends, Now Foes	SN: When two or more characters were once allies, but events in the past have pushed them apart to the point at which they are now enemies.
Narrative Tropes – Climax	
Darkest Before the Dawn	SN: At the climax of the story, everything seems hopeless. RT: The Determinator
Hail Mary	SN: At the climax of the story, this is the last-ditch effort made by the protagonists or teammates to overcome their trials. It often accompanies a “this is so crazy it just might work” type of plan.

Heroic Sacrifice	<p>SN: At the climax of the story, one of the main characters sacrifices themselves to save others.</p> <p>RT: The Sacrificial Lamb, Too Good for this World, The Good All Along Character</p>
Almost Dead Killshot	<p>SN: At the climax of the story, one of the characters that the players thought was dead (or nearly dead) delivers a mortal wound to their opponent, often saving another individual in the process.</p>
Pointless Revenge	<p>SN: At the climax, once revenge has been achieved for a character for whom it was the driving force, new information comes to light that renders the revenge unethical or unnecessary even though it has already happened.</p>
Narrative Tropes – Endings	
I Choose to Stay	<p>SN: At the end of the story, one of the characters chooses to stay in the new setting instead of going home with their teammates (if they have any).</p> <p>RT: The Bold Explorer, The Otherworldly Visitor(s)</p>
But Now I Must Go	<p>SN: At the end of the story, one of the main protagonists leaves the group after their ordeal is over.</p> <p>RT: The Isolationist(s), The Reluctant Hero</p>
Ambiguous	<p>SN: At the end of the game players are unsure of the ending- it could go multiple ways.</p> <p>Example: BioShock Infinite</p>