

COMP08035 Computer Games Design

Week 04 Lecture - Storytelling and Narrative



Story (1/2)

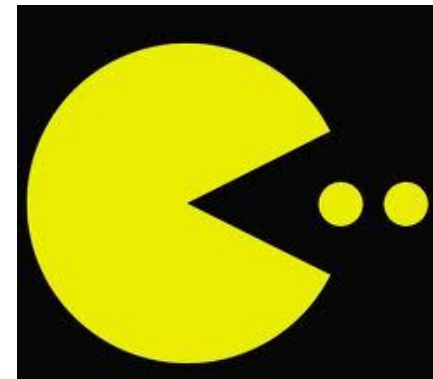
- Stories are as old as human communication
- The importance of storytelling has increased as computer games have become more complex and sophisticated
- All but the most abstract of games need some kind of justification for the game



Cave painting, Lascaux, France, 15,000 to 10,000 B.C.



Story (2/2)



The Heroic Monomyth (The Hero's Journey)

- Campbell (1993) describes the common stages of a hero's journey found in many stories throughout the ages
- Three stages:
 - Departure;
 - Initiation; and
 - Return.





The Heroic Monomyth (1/6)

1. Departure

Call to Adventure: The hero's journey begins when the hero becomes aware of the world outside his home or town where he/she has lived for his entire life. His journey is usually given to him by a herald who helps the hero by acting as a guide.

Refusal of the Call: The hero may actually refuse the initial call to adventure, usually from their fear of change. The hero will eventually go on his journey, either from "encouragement" by a supernatural force or by an event that almost forces the hero to move beyond his home.

Supernatural Aid: As the hero travels on his journey, he may meet with an old man, a god/goddess or a messenger who gives the hero a weapon or some magical powers.



The Heroic Monomyth (2/6)

1. Departure

Crossing the First Threshold: This "threshold" the hero must cross is what separates the hero from the comforts of his home to the adventurous new world filled with mystery and danger. Sometimes the threshold is guarded by a gatekeeper whom the hero must defeat.

Belly of the Whale: As the hero crosses the threshold, he finds himself alone in the darkness of new world. In the darkness, the hero may find his purpose to go on the journey and can emerge from the "belly of the whale" as a new person.



The Heroic Monomyth (3/6)

2. Initiation

Road of Trials: In the new world, the hero must confront a series of challenges and tests to help the hero improve his character and skills to become more self-reliant.

Meeting with the Goddess: During the Road of Trials, the hero may encounter the goddess of the new world, who could be viewed as a beautiful, motherly figure or as a queen. The goddess can bring complete fullness to the hero's character, helping him realize what awards await him when he finishes his quest.

Woman as the Temptress/Temptation from the True Path: Women in a hero's journey can sometimes be represented as a temptress, rather than a goddess, and also acts as another step in the Road of Trials. The hero must overcome his selfish desires to return to the rightful path and also build his character.



The Heroic Monomyth (4/6)

2. Initiation

Atonement with the Father: Eventually in his journey, the hero may encounter a fatherly figure with much authority. The father figure (like the goddess) can be portrayed as a man who feels threatened by the hero or as a man who helps the hero in his journey. Either way, the hero must reconcile with the father to understand him and himself.

Apotheosis: A hero's apotheosis is achieved when he comes to a realization about the purpose of life and himself. With an expanded consciousness, he views the world in an entirely different way than when he first started his journey. Usually, the hero at this point becomes a selfless person who always cares for others before himself.

The Ultimate Boon: With the new knowledge the hero acquired in his apotheosis, he now wishes to share it with the rest of mankind. Usually, the knowledge the hero obtains is related to immortality, where an indestructible life continues after the death of the body.



The Heroic Monomyth (5/6)

3. Return

Refusal of the Return: Once the hero finishes his quest, he may not want to return to his home and stay in the new world. The hero may believe that the old world won't accept or understand what the hero has learned on his journey.

The Magic Flight: The hero may rather decide to return home after finishing his quest. He may be accompanied by a protector who helps him overcome the obstacles the hero might face as he returns home. With the prize in hand, the hero must flee from those he angered on his journey.

Rescue from Without: While on the return journey, the hero may need to be rescued from death or from a state of helplessness and bliss.



The Heroic Monomyth (6/6)

3. Return

Crossing of the Return Threshold: As the hero travels to return home on his journey, he must once again cross the threshold separating his home and the new world. He may have to defeat another gatekeeper, and in the process become "reborn" with his humanity after his "death" from crossing the threshold the first time.

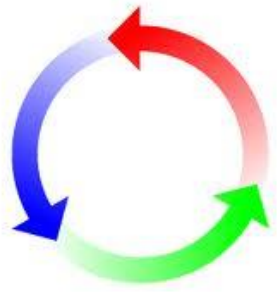
Master of Two Worlds: Once the hero crosses the threshold, he comes to realize that there really is nothing separating his home from the new world. He now understands the differences and the balance between the comfortable safety of his home and the new world. With this understanding, he has also balanced his character and mind.

Freedom to Live: Now with the journey complete, the hero has reached an understanding with himself and can now live freely between his home and the new world. With his newfound knowledge, he can now be beneficial to the world.



Story Structure

- Most common format is the 3-act structure
- Used in literature, movies, and story-based games
- Hero's journey is often used in a circular story form
- Converse of this is the open-ended form, in which plot strands are deliberately left open and questions unanswered

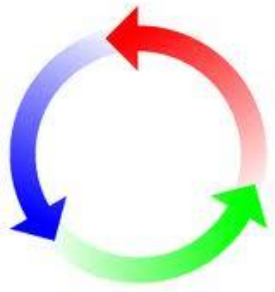


Circular Story Form (1/3)

Act 1

- The introduction of the hero and the ordinary world
- End of Act 1 is the hero preparing to cross the threshold and enter the special world

The Ordinary World – Call to Adventure –
Refusal – Meeting the Mentor

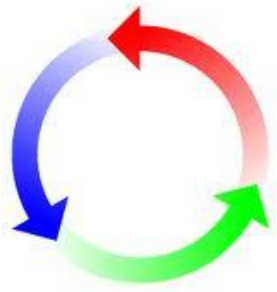


Circular Story Form (2/3)

Act 2

- The longest act
- Takes place in the special world
- Often split into two parts: the end of the first part is the ordeal
- End of Act 2 is the farthest point in the hero's journey

Crossing the Threshold – Tests, Allies and Enemies –
Approach to the Innermost Cave – Ordeal – Reward –
The Road Back



Circular Story Form (3/3)

Act 3

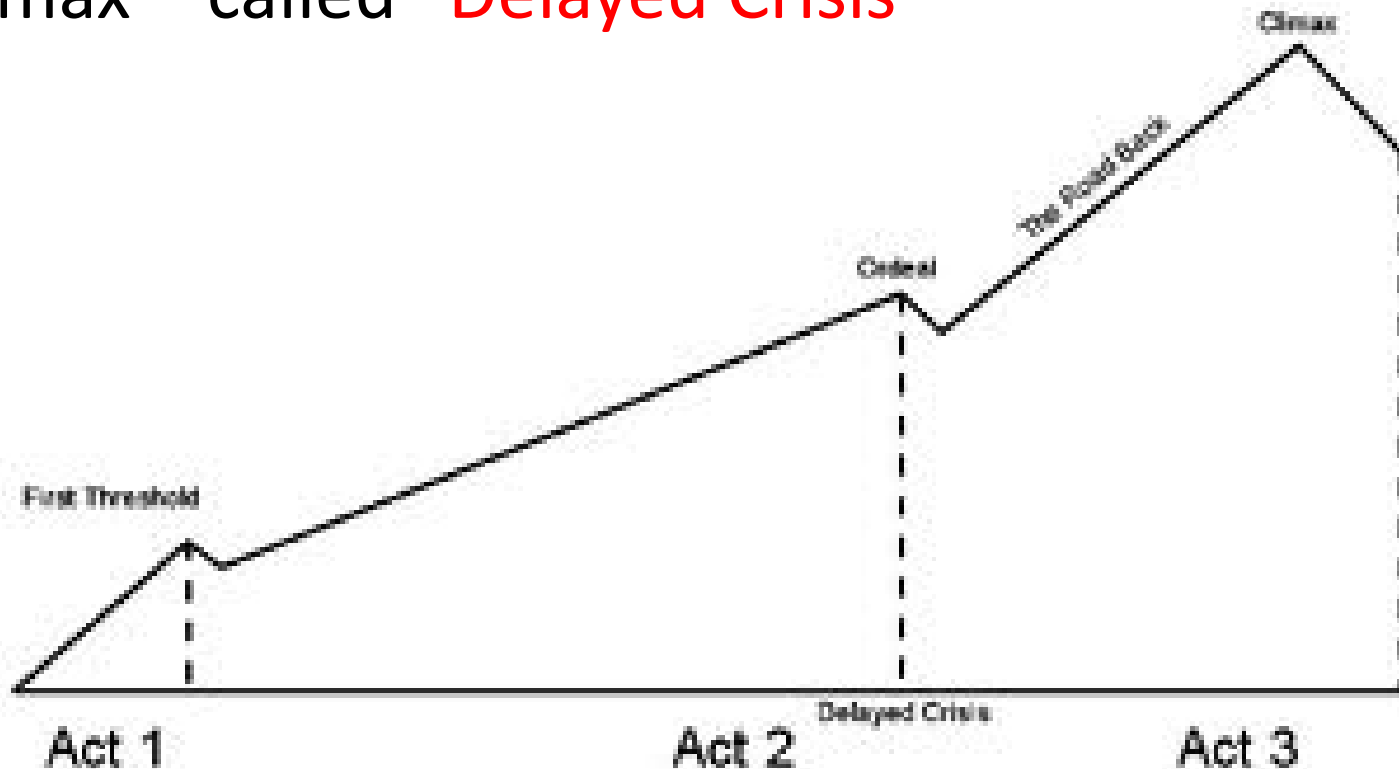
- Start of Act 3 heralds the return of the hero to the ordinary world
- Takes hero back where he started in the ordinary world
- May not be the same one he started from

Resurrection – Return with the Reward



Plot Pacing (1/2)

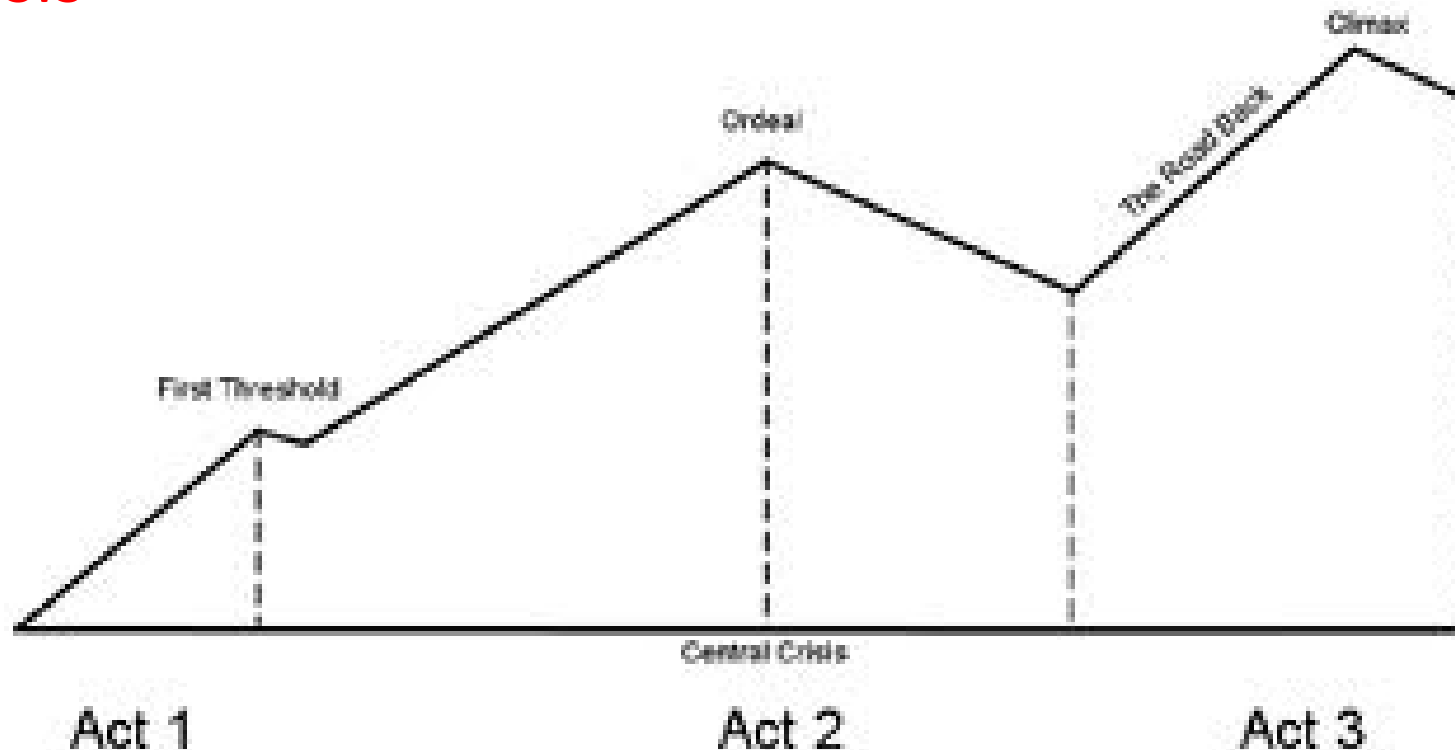
Standard approach is to build up slowly to ordeal at the end of Act 2 then move on quickly to the final climax – called “**Delayed Crisis**”





Plot Pacing (2/2)

Less-used approach in games is to have the ordeal roughly in the middle of the story – called “**Central Crisis**”



Narrative In Games



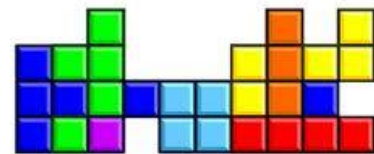
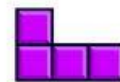
- Non-interactive part of the game's story
- Need for balance between narrative and gameplay
- “Core” gamers need less narrative, “casual” gamers need more
- Avoid seizing control of the player's avatar as part of the narrative – allow the player to be in control



Storytelling And Narrative (1/3)

Questions about your game:

1. Does your game require a story, or is it entirely abstract? If abstract, would a story add to its appeal?
2. Can the story begin at the start of the game, or do you need a backstory?
3. Will you use all or part of the monomyth? If not, what form will your story have?

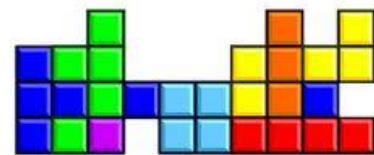
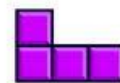




Storytelling And Narrative (2/3)

Questions about your game:

4. Will your story have a 3-act structure? If not, what? Will some plot threads be left unresolved?
5. How will you pace the plot? Graph out the major points.
6. Will your game include narrative? Is the narrative essential to play the game?

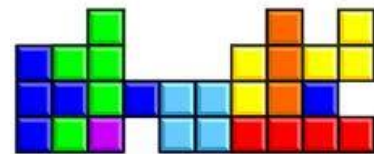
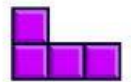




Storytelling And Narrative (3/3)

Questions about your game:

7. Will the narrative material be embedded in the gameplay or separate? Can the player interrupt or ignore it?
8. What form(s) will the narrative material take?
9. Will your story be multi-part? Series, serial or episodes?



Practical

- Run through a presentation of your game idea with your Lecturer to make sure you're on the right track
- Record progress in your blogs

