



NARRATIVE DESIGN

An overview

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CLASSIC
DRAMATURGY

Once upon a time...

Humanity has always told stories.

- Kesh Temple Hymn - 2600 B.C
- Homeros - The Iliad, The Odyssey - 750 B.C
- Beowulf - approx. 1000 A.D
- Shakespeare - 1590 A.D
 - *Established rules for modern storytelling*

Dramaturgy

Modern storytelling can be put into 7 steps:

1. Introduction
2. Presentation
3. Recess
4. Escalation
5. Climax
6. Conclusion
7. Moral/Premise

Dramaturgy

Another method of structuring a story is this:

1. The Hero
2. The Problem
3. The Guide
4. The Plan
5. The Call to Action
6. Avoiding Failure
7. Success

Dramaturgy

Yet another method of creating a story is a simple exercise:

1. Once upon a time_____
2. And everyday_____
3. Until one day_____
4. And because of that_____
5. Which led to_____
6. Until finally_____
7. And ever since_____

Dramaturgy - Scenes

- One method of classical writing is thinking in scenes. If you include a scene, what does it add to the story? If it is cut, does it change the story?
- A chapter can consist of any number of scenes.
- Consider the consequence a scene will have on the overarching narrative. Don't start plot points that will never be resolved.
- A scene can be included for various reasons.
 - *Driving the plot.*
 - *Building character.*
 - *Introducing important plot points.*
 - *Etc...*

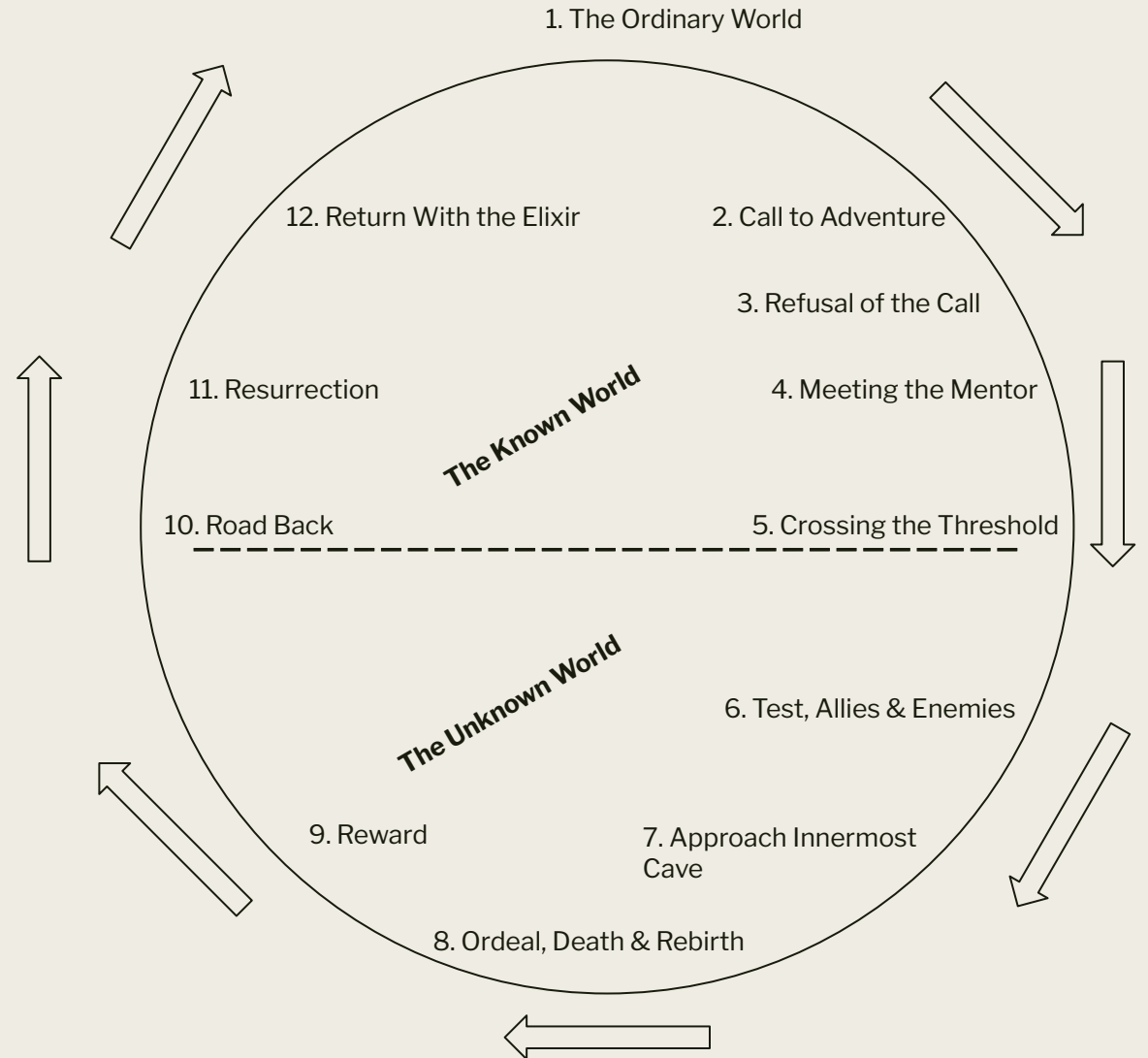
Traditional techniques can be useful to tell a story, but can remain as inspiration only. Know the rules before breaking them!



THE HERO'S JOURNEY

The Hero's Journey

Also called Monomyth, The Hero's Journey, originally devised by Joseph Campbell, is a classic structure that is recurring in many classical stories and tales. It has since been revised, and there exists different models with different number of steps, but they all follow the same basic principles, and they all utilise the "Crossing the Threshold" step.



The Hero's Journey - The Hobbit (movie version)

An example of the 12 step version, based on The Hobbit.

1. The Ordinary World - Bilbo has a peaceful life in The Shire.
2. Call to Adventure - Gandalf invites the dwarfs to Bilbo's house.
3. Refusal of the Call - Bilbo initially turns down the offer to join them on their quest.
4. Meeting the Mentor - Gandalf is a guide although the quest, and encourages Bilbo.
5. Crossing the Threshold - Bilbo changes his mind and joins the dwarfs, leaving the the safety and the known behind.
6. Test, Allies, and Enemies - The group endures various trials and faces adversities throughout their travels.
7. Approach the Innermost Cave - After the defeat of Smaug, the dwarfs barricade themselves in the mountain, and the battle of the 5 armies draws near.
8. Ordeal, Death & Rebirth - The battle of the 5 armies happens, with losses on all sides, but mainly the deuteragonist Thorin.
9. Reward - The treasure is divided and Bilbo gets his share.
10. the Road Back - Bilbo and Gandalf travels back to The Shire.
11. Bilbo returns, finding out everyone believed him dead.
12. Return With the Elixir - Bilbo returns to his life as a rich Hobbit, and with the One Ring, laying the foundation for coming stories.



PLOT ELEMENTS



Plot Elements - Red Herring

- Something that misleads or distracts from a relevant or important question.
- A technique that can be used to mislead the reader. For example, a character is portrayed as an antagonist, but later turns out to be an ally.
- Often used in thrillers and mysteries to deceive the reader.

Plot Elements - Macguffin

- An object, device, or event that is necessary to the plot and the motivation of the characters, but insignificant, unimportant, or irrelevant in itself.
- Example: The briefcase in Pulp Fiction.

Plot Elements - Chekov's Gun

- Originally phrased as: "If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there."
- There is a difference between misleading and confusing the reader.
- In games, this can be used as Foreshadowing.



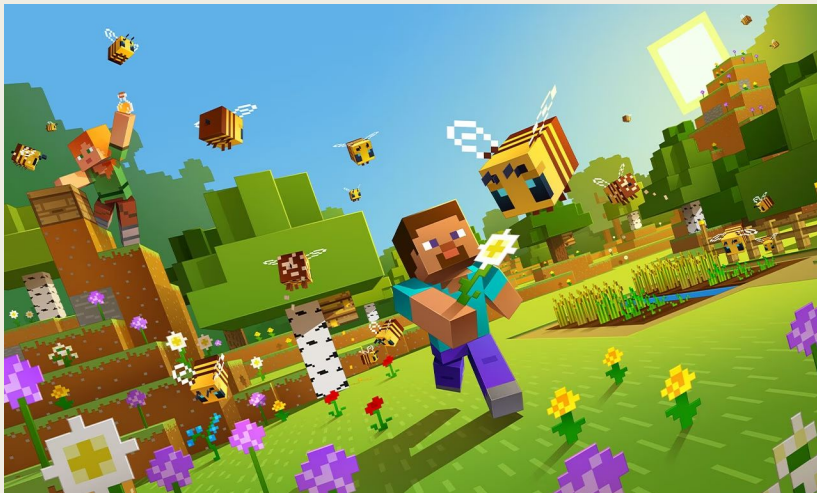
SYSTEMS AS
NARRATIVES -
GAMES

Systems As Narratives

- Games provide unique methods of telling a story that many other formats don't.
- Games provide multiple ways to tell a story.
 - *Games are a combination of different medias, each with their own unique way of providing narrative.*
- Games can use systems to provide a narrative.
- Always consider, what kind of story do you want to tell?
 - *How do you handle the limitations of games as a format?*
 - *How can you use it to your advantage?*

Systems As Narratives - Players telling the story

- Modern games allow players from all over the world to interact with each other, this provides a unique opportunity for players to build their own story.
- The experience can be unique for each player.
- Example: Minecraft. Let's players build a world together.
- Example: Journey. You will encounter players who you can't communicate with, but together you will make progress.



Systems As Narratives - Let the game build the story

- Games provide the opportunity to build a narrative based on the player's choice.
- Example: The Sims. Doesn't contain a clever story in itself, but rather lets the player create their own story using the game's systems.
- Example: Undertale. There is a clear path to follow, but the experience you will have is depending on the choices you make during gameplay.



Systems As Narratives - The unique properties of games

- Example: Braid. The game has at a first appearance a classic damsel-in-distress narrative, but due to the game's mechanics, a twist is provided based on the player's actions.



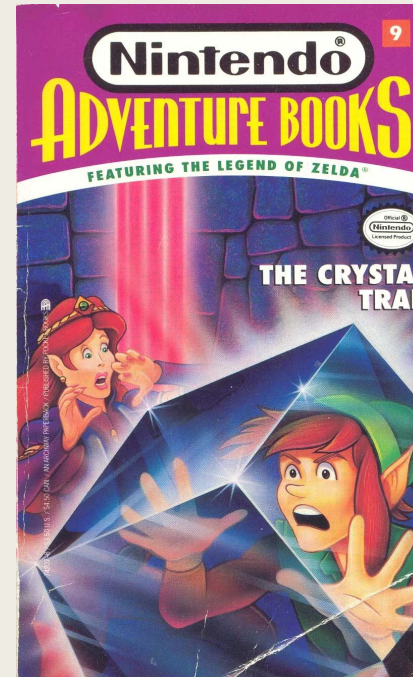
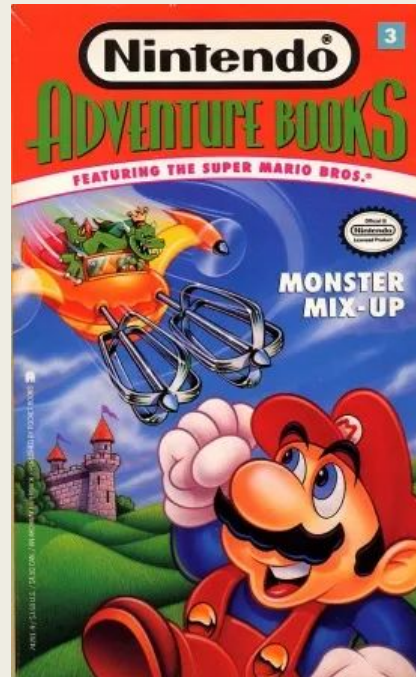
Systems As Narratives - The unique properties of games


- Example: Bandersnatch. Netflix's Bandersnatch is a unique combination of game and film, letting the player make choices that affect the plot of the movie.



Systems As Narratives - The unique properties of games

- Choose your own adventure books have been around since at least 1976, letting the players make choices, affecting the outcome and branching of the books.





DIFFERENT KINDS
OF
STORYTELLING

Different Kinds of Storytelling

- There are two main schools of storytelling in regards to games.
- *Ludology* - Argues that the storytelling is unique for the media, and that games are understood through interaction and their mechanics.
- *Narratology* - Argues that games should be viewed the same as other media formats when it comes to storytelling.
- Ultimately, these are purely academic concepts and not inherently useful during development.

Different Kinds of Storytelling - Linear vs Non-linear

- Games are unique in the sense that they provide the most useful way for implementing non-linear storytelling, and branching paths.



TROPES

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Work in progress...

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