
LEARNING THROUGH MAKING: NOTES ON TEACHING INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Students in game design programs, such as the Simulation and Digital Entertainment program at the University of Baltimore, often aspire to become makers of digital works. In the service of those needs, the University of Baltimore's game design program integrates courses on design, programming, and technical art. Courses that make games an object of study are essential to providing these students context and in introduction to the potential of the medium, but they are often viewed as secondary by students focused on immediately applicable skills towards employment in the industry. My approach to resolving this apparent disconnect was to propose a new course in Interactive Narrative grounded in the process of "critical making," which Daniel Chamberlain defines as "making a way to better ask questions" (Chamberlain 2013). The guiding questions of both the course and the projects revolve around stories: What are the opportunities of interactive narratives, and how does storytelling in a space with player agency offer new potential for experience design? The content of the course encourages students to contextualize games among media more broadly with exposure to forms including interactive fiction, electronic literature, comics and hypertext, while the practice of the course requires the making of works in these genres alongside study. I taught the course in fall 2013 for the first time following its acceptance as part of the curriculum.

The University of Baltimore is a four-year state university; as this course is taught at the senior level, most of the students enrolled are juniors and seniors with some experience in game development. As the course needed no additional prerequisites beyond completion of the general core curriculum, which includes an introduction to game design, 2D art, and scripting, some skills could be assumed on the part of students. Given this baseline, the course relied on introducing students to new and accessible platforms to allow them to focus on the structure and style of narrative in making works in dialogue to the genres of study. The initial course used three platforms: 1) Scratch, a tool for block-based coding of visual animations and simple games; 2) Twine, a card-based system for creating linked hypertexts; and 3) Inform 7, a natural language engine for writing interactive fiction. In each case, works were chosen for study built within the platform or platforms with similar affordances, and whenever possible works were studied where the authors shared not only the finished piece but also the underlying source code. Studying the underlying code and exploring all layers of the work offers an essential bridge between studying and making.

Matt Ratto has defined critical making as "processes of material and conceptual exploration and creation of novel understandings by the makers themselves" (Ratto 2011). The philosophy of critical making integrated throughout the three units of the class required students to think about the ways different levels of player agency and models of interaction influenced both the objects of study and their own work as narrative designers and writers. As Chamberlain notes, this is essential to bringing students into an active role, with the understanding that "making is something done by authors, scholars, and audiences, and that students themselves may occupy these roles" (2013). This same focus on making as accessible is at heart of many of the chosen platforms for the class. It is the grounding rhetoric of the "Twine Revolution," as Anna Anthropy explains:

This last year since the book has been out, people have really adopted Twine, which is a free tool for making text games. And aside from being free, it's really not programming at all – if you can write a story, you can make a Twine game. A lot of people have been making all this weird amazing stuff. Someone made a Twine game, In Memoriam, for his dead brother. Someone made a Twine game about what it's like to come out as bi in a lesbian community and be re-closeted. Someone made a game about what it's like to sacrifice to the devil and receive a strange new pneumatic body with which you take over the world. Twine is this amazing queer and woman-orientated game-making community that didn't even exist a year ago. (Ellison 2013)

The simplicity of the platforms is an opportunity to put design and narrative at the forefront and to participate in this type of personal game-making dialogue as readers and makers. The works chosen for study draw on this range of voices and identities, and thus offer very different perspectives and narratives than mainstream games.

One aspect of the University of Baltimore's course format strongly influenced the design of this course: classes meet once a week for two and a half hours. Thus, the course relied heavily on the use of a community website, built and maintained as a private site in BuddyPress. Students were asked to share their responses to writing prompts, game designs, and thoughts on various assigned texts through this forum site to keep conversations going between in-person meetings. This format is particularly valuable for extended reflection on the creative works of others as interactive narratives often require extended time to traverse and apprehend fully.

The online space was particularly essential for reflections on challenging works, including Chris Ware's *Building Stories* and Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style*, which served as foundational texts for introducing playful narrative structures and approaches to writing under constraint. Two other textbooks introduced principles of creative writing: Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird* and Keri Smith's *This is Not a Book*, a journal built on creative (or destructive) exercises embedded on every page. These varied texts were essential for bridging the gap between students' experience with mainstream video games and works created in different artistic traditions. The use of *This is Not a Book* as a text grounded the creative "jolts" that opened every class, encouraging students to engage in something playful, unexpected, or even destructive as an entry-point into the class dialogues. And while *This is Not a Book* and *Bird by*

Bird are not explicitly tied to games, both offer opportunities for engaging the students more broadly in creative practices.

These works may at first seem unusual for a course in games: This is in part because the traditional commercial game space (which students in this program tended to already be fairly familiar with) is not the space where most experiments in game-based narrative are happening. My goal with the course readings was twofold: 1) to introduce students to game and game-like interactive narratives that offer a broad model of potential interactions, and 2) to ground students in the evolution of interactive and playful narrative that includes pre-digital works. Thus, many of the works highlighted throughout the syllabus draw on electronic literature, comics, interactive fiction, and hypertext. As these works can be unfamiliar and often difficult to traverse thanks to their combination of ludic and literary elements, I set aside time for group reflective plays during several classes. During these reflective plays, students were asked to engage with the similarities and differences between these mediums and the commercial game forms they aspired to work in.

Success in the course was measured through two means: the students' engagement with the creative works under study, through conversation online and in-class, and the students' own making, through a sequence of mini-projects culminating in an open platform interactive narrative work. As the following rubrics demonstrate, technical mastery was far less important to judging success at obtaining the course goals than the development of narratives and interactive experiments that demonstrated an evolving reflective practice of critical making.

SYLLABUS: INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE

COURSE OBJECTIVES

From *Choose Your Own Adventure* books to video games, from interactive web comics to hypertext novels and experiments in electronic literature, interactive narratives are an integral part of our experiences of stories. In *Interactive Narrative*, we'll consider and practice the use of a range of playable and interactive media for telling stories. We'll work on creative writing across forms and build a range of projects. The course is divided into four major topics: Text/Hypertext, Image, Game, and Worlds. Throughout the semester, we will:

- Analyze and respond to creative interactive works
- Design and write stories using a range of platforms
- Practice the creative writing process
- Construct models for interactive narratives
- Examine the relationship of technology and storytelling

This is a reading and writing intensive course. Be prepared to engage through hybrid media, as the course discussion forums are essential to your progress. Each week, there will be two topics to respond to in the class discussion forum: a creative writing prompt and a critical discussion of an assigned text.

COURSE READINGS

- Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Knopf, 1995.
- Queneau, Raymond. *Exercises in Style*. New York: New Directions, 1947.
- Smith, Keri. *This is Not a Book*. New York: Perigee, 2009.
- Ware, Chris. *Building Stories*. New York: Pantheon, 2012.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

- *Creative Mini-Projects (30%)*: For each unit, we will work with an interactive narrative tool (Twine, Scratch, and Inform 7) to create an interactive narrative. Guidelines will be assigned at the beginning of the unit.
- *Not a Journal (10%)*: Creative exercises from *This is Not a Book*
- *Final Project (25%)*: A cumulative multimedia interactive narrative
- *Online Participation (15%)*: Responses to peer works and reading prompts
- *In-Class Participation (20%)*: Reading quizzes, in-class creative writing exercises, and reflective play

LATE WORK

Late work will be deducted a letter grade immediately, and an additional letter grade for every week of additional lateness.

LATE ARRIVALS AND ABSENCE

If you miss a scheduled class, you will still be held responsible for the online prompts. One day's worth of in-class participation will be excused: additional absences will receive a zero for the day's work. Each week lists required texts to bring for the day. Failure to bring the required books will result in lost participation grades for related in-class activities.

FINAL PROJECT: A MULTIMEDIA INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE

For this project, you can use any combination of tools we've worked with in class as well as your own existing media skills. Make sure that you choose a platform you are comfortable with so that you can focus on your writing and storytelling. Your work will need to combine the different elements of interactive narrative we've worked with throughout the semester, and must include original text. You can also use a combination of "found" (creative commons licensed or fair use) and original images, film, audio, or other media to supplement your work with attention to the overall mood and narrative strength. Feel free to work within any genre, but remember to choose an approach that will allow you to meet all of your project requirements while creating a portfolio piece that speaks to your own creative inspirations. You can take any of the previous projects you've created for this class and use them as the foundation for a remixed or extended narrative.

Your project should include:

- **A Developed Narrative.** The story told across whatever media and interactive components you use should have a beginning, middle and end—even if players do not encounter story components as a whole or in a specified order and thus must piece together the logic for themselves. It can be open to several interpretations but must make use of some concrete details.
- **Strong Characters and Environments.** Remember to have a clear sense of your character's needs and desire as they drive the narrative, and create tension between characters and the world they inhabit.
- **Your Personal Voice.** With attention to the lessons learned from Exercises in Style, focus on sharing your unique perspective through your use of language and development of the story. This does not mean that the central character needs to reflect or have anything in common with you—but it does mean you need to pay attention to style.
- **Reader/Player Agency.** The reader or player should be able to guide their exploration of the narrative in some meaningful way: this can span from navigating the different layers of a hypertext, making decisions for certain characters, or outright occupying the role of a character within the narrative. Make sure the choices feel meaningful.
- **No Broad Stereotypes or Clichés.** Writing characters that are distant from your own identity can be challenging: avoid relying on stereotypes of race, gender, sexuality, or faith and try to honestly inhabit the characters' perspectives.
- **Intentional Use of Non-textual Media.** Keeping in mind the lessons from Building Stories, incorporate graphics, audio, and other elements when appropriate. Consider how these elements reflect or create tension with the primary text. If you are using Inform 7, you can include these elements separately or use code and substantial interactivity as your media element.
- **Thoughtful Use of Tools and Interfaces.** Choose your platform to suit the needs of your story and your own style.

WEEK ONE: TEXT/HYPertext - EXERCISES IN STYLE

Today, we'll be getting to know each other and the course and laying the foundation for a creative class. We will:

- Review the syllabus and class texts
- Register for accounts on the site
- Complete a first creative writing activity

Before next week, read:

- Lamott, *Bird by Bird*. Read: Getting Started 3-15.
- Queneau, *Exercises in Style*. Read: Introduction, Metaphorically, Dream, Narrative, Official Letter, Passive, Exclamations, Comedy, Sonnet, Unexpected, Science Fiction, Cyberpunk.

Reading goals:

- Reflect on the creative writing process (Lamott)
- Understand the role of genre and medium in storytelling (Queneau)

You should have created an account on the site in-class. Log on and complete this week's two exercises:

- Week One: *This is Not a Book*—Choose a page from your *This is Not a Book* journal and complete the exercise (I'd suggest picking something creative that doesn't completely destroy the book—at least, not yet!) Document the act: it may involve writing, drawing, or placing the book in an unexpected context. A photograph or scan will work. Post this week's page as a response to this topic.
- Week One: *Exercises in Style*—After reading the selections from Raymond Queneau, compose your own version of the fundamental story retold in each of his exercises in style. Your retelling should be written as a transcription of gameplay. You can re-imagine the story as situated in an established or imagined game from any genre or platform. Post your version as a reply to this forum topic.

All discussion requirements will be forum posts in the class group, which is restricted to access by members of the class.

WEEK TWO: TEXT/HYPertext - BOOKS AND GAMES

Bring: *This is Not a Book* and *Exercises in Style*.

Warm-up: Communication

- Follow the directions and fill pages 49-50 of *This is Not a Book*.
- Pass your book to the person to your right and back again
- Repeat at least four times with your correspondent

Critique and Discussion: Exercises in Style

- Game narratives and book narratives
- Impositional versus Expressive Narratives
- Oulipo: writing under constraint

Making Things with Twine

- Creative Writing Exercise: Telling a Story
- Play: Porpentine's **Howling Dogs (2013)**
- Play: Ryan Casey's **Twine Tutorial (2012)**
- **Anna Anthropy – Twine Tutorial**
- In-class: Twine Basics

Text/Hypertext Project: A Personal Twine Story

For your first project, we'll be working in Twine to share a personal story. Start with your memory, but don't feel limited by it: Use your experiences as a starting point for shaping the narrative. On this first assignment, stick to realism (or at most magical realism) and focus on your voice and using Twine as a medium for communication. Keep in mind what you want your player to take away from the work.

- **Use links effectively.** Consider both the text used to link to the next passage and the organization of your content. Remember to watch your structure and make sure it can be navigated in a way that enhances each passage's content.
- **Write meaningful passages.** Each passage should serve a clear purpose and demonstrate your style, whether you are working with minimalism or relying heavily on metaphor. Your story should contain approximately 15-20 passages.
- **Plan a clear beginning and end.** Your story should be a complete short story: it can have two or three possible endpoints, but it should clearly come to a conclusion. Make sure the passages are linked to provide the player with a satisfactory ending.
- **Respond to reader/player choices.** Depending on the needs of your story, use a combination of simulated loops, if/then statements, and other Twine conditionals or variables. At least five passages need to demonstrate meaningful incorporation of responses to conditions—use [Dan Cox's guide](#) for reference.
- **Enhance your Twine interface.** Use CSS, images, sound files, or JavaScript to customize your Twine project appropriately. Make at least three meaningful changes to the core interface. Consult Porpentine's [Twine Resources](#) for reference.

Your Twine story needs to be hosted and accessible to your classmates for peer review. One easy solution is to follow [Dan Cox's instructions to use Google Drive](#). If you don't want the work to be public, you can restrict access only to those who have the link. However, if you want to publish your project, you can share it on [TwineHub](#)—currently, via email. (This can be a great way to have a public portfolio piece.)

Take-home Discussion

Log on and complete this week's two exercises:

- Week Two: *This is Not a Book* – pick a page to complete
- Week Two: Playing "Bee" (Varytale 2012)—Play Emily Short's "Bee" (a "choose your own adventure" style text) through to at least one ending. Pay particular attention to the impact of choices, your "stats" and the use of variables, and the character's voice. Discuss "Bee" in the forum. Compare your experience with other players and readers, sharing notes on these elements and considering how they were constructed. How did you feel about your choices? How does the interactivity impact your experience of the story?

All discussion requirements will be forum posts in the class group, which is restricted to access by members of the class.

WEEK THREE: TEXT/HYPertext: QUESTS

Bring: *This is Not a Book* and *Exercises in Style*.

Creative Warm-up: *This is Not a Book*

- Follow the directions in *This is Not a Book* on page 19.
- If you end up with something you cannot do under the constraints of the classroom, try flipping 5 pages in the other direction.
- Share the results of your "choice" with a partner.

Discussion: Nonlinear Storytelling, Meaningful Choice, and Player/Character Motivation

- Considering Emily Short's "Bee"
- Play: Depression Quest (Zoe Quinn 2013)
- Exercise: Choose Your Ending

In-Class: Building Your Twine Story

1. Adding the framework

- Never remove or change the "Start" passage.
- Include the "StoryTitle" and "StoryAuthor" passages
- Add a passage called CSS with the tag "stylesheet"
- Pick an export format

2. Linking passages and adding elements

- Add a link: `[[text you display|PassageTitle]]`
- Add an image (stored in same folder): `[img[sampleimage.gif]]`
- Embed another passage: `<<display 'PassageTitle'>>`

3. Playing with your stylesheet

- Change the display of links:

```
a { text-decoration: none !important }
a.internalLink { color: green !important }
a.internalLink:hover { color: white !important;
```

- Change how passages are displayed:

```
.passage { width: 500px !important }
.passage { color: purple }
```

Overall Stylesheets for Inspiration

4. Working with Conditionals


```
<<silently>>
```

```
<<set $metking = "no">>
```

```
<<endsilently>>
```

```
<<if $metking == "no">>The king barely nods at you in greeting.
```

```
<<set $metking = "yes">><<else>>The king ignores you.<<endif>>
```

5. Going further: **Twine scripting**

Project Turn-in and Peer Review

Join the "Project One: Twine Storytelling" group during today's class. When your project is ready, post a new forum topic with your work's title. Link to your work.

By our next in-person class meeting, read and respond to each of your peer's Twine projects. This virtual feedback substitutes for our class meeting. Remember to be constructive and thoughtful: Highlight moments where you were surprised, engaged, impressed by a choice in language or sensory detail, or intrigued by a response to your progression.

Before Next Class

Start reading Chris Ware's *Building Stories*. Aim to read about 1/3-1/2 of the contents, chosen however you'd like. Remember to bring *This is Not a Book* and *Building Stories* with you to class.

Reading Goals

- Explore experimental comics as a form of an interactive narrative (Ware)

WEEK FOUR: TEXT/HYPertext - ONLINE GALLERY AND PEER REVIEW

Read and respond to each of your peer's Twine projects. This virtual feedback substitutes for our class meeting. Remember to be constructive and thoughtful: Highlight moments where you were surprised, engaged, impressed by a choice in language or sensory detail, or intrigued by a response to your progression.

WEEK FIVE: IMAGE - SEQUENTIAL--AND "NON-SEQUENTIAL"--ART

Creative-Warm Up: Art Exercise

- Follow the directions in *This is Not a Book* on page 145. Supplies will be provided.
- In pairs, discuss the impact of visual changes on your perception of a book.

Discussion: Twine Threads

- What did you learn from your own writing?
- How did your peers use Twine differently?
- How did working in Twine change your writing?

Reading Out of Order: Building Stories

- What is sequential art?
- The space between: considering the gutter
- The tension of images and text

Exercise: Follow the Character

With your small group, choose a character to "follow" through *Building Stories*. Choose several pieces of *Building Stories* and try to place them in order by time. Draw a timeline charting the evolution of the character. Make sure to consider:

- Visual evolution (clothing, expression, aging)
- Contextual evolution (situations, environments, relationships)
- Narrative evolution (major events, turning points, character arcs)

Consider using markers to color code your timeline. Make sure to write all group members' names on your timeline and hand it in at the end of class.

Take-home Discussion

Log on and complete this week's two exercises:

- Week Five: *This is Not a Book* – choose, complete, and scan a page
- Week Five: Dissect a Page - Choose a page of *Building Stories*. Trace or redraw the essential lines of the page and map out the narrative. Make note of symbols, repeated imagery, the passing of time, character expressions, environmental storytelling, use of white space or gutters, and any other elements you observe. Scan your image of the dissected page and share it here.

Reading Goals

- Creative journal exercise (*This is Not a Book*)
- Examine the construction of sequential art as a gateway into environmental storytelling (Ware)

WEEK SIX: IMAGE - THINKING BEYOND THE PAGE

Exercise: Drawing and Writing

- Choose one page in *This is Not a Book* to complete and discuss: 25, 48, 86, 102, 168

Discussion: What's in a page?

- What do we take for granted when reading?
- How did Chris Ware's designs break your expectation of the page?
- How do we "build" the story when reading?

Meeting Eliza

Memorable Characters

- Mickey Mouse
- Mario
- Lara Croft
- James Bond

Exercise: Conversation with a Character

Choose a character from *Building Stories*. Write a conversation with that character where you ask the questions and try to construct their answers. Think about the character's voice, the information they would or would not share, the gaps in their story and how they might be filled, and your own responses.

Building Characters in Scratch

- Introduction to Scratch
- Visual programming and placement
- Making a conversation

Image Project: Characters from Scratch

For your second project, we'll be creating three characters in Scratch, primarily using their appearance and dialogue to communicate their identity. Remember to avoid stereotypes and think about what brings these three characters together: you should reveal a narrative (an incident or a conflict) through the interactions with and between the three characters. Your work should:

- **Use images to communicate.** Consider expression and comic techniques of exaggeration to design the appearances of your characters. You should not use the built-in sprites: you will be judged not on the quality of your artwork, but on what it communicates.
- **Write meaningful dialogue.** Each exchange should clearly tie to the narrative (even if it is very fragmented) or advance the character's identity. Your work should include at least 20-30 lines of meaningful dialogue. Think about the details: how does this character greet someone?
- **Convey a narrative.** The story embedded within the fragments should have a beginning, middle and end, even if the players do not encounter them in whole or in order and must piece together the logic for themselves. It can be open to several interpretations but must include some concrete details.
- **Implement simple interactivity.** Depending on the needs of your story, use a combination of point-and-click and dialogue options to allow the player to interact with the environment and characters to advance their understanding of the story.

- **Avoid stereotypes and clichés.** Writing characters that are distant from your own identity can be challenging: avoid relying on stereotypes of race, gender, sexuality, or faith and try to honestly inhabit the characters' perspectives.

Your Scratch story should be uploaded and accessible to your classmates for peer review using MIT's service.

Take Home Discussion

Log on and complete this week's two exercises:

- Week Six: *This is Not a Book* – choose, complete, and scan a page
- Week Six: Character Sketches - Sketch your three characters for the Image Project: Characters from Scratch. These can be rough drawings done with pencil and paper or your preferred medium. Focus on their core features and include a six-word short story with each character that describes the essence of their character. Scan or photograph your art and attach it here.

WEEK SEVEN: IMAGE - FROM COMIC TO GAME

Exercise: Interview Your Character

Complete the exercise on pages 113-114 of *This is Not a Book* as one of the three characters for your project. (If you've already done this page, complete this on a separate sheet of paper and keep it in your journal.)

Writing Conversations

- A few samples
- 12 Angry Men
- The Breakfast Club
- Before Sunrise
- Royal Tenenbaums
- Star Trek

Play and Discuss

- Choose Your Own Carl (Scott McCloud 2001)
- Icarus Needs (Armor Games 2013)
- Facade (Auto Mata 2005)

Continuing with Scratch

- Working from a seed project
- Interacting with objects and people
- Modeling Scratch Conversations

Continue — Image Project: Characters from Scratch

For your second project, we'll be creating three characters in Scratch, primarily using their appearance and dialogue to communicate their identity. Remember to avoid stereotypes and think about what brings these three characters together: You should reveal a narrative (an incident or a conflict) through the interactions with and between the three characters. Your work should:

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Your Scratch story should be uploaded and accessible to your classmates for peer review using MIT's service.

Project Turn-in and Peer Review

Join the "Project Two: Characters from Scratch" group during today's class. When your project is ready, post a new forum topic with your work's title. Link to your work.

By our next in-person class meeting read and respond to each of your peer's Scratch projects. This virtual feedback substitutes for our class meeting. Remember to be constructive and thoughtful: Highlight moments where you were engaged in the conversation, identified with a character, or observed a conflict

WEEK EIGHT: IMAGE - ONLINE GALLERY AND PEER REVIEW

Read and respond to each of your peer's Scratch projects. This virtual feedback substitutes for our class meeting. Remember to be constructive and thoughtful: highlight moments where you were engaged in the conversation, identified with a character, or observed a conflict.

WEEK NINE: GAME - INTERACTIVE FICTION

Exercise: Play in *This is Not a Book*

Follow the directions in *This is Not a Book* on page 156. You have 10 minutes to complete this task and return to the classroom. Once back, share your observations with a peer. What details stood out to you? How did your perception of the outdoors differ from your classmates?

Creative IF in the Industry

- [Interactive Fiction at PAX East](#)
- [Automatypewriter](#)
- [Speed IF at PAX](#)
- [Speed IF Completed Games](#)

Inform 7: Practicing with a Simple Game

- [Cadre, 9:05. \(2008\)](#)
- [Writing a basic text-adventure](#)

During today's class, you will adapt a basic text adventure to your own content. Make sure you change the descriptions, object names, and room names. Focus on creating a compelling setting and clearly relating the objects to your character's viewpoint: Describe them through the character's eyes. Finish your game before next week and submit your work on the forum for Week Eight.

Other Resources:

- [RPG Rules Example](#)
- [Writing with Inform](#)
- [The Recipe Book](#)

Mini-Project Three: A One-room Game

Using Inform 7, develop a simple game set entirely in one room. Focus on developing the objects and include a simple puzzle that can be solved in order to escape the room, thus ending the game. Reveal the narrative through the player's exploration and interactions with the objects in the environment. There is no need to include other characters or dialogue: Your focus should be on environmental storytelling. Your game should include:

- **A well-described setting.** Make sure to use the character's perspective to convey key details, background, and emotional stakes to the player.
- **Ten interactive objects.** These can include objects the player can pick up, move, or otherwise interact with.
- **At least one original verb.** Define at least one verb the player might use to probe the objects in your environment with a rule governing action.

- **A clear beginning and end.** Give the player enough information to understand and achieve the objective and a sense of fulfillment when it is accomplished.

Take Home Discussion

Log on and complete this week's two exercises:

- Week Nine: *This is Not a Book*
- Week Nine: Share a link to your first interactive fiction

WEEK TEN: GAME - SCRIPTING STORIES

Exercise: Working With Language

Follow the directions in *This is Not a Book* on page 214 and tell a story. Invent at least one new icon for the language and share it with your neighbor.

In Class Play: Shade by Andrew Plotkin (2000)

Extending Our Inform 7 Game

- Using Existing Verbs
- Defining a New Verb
- Objects and Interactions
- Locked Objects
- Creating Scenes

WEEK ELEVEN: GAME - PEER CRITIQUE

Due Today: Interactive Fiction

Bring your project to class on a USB drive or saved in Dropbox. We will be playing and critiquing the games in-class, so make sure it is ready to play (it's okay if there are some bugs or errors.) You will need to hand in your game by transferring me your files or emailing me the link to the files stored on Dropbox or another service.

Gallery Playtest

You will play in pairs, watching one another play the other's game (don't try to both play at once). As you playtest your classmates' games, consider these questions and share your thoughts with the game's creator:

- Is the environment clearly developed?
- Do you have a sense of where I am? Of who you are playing?
- Can you interact with the environment? Do the interactions seem natural?
- When are you thwarted? Frustrated?

- Do your choices make sense?
- Do you feel a sense of progression?

Exercise: Story Starts

Use the tropes story generator to "roll" a plot starter. Write the introduction, sticking to the elements the generator defined but adding in your own details. (Hand in this paper at the end of class.)

Remixing Your Ideas

- Everything is Derivative
- Everything is a Remix
- Story Structure
- Emergent Narrative

For next week:

Play Aaron Reed's maybe make some change (2011) and discuss it on the class forum. Make sure to read the "about" statement. Consider: how does the work use pieces of news, borrowed media, audio, and original content together to tell its story? How did you respond to the different fragments of the work?

Reading Goals

- Understand the role of choice, agency, and multimodal storytelling in hypertext (Reed)

WEEK TWELVE: WORLDS—INTERACTIVE FICTION / ELECTRONIC LITERATURE / NARRATIVE GAMES

Exercise: Your Style

Write on the in-class prompt three times, each time using a different "style." You can "borrow" your style from Raymond Queneau or try something different.

- What does writing style communicate?
- How do you develop your own voice?
- What makes "good" writing?

Discuss: Maybe Make Some Change.

Beyond the Hero's Journey

Finding your Genre

- Electronic Literature
- Interactive Fiction

- **Narrative Games**

For Next Week:

- Bring a written draft of text and concepts for your final project—you will meet with me to discuss your plan.

WEEK THIRTEEN: WORLDS - EXERCISES IN INTERACTION

Bring: *This is Not a Book*. Make sure your name is on it.

"Practice Makes Perfect"

Warm-Up: Metatext

Consider the things you've done with and in *This is Not a Book* throughout the semester. Write a poem that encapsulates your thoughts on your own work and the idea of writing and text you have now. Follow these restrictions: the first line of the poem can only contain a single word. The next line should contain two words, the next three, and so on, adding one word with each line.

Discussion: Creating Interactive Narratives

- Layers: Jody Zellen, **Pause (2006)**
- Binaries: Pierre Chevalier, **Destroy/Wait (2013)**
- Motion: Steaw Web Design, **Never Mind the Bullets (2010)**
- (e)motion: Lynnea Glasser, **Coloratura (2013)**
- Conversation: Emily Short, **Galatea (2000)**

Extensions for Inform 7

Group Exercise: Build a Story-World in Inform 7

Open up a new game in Inform 7 and add a title and a room. Place a single object in the room with a meaningful description. Every few minutes, we will rotate to the next computer: add an additional object to the room that expands upon the setting as currently represented. Make sure to do a quick check of your code for errors each time.

WEEK FOURTEEN: BUILDING AND WRAPPING UP

Warm-Up: Agency

Choose a page from *This is Not a Book* that you've previously ignored, and complete it. Share your results with a neighbor. Why did you choose this page?

Peer Feedback: Final Projects

Bring whatever you have of your final project and prototype and set it up. We will rotate partners: share your concept, existing narrative, and any interactive elements you have available. Respond to one another's work:

- What are the central themes? How does the work make you feel?
- Who are the primary characters? Are they compelling? Unexpected?
- What is the storyworld like? What do you want to learn more about?

Looking Ahead: "First Encounters" virtual festival

Open Development Time

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