Narrative and Setting

Jaanus Jaggo
Gameplay

?
Gameplay

How player interacts with the game world and how game world reacts to the choices player makes.
Narrative

Books

ideas over time
Narrative

Books

- ideas over time

Movies

- sensory experience

- ideas over time
Narrative

Game narrative: not just plot and dialogue but the structure of game design
Flow in games

![Graph showing the relationship between difficulty and time spent playing in games. The graph illustrates that flow occurs when the difficulty and time spent playing are balanced, avoiding the extremes of frustrating (Too hard/confusing) and boring (Too easy).]
Flow in games

Difficulty

Time spent playing

frustrating
Too hard / confusing

flow

boring
Too easy
Flow in games

Difficulty

Time spent playing

frustrating
Too hard / confusing

flow

boring
Too easy
Tension in stories

Tension

Too tense

boring

Time spent playing

0

0

0
Three act structure
How to express the narrative

One basic principle in writing is to “show, do not tell”.

What about the video game?
How to express the narrative

Principal is: “do not show but let the player do it himself”.

Examples:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94qpNn2_BxY&t=5m0s

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvp6mo4H1X0&t=1m0s
Explicit story and player story

Kinds of narrative in games:

- Traditional narrative (plot, characters, dialogue)
- Player’s personal experience

Good player story is the end goal but they should be indistinguishable!

Player story in Tetris game?
Player made stories

Dwarf Fortress

Simple graphics  http://dfstories.com/  Rich gameplay
Tutorial is a part of your story

1. Blend the tutorial into the game
2. Player should “do” not “read”
3. Use fewer words
   a. Max 8 words on the screen
4. Spread out the teaching of game mechanics
5. Leverage what players already know

Extra Credits: “The best example of this is of course Portal, which was 90% tutorial but was so much fun that none of us seemed to notice.”

Putting the player in control

In the game *Journey* the explicit story appears to be very loose.

Missing story pieces will emerge from gameplay!

More info: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGCkVHSvzM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGCkVHSvzM)
Three act structure

Carefully crafted and playtested pacing
Getting the pacing right

Pacing balancing mechanics -> The games might get boring because of player’s own actions.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L8vAGGitr8
Getting the pacing right

Tony Hawk’s pro skater

**Problem:** players are repeating same tricks over and over again!
Getting the pacing right

Tony Hawk’s pro skater

Solution: Repeated tricks will give less points
Getting the pacing right

VS

DARK SOULS

VS

Bloodborne
Getting the pacing right

**Rally mechanic** - after getting hit you can get your health back by striking back
Getting the pacing right

World of Warcraft -> The longer you play the *less* experience you get

Would you like it?
Getting the pacing right

World of Warcraft -> The longer you are away, the more experience you gain!

TIME SPENT NOT PLAYING

EXPERIENCE MULTIPLIER

40x
Game Setting

Game Setting consists of:

- **Physical setting** - where the game takes place
- **Temporal setting** - the time period when the game takes place
- **Environmental setting** - how the environment affects the game
- **Emotional setting** - what emotions the game creates
- **Ethical setting** - how the game is played and age ratings
Task

Design a character for post-apocalyptic game:

- Gender
- Origin
- Positive traits
- Negative traits
- Appearance
Your projects

- You have to do it in teams of **3-4 students**.
- Required amount of work is **90h x #students** in a team.
- Final game has to have:
  - 30m of meaningful gameplay
  - scalable content (upgrades, items, enemies)
  - some interesting novel ideas
- Final game has to be:
  - an indie PC game (you will not get max points for a mobile game design)
  - polished (sounds, animations, general polish feel)
- The grading:
  - Is subjective
  - Barely meeting the requirements will not give maximum points
  - Both design and implementation are graded
The common problem in software engineering

- How the customer explained it
- How the Project Leader understood it
- How the Analyst designed it
- How the Programmer wrote it
- How the Business Consultant described it
- How the project was documented
- What operations were installed
- How the customer was billed
- How it was supported
- What the customer really needed
The common problem in software engineering

Game development
Game design document

Guiding vision document created by dev. Team

Used to organize the efforts within the dev. Team

1. **Team:** team member names
2. **Mantra:** 1 line sentence about what your game is (eg. Epic robot battle with multiple story paths)
3. **Design Pillars:** up to 3 phrases that convey the feeling of your game (eg. Fast, Action-packed, Mayhem)
4. **Summary:** a short brief
5. **Features:** list of cool features and unique elements you want to include
6. **Interface:** player controls and operative actions
7. **Art style:** references to the art of your vision
8. **Music/Sound:** what kind of music/sound your game should have
1. Make it readable:
   a. Plenty of white space
   b. Paragraphs
   c. Short lines of text
2. **Prioritize** - you should draw clear line between things that you intend to do and things that you’d like to do if you have some time left over.
3. **Get into the details** - readers can understand general things differently.
4. **Gameplay drawing** - Add at least 1
5. **Illustrate your paragraphs** - At least 5 illustrations (can be searched from internet)
Examples of game design document

- Bioshock
- GTA
- Mythos
- PID
- Desert Blood

Source: http://www.gamedev.net/page/resources/_/business/practical-tips-for-independent-game-development-r2687
Homework

1. Choose teams (3-4 people).
2. Create a design document about your game (PDF format).
3. Prepare to present your game design in next lecture - prepare 4 minute presentation with 3-5 slides describing your game idea.

Video recommendations: Designing Journey
Task - if we have time left over

Fast paced 3-rd person action shooter game!
Player uses different firearms to kill the monsters.
The player can get upgrades.
The game has procedural generation.

1. Is it 3D or 2D?
2. Where the game takes place?
3. What kind of monsters there are?
4. What resources player collects?
5. How the player gets upgrades?
6. What is procedurally generated?
The game I meant