

SPLASH Outline for scenario course

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1 The Game Itself

1. Genres of Play

(a) Hack and Slash - HS

- i. Focused on combat and exploration
- ii. Most direct descendant of wargames
- iii. Seen in D&D in most stereotypical form

(b) Mystery - MY

- i. Focused on finding clues and investigation
- ii. Mainly a result of *Call of Cthulhu* in the 1980s
- iii. Can be less combat-heavy than HS

(c) Narrative - NA

- i. Focused on story and characters
- ii. Seen in modern 'indie' games: *Fiasco*, *Powered by the Apocalypse*, etc.
- iii. Can include narrative mechanics, less simulationist

2. Antagonist

(a) Environment

- i. Monsters
- ii. Survival
- iii. Journeys

(b) Agent

- i. A person or organization with agency - they can make decisions
- ii. Villains
- iii. Culprits
- iv. Opponents

(c) The Party

- i. Conflict within the party
 - ii. Conflicting goals
 - iii. Secret agendas
 - iv. Incomplete information
- !!! Harder to do on short notice

2 The Scenario

1. Figure out what kind of game your players want to play
 - (a) HS, MY, NA
 - (b) This will determine what kind of system
 - (c) You may already know this: it's good to know your group
 - (d) Narrative games are generally dictated fairly heavily by the system.
2. Determine the system
 - (a) You may already know this, and have one in mind
 - (b) Don't be afraid to wing it! Make things up!
3. Determine the antagonist
 - (a) Agents are easiest
 - (b) Environment can be blah, depending on group
 - (c) Inter-party conflict is difficult to wing
4. Figure out the premise
 - (a) What are the PCs doing?
 - (b) This is when the players get told what they're doing and what constraints they may have on their characters
 - i. Try to tie in their characters to the game if possible
5. Structure the scenario
 - (a) Five-node mystery - mainly for MY (see fig. ??)
 - (b) Five-room dungeon - mainly for HS
6. Determine the timeline
 - (a) What does your antagonist want to do?
 - (b) Why do they want to do it?
 - (c) When do they want to do it?
7. Determine the locations
 - (a) Node-based design
 - i. Think of things as dungeons: chains of locations
 - (b) "Three-clue rule"
 - i. If there is a conclusion you want your players to make, make sure there are three ways to get to it.
8. Determine NPCs
 - (a) Names, ages, professions, reasons for being there
 - (b) Brief description: at least one notable feature
 - (c) What do they know?
 - i. Can wing it if necessary

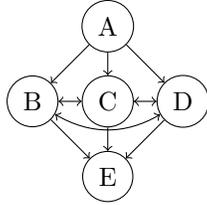


Figure 1: Five-Node Mystery

3 Prep

- **Don't prep plots, prep situations**
 - A plot: The bad guy attacks them. After that, they follow him to his lair. After that, they kill him, stopping his plan.
 - * What if they do poorly? What if they don't follow him? What if they don't kill him?
 - A situation: The bad guy wants to do X at time Y. The bad guy has Z capability.
 - * More robust - less dependent on player choices.
- Prep only what you can't improvise
 - Maps, pictures, stat blocks
- Don't close off options: give yourself flexibility to change
 - You can change antagonists, settings, plans
 - Allows you to react to players and make it more fun
- **Don't get attached to your plot. It's everyone's game, and it's everyone's job (including yours) to make it fun.**

4 Expanding on your scenario

- Add nodes
- Chain together scenarios
 - “Five node campaign”
 - * Make five five-node-mysteries
 - * Hook them together like a five-node-mystery
 - * Have fun!
- Add detail
- Add antagonists
 - Have antagonists run in parallel
 - Multiple plots going at the same time
- Add asides
 - Sessions or scenarios focusing on something separate from the main plot
- **Figure out what works for you.**

5 Resources

- The Alexandrian
 - Resources for game design theory, advice on building scenarios and campaigns. High quality of writing
 - <http://thealexandrian.net/>
- Forums - use common sense, be a good member
 - D&D and similar:
 - * Giant in the Playground Forums (<http://www.giantitp.com/>)
 - * ENWorld (<http://www.enworld.org/>)
 - Call of Cthulhu, other horror and investigative games:
 - * YSDC (<http://yog-sothoth.com/>)
- Me!
 - `matthew_petersen(at)brown(dot)edu`
 - * I'm happy to answer questions.
 - <https://meptrsn.github.io/>
 - * I occasionally write about games on my blog, but not frequently.