The Art of Game Design: Story
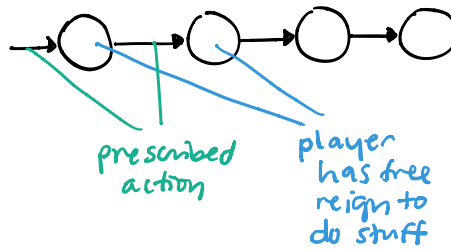
story   **game**

creating an experience

- stories must do something to enhance gameplay
- most games have some story element
  even chess!

2 ways of Interactive Storytelling

1. String of pearls

prescribed action

player has free reign to do stuff

ex: Mario, Final Fantasy

2. The Story Machine

game

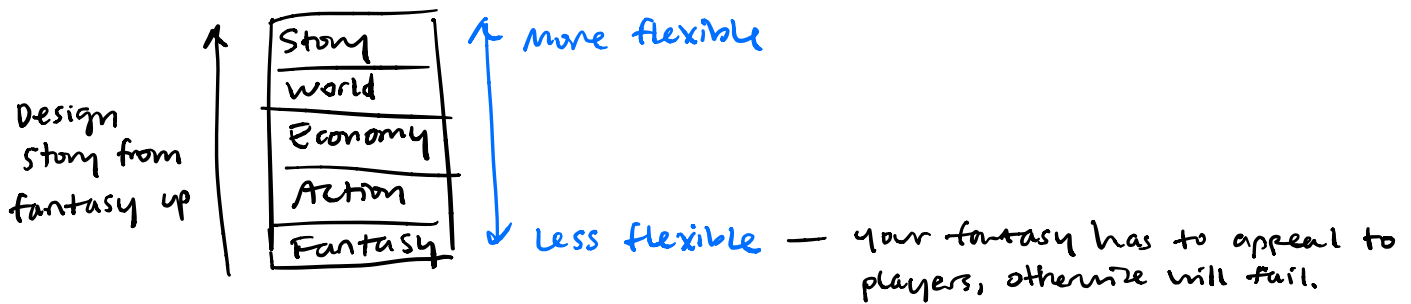STORY

player

player is the author
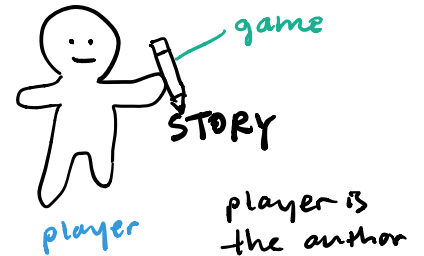
ex: Minecraft, Sims

The Problems

1. Good Stories have Unity — too many endings makes story feel unconnected and weak

2. The Combinatorial Explosion — having too many choices forces game designer to fuse plotlines. But if everything leads to same conclusion, what was the point of choices?

3. Multiple Endings Disappoint — 1. "Is this the real ending?"

2. "Do I have to play whole thing again to see another ending?"

4. Not Enough Verbs — stories require communication b/w characters, but video games can't support that
— can only do stuff like run, jump, punch. can't talk, ask, negotiate, etc.

5. Time Travel Makes Tragedy Obsolete — games give player freedom and control at the price of giving up inevitability
— in traditional story, tragedy makes you cry b/c you can't avoid it, but in video game you can.

~~10~~ story tips for game designers

1. Respect the story stack

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↑   | Story    |   ↑ More flexible
    | World    |
Design  | Economy  |
story from  | Action   |
fantasy up  | Fantasy  |   ↓ Less flexible — your fantasy has to appeal to
                              players, otherwise will fail.
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2. Put your story to work!
Mold your story to support the gameplay you think is best

3. Goals, Obstacles, Conflicts
Need these 3 ingredients for compelling story

4. Make it Real
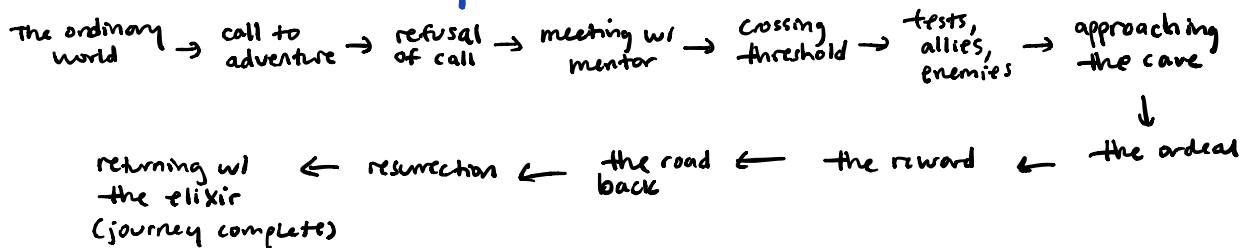If it's not real to you, it's not real to your audience.
Plan out details of your world.

5. Provide Simplicity and Transcendence
↓ game world is simpler than real world
↓ player is more powerful in game world than real world

6. Consider the Hero's Journey
The ordinary world → call to adventure → refusal of call → meeting w/ mentor → crossing threshold → tests, allies, enemies → approaching the cave ↓

returning w/ the elixir (journey complete) ← resurrection ← the road back ← the reward ← the ordeal

7. Keep your story world Consistent

8. Make your story world accessible (understandable)

9. Use clichés judiciously
clichés are overused and abused, but also familiar and therefore understandable

10. Sometimes a Map brings a story to life — draw a map of your world to gain inspo

11. Surprise and Emotion (add them!)