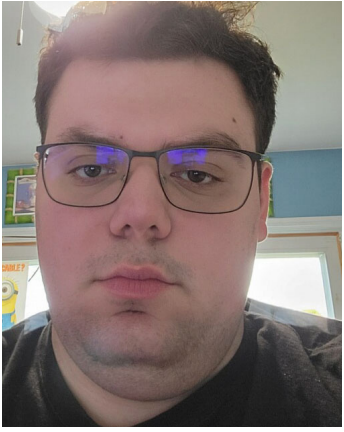


FEATURES

How to Write Good Storylines for Video Games

By Lucas Werner



The storyline is one of the biggest parts of any video game. Storylines have a recipe to follow, just like any freshly made dish. As with any recipe, a good storyline requires attention to each of its ingredients. What are these ingredients? Here are the main ones:

1. World-building

When building your story for any book, novel or game, geography and topography might be among the first things to consider, since you'll have a range of ideas to work with, such as cities, continents, history, territorial conflict, and others. The unique world of the game will serve as a guideline for your characters' backstories, as well as for any possible future installments of the game. World-building requires time and heavy thinking.

2. Character Creation

Characters, whatever their function (protagonist, antagonist, or otherwise), may serve as your most important asset. Depending on the amount of effort put into their creation, you might end up with a game that rocks or one that bombs. When creating these indi-



Blank screen waits to be filled by gamemaker

Photo by Lucas Werner

viduals, first consider their history: What environment did they grow up in? Were there any positive/negative life-changing events in their pasts? What is their personality? Then, ask what are their unique skills--these may be used for game mechanics. Lastly, what do they look like, based on the previously mentioned factors?

3. Writing the Grand Storyline

Creating the overarching conflict that's going to drive the game is challenging because it requires tying in to the World Design without revealing the entire storyline all at once, but revealing

bits of the conflict here and there. This is done by asking things such as what are the main characters' roles, what is the history of the nations that may or may not be in conflict, and so on. Alternating between close-ups of the characters and story events would be a good way to go about things.

4. Writing the Game Story

Next, take a bit from each step and develop the in-game story and dialogue. Make sure that the story moves forward, that it reveals something of one or more characters, and that it's easy to follow.

5. Storyboarding

This part requires drawing skill. It's useful to make sure that the cutscenes (if any) communicate clearly. Cutscenes are narrative-driving scenes that the player can't control.

6. Implementing the Story In-Game

After getting through all that hard work, it's time to mix and match the game mechanics with the narrative in a way that's appropriate to the theme/genre you want the game to have. This is done by arranging multiple elements: the game's cutscenes, environment, enemies, allies, exclusive content, and more.

7. Iterating

This is sometimes the tedious part of storymaking: Revising your work. This is done after the previous six steps are completed, where you change minor details here and there from the beginning to the end, making sure the work is original.

And that's how you write a video game storyline. Writing your own story takes time and effort; a few extra hands wouldn't hurt. I speak from experience, as I am currently at work on a new game myself. If anyone would like to know more about the process, I can be reached through The Viking News.

