

“Designing RPG Scenarios”

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Origins Seminar

Columbus, Ohio

Designing RPG Scenarios

- Overview & Definitions
- Technique
 - Description
 - Reward
 - Conflict
 - Plot development
 - Point of view
- Questions / Answers
- Frenzied Applause!

Gaming Principles

1. ***Stafford Principle: maintain a sense of wonder in the campaign.*** Make sure there is always some surprise or something special that makes a session, an adventure, a campaign and your whole world unique.
2. ***Perrin Principle: be consistent.*** If you do something once, it becomes a precedence. The players will remember it, and count on it being the same next time. If it's not the same later, have a darn good, obvious to the players reason that it's different.
3. ***Petersen Principle: make it fun.*** Don't be afraid to change a plot to go with player enthusiasm. Try something crazy or goofy, even (or especially) in serious settings. Roll with the mood and make it happen. Be high energy!
4. ***Staats Principle: reward the players as well as the characters.*** Handouts, riddles, music, etc. that can be experienced by the players' senses directly or challenge the players' creativity reward the players. The players are the ones that come to the sessions every week, and ultimately, it is the GM's goal to reward the players. Some folks are just fine vicariously being rewarded through their characters, but it's oh so much more fun to be rewarded as a player during the course of a session.
5. ***Sandy's Axiom: involve at least three senses in every scene.*** These can be described or experienced (e.g. props, incense, etc.). People have five senses, and adding details about weird sounds, the unusual smell or the texture of something adds to the gaming experience.

Definitions - I

1. **Role-Playing:** (We will use Schick's definition for the purposes of this document.)

Gygax in Role-Playing Mastery: "Acting out a make-believe position"

Costikyan in Toon: "Role-Playing is just 'Let's Pretend'"

Schick in Heroic Worlds: "Quantified Interactive Storytelling"

2. **Character:** The role a player assumes when playing a Role-Playing game.

3. **Adventure:** A Role-Playing session or series of sessions using the same characters throughout with definite beginning, middle and ending.

4. **Campaign:** A series of connected sessions where the characters accomplish something which could not have been done in one adventure.

Definitions - II

5. ***Fantasy Role-Playing*** (FRP): Role-Playing which takes place in a fantasy milieu.
6. ***Fantasy Role-Playing World***: The environment in which the characters interact. It has a consistent set of physical laws and a coherent mythical order.
7. ***Cross-Over***: Travel from one Role-Playing milieu to another.
8. ***Multi-verse***: Set of all Role-Playing worlds/milieu's possible for characters to enter from a particular campaign. (Note: these worlds do not have to all be run by the same referee.)
9. ***Party***: A group of characters involved in a campaign who travel through the Role-Playing world together with a common set of goals and objectives.
10. ***PC***: Player Character, a character controlled by a player
11. ***NPC***: Non-Player Character, a character controlled by the referee
12. ***Tie-In***: Connecting two plot threads or regions that were not previously related.
13. ***Maguffin***: a plot device or thread specifically designed to incite player interest.

Designing RPG Scenarios

What we're trying to accomplish

The seminar explores how to design RPG scenarios .

The name of the game in Role-Playing for the referee is creating a world where the players can *suspend disbelief*. The techniques described in this document will aid you in achieving this objective.

The Single Page Method Description

- Description
- Reward
- Conflict
- Plot development
- Point of view

Description

- Humans have five senses (at least)
- Use at least THREE in every scene
- Props can help out a great deal here
- Caution: *Props can be overdone*

Reward

- Reward the Characters
 - Capabilities
 - Span of Control
 - Acquisition
- Reward the Players
 - Puzzles
 - Comfortable environment
 - Pleasant Interactions

Conflict

- Without conflict, there is no scenario
- Make it further the plot
- Can be patently unfair -- as long as it is resolved in a reasonable time
- Caution: *Easy does it!*
- Caution: *Only things you are comfortable with!*

Plot Development

- Coherent Story Line
- Consistency
- Clear beginnings, middles, and ends

Point of View

- Players know what PCs would know
- NPCs know what the NPC should know
- Be consistent

Putting it Together

- One-Up or Campaign
- Genre
- Set Goals
- Major Scenes
- Linking Scenes
- Flesh out NPCs
- Blockbuster Openings!!!
- Caution: *be willing to kill your children*