



STORIES AND NARRATIVES

Story versus Narrative

- Story:
 - Cupid and Psyche married, on the condition that Psyche never see him. She, on purpose, looked at him while he slept. He discovered this, so he was forced to leave. Psyche had to go through many trials set by Cupid's spiteful mother, Venus, before the pair could reunite.
- Narrative: The linear collection of scene, action and dialog that tells the story.
 - “once upon a time, the ne'er-do-well son of Venus, Cupid, played with mortals by shooting golden arrows to make someone fall in love and arrows of lead to make humans loathe one another. It happened that Cupid, one day, saw the beautiful Psyche, and accidently pricked himself with one of his own golden arrows...”

Styles of stories:

- Episodic: Old fashioned radio or TV shows with a 'reset' after each show (Lone Ranger, Star Trek, Andy Griffith Show)
- Film style: Extended story resulting in a change in the world, often has character development, usually ends in big pay-off (Star Wars IV, Die Hard, Lost)
- Serial: Intermediate between episodic and film style – in games there usually is a story line that finishes with a change of level (i.e., change to a new world) (Soap operas, Babylon 5)

Narratives

- Limited branching: a series of yes/no type questions. Depending on answer, game branches to appropriate part of narrative/story. More than one ending possible.
- Directed Narrative (chokepoints): Player's choices ultimately funnel him to a chokepoint. E.g., player is allowed to explore, but cannot progress to next level until he performs a specific action.
- Critical path: there is only one successful path. Player can go off path only very slightly. Nothing important happens off path.
- Nodal: Game has several nodes; each node is a complete story.
- **N.B. a game may combine several narrative styles.**

Cut scene

- A cut scene is a sequence in which the player has no control – i.e., no inter-activity.
- Purposes:
 - Relate background information to player
 - Move story forward
 - Give the player a breather
 - Introduce a new character
 - Show player what he did wrong (e.g., after hero is killed)
 - Give rules
 - Pretty payoffs

References

- Dille & Platten, The Ultimate Guide to Video Game Writing and Design, 158065066X
- Fullerton, Game Design Workshop, 0420809748
- The Web (various)