

NARRATIVE BRIEF
RANDOM MECHANICS EXAMPLE

by
Quain Holtey

Assignment Context

The purpose of this assignment is to take 5 randomly rolled game mechanics, identify what emotions these mechanics could potentially evoke, then create a narrative treatment for a game using at least 3 of those mechanics.

Rolled Game Mechanics

1. **Discarding** - Can evoke emotions of **loss and pain, but also acceptance and growth**.
Something that could either damage the player or fulfill them emotionally.
2. **Catching** - Can evoke emotions of **desire and collecting/hording**. Could also illicit fear and avoidance if used in a “catching a virus” sort of way.
3. **Arranging** - Evokes emotions of **calmness**, maybe a feeling of progression and **organization**.
4. **Sequencing** - Evokes emotions of pride and **satisfaction if done well, or anxiety if done poorly**.
5. **Herding** - Evokes emotions of **progression and accomplishment**, as well as awareness to **ensure the ‘herd’ stays together**.

Story Stack

What is a Story Stack?

A framework presented at GDC 2019 by Jesse Schell, author of *The Art of Game Design*, in which the player fantasy serves as the foundation to a game's experience, with player actions, progression, story world, and narrative building off of that foundation.

Using these 5 game mechanics, I postulated a potential story stack that would fit with the emotions and themes inherent in the game mechanics.

Proposed Story Stack:

1. **Player Fantasy** - Organize combinations of aliens to achieve the highest score.
2. **Actions** - intaking (catching) aliens, organizing existing aliens (arranging) into sequences or herds, shipping off completed groups of aliens (discarding).
3. **Economy** - Round specific buffs based on what groups get discarded, score additions and subtractions, score multipliers, authority suspicion level, player morale/happiness
4. **World** - A space station that needs alien refugees organized into specific groups that are then sent off station.
5. **Story** - As a space station employee, you must choose to group aliens together in optimal ways to be sent off station for work, or group them together in families to be sent off station for relocation.

Narrative Brief

On an intergalactic space station, a refugee sorting employee (player character) must organize (**arrange**) incoming alien refugees into similar groups (called **herds**) to be sent home (**discarded**). However, doing so violates work orders sent to the sorting employee by The Authority super computer that tasks them with organizing the aliens into dissimilar groups (called **sequences**) to create optimal work groups to be sent off to labor camps.

Arranging aliens into **herds** increases **player character's** morale/happiness, and grants them unique buffs/abilities they can use to fly under the Authority's radar, but increase the Authority's suspicion level. Arranging them into **sequences** decreases morale/happiness, but decreases the Authority's suspicion level and grants score multipliers for fulfilling work orders. This aims to feed into the evoked emotions associated with these actions. Namely loss/pain or acceptance/growth with discarding, and satisfaction/anxiety and accomplishment with sequencing and herding.