

NARRATIVE BRIEF
STORY IDEAS EXAMPLE

by

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Assignment Context

The purpose of this assignment is to take a large amount of random story ideas presented by a non-narrative focused team, identify which ones could work together, and create a story brief based on the combined ideas following the seven point story structure presented by John Truby in his book *The Anatomy of Story*.

To simulate the non-narrative focused team ideas, the list of ideas was AI generated. AI was not used in the rest of this example.

Random Story Ideas

- 1. A mysterious ancient artifact that holds untold power, sought after by both heroes and villains alike.**
 - a. Combined the artifact aspect, but combined it a bit with several others so there are multiple artifacts between the two rival factions (another provided idea)
- ~~2. A hidden society of shape shifters living among humans, struggling to keep their existence a secret.~~
 - a. Felt the shape-shifter aspect didn't add much to the story, and trying to stay secret detracted from the desired player fantasy.
- 3. A parallel dimension that threatens to merge with the game's world, causing chaos and destruction.**

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- a. Kept the idea of the threat of causing chaos and destruction, but felt fitting the parallel dimension into the more 'naturalistic' focused world was a bit of a detractor.
- 4. A protagonist with a unique ability to communicate with animals, who becomes instrumental in uncovering a conspiracy.**
 - a. Kept this idea almost wholesale as it added to the story's conflict and desire.
- ~~5. A forgotten prophecy that foretells the rise of a chosen one who will either save or doom the world.~~
 - a. A prophecy, while interesting, didn't seem to make any improvements on the story.
- ~~6. A cursed city where time moves differently, trapping its inhabitants in a perpetual cycle of despair.~~
 - a. Another interesting idea that didn't add to the story in a meaningful way.
- 7. A war between two rival factions, each harnessing powerful magic and technology to gain the upper hand.**
 - a. Used as the main point of conflict in the story, focusing on the two rival factions each using natural or artificial artifacts in their war.
- 8. A group of rebels fighting against an oppressive regime, with the player caught in the middle of the conflict.**
 - a. Used the player being the one caught in the middle of the conflict, as well as the idea of an underdog/rebels, but not quite as domineering as rebels vs. oppressive regime.
- 9. A journey to the world's edge, where ancient secrets and mythical creatures await.**
 - a. A fun idea incorporated into the last forest of the story and combined with the idea of the player speaking with animals.
- ~~10. A virtual reality simulation has gone awry, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.~~
 - a. Another great idea that didn't seem to improve the story, only change it. Passed on it.
- 11. A sentient AI with its own agenda, manipulating events behind the scenes for its own gain.**
 - a. Used as an interesting opponent and combined with the powerful artifacts/technology ideas above.
- 12. A series of interconnected quests that explore themes of identity, morality, and the nature of power.**
 - a. Used throughout the player's plan, finding artifacts/uncovering secrets that lead to conspiracy on both sides and potential destruction for all involved.

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 12 randomly generated story ideas, I postulated a potential story stack that would fit with the ideas and themes that saw a lot of overlap while trying to incorporate as many ideas as possible.

Proposed Story Stack:

1. Player Fantasy

- a. To bring peace to a warring world through compromise.

2. Actions

- a. Talk to NPC characters
- b. Build relationships with NPCs
- c. Navigate a hostile world
- d. Investigate threads/items for answers.

3. Economy

- a. Uncovering hidden motives to NPCs
- b. World evolution based on playstyle (becomes more/less technological depending on how you choose to complete missions, with the animals, or with the robots).
- c. Unique NPC reactions based on relationship status
- d. Dialogue options based on information found investigating
- e. Stat increases to increase odds of successful interactions (persuading, intimidating, etc)

4. World

- a. A technological city ruled by robots with human companions that has expanded to the borders of the last forest on earth and that threatens to swallow it and destroy the last few mythical animals that remain and call it home.

- b. This ongoing battle between nature and technology can be influenced by player decisions, having the forest grow into the city, or the city expand into the forest, based on whether the player chooses to solve conflicts in favor of the animals or the robots.

5. Story

- a. As a human citizen in a city run by robots, Rys uncovers an artifact that allows them to speak with the mythical animals that remain in the last forest. Using this and other powers granted by this artifact, Rys sets out to stop the city's expansion and to save the last forest with the help of the mythical animal leader, Brenholt. They discover the robots have found a way to create a fabricated artifact that is just as powerful and has given the AI Swallow sentience. During an attack on the fabrication facility, Rys learns that the robots must expand or risk dying out. With the idea to use their natural artifact as a blueprint, Rys creates several fabricated artifacts that allow for a technological forest to be built, providing a home for both robots and mythical animals and ending the conflict between them.

7-Point Story Structure

Flawed, Deeply Human Character

- A human named Rys with the unique ability to communicate with the mythical animals in the last forest thanks to a powerful, natural artifact. They are timid and naive.

Desire

- To use their ability of being able to talk to both animals and robots to establish peace between them and save the last forest.

Opponent

- A sentient AI named Swallow that has learned how to create powerful fabricated artifacts and is using its power to expand the city and destroy the last forest, along with the natural artifacts that give the forest its power.

Plan

- Rys helps the mythical animals, led by Brenholt, to push back against the city's expansion, using their powerful natural artifact.
- They go into the city to infiltrate the Expansion Offices and uncover how they are expanding and beating the natural artifact's powerful abilities.

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- Rys uncovers the secret that Swallow has created a fabricated artifact and using it to expand the city and destroy the forest. They escape Swallow and the Expansion Offices to return to the forest and share the news.
- With the mythical animals, they devise a plan to attack the facility that has manufactured the fabricated artifact, but something feels off, and one of the mythical animals, Sorrin, is against the plan.
- While destroying the facility, Rys learns that the robots HAVE to expand, otherwise new robots can't be made. When they bring this up to Brenholt, he doesn't seem to care.
- Rys stays in the city after the attack, and plans to meet with Swallow to discuss a potential compromise. The meeting is a trap, though, and he escapes into the forest.
- The mythical animals decide they need to destroy Swallow if they hope to stop the expansion completely. Rys tells them it will lead to the robots dying, but Brenholt feels it is either the animals or the robots. It cannot be both.
- Sorrin sides with Rys and together they return to the fabrication facility to fix it, with the plan that they can use Rys's natural artifact as a blueprint for fabricated artifacts that can be used to expand an idealistic "technological forest".

Battle

- Swallow and Brenholt's battle converges at the fabrication facility. Rys attempts to stop them from destroying the newly repaired fabricator before the new natural/fabricated artifact hybrid can finish being created.

Moment of Truth

- Rys realizes that in order to keep robots and mythical animals from destroying each other, they need to stand their ground against both so that a compromise can be reached.

Conclusion

- Rys successfully stands their ground, and their natural/fabricated artifact hybrid is completed, allowing them to expand a technological forest that provides a habitat for both robots and mythical animals.