

MUSE

a **Storytelling Game**

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First Edition

Muse is a storytelling game where players collaborate and compete with each other to tell an enjoyable story. Players will take turns, with each of them contributing to a single story. Play will pass from player to player in clockwise order, unless listeners *jump in* or *object*. Players will inspire each other to create *story elements*, which will get combined into *questions* about the plot. No-one knows in advance how questions will finally be *answered*. The game ends when no more questions can be created and the last question in play has been answered. The player with the best hand remaining gets to narrate the story's epilogue.

Table of Contents

REQUIRED MATERIALS	3
THE FIVE PHASES.....	3
SETUP	3
Code of Conduct	3
Genre and Tone.....	4
Brainstorm Story Elements	4
Brainstorm Questions.....	5
VETO	6
INTRODUCTION	6
Determine the First Narrator	7
THE NARRATOR’S TURN	7
Narrate.....	7
The Limits of Narration	7
Narrating Around Questions	8
Choose a Question	9
Add to a Question	10
Answer a Question (Start a Showdown)	12
LISTENERS’ TURNS	14
Interject	14
Jump In.....	14
Object.....	15
Card Contest.....	15
IN-BETWEEN TURNS	16
Create an Element	16
Create a Question	17
DEVELOPMENT.....	17
CLIMAX	17
EPILOGUE.....	18
SPECIAL CASES	18

Required Materials

To play you will need:

- 3 to 6 people of all ages
- A deck of 52 cards (no jokers)
- Lots of pens and paper

The Five Phases

Each game of *Muse* has five phases, each of which is triggered by the following events:

Phase Name	Triggering Event	Page #
Setup	Game started	3
Introduction	Setup completed	6
Development	6+ elements checked	17
Climax	All elements crossed out	17
Epilogue	All questions answered	18

Setup

Players sit around a table.

- Place the deck of cards at the center of the table. This is the *draw deck*.
- Discarded cards will be placed adjacent to the draw deck, into the *discard pile*.
- Have two sheets of paper on the table, one called the *Element Sheet*, and the other called the *Question Sheet*.
- Have 6 small pieces of paper ready. Standard 2x3 inch index cards are a good size. Write down “Yes” on 3 of the sheets, and write down “No” on the other three.
- Deal each player a hand of cards from the draw deck, as indicated by the following table.

# of Players	# of Cards Each
3	6
4	5
5	4
6	3

Next, players will follow a series of quick preparatory steps: Code of Conduct, Genre and Tone, Brainstorm Story Elements, and Brainstorm Questions.

Code of Conduct

This step involves the players agreeing on a Code of Conduct that they will adhere to. This will ensure that everyone has a good time and that nobody is offended or made unhappy by the contents of the game’s story.

Ideally there should be a consensus on the contents of the Code of Conduct. If consensus can't be reached, then any contentious rules should be voted on by *majority vote*. In the case of a tie, then the rule is not in force.

Here's a typical example of a *Muse* Code of Conduct:

- The game's players can't be featured as characters in the story.
- No player can ever declare, "And it was all a dream..." or otherwise use a cheap-shot to derail the story.
- Excessive violence, sex and profanity are forbidden.

Genre and Tone

In this preparatory step, the players choose a *genre* and *tone* for the story. If they can't be selected by consensus, then these choices are ratified by *majority vote*, and failing that (*e.g.* a tie) should be ignored.

The **genre** is the category of story, which helps define the story's style and substance in a very general way.

Sample genres: science-fiction, fantasy, cyberpunk, pulp, historical, alternate history, romantic, horror, comedy, action, disaster, exploration, space opera, fairy tale, etc.

The **tone** is the underlying emotion of the story.

Sample tones: upbeat, light, dark, sinister, joyful, fearful, funny, mature, light-hearted, hateful, loving, serious, angry, sad, etc.

Brainstorm Story Elements

In this step, each player should brainstorm two *story elements*, and then write them down on the Element Sheet along with their name.

A **story element** is a few words or a sentence describing a character, thing or place. Story elements should inspire the other players to create an interesting story.

- A story element should be something that can enter the spotlight *at least twice* in the story.
- Each story element should be independent of the others. For example, one story element should not refer to another.

Sample Character Story Elements:

One-Eyed Jack, a mercenary that has a bullet replacing one eye
an alien species of sessile, mind-controlling cacti
Orville, an innocent farm-hand
Spuds, a species of potato-like aliens that reproduce by budding

the Masked Crusader

Sample *Thing* Story Elements:

the only radio left on the planet
the cure to cancer
a nuclear bomb
the *Meandering Beast*, a slow but sturdy ship
a stolen passport
a priceless diamond

Sample *Place* Story Elements:

a remote mining colony
an orbital space station
Iron Curtain-era Berlin
a hidden city; the bottom of the ocean

Sample *Bad* Story Elements:

the *Meandering Beast* exploding (can only happen once)
Bob, a player in the game (probably violates your Code of Conduct)
a pink bunny rabbit (this is bad if you have a game with a serious tone)
Jackson, a friend of Orville's (refers to another story element)

Brainstorm Questions

Now, each player should select two or three elements written by other players, combine them together into a new *question*, and then write it down on the Question Sheet along with their name.

A *question* evokes action in the story, where a character attempts to achieve a goal against opposition. It is a turning point in the plot where the outcome is uncertain and could really go either way. However the question is answered, it will have a dramatic impact on the story.

A question must:

- Be phrased such that it can be answered with “yes” or “no.”
- Incorporate 2 or 3 elements written by someone else.
- Have built-in conflict. In other words, it should be reasonable for some character, group, or entity to want the question to come true, and for another to want to prevent it.

Questions must take one of the following forms (you can make them a little more descriptive, but this gives the general idea):

- Does *Element 1* do something with/to/in *Element 2*?
- Does *Element 1* do something with/to/in *Element 2* somehow involving *Element 3*?

Sample Questions:

Does One-Eyed Jack reach the remote mining colony alive?

Does Orville discover the ancient hidden city at the bottom of the ocean?

Does the Meandering Beast successfully carry the cure to cancer through pirate-infested seas?

Does One-Eyed Jack warn the orbital space station of the impending mind-control cactus attack?

Does the Masked Crusader safeguard the priceless diamond?

Example of play: Alice, Bob, Charlie and David get together to play a game of *Muse*. There are four players, so they each get 5 cards as a starting hand. The players agree to the standard code of conduct, and pick *fantastic historical drama* as the genre and tone for their story.

Between the four of them, the players brainstorm a total of 8 story elements:

- A. **Alice:** the *Meandering Beast*, a slow but sturdy ship
- B. **Alice:** a wedding
- C. **Bob:** famed explorer Orville Wright
- D. **Bob:** the bottom of the ocean
- E. **Charlie:** a hidden city
- F. **Charlie:** an ancient mummy book describing forbidden necromantic practices
- G. **David:** sea monsters, huge things with rubbery nigh-invulnerable skin
- H. **David:** George Jackson, a doctor and explorer

The players each brainstorm 1 question:

1. **Alice:** Does Orville Wright discover the hidden city at the bottom of the ocean?
2. **Bob:** Do sea monsters disrupt the wedding?
3. **Charlie:** Does George Jackson meet his doom at the bottom of the ocean?
4. **Dave:** Does Orville Wright discover the mummy book?

Veto

Throughout the entire game, if ever a player attempts an action that the other players recognize as being against the rules (for example, creating any of the example bad story elements above), then they may *veto* the action.

Normally the acting player will withdraw the illegal action without a fuss, or offer a reasonable explanation that the vetoing player will accept. However, in the event of a disagreement it is resolved by a *majority vote*. If the vote is a tie, then *randomly* determine who wins the disagreement.

Introduction

Once the *Muse* setup is complete, we begin the Introduction phase of the story.

Determine the First Narrator

The players randomly determine who will start the game. The starting player is called the *Narrator*, and everyone else is called a *Listener*.

On the first Narrator's first turn, they must *Choose a Question* (please see below for more details). This will allow the players to jump-start the story with some action!

The Narrator's Turn

The currently active player is called the *Narrator*. Until their turn ends, Narrators may take any of the following actions. Actions that are underlined end the Narrator's turn.

1. **Narrate**
2. **Choose a Question**: say the *key phrase*, "I'm choosing a question."
3. **Add to a Question**: say the *key phrase*, "I'm adding to a question."
4. **Answer a Question**: say the *key phrase*, "I'm answering a question."
5. **End Turn**: say the *key phrase*, "I'm ending my turn."

In general, unless you use a *key phrase* described above (e.g. "I'm ending my turn"), or some reasonable variation (e.g. "now it's your turn"), then the Listeners will assume that you are narrating.

After Narrators choose a question, add to a question, answer a question, or explicitly end their turn, their turn will end. Next:

- The Listeners get the chance to brainstorm more story elements and questions. See the section *In-Between Turns*.
- The next player in clockwise order becomes the new Narrator.

Narrate

Narration is the central part of a game of *Muse*. It's storytelling in its most basic form: the Narrator tells a story while everyone else listens.

When narrating, the Narrator can tell the story and describe characteristics of the plot, setting, characters, conflicts, etc. Narrators may introduce new characters, locations, activities, objects, etc. Narrators may take the roles of characters in the story and then perform actions or say dialogue through those characters. However, there are some limits to what can be narrated, as described under *The Limits of Narration*.

The Limits of Narration

Narrators may add almost anything to the story. However, there *are* a few limits, and these are:

- Narrators may not break the Code of Conduct.
- The Narrator must respect the genre and tone of the story. This means following the laws of physics and causality—at least as far as the genre follows them.

- Narrators may only add new story information, and may not delete previously established information. However, new information may show that previous information was false, incomplete or misleading.
- Narrators may not narrate in such a way that an *in-play* question becomes true, or that it becomes impossible.

If the Narrator breaks any of these rules, a Listener may *veto* any part of the narration that surpasses these limits. Please refer to the *Veto* section for details.

Narrating Around Questions

During play, it will be a challenge for players to tell the story while not simultaneously saying things that ruin in-play questions. To simplify thinking about this issue, it can help to break down each question into a series of sub-questions, one for each element. Let's take question 2 as an example: "Do sea monsters disrupt the wedding?" This can be broken down into 2 sub-questions:

- Does the wedding get disrupted?
- Is it sea monsters that cause the disruption?

We should see both sub-questions as being important and integral parts of the main question. If a Narrator's storytelling could make either sub-question come true or make either of them impossible, then the offending statements should be vetoed.

For Example: if someone narrated a character seeing the wedding getting completely disrupted from afar (without seeing who did it), this should be vetoed. It can ruin a lot of the suspense in the story because now we *know* that the wedding has been disrupted. Similarly, if someone narrated Orville Wright hunting and killing the last living sea monster, this should be vetoed as well.

Continued Example of Play: Charlie is randomly chosen to start the game.

Looking at the Question Sheet, Charlie reads Alice's question, and it gives him an idea. Charlie says, "Orville Wright, famed explorer and skilled submarine pilot, prepares to bring his one-man craft deeper than it has ever gone before. As he descends beyond his small submarine's diving limit, the hull begins to screech metallicly. A rivet violently bursts from its place and ricochets around the small cabin—narrowly avoiding Orville's head before coming to rest near his foot."

"Up ahead, Orville can see what appears to be the half-destroyed ruins of a building jutting out from the bottom of the ocean—"

David says, "Veto! It's pitch black at the bottom of the ocean, Orville shouldn't be able to see anything."

To which Charlie responds, "You're right... I guess the submarine has headlights."

"Okay." David replies.

Choose a Question

You will want to choose a question because it will give you first dibs on adding to that question, which can win you cards. You might also win a card or two through the elements you authored.

You may only choose a question if there are **fewer than 3 questions** currently in play. If there are too many questions, then some of them must be resolved before a new one can be created.

Choose a question that was **written by someone else** from the Question Sheet. That question now comes into play and becomes part of the story.

- Select two of the story elements that make up the question and check those off on the Element Sheet. If there are more than 2 elements in the question then you can pick which 2 to check off. You can't check off an element that's already checked.
- If you can't check off at least 2 elements, then you must discard one card of your choice from your hand for each element that you can't check. If you don't have enough cards in your hand, you may not choose this question in the first place.
- When a story element gets checked, that story element's author draws one card from the draw deck.
- When a question is chosen it is crossed out from the Question Sheet and the question's author draws one card from the draw deck.

When in play, a question takes the form of two small sheets of paper. Each will have the title of the question written at the top, along with the word *Yes* on one paper, and *No* on the other. The *Yes* paper represents wanting the question to come true, while the *No* represents wanting something else to happen.

Players will place cards face-down on the *Yes* or *No* papers, in order to tip the question in one direction or another. The more cards that are on one answer, the higher the odds that that side will win.

After choosing the question:

- Write down the name of the question on a *Yes* paper and a *No* paper.
- Place both papers in the middle of the table.
- For the question you just chose, you may now ***Add to a Question***, exactly as described in that section.

Once all this is done, your turn ends.

If 6 or more elements are *checked off* after choosing a question, then the story has reached the Development phase. See the ***Development*** section.

If all of the elements have been *crossed out*, then see the ***Climax*** section.

Continued Example of Play: Continuing his turn, Charlie says, "I choose Alice's question! Does Orville Wright discover the hidden city at the bottom of the ocean?" Since this question

contains three elements when only two can be checked off, Charlie decides to check off elements C and E. He also crosses out question 1 on the Question Sheet.

Bob and Charlie each draw a card because their elements got checked. Alice draws one card because her question got crossed out.

Charlie writes down question #1 on a *Yes* paper and a *No* paper, and then he puts both papers in the middle of the table.

Add to a Question

You will want to add to questions because it will win you cards.

Follow these steps to add to a question:

1. Narrate something that makes it more likely that the question will be answered by a yes or no.
2. Say the *key phrase* "I'm adding to a question!"
3. Then add cards face-down to the *Yes* or *No* pile of that question, depending on which way you narrated. Which pile you add to should make sense depending on your narration.
4. You now become the owner of that answer to the question, bring the paper in front of you at the table.

When adding cards to a question's *Yes* or *No* answer, you may either:

- Draw one card (without looking at it) from the deck and add it to the answer, *or*
- Add *any number* of cards from your hand to the answer.

The first time a Narrator adds to a *Yes* or *No* answer, that paper will move from the middle of the table to being in front of Narrator. However, the second and subsequent times, the answer will get stolen from another player.

Important Limitation: you cannot be the owner of *both* the *Yes* and *No* answers for a single question at the same time. Hence, if you are the current owner of one question's answer, you can't add cards to the other answer for the same question. You *can* add more cards to your own answer.

Good Additions: in general, a good addition to a question is something that adds drama to the story by creating conflict or escalating an existing conflict. In stories, there are 3 main kinds of conflict:

- Protagonist vs. Antagonist
- Protagonist vs. Environment
- Protagonist vs. Self

- Stories would be no fun if they were all negative. Good additions to questions can also be positive, helping the protagonist come closer to achieving his goal by reducing or overcoming conflict.

Examples of Good Additions: We'll use question #1 as an example (Does Orville Wright discover the hidden city at the bottom of the ocean?), and show a variety of different ways by which Narrators could add to the question. The Narrator might start with, "As Orville approaches the ruined building at the bottom of the ocean..." and finish with:

Positive (Yes Side):

...he sees that it's open sea between himself and the building, this should be easy.
 ...he discovers that the building is strangely built, as if by alien hands.
 ...he finds a strange sculpture on the ocean floor, evidence of civilization!

Protagonist vs. Antagonist (No Side):

...a monstrous tentacle attaches itself to his tiny submarine!
 ...he hears a ping from his sonar—it's a torpedo approaching at break-neck speed!
 ...he turns around, only to find that he's *not alone*!

Protagonist vs. Environment (No Side):

...he hears a metallic grind—his sub has struck an unseen rock!
 ...there's a rumble as one of the building's unstable walls crumbles nearby!
 ...he hears the screech of tearing metal as the tortured hull finally begins to buckle under the pressure!

Protagonist vs. Self (No Side):

...the building disappears and he wonders if his eyes are just playing tricks on him.
 ...he thinks of all the times his so-called adventures have failed to turn up anything interesting.
 ...he remembers how his father always told him he'd amount to nothing, he should just turn back and stop wasting his time.

Continued Example of Play: Charlie has one last thing to do before ending his turn. He may now add to the question that he just chose. He wants to start things off with a bang and narrates, "As Orville approaches the ruined building at the bottom of the ocean, he hears a ping from his sonar—it's a torpedo approaching at break-neck speed!"

Charlie draws one card from the draw deck and, without looking at it, places it face-down on the *No* answer to question #1. Charlie takes the *No* paper and brings it in front of him on the table. Charlie gestures to Dave, "It's your turn now."

Dave continues along the same track, "Charlie sets the engines to full throttle and pulls hard on the controls, desperately trying to evade the seaborne missile. A near miss! However, the torpedo is coming back around for a second pass! *I'm adding to the question.*"

Dave takes the *No* paper from Charlie and places it in front of himself. He selects two cards from his hand and adds them face-down on top of the one card already there. Now there are 3 cards on

the *No* side, which is in front of Dave, and there are still 0 cards on the *Yes* paper in the middle of the table. Dave says, “It’s your turn, Alice.”

Alice narrates, “Sweat dripping down his face, Orville realizes that he’s not going to beat this torpedo with raw speed. He’ll have to defeat it where it’s weakest and he’s strongest—the brain. Setting the throttle to full reverse, Orville backs up his submarine just in time for the speeding torpedo to crash into the ruined building. The structure crumbles in a muted explosion. Mopping his brow with a handkerchief, Orville thinks to himself, ‘Now, little torpedo, to find your master.’ *I’m adding to the question.*”

Alice takes the *Yes* paper from the center of the table and adds two cards from her hand face-down on it. Now she has 2 card on her *Yes* side, and Dave has 3 cards on his *No* side. “It’s your turn, Bob,” Alice offers.

Bob chooses to put aside the current conflict for the moment. He declares, “I choose question #4: does Orville Wright discover the mummy book?” That’s Dave’s question, so he draws a card, and Bob crosses it out.

Next, Bob needs to check off two elements. Unfortunately, Orville Wright has already been checked off. Bob checks off the mummy book, but discards a card from his hand because he can’t check off a second element. Charlie draws a card because he came up with the mummy book.

As usual, Bob writes the question down on a *Yes* and *No* paper and places them in the middle of the table.

Bob narrates, “As Orville explores his surroundings, searching for whomever it was that launched that torpedo, he discovers a large sealed chest on the bottom of the ocean. ‘Strange,’ Orville says, ‘even after that building and the torpedo, that was the last thing I was expecting... I wonder what’s inside?’”

Bob adds a card face-down from the deck to the *Yes* paper for question #4, and brings the paper in front of him. “Ok, it’s your turn, Charlie.”

Answer a Question (Start a Showdown)

You may want to answer a question because you own one of the sides of the conflict and stand to win cards, because you’re the author of the question, or just because you want to finally see what will happen.

Say “I answer a question,” and select the in-play question that you would like to resolve. The chosen question must have an owner for both possible answers.

Next, we have the *showdown*:

- The *Yes*-side owner and *No*-side owner each turn over the cards in their respective piles. The winner is the owner whose answer’s cards make the best poker hand.

- To *turn the tides*, each side owner may add cards from their hand to their answer paper. Add the new cards to the original ones when considering how good a poker hand the player has.
- Once the players are no longer willing or able to add more cards, the final winner is declared.

The showdown loser:

- Draws 2 cards.

The question's author:

- Has the opportunity to draw a bonus card. If either the *Yes* or *No* sides reached 5 cards or more (considering any cards added to turn the tides), then the question's author draws 1 card.

The showdown winner:

- Draws a number of cards equal to the number of cards that were held by the loser's side (including any cards that were added to turn the tides).
- Discards all of the cards that were in the *Yes* or *No* piles, including those that were played to turn the tides.
- Becomes the next Narrator, and may narrate how the question is answered and unfolds. The Narrator may then continue narrating as usual.

Answering a question effectively ends your turn, since play will pass on to the showdown winner. The only exception is if you won the showdown you called for, in which case you stay on as Narrator.

Once the last question has been answered and no new questions can be created, the game reaches the *Epilogue* phase. See that section for more details.

Continued Example of Play: Alice declares, "I'm answering question #1." She owns the *Yes* side for that question, which has 2 cards on it. Dave owns the *No* side, which has 3 cards.

The showdown begins. Alice turns over the cards on her *Yes* answer: A♠ and 10♥. On the other hand, Bob reveals: 10♦, 6♥, and 6♣ for the *No* side. Currently, Dave is winning with his pair of sixes.

Alice turns the tides by adding a card from her hand: a 10♠. Now she has A♠, 10♠ and 10♥ and is winning with a pair of tens.

Dave turns the tides again by adding a card of his own from his hand: a 10♣. Now he has 10♦, 10♣, 6♥ and 6♣. He is now winning with two pairs.

Alice adds an A♦ from her hand, so she now has A♠, A♦, 10♠ and 10♥. She now has two pairs, but her high card is better than Dave's, so she's winning again.

Dave finally concedes defeat. As the showdown loser, Dave draws 2 cards. During the showdown, both sides reached 4 cards but neither reached 5, so Alice (the answered question's author) does not draw a bonus card. Alice does, however, draw 4 cards (the number of cards Dave has on his answer paper) because she won the showdown. Alice discards all of the face-up cards resulting from the showdown.

Alice remains the Narrator (effectively getting a second turn in a row). She now has the opportunity to completely answer the question. She says, "Having narrowly survived his encounter with the torpedo, and ignoring the mysterious chest for now, Orville continues his investigations. He discovers that the strange building at the bottom of the ocean was not alone, and that there's an *entire city* down here—inhabited by mermen."

Listeners' Turns

During the Listeners' turns they may take any of the following actions, one at a time (underlined options start a *card contest*):

1. **Listen**: listening to a great story is what this game is all about. Enjoy!
2. **Interject**
3. **Jump In**: say the key phrase, "I'm jumping in!"
4. **Object**: say the key phrase, "I object!"

Interject

As a Listener, feel free to occasionally offer a little idea to help the Narrator if they're stuck, make a suggestion if you just thought of something really brilliant, or ask a question if you need clarification.

Narrators may accept an idea and weave it into the story, at their discretion. They should usually answer questions, although this is again at their discretion.

It's courteous to keep interjections to a minimum. If you have a lot to say, *jump in* instead.

Jump In

You may *jump in* at any time if the Narrator is currently narrating.

Jumping in starts a *card contest* between you, the Narrator, and any other players that want to jump in or object. See the ***Card Contest*** section for details.

If you win, you immediately become the new Narrator! You may begin narrating exactly where the previous Narrator left off.

If the original Narrator wins, then they get to keep playing their turn. You may jump in again later if you wish to and have enough cards in your hand.

Object

An objection is similar to jumping in, except that it allows you to undo something that the Narrator just did... *if* you win.

You may *object* immediately after the Narrator narrates a sentence you don't want in the story, or immediately after the Narrator uses a *key phrase*.

Objecting starts a *card contest* between you, the Narrator, and any other players that want to jump in or object. See the **Card Contest** section for details.

If you win:

- You immediately become the new Narrator! In addition:
- If you objected to a narration, then you erase the last sentence spoken.
- If you objected after a key phrase, then you just prevented the Narrator from taking that action.

If the Narrator wins, then they get to keep playing their turn, and whatever they said or did becomes fact. You may object again later if you wish and have the cards available.

Card Contest

Here is how a *card contest* works:

- Every Listener involved in the contest plays one card **from their hand** face-down onto the table in front of them.
- The Narrator draws one card **from the deck** and places it face-up onto the table.
- The Listeners flip their cards face up.

Once all of the cards have been played, the players can add cards from their hands to their own played cards to *turn the tides*, just like in a showdown (please see page 12). Once no one is able or willing to play any more cards, the **contest winner** is the player with the best poker hand amongst the cards played. The winner gets whatever they were vying for in the contest.

After a winner is declared, all of the cards played are discarded.

Continued Example of Play: Sometime later in the game, Bob is narrating, “Walking along the ocean bottom in his hard diving suit, Orville finally locates that mysterious chest he had found last week. This chest raises so many questions... How did it get here? What is inside of it? After hauling the watertight chest back into his submarine, Orville reaches for the latch and opens it. Inside—”

“He finds nothing!” David interjects.

“No,” Bob continues, “...he finds—”

Charlie says, “I jump in!” David, not wanting to be left out, says “I jump in too.”

Charlie and David each pick a card from their hand and play it face-down in front of them.

Bob draws a card from the draw deck and plays it face-up: a J♥. Charlie and David reveal their cards: Q♥ and K♠ respectively. Nobody is willing to play any more cards, so David wins. He's now the Narrator. If his turn ends naturally, it will become Alice's turn as usual. Hence, Charlie just got skipped.

David begins narrating, "Peering inside the chest, Orville's shoulders slump. It's empty. His father's face drifts into his vision, accusations of worthlessness on the spectre's lips. Drawing himself up, Orville has an idea. He begins searching the chest with his hands. Before long, he finds and triggers a hidden catch. This reveals a false bottom, which he removes. Inside, he finds three things: an old leather-bound book, a gold sextant and what seems like a yellowed, used bandage—"

Charlie doesn't like the way the story is going. However, he knows that David hasn't broken any rules, so he can't veto this last statement. Instead, he declares, "I object!"

Charlie plays a card from his hand face-down. David draws a card from the deck and plays it face-up: a lousy 3♣. Charlie reveals his J♠.

David adds a 3♦ from his hand to give himself 3♦ and 3♣: a pair of threes.

Charlie adds a J♦, thus giving himself J♠ and J♦: a pair of jacks.

David concedes. Charlie erases the last sentence David spoke from the story, so now we don't know what Orville found in the chest. Charlie continues the narration, "Orville learns that the chest's false bottom is full of glittering gold coins... and a map to a buried treasure! First he discovered the lost civilization of the mermen, and now a treasure map. All in all this has been a most profitable venture..."

In-Between Turns

Whenever a Narrator's turn ends, this gives a chance for the Listeners to add to the mix of available story elements and questions.

Whenever the narration changes hands, each Listener may do **one** the following:

- **Nothing:** this will be your typical behaviour in-between turns.
- **Create an Element:** say the key phrase, "I'm creating an element!"
- **Create a Question:** say the key phrase, "I'm creating a question!"

Create an Element

Listeners may only create new elements before the story's Development phase (see the *Development* section).

Creating an element works just like during brainstorming. The elements can be original ideas, or can be based on things that came up during the story. Write the element down on the Element Sheet, along with the Listener's name.

Create a Question

Listeners may create new questions until the story hits the Climax (see the *Climax* section).

Creating a question continues to work exactly as during the brainstorming phase of the game. Listeners select 2 or 3 elements to incorporate into the question, and then write it down on the Question Sheet along with their name.

Continued Example of Play: David narrates, “George Jackson grinds his teeth as Orville Wright finishes his presentation to the Submarine Society. ‘Rubbish!’ he mutters to himself, ‘Those discoveries should have been mine, for I’m the true inventor of that submarine Orville used.’ George looks longingly at Gloria Eastside, who stands in the crowd gazing admiringly at Orville. ‘Yes,’ George added, ‘I shall win back Gloria’s affection from that impostor.’ *Ok, my turn is over, it’s your turn Alice.*”

Now Alice, Bob and Charlie have the opportunity to add new elements or questions, if they wish. Bob says, “I’m creating an element” and adds the new element *Gloria Eastside* to the Element Sheet, along with his name.

Development

The story is said to have reached the Development phase once 6 or more elements have been checked off. This means that the story is approaching the climax—but it’s not there yet.

At this stage in the game:

- No new elements may be created in-between turns.
- Any unchecked elements remaining on the Element Sheet are crossed out. These will not be used this game.
- Any checked off elements are considered *refreshed*, in the sense that they can now be used one more time when electing to **Choose a Question**.
- When the checked elements are chosen a second time, they are crossed out. There is no bonus card for the element authors when their element is crossed out.

Climax

The story is said to have reached the *Climax* phase when all of the elements have been crossed out.

At this stage in the game:

- No new elements or questions may be created in-between turns.

- New questions may no longer be chosen from the Question Sheet. In other words, Narrators can only add to or resolve questions remaining in play.

Epilogue

The game reaches the *Epilogue* phase after hitting the Climax, once the last question in play has been answered.

Every player reveals their hand in a final showdown. The player with the best poker hand is chosen as the story's *Epiloguer* (a new word, pronounced *epi-logger*).

Everyone's cards are discarded.

Now the Epiloguer may narrate the story's epilogue, without anyone else being able to jump in or object.

Once the epilogue is over the story has drawn to a close, and this session of *Muse* has finished. Don't feel too sad, there are plenty more stories to be experienced another time!

Special Cases

No Cards in the Draw Deck: if the draw deck ever runs out of cards, just reshuffle the discard pile into a new draw deck. If there are ever no cards in the draw deck and the discard pile combined, then the player with the most cards must give up one card to the draw deck, picked randomly by another player. If multiple players are tied in having the most cards, then they all lose one card.

It's technically possible for all the cards in the deck to be used up, and for nobody to have any cards left in their hand. In this very unlikely event, remove a card from the answer paper with the most cards amongst all the answer papers in play. In the case of a tie for the most cards, remove a card from each tied answer.

Example: the draw deck has run out of cards, and Alice needs to draw 2 cards. Alice has 15 cards in her hand, Bob and Charlie each have 14 cards in their hands, while David has 9 cards.

Bob picks a card randomly from Alice's hand and places it in the draw deck. The draw deck still needs one card. Now Alice, Bob and Charlie are all tied for the most cards with 14 cards each. David picks one card randomly from each of them. He shuffles the 4-card draw deck, and Alice draws 2 cards.

No Cards in Hand: it can happen during play that players will run out of cards in their hand. These players will not be able to perform any actions that require them to spend a card until they have cards in their hand again.

Mutually Exclusive Questions: you may sometimes end up with a question that cannot be answered, because to do so would require a veto since it would simultaneously answer another

question. If you ever notice this in play, then you should erase whichever question was created last (out of the conflicting questions).

Example: This question is created: “Orville is the first to discover the hidden city”, and later on this question is written: “George is the first to discover the hidden city”. In this case, answering the first question with a *Yes* will automatically answer the second with a *No*, since the questions are mutually exclusive. In this case, the second question involving George should be erased.

More Focused Stories: if you find that your stories are a little too wild and unfocused, then there’s an easy way to help fix this. At the beginning of the game, after the first Narrator chooses the first question, cross out all of the unchecked elements and unused questions. The most unfocused elements probably come from the initial brainstorming. Hence, by erasing the unused options from the brainstorming it gives the players a chance to develop new elements and questions that fit better into the emerging story.