



**Game Writing
Tutorial**

New Points of View — Research and Inspiration

Toiya Kristen Finley

Narrative Designer and Game Writer, Schnoodle Media, LLC

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Who Am I?

- PhD in Literature and Creative Writing, with a focus on world building and community creation in fiction
- Over 60 short stories and critical articles on science fiction and fantasy in print
- Narrative designer, game writer, and game designer of indie titles, text-based games over SMS, and interactive fiction
- One of those weirdos who still prefers walking through library corridors to quik-n-dutty Google searches

In Search of New Settings

- Games Tend to Take Place in a Few Types of Worlds
 - Urban Sprawls, Medieval European Societies, Societies in the Edo Period
- Familiar Settings Lead to Predictability
 - Players are used to seeing certain types of characters and their storylines.
 - Players are used to seeing familiar social dynamics play out between types of characters.
 - Players can figure out conflict developments and choices they'll have to make based upon the type of world.
- New Settings Mean New Experiences for Players
 - The unfamiliar can be more engaging and immersive simply because it's different.

Research: Where to Begin?

- Research Points to Real-Life Examples that Inform Aspects of World Building
- Factual Foundations Lend Credibility and Believability
 - Example: Game-world societies based on real-life counterparts
- Research Can Bring Inspiration
- New Ideas, Concepts, and Details

Research: The 6 Ws

- Simple Questions for Brainstorming
 - **Who?**
 - **What?**
 - **When?**
 - **Where?**
 - **Why?**
 - **How?**
- Questions Based on the 6 Ws Help Direct Research

Using the 6 Ws: Macro Level

- Example: Develop a World with the Following Conflict:
- A natural disaster cuts off people in a large city from the rest of civilization.
- The population forms dangerous factions in order to survive.
- Some Questions Regarding the Conflict:
 - **What** kind of natural disasters could create this scenario?
 - **Where** (geographically) could such a scenario occur?
 - **When** in history has a similar scenario occurred?
 - **How** did people survive?
 - **Who** survived?
 - **Why** did dangerous groups develop?

Using the 6 Ws: Micro Level

- Example: The Player-Character Is a Falsely-Accused Policeman on the Run
 - **Why** was he framed?
 - **Who** has been in a similar situation?
 - **Why** were *they* framed?
 - **When** did they live?
 - **What** were the social dynamics of the police force like?
- Questions about a character or class can lead to queries about that character's/class's society.

Information Uncovered in Research

- Sparking New Ideas
 - BioShock Infinite: Irrational Games wanted the art aesthetic to match the optimism of early 20th century life.
 - The “optimistic,” vibrant look would be unusual and a disturbing setting for horror.
 - Art Nouveau was chosen as the art style in the game.
 - The creators researched architecture, street scenes, and old photos to inform the settings in the game.
 - (Sources: RickLiebling.com and Gamepro.com)

Information Uncovered in Research

- Revising and Fine-Tuning Ideas
 - *L. A. Noire*: 90% of the cases were inspired by true crimes.
 - Research included looking at newspapers from every day in 1947, the year the game takes place.
 - 1947 was chosen because it's the year of the Black Dahlia case, which has an analogue in the game.
 - The brutal images on the front pages of newspapers—common for that time—help set the tone of the game's violence and the NPCs' responses (and lack thereof) to the violence.
 - (*Source: The Guardian*)

Developing Analogues Based on Research

- Analogues Aren't Direct Representations
- Analogues Allude to and Take Inspiration from Direct Counterparts
- Analogues Include:
 - **Characters:** Alan Wake is a bestselling horror writer like Stephen King, and he'd fit in a Stephen King novel.
 - **Locations:** *Deadly Premonition*'s Greenvale is patterned after small towns in the Pacific Northwest.
 - **Philosophies:** In *BioShock*, Rapture's worldview is based on Objectivism.
 - **Time Periods:** *Assassin's Creed II* takes place during the Italian Renaissance.

Analogues Draw Inspiration from Real Life and the Imagination

...and Lead to Greater Discoveries

Fullmetal Alchemist

Original Idea: Use the Philosopher's Stone in a manga

- Hiromu Arakawa researched alchemy. She was fascinated by its philosophical aspects.
- The theme of “equivalent exchange” developed from childhood memories.
 - Her parents were farmers. Through tending crops, they “gave something” to “get something” in return.
- A trip across Europe inspired the setting.
- Arakawa's fascination with the English Industrial Revolution inspired Amestris's social dynamics and technology.
- **Historical Details, Personal Experience, and the Imagination** can work together to create new experiences in the worlds we design.



Developing Direct Representations

- Direct Representations Are Facsimiles
- Direct Representations Are Recreations
 - Example: The Normandy landings in the *Call of Duty* series
- Direct Representations Require a Great Deal More Research than Analogues
 - Accuracy is extremely important.

Inspiration for a Direct Representation

The Arrival: Nakan

Original Concept: Make a Game with an Anti-Genocide Theme


Research leads to a series of planned games on the Taino.



The Need for Authenticity

- Authenticity is key for both analogues and direct representations.
- We may need consultants to help pinpoint inaccuracies or sharpen authenticity.
 - Examples: *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *The Arrival*
- How to find consultants

Is Cultural Appropriation a Bad Thing?

- It happens whenever we borrow from a culture that's not our own.
- It can be respectful or problematic
 the Mehndi “fad.”
- Borrow, but Value and Respect.

World Building Exercise



For your archetypal world settings, design **2 characters** and **1 specific location**. Each character should represent a character class in your game (they don't have to be human). The characters interact at the location. Use the images to help generate ideas.