Storyforge

Storyforge is a game that tests the creative writing skills and grammatical knowledge of its players, as they attempt to collaboratively craft a story, writing it sentence by sentence simultaneously. After each draft of the story is written, the players will vote on whether they shall begin a new draft or submit their work to the judgement of The Editor. If the Editor finds no narrative, cohesive, or grammatical errors within the story, the players win. However, if the Editor finds mistakes and rejects their story three times, the players lose.

Beginning the Game

Materials needed: Writing tools, a six-sided die (optional), and paper.

Roles: Editor (1 instructor), Players (5 or more students)

Time to play: 30-60 minutes

To begin playing Storyforge, all players must have a piece of paper or a notecard, a pencil, and an eraser. The Editor must have written down the following information for the players:

- The Setting (a labyrinth, a forest, an airplane, etc.).
- The Protagonist(s) (a mighty hero, a lowly goblin, a team of firefighters, etc.).
- The Goal (fight a dragon, follow a map to the X, bake a pie, etc.).

The Editor can create their own situation and circumstances, or the players can roll dice and determine the beginning of the story randomly using the tables at the bottom of this document. After the Editor is finished listing the Setting, Protagonist, and Goal, the first draft of the game will begin.

Playing the Game

When the Editor finishes explaining the initial situation, they will prompt the players to write down **one, grammatically correct sentence** of about 10 words. Then, each player must **count the number of words in their sentence and write that number on the top of the page, along with their name**. When all players are finished, the Editor collects all the pieces of paper, and reads each sentence in order of how many words are in each sentence, **least to greatest.** The string of sentences comprises the first draft of the Story.

Once the Story is written and read aloud, the group will vote to either submit their work to the Editor or begin another draft. If the majority votes to submit, then they submit their story to the Editor (detailed below). If the majority votes for another draft, number the sentences according to their order, so **each paper has two numbers on it: one for number of words and one for placement in the story**. Then, **randomly redistribute the sentences among the players**, and the second draft begins.

If the players begin a second draft, they each receive a random sentence from the story. They have the chance to correct any grammatical errors they can find as well as change the details of the sentence. **Players may rewrite the sentence however they wish, but it must keep the same number of words it had to begin with**. Once all the sentences are finished, the Editor collects them and reads them out loud again. The players may repeat the process, voting for submission or another draft.

Submitting to the Editor

If the players submit their story to the Editor, the Editor will read through it for the following errors:

- How many of the required details (setting, goal, etc.) are missing?
- How many inconsistencies or incoherent moments are there?
- How many grammatical errors are there?

After reviewing the story, the Editor will give the players three numbers, indicating the number of errors listed above. The players win the game when all three numbers are zero. If there are still mistakes after three submissions, the players lose.

Illustrations

The players will inevitably have some downtime while the Editor is reviewing the story. Any time they are not writing, or the Editor is not reading the story aloud, the players may illustrate their story on the same or a separate piece of paper as their sentence. **For every three illustrations the players draw, they may ask the Editor to fix one of the errors in a submitted draft for free.** This means that when the Editor tells them the number, the players get to pick certain errors for the Editor to fix automatically, lowering the total number of errors.

However, **they cannot pick grammar mistakes.** If the players reduce the number of errors to zero this way, and none of the errors were grammar mistakes, they win the game.

- **Ex.** The Editor tells the players there are five errors. The players have made six illustrations, so the Editor fixes two errors for them, and they only have to fix three errors in the story in order to win.
- **Ex.** The players have one error and three illustrations. However, the error was a grammatical mistake. They must start a new round and fix the mistake before they can win.

Events

At the Editor's discretion, more details may need to be added to the story. **Before starting a new draft, the Editor may have the players roll on the Event table** (see Randomized Tables). The players must then add the detail of the event to their story, and keep it as they go forward with drafts, just like a setting, protagonist, or goal. **This rule is optional** and recommended for groups that want an extra challenge.

Other Rules

- If there is ever a tie in a vote for submission or another draft, the players will automatically start a new draft.
- If there is more than one sentence in the first draft with the same number of words, then the order is decided by the alphabetical order of the player's names on the pages.
- If the Protagonist or the Setting changes due to the players shifting focus in their writing, the Editor may decide whether or not to mark it as an error. The story needs to make logical sense, so as long as the change is justified, there is no issue with changing these. **However, the Goal cannot be changed.**
- Players may only tell other players about grammatical errors they've spotted during the voting discussion described above.
- If the sentences written do not lead the story to a proper ending, but there are no other issues with it, the players may add a single sentence to the story: "The End."

Changing the Difficulty

To increase or decrease the difficulty of Storyforge, feel free to add any of the following rules. These are **optional** and are not required to play the basic game.

- *Increase Difficulty*: **Add more story elements!** As the Editor, you can determine how many settings, protagonists, goals, or events the story needs to have. The more you require, the harder the game will be.
- *Decrease Difficulty*: **Reorder the sentences!** After reading the first draft, give the players the chance to collectively reorder the sentences however they want. This allows them to collaborate with each other, making the writing in the future a little bit easier. This addition is highly recommended for large groups of players.
- *Increase or Decrease Difficulty*: **Change the illustrations!** By changing the number of illustrations needed to fix an error, you can make the game much easier or much harder. It is up to your discretion as the Editor

Quick Rules

This is the general order of how things happen in Storyforge.

1. The group decides on a setting, protagonist, and goal.
2. Each player writes one sentence (about 10 words) and puts their name and number of words in the sentence at the top of the page.
3. The Editor reads the sentences in order of least number of words to greatest. Then marks the sentences so that the players know their order.
4. The players decide if they want to do *another draft* or *submit to the Editor*.
5. *Another draft*: The players receive a random sentence and must edit it while keeping the exact same number of words. Once all sentences have been turned in, the Editor reads the draft and repeats Step 4.
6. *Submit to the Editor*: The Editor decides if the story is coherent.
   1. The Editor counts the number of errors and tells them to the players.
   2. The players count how many rounds (drafts or submissions) that all of them have made an illustration.

3. The players may ask the Editor to fix a non-grammatical error for each set of three illustrations.
4. If the number of errors is zero, the players win the game. If the number of errors is not zero, repeat Step 5.
5. If the players have submitted to the Editor and failed to win three times, they lose.

Randomized Tables

The following tables are suggestions for the Setting, Protagonist, and Goals of the game. Feel free to create your own or add to the tables as you wish. This is a game about creativity, so the more creative your lists, the better.

Settings – roll a six-sided die.
1. An airplane.
2. A cabin in the woods.
3. A corporate office.
4. A medieval battlefield.
5. A haunted castle.
6. An abandoned shopping mall.

Protagonists – roll a six-sided die.
1. A firefighter.
2. A Victorian-era ghost.
3. A lonesome cowboy.
4. A hedgehog.
5. A mighty hero.
6. Jennifer.

Goals – roll a six-sided die.
1. Slay a dragon.
2. Bake a pie.
3. Uncover a lost treasure.
4. Reunite with a loved one.
5. Get a good night's sleep.
6. Eat some ham.

Events – roll a six-sided die.
1. Something must catch fire.
2. Someone must lose their marbles.
3. Something must die.
4. The protagonist's worst nightmare must come true.
5. The protagonist's wildest dream becomes a reality.
6. The setting must dramatically change.