World of the Story

Show Notes for Shakespeare & Dragons, Episode 1

What are the principles of Storytelling, and how do these apply to world building? Story is life concentrated. It is real and unreal. It is outside the real time of our existence, but part of the Eternal Time of our imagination, our Spiritual Reality. Good Story appeals to both our intellectual desire to see things new and to be enlightened, as well as our emotional need to connect to others and feel deeply. Traditional Story: the author of the medium creates "interesting" and "appealing" characters that are motivated to do something, that have a desire and/or a need. The author then creates the ultimate conflicts specially catered to these characters' needs, desires and flaws, and continually thwarts the characters' journeys to obtain their desires by creating complications for the characters; again, complications that are uniquely catered to the characters (and complications that often force the characters to choose between opposing desires or needs). The Story, in its most essential form, is about a character, or group of characters, who must overcome personal flaws and work through conflicts, in order to reach a personal desire or need.

In interactive storytelling, the player's role becomes the creation of a unique and interesting character, with a strong motivation and desire, a clear set of flaws, and a rich back story. The author's – or game master's – role is to provide a setting detailed enough to inspire complex and detailed characters, and to create antagonists, conflicts and complications that are uniquely catered to these characters and force them to move forward to resolve the problems set up by the author/game master.

When the author/game master provides the conflicts that the players' characters must deal with, the players will make choices that will shape the ultimate themes of the story. Who wins, who loses, how conflicts are resolved, and what prices are paid in resolving these conflicts will determine the thematic ideas of the story. The author/game master also inspires the tone of the game, the atmosphere of the world, and the textures of the setting. But the players embody the attitudes of their characters, which in turn affect the tone and mood of the game. The author/game master can only set the pieces up for play, but should not and cannot anticipate the variables of human choice, free will, emotion, and/or absurdity. The finale of the game cannot be a product of fate, but rather a choice of free will. The game master can only arrange the elements of the game to anticipate the likely outcomes of play; but the outcome will usually be a surprise.

Suggested Worldbuilding Activity

Pick a character from fiction, a book, movie or television show. Determine the character's:

1. Desire–what motivates him or her

2. Needs–what the character needs emotionally or spiritually, what the character must learn

3. The character's external and internal weaknesses and flaws

4. The forces of antagonism that are in direct opposition to the character's desires and needs

Next, watch for the complications that test the character's weaknesses and keep him/her from obtaining his/her desires. What choices does the character make when confronted with these complications? What are the thematic ideas that the character embodies when he/she makes these choices?

About this Document

These are Show Notes for an episode of the worldbuilding podcast Shakespeare and Dragons.

The episode can be downloaded at: http://media.libsyn.com/media/imworlds/sad-episode001.mp3

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