DYNAMIC STORYTELLING IN GAMING
THE PROBLEM WITH ENGAGING CHARACTERS

- Games had two types of characters
  - Specifically crafted characters for storyline (most JRPGs)
  - Player creates own character
- Both of these character types have their own set of disadvantages
SPECIFICALLY CREATED CHARACTERS (THE JRPG MODEL)

- Player characters specifically created with the storyline in mind, fully scripted
- These characters allow the story to flow
- Main character has scripted relationships with NPCs
- **PROBLEM:** How do we make the player engage with the character?
- **PROBLEM:** How do we account for different player backgrounds?
PLAYER CREATED CHARACTERS

- Characters created by the player
- Allows for the player to connect with his character
- Allows players from different backgrounds to sculpt their preferred characters
- PROBLEM: How does this character fit with the story?
- PROBLEM: The “everyone is important” syndrome.
ENTER DYNAMIC STORYTELLING

- Games which let the player progress the story
- Started with text based adventures
- Contrast with emergent narratives
- With modern technology, games with dynamic storytelling can be considered alongside cinema
DRAGON AGE

- Employs a “relationship” system between the player character and his or her companions

- Form relationships with party members by talking to them and selecting different answers

- A high enough relationship will raise the follower’s morale and fighting power

- A low enough relationship may cause the follower to leave the party or even fight back

- PROBLEM: The story itself does not change due to decisions, just your party members
MASS EFFECT

- Employs a “morality” system
- When talking to other characters, dialogue options will either raise or lower morality
- High morality = paragon
- Low morality = renegade
- Different characters react in different ways depending on if you are a paragon or renegade
- PROBLEM: Mass Effect 3 had an ending which essentially erased all choices
HEAVY RAIN

- Player “controls” four different characters through dialogue options and quick time events
- If a player character dies, the game will continue as if it were supposed to happen
- PROBLEM: Too much emphasis on the system, not enough on making a coherent story
- PROBLEM: Ends up being guided toward the end, where the story then splits, only eight endings.
TELLTALE GAMES

- Three major franchises: The Walking Dead, The Wolf Among Us, and Game of Thrones
- Games are presented in episodes
- Point and click adventure games with dialogue trees and quick time events
- Major pieces of the story change depending on player decisions
- Enough guidance to create a cohesive story while still giving the player the ability to feel connected to the story
CONCLUSIONS

- Most of the titles mentioned only delve slightly into this method of storytelling
- What do we need from games to make this method of storytelling more effective?
- Why no big award show for video gaming?
- Are games that use this technique really games?