Interactive Stories

A. Sounds great, but where are they?
B. Abort, Retry, Ignore
C. Potentially huge, if...
Steve Peterson

- Co-founder of Hero Games
- Co-designer of Champions
- “#1 RPG of All Time” *Inquest* magazine, 1998
- Designer, Author, Marketer
Top Ten Reasons To Be A Game Designer

Warning: Some images may be disturbing to some viewers.
#10. It explains to others why you’re always “playing a game” instead of “working.”
#9. To be able to impress small children with your important job.
#8. To eliminate any anxiety caused by owning vast wealth and possessions.
#7. So you can deduct from your taxes all of the books, movies, comics, and games that you would have bought anyway.
# 6. So you have a full-time job where you work half-time – only 12 hours per day.
#5. So that you can go to work wearing anything you want.
#4. The healthy food and drink common in the game industry.
#3. Contract disagreements are always amicably resolved.
#2. Seeing your name in 6-point type on page 132 of a 132-page manual.
#1. All the beautiful groupies gaming tends to attract.
Why Game Design?

The dawn of a new era
Design Principles

- Rules of Thumb to help guide designers
Temporal Analysis

- What does the player spend his time on?
Design for Marketing
Design Efficiency

- % of time spent on development should be roughly equivalent to % of play time
Show, Don’t Tell
Interact, Don’t Show

- The logical extension of the rule
Focus on Fun

- If it’s boring, why is it in there?
Algorithmic, not Data-Driven

- Why combat is more fun than conversation
Start with Balance

- And you’re more likely to end with it
Designing Interactive Stories

- Some seeds for designs
Layers
Make It Compelling
Assign Values

- Think RPG stats for emotions
- Call of Cthulhu SAN
Make a Difference

- “A difference which makes no difference is no difference.” – William James
What We Don’t Need

- Modeling an entire universe
- Human level AI
- Complete speech parsing
- Infinite plot variety
What We Do Need

- Moments of high drama
- Uncertain outcomes
- Risky choices
- Unexpected events
- Immersion
- Range of emotion
Survivor Bias

- Remember the bombers.
The Market Is Changing

- Mobile games
- ARG’s
- MMORPGs
- Social networking
- “Blockbusters” losing money
Create The Future