

Narrative Telephone

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Play is vital for building relationships and a sense of community among people of all ages. We were inspired by Idea Starter #3 (Community) as a provocation to imagine ways for students to keep socially interacting. We chose a loosely academic framework coupled with a remotely-playable game to help fill the gap in their daily social interactions with each other.

For the concept of the game, we were inspired by a series of videos called Narrative Telephone on YouTube (<https://critrole.com/shows/narrative-telephone/>), posted by a group of voice actors (who are also friends!) As seen in their videos, taking the game of telephone and adding a narrative element to it gives rise to hilarious, memorable stories.

In addition, we were also inspired by the increased resources and accessibility to video creation tools available to teens and tweens now, via apps like TiKTok and Adobe Rush. This allows for the game to branch out from just being stories narrated to a camera, as not all students might want to participate in this way. TikTok also has a popular hashtag, #edutok, where a number of [educational videos](#) created by teachers and students alike reach the app's large audience.

Overview

The game is kicked off by one person, who records themselves telling a short story, and passes it on to another person in the group. This person can only watch the video once, and having watched it, must record themselves retelling the story for the next person in line, and so on, until everyone in the group has recorded their version of the story. The final version, like in the game of telephone, usually ends up as a hilariously distorted version of the original.

To ground this concept in schoolwork, we tested the idea by running the game with a historically significant story. To stimulate the students' creativity, we created a list of different ways students can author their version of the story ([borrowing from Global Game Jam's use of diversifiers](#)) For example, you may choose to tell the story via drawings for a 5 point bonus.

Gameplay

The game can be run in a classroom by splitting up the students into groups of 4-5 each. The teacher acts as a facilitator while the students play the game.

Phase 1: Work

- The facilitator assigns the subject to each team.
- The team selects a specific topic / concept / section / chapter within the subject..
- The facilitator selects the player who goes first in each group. This may be done randomly, or with any method of your choice!
- The selected player then works with the facilitator to select the exact story they will tell. E.g; events leading up to world war II.

Phase 2: Play

- The first player records themselves explaining the event in a format of their choosing (see Diversifiers below for a list of possible formats).
- The second player may watch this video **just once**, and has to create a video retelling the story for the next person.
- Points from the diversifiers are added to the total score. Each qualified Diversifier adds 5 points, and players can combine diversifiers.
- Each video must be a maximum of 2 minutes.

Phase 3: Celebrate

- This phase may occur immediately after all teams have finished, or on the following day.
- The last video from each team is shared with the other teams.
- Upon receiving videos from other teams, each team submits a guess about the story that is being told by the other teams.
- For each correct guess, the creators get 3 points and the guessing team gets 1 point.
- For each video created, teams are awarded 5 points for each diversifier they used.
- Additionally, the facilitator may lead an open discussion at the end about

Diversifier Awards

1. **Minimalist** - Traditional narrative telephone format, film yourself telling the story.
2. **Artist** - Actively drawing within the duration of the video. Use only a single piece of paper, or a maximum of 9 storyboard tiles.
3. **Family Affair** - Other people (or animals) make a cameo.
4. **Substitute** - Explain what you saw to a family member and have THEM record, adding an extra node in the chain
5. **Director's Cut** - Other people (or animals) are in the starring role.
6. **Witness** - Tell the story as if you saw it happen.
7. **Protagonist** - Tell the story as if it happened to you.
8. **Wordless** - Tell the story without using any words (whether written, typed, drawn, or spoken)
9. **Maestro** - Incorporate music beyond background music.
10. **Globetrotter** - Add a part in the video (upto 30 seconds) that is just you freestyling in a secondary language. The person who receives the video repeats that section with whatever they think you were saying, or anything they want.
11. **Jack of All Trades** - Hitting more than 2 diversifiers.
12. **Powerpoint Pro** - Make a quick presentation for the team.

Team Score

- Diversifier(s): 5 points each.
 - For each diversifier a player hits, they earn 5 points for the team.
- Correct Guess(es) received: 3 points each.
- Correct Guess(es) given: 1 point each.