Games: What Are They?

Topics in Game Development

UNM

ECE 495/595; CS 491/591

Date back to ancient times

- Found in virtually every culture

- Not only for entertainment

- Also served serious functions

Used to train for hunting and warfare…

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Also used for religious purposes

- Way to communicate with deities
- Of great importance to both athletes and spectators
- Called for highest level of skill

Ancient games could have life and death consequences…

Traditional games often contain story elements

- Sumo recreates an ancient legend

- A link to Japan's spiritual history

- Both a physical competition and a culturally significant event

Games offer intense excitement

- May be dangerous, require courage

- Contain a great deal of action

- Clear cut objectives (catch fox)

- Obstacles (fences; ditches)

- Worthy adversary (wily, fast)

- Allies (hounds; fellow hunters)

Games contain the basic elements of drama

- Conflict: 2 sides fighting
- Greeks: competition for a desired prize *(**agon**)*
  - ➢ The prot**agon**ist (the hero; the one going for the goal)
  - ➢ The ant**agon**ist (the opposing force; the adversary)
- Obstacles & challenges

Games also have:

- A structure (beginning, middle, end)
- Clear cut rules
- Rewards and penalties
- A defined playing space (court, field, track)

Ancient board games similar to ancient athletic games

- Often rooted in spiritual traditions
- Senet: found in King Tut's tomb
- Tomb paintings indicate symbolic opponent: spirit from afterlife
- High stakes: immortality

Modern board games

- Similar to athletic games (win/lose; competitive; have a structure)

- But safer environment

- Often include elements of the unexpected

- Can act out fantasies

- Are social experiences

Board games may also…

- Include colorful characters, have elements of story

- Be set in a fantasy environment

- Stimulate imaginative play

Modern games contain ancient and universal themes

Joseph Campbell: articulated concept of **"The Hero's Journey"** myths of life and death expressed in rites of passage (coming of age)
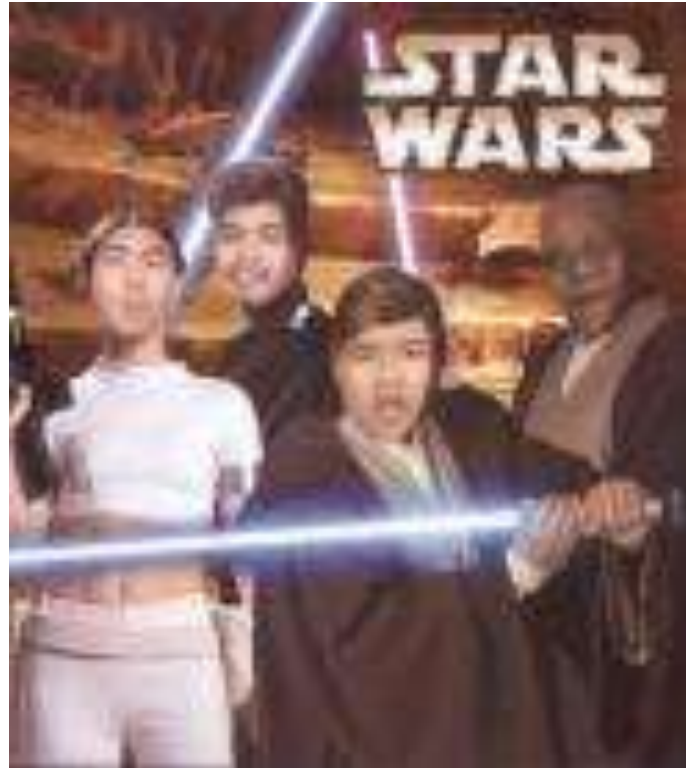
"Hero's Journey" found in…

…ancient literature like the Odyssey

"Hero's Journey" found in…

…Ancient beliefs about the afterlife: the Egyptian Book the Dead

"Hero's Journey" found in…

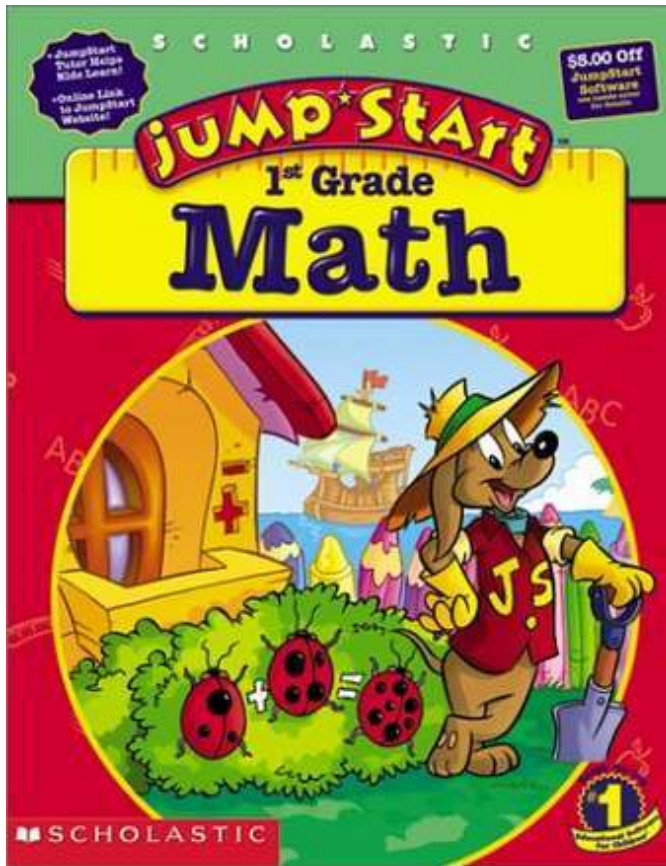… modern motion pictures

"Hero's Journey" also found in…

…today's video games

What the Computer Brings to Games:

- Immerses player in fictional world
- Provides vivid backgrounds, characters
- Offers immense amount of content, variety
- Sets a pace
- Hides rules

As with ancient games, video games may be used to teach and train…

- Used for diverse array of subjects ("serious games")

- Used for diverse array of skills

- Used for diverse groups of audiences, both adults and kids

May also be used to inform…

And to promote and advertise

Genres include:

- Recruitment video games *("America's Army")*

- Alternate reality games (ARGs)

- "Advergaming"

In sum, games are:

- More than entertainment

- Rooted in ancient traditions

- By nature dramatic

- By nature exciting

- By nature full of action

- Conducive to fantasy play and role play

In general, games have:

- A structure (beginning, middle, end)

- Rewards and penalties

- A defined playing area (setting)

- Opportunities for social interaction

Games Are Experienced as Play

- Players **pretend** to be something they are not, and are absorbed in doing something that is not real

- The experience of **playing:**
  - Implies you have choices
  - Implies you have the freedom to act
  - Implies you can choose how to act

And Games Always Have:

- A clear-cut goal

- Characters (protagonist; one or more antagonists)

- Rules

- Obstacles and challenges to overcome

- An end result: winning or losing

Let's make a game!

- Base it (loosely!) on true story of a treasure hunter seeking hidden coins from Civil War

- But turn it into a game

- Can be any genre: RPG, shooter, adventure, action, educational, etc.

Task: determine these elements:

- What kind of game is it?

- Main characters? (protagonist; one or more **antagonists**)

- What is player's goal?

- What is opposing this goal? (Create several obstacles and challenges to overcome)

- What makes game exciting?

- End result: what is winning/losing?

Reading assignment:

Chapter one of textbook: pp. 3-33