

Facilitator Handbook

A Roleplaying game to facilitate critical thinking

This is a freeform tabletop roleplaying game, where participants take on the role of some of Brazil's folklore characters, with a facilitator leading these characters through a story. Through empowering both group and individual decision making, as well as encouraging the usage of information while making decisions, this game seeks to impart and enable critical thinking skill within a relaxed environment.

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Overview

The game consists of a group of characters (controlled by the players) embarking on a story that the Facilitator presents. The story evolves through the actions of the characters, as interpreted by the facilitator, following a basic pattern of play. The Facilitator sets the scene, providing the situation for players to react to. The Players then collectively decide how they want to act or respond. The Facilitator describes the effects of these actions on the story. Through debate, sharing of information and cooperation critical thinking skills are developed.

Pattern of play

Below is the basic pattern of play described in three structured steps:

1. The facilitator describes the environment. The facilitator tells the players where they are and what is around them, presenting the basic overview of the available actions. For example, if the facilitator describes a setting with a tree and an axe, they could suggest actions of climbing the tree or inspecting the axe. The players may ask for clarifications, such as how tall the tree is, so they can understand the environment better, and it is up to the facilitator to decide whether to fill in these details or not.

2. The players describe what they want to do. The facilitator gives room to the players to choose how they want to act within the described environment. Following the tree and axe scenario, they may wish to follow the suggested actions and climb the tree, or they may wish to be creative and use the axe to cut down the tree. As facilitator you may wish to ask for the logic behind an action, such as *“are you climbing the tree to get a better view”*. Doing so will help the players utilise their critical thinking skills.

With multiple characters, sometimes one player will speak for the whole group, while other times multiple characters wish to do different things. If one player wishes to climb the tree, while another wants to chop it down, the facilitator may wish to resolve the climbing before the chopping. The players don't need to take turns, but the facilitator listens to every player and decides how to resolve those actions.

3. The facilitator resolves the players actions and their effect on the story. Resolving an action is describing how the environment or story changes as a response to the players action. Sometimes this may be simple, such as telling a player that they can see much further from the top of the tree. Other times it's more complex, such as describing the difficulty of cutting down a tree, before the tree comes crashing down, making a loud noise. If a player had a critical thought process behind their actions, such as *“I want the falling tree to make a bridge over this river”* the facilitator should reward this by describing that eventuality. Resolving an action will often lead back to another decision environment, bringing a flow of decisions into the game and retuning the pattern of play to step 1.

“Now that the tree bridges the river, you are free to cross it safely.”

The Story

The story is presented in a separate handbook, which covers how the environments and the world are presented. The story follows a group of characters, who are some of Brazil's folklore heroes, discovering a blight within the rainforest. This setting provides a common motivation for the player characters, to prevent the spread of the blight, while being analogous to the COVID-19 virus.

Some ideas for actions player may perform and how to resolve these are suggested, however the facilitator's individual resolutions are prioritised, due to the uncertainty of player's actions. At some points, the presented story has some pre-set choices that players must discuss and agree upon, here the resolutions should follow that of the story. To help described the environment, handouts are included that represent the environment visually, simplifying the level of detail needed to be described through words.

Game Structure and Character Cards

To help structure the play for players unfamiliar with roleplay, players are provided with a set of cards that describe abilities of their characters. These cards suggest courses of actions by giving strengths and weaknesses to each character. Some characters may be better at climbing trees, while others may be more suited to chopping them down, while others still could choose to circumvent the scenario completely by utilise one of their strengths. An overview of the characters is presented in the characters section.

Knowledge Cards

A separate set of cards that represent each character's knowledge about the story and environment are also provided. These cards are intended to enable sharing of information between players by requiring players to synthesise information between their characters.

These cards are drawn later, when a certain point in the story is reached – specific to each character. These points are noted. The details on the knowledge cards are kept secret and must be shared verbally rather by showing the cards.

Blue Flower Card

One of the cards with an essential ingredient for the potion, The Blue Flower, exists in three versions. In each game, Saci, the character with knowledge of medicine, receives one of the three versions of this card at random. The other characters have knowledge of one version of this flower each. This allows to add more variation to the game and facilitate discussion about which knowledge is relevant in a particular situation.

Multiple Players per Character

For larger groups, groups of players will be working together to play one character. In these cases, it may be best to give a few minutes after describing the environment for the groups to decide among themselves how they want to act. Structuring the session more formally by prioritising the player actions that progress the story will help the flow of the game and allow for the discussion time.

Explaining the game to players

"This is a collaborative storytelling game where one person plays the narrator while everyone else plays a main character."

Tell players that you will be presenting a worlds and story, and that they can use their characters to interact with it. There are no strict rules as everything will be interpreted based on the players' intentions. The first section of the story acts as a simple sandbox for players to understand the basic pattern of play. If players are struggling to interact with the world, it may be best to ask questions such as *"What would your character do?"*

After the players complete the first story section, knowledge cards are drawn. Tell players that they are free to look and read the cards at any time, but they cannot directly share the images on the cards with the other characters.

Setting up the Game

The game has a number of handouts to be presented to the players when they reach certain points, alongside sets of cards for each player. Following COVID-19 regulations, physical objects should not be shared between participants.

Prior to the start of the game, provided players each with their two sets of cards (Character and Knowledge cards).

Characters

There are five characters, each a notable Brazilian folk hero. By playing as a well-known and powerful character, player will be less inhibited by their own biases and abilities, instead utilising the agency and strengths given by these characters to make critical decisions more freely.

However, in order to facilitate the spirit of cooperation, each of these characters has a strength and weakness that either allows or prevents them from taking some actions. Players have to rely on other characters to have a full range of actions needed to finish the story.

Additionally, each character has a special knowledge, represented by another set of cards that show what each of the characters knows about their situation. Saci Pererê has 3 versions of one of his cards, only one of these cards should be prepared, this brings variety and uncertainty to the game.

Saci Pererê

	Strength Saci Pererê can choose to disappear and reappear wherever he wishes Weakness Saci Pererê cannot interact with animals Knowledge (Core) Saci Pererê has knowledge of herbs and medicine
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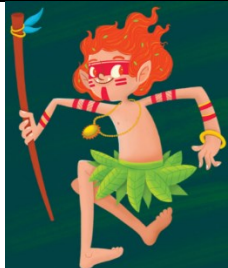
(Iara / Boto)

	Strength (Iara / Boto) can freely explore and traverse any ponds or rivers Weakness (Iara / Boto) cannot climb or run fast on land Knowledge 1 (Core) (Iara / Boto) knows about the plants and creatures contained in rivers Knowledge 2 (Iara / Boto) can choose to see distant places by looking into water
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(Caipora / Caapora)

	Strength (Caipora / Caapora) can manipulate the soil, dig holes or make plants grow Weakness (Caipora / Caapora) cannot interact with fire Knowledge (Core) (Caipora / Caapora) can speak to animals and learn information from them
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Curupira

	Strength Curupira can use their fire for burning and cooking Weakness Curupira cannot interact with water Knowledge (Core) Curupira knows of the tool and tactics of civilisation. Also, Curupira can use these tools.
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Uirapuru

	Strength Uirapuru's singing has a relaxing effect on people, creating an aura of peace Weakness Uirapuru cannot carry objects heavier than a nut Knowledge 1 Uirapuru can read and speak every language Knowledge 2 (Core) Uirapuru has information about any other character they might encounter
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Localisation Guide

The game's core component of critical thinking is facilitated by the character's knowledge rather than their skills or abilities. Localising the game into cultures with different mythological figures would require localising based on their knowledge rather than similarities in personality or abilities.

As an example, Saci Pererê is both a trickster and can teleport. Localising him into a Norse pantheon would seem like a character Loki, a trickster god. However, prioritising the knowledge is most important, meaning a character like Eir, a Goddess or Valkyrie associated with medical skill, is most apt for maintain critical thinking components.