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# Variable Narrative Form in Gaming

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## Linear Structure vs Variable Form

The focus of this proposal is to allow design educators to better understand the variable forms of gaming narratives. Much like Web site design, gaming narratives are not always just reactive but interactive. Users are given choices in games that change the narrative shape. Understanding these variables are key in development of a game design experience.

Through the research into the various narrative structures, a better understanding of narrative form can be understood. The different forms can be seen as episodes, structures and stages. These forms represent the written, visual and audio narratives. This synthesized information is a key component in understanding interactive gaming narrative. (see ex 01)

Most narratives have a very linear structure to them. Below are the different components from the various disciplines, formatted in a linear structure. The narrative starts and ends without being interrupted. (see ex 02)

Due to the interactive nature of the game, the typical narrative structure needs to represent multiple paths/decisions. The center core of the form allows the narrative to hold together even though it may need to change during the given experience. This game interaction has four paths—others might have more or less, this is just one of many examples. (see ex 03)

When we start to visualize the narratives, we start to see the differences. The linear narrative still has same structure no matter how many times you experience it. Gaming takes more of a variable form than a linear structure. This form varies based on the user's experience. Multiple experiences can result in multiple forms. This visualization of the narrative form allows designers to better understand how the game experience is constructed. If the user takes a different path, the narrative form will change, as seen below.  
(see ex 04+05A–B)

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Example 01

*Narrative Episode*

Setting  
Complication  
Psychological Response  
Attempt to Cope  
Results

*Short Story Structure*

Set-Up  
Catalyst  
First Turning Point  
Climax  
Final Confrontation  
Resolution

*Paradigm of Dramatic Film Structure*

Beginning  
Set-Up  
Plot Point I  
Middle  
Confrontation  
Plot Point II  
End  
Resolution

*Structure of Musical Story*

Exposition  
Development  
Recapitulation

**Video Game  
Narrative Form**

- 1 *Set-Up*
- 2 *Turning Point*
- 3 *Engagement*
- 4 *Stimulation*
- 5 *Closure*

*Note: This is just one of a many combinations of possible video game narratives.*

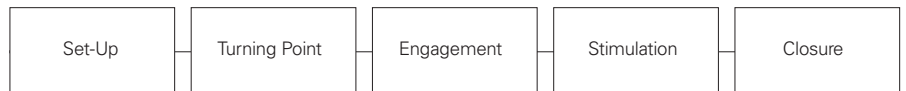
# Variable Narrative Form in Gaming

Example 02

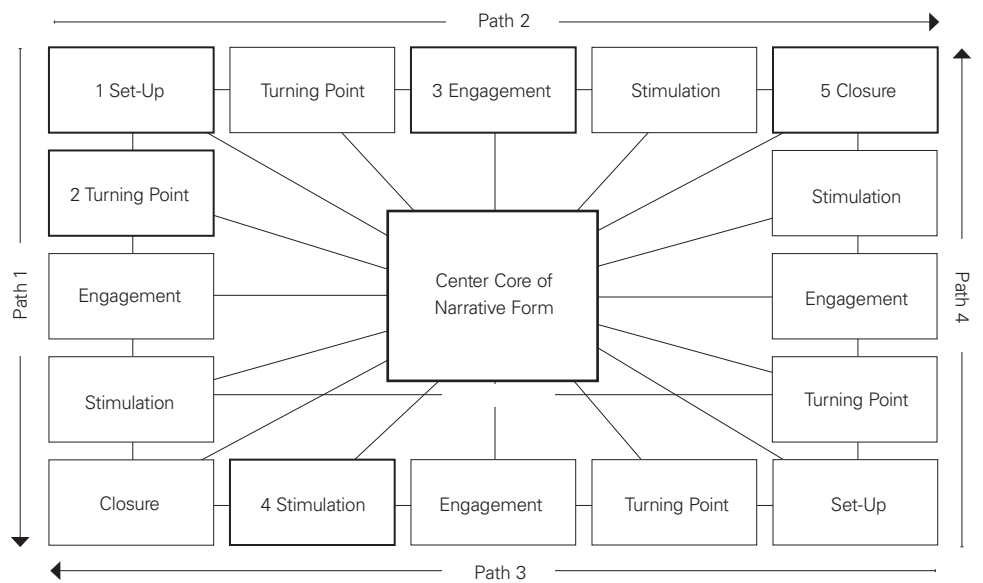
## Video Game Narrative Form

- 1 *Set-Up*
- 2 *Turning Point*
- 3 *Engagement*
- 4 *Stimulation*
- 5 *Closure*

## Standard Linear Narrative

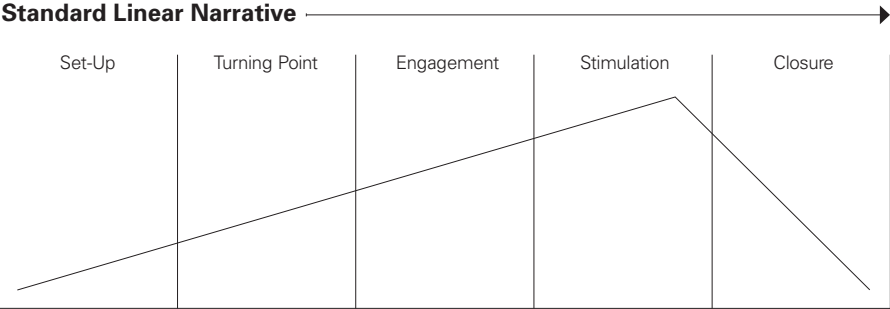


Example 03



# Variable Narrative Form in Gaming

Example 04



Example 05

