**Twine Game and Presentation**

**Overview**

This assignment falls at the end of a unit on electronic literature in ENG 263: Digital Literary Studies. In the unit, students study electronic literature and video games and analyzing texts using media-specific analysis (examining how the technical and aesthetic elements of a work relate to the message/meaning). After creating Adobe Spark projects to analyze a work of their choosing, students create a text-based Twine game that uses basic HTML to show a relationship between the game’s message and its technical and aesthetic features. They present this game to their classmates, who have the opportunity to interact with the Twine texts.

**Learning Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will evaluate digitally born texts in relation to their social and cultural contexts, including traditional print media.</th>
<th>In-class exercises.</th>
<th>Reading/playing/viewing responses, Twine project and presentation, Spark project, final portfolio reflections.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will analyze digitally born texts through traditional and new media cultural theories.</td>
<td>In-class exercises.</td>
<td>Reading/playing/viewing responses, Twine project and presentation, Spark project, final portfolio reflections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will enhance writing skills and strategies.</td>
<td>In-class exercises</td>
<td>Reading/playing/viewing responses. Distant reading project, Twine project and presentation, Spark project, video essay. Final portfolio reflections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required Resources**

A computer for each student; access to Twine (twinery.org--the online version works well).

**Assignment Purpose**

In ENG 263, the Twine assignment allows students to understand games from the inside out, with the building of games helping them understand the role of the player in creating the text.
Additionally, the Twine assignment allows students to study the relationship between form and content in texts, use storyboarding to structure narratives and arguments, practice simple HTML, and learn an alternative and interactive presentation format that they may use in other courses.

**Instructor Preparation**

The instructor should experiment with Twine, both by playing popular Twine games (see below) and creating Twine games. The instructor should also choose a version of Twine to use--downloading Twine 1.4.2 or 2.2.1 may require permission from a network administrator, so I recommend using the available online version (which is a version of Twine 2).

The instructor should also choose a story format to become familiar with in preparation for instructing students (I use Harlowe in Twine 2). The instructor should read through some of the official documentation for Harlowe and be prepared to show students a few basic techniques, such as creating links to new passages and editing the style.

The instructor should consider how students will share their texts. Students can download and then play the games locally, or they can upload them to a course “game jam” on a site such as itch.io. If the instructor wants the students to upload their games, the instructor should become familiar with the itch.io site and upload options.

**Student Preparation**

Students should be familiar with interactive fiction, especially digitally produced texts. The instructor might reference children’s “choose your own adventure” texts and show popular Twine games such as *Depression Quest* by Zoe Quinn, *With Those We Love Alive* by Porpentine, and *My Father's Long, Long Legs* by Michael Lutz.

Students should also be familiar enough with basic word processing to create their own narratives. Practice navigating new and unfamiliar websites would also be a bonus so that they can quickly learn the Twine environment.

**Unit Outline**

**Day 1: Creating electronic literature/digital games**

**GOALS:** Study and create electronic poetry

- Goals on board
- Explore agency by creating e-lit
  - http://spoonbill.org/n+7/
- Look at poetry generators
Day 2: Creating electronic literature/digital games, continued

GOALS: Practice making games in Twine
   Explore itch.io

- Goals on board
- Re-examine Twine games from earlier in the unit
- Talk about importance of determining overall narrative structure first as well as role of player in creating the story
  - Will the story have multiple endings? What are they?
- Go through “Build a Game in an Hour” overview
  - Walk students through how to create passages
    - Let students create passages for 10+ minutes
  - Show students how to do basic text markup
    - Show them how to download my sample markup
  - Show students Harlowe guide
    - Let students do markup for their passages, circulating and answering questions and directing them to the guide for answers, 10+ minutes
  - Show students how to edit the overall stylesheet, using my sample markup
    - Continue circulating and answering questions
- Throughout class, ask students to help each other--those with coding experience may have greater expertise than the instructor

Day 3: Twine presentations

GOAL: Explore and evaluate peers’ Twine games

- Goals on board
- Prepare Twine games (each game on its own computer)
- Students rotate and play Twine games, completing evaluation sheet

Assessment Suggestions

The instructor may wish to determine (with student input) the minimum number of passages the game should contain and, perhaps, how much and why type of markup the game should
include. If students are playing their classmates’ games, the instructor may use a peer evaluation sheet so that the students play a role in evaluating the success of their classmates’ projects. I used a specifications-grading system, giving students detailed specifications for what would constitute a passing text, particularly in terms of the formal elements (the number of passages, etc.). Students could earn higher grades by establishing a clear connection between the aesthetic, technical, and narrative elements of the text. A student-written reflection may also be a good component of grading the project (though I did not use one).

Resources for Development

I have created a guide for building a game in an hour using Twine. The guide includes a link where instructors and students can download sample Twine markup and use that as a template for editing their texts.