

DRAMA

Drama

Drama is an experimental roleplaying story game for 4 or 5 players, allowing the players to take on the roles of writers, directors, and actors in an ongoing plot. The system is designed to emulate all manner of dramatic work, regardless of genre.

Setup

Each player selects one of the four roles from page 4. If there is a fifth player, he is Background. Name your characters.

Players should agree on a number of story elements such as era, location, and so on. The Antagonist and Protagonists should each select goals, doing their best to incorporate one another's story elements. For instance, if the Antagonist wants to kill a cop for sending him to jail, the Protagonist should either be that cop, that cop's partner, or someone who knows that cop.

The supporting cast do not need immediate goals, as their involvement will develop and unfold during play.

Finally, make sure the Protagonist and Antagonist are not next to each other around the table.

Make some note cards handy for plots. Write the Protagonist's goal on one plot card and the Antagonist's goal on another plot card.

Characters

The definition of Antagonist and Protagonist should be fairly obvious to players. However, the supporting cast need further development. Once the players have agreed on a setting and who the Antagonist and Protagonist are in the story, the supporting cast should come up with their relationship to the main two players.

Note. Just because you're playing supporting cast doesn't mean you don't get as much game time. You have plot threads to develop as well.

Design Question. Does this game need oracles or a relationship grid like Fiasco?

Play

Game play is done in acts. The players should determine ahead of time how many acts they will play through, but five is standard.

All players take 5 six-sided dice and roll them, keeping them separated. The Protagonist selects his lowest die and frames a scene with it (see below). If he has nothing lower than a 4, he must either use his special ability, or pass to the next player. This continues around the table until one player can frame a scene to start the act. Essentially, Act One cannot open on a 4, 5, or 6. In the rare instance that no one can frame a scene in Act One, everyone re-rolls.

Framing Scenes

In Drama, each die represents a different level of plot development. A '1' represents the introduction of a plot, while a '6' represent the resolution of a plot. In between, the plot development scales based on the die.

Below is a short hand guide to Scenes. Another copy of this chart is on your character sheet.

- 1 Plot
- 2 Character Development
- 3 Rising Tension
- 4 Complications
- 5 Twist
- 6 Resolution

Plot. A plot card is created to indicate a new plot, such as a child goes missing or "I want a divorce."

Character Development. A plot may advance through character development, showcasing the inner-thoughts of a character.

Rising Tension. This is a plot device used to make the audience question where the plot is going it is very different from...

Complications. A plot complication makes the problem worse. If the plot is to disarm the bomb, now they must first find the bomb hidden inside a warehouse filled with those cymbal-banging monkeys.

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Twist. A twist changes the plot in some way. The plot may have been about disarming a bomb, but that was just a rouse. The bomb is actually a fake and the plot is about rescuing a favorite child.

Resolution. The plot is resolved. The player can end the plot however he likes, so long as a PC does not die. That said, if this is the final plot resolution, feel free to kill a PC.

In order to frame a scene, a plot card must be selected. The Active Player frames a scene based on the die used. For instance, if the die is a 1, he can create a new Plot, but if the die is a 3, he can only raise the tension on an existing Plot. With the exception of the two main plots for the Antagonist and Protagonist, it is not necessary to go through each step (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) of plot to resolve it. Smaller plots can leap from 1 to 3 to 5 to 6 or 1 to 4 to 6 or however you wish.

Discard used dice. They are gone from the act, although a player may gain additional dice from one of his abilities.

WRITER'S MEETING

It may become possible that there are no plots remaining to play dice on. If this is the case, the player discards one of his dice and rerolls the remaining dice (if any). If any player should ever run out of dice during the act, play continues one more time around the table until the Act ends on his turn.

Act 2+

Each subsequent Act should open with the player to the left of the previous starting player. At this point, there should be a number of plot cards on the table that a player can use to develop his story. If not, follow the rules for Writer's Meeting above.

Resolving Plots

The player who resolves a plot removes the card from play and gains 1 Drama Point. Drama Points may be spent for a number of things.

- Activate an ability
- Make one of your dice a 1
- Make one other player's die a 6
- Reroll any one die
- Remove one rolled die from play

Final Act

During the final Act, the Antagonist and Protagonist should each be given one additional die each, while Background and Supporting Cast may use their innate abilities twice. Regardless of the outcome of the dice, the Antagonist and Protagonist should be allowed on final scene each (any die) to wrap up their plots if they are still unresolved. If this is part of a longer campaign, it is recommended that you ignore this last rule and allow plot threads to dangle.

Advice

Suggestion #1. Take good notes.

Suggestion #2. Try to Keep the number of unresolved plot cards to a minimum. There should never be more unresolved plot cards than players.

Suggestion #3. After the initial roll, allow players to reroll pairs.

Suggestion #4. Plots that go from 1 to 6 with no intermediate steps should not earn Drama Points.

Suggestion #5. Supporting Cast should feel free to invent new characters whenever they like. In a five-player game, this role is left to Background.

Ending the Game

Drama is designed to be played as long as you want. In order to reflect a single movie, only 3 to 5 acts should be played. However, it is not beyond the realm of possibilities to run a Drama campaign, so long as the Antagonist changes every so often.

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Antagonist

Once per act, the Antagonist may change any die into a 4 or 5.

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- 2 Character Development
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Protagonist

Once per act, the Protagonist may change any die into a 2 or 3.

- 1 Plot
- 2 Character Development
- 3 Rising Tension
- 4 Complications
- 5 Twist
- 6 Resolution

Supporting Cast No. 1

Once per act, the Supporting Cast may change any 6 into two 3s.

- 1 Plot
- 2 Character Development
- 3 Rising Tension
- 4 Complications
- 5 Twist
- 6 Resolution

Supporting Cast No. 2

Once per act, the Supporting Cast may change any 6 into a 2 and 4.

- 1 Plot
- 2 Character Development
- 3 Rising Tension
- 4 Complications
- 5 Twist
- 6 Resolution

Background

Once per act, the Background may change any 6 into three 2s.

- 1 Plot
- 2 Character Development
- 3 Rising Tension
- 4 Complications
- 5 Twist
- 6 Resolution

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