

A Roleplaying Game of Connection and Meaning
*Inspired by Hermann Hesse's **Das Glasperlenspiel***
by Daniel Ravipinto

Game-Chef 2006

Final Draft
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Theme: Time

1. The Game is completely playable
in **4 Sessions** of **2 Hours** each.

Ingredients: Package 1

1. Glass
2. Committee
3. Emotion

“These rules, the sign language and grammar of the Game, constitute a kind of highly developed secret language drawing upon several science and arts, but especially mathematics and music, and capable of expressing and establishing interrelationships between the contents and the conclusions of nearly all scholarly disciplines, The Glass Bead Game is thus a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture; it plays with them as, say, in the great age of the arts painter might have played with the colors of his palette. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art that the human race has produced in its creative eras, all that subsequent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts and converted to intellectual property - on all this immense body of intellectual values the Glass Bead Game player plays like an organist on the organ.”

Hermann Hesse,
Das Glasperlenspiel (1943)
(English translation by Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1969)

Contact

www.peccable.com
peccable@peccable.com

For Neil, who believes even when I do not.

Author's Notes

Special thanks to Andy Kitkowski for running Game-Chef and this year's great theme and ingredients, to the other competitors for their fascinating ideas (both as part of their own work and while commenting on each other's) on the 1km1kt forums, and to Mike O'Sullivan for letting me know about the competition in the first place.

My muse didn't get working on my Game-Chef entry until Saturday morning. I stared at the ingredients Friday night and very loudly complained that I had absolutely no idea what I was going to do. Sometime between then and the following morning, however, something must have clicked. Most likely it was seeing my new copy of Hesse's novel sitting snugly on my bookcase.

Ingredients-wise, my entry is a storytelling-by-**committee** game based on connecting **emotions** via a system which is an attempt to emulate the one vaguely described in Hesse's "The **Glass** Bead Game." The initial board is built purely by vote and negotiation, with later conflicts being handled by a combination of arbitration, point spending and chance. The concept of bounding the game in **time**, with the players literally working against the clock from movement to movement, prevents gameplay from becoming bogged down in the details. While building the maps which guide the story (and even acting out scenes), the ticking clock should remind players that they need to keep things moving.

The central intention of this work was to build a system for telling stories that guides and rewards players for using concepts and ideas that are half-way between their own and the other players'. It paradoxically gives *more* control to players who do not force their original vision onto the work, in the form of points. The original emotions the players put into the game are only ever worth a single point, and can only ever produce one further point during the course of the first session.

Concepts which link one more or player's ideas, on the other hand, are worth far more, with the Trigger Node, the concept linking as many of the given themes as possible, becoming the basis for the story told.

During conflicts the more a player's desired resolution attempts to include the ideas of other players the more likely it is to succeed.

Meanwhile, the design attempts to evolve the structure of the stories told by using the ideas and concepts which were most popular with the players as the basis for future stories.

All of this hopefully adds up to a game which encompasses Hesse's ideas on music, science, art and connection. Play involves a rigidly structure system which still allows a great deal of freedom and creativity.

In "The Glass Bead Game", Hesse notes that novices often begin their training by looking for connections between two seemingly incongruous works; for example, a piece of music and a scientific principle. By forcing their minds in new directions, by attempting to explore the strange space between the given points, they end up somewhere they never expected. I'm hoping players of my Glass Bead Game will end up in the same place.

Defining the Game

“What lies at the intersection of love, loss, and tragedy?”

Have you ever played with a Ouija board? It's a strange experience straddling the line somewhere between controlling and being controlled, leading and being led. With your fingers on the planchette, you can influence the situation, try pushing it towards this letter or that, but the thing seems to have a mind of its own, independent of any of the players. **The Glass Bead Game** captures that feeling in a roleplaying game, mapping the space between the ideas of each of the players and telling stories in the gaps, in the unknown zones labeled “Here There Be Dragons.”

Das Glasperlenspiel (literally translated as “The Glass Bead Game” but also known as “Magister Ludi” in English) by Hermann Hesse was the original inspiration for the work. In the novel, players use culture, art, music, mathematics, history -- the whole of human knowledge -- as their playing field. They play with ideas as easily as athletes play with a ball.

The central element of this version of The Glass Bead Game is a map made up of spaces (called *nodes*) which are connected by lines. The map defines the boundaries of the story to be told and contains all of the themes, characters and events which comprise it.

In the game, players play out a series of scenes all of which are part of the same story. At the end of each session, the ideas which were most popular with the players are saved and used as the basis for the next session. A complete game is played over four such sessions.

Each session tells a different but connected story. Perhaps it involves the same characters, but in a different situation - in the past or in the future. Perhaps it is about completely different characters in a similar situation. Or perhaps the characters and story are completely new, but thematically linked to a previous session and story. Since themes and ideas from previous sessions carry over to future sessions, the scenes and stories evolve in new and hopefully interesting directions while still remaining at least thematically linked by the ideas behind them.

Each session, like a piece of music, is also bounded in time. A single session of the game is broken down - like a four-part sonata - into four *movements* of differing length. Keeping to the schedule, sticking to the tempo of the game, is important. The limits prevent the game from becoming a brainburn - forcing players to go with their gut instincts rather than min/maxing every move.

The final movement of the final session will sum up the themes set up by the previous sessions and stories, resonating with all of the ideas which have appeared during the game even as it ends it.

The feeling one should get from a good Glass Bead Game is similar to what one feels when writing a sonnet or working in a similarly restricted art style: tightly constrained, but completely free within the given boundaries. A lot like life.

So, without further ado, on to the game...

Preparing the Game

You will need a few pieces of equipment before you can begin a session of The Glass Bead Game:

- A clock or stopwatch, to keep track of time. One with an alarm might be helpful.
- Copies of the necessary maps: one central story map and one character map for each player. These are described below and can either be of your own making or one the sample maps provided.
- Pens or pencils.
- Polyhedral dice. Which ones you'll need will be defined by which map you're using.
- Small pieces or markers in various colors, one color for each player. Glass beads would, obviously, be particularly apt.

Although there isn't a Game Master or Storyteller per se, one player must have this equipment ready before the game begins. This player is the *Host*. The Host should also be familiar enough with the rules to oversee gameplay and keep the game moving.

Maps

There are two types of maps in the Glass Bead Game, similar in structure but differing in purpose. The first type is a *story map*, which contains the themes which make up that session's story. The second type is a *character map*, which describes those ideas that make up a player's character.

A single session of the game will require one story map and one character map for each player. Example story maps may be found in at the end of the rules. Differently sized maps are suggested for differing numbers of players. Thus these rules contain one map for two players, one for three, one for four, and one for five or six players. Beginning Hosts should simply choose and copy the map appropriate for the expected number of players.

The suggested character maps are based on the two and three player maps, each with eight and ten nodes respectively. The author favors the ten-node (3 player) map, but either should be sufficient and newer players may find the smaller map easier to handle.

The Host must have copies of the proper story map and multiple copies of whatever character map is to be used ready before the game begins.

Hosts are also welcome to create their own, unique maps. General guidelines for creating such maps (along with ideas for converting existing node-structures such as the Kabbalah's Tree of Life) can be found at the end of the rules.

Dice

Each map contains a specific amount of numbered nodes. The sample maps all have a number of nodes equal to the sides on various polyhedral dice (8, 10, 12, 20). In order to play with a given map, you'll need one die with the same number of sides as the nodes of the map. Thus, for a two player game you'll need an 8-sided die (d8). A six player game will require a 20-sided die (d20), and so on.

Some player-created maps may require multiple dice. A 16-node map may work with 3 6-sided dice (3d6). The map should identify what dice are required for the game.

Playing the Game

Timing

Each game session is limited to two hours. The way the game is structured, little or none of that time can be spent socializing or delaying. So it's a good idea to schedule time beforehand taking this into account, and then announce the beginning and end of play. This is the Host's job.

Like a four-part sonata, the game is broken into four *movements*, each with a definite time limit. The movements are:

- *Allegro* (Time Limit: 30 minutes) Players create the story map and establish a Trigger Node - the beginning and central core of this session's story.
- *Andante* (Time Limit: 20 minutes) Players create their characters using ideas from the story map as a basis.
- *Scherzo & Trio* (Time Limit: 1 hour) Players play out scenes as dictated by the story map.
- *Sonata Rondo* (Time Limit: 10 minutes) Players either wind down the session and prepare for the next, or, in the case of a Game's final session, play out the end of the story.

It is important to stick to the time limits as listed. In the case of the first two movements, nodes on either the story map or character maps may be left blank. This is fine, and play should continue with the maps as is.

Any scene being played out during the third movement must be wrapped up immediately and play should then proceed to the fourth movement.

As you get better at the game, you may find that you finish the first or second movements early. In this case, you may add any additional time to the end of the third movement, thus extending it, and proceed onwards.

First Movement: *Allegro* (30 minutes)

The first movement of any session of the game involves the creation of the story map, the central area where gameplay will take place. This is done over a series of rounds.

First Round

The story map should be placed at the center of the play area with the colored markers nearby as a central bank. Each player chooses a starting node in turn, starting with the Host and proceeding clockwise. Starting nodes are indicated by capital letters (A, B, C, etc.).

Each player writes in their chosen node an emotion he or she wishes to include in the story, and represents an idea he or she wishes to explore.

Each emotion placed is worth one point, and each player takes one marker from the pool of his or her color to represent this. Finally, a single open circle should be placed near the circle representing the amount of points it can generate later in the game.

EXAMPLE:

Dan, Jill, Star and Neil are playing a Glass Bead Game using the sample four-player map and a d12 die. Dan is the Host, and so after some small talk announces the beginning of the game and the start of the first movement. He sets an alarm on a small clock. The players now have 20 minutes to complete the first movement.

He begins the game by placing the emotion "Fear" in position 1 which is labeled with an "A". He draws in a small open circle beside the node and takes a marker of his color before passing his turn on to Jill.

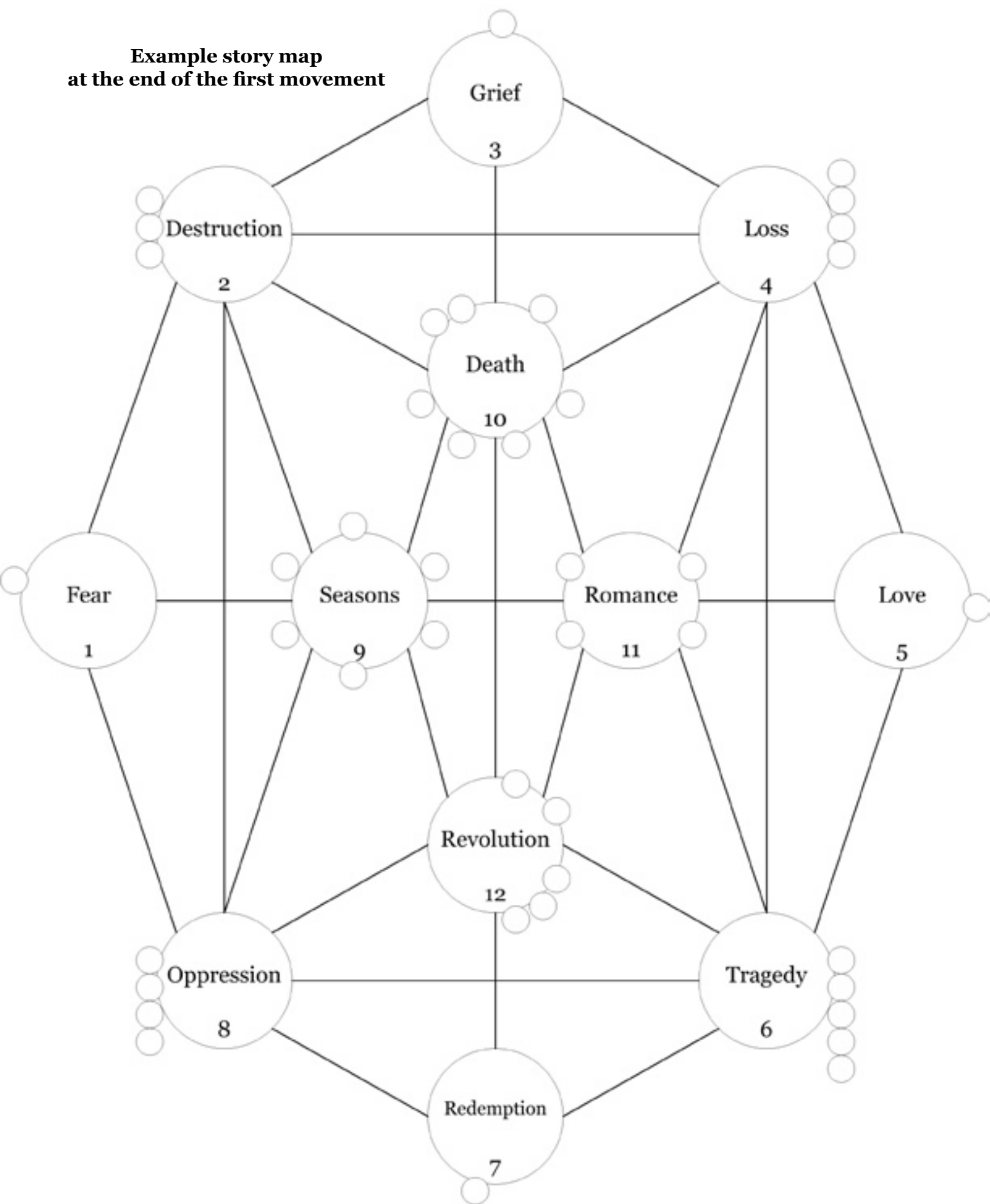
Jill places "Grief" at position 3 (labeled "B"), takes her point, draws in a circle and passes on to Star. She, in turn, places "Love" at position 5 (indicated as a starting node by the letter "C") and passes to Neil after taking her point and marking her node.

Neil announces that he wants to play the emotion connected to the wish for redemption, the desire to atone or better oneself. He can't name it, but he knows it's not "Guilt." The players all agree that there is definitely an emotion which means this, but no one can come up with the word for it. They agree that they'll simply call it "Redemption." Neil places it at position 7 (labeled "D") and ends the first round by taking his point and drawing in a circle beside the node.

Additional Rounds

Play continues with players proceeding clockwise and filling in the remaining nodes on the board. These may be filled with any single idea or concept including, but not limited to, further emotions.

**Example story map
at the end of the first movement**



When filling in a node, a player must pay attention to any nodes which connect to the space they've chosen which are already filled in. When they fill in such a node, its idea must somehow be thematically connected to all the filled nodes to which it links.

When filling in such a node, a player must make an argument for his or her choice, for why his or her idea fits. If all the other players agree, the node is successfully filled. If not, discussion is required. If an agreement cannot be reached, the player can choose to pass, or make a second attempt with a new idea or concept at same location, or a new one. **After two unsuccessful attempts, a player MUST pass.**

If a node is successfully filled, it scores a number of points equal to the filled nodes it links to, plus one. Thus, a space connected to two filled nodes scores three points. This is why each starting node scores 1 point.

Nodes should be marked with a number of open circles equal to the points they scored when placed.

EXAMPLE:

Play continues with Dan taking over. He chooses node 2 on the board, placing "Destruction" between "Fear" and "Grief" (arguing that destruction can lead to both). The other players agree, allowing him to score 3 points and placing three open circles beside node 2.

Jill takes her turn, placing "Loss" at node 4, noting that it connects to "Destruction", "Grief", and "Love". She argues that destruction can cause loss, loss can lead to grief, and that love and loss are thematically linked. She scores four points and marks the circles beside the space.

Star places "Oppression" at position 8, arguing that fear and destruction are often tools of oppression. Dan has some issues with her arguments connecting "Oppression" to "Redemption" (that one can be the stage where the other plays out, or that an oppressor can eventually desire to mend his ways) but lets it pass. She scores 4 points and places the same number of circles beside the node.

Neil scores 5 points by placing "Tragedy" at node 6, connecting it to "Oppression", "Redemption", "Love", and "Loss". He takes his markers and places 5 circles beside the node.

At the end of the second round, the scores are:

*Dan: 4
Jill: 5
Star: 5
Neil: 6*

Play continues in this manner until all spaces are filled.

EXAMPLE:

Dan starts the third round by placing "Romance" at position 11, connecting it with "Loss" and "Tragedy" (romances don't always end up well) and "Love". He scores 4 points for this and marks the node appropriately.

Jill fills node 12 with "Revolution", connecting it to four other existing nodes and scoring 5 points. Star adds "Seasons" to node 9, arguing the cyclical nature of many of the ideas on the board, which nets her 6 points.

Neil ends the round and the movement by placing "Death" in the final node, scoring 7 points for its connections to "Destruction", "Grief", "Loss", "Romance", "Revolution" and "Seasons".

At the end of this round, the scores are:

*Dan: 8
Jill: 10
Star: 11
Neil: 13*

The Trigger Node

The final step of the movement is to identify the *Trigger Node*. The Trigger Node is the center of this session's story, the person, event, or idea around which the whole story revolves. The node which scored the largest number of points during the first movement becomes the Trigger Node.

The node represents the person, event, situation (or all of the above) which is the central conflict and cause of the story to be told. Triggers can be as specific or vague as the players wish, but all players should have a clear idea of where the action in the story is proceeding from before continuing.

EXAMPLE:

In the game we've been looking at, node 10 ("Death") is Trigger Node, scoring a whopping 7 points.

The players talk about it and seeing how dark the themes that have appeared on the map are, decide on a particularly morose starting point for their story. The "Death" node will represent a friend of all of their characters, who, for various reasons, has decided to end his life. He does this with full knowledge and forethought, and so has decided to invite those closest to him (their characters) to a "going away" party.

The story will be about the central character, how the characters connect to him, their shared histories, and possibly the party (and the character's eventual death?).

In this case, the Trigger represents both a person (the friend) and an event (the party). The characters the players create will have to figure out how they will react to this situation. Will they embrace it? Reject it? Will they try to convince their friend that he is wrong? They will also need to think about what sort of history they've had with the character. Are they close? Acquaintances? Friends? Lovers?

Timing Out

If during the first movement time runs out, immediately identify the Trigger Node (based on the scores as they currently stand) and move on to the second movement. In this case there may be blank spaces on the story map. This is fine. Simply identify the Trigger Node and what it represents as quickly as possible and continue with the next movement.

Second Movement: *Andante* (20 minutes)

The second movement begins immediately following the first. The central map, the playing ground on which the story will be told, has been completed. The next step is to create the characters who will inhabit the story.

Play order for this movement proceeds in reverse order of score. **The player who scored the LEAST number of points in the first movement goes first, followed by the player who scored next least and so on.**

Primary Node

Players begin by choosing the element of the map that most interests them as the basis of the character they will play. Any node (including the initial emotions played in the first round of the game) is valid, other than Trigger Node. This node is called the character's *Primary Node*.

Primary Nodes must also be chosen with the following restriction: **No player may choose a node such as to completely block off any other player's Primary Node.**

In other words, players may not choose a node such that another player's chosen node cannot connect with at least one unchosen node.

For example if while playing on a four-player board (as in our example), a player had chosen node 5, and a second player had chosen node 4, a third player could not choose node 6, as this would completely block off the first player.

When a player has chosen his or her Primary Node, he or she should mark it by placing a marker of their color (from the central pool) on their selected node.

EXAMPLE:

At the end of the first movement, Dan had only 8 points and so begins the second movement by choosing his player's Primary Node. He chooses node 5, Love.

Jill is next, with 10 points. She chooses Destruction. She places a marker from the pool on node 2.

Star scored 11 points and goes next. She places a marker on node 11, Romance.

Neil, with the most points, goes last. He chooses Redemption and places a marker on node 7.

Secondary Node

Players then choose a second node to further define their character. This *Secondary Node* **must** be connected on the story map to the Primary Node they just chose (hence the rule concerning the blocking of a player's primary node).

Player order is the reverse of the first round. In other words, the player with the most points (who chose his or her Primary Node last) chooses twice in a row: first his or her Primary, then his or her Secondary.

EXAMPLE:

Immediately after choosing Redemption, Neil places a second marker on node 8, Oppression.

Star goes next and connects Romance to Tragedy (node 6).

Jill links Destruction to Grief and places a marker at node 3.

Dan, realizing that he's been blocked off by Star, has only one choice: Loss, at node 4.

Marking Nodes

Once Primary and Secondary character nodes have been chosen, any markers can be removed from the board. When doing so, the nodes should be identified as belonging to a specific player's character, which can be easy as simply writing the player's initials beside the appropriate nodes.

EXAMPLE:

Dan removes his two markers from the board and places a small "D" beside nodes 4 and 5: Love and Loss.

Character Maps

From these two nodes, the players each create a character map: a list of ideas, elements, concepts, and attributes that make up his or her particular character.

Each player is now given a copy of the Host's chosen character map (the author suggests either the 8-node [2-player] map or the 10-node [3-player board] map, though any map is valid).

Taking the two nodes chosen during this phase, the players choose and fill in two nodes of their map. These nodes start with a number of open circles beside them as those beside their node on the central map.

Players now work on their own, filling in their map as the central map was filled in during the first movement. Linked nodes must be thematically linked and open circles are still listed under each node. However, players do not score any further points during this movement.

Players should keep in mind that they are creating the set of themes and ideas that will define the character they play in the next movement.

Once they have a grasp for the character, they should name them and possibly include a brief description on their character map for future reference.

EXAMPLE:

Neil takes his character map and decides that Redemption will be central to his character, so he places it at Node 10 on his copy of the 3-player, 10-node map. He places Oppression, his secondary node, at position 3. Redemption starts with one circle beside it, Oppression starts with four, these values taken from their matching counterparts on the story map.

Linking Oppression and Redemption, he finds Loyalty, which he places at position 2, with three circles next to it.

Linking Redemption and Loyalty, he chooses Obedience, which he places at position 1, again with three open circles.

He thinks awhile and places Evil at position 3, connecting it to Obedience, and Oppression. This node has three circles beside it.

He proceeds on in this manner until his entire character map is filled. He receives no points for any of these nodes.

If there is time left over during this movement, players can check each others' character maps for consistency. Or, as with the previous movement, play may proceed immediately to the third movement, with any saved time being placed at its end.

Timing Out

Again, if time runs out before every player's character map is completely filled, the game proceeds immediately to the third movement with any empty nodes left blank.

Third Movement: Scherzo & Trio (1 hour)

This is the main part of the game. The story's boundaries have been defined, the characters have been created, and the Trigger -- or starting point -- has been decided upon. Now, starting with the Host, each player describes the beginning of a scene. Scenes are the fundamental building blocks of the story that is about to be told.

Scenes

A scene is a single segment of story, taking place in a single location at a specific point in time. Scenes are represented on the story map by the lines which connect nodes. Thus, any scene can be described as a connection between two ideas on the map.

The emotional or thematic content of a scene should be defined by the two nodes its line connects. Thus, a scene taking place between two nodes of "Hatred" and "Freedom" should involve those two themes.

Any scene may only be run once. Thus, when a scene is chosen, the line that represents it should be marked. A cross-mark or X should be sufficient.

Any players who have their character's Primary or Secondary nodes connected by a scene's line are assumed to be in the scene.

Observers

If a player's character is not in a scene, that player is an *Observer*. Observers arbitrate any *conflicts* that arise during the scene. (Conflicts are explained later.) However, Observers may enter a scene at any time a conflict is not occurring by doing one of the following:

- An Observer may introduce their own character into a scene by paying a point to the bank.
- If the Trigger Node represents a character, any player may introduce that character into the scene by paying a point to the bank.
- An Observer may pay another player to take control of his or her character by offering a set of points in payment. The character may already be in the scene, or may be owned by another Observer. If the seller agrees, he takes the points and gives the character's map to the purchaser for the duration of the scene.

If a scene does not connect to any player's nodes, than all players obviously start as Observers. Since a scene must have at least one character present, the current player must pay points to play a character in the scene (either his own, or another's).

Scenes begin with an initial setting: a location and a set of circumstances declared by the current player, possibly with the assistance of others. Each player describes what his or her character is doing as we "fade in". The scene proceeds from there.

EXAMPLE:

Dan, as Host, begins the third movement. For his first scene, he wants something involving his character's primary node of Love. He chooses the link connecting Nodes 10 and 7, which connects to Star's primary node of Romance.

Both nodes are linked to Death (the Trigger, their friend) by Tragedy. The scene will revolve around the themes of Love and Romance. Possibly a tragic romance? Talking it over with Star, he begins a scene in which the tragic fallout of a love triangle between his character, Star's character and their mutual friend comes crashing down around their ears.

Neil decides that the friend will be present in the scene and pays one point to play him.

Jill remains an Observer, limiting her play to making suggestions and comments for most of the scene until, at the climax, she decides her character unexpectedly shows up, causing a truly painful silence. She pays a point for this.

Playing a Scene

One of the most important points of playing a scene in The Glass Bead Game is that you have total control over the character you play. Anything you wish to say or attempt to do, happens. The outcome of your actions, however, might not be quite what you expected.

The important word here is “attempt.” Actions in which your character attempts to affect another character can become complicated, since stating what happens would take control from the player playing that character. Also, you may attempt an action which the other players feel is inappropriate thematically, or doesn’t work with how they’ve envisioned the characters.

When any of these situations occur the other players have a choice to make: they can either let the statement pass as is, in which case the stated action happens, or they can call for a conflict.

Conflict

During a scene, the player’s (or the character’s) intentions will come into conflict. One player will want the story to go in one direction, a different player will want another. The players involved in a conflict need not be currently playing a character -- an Observer may wish to countermand a statement made by a player currently in a scene.

Valid reasons for a conflict include: a character making an out-of-character action, disagreement on the actual results of an attempted action, statements not in keeping with a scene’s themes, and so on.

Any player in a scene may call for a conflict at any time. An Observer may pay a point at any time to do so. Any number of players may be involved in a conflict. If three players wish a situation to resolve in three different ways, it is a three-way conflict. Players may align their resources with an existing side with two players could combining efforts towards a single outcome.

Conflicts are broken down into several phases:

1. Declaration of intent

Once a conflict is clearly defined, with sides and the players involved established, each side declares its intent. This is simply answering the question: “What do you want to happen? What is your **intent** as a player?”

2. Stakes and outcomes defined

Next, all sides declare what is at stake - what can be won or lost, and what is their desired outcome by answering the question: “What will happen if you win?” This may require some negotiation, as players realize that they are not as

invested -- or are more invested -- than they thought. The outcome should be clear to all players before proceeding. It may even become clear, in negotiation, that there is no conflict at all.

EXAMPLE:

When Jill announces that her character will appear at the end of the scene, Neil disagrees. He describes a different ending to the scene - one in which his character (the Trigger) storms off, crying, leaving Star’s and Dan’s characters in an uncomfortable silence. Dan disagrees, thinking the scene should end in an explosive argument. Star thinks a moment, then throws her support behind Jill’s idea.

A three-way conflict has arisen, with Jill, Neil, and Dan -- having declared their intentions and the stakes involved -- now representing the three possible outcomes. Star places her resources behind Jill’s idea during the conflict.

3. Gathering resources

If there really is a conflict, all sides now gather resources in the form of points. Gathering resources begins with the player with the least amount of points and continues clockwise, with players placing markers of their color from the bank on either nodes in the central map or their characters’ map **if that character is in the current scene**. Observers involved in a conflict cannot gain points from their characters, though they can still harvest points from the story map.

As they place each marker, the player must make an argument for how the idea, theme, or concept is connected to the current conflict and particularly the outcome they desire. Such arguments are judged by any current Observers not involved in the conflict. If such an Observer does not exist, it is judged by and negotiated with the other players. In the case of a tie, the player is allowed to take the point.

As points are gathered from nodes, the open circles that were drawn beneath them in the first movement are filled in. Only a node with open circles remaining may be harvested from in this manner. For example, starting nodes (the emotions that the players placed on the map at the beginning of the first movement) can only ever produce a single point during a session.

Note that the duplicate nodes between a character map and the story map act as separate nodes for purposes of gathering resources. The story map’s node represents the general theme. The character map’s node represents that particular character’s view on that theme. Players can gather resources as long as they have valid arguments to do so. This continues until all players pass.

EXAMPLE:

Dan, having the least number of points, is the first player to gather points. Thinking that the results described by the other players are forms of tragedy, and that they may try to gain a point from that node, he announces that he's gathering a point from node 6 ("Tragedy"). He argues that his ending of an explosive argument is most definitely a tragedy: it marks the end of the involved characters' friendships.

The other players are unable to find fault with this reasoning, though Jill was really hoping to use node 6 for herself. Dan places a marker of his color on the node and takes another marker to represent the point he gained. He fills in one of the open circles beside the node and play continues with Jill attempting to gain a point from node 4, "Loss".

4. Claiming initial territory

Once players have gathered their resources, the boards are cleared. Each player in turn (again, starting with the player who currently has the least amount of points) places a marker on a node on the central story map that best represents their side of the argument. Again, arguments are arbitrated by uninvolved Observers or the other players and ties result in the player taking the node.

EXAMPLE:

During the resource gathering phase, Dan gained a considerable number of points, putting him ahead of Jill. Because of this, Jill is the first player to claim territory.

Again, seeing how the other players may attempt to grab node 6, and considering that it is connected to five other nodes, she takes a marker of her color from the bank and places it on "Tragedy," explaining why she believes her result fits the theme.

Dan disagrees, and the issue is put to a vote. Neil and Star both vote that Jill's argument is valid. Her marker is allowed to remain and it is now Dan's turn.

5. Bid for placement and expanding territory

The players now attempt to expand their area of influence by bidding. Players take any number of their point-markers and secretly place them in their hand. All players reveal their bid at once. In the event of a tie, all tied players may openly add markers to their bid until a winner is decided.

All points bid by all players are lost.

The winner is then allowed to add a marker to a node **connected to their initial node**, again explaining why it is a valid part of their argument and outcome. This placement is again arbitrated by Observers or the other players.

Ties result in the marker being added to the node. If a player fails to convince the arbiters he or she may not place the marker, and still loses any points that were bid.

Keep a running tally of how many points were bid by each player during this process, as it will be important in resolving the final outcome.

Step 5 is now repeated. If any players do not bid at least 1 point each repetition, they can no longer bid for placement and are finished. As long as players are willing to bid points and come up with suitable arguments for the nodes they connect to, they can continue spreading their zone of influence over the central story map.

6. Resolution

By this point, the players have staked out zones of influence on the story map that represent their arguments for how their outcome fits the map and the story being told. There may be nodes that are not controlled by any arguing party, which is fine.

The issue is resolved on the roll of the die or dice defined by the story map. In the case of a four-player map, this is a d12. The die will indicate which node is the Resolving Node. If the die comes up 6, then position 6 is the Resolving Node.

If the resolving node is part of an arguing party's territory, they win the conflict. The issue is resolved as they described it and the scene continues.

If the resolving node is not part of any party's territory, things become a little more complicated. If there is an obviously shorter route to one player's territory than any other's, that player is the winner **if he or she can fold the resulting node (and any passed on the way to their territory) into their result**. The final result might be slightly different than originally stated, so as to include the themes or ideas required. Arbitration is again done by Observers or the other players, with ties resulting in the player winning the conflict.

If the node is an equal distance away from more than one player's territory, the player who bid the most points wins the conflict, again, folding any new nodes into the result.

EXAMPLE:

After claiming territory, a d12 is rolled. It comes up 12 ("Revolution") which is a node no player claimed during the last phase. It is equally distant from all players' territory.

Comparing the points that were bid during the conflict, Jill is found to have spent more than any other player. If she can include the concept of "Revolution" in her result successfully, she will win the conflict.

Ending a Scene

The player who created a scene can call at any time for its end. Any other player can call for the ending of a scene at any time by paying a point. All characters in the scene now vote on whether to end it. In the case of a tie, the scene ends.

Play then proceeds to the next player clockwise, who chooses the next scene.

Timing Out

The third movement ends when the hour is up. Any scene currently being played out is wrapped up as quickly (and as meaningfully) as possible.

Fourth Movement: *Sonata Rondo* (10 minutes)

The fourth movement is where the session wraps up. A single Glass Bead Game is played over four sessions with the end of each informing the beginning of the next.

For each board in the game (the story map and each character map) do the following:

- For the story map, find the nodes with the most filled-in circles, those nodes which were used to harvest the most points during the course of the game. Make a list of the top ranked nodes equal to the number of players. These nodes will be used as the starting nodes of the story map for the next session, rather than the emotions that were used at the start of the first session.
- For each character map, find the top two nodes which produced the most points and have the most filled-in circles. These two nodes will create the next character map for that player in the next session.

Points do not carry over from session to session.

Any points remaining at the end of the fourth movement are returned to the bank. Players will have an opportunity to gain points during the first movement of the next session, as well as harvesting points during conflicts.

Finishing the Game

With the end of the final movement, you have everything ready for the next session. After going through the first movement you will have a new story map which, while thematically linked to the first, is completely different.

Faced with a new trigger node, players have several options for the types of stories they want to tell in future sessions:

- Triggers and stories can be thematically but not narratively linked. The game becomes a series of short stories whose characters are linked in meaning, but need not be the same people.
- Triggers and characters can be repeated with variations. The game becomes a look at a set of parallel universes: the same story from different perspectives. The characters can be pulled over completely, or be different people with some of the same qualities.

- The characters could be carried over via the top two nodes from the previous sessions: they could evolve, concentrating on different portions of their personality from session to session, with the trigger events moving either forwards or backwards in time. The game becomes a series of interrelated stories about the same set of characters, experiencing their personalities under different circumstances in their lives.

Future sessions are played in the exact same manner as described above, with one important difference.

In the fourth session, the Trigger Node does not define the beginning of the story to be told; it defines the end. It defines where the final story will end up. To open the story of the fourth session, players will need to discuss where they should start that session's tale, keeping in mind the ending goal described by the Trigger.

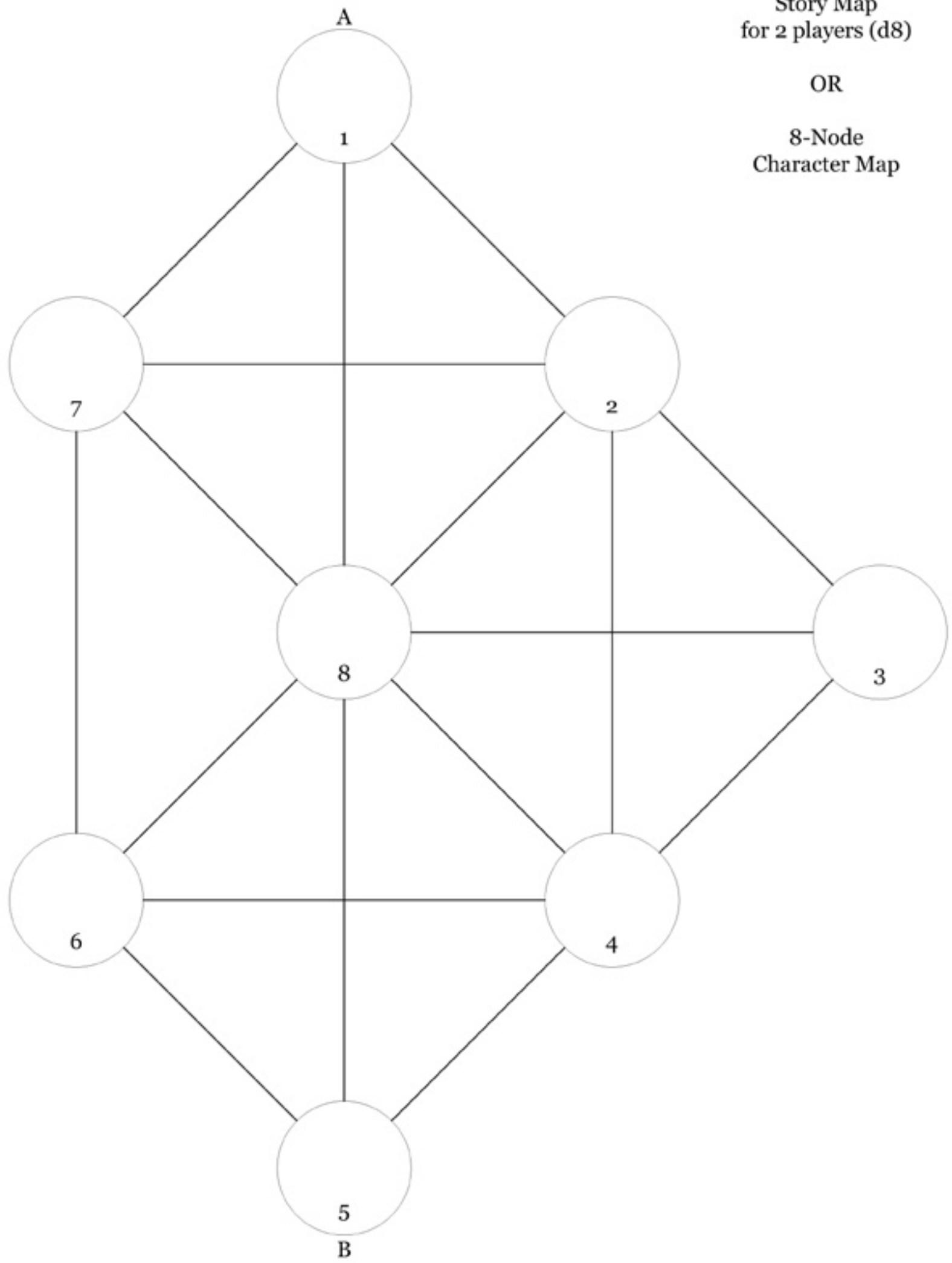
When the third movement ends, the fourth movement of the fourth session becomes a single scene involving all the player's characters, in which they play out the final Trigger Node, and the end of the game.

Hopefully the ending will resonate with all of the themes and ideas that brought the players to that point. Since each session's map is based on those nodes the players used the most, the final Trigger (and thus the final story) should be a natural evolution of the ideas the players have been playing with throughout the game.

Story Map
for 2 players (d8)

OR

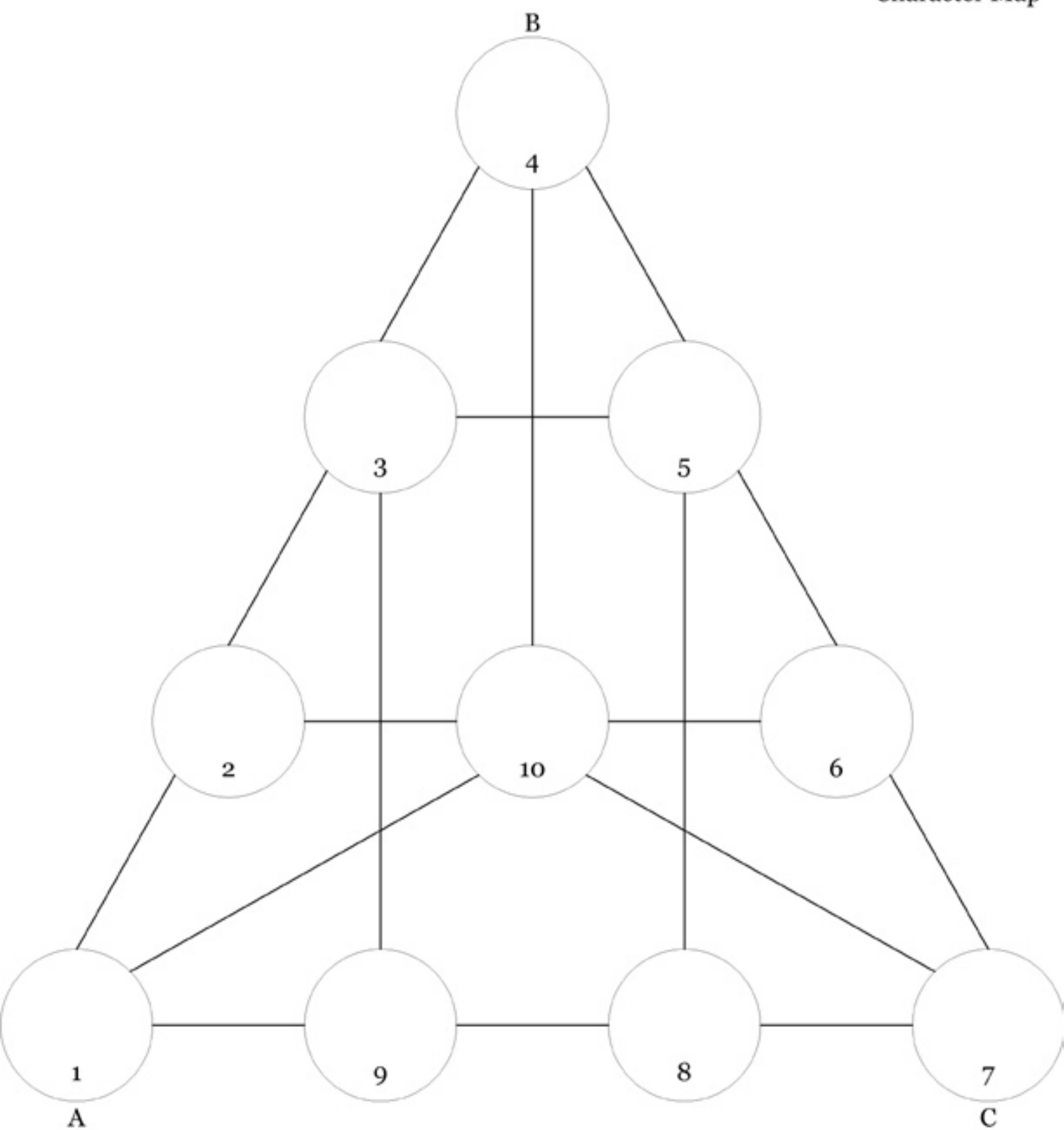
8-Node
Character Map

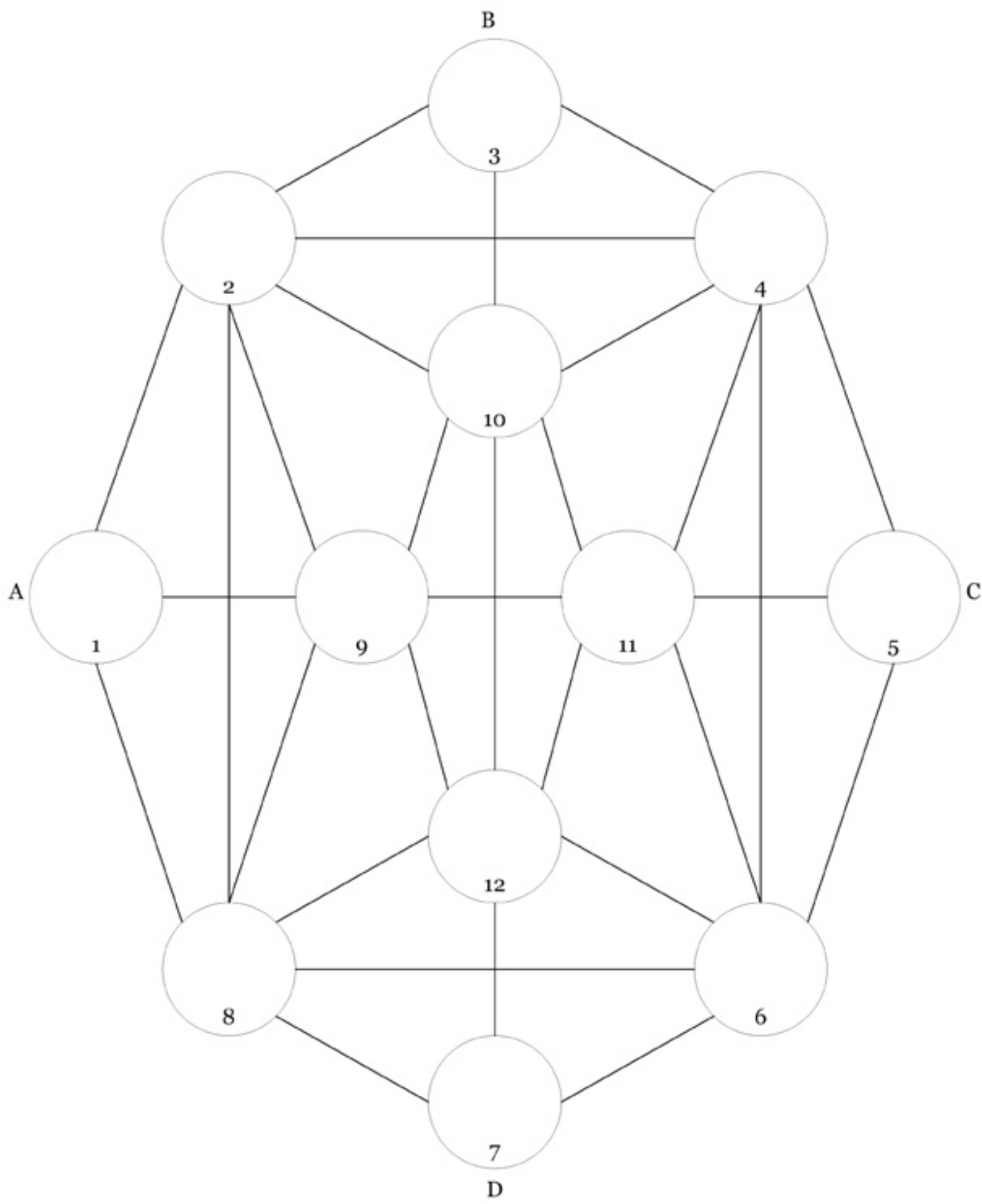


Story Map
for 3 players (d10)

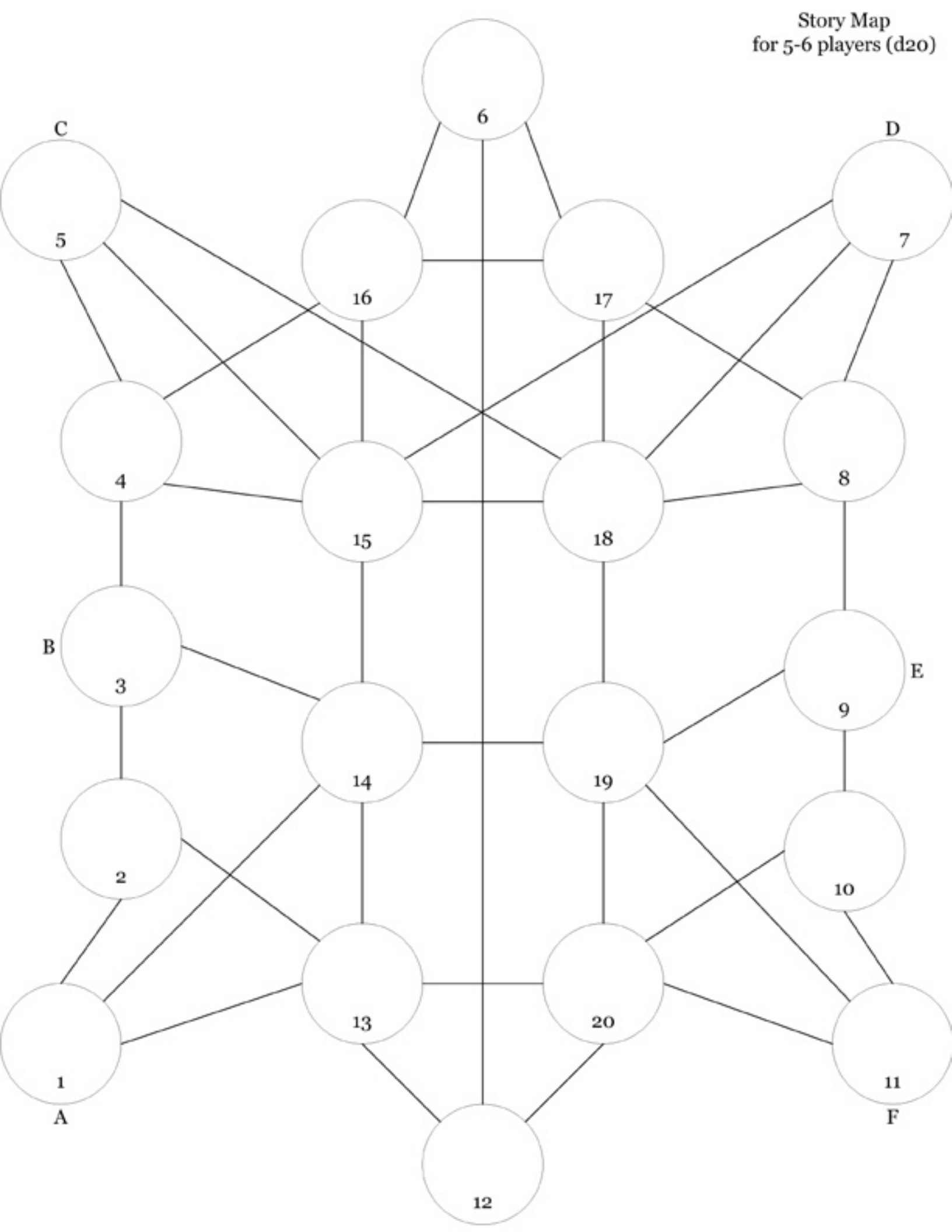
OR

10-Node
Character Map





Story Map
for 5-6 players (d20)



Creating Your Own Maps

After playing with the sample maps, players may wish to make maps of their own, with more or less nodes, or with particular patterns to facilitate a particular aspect of gameplay. This section of the rules details the general guidelines I used to develop the sample maps, and some ideas you may want to keep in mind when making your own. It also includes a set of variant rules for utilizing existing nodal systems (such as the Tree of Life).

My original concept for the maps was that of a “semiograph”; literally a diagram of signs, on which the players could map out the connective space between their original ideas.

The basic format I used was of a scattered outer edge where players could place their ideas and a more connected, coherent center which would interrelate the various combinations they came up with.

All of the sample maps follow the same general rules:

- Each map has a number of nodes greater two times the number of players for whom it is designed. This ensures that players will get at least two chances, on average, to fill in the map.
- Each node connects to at least three other nodes.
- Each map contains a number of starting nodes equal to the number of players. No starting node connects directly to any other and each one has exactly three connections. Each starting node is labeled with a capital letter. Preventing starting nodes from connecting allows each player’s initial move to only score one point, and be completely uncontaminated by any other player’s choices. The same number of connections allow each player’s initial input to have equal weight.
- The number of nodes of each map equal the sides on a polyhedral die. Each node of the map is numbered, in order starting from 1.

You obviously don’t have to follow these guidelines if you don’t want to. An interesting variant might be to have a differing number of nodes (such as 16) and using multiple dice (3d6 - with the 16 nodes numbered 3 - 18, inclusive).

Maps which use multiple dice should be numbered carefully. If, for example, your 12-node map used 2d6, numbers such as 7 should be placed towards the center of the map, as 7 is more likely to come up on 2d6 than any other number. Such nodes would make for an interesting competitive element, as players would more likely want to include them in their zone of influence during conflicts.

Story Map Variant

An interesting (but considerably more complex) variant would be to use existing semiographs (such as the Kabbalah’s Tree of Life) as story or character maps.

The nodes of the Tree of Life, called the Sephiroth, are an example of a sacred geometry and represent a map of reality, with each node having a particular meaning, such as Kether (the Crown) or Chokmah (Wisdom).

Using such a map in a Glass Bead Game would add another level of meaning, as players would have to take the pattern’s original meaning into account when filling nodes. An idea placed at Chokmah would have to both connect to all linked nodes as well as connect to the node’s original concept of Wisdom.

The Glass Bead Game

Summary Sheet

I. Allegro (30 minutes)

A. Create the story map

1. Each player places an emotion on a starting node. Each scores 1 point.
2. In turn, each player attempts to fill in new nodes connecting to previously linked nodes. Each is worth 1 point plus 1 for each connecting node. Place an open circle for each point.
3. All added nodes must be approved by all players.

B. Define the Trigger Node

1. The Trigger Node is the node which scored the most points when it was created.

II. Andante (20 minutes)

A. Choose Primary and Secondary Nodes

1. In reverse-score order, each player chooses a Primary Node.
2. In score order, each player chooses a Secondary Node.

B. Create character maps

1. Place Primary and Secondary nodes on character map.
2. Fill in character map, connecting each node to previously filled nodes. No points are scored during this process.

III. Scherzo & Trio (1 hour)

A. Scenes

1. Each player, starting with the Host, chooses a link on the story map as the next scene. Characters whose Primary or Secondary nodes are linked are in the scene, other players are Observers.
2. Scenes must thematically connect to the two nodes they link to.
3. Players have complete control over their characters, unless their actions come into conflict with other characters or players.
4. Observers may enter a scene by paying a point for their own character or the Trigger character or paying another player for the use of their character.

B. Conflict

1. Declaration of intent
2. Stakes and outcome defined
3. Gathering resources (in reverse-score order)
4. Claiming initial territory (in reverse-score order)
5. Bid for placement and expanding territory
6. Resolution

C. Ending a scene

1. The current player may call for the end of the scene at any time, other players may pay a point to do so.

IV. Sonata Rondo (10 minutes)

A. Final actions

1. Find and record the story and character nodes which provided the most points during the game.
2. If this is the last session, play out scene defined by the final Trigger Node.