

A Drop Too Many

WW2 Coup De Main dialogue game

The Dialogue Game

This is a form of interactive storytelling around a theme. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't - it depends on whether the players have a consensus of the nature of the story being told - the results vary from the realistic, to the amusing to the downright surreal. Its entirely up to the players. The best way of running this is to have all the players on the same side, as in a role playing game.

It is also essential to use a background period or situation that is familiar to all.

The basic rules are simple.

Given the situation each turn - each player writes a short description of the situation of a player on their right. This is short (you are only given a small bit of paper on which to write for this reason) - and must include three elements:

- a. An outcome of a previous turn/player action.
- b. A description of events - perhaps with some new information.
- c. A problem for the player.

Once everyone has written, the paper is passed to the player concerned and each person reads out their problem and announces publically what they intend, or would like to do about their situation. But they may NOT describe the outcome. Their announcement is like their 'orders' for the next round.

On the second round, you are writing for the person 2 to your right (not the person you wrote for last time - and the following turn it is 3 to the right and so on).

Having listened to the person you are writing for's stated intentions, you can write the outcome of their action, and pose a new problem for them. This way you never decide the impact of the problem you set.

Almost anything goes - so long as the players collectively accept that the description is plausible. No dice are rolled, ALL outcomes (including those of combat) are determined by the descriptions written by the players.

This all sounds jolly complicated, I hear you say. It isn't - it is much clearer once you start playing.

A quick example:

Imagine a Napoleonic Brigade defending a ridge. The five players are the Brigadier, 3 battalion commanders and an artillery battery commander. The various forces are represented in a wargames table just like a conventional wargame. Initially, just the British are placed on the table.

On the first round Player 1 writes for Player 2, Player 2 for Player 3...and so on.

Player 1 writes:

"Player 2, looking across the valley sees two French regiments forming for the assault. He notices that one of two men of his battalion are looking nervously to the rear."

When the turn comes, Player 2 announces that he will ride up to one of his Sergeants and instruct them to speak severely to the men". The French regiments he had 'spotted' are added to the table top

On the next round, Player 5 is writing for player 2. He writes "Player 2 speaks to his sergeant, who immediately sets off to remonstrate with the wavering solders. Out of the corner of his eye he sees the French are starting to advance. A cannon shot whistles past his horse who shies and throws him in the mud."

The French regiments are moved closer....

At the same time the other players will have been doing similar things.

Later the French assault might the British Line. The result will be mentioned (hopefully) in the commanding player's note written by another player - such as "In the smoke and confusion, you think you can see the French recoiling in front of your steady troops. A stray shot knocks your hat off. You see the 3rd Battalion wavering on your left."

Often, attempts to 'stitch up' other players will be made by giving them nasty surprises. Of course after a short time the victim gets to write for the perpetrator, so revenge is always on the cards. Or another player might wish to help an ailing player out of a hole, and so will describe a beneficial outcome. Usually these games are a balance of good and bad outcomes - the outcome of the battle usually depends on this balance - if the players are very competitive, the game becomes one of retreat and defeat - if cooperative, their side usually 'wins' the battle.

The Scenario

You are members of a platoon being landed by glider onto a key target in a secret location. The target is a bridge over a fast-flowing river. Capturing this bridge intact will facilitate the rapid advance of our armies and the inevitable swift conclusion of the war before christmas (as usual).

The Horsa glider carries your platoon of 22 men, as follows:

HQ Section

Lt Jonathan Crowe	Rifle
Lcpl Graham Evans	Sten
Pvt 'Tyke' Robinson	Rifle, 2" mortar
Pvt 'Smoggie' Smith	Rifle, 2" mortar no. 2

1 Section

Sgt Ian 'Lanky' Drury	Sniper Rifle
Cpl John Curry	Sten
Lcpl Bob Cordery	Bren
Pvt 'Chalky' White	Rifle, Bren No 2
Pvt 'Taffy' Jones	Piat
Pvt 'Nobby' Clarke	Rifle, Piat No 2

2 Section

Sgt Mike 'Killer' Curry	Sten
Cpl Tim Gow	Rifle
Lcpl Tony 'Hawk' Hawkins	Bren
Pvt 'Ginger' White	Rifle, Bren No. 2
Pvt 'Jock' McTavish	Sniper Rifle
Pvt 'Paddy' Murphy	Rifle

3 Section

Sgt Rob 'Coop' Cooper	Rifle
Cpl John Bassett	Bren
Lcpl Jim 'Windy' Wallman	Rifle
Pvt 'Scouser' McGuinness	Rifle, Bren no. 2
Pvt 'Geordie' Cameron	Sten
Pvt 'Pie-eater' Perkins	Sniper Rifle

The Germans are not expecting a raid this far from the front, and will almost certainly be composed of just old men and boys.

The action starts after the platoon has landed and the platoon has gathered itself for the rush on the bridge.

The plan is simple - take the buildings at either end of the bridge and hold on until help arrives (probably only a couple of hours at worst).

Game Layout

All you need is a large map or terrain model, including a wide river, a bridge, and some trenches, buildings and bunkers. Counter or figures representing the troops involved, plus loads of spare enemy troops and vehicles to be brought in as the story develops.

You will also need paper and pen for each player to write the dialogues.

Ideally, between 4 and 6 players, each of which will be a key character in the platoon.