

Muse Quick Reference

2017 FREE EDITION

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Setup

You will need these materials:

- 1 standard 54-card deck of playing cards, with the Jokers removed
- 30+ tokens
- Pen & paper

Here's how to set up the game:

- Deal 3 cards and 1 token per player.
- Place the remaining cards face-down as the draw deck.
- Put the Crisis Yes, Crisis No, Yes 1 and No 1 Answer Sheets into the middle of the table.
- Keep the Story Sheet handy.
- Choose a random person as the first Narrator. Subsequent Narrators have their turns in clockwise order, or in random order depending on Show-downs and Jump Ins.

Card Maximums

All hands and Subplot Answer Sheets are limited to this number of cards:

- **2 players:** 8 cards
- **3 players:** 7 cards
- **4 players:** 6 cards
- **5-6 players:** 5 cards

If you're Narrator then discard any extra cards of your choice at the end of your turn. Listeners discard immediately.

Story Seed

Choose either an *existing story*, an *original story* or a *genre/tone*.

Brainstorm

Do a 5 minute warm-up activity that gets players moving, drawing and laughing. Next spend 15 minutes brainstorming past events, characters, scenes, goals, relationships, and conflicts. Apply these brainstorm rules:

- Write your idea down + announce it
- No criticism
- Build on the ideas of others

Fill Story Sheet

An idea gets written down if 2 players agree with it and nobody strongly objects.

- **3 Characters:** Main characters in the story (don't have to be good!).
- **2-3 Scenes:** Interesting places where action can take place. Like a scene in a play.
- Add a bit of extra flavour text for each character and scene.
- **1 Goal per Character:** A character's strong desire. Must be transformative (e.g. a journey). Put main characters in conflict with each other.
- **1 Relationship per Character:** A conflict or close bond between this character and another character/group. Make sure that each main character is connected to the others somehow.
- **1-2 Threats:** A current or future event that puts the main characters (and/or their goals and relationships) at risk. It forces the main characters into action.
- **1 Crisis Question:** The central question of the story. It should hinge around the protagonist (the leading character) obtaining their goal against opposition. "Will Character X do Y?"
- **1 Subplot Question:** Allows a main character to advance toward their goal, challenges the character in achieving their goal, or actually accomplishes that goal outright. "Will Character X do Y?"

If you're not using the official Muse Story Sheet then draw a box to the left of every character, goal, relationship, scene and

threat. This box is for adding checkmarks during narration.

Do You Like This Story?

Review the Story Sheet. Modify it as necessary until every player is satisfied and willing to play.

Taming the Chaos

To keep Narrations reasonable, follow these rules:

- **Respect the Story Seed:** The Seed defines expectations of what's possible in the fictional world.
- **Only Add New Story Information:** Don't contradict previous narrations. You *can* show that something players *thought* was true was really false.
- **KISS Principle:** narrate the obvious next step in the story.
- **Code of Conduct:** Never say "And it was all a dream..." Don't include profanity, graphic violence or graphic sexuality unless all players agree to it.
- **Can't Answer a Question:** Questions can only be Answered after a Showdown.

Narrator's Turn

As Narrator you can do the following actions:

- **Draw 1 Card** under the following conditions (max 1 card per turn):
 - You added colour/description to an unchecked element from the Story Sheet (add a checkmark to the element now).
 - **After all story elements have been checked off:** A Listener hands you a card from the draw deck because they liked your narration.
 - Your hand is empty.
- **Support an Answer** by playing a card/token from your hand onto an Answer Sheet. Cards go on Subplot Questions, tokens go on the Crisis Question. You now own the Answer Sheet. *This action ends your turn.*
- **Start a Showdown:** Ends your turn. Don't call a Showdown on the Crisis Question until after players *Bring on the Climax*. Each Answer Sheet must have an owner, at least 2 cards/tokens, and be at a dramatic cliff-hanger in the story.
- **End Your Turn:** at any time if you wish.

Showdowns

Showdowns work as follows:

- Reveal the cards on the Answer Sheets.
- For each side, set aside all but the lowest card.
- The currently winning player has the highest ranked card. Aces are high.

Suits are from best to worst: Spades, Hearts, Diamonds and Clubs. Ties are impossible!

- A pair beats a single card, three-of-a-kind beats a pair, etc.
- Anyone not on the winning side can Turn the Tides by playing 1 or more cards of the same rank onto the losing side, so long as the card(s) played are better than what's on the opposing side.
- Listeners become Supporters for a side when they Turn the Tides for it. They can only Support one side at a time per Showdown.

A winner is declared after no-one can or wants to Turn the Tides again:

- **The Showdown winner** and all Supporters get 1 token each. The Showdown winner becomes the new Narrator and narrates the answer of the Question.
- **The Showdown loser** and all Supporters draw and split a number of cards equal to the total number of cards played during the Showdown. The losing side owner keeps any uneven remainder.

Listener's Turn

As a Listener you may do the following:

- **Listen to the Story**
- **Jump In:** To interrupt the Narrator and take over the current turn. Works as follows:
 - Players bid cards face-down.
 - Listeners must always outbid the previous bid.
 - The Narrator can match the highest bid to win. Otherwise the highest-bidding Listener wins.
 - A winning Listener becomes the new Narrator and can optionally erase the last few sentences of narration or prevent the Narrator from *Supporting an Answer* or *Starting a Showdown*. The Narrator gains all of the winner's bid cards.
 - A winning Narrator stays Narrator. The highest-bidding Listener keeps the Narrator's bid cards.
 - Players can only Jump In once per turn!
- **Draw 1 Card** if your turn gets skipped after someone Jumps In.

Call a Time Out

Anyone can call a Time Out at any time to:

- Take a break, discuss, or retroactively change the story.
- **Raise a Question:** only if there aren't already 2 Subplot Questions in play and the option to *Disallow New Questions* has not been triggered.

- **Bring on the Climax:** The Narrator may now *Start a Showdown* for the Crisis Question.
- **Disallow New Questions:** Players may no longer *Raise a Question*, and once the last Subplot Question has been answered this automatically *Brings on the Climax*.

Epilogue

The game ends when the Crisis Question gets answered. To *Start a Showdown* on the Crisis Question:

- The players must have agreed to *Bring on the Climax*.
- Each Answer Sheet must have an owner and at least 2 tokens.
- The Crisis Question must be at a dramatic cliff-hanger in the story.

The final Showdown works as usual except for:

- Each side owner draws 1 card per token and uses these as the cards for that side.
- **The winning side owner** tells the Epilogue for the story. Keep it brief because no-one can Jump In.
- In clockwise order from the winner **each winning side Supporter** can add to the Epilogue.