

# Muse Quick Reference

2017 FREE EDITION

---

Copyright © 2017 [Jonathan Benn](#), Some Rights Reserved. Design by Jonathan Benn and Paul Taliesin. Contents made available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International license](#).

---

## 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.