

A Letter from the Publisher

Here are some music, movies, TV shows, books, and people that give you an idea of the vibe I'm going for with Misspent Youth. Too bad paper doesn't have hyperlinks.

Music: Rage Against the Machine, Anti-Flag, Bikini Kill, Public Enemy, Dead Prez, Cocksparrer, Stiff Little Fingers, The Clash, Ani DiFranco, Year Zero by Nine Inch Nails

Movies: Turk 182, SLC Punk!, A Clockwork Orange, ET, A Scanner Darkly, The Corporation, The Animatrix: Kid's Story, River's Edge, Mean Creek, Stand By Me, The Goonies, Home Alone, The Breakfast Club, Ocean's Eleven (2001)

TV: The Boondocks, Avatar: The Last Airbender

Books: Feed by MT Anderson, His Dark Materials by Philip Pullman, King Dork by Frank Portman, A Scanner Darkly by Philip K. Dick, Snow Crash and The Diamond Age by Neal Stephenson, Runaways by Brian K. Vaughn

Historical figures/movements/personalities: Monkeywrenching, Noam Chomsky, Morgan Spurlock, Michael Moore, The Weather Underground, Earth First!, The Open Source Movement, The Yes Men, Malcolm X, Howard Zinn, Mario Savio, The Yippies

Welcome to Misspent Youth! Thanks for trying out this ashcan version of the game. You're in for lots of fun gaming.

Introduction

Misspent Youth is a science fiction game about friendship and rebellion. It's a roleplaying game, which means that you create a world and pretend to be people you're not. It's a story game, which means that you use the game to create story-shaped fiction in real-time as you play it.

The protagonists in the game are called Youthful Offenders (or YOs), and are kids between 12 and 17 years old. The antagonist is called The Authority, and is the force that's fucking up the world and making it a generally shitty place to live. One person will play The Authority, and the others will each play a single YO.

Player ownership over the characters is less firm than other roleplaying games you may be familiar with. To play this game, you need to be open to the opinions of others about what would make a good story, and you need to be vocal about your own opinions too. Don't be a pushy asshole about it, but share your ideas and expect others to do the same.

So that I don't have to engage in verbal gymnastics, I will frequently, say, refer to the player of a YO as a YO or a YO player. It's important though that you keep in mind the separation between player and character, here. I know the difference. I just want to minimize torturous language like "the person playing the Authority" when I can just refer to "The Authority."

Since the English language is prone to accidental sexism, I try not to use third person singular pronouns, pluralizing when possible. When doing so would make a sentence ugly or stupid, I will randomly determine the gender I'm using. Usually I try to avoid this bullshit altogether by speaking to "you."

I've played Misspent Youth a lot. It's fucking awesome. You're going to have fun with it. In fact the fun in this game is so highly concentrated that it violates drug laws in some areas.

What you need

To play Misspent Youth you need 4-6 people, two six-sided dice, paper, pencils, and someplace you can be loud and not distracted.

The Greatest Enemy of Truth

For anyone to give a fuck about the bad guy, you have to make it really interesting. It's got to be something that's going to piss you off royally. This is true even if you're going to play The Authority (shit, it might even be more true if you're The Authority). Since everyone needs to be bought into the villain, and since a good villain will help you create protagonists you give a shit about, you create that villain as a group at the start of the game.

After you create the Authority, you're going to flesh out some of the details of the world and then begin to define the clique that the Youthful Offenders are a part of. Once these steps are done, you can get to creating the little badasses that are going to raise all that hell.

Authority creation

Every Authority doesn't have to be Big Brother, in control of every part of society. If you want to have an Authority that's got that much control and power and legitimacy, good for you! But it's equally valid to have something fucking up the YOs' lives that's as marginalized as it is, or something in between.

You might already have an idea for what you want The Authority to be, or you might want to examine the options here and build a bad guy from the ground up. Either way is cool.

As you make decisions on what The Authority will be, write it on a sheet of paper that's going to be shared with the entire table. The Authority has the following characteristics:

- * Name
- * Description
- * Vice
- * Visage
- * Victim
- * Need

Name & Description

This stuff is self-explanatory. You don't have to come up with a name and description at the outset, but do it before you finish with this section. The description is just a few sentences about what this thing is; it should help to explain the traits you choose below a bit more.

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TRAITS

So I just tossed out this word "traits" like you know what it means. Well you probably do, but you might not know the specific meaning I have in mind for it. In this game (and lots of others like it), traits are the basic game-unit of description for characters and things. They act as flags that tell you what's important about a character and they serve as a guideline to keep in mind when roleplaying the character.

There are two kinds of traits in Misspent Youth. Traits can be closed (which means they're selected from a limited list), or they can be open (which means that you write in a few words to create the trait).

By the way, closed traits aren't exclusive. Let's say you pick "Smart" when you're making your Youthful Offender. That doesn't mean you're not tough as well. It just means you're not Tough. It means she may be able to take a few knocks, but ultimately what she's about is being Smart.

Other players will be looking at your traits a lot, to know how to act and what to do to be interesting to your character. Look yourself, too. Keep in mind what your character's about and play these things up.

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Vice

The Authority's vice is the underlying emotion or motivation that it acts out of. Why does it do what it does? What's at the root of all the fucked-up shit it's engaging in?

Sadism: A sadistic Authority is all about causing pain. The agony it gets off on may be physical, psychological, or both. These freaks are usually irrational and impulsive, likely to make unstrategic decisions just to fuck with you.

Greed: This Authority is driven by an insatiable and undeniable hunger. Most of the time it's out for money, but obsessive acquisitiveness can be felt for shit other than the dollar.

Fear: The Authority's all full of bluster and shit, but at base it's just a scared little kid. Most bullies are motivated by fear, but watch your ass; it doesn't make them any less likely to bust your head open.

Stability: This Authority is all about keeping things exactly as they are now. It hates a world of constant change and finds this one perfect and controllable.

Utopianism: Utopian Authorities think they know what's best for you, and they really believe whatever fucked-up scheme they have will make world a better place. Watch out for what "better" means, though, 'cause it sure as shit ain't gonna be something you'll like.

Visage

This is all about what form The Authority takes. What kind of face it wears tells you how you're gonna attack it and take it down.

State: The Authority is the cops, the courts, the Feds, the holder of "legitimate" reins of power.

Corporate: Business interests, big or small. Could be anything from a street gang to an interstellar megacorp. Whatever the scale it's got one principal: make it for a dollar and sell it for two (or ten).

Religious: They say they got a direct line to God, or a dead sci-fi writer, or the Transcendental Loving All, or whateverthefuck. They'll operate out of received wisdom that can't be challenged and whisper soft words while they tape your mouth shut.

Personal: It's just one guy! Someone with personal magnetism and a vision. Should be easy to take out, right?

Systemic: This kind of Authority has no face spit in, no body to threaten, no headquarters to stinkbomb. It's a process: a drug culture, a civil paranoia, a way of thinking or doing things.

Victim

The Victim is whatever the Authority is killing, consuming, ruining, perverting, controlling, and generally fucking up.

Humanity: It chews up people somehow. Usually that means killing them; sometimes it means enslaving them or driving them insane.

Nature: The Authority commits crimes against nature, the world, animals, plants, and natural processes; everything from clear-cutting tree-whackers to a twisted asshole who likes to hurt puppies to a cult in a creepy house on the hill churning out four-assed monkeys.

History: These are the kind of people who put out history books that say America was this big empty land waiting for white people to come and make shopping malls.

Progress: Why change things? Things are just fine how they are now, right? This Authority usually wants to stop technology from getting out of its hands, but sometimes it gets all squicked out by social change, like weirdos falling in love in strange and secretly exciting ways.

Freedom: Freedom of choice, speech, religion, the press, movement, all of these things and more are anathema to The Authority. People sometimes say inspiring things, print embarrassing facts, and go places they shouldn't. The Authority believes in total lockdown.

Need

This is a sentence or two telling what The Authority wants and what will happen if it gets its way. What would happen if the YOs didn't exist?

[EXAMPLE]

So let's say you had an idea for a world which was this wonderful, magical Utopia where everything was handed to you, but where people were killed when they reached 18. Let's say there were a group of policemen dedicated to preserving this order called the Sandmen. (Let's say. . . .)

So we'll call them The Sandmen, the description we give is: "The police force which collects people when they run away from the sacrifice ritual, or when they disobey the strict edicts of society."

So that's name and description, now we move on to traits. You can make an argument for Stability, maybe even Fear for Vice. But c'mon, it's right there, this has to be Utopianism.

For Visage, you could argue that at root the game is about the Systemic Authority that uses the Sandmen as its pawns. However, since you picked the Sandmen for The Authority's name and description, it's clear that you're more interested in dealing with the police force itself as the bad guys. So that makes a Visage of State.

Now what are they preying upon? This is tough. The Sandmen kill people, they have created a domed bubble city where all the natural life is controlled, they have eradicated the history of this culture, they do not permit any social or technological forward movement, and they certainly control the actions and activities of the populace to a great degree. However I think it's safe to say the thing they're most about is killing people when they get too old. So we'll go with a Victim of Humanity.

Finally, the Need. This is kinda hard, too. It's rather passive to just say that society will stay the way it is. I mean, that's clearly what the Sandmen want but it doesn't provide a lot for you to fight against and be angry about. Maybe if the YOs don't win, the Sandmen will get freaked out by this first-ever challenge to their

authority and wind up overreacting, accidentally wiping out the human race.

[/EXAMPLE]

World Creation

Motifs

Now that you know what The Authority looks like and whose cookie jar it's got its hands in, it's time to figure out what kind of world you're kicking around in. In this stage, each player (even the one playing The Authority) creates a science-fiction trope in the world. These facts get used to help generate plot points and can be useful in coming up with characters on the fly.

The Motifs the Youthful Offenders come up with empower the Authority in significant ways, so it can be helpful to do theirs first. Make sure you come up with really horrible shit so you can make characters who'll be pissed off about it. Don't make it such a total lockdown that there's no room for your YOs to kick up some trouble, but give The Authority teeth.

The Authority's contribution then gives the YOs a crack into which they can slip and fuck shit up. Again it's important that the kids not be given the store, nor that they be totally neutered.

This sci-fi-y shit can be technological (laser guns! flying cars!) or it can be social (galactic imperium! families are illegal!). Also make sure to communicate a lot here. People can get stumped; help them out when you see them struggling or ask for help when you're stuck.

It's also important that anyone can call bullshit on something if they think it sucks. Don't be a dick and undercut people's input, but you also shouldn't let something get thrown into the setup if it's going to bug you. Let's say someone shouts "laser guns and flying cars!" and you were thinking something much more grounded. Say so! But be nice about it.

When you've got these worked out, record them somewhere central so everyone can refer to them in later stages.

Rating and Themes

What kind of a game do you want to have? What content should be in it, and what shouldn't? How "adult" is it gonna be? This is important stuff to talk about so you don't freak someone out later.

First, decide on what the rating for the game is going to be. You might use your country's film rating board, or the video game or television rating system. Look into what goes into these ratings; you might find some interesting stuff. For example, you can only say "fuck" one time if you want to have a PG-13 rating.

Next come themes. Pick three from the following list that you want to see explored and "on the table" during your games. These are things that are going to come up a lot and you can use them to flesh out your characters and come up with plot twists and story ideas.

- * Sex
- * Violence
- * Race
- * Class
- * Gender

- * Drug use
- * Hate speech
- * Homonegativity
- * Other

Again, record this centrally so you can keep referring to it as world and character creation progresses and during stories.

The Clique

What kinds of rebels are you going to be? Are you a band? A skate club? Rogue EMTs? What draws you together and why do you stick together? Come up with something interesting and grabby. I pretty much guarantee that if you say "classmates" you'll be bored. At least make them classmates that are in detention together all the time.

Once you've figured out what you guys are as a unit, decide if you want to give yourselves a name. Once that's worked out, put the name and a brief description on the world document you've been using so far.

Now comes casting. Brainstorm a bunch of character concepts that should be in the game. Treat it like you're TV writers figuring out who your recurring cast is. Come up with about twice as many concepts as you're going to need. The concept is best as a short, 2-3 word phrase; something flavorful, but don't go overboard. For example: "little hothead," "dumb and strong," "rich kid," etc.

This part is like making microwave popcorn; at some point the ideas are going to come more slowly and eventually stop. Try reading the list off once or twice and seeing if anyone can think of any more. Once that's done, move on to the next step.

One player--probably the Authority player--reads off the concepts. When you hear one you really like, tell people. If no one else wants it, it's yours. If someone else does, negotiate. You also might want to consider combining two of these concepts. You can have a lot of fun slapping together shit that seems really weird at first: rock-star scientist, the badass coward, or the graffiti artist vigilante.

Once you've got your concepts, time to make your dude.

Lil' Bastards and Riot Grrrls

Now that you know what The Authority is all about and you've done casting (p. XX), it's time to make the snotnosed meddlers that are going to make the Authority regret waking up in the morning. Making your Youthful Offender isn't shit you keep to yourself; everyone else should get the chance to cheat off your paper. A lot of times if other players are stuck on one of their own decisions, hearing what you have can help unstick them.

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As you make character creation decisions, put them on Your Permanent Record, which you can photocopy out of the back of the book (p. XX).

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Non-Trait character decisions

All characters need to have a name, an age between 12 and 17, and a gender. You can do this out front or wait until later. Characters also need to have three simple physical characteristics, each no more than two or three words (these are called "Looks" on Your Permanent Record). When you're making up a story together, it helps to know what the characters look like. Note, however, that none of these are traits (p. xx).

Traits

Traits are what matters when it comes to beating the Authority's fucking smirky face in. All that shit I said about traits earlier (p. XX) is valid here, too. Take a gander at it before you move on.

YOs have 5 traits: Mistreatment, Motivation, Means, Schtick, and Glitch. The first three are closed and the last two are open. Keep in mind that even when they're negative, traits are used to win conflicts. You'll be saying stuff like, "No, now we're winning because of my (insert trait here)."

All of your traits start out "free" but they won't stay that way. Free traits are youthful, naive, and idealistic. While they're sometimes dark, they're still "pure." During game play you may find yourself about to lose a conflict to The Authority and decide "Nah, fuck that!" You can sell out, win that conflict, and take on the "sold" version of the trait. For closed traits these sold values are predetermined, but for open traits you erase the free version and write a new, more fucked-up one to replace it. When you write down your closed traits on Your Permanent Record, write the free one, then the sold one after it. This is so you can see where you're headed. I'll tell you more about selling out traits later (p. XX).

Mistreatment

There's got to be some reason that you can stay out til all hours of the night hacking police systems to uncover dirt on the implants they're putting into prisoners or smashing the windows on upscale bistros that secretly serve human flesh. Clearly, your parental units are defective. This trait is about how they fail you.

Choose one of the following:

Abused: You're the victim of one or more kinds of abuse. Abuse sells out to Abusive: you're feeding back into the cycle.

Neglected: You're either an orphan or your parents are infrequent visitors in your life. Neglected sells out to Misanthropic: People? Fuck 'em. I don't need them. They're a bunch of shits anyway.

Fostered: You're taken care of by disinterested caregivers: paid workers, robot nannies, etc. Fostered sells out to Cold: Emotions just don't matter that much.

Spoiled: You get everything you want, stay out as late as you want, buy whatever you want. Spoiled sells out to Selfish: You deserve to have every little whim satisfied.

Sheltered: Every corner was rounded off and you were never burdened with decisions as a kid. Sheltered sells out to Dependent: You can't do shit on your own.

Motivation

Most kids (and adults for that matter) respond to The Authority's bullshit by politely doing as they're told. You don't. Why not? What makes you so special? Why do you care what happens to other people? What the hell possesses you to put yourself in such danger?

Choose one of the following:

Outrage: You're filled with a holy, pure anger. Injustice drives you bugfuck crazy and you won't sit still for it. Outrage sells out to Wrathful: You become consumed by a directionless spite that burns anyone in your way.

Pride: You know you're a worthwhile person who doesn't have to put up with this shit. Pride sells out to Arrogant: Not only are you good, you're better than everyone else, even your friends.

Altruism: You have this deep and undeniable need to help people in trouble. You can't help it, it's reflexive and sometimes it winds up fucking you. Altruism sells out to Manipulative: You've been other people's patsy long enough, time to get yours!

Optimism: The world wasn't meant to be this way and you can change it. Optimism sells out to Cynical: Yeah, you know how the world should be, you're just sure it's never gonna be that way.

Thrills: You're addicted to danger and there's nothing hotter than counting The Authority's coup. Thrills sells out to Nihilistic: Your need for sensation and danger intensifies to the point of self-negation.

Means

How do you go about fighting The Authority? What's your approach to problems? What are you good at?

Choose one of the following:

Tough: You're a bad-ass, able to dish out and take physical punishment, able to withstand The Authority's psy-ops. Tough sells out to Brutal: You tend to take shit too far when it comes to giving someone a thumping.

Bad: You're the bad kid, the outcast, the leather-jacket-wearer. You specialize at ostentatiously breaking rules. Bad sells out to Perverse: Now you're just being a freak for its own sake, engaging in some profoundly fucked-up behavior in a compulsive need to break every boundary.

Smart: You're a friggin' genius. Some people know a lot about one thing, you know a lot about most things and a ridiculous amount in a few areas. Smart sells out to Pedantic: You're always correcting people, pointing out small and irrelevant errors, and proving to everyone how bright you are.

Cool: People want to be you or be with you. You break new ground constantly and when you talk to people you make them feel important. Cool sells out to Trendy: You've gone from a ground-breaker to an avid follower who fakes it.

Fast: Agility, athleticism, quick-wittedness; you're a hebephrenic ninja-weasel on crank. Fast sells out to Efficient: Everything is so much more ordered and directional now. That's better, right?

Schtick

This trait describes your main technique for beating The Authority. It could be a set of skills, a "job," or a particularly salient personality characteristic. You're the (insert Schtick) guy/girl. Write a short phrase to describe this trait. If it sells out, you will erase it and replace it with something darker.

Glitch

This is your heroic fatal flaw, a youthful and innocent failing that helps you beat The Authority even though it fucks with your life. You may not sell out Glitch unless you've sold out all your other traits. Write a short phrase to describe this trait. If it sells out, you will erase it and replace it with something darker.

[EXAMPLE]

I like Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash a little too much. YT is practically the reason this game exists. So I want to make a character like her but I don't want to be a lameass copier.

Anyway, our clique is going to be an illegal courier service, and I pick the "crazy-overconfident chick" and "the innocent" as concepts. I decide Randy is going to be a 15-year-old girl.

At first, I'm kind of tempted to go with Abused or Neglected for Mistreatment, but then I remember she's supposed to be "the innocent." I decide that Sheltered seems to fit best; her parents never let her do anything which was fucking maddening for her.

It doesn't take me even two seconds to decide that Randy's got to be Thrills/Nihilistic for Motive and Fast/Efficient for Means. No-brainer.

So after writing these down on Your Permanent Record, I start thinking about what to do for a Schtick. I decide I wanna go nuts: "Hot-assed hoverboarding parkour ninja delivery girl!" The exclamation mark is central to the trait, and it must be spoken in a single breath.

Now for Glitch. I think I need to address the whole innocent thing a little more, and I want to give her a third dimension as well. So at first I'm thinking something like "Trusts too easily" or "Reckless with more than her ass" or "Talks a big game but is actually pretty innocent." I ask my friends for help because I think all these suck. We come up with "In over her head." I like it 'cause it's got levels to it.

[/EXAMPLE]

Death or Glory? Just Another Story

Each episode of Misspent Youth takes place over seven scenes which are intended to model the "three act structure" common to many movies, TV shows, plays, and novels. Episodes start with questions the YO players ask of each other about their friendship. The game then moves on to the seven scenes, which are:

- * Exposition
- * First Plot Point
- * Heating Up
- * First culmination
- * Midpoint
- * Climax
- * Denouement

There's another type of scene that lives in the gooey middle of the ones mentioned above: the interstitial scene.

Friendship questions

At the start of each episode, ask the Youthful Offender player to your left a question about the friendship between your characters. Either the question or the answer must introduce an Authority Figure (AF), a character or force that belongs to The Authority. If you don't introduce an AF in the question, then you strand your friend with coming up with one in the answer.

The question doesn't have to be something that was asked in-character. Decide that between yourselves. It's also supposed to be about something that's happened in the characters' past together. You can make up huge things in characters' backgrounds with friendship questions. For example: "After we slept together why didn't you want to tell your big brother?" (Authority Figure, right there!) Don't abuse this "power." If you introduce something shitty about your friend's character that's going to ruin it for her, you're an asshole. Check with her if you're going to put something out there that you think might freak her out and be willing to retract it if it does.

If you're stuck on what to ask, take a look at the character's Permanent Record. There might be traits there you can work with. If you're still stuck, check out the motifs (p. xx) and themes (p. xx) for the series. Combining a motif, a theme, and/or something off the character sheet is a great way to get inspiration and to reinforce the feel of the world you set up together.

The Authority needs to record the questions and answers at this stage in order to reference them later in the episode.

The Tag

Misspent Youth is a game about friendship. One of the ways it's about that is the friendship questions, and another is the Tag. The Tag is some fun-to-hold-fiddle-with item that sits on the table and gets passed around. (I personally like to use a Jungle Speed totem.)

Whenever you rely on someone, ask for help from someone, say something like, "You're good at this," you claim the Tag. The Tag is a reward for copping to the fact that you need other people, for making their characters look awesome, and for making sure that the game stays about friendship. Whenever you make someone awesome, you get the Tag.

The Tag can only be transferred once per scene and a scene can't end until the Tag has passed. Once you have it, the other kids in the clique are looking to your character as the leader. This doesn't mean they become yes-men or zombies, but they are going to look at your character to see what they should be doing.

Unfortunately, this also means that The Authority is looking at you, too. When you've got the Tag, The Authority focuses its attacks on the shit you care about: your stuff, your family, and so on. The Authority player will ask you things like what the stakes of the scene are or might even get scene framing ideas from you. That doesn't mean you don't involve your friends in these decisions, it just means that The Authority can't imagine that you'd bother.

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Scene framing

Scene framing means describing how a scene starts out. For almost all scenes, The Authority has this power. He says where things start, who's there, what they're doing, and might even say how they're feeling or what happened just before the scene started. That doesn't mean he doesn't check in with everyone else both to see if it's okay with them, and to ask for help with ideas. Remember, The Authority plays a gigantic asshole, he doesn't get the right to become a gigantic asshole.

The YOs are assumed to be in every scene together; if not physically in the same location then it is assumed the action will cut frequently between them or they'll be in communication. If you really don't want to be in the scene, tell The Authority player that and he can decide whether to honor that. Keep in mind though, the way conflicts work you might be fucking your friends over by not being available to be in the scene.

The Authority will also frequently tell you the purpose of the scene from a fictional level. Work with him to try to achieve this purpose. More on that in the descriptions of the individual scenes.

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The arc

So this is where I start talking about the seven scenes I mentioned earlier. This part is pitched mostly at The Authority, but the more who read this the better the game will go.

The descriptions for the scenes will give you the name for the scene, the purpose, any special notes you need to be aware of, and the "default claim choices." That doesn't mean shit to you now but it will after you've read about the conflict system (p. XX) and then you'll be happy it's there.

While I'm talking about conflict: each scene should also have a conflict in it. Again, you'll grok that better when you get to that chapter but in brief: at some point in each scene The Authority should try to impose its will on the Youthful Offenders, and they should stand up for themselves.

Scene X: Interstitials

I'm going to start out the description of the story arc by not talking about the story arc yet. Instead I'm going to tell you about interstitial scenes.

Interstitials are the only kinds of scenes that YOs can frame. They're moments of character exploration which do not interact with any of the mechanics. Thus, the Tag doesn't pass and there are no rolls. Interstitials are more likely than other kinds of scenes to not contain all the Youthful Offenders.

The Authority may ask if anyone wants an interstitial between plot scenes, or a YO may ask for one.

Scene One: Exposition

The exposition scene usually serves to help us get to know the characters, see their interpersonal interactions, and maybe see them experiencing their everyday lives. On the other hand you can start the exposition scene in the middle of some big, splashy action, though the purpose of this action is to give us an intense look at what the characters are like.

The exposition scene also establishes the inciting incident for the episode. The inciting incident is the first important thing that pulls you into the story. When you talk about a movie and go, "It's about XYZ," that XYZ is probably the inciting incident. In Misspent Youth this is most often an attack on The Authority or a reaction to an attack by it.

The easiest way to come up with an inciting incident is to look at the motifs, themes, and friendship questions and have an Authority Figure aggressively fuck with something that the players care about in a way that pulls in one or more of the motifs or themes you've been given to work with. The YOs' reaction will usually result in an inciting incident. Good YO players will participate in this process, too, helping the table come up with a bitey incident.

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Finding the Conflict

At some point in each scene, you're going to need to find a place for the conflict to happen. The first moment where the Youthful Offenders do something that The Authority would want to prevent, call for a conflict.

Or, don't. Let the first one go. The more they can get away with, the more creeped out they'll be, knowing that The Authority is going to do something in the scene.

The conflict doesn't have to happen in a moment of action, though that's often a good place for it. A moment of tension between the YOs is another good place to call for a conflict. Sometimes you can take a seemingly minor event and give it really big implications by making it the focus of a conflict.

More on conflict in the conflict article (p. XX).

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Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO
- * Conflict
- * Establish the inciting incident

Claim: 3 or 11

Scene Two: First Plot Point

By this time, you know what the inciting incident is and you've seen where the Youthful Offenders are at emotionally, physically, and interpersonally. It's time to get shit moving. The first plot point scene should focus on a reaction to the inciting incident by the YOs, The Authority, or both.

Planning Phase: What I find very useful at this stage is for all the players--including the one playing The Authority--to work out the outline of a plan that the YOs will implement to attack or defend from The Authority.

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Sometimes players can get kinda freaked out by The Authority player getting involved in the planning, but you need to get over that shit. The person playing The Authority is another player at the table and is just as involved in making the story. In fact, as The Authority your main job is twofold: pretending to be people that piss off and scare the YOs, and making sure the story is moving forward. You're not there to fuck the YOs' plans over, and the other players need to know that.

You're telling stories about heroes, heroes who everyone wants to win if you've created an odious-enough Authority. In order for those heroes' win to be exciting their adversaries have to be fucking assholes that you're dying to see taken down. You and the YO players are both in this to make a great story together.

[/SIDEBAR]

There are a few ways for The Authority player to get involved in the planning. What I find most productive and helpful is to ask the YOs what their plans are, then ask what steps they need to take in order to carry out the plan. If they're stuck on an element, or they're completely locked up, I'll usually say "May I make a suggestion?" or "What if you do this?" You may notice I'm being really pussy-footish here, as though I don't believe my own claim that you're just another player who is there to make a good story. Because of the fucked-up history of the RPG hobby, people might feel overly deferential to you. Keep an eye out for this and don't let them. Be polite, be gentle, or mock them for being wimps. Whatever works for you.

The planning phase is very helpful to you if you're playing The Authority. Take a look at the scene structure outline (p. XX) and map the steps of the plan on to the scene structure. Don't get married to this plan, though. The requirements of the structure and the outcome of conflicts will fuck it up. Know this. Expect this. Fucking celebrate when this happens. It means your story is alive. If the plan gets fucked sideways, wait until the dust has settled and ask the YOs how they're tinkering with their plan to cope with its having gone tits-up.

One last note on the planning phase: this can be in-character, out-of-character, or some monstrous hybrid. Ask what everyone's comfortable with and roll with that. You can try skipping the planning phase, but I wouldn't recommend it. A YO plan is a really helpful

framework to build scenes around and the game might suck ass if you don't make one.

Implementation and Plot Point: So now that they've got a plan, the YOs need to act on it. Role-play out the first phase, the one you've assigned to the first plot point scene.

At some point in the scene you've got to introduce the first plot point. Usually it's best to wait to do this until the conflict for the scene but sometimes it can work just before the conflict or in the direct aftermath.

Plot Point: Plot points are important things that happen in a story that intensify or take the story in new directions. Choose one of these. Feel free to kibitz over which one to use at the table, if that's your style.

Reversal: Shit goes from bad to good, or from good to bad.

You're following a small fighter craft toward a moon, only to realize it's not a moon after all.

Discovery: We learn something significant we didn't know before that makes everything that's come so far look completely different.

The bad guy turns out to be your dad.

Complication: Something gets in the way of the plan.

You escape the blockade only to have your hyperdrive fail on you.

Catastrophe: Something really fucked-up happens that seems to yoink story off the inciting incident entirely.

A lovable rogue gets frozen in suspended animation and carted off to who-knows-where by the bad guys.

Which kind of plot point to use will often seem obvious given what just happened in the story. That is to say, sometimes you'll be looking back at what's happened and saying, "Oh, that was a reversal."

Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO.
- * Reaction to the inciting incident
- * Planning (not a must really, more of a should)
- * Acting out the plan (again, should (though must if you have a plan))
- * First plot point
- * Conflict

Claim: 3 or 11

Scene Three: Heating Up

This scene is one of intense action or interpersonal conflict. The YOs take in the first plot point, react to it, adjust their plan if necessary, and move forward. The plot point is intensified and further explored and new elements about it are revealed.

It's helpful to take a look at the reformulated plan and frame this scene around the next interesting part of it. During this scene you also should introduce another Authority Figure (one of the ones from the friendship questions perhaps) to fuck with the YOs. It might be best to introduce the AF at this point but not have it confront them fully or directly yet.

Take some time to explore the plan here. This might be a longer scene than most others; in the classical plot structure, a large portion of the story takes place during this phase. This is a build up to when the shit really starts to fly.

Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO.

- * Deepening investigation of the first plot point
- * Introduction of an AF (should, not must)
- * Slow build to things getting really tough
- * Conflict

Claim: 4 or 10

Scene Four: First Culmination

As the tension mounts, in this scene the YOs should seem close to achieving their goal effortlessly just before everything falls apart.

Develop the plot further, have the earlier-introduced AF take a stronger role or pull another one in. Develop the plan further, challenge it. In fact, you might want to have the plan appear to succeed and end at this point. A false ending is a very fun way to go, and would introduce great dramatic irony since everyone knows it's not over yet.

Since the YOs should seem close to things coming together (or believe they've achieved their goal), it might not be a good idea to have the conflict determine the success or failure of this part of the plan. If you choose to do that anyway and the YOs fail, you should consider how to end the scene on something of a high note.

Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO.
- * Plan about to come together
- * Conflict

Claim: 2 or 12

Scene Five: Midpoint

At this point in the story, the YOs have to be pushed to their nadir. All hope should seem lost and they're gonna have to scramble mightily to get their shit together. The Authority player needs to make the villains and situations as fucked-up, wrong, and cruel as the rating (p. XX) and themes (p. XX) for the series allow.

Again, an easy way to get into this scene is by having it be about an element of the plan. If it seemed like the story was over in the last scene, this is where you show the audience that there's a whole other level to explore.

As in the first plot point scene (p. XX), introduce another plot point here.

Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO.
- * All hope is lost!
- * Introduce a new plot point: reversal, discovery, complication, or catastrophe (p. XX).
- * Conflict

Claim: 6 or 8

Scene Six: Climax

Ok so the YOs are thoroughly fucked now, right? Well this is the scene where they recover from their setback and directly confront The Authority.

This scene should address in the stakes of its conflict whether the YOs' plan will succeed or fail, whether they will be able to affect the change they want in the world. This is what it's all about. By the end of this scene the inciting incident will be resolved definitively.

By the way, the YOs don't have to win. Tragedy can make great stories.

Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO.
- * Do the YOs win or lose?
- * Conflict

Claim: 5 or 9

Scene Seven: Denouement

Whew. It's over. Now what? Give yourselves a scene of reflection, recuperation, and maybe even retreat if you fucked up really badly in the last scene. This scene should be quieter, should give plenty of room for character exploration, and should ideally give a hint at what's ahead in the next session.

The scene should also be shorter than most. Don't overstay your welcome. A good way to get a handle on this scene is look at any friendship questions which haven't been addressed yet and explore them.

Musts:

- * Claiming of the Tag by a YO.
- * Take a breather
- * Conflict

Claim: 2 or 12

Aftermath

Finally, when the action and story is over, take a minute as players, entirely out-of-character, to talk about what you've just been through together. Reminisce and enjoy what you came up with. Then decide what motif (p. XX) you want to add to the world creation document that you made when you started the series. Decide if it's going to be one that empowers The Authority or the YOs. An easy way to make this decision is to look at whether the YOs succeeded in the climax; if they won the session, the motif should probably empower them. It doesn't have to follow on directly from the events of the episode if that doesn't make sense, however.

Throwing Your Body upon the Gears

The conflict system is the part of the game we use to resolve actions by the Youthful Offenders that The Authority opposes. While you could just talk about whether certain things will happen or not, the conflict system allows for unexpected shit to happen and can lead to fun and exciting moments of storytelling which pull the story in new ways you could not previously anticipate.

You've got to have one (and no more than one) conflict per scene (p. xx). When the point in the scene arrives where The Authority would want to stop what the Youthful Offenders are doing, that's usually a good place to start using the conflict resolution system.

All conflicts are between The Authority and the Youthful Offenders. If characters are fighting with one another, then mechanically what they're fighting against is The Authority's influence on their friendship. They're striving to stop that caustic presence from fucking up their love for one another.

Also, all conflicts are group conflicts. That is, in all conflicts all characters are assumed to be participating. If they're not there physically, then they can still take part in the conflict through the impact they've had as friends on those who are there.

Here's how conflicts work.

Calling a Conflict

The Authority decides when all conflicts. You should probably consult the other players before doing so, however. A good sentence to use when introducing the conflict is, "I think we've got a conflict here." Sometimes people want to play things out a bit before involving this system. Again, remember that you're playing dickheads, but you don't get to be one to your friends if you're The Authority.

Also, if another player says, "Hey I have an idea for a conflict," hear her out even if she's not The Authority. The Authority has the final say but, again, shouldn't be a jerk.

Intent

The process begins when The Authority declares what it wants out of the conflict. An easy way to frame intent is to say something like, "If I win," something happens. That "something" is the intent. Intent should be a large-scale thing. You don't say, "If I win, you guys don't get the door open." That kind of smaller-grain detail will come later. Instead you'd say something like, "If I win, you guys get bad data from the computer that's in the office behind the door."

The Authority then asks the player with the Tag (p. xx) what will happen if the YOs win the conflict. These intents are mutually exclusive, and as such you're best served not just stating the opposite ("If we win, we get good data!"). Negation of my intent is implied by you winning your intent. Therefore, choosing an intent that is tangential to mine is probably more interesting and fun.

You should negotiate both sides of intent until either outcome will make for an interesting story. If either side says, "I don't care if you win that," the other side probably has a shitty intent which should be reframed.

The Authority doesn't need to declare intent first and if you're stuck, you can ask the YOs what they'd like. For that matter, if either side is stuck they should ask the table for suggestions on refinements.

Also, just because The Authority is asking the person with the Tag what the YOs' intent is, it doesn't mean that person has sole authority to declare intent. There should be some discussion among the YOs. Again, don't be a dick to your friends.

Deciding intents is probably one of the most important parts of the conflict process. Take time with it. But don't take so much time that you don't play the fucking game.

Make note of the intents once they've been decided upon. Maybe even consider writing them down for reference later.

[EXAMPLE]

Ok, if The Authority wins, the Cute Alien (C.A.) gets recaptured by the government scientists. If the YOs win, they get C.A. to his mothership with enough time for a tearful goodbye.

[/EXAMPLE]

First roll

Just a brief note before you read on that's important to know: The Authority never rolls the dice. The only people who roll dice in this game are the Youthful Offenders.

Take out a photocopied version of the conflict resolution map (p. xx) and set it on the table. The Authority declares what it's doing to get what it wants and to deny the YOs what they want. This declaration must be something that does not achieve its intent, but rather will if unopposed.

[EXAMPLE]

Terry, who is playing The Authority, says, "The Feds are on your tail. They know you sprung C.A. and send out an APB or something."

[/EXAMPLE]

At this point, The Authority asks if anyone's going to stand up. The first YO player to say that she will, or to grab the dice, is the one taking action.

Now I'm talking to you, YO players: do not say what you're going to do. I know you want to. I can hear your buzzing little brains. You've got all these awesome ideas! You want to pick up the dice and say, "I'm going to ninja block him then spit in his face and look awesome using my Fast trait!" Shut up! Don't speak! Don't do it!

It's ok to look at your sheet, review your traits, and think, "Do I have anything that applies here?" If you must it's even ok for you to come up with a plan. Don't get wedded to it, though. And for god's sake, don't say anything yet. You'll see why later.

Ok, you've got the two six-sided dice. Now roll.

On the first roll, no matter what number you hit, you are countering what The Authority did. Pick a trait, put a marker on the number you hit on the conflict map, and write that number next to the trait on Your Permanent Record. You cannot use that trait again for this conflict.

You then narrate what your YO is doing that would lead to success for the kids if The Authority let things stay as they are. This narration needs to make sense for the trait you chose.

[EXAMPLE]

Judd, who plays Ethan, says that he'll stand up. He rolls and gets an 8, which is not the best number he could have gotten, but almost.

Judd says, "Ethan's Smart and knows the back roads through the woods. He and his brother Matt get C.A. into the basket of his bike and he goes racing off in the woods toward the landing site."

[/EXAMPLE]

The Authority now claims some numbers. In the "Death or Glory? Just Another Story" article (p. xx), each scene description gives two possible values for "Claim." You place a marker on the conflict map on 7, and one on one of the other two possible Claim numbers for that scene. This number should be on the opposite side of the line on the conflict map from the one that the YO rolled.

[SIDEBAR]

[CHART]

Allowed claim numbers by scene

Scene 1, Exposition: 3 or 11
Scene 2, First plot point: 3 or 11
Scene 3, Heating up: 4 or 10
Scene 4, First culmination: 2 or 12
Scene 5, Midpoint: 6 or 8
Scene 6, Climax: 5 or 9
Scene 7, Denouement: 2 or 12

[/SIDEBAR]

[/CHART]

[EXAMPLE]

Terry puts a marker down on 7. Since this is scene six, the climax, she can claim either 5 or 9. As 5 is on the other side of the line from Judd's claim, 8, she puts a marker down on 5.

[/EXAMPLE]

But what if the YO claims one of the numbers that The Authority should have access to on the first roll? That's a two-part answer. If the number the YOs hit is something other than 7, you just choose the other number of the two available to you.

[EXAMPLE]

If Judd had hit 5 instead, Terry would have to claim 9.

[/EXAMPLE]

On the other hand, if the number the YOs hit is 7, then they lucked out big-time. The Authority chooses one of the two numbers available to her for the scene, and that's all.

[EXAMPLE]

Let's say Judd hits 7. Fucking awesome! Terry grumbles and chooses 5 because it's her favorite number or something.

[/EXAMPLE]

When the numbers are claimed, The Authority narrates how the YOs' actions are being countered, and what it's doing to achieve its intent.

[EXAMPLE]

Terry says, "The Feds have you terrified, and as you're hitting bumpy patches in the trail your fear gets the better of you. You're in danger of losing control of your bike. Who's gonna stand up?"

[/EXAMPLE]

Second roll

Again, if you're first person to step up, you're the one who rolls. Again, do not state what you are doing yet. Planning is ok, keep your fucking yap shut, etc. Now roll.

At this point there are three possible outcomes: you will hit a number The Authority claims, you'll hit a number the YOs have claimed, or you'll hit an unclaimed number.

If you hit a number The Authority claims, the YOs have lost, and The Authority describes how. If you hit a number the YOs have claimed, you win! You describe how you get the intent you declared at the start of the conflict. If you hit an unclaimed number, put a marker down on that number, write the number down next to a trait on Your Permanent Record, announce what that trait is, and narrate as in the first roll, above. The conflict then moves on to the third roll.

[EXAMPLE]

Judd has claimed 8 with Ethan's Smart trait and Terry has claimed 7 and 5.

Eppy, who's playing C.A., grabs the dice. He rolls a 9. "I'm going to be using . . . C.A.'s Schtick, 'Psychic alien cutie-pie.' He takes control of the bike telekinetically and it rises up into the sky, passing in front of a full moon."

He puts a marker on 9, and the game proceeds to the third roll.

[/EXAMPLE]

[SIDEBAR]

Winning Through Someone Else's Trait

It's possible--quite likely in fact--that you will win a conflict by hitting a YO number you don't own. In this case, your character wins through the actions, influence, teachings, etc., of that character. Maybe you learned a trick from him, or you bucked up your courage because he's fighting beside you, or you saw how he deals with this kind of shit. Describe how you are winning with his trait.

[/SIDEBAR]

If you lose, you may choose to sell out one of your traits. If you do this, you steal victory from The Authority by acting like it, and winning. If the trait is a closed one, permanently blacken out the free version of the trait. If it's an open trait, erase the old version and write a new one in, something darker and more Authority-tinged, and indicate that this is a sold-out trait in parentheses. Remember that Glitch can't be sold out if you have any other free traits. From this point forward, the sold version is your trait for that category. It will never come back in play as the free version.

If you win by selling out, it's important that the narration include you acting in a really fucked-up way. Yes you won, but you went too far and it changed you in some way. There should be a palpable sense at the table and from the other characters in their roleplaying that they acknowledge how fucked that was.

[SIDEBAR]

Should I Sell Out?

Just because you can win a conflict by selling out doesn't mean that you have to. Do you want to take the fiction in that direction? Is this the right place for you to lose? Might the story be even better for you losing? Would taking this moment to become a little more fucked-up make the game suck or feel wrong for you right now?

Ask yourself these questions, and take the time to consider them. Also, keep in mind that once one Youthful Offender has sold out all of his traits, that session is the last one of the series. Are you ready to let it end yet? Has the clique accomplished everything they wanted to?

[/SIDEBAR]

Third (+) Roll

The Authority now claims the lowest-ranked value that hasn't been claimed yet. The rankings, from lowest to highest, are 2 and 12, 3 and 11, 4 and 10, 5 and 9, and 6 and 8. If you can choose between two values at the same level, you must choose the one that has less claims on the same side of the line. If there is a tie, pick whichever one you want to.

[EXAMPLE]

Judd has claimed 8 with Ethan's Smart trait and Terry has claimed 7 and 5. Eppy has 9 locked up with C.A.'s "Psychic alien cutie-pie" Schtick trait. Terry has to claim 2 or 12, and since two of the three claimed traits are on the same side as 12, she must claim 2.

"Hooray, you're flying!" Terry deadpans. "Too bad he doesn't know how to land the thing. The bike flips over and Ethan and C.A. are thrown to the ground. Who's doing something?"

[EXAMPLE]

The conflict then continues as before. Someone chooses to go, rolls, and moves forward. Continue in this way with The Authority slowly gaining more and more of the board, until the conflict is resolved.

Exercising Your Authority

I've said it several times: you're playing an asshole but you shouldn't be one. This article is all about that. Not just avoiding bad things, though; I also want to talk about how you get to be good at running this game.

Guide the story, don't control it

As Authority, your primary responsibility is twofold: portray opposition that is entertaining and that the YOs are eager to defeat, and keep an eye on the requirements of the story structure and make sure they're being met. As with many traditional RPGs, you're responsible for the story and the other players are responsible for their characters.

However, being responsible for story doesn't mean you have sole authorship over it. YO players are responsible for their characters, but they take input from you and from one another during character creation and during play. Other players have every right to create new things, push the story forward, etc. It's just that it's your job to make sure that the needs of the story structure system are being met.

Here's a "secret." You want the YOs to win just as much as they want to win. Also, none of the choices you make can stop them from winning. It's true. Take a close look at the conflict system (p. xx) and you'll see. Wanting them to win and wanting to make a great story are not incompatible with playing tough opposition that makes them feel pushed to the breaking point. It's being driven down hard like that that makes eventual heroic comebacks so exciting. It's being driven like that, also, that can make failure in the end so heartbreaking and wonderfully tragic.

Framing a scene

You have to frame every single goddamned scene in this bitch, so you're gonna be stumped from time to time. That's totally cool. No one should be looking to you as the magical font of ideas and light. If you're stumped:

- * Look at the friendship questions, motifs, themes, and the plan (if there is one).
- * Ask for help if you're stuck; your friends will help you.
- * Ask whether anyone has a scene they want to see.
- * Lay out the requirements of the scene and ask, "So how should we start this one?" or something like that.

Flags

Read the characters' sheets over and over again throughout the game. Pitch your AF characters at the YOs' traits. You've got someone who's Abused, Thrills, and Fast? Give her a big, slow, cruel chick to fight. Have to decide what The Authority is trying to do right now? Review its traits, and its Need.

Furthermore, make sure the other players know what one another's traits are and encourage them to play up to one another's strengths.

[NOTE]

This section is likely to be expanded as "you do this at your table but you didn't put it in the game" reports come flooding in. Anyway, that's my excuse for its abrupt ending.

[/NOTE]

End of the Line

The last episode of a series is reached when one of the Youthful Offenders has sold out her last trait. At the end of that episode, create your motif and then it's time to figure out endgame.

For Your Character

If you have more sold out traits than free traits, then you've given up on the struggle and have become just another asshole adult who's likely to push people around. Yeah, sure, you did good back in the day but conformity is around the corner. Narrate what happens in your character's life after the series is over with this in mind.

If you have more free traits than sold out ones, you grow up but you don't become part of the machine that grinds up everything good in the world. You've managed to enter your adulthood with a spark of that idealism and freedom intact. Narrate what happens in your character's life after the series is over with this in mind.

If you're in a position to have this hopeful ending, you can give it up to redeem someone. You may choose to sell out the rest of your traits (make the changes to Your Permanent Record) and liberate one of your friends who ends the game sold out. Narrate how you accomplish this. The first person to claim this privilege for a particular YO is the one who gets to do it for him.

For the World

Now you need to decide what happens to the world at large. Does The Authority get its Need? Do the YOs write a new future?

This is really a process of negotiation among all the players (YO and Authority) at the table. Review what has passed in the episodes so far and decide what seems like a reasonable outcome for the world.

You can use the added motifs (p. xx) to help you decide what happens next. Are most of them hopeful and positive or are they mostly new systems of control? The balance here can help you decide if it's a positive, tragic, or mixed ending.

Optional Rules

There are a bunch of rules in this game, and while I'd encourage you to play the game as written through for at least one series, you might want to try fucking with them a bit to make the game more fun for you. We call this drifting or hacking, and it's totally cool to do to a game. Here are some ideas I've had for hacks. Let me know how these work, and if you come up with some new ones I'd love to hear about them.

Sharing/Rotating Authority

So you took the Authority role at the start of the series. Maybe you want to be able to fight against it, too. If you're a YO, maybe you'd like to be the bad guy once in a while. If so, you can change the person who plays The Authority from session to session. There are two basic ways to go about this: rotating characters or sharing them.

Since rotating is the less-crazy version of this I'll start with that. It's pretty simple, really. In the session where you're playing The Authority, your YO isn't present. Make up a reason and roll with it.

It's important that each character get played in roughly the same number of episodes. Every conflict a character isn't in puts more stress on the others; you'll be constantly called upon to sell out your traits and this other freeloader isn't doing shit.

Another way to handle this is to mix up who's playing what character from episode to episode. Maybe you do it randomly, maybe there's a sequence.

Fucking with traits

The trait system as constructed is a good balance: it gives you a strong framework in the closed traits to help you build a character concept, but gives you room to author something unique and flavorful about your character with the open traits. There are a number of fun ways to screw around with this, though.

Closed-trait options: If you can think of other options that should be available to you for one of the closed traits, swap them out or add some. For example, let's say you thought Rich should be one of the choices for Means. What would its sold version be? Will it be a sixth choice for Means, or will you use it to replace Bad?

You might even think of rewriting entirely what one (or more) of the closed traits are. Think that Mistreatment should be replaced by Opportunity (so you've got Means, Motivation, and Opportunity)? Go for it. Come up with choices for free traits and their sold opposites.

Opening closed traits: Why don't you take this shit lying down? Why not write up why rather than picking from a list? Easy enough to do, though you lose some of the idea-framework goodness that you get out of closed traits.

Closing open traits: Want to define five different ways that people fight The Authority? Maybe everyone is a skatepunk, a hacker, a street thug, a social engineer, or a secret insider. Don't forget to come up with the sold versions of these traits, though.

Open Authority traits: Maybe The Authority's Vice isn't Sadism. Maybe it "Psychically Stores Pain Energies."

Setting Hack!

Look closely; Misspent Youth doesn't have to be a science fiction game. A friend pointed out to me that you could totally play this game as teenage fighters in the American Revolutionary War. 50s street gangs, pirates, mischievous anthropomorphic animals, whatever you want, I'm sure you can find a way to wrench the system into shape.

If you go this way, you want to come up with a motifs list that addresses the genre you're going with. Also, think about what "selling out" means. It might be straight, easy, and obvious, but the genre you chose might not lend itself so easily to simply selling out or being free

Inspirations and Acknowledgements

Influences

Here are some games that had a big impact on me in designing Misspent Youth.

Dogs in the Vineyard by Vincent Baker and FATE 3.0 by Evil Hat played a big part in open traits. Dogs gave me the idea, and FATE helped me figure out how to write punchy ones. Dogs also gave me the idea of how to implement conflict resolution on the meta-scale (intents), yet to allow for resolution that felt a little tasky and had some back-and-forth to it.

The World of Darkness games by White Wolf were the inspiration for having three "splats" in the closed traits. I spent many a year playing these games and the framework that three choices of five possibilities each can give you is really powerful.

Because of the lifepaths in Burning Wheel by Luke Crane, I tried to structure the closed traits for the Youthful Offenders and The Authority in chronological/developmental order. If you squint and tilt your head sideways, you can see that.

The Shadow of Yesterday by Clinton R. Nixon taught me that if you construct the system such that players can succeed if they push hard enough, it makes the game kick fucking ass.

It was a dissatisfying game of Cybergeneration by Firestorm Ink that lead me to want to design Misspent Youth in the first place. While the system didn't work for me, I was captivated by the idea of a game where the juvenile shit-talking you do with your friends around the table would be non-anachronistic and thematically appropriate.

My Life with Master by Paul Czege gave me the wonderful idea of group creation of the antagonist. It's such a great idea that I have, on several occasions, forgotten it came out of his game and credited myself with this as an innovation in Misspent Youth.

People

These people deserve thanks and more for helping me, pushing me, and giving me shit when I needed it.

Judd Karlman for introducing me to hippy games, for being my oldest friend, and for coming up with the idea of selling out traits at a Dreamation designers' roundtable.

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