TweetQuest

MMO Stories 140 Characters at a Time*

*including spaces

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Who?

FLYING LAB SOFTWARE

ARENANET

WIZARDS OF THE COAST®

XBOX 360

Carbine STUDIOS™

MMO Quest Text: The Common Perception

MMO Quest Text: The TweetQuest Way

The TweetQuest

xXSargeXx Cory Herndon

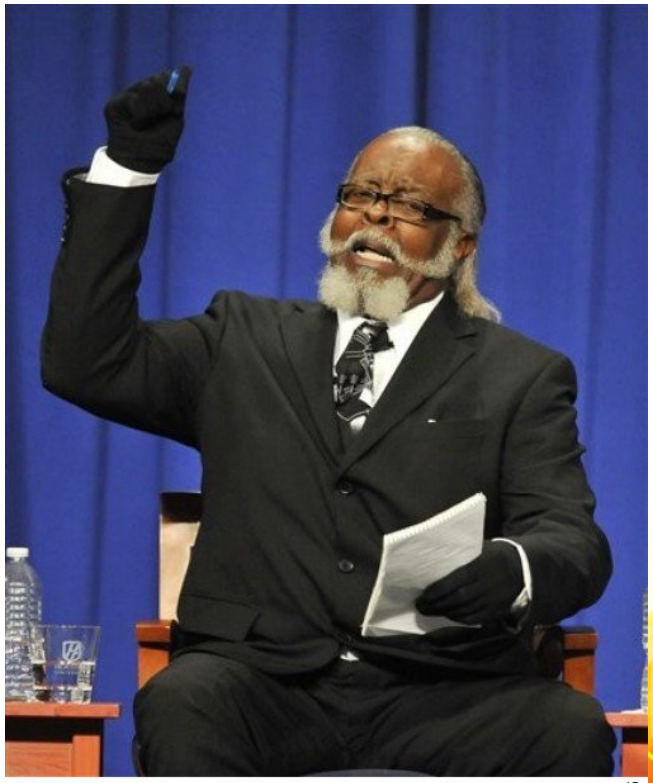
Many players want stories in their MMORPGs, but may not read a huge wall of text. Your job? Write text so short they can't help but read it.

An ever-increasing number of seconds ago

(The above “tweet” is 140 characters with spaces.)

Key Points

- Most MMO quest text is too damn long!

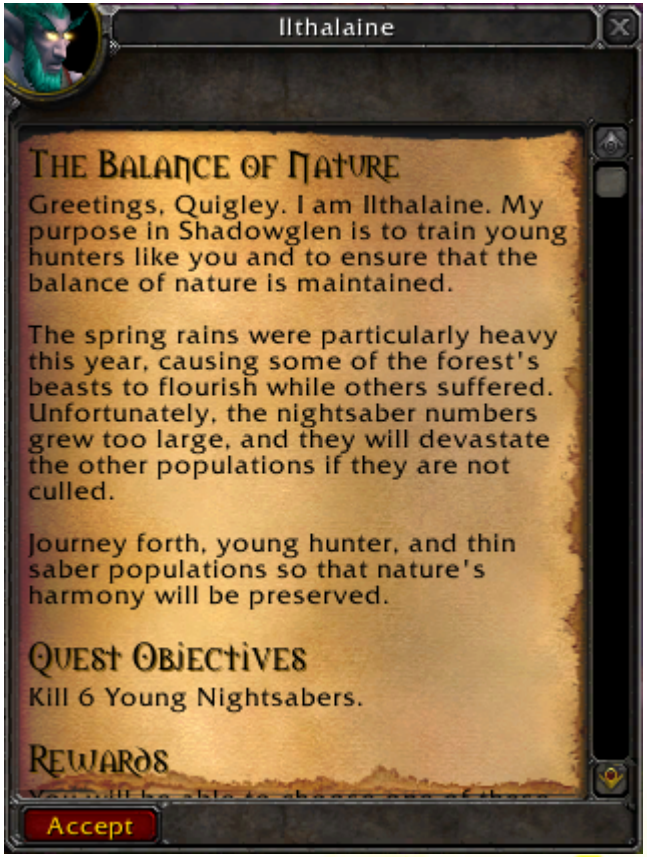


Less of this.

"Greetings, Quigley. I am Ilthalaine. My purpose in Shadowglen is to train young hunters like you and to ensure that the balance of nature is maintained. The spring rains were particularly heavy this year, causing some of the forest's beasts to flourish while others suffered. Unfortunately, the nightsaber numbers grew too large, and they will devastate the other populations if they are not culled. Journey forth, young hunter, and thin saber populations so that nature's harmony will be preserved."

--*World of Warcraft* quest "The Balance of Nature"

(497 characters with spaces.)



And this.

“Ha! You want to know what those mutinous dogs have planned? You couldn't figure it out for yourself? Har!

Well, it shan't be too complicated. Any ship that tries to get past the mutineers and into Port Royal, the pirates aim to sink 'em. Not even your ship is fast enough to elude those treacherous bastards.

I'll tell you what, Captain. I've got a fast ship o' my own, "The Swift." If you're willing to take the risk o' your life to get that letter of marque to Port Royal, I suppose I owe Milford Cox enough to risk my ship. That privateersman saved my neck on more than one occasion. Borrow my ship, Captain, she's not much good for heavy cargo, but she's fast. Fight your way past those pirates and get that letter of marque to Milford's missus.”

--Greeting text from *Pirates of the Burning Sea* mission “Final Justice”
by Cory J. Herndon ←

(747 characters with spaces.)

More of this.

(38 characters with spaces.)

(Thank you, Internet.)

And this.

Bosun Redmark
6
1000 / 1000
Soldier Krull
You can walk? You're lucky. Between the ship crash and this blasted storm, I've got men down all over these woods.
← Quest offer: 114 characters
Quest title →
[From the Wreckage]
Nevermind
F Talk to Bosun Redmark
Crash Site
Yeti Snowstalker
ship crashed in the middle of a fierce snowstorm.
18:08 [Say] : Can you survive?
18:08 [Dev] : You have joined [1 - Dev].
18:08 [General] : You have joined [2 - General].
18:08 [Dev] : nwdiscovery has joined [1 - Dev].
18:09 [Dev] : 10USShoes has left [1 - Dev].
18:09 [Dev] : killyouwithmybrain has left [1 - Dev].
18:09 [Dev] : fumanchu has left [1 - Dev].
/s
2015 / 2015
1400 / 1400
Zone Objectives
0/0
CALL
ON/OFF
NEAREST HOLDOUTS:
Bunii
XP: 1/2175
0/10

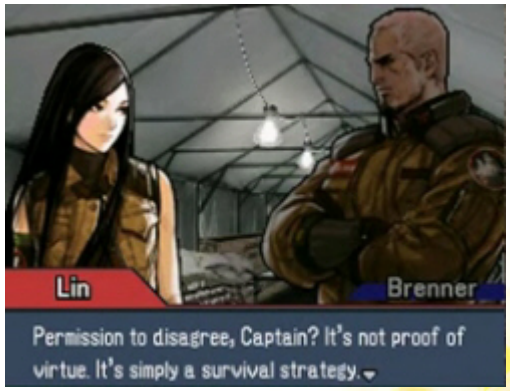
Or this.

Path quest offer:
63 characters→
Soldier Krull
This planet is ours, and we're gonna fight to keep it that way.
Crash Site
Bosun Redmark
(Yeti Control Point!)
(Protecting the Protectors)
Nevermind
←Simple, direct title
F Talk to Soldier Krull
Zone Objectives
NEAREST HOLDOUTS:

Key Points

- 140 characters (with spaces) of text is short enough you can't help but read it.

Non-MMO Examples



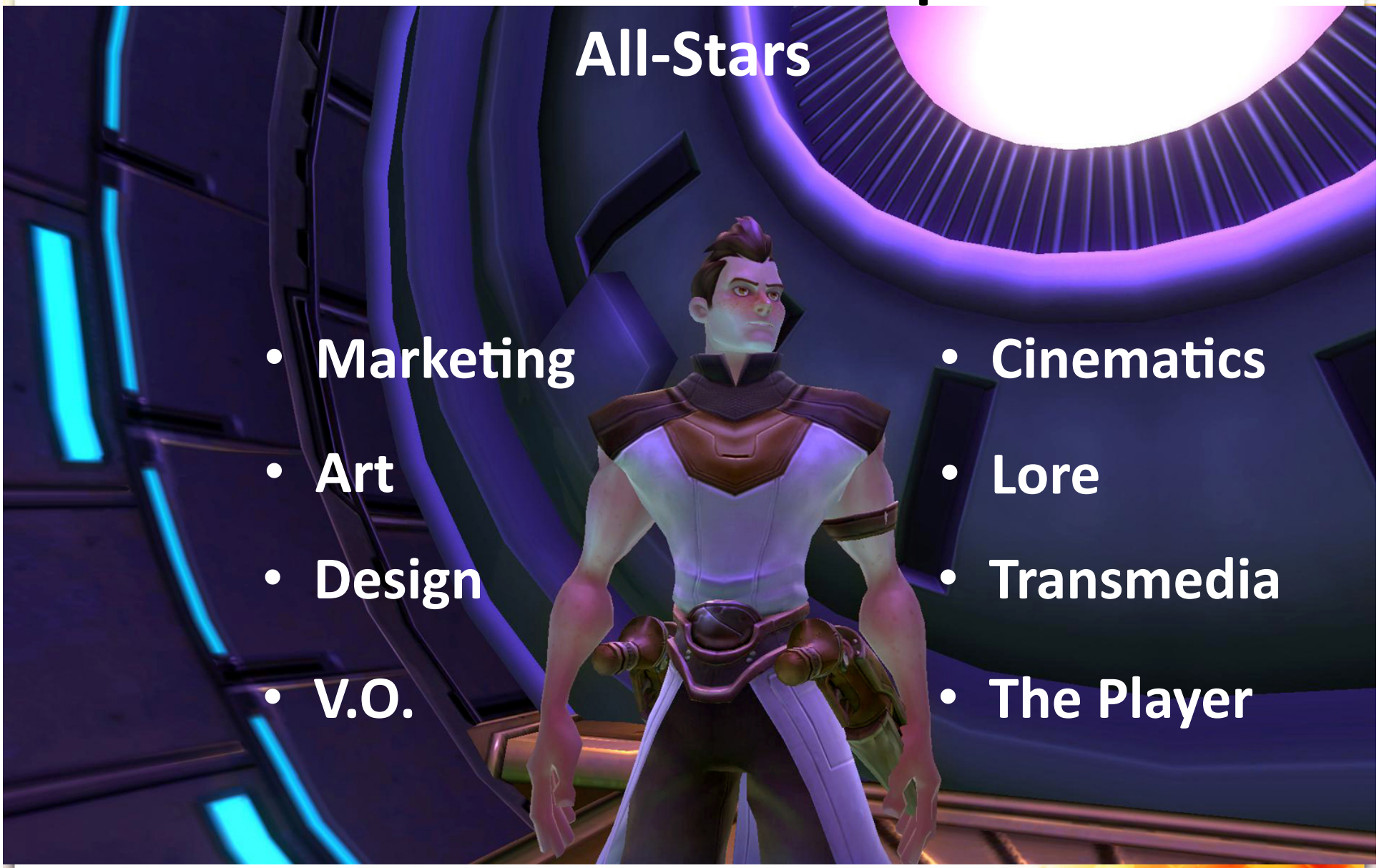
Don’t Forget the Flavor

Key Points

- A 140-character limit encourages integration of story into the *whole* game.

Narrative Back-Up

All-Stars



- Marketing
- Art
- Design
- V.O.
- Cinematics
- Lore
- Transmedia
- The Player

Why Do I Need Text at All?

CENSORED

Key Points

- The story the player experiences is unique and personal.

- MMO players build their own stories.
- Keeping text short and stories modular allows the player to create connections.
- Social connections make reading text secondary to game play and communication.

Marketing

- It's the first thing most players see
- Displays style and mood
- Lays foundation for the narrative
- Invites questions, teases answers

Carbine STUDIOS™

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A ship approaches.

Science fiction

Retro style →

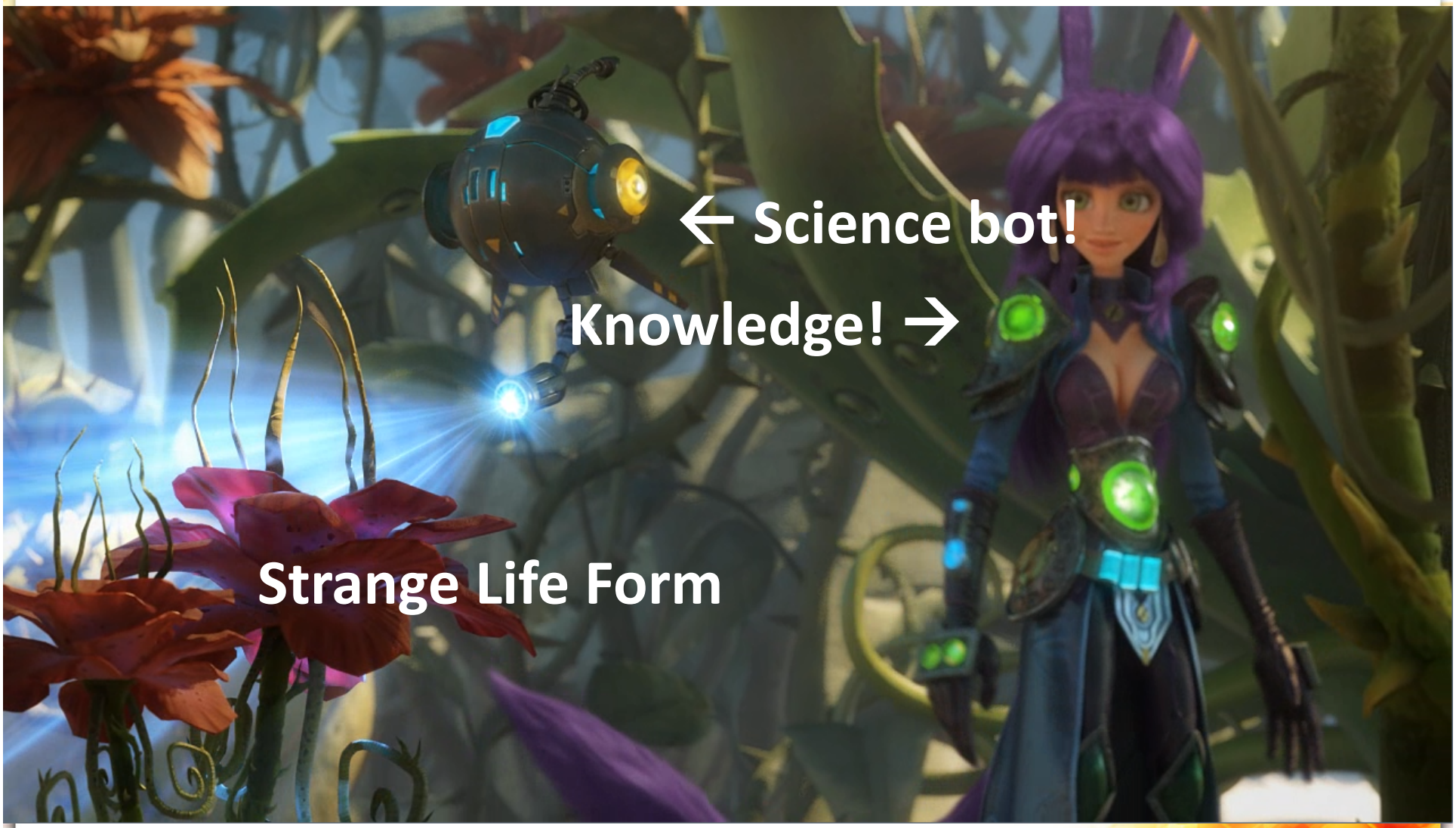
A decal?

A planet that isn't our own.

The Soldier's Path

The Explorer's Path

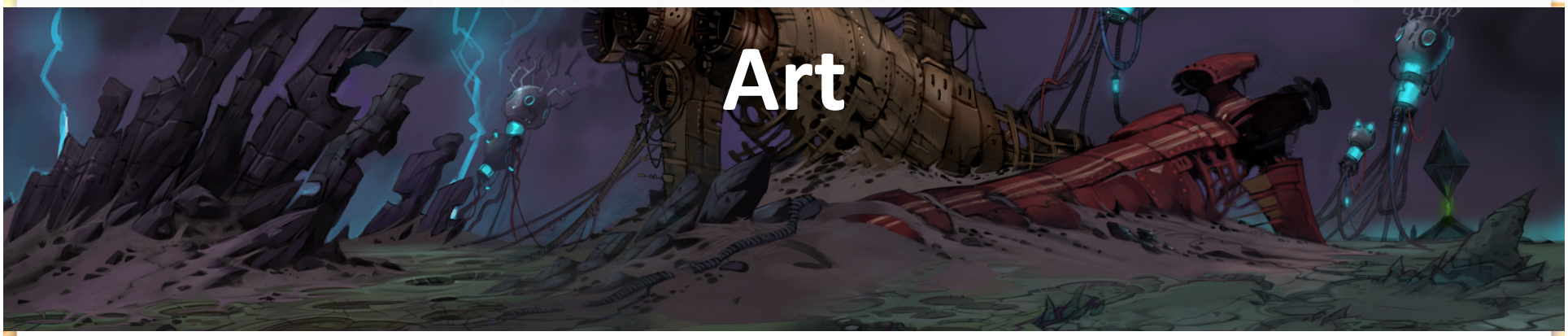
The Scientist's Path



Class: Warrior

Class: Esper

Class: Spellslinger



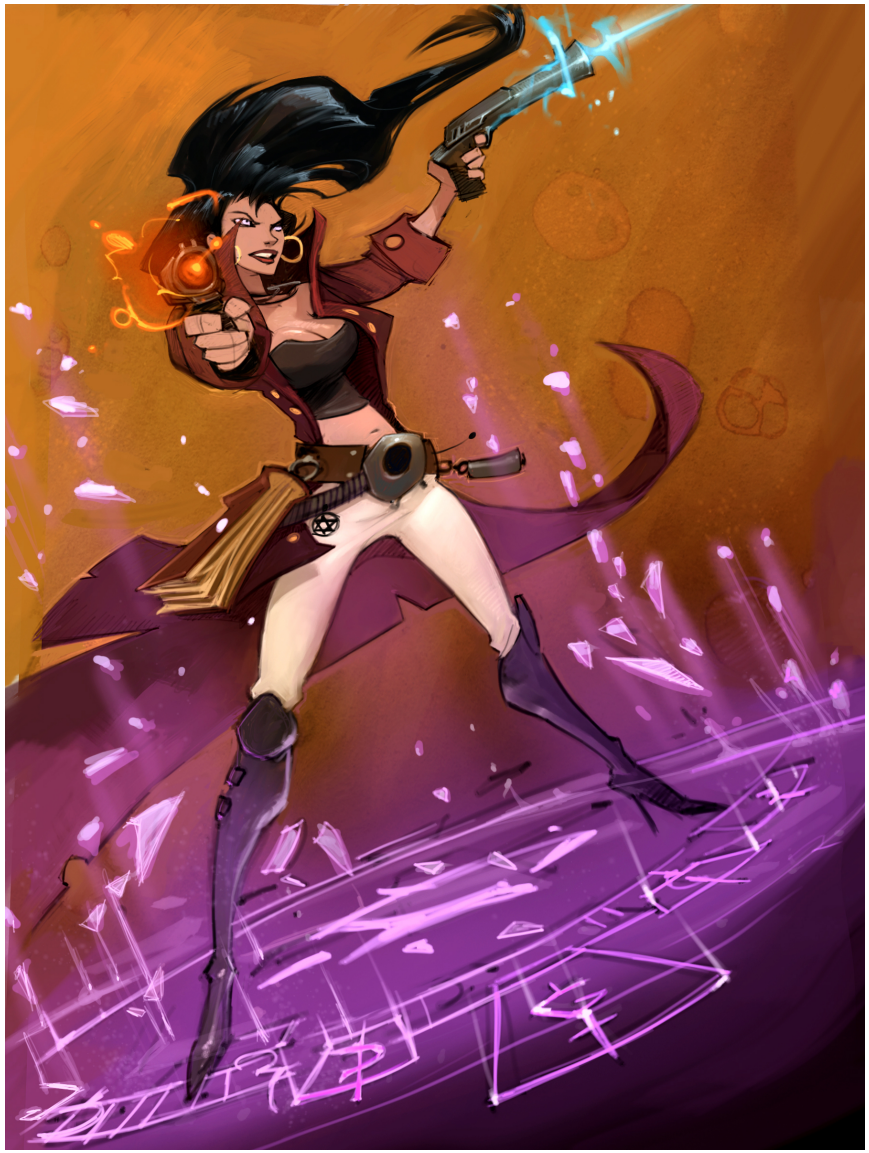
Art

Omnipresent

Powerful narrative tool

Concept art informs design

Concept Art



In-Game Art

In-Game Art

In-Game Art

Design Text

- Tutorials
- Help Text
- Story Panels
- Objectives
- Quest Log

Without design text…

Without design text…

Tutorial Text

Help Text

34 m
Yeti Snowstalker
240 / 404
Freeze Breath
Crash Site
Combat tip→
Double tap "S" to evade!
Tasks
1 Yeti Control Point!
Find the control point at the bottom of the hill
2 From the Wreckage
Rescue survivors north of the crash site. (1/3)
Kill yeti on your way to the ancient tower. (1/4)
16:30 [NPCChat] Trapped Survivor: Help me! Anyone!
Help me!
16:30 [Say] : Double tap "S" to evade!
16:30 [NPCChat] Trapped Survivor: I don't want to die out here!
16:30 [Say] : Double tap "S" to evade!
16:30 [NPCChat] Trapped Survivor: Help me! Anyone!
Help me!
/s
Zone Objectives
NEAREST HOLDOUTS:
A.Conquer the Yeti 4x
2935 / 2935
1570 / 1700
CHERNDON1
XP: 34/2175

The Quest Log

Narrative Design

Voiceover

- Quest VO
- Narration
- Ambient speech

Lore

- Found Objects
- Archives
- One-click quests
- Optional Content
- Ambient audio

Lore via One-Click Quests

Lore via Datacube

Cinematics

- Juxtapose art, design, lore
- Provide exposition
- Advance the plot
- Break up the rhythm
- Suggested, not required

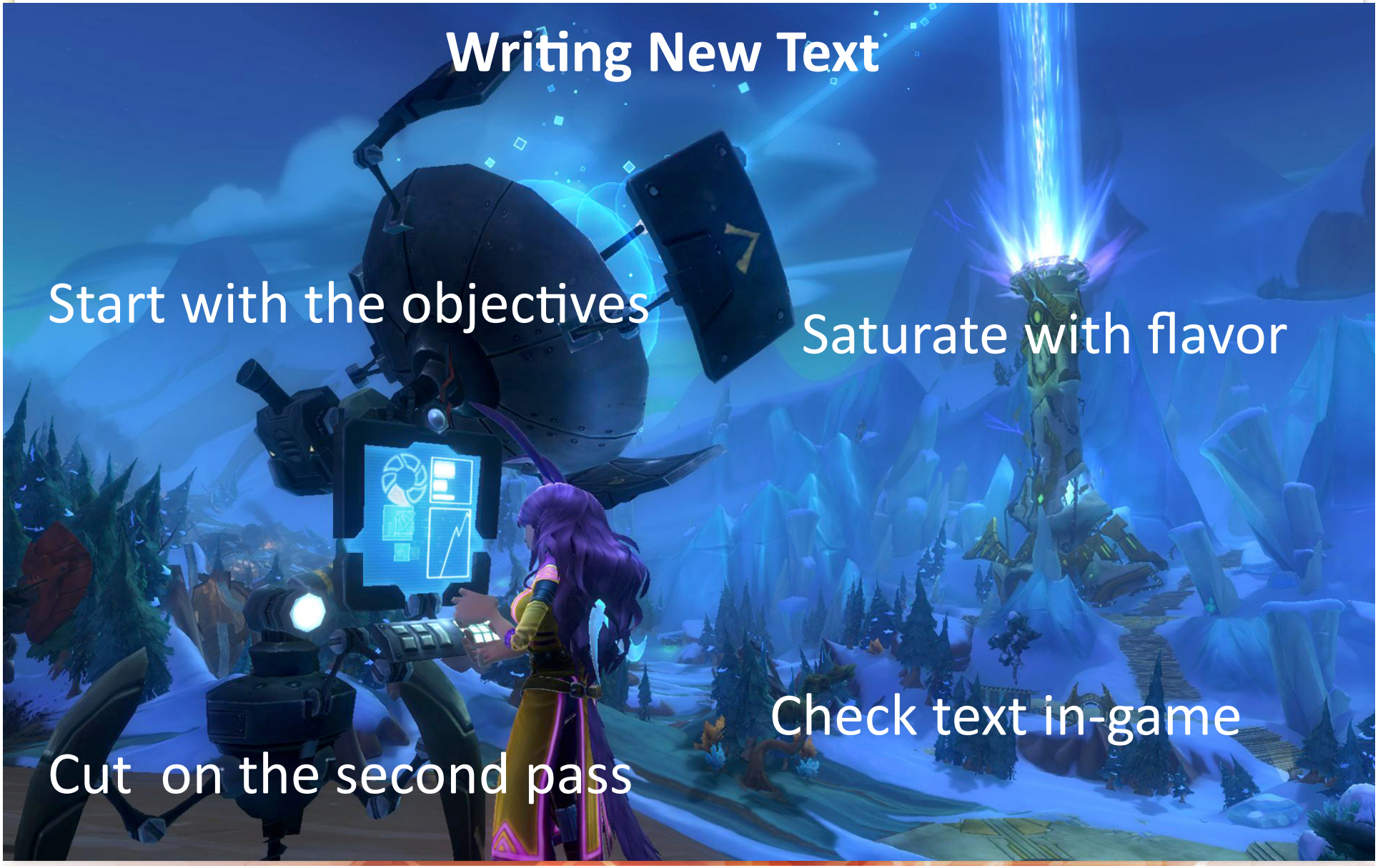
Cinematic: The Tower

Cinematic: The Rescue

Transmedia

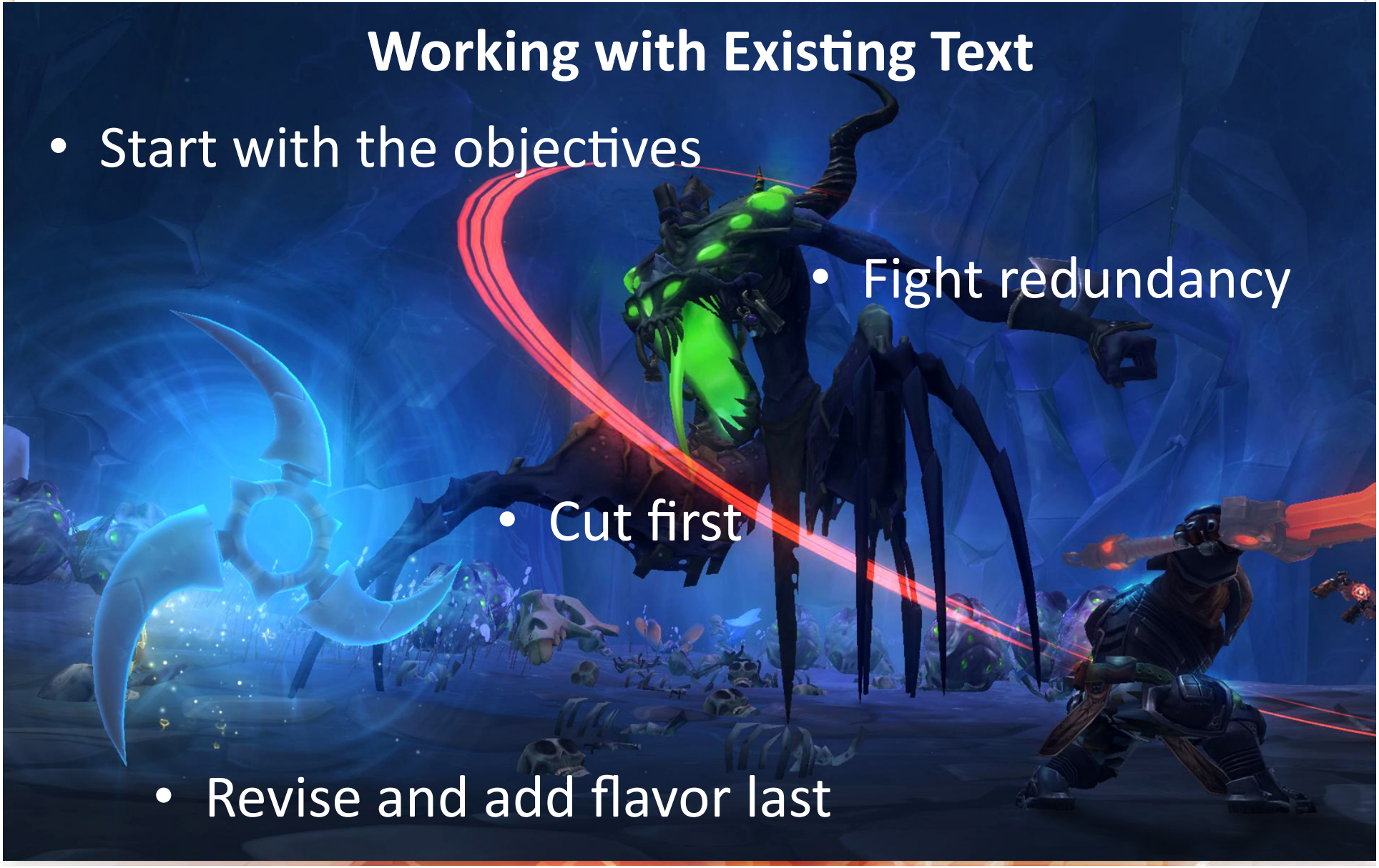
Outside-the-game material
•Fiction
•Cartoons
•Films
•Comics
•Art books
•Toys

Reaching 140



Cutting to 140

Working with Existing Text



- Start with the objectives
- Fight redundancy
- Cut first
- Revise and add flavor last

Examples please.

Space: the final frontier.

These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise.

Its five-year mission:

To explore strange new worlds.

To seek out new life and new civilizations.

To boldly go where no man has gone before.

Audio: STAR TREK written and created by Gene Rodenberry

(Characters with spaces: 220)

Space: the final frontier.

These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise.

Her five-year mission:

To boldly go where no man has gone before.

(Characters with spaces: 139)

HELLO STONEHENGE!

Sorry, dropped it. Hello, Stonehenge! Who takes the Pandorica takes the Universe! But, bad news everyone, 'cause guess who! Ha! Except, you lot, you're all whizzing about, it's really very distracting. Could you all just stay still a minute because I AM TALKING! Now, the question for the hour is, “Who's got the Pandorica?" Answer: I do. Next question: "Who's coming to take it from me?" Come on, look at me! No plan, no backup, no weapons worth a damn, oh, and something else: I don't have anything to lose! So, if you're sitting up there in your silly little space ships with all your silly little guns, and you've got any plans on taking the Pandorica tonight, just remember who's standing in your way! Remember every black day I ever stopped you, and then, and then, do the smart thing!

Let somebody else try first.

(Characters with spaces: 822)

Audio: DOCTOR WHO episode “THE PANDORICA OPENS” written by Steven Moffat

Hello, Stonehenge!

Who has the Pandorica? I do. Plan to take it?

Remember who's standing in your way.

Be smart. Let someone else try first.

(Characters with spaces: 138)

HELLO STONEHENGE!

Who has the Pandorica? I do.

Plan to take it?

Remember who's
standing in your way.

Be smart.
Let someone else try first.

(Characters with spaces: 138)

Good morning. Good morning. In less than an hour, aircraft from here will join others from around the world, and you will be launching the largest aerial battle in the history of mankind.

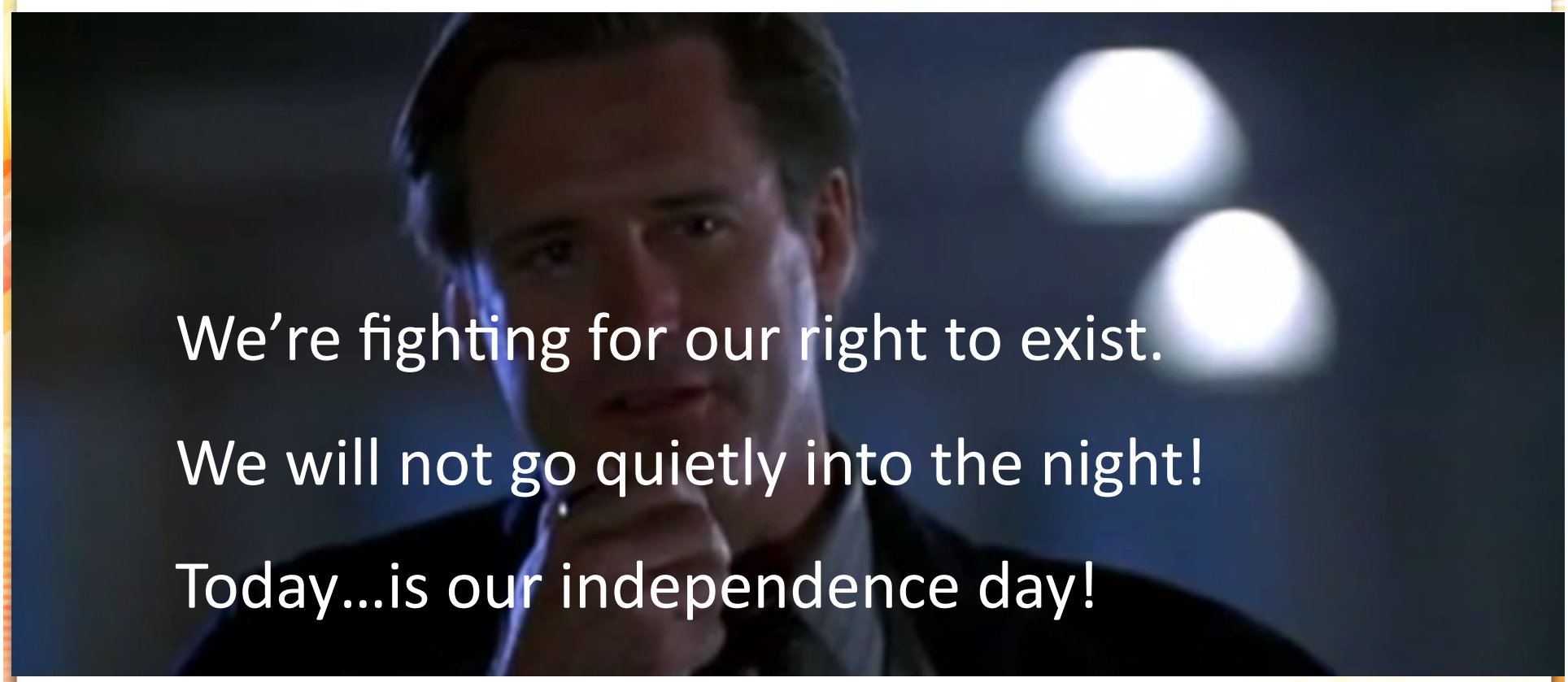
Mankind, that word should have new meaning for all of us today. We can't be consumed by our petty differences any more. We will be united in our common interest. Perhaps it's fate that today is the 4th of July, and you will once again be fighting for our freedom. Not from tyranny, oppression, or persecution, but from annihilation. We're fighting for our right to live--to exist.

And should we win the day, the 4th of July will no longer be known as an American holiday, but as the day when the world declared in one voice, “We will not go quietly into the night! We will not vanish without a fight! We're going to live on, we're going to survive.” Today, we celebrate our independence day!

(Characters with spaces: 877)

Audio: INDEPENDENCE DAY written by Dean Devlin & Roland Emmerich

Short...



(Characters with spaces: 110)

Stacked.

Good morning. Today we launch the largest aerial battle in the history of mankind. Mankind, a word with new meaning for all of us today.
(Characters with spaces: 136)

We can't be consumed by our petty differences any more. We will be united in our common interest. We're fighting for our right to exist.
(Characters with spaces: 136)

Should we win the day, the 4th of July will no longer be just an American holiday, but the day when the world declared in one voice:
(Characters with spaces: 132)

"We will not go quietly into the night! We will not vanish without a fight! We're going to live on, we're going to survive." Today we celebrate our independence day!
(Characters with spaces: 165)

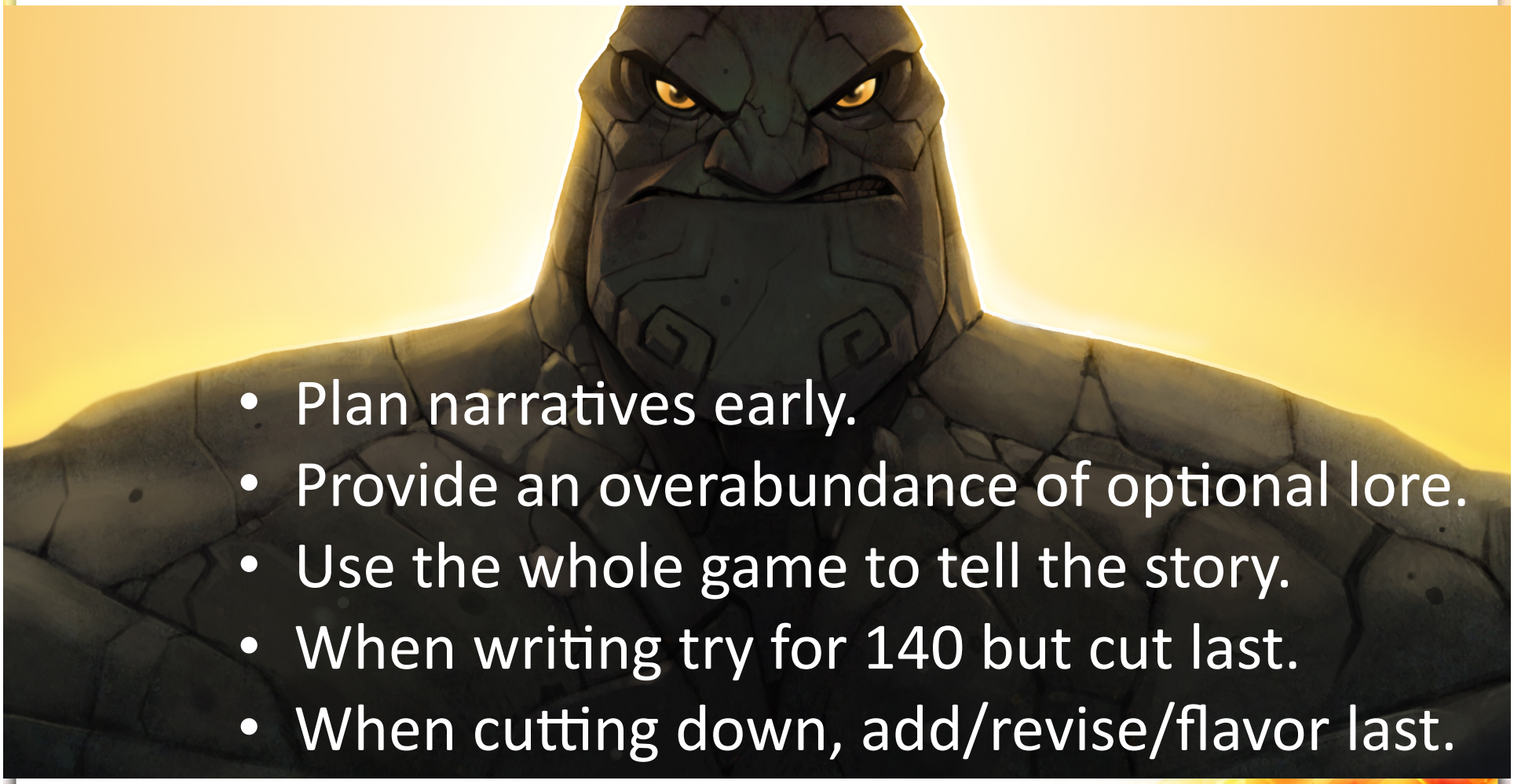
The Secret Rules

- The limit is a tool, not a straitjacket.
- 140-character chunks can stack.
- 180 is close to 140—without spaces.

That's cheating!

That's why
they're secret.

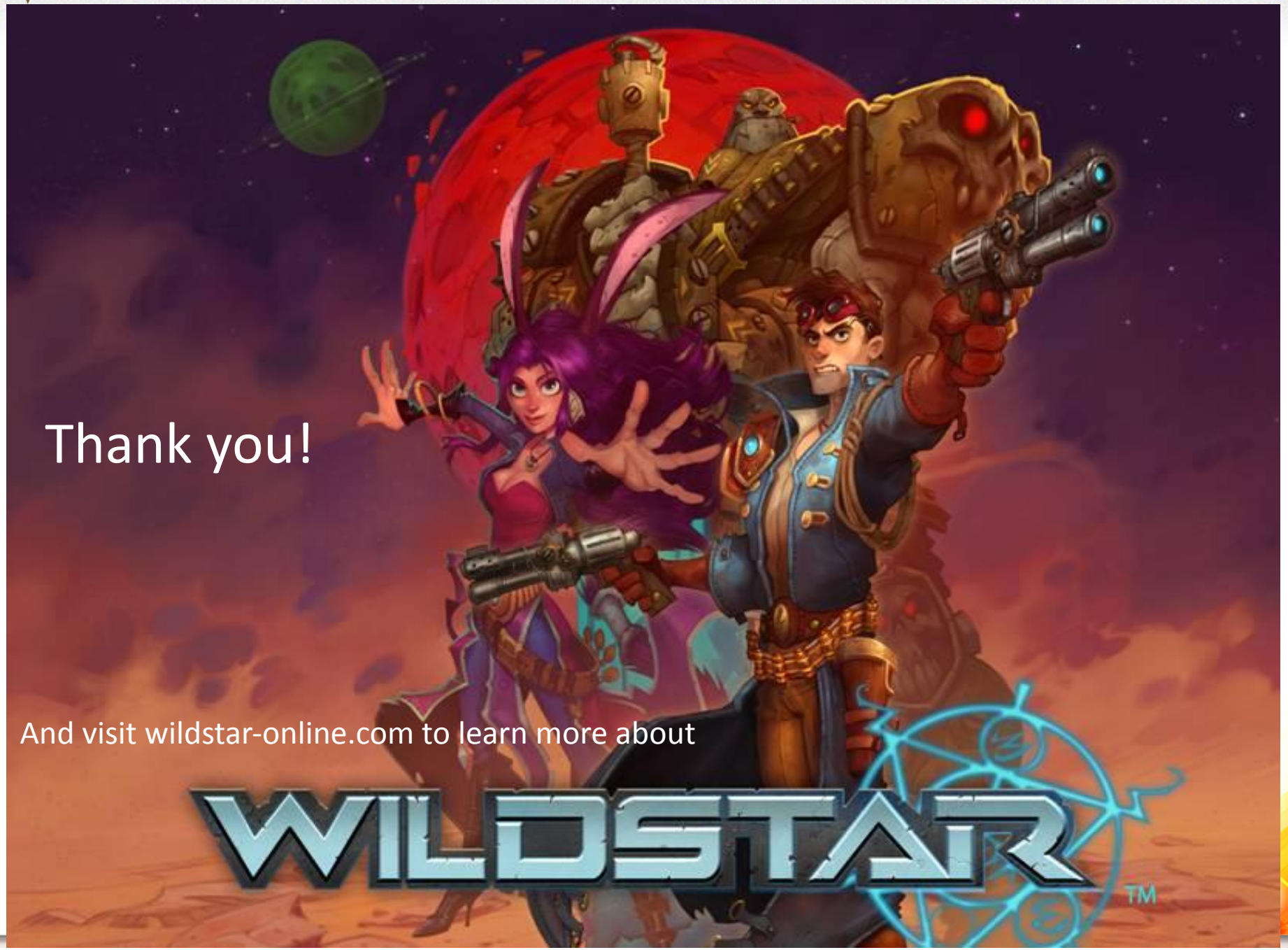
In Closing…



- Plan narratives early.
- Provide an overabundance of optional lore.
- Use the whole game to tell the story.
- When writing try for 140 but cut last.
- When cutting down, add/revise/flavor last.

Cinematic: The Epilogue

Questions?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