

StorySoup

A Story Telling Prompt Generator

User Manual



StorySoup? What's that all about?

StorySoup is a simple application that suggests basic story components you may like to use to create a story. So if you are after a short story writing or story telling challenge, run *StorySoup*, hit "Go", and let the creative juices flow.

The story components are;

- Challenges** – Challenges that the story needs to overcome or find solutions for.
- Characters** – Who the significant players in this story are.
- Events** – Things of note that happen during the story.
- Locations** – Places where the story is set or that may be passed through as the story unfolds.
- Objects** – Items of significance to the story.
- Endings** – The end point for the story.

StorySoup will not write the stories for you. That's up to you. But it will give you a good framework to create from.

StorySoup was originally conceived as a story telling card game but with suggestions from others (and the fact the deck was getting so big that shuffling it was going to be a challenge) it was turned into an application. It can still be used as a story telling card game, and so the original rules for the card game are included here.

Just because you didn't draw a card for some particular story element doesn't mean you can't include that element. The selection is not restrictive. It's your story, you can add whatever you like.

Installing StorySoup

Windows

Drop the downloaded executable to anywhere where you'd like it to live. Double-click on it and it will start. It does not need to be installed.

Linux

Drop the downloaded executable to anywhere where you'd like it to live. Double-click on it and it will start. It does not need to be installed. If it fails to start, it may be worth checking that it has been set to executable. Right click on the *StorySoupv7-LinuxXXbit* file and check it's permissions and that the 'executable' flag is set.

Android

You will be surprised. This App does not require access to your personal data, the web, your camera, or anything else on your device. It is self contained and so just run your *.apk* installer on the *StorySoupv7.apk* file wherever you have downloaded it.

Method – Using StorySoup

When you first start StorySoup you will be faced with a bank desktop and several big inviting-looking buttons.



The controls are:

“Go” button (right side): This draws a new selection of story components.

“Capture Screen” button (bottom): This saves an image of the *StorySoup* window together with a text file with a list of the story component text. (Windows, and Linux versions only)

Quit button (bottom left): This shuts down the application.

“Settings” button (top left): This takes you to the settings screen where you can select the genre, the number of cards to show, custom text lists, and set a custom location for saving the screenshots.

If you hit the “Go” button at this point the application will draw eight story elements cards and two ending cards from the “Everything” genre.



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These are suggestions for story components that you may like to incorporate into your story. Maybe you like some of the components but not others. By clicking on the cards you wish to retain, you can pin them. In this example we have pinned the “*The journalist*”, “*A set of false fingerprints*” and the “*A deadline had passed*” cards.



Hitting “Go” again will draw a new spread of cards while retaining the pinned cards.



By clicking on the pinned cards, you can un-pin them. You can pin as many as you like and hit “Go” as many times as you like to get a spread in which you see a potential story.

Capturing Your Story Spread

At some point you will have a spread of story components you wish to use for writing your story. By hitting the “**Capture Screen**” button you can save an image of the *StorySoup* screen together with a text list of the story components present. (Only for Windows, and Linux versions)



A message dialogue will pop up telling you the name of the image file and where it was saved to. The text file has the same name. In this example the screen shot has been called “StorySoup201973015571.png” and was saved in the default directory called “ScreenCaptures”. The directory where Screenshots are saved can be changed in the **Settings Page**.

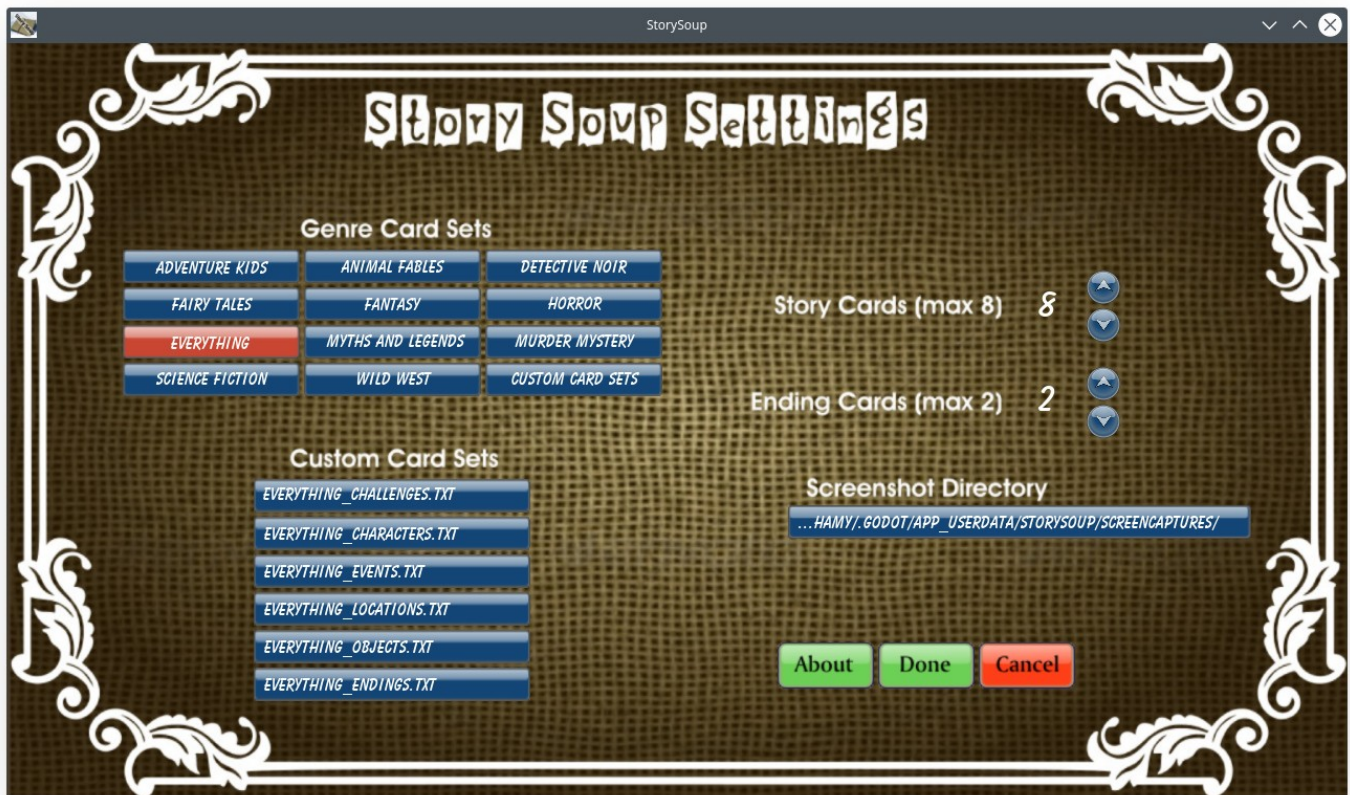
The default Screenshot directory varies between operating systems:

Windows: C:\Users\USER\AppData\Roaming\Godot\app_userdata\StorySoup\ScreenCaptures

Linux: /home/USER/.godot/app_userdata/StorySoup/ScreenCaptures

Settings Page

Clicking on the “**Settings**” button on the main StorySoup page will open the settings page.



The **Genre Card Set** allows you to select from a range of different Genre. These are described and demonstrated in the next section. If you had cards pinned when you opened the Settings page these will remain pinned when you finish selecting your settings. This means you can have cards from one genre in a spread from a different genre.

The **Custom Card Sets Area** allows you to introduce your own lists that will appear on the cards. This is described in more detail later. Clicking on the relevant slot to open a file dialogue window. Navigate to your custom card content list text file, and load it. Each slot button is designed to load a particular type of card; Challenges, Characters, Events, Locations, Objects, and Endings. There is nothing to stop you loading a set of Events cards into the Challenges slot, it will still work but the background images won't match the content type.

The **Story Card Number** and **Ending Card Number** Areas allow you to vary the number of cards in your spread using the up and down buttons beside each entry. The maximum number of Story Cards is 8 and minimum is 1. The maximum number of Ending Cards is 2 and the minimum is 0.

You can change the location of the directory where your screenshots will be dropped using the **Screenshot Directory** button. Clicking this button will open a file dialogue.

Click **Done** for your changes to take effect. When you drop back to the Story Soup screen, you will see your cards are the same as they were before you made the changes. The next set of cards based on your selected genre will be drawn when you hit the **Go** button.

Ingredients - The Genre

StorySoup has a number of Genre included in it's database. They are;

Adventure Kids

I say what a spiffing genre this is. It has all the elements of a rollicking adventure filled with dastardly villains, school bullies, and lashings of ginger beer.

Famous Five, Secret Seven, Bobby Brewster, boarding houses, catapults, and mysteries – all are part of the *Adventure Kids* genre.



Sand cascading beneath sandaled feet, they plunged down the side of the last sandhill before reaching the sea.

"Did you know *this bay used to be used by smugglers?*" said Karen.

"What a smashing place for a picnic." said Gerald taking a deep breath of the cool sea air.

"Oh look! Here comes *Aunt* Ingrid and Spot." Elizabeth observed pointing to a figure ambling along the curve of the bay with a small black dot orbiting madly around them.

"It looks like Spot's going completely crazy with excitement." said Karen. "I reckon he'll dig up loads of buried treasure while we're here."

Soon Aunt Ingrid sat down with them. "May I?"

"Hello Aunty." said Gerald. "Help yourself. We brought enough food to sink the Queen Mary."

"Yes I thought my cupboards were a bit bare." Aunt Ingrid bit into a large ham and tomato sandwich.

"Oh look! *Spot's found something.*" said Karen.

Spot was rapidly disappearing in a spay of sand, seaweed and shells, yapping and barking as loudly and excitedly as his tiny body could manage.

"Let's take a look." suggested Elizabeth. "It's probably just another hidden radio set left by spies like last time."

"No it isn't!" gasped Karen. "Look!"

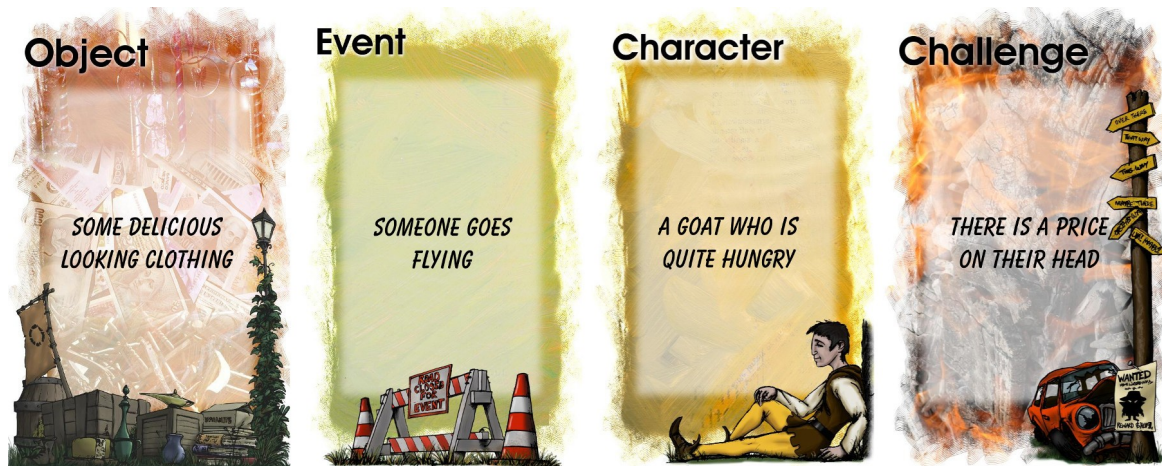
There, projecting from a concrete slab set into the sand was a *heavy iron lever*. Beside it was a metal manhole cover with the words "Top Secret" painted on in official looking lettering.



Objects:	<i>The secret lever</i>	Events:	Someone shouts a warning
Challenges:	They were famished	Locations:	<i>Smuggler's cove</i>
Characters:	The salesman	Endings:	They won even though they were girls
Challenges:	A dead body	Endings:	Celebrated with an icecream
Events:	<i>Discovered by a little yappy dog</i>		
Characters:	<i>The aunt</i>		

Animal Fables

The *Animal Fables* genre brings together *Peter Rabbit*, *Wind in the Willows*, and *Watership Down*. Animals are the main characters and the challenges of survival are the main themes for this genre.



"I don't know what he's so angry about." Gilbert shook his head flapping his ears around him. "It wasn't as if the farmer wore them."

He paused in his ruminations. "Actually there was one time...."

Gilbert recalled the taste. He had expected something that flowery looking to taste floral. Not that the synthetic taste was bad of course. They had been delicious. *But here he was with a price on his head.* He thought despondently, "Was "Free" the same as a price?"

He peeked through a gap in the barn door. The dog was still sitting out there in the middle of the yard guarding the entrance to the back yard. Gilbert wished the dog would go away so he could at least make a small foray out. He was beginning to get a bit peckish. The flowery looking dress he had eaten hadn't really provided much nourishment. He looked around the shed. Sure there was straw here but why eat that stuff when there were better things available? He had tried a nibble of the quad-bike seat but found it a bit too chewy for his liking. The tractor was inedible as were the old tins of paint. He sighed.

Just then something caught his eye. *It was vaguely person shaped, and lying on the upper level, a floppy hat over its head.* It appeared to be wearing an old woolen jersey over a stained white shirt with a collar. *Gilbert's mouth watered. He loved collars especially.*

With great difficulty he clambered up the steep ladder to the upper level.

Delicately he extended his tongue to savour the taste of the woolen jersey. The floor moved a little under his feet. He froze. A sickening creak ripped the silence and the upper level dropped slightly, before tilting and collapsing releasing a cascade of fencing tools, bales of straw, empty containers, and noise. *Gilbert took a flying leap to keep out of the tumbling mess,* and landed awkwardly on the quadbike. The floppy hat floated down and landed on his head covering his eyes. He tossed his head but it was tangled in his horns. He snorted and gave a especially big toss of his head. He scrabbled as his feet slipped on the seat and found himself planted belly first on the fuel tank. His flailing legs kicked the starter....



Objects	A scarecrow	Objects:	Some delicious looking clothing
Characters:	A goat who is quite hungry	Locations:	A dolls' house
Challenges:	Something is on guard	Endings:	They would have their revenge
Events:	Someone goes flying	Endings:	Despite their adventure they still didn't like water.
Challenges:	There is a price on their head		
Locations:	The drafty barn		

Detective Noir

There, hunched against the cold under the fickle light of the street corner lamp, was the contact. They looked up suddenly as Turner approached.

"You're late!"

Detective Noir is the classic gumshoe detective genre with gangsters, speak-easys, dark ally-ways, and dubious clients. There are no happy endings in this town.



Tasker tried to get his breathing under control despite the prickle around the edge of his vision. They were too close. Anything could betray his location to the pursuing thugs. Carefully he peered around the edge of the recess. *A heavy-set shape crossed the alley entrance, the dull streetlight briefly outlining his slab-like features. Tasker pulled back out of sight. He didn't stand a chance against someone like Talbot. Everyone in the gang knew Talbot was the Baker Street Gang's top attack dog. How could they not? They had lost enough men to Talbot. He was built like a pro-wrestler, as vicious as a stoat, and smart. It was only a matter of time before Talbot came back to inspect this ally.*

Silently cursing his *lack of discretion when asking around for information on the shipment*, Tasker cast his eyes around the alley. This had been a bad move. He was trapped. The wall opposite was blank, the end of the alley was also a blank wall with a couple of overloaded dumpsters and rubbish bags. The only feature of note was the doorway in which he was concealed. *He sighed and leaned back against the doorway which suddenly fell open.*

Picking himself up, he found himself in a large room. Light from the street filtered through grimy windows to fall on crates and work benches covered in intricate glass equipment. Suddenly remembering himself, he quickly closed the door and slid the bolt across.

He inspected the glassware more closely. Some of it was still surrounded in packing material. The crates had stenciled labels that claimed the contents to be oranges. *Tasker knew all about crates of "Oranges". That was what the shipment was supposed to contain. That meant it had already arrived....*



Challenges: *They know who has been asking questions*
Events: *Someone learns the truth*
Characters: *The last person anyone would want to meet in a dark alley*
Challenges: They were beginning to get hysterical
Events: *A doorway opens unexpectedly*
Objects: A very small camera

Challenges: *The gangs are on the verge of war*
Challenges: Won't believe the evidence
Endings: ... turned and fled, the police hot on their tail.
Endings: Rejoin the force? The pay was lousy but it was still better than what they were earning now.

Fairy Tales

Once upon a time something happened and they lived happily ever after. That might happen, but maybe not. The *Fairy Tales* genre is not necessarily “happily ever after” and maybe just as dark as some of the original Brothers Grimm fairy tales or the more recent reimaged classics.



Little Ceri looked at her **empty bowl** and **burst into tears**.
 “I know. I know” said her mother patting her hand. **“Someone or something has had a go at my breakfast too.”**
 “We’re poor. We’ve nothing to steal, why do this to us?” grumbled Ceri’s father. “It was only gruel.”
 “It was probably that **damn sorceress’ pet**.” sighed Ceri’s mother.
 “The slug?” Ceri’s father scratched behind one of his pointed ears and raised a shaggy eyebrow.
 “The slug. The blue one. **She promised she would control it better after last time it came over here and ransacked our grain bin.**”
 “We should be able to find its trail.” suggested Ceri’s father rifling through a box of cast off plastic baubles and trinkets. **He pulled out a slightly scratched magnifying glass.** “Ah here it is.”
 Ceri couldn’t maintain her sadness when her father turned around and pulled a distorted face at her through the magnifying glass. “Shall we find that dastardly slug’s tracks?”
 Ceri and her father looked around the room and soon discovered a trail of slime crossing the floor from the table to the wall, **then up the wall and through a gap in the floor joists that supported their ceiling.**
 Outside their home the trail continued, stopping here and there to investigate some morsel or other as it made for the sorceress’ home, finally ending near the house’s front door step.



Objects:	A bowl of gruel	Objects:	A dragon's tooth
Characters:	The sorcerer with the strange pet	Locations:	Under the floor
Challenges:	Something special was missing	Endings:	The fool became the wisest of the ruler's advisors
Events:	Someone begins to cry	Endings:	There would be no rest for them ever again
Challenges:	They renege on a promise		
Objects:	A looking glass		

Fantasy

The *Fantasy* genre covers anything from Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" to Charles De Lint's urban fantasies, to China Mieville's dark worlds, to steampunk.



"Well well. Look what we have here." the *Captain of the Guard* grinned down at the prone figure on the ground. He patted the bare buttock of the statue beside him. "It must be my lucky day."

The hooded figure of the ground groaned. "Surely, Captain, you don't believe that old story about *patting him on the rump giving you luck*? If it does it doesn't last long. I did that immediately before trying to climb the *garden wall*"

"Oh yes." the *Captain of the Guard* looked at the loose bricks scattered around the weedy path. "Had a little tumble did we?"

The hooded figure just muttered and started to rise.

"Not so fast Jessneh." The *Captain of the Guard* clapped a heavy hand on the hooded figures shoulder forcing them back down. "*Where's the good merchant Yammelkind's jewel? I know the Guild of Thieves have had their beady eyes on it for a while.*"

"You have the wrong person captain." Jessneh spat. "I don't have it. Nor did I know it was missing."

"Oh really? And what suddenly possessed you to attempt to climb a crumbling wall in the dark? A wall that might have given good access to the city roofs, I might add."



Objects:	<i>A dazzling jewel</i>	Events:	A bell begins to toll
Objects:	Bottle of massage oil	Challenges:	The sword is rusty
Challenges:	<i>The structure is crumbling</i>	Characters:	<i>The captain of the guard</i>
Locations:	<i>In the garden with a statue everyone wanted to touch</i>	Endings:	Still out there to this day
Characters:	<i>A thief</i>	Endings:	That just goes to show that being nasty and selfish has its rewards.

Minestrone

Just like Minestrone soup this genre is a bit of everything plus things that didn't fit any particular category. If you are after some really random stories, then this is the genre for you.

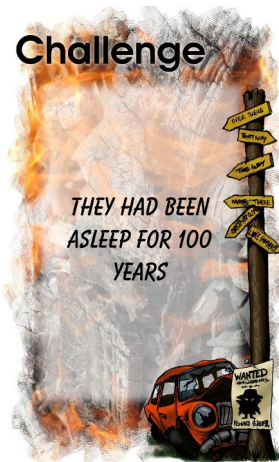
Character

THE PRINCE



Challenge

THEY HAD BEEN
ASLEEP FOR 100
YEARS



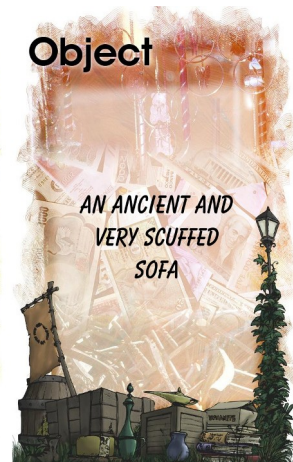
Event

SOMEONE IS
HEALED



Object

AN ANCIENT AND
VERY SCUFFED
SOFA



Clearly *the Prince* opened his eyes. Bright sunlight stabbed at him. He squeezed his eyes closed feeling the caked sleep fall away. Raising his hand to shade his eyes he was surprised to encounter hair. Long hair. He pulled at it and quickly discovered it was his hair.

"What the?" he jerked awake and looked around.

He took in the semi collapsed wooden walls surrounding him, the grimy and broken windows, the floor covered in weeds, and the sofa on which he lay.

"Oh." he focused on the *sofa*. *It was badly faded* and the leather was cracked and hard.

"What happened to the sofa?"

He explored the hair on his face. "What happened to me?"

"*I have dispelled the curse.*" A voice nearby. A dry and whispery voice as of wind through autumn leaves. "Please take it easy. You have been asleep for a long time."

"What? Who?" Desperately the Prince looked around for the source of the voice but saw no one.

Slowly he scanned the surrounding debris. *Was that a face amongst the tangle of wisteria* that had claimed one of the walls?

"Do you not recognise this place?" The voice was amused.

"I...I think I do." said the Prince. He ran a hand over the scuffed sofa, raising a small cloud dust. "This sofa was red when I lay down on it last night and the cottage was intact I think. I was *pretty drunk* last night. How long have I been asleep?"

"*About a century.*"

"A century? But...."



Objects: *An ancient and very scuffed sofa*
Characters: *A dryad*
Events: *Someone is healed*
Challenges: *They had been asleep for 100 years*
Events: A change in the weather
Challenges: ... disaster will occur if one of your characters gets hungry.

Challenges: *Wasted*
Characters: *The Prince*
Endings: So she told him she was a princess which turned out to be the case in an entitled but not titled sense.
Endings: ... turned and fled, the enraged prince hot on their tail.

Murder Mystery

Everyone has something to hide. Secrets to uncover, and motivations for doing away with someone. The *Murder Mystery* genre draws its inspiration from the “Cluedo” board game, Agatha Christie’s “Hercule Poirot” and “Miss Marple”, and the “How to Host a Murder” games. Maybe there is some “Kill Doctor Lucky” in there too.



Erica held the letter up to the firelight. “I can’t see anything through the bloodstain. It starts off with some sort of beg for forgiveness, but then the rest is obscured”

“What could he have done that he felt the need to beg forgiveness from anyone?” Colonel Grey sipped his sherry and settled deeper into his seat. “He was a respected pillar of society.”

“And a great patron of the arts.” Angelo put his face in his hands. “Oh God! What am I going to do now? Without his support I’m going to have to go back to waiting tables instead of focusing on my art.”

“Do we actually know the letter was from him?” Cheri held out a hand.

“It looks like his handwriting, but the sign-off is unreadable.” Erica handed the letter to Cheri. Cheri studied the letter, turning it too and fro, and looking along it in an attempt to make out any indentations in the paper. “Where did you find it?”

“The conservatory.”

“Would you show me?”

“Sure.” Erica stood and nodded towards a writing desk in the corner. “You may want to grab a torch from the second drawer down. With the lights out, the conservatory is pretty dark at night.”

“Anyone else coming?” asked Cheri.

“I’m quite comfortable here thanks.” said the Colonel “I look forward to hearing what you find.”

“Angelo?”

Angelo fidgeted and shook his head.

“Fine. It looks like it’s us two then.” said Cheri.

“You were right about needing the torch.” said Cheri sweeping the beam around the room.

“Where did you find the letter?”

“Over there on the coffee table.”

Cheri knelt down and played the torch beam over the coffee table and the small amount of dried blood where the letter had been. “This is weird. There’s virtually no other blood around. It almost looks like the letter has been placed here after it got blood on it.”

“Did you hear that?” Erica cocked an ear.

“What?”

“It sounded like Look out!” shouted Erica.

Cheri jerked aside as a pair of roof tiles smashed through the conservatory roof filling the space where Cheri had been with broken glass and concrete.



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Locations:	The conservatory	Events:	Someone shouts a warning
Challenges:	The bloodstain obscures the writing	Challenges:	Roof-tiles are loose
Characters:	The poverty stricken artist	Endings:	It had been a gamble but it ended up working out right
Objects:	The fire-iron	Endings:	The wine used to toast their success had a bitter almond aftertaste
Locations:	The kitchen		
Locations:	Beside the fireplace		

Myths and Legends

The *Myths and Legends* genre encourages the story teller to develop new legends inspired by indigenous cultural stories from around the world. These might be myths of mighty deeds or legends to explain everyday things.



The **Golden Emperor** surveyed his garden. The ground was there, the rocks had been placed, the white gravel had been carefully raked into interesting and peaceful patterns. But there was something missing. He thought for a bit. "Trees. That was it. It could do with some trees tastefully added to the little rock islands."

He clapped his hands and summoned Ethany **goddess of wine**.

"Ethany. I have a task for you."

"Oh great!" laughed Ethany. "I need ss-something to focus on. What will it be Oh mighty one?"

"Ethany. I wish for trees to be added to my garden. Take some leaves from the **mighty tree of heaven** and plant them around the islands so that I may enjoy the rich sights of trees in my garden adding life to the patterns"

"Right 'cha are boss! Trees it is.... The mighty tree of heaven." Ethany did a wobbly salute and fell over.

Later that day, Ethany lay under in the shade of the mighty tree of heaven looking up through the roots as they spread out across the sky. She took a swig of the amphora of wine beside her. "It's hot work this is. Ah well, I'd better get some leaves."

With that she started digging around the mighty tree of heaven and soon had an armload of nice green leaves. She took them back to the Emperor's garden and with amphora in hand began planting the leaves. It was a hard job trying to stick the leaves in the ground, the green bit kept bending. Frustrated she jammed the stalks into the ground instead. "Ah much easier." she giggled.

Soon the garden's little islands were covered in leaves with their green bits sticking up into the air. Ethany stepped back and admired her work. "That looks quite neat that way around."

"OK a bit of growth juice" She liberally sprinkled her amphora of wine over the leaves and stood back.

There was a rustling and creaking as the trees grew all over the little islands. **Reaching upwards with their green leaves and squirming their roots down into the rich soil.**

Ethany laughed.

The Emperor was not pleased. "Ethany! What have you done? They look ridiculous with their green leaves sticking up in the air and the roots downwards."



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Locations: The storm lashed sea
Objects: A fish bone
Events: A competition is won
Objects: A legendary tree
Characters: The emperor
Challenges: They were dead

Challenges: The trees were upside-down
Characters: The goddess of wine
Endings: Never again would it be like it was
Endings: When she put it on, everyone bowed their heads and submitted to her.

Science Fiction

The *Science Fiction* genre provides the building blocks to create anything from hard core science fiction where the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, and the extreme environments of alien planets and space make survival a challenge to space opera where traveling across the galaxy is as simple as walking to the street corner. Where technology, people, thought, environment and society is going are all things for the story teller to speculate upon as they maneuver their way through the story components for the *Science fiction* genre.



Career Private E Beckler was beginning to regret the previous night out hitting the station's bars. Although it was only a short test run to the *transfer station orbiting the Earth-Moon L₅ Lagrange Point* and they had only been going an hour, he was feeling a slight but growing need to visit the "rest room". Nothing much was happening, so he excused himself and went in search of the nearest toilet.

He had been shown a virtual tour of the *new vessel during his brief training session, but hadn't paid that much attention. Since its recent fit out*, it was new to everyone else on board anyway, so he forgave himself for being unfamiliar with where the toilets would be located. When they started doing the long range missions he would have plenty of time to become acquainted with the ship. Ahead of him a familiar blue toilet bowl icon showed above a small door. He hastened towards it.

Beside the door was a wide gray panel with a green-lit rim. He laid his hand on it as he came level with the panel and swung into the door. *The door did not whisk quickly aside as he had expected, but stayed resolutely and firmly closed.* He collided with it with a resounding "thud".

He rubbed the side of his face where it had impacted the door and frowned at the panel. It remained green-lit. He pressed his hand against it again more firmly. The surround flickered orange and nothing else appeared to happen.

"Stupid door." he glowered at. It ignored him.

He sighed and went in search of another toilet. It didn't take long to find another one. He tried the panel and pushed on the door. Nothing.

"Oh come on!" he was beginning to feel a little more urgency.

"What's up?" it was one of the engineers.

"This is the second door that won't open for me."

"I presume you've got clearance to be onboard?" said the Engineer. "Let's have a try?"

The engineer pressed his hand to the panel. It flickered orange and returned to green. The door remained closed. "The green light definitely indicates the toilet is vacant, so being occupied is not the problem."

The engineer made a quick call on his communicator. "I'll get someone to bring a system analyser. Then we may figure out what's going on."

"Soon would be good." said Beckler beginning to jitter just a little.

With the **analyser in place** the engineer instructed Beckler to press the panel again. The surround flashed orange, and the analyser emitted a brief shot of static.

"A signal of some sort?" wondered the engineer. "Do it again but keep your hand down."

Beckler did as he was told. The result was the same.

"It's some sort of magnetic disturbance." said the engineer gazing at the analyser output. He thought for a bit then laughed "I think I see the problem."

"A quick fix I hope." said Beckler between gritted teeth.

"Ah...no. It's a bit tragic. You know the Ortogians?"

"I know of the Ortogians."

"And how they use magnetic glyphs to record information and magnetic pulses to communicate?"

"Yes."

"I think this is Ortogian technology."

"But.."

"Yes. No solution. Our cheap arse management in their usual cost-cutting style have ignored our advice yet again and ended up with our ship fitted with Ortogian-made toilets."

"Spare me the lecture." howled Beckler jiggling on the spot.

"The panel probably only responds to Ortogian sucker patterns."

"I said spare me the lecture." Beckler was just about crying. "What do we do?"

"This is a crowbar job."

With a final groan and hiss, the door was opened enough for Private E. Beckler to squeeze inside. There in front of him a strange curving device in stainless steel projected out of the floor. The Engineer looked in behind him. "Great! An Ortogian toilet thing. Good luck with that."

The makeshift curtain swung closed across the door. Private E Beckler turned towards the device. **With a look of determination he advanced.**



Characters:	Career Private E. Beckler	Objects:	A vehicle with an unusual defect
Challenges:	The door is locked	Objects:	A crowbar
Locations:	In orbit	Endings:	... and that is why it is better to be rich, beautiful, and empty-headed than poor and honest.
Events:	A new device is installed	Endings:	with a look of determination they advanced.
Events:	Something is translated		
Characters:	The celebrity player of an overblown sport		

Horror

The *Horror* genre includes story components that encompass the range from the subtle implied horror of H.P. Lovecraft, to the splatter-fest of apocalyptic zombie horror.



Midnight¹ sat back and rubbed her eyes carefully so as to avoid smearing her deep mascara. She had completely lost track of time. With her parents away for the weekend there was nobody to stand over her and glower her off to bed. *She'd been reading the "DarkStarz" occult forum for hours.* She swung her legs off the bed and padded down to the kitchen to look for any convenient no-effort snacks she may have missed earlier.

Rounding the base of the stairs she suddenly stopped. *There in the darkened recess below the stairs was a doll.* It wasn't hers, and certainly wasn't one she recognised. It was missing most of its hair, the plump face was chipped and battered with one eye missing. The clothing was torn and stained. She smiled to herself and reached for it "Creepy!"

No sooner than her hand had touch it, she heard voices in her headphones where they had been playing Siouxsie and the Banshees. She dropped the doll.

The voices receded to a mutter under the music.

Midnight backed off hurriedly. She almost recognised the voices. They were familiar and yet nobody that she could recall. On the edge of hearing the voices seemed to call to her. She snatched off her headphones and the voices ceased.

Shaking she stumbled up the stairs to her room.

Taking a deep breath to calm her nerves she pulled up her laptop and started a new topic on the "DarkStarz" forum. She described the doll and what she had experienced. It wasn't long before there were a couple of new posts. *One linked to a Reddit discussion on DIY devices to view the supernatural.* It didn't look too complicated.

Midnight pulled out her drawer of jewellery making materials. Soon she had a pile of copper wire and thin metal sheaves on her desk. Working quickly she fashioned a device around a plastic bottle neck. She looked at it critically. It didn't look like much really, just a bunch of folded metal shapes and heavy wire around an opening. She held it up to her eye and gazed around the room. There were her posters of Alice Cooper, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Dead Can Dance, her dresser with its monochromatic selection of makeup. Nothing out of the ordinary there. She wondered how you could tell if it was working.

Making her way down the stairs she tentatively raised the device to her eye. Over the doll was a shadowy figure. It held out its arms to her. *She felt herself drawn towards it. From her headphones hanging forgotten about her neck, a sighing voice made promises to her and*

1 Her parents called her "Beatrice" but she was "Midnight" to herself and anyone else that mattered.

coaxed her with feelings she had never had before.



Events:	A bell begins to toll	Objects:	The device for viewing the supernatural
Challenges:	The photograph shows nothing out of the ordinary	Challenges:	The radio is receiving a mysterious signal
Objects:	A fiddle made from the blackest wood	Objects:	A creepy doll
Characters:	The teenager who is into the occult	Endings:	The prophesy was fulfilled
Events:	Someone surrenders to the darkness	Endings:	They would never clean up the mess in time.

Wild West

Saddle up in the *Wild West* genre where outlaws, snake oil salesmen, dusty towns, and the open sky beckon the story teller.



Dirty Steve glanced out of the grimy window and ducked his head back, breathing heavily. That one glance had told him enough. They would be here in ten minutes. He hadn't realised they were so close on his heels. There was no where to run now. He cast his eyes desperately around the disused office; the bare wooden chair, the dust covered desk, the woodworm riddled wardrobe with its door half off. His eyes focused on something in the wardrobe.

Maybe he could bluff his way out. He pulled a dusty suit out of the wardrobe. It was well worn, but luckily the moths hadn't been at it. Quickly he put it on, brushing off the worst of the dust.

When Dirty Steve first entered the old mining site, he had noticed a door marked, "testing". Grabbing an old dented briefcase as he left the office, he quickly scuttled over to the building where he guessed the test laboratory was. Inside was a shambles. Abandoned equipment lay everywhere, but there were a few flasks and some very basic chemicals, that was all he needed. A dab of boot polish in his hair, a quick scrub of his teeth, and he set to work.

Sheriff Woodleigh surveyed the abandoned mine buildings. "Be careful boys, he could be anywhere. Remember, we want him alive. Check all the buildings."

"Sheriff," a deputy hailed him from near one of the buildings. Two of the sheriff's men were leading a man dressed in a dusty suit and stained shirt from one of the buildings.

"Good day to you sir," said the man, smiling widely and brightly revealing very white teeth.

"Good day to you to," replied Woodleigh. "Now please tell me what brings you to this abandoned mining site."

"Well sir," the man in the suit shrugged off the deputy's hand. "I was just travelling on to Big Bull Gulch down the road there awhile to see if I could sell some of my patented medicine there. I didn't have much luck in Armadillo back there. Anyways I thought this would be a good place to stop and rest and also make up some more of my patented medicine. Stocks are a bit low you understand."

"Have you seen anyone pass through here?"

"I've been kinda busy making my medicine so I ain't taken much notice of what's been happening hereabouts."

"OK. But keep an eye out will ya. There's an outlaw on the run and we believe he may have take refuge in here."

"Thank you sir," the man bobbed his head politely. "I'll do just that."

Dirty Steve breathed a sigh of relief. It looked like the Sheriff had bought it.
His thoughts were interrupted by one of the deputies who had dragged him out of the lab.
“Sorry ‘bout that mister.”
“Don’t worry about it.” said Dirty Steve.
“Say. You haven’t got something that will cure, y’know, the “trots”” he asked hopefully.
“Oh sure. I have something here.” Dirty Steve pulled out a bottle of a black liquid which he had created in the lab a few minutes before. “This is my patented medicine. It cures stomach pain from gas, diarrhea, and indigestion, and also gives you sparkly teeth to boot. That’ll be a dollar.”

Dirty Steve returned to the testing laboratory and gathered up his equipment. He quickly gathered up a pile of the charcoal he had used to make his medicine and put it in a jar to take with him. He was just about to leave when the door burst open.
“We have you now Dirty Steve.” said the Sheriff.
“Who’s Dirty Steve?” asked Dirty Steve, putting his bag down trying to hide the jitters.
“You sold one of my men one of your patented medicines.”
“Er...yes.”
“He’s feeling better than he’s ever felt and his teeth are stunningly white.”
“Yes?” said Dirty Steve. “A happy customer then?”
“A happy customer, yes, but everyone knows Snake Oil merchants like you are just bottling up mixtures of cocaine and laudanum and giving it a bit of colouring.... and their cures don’t work. And nor would you just charge a dollar.” He turned to a deputy and said, “Search his bag for laudanum, cocaine and the usual medicinal materials.”
“No Laudanum.” said the deputy tipping the contents of Dirty Steve’s case out into the dirt. He poked through the pile. “Charcoal, boot polish, turpentine, sugar. Nope. No laudanum, cocaine, or alcohol.”
Dirty Steve squirmed and started to sweat. “I ran out.”
“Dirty Steve.” snapped the Sheriff. “You’re under arrest for banditry. We may also add charges of attempting to undermine the health system of this great country of ours by pretending to be a charlatan and selling remedies that work for affordable prices.”



Events:	Someone sells something	Events:	An official announcement
Characters:	The bandit with nice teeth	Locations:	Among the disused mining buildings
Challenges:	The truth has been discovered	Characters:	The snake oil salesman
Objects:	A heavy iron door	Endings:	When asked about it later they denied all knowledge
Challenges:	Someone had already been there.	Endings:	It was too much to resist

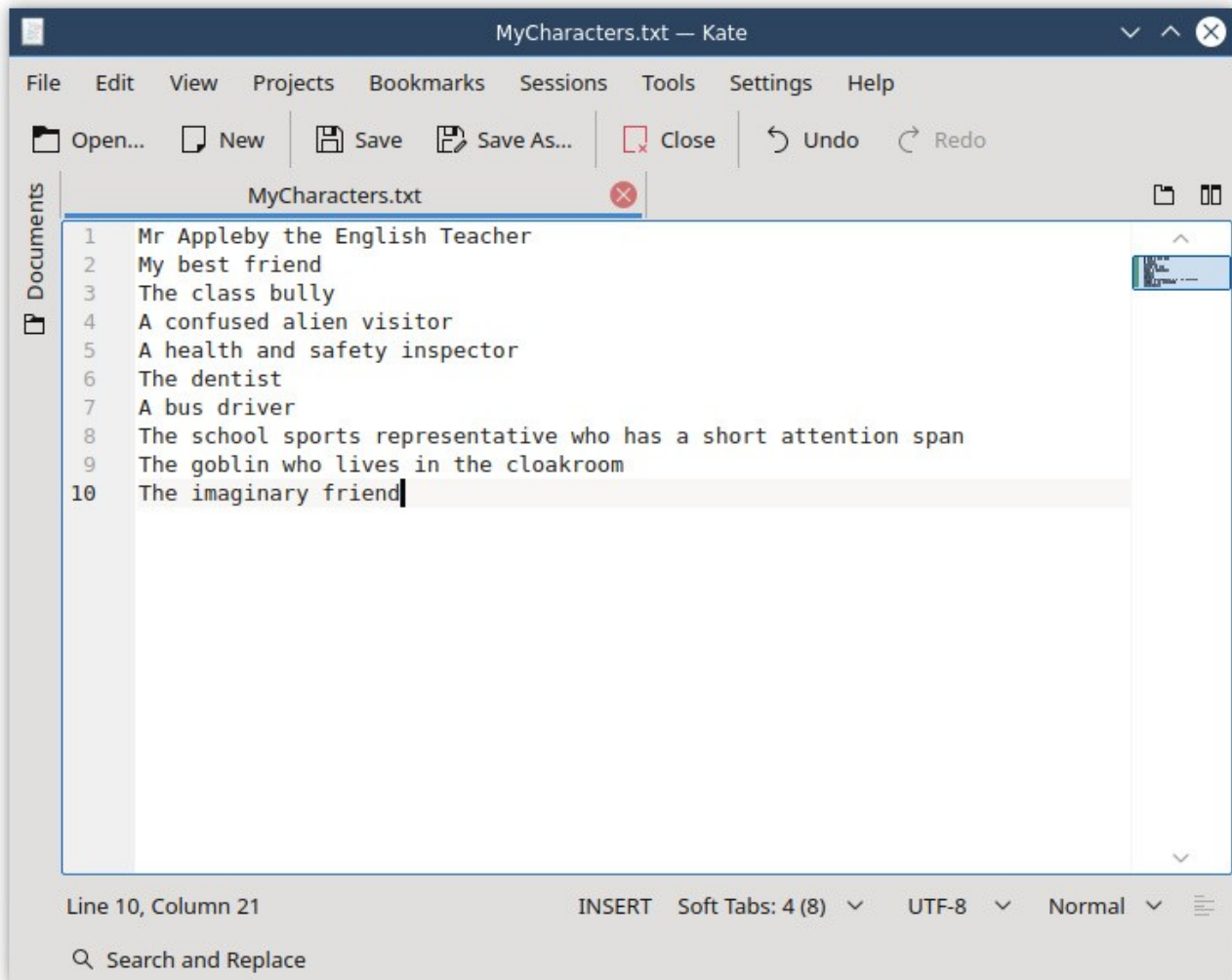
StorySoup – A Story Telling Prompt Generator

Custom Genre (Custom Card Sets)

Of course you can also make up your own lists to add into the mix.

To create a custom file all you need is a text editor such as Notepad, Notepad++, Gedit, Kate. Basically any editor able to produce plain text files will work. If you are going to use something like LibreOffice or Microsoft Word you will need to save your file as Text file (.txt).

Each separate card is just a line of text. For example the file might consist of this list;



Aim for at least ten items in your list. If you are wanting to bias the cards drawn towards a particular selection of cards then you may want to add in multiple of the same card. Of course this means drawing the same card content multiple times is a possibility.

It will pay to delete off any paragraph returns you may have at the end of your list. If left in they will create blank cards (which may be desirable).

If the list in the example above were in a text file called **MyCharacters.txt**, you would be able to load this up with the Custom Card Set selection by clicking on the Button carrying the **Default_Characters.txt** title. Navigate to your file and click the **Open** button.

StorySoup as a Game

Should you wish to use StorySoup as a game here are some suggestions;

Common Root Story Telling

2-4 players decide on a common set of cards, and then using that and additional elements on their own, create a story each.

What you will need;

Up to 4 players

Something to write on for each player

A copy of StorySoup

Process

- Decide on a common set of cards to use in each of the stories. This is done by using StorySoup to deal and re-deal cards, with the players pinning those elements they like until each player has pinned one card. You may like to set a maximum number of re-deals.
- With those selected cards pinned, each player takes a turn with StorySoup to pin and re-deal additional cards to create more elements they would like to include in their own story. A maximum number of re-deals may be agreed on by the players. Once they have their selection they copy them to their note pad.
- The remaining players take a turn to gather the additional story elements they want to include.
- Once all players have their selection of story elements they can create their story. The story must include the common elements selected at the start of the process.
- Each player tells their story.

Limited Story Challenges

To add a little more challenge to the process the players may decide to agree that a selected Challenge card must be included in everyone's story or all stories must end at the same Ending card.

Changing Story

2-4 players each tell a common story but each time its told a story element is changed.

What you will need;

Up to 4 players

A copy of StorySoup

Process

- Use StorySoup to deal and re-deal selection of cards. The players pin the cards they want in their combined story. You may want to restrict the number of cards in the spread to make story telling easier and quicker. For example you may only want to use 4 story element cards and no ending cards.
- Once the full agreed number of cards a pinned one player tells the story.
- One card is un-pinned and a replacement card is dealt. This may be the first card that turns up or the players can elect to re-deal until a suitable one turns up or the first card matching the type of the original card is dealt. For instance the card that was un-pinned was an object, so the players may elect to re-deal until the next object card turns up. The new card is pinned.
- With the new spread, the second story teller tells the same story but now substitutes the new card.
- The process repeats with a card being unpinned, and a new one dealt.
- As play progresses the original tale will evolve as the spread of cards changes.
- The game ends whenever the players decide or after each card in the spread has been changed.

Collaborative Story Telling

1-4 players create a story between them

What you will need;

Up to 4 players

A copy of StorySoup

Process

This is essentially the same as using StorySoup as a creative writing prompting tool for the solo writer. The difference is that the players discuss how they see the story running as they pin cards, and re-deal cards. Together they will agree a set of cards and then either create a common story or all tell their own version of the story using the same story elements.



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