

## Playing, Reading, and Composing in Twine Activity Sample

This sample describes an in-class activity that works best across two class periods of approx. 75 minutes. This activity works well in any class that asks students to engage with media objects. This particular assignment was adapted from a graduate seminar in participatory media for an undergraduate class. The assignment offers students the chance/challenge of creating a game through an open-source interactive fiction design program called Twine. Students should have complete control over the complexity or simplicity of their objects. Twine is a game design program that allows users to compose text-based interactive narratives. They can be simple or complicated. Ideally, instructors should understand the basics of Twine, which you can learn through the platform community's [extensive tutorial guides](#).

This activity can work for game courses (allows for a conversation about Twine and alternative game creation platforms and queer creators), writing courses (allows students to compose in a new genre and medium), rhetorically-driven discussions (allows students to discuss how Twine games both adhere to and depart from both video game conventions and literary fiction conventions).

### Activity Basics

#### **Students will:**

- Play Twine texts independently and socially
- Read Twine-related or game theory texts
- Discuss video games and digital media as critical media texts
- Compose a text in Twine

### Suggested Activity Order

#### **Before the Activity:**

- Students should be introduced to Twine as a composition platform by playing simple text-based games (suggestions: [You Are Jeff Bezos](#), [Cat Petting Simulator](#)).

#### **Day One: Introducing Twine Games**

- [10 min] Discuss students' experiences playing the Twine games before class.
- [15-20 min] Create a simple Twine game. Can be something that you created already and then re-create in class to demo the software, or something that you create in collaboration with the class.
  - This invites questions about how to do things and then employing research strategies to find the proper tutorial to compose the class' suggestions.

- [Remainder of available time] Play and discuss Porpentine's [With Those We Love Alive](#).<sup>1</sup> Due to the simplicity of these text-based games, students might be surprised by the complexity of *With Those We Love Alive*. As a note, Porpentine's [With Those We Love Alive](#) invites players to draw sigils on their skin if they choose, engage with audio if possible, and has creator-included content warnings for **violence, self-harm, and abuse**. As a result, students should be warned about the content ahead of time and instructors should respect students' decision to engage with the Twine content differently. There are many, many Twine games, and students with experience playing these games or using the platform should have the opportunity to volunteer a game per instructor approval. Other options might include [Queers in Love at the End of the World](#), [You Are Jeff Bezos](#), [Cat Petting Simulator](#), [Daymare #1: "Ritual,"](#) and [The Domovoi](#).

### Day Two: Composing Twine Texts

- [10-15 min] Play and discuss Anna Anthropy's [Queers in Love at the End of the World](#). This discussion can focus on what the texts the class has played so far suggest about Twine as a composition platform.
- [15-20 min] Discuss a Twine-related text (suggestion: "[Twine, the Video-Game Technology for All](#)" or excerpts from either Anna Anthropy's [Rise of the Videogame Zinesters](#) or Bo Ruberg's [Video Games Have Always Been Queer](#)). Using these texts, in-class discussions can address questions like:
  - What are Twine games? (Are they *games*?)
  - Who composes these texts?
  - How is Twine different from other game design software? Or word processing software?
  - What kinds of narratives exist on Twine?
- [Remainder of Class] Individually, in small groups, or as a whole class, compose a simple game or interactive fiction text in Twine. Position the Twine platform as a space where writers can create interactive fiction games and invite students to create a simple story with only a handful of click-throughs. The story should have a beginning, middle, and end. Given time, ask students to share their experiences of creating a game after both individually and collaboratively playing a finished text. This section of the activity can scaffold toward a longer game design or composition project. Students can compose literature in the Twine platform, design interactive games, or simply learn how to revise their understanding of what a "word processor" can look like and do.

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<sup>1</sup> As a note, Porpentine's [With Those We Love Alive](#) invites players to draw sigils on their skin if they choose, engage with audio if possible, and has creator-included content warnings for violence, self-harm, and abuse. As a result, students should have the option to choose another text to play. There are many, many Twine games, and students with experience playing these games or using the platform should have the opportunity to volunteer a game per instructor approval. Other options include [Queers in Love at the End of the World](#), [You Are Jeff Bezos](#), [Cat Petting Simulator](#), [Daymare #1: "Ritual,"](#) and [The Domovoi](#).