A brief overview of useful game development tools

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- E-Learning producer at UZH Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

- BA in History, Comparative Literature, Human-Computer Interaction

- Hobby game developer

Goals of this presentation

- Introduction to different tools

- Low barrier of entry

- Free and often Open Source

- "Game engine"

  - Software that allows the creation of a game without doing everything "from scratch"

Lives in Transit

Text adventure for history students

- Developed at the history department of UZH, together with external companies

- SNF funded

- Learning about the research process

- "Roleplaying" as a PhD student

- Fun, but also stressful

➡ https://livesintransit.org

Welcome to Lives in Transit!

Lives in Transit (*LiT*) is an interactive, text-based game which simulates the experience of researching and writing global history.

As a player, you will adopt the role of a university graduate student, choose a research topic, and work through a challenging set of storylines. In each topic, you'll collect real historical sources and create a record of how your thinking changes during research. Your ability to progress will depend on your interactions with a set of fictional characters—in the university, in museums or in the media, and in the archives. Like this historical map of Japan's Yamashiro province, your research landscape will change as you decide which road you'll take.

You can play LiT from your computer (but not yet from mobile devices). After you have logged in with your player name, you can choose either to play individually or to set a topic as a class exercise for your students.

We hope you learn and have fun. Please feel free to give us feedback on Twitter via our handle, @transitlives

The LiT Team, University of Zurich

Universität Zürich UZH
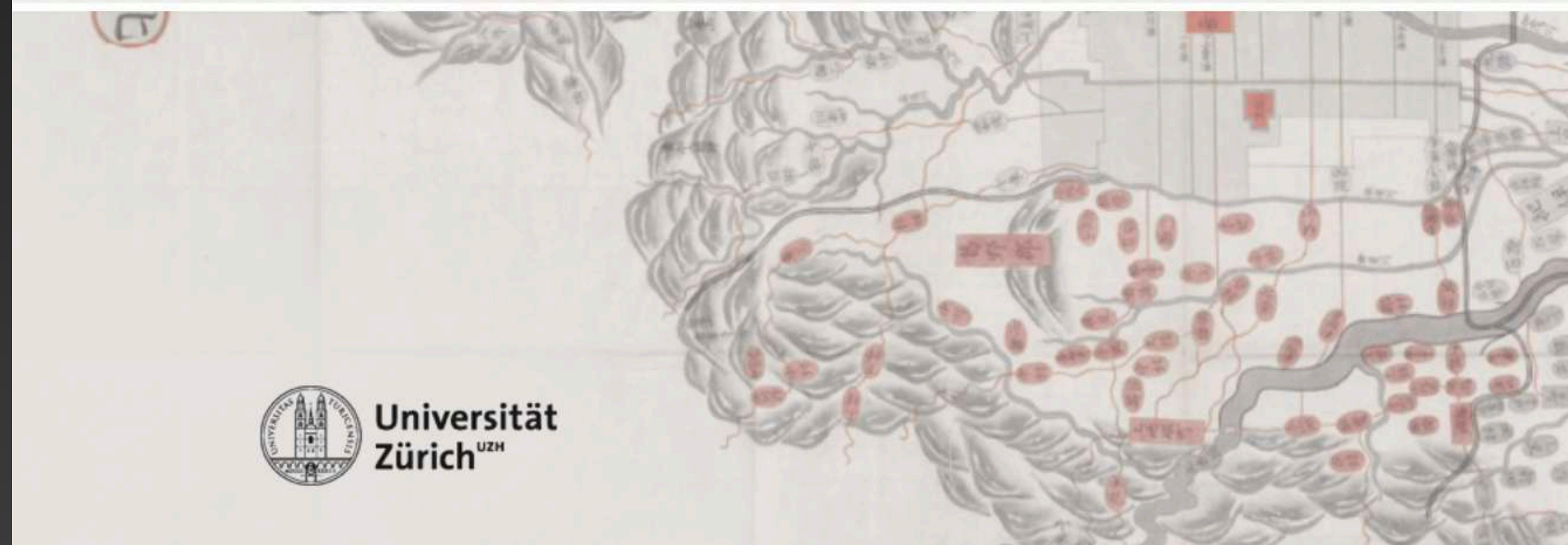
Choices

🥦 The scenario…and questions (1/3)

The scenario: You're an early-stage PhD student. Just seeing that sentence gives you the shivers: who would have imagined that, having graduated from an upwardly-mobile but still second-rate provincial university (which shall remain nameless), you would find yourself here, under the supervision of the world-renowned Professor Meredith Moira? What a privilege! What a success story you are turning out to be, making your family back home so proud!

At least, that is one reason for your shivers. The other is that, despite your undoubted potential, you're actually somewhat overwhelmed. Your application to study with Prof Moira had been full of references to *entangled histories* and *connectivities* and *transculturonomies*, but you still aren't sure what any of these words (especially the last one) really mean. Professor Moira, who is not averse to using a bit of jargon herself, looks at you with shining eyes when other PhD students use such terminology during her weekly postgraduate colloquium. When she does so, you tend to…
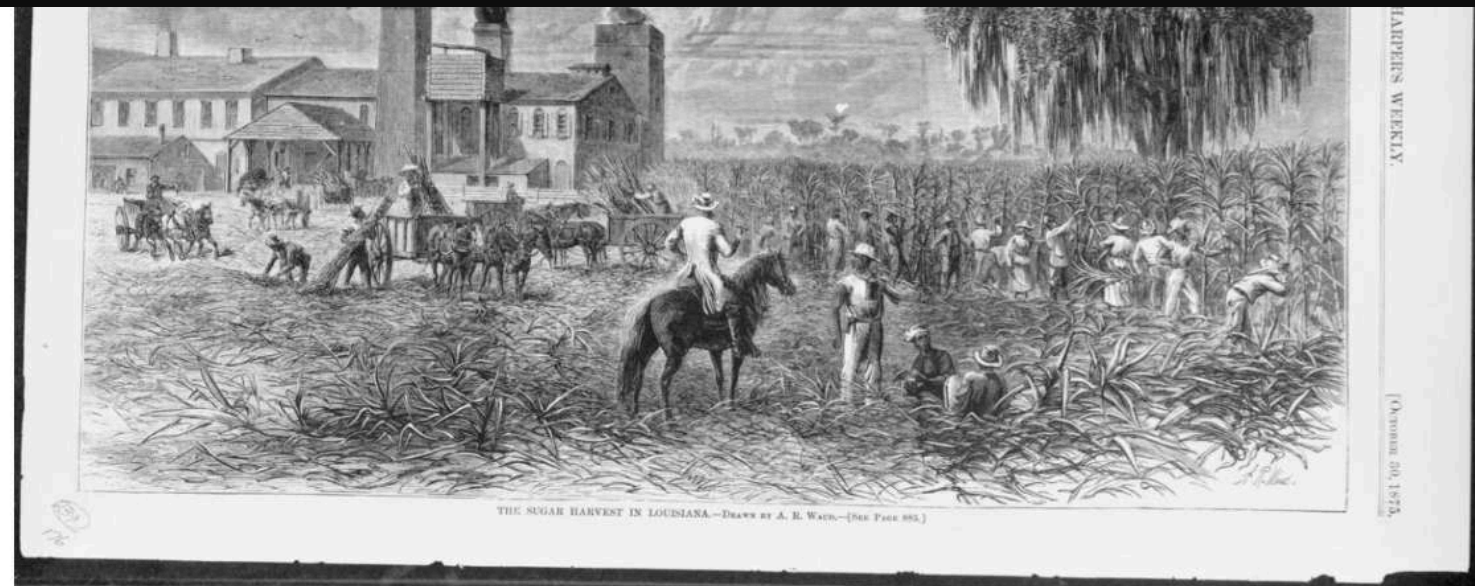
...nod enthusiastically and open your notebook as if to check a reference

...murmur "yah" and "entangularities"

...try to direct Prof Moira's direction towards your friend Dani, who speaks jargon like a native

...sigh impatiently and ask, "yes, but what about the sources?"

Notebook

A.R. Waud, "The Sugar Harvest in Louisiana", 1875.

The "Race and Face" presentation begins. (Whether you finished them in time or not, your notes have been saved to your Notebook, which you can open by clicking on the right-hand side of the page now. You can add to the Notebook at any time, e.g. by adding to your previous or current inputs; and you can download your Notebook as a PDF at any time. If you are playing this topic as part of a class assignment, remember that your teacher will be able to see your Notebook entries at the end of the game.)

The speaker, a PhD student at the University of Hawai'i, starts by saying that, as an Asian-American, the question of race and face are personal to her. Her great-great-grandparents emigrated from Japan to Hawai'i in the 1890s. Hence her first slide, which shows an iconic plantation scene from Maui in the 1880s. (Of course! You knew it didn't quite look like a Caribbean setting…) *Maui*—what a strange coincidence. But before you can think any further, Ms Okada has already moved on and is talking about a new image. This is a sketch which she says appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in 1875, ten years before the Hawaiian painting. She points out some similarities between the two images, including the overseer on horseback; but she also suggests a key difference, namely the prominent place of the sugar mills in the background. She agrees with Sidney Mintz, in that these mills were the factories of European industrialization *avant la lettre.*

The presentation continues…

Initial thoughts on "Race and Face" painting

Notes on the presentation

Autosaved ✓

Create new note   +

E-Mails

Natalie Tasukarru
Boss heads-ups

Natalie Tasukarru

Reply

Boss heads-ups

Hi L,

I hope all's going well at the conference. This is just a quick one to let you know that Prof Moira is on the prowl for unsuspecting PhD students. She's looking for "volunteers" to help prepare some of her teaching for her Block Seminar in two weeks. I know you've got plenty of other things going on at the moment but she told me she would be in touch.

Just FYI. No need to reply!

Let me know when you're back and hopefully we can get a coffee.

Best,
Natalie

Dr. Natalie Tasukarru
Postdoctoral Assistant, Department of History

Reply

Twine
Hypertext Games

Flexibility ● ● ○
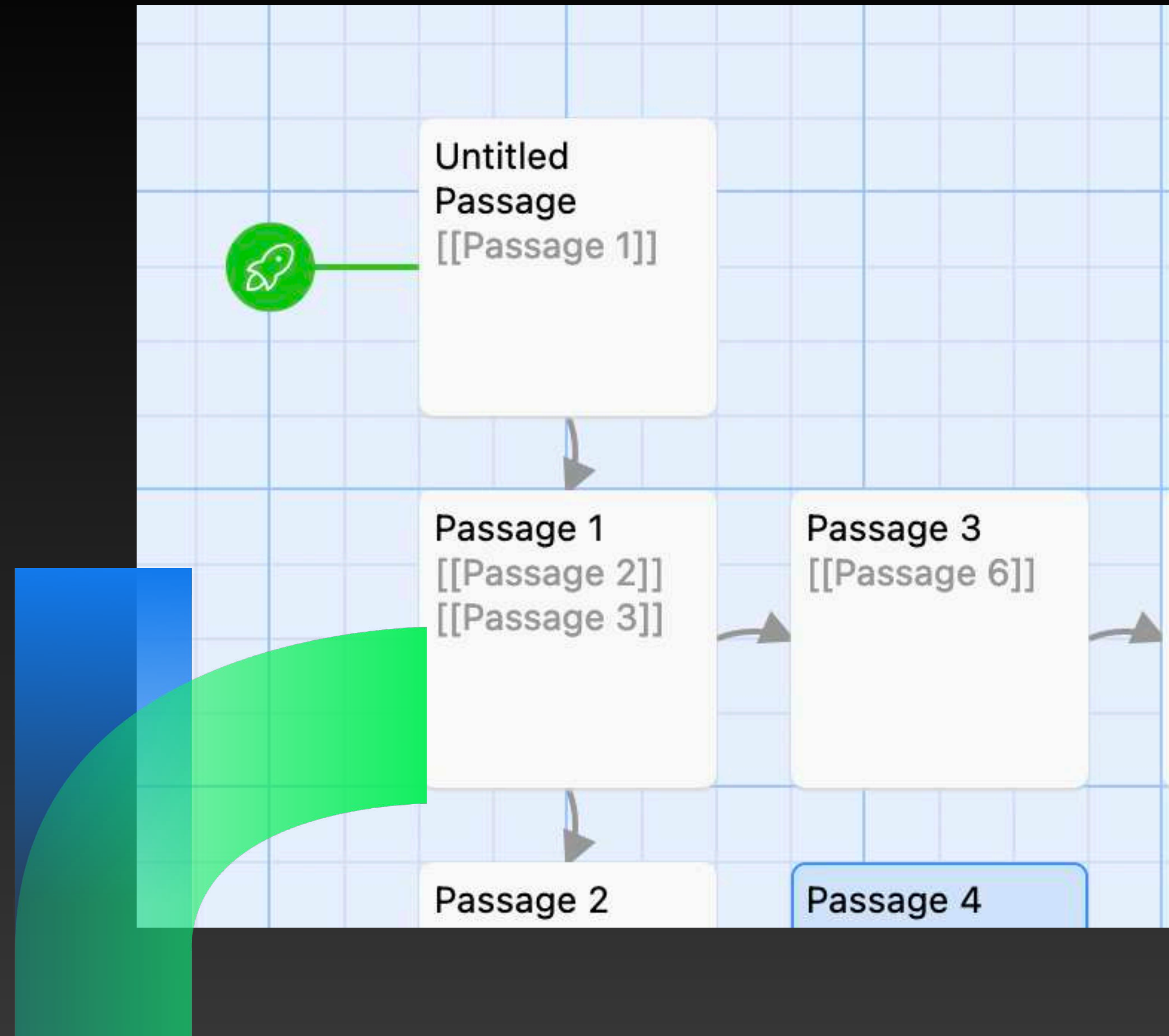Coding knowledge ● ○ ○
Support ● ● ●
Analytics ● ○ ○

Browser, Windows, OSX, Linux,

GUI, Markup, HTML, CSS, Javascript

- Choice-Based and Hypertext games

- Text and images

- Very easy to use, large community

➡ https://twinery.org/

Depression Quest, Zoe Quinn, 2013 / Even Cowgirls Bleed, Christine Love 2013 / Bandersnatch (Black Mirror episode), 2018

Bitsy
Pixel Exploration Games

Flexibility ○ ○ ○
Coding knowledge ● ○ ○
Support ● ● ○
Analytics ○ ○ ○

Browser

Scripting language

• Character walking around in a world

• All-in-one tool, engine comes with all required
features (image editing, music composer etc.)

• Limited content types

➡ https://make.bitsy.org/

My Dream Job: How I Survived Job Hunting in Animation, Bubbly Oasis

Inform 7
Natural Language Games

Flexibility ○ ○ ○
Coding knowledge ● ● ○
Support ● ● ○
Analytics ○ ○ ○

Windows, OSX, Linux,

Scripting language

- Parser games

- User interacts through text input

- Form of game that has a very long history

➡ https://ganelson.github.io/inform-website/

Deep Forest

Onyx
An Interactive Fiction
Release 1 / Serial number 230417 / Inform 7 build 6M62 (I6/v6.34 lib 6/12N) SD

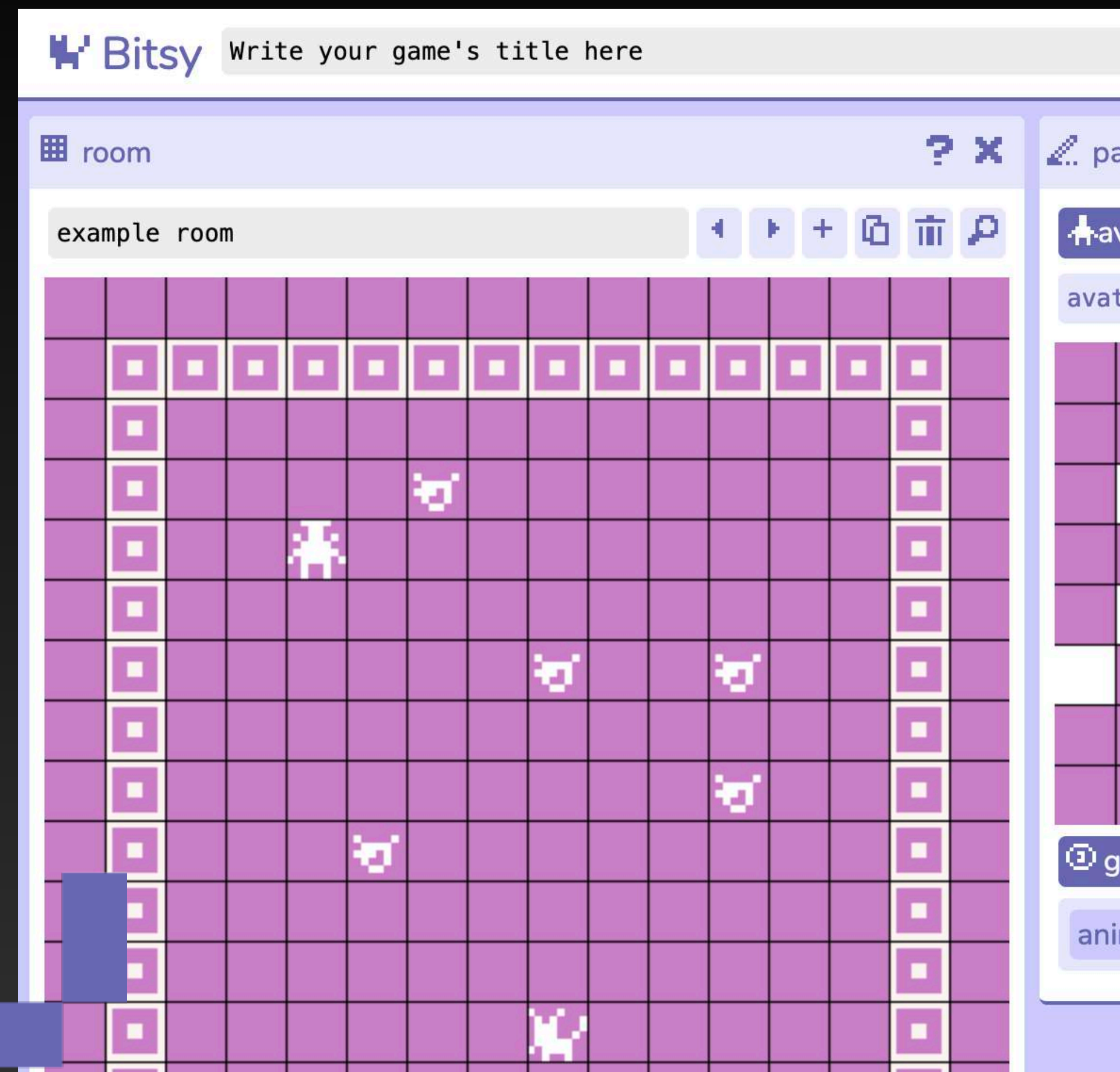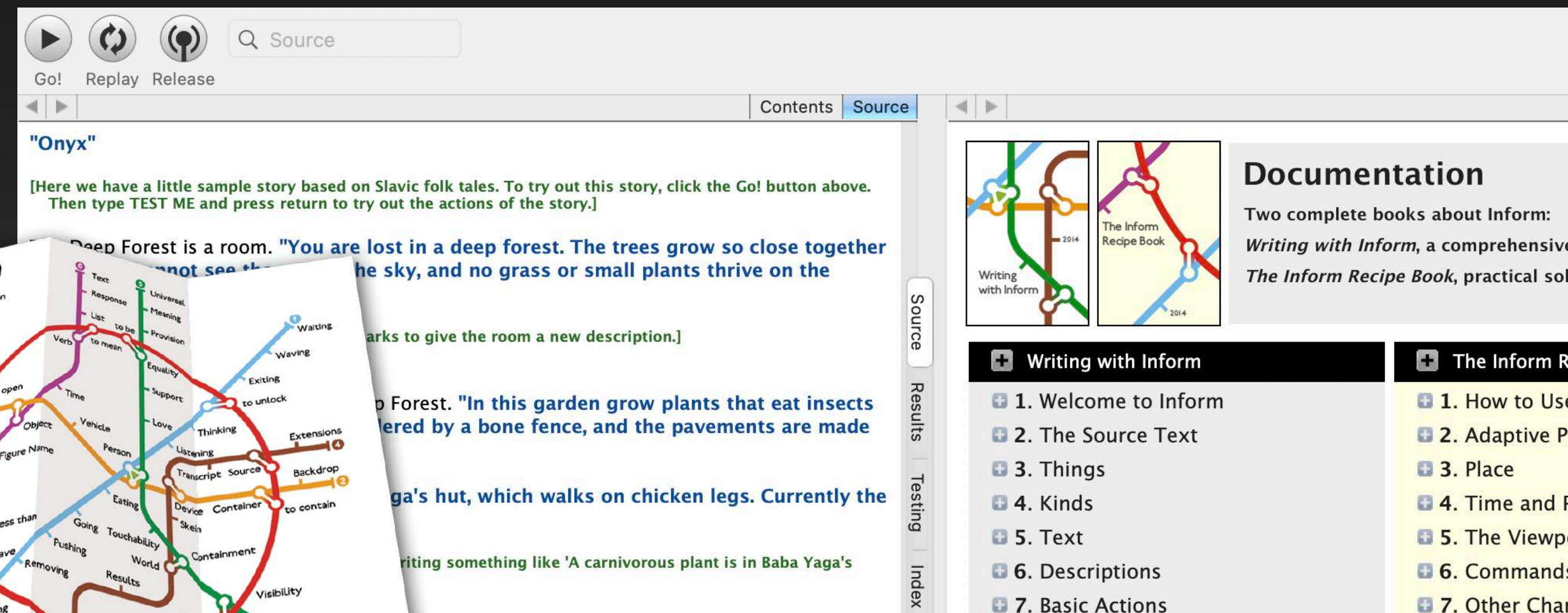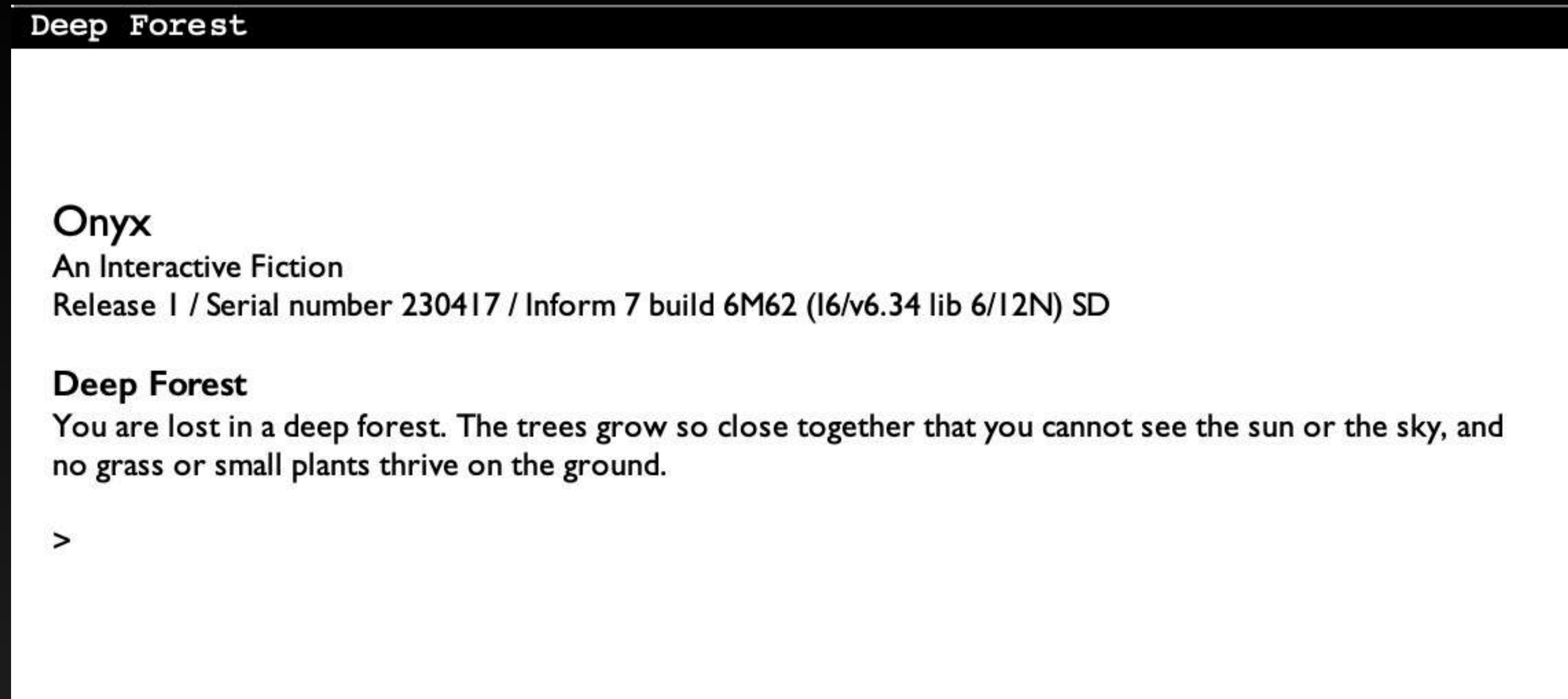Deep Forest
You are lost in a deep forest. The trees grow so close together that you cannot see the sun or the sky, and no grass or small plants thrive on the ground.

>

Go! Replay Release

Contents | Source

"Onyx"

[Here we have a little sample story based on Slavic folk tales. To try out this story, click the Go! button above. Then type TEST ME and press return to try out the actions of the story.]

Deep Forest is a room. "You are lost in a deep forest. The trees grow so close together ...annot see th... ...he sky, and no grass or small plants thrive on the

...arks to give the room a new description.]

...p Forest. "In this garden grow plants that eat insects ...ered by a bone fence, and the pavements are made

...ga's hut, which walks on chicken legs. Currently the

...riting something like 'A carnivorous plant is in Baba Yaga's

Documentation
Two complete books about Inform:
Writing with Inform, a comprehensive
The Inform Recipe Book, practical solu

Writing with Inform	The Inform Re
1. Welcome to Inform	1. How to Use
2. The Source Text	2. Adaptive Pr
3. Things	3. Place
4. Kinds	4. Time and Pl
5. Text	5. The Viewpo
6. Descriptions	6. Commands
7. Basic Actions	7. Other Chara

```
Deep Forest

Onyx
An Interactive Fiction
Release 1 / Serial number 230417 / Inform 7 build 6M62 (I6/v6.34 lib 6/12N) SD

Deep Forest
You are lost in a deep forest. The trees grow so close together that you cannot see the sun or the sky, and
no grass or small plants thrive on the ground.

>
```

```
Living Room                              Score: 15        Moves: 23
>take water
You can't reach something that's inside a closed container.

>take bottle
Taken.

>go west
Living Room
You are in the living room. There is a doorway to the east, a wooden door with
strange gothic lettering to the west, which appears to be nailed shut, a
trophy case, and a large oriental rug in the center of the room.
Above the trophy case hangs an elvish sword of great antiquity.
A battery-powered brass lantern is on the trophy case.

>take rug
The rug is extremely heavy and cannot be carried.

>open case
Opened.

>take sword
Taken.

>
```

Onyx, Inform 7 demo game / Zork I, 1977

Ren'py
Visual Novels

Flexibility ● ● ○
Coding knowledge ● ● ●
Support ● ● ●
Analytics ● ○ ○

Windows, OSX, Linux,

Python

- Visual novel, interaction through text choices

- Focus on visual aspects

- Large community

➡ https://www.renpy.org/

```
# The game starts here.
#begin start
label start:
#end start

    scene bg washington
    show eileen vhappy
    with dissolve

    # Start the background music playing.
    play music "sunflower-slow-drag.ogg"

    window show

    e "Hi! My name is Eileen, and I'd like to welcome you to the Ren'Py tut

    show eileen happy

    e "In this tutorial, we'll teach you the basics of Ren'Py, so you can m

label tutorials:
```
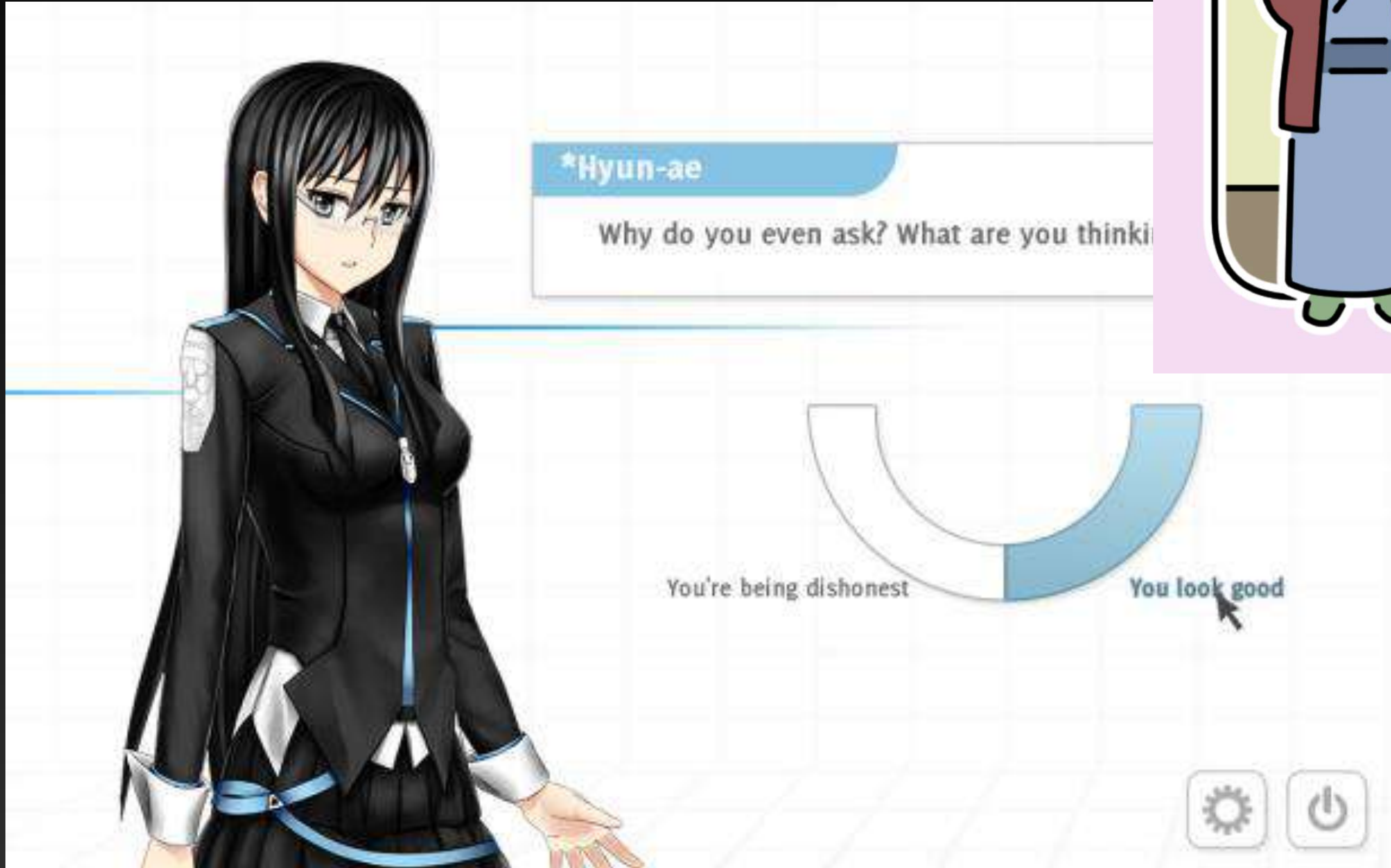
Eileen

In this tutorial, we'll teach you the basics of Ren'Py, so you can make games of your own. We'll also demonstrate many features, so you can see what Ren'Py is capable of.

Analogue: A Hate Story, Christine Love, 2012 / One Night, npckc / Butterfly Soup, Brianna Lei, 2017

Reading and Research

- Game-Based Learning UZH
https://www.gbl.uzh.ch/

- Game Developer Conference
https://www.youtube.com/
@Gdconf

- IFComp https://ifcomp.org/

- Emily Short https://
emshort.blog/

Questions?