

Dramatic Irony

(DRAFT 1.3)

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Dramatic irony - Nedward Rehanek

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Elevator Pitch

Dramatic Irony is a Visual Novel game about the closeted transgender high school experience with a Shakespearean twist. How will you survive your last 6 weeks of high school with a colourful cast of peers and teachers?

Values

Representation, Community, Respect

Mechanics

The mechanics are clicking through text, selecting different options, and saving/loading. These will all be done with the mouse (left click).

Dynamics

Interact with peers in a high school environment, navigating social life while also dealing with the weird shenanigans that dramatic irony brings up. This includes problem-solving and deducing different things about characters, and making choices that pertain to your own playstyle.

Aesthetics

I want to evoke emotions related to empathy, community and relation to the content. While the game is meant to make the trans experience a bit lighter, the jokes should not be taking away from the seriousness. The game will be a mash of Shakespearean and high school aesthetics. Its main colours will be muted yellows and blues in regards to the background. The game's background colours expanded to include reds, but still are very muted.



Player Interface

Dramatic Irony be made in Renpy. The dialogue/main game will look like the following:



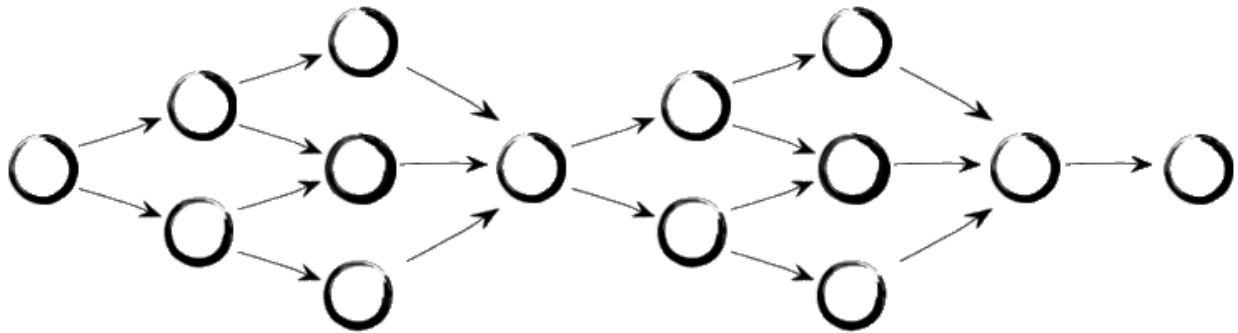
It will be navigated using the mouse. The settings/options will be listed below the text box. To get to the next text, players must either click on the game or click on the choices using their left mouse key.

Preference menu and saving menu as depicted by Renpy's official system:

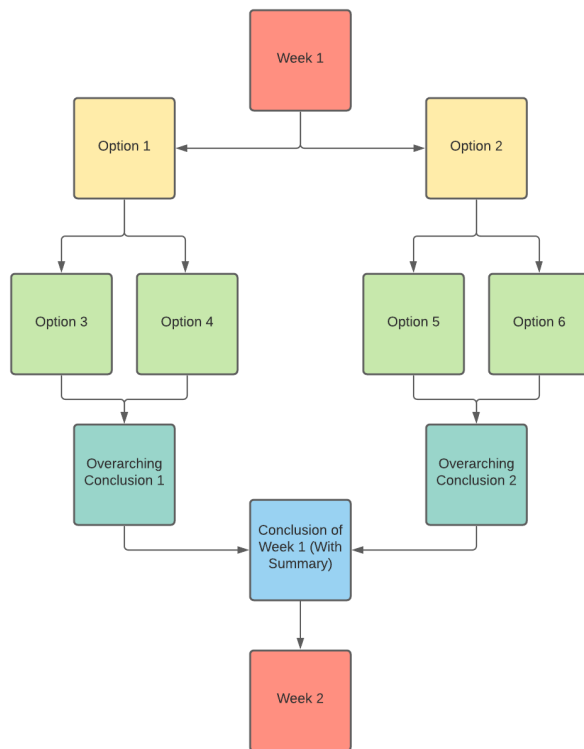


You can save at any time in the game. This makes the game easy to process and allows players to go at their own pace.

Narrative Structure



It will be a parallel narrative with conditions that unlock different parts of the ending. The structure is pretty fixed - there are pre-existing challenges that will always come up. Some are brought up due to player choices- who they've come out to and how they've explained it. The weeks will start at a single point and diverge depending on the player's choice, then converge in time to become week two, where the process repeats. Please look to the chart below for visual aid:



Each colour on this chart represents a different stage. Each stage should take the same amount of time as one another to happen. Not all options in each stage will be the same. When it gets to Week 2, the formula resets. This is loosely how the game works.

Week Structure:

Week 1 - Typical Highschool Week

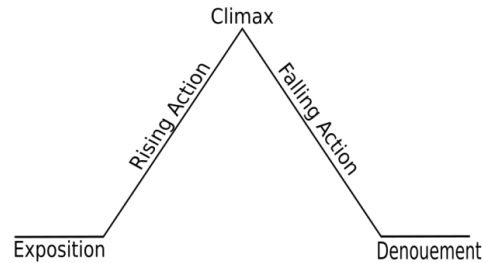
Week 2 - University Talks

Week 3 - Spirit Week

Week 4 - Prom

Week 5 - Final Project/Exams

Week 6 - Graduation / Goodbye



Exposition- Week 1 Typical Highschool Week - The main characters are established during this time and the fact that the main character is transgender is established. The overarching timeline of 6 weeks will be established.

Rising Action - Week 2, 3, 4, 5- The main characters are working through university talks (talking about the future) spirit week (celebrating almost being done) prom (same as the last one) and Final Project/Exams (acknowledging the end of the school year). These are the weeks where concealing it gets more and more complicated- not necessarily harder just more awkward.

Climax- Week 6 - Graduation is the climax and it is the point where a lot of worries come together. Having to dress formally for an event (wear a dress), having your birth name on a certificate, and having momentous pictures taken of you for memories... a lot of hard parts in there.

Falling Action/Denouement - Goodbye, Week 6 part 2 - after that stressful moment with graduation - it's over. It's a time of relaxation and farewells and moving on. It's where a lot of the player's choices give them special dialogue based on how they interacted with their peers and their choices.

Narrative Style

The narrative will be delivered one of three ways. There will be character dialogue, internal thoughts present by the main character, and narration by an unnamed narrator. The dialogue will be written like spoken word with the name above the text (and read out) indicating who is speaking. For example:

Terry

“Man. That sucks.”

Internal thoughts will be written in the same format (like the spoken word), with their own bracket. For example:

Thoughts

Can this get any more awkward?

The narration will be written strictly in the third person. The narrator is not omnipresent and all-knowing. For example:

Narrator

Terry picked up the mostly empty cup that had the remains of his slushie. He brushed off the cup and stared at it for a second, before dropping it into the trash can.

Characters

Main Character (Lily)

The main character is an individual in the last 6 weeks of their final year of high school. At the beginning of the game, they realize that the thing they've been feeling is most likely being transgender. They have a small group of friends and are a bit shy. Most of the personality will be inspired by the player or how I view my younger self in high school.

The Lovers

The Lovers are actually two people and are considered the coolest couple in high school. They seem to be connected at the hip, even though they have different hobbies. August (She/Her) and Avery (He/Him) have been friends since they were children. August is a rather buff short girl who is head cheerleader but is also a patron of the arts (theatre and visual art) and is known for how confident and loud she is (She is really smart too- especially people smart!). Avery is a lanky individual who is head of the debate team. He really likes things in black and white and is known for his smarts and ability to create a compromise. Surprise! They're both gay and pretending to date one another.

The Fool

The Class Clown type of figure. He is a teenager named Terrance (or just Terry) and is doing an extra year in high school. Teachers either hate or love him. He can be loud and disruptive at times but it is never to make fun of the teacher. He's scared of graduating. He believes that if he's able to do good here by making some of his peers laugh then why even bother moving on altogether? He should just stay here!

The Town Crier

The Town Crier is a character who seems to not be able to keep his mouth shut. If you tell him a secret he will likely be unable to keep it a secret- that's what everyone believes really. He has a few secrets he's able to keep and if you tell him you're trans he will keep it under wraps. However, he is also really inexperienced in communicating with transgender people, and will thus ask inappropriate questions without realizing they are inappropriate. It can get tiring talking to him.

The Hermit

The Hermit is a character who does not seem to fit into the "normal" body of people. She is asocial and doesn't make much effort to connect with her peers. She seems shy even at times. It is strongly suspected that she is queer, even by the protagonist. However, she actually carries some homophobic and transphobic views and if you come out as transgender to her, she will be verbally aggressive towards you. This is partly because she has constantly been asked if she was transgender as if it was a negative thing, which gave her the implication that being transgender was being less than.

The Ruler

When The Ruler is around, everyone tenses up a little. They come from a very strict household and expect their closer peers to behave well at school like they were raised. They seem to want to drop that act from time to time, but they appear to get scared of doing so. They present very femininely. If asked privately about their pronouns, they will reveal that they are non-binary and use they/them pronouns, but they don't want to come out until they have reached university and they do not have to worry about their safety and can come out with a second home to go to.

The Judge

The Judge is a teacher who while seems strict in their class, at times can be silly and even erratic during class. They teach an English class but often go into topics of art and human rights, often fumbling with the proper terminology. They seem like they have the right sentiment, but if you come out as transgender to them, they will commit microaggressions towards you and

hint (but never explicitly say) that you're transgender to the class. They will also try to manipulate you, calling you their favourite student and continuing to pester you. They also pester The Hermit in a similar way, assuming that she is transgender when she is not.

The inspiration comes from a teacher Nedward actually had in high school who would often nearly expose his identity to the class on purpose, all while him never coming out to that teacher. The teacher had made an assumption and while it was correct, they conducted their class poorly and made Nedward feel unsafe at school.

The King

The King is a Social Science teacher who teaches the main character. He is a friendly face and often goes on passionate rants during class. He loves to talk about making the world a better place- in any capacity that you can. If you come out to him, he will treat you with respect and ask you when to use your pronouns (if you're okay in class if he uses your pronouns when you're alone are you okay with him switching pronouns, etc.) and ask for your feedback on how certain issues are represented. He will also ask you if you have any more ideas on how to make the class more inclusive. He is a very positive source.

The King is the second character directly inspired by a teacher Nedward had in high school. Nedward was accidentally outed at one point to this teacher and in response when it was safe to do so, the teacher pulled Nedward aside and talked about pronouns and being transgender with Nedward in a way that was respectful.

Audio Visual

Originally I had planned for different text boxes, but now it is limited to one due to accessibility issues. I do not want to make the game hard to read, and the changing between boxes may make it more difficult to digest the game for the transition between two parts are rapid and laced throughout the game. Most of the backgrounds are light in their settings and will not change. The characters are drawn in my typical art style. Below are rough concepts of characters players may meet in-game, including The Fool, The Lovers, The Hermit and The Ruler. The Lovers, specifically August, has changed since this concept to have a hijab. This change was made after Laurier's Queer Sphere team suggested the change.



Newer designs:





The setting will be a typical high school setting, much like these photos:



The audio will mainly consist of background music. There will be “classical” music playing in the background, emulating a posh atmosphere that is stereotypically associated with Shakespearean times. Further, there may be a phone call sound effect that will be accompanied by a subtitle. There is also a bell sound effect when terry approaches because his character has bells and adds to the humour.

Accessibility

Accessibility-related things include adjustable font, text to speech if able, take feedback, no flashing/ shaking/ quick events. This is to ensure that the visually impaired are able to make the font a readable size or listen to the story rather than see the story. Taking in feedback constantly is also important because the game cannot improve without it. I also plan to talk with folks working in SAFA (Student Advocates for Accessibility at Laurier) to ensure I am doing all I can to make the game accessible. Further, I plan to make sure there are no flashing/shaking/ quick events for those who have processing issues like myself and cannot handle certain forms of quick events without great difficulty. Finally, I will make sure that there are no cues that are audio without a proper subtitle for those who are hearing impaired.

I acknowledge that while I am trying my best to include accessibility features, there are features I cannot add due to my lack of knowledge in programming and/or scope, such as voice acting to help discern the characters from one another. Further, in the current scope, I do not think I am going to be able to add a note system for players who need to take notes on plot points.

Moodboard

