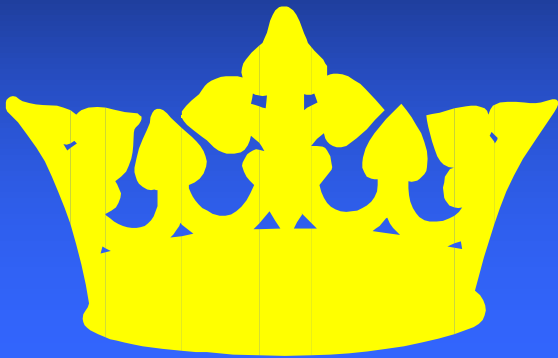


“Design and Use of Props in Gaming”

(*“How to Make a Bridge, Not a Crutch”*)

by Dr. Rich Staats



Overview

- Gaming Principles
- Value of Props
- Types of Props
- Effective Use
- Tricks of the Trade

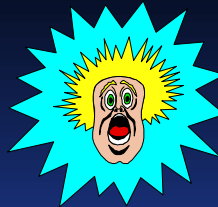


Gaming Principles

1. ***Stafford Principle: maintain a sense of wonder in the campaign.*** Make sure there is always some surprise or something special that makes a session, an adventure, a campaign and your whole world unique.
2. ***Perrin Principle: be consistent.*** If you do something once, it becomes a precedence. The players will remember it, and count on it being the same next time. If it's not the same later, have a darn good, obvious to the players reason that it's different.
3. ***Petersen Principle: make it fun.*** Don't be afraid to change a plot to go with player enthusiasm. Try something crazy or goofy, even (or especially) in serious settings. Roll with the mood and make it happen. Be high energy!
4. ***Staats Principle: reward the players as well as the characters.*** Handouts, riddles, music, etc. that can be experienced by the players' senses directly or challenge the players' creativity reward the players. The players are the ones that come to the sessions every week, and ultimately, it is the GM's goal to reward the players. Some folks are just fine vicariously being rewarded through their characters, but it's oh so much more fun to be rewarded as a player during the course of a session.
5. ***Sandy's Axiom: involve at least three senses in every scene.*** These can be described or experienced (e.g. props, incense, etc.). People have five senses, and adding details about weird sounds, the unusual smell or the texture of something adds to the gaming experience.

Value of Props

- Suspension of Disbelief

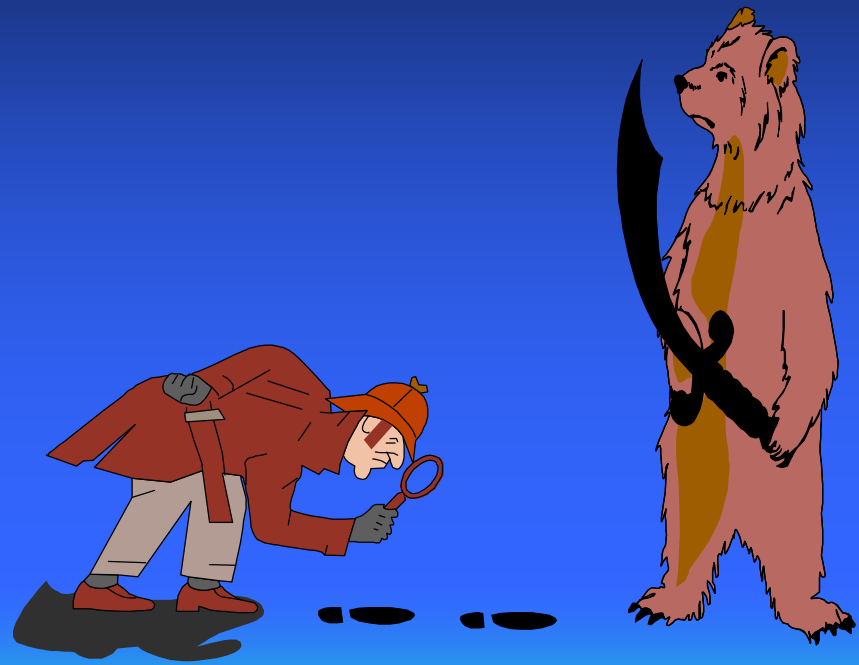


- Focal Point
- Atmosphere

- Plot Devices

- Clues
- Plot Lines

- Fun for the Players



Types of Props

- Most props are multi-sensory
- Primarily visual
 - Documents
 - Photos or pictures
- Primarily aural
 - Music
 - Sound effects
- Primarily tactile
 - Pieces of ...
 - Clothing
 - Accouterment
- Primarily scent
 - Incense
 - Scents
- Primarily taste
 - Food
 - Beverages

Making the Most of Props (1/5)

FEED the FANE!

- Fits with the genre/mood
- Effort in = results out
- Effective
- Durability
- Fun
- Appropriate
- Not a distraction
- Economical

Making the Most of Props (2/5)

FEED the FANE!

Fits with the
genre/mood

- Color, tone
- “Silliness Factor”
- Themes



Effort in = results
out

- Time investment
- Creative investment
- Emotional investment

Making the Most of Props (3/5)

FEED the FANE!

Effective

- Unexpected
- Fits within established framework
- Appealing



Durability

- How significant is it?
- How will the prop be used?
- Special handling requirements



Making the Most of Props (4/5)

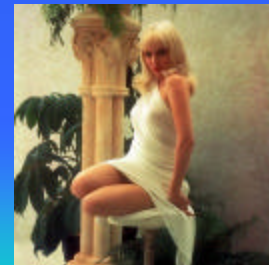
FEED the FANE!

Fun

- Players can experience it
- Theme, color, tone
- Useful

Appropriate

- Inoffensive
- Maturity level
- Danger level

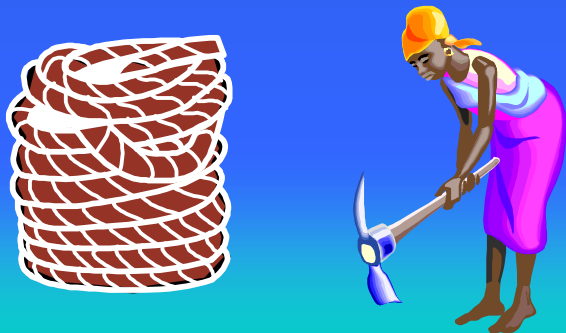


Making the Most of Props (5/5)

FEED the FANE!

Not a distraction

- Effort to engage
- Background stays in background
- Too much fun!



Economical

- Game is make-believe, home/food are real!
- What are your goals
- The best things in gaming are free!

Tricks of the Trade

- Engage taste, touch, and smell
- Design props to be flexible
- Encourage props to be used during the game
 - Plot
 - Players actually experience
- Be subtle
- Be bold
- Be cheesy!
- Raid the garbage
- Acquire some craft and cooking skills

