

THE ART OF MAKING A DREAM

A short manual for a finite storytelling engine, and a longer invitation to think.

THE PREMISE

Start with three words that rarely appear together. The Dream Architect places them inside six connected chambers. Rooms, recurring objects and choices form a story that the visitor can navigate rather than merely read.

WHAT THIS IS

Original interactive fiction designed as an artistic experiment in narrative coherence, symbolic association and agency. The experience does not claim to reconstruct actual dreams or discover personal truths.

WHAT TO BRING

Curiosity, a willingness to repeat the same seed, and perhaps paper for a field journal. You need no account, microphone, paid model or network access after loading the website.

SYSTEM ATLAS

SIX CHAMBERS ONE GRAMMAR

A dream feels uncanny when a rule returns disguised.

THE TOPOLOGY

Vestibule -> Orchard -> Station or Library -> Clockmaker Lake -> Room That Remembers. From the Station you may return to the Orchard or continue to the Lake; the Library does the same. Previously visited chambers remain reachable from the map.

THE STATE

The program stores a three-word input, integer seed, current location, visited rooms, inventory, a journal and one decision per room. It also keeps a small cumulative choice signal called trust. This signal is a fiction-design variable, not a psychological trait.

WHERE THE SEED GOES

A repeatable local pseudo-random generator selects phrase variants for room descriptions. The phrases themselves were written by the author. The same three words and seed rebuild the same starting text; later choices produce different paths.

CONCEPT LABORATORY

SYMBOLS DO NOT COME WITH LABELS

Interpretation is made, contested and revised.

ASSOCIATION VERSUS DIAGNOSIS

A moth, a mirror or a station can invite many readings. An artistic symbol has no built-in clinically validated universal meaning. A reader may connect it to memory, culture, a story or nothing at all.

NARRATIVE CAUSALITY

In a causal story, a decision changes something later: an object, response or ending. Dream Architect uses visible choice consequences and a ledger so that the visitor can compare interpretation with action rather than assume an invisible oracle is speaking.

AN INTERESTING AMBIGUITY

A well-chosen symbol can feel meaningful even when the original combination was random. This is a question about human sense-making, not proof that randomness knows the future.

GUIDED EXPERIMENT A

REPEAT THE SAME WORLD

Control the seed, vary the behaviour.

PROTOCOL

1. Choose mirror / moth / station and seed 2718. Write down the initial scene.
2. In each chamber, prefer the open-ended first choice. Visit all six and record the ending.
3. Reset to the identical seed. This time prefer the most definite or withholding response.
4. Compare decisions, objects, journal and last room.

QUESTIONS

What actually changed in the program? Which feeling of difference did you add as a reader? Did similar room descriptions feel different after a different choice history?

CAUTION

The ending categories reflect a small authored scoring rule. They are not validated measurements of openness, certainty, trust or personality.

GUIDED EXPERIMENT B

CHANGE ONE SINGLE WORD

Keep the machine constant; perturb the metaphor.

PROTOCOL

1. Keep numeric seed 2718. Run mirror / moth / station. Record one surprising sentence.
2. Substitute river for mirror and replay.
3. Restore mirror, then substitute umbrella for moth.
4. Compare which images become easier or harder to make coherent.

QUESTIONS

Did a different word alter only content, or did it alter how you explained the same actions? Which associations were supplied by the template? Which were supplied by you?

TECHNICAL NOTE

The local string hash includes the words and numeric seed. Altering any word also changes seeded phrase selection; to study one change at a time conceptually, compare room structure as well as prose.

GUIDED EXPERIMENT C

THE MAP IS NOT THE MEMORY

Topology and narrative explain different things.

PROTOCOL

1. Make a dream and explore the Orchard before choosing between Station and Library.
2. Sketch its six-room map without looking.
3. Read only the journal. Reconstruct what happened and why.
4. Compare your reconstructed events with the room map.

QUESTIONS

Which source better captures cause and consequence? What does the map preserve that the journal cannot? Does an inventory object tell you what you wanted, or merely what you did?

BONUS VARIATION

Try a run that visits the Library first and another that visits the Station first. You can reach both, but a reader may give early information more weight.

PRACTICAL NOTEBOOK

YOUR OWN DREAM GRAMMAR

A paper-based creative exercise that works without the site.

BUILD A PORTABLE WORLD

Choose three unrelated words. Draw four boxes. In each box write: (a) one impossible physical rule, (b) a recurring word, (c) an object that can be picked up, and (d) a choice with two outcomes. Connect boxes with arrows; no path should require a hidden decision.

WRITE THE CONSEQUENCES

For each choice, define a visible change that matters at the end. Avoid flattering or condemning the player. An ending can make room for uncertainty without declaring that uncertainty is always virtuous.

REFLECT

Where did the story become emotionally resonant? What was explicitly written, and what did you project into the gaps? Where would a different reader legitimately disagree with your interpretation?

CONTEXT, CAUTION AND FURTHER READING

THE MACHINE HAS LIMITS

Good experiments describe their boundaries.

PRIVACY AND ACCESS

The site is static. The core engine runs locally, without third-party trackers or an AI backend. Save uses this browser's local storage; JSON export lets you retain a copy. A browser reset or private mode can remove saved state. Avoid entering private information you would not want in an exported story.

WHAT IS NOT CLAIMED

No universal dream dictionary, therapy, scientific test, factual prediction, personal diagnosis or actual generative-AI response is provided. Optional audio is a simple Web Audio tone and can be turned off.

READING PATHS

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths" (fiction on branching structure); Italo Calvino, "Invisible Cities" (modular imagined places); Marie-Laure Ryan, Narrative as Virtual Reality (narrative and interactivity); Jerome Bruner, Actual Minds, Possible Worlds (narrative as a mode of understanding). These are suggested intellectual companions, not claims of direct implementation or endorsement.

THE LASTING QUESTION

If the machine supplies the rooms and the reader supplies associations, where exactly does the story happen?