

Narrative Crossroads: The Outsider

A character analysis framework for exploring key decisions and motivations

Overview

This module adapts the *Narrative Crossroads* framework for analyzing H.P. Lovecraft's "The Outsider." Students will roleplay as characters at pivotal moments in this haunting tale of self-discovery and alienation, exploring the depths of identity and horror through structured gameplay.

Setting Context

- **Time Period:** Implied medieval or ancient setting within the narrator's perspective
- **Location:** A dark castle, surrounding graveyard, abandoned tower, and an unknown mansion
- **Social Context:** Isolation, alienation, and the confrontation between self-image and reality
- **Atmosphere:** Gothic, oppressive, haunting, uncanny

Character Options

Roll	Character	Confrontation	Comprehension	Connection
1-4	The Narrator/Outsider	60%	70%	40%
5-6	Party Guest	55%	60%	70%

Liminal Spaces

Roll	Threshold Moment	Decision Points (with Required Skills)
1-2	Deciding to leave the castle	1. Finding courage to leave familiar darkness (Confrontation) 2. Navigating unknown passages (Comprehension)
3-4	Climbing the black tower	1. Overcoming physical obstacles (Confrontation) 2. Pushing through the trapdoor to light (Comprehension)
5-6	The moment at the party	1. Approaching the mansion and guests (Connection) 2. Confronting the mirror image (Comprehension)

Confrontation Questions (Roll 2D6)

Roll	Question
2	What physical obstacles have you overcome to reach this point?
3	How do you feel about leaving your familiar surroundings?
4	What drives you to continue your journey despite fear?
5	What physical sensations are most unfamiliar to you?
6	How do you react to unfamiliar physical spaces?
7	What gives you strength when facing the unknown?
8	What physical actions do you take when frightened?

9	How do you handle tight or enclosed spaces?
10	What aspect of your physical form troubles you most?
11	How do you respond when physically threatened?
12	What would make you retreat back to safety?

Comprehension Questions (Roll 2D6)

Roll	Question
2	What is your earliest memory?
3	How do you perceive your surroundings?
4	What draws you toward the unknown?
5	What do you hope to find beyond your current existence?
6	How do you understand the concept of "others"?
7	What makes you different from those you observe?
8	What frightens you most about yourself?
9	How do you experience time in your isolation?
10	What do you believe exists beyond your known world?
11	What would make you feel accepted?
12	Why do you fear/seek reflections?

Connection Questions (Roll 2D6)

Roll	Question
2	How do you imagine interaction with others would feel?

3	What kind of reception do you expect from strangers?
4	How would you introduce yourself to someone?
5	What about human interaction confuses you most?
6	How do you think others perceive you?
7	What would you like to tell someone who saw you?
8	What social customs have you learned from books?
9	How might you attempt to make someone comfortable in your presence?
10	What do you believe is your relationship to humanity?
11	How do you understand the concept of belonging?
12	What would you sacrifice to be accepted?

Thematic Elements

- Identity and self-discovery
- The horror of self-realization
- Isolation and alienation
- The uncanny and the grotesque
- The boundaries between humanity and monstrosity

Implementation Guide

Classroom Setup (45-60 minutes)

1. **Introduction (5 min):** Explain the *Narrative Crossroads* system and distribute materials
2. **Character Selection (5 min):** Students roll or choose their character
3. **Liminal Space (5 min):** Students roll or select their threshold moment

4. **Character Interview (15-20 min):** Students roll for and answer their three questions
5. **Decision Resolution (10 min):** Students roll for and describe key decision outcomes
6. **Reflection (10-15 min):** Students document insights and connections to themes

Materials Needed

- D6, D10, and D100 dice (or dice rolling app)
- Character sheets
- Journal sheets for responses
- Copy of "The Outsider"

Assessment Options

- **Character Journal:** Students submit written responses from the character's perspective
- **Audio Character Study:** Students record their interview responses as the character
- **Comparative Analysis:** Students analyze how the Outsider's perspective shifts throughout the story
- **Alternative Narrative:** Students explore how the story might differ if the Outsider had chosen differently

ELA Standards Alignment

- Analysis of how complex characters develop (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3)
- Analysis of theme development (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2)
- Writing narratives to develop experiences (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3)
- Engaging in collaborative discussions (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1)

Sample Play: The Outsider at the Tower Threshold

Character: The Outsider **Skills:** Confrontation 60%, Comprehension 70%, Connection 40%

Liminal Space: Climbing the black tower - The moment when the Outsider must decide whether to push through the trapdoor toward the unknown light.

Decision Point: The Outsider must overcome fear to push through the stone trapdoor.

Required Skill: Comprehension 70%

Dice Roll: 37 against Comprehension 70% = Success

Outcome: "Despite the overwhelming dread that fills you as you approach the trapdoor, your hunger for discovery proves stronger than your fear. For countless years you have existed in darkness, and now light—real light—beckons just beyond this final barrier. You place your pale hands against the cold stone and push with all your might. The trapdoor resists, then slowly, with a grinding sound that echoes down the spiral staircase, it gives way. You have spent eternity in darkness; you will not retreat when illumination is finally within your grasp. As the stone moves aside, moonlight floods down upon you—the first true light you have ever known—blinding, painful, yet irresistible. You emerge from your underworld, blinking, disoriented, yet filled with a terrible exhilaration."

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