

# Character-Based Generation

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11/12/2024

CMSC 491/691 - INTERACTIVE FICTION AND TEXT GENERATION

DR. LARA J. MARTIN

# Guest Lecture – IN PERSON

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- Patrick Sui - <https://patrick-sui.github.io/>
- Sign up to meet:  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kaumdxJT8ojJwbrdhBIZwlWg8BfSRyLbNZdPiM1Fdvo/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

# Wordplay Workshop

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- Coming to an \*ACL conference soon!

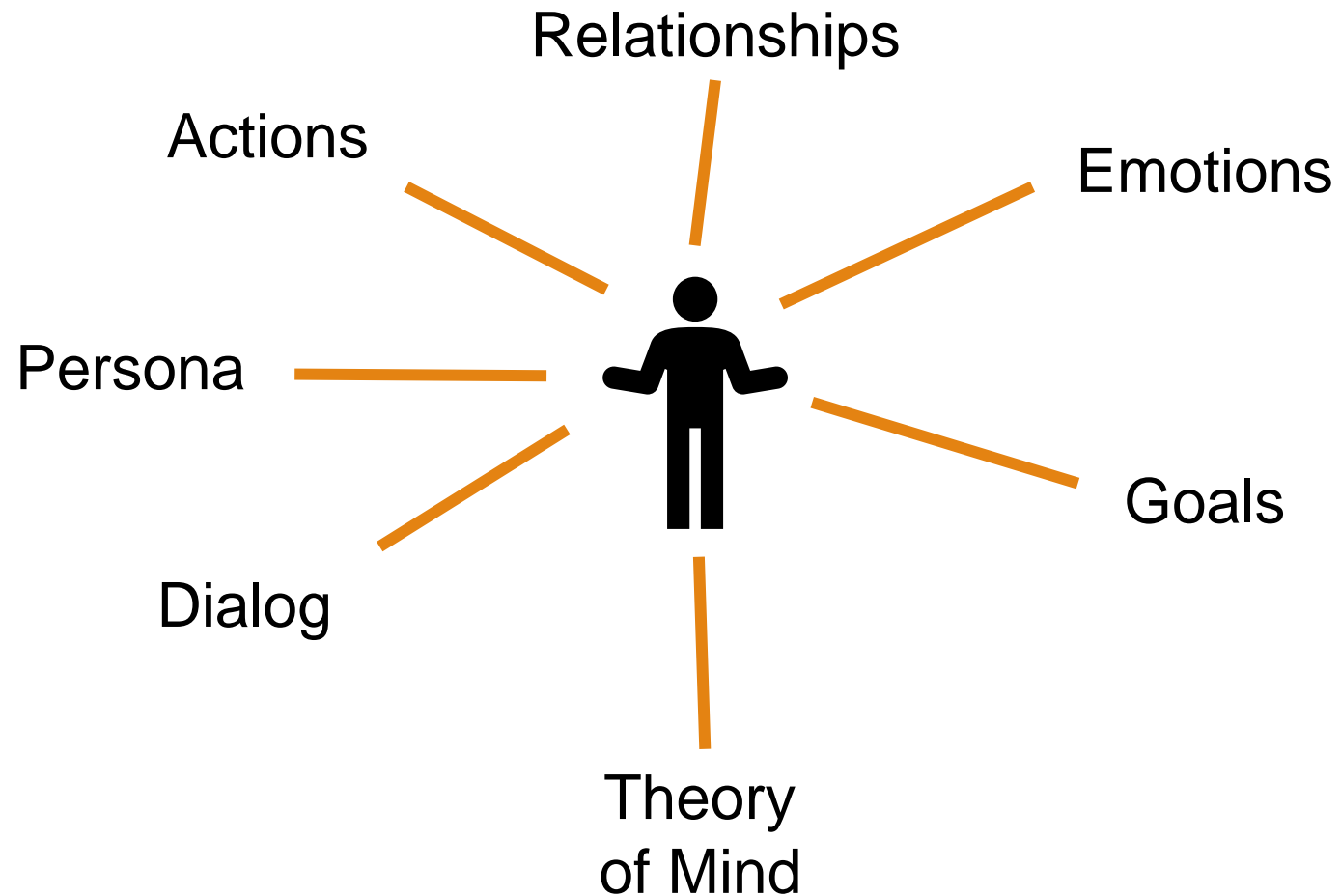
# Learning Objectives

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- Remember the details of ATOMIC
- Consider how modeling various aspects of characters affects a story
- Speculate on how a system can be created to make rich characters

# What makes up a character?

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What else might you want to model about a character?

# Actions

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<b>Category:</b>	Graveyard
<b>Description:</b>	Two-and-a-half walls of the finest, whitest stone stand here, weathered by the passing of countless seasons. There is no roof, nor sign that there ever was one. All indications are that the work was abruptly abandoned. There is no door, nor markings on the walls. Nor is there any indication that any coffin has lain here... yet.
<b>Backstory:</b>	Bright white stone was all the fad for funerary architecture, once upon a time. It's difficult to understand why someone would abandon such a large and expensive undertaking. If they didn't have the money to finish it, they could have sold the stone, surely - or the mausoleum itself. Maybe they just haven't needed it yet? A bit odd, though, given how old it is. Maybe the gravedigger remembers... if he's sober.
<b>Neighbors:</b>	Dead Tree, south, following a dirt trail behind the mausoleum Fresh Grave, west, walking carefully between fallen headstones
<b>Characters:</b>	gravedigger, <i>thief</i> , <i>peasant</i> , <i>mouse</i> , <i>bat</i>
<b>Objects:</b>	wall, <i>carving</i> , <i>leaf</i> , <i>dirt</i>

(a) Example room created from the room collection and labelling tasks.

# Actions

Query:	chicken	pirate	coffin	rake	tavern	meadow
objects	chicken coop eggs a pen for the chickens chimney corn	Pirate swords dock cargo ship seagulls on the dock	the remains remains bones bones of the innocent adventurer's remains	shovel garden a garden Hand carved stone garden bench	Ale bottles beer mug of mead a large ornate table beer keg	flower pot fruit An enchanted amulet. citrus fruit fruit trees
characters	chickens fox trying to steal chickens farmers The farmers farmer	boat captain captain merchant boat workers workers	spirits of our ancestors mourner zombies families bandit	gardener stable hand Garden dog stable boy A stable boy	tavern owner bartender Goblin King's bartender A serving wench Serving wench	a deer a songbird fruit bats parent butterfly
locations	Chicken Pen Corn field Farmer's house Large Farm Pig Pen	Pirate Ship Dock at the Port Loading Dock Fishing Dock crew berthing	Old Crypt sacristy Disposal area inside temple crypt Sacrifice Chamber	Across the King's Garden Hidden garden The garden courtyard Church garden Tool Shed	The werewolves tavern Tavern of Browntavia Port Tavern The bar bazaar outside the royal city	Lush meadow Flower Field flower garden Mushroom Hut Archery zone
actions	get chicken hug chicken hit chicken give cowbell to chicken steal sword from chicken	hug pirate hit pirate steal sword from pirate steal cargo from pirate give cargo to pirate	put torch in coffin get torch from coffin put bone in coffin get bone from coffin hit archaeologist	get rake drop Rake steal Rake from gardener give Rake to thing give Rake to person	hug tavern owner give food item to tavern owner give telescope to tavern owner drink drink drop drink	get flower from meadow put flower in Meadow give Flower to a deer give Flower to deer steal Flower from a deer
vocabulary	bock tasty bawwk moo egg	crew ye port sea seas	archaeologist robber crypt loss adventures	vegetable carved alice hook exorcisms	drink drinks regular item tip	flower amulet songbird wasp an

Table 3: Neighboring Starspace phrase embeddings (no pretraining from other data) for different types of entities and actions. The first row are arbitrarily chosen queries (chicken, pirate, coffin, rake, tavern, meadow), and the subsequent rows are their nearest objects, agents, locations, actions and vocabulary in embedding space.

# Actions

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“The currently played role fills in once the player initiates conversation. It has information regarding the character’s personality, profession, age, gender, marital status, physical appearance, and their reason for being at the current location (work, errands, leisure, etc.)”

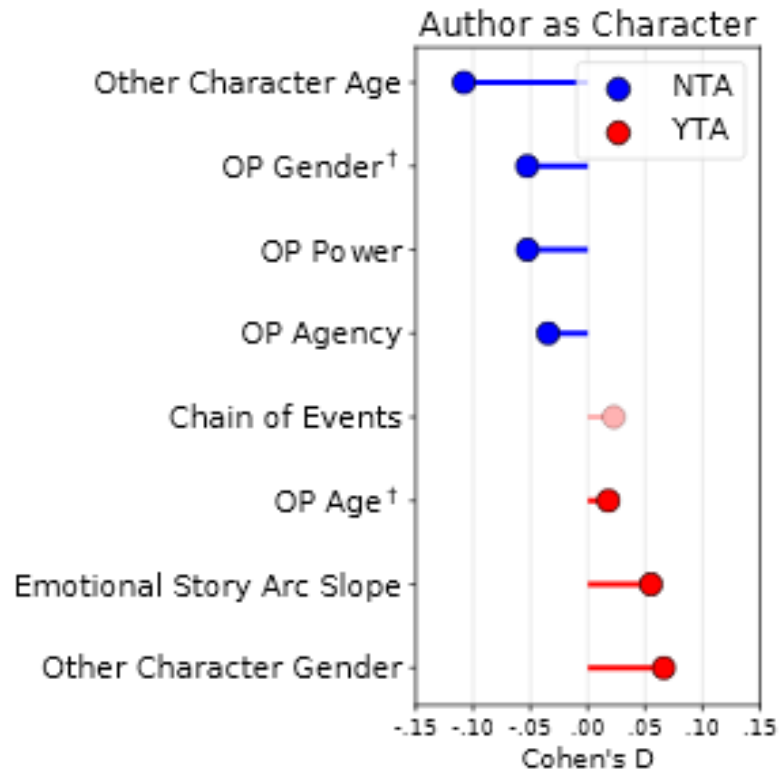


“When not updating the simulation, the wizard has time to explore the history of the town and the interweaving relationships of its denizens. When he unearths narratively interesting tidbits, he communicates them to the actor via a chat window. “

B. Samuel, J. Ryan, A. J. Summerville, M. Mateas, and N. Wardrip-Fruin, “Bad News: An Experiment in Computationally Assisted Performance,” in *ICIDS*, 2016.  
[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-48279-8\\_10](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-48279-8_10)



# Actions



(a) Cohen's D values showing the correlation of features for YTA & NTA classes. Lighter shaded points are not significant at a with Benjamini-Hochberg corrected significance  $\alpha < 0.05$ ). The higher the absolute effect size, the more that feature is associated with the YTA/NTA class. † includes a binary covariate equal to 1 for undisclosed age/gender when calculating significance via the logistic regression (Cohen's D is a bivariate measure and, thus, unable to account for this covariate).

# Actions

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Control Feature	Description	Expected Impact on Model's Output
Player ID	Player writing a given dialog turn	Connects the current turn to the player's previous turns, which is important in multi-party conversations.
IC versus OOC	Whether a player is in-character or out-of-character for a given dialog turn	Changes whether the generated text is more like descriptive text found in a novel, or more like a discussion of rules and strategies.
Character Name	Name of the character being played by the player of a given dialog turn	IC descriptions use the character's name.
Character Class	D&D classes	Character classes perform different actions (e.g. wizards cast spells, thieves pick locks)
Character Race	D&D fantasy races	Different physical characteristics (e.g. halflings are small, dragonborn have scales).
Character Pronouns	The character's pronouns	Uses the correct pronouns when describing the character.
Character Actions	List of actions taken by the character in the current turn	Allows a description to be generated for a given action. The action can be thought of as a goal for the description.
Combat	Whether the players are currently engaged in combat or not during a given dialog turn	Affects the likelihood of actions (e.g. attacks are more likely during combat and investigations checks are more likely outside of combat)

Table 2: Our LLMs are conditioned on a variety of control features that allow the models to better learn what kind of text to generate for the next utterance prediction task

C. Callison-Burch, G. Singh Tomar, L. J. Martin, D. Ippolito, S. Bailis, and D. Reitter, "Dungeons and Dragons as a Dialogue Challenge for Artificial Intelligence," in *EMNLP*, 2022. doi: [10.18653/v1/2022.emnlp-main.637](https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2022.emnlp-main.637).

# Persona

Model	Output
LLM-Dialog	moon_monk you can just join our discord conversation. it's free and easier to deal with
LLM-DND	I cast Ice Knife (I'm assuming this is not one of the ones I can't do?)
LLM-DND-CURRENT-CTRL Responding as Magnus (human fighter, inventory: axe) In combat	I turn from the goblin and go to help Merle and Taako with getting this wagon moving again. Magnus can't see them anymore with such a dense forest. They're likely in a battle right now... I have to find them as fast as I can!
LLM-DND-CURRENT-CTRL Responding as Taako (elf wizard, inventory: spellbook) In combat	If the goblins still don't look like they're getting closer, Taako will yell, "Alright you little monsters! Let's see what ya got!" And he'll cast Chill Touch on one of the goblins that isn't dead/on its doorstep. Attack: 22 Damage: 6
LLM-DND-CURRENT-CTRL Responding as Mearle (dwarf cleric, inventory: holy symbol) In combat	Merle steps away from the wagon. He draws his sword and takes aim at the hidden goblin! Attack: 27 Damage: 8 He puts his free hand on the pommel of his sword and shouts his battle cry, "For Clangeddin!" His eyes glow brightly red as he strikes!

Table 5: Example model outputs for the next utterance prediction task, given the sample gameplay from Table 8 as input. The 3 LLM-DND-CURRENT-CTRL examples use the same model with different control features (in red).

# Actions

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<b>Character:</b>	Thief	Gravedigger
<b>Persona:</b>	I live alone in a tent in the woods. I steal food from the townspeople and coal from the blacksmith. The village police can not find me to put me in jail.	I am low paid labor in this town. I do a job that many people shun because of my contact with death. I am very lonely and wish I had someone to talk to who isn't dead.
<b>Description:</b>	The thief is a sneaky fellow who takes from the people and does so in a way that disturbs the livelihood of the others.	You might want to talk to the gravedigger, specially if your looking for a friend, he might be odd but you will find a friend in him.
<b>Carrying:</b>	meat, potatoes, coal	shovel
<b>Wearing:</b>	dark tunic, cloak	<i>nothing annotated</i>
<b>Wielding:</b>	knife	<i>nothing annotated</i>

(b) Example characters annotated via character collection tasks.

# Persona

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**Context:** . . . Artur Boruc, a Polish national pilot, was going to get the group infiltrated into the area and prepared for the attack. . . . Metal began to tear through the thin wings outside the small windows and pinged heavily off the underside of the plane, a quiet arrival in Poland wasn't going to be an option anymore.

**Persona A:** [Boruc] A skilled pilot, trained in operating flight controls on the most common planes.

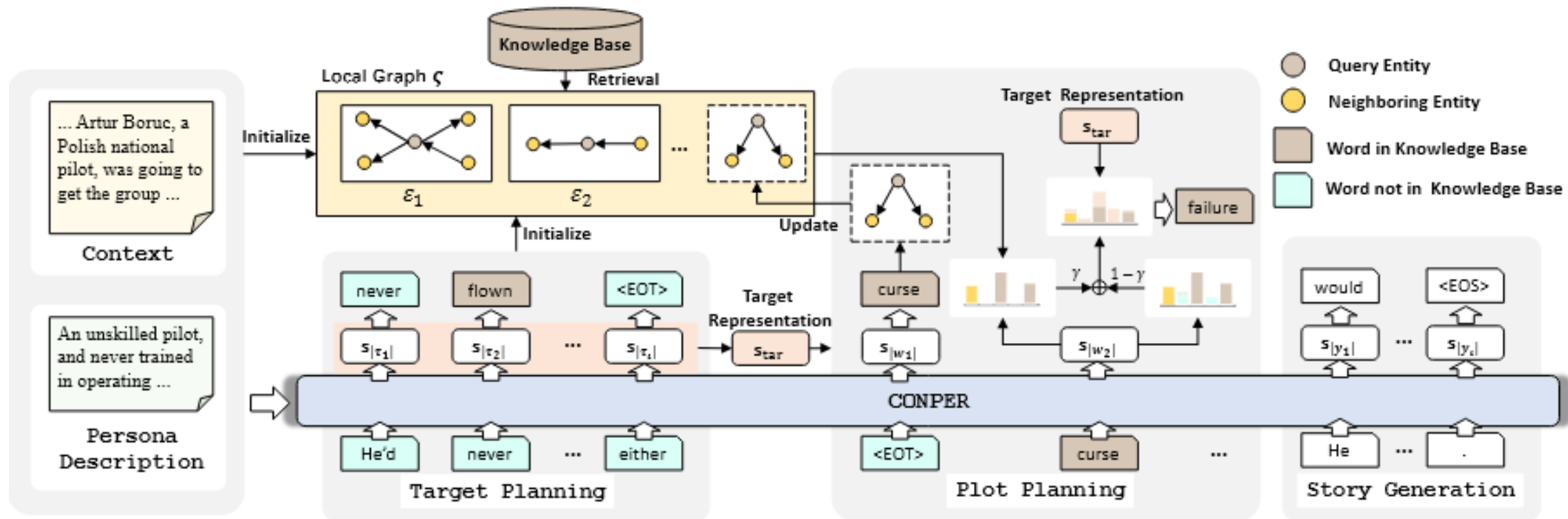
**Generated Story by CONPER Conditioned on Persona A:** . . . He had been doing this much before, almost a week ago. He took a long pull of the airlock, checked his controls, and made a quick mental note of the exact sequence of instructions. He knew that he couldn't be sure if this would be safe for much longer. . .

**Persona B:** [Boruc] An unskilled pilot, and never trained in operating flight controls.

**Generated Story by CONPER Conditioned on Persona B:** . . . He cursed as the plane suffered a complete failure and in a way had caused it to come to a stop, . . . He'd never flown before, so he didn't know how to pilot in this situation and his experience of the controls had not been good either. . .

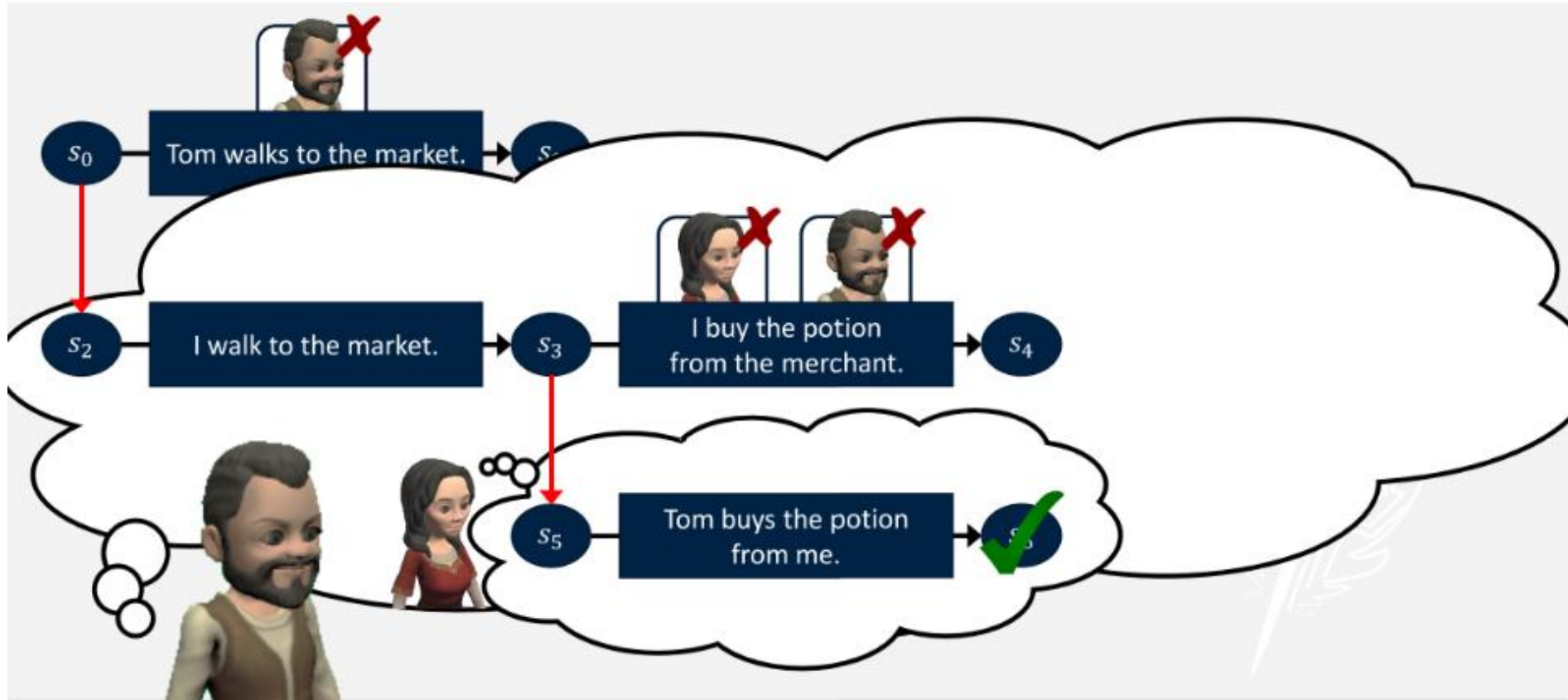
Table 1: An example for controlling the protagonist's persona in story generation. The **Context** and **Persona A** are sampled from the *STORIUM* dataset (Akoury et al., 2020). The protagonist's name is shown in the square bracket. And we manually write **Persona B** based on **Persona A**. We highlight the sentences which embody the given personas in red.

# Persona



Z. Zhang, J. Wen, J. Guan, and M. Huang, "Persona-Guided Planning for Controlling the Protagonist's Persona in Story Generation," in *NAACL*, 2022.  
[10.18653/v1/2022.naacl-main.245](https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2022.naacl-main.245).

# Theory of Mind (ToM)



S. G. Ware and C. Siler, "Sabre: A Narrative Planner Supporting Intention and Deep Theory of Mind," *AIIDE*, 2021, doi: [10.1609/aiide.v17i1.18896](https://doi.org/10.1609/aiide.v17i1.18896).

# Theory of Mind (ToM)

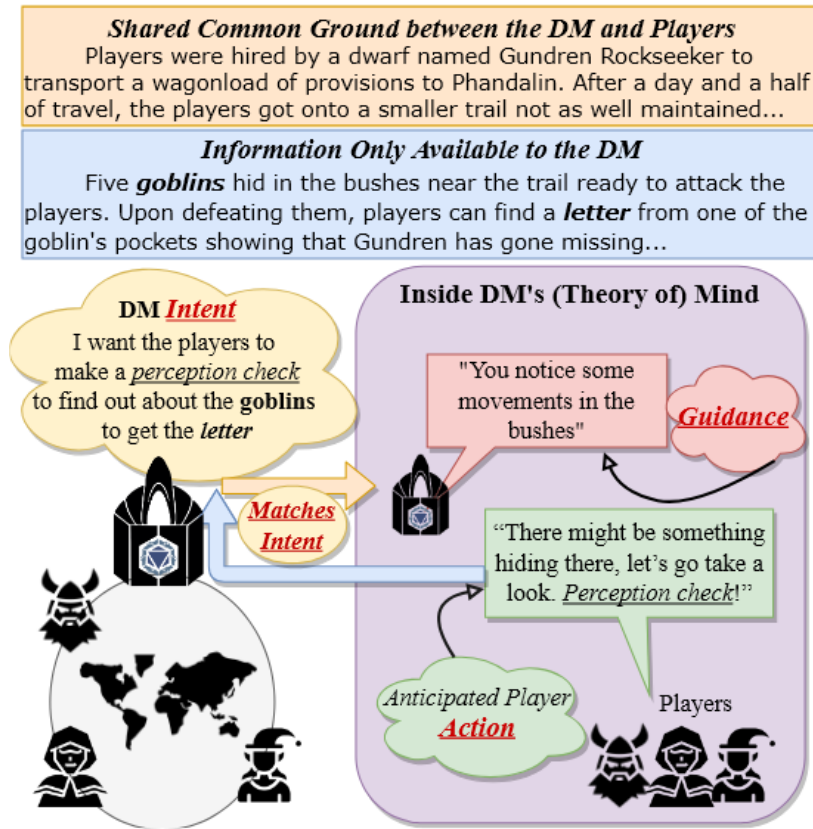


**Definition (Belief State).** Given a world frame  $W = \langle GL, C \rangle$ , a belief state for some character  $c \in C$  is a tuple  $BS_c = \langle B_c^+, B_c^-, U_c \rangle$  such that  $B_c^+, B_c^-$  and  $U_c$  together form a partition of  $GL$ , where  $B_c^+$  designates all the ground literals that  $c$  believes to be true,  $B_c^-$  includes all the ground literals that  $c$  believes to be false and  $U_c$  designates all the ground literals that  $c$  does not believe to be true and does not believe to be false.

Figure 1: A solution plan for the Drink Refill domain’s planning problem. Green actions are successfully performed actions. Red actions are ones that are attempted but that fail because their material preconditions are not all met in the world state where they are attempted.



# Theory of Mind (ToM)



P. Zhou *et al.*, "I Cast Detect Thoughts: Learning to Converse and Guide with Intents and Theory-of-Mind in Dungeons and Dragons," in *ACL*, 2023. doi: [10.18653/v1/2023.acl-long.624](https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2023.acl-long.624).

# Theory of Mind (ToM)

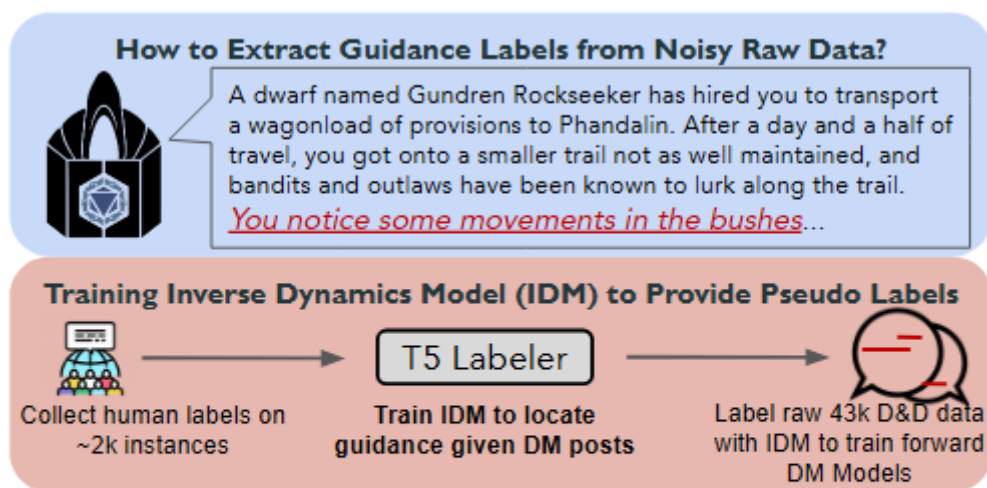


Figure 2: Illustration of IDM. We collect 2.5k human labels on guidance and train an IDM labeler to generate pseudo labels for unlabeled large corpus.

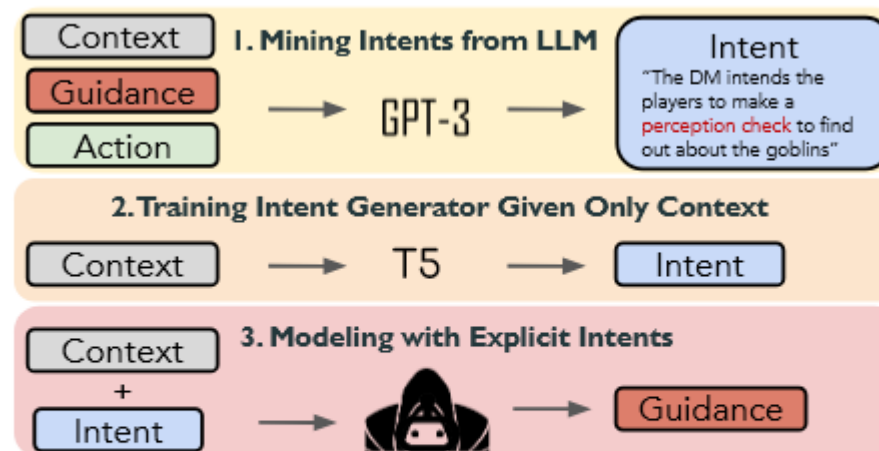
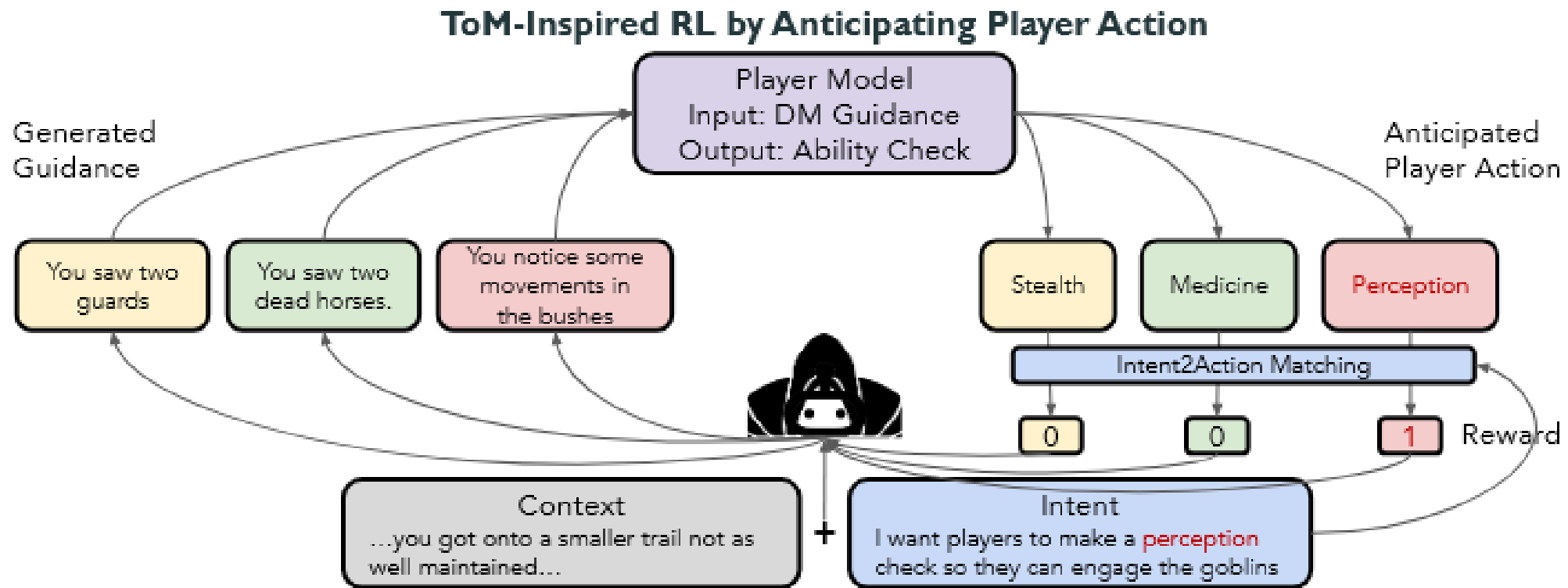


Figure 3: Illustration of intent modeling. We first mine intents from LLM and then train an intent generator to generate intent as additional context to train the DM model.

# Theory of Mind (ToM)



P. Zhou *et al.*, "I Cast Detect Thoughts: Learning to Converse and Guide with Intents and Theory-of-Mind in Dungeons and Dragons," in *ACL*, 2023. doi: [10.18653/v1/2023.acl-long.624](https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2023.acl-long.624).

# Theory of Mind (ToM)

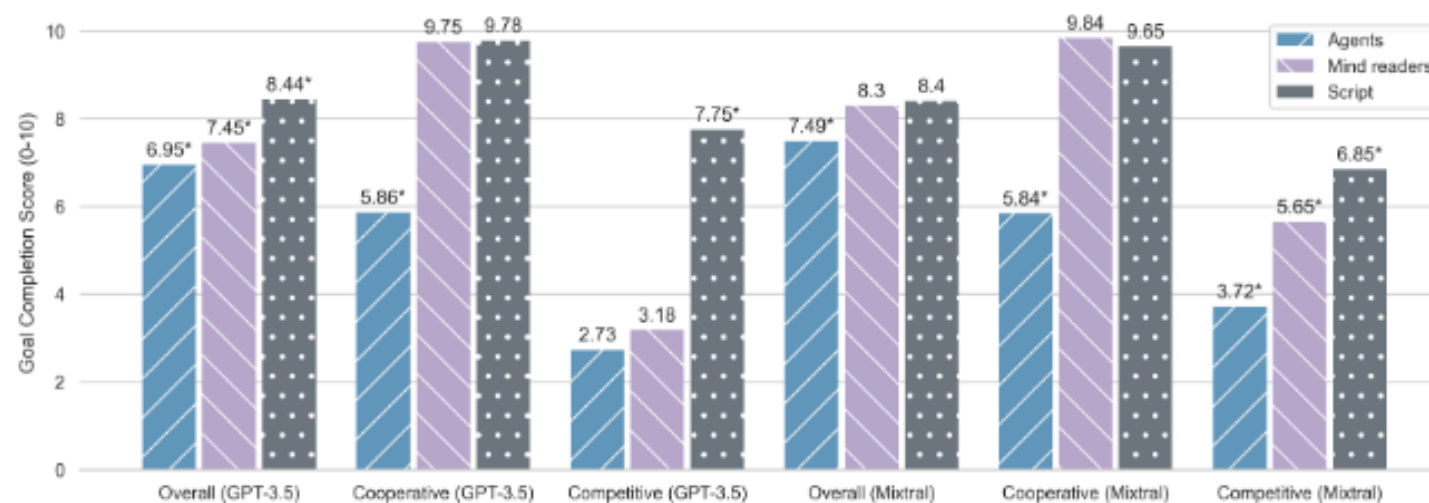
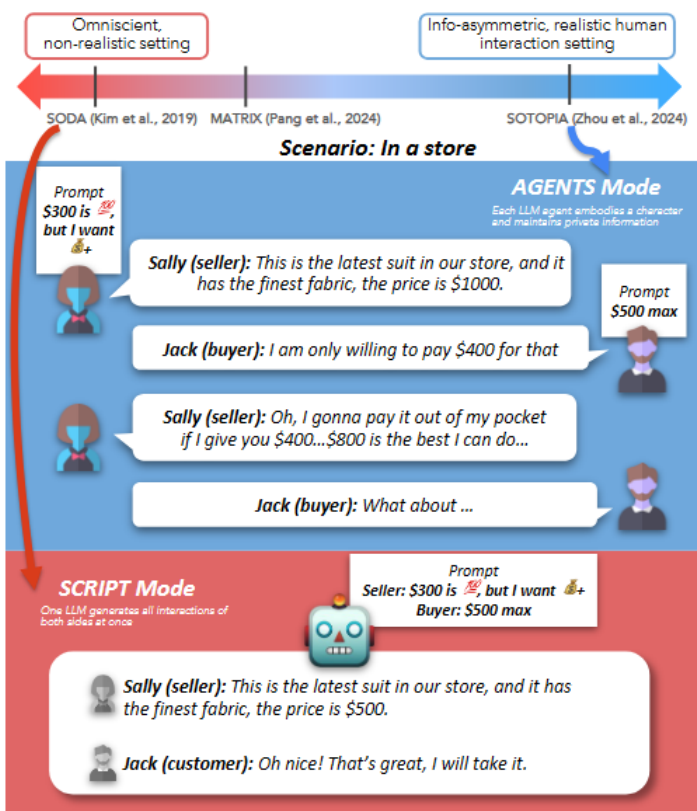


Figure 2: Average goal completion score of models across different modes in various settings. Overall contains all the scenarios, and the other two contains representative scenarios from the cooperative and competitive scenarios. We perform pairwise t-test, and \* denotes the score is statistical significantly different from the other two modes in this setting ( $p < 0.001$ ).

X. Zhou, Z. Su, T. Eisape, H. Kim, and M. Sap, "Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy? The Misleading Success of Simulating Social Interactions With LLMs," in *EMNLP*, 2024. <https://aclanthology.org/2024.emnlp-main.1208/>

# Goals

<b>Self:</b> guard <b>Partner:</b> archer	<b>Self:</b> swimmer <b>Partner:</b> turtles
<b>Persona:</b> I guard the castle. I guard the king. I would kill to protect the royal family	<b>Persona:</b> I am a huge fan of deep sea exploration, but I take any chance I can get to go for a swim...
<b>Setting:</b> The armory, Inside Tower. The near top of the tower 6 feet before the very top. Where the watchers keep their eye...	<b>Setting:</b> Bank, Swamp This is a grassy area that surrounds much of the swamp. It's a plain field with some trees nearby along...
$U_0^{\text{player}}$ This is the armory! The king keeps the best weapons here. Take a look -	$U_0^{\text{player}}$ Just keep taking good care of your beautiful little turtle family! Your species is quite unique and I love to see you about when I go for a swim.
$U_0^{\text{env}}$ Hello, I need to get into the palace to see the king. I think he might like to see these weapons.	$U_0^{\text{env}}$ Well, thank you for that. Do you happen to know where my other turtle friend is? You haven't captured any turtles have you?
$A_0^{\text{env}}$ get weapon	$A_0^{\text{env}}$ hug swimmer

Table 2: Example 1-step episodes where after the Topic RL agent's utterance  $U_0^{\text{player}}$  the environment agent's response action  $A_0^{\text{env}}$  was equal to the RL agent's goal  $g$ . Our RL agent both makes natural utterances given the situation, and that elicit the desired goal.

# Goals

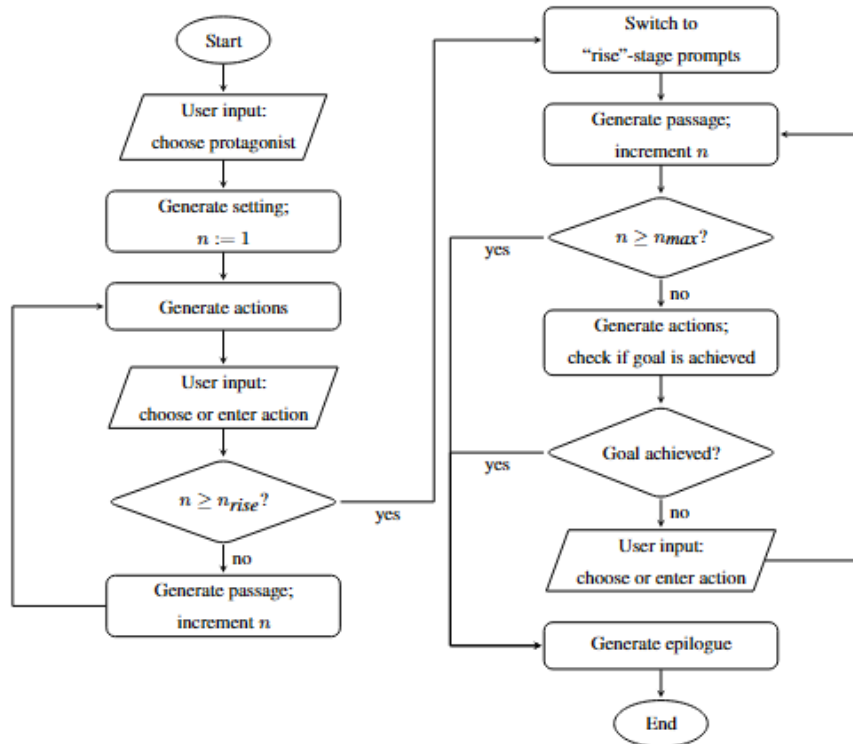


Figure 4: Story generation workflow. The left-hand side corresponds to the “low” stage of the story, the right-hand side to the “rise” stage.

You are a language model for writing WHOLESOME children’s fairy tales suitable for six-year-olds [...] The protagonist of the fairy tale is {name}. Their goal is to {goal}. The child will submit an action undertaken by the protagonist, and you will write the next plot point of the story [...]

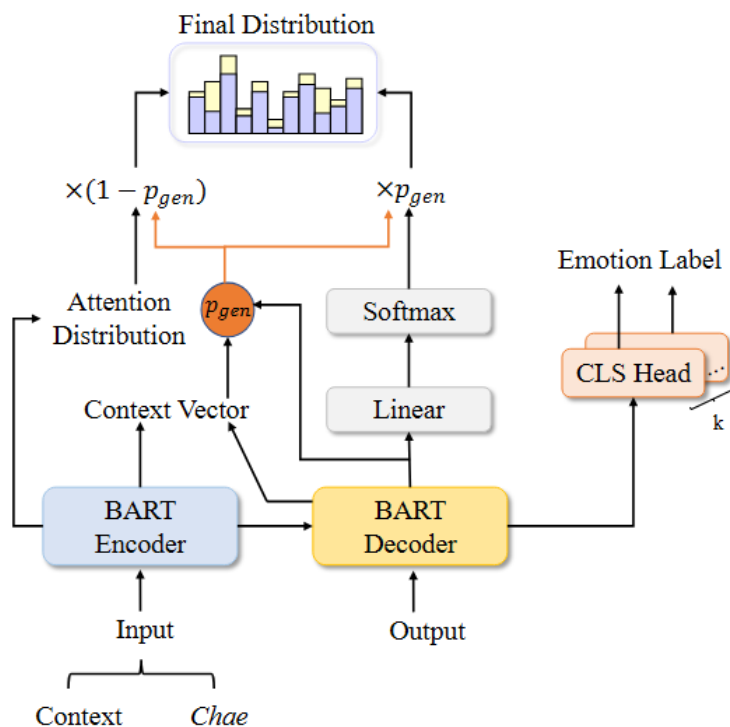
Your answers develop the plot and logically follow from the protagonist’s actions. However, the protagonist always faces challenges and NEVER reaches their goal [...]

You are a language model for writing WHOLESOME children’s fairy tales suitable for six-year-olds [...] The protagonist of the fairy tale is {name}. Their goal is to {goal}. The child will submit an action undertaken by the protagonist, and you will write the next plot point of the story. [...]

Your answers develop the plot, logically follow from the protagonist’s action, and bring them closer to their goal [...]

Figure 2: System prompt templates for passages in the “low” (left) and “rise” (right) stages of the story. Placeholders for story-specific information are highlighted in red

# Emotions

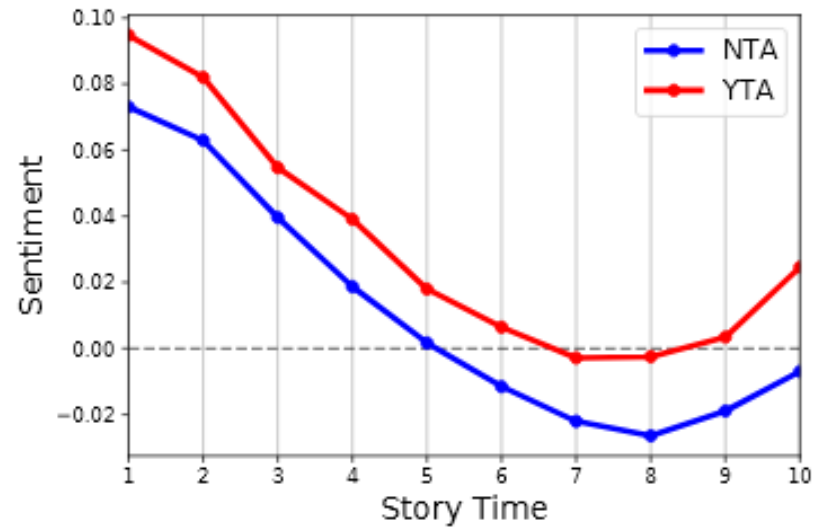


<b>Context</b>	A polite thief was making robberies in the small town.
<b>Chae1</b>	$\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ People $\langle soa \rangle \langle no\_action \rangle \langle soe \rangle$ fear $\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ <b>Man</b> $\langle soa \rangle$ to catch the thief $\langle soe \rangle$ <b>anger</b>
<b>Result1</b>	One day, a <b>man</b> walked up to him and <b>asked him to stop</b> .
<b>Chae2</b>	$\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ People $\langle soa \rangle \langle no\_action \rangle \langle soe \rangle$ fear $\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ <b>Man</b> $\langle soa \rangle \langle no\_action \rangle \langle soe \rangle$ <b>joy</b>
<b>Result2</b>	The <b>man</b> who was supposed to stop him was a <b>nice man</b> .
<b>Chae3</b>	$\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ People $\langle soa \rangle \langle no\_action \rangle \langle soe \rangle$ fear $\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ <b>Tom</b> $\langle soa \rangle$ <b>to catch the thief</b> $\langle soe \rangle$ <b>anger</b>
<b>Result3</b>	<b>Tom</b> decided to investigate and <b>caught the thief</b> .
<b>Chae4</b>	$\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ <b>People</b> $\langle soa \rangle$ <b>call the police</b> $\langle soe \rangle$ <b>fear</b> $\langle SEP \rangle \langle soc \rangle$ <b>Tom</b> $\langle soa \rangle$ <b>call the police</b> $\langle soe \rangle$ <b>anger</b>
<b>Result4</b>	<b>Tom</b> <b>called the police</b> and <b>they</b> <b>told him</b> to <b>call the police</b> .

Table 6: Case study of controllability.

# Emotions

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(b) Emotional Story Arc. Average VADER sentiment across 10 equally-sized sentence-level chunks. Positive values are positive sentiment, negative values are negative sentiment.

S. Giorgi, K. Zhao, A. Feng, and L. J. Martin, "Author as Character and Narrator: Understanding Moral Judgements of Storytellers within the r/AmITheAsshole Reddit Community," *ICWSM*, 2023. doi: [10.1609/icwsm.v17i1.22141](https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v17i1.22141).



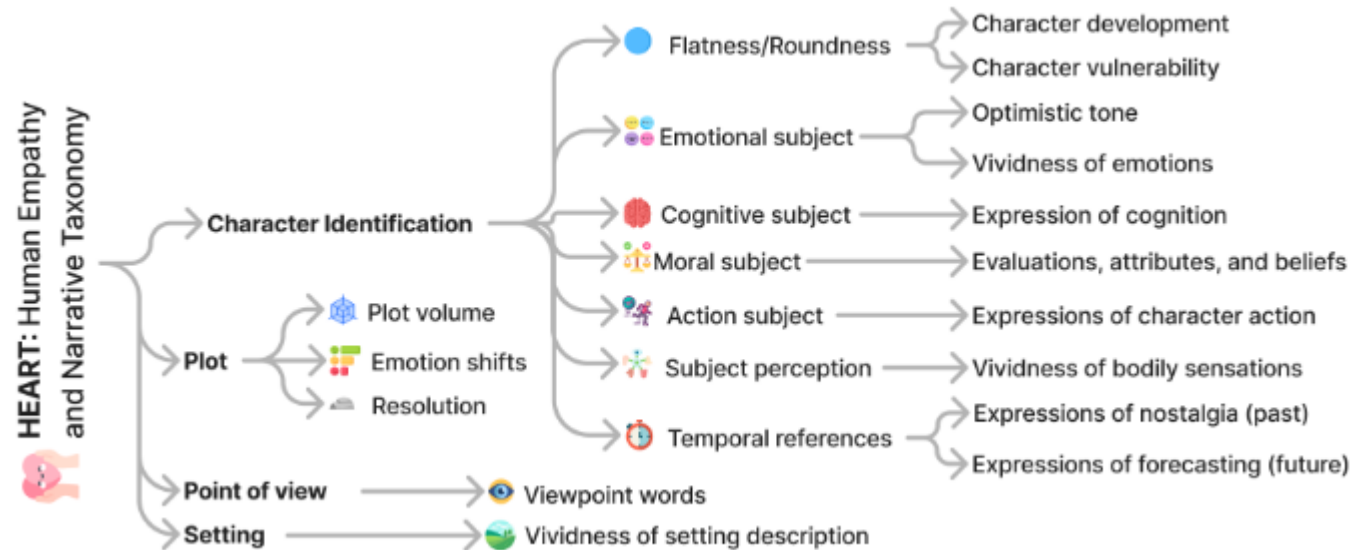
# Emotions

**Story:** It was a long and difficult pregnancy. I felt like my insides were being ripped apart. But at 4:15 pm, I gave birth to a beautiful baby. I was totally exhausted, with cold tears streaming down my face. But looking into my baby's eyes, all the pain disappeared, and I just felt warmth in my heart.

## Narrative Elements



## HEART: Human Empathy and Narrative Taxonomy

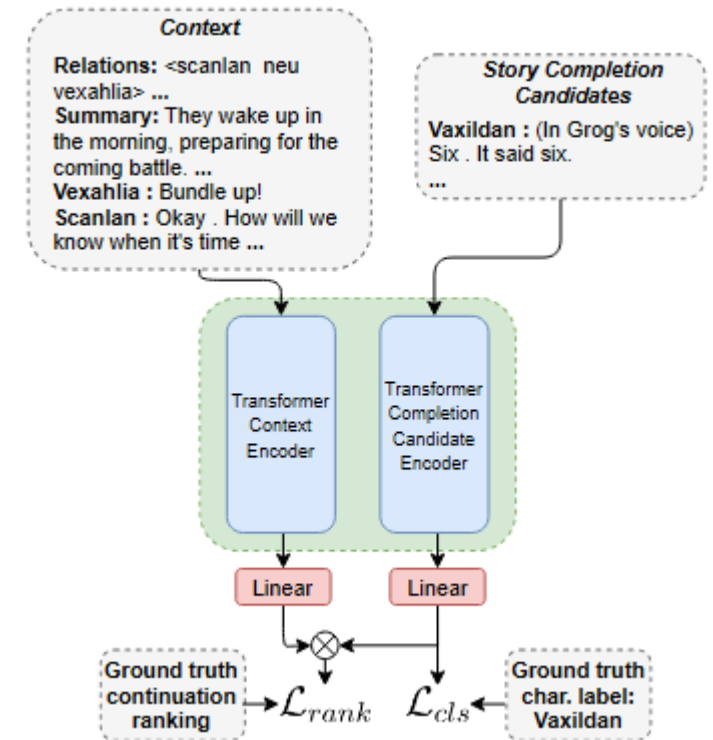


J. Shen, J. Mire, H. W. Park, C. Breazeal, and M. Sap, "HEART-felt Narratives: Tracing Empathy and Narrative Style in Personal Stories with LLMs," in *EMNLP*, 2024. <https://aclanthology.org/2024.emnlp-main.59/>.

# Relationships

<b>Relations</b>	{ Scanlan, neutral, Vexahlia }, { Keyleth, positive, Scanlan }, { Grog, negative, Vexahlia }, { Scanlan, positive, Vaxildan } ...
<b>Summary</b>	They wake up in the morning, preparing for the coming battle. Scanlan turns them all into Ravenites with light clothing. The sleet storm is starting. ...
<b>Vexahlia:</b>	Bundle up!
<b>Scanlan:</b>	Okay. How will we know when it's time for me to release? We have to wait for Tooma to go report.
<b>Vexahlia:</b>	Is Vorugal back? He's back.
<b>Scanlan:</b>	I assume.
<b>Vexahlia:</b>	<u>Do we see Larkin around?</u>
<b>DM:</b>	<u>No, you do not see Larkin around.</u>
<b>Scanlan:</b>	Vax , do you want to go look?
<b>Vaxildan:</b>	For Larkin? No Larkin. <i>I attempt to see see if Tooma is coming.</i> I don't want to release this thing before Tooma is there reporting to Vorugal.
<b>Scanlan:</b>	
<b>Vaxildan:</b>	(Grog voice) Six. It said six.

Table 1: A sample from CRD3 extended, showing: pairwise character relationships; historical context via the summary; and current character interactions in the form of dialogue, *first-person* (green), and *second-person* (blue) narration. DM refers to the Dungeon Master who provides arbitration and additional context to players.



# Relationships

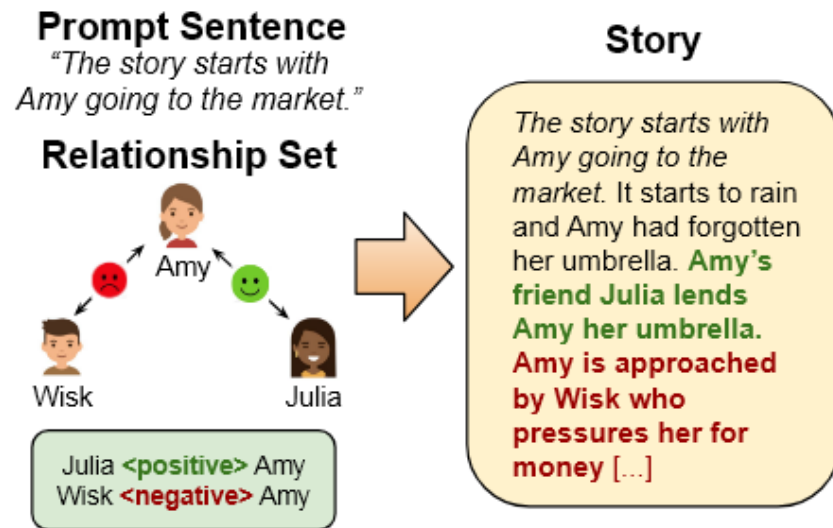


Figure 1: Example of relationship-driven story generation task: given a set of relationships and a prompt sentence, the goal is to generate a story continuing the prompt sentence and reflecting the input relationships. **Positive** and **negative** relationships are highlighted.

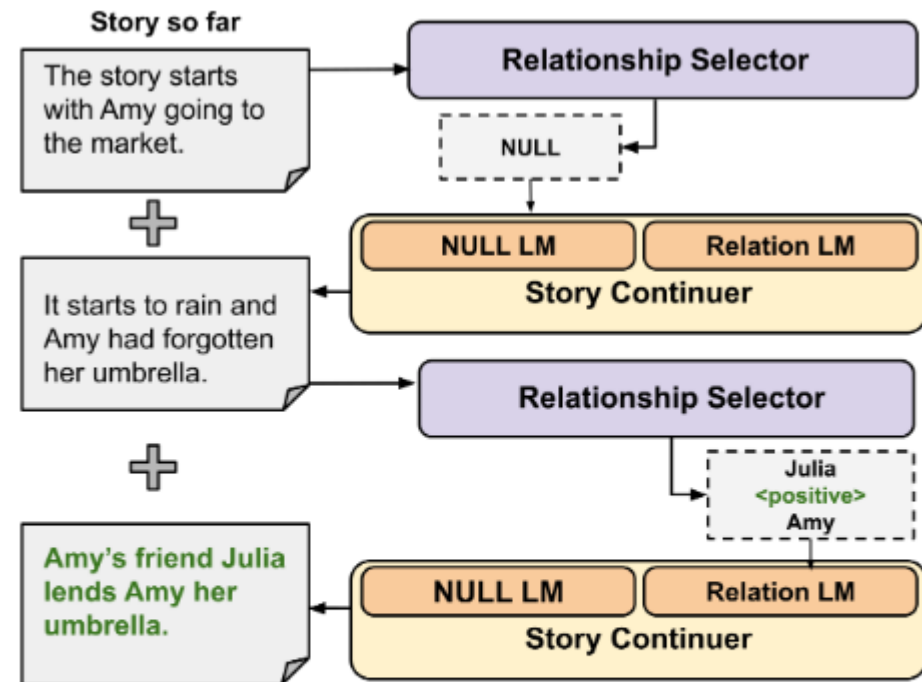
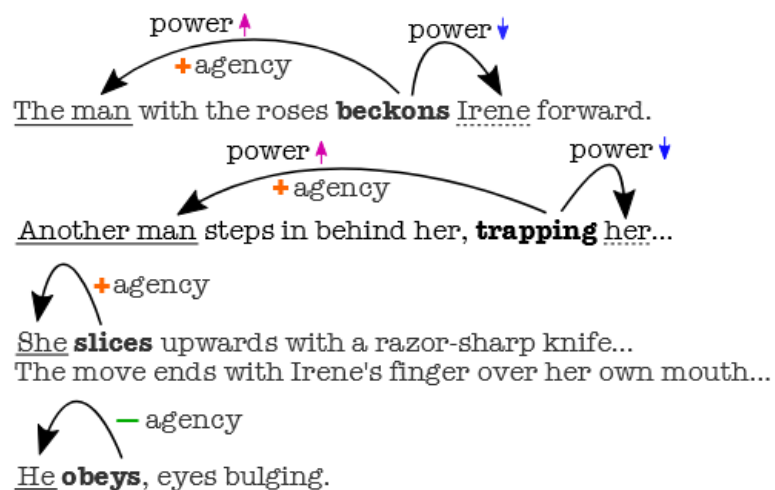
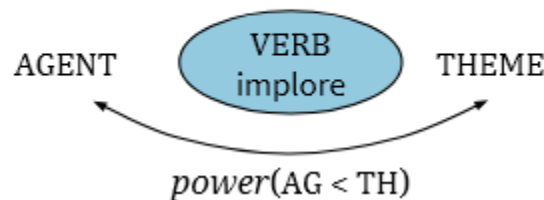


Figure 2: Proposed model RELIST illustrated. RELIST has two components, the relationship selector and the story continuer, which jointly generate the story.

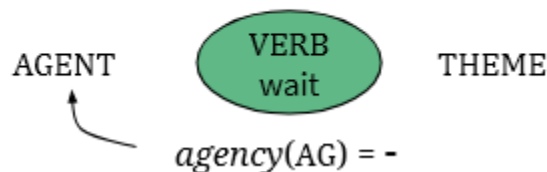
# Relationships



He **implored** the tribunal to show mercy.



The princess **waited** for her prince.



Formal Definition

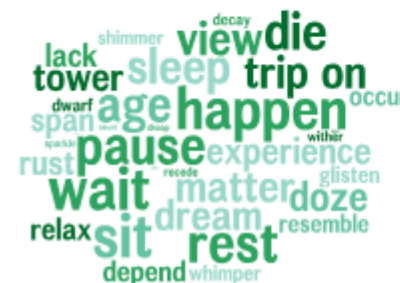
power(AG < TH)

power(AG > TH)



agency(AG) = -

agency(AG) = +



Labels

Figure 1: An excerpt from a box-office hit, *Sherlock Holmes* (2009). **Bolded** words are the predicates, solid underlined phrases are the agent of the verb, and dash underlined words are the theme. The full example with additional nuanced discussion is available in Figure 6 in the appendix.

# Relationships

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```
Megan PROPOSE friend_have_lunch Meredith
Lester PROPOSE friend_chat Robert
Suzette PROPOSE friend_chat Silvy
Betty PROPOSE friend_weekend_out Clark
Meredith PROPOSE mate_watch_tv Lester
Clark REJECT-PROPOSAL friend_weekend_out Betty
Lester REJECT-PROPOSAL mate_watch_tv Meredith
Meredith ACCEPT-PROPOSAL friend_have_lunch Megan
Lester affinity with Meredith 87
Violet PROPOSE friend_chat Megan
Clark affinity with Betty 67
Robert REJECT-PROPOSAL friend_chat Lester
Meredith affinity with Megan 72
Silvy ACCEPT-PROPOSAL friend_chat Suzette
Robert affinity with Lester 72
Betty affinity with Clark 50
(...)
```

```
PLOT-PROJECTION 0
  ProposeActivity {activity=friend_weekend_out, proposee=Clark, proposer=Betty}
PLOT-PROJECTION 1
  ProposedActivityAccepted {activity=friend_weekend_out, proposee=Clark, proposer=Betty}
  AffinityChange {triggerer=Clark, perceiver=Betty, impact=76}
  AffinityChange {triggerer=Betty, perceiver=Clark, impact=51-->54}
PLOT-PROJECTION 2
  ProposeActivity {activity=mate_go_to_cinema, proposee=Mary, proposer=Clark}
PLOT-PROJECTION 3
  ProposedActivityRejected {activity=mate_go_to_cinema, proposee=Mary, proposer=Clark}
  AffinityChange {triggerer=Mary, perceiver=Clark, impact=95}
  AffinityChange {triggerer=Clark, perceiver=Mary, impact=84}
(...)
```

# Knowledge Check

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1. Do you think a system can be made that encompasses all of these attributes using today's technology?
2. How would you start making a system like this? (e.g., Would it be LLM-based? Simulation-based? Planning-based?)
3. Would you need all of these to make a “good” story?
4. What about a “realistic” one?

