ETEC 565D: Field Note Exercise                              Brad Forsyth, #93481059

# Session 1: Before Playing

**Title of Game:** *The Banner Saga*

**What will I like / dislike about it?**

I expect I will enjoy the medieval fantasy story and setting inspired by Norse mythology, as well as the hand-drawn art style. I also expect to enjoy the role-playing elements, such as levelling up and managing the items and skills of multiple characters.

**What will I find interesting about it/boring or tedious about it?**

I was drawn to this game because of its promise to deliver an engaging story that is shaped by the choices made by the player, including facing consequences for poor choices, such as the permanent deaths of characters or failing to be successful at a particular objective. I also find the idea of interacting with and controlling a diverse cast of characters to be interesting as well. I expect I may find the tactical elements and complex battle system to be tedious at first to learn, as this game is much more strategic than games I am accustomed to playing.

**What will I need to do in it?**

I will need to take control of two primary characters and a cast of supporting characters as they help navigate a caravan of their people to safety away from a race of beings called the Dredge. To do so, I will need to proceed through the story, making impactful decisions along the way, and defeat enemies through various small-scale battles and large-scale wars.

**What will I need to learn within it?**

I will need to learn how to anticipate how my choices in the game may affect the story. I will also need to learn how to be successful in both battles and wars. Battles are smaller combat scenarios in which the player controls six heroes of their choice. Battles feature a tactical, turn-based combat system that occurs on a grid, similar to chess, that determines player movement. To be successful, I will need to learn the combat rules, such as how damage is calculated, how movement is controlled, how characters' stats affect their actions, and how resources are managed. I will also need to learn useful strategies, such as how to best utilize the possible actions taken by each character during their turn (move, use ability, cast magic, or rest), how to best navigate characters into advantageous positions, how to determine which combination of character classes work well together, and how to customize and best utilize characters' abilities, stats, and equipment. Wars are larger scale encounters in which success depends on the strategic choices made, presented in a text format similar to a choose your own adventure story. I will thus need to learn to weigh the pros and cons of choosing various strategies in order to be successful.

**What will it be like / similar to (other games I have played)?**

I have played many games with similar role-playing elements and narratives that emphasize player choice and consequences. Although I am familiar with the turn-based combat systems featured commonly in Japanese RPG games, I have not played many games with a similar tactical grid system that restricts player movement and emphasizes strategic positioning.

**Fieldnote Summary Session 1**

I expect to enjoy the fantasy setting, story, and role-playing elements of *The Banner Saga* based on the game's promotional material and reviews and my personal interests and experiences playing similar games. I do, however, anticipate finding the tactical combat system to be challenging at first and hope it does not dissuade me from playing the game further.
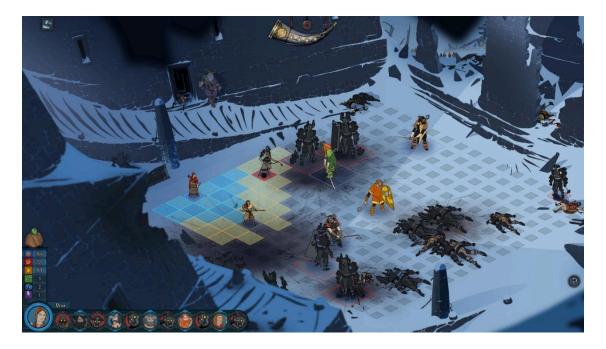


*Figure 1. The Banner Saga Gameplay Screenshot. https://bannersaga.com/game/the-banner-saga/*