

Mythology Mash

An atmospheric Mini-Larp by Kevin Blank for 3-8 Players about telling stories about the Gods

*"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today."
--Robert McKee*

In Mythology Mash, player take on the role of shamans for ancient polytheistic religions, meeting for their great annual meeting, the *Shaman-ting*. They tell each other Stories about their gods, to enrich their wisdom and spread the word about them.

The game should not be very emotionally heavy - it aims to be an immersive experience, with a light layer of themes of religion and political influence.

Info

- *Player Amount:* 3-8, with an optimum of 6 players + infinite Specatators
- *Required GMs:* 1
- *Required time:* Around 2hrs
- *Play Space:* Designed to be played around a campfire, when it has become dark.
- *Equipment: Writing material,* These things are optional, but greatly enhance the experience
 - Some Fire Effects to enhance the stories (coloring the flame or making it bigger)
 - Some naturalistic props (bones, cords and twigs) to build small totems
 - Speaker
 - tribal instruments to provide for some atmospheric music.

Overview

The game is played over three years. Each year starts with a short introduction, about what has happened in the last year.

The players take turns in telling one story of their gods, which they have prepared beforehand - they try to flavor them in regards to the overall story.

The telling of the stories should be atmospheric - it is mostly about how they are delivered, and not about the specific contents - the players can use their full roleplaying skills here, and enhance them with what is around them.

About the Atmosphere

This larp tries to create a very specific kind of atmosphere, and it is a good idea to try and enhance this atmosphere - there are several ways to do that.

Effects

You can use several fire effects to give the Players the tools to punctuate their stories with “magical” effects. Use things like Lycopodium powder and effects to color the flame. You can also use some different incense materials to enhance the feeling of a ritualistic space.

Talismans

The players are playing shamans from different pantheons - it has proven very atmospheric if they have some form of natural prop to use during the narration of their stories. When planning to play the game in the evening, you can offer players an hour during the afternoon to build some small props with you.

These can be created easily with some found branches, leafs and stones. Take care to bring some natural looking cord or small rope to tie things together. You can also bring an assortment of bones and pieces of cloth to help enhance the talismans.

Costuming

When planning for the atmosphere of this larp, it is easy to get carried away and start to bring materials for costuming as well (things like coats, larger pieces of cloth and leather, etc.) - however, the more “real” costuming there is the less imagination will be triggered for the players - when using just a few pieces of costuming you will lose the players own imagination, so I recommend against using extensive costuming for this.

The only “costuming” that might be used is black facepaint - this can be used by the players to apply so simplistic makeup or smear in their faces during high points of their stories.

Instruments

You can get some tribal instruments like shaman drums, Rattles or rain pipes as well. These can greatly enhance the atmosphere and work well to include spectators in the experience.

Music

The game works well with the right music tracks - find them in this spotify playlist:

https://open.spotify.com/user/1141479350/playlist/01YuTCEICMEKGM189iauyS?si=NJQqx9aJRaCDPpqQxS_jjw

1. Workshops

Throughout the workshops for the game, several things should happen:

- The players define their pantheon
- The players define their shaman characters
- The players get into telling stories.

About the theme of the game (3 Minutes)

Go through the following points:

- Welcome the players, tell them that in this game they will play shamans of polytheistic religions, and will be telling stories. For that they will be put into small teams of 2-3 players (2 with 6 players, 3 with 9 players)
- They will tell stories in this game, but don't have to worry, as they will get some basic material for this.
- In the first part, we will go through a few workshops that help you come up with your gods, characters and stories.
- The game is not very emotionally heavy, the goal is to create a cool atmosphere and have fun while doing it.

Find your shamanistic soulmate (5 Minutes)

In this workshop, we want to put the people together, into random pairs. For the players, this should feel like "Destiny" bringing them together. If the players already formed pairs, that's fine too, there is another branch of this text for this.

This is what the game master goes through:

To start the game off - we want to get everybody in the mood. Stand up and close your eyes. Hundreds of years ago - the divine was not as clearly defined as it is today. Humans sought meaning of the world around them, and tried to explain it. Gods were created. The Gods came from all around us.

Do you feel the wind on your faces? <make a pause>

And the warmth of the Air around you...the heat that comes from the fire in our midst...<pause>

Feel the earth beneath your feet - and feel how it connects us all. To nature, and each other <another pause> .

Now that you feel where we are - we can feel the energy that surrounds us - the energy that will eventually make up our gods.

If the players already have partners

Can you feel the others around you? Even before you touch them? The gods are not just in the nature, but also in ourselves.

Lock Hands with the players next to you. Can you feel which one is your Co-shaman?

<Pause>

The Gods are within us all, and they are all the same, we might recognize them differently, but yet, we are all connected...

If the players don't have partners yet

Everybody try to feel around you, slowly

<Now everybody should slowly move around>

Can you feel the others around you? Even before you touch them? The gods are not just in the nature, but also in ourselves.

<pause a bit>

I now want you to lock hands with another person.

<the players fumble around a bit until they found a partner>

Open your eyes - you were drawn to each other - This person will be your co-shaman. Talk to each other to find out who the old shaman is, and who the young one.

Who are our gods?(15 Minutes)

Every shaman pair now has time to create their pantheons.

They receive some random cards, that define the pantheon, as well as some traits for the relevant gods for their stories. (All Cards see appendix A)

- One Manifestation card for the - This tells the players how their gods manifest.
- One Adjective card for the - This adjective defines the overall appearance and type of their gods

They get some time to define this and write it down (about 5 minutes). Then they get:

- Three God Titles for the - These are the three most relevant gods for their pantheon, they are defined by their Titles - e.g. "The One-Eyed", "The Giant", etc. All their stories will be about these 3 gods.

The players then define their Pantheon by telling each other stories about it. They can of course define some things offgame as well.

They should definitely come up with

- A name for the whole pantheon, or their tribe
- Names for the gods
- Where do the gods live?

The old shaman begins.. "Our gods are <Manifestation>, they are known to be <Adjective>..." The old shaman then talks a bit about what the gods are up to, while the young shaman fills in some details with questions about it.

In the next step, the three relevant gods are defined. This is done by the old shaman asking the young one what he knows about "The Trickster" - and the young one tells of this god.

We are the servants of the gods(10 Minutes)

In this workshop, the players figure out their own characters - this is done, as all other parts of the game - by telling a story.

To help the players, there are cue cards they can take from a pile that will introduce some concepts into their story.

However, the first step is to figure out how shamans of their pantheon would behave.

The GM goes through this:

Now that we know which gods we serve, we need to know who we are...first and foremost, we are shamans of our gods. But what does that mean?

By now, you have a good idea of what kind of gods you serve - so how would shamans of these gods behave. Would they speak in normal tones - like an old friend?

*Would they **start to whisper** be all mystical, whispering like the wind.*

starts to shout** OR WOULD THEY BE AGGRESSIVE? And shout a lot? **if possible, throw something in the fire here

They might be measured and distant (in a measured and distant tone) or VERY theatrical.

The player think about this for a moment.

For the next exercise - we want to figure out who we are, and where we come from. For this, you will tell a story to you co-shaman again.

The story should answer two questions:

- *Where do you come from?*
- *Where do you want to go?*

If you need some inspiration - you can take cue cards from the respective card deck. You can take a card and look at it, but you don't need to feel compelled to use it - you can always just put it back and take another one, or come up with your own story.

Take a maximum of 5 minutes for your story.

The players then proceed to tell their stories - make sure that the card deck is somewhere where all of them can reach. Every player gets one "Where do you come from" and one "Where do you want to go" card. It can easily happen that two players of the same pantheon have different characters.

Who are we? (5 Minutes)

This part of the workshop is about introductions - the shaman pairs introduce themselves to each other, and already get a chance to try out their Narration style.

The GM goes through this:

Of course we want to get to know each other as well - each one of you now has 2 minutes to introduce themselves -- introduce you and your pantheon. Try already to include the style of narration you've thought about before.

GM Task: Write down the names of the tribes to use them later.

We live on in our stories. (15 Minutes)

In this workshop we will talk about how stories are structured, and start to talk about the ruleset of the game.

The GM goes through this:

As already mentioned, this game is all about telling stories -- each of you has three stories about their gods, which will be told throughout the game.

Let's just take a moment to talk about story structure. A story usually consists out of:

- *Exposition*
- *Climax*
- *Resolve*

Our stories will be very short - only around 5 minutes, but it can still help to keep these 3 points in mind to be able to tell a compelling story.

The Exposition is the start situation of the story - here you talk about the characters and the locations where they are - a special focus should be put on the challenges that they are facing, what they intend to do.

During the Exposition, the tension should rise - conflict should start showing up, and lead into the Climax of the story - usually some kind of turning point, where the heroes engage in the main conflict of the story.

After the climax, you talk about what happens - the Resolve. What are the consequences of the actions in the story? How did the story change the characters?

*In the game, you get to tell three stories - you only get the rough titles - every pair draws three cards from this deck now *gives around story deck* -- if you don't like story title, feel free to put it back and take a new one.*

Talk a bit about the rough content of the story -- but don't go into too much detail - you should fill out the three areas, so you have some form of guideline for later.

During the game, you will tell these stories - but you'll have to modify them depending on the situations - think of them more like sermons during a mass -- the stories are fixed, but what they tell the others should be modifieable depending on what needs to be told.

Structure of the Game (5 Minutes)

In this last workshop, the players learn how the game is structured, what cues they need to listen to and when they should do what.

The GM goes through this.

Before we begin, we have to talk about how the game is structured. The Shaman-ting meets every year, It is usually several days of cultural exchange and revelerie, but the high-point is always the eve of tales - where the shamans sit together and tell stories of their gods.

Every meeting begins with music being played - while the music plays, you sit around the fire, watching the flames intently.

After that, the shaman leader, Me, will open the meeting - the opening will contain important information on what happened in the time since the last meeting - about the political and major happenings in the land. You should definitely try to flavor your stories according to them.

The Shaman Leader will call you out, one by one, to tell your stories.

When others tell a story, you should engage with them - laugh with them, or about them - throw in shouts if you feel that they fit

This game is about telling stories and acting through them - you can interact through the stories, and influence other through them, but there will not be dedicated time to play outside of telling these stories.

Maybe -- Talk a bit about the available atmospheric props (and safety stuff)

2. The Game

Overall structure

The game is structured into 3 Meetings, usually happening each year.

Start of a meeting

Each year starts like this:

1. Players look into the fire - Music plays.
2. The Leader of the Shaman-ting (the Game Master) tells the story of what happened in the last year
3. The Leader points one of the Tribes out to begin with their storytelling (this should change each year.
4. All shaman pairs tell the stories of their gods.

End of a meeting

Once all the Stories have been told, there is some time for the shamans to play on the stories that were told - once the game master deems the time enough, he turns up the music - upon which the shamans start looking into the fire, one by one.

The music plays loud for some time (about 1 minute), until the next year starts.

End of the Game

At the end of the third year, the game also ends. The ending itself is pretty free-form, it depends a lot on the choices of the players - how they told their stories and what they focused on.

First Year - Introduction (Wadrana - Loyndomriss)

The first year serves very much to set the scene. The Game Master tells the story of how the Shaman-ting came to be, as this is the first year the young shamans, the new generation, accompany the old ones.

When telling these introductions, the Game Master should try to set up a very dramatic style of narration.

GM Task: Take note which shamans talk the most of war and violence - you will need this information on day 2.

The Game-master tells this:

WELCOME Shamans! To another Shaman-ting - our annual meeting. I can see that your brought the young ones as well this year - even the <insert one of the tribes> Welcome, welcome. Here at the Shaman-ting, we put aside our conflicts - we put aside our fights - we meet to tell each other stories of our gods - some come here to learn, some to inspire, and some come here to boast and impress.

The Game Master then calls out the first tribe to tell their stories.

<Tribe name> enlighten us with your wisdom!

GM Task: After the 3rd story - turn on the next music track, turn up the volume and let it run for about 1 minute.

Second Year - An oncoming storm (Wadrana - Runaljod)

The second year is the point where conflict starts to come in. The tribes are at each others throat, the Shaman-ting is the only place where they can talk in peace.

The stories told in this year should be stories of martial prowess, or of reaching out their hands to each other.

GM Task: Note which tribe is the “weakest” and which one would defend a weak tribe. You will need this for the 3rd day.

The Game-Master tells this:

WELCOME Shamans! The last year has been heavy on conflict. More and more of our brothers are fighting each other - more and more leader put down a claim to power. The <insert one of the more warrior like tribes here> is gathering their clans. We live in tense times. Here at the Shaman-ting, we put aside these conflicts, to tell the stories of our gods.

But when mortals go to war, how can the divine be left out of it? Will our gods fight with us, give us strength? Whose gods are the strongest? Whose gods will win in the upcoming conflict?

The Game Master calls out the first tribe to tell their stories (should be a different one than the first time)

<Tribe name> - Tell us your story!

When the stories in this year are told, the game master should mentally take note of the kind of stories they tell, and what the reactions are. How these stories are told will heavily impact the politics in the upcoming conflict -- an aggressive shaman, telling the story of a war between the gods, and how they defeated all the other gods will lead to their tribe being strong aggressors in the conflict - A shaman telling a story of peace and love, of how the gods forged a bond despite their differences will cause their tribe to seek peace with the others.

Depending on all of their stories, figure out how the conflict might turn out - important is that one of the tribes has to be clearly defeated, almost brought to extinction.

Third Meeting - The Aftermath (Wadruna - MannaR)

The third and last meeting of the story happens after the conflict has taken place. There has not been a shaman-ting for the last 5 years, as conflicts have ravaged the lands, making it unable to find the peace and place required to do so.

The old shamans grow very old, and the new one take over - the stories in this year might be about reconciliation, or about banding together as one. They might be about transformation and change.

The Game master tells this:

Welcome Shamans! 5 years have passed since our last meeting. The conflicts that have ravaged these lands made it impossible to hold a shaman-ting. I can see that the old ones amongst you have grown ancient like myself. It seems time that the new generation takes over.

The wars have been brutal - the <Insert Tribe Name> have been almost driven to extinction by the <Insert other Tribe name>, if the <Maybe 3rd tribe> would not have intervened.

We are scattered and weak - exhausted and tired. Have our gods forsaken us? Or is this what they have intended for us? There is word of a new god on the horizon - shamans from distant countries have come and told us about one almighty being. Are our gods strong enough to withstand him? Are we?

<Tribe Name> - what is your story?

Epilog (Wadruna - Wunjo)

The shamans go through their last stories. Depending on what they talk about, the epilog will change accordingly.

After the stories are done - the music gets started and played for some time.

Turn down the music a bit, tell them what happens.

Some things that could happen at the end:

- The Leader calls this the last shaman-ting, as all things are coming to the end.
- In the epilog there is talk of a crusade and forced conversions.
- In the epilog there is talk of a peaceful conversion lead by a tribe
- In the epilog there is talk of how a certain tribe fought until the bitter end.

In any case, the epilog ends with the old gods being forgotten - a distant memory of a different time.

Turn up the music and let it play for another few minutes, while the players reflect.

3. Afterplay

After the game has ended, there is the possibility of a short free-form afterplay briefing. The game should not be very emotionally taxing, so it is not necessarily required.

If it is wanted, it should focus on cool moments and stories. The Afterplay can strongly resemble the game itself, sitting around a fire telling stories

Appendix

Pantheon cards

PANTHEON: _____

THE GODS ARE _____
ADJECTIVE MANIFESTATION

MAIN GODS

STORIES

NOTES

PANTHEON: _____

THE GODS ARE _____
ADJECTIVE MANIFESTATION

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PANTHEON: _____

THE GODS ARE _____
ADJECTIVE MANIFESTATION

MAIN GODS

STORIES

NOTES

Who are our gods?

Manifestations

YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... FISH	YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... GIANTS
YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... ELEMENTS	YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... WOMEN
YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... CHILDREN	YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... INSECTS
YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... NATURE ASPECTS (LIKE THE WIND, THE EARTH, ETC.)	YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... TIMES (LIKE SEASONS, THE DAY/NIGHT, ETC.)
YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... CATS	YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... ANIMALS
YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... BIRDS	YOUR GODS MANIFEST AS.... DWARVES

YOUR GODS ARE.... WRATHFUL	YOUR GODS ARE.... PROUD
YOUR GODS ARE.... PLAYFUL	YOUR GODS ARE.... SILENT
YOUR GODS ARE.... ARROGANT	YOUR GODS ARE.... PACIFISTIC
YOUR GODS ARE.... VIGILANT	YOUR GODS ARE.... LOVING
YOUR GODS ARE.... SEXUAL	YOUR GODS ARE.... WISE
YOUR GODS ARE.... VIOLENT	YOUR GODS ARE.... CORRUPTING

God Titles

KNOWN AS.... THE WATCHER	KNOWN AS.... THE ONE-EYED
KNOWN AS.... THE MOTHER	KNOWN AS.... THE FATHER
KNOWN AS.... THE ALL-FATHER	KNOWN AS.... THE ONE-ARMED
KNOWN AS.... THE CRIPPLE	KNOWN AS.... THE TRICKSTER
KNOWN AS.... THE TITAN	KNOWN AS.... THE INVINCIBLE
KNOWN AS.... THE GOOD	KNOWN AS.... THE EVIL
KNOWN AS.... LORD OF THE UNDERWORLD	KNOWN AS.... GOD OF WINTER

KNOWN AS.... THE GREAT HORSEMAN	KNOWN AS.... THE WARMONGER
KNOWN AS.... MASTER OF HEALING	KNOWN AS.... THE GUARDIAN
KNOWN AS.... THE CRUEL	KNOWN AS.... GOD OF THE SEA
KNOWN AS.... THE MANY HORNED	KNOWN AS.... GOD OF DEATH
KNOWN AS.... GOD OF WAR	KNOWN AS.... THE FIRE

We are the servants of the gods

Where do you come from?

YOU WERE... AN ORPHAN WHO WAS TAKEN IN BY THE SHAMAN FOR TRAINING	YOU WERE... TRAINED FROM YOUTH TO BECOME A SHAMAN
YOU WERE... SELECTED BY THE OLD SHAMAN AS THEIR APPRENTICE	YOU WERE... TAKEN AS A SLAVE AND ENLIGHTENED, SO YOU CHOSE THE PATH OF THE GODS
YOU WERE... CONVERTED FROM ANOTHER BELIEF	YOU HAD... A DREAM WHERE THE GODS SHOWED YOU THAT THEY SELECT YOU AS THEIR SERVANT.
YOU WERE... FORETOLD BY AN ORACLE AT A YOUNG AGE THAT YOU NEED TO SERVE THE GODS	YOU CAME FROM... ANOTHER TRIBE, AND WERE CHOSEN BY THE SHAMAN ON THEIR TRAVELS.
YOU WERE... A SINNER AND NOW HAVE TO SHOW PENANCE BY WALKING THE PATH OF THE GODS	YOU HAD... A FAMILY THAT WAS SLAUGHTERED BY ENEMIES. YOU NOW SERVE THE GODS TO FIND MEANING.

Where are you going?

YOU WANT TO... SHARE THE WORD OF YOUR GODS WITH EVERYBODY	YOU THINK... THAT YOUR GODS ARE THE STRONGEST ONES.
YOU THINK THAT... ONLY THROUGH SHARING OUR GODS, THEY CAN BECOME STRONGER	YOU WANT TO... DO EVERYTHING SO THAT YOUR TRIBE BECOMES STRONGER AND SURVIVES
YOU KNOW THAT... THE WIND OF TIMES WILL CHANGE THINGS. WE NEED TO BE PREPARED	YOU DO NOT... WANT TO CHANGE YOUR WAYS - YOU THINK THAT BY SECURING OUR TRADITIONS WE CAN BECOME STRONGER.
YOU THINK THAT... WE NEED TO CHANGE TO ADAPT. THE OLD WAY CAN NO LONGER BE SUSTAINED.	YOU THINK THAT... ONLY THE GODS KNOW THE TRUE WAY. YOU WAIT FOR THEIR SIGNS, AND SEE THEM EVERYWHERE.
YOU THINK THAT... IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW THE GODS, BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE DONE BLINDLY. WE NEED TO OPEN OUR EYES FOR OURSELVES	

We live on in our stories.

STORY THE AWAKENING	STORY THE BEGINNING
STORY THE END	STORY THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL
STORY THE BIRTH OF _____	STORY THE DEATH OF _____
STORY THE TREASURES OF _____	STORY THE HALL OF THE GODS
STORY _____ AND THE DRAGON	STORY _____’S WEDDING
STORY THE PUNISHMENT OF _____	STORY THE MOUNTAIN OF GLORY
STORY THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS	STORY HOW _____ WAS BIRTHED
STORY THE STORY OF THE MOON	STORY THE STORY OF THE SUN
STORY THE FIVE TASKS OF _____	STORY ABOUT THE COURT OF _____
STORY THE LEGEND OF THE WOLF	STORY THE BARREL OF _____

STORY

WHEN _____ HID IN THEIR CAVE

STORY

WHEN _____ DEVoured THE WORLD