



# Lens

A solo hack of Microscope, the fractal role-playing game of epic histories by Ben Robbins

## Principles

- **The timeline is final:** No unreliable narrators or contradictions. Avoid time travel.
- **Time is flexible:** Never state concrete dates or duration. The terms Period/Event/Scene denote hierarchy more than length.
- **Avoid welding Periods:** Keep mortals in their Period. Otherwise, Periods get stuck together in their life span, reducing your flexibility. Avoid Immortals. They dominate games, being less work to repeat rather than creating new characters.
- **Name your entries:** Write short, literal titles for your entries that help recap your work.
- **Customization:** These rules can make any three tiered, bulleted list. [Age of Ravens made a hack](#) for making a city, without a chronological element.

## Making History

- **Tone:** Light or Dark, whether an entry is generally happy or sad. Note with /
- **Period:** Place between Periods. Describe what happens and how it's different from other periods.
- **Event:** Place inside a Period and describe.
- **Scene:** Inside an event. Write a question, describe the scene up until the moment the question is answered.

## Set Up

This game is best played as a bulleted list in a word doc or as index cards laid out in order.

1. **Big Picture:** Pick a concept for your history, no more than a single sentence.
2. **Bookends:** Make Start and End Periods, noting their Tone. You can't add beyond these.
3. **Palette:** In "Yes" and "No" columns, decide what can appear in the timeline.
4. **First Pass:** Add a single Period or Event to your timeline, noting their Tone.
5. **Mood and Cohesion:** Starting now, Tone is random. Choose a Mood rank (1-9) representing the odds out of 10 for a Light entry. Choose a Cohesion rank (1-9) representing the odds of adding a turn to the round.

## Playing a round

1. **Choose a Focus**, the topic of this round. It can be broad and thematic ("betrayal", "inventions") or small and specific, even a new element. All entries must relate to it.
2. **Take your turn.** Roll d10 for **Tone**. If you roll  $\leq$  Mood, your addition will be Light. Roll higher, it'll be Dark. **Add** a Period, Event or Scene that matches the Tone/Focus. If stuck, use the Oracle and Inspiration Table. Roll a d10. If you roll  $\leq$  Cohesion, take another turn and re-roll.
3. **Add a new Legacy** to your list, something that appeared this round you want to explore later. It should be concrete, not a theme. If you have six, delete one before adding one.
4. **Explore a Legacy** from your list (choose or roll). Add an Event or Scene related to that Legacy.
5. **Adjust Cohesion and Mood** by 1, according to preference. When ready, play another round.

## Inspiration Table

Roll a d6. Your entry is related to the...

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. Economic    | 4. Political |
| 2. Environment | 5. Religious |
| 3. Military    | 6. Social    |

## Oracle

Ask a yes or no question. Evaluate the odds out of 10 that the answer is yes. Roll a d10. If you roll  $\leq$  the odds then it's a "yes." If greater, it's a "no."

## Extra Inspiration Tables

You can add or ban tables in your palette to create alternate playstyles. Using just the default table for your first playthrough is recommended.

<b>Nature Table</b> Roll a d6. Your entry is related to... 1. Climate                      4. Predation 2. Fauna                        5. Sea 3. Flora                         6. Terrain	<b>Culture Table</b> Roll a d6. Your entry is related to... 1. Arts                            4. Etiquette 2. Clothes                       5. Rites 3. Cuisine                       6. Status
<b>Good Table</b> Roll a d6. Your entry is related to... 1. Birth                         4. Fun 2. Collaboration              5. Improvement 3. Forgiveness                6. Victory	<b>Bad Table</b> Roll a d6. Your entry is related to... 1. Death                        4. Division 2. Defeat                       5. Exacerbation 3. Dejection                   6. Grudge
<b>Personal Table</b> Roll a d10. Your entry is related to someone's... 1. Achievements              6. Personality 2. Authority                    7. Professions 3. Bonds                        8. Responsibilities 4. Fears                         9. Secrets 5. Loves                        10. Values	<b>Historical Philosophy Table</b> Roll a d6. Your entry is related to... 1. Great man theory        4. Social Darwinism 2. Hegelian Dialectics    5. God/Universe's Plan 3. Historical                   6. Combine two, roll for Materialism                   each.