

AMUSE BOUCHE

[A larp – with literature, food, and taste]

The Aphra has long been the prestigious literary award in the world. Each year the process is the same, # Judges in a closed room, a full meal of # Courses, and the same 150 year old iron-clad criteria to decide what defines good taste

Who decides what kind of art has merit? This game explores the different forces, relationships, and politics that shape our understanding of what is “good” literature. Inspired by the Prix Goncourt selection process.

Important Formulas:

*(# of Literary Works/#GMs) + (#Players) = # of Courses *Round odd numbers up*

Title of Course = 2) Common Word or Trope + 3) Reference + Food in Course

For 4 – 8 Players (3 is acceptable, but not optimal. 8+ will also work, but consider having an assistant server at that point)

(# Players + #GMs) Printed Literature Pages (see page 1)

A Handful of Index Cards

Ample writing utensils

(# Players + #GMs) Sets of Silverware

2 x (# Players + #GMs) Plates

2 x (# Players + #GMs) Drinking Vessels

Plenty of Napkins and Wet Wipes

2-3 Tables and 6-12 Chairs

*A Chalkboard is useful

*A Screen or divider is recommended

When preparing for this game, it is important to plan ahead. After utilizing the important formulas above, you should send a questionnaire to your participants at least 1 week in advance inquiring as to 1) Food Allergies and Restrictions, 2) Favorite Genre to Read, 3) Most Overrated Book.

Whilst you wait for the responses, prep the **Literature Pages**. From the appropriate # of works, choose a 1/4 to 1/2 page excerpt from a page of the same number in each work. On the second half of the page, edit a biography of the original excerpt author, by taking out word and leaving blanks much like the game Mad Libs. (See examples Pages 4-6).

After you have received the questionnaire responses, use question 1) to set the menu (See Page 3 for examples) at least 3 days in advance. Assemble a diversity of flavours and textures and think about unique presentations that will incite emotions. The chart below can be used as inspiration. You can, certainly, use a cuisine or a theme exclusively.

| | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|--------|--------|---------|------------|---------|
| Salty | Sweet | Sour | Bitter | Spicy | Astringent | Pungent |
| Dry | Wet | Hot | Cold | Starchy | Crunchy | Chewy |
| Gelatinous | Syrup-like | Fluffy | Juicy | Slimy | Hard | Other |

After the menu has been set, you will use the responses to 2) and 3) to name each of your **Courses**.

Each Course should correspond to the response of one player, by taking a common words or tropes from the genre and putting them together with a reference to the overrated book and a reference to the food itself. If there are unnamed Courses after this process is over you may feel free to

name them after your own literary preferences.

Make name tents, and write the names of the Courses on the outside of the tents. On the inside of each tent, write a **Motivation** listed that corresponds with the outside. Set aside the tents.

| | | | | |
|----------------|---------|------------|--------|-----------|
| Acceptance | Justice | Family | Power | Curiosity |
| Pleasure | Passion | Bitterness | Anger | Legacy |
| Social Contact | Order | Collecting | Status | Newness |
| Independence | Honor | Idealism | Peace | Vengeance |

Prepare your food and wait for game day.

Preparation on the day

Set your dining table. You should make every effort for elegance with the materials you have available. A table-runner, white tablecloth and candles are not amiss, and upon this you should lay out the dishes and water glasses only to indicate seating. Under each dish, hide a card with a literary vocation, such as: writer, playwright, screenwriter, journalist, editor, translator, academic etc. Designate one seat to be the **President**, the most senior member of the committee, the number of years on the committee will be younger and younger as you go around clockwise. During this game, the GM should always move clockwise during service. Make a **Seating Arrangement Chart**. Print out the Judging Criteria:

“The Recipient should have fully shown in their most recent publication and their entire body of work: the breadth and depth of the human experience, a discourse with our literary heritage, and meaningful contributions to the medium” (Print Page 7)

On another table or on the centre of your dining table, you might lay out one each of your plated dishes with their corresponding name tents.

Another table on the other side of the space should be designated your food prep area.. It is best to place the screen or divider between the two areas. Be organized.

Workshops & Co-creation

The first thing you should have your players do is to choose a Course that calls to them. The name of the course and the primary **Motivation** within will inform their character. Leftover courses are allocated to the **President** or if there are doubles then distribute amongst the people.

After they have chosen, have them decide amongst themselves, where to sit based on the years on the committee – you have already decided this seating arrangement earlier. They should then discover their character’s vocation under their plate.

Then read out or write down the Obstacles to Objective Judgment, and allow them to pick and determine the reason WHY. Overlaps are fine. These should remain a secret.

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Accepted 3 rd Party inducement | Didn't read all the books | Personal conflict | Pride |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|

Have them come up with Character Names for themselves, they can write these on name tents.

Record all the relevant information on your Seating Arrangement Chart: Course, Age, Vocation, Character Name, Dietary Preferences and so forth. You will keep this privately as a GM reference

Fill out the **Literature Pages** together, by having the players come up with two options as fast as possible and then voting. This process should be lightening fast.

Explain the Mechanics and the Schedule, briefly:

Each Course will begin with the corresponding Character being served first. They are designated the person who must speak first to make a statement or ask a question. The rest of the committee is served clockwise.

Conversation should flow naturally without GM interruption. The GMs should refill water between courses, and always do so clockwise, while observing the flow of the conversation and seeing a natural way to end the course by taking away the plates of the first person who was served.

Each Course will end with corresponding Character being given an opportunity to leave the table have an **Exterior Scene**. This will be your ONLY in-character chance to leave the table, for a “smoke” or “toilet” break, and go to the other side of the screen or room to play a scene where your character engages with the outside world in some fashion. If you have multiple name tents, you will have an opportunity each time that particular Course finishes. “Outside” should be within earshot, but not too close as to disturb the table.

Knife and Fork Mechanic: Placing your knife and fork in the 90 degree angle finished position represents opting in to your Character’s Exterior Scene or offering to NPC for another player’s Exterior Scene. If no one opts-in then the GM should NPC.

Voting: There will be 3 total votes during the course of the dinner, the timing of which will be determined by the President. The first 2 do not count towards the final result. The first vote will be completely anonymous and the second will be named with reasons given. The GM can tally points in their role as the server. The 3rd and final vote will happen following Dessert and this will conclude the Game.

To debrief, have everyone introduce themselves again and then tell your players what the actually works of literature and the authors are.

Index

12 Course Minimalist Sampler (Purchase enough so that GMs can eat along, this is fairly important to track the progress of the game.)

Aperitif – Vermouth or Campari or another bitter drink

Hors d’oeuvres – Flavored Chips topped with Spicy Salsa

Potage – Flavored Tea + Small Biscuit

Poisson – Smoked fish or Garlic hummus on bread

Entrée – Mochi

Releve – Crunchy Rice Cakes with Curry Sauce

Sorbet – Fruit Jelly

Rôti – Jerky with Dried Cranberries or Dried Apricots with Dried Cranberry

Légume – Sliced Cucumber Salad with Crème Fraiche

Entremet – Store bought lemon bars

Fromage – Variety of Cheeses

Café – Coffee and Popping Chocolate

**Champagne or something bubbly is recommended to finish the larp, during debrief.*

Sample Literature Pages

*When I awoke from the incredible sleep that follows the appeasement of the flesh, I saw A***, watching me and smoking a cigarette. The memories I have of my life at that time are all of this order, Dissolved are the restless nights, the clammy vision of crowds of bodies mangled and shredded by spurts of light that cut through shadow. Crystallized at the bottom of my memory remains the recollection of these sleeps and these wakings where one floats between the resurgence of desire and the memory of its satisfaction.*

____(Author's Name)_____ was born __(Year)_____ and currently teaches at __(University)_____ as a Research Professor of Literature and __(Academic Subject)____. __(His/Her/Their)_____ first novel, __(Title)____, hailed by critics, tells a __(adjective)_____ story between two people without giving __(Complete the Sentence)_____. __(His/Her/Their)_____ second novel, __(Title)____, told the fate of a character losing __(Complete the Sentence)____. In __(Title)____, a serial killer methodically murders characters from __(Established Novel)____. __(He/She/They)_____ has published half a dozen novels, starting in __(Year)____, some of which have been translated into Japanese, Finnish, Spanish, Italian, German... __(His/Her/Their)_____ current research interests include: the history and theory of the __(Subject)_____

I had never heard them exchange a single word, through their silence did not seem to be the result of some petty calculating revenge, and what had turned them mute to each other was not resentment – flaunted conspicuously yet indicating a very fervent attachment between man and wife., the kind of silence which rancorous couples often give as a present to each other to extort something –no, their silence had and express purpose, but it is possible that a slowly cooling mutual hatred had stiffened them into this neutral state., although nothing seemed to allude to its cause, since they appeared perfected content and well adjusted, behaving in each other’s presence like two wild animals of different species acknowledging each other’s presence, but also acknowledging that the laws of species were far stronger than the laws of the sexes, and since each could be neither a mate nor a prey, communication was also impossible.

____(Author’s Name)____, (born __(Year)_, __(Non-US city)_), __(Nationality)____ author, essayist, and playwright known for __(his/her/their)____ detailed __(genre)____ tales and prose-poems that often blend points of view or points in time. __(Author)____ grew up in __(City)____. __(His/Her/Their)____ mother died when __(he/she/they)____ was a child, and __(his/her/their)____ father committed suicide outside the family home. __(His/Her/Their)____ first novella, __(Title)____, based on childhood experiences, was published in __(Year)____, followed by a collection of short stories, __(Title)____ also rooted in __(his/her/their)____ childhood. In __(Year)____, __(he/she/they)____ completed a first novel, though, because of censorship issues, the book was not published until five years later. __(His/Her/Their)____ __(Title)____, is a massive __(adjective)____ work of intertwining narratives centering on __(Complete the sentence)____. Critics have been divided about __(his/her/their)____ plays, which were considered __(Adjective)____.

I know you go to see your uncle's family in secret, I would tell Mevlut, you go to your uncle Hasan's shop to fold up newspapers, you sit and eat at their table, you play with Suleyman, but don't forget they cheated us, I would warn him. It is a terrible feeling for a man to know that his son would rather be in the company of crooks who tried to trick his father and take what was rightfully his! And don't get so agitated about that blazer. It's your by rights! Don't you ever forget that if you stay so close to the same people who so shamelessly grabbed the land your father helped them claim, they will lose all respect for you, do you understand, Mevlut?

____(Author's Name)____ was born __(Year)__ in _____ into a prosperous, secular middle-class family. __(His/Her/Their)__ father was an engineer as were __(his/her/their)__ paternal uncle and grandfather. It was this grandfather who founded the family's fortune. Growing up, __(he/she/they)__ was set on becoming a painter. __(He/She/They)__ studied architecture and _____ at __(University)__. ____ (Author's Name)____ has said that growing up, they experienced a shift from a traditional family environment to a more Western-oriented lifestyle.

____(He/She/They)__ wrote about this in __(his/her/their)__ his first published novel, a family chronicle entitled __(Title)__, which in the spirit of __(Famous Author)__ follows the development of a family over three generations. The second novel, __(Title)____, uses five different narrator perspectives to describe a situation in which several family members visit their ageing grandmother. The grandchildren's political discussions and their friendships reflect __(Complete the sentence)__.

____(Author's Name)__ international breakthrough came with, __(Title)____. It is structured as an historical novel set in 17th-century __(Major City)__, but its content is primarily a story about how our __(personality trait)____ builds on stories and fictions of different sorts. It is perhaps, on a symbolic level, the European novel __(Complete the Sentence)____. ____ (Author's Name)____ has a reputation as a social commentator even though __(he/she/they)__ sees themselves as principally a fiction writer with no political agenda.

The Recipient should have fully shown in their most recent publication and their entire body of work: the breadth and depth of the human experience, a discourse with our literary heritage, and meaningful contributions to the medium.