

Taller Than Space is Wide

by Alexa Kirchner

You are time travellers. There is a vast universe full history out there and it is your privilege to wander it. But time travel can be a lonely business...

Setup

Make a copy of the game spreadsheet ([available here](#)) and share access to it with all players. Set up a backchannel, a form of communication outside the spreadsheet accessible to all players. Discuss in the backchannel how long you'd like to play, which modes you're interested in (modes below), and what you'd like to put on the Adds and Bans list.

The Adds and Bans lists contain general topics that you'd either like to include or exclude from the game. Topics on the Adds list you are encouraged to incorporate, even if it doesn't necessarily make sense in context. Topics on Bans list should not be introduced into the fiction in any circumstances. Things that you would find upsetting to be in the game should definitely go on the Bans list but also topics you find boring, you're tired of, or you just don't feel like engaging with today. Put the Adds and Bans in the [Machines](#) tab. Any player may add new elements to the lists at any time - check it frequently to see if there any updates.

When you are ready, begin play.

The Spreadsheet

There are three tabs on the spreadsheet – [World](#), [Machine](#), and [Workings](#). The [World](#) tab represents all of history and the entire universe. Time passes as you travel down the spreadsheet, with higher row numbers taking place after lower row numbers. Rows represent differences in any dimension other than time— two cells on the same row might represent two moments in different parts of the same world or in different, parallel, timelines. Each cell represents a single, specific event in a single, specific time and place.

In the [Machines](#) tab you'll find the Adds and Bans list and two machines you'll use to time travel. The **Time Machine** will generate a row and column for you to travel too when you do not otherwise have a destination. The **Guide Book** will provide information about the event you've travelled too. Paste it into the cell you're visiting and it'll give you a prompt you can use as launching off point. Copy the cells containing the machines so you can bring them with you as you travel.

[Workings](#) contains information necessary for the machines to work but you won't need to interact with it during play. Feel free to check it out if you're interested.

Play

1. Select an event and travel to it. You can use the time machine to find an event, return to any previous event you remember the location of, or travel to any described event you might've seen on your travels.
2. Paste the guidebook into your destination cell to receive a prompt. Think for a while about who might be there, what might be happening, and why you might've travelled there. When possible, link this event to other events you've encountered during your travels.

3. Write an ode to describe the place. Odes consist of three lines, each of which describing the place in one short sentence. There are a variety of common Ode formats, but the three most popular are:

A description of the place before a significant event

The event

A description of the place after the event

A general description of the place

What you were doing there

A small detail that was important to you

A minor detail about the place

A description of the actions there

The significance of the events (or lack of significance)

The traveller should not feel bound to these styles, they are merely popular forms. Odes should be placed in three cells of the same column, one after the other, and italicized.

TIME MACHINE

F856

GUIDE BOOK

A terrible calamity in a Village

Remote village of farmers and monks

A rending of the earth, fire from the heavens

Survivors scattered and the village destroyed

An example prompt and ode

4. Leave a message. Messages should start one column over from the ode and they may take any form you desire. You can talk in more detail or comment about what is happening in this moment, describe other business, talk about your life, or any other business.

When writing messages, break them up into multiple cells. Try to limit each cell so that it contains only a single sentence or thought. Let the sentences sprawl out, across rows and columns, changing directions at times as they may. If you are responding to another message, place your message beside or below it. If your message takes you from one moment to another, or connects to another moment, then those two moments have become linked, be it through natural history or the meddling of time travellers.

If your message or your ode overwrites other messages or odes, so be it. The first lesson of the time traveller is that even the past is ephemeral.

TIME MACHINE

GUIDE BOOK

*Remote village of farmers and monks
A rending of the earth, fire from the heavens
Survivors scattered and the village destroyed*

U278

A terrible calamity in a Village

Beloved,
A tragedy, undeniably
But sadly inevitable I'm afraid
This place was going to end one way or another
Happening here and now is as fine as any time I guess
Sorry if this comes of as callous
It's been a hard year
Yours, M

Example prompt, ode and letter

5. Travel to another moment. Continue travelling until you hit the time limit or until you think you've reached a natural ending point.

Modes of Play

Time War: Play as agents of far future civilizations fighting over how history will go. Fill your letters with taunts, overtures, betrayal, and the slowly-built respect of enemies and equals.

Lovers Across the Universe: Play as lovers separated by the vagaries of time travel. Fill your letters with hoping, longing, and (of course) love.

You in a Distant Place: Play as yourself in extraordinary circumstances. Fill your letters with your real life, fears, history, and feelings.

Short Term Play: Gather your players and start playing at a specified time. Play for about two hours.

Long Term Play: Create the spreadsheet sheet and backchannel and come by whenever you like and makes a few leaps through time before leaving and returning again later. Let the timeline slowly be filled. Stop playing whenever you like.

Solo Play: Travel through time alone. Write your letters to individuals who will never receive them. Play as long as you like.

Offline Play: Write your odes and letters in a text document or physical journal. To generate prompts, use a standard deck of cards and draw a card for each event.

Use the suit to find the location:

HEARTS a City, Village, Fortress, or Neighborhood

SPADES a Desert, Ocean, Ruin, or Island

DIAMOND a Forest, Farm, Tundra, or Park

CLUBS a Temple, Library, Outpost, or Prison

And use the card's value to find the event:

Ace A pivotal moment, important only in retrospect,

2 A terrible calamity

- 3 The middle of a slow decline
- 4 A busy day
- 5 A private moment
- 6 Construction
- 7 A battlefield
- 8 The calm before the storm
- 9 The early days of something greater
- 10 Something's final end
- Jack** The aftermath
- Queen** A discovery
- King** An unveiling