

GONCHAROV

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GONCHAROV is a larp for 10+ players that explores the experience of being a part of an online community formed around a niche piece of media, with all of the joy, humor, and drama that comes with it.

An Author's Note: The title of this game is referential to a real-world fake piece of media. GONCHAROV is not designed to be played using actual references to the Goncharov internet meme. Though you can if you want to. I'm not your mom.

That new book, game, TV show, and/or movie is just so good, but no one in your life wants to actually watch it! Who are you supposed to talk about this to? How are you supposed to share your theories? And surely someone *has* to see the obvious sexual tension between those two of your favorite characters, right?

Fortunately, you know just what to do: Turn to the internet, where you can always find people that share your obsessions. Except... It's too early. There's not even a fan wiki yet!... Well, who better to start one than you?

SETUP

You Will Need:

- A space to record the fan wiki for the game that all players can view. Ideally, this is a digital space for ease of editing. Suggested spaces include: A shared google doc, a discord server, or an actual fan wiki website. Talk with your group about what players are most comfortable and familiar with using.
- A space for the changelog of the wiki. This can be done using a subsection of the space for the wiki or its own space. This space should be editable by all players.
- One person to act as The Administrator. This person will be responsible for running the game, but will also participate as a distinct character within the community.
- If playing in-person, something to act as name tags for players' screen names.

To start, each person in the game will come up with one detail about the piece of media that the community will be formed around. These details can be a wide range of things, but below are questions to answer that can help guide you during this process. Not all of the questions will be applicable to your game. That's okay! Be creative and build off of one another's answers. Do not, however, give it a name during this step.

- What medium is this media in? (Game, TV Show, Book Series, Movie, etc)
- What genre(s) are being used? Answer this question a maximum of three times.
- Who is the main character? Describe them briefly.
- What goal do the main character(s) have?
- Who is the primary antagonist?
- Who is an important side character?
- Who is the "intended" audience? Remember that oftentimes, this will not describe who actually joins the online community.
- What's something about this piece of media that has caused some controversy?
- What average rating does this piece of media get from review websites a la Rotten Tomatoes or GoodReads?

Once every player has given their details, everyone takes some time to write a Page about their details to add to the Wiki. A description of what a Page constitutes can be found in the **PLAY** section. These Pages will all be added to the Wiki together to constitute the initial **Canon** for the

media. Not everything will be defined yet, and this is intentional: There'll be plenty more to add during play!

Once this step is complete, discuss briefly what the piece of media might be named. Anyone may suggest a name except for The Administrator. Instead, The Administrator has final say on what suggestion is decided upon, and should enforce that this conversation lasts no longer than 5 minutes. As a general rule, The Administrator should choose a name that is well-liked among the players—their final say is meant to avoid indecision.

At any point during the setup process, give your own character a screen name and think about why they found this piece of media so engaging. You don't need to build out a full backstory; this game is about the community as a whole more than it is about any individual.

Finally: Take a few minutes to read through all of the Pages. Imagine this is your first time reading/watching/playing this piece of media. How exciting! Time to get online and talk about it!

PLAY

There are three main aspects to gameplay: Creating A Page, Adding/Editing Fanon, and Community Discussion.

Creating A Page is the core way to add more details about the piece of media the community is formed around. During setup and the first two phases of the game, every player will get the opportunity to create one Page on the shared wiki. (Depending on the format, this could be a Discord text channel, an actual page, or a tab within a google document.) This page should be about something concrete within the piece of media; a character, an important item within the story, or a mechanic of gameplay are all types of things a Page can be made about.

When creating a Page, include plenty of details! What does this character look like? Why is this item important? What system does this mechanic exist within? Everything written on the Page becomes **Canon**. These details cannot be changed once they are submitted to The Administrator. For this reason, please leave out details that are **subjective** during this step of play. ***To create a Page, submit the title of the page alongside the body of the Page to the Changelog, and The Administrator will create the Page.***

Adding/Editing Fanon represents the body of creative work that exists around this piece of media. Interpretations of a character's motivations, popular fanfiction tropes, or advice on how a mechanic impacts strategy are all examples of Fanon. This can be added at any time by any player. ***To add or edit Fanon, submit what you would like to Add/Edit to the Changelog of the Wiki, along with the Page to be Added to or Edited, and The Administrator will apply the changes to the appropriate Page.*** Fanon should be a distinct section, kept separate from the main Page Canon. You **can** edit aspects of Fanon that have been submitted by other

players. This might cause tension within the community, but everyone should see things the way you do!

Community Discussion is happening all of the time! This is the roleplay you do with your fellow players about the piece of media you have created. Talk about your favorite characters, ships, and theories! Develop opinions on what the creators could have done better, or why they're visionaries! Don't be afraid to disagree with someone else's take, even vehemently (With proper roleplay safety!)

Community Discussion ***should not be written down***. This represents the ephemeral nature of such discussions. It will naturally influence Fanon, but you should be spending most of your time roleplaying Community Discussion. After all, the volume of such discussions far outweighs anything that gets preserved on the Wiki.

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Administrator is the role responsible for running the game, as well as actually publishing and editing Pages. Within the community, The Administrator is someone who is associated with the media that the Wiki is being created about; perhaps they're on the publishing team. Perhaps they're the author. Whatever it is, their involvement with the production gave them a justification to have some measure of control over the Fan Wiki, as well as some authority within the community.

The amount of interaction The Administrator has with the community is up to you. Maybe your Administrator is standoffish, only getting involved when needed, or maybe they're mediating disputes between community members every day. It should be noted that playing a highly involved Administrator requires a degree of care. As The Administrator has some amount of power both within the game world and as the game runner, there must be consideration given to not centering the game around yourself. This is a game about community, after all!

GAME PROGRESSION

The game is played in three phases. The first phase comes immediately after setup. During this phase, each player will create one Page, as they did during setup. They will do so one at a time, and each new Page will be announced by The Administrator when it is published. Once everyone has created a Page, the second phase will begin.

This will be marked by The Administrator announcing new content for the media. This can be a new book in a series, a spinoff, a new season of a TV show, a DLC; whatever best fits the situation! After this, players will once again be asked to create Pages one at a time, this time for the new addition to the media. Fanon can still be created for the original Pages, but all new Pages should be for the new content introduced by The Administrator.

Once the second phase has been completed, the game will move on to the final phase. During this phase, no new Pages will be created. Instead, players will have the opportunity to update the Canon on Pages from phase 1 with how the new piece of media has impacted the subject of that Page. As in previous rounds, every player will have one opportunity to edit Canon in this way. Once this is complete, the game comes to a close. As a debrief, allow each player to speak briefly on what aspect of the media that you have created was their favorite.

OPTIONAL RULES

- The Administrator has the ability to adjust the Fanon content that players add to the Wiki. Maybe the Fanon didn't align with the views of the production company, or The Administrator simply didn't like it. Whatever it is, the player who submitted the Fanon should be notified out-of-character that this has occurred.

Discuss with your group beforehand if this is a rule that people are okay with. Friction between people in positions of moderate power and simple community members is often a real part of these communities. However, such conflict may not be the kind of experience your group is looking for when playing this game.

- Particularly in bigger games, The Administrator may get overwhelmed by the requests in the Changelog. If this begins to happen, The Administrator may appoint Moderators from the community to help manage that burden. In doing this, Moderators would take on some of the duties of Adding/Editing Fanon, but **not** Creating Pages. If playing with the first optional rule above, Moderators would then also have the ability to adjust submitted Fanon.
- In a convention environment, you may want to play this game pervasively! If someone asks what's going on, let them know about the game and welcome them to join play. Getting new people invested in your favorite media franchise is a classic part of the experience in these kinds of communities!