

MAKING HISTORY

A WORLD-BUILDING GAME BY ROSE DOCHERTY

Making History is a game about civilisation, hard decisions, and public memory. In this game, players escort a nation through time, from a pre-history settlement to an information nation, creating the society, the history, the technology, the conflicts, and the surrounding world as they go. The game is split into five Eras, which are each defined by the introduction of a revolutionary technology—the Sunlight Era, farming; the Sketch Era, written communication; the Ship Era, ships; the Factory Era, industry; and the Information Era, digital communication—each Era bringing with it the new experiences and difficulties that the nation has to face. Ultimately, however, this is a game about history, and how much it affects a society throughout time, despite how fragile and changeable a concept it is.

THE BASICS

This is a mini-game for any number of players, though keep in mind that it involves a lot of discussion and open creation, so you need a small enough group that agreements can be reached.

It can be played in one long session, though splitting it into one session per Era can create a muddle of memory that mimics the fog of history. Each Era should take 45 minutes—1 hour, depending on how readily you agree and how quickly the creative juices flow.

Gameplay is simple: each Era has a set of cards. Draw cards and follow the instructions on them until you run out, then move on to the next Era. The cards create details about your civilisation, which you record on the Civilisation Sheet. These details should be reached at through group decision-making; make sure everyone has a chance to speak up.

At the end of each Era the group asks themselves a number of questions, then you move on to the next set of cards.

Making History can stand alone as a world-building narrative, or it could be used as world creation for another role-playing game, or even for general writing projects. It's a game designed to mimic the unreliability of history, but it's also a game that stimulates and fosters creativity, and can serve as a guideline for world creation.

GAMEPLAY

THE CIVILISATION

The central component of **Making History** is the creation of a Civilisation. During the game, every action you take will add, edit, or remove a component from the Civilisation Sheet. There are five different components that make up your civilisation; Discoveries, Memories, Economic and Public Conflicts, and Social Groups.

Memories: Memories are events of importance in your civilisation that form the history and culture of your society. They can be moments which bring the nation together or which tear them apart, and can be completely accurate or mired by myth and legend. They are flexible, and will change significantly over the Eras. Real world examples could be America's War of Independence, France's French Revolution, or New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi.

Discoveries: Discoveries are creations, inventions, or uncovered mysteries that make up the knowledge and the technology available to your nation. These can be things created by the nation, or things uncovered by trade or exploration. You can pick these from real-world examples, or make something up completely. Don't be bound by our history and science—go outside the existing world and create something completely new.

COMPONENTS

- 1-4 players (recommended).
- Civilisation Sheet.
- Pencil and eraser (history is impermanent, so always write in pencil).
- The five Era card decks.
- Optional: a map. Not necessary, but can be very helpful in envisioning the world.

Conflicts: Conflicts are any events that cause problems within your civilisation. These are split into **Public**—problems within society, based around the people—and **Economic**—financial problems within the economy—Conflicts. Some cards can add conflicts, while others can resolve them. Conflicts give insight into your leadership style, as well as the culture and views of your populace. Examples of public conflicts could be widespread fear or paranoia, or government dissatisfaction, while examples of economic conflicts could be war, tax-dodging, or loss of a trade partner.

Social Groups: Social Groups are different pockets of your society with their own aims, cultures, and grievances. They define and make up your civilisation, giving it character and culture. Some cards will add new Social Groups, while others will add details or use existing Groups. Social Groups can be religions, organisations, classes, races, businesses, or any other significant part of society.

THE ERAS

SUNLIGHT ERA

You control an agriculture-based settlement with limited technology and no written history. The settlement is small and community-focused, the problems it faces are based mostly around natural dangers, banditry, and tribes settling in the area, and history is carried through cultural practices and word of mouth. Over the period, it will grow and expand, eventually becoming an early city-state.

At the end of the sunlight era:

- The lack of written records makes memory impermanent and difficult for people to trust. Pick two memories and remove them. Pick another memory and change one of the details.
- The growing population obscures individuals and forces people to group together. One of your social groups has disappeared – which one and why?
- Time and advancements of other civilisations has made some of your discoveries obsolete. Pick two discoveries and remove them. Pick another and describe how it has been refined to be more advanced.
- If there are any conflicts left over, these continue into the next Era. One of them has become more significant as time goes on. Describe the impact it's having and add that detail to the conflict.

SKETCH ERA

Written communication has been developed and there is now an official record for history. However, the majority of the population is still illiterate and the economy is still agriculture-based. Over the period, societal culture will develop and diversify, and the city-state will expand into a country.

At the end of the Sketch Era:

- Written records have obscured earlier memories and limited the amount of people who can add to history. Describe the people who make the archives and add them as a social group. Pick two memories that were not included in written records and remove them.
- Over time, two of your social groups have merged to form one distinct community. Remove the separate groups and add the new one, describing how they have changed from the original groups. Another group has been caught up in a long-standing conflict that has ultimately led to its destruction. Remove the social group and any relating memories.
- Natural disasters, internal and external conflict, and human error have led to some of your technology being lost. Pick two of your discoveries and remove them, describing how they were lost.
- If you have conflicts left over, they continue into the next Era. One of your PUBLIC CONFLICTs is mostly forgotten, but it looms in history forever. Add it as a memory.

SHIP ERA

Your land-based country has expanded far enough to reach the sea. The global expanse has opened up to you, providing new opportunities for trade, acquisition, exploration, or perhaps war. Over the Ship Era, your civilisation will grow into a global power, and the economy will greatly expand, merchants and burghers increasing in importance and power.

At the end of the Ship Era:

- The social group that controls the archives decides to edit history. Pick two memories and remove them. Why were these memories repressed? Another one has been changed to support the current leadership. Edit a memory and decide why.
- As communities diversify, parts of them get lost. One of your social groups has changed over the past eras into something completely different. Discuss how it has changed, and edit it under your Social Groups to reflect that. Another social group has simply died out. Pick one and remove it.
- Inefficiency or poor production has led to some discoveries being abandoned. Pick two and remove them, describing why they were left behind.
- If you have conflicts left over, they continue into the next Era. One of the conflicts has been resolved, but at a huge cost. Pick a conflict and remove it, then remove a discovery and a social group and describe how the one destroyed the others.

FACTORY ERA

This is a period of serious economic advancement, when production is expanded and diversified and the economic base changes from agricultural to industrial.

Urban centres become more densely populated and the public sphere has expanded, giving people more ability to comment on the running of the country and more opportunity for civil rights issues to rise. Over the Factory Era, your civilisation will become more urban and more socially aware.

At the end of the Factory Era:

- A recent event has had such national importance that earlier memories have been obscured. Pick two earlier memories and remove them. What other memory overtook them and why is it so important? Add this detail to the memory.
- One of your social groups has become 'integrated' into society, to the point where it has disappeared entirely. Remove it from your social groups and add it as a memory.
- Moral groups have campaigned against some of your discoveries. Who are they and why do they object to the new technology? Either use a current social group or add a new one. Pick two discoveries and remove them, describing why they were seen as so immoral.
- If you have conflicts left over, they continue into the next era. Some have changed as times change. Pick one and describe how it has become more modern. Others have been ignored and discouraged until the populace eventually forgets about them. Remove a PUBLIC CONFLICT and describe why it was forgotten.

ENDING THE GAME

You have moved your civilisation through five eras, changing it from a tiny illiterate settlement to a sprawling nation with its own complicated culture, history, and patchwork of social groups. Looking back through the Civilisation Sheet, take some time to consider and discuss the following:

- Take a look through the memories that you have left. This is the official history of your nation, forming how your nation sees itself today. How much of the earlier eras is left? How many of your memories have been left untarnished? Is this an accurate portrayal of your civilisation?
- Your social groups are equally as important in shaping your nation's culture through the individual cultures of the different people who live there. How many cultures have been preserved? How many have been lost to history? And of those that are still around, how many coexist peacefully, and how many are happy with the civilisation they live in?
- Discoveries, the technology your civilisation produces, determine the kind of economy your civilisation has. According to your discoveries, what kind of technology does your civilization produce? Do you produce a lot of weapons, or are you at the forefront of tech? Has your economy updated with the times?
- The conflicts you have left over will shape the future of your society. Is your civilisation divided by PUBLIC CONFLICT, or drained by ECONOMIC CONFLICT? Is it a society of the brink of collapse, or is it standing strong and united? Do your people love you, or are you heading straight into a revolt?
- Finally, consider your civilisation as a whole. How greatly has it changed or grown over time? How much does it fit what you originally envisioned? If you have a map, look over it and consider the way that the landscape has taken shape, and how much your civilisation has changed the world around it.

Where you go from here is up to you. Feel free to use this civilisation as a starting point for further stories or games, or destroy the civilisation and build another one on top of it, using the bare bones of this civilisation as a point of settlement and starting the game over again.

INFORMATION ERA

This is a period when communication has significantly advanced, allowing information to be available easily and quickly to a wider audience and on a larger scale than ever before. Huge archives of information can be accessed and added to by most of the population. However, the white noise of so much information makes public memory and history harder to verify and identity, and easier for people to manipulate, use, and obscure. Over the Information Era, your leadership style will truly be tested. Information comes at a price, and you must decide for your populace whether or not they're willing to pay.

CIVILISATION SHEET

NAME:

ERA:

MEMORIES:

SOCIAL GROUPS:

DISCOVERIES:

PUBLIC CONFLICTS:

ECONOMIC CONFLICTS: