

WEAVE A
TALE OLDER
THAN THE
HEAVENS
THEMSELVES

*Before
There Were
Stars...*TM

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Before There Were Stars...™



3-6, 10+ 40-60

CONTENTS:



24 Star Dice (12 white, 12 gold)



80 Constellation cards



6 cloth
Offering
Bags



6 Moon tokens



125 Star Point beads:
50 Blue, 50 Yellow, 25 Gold



6 two-sided
Story cards



Optional, but recommended

DOWNLOAD THE FREE COMPANION APP TIMER

Available at Apple iOS AppStore™ or Google Play™ store. Search for *Before there were Stars*. Can also be accessed from most internet browsers at smirkandlaughter.com/BTWS

OR you can use
ANY digital timer.



OBJECT OF THE GAME:

“Before there were Stars...” is a storytelling game where players take turns, telling the mythic story of ‘their people.’ Each player’s story is uniquely their own and is told over the course of four rounds, or Chapters. After each Chapter, players will award Star Points to one another for standout moments of their stories that most connected with them. At the end of the game, the player with the most Star Points is honored as a true lore giver.

SET UP:

Each player takes a Story Card and a cloth Offering Bag of matching colors. Place the Story Card in front of you with the “Myth” side face up. (The other side, “Legend,” provides a different story prompt, for future games. See “Legend” at the back of the rules.) Keep your Offering Bag beside your Story Card, for use at the end of each Chapter.

Shuffle the Constellation cards and place them face down in the middle of the table, forming the Constellations deck.

Download the companion app timer (instructions on previous page) and open the app. Alternatively, you may use any :60 timer. A timer is useful, but not necessary to enjoy the game.

Ask if anyone would like to be the first player or, otherwise, have the owner or host of the game begin as first player. Give the first player 12 Star Dice of the same color. Give the other set of 12 Star Dice to the player seated clockwise from them.

PLAYING THE GAME - OVERVIEW:

“Before there were Stars...” is played over the course of four storytelling rounds, called Chapters. Each Chapter is played in three phases: *Stargazing*, *Storytelling* and *Appreciation*.

1. In the *Stargazing* phase, players take turns rolling the dice and choosing a card from the Constellation row at the center of the table, until each has chosen two cards for the round.
2. In the *Storytelling* phase, players take turns sharing their stories aloud.
3. In the *Appreciation* phase, players privately hand out Star Points to the other players, in appreciation of some aspect of their story.

THE STORY CARD

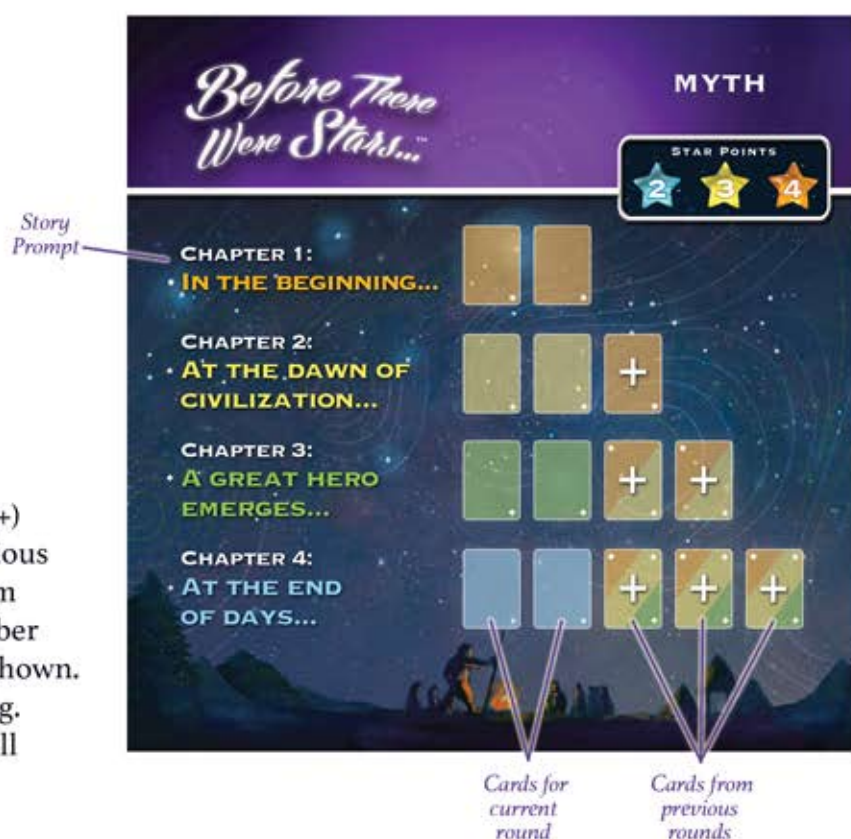
Before we detail each phase, take a look at your Story Card.

You will see that each Chapter has a story prompt, which is simply a guide to help you begin your tale. Each is followed by two card icons of the color matching the prompt. (♦♦♦ provided for color blind players) For example, Chapter 1’s story prompt is “In the Beginning...” and is followed by two orange (♦) card icons.

So, the first Chapter of your story will tell the tale of how the universe began. The two orange card icons let you know that you will be selecting two Constellation cards this round to use as keywords/concepts in your story.

In the following Chapters, notice that you will be selecting two new cards each round. In addition, the card icons marked with a plus sign (+) indicate that you will need to utilize one or more cards from your previous Chapter(s) that round. They are colored to show that you may add them from ANY previous round, as desired. You may use *more* than the number of previous cards indicated, but a player must use *at least* the number shown. This will help your story gel together better, making it more compelling. The better you link all four Chapters of your story, the more players will want to reward you with Star Points.

As you select each Constellation card, your story will start to take shape as you are inspired by the keywords on the cards. Be open to shifting the narrative as you incorporate more keywords. Have fun free-associating and improvising, as you weave each Chapter of your story together.



THE STARGAZING PHASE:

Flip 5 cards face-up from the Constellation deck to form the Constellation Row, at the center of the table, where all players can see them easily.



The first player, and the player seated clockwise of them, each roll all 12 of the dice they were given during Set Up. A player's rolled dice form their 'night sky.'

The first player looks over the available Constellation cards, face up in the Constellation Row, and decides which card(s) has a keyword that they would most like to use in their story this round. Then, they compare the die faces printed on the card to the dice they rolled in their night sky. In order to choose a specific card, a player must be able to exactly match all die faces on the card with ones rolled into the night sky in front of them. It is possible that a player may not have access to all five Constellation cards, including their favorite.



The dice shown would allow either of these cards to be chosen as keywords for your story

If a player either cannot (or does not wish to) choose any of the 5 face-up Constellation cards, they may choose the top card of the Constellation deck as a blind draw. Be aware, however, that a blind draw must be used, regardless of what card was drawn.

When a card is taken from the Constellation row, immediately replace it with a new Constellation card from the top of the deck, so there are always 5 constellations from which to choose.

Once a player has selected a Constellation card, they pass their 12 dice to the next player in line, leapfrogging over the player with the other set of dice. This action signals the player holding the second set of dice to begin choosing their Constellation card.

Play proceeds around the table until every player has chosen two Constellation cards. This ends the Stargazing phase and the remaining face-up cards from the Constellation Row are placed back in the box.

THE STORYTELLING PHASE:

The Constellation cards chosen in the Stargazing phase are used as two primary story elements during the Storytelling phase. A story can take any tone its creator desires. It can be told like a classical myth might be - or it can be funny, spooky and dark, hopeful and joyous, whatever strikes you in the moment. Imagine the type of culture that would have this story as its foundation - and then, just have fun with it.

Starting with the first player, players will take turns telling their story aloud. Before doing so, have the current storyteller take a moment to collect their thoughts and, when ready, they will start the timer (if a timer is being used) and begin their tale.

Example: In Chapter 1, Melodee has chosen the Constellation BOOK and VALLEY. She gets ready, starts the timer and begins, speaking in a voice that all can hear... *“In the Beginning, the All-Mother poured all of her knowledge into a gigantic book, so that she could one day share it with her children. But as all was still void, there was nowhere to raise her family. So, she took the book in hand and opened it at its center. The pages unfurled, forming a great valley, where her children could now grow and prosper.”*

The Timer:

Use of a one-minute timer is highly recommended, but not mandatory. The timer is only intended as a loose guide to keep the game moving forward smoothly. A player does not need to fill the entire minute, nor should anyone feel the need to end abruptly when time runs out. It is only a gentle nudge to start wrapping up.

Using Keywords and Prompts:

The keywords on the Constellation cards and the prompts on the Story Cards are, likewise, guides to help frame your story. Many find it useful to use the actual words printed, but you don’t need to. For example, if the keyword on your Constellation card is “Fox” but you prefer a more poetic phrase like, “A red-headed thief,” you may certainly do so. If a keyword could be interpreted several ways, any interpretation is permitted, regardless of the illustration on the card. The word “Chest,” for example, could be a wooden storage box - or the upper torso of a person. Both are perfectly acceptable. The story prompt, “In the Beginning...” could be replaced with, “Our world started as void...” or any other phrasing you choose. Convey the concepts using any wording you wish.

Being a Good Audience:

During each story, the other players should remain an attentive audience, as all players will be awarding Star Points based on what they’ve heard, during the next phase. (We recommend shutting off or silencing phones and mobile devices in respect for the storytellers)

When all players have told their story for the current Chapter, proceed to the Appreciation phase.

THE APPRECIATION PHASE:

Having enjoyed all the stories, each player now has the chance to award Star Points to the other players. Star points have three values, as shown on the upper right side of your Story Card. Blue is worth 2 points, Yellow is 3 and Gold is the highest at 4 points.



Depending on the number of players, you will have a different number and assortment of Star Point beads to award (but always one less than the number of players, as you do not score yourself).

- 3 players:
- 4 players:
- 5 players:
- 6 players:

To begin the Appreciation phase, hand each player one full set of Star Point beads (listed above) with which to score the current Chapter.

All players then pass their Offering Bags clockwise around the table. Place one Star bead into each player's bag, except your own, scoring them per the guidelines below. If you can't remember whose bag it is, the color of the bag matches the Story Card in front of the player. All players should also keep their Constellation cards in full view, to help remind players of their story.

AWARDING STAR POINTS - Guidelines for Scoring

When you score a player, reward them for a particular aspect of their story that appealed to you.

It is important to remind everyone that you are not necessarily rewarding 'the best performance' or even 'the best story.'

Rather, award your points based on the best story 'moments' you heard that round. Something they said that really struck a chord with you, an image they painted in your mind that you loved, how they connected surprisingly different elements to great effect. Give points for creativity - or for pure enjoyment. If you thought to yourself, "oh, that was cool," during a story, that's a reason to score them well.

When you think about scoring in this way, it will assure that those who are less confident storytellers will not be constantly overshadowed by those who are – and that really good storytellers cannot rely on their performance as much as they may think.

Anyone can have a "great moment" - and every great moment deserves to be recognized.

Once all Star Points have been awarded, the Chapter ends. The player seated clockwise of the 'first player' from the recently ended Chapter becomes the first player for the next Chapter, and begins a new Stargazing phase. Repeat these steps for all Chapters.

THE "OVER THE MOON" TOKEN & ENDING THE GAME:

Once all four Chapters have been completed, there is one last honor to bestow before players may examine the points in their Offering Bags.

Give each player a Moon token.

Starting with the owner of the game (or host), each player will mention one or two favorite 'moments' from the stories they heard. Then, they will tell us their most loved moment of the game, one that truly touched them, made them laugh, or was just a brilliant or beautiful story element and explain why they are 'Over the Moon' about it. Explain why these moments appealed to you. then hand the Moon token to the corresponding player. Moon tokens are worth just one bonus Star point – but the act of giving and receiving them is worth far more.



Players may now empty their offering bags to discover their scores, honoring the top scorer as **Master Lore Giver**.



OPTIONAL RULE:

You Are Made of Starstuff: Occasionally, you will see a path that is closed off to another storyteller because their stars don't align, making it impossible to bring a much-wanted keyword into their story. If you feel moved to offer them a single die from your night sky of dice, so they can use that Constellation card in their tale, you may do so. But such a gift is precious and rare, so players may only do so once per game. Additionally, such a boon cannot be requested, only offered with a glad heart. As the die you give them is removed from your night sky, the universe provides you a peek into the future to recognize your good deed. After the Constellation Row is refilled, you may look at the top card of the Constellation deck, giving you 6 known possibilities to choose from on your turn.

NEW STORIES TO TELL:

With so many cards and the limitless creativity of players, you will never run out of unique tales to tell - but, we have provided an additional story prompt on the reverse side of your Story Card, the **LEGEND**. It is recommended for players who have already played the game, as some players may find it a more challenging story to craft.

As before, the LEGEND encourages players to create compelling stories about beginnings and origins, but this time, the origin of a specific thing. Why do we have autumn? How did we first gain mastery over fire? How did the Arctic Fox lose his color? The Legends you create explain how-and-why things are, as they are, in the world.

The game is played very much like the MYTH you told in previous games, but the story prompt structure is different. Instead of four mini-stories linked together, the Legend is one story, told in three parts. Take a look at the Story Card, as we add some detail to further explain each prompt.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Players will roll dice and choose Constellation cards, as they did previously, but instead of two cards, players will take turns until they have selected three Constellation cards. One of these cards will be used as the Legend itself, represented by the green card icon and it will become the subject of your story, while the other two cards, shown in orange, help begin the tale. Think of Chapter 1 as the *Introduction* of the characters and their predicament.

Chapter 2: Complications and Cliffhanger

The subject of your story remains the same (the green card). Players will roll their night sky and select another three cards (yellow). This is where things get really interesting and unforeseen circumstances make things more complicated for your hero(es) - and it ends on a cliff hanger, where things are put in motion for the big finish.

Chapter 3: Resolution and the Lesson

Here, you may tell the epic resolution to the story, letting the audience know what happened in the end. This time, you will only be rolling dice and selecting two new Constellation cards. At the very end of your story, it is time to wrap up. You are a wise teacher, as well as a storyteller, and here is where you make it clear to your audience

why we tell this legend, and that all they just heard is the very explanation for why things are as they are in the world.

"And ever since that day, Artic Foxes have had white fur, their bright red coat drained of color by fear, but made safe from predators evermore."



COMPARATIVE TALES: Storytellers from cultures around the globe explained our world in vastly different ways. The story of the setting sun and the rising moon is a common theme, but with wonderfully unique stories that can be compared and contrasted. So now, try telling the Legend of a common constellation, but from the perspective of different peoples. Ignore the green card icons on the story prompt. Instead, deal each player 5 Constellation cards. Have each player choose one, as the Legend they would like to tell. Collect and shuffle these cards, drawing one at random as the Legend that everyone will tell the story of. Then continue as normal, rolling and selecting (orange) cards for Chapter 1. See how different each storyteller's vision of the same Legend can be.

Before There Were Stars...™



FIND MORE:

We hope you've enjoyed playing this game every bit as much as we did creating it for you. But it doesn't have to end here. We are already planning new, themed story sets for the future, to bring all-new tales to your table. Plus, look for additional story prompts you can download on our website at SmirkandLaughter.com or at DrivethruRPG.com

SHARE YOUR STORY:

Remember, stories are for sharing. We'd love to hear your amazing tales, so visit us on Facebook and share one of your inspired bits of storytelling with our community. We ALL LOVE a good story. Tell us yours.



facebook.com/smirkanddagger

ARE YOU A TEACHER?

Mythology, oral traditions and creative storytelling are at the very center of many Social Study and English programs. And there is no better teacher than experience -- or rather, a teacher armed with a fun and engaging experience that can bring the subject matter to life. Well, we're already a step ahead of you and have worked with education professionals to develop common core lesson plans for both English and Social Studies. Find out more and download the materials at SmirkandLaughter.com

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Printed by Lijia Game Production Co., Ltd.

S&D 1002

