

# Bedlam Gatewoods

by  
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## Bedlam Gatewoods

Consisting of nineteen ink drawings and scan QR codes that lead to interactive audio, Bedlam Gatewoods encourages the viewer to experience a fictional fantasy world of interesting settings and characters. This project holds a special place in my heart, as it is something that I have worked on since middle school . Ever since I was little, I loved storytelling. Storytelling along with the skills of worldbuilding and character creation hold a sense of power and comfort. The idea that I can construct a whole separate world with a variety of new characters from just the creativity of my mind is still something that fascinates me to this day. I often use storytelling to show appreciation for my interests and those I care about. With my project, my art presents the fictional world of Bedlam Gatewoods, taking inspiration from mythology and folklore, I focus on the development of the three characters Amoli Naakari the naga, Aengus O'Shaughnessy the dullahan, and Raven Anemoi-Ba the siren in a way that goes beyond pages of an average book.

When people think of a story, many think of the standard plot outline; beginning and end with events in between. However, this structure can appear limited, as stories don't always have an end and are often never truly linear. My project's presentation depicts a nonlinear, ever-growing story, analogous to the structure of a tree. While the dimension tree is actually drawn out, the pictures within the project take formation of something reminiscent of tree branches. This brings attention to the importance of the dimension tree in the story and enforces a free-flowing narrative. This freeform format is also supported by the placement of the four scan QR codes, each which connects the viewer to an audio clip which provides bits of information on the narrative history and insights about the characters. With an absence of a strict structure, the

viewer has control of their experience of Bedlam Gatewoods. The viewer can choose which pictures to focus on, which audio clip to listen to first or how many they listen to. Through this interactive process, the viewer becomes a part of Bedlam Gatewoods in a way that a book couldn't achieve.

Another way that Bedlam Gatewoods breaks the structure of a linear format is through using nonstandard dimensions of paper. Some are bigger than others, some can fit in a note book, two even take form of triangles. This breaks the cookie-cutter rectangular pages of most books, there is a push for non-conformity. This lack of similarity in shape and size gives variety in the scenes portrayed and gives the viewer the chance to take in the story that is provided to them. Along with the tree arrangement, the shaped drawings function as an aid to direct the viewer to an upwards direction, enforcing the continuing expansion of the story. This directional flow is especially noticeable in the triangular drawings of the project.

Focusing on the visual component of Bedlam Gatewoods, one line of inquiry that I followed was "What information do I show about my characters and their world and how do I show that"? I categorized the type of subject matter that helps focus on character development: cherished objects, interpersonal connections with each character, and what each character does when alone. With Amoli, I focused on her friendly, bubbly personality and her interest in magic. Two of the drawings surrounding her portrait include her participating in both paganistic and Hindu rituals. One of the pieces that give insight into her purple grimoire, which alludes to her spirituality, knowledge of spells, and rituals. Throughout the other drawings that include her, she is always seen smiling, highlighting her friendliness and optimistic nature.

While Raven is also drawn with a smile, hers is more devilish and carefree. I wanted to show Raven's confidence and her rebellious fun-loving nature. An example of this is when

Raven is drawn climbing up the Dimension Tree, a tree that is considered sacred in Bedlam Gatewoods. In drawings where Raven is with others, her demeanor has a hint of swagger. There are drawings that show her ability to transform between a feathery humanoid to a birdlike creature; showing that her confidence stays in both forms. Jewelry is something that holds significance to Raven's character. Two drawings that show this interest are the portrait of a younger Raven with all sorts of jewelry and a drawing of her jewelry box. The jewelry emphasized with color, giving the object importance.

Aengus is a contrast to Raven and Amoli due to her reserved and withdrawn nature. Many drawings of her are of her alone in the forest. The only group of people she is shown to be around are Amoli and Raven. With Aengus' character, I wanted to allude to Aengus once being human. This was discreetly portrayed in her object centered portrait of her silver locket of her human parents being blocked off by various items. This creates a complicated composition, many of the items are not identifiable at first glance and thus takes a while for viewers to realize what is going on.

For many of the drawings, I tried to balance between scenes that the viewer can enter and scenes where the viewer acts as an outsider. In order to do this, I used an asymmetrical linear perspective leaving space for the viewer to enter. An example of this is the horizontal picture frame of Amoli, Aengus and Raven playing videogames. The composition clusters the characters on the left side leaving a large part of the composition fairly open. The viewer visualize themselves in the room with the characters and gather information from the setting that wouldn't be noticeable at first glance; the chair with clothes on it, Amoli's t shirt that says spicy mama, the roommate of the month board, and the Blood Moon poster. These little snippets of information help paint a better description of what their home life is like: a comical slightly messy yet

functional living situation. In other pictures such as the three that showed the characters' prized possessions I use a flat picture plain. The backgrounds are blocked off by a dark shade of gray or black to contrast the objects shown. This balance is done to diversify the information that the viewer can access. Too many open spaces would turn the viewer into an invader, and too many flat picture plains would guard off the viewer completely. This variety encourages viewers to maintain interest in Bedlam Gatewoods without overstepping boundaries.

I rendered the project in a medium that I am most comfortable with, pen and ink with minimal touches of color created with oil pastels. The fluidity of ink gives the visual portion the aesthetic of illustrations of William Blake. I was always interested in the whimsical journal-like art of Blake's paintings. One of Blake's works that come to mind are his watercolor paintings of *The Book of Job*. He has a similar color palette to the pictures from Bedlam Gatewoods; mostly black and white with a slight amount of color.

The color of the oil pastels typically act as a contrast to the black, gray, and white of ink. There are exceptions where the color both brings attention to certain objects within the picture or represents something. In the picture of Amoli's grimoire, the viewer can see two of the open pages, one providing information of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music and art and drawings of objects associated with her. The color yellow represents this goddess and is shown throughout the picture.

The audio component of this project consists of four audio clips. Three of them are a little over a minute, with the fourth one being almost five minutes. The first is an introduction to the project. The second focuses on the dimension tree and its importance to the community. The third focuses on the town of Bedlam Gatewoods and the last audio clip gives insight to the characters of Amoli Naakari, Raven Anemoui-Ba, and Aengus O'Shaughnessy. The audio

component is crucial to the project; each audio clip helps to demystify the visual component of the project.

The inspiration for Bedlam Gatewoods derive from many podcasts and educational videos that discuss mythology and folklore from various cultures. I was first introduced to Irish mythology by a YouTube channel known as Overly Sarcastic Productions in their videos discussing the mythology of Cú Chulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhail. I started searching up Irish mythology, where I was introduced to the Irish dullahan, the creature that Aengus is based on, which introduced me to Indian mythology, the tales of Krishna and the Mahabharata, an epic from ancient India about the Kurukshetra War. Other channels include Aloreing by Kimberly Hammons and Ryan Huskins, Myths and Legends by Jason and Carissa Weiser and Stories with Sapphire by Sapphire Sandalo. The open access to all these sources taught me about the other types of narrative that exist. Though many of these are written in a linear structure, the stories themselves go beyond the finish of a book. There can be many variations for a single story. They adapt and are constantly growing throughout the years like Bedlam Gatewoods.

The Bedlam Gatewoods project is close to my heart. I want to continue to work on the story and character development, introducing more characters to really make Bedlam Gatewoods whole. Eventually, I see the initial project transforming into a graphic novel in which I will continue to utilize the world building techniques that I've learned while developing this project. More specifically, I want to continue to work with a diverse picture plane and experiment on how a story can be presented to push the idea of a nonlinear narrative. The beauty of storytelling is the creativity that comes along with it, and how to tell the story shouldn't be limited.

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Exhibition Images



*Bedlam Gatewoods*, pen and ink and oil pastel, approximately 60” x 48’, Spring 2022



*Summoning*, pen and ink and oil pastel, 7.5" x 7.5", Spring 2022



*Grimoire*, pen and ink and oil pastel, approximately 9" x 8", Spring 2022



*The Trio and The Dimension Tree*, pen and ink and oil pastel, 17" x 19", Spring 2022



*An Old Memory*, pen and ink and oil pastel, 8" x 9", Spring 2022



*The Anemoi-Ba Jewelry Box*, pen and ink and oil pastel, 7.5" x 9", Spring 2022



*Secret Silver Locket*, pen and ink, oil pastel and sketching crayon, 11" x 7", Spring 2022



*Video Games*, pen and ink and oil pastel, 14" x 7", Spring 2022