I love multiplayer games. Very little beats the feeling of taking on real people and working with real people in a game. People provide much less predictable challenges than computer driven opponents.

One thing that many multiplayer games miss is a good story. This isn't always true, but the deepest narrative experiences tend to be single player only. Think about games such as Walking Dead, 80 Days, Heavy Rain, Her Story etc. Each of this offers a deep story, but on the surface seems to offer nothing that resembles multiplayer elements.

However, this is changing and in a really subtle but excellent way.

Games designers have realised that bringing social groups together in games, creating a level of relatedness, does not require people to be in the game together at the same time. What they need is a mechanism for *Social Comparison.*

My two favourite examples of this come from 80 Days and Telltale's Batman.

80 Days

In 80 Days (if you have not played it, get it now – then come back...), you play Phileas Fogg's trusty valet, Jean Passepartout. The game has you choosing routes around the world, country by country, trading and negotiating your way through some of the best story writing I have ever seen. It is a very personal and solo experience, which brings us to the question. How can they make that feel social? The answer is simple and genius in equal measure.

As you plot your route, you have access to a global map. However, if you look you will see there are lots of icons on the map, that are not you. Tapping one of them will reveal that these are other players who are currently travelling around the world, experience their own unique story. You can see their route so far and some information about how many countries they have visited and for how long they have been travelling. What starts as a solo experience suddenly feels less lonely s you realise others are doing the same thing as you. It is subtle

but very powerful!

80 Days Multiplayer

Telltale's Batman

Telltale's Batman tells a story of a more detective focused caped crusader as he tries to discover just what the hell is going on in Gotham. Working as a Choose Your Own Adventure, you have to decide which responses will work best for any given conversation or situation. Some of these choices hold more significance to the story than others and this is where the solo experience can become a social one.

At the end of the chapter, you are given a breakdown of your most important decision – compared to how other players have responded. Oh, you chose to punch him in the face? Well, it turns out only 20% of players made the same choice!
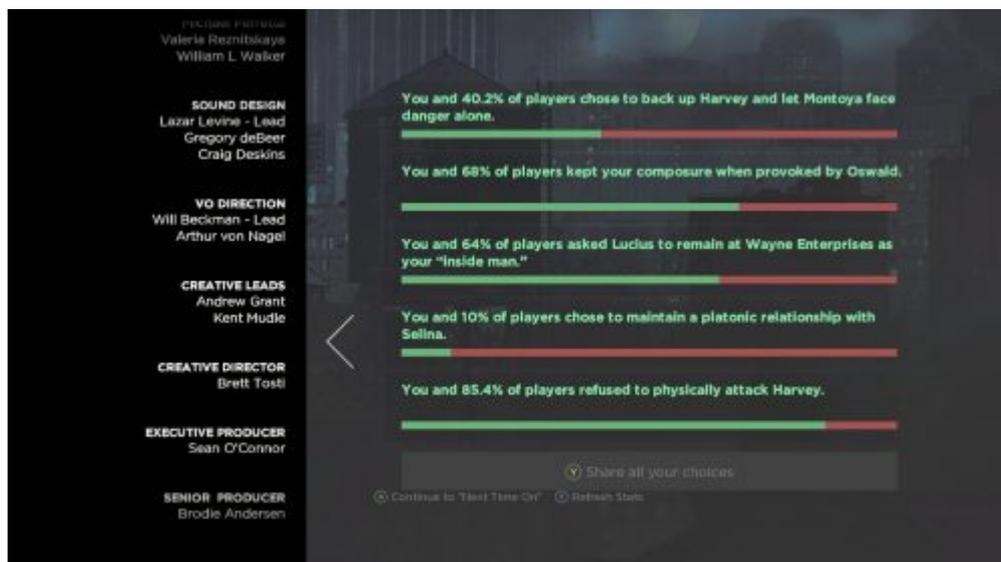
Batman: Decisions Matter

It doesn't stop there. In an attempt to make narrative games team events, they included a local multiplayer option called *Crowd Play.* In this mode, up to twelve people can sit around the screen and vote on what option to take. The game follows the will of the crowd!
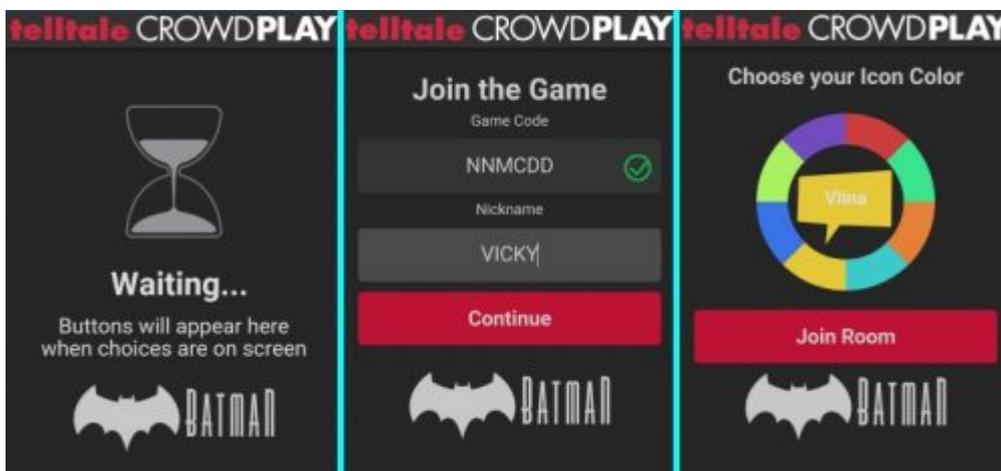
Batman: Crowdplay

Whilst it may not seem obvious how to make multiplayer experiences from solo games, it is not impossible! Let me know what examples you have seen where this has been done really well, where the multiplayer experience may not even affect the game, but it still adds that social element that is so often needed to feel that you are not alone!

Speaking of relatedness, I thought I would end on a cute note. Here is a video of me and my

daughter, Olivia, doing a little duet!

Also published on [Medium](#).

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