
Somethin' Fishy
The Rulebook

Beneath the shimmering waves of the ocean lie five underwater cities: Coralossis, Blueshore, Marisyn, Triton's Keep, and Kelpport. Each of these cities is home to various groups of underwater people, who have developed their own unique cultures, histories, and ways of life not unlike our own. The 5 cities have evolved complex economies, and follow democratic principles, ensuring all voices are listened to and respected.

But not all is peaceful beneath the waves. In the quietest corners of the abyss, whispers have begun to spread. There have always been forms of inequality among the denizens of the cities, and now more and more rumours are being spread that the explanations by the mainstream media are not to be trusted. Gradually, unsettling conspiracy theories are coming up, disturbing the peace and threatening to overthrow those who rule these aquatic domains.

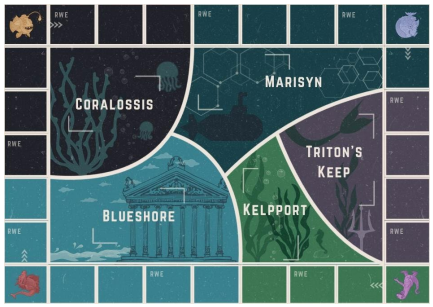
Introduction & Objective of the Game

Somethin' Fishy is a game about conspiracy theories and is designed to teach players about the dynamics of manipulation. In this game, 2-4 groups of conspiracy theorists are all trying to be the first to dominate the minds of an underwater civilization. For more information about these groups, see the Narrative section.

The game mechanics are based on a framework from Professor Howard Gardner's book 'Changing Minds', in which he points out 7 factors that each begin with 'Re' (Reason, Research, Resonance, Real World Events, Redescriptions, Rewards and Resistance), that can be used to understand how 'mind changing' works.
In Somethin' Fishy this has been adapted so that the various groups mainly use Reason, Research and Resonance to try and overcome the Resistances of the city populations, aided by Redescriptions and Rewards, while Real World Events (RWE) happen that may further help or hinder the groups' attempts at manipulating the masses.

Component Overview

Game Board
The Game Board features 4 starting squares in each of the corners, as well as regular and RWE squares. There are also 5 City areas in the middle of the board.



Real World Event Cards
These cards describe events happening in the world which affect the players or the cities positively or negatively. They must be read out loud and affect the game immediately.

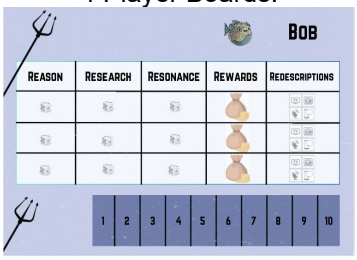
Player Boards
The Player Boards help the players to keep track of their narrative development through so-called Power Dice, Reward Tokens and Redescription Tokens. These represent the effort, time, and money, as well as the access to media that their group is putting into developing and spreading their conspiratorial beliefs. At the bottom of each Player Board is a 'City Influence Tracker' through which each player can keep track of how much influence they have over one or more cities, by using a city's City Influence Token.

City Cards
City cards have a Logic level, an Education level and an Emotional Intelligence level. These levels combine to indicate a city's Resistance level. Plus and Minus tokens raise or lower these levels and are placed in the empty spaces on the cards.

Game Components

1 Rulebook
1 Game Board
12 Real World Event Cards
8 City Cards
36 Power Dice (not supplied)
1 Main Die (not supplied)
4 Character Pieces:

4 Player Boards:



12 Reward Tokens:

12 Redescription Tokens:

10 City Influence Tokens:

18 Minus Tokens:

18 Plus Tokens:

Game Setup

A) Set the main board in the center of the table.
B) Each player chooses one of the Character Pieces and takes their matching Player Board, as well as 9 Power Dice.
C) Place 1 Power Die on the 1st level of Reason, another 1 for Research and another 1 for Resonance on each player's Player Board.
D) Place the Main Die within easy reach of all players.
E) Shuffle the Cards into a face-down deck, placed within easy reach of all players.
F) Shuffle or choose 5 City Cards and place 1 upside down, 1 for each of the City areas on the Game Board. You can increase or decrease the difficulty of the game by choosing cards with a higher or lower resistance level.

Gameplay

After reviewing your game components and setting them up, you are ready to play. Players will take their turns in clockwise order, starting with whoever rolls the Main Die the highest.

On Your Turn

When it is your turn, start by **moving** around the board using the Main Die;
After moving you may choose to do any 1 of the following *activities*:

1. Actively try to **manipulate a city**'s population to adopt your narrative
2. **Spread rumours** among the population of a city

3. **Organise gatherings** in a city
4. **Host a rally** in a city

Movement & RWE Cards

Most squares are neutral and nothing happens when landing on them. If you land on an RWE (Real World Event) square, you must draw a Real World Event card from the top of the draw pile. When you draw a Real World Event card, read its italicized text aloud and then follow the instructions. Place the card face down on a discard pile next to the other cards. When all the cards have been played and discarded, shuffle them and continue playing.

After landing on an RWE square your turn ends. When a player lands on their starting square, they gain +1 Rewards.

When a player passes their starting square, they gain +1 Redescriptions.

Activities

Manipulating a City

This is the main action for players, as the aim of the game is to get as many cities as possible to adopt your groups' belief system. This is done by changing the minds of people through a clever combination of Reasoning, backed by Research, in a way that Resonates, sometimes backed by Rewards, and through many different Redescriptions. Real World Events can help or hinder your progress.

A player may attempt to manipulate a city after landing on a square with the same colour as that city. This is done by rolling your group's Reason, Research and Resonance dice and matching or rolling higher than the city's Resistance level. The Resistance level is the combination of the city's Logic level, together with the Education level and Emotional Maturity level. The combination of your Reason, Research and Resonance dice is called the Manipulation Score.

If you have Reward Tokens on your Player Board you may add up the number of Reward Tokens to your Manipulation Score. However, when a Reward Token is used it must be discarded. Similarly, if you have Redescription Tokens on your Player Board, you may re-roll your Reason dice as many times as you have Redescription Tokens. However, they too may only be used once.

Successfully manipulating a city means you place the City's Token on the first point of your City Influence Tracker on your Player Board. You also gain +1 reward and +1 redescriptions to represent the gain in additional resources.

Spreading rumours, organising gatherings, and hosting rallies

After landing on a square, instead of attempting to manipulate the city, you may choose to either spread rumours among the population, organise gatherings, or host a rally. These all work in similar ways; spreading rumours means you challenge the city's Logic level against your Reason level, which is done by rolling your Reason di(c)e and matching or rolling higher than the city's current Resistance level. If successful, you must place a Minus token on the city in question to indicate that the city's Resistance level has been decreased. If unsuccessful, nothing happens and your turn ends.

By spreading rumours in cities players can slowly wear down the resistance level of a city, making it easier to adopt alternative narratives about reality. However, rumours alone cannot convince entire populations to change their beliefs. Therefore, a city can only ever have a *maximum of 3 Minus tokens*.

Keeping control of a City

Once a city has been manipulated it means you are in control of it. You keep track of which city you control by using the City Tokens. Controlling a city does not mean that it is in your power forever however, as other players can manipulate the city into their control. However, the longer you remain in control, the more difficult it becomes for other players to manipulate it. This represents how conspiracy theorists tend to become more and more entrenched in their beliefs over time. Players keep track of this by using the City Influence Tracker on the bottom of their Player Boards.

End of the Game

The game ends when one of the Players controls 3 or more of the cities, OR after 10 rounds, in which case the winner is the player who controls the most cities. In the event of a draw, none of the players win, meaning the conspiracy theories failed to convince enough people to upset society.

Credits & Additional Resources

Game Design
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Narrative
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Narrative

4 Groups of Conspiracy Theorists

There are four groups responsible for these conspiracies, each with their own leader, pursuing their own agenda and reasons to take power over the five cities.

1. Ethan & The Kraken

   Symbol: The Kraken's tentacle
   Characteristics: Ethan considers himself an intelligent, morally superior religious prophet of The Kraken.
   Belief: Ethan and his followers believe that a long time ago a God-like being called The Kraken dominated the oceans. In those days, sea serpents such as Ethan were given divine right to rule over all the other denizens of the underwater world. It was an era of peace and prosperity (at least for some). Unlike today, where new technologies and progressive policies are 'devastating' the daily life of the people, and the world is divided and filled with violence, physical and moral debauchery. Ethan and his followers believe that there are signs… perhaps the death of a politician, maybe the sudden destruction of one of the cities by something from above… indicating that the end times are at hand! Ethan and his followers must be given control over all the cities because only they can calm down The Kraken and restore peace and prosperity!

2. Shadow & The Shroud

   Symbol: Light bulb
   Characteristics: Shadow is a bit unhinged and messy but completely obsessed with revealing the truth!
   Belief: Shadow and her friends believe there is a Deep Sea State, which is secretly controlling the 5 cities, unfairly keeping the elite in power while they are left powerless and stuck in their messy life. They find clues in random symbols and connect dots everywhere (even where there are no connections). To them it gives a sense of purpose and meaning, even though they neglect the responsibilities in their real life. Shadow sees herself as being morally superior to everyone else because she 'does her own research'.

3. Locha & The Seekers

   Symbol: A big foot
   Characteristics: Locha is a sweet but gullible creature, and looks like a hybrid between a mythical sea serpent and a fairytale humanoid from the forest, but is actually a rare deep sea salamander.
   Belief: According to Locha and their friends, they started as harmless investigators of unusual things, like mysterious lights, unexplained changes in the currents, bizarre artifacts and so on. At some point they started a podcast service (led by their friend Nemo) to discuss their findings. It became a hit and attracted many more seekers. Gradually different thoughts came together and developed into a belief that mysterious beings they call 'Sharkin' (half-shark and half-dolphin), are coming from the deepest depths of the oceans where no one dares to go. No one knows if they are peaceful or evil, but Locha and their friends are determined to let everyone know about them so action will finally be taken!

4. Bob & The Huff-and-Puffers

   Symbol: Pitchfork
   Characteristics: Bob is just a simple, spiky fish who wants the simple sea life. He can get very mad though when he feels disrespected.
   Belief: Bob was never political, but after he lost his job at the fishstick factory for drinking at the assembly line, and was replaced by a lobster, he couldn't take it anymore. After binge watching FinNews and getting drunk again, Bob started huffing and puffing to his friends and eventually started a populist movement of angry pufferfish. Their stories may differ in the details, but they all feel neglected and unheard by the rulers of the cities. Some of them also believe that the status quo is locking up young guppies in cages and are performing rituals on them to drain their blood so they can stay in power forever. Bob and the Huff-and-Puffers believe crustaceans and turtles are to blame for their lack of jobs, and Bob especially hates lobsters..