

# LINEAR STORY FLOWS

## Symbol Legend



Starting point for the story.  
There is only an out path from a start.



Story moment with no interactivity.  
(e.g.: movie cut-scenes, exposition text passages)  
There is only one in and out path from an event.



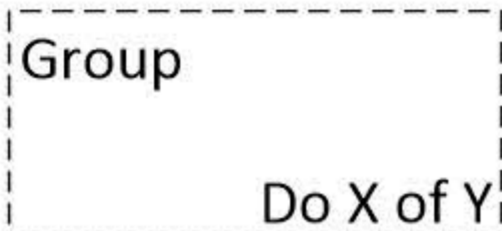
Players must make a choice that determines story flow.  
There is one way in, but multiple paths out from a choice.



Represent a cluster of events and choices.  
Diagram shortcut that illustrates meta narrative structure.  
There are multiple ways in and out from a cluster.



Sometimes a user-interface offers players a choice for where they want the story to go next.  
The example used is of a map screen where every location is linked to every known location in the game.

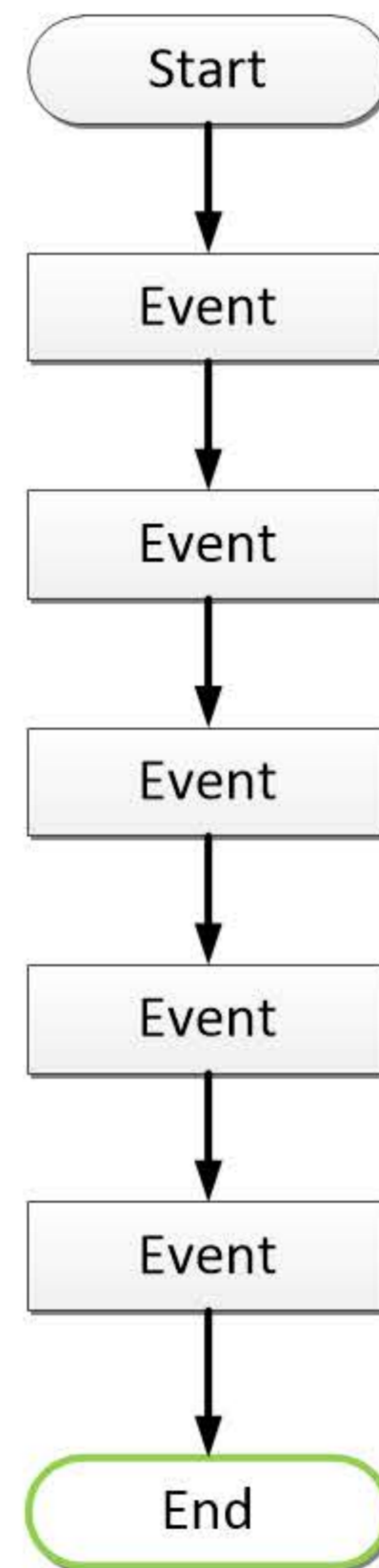


Groups a series of events/tasks where completing a specific number will then unlock another series of tasks.  
There can be multiple ways to unlock a group, and may lead to other groups that become unlocked.



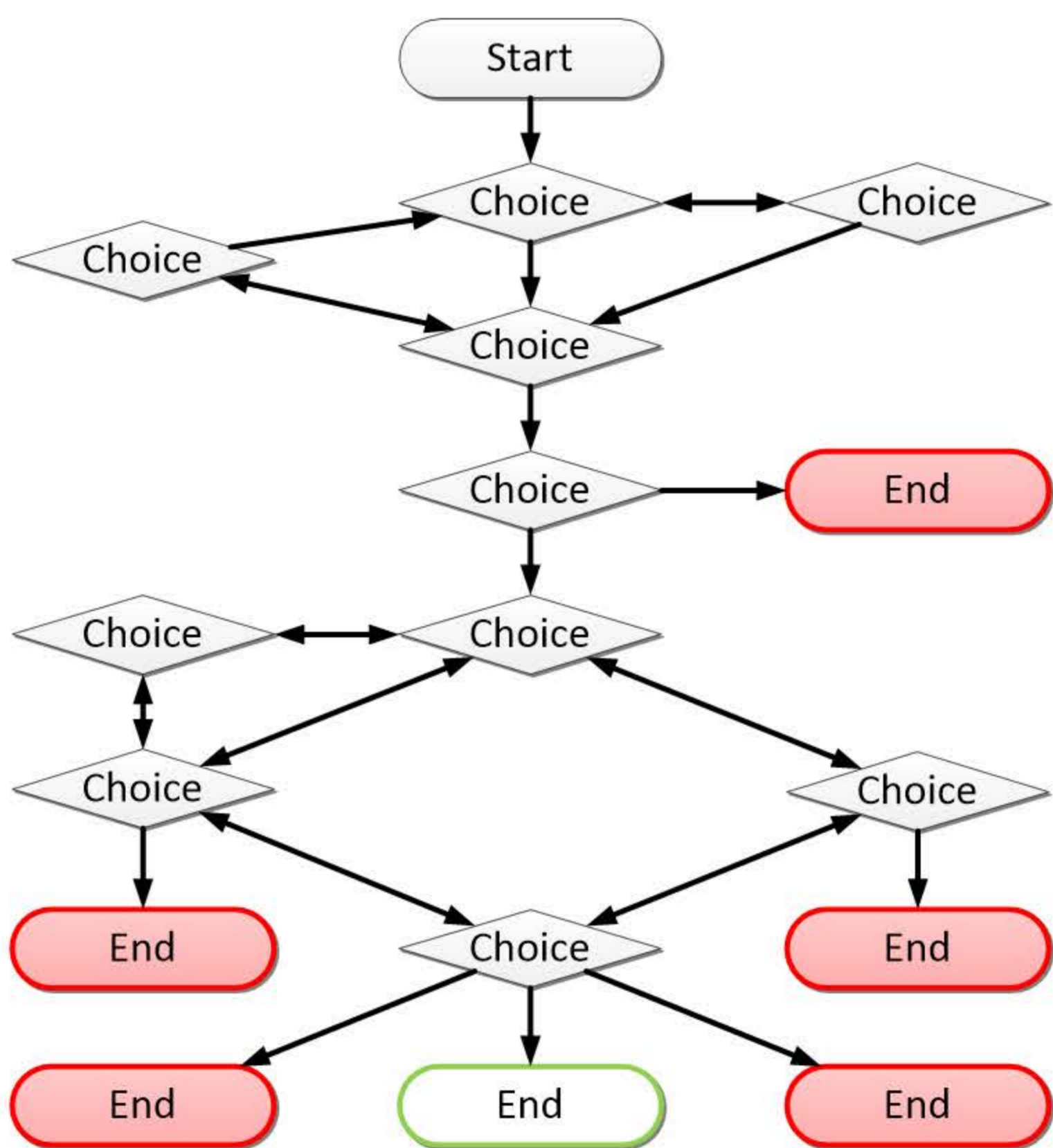
Ending point of the story.  
Represents an preferred (green) or incomplete (red) ending for the story.  
There is only one way into an ending.

## Traditional Media



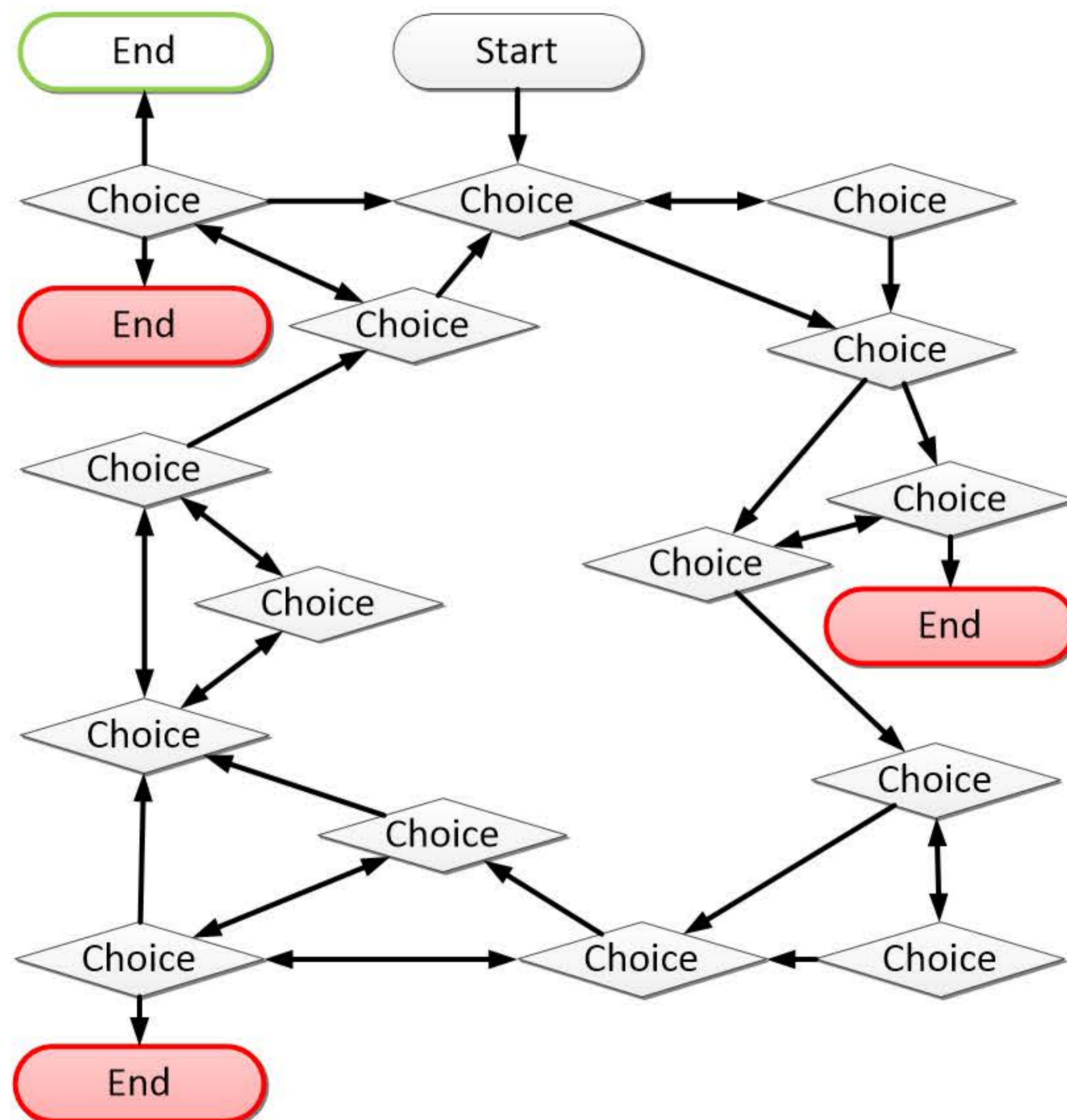
Completely passive with no element of choice.  
Linear progression from start to finish.

## Gauntlet



Main central thread with choices that tend to fold back into main story line.  
Tends to be a constrained story path where the world is dangerous or challenging.  
Gauntlets have two varieties: deadly - going off the path ends the story, or friendly - main path can be rejoined with later choices.

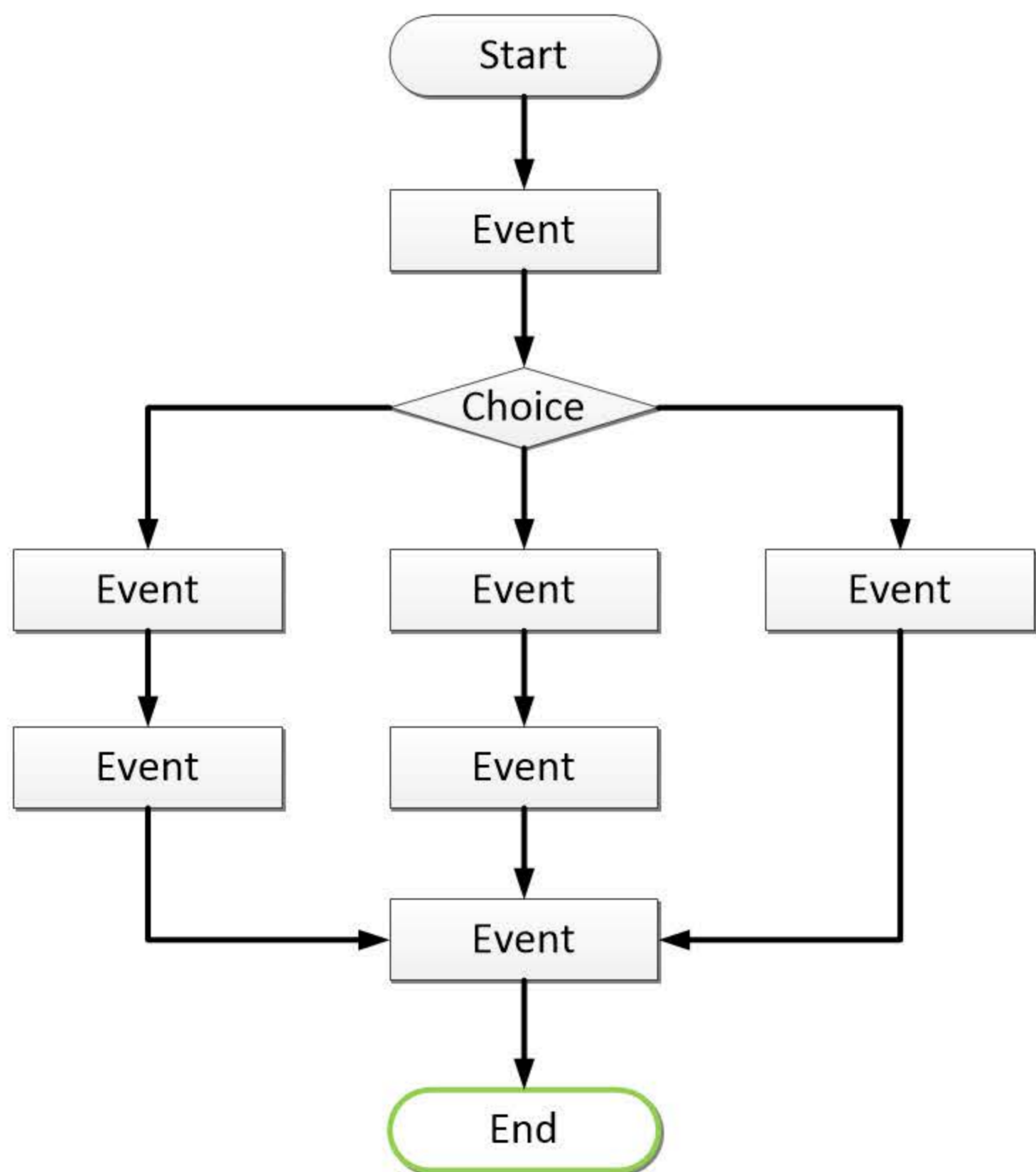
## Loop



Story has a central path that loops back on itself.  
Key choices only go forward, and do not let players to go backwards in the loop.  
Examples: Majora's Mask, Groundhog Day, & Training Simulations

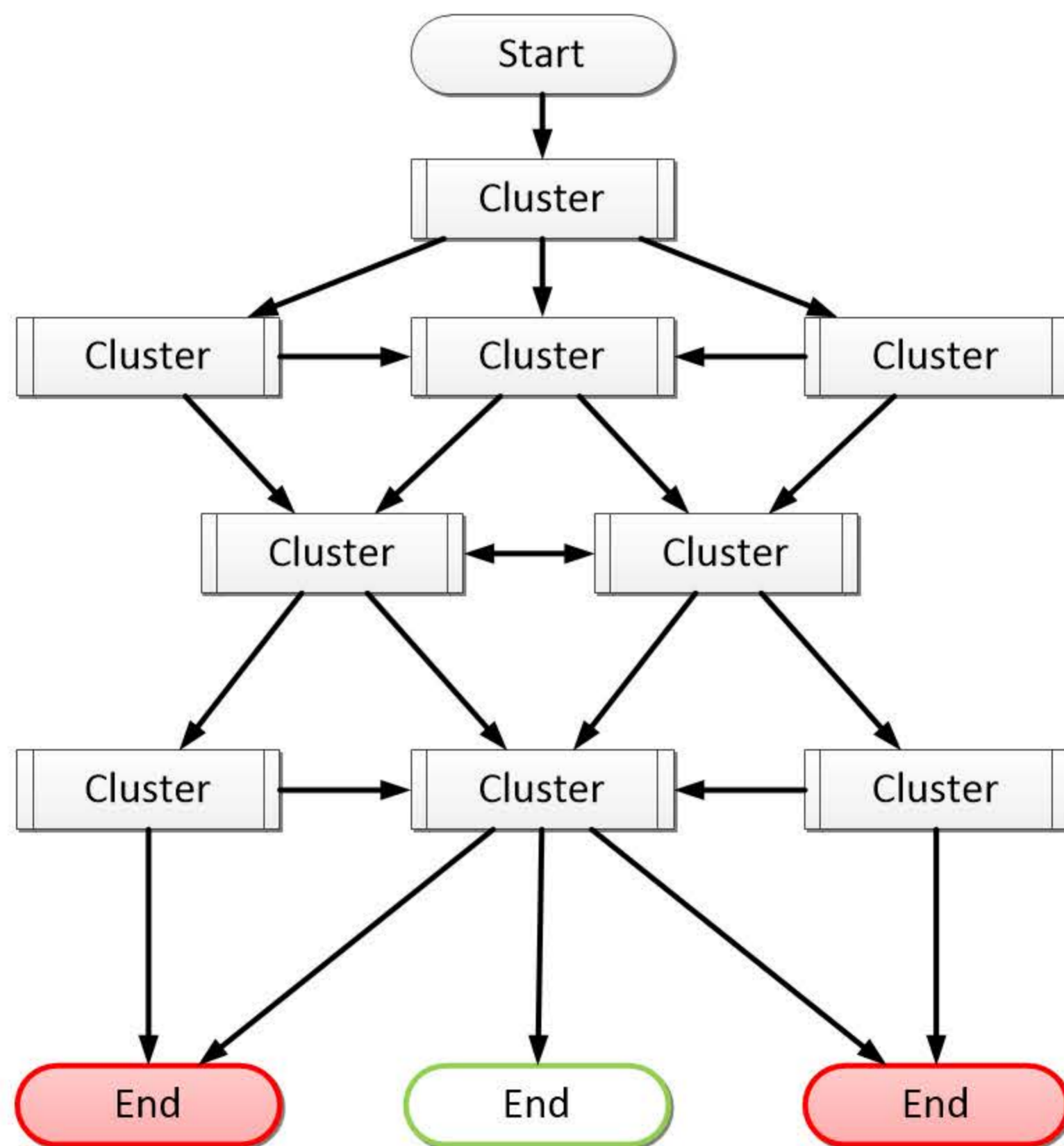
# BRANCHING STORY FLOWS

## Railroad



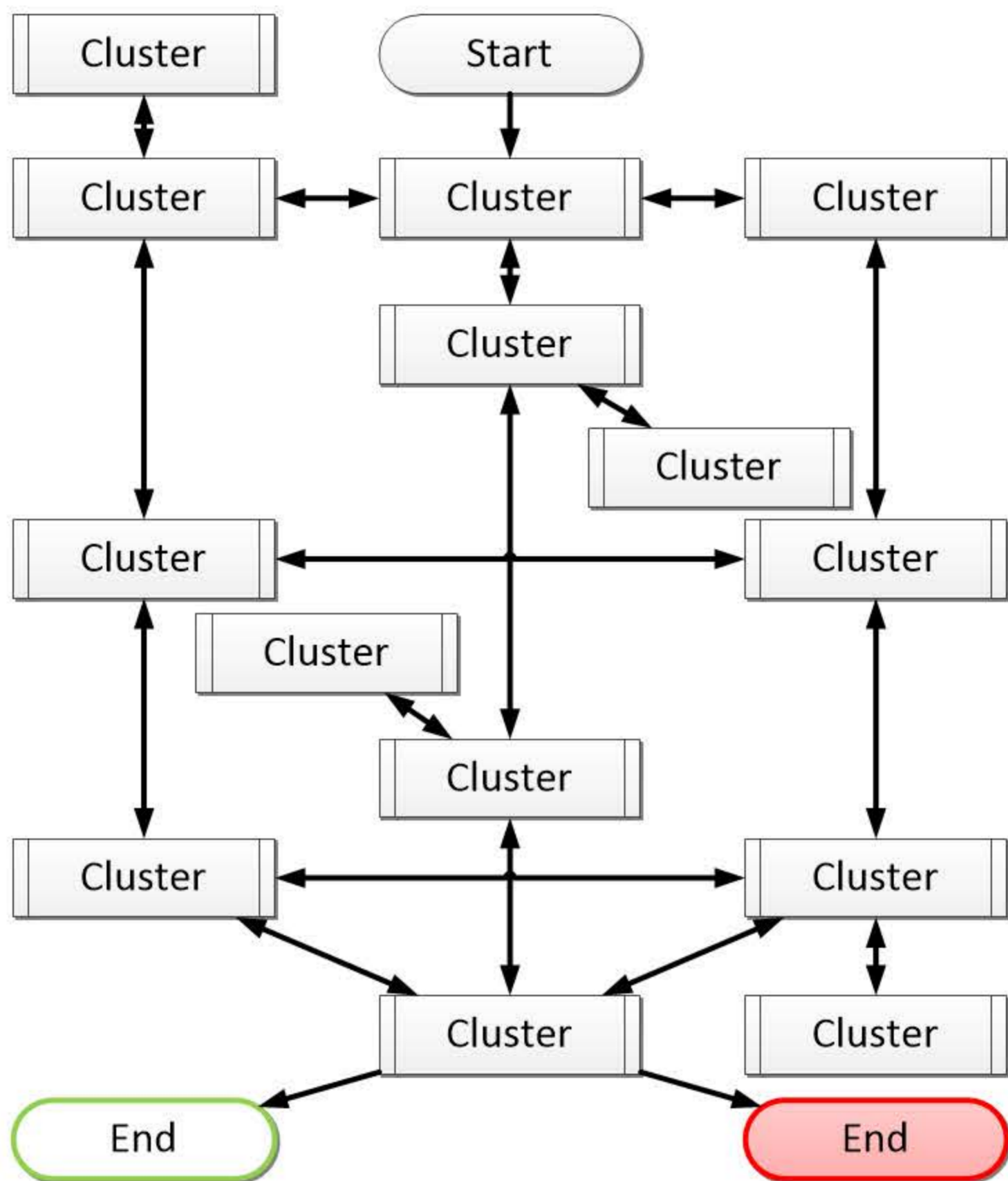
Player is given the illusion of choice. Choices "railroad" the player to the same place.  
 Also known as branching and bottleneck structured narrative.  
 Railroad stories are great ways to learn interactive storytelling, but have limited replay.  
 Examples: Telltale Games (criticism), JRPGs.

## Meta-Gauntlet



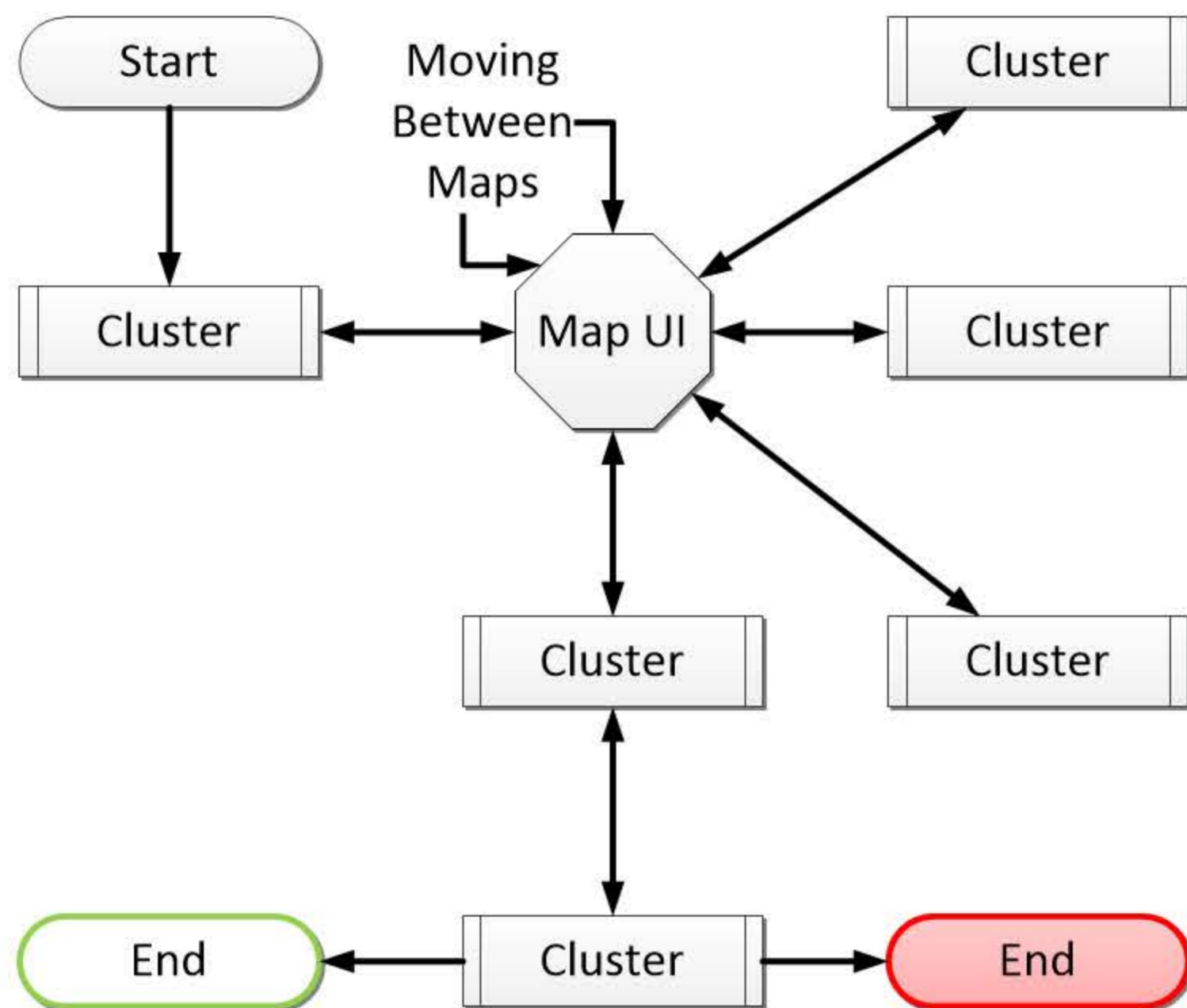
Within each cluster is a group of choices and events.  
 The clusters form a gauntlet meta-narrative structure that organizes the story flow.  
 Narrative tends to be fragmentary or episodic like tabletop RPG games.  
 Examples: Fighting Fantasy Books, Quest Themed games.

## Connected Map



Each cluster is a group of choices and events focused on a specific room or location.  
 Players can move between locations and can almost always backtrack.  
 Players can explore at their leisure, but beware of excessive back and forth.  
 Examples: Scorpion Swamp, Classic IF, MYST, 1<sup>st</sup> Person Adventure

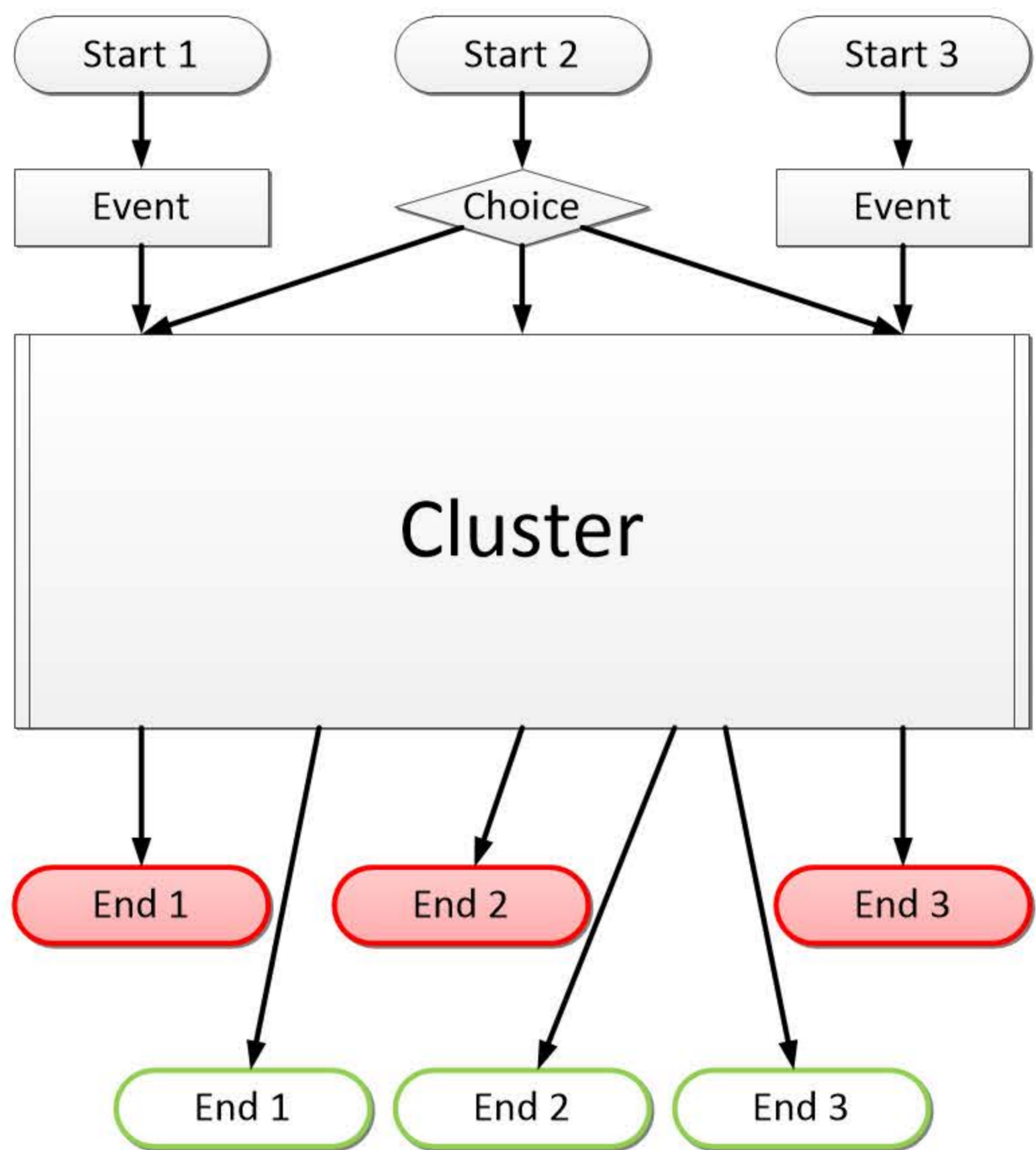
## Open Map



In the case of an open map, all locations can be reached through a map interface.  
 Some locations can only be reached from other connected locations.  
 Examples: Point and Click Adventures

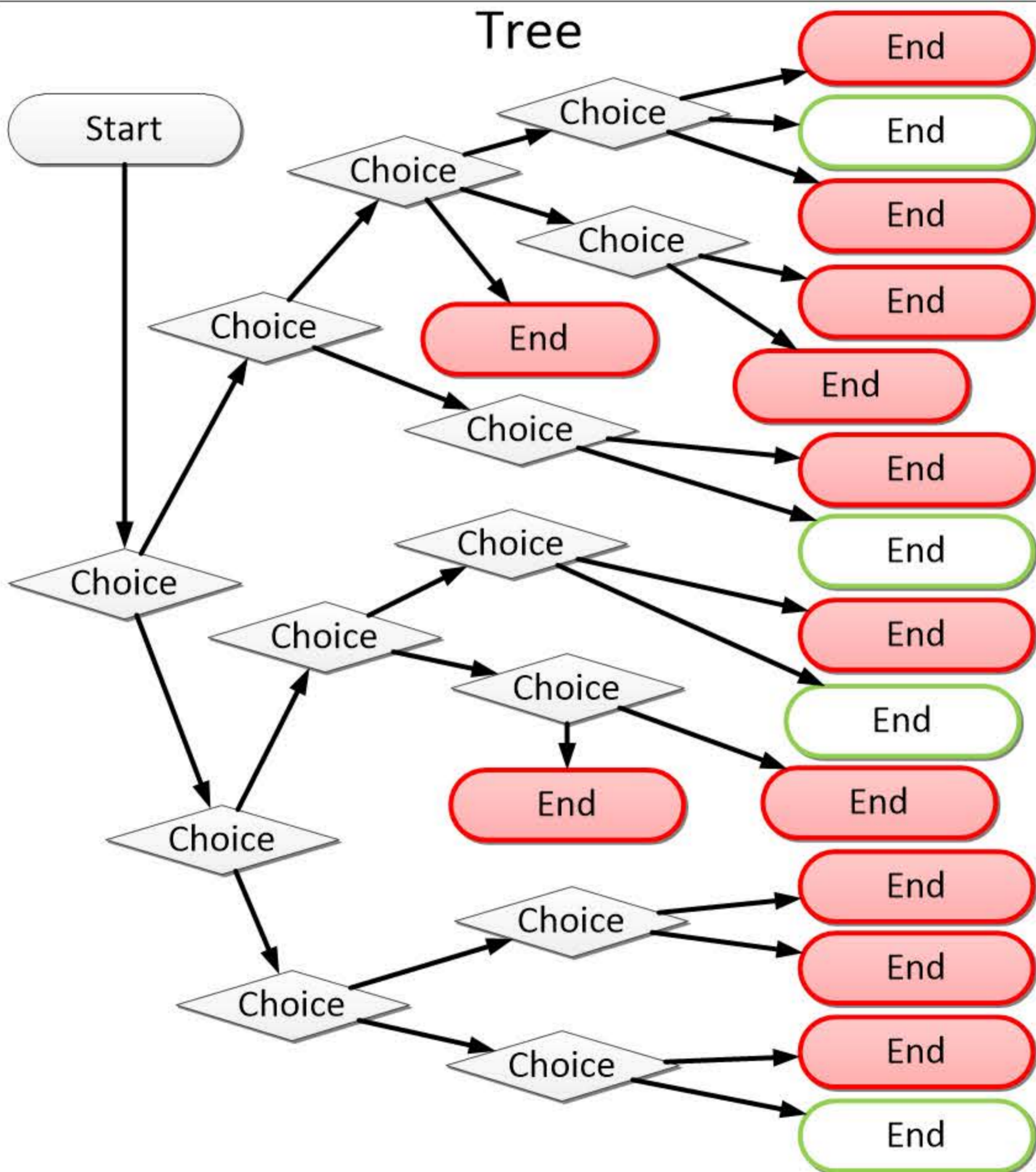
# COMPLEX STORY FLOWS

## Sorting Hat



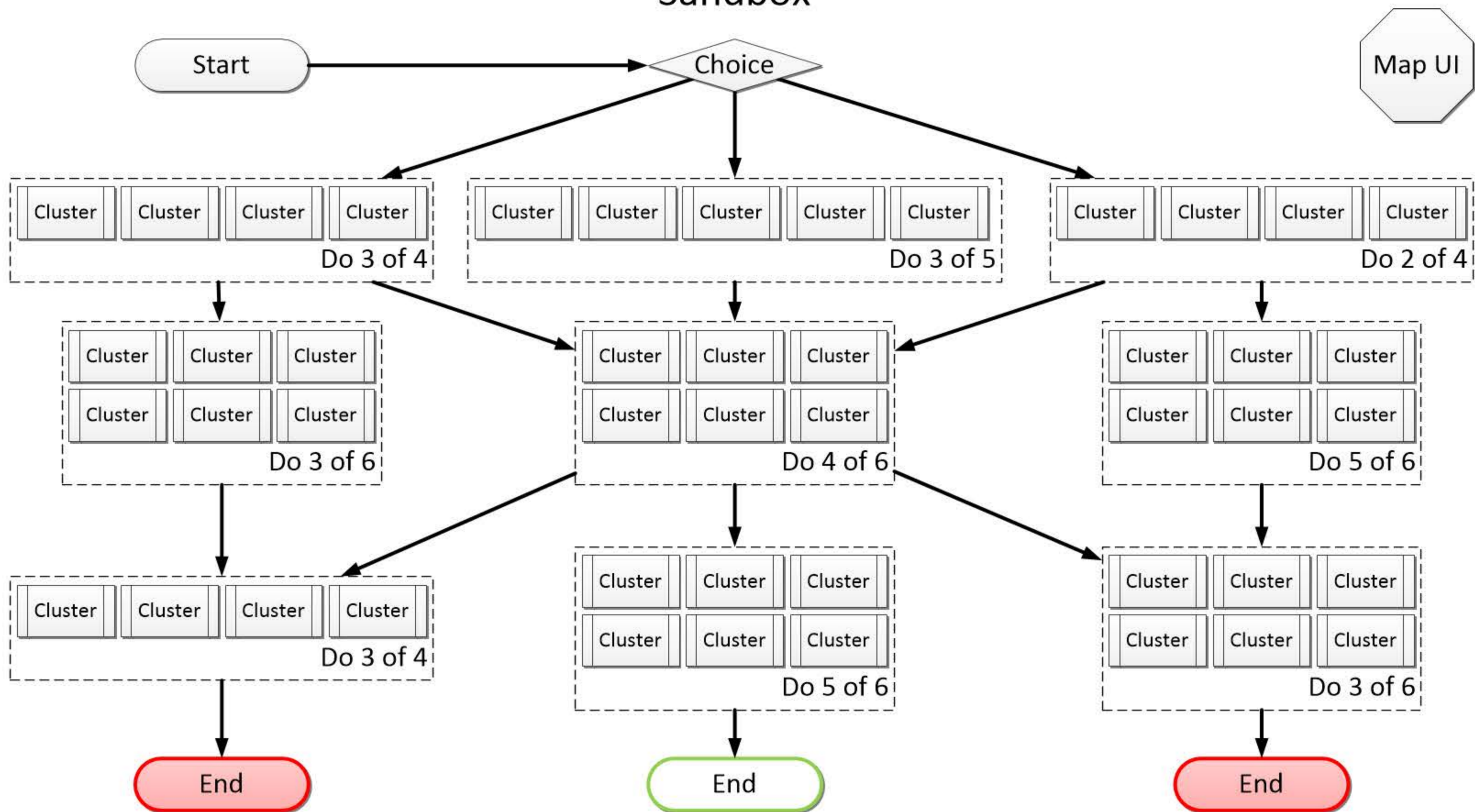
Story has multiple beginnings. Game must always know the player's starting point.  
 Writer may end up creating multiple narratives that fuse and flow together.  
 All endings may be reached, or only certain endings based on starting choice.  
 Examples: Ryan North's "To Be Or Not to Be"

## Tree



Each choice branches into their own set of choices and outcomes.  
 With no merging or overlap there is no need for state-tracking (see YouTube).  
 Examples: Early Choose Your Own Adventure Novels, YouTube Choice Videos

## Sandbox



Players unlock groups of clusters of events/tasks that need to be performed. Once a certain number are completed, then another group of tasks is unlocked.  
 Players choose which tasks they want to complete. Great way to organize narrative where setting is a large open world.  
 Narrative flow is determined by which group of tasks the player chooses to complete.  
 Examples: Open-World Games (GTA & Skyrim)