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# Imaginative Immersion: Developing a Theatre of the Mind Pedagogy for an Ever-Changing Educational Landscape

Cory Kennedy Barrow  
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IMAGINATIVE IMMERSION: DEVELOPING A THEATRE OF THE MIND PEDAGOGY FOR AN  
EVER-CHANGING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

by

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B.A. Theatre, University of Florida, 2017

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
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Major Professor: Julia Listengarten

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## **ABSTRACT**

The suspension of disbelief is integral to the performing arts. We ask our actors to see couches made of three chairs, designers to create cities in empty spaces, and most of all; we ask audiences to believe the stories and relationships that are figurative and often abstract. This level of critical and creative engagement is assumed to develop in spaces of higher education. However, with an ever-changing world and increasing conversions and integrations of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in spaces of higher education, it has become even more apparent that students need to develop their creative and critical thinking skills earlier on in their development. By recontextualizing learning through imaginative immersive game systems, such as Dungeons & Dragons and similar tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs), I have found that students experience categories of significant learning synergistically through experiential gameplay. This immersive storytelling relies entirely on the player-performers to spend their disbelief and immerse themselves in their imagination, termed theatre of the mind. The gamification of role-play acts as a means of challenging students to activate their development of collaborative improv, storytelling/playwriting, and dramaturgy skills. Through research and play testing, I have developed a gamified drama-focused role-play educational tool utilizing many of the core gameplay mechanics in the world's most popular TTRPGs. In this thesis, I present the game structure and reflect upon my experiences implementing this work. Additionally, I explore the cross sections between game design and immersive theatre practice and consider how this intersection is utilized in gamified performance and pedagogy. Finally, I consider how a theatre-of-the-mind-based pedagogy can be utilized in subjects outside of the theatre classroom.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DnD – Dungeons and Dragons

ESL – English as a Second Language

LARP – Live-Action Role Play

OFS – Orlando Family Stage

TTPRG – Tabletop Role Playing Game

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I was working as a summer camp teaching artist when the concept of using tabletop role-playing games as a teaching tool first presented itself to me. My students usually came to me during lunchtime with one of two questions. Either "Can you help me open this?" or "I spilled my extremely messy food on the floor. Do you have a napkin?" So, you might imagine my surprise when one of my students took time during her lunch period to ask me what I was doing. I looked up from my computer and paused to think about my response. I was using that time to work on a new plot line for the Dungeons and Dragons game I would play with my friends later that night. In our last game session, the adventuring heroes (players) bravely jumped into an interdimensional portal, separating the group into different magical planes of existence. As the game facilitator, I was very excited to build some possible story points for my players to explore.

Knowing I needed to retain any cool points I held with this student, I told her I was working on an improv game my friends and I played together. I explained that the game my friends and I play is similar to a choose-your-own-adventure story, so it requires me to prepare a lot of different outcomes. My student saw right through my clever description and responded, "Oh, like Dungeons and Dragons from Stranger Things? I love that show! I've always wanted to play it. Can you teach me?" Surprised, I took another moment to think. I had yet to consider Dungeons and Dragons a game designed for young people. The mechanics are dense, as is the fantasy lore. However, seeing her excitement, I agreed to teach her to play during recess. Over the course of the week, more students became interested in playing until, eventually, the whole class developed characters and were collaboratively storytelling!

The students, ages 9-11, role-played as adventurers, solving the mystery of a hidden temple lost beneath mounds of sand dunes. They helped each other survive the harsh desert conditions, scale into caverns, fend off fearsome monsters, and threw in a few silly pranks along the way. From a theatrical

lens, they were making choices, listening, responding, and supporting their ensemble. In conjunction with our new recess tradition, I noticed a shift in my students' comfortability in their performance class work. When we played traditional improv games like "Cab Driver," they were eager to jump in with ideas and listened to each other's story beats. I also noticed that the young actors were making new and unique choices during their rehearsal period without needing directional prompting. As I reflected on what could have reinforced these acting skills in our daily learning, I began thinking about the core values of Dungeons and Dragons. As I did, I realized my original game description wasn't far from the truth. Dungeons and Dragons and similar tabletop role-play games (TTRPGs) are built on a foundation of playing make-believe structured by rule sets that maintain the form of a story. The same thing is true of the improv games that companies like Second City, Upright Citizens Brigade, and the Groundlings use to teach basic techniques.

Though Dungeons and Dragons is not intentionally performative, the game promotes dramatic role-play through its mechanics. The game requires players to use the information and tools that they have developed through character creation to make informed choices when solving problems. By making character-informed choices, players have a higher chance of succeeding in their in-game actions. Additionally, Dungeons and Dragons is designed to be a team game, meaning, players need to listen to and collaborate with the other players in their adventuring party to effectively devise solutions. Often, the players become so immersed in the narrative world and dramatic stakes that they dialogue in character, essentially performing a long-form improvisational story. As I watched my students grow over the summer, I wondered if their shift in creative autonomy was a reflection of the performative dynamics found in the Dungeons and Dragons game system. Furthermore, I became curious about what it would look like to utilize the TTRPG style of story devising as an intentional theatre-making tool, both in developing immersive performance and as a pedagogy.

Throughout this thesis, I reflect upon my experiences and influences in developing a 6-session in-class residency program inspired by the immersive and theatrical qualities of tabletop role-play games (TTRPGs). The "Roll for Show" game system, developed through my research, is designed to activate students' critical and creative thinking through imaginative and immersive role-play called "theatre of the mind." While residency content includes various aspects of theatre studies, including dramaturgy, playwriting, and improv, it is aimed to reinforce and uplift creative and critical thinking skills. Chapters will cover the processes and methodologies I applied while playtesting material and facilitating practical case studies.

Following this introduction, chapter 2 briefly introduces the core design frameworks through which I centered my research. These frameworks include methods of game analysis and immersive theatre practice. In Chapter 3, I expand on the framework by connecting current pedagogical theories for higher education learners to my observations while facilitating "Magic and Mayhem," a summer camp at Orlando Family Stage (formerly Orlando Repertory Theatre). In my reflection, I draw parallels between Dee Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning and the rule sets of *The Quiet Year* and *Dungeons and Dragons*, two TTRPGs I facilitated during the camp to devise a script with the students. Chapter 4 is what I am referring to as my leveling-up period. After reflecting upon my observations from "Magic and Mayhem," I wondered if I could use my understanding of TTRPG formats and teaching practices to develop a TTRPG intentionally designed to teach students collaborative storytelling. In this chapter, I introduce the term "playtesting" and discuss my process of playtesting the mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics of "Roll for Show." This is activated in chapter 5, where I present my experience implementing the "Roll for Show" system in a High School theatre class at Windermere Preparatory School. Finally, I will conclude my thesis with a proposal for future utilization of this pedagogy in arts-integrated learning.

## **Why This? Why Now?**

“Why this?” and Why now? are the two essential questions that lay at the foundation of any of my processes. They have become so integral to my practice that they are also the questions I ask my undergraduate and high school students to consider at the start of any course work requiring script analysis. By asking these questions of a play we can begin to dig deep and form a dramaturgical understanding of the work. Asking “why this” and “why now” in terms of script analyses begins to open conversations surrounding a work’s historical context, sociological significance, artistic innovations, modern impacts, and so much more. In my initial decision to develop a TTRPG as a pedagogical tool, I began by asking myself these same questions, considering the potential impact of this research and how I might begin my approach. As I did, I found myself drawn to the diverse conversations and opinions regarding the integration and inevitability of Artificial Intelligence in spaces of higher education. While my research isn't directly focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI), it is the answer to my question “why now”.

## **Addressing the Current State of the Ever-Changing Educational Landscape**

Artificial intelligence programs have been around for years. Consider predictive suggestions on online search engines or the early integration of AI engines in computer games in the 1950s. Still, since the official release of ChatGPT in 2022, spaces of academic advancement have increased research and debates on the potential utilizations and disruptions of artificial intelligence (AI) in learning. In the Fall of 2023, the University of Central Florida held a conference gathering faculty from over 50 universities nationwide to share their personal insights into using this technology in their classrooms as an assistive tool. The conference's keynote speaker, Dr. Ray Schroeder, a Senior Fellow of the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), has published articles calling for universities to embrace the disruption and explore AI as an assistive tool. In a recent article, he shares that artificial intelligence

is not a "fad" and "is seen broadly as money-saving, creative and competitively necessary in the workplace" (Schroeder *Productively and painlessly integrating AI into classes*). He goes on to explain that literacy with crafting prompts for these generative engines is being sought after by employers and that spaces of Higher Education must be responsive to "employer needs and expectations in order that our learners are well prepared for careers upon degree or certificate completion" (Schroeder). One of my favorite quotes that both uplifts and challenges this way of thinking comes from the writings of educational scholar Ken Bain. In his 2021 book, *Super Courses: The Future of Teaching and Learning*, he states, "If a college education doesn't leave people with a driving curiosity that feeds a lifetime of study, creativity, and contributions, it stunts their growth and robs them and society of their potential" (Bain, 37). Bain considers higher education to be a space where students are inspired to form and refine their creative and critical thinking skills to become lifelong self-learners. Meanwhile, Dr. Ray Schroeder's approach suggests that students should have already developed these skills. In both scenarios, critical and creative thought is at the forefront of measuring student growth, but when this level of thinking is expected to develop changes. I believe there exists a period for growth and preparation in secondary education, which is the space I attempt to occupy through my research.

I see AI technology as a disruption in the same sense that Texas Instruments disrupted systems in 1973 with the invention of the first handheld calculator. At the time, there was a concern amongst educators that students would become dependent on their calculators, thus limiting the students' understanding of foundational information. As the handheld devices became more integrated into society, however, educators learned to use the new technology as a tool. Here, the calculator is an assistant; it's not the creative mind crafting a problem requiring a solution. I consider AI to be a creative calculator. Toward the end of his article, Dr. Ray Schroeder offers a scaffold for facilitators to integrate AI prompt writing into their instruction. He notes that teaching students to craft these prompts can inspire the learners to engage more deeply with the material as they craft increasingly more creative



prompts for AI response. Before arriving at this level of creative engagement, however, primary and secondary students need to build the foundations of creative thought, just as the math students need before being given a calculator. In my work, I look to enhance young learners' creative agency and problem-solving through the imaginative, immersive qualities of tabletop role-play games (TTRPGs).

### **Why tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs)?**

Since 2014, Tabletop role-play games (TTRPGs) have seen a massive resurgence in popularity, primarily due to their introduction into the streaming media landscape, which followed the release of the 5th edition of *Dungeons and Dragons*. Podcasts and online streaming services began using Tabletop Role Play Games (TTRPGs) to develop engaging stories in real-time. The aforementioned show, *Stranger Things* on Netflix, was released in 2016 and heavily featured *Dungeons and Dragons*, introducing the game to a new generation of players. Additionally, a 2021 report of the highest earning streamers on Twitch.tv, a popular online streaming platform focused on gaming, revealed that a TTRPG group called "Critical Role" held the highest earning stream on the platform, resulting in earnings of over nine million dollars since 2019.

These games activate a level of imaginative role play that often results in a collectively imagined story space. In the tabletop role-play gaming community this is called the "Theatre of the Mind." This term describes the non-tangible story space developed within a tabletop role-play game or TTRPG. Players sit around a table and collectively narrate the action in the storied world. Often, there is no physical representation of the space where the action is held, but it is narrated and developed through what closely resembles long-form improv. Through my research and the process of creating a teaching method that utilizes theatre of the mind, I've discovered that this storytelling style can immerse students in a world of their imagination and encourage them to collaboratively translate their stories

into a play. As I reflect on my process in the chapters to follow, I also seek to uncover how these imagined story spaces might work to enhance the early development of critical and creative thought.

## **CHAPTER TWO: FRAMEWORKS - GAMIFICATION AND IMMERSION**

To better understand what defines a theatre of the mind-based pedagogy, it is essential to identify its intersections. This chapter and the following provide an overview of the intersections of arts and learning that characterize the theatre of the mind-based pedagogy, specifically exploring the frameworks of game design, immersive arts, and educational scaffolding. By providing an initial overview of each of the frameworks, it is my hope that you will have the context to follow my journey developing the “Roll for Show” course/game system which is an activation of the theatre of the mind-based pedagogy. In the sections below, I define the term "Theatre of the Mind" and provide examples of game systems that utilize this form of imaginative immersion. I then analyze the game design and immersive theatre methodologies that have influenced my practice and are referenced throughout my thesis.

### **Defining Theatre of the Mind**

Theatre of the mind is a term used by the tabletop role-play game (TTRPG) community to describe the collectively imagined game world that players and their facilitator use as their narrative playground. Like listening to a radio play, players sit together and immerse themselves in audio storytelling. In this case, however, the audience and performers are the people gathered at the table. Occasionally, playgroups will create small-scale visualizations of the theatre of the mind space to assist with detailed game mechanics, usually ones that rely on distance. Pictured below is a battle scene from a game of Dungeons and Dragons, which I facilitated with a group of friends. In this scene, the adventuring heroes are in the climactic battle of their year-long campaign. After months of tracking the disappearance of allied soldiers, the players finally came face to face with the cavalry's captor, an arch Devil trying to use their souls to gain power and begin the apocalypse. The stakes are very high as the

heroes and the allies they have made throughout their journey work together to defeat the arch Devil and save their world.



Figure 1 Dungeons and Dragon game in which miniature figures are used to represent characters in battle and household items are used as building/terrain.

Until this battle, our game had been held entirely over Zoom due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. During our time on Zoom, we relied on theatre of the mind to guide us in our narrative gameplay. The picture above was the first time many of my friends had ever met in person, but we had already felt like a longtime friend group due to the hours spent working as an ensemble.

Another tactic game designers will use to support a theatre of the mind space is invoking literary devices such as genera and tropes. In *Kids on Bikes*, a TTRPG inspired by mysterious stories in small towns similar to shows and books such as *Stranger Things*, *E.T.*, and *IT*, players create their characters by selecting from a list of "tropes" that determine the character's unique attributes. Examples include the "Brilliant Mathlete," "Overprotective Parent," "Plastic Beauty," "Reclusive Eccentric," and so on.

Furthermore, the game system asks the players and facilitator to devise the game setting as a group to establish a sense of close community that is often a plot device in a small-town narrative. The players and facilitator do this by agreeing upon a narrative tone (comedic, dramatic, horror, etc.), the year or decade, as well as a series of 8 questions to establish a collective knowledge about the town/setting. By utilizing familiar tropes and archetypes, *Kids on Bikes* creates a quickly approachable game system for players to immerse themselves within. Looking at *Kids on Bikes*' methods of character and setting creation through a theatrical lens, the game is asking the players to practice dramaturgical tablework. Through this table work, players are provided a greater sense of creative agency within their theatre of the mind gameplay/storytelling, which works to deepen player immersion. This is an element of game dynamics and immersive theatre design, which I will discuss in the following two sections.

### **Game Design Methodology**

In the early 2000s, game designers Robin Hunicke, Marc LeBlanc, and Robert Zubek created waves in game design scholarship by asking, "What makes a game fun?" Their paper, "*MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research*," developed as part of a series of workshops, proposes a succinct and formal approach to analyzing games known as the MDA approach. MDA is defined by its three levels of abstraction—mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics—which influence the players' overall experience and behaviors while engaging with a game. In my research, I use the MDA approach as a guideline while designing the "Roll for Show" game system, as well as a method of analyzing the systems mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics from a player perspective.

In this section, I unpack Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek's definitions of mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics by analyzing fifth edition *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D). In using D&D as an example, I aim to provide a basic understanding of gameplay to introduce common elements of TTRPGs and familiarize the reader with the core game system in my research. It's also worth noting that the MDA framework is

presented from two perspectives. Mechanics-dynamics-aesthetics refers to how game designers view their work. "The mechanics give rise to dynamic system behavior, which in turn leads to particular aesthetic experiences" (Hunicke et al.). Players, however, see the completed project and view the process from the opposite direction, aesthetics-dynamics-mechanics. "Aesthetics set the tone, which is born out in observable dynamics and eventually, operable mechanics" (Hunicke et al.) Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek explain that considering a game design through the player approach ensures an "experience-driven (as opposed to feature-driven) design" and so, that is how I will present the MDA analysis of D&D.

## **Aesthetics**

Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek define aesthetics as the emotional responses a game invokes in its players. In their writing, the design scholars offer a vocabulary list of aesthetics as a guide to understanding what they are referring to when discussing emotional responses. Possible aesthetics include but are not limited to,

1. Sensation - Game as sense-pleasure
2. Fantasy - Game as make-believe
3. Narrative - Game as drama
4. Challenge - Game as obstacle course
5. Fellowship - Game as social framework
6. Discovery - Game as uncharted territory
7. Expression - Game as self-discovery
8. Submission - Game as pastime

(Hunicke et al.)

Wizards of the Coast, the developing and publishing company for *Dungeons and Dragons*, describes the game as a system in which you are your friends” form an adventuring party who explore fantasy worlds together as they embark on epic quests and level up in experience” (What is D&D: Dungeons & Dragons). Key descriptors such as fantasy worlds and epic quests are reminiscent of Arthurian stories, Odyssey tales, or, more contemporarily, J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" series. However, in unpacking the Wizards of the Coast description through an MDA lens, the aesthetic of *Dungeons and Dragons* falls within the categories of Fantasy, Narrative, Fellowship, Discovery, Expression, and Submission.

With the above categories in mind, we can devise a more in-depth understanding of the emotional responses that *Dungeons and Dragons* invoke. In a typical game of fifth edition *Dungeons and Dragons*, players will engage in a make-believe world (fantasy) in which they embark on a heroic quest reminiscent of a classic hero's journey (narrative). The game's facilitator will present the various challenges within the world that the group must work to uplift each other's strengths and concur with what lies ahead (fellowship). As they journey, they will encounter the different landscapes and people of the make-believe world (discovery). The characters and players may even learn something about themselves along the way (expression). Overall, the immersive role-play that this game allows for will leave a lasting impact on the players and their friendships, even outside of their make-believe world (submission).

## **Mechanics and Dynamics**

When discussing the three levels of abstraction in the MDA approach, Leblanc remarks that the levels are meant to be viewed more as individual "lenses" that are "separate, but causally linked." In my opinion, dynamics and mechanics are the two lenses that are most directly linked. Therefore, it makes

sense to discuss these two in tandem. Mechanics are the rules of a game. The mechanics tell players what tools and bounds they must work within during gameplay. Dynamics are a result of the player's creative responses to mechanics. This is also defined as the in-game actions that occur while the game is being played. For example, the mechanics in poker include shuffling, dealing, hitting, and betting, while dynamics refer to bluffing. They are the Stanislavski-an tactic, while the mechanics are the script.

In *Dungeons and Dragons*, the dynamics are heavily influenced by the mechanics represented on a player's character sheet and their dice rolls. A hallmark of the tabletop role-play game genre is the dice. Different systems use different combinations of multi-sided dice, but typically, TTRPG mechanics will either require a number of six-sided dice (d6) or a set of seven polyhedral dice (d4, d6, d8, two d10, d12, d20). Character sheets act as a blueprint for a character's strengths and weaknesses as determined through the player's character creation process. To see a sample fifth edition *Dungeons and Dragons* character sheet refer to appendix item A. Fifth edition *Dungeons and Dragons* offers players a list of abilities, skills, actions, and race/class features to use as a road map when designing and playing their characters. These design features are the mechanics that inform players of dynamic avenues through which they can explore narrative gameplay.

For example, in the game session pictured in "Defining Theatre of the Mind" above, I mention that the players are facing their climactic battle against an archdevil. The players know their objective is to find a way to stop their enemy from causing an apocalypse, but their tactics are wholly determined by how creatively they can interpret the game's mechanics. Players who made characters more adept at strength-based skills may choose to attack the devil. Charismatic characters may use skills of persuasion, deception, or performance. Intelligent and wise characters are typically associated with spell casting in D&D; therefore, those players may try any number of supportive or offensive spells to achieve their objective. In the pictured battle, the group began attacking their opponent but quickly realized that he was too strong to defeat using brute force. As a result, they considered their characters' individual skill



sets and laid the perfect trap to banish the arch-devil back to his circle of hell. However, more than just having a plan is needed to win. As I mentioned before, dice rolls are a hallmark of TTRPGs. Their role is best described in the rulebook for *Kids on Bikes*, which states, "Any time you do something that runs the risk of failure, the GM [facilitator] will set a numerical difficulty for the action" (27). The facilitator maintains the metaphysics of the world by providing a "difficulty class," a number scaled for how difficult the task will be to achieve. The player then rolls their dice and attempts to meet or beat the facilitator's number. Looking at this through a theatrical lens, dice rolls provide mechanics for defining the dramatic stakes of a situation. Dynamic responses to character creation may mean that players are more inclined to role-play tasks according to a character's strengths and weaknesses, but the game's dramatic arc is determined by player response to the success and failure of dice rolls. Just as a hero's story arch is propelled by their highest and lowest dramatic moments.

Turning back to the example players and their battle against an archdevil, with a streak of successful dice rolls, the heroes worked together to defeat their enemy. The cleric and paladin characters, both associated with having divine power, used their radiant magic to weaken the archdevil, thus creating a distraction. In the meantime, the combat-heavy characters worked with the allied forces of the town to dwindle the numbers of the less powerful henchman creatures. These actions created an opening for the wizard to prepare a powerful banishment spell preventing the archdevil from ever returning.

The key to holding a dynamically engaging TTRPG session is honoring player agency. In their writing, Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek warn against designing mechanics that inhibit agency, citing "Monopoly" as their example. They explain that the mechanics of this classic board game allow rich players to get richer while the poor players continue to get poorer. While this effectively communicates the experience of being a business owner in a monopolized industry, the inhibition of player win conditions creates a gap in player involvement. This gap eventually dissolves any engagement or

dramatic stakes for the players. In the *Dungeons and Dragons* example, the objective prompt is scaffolded so that players can enact dozens of possibilities. They could attempt to bargain with the archdevil or challenge him to a battle of the bands in the style of the Charlie Daniels Band song "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." The only element that can set players back is an unfortunate dice roll, and even then, failing a dice roll is never a "no" it's a "no, but" a new avenue to explore. Agency is often referred to as a key to immersion, and allowing players to make choices that hold impact is not only crucial for immersive TTRPGs, but it's also commonly pursued in immersive theatre practice.

### **Gamification in Immersive Theatre**

I was first introduced to the MDA framework through Adrienne Mackey, founder of Swim Pony Performing Arts, who contributed to the Routledge book *Experiential Theatres Praxis-Based Approaches to Training 21st Century Theatre Artists*. There, she writes about the influence that MDA has on her design of immersive experiences. But Mackey is not the only immersive artist who has drawn parallels between game design and immersive work. Many well-known immersive and interactive artists have interwoven agentic mechanics into their performances. Some even allow audience participants to directly impact the experienced story. Punchdrunk, the company behind *Sleep No More*, has written, "We believe that the future of interactive audience experience will be at the cross-section of gaming and theatre" (*Punchdrunk X Niantic*). Additionally, Caro Murphy, artist scholar and former immersive experience director for Walt Disney World, has presented at MIT and Columbia, among other prestigious venues, on intersections of live-action role play (LARP), gaming, immersion, and education. In their work, Murphy presents a proposed taxonomy of the immersive arts. This taxonomy is broken into three distinct axes: the Physical Space (production elements such as sfx, lighting, sound, and set), the Participant's Agency (methods of empowering the audience to perform actions and create impact), and gamification (mechanics that support interaction)

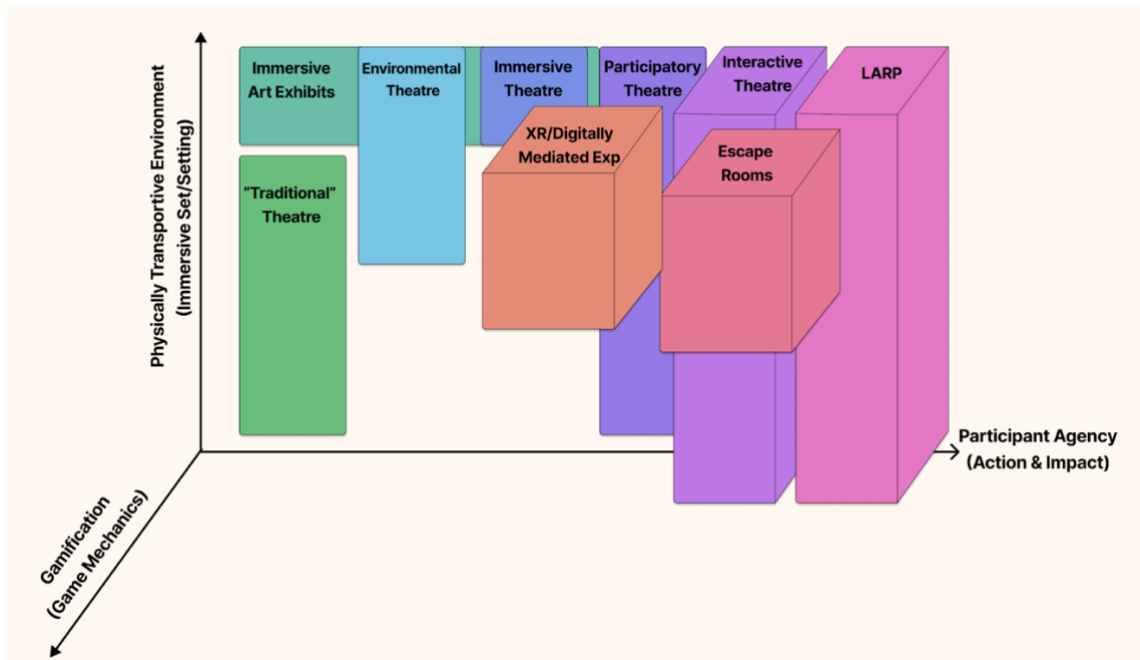


Figure 2 Taxonomy of the Immersive Arts by Caro Murphy. Image used with permission from Murphy.

In many books about immersive theatre practice, the term "immersive theatre" becomes a muddy catch-all for any of the art forms above. In my work, I focus on the interactive features of immersion, which lie on all three axes, and their relationship to mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics.

For example, a show I developed in my first semester of grad school titled, *A Dark and Stormy Knight*, is an interactive theatre piece that lies primarily along the 3rd-dimensional axis within the intersection of "interactive theatre," "escape rooms," and "LARP" (live-action role-play). In *A Dark and Stormy Knight*, the audience assumes the role of patrons of the Golden Goose tavern who are suddenly faced with decisions of heroic proportions as they prepare to face a dragon who has picked up the entire tavern and is now flying to add it to their dragon horde. The show begins as a single-dimensional immersive piece according to Murphy's Taxonomy. Interactions remain passive as audience members and characters enter the tavern, order food and drinks, and hold jovial conversations as the world takes shape. The show then has its first form shift once a call to adventure occurs, and the actors ask for audience participants to volunteer as heroes. A third shift occurs once participants learn that the

magical items are sealed with a protection spell and must now solve a series of puzzles to unlock the items. Here, the show shifts into an escape room as the whole audience is invited to help the volunteer heroes solve the puzzles cleverly interwoven into the tavern's design. To further the immersion, each puzzle is designed to familiarize the audience with the published *Dungeons and Dragons* lore. Offering shared knowledge about the show world immerses audience members by providing them tools (mechanics) to make informed in-world decisions (dynamics). With this newly claimed knowledge, the show makes its final shift, brushing up with the LARP format as the characters now ask the audience to assume the role of an adventuring party and work together to defeat the dragon. The choice is entirely up to the audience, and the actors direct the execution of the chosen action. Aesthetically, this show highlights audience experiences of narrative, fellowship, challenge, expression, and fantasy.

*A Dark and Stormy Knight* is a more active example of gamification in immersive theatre but shows like *Sleep No More* have much more subtle game dynamics. In Punchdrunk's popular show, *Sleep No More*, the audience is told that they are allowed to wander around the various floors and riffle through the moveable objects; however, audience members can't speak or interact with the actors unless the actor prompts them to do so. Though these are not inherently playful, these mechanics act as an agreement for decorum within the performance space. Now, imagine for a moment that you are attending a performance of *Sleep No More*. You know nothing about the show, its aesthetic, or its performance style, but you now know the basic mechanics of the piece. What do you choose to do? Do you prefer to walk around the space, rifling through set pieces and reading materials, piecing the story together prop by prop? Do you attempt to find an actor to follow in hopes of receiving an interaction? Do you just explore the space, taking in the story as it happens to you? Or do you do a mixture of all of these? All of these actionable choices inform the dynamic relationships of your experience within the game structure of *Sleep No More*.

When my husband and I attended the performance, we had two vastly different experiences. My husband was dropped off on the top floor of the 5-story show space by himself. Eventually, he began to wander around and found an actor whom he was able to identify as King Duncan from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and began to follow him. He watched as the King went to bed. Then, after some time, the actor playing Macbeth entered the room, followed by a flood of audience members. The group huddled together as they watched Macbeth suffocate Duncan and left as Macbeth fled the murder scene. My husband, however, chose not to follow the leading actor and stayed with Duncan to see what would happen. After some time, Banquo entered and found the body, which piqued my husband's curiosity. He followed this new character through a funeral procession down various flights of stairs. As the night went on, he continued to find more and more intimate encounters, witnessing a truly unique performance.

On the other hand, I did not follow many actors through their tracks. I was a bit overwhelmed seeing the floods of audience members following each actor in their performance. Instead, I wandered through the various floors and watched the performances as I came across them. Because of this, I received a much less linear story and instead happened to encounter more of the Alfred Hitchcock storylines, which were creatively woven as a B-plot to the Macbeth storyline. This variance in experience speaks to the dynamic possibilities of *Sleep No More* from a game design perspective. Unlike *A Dark and Stormy Knight*, we were never prompted to solve puzzles or engage in gameplay, yet the show had clear mechanics that influenced our dynamic experiences. The provided rules are simple to retain and encourage curiosity-informed action, and a dynamic relationship develops between the audience, actors, and the space itself. This allows the audience to curate their experience, leading to a sense of autonomy, which is pivotal when crafting immersive and participatory performances.

The show itself was the game.

## Moving Forward

Now that I have introduced the key design frameworks that inspire my research note that these concepts will continue to be mentioned throughout this thesis. In current theatre classrooms, game-based learning is a common practice, made popular by the works of 20th-century artists such as Viola Spolin (1986) and Augusto Boal (1985, 1992). Spolin and Boal wrote about gamifying acting techniques to make the learning process more accessible to a broader range of students. With proper facilitation (side coaching), they posit that gamified theatre techniques can be used as a community engagement tool and as an introduction to deeper learning. Questioning what makes a game fun and immersive and provides opportunities for indirect learning is at the core of my developed practice. In my research, I look at the road paved before me and ask, what if the game we play doesn't last just one session? What if this game requires a long-form investment to develop multiple skills over time? What if that investment is so creatively agentic that students forget the pressures to perform and learn, and instead actively practice developing their sense of play? The following chapters outline my journey to create a theatre of the mind pedagogy that is capable of answering those questions.

## CHAPTER THREE: MAGIC AND MAYHEM

The forest around you is filled with a thick rolling fog covering its dynamic and undeniably strange landscape. A red clay mountain towers in the northeast while an enchanted purple lagoon wades in the south. The mysteries of this land, however, are far vaster than its natural peculiarities. As spring comes in and clears the skies ever so slightly, 20 brave adventurers begin to explore. They uncover hidden ruins, a sunken pirate ship, and a dragon skeleton! What happens next is up to them.

More accurately, the 20 student participants of “Mischief and Mayhem,” a collaborative playwriting summer camp developed in partnership with Orlando Family Stage (OFS). In my previous chapter, I provide an overview of the *design* frameworks that inspire my approach to developing a theatre of the mind pedagogy. This chapter presents the *pedagogical* values of tabletop role-play (TTRPG) as I observed them during my first case study—“Mischief and Mayhem” summer camp. Over the course of 1-week, 20 young artists, ages 8-12, wrote and performed in a 30-minute play using the TTRPGs *The Quiet Year* by Joe Mcdaldno and 5th edition *Dungeons and Dragons* by Wizards of the Coast as their primary devising tools. During this process, I was supported by my co-facilitators Joni Newman, educator and dramaturg, and Bryan Jager, educator and playwright, as well as three high school-aged teaching assistants. By breaking lessons into elements of story creation, students developed the play's original world, lore, characters, action, and dialogue, which were all incorporated into their final performance.

Having witnessed the growth of my students at Center Stage, mentioned in my introduction, I knew that the improvisational elements of *Dungeons and Dragons* had an impact on my students' choice-making skills. I also knew from personal experience that problem-solving in a world of

imaginative fantasy acts as a long-form ensemble-building experience. My goal in developing the “Mischief and Mayhem” course was to intentionally study the developmental learning impacts that games such as *Dungeons and Dragons* have on young artists when used as part of the devising process. As I continued to familiarize myself with research that systemized “how” students learn, I began to draw parallels between the mechanics of popular TTRPGs and well-known models of learning. Primarily Dee Fink's “Taxonomy for Significant Learning,” which showcases how an active and synergistic approach to teaching can create a meaningful and long-lasting impact for students. In the sections below, I provide a brief overview of Fink's Taxonomy. This is followed by an MDA analysis of *The Quiet Year* and *5th edition Dungeons and Dragons*. Furthermore, in the dynamic section of my MDA analysis, I connect the elements of Fink's taxonomy to my observations of student dynamics while playing *The Quiet Year* and *5th edition Dungeons and Dragons* during the 2022 “Mischief and Mayhem” summer camp.

### **Taxonomy of Significant Learning**

In his book *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*, Dee Fink defines significant learning as “a powerful learning experience, [where] students will be engaged in their own learning [...] Not only will students learn throughout the course, but by the end of the course, they will also clearly have changed in some important way” (Fink 8). Fink's model for achieving significant learning emphasizes the importance of learning not just for knowledge but for personal development as well. A concept that I believe is foundational to arts education. His model, Taxonomy of Significant Learning, is a direct response to Benjamin Bloom's (1969) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, a classically taught model that depicts learning as six steps of a pyramid. Bloom's Taxonomy conveys learning as a linear process with knowledge placed at the base, followed by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation at the top. Fink's model also highlights six categories of learning, but unlike Bloom, Fink presents a synergistic perspective.



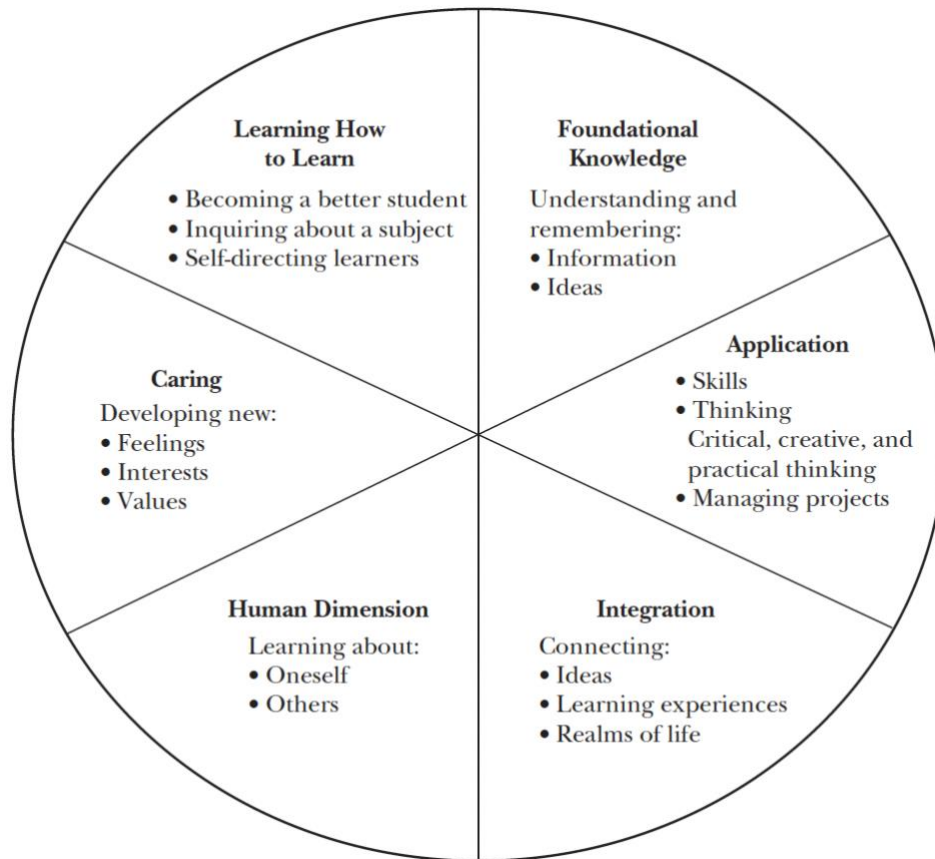


Figure 3 Taxonomy of Significant Learning. *Creating Significant Learning Experiences, Revised and Updated* by L. Dee Fink. Copyright © 2013 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. AAC&U, 2007. *College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

What excites me about this model is its portrayal of the interactive nature of the categories of learning.

Fink explains the importance of this synergistic approach by outlining how each category supports the other to enhance learning. He states,

if a teacher finds a way to help students learn how to use the information and concepts in a course to solve certain kinds of problems effectively (application), this makes it easier for them to get excited about the value of the subject (caring). Or when students learn how to effectively relate this subject to other ideas and subjects (integration), this makes it easier for students to see the significance of

the course material for themselves and for others (human dimension). When a course or learning experience is able to promote all six kinds of learning, one has had a learning experience that truly can be deemed significant. (Fink 37-38)

While the models presented above are intended to be utilized in higher education, the applications of this work are just as valuable in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

### **Course Content**

As mentioned at the top of this chapter, the 2022 “Mischievous and Mayhem” summer camp at Orlando Family Stage (OFS) was a 1-week collaborative playwriting camp that resulted in a staged reading of the students' work. The description for the class posted on Orlando Family Stage's website read,

We need your help, adventurer! Come along as we collaborate to devise a story of high-stakes fantasy adventure in which you are the hero. Immerse yourself in this Dungeons and Dragons-style adventure where students use improvisation and role play to create a unique theatrical experience and an original script. All you need is your imagination!

Class content was designed around a daily essential question used to activate students' curiosity in their work. This practice is reminiscent of the work of Ken Bain, mentioned in my introduction, and his definition of the "Super Course." In his book *Super Courses: The Future of Teaching and Learning*, Bain explains that the world is constantly changing, and new information is discovered and shared at a rapid pace. Because of this, learners must be prepared not just to assume expertise after a 4-year college degree, but instead, colleges should strive to inspire lifelong learners. The "Super Course" that he provides examples of throughout his book is built around big fascinating questions, experiential projects, and collaborative learning environments. Bain's work highlights many of the same qualities of the "Taxonomy for Significant Learning," though Bain's work is targeted toward higher education. His focus on asking big fascinating questions and experiential projects corresponds with Fink's categories of

*application, integration, and learning how to learn.* Inspired by both methods of course structuring I have found that by developing a practice of incorporating essential questions, an active theatre classroom becomes a "Super Course" in the middle and high school levels. In the following sections, I outline the creative process of "Mischief and Mayhem" for developing the setting, character, and narrative arc using the two TTRPGs, *The Quiet Year* by Joe Mcdaldno and 5th edition *Dungeons and Dragons*. There, I also conduct an MDA analysis from the player perspective (aesthetics, dynamics, and mechanics) to connect the game systems features to the categories of learning presented by Dee Fink.

### **Setting Creation - The Quiet Year**

The essential question for day 1 was, "What does our world look/act like? What is worth questing for?" Since all 20 students would be working on one script, I began our process by establishing a group vocabulary and expertise about the setting and plot hooks we would explore. *The Quiet Year* by Joe Mcdaldno served as our dramaturgical tool for starting this process. *The Quiet Year* is a collaborative map-building TTRPG in which players are cast as community members working to rebuild their home after a devastating occurrence destroys everything. In relation to the MDA analysis, *The Quiet Year* aesthetically fits the descriptions of Discovery, Narrative, Fellowship, and Fantasy. The community is given one year to build as much as possible before winter ends, and devastation threatens to return. Players act both as voices of the community and impartial storytellers as they construct the landmarks, history, and mysteries of the community being developed.

Starting with just a blank piece of paper, players take turns answering questions and performing actions that call for players to draw key landmarks on the paper and expand upon their stories in a lore document. Over the course of 52 turns, representing the weeks in a year, players act as worldbuilders and dramaturgs as they fill the world with life and history. At the top of this chapter, I paint a theatre of the mind style portrait of the key locations and discoveries that characterize the world created by the

"Mischief and Mayhem" students as a result of our *The Quiet Year* gameplay. Below is a picture of their finalized map.



Figure 4 Finalized map developed by students and teaching artists.

There are four key tools for running the game.

1. The Map - A blank piece of paper on which everyone will take turns adding to the landscape by drawing discoveries throughout the game.
2. Lore Document - This can be digital or physical. This document serves as a log of all the story points not drawn on the map but discussed with the group. The document contains any characters that develop, rituals or cultural touchpoints, conflict that arises, and other exposition points that influence the world.
3. The Dice - A set of 6-sided dice which will be placed to indicate the number of weeks that pass before a construction project is complete. These timelines are determined through group discussions.

4. The Cards - Color-coordinated prompt cards that delineate the four seasons. We wrote the devising prompts on index cards.
5. Contempt Tokens – This can take several different forms. Their purpose is for a player to indicate any tension or frustration that may arise. Acknowledging tension is essential when creative decisions are being collaboratively built upon. Facilitators can use color-coded (red, yellow, and green to indicate severity), small game pieces (i.e., checkers), or a hand raise.
  - We approached contempt differently than in The Quiet Year's rule sheet. It writes, "Contempt will generally remain in front of players until the end of the game. It will act as a reminder of past contentions. Its primary role is as a social signifier" (Mcdaldno 7). Instead, we discussed any moments of contempt to promote collective understanding and creative decision-making.

Because the game's mechanics depend on the narrative actions of the previous round, it is easier to organize facilitation into a multi-step process.

### ***Step 1 - Designing a Landscape***

To begin, I lay out a large blank piece of paper in the middle of the room. I then narrate the given circumstances of the game. Next, I break the class into small groups. The groups are given 5 minutes to work together to decide on one natural and one unnatural structure to place on the map. Natural structures include mountains, lakes, and trees, while unnatural structures might be statues, castles, or neighborhoods. Some examples from the "Magic and Mayhem" students include ruins of a fairy castle that sits atop a red clay plateau, a large waterfall with a pirate ship hidden behind, a giant tree, and a witches' hut. Once 5 minutes have passed, we wrap up step 1 by having each group present their structures and draw them on the map.

## ***Step 2 - Developing the Story***

In the next step, the class moves into a more individualized round of our collaborative process. Each student is given a card with a creative writing or drawing prompt during this phase. Sitting in a circle, the students go one at a time, answering their prompt and adding to the world map or lore document. Each player's turn is broken into two phases:

1. Card Phase - The player reads and responds to the devising prompt card in their hand.
2. Action Phase - The Player chooses to either discover something new, hold a town discussion, or start a project. Whatever action the player chooses will act as a catalyst for future lore development that the rest of the group can continue to build upon.

For example, Student A receives a card that reads, "What is the most beautiful place in the community? Or, what is the most disgusting place in the community?" Student A decides that there is a beautiful community vegetable garden and draws an icon representing its position on the map. They then move on to the action phase, where Student A decides to discover something new during their action phase and draws a giant dragon skeleton in the northwest corner of the map. Later, another student builds upon the discovery by deciding to hold a town discussion during their action phase. In this discussion, the second student shares that a dangerous group of scavengers had set up camp near the dragon skeleton. In that same discussion, a third student shares that some crops were missing from the farm in the center of the map. Suddenly, the group is united in a concern that the scavengers were stealing from their main food supply.

This phase of the game continues until the players have answered all 52 questions, thus cycling through a full year of rebuilding. In our version, we didn't cycle through the full 52 questions; instead, each student and teaching artist was given one turn. The prompts were pre-selected and written on color coded flashcards that represented the 4 seasons. By cutting down the number of individual turns,

we were able to keep the run time of the game at a manageable 60 minutes rather than the suggested 2-4 hours.

The discussion sparked by Mcdaldno's creative prompts naturally immersed students in the world they were creating. They dialogued, free of performative pressures, still invoking the tone of a community hoping to rebuild before the next disaster. In thinking about Dee Fink's emphasis on synergy, I began to note *The Quiet Year's* seamless realization of the categories of significant learning through its game mechanics. The students *applied* their critical and creative thinking skills to their real-world *foundational knowledge* and designed a believable fantasy world to use as their play's setting. Furthermore, developing the first structures as a group helped establish a dramatic *foundational knowledge* through identifying a vocabulary, tone, and a gauge for realism within the world we are creating. The act of establishing a vocabulary and tone as an ensemble also acted as a form of community agreement about the world and how we would treat our story. In my opinion, forming and honoring a community agreement communicates a connection of the *human dimension* within ensemble work. It was exciting to see this agreement form so naturally over the course of the game. Over about an hour and a half, the butcher paper went from a large blank piece of white paper to a fully lived-in world with history, political figures, deities, and dramatic stakes. In our class reflection, the students *integrated* their experience developing a world into a discussion of how this relates to our work as theatre artists. The "Magic and Mayhem" students displayed their ability to learn how to learn as they reflected on how the collaborative mechanics of the game helped them practice the improvisational rule of "yes and." I also witnessed the students showcase their *care* for their work as they buzzed amongst each other, discussing areas of the map that excited them, characters that might exist there, and so much more. That element of *care* would continue to develop through our process. Later, I was able to use my reflection on their engagement to identify possible plot hooks and in-world enemies that the heroes could face once we moved into adventuring through Dungeons and Dragons.

## Character Design - Dungeons and Dragons

Our final activity on day one was dedicated to character development. From the beginning of camp, I had students express their profound disinterest in performance. Many students had signed up for camp because they were either interested in the Dungeons and Dragons marketed element or trying something new for the summer. Because my students had been so verbal about their performance apprehension, I made sure to take note of how their interest in the program might grow, decline, or plateau in our process. My first indication that things were moving in a positive direction was that by the end of *The Quiet Year* game, the students who once had no interest in performance began to **care** about their world and were excited to **integrate** their lore into their character development process.

With just a few minutes left in our day, my co-facilitators distributed paper and pencils for students to begin brainstorming potential backstories for their characters. Since we would only have about 1.5-2 hours to play through our adventure, the students needed a solid foundation of who they were playing and what motivates their characters' actions without having the time to provide any exposition. From the writing prompts in *The Quiet Year*, we laid a foundation of a few named figures in the world and discussed some communities that populate the map, such as elves, lizard people, dragons, and fairies. Students were instructed to use existing information or continue to build ideas within the realm of the world that was just discussed when building characters. Additionally, I had the students consider the following prompts to assist in their brainstorming: "Who are you (name, age, class)? Who is important to you (family, friends, teachers, enemies)? What are you naturally good at, and what do you want to be good at? Why are you an adventurer?" class in this circumstance refers to the Dungeons and Dragons term "class," meaning what role do you serve in your party (i.e. rouge, wizard, bard, fighter, cleric, etc.). These guiding questions were inspired by Uta Hagen's six questions, "Who am I? What are the circumstances? What are my relationships? What do I want? What is my obstacle? What do I do to get what I want?" (134). I shared these questions with the group for a deeper



exploration. For any students who needed a visual aid or wanted examples from the Dungeons and Dragons source material, I brought out two of the books in Wizards of the Coast's Young Adventurers Guide series, *Warriors and Weapons* and *Wizards and Spells*. These books provide images and stories reminiscent of classic hero tropes and use the language of Dungeons and Dragons to provide examples of the various classes and fantasy races that exist in Faerûn, the setting for most D&D adventures.

Having freshly designed an entire world, rich with lore and culture, the students were swirling with potential character concepts. Our end-of-day activity ended up being more of an initial brainstorming session, after which students continued to think about character concepts when they went home. The full character development activity ended up taking the first half of our second day and included finalizing backstory, drawing character art, and filling out a Dungeons and Dragons character sheet. An example of the Dungeons and Dragons character sheet used in "Mischief and Mayhem" can be found in my appendix, with annotations describing their impact on gameplay. As I discuss this next section, please reference the sheet as a visual aid while reading.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the dynamics of *Dungeons and Dragons* are heavily influenced by the mechanics represented on a player's character sheet and their dice rolls. Therefore, it is important for players to shape their character sheet to best support the character they want to portray. Dungeons and Dragons character sheets can be broken into four main sections. At the top, players fill out their character's names and basic physical information. The section just below contains the character's armor class number (this reflects how hard it is for an enemy to land an attack), walking speed, and hit points (how well this character can withstand damage). In my opinion, the most important section of the character sheet concerning character creation is the ability score section, highlighted in green just below the second section. In Dungeons and Dragons, players roll a 20-sided die (d20) when choosing to do an action that has potential to fail. For example, if a character is trying to break down a wooden door, they might run into trouble considering the stability of the door. Therefore,

the games facilitator would ask the player to roll their d20 and provide the number (difficulty class) that is needed to reach in order to successfully break down the door. Breaking down a door might be a considerably difficult task, depending on its durability. The “difficulty class” provides context for how likely their character is to succeed based on the imagined circumstances. At this point, anyone who wants to try is allowed to, which can sometimes lead to memorable comedic moments or creative problem-solving. That is why carefully considering a character's ability scores is vital to character design in TTRPGs. If a player knows they want to create a character who can easily break down doors, they might put their highest bonus (the positive, neutral, negative number value that players add to their dice roll) into strength. The image below shows the reference guide I displayed for the students as they filled out their character sheets.

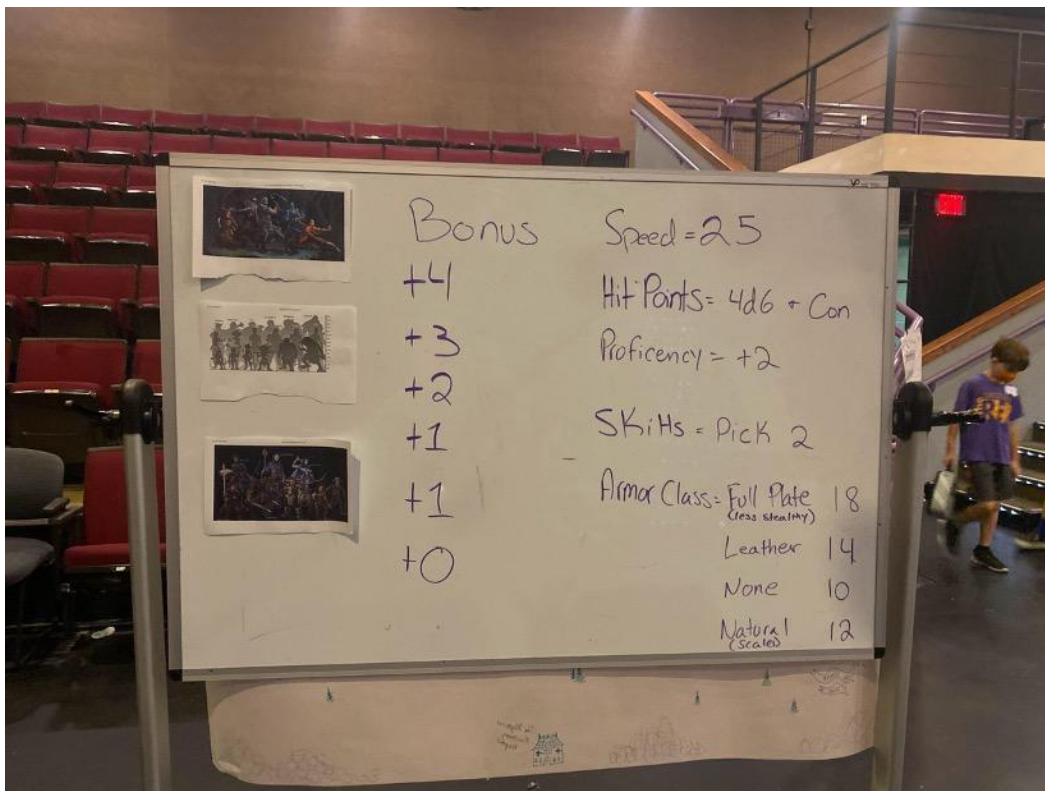


Figure 5 Whiteboard displaying ability bonuses to choose from and other needs for filling out a Dungeons and Dragons character sheet.

Another critical section for players to keep in mind when considering their placement of ability score bonuses is the "stuff I can do" section. These are some guiding actions players can choose from when

trying to devise a solution to the problems they may face. While players can narrate any action they feel an appropriate reaction to the situation, this list provides examples of what they *can* do. The items in bold, such as animal handling, arcana, and investigation, relate to the ability scores listed above. An example of how these came into play during one of our "Mischievous and Mayhem" adventures was when the students came across a dragon egg as it hatched and released hundreds of baby dragons. The students immediately asked if they could each keep a dragon as a pet. I instructed the students to roll for animal handling, an action tied to a character's wisdom ability. Many of the students decided to make wise characters and passed the check, but two of the students did not. This led to a lovely moment where one student asked to cast a spell to persuade two more baby dragons to join the crew alongside their friends.

At the time, I felt it was important to focus on how backstory can be reflected through game mechanics, but as I think about this more, there is an argument to be made for the opposite. If students were asked to fill out their character sheets to establish an understanding of the character's base abilities, they could justify those choices by writing a backstory. This process may help students who are struggling to integrate their learning with abstract creative thought but can process how numbers reflect a character's abilities. Another option may be for students to be offered both the free writing prompts and the character sheet and decide for themselves what would work best.

### **Narrative Arc - Dungeons and Dragons**

Once we had a setting and characters, it was time to begin adventuring! Our essential question at this point in the process was, "how do we collaborate to solve problems and tell a story together?" To begin our exploration, I placed three help wanted posters with pull tabs on a "quest board" in the classroom. Each poster was associated with one of the available quests written by the facilitators, who would also act as the Game Master (GM). Students were asked to take a tab from whichever quest they

wanted to accept, thus allowing the students to step into their roles as adventurers. Once each student had accepted a quest, they had now formed groups of 5-6, called adventuring parties. Each adventuring party was led by one teaching artist and supported by one apprentice. We started playing after lunch and continued to play for the remaining two hours before our end-of-day procedures. Since the three groups were split up to allow for better focus, I could not observe the other two sessions. However, from our facilitator debriefing session after the students were picked up, it seemed like we all had similar experiences. In each of our sessions, the students remained engaged the whole time. We each noted a clear line of growth in the students' abilities to support each other in scenes and find comfort with improvisation. While there were some students who wanted to control the scene more than others, having a turn-based role-play mechanic allowed each student to speak up and be heard. Eventually, we noticed that as the adventure progressed and the students remained immersed in their story, they began to stop looking to the game facilitator to direct dialogue and instead engaged directly with each other, in character, to collaboratively solve the problems they faced. Much of the learning they showcased mirrors the principles of improv -- "yes and," listen and respond, and make your partner look good. We could have done an entire camp on improv basics, but instead, students' investment and *care* in what they were learning promoted an active and subliminal space to *learn how to learn* these skills on their own. As we were playing, I do not think they internalized what they were doing so well, but in our end-of-day reflection, I asked the students first to think about their favorite moments in their adventures; I then asked them to consider what made those moments work. As they reflected, I watched them begin to make connections and *integrate* their in-game successes into their theatrical learning. With just a bit of reflection, they could connect that by listening to their other adventuring party members; they found ways to make their scenes play out. They began to understand the importance of listening to their scene partners on stage and using their given circumstances to inform their character choices.

While this was very exciting to watch unfold, my favorite in-game moments invoked Fink's category of *human dimension*. Like the moment mentioned earlier with the two players who didn't initially receive baby dragons, Dungeons and Dragons has a unique ability to reinforce students' emotional development. Another example of this occurred just after the students in my adventure were given a task to secure a giant egg for the Fairy Queen. Once the students received their mission, one student asked if he could cast a spell and teleport the whole party to their given location. I told him he could do that, but teleporting so many people so far may be difficult. I instructed him to roll an arcana check, and sadly his roll and added bonus, an additional value added to player rolls according to the character sheet, did not meet the determined difficulty class. I asked if he would like to try anything else. He thought about this and said, "What if I bring us as far as I can, and we find another way from there?" The group agreed, and after I narrated that with his choice to conserve his energy, he successfully cast the spell, and with a flick of his wand, the group found themselves in an area of the forest guarded by the "Wordsmith Warlock." In order to get past, they would first have to defeat the warlock in a tongue-twister battle. This led to a very fun activity in which the students used their real-world skills to work together and devise a tongue twister that was too difficult for the Warlock (me) to repeat. Later, this moment made its way into our finalized script and received sizable laughter from the parent audience. When so much of learning is spent rewarding success, it is hard to remember the value of failure. In this moment, the spell casting student could have gotten frustrated and given up; instead, he took a moment to think about what he had learned from his roll and found a new solution which led to an exciting opportunity. My favorite lesson Dungeons and Dragons teaches students is how to find success in failure.

## Expertise Bias and Facilitating Tabletop Role-play Pedagogy

In my excitement to invoke a tabletop role-play-based pedagogy, I had yet to consider that most people are unfamiliar with the common mechanics of TTRPGs. This created a unique challenge for me as I not only had to teach the students how to play the games for their devising practice, but also had to teach my co-facilitators how to run the game. Below is an excerpt from my adventure lesson plan, which I distributed to my co-facilitators to guide them in their individual adventure planning.

When writing a small adventure, it is important to consider what the goal (end result will be). Everything else in the adventure is really listening and improving along with the thoughts, ideas, and desires of your players. A good adventure includes intrigue, stakes, a compelling plot quest, problem-solving, and maybe even a battle! Here is a template with some resources that may help you when running your game.

### Part 1: Getting the group together

- **Read Aloud:**
- Since the storm, you have noticed small sources of colorful, wispy light making a trail through the forest. Their strange appearance has been intriguing to you, and you have been following their trail ever since you first gazed upon their hypnotizing light. After months of following the wisps, you find yourself at the foot of the red clay mountain, and as you look around, you see others showcasing the same focused gaze toward the sky, though you cannot see what they are looking at.
- **Describe your characters and what your wisps of light look like.**

The end portion in bold is meant to be said aloud as a request to the players to help them establish themselves in the narrative. The full adventure lesson plan guide is in my appendix for further engagement.

Shown in the narration above, I facilitated an adventure beginning at the Red Clay Mountain. Each of the facilitators chose a different area of the map as a setting for their story so that each adventure would be new and engaging for student sharing. Though each lesson plan included pre-written plot points such as the opening narration, a mission, some challenges to overcome, and a reward for their work, the dynamic moments between and the methods of reaching each plot point were determined by the actions of the players. Additionally, each facilitator added their own flare to their adventure due to its flexibility for teaching styles. Brian chose to strictly use puzzles for problem-solving and promoted creative solutions in his facilitation, while Joni used on-your-feet acting games to help students embody the challenges she presented in their adventure. Even though both of my co-facilitators had never played a game of Dungeons and Dragons before, they each familiarized themselves with the basic rule sets and used their creative agency to tell a story collaboratively. Since then, Joni Newman wrote to me about her experience co-facilitating "Mischief and Mayhem" and has given me permission to share her reflection. She writes,

I was pretty excited about the concept of the D&D camp when you first explained it to me, but also very skeptical that I could actively contribute to it at all. D&D always seemed like a world with way too much vocabulary to learn and too much immediate improv. As an educator (and artist), I know that one of my weaknesses is the desire to step in too early and try to control and shape the situation into something specific when I should just let it breathe or go with the flow a bit more, so watching you (and Bryan) lead your groups was really helpful for me in seeing that I *do* have some of the basic skills needed to do something like this with my students. I think it's one of the reasons why I think it's such a good idea—if you know how to shape a story with a beginning, middle, and an end—you can do this activity. (Newman)

The full version of her reflection can be found in my appendix. As she goes on, she shares that she is using this TTRPG pedagogy in subsequent residencies and has found it to continue to be highly engaging and effective.

One of my key takeaways from facilitating "Mischief and Mayhem" and going through the peer feedback I received is that using immersive theatre of the mind methods of TTRPGs may be intimidating at first, but once the game begins, students and teachers are able to ignore performative pressures caused by the vulnerable nature of improv and devising. Instead, they find comfort in activating their imaginative immersion and can stay present, listen, and respond to the work created by their ensemble.



## CHAPTER FOUR: LEVELING UP

After the success of the "Mischief and Mayhem" summer camp at Orlando Family Stage, I decided to explore the possibility of transitioning the course from a camp format to an in-school workshop series. Having facilitated several in-school workshops through my work with Orlando Family Stage, I've found immense joy in working with schools to enrich teaching and learning through arts-integrated learning. As an artist, I value multiple perspectives and collaboration in my work and strive to emulate those qualities in my teaching by exposing students to varied learning methods. In-school workshops act as a tool to encourage students to engage with their work beyond the curriculum and begin to practice Dee Fink's category of *integration*.

As I began considering the structure of "Magic and Mayhem" as an in-school workshop series, I was immediately confronted with the reality of time constraints. While facilitating "Mischief and Mayhem," I had 5 hours a day with the students to build an ensemble and teach the material. In contrast, in Orange County, Florida, Middle and High School classes range between 50-90 min. Considering this, I realized that I couldn't directly utilize the complex mechanics of Dungeons and Dragons or the multi-step process of *The Quiet Year* as both games took between 1-2 hours of class time each to provide instruction and play through a game session. Similarly, during class time, students were given the entire morning, about 1.5 hours, to craft characters and discern how they might work with other player characters. I wondered how I might still provide the same significant teaching and learning experience while restructuring the course to fit these new constraints.

I decided to seek advice from the education outreach team at Orlando Family Stage. Having been my partner in my first case study, they understood the course goals and could provide guidance on determining a realistic course structure. The education outreach team advised me to develop a 4-7 session course that would meet 1-2 times a week, depending on the school schedule. Additionally, they

advised me to include core subject standards in the course description so that teachers could pitch a multi-disciplinary element to their principles.

With this information, I developed a 7-session workshop series marketed as an active learning style course designed to highlight English Language Arts standards while teaching fundamentals of dramaturgy, playwriting, improv, and acting methodologies alongside artistic collaborators. Instead of directly utilizing the game systems of complex TTRPGs such as Dungeons and Dragons, I decided to develop my own system, designed with a pedagogical framework at its core. Later in this chapter, I present and reflect upon my process of playtesting the mechanics for "Roll for Show," which is a TTRPG system utilized during my second case study at Windermere Preparatory School. Once I finalized the "Roll for Show" mechanics, lesson plans were scaffolded to frame the TTRPG activation with brief discussions to build *foundational knowledge* about the day's subject matter and reflections, which activated Fink's categories of *integration* and *learning how to learn*. By designing gameplay to incorporate pedagogical practices actively, I can spend more time devising through gameplay with the students than lecturing them on new material. The goal being that students learn the material primarily through activation and reflection.

### **Playtesting**

To fine-tune the mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics of the "Roll for Show" game system before bringing it into schools, I worked with a group of interdisciplinary scholars and gaming enthusiasts from the sociological, mathematic, literary, engineering, visual arts, and medical fields. By testing the "Roll for Show" format with this group, I gained insight into how the gameplay felt in real time. We would meet virtually, and I would provide context for the lesson plan material and facilitate the game activation. Participants roleplayed as Florida High Schoolers and provided insightful feedback using the Liz Lerman Critical Response Method. Occasionally, I also facilitated discussions or play-throughs of existing TTRPG systems to garner inspiration from other successful titles such as *Kids on*

*Bikes, Kids on Brooms, and Masks*. Additional inspiration came from a play session of the TTRPG *Lasers and Feelings*, which I participated in during the 2021 LMDA conference, centering research on productions outside the traditional proscenium.

## **Background on Playtesting**

Similar to the workshopping process in new play development, playtesting involves gathering a group of developers to play, provide feedback, and revise new TTRPGs. One well-known approach to playtesting was developed by the creators of *Dungeons and Dragons* in 1975. The current publisher, Wizards of the Coast, continues to pay homage to this process when testing new game features today.

As the first edition of *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* garnered undeniable popularity in the early 1980s, the game creator, Gary Gygax, recognized a call for more. Fans of the game wanted new adventures and mechanics for creative problem-solving. And so, Gygax and his publisher, TSR, released *Dungeon Magazine*, a 30-page hobbyist magazine sent to hobby shops and bookstores. The magazine was filled with adventure hooks, columns on common gameplay questions, and new game features. Most notable, however, was the publisher's opening statement: "we also make allowance for the fact that as the field grows and expands, demands and needs will change. We actively encourage your suggestions, criticisms, or whatever. We can adequately serve you, the gamer/reader, only if you let us know what you like/want" (3) The magazine served as a space for fans to receive new information, but more importantly, it opened a dialogue for collaborative conversations between the players and the creators.

After ten years of dialoguing, the publisher released *Unearthed Arcana*, the first expansion book to the original *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* sourcebook. In his opening dedication, Gygax thanks his friends, family, and colleagues who tested the newly published material, challenged him with questions,

and encouraged him to find the logic and grounding of reality in a made-up world of magic. Gygax's partner, Jeff Grubb, expands on this, stating,

Much of the material within this book first saw the light of day in DRAGON Magazine, but in the time since, has been playtested, questioned, discussed, re-tailored, re-presented, and re-playtested. [...] Everything was checked out with the architects of the AD&D game system; the structure of the system is their baby, and only they know what ideas will fit into it. [...] That finished form, *Unearthed Arcana*, is in your hands now. It is a book that will change the way the AD&D game is played. Enjoy. (4)

In the new play development process, a playwright needs to hear their work aloud to make a first set of revisions. They may ask questions such as, "Does the dialogue naturally flow?" or "Is context missing?" It's then brought to a dramaturg and/or director to help consider the audience's perspective of the piece. Through each step, the playwright continues to revise and recontextualize their work. With each new perspective, the piece is refined until it is ready to be produced. A game designer needs to ask similar questions when developing their new work along with a group of invested playtesters.

### **Playtesting "Roll For Show"**

When structuring the "Roll for Show" game system, I centered my approach on developing a game as a course framework. Therefore, the system's mechanics become a series of lesson plans culminating in a course handbook. When playtesting, I experimented with conceptualizing the game as three parts/learning objectives: world-building and dramaturgy, character development, and adventuring/improvisation. This would be followed by a writing and staging phase, formatted more closely to a traditional theatre class structure. Together, this scaffolding provides a system that results in a collaborative playwriting experience. The sections below outline the "Roll for Show" game system as it was tested and refined through the playtesting process.

## **Part 1: Worldbuilding and Dramaturgy**

When thinking of how to begin the playwriting process, I took the advice of theatre scholar Elinor Fuchs and looked at the play as its own world. In our first session, students are introduced to the artistic practice of dramaturgy. Inspired by Fuchs' article, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play," and the world-building mechanics for *The Quiet Year*, *Kids on Bikes*, and *Kids on Brooms*, students are tasked with utilizing questioning to design a rich world to use as their plays' setting. The questions that guide players through the process are generated from Fuchs's article, and rounds are arranged according to her observations of space, time, climate, and social structure. The entire day-one lesson plan is in the appendix for suggested framing of the activity below with meaningful discussion and reflection.

Table 1 "Roll for Show" Mechanics for Worldbuilding

<p><b>Part 1: Setting a Landscape</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Break the class into 3-4 small groups.</li><li>2. Instruct the groups through the following prompts.</li></ol> <p><u>Narrate:</u> <i>We are going to be designing the setting for our play. But first, we must determine some foundational details to get started. For the next 3 minutes, your groups will work together to decide on 1 natural and 1 unnatural or man-made structure that you will add to our map. Then, we will share them with everyone.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examples of natural structures: Mountains, rivers, lakes, streams, trees, etc.</li><li>• Examples of unnatural structures: Statues, villages, hospitals, dams, etc.</li></ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Walk around the room as students discuss and offer guidance as needed.</li><li>4. Once 3 minutes have passed, have each group determine 1 artist who will draw the structures on the map. The groups will take turns presenting their structures as their artist draws them on the map.</li></ol> <p>NOTE: Leave an empty margin on the left side of the paper for notes.</p>
<p><b>Part 2: Filling in Details</b></p> <p>Once each group has presented their structures, break everyone into pairs (for small classes, pairing is unnecessary) for Part 2.</p>

Narrate:

*For this next part, we will act as explorers, documenting the development of our community. We have lived in this land for as long as anyone can remember, but no one has ever taken the time to create a written history or explore beyond what we already know. That is now our job!*

1. Pass out individual dramaturgy index cards to each pair (index card prompts are listed below). The number of index cards can be reduced to accommodate the class size. The facilitator can choose which index cards are removed.
2. Students will take turns going around the circle and answering the questions on their cards (questions are listed below)
  1. Some cards may ask a student to draw on the map, while others may require a note to be written down on the notes section side of the paper.
3. **Council Round:** During the Council Round, the whole class should be engaged in a discussion centering on the community's development thus far. Students must work as a team to identify any potential story conflicts and determine a project to develop over the course of the next round. To facilitate Council Round discussions, use the following steps.
  1. Ask the students to offer potential discussion topics pertaining to recent developments currently on the map. Then, determine one question or topic of interest to discuss.
  2. Open the discussion to the whole class, allowing each student to contribute either one question or statement.
  3. Conclude the discussion by encouraging the students to find ways to build off of the discussion topics during the next round.
4. **Question Round:** This is the final round of the game. The goal is for the students to develop their own dramaturgical questions by reflecting on the world they have created. In this round, ask the students to share any questions about the world as it is right now. You can write these down and spend the remaining class time finding answers, or use this as an excellent opportunity to consider some plot hooks.

Below are the prompts printed on the Dramaturgy Cards:

**Developing Space**

1	What is the most beautiful space in your community?	Or	What is the most disgusting space in your community?
2	You discover a large body of water! What does it look like?	Or	You discover a large mountain range! What does it look like?
3	What is a natural structure that people are afraid to pass by? Why are people afraid to go there?	Or	What is a man-made structure that people are afraid to pass by? Why are people afraid to go there?
4	A child in the community has made a discovery! What did they find? Where did they find it?	Or	A group has decided to go on a mission. Where are they going? What are they hoping to find?

**Discussion: Council Round**

**Developing Time**

5	How does the community measure time?	Or	Are there stars and planets in your community? What are they used for?
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**Developing Climate**

6	Weather patterns shift and provide a sign of hope. What is the shift? What is this sign?	Or	Weather patterns shift and cause fear in the community. What is the shift? What is happening?
7	What plants grow in our community?	Or	What animals exist in your community?

**Discussion: Council Round****Developing Social Structures**

8	What is the main trade or export of this community?	Or	What event caused this community to become infamous?
9	Who does the community turn to to ask for guidance? What did they do to gain this reputation?	Or	Who is considered the ruler of this land? How is their title determined?
10	What is an activity that unifies your community?	Or	What is a belief that unifies your community?

**Discussion: Council Round**

11	Two members of the community start to argue. Who are they? What are they fighting about?	Or	There is another community on the map. Who are they? What separates your two communities?
12	Someone new arrives. Who are they? What message do they bring?	Or	Someone leaves the community. What message do they leave behind?
13	A recent discovery has been creating some unease in the community. Which one is it?	Or	A big festival is being held to celebrate the rebuilding! What is the main event of the celebration?

**Discussion: Question Round**

Playtesting Reflection:

In initial playtests, this activity more closely resembled the mechanics of *The Quiet Year*. To integrate dramaturgical vocabulary and practices, I changed the framing of each round to reflect Fuch's

dramaturgical observations instead of *The Quiet Year's* seasons. Additionally, players were now grouped into pairs to answer questions, and there were far fewer questions to be answered. The choice to break students into groups of two was influenced by the dynamic models provided by Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek in the MDA Framework. In reviewing their work, I identified that the mechanics for round progression and turn count are the primary factors in determining a game's length. So, having 52 turns containing two parts would add up. Similarly, during initial playtests, I discovered that *The Quiet Year's* turn mechanic, in which player turns are broken into two parts, was another key contributing factor to the game's runtime. Florida Secondary School classrooms are typically set at a student-to-teacher ratio of 25:1. If every student took one turn, which, according to *The Quiet Year's* rule book, takes about 3 minutes each, the game would run at least 75 minutes in length. Still too long. I decided to restructure the turn count so that students would be placed in pairs, and each pair would receive 1 turn. With this adjustment, the game now runs 45 minutes with instruction. By having fewer questions to answer and shorter turn rates, the game would have a shorter run time, allowing more time for a dramaturgical reflection on the mood and tone of the world.

During playtests, however, I fell into another pitfall shown in the dynamic models. Having gaps that inhibit player involvement sinks dramatic tension and agency in a game, thus impacting player engagement. To resolve this, I turned to the simple and collaborative structure of the *Kids on Bikes* game system. *Kids on Bikes* focuses on collaboration and communication as critical factors in world-building. To establish a consensus, the process begins with a group discussion determining the tone and time period to use as guidelines before answering individual prompts. These mechanics emulate the framework of creating a community agreement, a common activity to develop a cooperative environment in devising spaces. I chose to continue to build on the potential of a game working as both a playwriting tool and a day-one ensemble exercise by removing the action phase of a turn and replacing it with discussion rounds that called for everyone's involvement. By incorporating frequent moments of



group impact, the game has shifted further into an aesthetic of fellowship while invoking the immersive practice of establishing shared knowledge to provide a sense of agency.

### ***Part 2: Character Development***

Character development plays a significant role in any storytelling platform and is especially true in tabletop roleplay. In these games, the players act as both performers and audience members as they immerse themselves in the story being developed. To ease a player into the process of long-form improvisation, the pressure of thinking of a character on the spot is removed and replaced by a character sheet. The "Roll for Show" character sheet is formatted as a multi-page worksheet that presents varying approaches for creating a playable character. There is no specific way to fill out the sheets, but players should complete the entire packet to get a complete picture of their character. The presented order mirrors the approach utilized by the students of "Mischief and Mayhem," beginning with developing a backstory influenced by Uta Hagen's six steps and ending with character art and a quick reference sheet for gameplay.

Table 2 “Roll for Show” Character Development Worksheet

Roll for Show - Character Development

Student Name:

(Page 1) Building your backstory

In our class discussion, we thought of some of the communities that make up the people and creatures of our play setting. Using the questions below, write a backstory about the character you'll be playing in our playwriting process.

1. Who am I? (name, age, role)
2. What are the circumstances? (What part of the map am I from?)
3. What are my relationships? (mentors, teachers, family, friends, etc.)
4. What is your super objective? What drives you to be an adventurer/explorer? (This should be worded as an “I want” or “I need” statement.)
5. What are your obstacles? (fears, enemies)

Write your backstory below:

(Page 2) **What is Your Role?**

Every hero's journey involves a group of heroes working together to solve problems. Choose one category below, fill in the blanks, and discover your role in the adventuring party!

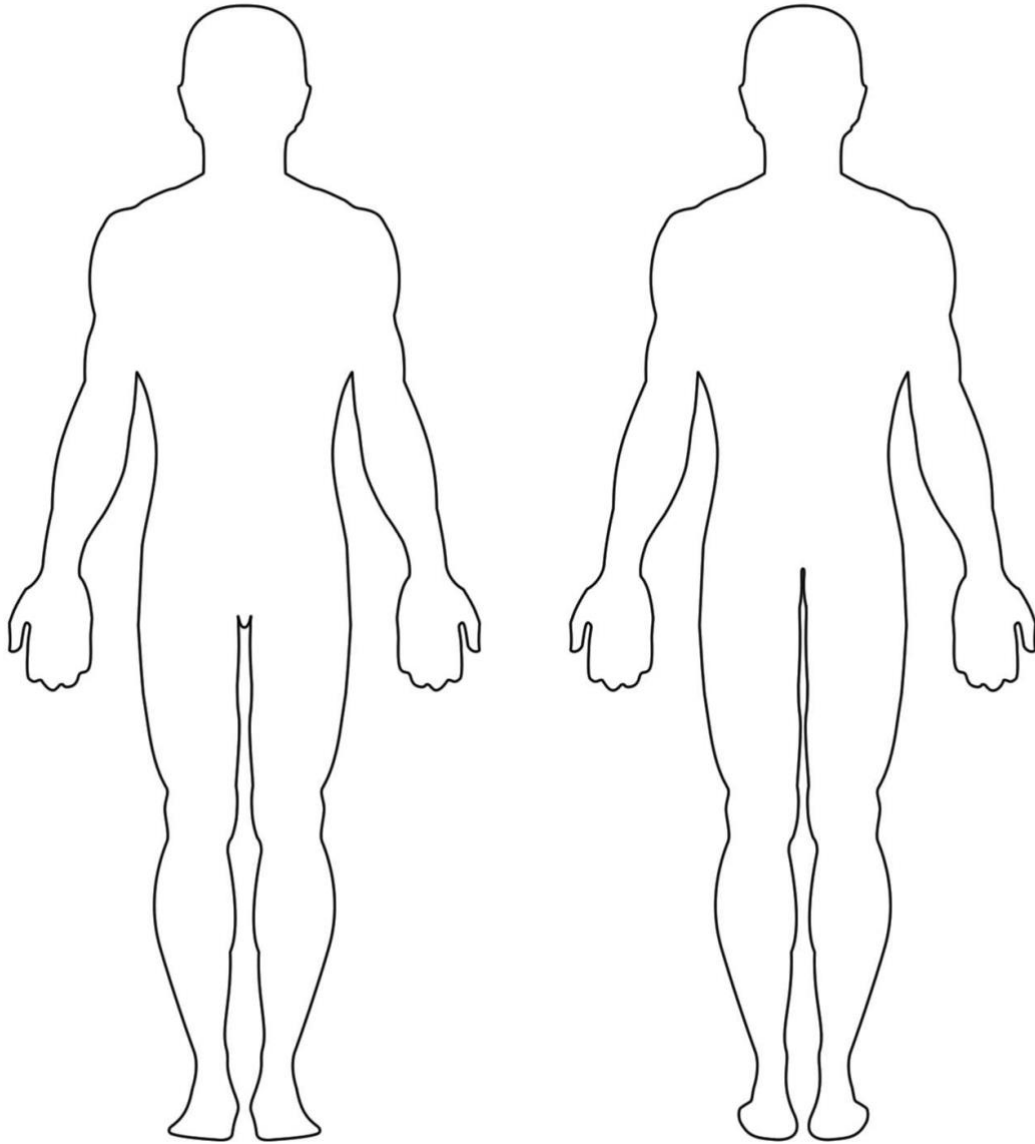
Magic User
How does your magic manifest? <input type="text"/> (emotions, one of the elements, studying, detailed magic, etc.)
<b>Special Skill:</b> Roll an extra die anytime you use your magical ability!

Champion
What type of training do you have? (sword, hand-to-hand, archery, etc.)
<b>Special Skill:</b> You have the unique ability to protect those you care about. In moments of conflict you can choose to either, <u>protect</u> - if your ally will take harm, you can perform an extra action to take the harm instead, or <u>persevere</u> - if you lose in a conflict roll, you can choose to succeed instead. Causing you to take harm and inflict harm.

Connector
How do you connect to others? (healing, performance, trickery, etc.)
<b>Special Skill:</b> You can understand the unspoken in others. Anytime you use an Aid Token to influence someone to help an Ally, one token will count as two.

Engineer
What is your field of expertise? (chemistry, technology, crafting, etc.)
<b>Special Skill:</b> Roll an extra die anytime you use an invention or your area of expertise.

**(Page 3) Draw a picture of your character below:**  
What do I look like? What am I wearing?



**(Page 4) Player Reference Sheet**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Character Name	Age	Role (magic user, champion, connector, engineer)

Super Objective:

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Physical Harm: ○ ○ ○ (○○   Champions Only)
Social Harm: ○ ○ ○

Character Traits (Assign a number to the spaces below. Each number can only be used once)  
 +2 (excellent), +1 (pretty good), 0 (average), -1 (not good at this), -2 (tragic):

Muscle	Movement	Head	Heart	Resilience
Refers to your natural athletic and physical abilities.	Refers to how quick, nimble, or responsive you are to a situation.	Refers to the use of your knowledge or intuition.	Refers to your ability to influence or understand others.	Refers to how well you are able to withstand harm.
—	—	—	—	—

Special Skill (according to role listed above): _____
_____
_____

### Playtesting Reflection:

I asked the playtesting group to fill out the character sheet in their own time and come to the next play session prepared with questions, feedback, and a story they could share. Overall, the playtesting group found the sheet straightforward, with a few exceptions regarding the wording of ability score placement, which refers to where a player chooses to place their available ability bonuses when filling in their character sheet. I also noted that players' approaches to answering the backstory questions varied from long-form writing to short-answer responses to each question. Both versions, however, encouraged players to answer all five questions. Therefore, I determined that organizing responses would be left up to player preference. From our discussion, I decided that introducing the worksheet in class and allowing students to begin working on it then may be most helpful. If students don't complete their character sheet in the allotted time, they would be allowed to take the sheet home and bring in a finished version for the next session.

Another major discussion we had as a playtesting group involved adding an additional "Role," which focused on practical skill sets. Originally, the character "Role" options only included the "Magic User," "Connector," and "Champion." In contemplating the different problem-solving methods in adventurous stories, it seemed like characters are generally akin to using physical strength, studied knowledge, personal connection, or practical skills. Through this reflection, I decided to include the "Engineer" role.

As a final character development activity, I again drew inspiration from *Kids on Bikes*. In the *Kids on Bikes* game system, players take turns defining the relationships between their character and those of the other players. To do this, each player first determines how familiar their character is with the other players' characters. They then answer a series of questions on a provided chart to develop the given circumstances of their relationship. By determining character relationships before roleplay has begun, players become even more informed about the expository dynamics that will be in play while

devising. This is another mechanical way to ensure players have agency during gameplay, leading to a more profound sense of immersion. I wanted the players of "Roll for Show" to have the opportunity to develop these given circumstances, but again, I understood that time would be a factor. In a large classroom, students would not be able to take turns defining their character's relationship with every other player character in the room. Therefore, I playtested an activity that asked players to pair up and answer relationship-building prompts. While playtesting, I had the players try two different prompts:

1. In groups of 2, students will introduce their characters to each other. During this time, they should discuss situations where their characters might work well together and moments where their characters might have conflict.
2. Determine if your characters know each other. If you do - determine how you feel about each other. And pick one reason why you would help this character and one way they have made you mad in the past.  
  
If you don't know each other - Determine a rumor that you've heard about the other person and how that makes your character feel about them.

While I noticed that prompt 1 inspired more active conversations between players, I received feedback that the players could determine more meaningful relationship details in prompt 2. Some playtesters found the guiding questions helpful in directing conversations, while others found that having an option for not knowing each other allowed them to consider how they would react to meeting this character while roleplaying. A general concern arose surrounding the term "rumor," which often has a hurtful connotation in schools. As a group, we brainstormed alternatives and landed on the possibility that a player could offer a rumor about their character rather than their partner devising a rumor about them. This would allow players to determine how they might feel about someone they don't know without the possibility of feeling personal.

### **Part 3: Adventuring and Improvisation**

Since becoming a theatre educator and director, I've noticed that choice-making is a crucial element of an actor's training. Often, the artists I am most impressed and inspired by in a creative process are the ones who are invested in making new choices until they find the one that feels the most right. In tabletop roleplay games, player dynamics center on performing "action" mechanics to navigate in-game problems. For example, in a game of Dungeons and Dragons, actions include but are not limited to attacking, helping, searching, investigating, persuading, etc. When presented with a problem to solve, players respond by narrating the actions their character performs. The success or failure of their actions is then determined by their dice roll, and the story continues to unfold in this way. Similarly, acting, listening, and reacting are each the important tenets of improvisation and scene work.

When determining the mechanics for "Roll for Show," I thought of each rule as a tool for creative dynamic responses. I wanted the rules for facilitating the game to be simple so that other teaching artists would have enough information to run the game confidently but not so much that it would overwhelm a teaching artist who has never interacted with TTRPGs. I also wanted to ensure that the system encourages creative problem-solving and puzzle creation; this way, different play styles could be embraced. Below is the rule set for teaching artists to familiarize themselves with when facilitating a "Roll for Show" improvisation game.

Table 3 "Roll for Show" Mechanics of Adventuring

<p>Ages: 10+ Time: 1 hr session Materials: 2 six-sided die Player to Facilitator Ratio: 7:1 [maybe add a footnote]</p> <p><b>Stakes &amp; Dice Rolls:</b> The dice rolling mechanics for "Roll for Show" were intentionally designed to develop players' awareness of story beats and dramatic stakes to deepen their immersion and investment in roleplay. Using dramatic vocabulary, the metaphysics, usually called "difficulty class," is referred to as "stakes" in this game. Student-players are asked to narrate their character's actions throughout the adventure. Whenever an action that carries a risk of failure is narrated, the facilitator will determine what skill is being activated and set a number that reflects the stakes of taking the proposed course of action. The</p>
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player will then roll two 6-sided dice (2d6) and add their skill bonus to the rolled number. If the player's total number is greater than or equal to the stakes number, then the character is successful in their action, and the player narrates the result. If the total is less than the stakes number, then the character doesn't succeed, and the facilitator must narrate what happens as it relates to the provided dramatic stakes.

The scale for determining the stakes is set on the following chart:

<p>Dramatically Low Stakes (3)</p>	<p>Players must achieve at least a 3 (dice roll+skill bonus) at dramatically low stakes to succeed. The stakes of this situation are casual, and actions are highly likely to succeed by any character with minimal effort. Nothing will change by failing this roll.</p> <p>(example: The group is walking along a path and a player is trying to identify a song that is stuck in their head. If they succeed, they identify the song. If they fail, their frustration continues, but nothing changes.)</p>
<p>Low Stakes (6)</p>	<p>Players must achieve at least a 6 (dice roll + skill bonus) to succeed at low stakes. There may be some tension in low-stakes situations, but a character designed to perform the proposed action should accomplish a task easily. Failing this roll will not significantly change the plot, but there may be minor repercussions for narrative fun.</p> <p>(example: The group must travel a long distance to follow a lead on an investigation. They try to persuade the local authorities to give them a free ride. If they succeed in their persuasion, they have an efficient mode of transportation. If they fail, they must find a new way to travel, but the goal remains.)</p>
<p>High Stakes (9)</p>	<p>Players must achieve at least a 9 (dice roll+skill bonus) to succeed at high stakes. In moments of combat or conflict, the stakes are always at a 9 or higher. High stakes situations make any task difficult to achieve. There is always a repercussion for failing this roll.</p> <p>(example: The group has been ambushed by a band of thieves! The players choose to fight their way through this problem. One player, whose character is a champion, decides to swing her sword at one of the thieves. If she succeeds, she successfully lands a hit on her enemy and deals 1 point of harm. If she fails, her sword valiantly swings but misses her enemy, opening her up to an attack from her opponent.)</p>
<p>Dramatically High Stakes (12)</p>	<p>Players must achieve at least a 12 (dice roll+skill bonus) to succeed at dramatically high stakes. This is generally the climax or big battle of the story. If the stakes are dramatically high, repercussions for failing must be equally dramatic. This has the potential to create a huge shift in the narrative.</p>

	(example: Tensions have been growing in the group, and someone threatens to leave the mission and return home where things are normal and safe. One player tries to persuade them to stay by giving the group a pep talk. If they succeed, they inspire the group to keep moving forward. If they fail, the player decides to follow through and leave, causing the group to make the choice to either chase after them or follow through on the mission with one less member.)
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**Conflict:**

If players choose to engage in conflict, they must role-opposed muscle vs. resilience (or whatever ability they are using to inflict harm). If the attacker wins, then the defender will take harm; if the defender wins, no harm is taken. Whoever wins the conflict will narrate what happens.

- Harm: In this game, characters do not die, but they do receive harm. Any time characters are actively involved in a physical conflict, players are at risk of receiving harm based on the results of the conflict rolls. Players can only receive 1 harm at a time in a conflict. If a player reaches their maximum harm, something dramatic occurs. For example, they might break a bone or pass out. Players and facilitators should work together to determine an outcome that seems appropriate.
- Healing: Characters can recover harm by seeking out an ally to roll an appropriate stakes roll to heal their injury. Connectors are particularly good at this.

**Aid tokens:**

If a player does not meet or beat the determined stakes, they will gain an aid token. Aid tokens can be added to die rolls to meet the stakes. If players wish to aid each other, their characters must be in a situation that the narrative allows for, and they must narrate how they aid their ally.

**Special Skills:**

Each role has a special skill associated with what they bring to a party. It is important for students to become familiar with these skills so that they can use them in important situations.

**Playtesting Reflection:**

In our playtesting session, I facilitated an adventure in which the characters were tasked with uncovering the mystery behind why the leaves on the community's sacred tree were no longer blooming. The characters adventured deep into an underground cavern system and found that a giant creature was blocking the mineral water supply from flowing to the tree's roots, causing the tree to dehydrate. This adventure was set within the community that the group designed in Part 1, and the characters correspond with those they developed in Part 2. Having the shared knowledge of the designed world, the players interacted with their creations and even referenced some non-player

characters (townspeople), which I later portrayed to help deliver key story information. This open and improvisational narrative helped make the world of the play feel full and real within the context of our fantasy.

The reaction to gameplay was primarily positive. Elements expressed of impact included the balanced mechanics of special skills, aid tokens being viewed as exciting and helpful, and having stakes helping players remain "in the moment" with the reality of the game. I did notice that the players scarcely used aid tokens. When I asked about this, I learned that the players were saving tokens in hopes of having them when something highly dramatic happened. Moving forward, I wonder if asking the players to make even more choices will present more opportunities to gain tokens, thus making the tokens less of a precious commodity.

The playtesting group also had a lot of questions for me to consider moving forward. Primarily considerations of responses to harm and social dynamics. Originally, there was no guarantee of a character's safety when they reached maximum harm, and there was no way for players to alleviate harm. As I reflected on this, I decided to add the "healing" mechanics, which require players to interact with each other and allow for healing. I believe that centering mechanics on interactions creates more opportunities for dialogue in roleplay and in the scriptwriting portion post-gameplay.

Character-to-character interaction became a big topic of discussion in our post-game discussion. While playing, one player noticed that the other members of their party were acting socially antagonistic toward each other. This caused the character dynamics to feel less unified. In hopes of inspiring fellowship, the player narrated that his character wanted to gather some food and set up a picnic for everyone. As the facilitator, I shared that the stakes were low (6) because the party would continue the adventure regardless of kinship, though connectivity ultimately leads to better teamwork. I also shared that because his intention was to build a connection, he would add his "heart" skill bonus to the roll. He rolled 4 with his 2 6-sided die and added his "heart" bonus of 2, resulting in a 6 total! Since the party

was in a low-stakes situation (6), he narrated successfully gathering food and convincing the group to take a break for a picnic. This led to a beautiful story beat in which the party got to know a little more about each other and forged a bond before pressing ahead on their adventure. After the game, I wondered how social dynamics might be mechanized in gameplay to promote positive collaborations. Though I'm still not sure how to navigate social dynamics as a mechanic, I think leaning into mechanics that promote social interaction can naturally create socially dynamic responses. I also believe that negative interactions in a story setting can lead to satisfying story beats, and as a facilitator, it is my job to ensure that interactions remain in the imagined world and do not invoke real-world social dynamics, whether positive or negative.

### **Final Thoughts**

Games have long been a pedagogical tool amongst theatre practitioners. They are commonly used as warm-up exercises and to introduce lesson material. The popular game zip-zap-zop, for example, is used as a way to teach choice-making, lines/cues, enunciation, and pace. However, scaffolding a course around one game that develops each session and leads to a final devised product is a novelty in a field focused on play. Therefore, ensuring that this game encapsulates the process of building an ensemble and learning to create together is paramount to my research process. Just as Gary Gygax reached out to friends, family, and fans to improve his work, I seek to continuously develop the "Roll for Show" system to meet the needs of those playing. As I look forward to bringing this version of "Roll for Show" into schools, I wonder how having actual students will affect the in-game dynamics.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: PRINCIPLES OF THEATRE OF THE MIND-BASED PEDAGOGY**

Much of the feedback I sought during the playtesting process focused on the impact of mechanics on players' imaginative immersion. The playtesting group shared that, from their perspective, the mechanics were balanced and simple enough to focus on reacting to the story rather than learning a new game system. That said, it was also acknowledged that the playtesting group primarily consisted of avid TTRPG hobbyists; therefore, there existed a potential for expertise bias. As I prepared to implement the "Roll for Show" course/game system in a high school setting, I wondered how having actual students would affect the in-game dynamics. Furthermore, considering the range in student familiarity that I had with the students of "Mischievous and Mayhem," I wondered how accessible these mechanics would be to students with no previous experiences with TTRPGs. I began to refocus my exploration into identifying methods of facilitation that lead to accessible gameplay for students of all skill levels and, in doing so, identified three key principles to facilitating a theatre of the mind-based pedagogy—rephrasing confusion as curiosity, integrating immersive scaffolding, and ensuring that everyone has a chance to be a hero. In this chapter, I expand upon these principles and provide insight into why they are vital to a successful theatre of the mind facilitation. However, before diving into these principles, I feel it's essential to understand the context in which I structured and executed this case study, as outlined in the next section.

### **Case Study: Windermere Preparatory School**

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this in-school residency was brought to fruition with help from the education staff at Orlando Family Stage. After sending over a completed pitch in early fall, Orlando Family Stage contacted a few schools they thought might be interested in being a pilot

program. By late September, I was put in contact with the head of Windermere Preparatory School's drama department, and soon, a date was set to start a weekly workshop session with their Introductory Theatre Class. Windermere Preparatory School is a Nord Anglia Education international boarding school. With more than 80 schools worldwide, Nord Anglia boasts a curriculum influenced by a blend of internationally recognized programs offering a truly comprehensive and highly individualized education. Coming in to collaborate with the students on a workshop centered on creative agency fit right in with the school's objective.

There were, however, some significant obstacles to consider when working with a heavily international population, principally that many of the students were English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. With a system that engages so heavily with language through improvisation and playwriting, I quickly realized the oversight that my own bias caused. I decided to reach out to the classroom teacher to see what level of language assistance her ESL students currently need and sought to incorporate tools that may actively help the students. In my correspondence with the class instructor, she shared her concerns regarding the level of interaction displayed by the class thus far in the semester. She reiterated that this class was highly introductory level with theatre (9th and 10th grade), and some students struggled with English. Additionally, many of her students came from countries that are more structured and reserved in education settings. Therefore, she found encouraging them to speak up in class difficult. Finally, she mentioned that the students open up more when doing physical exercises. However, they are very resistant to improv, and she had recently given up on teaching verbal improv in favor of refining their pantomime skills.

It was clear that this would be more of a challenge than I anticipated. That, however, was not going to deter me in my work. I am passionate about using TTRPGs as an immersive teaching tool because their innate ability to uplift many of the challenging elements of theatre that the classroom teacher shared had been significant student inhibitions. When sitting around a TTRPG table,

improvisation is broken down into its core values: listening, responding, and building. Furthermore, language and culture are fluid in a world designed by multiple people working together. By identifying and regularly implementing the principles of theatre of the mind facilitation listed above, I found myself less concerned about the challenges of this specific class population and instead remained a mindful collaborator in the playmaking process.

### **Let your Students be ~~Confused~~ Curious**

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the first day of the "Roll for Show" in-school residency introduces the art of dramaturgy. In the lesson plan in the appendix, you will see that I use Lenora Inez Brown's definition of dramaturgy, which is found in the introduction to her book *The Art of Active Dramaturgy*. She writes, "Production dramaturgy is the art of taking the critical thinking tools developed to dissect a dramatic text's structure or form and use this information to actively transform art (a production or a play) by posing questions that inspire creativity." (Introduction) It is the practice of "posing questions that inspire creativity" that is at the core of the structure of the first day's lesson. We begin with a free writing exercise in which students have 3 minutes to answer the prompt, "What are the rules for a good story?" Once the 3 minutes have passed, the students are asked to share their responses. This exercise is straightforward and generally garners similar responses. Students cite having a clear plot, relatable characters, and an exciting hook as requirements for a good story. Next, I ask the class to reflect on their responses and consider what questions they asked themselves when trying to determine their rules for a good story. When I proposed this question to the students of Windermere Prep, I initially received confused looks. In traditional classrooms, students are asked to memorize and regurgitate information. Rarely are they asked to consider their methods for arriving at an answer. I repeated the question, "When you thought about what makes a good story, what questions did you ask yourself? How did you arrive at these rules?" I watched the students consider this, and after some time, they responded with several different tactics for arriving at their responses.

Too often, I have noticed that students are content with giving up when challenged in their work and respond with, "I'm confused," rather than taking time to comprehend what they are confused about. The ability to evaluate one's understanding and create questions of curiosity are levels of critical thought that lie at the top of Bloom's taxonomy and are typically reserved for college-level education. But if we go back to Chapter 3 and consider Dee Fink's synergistic approach, these levels of critical thought can be encouraged in earlier learning. This is why beginning with dramaturgy is a vital piece of scaffolding in the collaborative playmaking process. By learning to craft questions that inspire creativity, students are developing a practice for asking open-ended questions and exploring the possibilities rather than settling for a single "correct" answer.

For example, below is a picture of the setting and lore document created by the students in our world-building activity. The world they created was filled with magic and wonder, and by the design of the game, our exploration left the group with more questions than answers.

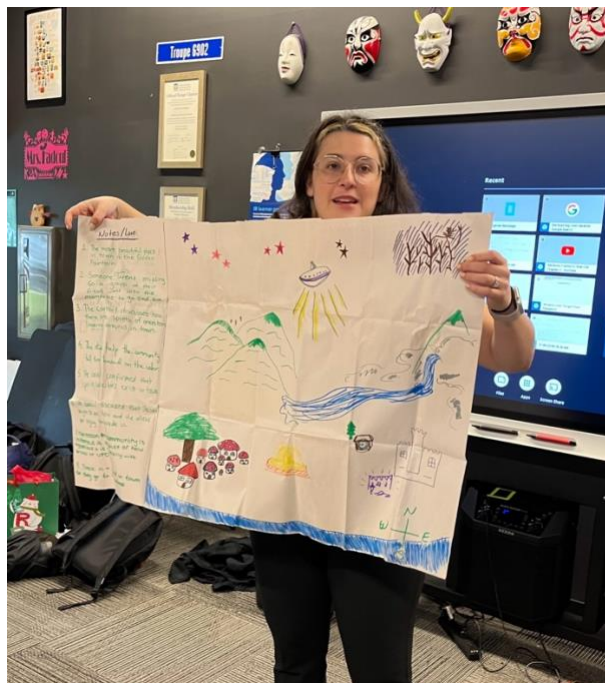


Figure 6 Myself leading class at Windermere Preparatory School and displaying the world map we created as we begin rehearsals.



In our post-game reflection, I asked the students to share some elements of the setting that they were excited to explore further. The students burst into sharing conspiracies about the mysterious forbidden forest and the true nature of the Royal Wizard. The energy shifted, however, when a student shared their confusion about who could be considered native to this world. The student's question was a response to another student's final lore addition. The final lore prompt stated, "Someone new arrives. Who are they? What message do they bring?" to which the student stated that modern humans arrived in the magical world and revealed that Jason, a character the group believed was an alien throughout most of the game, was actually a modern-day human. Suddenly, the class conversation was flooded with the phrase, "I'm confused by," which seemed to halt the idea-sharing that had occurred just moments before. As I considered how three words could put such a damper on the conversation, I thought about Liz Lerman's practice of asking neutral questions during the Critical Response Process. Neutral questions are not loaded with opinions, which can put the question recipient in a defensive position. Instead, they come from a space of genuine curiosity and encourage open dialogue. Considering this, I asked the group to rephrase their confusion and replace it with "I'm curious about." This turn in phrasing helped the students recontextualize confusion into dramaturgical curiosities to explore and expand upon narrative inconsistencies through their artistry. The act of rephrasing confusion also inspired me to add an additional "for next week" task for the students to consider; "what questions do you still have about the world?"

When we rejoined for session 2, I opened class with a free writing exercise in which the students were asked to list the questions they had devised over the past week. We then identified the questions that would help us understand our character development better and spent the first 30 minutes of class fine-tuning our collective knowledge about the setting and its culture. In this same discussion, we identified the genre of our story, which provided context for familiar tropes that the students used as a shared baseline for character development. By continuously encouraging curiosity instead of confusion,

students are more engaged in choice-making and holding agency in their work. This, in turn, is reflected in their self-directed work ethic as we get further and further into the process, a mirror of Dee Fink's synergistic approach to learning how to learn.

### **Immersive Scaffolding**

One of my primary concerns in moving from the playtesting group to a high school classroom was the accessibility gap between experienced TTRPG players and students who may be brand new to the form. To combat this, I referred to the methodologies of immersive theatre artists when transitioning audiences from the real world to the show world; in game design, this is referred to as entering "the magic circle." Adrienne Macky, an immersive artist introduced in chapter 2, lays out her guidelines for scaffolding immersive experiences in her contribution to *Experiential Theatres: Praxis-Based Approaches to Training 21st Century Theatre Artists*. Macky advises that when designing immersive experiences, it is vital to consider the perspective of the audience coming in, noting that traditional audiences are generally familiar with theatre decorum and their role as observers. However, when executing an experimental performance, the audience is unaware of the conventions the artist has chosen to break. Therefore, to ease audiences into the conventions of the show world, she incorporates a "tutorial round," which is a standard piece of design in video games. Tutorial rounds incorporate the player's unfamiliarity with the world and game mechanics into a brief, inconsequential instructional playthrough. Tutorial rounds allow players to begin the process of immersion while providing a space for confusion and learning to occur.

When I began facilitating the adventure on day 3 of "Roll for Show" at Windermere Prep, I started with a narratively driven tutorial round. In this round, the students' natural confusion was incorporated into an in-game training sequence. I narrated that the girls had seen a flash of light and suddenly found themselves in a room with a mechanical dragon guarding a horde of adventuring

equipment. Their players had to find a way to defeat the dragon using the skill sets on their character sheets. Instinctually, the players would narrate what they would want their character to do, which allowed me to teach them how to perform stakes rolls. If a person failed, I was able to introduce aid tokens. If a player tried to fight the dragon or if the dragon attacked, I introduced conflict, harm, and healing. By the end of the first adventure session, the students comprehensively understood the game's mechanics while simultaneously developing their characters and party dynamics. In fact, one of our favorite running jokes began in that session and made its way into multiple moments of the final script.

### **Give Everyone a Moment to Be a Hero**

Working with the students at Windermere Prep brought my awareness to Tabletop Role Play's accessibility barrier concerning language and language comprehension. As an avid gamer, I've heard stories of teachers facilitating Dungeons and Dragons clubs who have encouraged ESL students to partner with bi-lingual students who can act as translators. In these situations, the non-English language is worked into the narrative as one of the many languages of the story world, allowing students to play their characters openly without language as a barrier. Windermere Prep, however, is a language immersion school, and students are required to use English in their studies. Because of this barrier, I noticed a lack of verbal participation from students who struggled with English comprehension. In response, I decided to try a more direct approach to my narrative facilitation. I decided to reshape my imagined immersive lens to that of a film camera operator trying to get as many shots of the action as possible for the editor (student playwrights) to decide how to incorporate them in the final draft. I did this by ensuring each student had a chance to answer the question "What do you do?" whenever we reached a call to action. This way, each participant had an opportunity to contribute a narrated action.

For example, early in the adventure, the party split into two small groups to cover more ground. The group that ventured into the forbidden forest eventually got lost in the deepest, darkest depths of

the woods and faced the challenge of sticking together when they couldn't see the space before them. I opened the initial action to the whole group by asking, "What do you do?" I received immediate responses from the students who regularly felt comfortable with vocal initiative. The first student, whose character was named Deliah, tried to conjure some lightning to light their path. Unfortunately, her roll was unsuccessful, and the group remained in the dark. Another student playing the character Luise tried to feel the ground but again rolled poorly, and as a result, she slipped and fell into a hole that seemed to go on forever. Hearing Luise scream for help, Victoria, a third character, tried to feel the edge of the hole and rolled successfully. Victoria chose to jump into the hole to attempt to grab a ledge and pull both her and Luise up. As this was happening, I noticed that their party's fourth and fifth members, Veera and Yoyo, hadn't said anything yet. Both characters were being portrayed by ESL students, and one of the students struggled significantly with English comprehension. I decided to try addressing the girls directly and re-stated the situation, "Yoyo, you can barely see through all the darkness of the forest, but you hear your friends in trouble; what do you do?" I'm unsure if it was the gesture of permission to speak, the slow re-iteration of the narrative, or a combination of the two, but she thought about it and turned to her friend and said, "Don't you have fire magic?" The girl playing Veera perked up and added, "Oh yeah! Maybe I can light the way with a firework in the sky!" Her roll to do so was successful, and soon the girls could see a portal at the bottom of the hole. They all jumped in to see where it would lead, and the action continued. In our reflection on the adventure session, I asked what everyone's favorite parts were to gauge an idea of what moments should appear in the final script. Everyone had something to add, mostly surrounding their character's actions, but this was often supported by their classmate's agreement that each moment was thrilling to imagine. From my perspective as a facilitator, the most important takeaway was that everyone had a favorite moment to share. Everyone had a chance to be a hero!

## Additional Findings

After completing a staged script reading during the final class session, I asked the students to join me in one more reflection. This reflection was framed more similarly to an informal feedback session using Liz Lerman's Critical Response method as the structure. Similar to my feedback process with the playtesting group, I acted as both the facilitator and artist in this session. I began by asking the students for moments of impact, to which one student responded that they were shocked to learn that they had written and performed a 30-minute play. The other students echoed this shock, sharing that they had so much fun it only felt like 10 minutes. Another student shared that collaborating on the narrative and allowing each person to create and portray their own character made the script seem more realistic and individualized. This led to an exciting discussion of how it can be challenging for playwrights to learn to write characters with different voices and perspectives.

I then shared my questions as an artist with the group. I asked them if they found any specific activities helpful in their writing process. I also asked if anything felt like it was missing from their experience. One student shared that she found the character worksheet day boring because of the amount of individual work required. She then added that although it seemed unexciting, she found the activity extremely helpful because it gave her the exposition to make in-character decisions. The desire for more on-your-feet activities was a theme in our feedback session. The week after our tutorial round, I had the students integrate their narrative gameplay into performative sharing by staging a brief recap of the previous play session. This activity not only helped students visualize the story they imagined, but it also reinforced crucial story points and allowed students to begin devising dialogue and blocking options early in the process. Additionally, the students who struggled to participate vocally due to language processing found the on-your-feet recaps a helpful way to physicalize the story in a manner that became much more accessible and memorable. Moving forward, I plan to incorporate on-your-feet staged recap activities at the beginning of class after each play session. Finally, I asked the students for

their opinions on the process, and while they weren't sure how to articulate it, they shared that it was a lot of fun, and improv games didn't seem as intimidating anymore, which I will count as a major success.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Having facilitated a theatre of the mind-based pedagogical system in various spaces and with varying iterations I have found that this methodology works to deepen students' development of critical and creative thinking skills through gamified immersion. By turning the playwriting process into an adventurous improv game, the student participants of “Roll for Show” and “Magic and Mayhem” learned to collaborate as dramaturgs, playwrights, and actors through intrinsic and experiential play. Furthermore, by informing game mechanics with immersive theatre practices the students were given the structure to create a cohesive story with the agency to claim the work as their own. At the core of all this work is curiosity. If I can encourage you to take one thing away from this experience it is to lead with genuine curiosity and invite those creating with you (students, production teams, ensemble members, community members, etc.) to engage in forming a collective expertise. Since beginning my theatre of the mind-based pedagogical journey, its principles of collaboration, agency, and embracing uncertainty have informed more than just my teaching, it has also informed my artistic practice. As I conclude my thesis, I find it important to outline some additional applications of the theatre of the mind-based methodology expanding beyond the theatre classroom and as an artistic practice.

### Artistic Practice

While workshoping the immersive show *A Dark and Stormy Knight*, as mentioned in Chapter 2, collaboration, agency, and embracing uncertainty became core values in the process. As I have discussed through this thesis, audience agency is a valuable element in creating an immersive experience, but to allow for the audience to have an agentic experience in performance, the actors must have agency and act as open collaborators in the process. Just as the students of “Roll for Show” and “Magic and Mayhem” created their characters as a way of having ownership in the narrative, the actors in *A Dark*

*and Stormy Knight* were a leading part of creating their character's personalities, relationships, and backstories. By giving the actors agency in their character creation and backstory they understood their characters at a foundational level, and therefore could reasonably react as they believed their character would. While collaboration on character is a best practice for any interactive theatre piece, it was especially important for *A Dark and Stormy Knight* because the finalized script had a purposefully blank scene that relied on required the audience to determine the course of action. Caro Murphy calls this creating heart-shaped holes, meaning that the scripted characters should have needs that can only be filled by the audience participants. In this case, the script has a heart-shaped hole and asks the characters and audience members to form a genuine connection and collaborate in real-time. The actors and I spent a large amount of rehearsal time holding dramaturgical discussions about the characters and what they represent in the world of the play, and I encouraged them to see the characters as an extension of their creativity. We also focused our time attempting as many different audience responses as we could imagine and began to find comfort in the presence that uncertainty requires. Through this collaboration, the world of the play felt complete even though we never truly knew what would happen.

As I have been writing and working, I continue to notice the influence of the theatre of the mind-based pedagogy on my directing process. Through leading with curiosity, I found that I strive to create a space that asks questions and explores the wide breadth of answers to form a collective expertise between myself and my collaborators. For example, when associate directing Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* alongside Director Julia Listengarten the rehearsal structure felt very similar to the "Roll for Show" game structure. We would begin most rehearsals with a movement exercise led by movement director, Christopher Niess. In these exercises actors would activate and give shape to words, themes, and sections of text through collective movement and breath, building a physical vocabulary and giving shape to our play world. Somewhat similar to building a setting. We would then transition into an open discussion. Julia or I would ask big open-ended questions to the



room about the text to engage in a thoughtful exploration. These discussions were open for engagement with the full ensemble, meaning anyone and everyone in the room. I have learned that a good question is often followed by deep contemplative silence. Embracing contemplative silence is now extremely valuable in my process.

One question we repeatedly came back to centered the staging of the opening scene, which we all understood to be the creation of the universe. We explored what that creation looked like, sounded like, various theologies associated with creation, and even nothingness. At times this approach felt overwhelming or redundant, but what was occurring was the formation of a collective voice and an understanding that translated into something understandable, but undefinable.



Figure 7 Actors in *Metamorphoses* performing the opening scene. Photo by UCF College of Arts.

As a dramaturg that connection through agency and shared expertise happens through connecting the audience with the artistic process. While working as a dramaturg for the University of Central Florida production of *Peter and the Starcatcher* by Rick Elice. The play is an adapted work from Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson's *Peter and the Starcatchers* series and focuses on telling the origin story

of Peter Pan and the iconic characters that inhabit J.M. Barrie's Neverland. In production meetings, we discussed how the passing of this story from Barry to Barry and Pearson to Elice contributed to what the director termed its' pastiche aesthetic. The script felt like a love letter to theatre, storytelling, and the suspension of disbelief. As rehearsals went on, I watched the show's pastiche magic grow as the primarily non-moving set seemed to transform into multiple ship decks, an ocean floor, a lush tropical island, and a beautiful lagoon filled with starstuff. The driving force bending reality was the Viewpoints-style staging through which the ensemble of actors became doorways, stairs, and even fly rails! Though the story was physically being performed in space, it had an aesthetic of theatre of the mind due to the actor's sincere commitment to play. As a dramaturg on the project, I wanted to invite the audience to experience the collaborative nature of our process and engage them in activating their sense of play.



Figure 8 Actors in *Peter and the Starcatcher* at UCF portraying Black Stache and his pirate crew. Photo by UCF College of Arts.

To do this, I set up a lobby activity inspired by the core mechanics of the "Roll for Show" dramaturgy exercise used for setting creation. As audiences entered the lobby, they were invited to contribute to a map of Neverland by grabbing a prompt and responding to it by drawing on the large piece of paper that would become that night's map. Each performance had its own map that began as a large blank piece of paper and became a representation of the audience's collective imagination. I would love to say that by engaging with the lobby activity, the audience was able to deepen their connection to the performance. Unfortunately, I did not survey the audience to record such a correlation. One observation I made, however, was that as audience members engaged with the activity, I and my co-facilitators noticed a growing sense of playfulness with the activity itself. In later performances, my co-dramaturg mentioned that she felt the maps reflected the energy the audience brought with them each night.



Figure 9 Maps of Neverland designed by the various audiences of *Peter and the Starcatcher* at UCF

## Beyond the Theatre Classroom – Arts Integration

The “Roll for Show” game system is primarily designed for theatre classrooms. That said, the game system can easily be utilized as a Language Arts creative writing assignment. Just as the students in a theatre classroom develop a play through creating a setting, filling it with characters, and playing through an improvised adventure, the students of a Language Arts classroom can utilize the “Roll for Show” structure to write a short story. Growing research suggests that “integrating the arts into non-arts subjects correlates with a host of positive outcomes for students, including engagement in learning, academic achievement, and deeper thinking dispositions.” (Hardiman) In her contribution to *Mobile Brain-Body Imaging and the Neuroscience of Art, Innovation and Creativity*, education scholar Mariale M. Hardiman cites a four-year study performed in partnership with Chicago Public schools in which six public schools integrated an arts-based curriculum and were compared to six control schools sharing a similar student demographic. The final report of the study showed that the “arts-integrated schools produced higher scores on state assessments and narrowed the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students.” (pg. 199) This connects back to the parallels found between Dee Fink’s Taxonomy for Significant Learning and the TTRPG storytelling mechanics. As I continue to engage with the possible applications of theatre of the mind and TRPG-based pedagogies, I plan to expand this work beyond just the theatre curriculum. Companies like foundry10, a Seattle-based research company that seeks to expand how we currently think of learning through research, programming, and philanthropy, have already started this work through their game *Endless Blue: A Tabletop RPG*. *Endless Blue* is a TTRPG aimed to teach students principles of marine science by immersing them in tabletop role-play. In the game, students assume roles as oceanographers, navigators, marine biologists, underwater photographers, and more as they play through scenarios based on real-world adventures. Adventure topics include deep sea exploration, wildlife rescue, marine archeology, and any other ocean issues the facilitator wants to explore further with their class. Instead of magic and swords, students use cutting-

edge marine science technology to collaborate on solving problems and conducting studies, all through theatre of the mind. Currently, *Endless Blue* is going through rewrites to simplify its original rulesets and enhance accessibility, a common hurdle in pedagogical game design.

### **Final Thoughts**

In Chapter 4, I compare playtesting to the new work development process, but as I consider the reflections presented throughout my thesis, I realize it's not a perfect comparison. Most often, plays are workshopped with the goal of being published and produced. Once published, plays rarely go through consequential edits. In contrast, the world's most popular tabletop role-play game, Dungeons and Dragons, has undergone at least six different iterations since its first release and expects to publish its newest edition sometime in 2024. In the same way that Dungeons and Dragons and other TTRPGs continue to collaborate with players to create an enjoyable and agentic theatre of the mind experience, I intend for "Roll for Show" to be responsive to the classrooms it's played in.


I have already begun to revisit the course structure for a collaborative playwriting residency I am facilitating at Lake Highland Preparatory Academy. At the time of my writing, I have restructured the first day of the course to focus on genre, tone, and trope as a way to build a shared vocabulary of common story forms. This shared understanding of form has made conversations about inspiration, aesthetics, and plot points easier to integrate into session 2 allowing them to create a more cohesive setting for their play. I've also included an embodied exercise that works to explore these terms visually to ensure that the material includes physical activities. Finally, I have added a new free writing prompt for day 2, in which the students are asked to craft questions they need to answer during our setting-building game. The student questions did add to the game's run time, but this has had an overall benefit by activating their dramaturgical thinking skills more directly and adding to student agency in their work.

As I seek to continue exploring the defining characteristics of the theatre of the mind-based pedagogy and implementing this work in my practice I find myself seeking answers to new questions that have surfaced through this process. Moving forward I look to explore the following questions:

- 1) What are the best practices in facilitating a theatre of the mind-based pedagogical game system? In my writing, I noted the expertise bias that I had to keep in mind for students learning to play a TTRPG for the first time. Moving forward I wonder in what ways can I make the system accessible for teachers looking to implement this game in their classrooms. I also wonder if there are principles beyond what I listed in Chapter 5 that lead to an impactful experience for students and teachers.
- 2) What is the key demographic for this work? When I first began facilitating TTRPG play sessions with students I was in a classroom of students in grades 3-6. Since then, I have primarily facilitated this work with Middle and High School students. I wonder what school standards hold the most synergistic learning experience. Similarly, I wonder if the “Roll for Show” game system requires learning level adjustments.

As I continue implementing the work and refining mechanics, I am certain my questions will continue to grow. Maybe one day I’ll even write a book about everything I have learned and instruct other teachers interested in implementing this work as an arts-integrated activity. Most importantly, I plan to continue to playtest as part of my practice, making each iteration more engaging than the last. This way, I continue to grow and develop my craft alongside my students.

**APPENDIX A: FIFTH EDITION DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS  
CHARACTER SHEET**



**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®**

CHARACTER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS & LEVEL	BACKGROUND	PLAYER NAME
RACE	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE POINTS

<p><b>STRENGTH</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>INSPIRATION</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>ARMOR CLASS</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>INITIATIVE</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>SPEED</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p>PERSONALITY TRAITS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>IDEALS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>BONDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>FLAWS</p> <p>_____</p>												
<p><b>DEXTERITY</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>PROFICIENCY BONUS</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Hit Point Maximum _____</p> <p><b>CURRENT HIT POINTS</b></p> <p>_____</p>		<p>ATTACKS &amp; SPELLCASTING</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>NAME</th> <th>ATK BONUS</th> <th>DAMAGE/TYPE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>		NAME	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE/TYPE									
NAME	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE/TYPE															
<p><b>CONSTITUTION</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p>○ ___ Strength</p> <p>○ ___ Dexterity</p> <p>○ ___ Constitution</p> <p>○ ___ Intelligence</p> <p>○ ___ Wisdom</p> <p>○ ___ Charisma</p> <p><b>SAVING THROWS</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>TEMPORARY HIT POINTS</b></p> <p>_____</p>															
<p><b>INTELLIGENCE</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p>○ ___ Acrobatics (Dex)</p> <p>○ ___ Animal Handling (Wis)</p> <p>○ ___ Arcana (Int)</p> <p>○ ___ Athletics (Str)</p> <p>○ ___ Deception (Cha)</p> <p>○ ___ History (Int)</p> <p>○ ___ Insight (Wis)</p> <p>○ ___ Intimidation (Cha)</p> <p>○ ___ Investigation (Int)</p> <p>○ ___ Medicine (Wis)</p> <p>○ ___ Nature (Int)</p> <p>○ ___ Perception (Wis)</p> <p>○ ___ Performance (Cha)</p> <p>○ ___ Persuasion (Cha)</p> <p>○ ___ Religion (Int)</p> <p>○ ___ Sleight of Hand (Dex)</p> <p>○ ___ Stealth (Dex)</p> <p>○ ___ Survival (Wis)</p> <p><b>SKILLS</b></p>	<p>Total _____</p> <p><b>HIT DICE</b></p>	<p><b>SUCCESSSES</b> ○ ○ ○ ○</p> <p><b>FAILURES</b> ○ ○ ○ ○</p> <p><b>DEATH SAVES</b></p>														
<p><b>WISDOM</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>EQUIPMENT</b></p> <p>_____</p>		<p><b>FEATURES &amp; TRAITS</b></p> <p>_____</p>													
<p><b>CHARISMA</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>OTHER PROFICIENCIES &amp; LANGUAGES</b></p> <p>_____</p>	<p>CC _____</p> <p>SP _____</p> <p>EP _____</p> <p>GP _____</p> <p>PP _____</p>															



## **APPENDIX B: MISCHIEF AND MAYHEM CHARACTER SHEET**

**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**

CHARACTER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS & LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_ BACKGROUND \_\_\_\_\_ PLAYER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

RACE \_\_\_\_\_ ALIGNMENT \_\_\_\_\_ EXPERIENCE POINTS \_\_\_\_\_

ARMOR CLASS \_\_\_\_\_

SPEED \_\_\_\_\_

Hit Point Maximum \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT HIT POINTS \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>STRENGTH</b></p> <p>BONUS _____ SAVE _____</p>	<p><b>DEXTERITY</b></p> <p>BONUS _____ SAVE _____</p>	<p><b>CONSTITUTION</b></p> <p>BONUS _____ SAVE _____</p>
<p><b>INTELLIGENCE</b></p> <p>BONUS _____ SAVE _____</p>	<p><b>WISDOM</b></p> <p>BONUS _____ SAVE _____</p>	<p><b>CHARISMA</b></p> <p>BONUS _____ SAVE _____</p>

STUFF I CAN DO

---

## **APPENDIX C: ADVENTURE WRITING TEMPLATE**

When writing a small adventure it is important to consider what the goal (end result will be). Everything else in the adventure is really listening and improving along with the thoughts, ideas, and desires of your players. A good adventure includes intrigue, stakes, a compelling plot quest, problem solving, and maybe even a battle! Here is a template with some resources that may help you when running your game.

### **Part 1: Getting the group together**

- The best way to establish a new adventuring party is to have them start in one place and give them a common goal.
  - In many games this would be the, “You are sitting in a noisy and lively tavern when you notice a hooded figure sitting alone in a corner keeping to themselves. Their hooded face seems to turn toward you and they quickly duck out of the back door avoiding your gaze before you can ever see their face.....what do you do?”
- This also sets the tone and central action of the quest.
- **Insert here what brings your party to the same location.**

### **Part 2: The mission**

- Once the team has come together and grabbed onto their plot hook, the next step is giving them their mission.
  - Ex: A nearby witness sees them work together to apprehend the monster rampaging through the town marketplace. Impressed by their quick and skilled team work, the witness reveals themselves to be the Royal Adviser and they want to hire the party for a secret mission. If they accept, they will receive a worthwhile reward.
- This can also work in or be the same as with part 1.
- **Insert the mission.**

### **Part 3: The Obstacles**

- The next thing that makes for a great adventure are the obstacles along the way.
- Consider what traps may lie ahead.
- Are there monsters that guard their path?
- Could anyone be tracking them and trying to stop them?
- Is there a puzzle that needs to be solved in order to enter the treasure room?
- **Include two obstacles preferably 1 puzzle and 1 battle**
  - Monsters Manual
  - Puzzle Suggestions - Riddles, noise puzzles, you can even incorporate acting games, or word puzzles. Get creative!

### **Part 4: The Pay Off**

- After they have completed their last obstacle (let it be epic) the thing they seek should be attainable. Once obtained you can have a time jump or a magic moment that leads to them completing the quest and talking to the person who sent them on the quest in the first place, thus completing their arch.
- **Include a final epilogue.**

## **APPENDIX D: REFLECTION FROM JONI NEWMAN**

Hi, Cory!

I've been meaning to get this to you for ages—feel free to ask any follow up questions or clarifications if you need to. I'm coming off of a nasty head cold but *need* to get this off my to-do list!

I was pretty excited about the concept of the D&D camp when you first explained it to me, but also very skeptical that I could actively contribute to it at all. D&D always seemed like a world with way too much vocabulary to learn, and too much immediate improv. As an educator (and artist), I know that one of my weaknesses is the desire to step in too early and try to control and shape the situation into something specific when I should just let it breathe or go with the flow a bit more, so watching you (and Bryan) lead your groups was really helpful for me in seeing that I *do* have some of the basic skills needed to do something like this with my students. I think it's one of the reasons why I think it's such a good idea—if you know how to shape a story with a beginning, middle, and an end—you can do this activity.

For my groups, we started by talking about the Hero's Journey—I tried to be clear with them that while not *all* stories follow this pattern, that the adventure we were going to create together would probably have story beats that were similar to that pattern. While we were playing the game, I think this helped give them some ideas on both what might be coming so they could act strategically and also to think more omnisciently as playwrights. (I'd hear some of them saying things like "well, if things are too easy, it's not interesting" or "I want to introduce a talisman".)

The game itself is a fantastic guide on setting up the world itself, and also did a really great job of helping me to set up the framework for the adventure that the students eventually took. Both groups gravitated toward establishing stories that were very much "us vs. them", which I thought was interesting, but also definitely provided a really great foundation for storytelling. My first group is in the middle of actually finishing their actual D&D piece. It's been a big learning experience for me—especially on how to corral discussions. We end up with a few of the kids who want to direct all the decisions and others who have a hard time getting a word in. I've also noticed that I should probably have done a bit more work ahead of time to balance out some of the actual "challenges" that we do to help encourage them to utilize the strengths of everyone in the group. I've gotten better at that as the game has gone on. I've also gotten better at letting the dice decide how things go. I still wrestle with how much to step in and control the shape of things. I don't have the benefit of a D&D book guiding the value of difficulty in situations—I think next time I might come up with a basic map for myself on the specific skillsets of each character and coming up with challenges that will help balance out the solutions, and possibly pre-plan out the difficulty of such things. Even if it were something along the lines of "include a challenge that tests

their ability to work together—Nat20 every time they try to work alone, 10 if they decide to work with another person” or “strength challenge, facing some sort of foe, must roll collectively more than 60.” I’ve also enjoyed throwing a few theatre games in there to get them on their feet. (I did one where they had to navigate a dark forest only by listening to the talking pet bird of one of the characters for advice and they had to cross the room without touching any obstacles while blindfolded.)

On the whole, I have really loved this activity, and the theatre where I’ve worked has loved it too. It touches on so many different elements of creativity and I think the end result is going to be really fun. I’ll keep you posted on how things go once we start actually writing the script, but for now—things are going really well and the kids are loving it.

Joni



## **APPENDIX E: ROLL FOR SHOW DAY 1 LESSON PLAN**

## Session 1 - Dramaturgy & Setting

<b>Essential Question</b>	What are the questions we ask a play? How does answering those questions make for an effective story?
<b>Today's Learning Goals:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will become familiar with the goals of the process.</li> <li>• Students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of a dramaturg in the play development process.</li> <li>• Students will work as an entire class to create and agree upon the setting for our adventure.</li> </ul> <p><b>Florida Standard:</b>            TH.912.F.1.1 Synthesize research, analysis, and imagination to create believable characters and settings.</p> <p>ELA.10.C.1.2 Write narratives using an appropriate pace to create tension, mood, and/or tone.</p> <p>ELA.11.C.1.2 Write complex narratives using appropriate techniques to establish multiple perspectives.</p>
<b>Today's Vocabulary:</b>	Dramaturgy; Setting
<b>Materials:</b>	Large Piece of Butcher Paper, Markers, Dramaturgy Index Cards, <i>The Art of Active Dramaturgy</i>
<b>Class Time:</b>	90 min session
<b>Teaching Artist</b>	Cory Kennedy Barrow (may include additional TAs depending on class size. Should hold a 8:1 ratio)

**(00.00)**

### Activity 1 - Introductions

**Introductions** - Once the Teaching Artist has entered and settled into the classroom, they should first introduce themselves and begin introducing the course.

*Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am here as a teaching artist from Orlando Family Stage. Has anyone ever been to Orlando Family Stage before?*

[hold for student responses]

*Great! I'm here today because we are going to start an exciting journey together that will last for the next 6 weeks! By the end of our time together, we will have collaboratively written a play! That might sound intimidating now, but don't worry; we are going to have a lot of fun!*

**(00.10)**

## **Dramaturgy**

In this section, students will be introduced to the field of dramaturgy and have the opportunity to activate it through a setting-building exercise.

### **(15 min) Discussion -**

- **Free writing exercise.** The facilitator should instruct the students to spend the next 3 minutes writing an answer to the following prompt. “What are the rules for a good story?” Students should write down at least three “rules.”
- Once the students are done, ask them to share their name and their three rules with the class. Discuss these answers by asking the following questions:
  - What questions did you ask yourself when trying to determine your three rules?
  - What stories did you think of as examples?

Introduce the vocab term: **Dramaturgy**

*Has anyone ever heard of the work Dramaturgy before?*

[Wait for responses, then read the passage from *The Art of Active Dramaturgy*]

*“Production dramaturgy is the art of taking the critical thinking tools developed to dissect a dramatic texts structure or form and use this information to actively transform art (a production or a play) by posing questions that inspire creativity.”  
(Lenora Inez Brown, introduction)*

*You have already started to become dramaturgs by questioning what makes a good story! Dramaturgs ensure that the world of the show is effectively communicated to the audience and considers the impact of a show on the audience throughout the process. In our process, we are going not just to be playwrights but also dramaturgs. And we are going to start by creating the setting for our play!*

### **(45 min) Activation: Setting Creation**

Materials: Dramaturgy Cards (index), Large Blank Paper, Pack of Markers

Game Run Time: Every turn should be about 1 min - council/question rounds should be 3 min each (~40 min)

#### **Part 1: Setting a Landscape**

1. Break the class into 3-4 small groups.
2. Instruct the groups through the following prompts.

#### Read:

*We are going to be designing the setting for our play. But first, we need to determine some foundational details to get us started. For the next 5 minutes, your groups will work together to decide on 1 natural and 1 unnatural or man-made structure that you will add to our map. Then, we will share them with everyone.*

- Examples of natural structures: Mountains, river, lake, stream, trees, ect.
- Examples of unnatural structures: Statue, village, hospital, a dam, ect.

3. Walk around the room as students discuss and offer guidance as needed.
4. Once 5 minutes have passed, have each group determine 1 artist who will draw the structures on the map. The groups will take turns presenting their structures as their artist draws them on the map.

NOTE: Be sure to leave an empty margin on the left side of the paper for notes.

### **Part 2: Filling in Details**

Once each group has presented their structures, break everyone into pairs (for small classes, pairing is unnecessary) for Part 2.

*For this next part, we are going to act as a group of explorers, documenting the development of our community. We have lived in this land for as long as anyone can remember, but no one has ever taken the time to create a written history or explore beyond what we already know. That is now our job!*

1. Pass out individual index cards with dramaturgical questions attached.
2. Students will take turns going around the circle and answering the questions on their cards (questions are listed below)
  1. Some cards may ask for a student to draw on the map, while others may require a note to be written down on the notes section side of the paper.
3. **Council Round:** During the Council Round, the full class should be engaged in a discussion centering the community's development thus far. Students must work as a team to identify any potential story conflicts that have arisen and determine a project to develop over the course of the next round. To facilitate Council Round discussions, use the following steps.
  1. Ask the students to offer potential discussion topics pertaining to recent developments currently on the map. Then determine one question or topic of interest to discuss.
  2. Open the discussion to the full class, allowing each student to contribute either one question or statement.
  3. Conclude the discussion by encouraging the students to find ways to build off of the discussion topics during the next round.
4. **Question Round:** This is the final round of the game. Its goal is to have the students develop their own dramaturgical questions through a reflection of the world that they have created. In this round, ask the students to share any questions they have about the world as it is right now. You can choose to write these down and spend the remaining class time finding answers, or you can use this as a good opportunity to consider some plot hooks.

Below are the prompts printed on the Dramaturgy Cards:

### **Developing Space**

1	What is the most beautiful space in your community?	Or	What is the most disgusting space in your community?
2	You discover a large body of water! What does it look like?	Or	You discover a large mountain range! What does it look like?
3	What is a natural structure that people are afraid to pass by. Why are people afraid to go there?	Or	What is a man-made structure that people are afraid to pass by. Why are people afraid to go there?
4	A child in the community has made a discovery! What did they find? Where did they find it?	Or	A group has decided to go on a mission. Where are they going? What are they hoping to find?

### **Discussion: Council Round**

#### **Developing Time**

5	How does the community measure time?	Or	Are there stars and planets in your community? What are they used for?
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#### **Developing Climate**

6	Weather patterns shift and provide a sign of hope. What is the shift? What is this sign?	Or	Weather patterns shift and cause fear in the community. What is the shift? What is happening?
7	What plants grow in our community?	Or	What animals exist in your community?

### **Discussion: Council Round**

#### **Developing Social Structures**

8	What is the main trade or export of this community?	Or	What event caused this community to become infamous?
9	Who does the community turn to when asking for guidance? What did they do to gain this reputation?	Or	Who is considered the ruler of this land? How is their title determined?
10	What is an activity that unifies your community?	Or	What is a belief that unifies your community?

### **Discussion: Council Round**

11	Two members of the community start to argue. Who are they? What are they fighting about?	Or	There is another community on the map. Who are they? What separates your two communities?
----	--	----	---

12	Someone new arrives. Who are they? What message do they bring?	Or	Someone leaves the community. What message do they leave behind?
13	A recent discovery has been creating some unease in the community. Which one is it?	Or	A big festival is being held to celebrate the rebuilding! What is the main event of the celebration?

### **Discussion: Question Round**

**(1.10) Reflect**

For the last 15-20 minutes of class, reflect upon the following questions.

- What are some elements of our setting that you're excited to explore further?
- What "rules of storytelling" that we discussed earlier were reflected in the game we just played?

**For next week:** We will start working on characters next week. Start thinking about what kinds of characters you think live in this world.

## **APPENDIX F: PERMISSIONS**



Caro Murphy



22 Jan 2024, 08:23

Hi Caro!

I hope you are doing well and that you're finding joy in your most recent projects. I have loved seeing your posts that engage with your current process!

I wanted to reach out because I'm in the process of finalizing my thesis writing and I have referenced your most recent Proposed Taxonomy of the Immersive Arts. In referencing you and your work I was hoping to include an image of the taxonomy for readers who may not be as familiar with the wealth of immersive content.

I was wondering if I could get your permission to include your taxonomy image. I of course cite and reference you as the creator.

Let me know what you think!

Warmly,  
Cory Kennedy Barrow

22 Jan 2024, 10:59

Absolutely!



I have a most recent image I can send you too



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**APPENDIX G: IRB NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION  
LETTER**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Institutional Review Board**

FWA00000351  
IRB00001138, IRB00012110  
Office of Research  
12201 Research Parkway  
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

**NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION**

March 18, 2024

Dear Corryn Kennedy:

On 3/18/2024, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	IMAGINATIVE IMMERSION: DEVELOPING A THEATRE OF THE MIND PEDAGOGY FOR AN EVER CHANGING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE
Investigator:	Corryn Kennedy
IRB ID:	STUDY00006567
Funding:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRP-251_-_FORM_-_Faculty_Advisor__Scientific-Scholarly_Review.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval;</li> <li>• Updated HRP-250-FORM, Category: IRB Protocol</li> </ul>

The IRB determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should changes outside of administrative ones (study personnel, timelines, etc.) be made. If non-administrative changes are made (design, information collected, instrumentation, funding, etc.) and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination by **clicking Create Modification / CR** within the study.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu). Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Shameika Daye  
UCF IRB

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