Adventures in the Classroom

Creating Role-Playing Games Based on Traditional Stories for the High School Curriculum

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by

Csenge V. Zalka

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Dr. Joseph Sobol, Chair

Delanna Reed

Todd Emma

Harold L. Daniels

ABSTRACT

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The goal of this thesis is to develop a template for turning traditional stories into role-playing games for the high school curriculum. By developing 3 sample games based on Greek mythology, Arthurian legends, and a widespread folktale type, I explored the process of creating games that fit the limits of secondary classrooms and can be used to address specific educational standards. The sample games were tested with groups of high school and college students, and the results of the testing sessions evaluated in a narrative case study format. Feedback from the testing sessions was incorporated in the template, the final product of the thesis project. By exploring tabletop role-playing as a form of emergent interactive storytelling, a connection has been created between traditional storytelling and popular culture with the hope of reaching out to new audiences and introducing a stronger interactive element into storytelling in secondary education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Role-playing games have been a significant part of popular culture since the first publication of *Dungeons and Dragons* in 1974 (Gygax & Arneson). Role-playing is a popular pastime and a subculture in itself and features various subgenres such as live-action role-playing, massive multiplayer online role-playing, text-based online gaming forums, videogames, and tabletop role-playing. These games appeal to young adults as their target group, offering not only entertainment but also a sense of community both within and outside the game world. The game world itself changes from game to game, presenting a variety of options based on literary genres such as mystery, fantasy, science-fiction, mythology, and historical fiction. Players can immerse themselves in any imaginary environment of their choice.

The earliest and most basic genre, and the focus of this project, is called tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG). It is a form of emergent interactive storytelling where a group collaborates in creating a story. The group usually includes a Game Master (GM) and players (for a list of gaming terms, see Appendix A). The GM is responsible for setting the parameters of the game world and acting as the "eyes and ears" of the players in this imaginary setting. Every player has a playing character (PC) in the story that they are responsible for. The GM narrates the story and presents options at certain points where the players can make the decisions their characters would make within the game world. They describe their actions to the rest of the group, and the Game Master describes the results of those actions – this is how the story progresses until a conclusion is reached. Role-playing is not competitive: The group functions as a team, all working towards the same goal, helping each other out and using abilities, personalities, and skills that complement each other. The

only form of competition present is between the group of players and the Nonplayer Characters (NPC) that represent the villains or opponents in the story, their actions narrated by the Game Master.

I have been playing role-playing games for more than 10 years. I spent most of this time in the role of the Game Master, responsible for creating the basic storyline of the game and narrating the events. As a performing storyteller, I am aware that tabletop role-playing is a form of storytelling: A group of people create a story together in real time from first-person narratives that develop based on each other's ideas and the guidance of the Game Master. Role-playing is storytelling incorporated in a game format that appeals to people, not merely through listenership, but through creativity and active participation.

Simulation games have been a part of secondary education for more than half a century; the educational values of role-playing and simulation have been established through research, as will be discussed in the review of literature. However, role-playing games based on traditional stories and storytelling are viewed as entertainment rather than activities with real educational values. Several tabletop role-playing games are based on traditional narratives that are also a part of the secondary curriculum, but none of those games have been published with an educational purpose in mind. Using them in a classroom setting would require significant modifications to fit the secondary curriculum. Classroom activities have requirements such as time limits, number of participants, and learning levels that commercial games may or may not fulfill. Popular role-playing games usually have elaborate and often confusing rules published in series of rulebooks, and just the sheer number of these can be intimidating for anyone who would like to run or play such a game. This project offers an alternative method of gaming that can be learned and adapted in a shorter period of time.

Statement of Purpose

In this thesis project I explore the possibility of creating role-playing games with the specific purpose of incorporating traditional stories in classroom activities for secondary education. The research question of this thesis is: How can traditional stories be transformed into tabletop role-playing games in order to create effective classroom activities that can be used to address standards in literature and social studies?

Following the model of educational simulation games, instead of providing ready-made games I would like to encourage educators to develop their own ideas based on their students' best interest. The goal of this thesis is to develop a template for turning traditional stories (myths, legends, folktales, etc.) into role-playing games compatible with the high school curriculum. To support the project I discuss the benefits and history of role-playing games in high school education, the use of traditional stories in the curriculum, and the general basics of interactive role-playing systems. A separate chapter presents a template for turning any traditional narrative into an interactive role-playing game based on storytelling. I also developed and tested three sample games directly based on narratives that are included in secondary grade readings: one based on Greek mythology (Argonautica), one based on Arthurian legends (Perilous Graveyard), and one folktale (Extraordinary Companions). As well as addressing secondary content standards for literature, these games deal with additional standards such as teamwork, social interaction, and character development.

Methodology

This thesis started as a creative project of game design with an educational purpose in mind. My first step was to create sample games based on educational standards and literature associated with the secondary English curriculum. Researching the values and implementation of these games was the next step in the process.

Because time for the testing of the created sample games was limited, I decided to approach this project as a case study through participant observation. My experiences with creating and testing the games formed the basis of the template presented as the final result, and the testing sessions that I have conducted and actively participated in provided valuable feedback for the polishing of said template. As seen in the research question included in my Statement of Purpose, research through active testing was necessary because it was the only way of evaluating the effect these games can have on players both on the secondary and on the college level. The results had immediate and lasting effects on the sample games and the final template, and also opened up new opportunities for actively implementing the games in the future in both testing environments: East Tennessee State University (college level) and the ETSU University School (secondary grades).

The design process of the sample games also included traditional folkloristic research, mainly through researching variants of certain folktale types and exploring literary sources. This kind of research is not only part of my thesis but also part of the creation template. Game Masters (educators, storytellers, and game designers) creating their own games have to be aware of the importance of conducting research on the traditional narratives they aim to use for games. This ensures that the games will have educational values while still being a form of entertainment and will achieve the curriculum goals they were created to support. Traditional

narratives are best approached through folkloristic research before they are modified in the creative process of game design.

In order to create a coherent system for turning traditional tales into games and embed it in an educational context, I created sample games and documented the process of game design step by step. Using my experiences with these example games, I was able to deduce useful techniques and possible solutions to reoccurring problems in order to make the template not only useful but also easy to adjust to a range of traditional tales.

Once the example games had been created, I piloted them with two groups of players: experienced role-players on the college level and high school students with limited experience in tabletop gaming. I actively participated in all the testing sessions, assuming the role of participant observer. I was the Game Master of all the sessions which provided the advantage of the GM being fully prepared and thoroughly familiar with the game modules but also raised questions about the adaptability of the games that will have to be addressed through further research.

The high school testing group consisted of 10th grade students from the ETSU University School. Three girls volunteered for the test run of the Argonautica and were willing to stay after school to play for a few hours. The game was thus not divided into classroom sessions but played in whole, adjusted to the small number of participants. This testing session was by no means sufficient for the full evaluation of the game module or the educational benefits associated with gaming, but it did provide valuable feedback that has been included in the results of this project. Further gaming sessions incorporated into the literature curriculum are planned for the near future.

The college level group consisted of gamers between the ages of 21 and 26 who had experience with various tabletop role-playing games. I have known some of them previously from classes at the university, while others were invited by their friends. They all volunteered

for the testing sessions and were prepared to provide feedback in the end. The college level testing sessions had no time limits on them so they stretched longer than the school game; they were not divided into classroom sessions, but they did follow the episodic pattern of the game modules.

As a participant observer I was involved in the game process from beginning to end, simultaneously running the games and taking notes on the players' reactions and comments. Feedback was provided in three forms: Through recording the sessions and analyzing the players' reactions through the game; through postgame discussions (also recorded); and through short anonymous feedback sheets including questions about the game and the experience. I used the feedback I received from these two groups to adjust the game modules and create an enjoyable and useful learning experience.

The first chapter of this thesis includes the description of the project. The second chapter includes the review of literature on educational games, storytelling in secondary education, and traditional narratives in game design. The third chapter describes tabletop role-playing as a storytelling activity as well as the advantages and disadvantages associated with role-playing in education. The fourth chapter includes the template itself divided into separate steps. The fifth chapter presents the three sample games. In the conclusion chapter, I reflect on the feedback I received during the testing sessions.

Through combining commercial game design and curriculum design, the goal of this thesis is to apply both methods to create games that contain both entertainment and educational values in order to inspire, motivate, and educate students who participate in them.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This project is specifically based on tabletop role-playing. Whenever the generic term 'role-playing' is used, this is the genre it will refer to. This excludes computer-based games, digital media, and performance-oriented genres of role-playing.

Role-playing is often presented as a synonym or subset of drama. Contrary to popular belief, role-playing may or may not include acting out one's character – many times the events of the game are purely imaginary, and the participants shape the story through their words and creative imagination. Props, costumes, staging, and acting are mostly reserved for a distinct genre called Live Action Roleplaying (LARP). LARP games are not considered in this thesis. As opposed to performance-based classroom activities, role-playing games focus on the creation of narrative as a communal experience within the gaming group rather than performing towards an outside audience.

Reviewed literature includes simulation games as the form of educational activity closest to role-playing. For the purposes of this project I focus on simulation games developed for the social sciences and thus will not include scientific models and physical simulations. For the same reason I exclude computer-based simulation games in favor of "tabletop" experiences where there is direct interaction between participants. Whenever the term "simulation" is used it will be referring to tabletop games designed for teaching social sciences in the secondary classroom.

Role-playing is also an element of several other experimental teaching methods such as process drama and critical inquiry (Beach, 2010; Bowman, 2010). This, however, belongs more closely to theater and arts education, and therefore is less relevant to my current area of study.

The project is limited mainly by time; but I also have to emphasize that the main part of this thesis is the template, not the examples. Because of this I decided to create three game modules (campaigns) based on three types of traditional narratives that are often featured in the high school literature curriculum: Greek mythology, Arthurian legends, and folktales. The original tales were modified in order to create game modules that fit the criteria above.

The main focus of this project is the design and creation of games. Extensive evaluation and research on the effects of these games on the learning process will have to follow in a separate project. Evaluation was used to a limited extent in order to assist the creation of the game template and provide examples of the gaming experience. All testing sessions were conducted by me personally. I am aware that this limits the reliability of the test game results as well as the objectivity of the educational benefits of the games. Because the games have been created by me, I had background knowledge that beginning Game Masters might not have just by looking at the modules. In the future these games will need to be tested extensively by impartial Game Masters to evaluate the transferability of the game modules and explore how well educators can use the template do design games of their own. Further testing is also required to evaluate the educational benefits by testing the knowledge of the gaming groups before and after the games as well as comparing the learning process of gaming groups with classrooms that use more traditional textbook-based methods. This present thesis is a preliminary exploration of methods that will have to be tested in depth in a future project.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because my specific thesis interest – turning traditional tales into role-playing games for high school – has not previously been extensively researched, I gathered publications that deal with separate aspects of my project in order to delineate gaps in this field and to demonstrate how these separate domains of education and culture can be woven together through gaming. Literature relevant to my research was arranged into three overlapping categories: The use of role-playing games in education, storytelling and traditional stories in high school education, and traditional stories in role-playing games. I examined the literature that belongs to these topics separately.

Role-Playing in Education

To the best my knowledge, the method of teaching traditional literature through interactive games has not been considered by educators or theorists. Role-playing, however, has long been part of a different genre of alternative education: *simulation games*. Simulation games are very similar to role-playing games. They involve a group of players and a "game director" who work together to recreate a situation within the classroom and try to solve problems and issues together. It is an interactive form of teaching that can be applied to any field of study.

Simulation games developed from war games and became a part of American education in the 1960s; most of the books and articles dealing with these games were published in the 1970s. Taylor and Walford (1972) divided this first decade of educational simulations into shorter periods: "Acceptance on faith" (innovation and development of

simulation games), "Post-honeymoon period" (games producing negative or inconclusive results in education) and "Realistic optimism" (development of new games and more detailed research) (p. 25-26). Simulation games were first developed for elementary and secondary education and then carried over to the college level (Maidment & Bronstein, 1973; Zemliansky & Wilcox, 2010). It is interesting to note that this is the decade *before* the first fantasy role-playing game, *Dungeons and Dragons*, was published in the USA (Gygax & Arneson, 1974).

Simulation games are usually described as a mix of different educational tools such as drama and role-playing, but most publications either agree that role-playing is a limited element of simulations (Heyman, 1975; Tansey, 1971; Taylor & Walford, 1972) or discuss it as a separate genre altogether (Adams, 1973). Some publications such as McSharry and Jones (2000), however, suggest that role-playing is a broader term that encompasses drama, simulations, and games (p. 73).

Although the systems of role-playing games and simulation games are closely related and both have similar educational values and objectives, there are certain significant differences. Keller (1975) notes that "… simulation is an activity where all the data needed by students to carry out the desired tasks have been provided by the teacher, while role playing requires students to use research skills in data gathering" (p. 573). This is a significant distinction in terms of this present thesis because it focuses on the educational value of role-playing games in motivating the students to do further research. Keller also notes that "While role playing activities take less of the teacher's time to develop, they require more preparation by the students" (p. 573). Depending on the type of simulation and role-playing game under discussion, this point could be argued or reinforced. This project focuses on games that encourage students to do their own research for the games. However, because the final product of this project is a template rather than a finished game, creating the game module,

characters, settings and NPCs for the actual game is the teacher's responsibility, and as such requires extensive preparation, even in a simplified format.

According to other sources the main differences between simulations and role-playing can be observed in setting, competitive nature, the role of teacher, roles played by the participants, and sources for the games. Because many examples and methods for educational game design in this thesis were pulled from publications that deal with simulation games, it is important to note these key differences as represented in the literature.

Adams (1973), Di Giacomo (2003), Heyman (1975), and Maidment and Bronstein (1973) all make the same point about setting: Unlike role-playing games that take place in an imaginary setting, simulation games directly deal with real life issues and situations. They recreate a real social, historical, or political situation on a smaller scale in order to give a chance to students to investigate those problems in the safe environment of the classroom. Many of these games were created to prepare students for roles they might assume later on in real life. While role-playing games also teach potentially useful life skills and knowledge, most roleplaying experiences do not translate directly into realistic situations. For example, students will never have to defeat a hydra in real life; but working as a team to solve the "hydra problem" supplies them with important practice in teamwork and creative thinking.

Simulation games are usually competitive, while role-playing games are based on team effort. As many authors note (Adams, 1973; Keller, 1975; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973), in simulation students are often organized into groups that work against each other, compete to win the game, and obstruct the others' work to re-enact real life social or political conflicts. This form of gaming has different educational values than role-playing; it focuses more on debate and conflict resolution while role-playing puts more emphasis on team values and skills that complement each other to achieve a common goal and overcome imaginary obstacles set in motion by the Game Master.

Another significant difference noted in the literature (Adams, 1973; Betrus & Botturi, 2010; Heyman, 1975; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973; Taylor & Walford, 1972) is the role of the teacher in the group. Simulation games often "run themselves," and only require the teacher to observe and facilitate the experience rather than actively shaping the narrative of the game. In role-playing games the teacher (in the role of Game Master) is responsible for a significant part of the overall experience. I discuss this role in detail later.

Although role-playing is sometimes considered part of the simulation experience, there is a difference between roles in the two genres as well. In role-playing, obviously, the emphasis is on the individual roles and how well the player can think as his or her own character. In simulation games, as Heyman (1975) notes, the roles are often very generic, representing a group or a type rather than an individual, and they are acquired during the game rather than prepared in advance. Because simulations mostly deal with global social or political issues, individuality is secondary to representing ideas essential to recreating those issues (p.12).

There is one more significant difference between simulation games and role-playing games: while role-playing games since *Dungeons and Dragons* are developed by game designers and published with defined sets of rules and background materials, simulation games were mostly developed by the teachers who used them. Even though hundreds of educational simulation games have been published, most publications on simulations include extensive chapters on how to develop one's own adjusted to the curriculum, the class, and the chosen field of study (Adams, 1973; Heyman, 1975; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973; Tansey, 1971; Taylor & Walford, 1972). Teachers have been encouraged to develop their own games and their own ideas, as opposed to following a ready-made game system, and provided with extensive guidelines for designing their own games. This not only reduces the cost of using

games in the classroom but also allows greater freedom for the teachers who know the skills and levels of their students better than anyone else.

Apart from the main values explored in detail by the literature (and that is discussed in detail in the next chapter), there are also a variety of skills than can be acquired or developed through role-playing even if the game world itself is imaginary. Mello (2006) conducted research on the use of knowledge gained from fantasy role-playing games in the real world, out-of-game environment. Her results showed that many gamers used various skills and knowledge such as vocabulary, social skills, mythology, history, research skills, empathy, writing, leadership, and public speaking (p. 187-188). The relevance of her research to my study is that she specifically worked with fantasy role-playing games that are based on traditional stories and imaginary worlds instead of the real-life simulations.

Bowman (2010) organizes roleplaying-related skills into the following categories: personal skills, interpersonal skills, cultural skills, cognitive skills, and professional skills (p. 85-94). Some of her examples are related to role-playing games specifically designed for teaching those skills (military, government, corporation, health care), but she also includes data on the acquisition of skills from fantasy games people play for the sake of entertainment. This brings her results closer to the topic of my thesis.

Botturi (2010) devotes part of his study to the use of *Dungeons and Dragons* for language education; this publication is one of the rare instances when a commercial role-playing game is specifically used for educational purposes. He describes role-playing as experimenting with identities, which is a natural habit of the young adult age group. He also describes how, based on experiences with D&D, teachers can construct modern-day situations where language learners have to use key phrases to achieve their goals. Because the main tool of role-playing is speech, it fits in very well with foreign language education. Botturi also stresses the importance of a compelling narrative to keep the students engaged (p. 364-366).

In terms of this current project the most important part of literature on educational simulations is the creation of games and the methods developed to help teachers do that on their own. By taking the idea of easily designed and adjusted game templates from simulation to traditional story-based role-playing, a new method can be devised for the assimilation of traditional stories into the secondary curriculum.

Storytelling and Traditional Stories in High School Education

It is not the main goal of this thesis to argue for the usefulness of storytelling in general. Role-playing is a special kind of emergent interactive storytelling and also a genre and a culture of its own. In order to use games based on traditional stories in the classroom, the importance and place of those stories in the curriculum already has to be established. Because of this, I only use literature on traditional storytelling in high school education to a limited extent to support the points I make about the games. To avoid confusion, I focus on education in the United States.

The majority of literature that deals with the role of storytelling in high school is not based on documented qualitative or quantitative research; their sources are mostly anecdotal, derived from the personal experience of storytellers or educators. Storytellers base their opinions and claims on their personal practice, and even if evaluation had been included in their storytelling work, it does not always reach the level of scientific research. For this reason literature reviewed here has to be regarded with that background in mind unless otherwise stated.

The least well-researched age group in the field of under-researched storytelling would probably be high school (grades 9-12). De Vos (1991) in her book specifically dedicated to storytelling for young adults notes that high school grades are often represented together with

middle school as "young adult" or "secondary grades" (encompassing students between the age of 13 and 18) (pp. 1-2). However, Feller Bauer (1993) claims that in terms of storytelling telling traditional tales as part of the curriculum is much more widespread in middle school education than later (p. 389-390).

There are two ways traditional stories are represented in high school education: through traditional literature included in the curriculum and through storytelling programs designed for high school audiences. High school reading lists often include Greek mythology, Arthurian legends, Beowulf, Gilgamesh, Robin Hood, folktale, and fairy tale units (mostly Grimm), and a series of contemporary novels based on traditional themes. Certain schools, as illustrated by the example of Eder (2007), also put an emphasis on the preservation of local culture, incorporating Appalachian folktales, Native American myths, etc.

Professional and nonprofessional storytellers performing in schools usually try to connect their programs with the curriculum. However, they have a certain amount of freedom in choosing their tales that allows them to incorporate tales, myths, and legends that are not found on the reading lists. Publications that include sections or chapters on the use of traditional narratives in high school usually list a series of different genres.

As we have noted before, several myths and legends are already part of the high school curriculum. According to De Vos (1991) and Greene and Del Negro (2010) they appeal to young adults because of their more complex storylines, grand adventures, elements of romance, and cultural diversity. Because they cannot be removed from their original cultural context, myths and legends are a good starting point for exploring ancient societies and belief systems, comparing them to each other, and finding them in their modified forms in modern language and literature.

Young adults often view folktales and fairy tales as childish or too simple. However, storytellers can select variants of well-known tales from other cultures to demonstrate cultural

differences and similarities. Literary works based on traditional tales are currently very popular in young adult literature, but in order to understand the layers of meaning, readers need to be familiar with the original narrative. Variants, modernized versions, and fractured fairy tales intrigue young adult listeners and create a connection between tradition and the modern world they exist in (De Vos, 1991, p. 16-17; Greene & Del Negro, 2010, p. 176-178).

Several publications (De Vos, 1991; Feller Bauer, 1993; Greene & Del Negro, 2010) claim that the most popular genre among young adults is the ghost story; many storytellers tend to stick to horror and suspense when they work with this age group. At a developmental stage of emotional mutability, these stories allow the listeners to experience negative emotions such as fear and anxiety in the safe setting of an imaginary world. This is also true for role-playing games: in the same manner as traditional stories of ghosts, werewolves, and vampires, games allow the participants to face symbolic or realistic fears and learn ways of dealing with them.

Urban legends or urban belief tales (De Vos, 1991; Greene & Del Negro, 2010), like ghost and horror stories, often present a darker, mysterious side of reality, which can evoke even stronger emotions through their basic plausibility. These tales allow listeners to face threats and problems that could actually occur in real life, experience the emotions, and think about how they would deal with them.

One of the important traits of traditional narratives noted by both De Vos (1991) and Greene and Del Negro (2010) that ties in with role-playing games is the fact that they present an intellectual challenge to the listeners and encourage complex thinking. Adolescents are at the stage in their psychological development when they can grasp abstract ideas, challenge accepted beliefs, and experiment with new ways of thinking. Stories that work well with this age group are the ones that have complex characters rather than purely good or evil figures and present problems and dilemmas that challenge the listener's creative thinking. Turning

them into role-playing games that allow students to experience them through interactive storytelling can open up new layers of meaning and a more in-depth exploration of traditional narratives.

<u>Traditional Stories in Role-Playing Games</u>

There are several role-playing games based on traditional narratives; using plots, characters, and motifs from these sources allows the players to perceive the game world as a familiar setting. Betrus and Botturi (2010) note that creating "… an interactive instructional game with a compelling narrative and believable characters in a consistent world requires talent and experience. As nonprofessional storytellers, we can rely on old stories or on archetypal figures that have appeal because they awake cultural memories" (p. 41).

In the case of many role-playing games in commercial use, this has already been done. In fact, it could be argued that all role-playing games are based on archetypal characters and traditional motifs to some extent. Using folktales, legends, and mythologies for constructing a game world has always been extremely popular in gaming culture, especially with the fantasy and urban fantasy genre. For the sake of illustrating the importance of traditional tales in role-playing, I compiled a list of games that rely heavily on them and are also directly or indirectly related to the examples chosen for this present thesis.

1. *Changeling: the Dreaming* (Rein-Hagen, Chupp & Lemke, 1995) and its re-designed offspring, *Changeling: the Lost* (Achilli, 2007) are both centered on motifs from folk and fairy tales. In *Changeling* every character is a mythical creature. Participants can select to play satyrs, Sidhe, trolls, pookas, selkies (among many other kinds), or classical changelings (humans who have been kidnapped and raised by the fae folk). These characters

can cross over the line that separates the modern (mundane) world from the realm of imagination. The latter, known in the earlier game as the Dreaming, has different levels: the Near Dreaming (the realm of dreams), the Far Dreaming (the realm of fairy tales, folktales, myths, and legends), and the Deep Dreaming (raw imagination where everything is fluid). Most adventures take place in the first two because it is easier to construct coherent storylines in those settings. Most Changeling campaigns happen either in the mundane world or in the world of tales and legends using characters, motifs, artifacts, and settings pulled straight from traditional tales (Excalibur, Scheherazade, Eldorado, tricksters, etc.). The first edition of the rulebook (Rein-Hagen, Chupp, & Lemke, 1995) also contains a chapter on Joseph Campbell's model of The Hero's Journey. It describes how that model can be used for constructing campaigns for the game, and includes suggestions for each section, noting that following the pattern of traditional narratives will result in a coherent and enjoyable gaming experience that resonates with modern day players on a conscious and subconscious level (p. 91-95). *Changeling*, just as many of White Wolf's other role-playing games, operates within the Storytelling system. This gaming system was developed to lessen the importance of props, dice, and rulebooks in gaming, and put more emphasis on narrative and creativity. The game still uses dice rolls to represent success, failure, and luck, but the importance of turning those technical elements into narrative is emphasized both in the rulebook and in secondary literature (Hindmarch, 2010).

2. *Scion* (Achilli, 2007) has also been created by White Wolf Publishing, but it does not share the setting of the World of Darkness with other White Wolf games (*Changeling*, *Vampire*, *Werewolf,* etc.). In this game, participants play characters who are the children of ancient deities. Depending on the pantheon, these mortal heroes possess various powers, inherited from their divine parent and fight against the forces of evil embodied by mythical

creatures in the modern world. The game requires extensive knowledge of mythology, at least in the pantheon chosen by the player; but it also provides information on other mythologies as the campaign progresses and inspires participants to do more research on them. The appeal of the game is adapting traditional tales into a modern setting and using patterns from mythology in a new and creative way.

3. *Pendragon* (Stafford & Shirley, 1993) is a role-playing game based on Arthurian legends. It mixes legend with history; it retains magic and supernatural beings like dragons, but it also includes settings and characters from the history of the Early Middle Ages. This allows a diversity of options for the players: they can choose to impersonate a character that exists in the original legends, but it also gives them freedom to construct an original character that fits the atmosphere of the tradition. Players follow quests very much like the original knights' quests in Arthurian legends (where the gaming term originated) and create their own story within the extensive world of medieval literature.

4. *Grimm* (Vaughn & Schwalb, 2003) is a role-playing game based on the system of *Dungeons & Dragons* but has its own setting and rules. In this game all players play modern-day mortal children who get pulled into the world of the Grimm fairy tales. The game portrays a dark world full of dangers and emphasizes the darker tones of the unabridged Grimm tales. The system also includes Imagination points that are used for manipulating the fairy tale world though human creativity and bending the laws of folktales to the players' will. The appeal of this game is the players' familiarity with the Grimm tales and the chance to change the familiar plots into something new. It also appeals to gamers who enjoy the darker side of folk and fairy tales.

5. *Faery's Tale* (Sweeney, 2007) is a child-friendly role-playing game based on fairy folklore and tales. It has been created with parents in mind who would like to introduce their children to role-playing games, but it has been played by all ages. One of the main messages of the game system is that the weakest and the smallest can save the day, and strength does not always win – a valuable message for children and young adults. Instead of RPG, the creators call Faery's Tale a 'storytelling game,' and throughout the rulebook one can find quotes about the importance of tales and storytelling. In the game participants play fairy creatures, either bright (pixies, brownies, sprites, pookas) or dark (goblins and fallen fae). The game system and character creation is very simple and easy to follow in order to be child friendly, and the focus of the game is on storytelling. Even though it has been created with younger children in mind, it has the elements and potential for more serious, adult storylines as well.

6. Other popular role-playing games not directly related to my research also contain significant references to traditional tales and folklore. *Dungeons and Dragons*, the first and most popular tabletop role-playing game, is ultimately based on archetypal characters and mythical monsters. Settings are created by the game creators, but traditional elements are used regularly. The influence of folklore is most apparent in the Monsters' Manual, which lists dozens of creatures from world folklore and different mythologies, side by side by the monsters created by the writers themselves (Skip, Tweet, & Cook, 2003). Additional Background and Setting books have also been published based on world folklore. Using the 3.5 edition of the D&D system, a series of rulebooks has been released in electronic format by Dog Soul Publishing under the title *Folkloric*. These settings have been based on Russian, Celtic, Hindu, French, and Nordic folktales and legends, taking famous tales like *Prince Ivan*

and the Firebird and turning them into gaming campaigns complete with characters, settings, treasures, and creatures from the original story (Fiegel, 2005).

7. White Wolf's *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* (WtA) not only builds on traditional werewolf legends (placing them in the context of contemporary world setting) but also pulls in different kinds of oral traditions and shapes them to the game's rules. The Fianna, the band of Irish heroes, is presented as a tribe of Irish werewolves; Fenrir, the wolf of Norse mythology, is the spirit leader of another tribe called the Get of Fenris, and Greek mythology is represented by a tribe called the Black Furies. Myths, legends, and even historical events are explained through the world of the game (Rein-Hagen, 1991).

8. For decades, *Vampire: the Masquerade* (VtM) has been one of the most popular paper-based role-playing games, second only to *Dungeons & Dragons*. It reimagines vampire folklore in a contemporary setting and creates a diversity of vampire clans based on many cultural and folkloric traditions. This is the darkest and most serious of the World of Darkness games and also the one that has received the most critique for dealing with issues like murder, torture, rape, and the occult. Hindmarch (2010) notes that with the recent renaissance of vampire-based supernatural fiction, the game has gone through a revival as well; even though many names and motifs are still based on oral traditions, VtM is ultimately a game with an emphasis on a contemporary milieu. As a storyteller and Game Master, I would definitely not recommend this game for high school settings.

Traditional stories create a structure for role-playing that is easy for beginners to understand and follow. If a game operates by the rules of traditional stories, players can use their knowledge of story to solve problems that the Game Master presents. Bowman (2010)

when talking about role-playing narratives notes, "The content of these narratives often emerges from deep, archetypal symbols cultivated from the wells of collective human experience. Myths, epics, and fairy tales often tell recurring types of stories that appeal to universal aspects of the human condition" Later in her analysis of the subconscious connections of role-playing she also notes that "Role-playing games fulfill the need for modern-day ritual, cultivating the archetypal symbols of myth and providing a co-created social activity for the enactment of meaningful narratives" (p. 13-16). Wells (2009) proposes classroom activities specifically for middle and high school using mythology; she claims that "this dimensional experience imprints their imaginations with deep and applicable human truths." (p. 285). By exploring traditional narratives in an interactive setting role-players can get in touch with these archetypal symbols and unconsciously absorb them through the narrative of the game. Knowing that you are supposed to feed the old beggar, help the trapped animal, rub the magic lamp, not look at Medusa's face, etc. can change the flow of the game story. Using traditional stories for games motivates players to apply the knowledge they have previously accumulated - from readings, movies, storytelling, etc. - in a creative setting.

CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Educational Values

While there are significant differences between simulations and role-playing, the
educational values researched and mentioned in the literature are essentially the same.
Because simulation games for the social sciences were developed for the specific purpose of
education (from elementary school to college), the publications put a great emphasis on the
many ways they can enhance learning and inspire students. Some of the most commonly
referenced advantages are: learning by doing, motivation, development of social skills,
adjusted levels of learning, and the importance of complex understanding. In order to explore
the potential educational values of role-playing games, these aspects need to be discussed in
more detail.

Games encourage "learning by doing" (Adams, 1973; Bowman, 2010; Hertel & Millis,
2002; Heyman, 1975; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973; Zemliansky & Wilcox, 2010).
Simulations require participants to apply their freshly gained knowledge right away instead of
learning it and storing it for later. They learn through active participation, and thus the
information gained is ingrained through immediate practice and application, which leads to a
more permanent form of knowledge. This is also true in the case of role-playing games: By
shaping the narrative and experiencing the imaginary setting and background of their
adventures (e.g. exploring mythical Hellas) participants will remember their experiences as if
they have happened to them, and store them as part of their own memories in a form of
personal storytelling.

The entertainment and challenge provided by games create strong motivation (Adams, 1973; Betrus & Botturi, 2010; Bowman, 2010; Hertel & Millis, 2002; Heyman, 1975; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973; McSharry & Jones, 2000; Taylor & Walford, 1972;). Several publications note that games are fun. McGonigal (2011) makes a very important point about games: Most people see entertainment value and "fun" as the opposite of something useful, like "work." Publications discussing simulation games put a great emphasis on the way the concept of "gaming" motivates students, sparks their interest, keeps them creatively engaged and entertained, and thus attentive through the whole learning experience. The idea of a game also allows the students to feel safe and comfortable and open up to experimental ideas because they are unafraid of real-world consequences. Games can also inspire students to do further research on their own; they are encouraged to ask questions, learn from each other, and explore the connections between the game topic and their studies.

Communal games provide an opportunity for developing social skills (Adams, 1973; Heyman, 1975; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973; Taylor & Walford, 1972). Simulation games, like role-playing games, are group activities where everyone participates. There are no outsiders, no observers, and everyone has a part to play. Students experience social dynamics within the group. Bowman (2010) argues that participants develop communication skills, they learn to compromise, practice teamwork and collective decision-making, and learn how to recognize and deal with emotions that the game evokes. They develop empathy. They also learn how to present their ideas in the most effective way to the group in order to be heard and understood (p. 59-62). A significant part of role-playing and social interactions is character development; it is also present to some extent in simulation games, but as we have noted before, does not figure into the game to the extent that it does in role-playing. Bowman (2010) notes that there are different archetypal characters in every game and different relationships between player and character. The success of a role-playing game is largely dependent on

how confident the players are in their roles, how well they play the chosen role, and how the different roles within the group complement each other to achieve a common goal (p. 163-176).

Games connect several different levels of learning. Di Giacomo (2003) and Taylor and Walford (1972) both mention as a positive aspect of simulation games that students join into the group activity at their own learning level. Students who are more advanced are inspired to learn new ways of applying their knowledge, while others work harder to keep up with the group. Simulation games also allow a wide range of different options in every situation, which means they work with a wide range of different levels and adjust easily to the students' needs.

The topic of complex understanding is also emphasized by several authors (Betrus & Botturi, 2010; Bowman, 2010). Games are systems of rules and often include historical or fantasy worlds that have their own social, political, economic, and cultural systems. Understanding these systems and operating successfully within them requires complex thinking and logic and challenges the players' cognitive skills in figuring out the systems as they go. They inspire a higher level of thinking and more complex methods of problem solving.

<center>Concerns</center>

Publications have also dealt with the negative aspects of using simulation games in the classroom. Some of the concerns and critiques have been addressed by later research while others do not have simple defined solutions but can be managed by teachers on a case-by-case basis. These disadvantages, like the educational values, also apply to role-playing games. The most often voiced negative comments concern time, availability and costs, competitive nature,

escapism, control, and grading standards. Once again, these concerns should be addressed in more detail.

Gaming, especially simulations and role-playing games, takes up significantly more time than traditional lectures or other teaching methods. Betrus and Botturi (2012) claim that one of the most oft-voiced concerns is "fitting" these games into the curriculum (p. 47). Games also require extra time and work on the teacher's part – background research, developing the game, scheduling session, etc. Also, as Heyman (1975) notes, in many schools class periods are too short to include a whole game session in one class, together with the preparations, and one game usually takes up several periods from start to conclusion (p. 19-20). This is also true for role-playing games. To balance out this negative aspect, several suggestions have been advanced. Taylor and Walford (1972) encourage the teachers to adopt a new way of thinking instead of adjusting the game or the schedule: to look at simulation games as a way of deeper learning and detailed exploration of a chosen subject (p. 44-45). Others such as Adams (1973) and Di Giacomo (2003) suggest adopting an episodic format for the games where every session is its own story and the teacher can choose to run as many or as few of the individual mini-adventures as the schedule allows. This latter solution also takes into consideration that some students might miss a session or two, and they would have to be able to rejoin the story at a later time. The simplest suggestion is voiced by Betrus and Botturi (2010): "Test how long it takes to play the game ahead of time" (p. 53). Knowing the time frame the teacher can expect with a set number of players is extremely useful for planning games as classroom activities.

Concerns about availability and costs are also common. Published simulation games range from affordable to expensive, and the same is true for role-playing games as well. This was one of the reasons why many authors encouraged teachers to develop their own simulations (Di Giacomo, 2003; Hertel & Millis, 2002; Heyman, 1973; Taylor & Walford,

1972). Another related concern has been noted by Betrus and Botturi (2010): They warn educators that modern day students might be accustomed to professional games and media, and classroom games designed on a low budget might not appeal to them as much as games they can purchase on their own (p. 48).

Adams (1973) and Betrus and Botturi (2010) voiced concerns over the competitive nature of simulation games and their effect on promoting negative behavioral patterns in order to win. Even though role-playing games, unlike simulations, are not competitive in nature, they still need a certain degree of control from the Game Master, especially in the beginning when players are still getting used to functioning as a team and later on if personal conflicts emerge.

Mello (2006) claims that one of the most often voiced concerns both about simulation games and role-playing games alike is the accusation that they allow players to "escape" into another imagined reality and not face the problems and challenges of the real world (p. 175-176). It is very important in an educational game to bring the acquired knowledge and experiences back into reality so that the game does not only provide a window into another world, but it also has well defined real world uses and benefits. This is why many publications (Adams, 1973; Betrus & Botturi, 2010; Heyman, 1975) put a great emphasis on the importance of postgame discussions.

It is widely believed that simulations and role-playing, like other kinds of group activity, are hard to control and easily result in chaos and noise (Betrus & Botturi, 2010; McSharry & Jones, 2000). They require more control, more multitasking, and generally more work from the teacher to be heard and understood by every member of the group. Heyman (1975), however, notes that "noise does not necessarily mean lack of discipline" and points out that games are based on mutually accepted rules, while classroom order often is not (p. 20).

Grading performance within a simulation or a role-play game is more difficult than grading tests or assignments. They require more flexibility from the teacher and the students alike. Different suggestions have been made on grading simulation games, ranging from self-evaluation (Hertel & Millis, 2002, p. 73-90) and skills acquired and displayed during the game sessions (Keller, 1975, p. 580-581) to not grading at all but attaching additional postgame assignments instead (Heyman, 1975, p. 24-26).

<u>Role-playing as a Storytelling Activity</u>

As it has been mentioned in the Introduction, tabletop role-playing could be best described as an interactive storytelling game. Storytelling plays a dual role in it: it is part of the actual game and then becomes a separate activity after the game when players share their experiences outside the gaming group in the form of pseudo-personal narratives.

Bowman (2010) observes that "RPGs allow individuals to participate in the construction of their own narratives in a group practice of co-creation. […] the story develops through a continual process of involved interaction and creativity on the part of the participants. Thus, the 'audience' of a role-playing game invents the narrative as well as experiences it." (p. 13).

The easiest way to describe role-playing would be to say it consists of a group of players creating a story together by taking turns in telling it. This form of round-robin storytelling is definitely close to role-playing games but lacks the structure of well-defined individual roles within the narrative. Round-robin storytelling (for lack of better term) is usually in the third person, keeping a distance between storytellers and the narrative.

By allowing players to impersonate characters within the narrative, role-playing allows them to experience the story on a personal level and moves the focus from third person

to first and second. This deeper connection to the characters and the imaginary world they exist in enhances the storytelling experience and ingrains acquired information deeper into the player's memory as a personal experience.

The responsibility of keeping the story coherent and moving forward falls to the Game Master (also known in some games as the Storyteller). Using second person narration, the Game Master describes the game world for the players as well as the results of the actions they take in it. While the players are characters in the story, the Game Master is the storyteller. By no means does the GM play against the players – it has already been established that role-playing is not competitive and has no winners (or, rather, everyone wins in the end) – but the GM poses and disposes of all the challenges and obstacles the characters have to face in order to accomplish their goal. The Game Master is the moderator of the gaming group both in and out of character. The GM's responsibility is not only to create the game and make sure the players follow the rules but also to make the experience enjoyable and educational. In order to accomplish that, the GM has to know both the players as people, and their characters. The more personalized the game is the better it works as an experience. However, the Game Master cannot take full control of the story. Improvisation and creative thinking are encouraged in role-playing and has to be allowed within the game in order to make the players feel they are in control of the destiny of their characters and the outcome of the game, the ending of the story. In a form of interactive storytelling the Game Master and the players have to build on each other's ideas in the spirit of "yes, and…" Even though the Game Masters are the ones who plan the storyline of the game, they have to be willing to change that based on the players actions and have alternative options ready to steer them back towards the original goal if they go off on a tangent. Instead of refusing to explore their alternative ideas the Game Master has to come up with alternative means to keep the group on

track without forcing their decisions. Narratives are fluid and easily mutable; a role-playing game narrative is no different.

As we have mentioned before, role-playing is not competitive; however, the outcome of the game is of great importance. If the goal is accomplished, the whole group, including the Game Master, has a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Similar to traditional narratives, game stories have to come to a natural conclusion where the balance of the game world is restored. It has to be noted here, however, that the final goal is not the only accomplishment in the game. The educational and emotional value of the entire game process is just as significant; both the end and the means are equally important in providing a useful and memorable experience. In order to emphasize that, the Game Master is responsible for providing continuous feedback throughout the game, rewarding creative solutions and good role-playing with success in various forms (extra points, extra dice, critical successes and lasting effects within the game world). According to McGonigal (2011) continuous feedback is one of the factors that motivate players to keep playing and make games enjoyable and challenging.

CHAPTER 4

CREATING A ROLE-PLAYING GAME

In this chapter I present the process of turning traditional stories into role-playing games and discuss each major step separately. To create this template I have used my own experience with the creation of the sample games as well as sources that discuss simulations and game design. This process reflects my experience with turning traditional narratives into a role-playing game. Because it is very specific for working with traditional material, it has to be kept in mind that the design process for other kinds of games (board games, computer games, etc.) or other kinds of story sources (original, personal, etc.) can differ significantly and would require a different template. Templates for creating simulation games have been published by various authors (Adams, 1973; Jones, 1985; Maidment & Bronstein, 1973).

I have divided the design process into seven steps: story choice, game system, character options, nonplayer characters, settings, and game module. Each step is discussed in detail below. The structure of the template is as follows:

1. Story Choice: The Game Master selects the traditional narrative that will become the basis of the game. The GM conducts research on the origins and variants of the story.

2. Game System: The Game Master decides on the game system that fits the game story and the needs and experiences of the playing group and proceeds accordingly.

3. Character Options: The Game Master selects playable characters from the original story and creates short profiles that help the players choose and create their characters.

4. Nonplayer Characters: The Game Master selects the most important nonplayer characters from the original story and creates profiles for them. Shorter profiles are also created for monsters and potential combat opponents.

5. Settings: The Game Master conducts further research on the historical and cultural background of the original story in order to add more detail to the game world.

6. Game Module: The Game Master creates a skeleton for the original story, divides it into shorter episodes and scenes, and plans the game module accordingly.

<u>Story Choice</u>

The creation of a role-playing campaign that is based on a traditional narrative naturally has to begin with a story choice. Finding the right story takes significant research on the Game Master's part. For designing a game that fits a high school classroom and curriculum, I have compiled the following criteria:

1. The narrative has to be based on a team effort

Role-playing games are social games; instead of competing for the title of one winner, participants work towards a common goal. The narratives chosen for role-playing have to either present a group of characters with their own distinct personalities and skills or have to present obstacles and problems complex enough to require a team effort and a set of diverse skills possessed by several players. If this criterion is not met, individual players might be pressured to overcome obstacles on their own while others have to assume the passive role of observers. Having passive players in a game threatens that the attention of the group as a whole will be divided due to boredom. This does not mean that every single player has to be constantly announcing in-character actions, but they have to be challenged to participate in the creative thinking and planning phase and actively support the realization of the plans the group has proposed.

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2. The original story has to be a new tale in a familiar setting

In order to possess most of the educational values of games listed in the previous chapter, the best traditional tales to work with are less well-known narratives in well-known settings. Knowing the general cultural background of the game helps the players feel comfortable with the game world and come up with fitting characters, actions, and solutions (e.g. a general knowledge of Greek mythology or the Middle Ages). The game has to be constructed in a way to build on this minimal previous knowledge but at the same time spark interest and inspire further research. If the story itself is too well-known, however, that can present certain problems: Players might try to stick to the original characters and the original plot so closely that their own creativity is limited and they do not look for alternative solutions. There is also a chance they can anticipate everything the Game Master throws at them within the game, and the feeling of anticipation and exploration is diminished. For these various reasons, the tales chosen for gaming should sound familiar but should not be known in great detail to the players. If the Game Master is not sure about the knowledge of the players, he or she is encouraged to discuss it with them before choosing a story.

3. The original narrative has to be episodic or easily divided into individual sessions

This is very important for the sake of keeping time and providing a time frame for the game that is easy to plan for. As it has been discussed before, time is a major issue in implementing any kind of game into a curriculum. Tales chosen for gaming should have short episodes or clear pauses between scenes (for the definition of episode and scene, see the section on Game Module) so they can be divided, and the individual scenes or sessions can be rearranged or left out at the Game Master's convenience – but they still have to lead up to a cathartic ending. In my experience the ideal game has one well-defined opening session and

an epic conclusion – everything in-between is optional and can be adjusted to the needs of the playing group.

4. The chosen story has to have ties to other traditional characters and narratives

In order to inspire further learning and bring the most of the background tradition into the gaming experience, the chosen narrative has to be connected to other narratives of importance through characters, settings, or events. This will draw the interest of players to further research in order to create unique characters and solve problems in the game. This point may sound simple, but it is extremely important: Through these connections one game and one narrative makes it possible for the players to gain a general understanding of the broader tradition the story came from as well as the cultural and historical background. As noted before, contextualized understanding is one of the main educational values of both games and storytelling in high school; it also allows multifaceted knowledge transmitted via the gaming experience.

5. The narrative has to have multiple possible solutions

Playing a game that only has one possible outcome limits the creativity of the players and has a great chance of failure that ruins the gaming experience. Even though they have been created from a traditional narrative, games have to be constructed in a way that allows for multiple possible solutions within the world and the system of the game as well as accommodating the ones the players come up with on their own.

Creating a game like this is easier if one uses several variations of the same story type, as it will be demonstrated in the Extraordinary Companions game: popular folktale types have many variants that can be used to explore different problems and solutions within the same linear narrative. Myths and legends also often have multiple sources and variants; if a story is

only known from one source, it can be adjusted by the Game Master to open up new possibilities.

6. The story has to be age appropriate

This might be understood from the start but has to be stressed: as with storytelling programs and assigned readings, one has to make sure the story of the game is appropriate for the age group of the players. This can be achieved either by choosing a tale (or a variant) that has been previously featured in the curriculum or by editing a tale into an appropriate format.

Once an appropriate story is chosen, the Game Master needs to research it. As it has been mentioned before, it is especially helpful to use multiple variations of the same story to add diversity to the game. Research also helps with developing character options and creating a detailed setting or game world. For example, in the case of the Argonautica sample game, the Game Master not only has to be familiar with the book of Apollonius Rhodius but also elements of daily life in Ancient Greece such as costume, weaponry, food, etc. These details make the game more memorable and add to the learning experience, because in addition to learning about mythology the players also broaden their knowledge in cultural history and social studies. The more extensive the research that precedes the creation of the game, the more detailed the game can be.

It is also useful for the Game Master as educator to create a list of learning objectives before the creation of the game. Depending on what these goals are, and being conscious of them, the Game Master can choose the story that is most useful for achieving them.

Game System

The system used for the game also has to be the Game Master's carefully considered choice, although players can certainly have a say in the matter. If the majority of the group is already familiar with a role-playing system (such as the d20 system *Dungeons and Dragons*, or White Wolf Publishing's "storytelling system"), the easiest thing to do is to create the game around that system. Even if not every single player is familiar with it, the group can be responsible for teaching the basics for the few who are not. The final decision, however, is in the Game Master's hands.

In Appendix C of this thesis I propose and explain in detail a simplified generic game system I have designed for the sample games. During the testing sessions all participants succeeded in understanding and learning this system in 15 minutes or less, which is essential for the limited time available in classroom settings. Game Masters can design their own simple systems based on the games they are planning to play. For example, if a game campaign does not include fighting, a fighting system does not need to be developed at all (however there is always a chance that the players will go off the planned path and get in trouble).

The use of dice has to be addressed here. Role-playing can technically work without dice, solely based on the trust and cooperation of the participants in creating a coherent yet challenging narrative. However, if dice are not involved in making decisions and determining success in the game, elements such as fighting can easily provoke arguments within the group (e.g. "I hit him in the face." "I jump away!" "No, you don't! I'm faster!" "No you are not!"). In addition to representing the element of chance in the game, dice also have symbolic value in role-playing. The image of multi-sided dice (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20, d100) is associated with gaming. Experienced gamers pride themselves in having their own set of dice with colors

and designs they like and pouches or dice bags to keep them in. Rolling a handful of dice adds to the entertainment value of the game. The sample system I designed is based on six-sided dice that can be easily acquired, and no more than 12 of them are needed at any given time.

There are two main topics any basic game system has to address: character creation and combat. Character creation entails the system of skills, abilities, and attributes (the "stats") that describe a character and what it is capable of. Characters use these stats in the game to perform tasks that require skill or talent in some field. Having stats and dice rolls associated with using them allows any task in the game to become a challenge because there is always a chance a roll would fail or result in a critical success. All possible outcomes provide new directions in which the storyline can develop.

Combat is an important part of most game campaigns; games such as *Dungeons and Dragons* include elaborate fighting systems that divide combat into multiple rounds and steps. In games that put more emphasis on the storytelling aspect, combat can lose most of its complexity and still function well because narration takes over the role of dice rolls in detailing the actions and events. For example, instead of rolling dice to determine where a hit has landed, the Game Master can simply say "you managed to hit the dragon on its front leg," or even the player can call out the action before the roll: "I am going to try to hit the dragon on the front leg." Combats that include an extensive amount of rolling, especially if the results are not interpreted in narrative form by the Game Master, can drag out and become boring very quickly. Using more narration can make the system a lot simpler and thus easier to learn and requires less rolling, which saves a significant amount of time for other elements of the game.

Deciding the game system has to precede character creation because character options can include aspects (special abilities, extra skills, etc.) that are tied to the mechanics of the game.

<u>Character Options</u>

Once the original story and the game system are decided, the next step is to compile a list of playable characters or character classes. In most role-playing games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, characters are created based on Class (e.g. Fighter, Bard, Sorcerer) and Race (e.g. Human, Elf, Dwarf) that define their basic stats and then individualized. Some games such as *Changeling* base characters on a race or tribe (Kith) rather than occupation. In games that are based on traditional narrative there is an additional option that is rarely used in published RPGs: playing characters that are featured in the original source.

In the three sample games I have used three slightly different methods for character creation. In the Argonautica game, and part of the Perilous Graveyard, characters are taken from the original source, supplied with game mechanics, and presented ready to be played. In the Extraordinary Companions game, players choose a special power from a list, and build their own character around it. In the Perilous Graveyard and the Argonautica there is also an option for players to create completely original characters that then have to be approved by the Game Master. During the testing phase only a few players expressed interest in this latter option, but they all displayed excitement over the characters taken from the original stories.

Based on my experiences with the testing sessions, players tend to look at the special powers and abilities first and then the profile of the character, even before they read (and recognize) the name. Every previously prepared character needs to have a unique trait and skills or powers to go with it. These show one or more options of what the character will be able to accomplish in the game and what it can add to the team as a whole.

There is a range of character types that together make up a well-balanced team. Even if characters are chosen from the original story, there have to be options for all of these types.

For example, in the Argonautica game I chose to exclude characters that have been featured in the original source, but I kept a wide variety of possibilities in the module. The most common character types are based on archetypal images that frequently appear in traditional stories as well. Bowman (2010) exploring the character classes found in *Dungeons and Dragons*, associates these with archetypal folktale characters such as the Trickster (Rogue) and the Wise Man (Druid) and explores the implication of character evolution and identity alteration, and the significance of character choice as related to the player's own identity (p. 147-154). Howard (2008) also observes the relation between folkloric archetypes and playing characters, basing his work on Propp's list of *dramatis personae* (p. 67-69). Character creation can be a long and complex process that is affected by the player's personality just as much as by outside inspiration such as popular works of fiction; but the starting point can be provided by the main character archetypes the players might feel drawn to. The most commonly referenced character types are:

Fighter: Warriors, Gladiators, Soldiers, etc. These characters are skilled in combat, their most important attributes being Strength and Stamina. They can deal and take a lot of damage, but they are not exceptionally smart or fast. Players with these characters usually assume the role of "tank" within the team, diving first into fights and protecting others. In one of the testing sessions of the Argonautica a player created a female character of Heracles, and from the start of the game to the final conclusion she volunteered to take care of every fight, standing between the enemy and her teammates with her trademark line "I've got this."

Healer: Characters whose main task within the group is to patch up wounds, repair broken bones, cast healing spells, many times even during a fight, standing in the back. They do not deal damage, but they are essential to every fighting character that gets into fights more often than it can regain Life Points the natural way. Healer roles are usually assumed by players who like to stay in the background but still consider themselves essential to the group.

Magic user: Whether magic is actually used in the game world or some characters just possess special abilities, these characters provide the edge the team needs in situations where normal skills and means are not enough. They do not usually deal as much damage as tanks and rarely fight opponents head on, but they have unique talents that are useful for the team. Magic and special powers always come with a set of limitation to balance out the character, so magic users also rely on the rest of the team to protect them and complement their weaknesses. Players who choose magic users usually like creative thinking and finding new and interesting ways of applying their abilities.

Rogue: Thieves, Tricksters, Shape-shifters, etc. These characters do not deal much damage and almost never fight their opponents head on. They are good at sneak-attacks and hit-and-run fighting, dealing small amounts of damage repeatedly while staying out of the opponent's reach. They are also creative thinkers and like to explore alternative ways to seemingly simple solutions. Players who choose rogues usually prefer brains over brawn and like to have a wide range of skills they can use; many of them also like the challenge of playing a character that has obvious weaknesses such as lack of physical strength or low social status. Fighting is usually not their main interest. These characters are weaker but many times possess solutions to problems stronger characters could not solve on their own.

Ranged fighter: Whether Magic Users, Archers, or Snipers, teams usually need characters who can deal damage from a distance. Sometimes Rogues assume this role, and certain fighters use ranged weapons, but many times an archer can be a separate character, taking its place within the group as someone who does not deal as much damage as melee fighters but can deal it with considerable speed and accuracy. Players with these characters usually prefer grace to brute force and skill to physical strength.

Leader or Tactician: Every group needs a leader. These characters can belong to any of the above mentioned types or none of them at all. Leading the group depends more on the

character's (and the player's) personality than skills, and many times the role of the leader is assumed without a formal vote or even a discussion. Good leader characters do not possess complete power over the rest of the group but are still respected enough that they can have the final word in a debate if a decision needs to be reached. In some games the group leader is an NPC (e.g. in the Extraordinary Companions game), but that does not mean the Game Master has to make decisions for the players; in fact, the NPC character in the sample game needs a team because he is foolish and would not survive on his own. During the testing sessions the groups settled on a *de facto* leader who managed both the playing team and the foolish leader, mediating the interactions between them. In other games like the Argonautica where the group of heroes has a well-defined leading character, that character has to be decided on and taken in advance by one of the players. Leaders stand out in every group; it is the Game Master's responsibility to manage the discussion to reach a decision agreeable to the whole group. If the group keeps questioning the leader's authority, that issue needs to be resolved, both in and out of character.

When designing character options for a game, the Game Master has to make sure to leave enough freedom for the players' own creativity and imagination. If the characters are too well detailed and ready, the players will not see them as their own creations, and that takes away from their connection to the game. Giving profiles, suggestions, or unique traits helps with the creation process, but the players have to be able to fill in the blanks on their own to create characters they truly enjoy playing. A well-designed original character is an object of pride among gamers. Even if characters are taken from the original story, the Game Master has to at least consider all changes the players request before deciding if they can be allowed in the game. For example, during the testing of Extraordinary Companions, one player drew the Higher Wisdom power and decided he wanted to make his character a 12-year-old boy from modern times who traveled back to the game world with a time machine. No time

machines are mentioned in any of the folktales, and the world they describe is one of fiction; but as the Game Master I still decided the character fit well into the rag-tag group of "wonderful helpers," in fact, his origins explained his "higher wisdom." In the Argonautica game, players found immense enjoyment in the option of changing their characters' gender, and from many of the male Greek heroes, entertaining and unique female characters were born.

<center>Nonplayer Characters and Mobs</center>

Not all characters from the original story have to be playable in the game. Monsters and enemies are needed to provide a sufficient challenge, and NPCs are needed to fulfill minor roles such as giving quests or providing advice.

There are different types of NPCs: major NPCs have a full character sheet and play a significant role in the game story; they can be friendly or hostile to the group. If there is a chance an NPC will be a recurring character or the solution of a challenge depends on it, it is useful to create a full character sheet for it, as if it was a playing character. Minor NPCs that only play insignificant roles and are ordinary people without any special skill or ability do not usually need stats. If a minor NPC, by some turn of events. becomes a major one (for example, the group decides to bring them along on their journey), the Game Master can work out a character sheet for them later on. Minor NPCs don't require fighting stats; in some cases it is understood that a skilled hero is so much stronger and better at fighting that success is automatic, while other cases the Game Master can improvise stats if a minor NPC ends up in a fight.

All NPCs are played by the Game Master; for that reason it is useful not to have more than one major NPC in one scene. Having too many NPCs constantly present divides the

Game Master's attention and draws the focus of the story away from the group. The players need to be the heroes of the game; everyone else is just a supporting actor. This becomes especially important when the players are part of a bigger group, like in the Argonautica sample game. Even if the group only has three players (like in one of the testing sessions), the Argo needs a full crew to sail, so naturally the rest of the heroes will be present as NPCs. During the tests the Game Master allowed the players to lead the rest of the group; none of the NPC heroes acted on their own, but if the players needed help, they could call on them. The players only called for NPC help if their own efforts failed, and thus the focus of the story remained on them.

Monsters and fighting opponents need a profile, but not necessarily a full character sheet. Because their main purpose in the game is to be fought (and, ideally, defeated) by the playing characters, they only need stats that are related to fighting. In the sample games I developed a short template for monster profiles that proved sufficient during the testing sessions. The Game Master can always modify the stats of monsters to the playing character's needs. If initially opponents prove to be disproportionately easy or difficult to defeat, it is the Game Master's right and responsibility to adjust the numbers. Monsters that are too easily defeated lessen the excitement and challenge of the game; opponents that are invincible frustrate the players.

NPCs and monsters, just as playable characters, provide a chance for further learning. In the testing sessions of the Argonautica, monsters taken from Greek mythology were a point of interest for the players. They could use their own working knowledge of mythology to devise plans for defeating them, and the players who were familiar with the creatures explained their history and significance to the others, thus sharing knowledge within the group. Choosing monsters and opponents from the original story enhances the game experience and adds details that motivate players to learn more about the game world and the

tradition behind it. For example, in the Extraordinary Companions game, the group had to face a group of giants that had been guarding an enchanted princess who was turned into an unknown form and hidden in the giants' cave. One player suggested that the princess might have been turned into one of the giants and suggested exploring that possibility before attacking the creatures; but another player claimed that "this is a folktale, folktale princesses never get turned into giants!" The latter player proved to be right by applying his previous knowledge of folktales.

If the original story does not supply enough monsters or opponents, the Game Master has the freedom to provide additional characters from related traditions. For example, the Argonautica game includes the Clashing Rocks and only mentions Scylla and Charybdis that feature in the Odyssey. To give a choice to the players of the game and add more detail (and challenge) to the adventure, this latter option was also made available in the game module. Most monsters from Greek mythology can make a guest appearance in the game because they exist within the same imaginary world.

<u>Settings</u>

Setting is essential for making the game world come alive. It needs to include details from both the historical and the cultural background of the original story such as maps, weapons used, languages spoken, clothes worn, etc. Some of this pregame groundwork is the Game Master's responsibility and needs a significant amount of research; other parts can be delegated to the players in preparation of the game. Some elements of setting figure into character creation, such as the origins of the characters, languages, or social status. Much as in storytelling, not everything the Game Master researches and the original story reveals will figure directly into the game module. However, the more a Game Master knows about the

game world, the more comfortable he or she will be when improvisation is needed, and that will allow greater freedom for the players to explore. Instead of being linear, the game story will have the possibility to expand and include more of the original tradition, enhancing the learning experience.

Some details that figure directly into the games are:

Architecture: Whether it is a pseudo-medieval setting with castles made of stone or the palace of Knossus with its colorful pillars, architecture defines a significant part of the physical setting of the game. Every time the group enters a building they need to be able to navigate in it. If the building plays a key role in the game, a floor plan might be needed for the group to devise plans and movement; otherwise a general description should suffice. In some cases players already have an image they can start with; when someone says "castle" or even "Camelot", people can imagine the generic outline of the setting or at least the mood and the era, and the Game Master can build on that with more descriptions. Too much description can make the game boring; it is preferable to allow the players to ask for clarification if they want to find out more than the Game Master's short introduction. For example, during the testing sessions the players asked questions such as "does this castle have a courtyard?" or "how many doors does this room have?"

Weaponry: Many characters in the sample games wield weapons. The weapons available for them and the number of different kinds they are allowed to use are directly dependent on the character's Fight and Ranged Weapons stats. There are always monsters or opponents to defeat, and sometimes attempts at peaceful solutions fail. Knowing the basic weapons available in the game world allows the players to prepare for the fight situations and weigh their options beforehand. The existence or lack of some weapons is obvious to most players ("every knight has a sword", "no bazookas in Ancient Greece"), while others have to be negotiated (such as the British wandering swordsman's katana in one of the Extraordinary

Companions test game, where the Game Master required a full backstory from the player, explaining how a Japanese sword came into his possession).

Languages: It is useful to have a common language within the playing group; however, the characters may encounter people on their journey who do not speak their language. The list of most commonly spoken languages can be helpful for players during character creation; it is the Game Master's duty to make sure they choose languages that have a chance of becoming useful during the game. The number of languages spoken in the sample games is defined by the Languages skill; other game systems might use other methods to determine that. Sometimes the group may encounter NPCs who do not speak any of the languages known to them; these scenes are usually a challenge of alternative communication that needs to be managed through creative thinking and visual aid.

Transportation: Like weapons, some ways of transportation are self-explanatory, while others have to be negotiated with the Game Master. In the Argonautica sample game the ship is a given; in the Perilous Graveyard game, horses belong to every knight and their squires. Magical forms of transportation such as the flying ship in Extraordinary Companions are rare and have to be earned during the course of the game. For example, during the testing of the Perilous Graveyard, the wizard character rolled to see if he could enchant a broomstick and use it to fly. Despite the high threshold number, the roll was a success, and a new form of transportation was born.

Even though the setting of the game usually gives a hint to the players about what may be available and what may not, the Game Master can always make sure players have appropriate right ideas about their options to avoid later confusion.

Game Module

As it has been mentioned before in relation to story choice, the game module has to be episodic. This is true for all game campaigns to some extent but gains significantly more importance in a classroom setting. Having clearly separated episodes and scenes makes it easy to stop the game at any given point without breaking the flow. However, episodes have to be connected by one clear story arc. For example, in the Argonautica game the story arc is the mission to find the Golden Fleece and return it to Iolcus. The journey to Colchis and back is a string of shorter episodes that can be included or left out based on the group's needs and the Game Master's decisions. There are fixed points within the story arc that need to be touched upon: the call to adventure, the taking of the Golden Fleece, and the arrival back home. These episodes keep the rest of the game grounded in the original storyline.

Introduction: Games usually start with an introduction presented by the Game Master. This sets the scene and the mood, describes the game world, tells the players where their characters are at the beginning of the game, and builds up to the point where they can start acting within the scene. Introductions have to be short and to the point, but they also have to capture the player's attention and curiosity. As in any good storytelling, the introductory speech transports the players from reality into the imaginary world of the game. When using traditional stories as the basis of a game, the Game Master can draw from the original text for the introduction to create a connection between the game and the original story and give players a taste of how the tale used to be told.

Call to Adventure: Right after the introduction the players will be expecting to find out what their quest, mission or adventure will be. The task does not need to be given (like in the Argonautica), it can also happen accidentally to the group, but it has to be clearly defined and promptly revealed, or the game will get boring and the attention of the players will start to

wander. The Game Master can use an NPC to give the group a task (such as Moscione, King Pelias, or King Arthur) or can allow the group to figure out what they need to do by themselves. For example, in the Perilous Graveyard game once the group witnessed the abduction of Lady Luna and the disappearance of Sir Gawain, they can decide on their own to go search for them without being ordered to do so by King Arthur. Groups that have some experience in role-playing are more likely to take the initiative without being prompted.

Episodes and scenes: The main part of the game between introduction and conclusion is divided into smaller sections called episodes and scenes. For the purpose of this project, I defined episodes as larger and scenes as smaller units within the game story. An episode can consist of just one scene (for example, the attack of the Nymphs of Cius in the Argonautica), or several scenes (for example, the taking of the Golden Fleece, that ranges from the arrival to Colchis through the negotiations with King Aeetes, the fight with the bronze bulls, the fight with the dragon-tooth warriors, the deal with Medea, and theft of the Fleece, all the way to the flight from Colchis). Scenes are also known in some games, like *Dungeons and Dragons*, as encounters. A scene is usually one task, fight, or encounter that the group has to resolve before they move on. An episode is a longer, coherent story unit that can include one or more of these scenes.

When designing the game module, it is the Game Master's task to divide the original story into these units. When creating the sample games, I first made a skeleton outline of the original story, then divided it into smaller parts. Not all parts of the original tale are useful for a game. Some need to be excluded or modified to fit the game world and mechanics. For example, in the Argonautica, the group is supposed to lose Hercules, Polyphemus, and Hylas at the encounter with the Nymphs of Cius. If either of those characters is a PC, obviously they will not want to leave the game, so the Game Master can either leave out the whole scene or provide an alternative path to a solution where Hylas is rescued and no one is left behind.

These modifications can be made in the spirit of the original story but are allowed to stray from it to make the game work.

In the Extraordinary Companions game, several versions of the same folktale have been merged together to create the game story. This created a narrative that does not exist in this form anywhere in the oral tradition but works with the mechanics of the game and provides sufficient challenge to the players as a team as opposed to defeating every obstacle one-on-one. The episodes of the game have been taken from different versions of the folktale and strung together.

Conclusion: In role-playing the game is officially over when the group manages to achieve their goal. Although the highest point of excitement and achievement, the *fiero* (McGonigal, 2011) occurs right after the group has defeated the final opponent or obstacle, there still needs to be a conclusion, just as in traditional storytelling. This can be achieved simply by returning home or describing how life changed after the adventure; it can also end with a promise of more adventures in the future, if the Game Master wishes to continue playing with the group. The conclusion can also include lasting results of the adventures, such as "and now you are the king of this country," or "you kept the flying ship and can travel wherever you want." Usually, when games continue on for new campaigns, playing characters can receive experience points that they can use to learn new skills or enhance the ones they have. These points are distributed by the Game Master based on the achievements of the players in the game. When creating the sample games I kept in mind that they are limited to one campaign and thus did not develop a level-up system for the characters; however, if the same characters happened to be used in a new adventure, the Game Master is free to grant points that can be distributed on the character sheet or add new special powers to the characters.

<u>Before and After the Game</u>

Preparing the game module is not equal to being prepared for a gaming session. Game Masters have to make sure well in advance that everything is ready in order to have an uninterrupted, smoothly run game that will have its maximum effect and learning experience. The game needs to have a setting available (a room with chairs arranged around one table is ideal) and a well-defined time frame for scheduling purposes. Adams (1973) notes that "Before the game is actually played, a brief introduction to it should be given. The general rules of the game should also be discussed as well as those, if any, for specific individuals" (p. 31). In a classroom setting it is useful to have the first class session dedicated to an introduction to role-playing, character creation, and the game world.

The Game Master has to have the game module and blank character sheets prepared, as well as the originally created playable character profiles the players can choose from. Creating characters one session before the game starts allows the Game Master some time to adjust the game module to the group's specific skills and needs. It also allows time for the players to research their own characters and become familiar with them.

Once the game has concluded, a debriefing session can be useful for enhancing the learning experience (Adams, 1973). The players have a chance to discuss their experiences, ideas, and concerns about the game and share them with the Game Master who will need to consider them before another game is played. Follow-up activities, such as the ones I included in the sample game modules, are useful for linking the game to the curriculum and skills such as writing and research. The assignments in the modules are supposed to be an example; depending on the curriculum the game is implemented in and the priorities of the educator, there is a wide variety of postgame activities that can be designed for the specific needs of a certain class. Once the players have developed a comfortable personal relationship with the

narrative traditions the games are based on, they will be more open to in-depth discussions involving related topics within language arts, history, geology, or other fields of learning.

Diverging from the Original Story

As I have mentioned before, in order to fit the format of a role-playing game and to meet the needs and skills of the players, the original narratives have to be modified. Most modifications are made by the Game Master and are based on the story and its cultural background; but it is reasonable to voice concerns over how the narrative created by the players can become significantly different from the original text. Because these games have been designed for high school education and are based on stories that are part of the curriculum, this question needs to be addressed.

It is important to note that the educational benefit of these games is to learn about the original story *through* the game, not *from* the game. They are designed to inspire and encourage further readings and research and introduce the players to the world of the narratives and the cultures they have originated from. Once they have experienced the games they will be open to exploring the original stories the games are based on, or stories from the same tradition. During the testing phase, players (both high school and college level) repeatedly inquired about the original stories both during the game and in the after-game discussions. The most frequent question was "How did they do it in the real story?" which allowed them to compare the events of the story with their own creative solutions. There were also extended discussions before and after the game about the original characters, such as sharing what members of the group knew about Sir Kay's childhood or pooling knowledge about Dionysus and his manifestations on Greek mythology. All of these enable players to learn about the original story from each other and from the Game Master.

In addition to background knowledge, it also has to be noted that game narratives do not diverge from the original story as much as one would expect. During the testing phase players frequently came to the same conclusions that are featured in the original story without even realizing it. In the Argonautica game both groups figured out the way to get through the Clashing Rocks by observing how they moved (by 'observing' I mean asking the right questions from the Game Master). In the Perilous Graveyard game the goal of the game is to put together piece by piece the story of what happened to Sir Gawain while dealing with some of the same obstacles, so the game by default includes a comparison between the group's achievements and the original narrative.

The fact that game narratives do not diverge far from the original stories is partly because the players' options are limited by the game world. If the setting is properly described by the Game Masters and players are reminded of the resources at their disposal, there is a good chance they will come to the same conclusions the characters in the original story did or some variations of them. Because they are not allowed to use resources that do not exist in the game world (e.g. pull out a machine gun to slay the Harpies), they can only work with what have been provided for them by the Game Master even if they come up with new and creative solutions, those will still fit within the general world and rules of the game. If the Argonauts call for divine intervention, they can only call to the Greek gods (even more specifically, the ones they are associated with), and in turn the Greek gods can only do what they are known to be able to do in mythology, the results of the divine intervention will be similar to the stories that already exist in Greek mythology. It might not be that specific god that had been invoked in the original Argonautica (for example, in the test game, Ares provided help to the group at the Clashing Rocks instead of Athena), but it will still keep the players within the limits set by the original story.

Once again, it has to be emphasized that the game does not need to follow the original story word by word in order to have educational benefits. Role-playing games are supposed to help players explore unknown realms of the imagination that have been explored in many forms by many people before. By experiencing the narratives as a personal story, as it has been discussed before, they will have interest in expanding their knowledge on the topic. This way they create a personal connection to the tradition that gave birth to the original stories and will be open to further readings, research, and learning.

Note on Playing with Big Groups

The ideal number of players in a tabletop role-playing game usually ranges from three to eight. An average classroom usually includes considerably more students than that, so the games designed for education have to be adjusted accordingly. Simulation games have to deal with the same problem and authors have proposed various solutions to it. Adams (1973) suggests that "the teacher explain the game to five to six children and then, if others are to participate, have each of these play the game with a group of five or six classmates." (p. 31). This could also work with role-playing games. However, it would require a great deal more preparation on the students' part who are assuming the role of Game Masters. If there are students in the class who have been Game Masters before, the teacher can rely on their experience.

There are also alternative ways of playing with a larger group of people. It is possible to have only a few students play while others observe. It has been noted, however, that role-playing is an activity that focuses on the in-group and not an outside audience and has the possibility of becoming boring for the outsiders. If the teacher decides on this alternative, he or she has to make sure the audience has a task to fulfill instead of merely listening.

Another way of dealing with a large group is to have multiple people play one character. This method can be especially useful if some of the players are experienced with role-playing while others are not. Pairing experienced gamers with beginners allows the students to learn from each other through the process of the game instead of learning from a lecture. At some point in the game they can be allowed to take over the characters from their partners and try their hands at playing.

Although it is not ideal, it is possible to run a role-playing game with a larger group of participants (e.g. a whole class). It requires mutual respect between players and the Game Master in order to give everyone a turn to speak and act and for everyone to hear each other's ideas. A system of turn-based acting can be worked out if necessary, even outside fight scenes, determining an order in which everyone can declare what they would like to do. This system allows the Game Master to pay attention to everyone and make sure all voices are heard.

CHAPTER 5

SAMPLE GAMES

<u>Extraordinary Companions (Appendix D)</u>

This game is based on a folktale type rather than one single story. The type is numbered *AaTh 513: The Wonderful Helpers* (Aarne & Thompson, 1961). In Thompson's motif index (1956) the central motif of this folktale type is F601: Extraordinary Companions. Some researchers have suggested that these tales are directly or indirectly related to the myth of the Argonauts that also features a team of people with supernatural powers as well as a magic ship that is often found in versions of this folktale type (Delarue, 1956; Hansen, 2002; Scobie, 1983).

In this folktale type the hero (who is lacking in some way or shape: foolish, lazy, cowardly, or rebellious) sets out on a quest and acquires a group of companions with extraordinary abilities who then each get a turn helping out the hero to achieve his goal. Obstacles and tests set for the group are always matched by each individual power (or their combinations) until the ultimate opponent or obstacle is defeated and the boon acquired.

Basing a game on a folktale type rather than one specific tale opens up a series of opportunities. Versions offer a variety of characters, settings, and quests the Game Master can choose from to adjust the campaign to the skills and needs of the players. Folktale types that exist in various different cultures enable the group to experience those as settings and immerse themselves in the chosen culture through the game experience.

The main objective of this module is to motivate teamwork through a traditional folktale journey and allow participants to coordinate characters with unique skill sets that complement each other. The special powers in this game are assigned randomly; players have

to work with one that is assigned to them by blind luck. Dealing with given abilities and restrictions this way models real life experiences and encourages players to make the most of whatever talents they have to work with. In the course of the character creation and the game itself, they are motivated to help each other out with that process.

Teamwork is the main motif of this story type. While each character has its own special power that often reaches superhuman proportions, characters also have physical, emotional, and social weaknesses that balance them out. Their talents are one-sided; these characters are designed to work together rather than trying to solve problems on their own. Coordinating a group of them requires creative thinking, tolerance, and patience from everyone in the group. The backgrounds of characters are culturally and socially diverse and completely up to the imagination of their players; cooperating with the rest of the group promotes cross-cultural communication and cultural awareness. Even though the group has a leader, that role is not assigned to any of the players, and just as in the original tales, the leader is severely lacking in qualities that would be required to organize the group – so the group does not only have to organize itself but also has to deal with an incompetent but necessary leader, shape his character, and help him along on his way to becoming a worthy and good king. Throughout most of the campaign, the team has options for solving problems different ways: through negotiation, manipulation, or fighting. Decisions have to be made by the entire group about tactics before they decide on their actions, and that requires everyone to listen to each other's ideas and opinions and consider them. This might take up time from the game session, but it is a necessary and useful part of the interactive game experience, and part of the learning objective.

The NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts (1996) that are most relevant to this game are:

NL-ENG.K-12.1 *Reading for Perspective***:** Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NL-ENG.K-12.2 *Understanding the Human Experience***:** Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

NL-ENG.K-12.4 *Communication Skills*: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.6 *Applying Knowledge*: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NL-ENG.K-12.9 *Multicultural Understanding*: Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

NL-ENG.K-12.12 *Applying Language Skills*: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Argonautica (Appendix E)

The Argonautica is one of the most popular Greek myths; it represents the generation of heroes that precedes the Trojan War, as many of the heroes of the *Iliad* are the children of

Argonauts. Some of the Argonauts, e.g. Nestor, even lived long enough to witness the events of the *Iliad*. The characters in this story have strong connections to other Greek myths – many of them are scions of gods, followers of goddesses, or descendants or ancestors of heroes and families that play important roles in mythology.

Through this game, players get a glimpse into the world of Greek mythology. By researching their own characters, they familiarize themselves with the Greek pantheon, the geography of ancient Greece and the Middle East, and the basics of the daily life in the Bronze Age. Through working as a team they learn to use their skills and abilities in creative ways that complement each other as well as the basics of choosing and following a leader throughout the journey.

This game teaches teamwork and creative thinking. It is also deeply embedded in Greek mythology and culture and provides an opportunity for the players to explore the game world while interacting with it. It is a good opening for studies in Greek mythology, but it also provides an interesting experience when the players already have a working knowledge of mythology.

The NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts (1996) that are most relevant to this game are:

NL-ENG.K-12.1 *Reading for Perspective***:** Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NL-ENG.K-12.2 *Understanding the Human Experience***:** Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

NL-ENG.K-12.4 *Communication Skills*: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.6 *Applying Knowledge*: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NL-ENG.K-12.8 *Developing Research Skills*: Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NL-ENG.K-12.9 *Multicultural Understanding*: Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

NL-ENG.K-12.12 *Applying Language Skills*: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

The NSS Standards for World History and Geography (1996) that are most relevant to this game are:

NSS-G. K-12.1 *The World in Spatial Terms*: As a result of activities in grades K-12, all students should: Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective. Understand how to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context. Understand how to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

NSS-G.K-12.6 *The Uses of Geography*: As a result of activities in grades K-12, all students should: Understand how to apply geography to interpret the past. Understand how to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

NSS-WH.5-12.3 *Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE – 300 BCE*: The student in grades 5-12 should understand the emergence of Aegean civilization and how interrelations developed among peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia, 600-200 BCE.

<p align="center">The Perilous Graveyard (Appendix F)</p>

The Perilous Graveyard (*L'Átre périlleux*) is an Arthurian romance written in Old French from the 13th century. It tells about a long quest Sir Gawain takes on to redeem his reputation as a knight of the Round Table after he fails to protect a lady who was his charge.

In this campaign instead of going on the quest themselves, the members of the group will go on a journey to find Sir Gawain and prove he is still alive after news of his death have reached the court of King Arthur. This turns the game from a straight fighting quest into investigation. The players have to find, follow, and interpret clues while they explore the world of Arthurian legends, trying to find and rescue one of the most famous knights who have ever sat at the Round Table.

As in most role-playing games, this game teaches teamwork and creative thinking. Instead of the straight challenges to combat that can frequently be found in Arthurian legends, the game plot unravels a mystery that needs to be investigated; there are clues to be followed and pieced together, theories proposed and evaluated, and options and opinions discussed. This adventure contains less fighting and more critical thinking than usual role-playing

campaigns. However, it still relies heavily on teamwork and cooperation from all the members of the group.

Because this game is based on an Arthurian legend, it connects two historical eras: the time of the historical background of the legend cycle (6th century CE), and the golden age of Medieval literature when the stories were reimagined and written down (11th-14th century). Because the point of the game is not historical accuracy, it is a blend of both eras, telling more about the ideals of chivalry and feudalism than historical facts. Still, by immersing themselves in this imagined world, the players get a sense of life and culture in the Middle Ages.

The NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts (1996) that are most relevant to this game are:

NL-ENG.K-12.1 *Reading for Perspective***:** Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NL-ENG.K-12.2 *Understanding the Human Experience***:** Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

NL-ENG.K-12.4 *Communication Skills*: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.6 *Applying Knowledge*: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NL-ENG.K-12.8 *Developing Research Skills*: Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NL-ENG.K-12.9 *Multicultural Understanding*: Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

NL-ENG.K-12.12 *Applying Language Skills*: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

The NSS Standards for World History and Geography (1996) that are most relevant to this game are:

NSS-G. K-12.1 *The World in Spatial Terms*: As a result of activities in grades K-12, all students should: Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective. Understand how to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context. Understand how to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

NSS-G.K-12.6 *The Uses of Geography*: As a result of activities in grades K-12, all students should: Understand how to apply geography to interpret the past. Understand how to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

NSS-WH.5-12.4 *Era 4: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300-1000 CE*: The student in grades 5-12 should understand: Imperial crises and their aftermath, 300-700 CE. The search for political, social, and cultural redefinition in Europe, 500-1000 CE.

NSS-WH.5-12.5 *Era 5: Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000-1500 CE*: The student in grades 5-12 should understand: the redefining of European society and culture, 1000-1300 CE.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This project is built on a variety of sources: storytelling, secondary education curriculum design, game design, alternative educational games, and traditional literature. Its main goal is to present a simple template for turning traditional narratives into games for an emergent interactive storytelling experience also known as role-playing.

Extensive testing of the created games and the template has yet to follow. But the preliminary testing sessions that have been conducted during this thesis project have confirmed the educational values often mentioned by the literature on both gaming and storytelling. Players enjoyed the gaming experience immensely, and even groups that had never played together and did not even know each other prior to the game managed to become smoothly functioning teams that combined their skills and knowledge to work toward a common goal.

Evaluation was conducted in three basic forms: by recording and analyzing the gaming sessions, by postgame question and answer sessions, and by short surveys where the players could evaluate the basic elements of the game and the game system. The most in-depth knowledge of the effect of the games came from the first modality: by observing the players during the game. Even though this sort of information is not quantifiable, it provided valuable insight into the immediate effects of the game on the players both as individuals and as a group. By noting their inquiries on the subject of the original story and the cultural-historical background of the games, the educational benefits of the game have been affirmed. It was observed that the players expressed curiosity and discernment concerning the convergences and divergences of the narrative they created with the original sources. By observing how the group cooperated in order to solve problems and overcome obstacles, the idea of

noncompetitive teamwork has been reinforced. There were also several examples of players learning from each other instead of the Game Master and sharing knowledge on their own learning level while immediately applying that knowledge in the game. Several exceptional displays of creative thinking have been recorded where the players pooled their knowledge and resources in order to come up with solutions that fit the world of the game.

One of the challenges that yielded the most interesting and diverse solutions was the Clashing Rocks scene of the Argonautica (see full testing journals in Appendix B). In the high school group reaching the clashing rocks the players decided to send one man in a boat between the rocks to test them. They decided on the NPC who had previously been knocked unconscious (and thus deemed an insufficient fighter). To make things more interesting I drew a name from the Argonauts pile, and it ended up being a son of Ares. When the rocks clashed on him, he survived being hammered into the rock wall but rendered invulnerable by his divine father's intervention. He ended up swimming back to the ship. Periclymene (the member of the party responsible for making plans) figured out the trick of the rocks, make them clash, then start rowing across. She chanced upon the exact same solution as in the original story. Jason suggested to throw a sheep to make the rocks clash again, but then she changed her mind ("animal cruelty," said Heracleia) and suggested that Periclymene, the shapeshifter, change herself into a bird. She shifted into a hawk and flew across with the rocks nipping her tail feathers (again, identical to the original story), then the ship rowed across with Heracleia (the female Hercules) pulling two oars at once.

In the meantime in the college level group of experienced gamers, the Argonauts first had Aethalides the Archer shoot an arrow between the rocks and observed what happened. When the rocks were moving out he shot another arrow, and thus they figured out the trick with the movement of the rocks. Kali also suggested that when the rocks clash there should be a wave sweeping out, and when they part there should be a wave sucking things in between

them. She suggested to row as close as possible, use the suction to get inside, and use the outwards surge to make it to the other side. Everyone agreed to this plan. Periclymenus changed into an orca and swam down to the bottom to see if the rocks were floating or grounded. He found out that he could swim under them, and there was a current flowing there towards the other side he could ride. He took the anchor in his mouth and, riding the current, he towed the ship towards the other side. With their plan of riding the waves, and the whale towing them, the Argonauts made it safely to the other side. I would like to point out here the application of the group's knowledge of physics, observing the movement of water between moving objects, and finding the current. While the fact that rocks are floating and moving is the product of fantasy, the Bosporus does have a strong bottom current flowing towards the Black Sea, and ancient Greek sailors used this current with the help of basket-like constructs to tow their ships against the strong surface current that made the passage nearly impossible in certain seasons. None of the players knew this piece of information, but the Game Master was familiar with it, and by asking the right question, the group did not only acquire knowledge that helped them solve the game but also learned something about real life geography and physics, and by applying this knowledge immediately in the game they made it more permanent. After the game the discussion often returned to this part of the story; they too wanted to know how the original story solved this problem and gained a sense of pride that they found a solution close to the original, yet unique.

The fact that they shaped the resources creatively to their own liking demonstrates that the knowledge gained from the games is active, rather than a memorized, passive set of data that does not change and thus cannot be applied. Creatively and consistently changing the narrative means the players are comfortable with the game world and its inherent rules, enough to dare to stray from the original without violating it. The same is proven by the constant presence of humor in the gaming sessions: if the players are comfortable enough to

joke about the game and within the game that means they are comfortable enough with their knowledge on the topic. Most jokes noted and observed were creative variations on the original story, characters, or references to their existence in popular culture.

None of the groups was practiced in the sense that none consisted solely of players who had played together before. Throughout the games it could be observed how they got used to playing together and how the players naturally assumed roles that best fit their own personality and that of their character. This first became obvious by people's character choices. In the high school group the players were offered a choice of a selected group of Argonauts as characters; one volunteered to be Jason because she knew the story. Periclymene was fascinated by the idea of shape-shifting and read the character description thoroughly; she even reminded me sometimes that she needed to roll for shifting when I forgot about it. Heracleia chose her character by the Profile and only realized later on that she chose Heracles when she read the name. They both expressed interest in making their hero female; however, Jason who knew the story decided to keep Jason's character male.

I would like to point out the way the players instinctively assumed certain roles within the group. Jason was accepted as the leader even though the player's shy personality was obvious to everyone; she was supported for her knowledge, not her confidence, and she was repeatedly encouraged by the other players to make decisions, and her decisions were accepted without question. Even when someone else, like Periclymene, came up with an idea, the group looked to Jason for approval. Periclymene, in turn, assumed the role of tactician; she did most of the planning and the creative thinking and informed others about the monsters they encountered, obviously finding enjoyment in guessing what they were before the Game Master revealed them. She also used her shifting abilities to assume essential roles in teamwork – changing her character into a lion for additional strength, a monkey for a needed skill, or a hawk for speed. Heracleia, the female Hercules mentioned before, took on the role

of the fighter, taking damage to protect the others and doing the fighting and other strength-based activities such as rowing. Periclymene and Heracleia, although their personalities and interests were polar opposites (the former nerdy and quiet, the latter loud, confident, and not interested in mythology), found a rhythm for working together in the end that helped them defeat the odds and achieve the desired goal, capturing the Golden Fleece.

Postgame discussions have also provided a great deal of creative insight from the players. The discussions were conducted through open-ended questions, allowing the participants freedom to elaborate on the topics they found important. The experienced gamer groups were especially detailed in their suggestions about the game system, character creation, and further adventures. In the Perilous Graveyard game they suggested possible solutions for placing limitations on the abilities of wizard or sorceress characters. They also commented that they learned a lot about Gawain's and Gareth's backgrounds and their original stories from the game. The player of Kay mentioned that she only knew this character from the Disney movie (Sword in the Stone), and she learned to like and to understand him better through this game. They also claimed that hearing about the source after the game made them remember more about Arthurian legends. When the game was over they had several questions about the original story and how it was similar or different from the game. They also liked how Gawain's adventures were incorporated into the adventure but told by other characters from their point of view. In terms of critiques some players claimed that the fighting system could be improved and made suggestions about a success-based rolling system much like the one used in White Wolf games. We discussed the possibilities and drawbacks of using such a system. I included some of their ideas in the generic game system chapter.

All the groups expressed interest in playing again in the future. Critiques about the games included the number of character options (too many), character names (hard to

pronounce if not taught by the Game Master), and requests for more detailed descriptions of the setting, which shows the players' interest in learning more about the game world.

The evaluation surveys (Appendix B) allowed the players to rate specific elements of the games on a one to five scale, five being the best option. All the ratings were fairly high, but there was a slight difference in ratings between those for game mechanics (Attack, Defense, Skills, etc.) and creative elements. Players seemed to be more satisfied with elements such as *Story*, *Timing*, and *Using your own ideas*, while both in the postgame discussions and in the surveys there were suggestions for modifying the rolling system. These suggestions mostly came from experienced gamers; the high school group claimed that the rolling system was very simple and easy to learn.

As it has been mentioned before, extensive testing and evaluation of the games and their educational benefits has yet to follow. This thesis is a preliminary exploration for connecting traditional storytelling with gaming and creating a new method of education that benefits both gamers and storytellers. By combining the educational values of games and storytelling, role-playing provides a classroom activity that creates community, motivates further learning, and allows students to learn through active participation.

The storytelling revival and the gaming movement started within the same year and developed in a similar way. Still, the connections between the two have happened mostly on an individual basis, and have not been explored extensively from either side. Even though role-playing, as we have already pointed out, is a form of emergent interactive storytelling, it has been separated from the mainstream storytelling movement that focuses mostly on performance. On the other hand, role-playing is popular among high school students and young adults whose numbers within the audiences of traditional storytelling have been dwindling. By expanding and strengthening the connection between the storytelling movement and gaming, it would be possible to reclaim this lost opportunity for reaching out

to new audiences and educating the next generation of storytellers and story-listeners through interactive games.

This current study has its limitations, as it has been described in previous chapters. In the future extensive testing of the proposed educational role-playing games has to follow with high school groups to further explore the possibilities of implementing them into the curriculum. The benefits of interactive storytelling games have to be proven and promoted within the mainstream storytelling community. Connections have to be created to introduce gamers to live storytelling traditions. By opening up channels of communication that work both ways, gaming can become part of a new storytelling revival that is deeply intertwined with popular culture and holds more interest for the younger generation by speaking their language. By introducing storytelling to gamers, games can become a new form of passing on traditions and preserving narratives that have been passed down through several generations. Storytelling and gaming together can create a complex, interactive form of education that combines oral tradition with popular culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Gaming Terms

The most widely used gaming terms are selected from *Dungeons and Dragons* (Gygax & Arneson, 1974), and White Wolf games (Achilli 2007; Rein-Hagen 1998; Rein-Hagen, Chupp, & Lemke, 1995).

Campaign – The story of the game (also known as Adventure). One campaign can last for just one gaming session, or it can run through multiple sessions. Campaigns are divided into scenes.

Character sheet – The written representation of a PC. Includes basic information (name, age, etc.), short description, list of belongings, list of skills, and any other information essential for the game. Players usually create their own characters, but the Game Master has to approve them.

Game Master (GM) – The person running the game. In storytelling terms, the Game Master is the equivalent of the storyteller, while the players are responsible for impersonating the characters in the story. The Game Master is responsible for creating the game and providing the players with sufficient information for making decisions that move the game forward. Also known as the Storyteller (ST) in White Wolf games.

Module – The plan of a campaign. Modules include information that is only relevant for the Game Master, as well as possible outcomes, secrets, settings, NPCs and dice rolls.

Nonplayer character (NPC) – Characters in the story that are not played by any of the players – villains, helpers, minor characters, etc. All the NPCs are played by the Game Master.

Playing Character (PC) – The persona of the player within the game world; the role that they play in the story. Characters are not necessarily acted out, but the players have to learn to think with the character's head.

Skills – Things a PC is experienced in; anything from proficiency with different weapons to knowledge of nature, swimming, climbing, or riding a horse. Skills are included in the character sheets.

Stats – All the numbers included on a character sheet, such as Skills, Attributes, Special Abilities, etc.

Appendix B: Feedback

Interview Questions

1. What character did you play in the game? What did you like about this character? What would you change about this character?

2. Did you know the original story before the game? What is your opinion on playing this story?

3. What do you think about the length of the game? Do you think it was too long or too short?

4. What do you think about the gaming team? Would you add more people to the group? Would you like to play with less people?

5. What do you think about the obstacles and enemies in the story? Were they easy to defeat? Did they provide a sufficient challenge?

6. What was your favorite part of the game?

7. What was your least favorite part of the game?

8. What do you think about the game system? Was it easy to learn? Would you change it?

9. What is your opinion on the use of dice? Would you use them more? Would you use them less?

10. What did you think about the Game Master? What suggestions would you give about running this game?

11. What other stories would you like to play in this game?

Survey

Rate the game based on the criteria below, on a scale of 1 to 5.

1: It does not work / I could not understand it

2: It needs to be changed to make it work

3: It works but it is too complicated

4: It works, but could be improved

5: It works perfectly

Creating a character	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Learning the game rules	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Using skills (Jump, Hide, etc.)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Using abilities (Endurance, Perception, etc.)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Using special powers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Attacking	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Defending	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Solving puzzles/mysteries	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Working together with other characters	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
The world of the game	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
The story of the game	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
The timing of the game (scenes, quests, etc.)		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Challenges and quests	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Using your own ideas in the game	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Learning from the game (folklore, mythology, etc.)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Test Game - Argonautica

Location: ETSU University School

Date: 05/25/12

Duration: 1 hour 32 min (app. 2 class sessions)

Audience level: High school (10th grade)

Number of Players: 3

Game: Argonautica

Characters:

1. Jason (female player) – "Olive tanned skin, tall, black hair" 25 years old

2. Female Heracles (female player) – "Tall, blonde, muscular, HOT" 16 years old

3. Female Periclymenus (female player) – "Tallish, white hair, red eyes" 15 years old

Episodes

Sacrifice at Iolcus

Lemnos

Nymphs of Cius

Harpies

Clashing Rocks

Argus, son of Phrixus

Arrival to Colchis

King Aeetes' Challenge

Taking the Golden Fleece

Observations

None of the players have played an RPG before, but they got the hang of it very fast.
Periclymene was interested in role-playing, but she only attempted to join a game once before
and she did not remember the details. Jason had a working knowledge of the Argonautica, the

others had taken Greek mythology in English class but did not know the story. Heracleia confessed that she is "in the dumb class". Interestingly enough, she ended up being the most active of the three players.

The players were offered a choice of a selected group of Argonauts as characters; one volunteered to be Jason because she knew the story. Periclymene was fascinated by the idea of shape-shifting and read the character description thoroughly; she even reminded me sometimes that she needed to roll for shifting when I forgot about it. Heracleia chose her character by the Profile and only realized later on that she chose Heracles when she read the name. They both expressed interest in making their hero female; however, Jason who knew the story decided to keep Jason's character male.

At the start of the game the players needed some encouraging to start playing their characters. Because of Jason's working knowledge of the story they were all suspicious of the Lemnian women and left half their crew at the ship when they went to feast with them. Jason took on the leader's role at this point, but the other two followed him deciding the "amazons" might want to talk to women instead. They did not search through the island, so to add action to the game I told them they heard a commotion outside the feasting hall, and when they looked out the door they saw two women dragging one of their crew members away out of sight. Heracleia ran after them and caught them stashing the body in a room. The women tried to convince her to join them because all men are liars, but Heracleia argued with them, defending Jason, and then fought them, successfully scaring one away (but getting wounded in the process). At this point I taught them the fighting system of the game and they understood and used it without any further problem. Jason and Periclymene saw the fleeing woman and ran into the room, subdued the other attacker, grabbed the unconscious crew member (even though Heracleia wanted to leave them), and ran for the ship. The crew waited for them telling the amazons tried to set the ship on fire (that is what the messenger wanted to

warn them about before he got knocked out). They managed to flee before the warrior women caught up to them.

On their way once again the Argo had to stop for fresh water (and because Heracleia broke her oar). Periclymene succeeded in the Search roll and found the lake of the nymphs, and they all proceeded to fill their jars. The nymphs managed to grab Heracleia and Jason; even though they both tore themselves free, Jason was enchanted by the nymphs, and was saved by Periclymene who grabbed him and dragged him to shore. Heracleia managed to punch some of the nymphs before she made her way to the shore too. They searched for another fountain and filled their jars before they continued their journey.

Because I wanted to see some creative thinking after all the fights, I skipped some of the episodes and went straight to the Harpies. Jason talked with King Phineus and the group decided it was a good deal to kill harpies for information about their future. Periclymene was very excited and explained to Heracleia what Harpies are, as she knew them from Percy Jackson. When I asked them what their plan is, Heracleia said they should run in and start fighting, but Periclymene suggested to send in one person with food as bait and sneak attack the Harpies. Heracleia volunteered for bait – she seemed to grow more confident with every episode in the game, taking the role of "tank" as the strongest person in the group. Periclymene decided to shift into an animal for the fight, and Jason suggested lion. The fight ended with victory, even though the lion got severely wounded. Jason could ask three questions of Phineus; at first she asked how many challenges awaited them on their journey (I gave her the number of episodes left); then she asked if they will take the Golden Fleece and Phineus said yes (but he did not say they would keep it too); third, she asked if they will lose any men, and Phineus said the journey will have that danger. He also warned them about the Clashing Rocks.

Reaching the clashing rocks the group decided to send one man in a boat to test them; they decided on the man who had previously been knocked unconscious. To make things more interesting, I drew a name from the Argonauts pile, and it ended up being a son of Ares. When the rocks clashed on him, he survived, being hammered into the rock wall, but rendered invulnerable by his divine father's intervention. He ended up swimming back to the ship. Periclymene figured out the trick of the rocks, make them clash, then start rowing across. Jason suggested to throw a sheep to make the rocks clash again, but then she changed her mind ("animal cruelty", said Heracleia) and suggested that Periclymene change herself into a bird. She shifted into a hawk and flew across with the rocks nipping her tail feathers just like in the original story, then the ship rowed across with Heracleia pulling two oars at once.

On the other side they saw Argus and his companions floating in the sea; Jason jumped in immediately to rescue them, and so did Periclymene once she shifted back to human. Heracleia could not swim, but she hauled them all up onto deck with her oar. Argus took them to Aea and introduced them to King Aeetes and his family. None of the players trusted Medea and they warned Jason not to either; they did have knowledge of her from their studies in mythology. At this point Jason had to leave, so she left the challenges to the other two. Heracleia rolled for divine intervention from her father but failed the roll. They decided to pool their dice and tackle one bull at a time; they managed to do so with great success, even though Heracleia got burnt in the process. I rolled two six-sided dice to determine how many warriors will spring from the dragon teeth… and I rolled 3. This fight had a lot of unfortunate rolls and both characters were severely wounded by the time they won. At this point in the game they were loudly enthusiastic about their rolls, shaking them for a long time before rolling and wishing for high numbers, and cheering when the result was good. The high-fived once the bulls and warriors were defeated. When Kind Aeetes told them to leave they demanded a healer; when I suggested that Medea was a priestess, they went to talk to her.

Medea told them she would heal them if they took her with them, to which they promptly agreed without question. Once on the Argo Medea also told them she can take them to the Golden Fleece, and they agreed to that too. Medea lulled the dragon to sleep, but she only promised 10 minutes; someone with Climb skills needed to climb a tree to get the Fleece during that time. Periclymene was the only one with Climb, but she failed the roll; but then she shifted into a monkey, grabbed the Fleece, Heracleia grabbed her, and they all made it back to the ship in time.

I ended the game here with "mission accomplished" because we were running out of time.

All players got the hang of role-playing very fast; in the beginning they were concerned it would be like LARP-ing, a concept they were familiar with, and were greatly relieved when I told them they do not need to act out their roles. However, when we started playing they did act out their characters with gestures, voices, and facial expressions without even realizing it (e.g. Heracleia kept flexing her muscles).

The game was interrupted a few times; every time someone walked in the girls told them "we are role-playing!" and even tried to invite the security guard to "be Jason!" and join the game (after Jason left). They very excitedly described to him what the game was about and even told him that they were "wrestling fire-breathing bulls right now!", which just puzzled the man even more, him having no idea what they were talking about.

I would like to point out the way the players instinctively assumed certain roles within the group. Jason was accepted as the leader even though the player's shy personality was obvious to everyone; she was supported for her knowledge, not her confidence, and she was repeatedly encouraged by the other players to make decisions, and her decisions were accepted without question. Even when someone else, like Periclymene, came up with an idea, they looked to Jason for approval. Periclymene, in turn, assumed the role of tactician; she did

most of the plans and the creative thinking and informed others about the monsters they encountered, obviously finding a lot of enjoyment in guessing what they were before the Game Master revealed them. She also used her shifting abilities to assume roles in teamwork which were needed – lion for additional strength, monkey for a needed skill, hawk for speed. Heracleia, as we have mentioned before, took on the role of the tank, taking damage to protect the others and doing the fighting and other strength-based activities like rowing. Periclymene and Heracleia, although their personalities and interests were complete opposites (the former nerdy and quiet, the latter loud, confident, and not interested in mythology), found a rhythm for working together in the end that helped them defeat the odds and achieve the desired goal, the Golden Fleece.

Feedback

Because of the setting and timing of the game, there was not much time left for postgame discussion. Both players were satisfied with the game and they expressed interest in playing again next week. Heracleia, who kept bragging about being the daughter of Zeus, expressed interest in playing Scion as well, when I told them about it.

They noted that the rules were easy to learn and the rolling very simple.

Test Game – Argonautica II

Location: ETSU Campus

Date: 05/26/12

Duration: 3 hours

Audience level: College

Number of Players: 8

Game: Argonautica

Characters:

1. Periclymenus (male player) – "Young man with wild eyes and hair. Shy and bit of a freeloader" 20 years old

2. Eurytus (male player) – "Never without his sword (very elaborate) Slightly overconfident, but still amiable" 17 years old

3. Zetes (male player) – "Olive-skinned with dark hair. Sweet and bubbly, but with a temper that snaps on a moment's notice" 25 years old

4 Kali (female Calais; male player) – "Tall, black hair, sea green eyes, wears shorts, sandals and tight leather sleeveless top. Enjoys being alone, especially in high places." 25 years old

5. Aethalides (male player) – "Self-taught by the spirits of dead scholars" 29 years old

6. Phlie (female player) – "Tall, violet eyes, slender. Party girl, musician" 26 years old. Special ability: turning any liquid into wine.

7. Orpheus (male player) – "Tall skinny guy with a handlebar mustache and long shock of curly black hair" 22 years old

8. Autolycus (female player) – "Dark skinned, square jawed, leanly muscular, short curly hair, bright shining golden brown eyes" 20 years old

Episodes

Sacrifice in Iolcus

Lemnos

Royal Fight

Clashing Rocks

Argus, son of Phrixus

Arrival to Colchis

Taking the Golden Fleece

Observations

This group consisted of experienced gamers and had a very different dynamic than the high school testing of the same game. Character choice and creation took up a lot more time (experienced gamers generally spend a lot more time selecting and shaping the characters they play). Some of the group was used to playing together, others were new; it took time for everyone to pay attention to the others and learn about their characters. Most characters were chosen by their profiles and abilities. The player of Kali decided to make his character female because it was easier to use a female nickname, but he worked together with the player of Zetes in creating their common traits and background. The player of Aethalides worked out his own version of his special ability; his character was constantly pestered by some spirits of the dead who could not find rest. The player of Phlie decided she wanted to be a musician, and worked together with Orpheus all through the game.

In this game I left the choice to the group if they wanted to have Jason as someone's character or as an NPC. No one chose him, so he remained an NPC; after the game some claimed that they thought about playing him briefly, but they did not want to "order other players around". The group functioned well without Jason as a PC; in fact, he became a source of humor, because players and the Game Master together shaped him into an overly enthusiastic but very naïve character (much like Moscione in the Extraordinary Helpers module). The group agreed in the beginning that they needed to protect him (because he "has

the money"), and they did that all through the module even though they joked a lot about getting rid of him when he became too obnoxious.

This group paid a lot more attention to detail; because of that (and the higher number of players), the game moved ahead a lot slower than in high school. They stopped and took time to pray and sacrifice for the gods before they set out on the journey; they discussed the arrangements for posts on the ship (with Kali positioned as lookout, and Orpheus and Phlie taking turns keeping the rhythm with music). They took a lot of initiative in using their character's abilities throughout the game, and they repeatedly rolled for divine intervention (even though they never succeeded). They formed alliances very quickly (Zetes and Kali, three sons of Hermes, Orpheus and Phlie) and worked together very well as a team.

The team arrived to Lemnos, and even though the players were suspicious from the start, they decided their characters were not, and they went along with the women's invitation. The two female characters and Eurytus announced that they were not going to delve into the feast but keep an eye out, but no one stayed at the ship. The messenger from the ship was intercepted by the women and noticed by Kali and Phlie, who followed them and demanded to know why one of the crew members was knocked out. Upon hearing the women's claim that the man tried to hurt them they started a lengthy debate and negotiation. Once again I drew a name from the NPC list, and the man turned out to be Mopsus (lovingly nicknamed by the group as "good ol' Mopsy"). The women took Phlie and Kali to another room and tried to convince them to join their ranks. The end of the debate was a deal: the women promised they would let the Argonauts go if Phlie could make everyone wine strong enough to make them forget everything they saw on the island. In the meantime Aethalides slapped Mopsus awake and he told them the ship was on fire. The group sent Eurytus to organize a rescue party, Orpheus and Phlie to distract the women, Aethalides to talk to the spirits of the dead, and Kali to find Jason. Eurytus remembered that Heracles is with them too and he found him first

because he could carry barrels of water to put the fire out (the group paid a lot of attention to the NPCs; they had a working knowledge of Greek mythology). Aethalides crossed over to the spirit world and found out the men have been murdered; he also found out that the Queen let her father live. Zetes kicked him awake and back into the real world, and they went to talk to the Queen; they ended up blackmailing her into letting the Argonauts go (and making a deal that some of the Argonauts would stay just long enough to ensure the women can have children).

Leaving Lemnos the Argo moved on; the next place they put to shore was King Amycus's kingdom. There was a storm ahead they needed to wait out (they asked "good ol' Mopsy how long the storm will be). Eurytus and Aethalides as sons of Hermes volunteered to meet the King and talk to him; Eurytus ended up volunteering to fight him. He lost the fight and was knocked out; the King was going to keep beating him to death, but Kali swooped in and flew away with the unconscious warrior, while Zetes took on the fight (and was also beaten). The King ordered the Argonauts to leave his kingdom; they decided to extend wine (made by Phlie) as their departing gift to the King and his men, and made sure they fell asleep promptly and long enough till the storm was over.

The Clashing Rocks was the next challenge they had to face. They first had Aethalides shoot an arrow between the rocks and observed what happened. When the rocks were moving out he shot another arrow, and they figured out the trick with the movement of the rocks. Kali also suggested that when the rocks clash there should be a wave sweeping out, and when they part there should be a wave sucking things in between them. She suggested to row as close as possible, use the suction to get inside, and use the outwards surge to make it to the other side. Everyone agreed to this plan. Periclymenus changed into an orca, swam down to the bottom to see if the rocks were floating, found out that he could swim under them, and there was a current flowing there towards the other side he could ride. He took the anchor in his mouth

and, riding the current, he towed the ship towards the other side. With their plan of riding the waves and the whale towing them, the Argonauts made it safely to the other side.

On the other side they found Argus son of Phrixus and his brothers floating in the water. The children of Boreas flew down and pulled them out. The Argonauts made it safely to Aea where they met King Aeetes and started negotiations with him about the Golden Fleece. The group had a very different take on this part of the story: they decided they were going to make Medea and Jason fall in love and get married, and they were going to charm King Aeetes into giving Jason the Golden Fleece as a wedding gift. Phlie was in charge of charming the King (with wine and entertainment), while Autolycus and Aurytus searched around, the former for the whereabouts of the Fleece and the latter for love potions in Medea's room. The plan worked; Jason and Medea fell in love; the group managed to charm the King enough that the handed over the Golden Fleece. The game stopped at this point because we ran out of time; but we concluded that, even if they could not take it out of Aea, the group has at least succeeded in acquiring the Golden Fleece and delivering it to Jason.

Feedback

During the postgame discussion the group offered a few useful observations:

1. They said there are too many character options; choosing from them can be confusing and takes up a lot of time. I added a part in the character creation section of the game module, suggesting that the Game Master select a few character profiles that fit the planned game (depending on the number of participants), instead of offering all the options.

2. The Greek names are often hard to pronounce or remember. They kept creating nicknames for their characters that were easier to say. I added this option to the character creation section of the module.

3. They pointed out that many special ability descriptions just say "requires a successful roll", but show no threshold numbers. I made sure that the game system description reminds the Game Masters that they have to make decisions on threshold numbers based on the complexity of the task. I also added threshold suggestions to some of the power descriptions.

4. The group often wanted to know during the game what the "original" solution was to the challenges they faced, mostly out of curiosity. They suggested adding this to the postgame activities.

5. They suggested adding more details to the descriptions within the story.

6. They noted that the rules were very easy to learn and character creation was very simple and convenient. They also appreciated the used of six-sided dice and the lack of complicated mathematical formulae.

Results of the survey:

Creating a character 39/40

Learning the game rules 39/40

Using skills (Jump, Hide, etc.) 38/40

Using abilities (Endurance, Perception, etc.)39/40

Using special powers 36/40

Attacking 35/40

Defending 36/40

Solving puzzles/mysteries 38/40

Working together with other characters 35/40

The world of the game 38/40

The story of the game 38/40

The timing of the game (scenes, quests, etc.) 38/40

Challenges and quests 38/40

Using your own ideas in the game 40/40

Learning from the game (folklore, mythology, etc.) 39/40

Total: 566/600

As experienced gamers, this group was familiar with many different role-playing systems. The lower scores are the ones related to the skill and combat mechanics of the game, while they appreciated the creative parts such as using their own ideas and character creation.

Test Game – Extraordinary Companions

Location: ETSU Campus

Date: 05/06/12

Duration: 1 hour 35 min

Audience level: College

Number of Players: 6

Game: Extraordinary Companions

Characters:

Carpenter (female player) – "Crazy Canadian carpenter lady" 40 years old, no fighting skills,

-3 Strength

Mighty Strike (male player) – "British traveling swordsman with a katana called Catherine"

21 years old

Higher Wisdom (male player) – "12 year old American boy from the future" Cassandra

Freezing Breath (male player) – "Desert-dwelling nomad, allergic to flowers" 23 years old,

allergies

Wooden Soldiers (male player) – "Drunk Viking man", 30 years old, Intelligence Limit

Uncanny Hearing (male player) – "Young French/British man wearing earmuffs with bunny

ears"

Episodes

Call to Adventure

Winning the Princess

Princesses Lost

The Giants' Cave

Observations

Before the game players drew cards with the descriptions of extraordinary powers on them and created their characters. Character creation was fast, the most time taken up with brainstorming about weaknesses and limitations and designing original characters, such as the time-traveler boy who had higher knowledge, but nobody took him seriously because of his age. The players were very creative in implementing abilities and weaknesses into the background and attitude of their characters.

Because the group contained a Carpenter, I started with the young hero visiting her and ordering a flying ship. The "crazy Canadian woman" decided he was annoying but made the ship anyway and agreed to accompany him on his journey (mainly for the money offered). On the beach they picked up the boy of infinite wisdom, who resisted first and claimed that they were "stupid and boring", but agreed to go along anyway. Next they picked up the freezing breath person in the desert (where he lives on account of being allergic to all kinds of plant life). Finally they turned towards France where the young hero intended to go to marry a princess. Missing their mark they ended up going much farther north and picked up the Viking woodcarver, then the British swordsman on their way south.

Arriving to the King's court they signed up for the challenges to win a princess. The Viking took the drinking challenge and broke the record before he passed out. The swordsman took the bullfight challenge and managed to lure the bull into the stables by running and jumping around it but botched the challenge in the end by wounding the bull with his sword. The boy took the archery contest, using his own slingshot and his infinite knowledge of telling where the targets were hidden. Freezing Breath took the challenge of bravery, deciding without even knowing what it was going to be, and spent half a day in the burning room building ice sculptures.

When the kidnapping of the princesses was announced, the group set out at once to find the princesses. They decided to go north first (after the boy tricked them into believing

him with reverse psychology) and find the giants. At this point Hearing Ears joined the group and helped them find people in a village who had been hiding, terrified of the giants, and convinced them to point the group in the right direction.

The group encountered the three giants on a clearing in the forest and decided to fight them. Freezing Breath froze them into place and created ice slides for the team to slide down from the higher ground (and to stop the giants from climbing up the hillside). Hearing Ear used his hearing to tell where the third giant's heart was in his body, listening for the heartbeat, while the Carpenter and the woodcarver created a catapult for flinging wooden soldiers at the giants. The swordsman finally had a time to shine and he delivered his mighty strikes at all three of the giants. The only problem the group could not solve was the whereabouts of the stolen princess; they suspected she had been changed into another form, and some of them were worried that she might be one of the giants. The Swordsman argued that "this is a folktale, princesses never turn into giants in folktales!" while others countered his argument with the example of Shrek. Finally the group decided the princess has to be in some other form and managed to find the acorn she had been turned into.

At this point the game had to end for the lack of time. During the postgame discussion the players agreed that the game system was easy to learn and apply, but they had a lot of questions about what the skills and abilities entail. They suggested warning players ahead that Endurance is going to be important for protecting yourself in a fight. One player also suggested that there should be an option for gaining more points on top of the 25 by taking minus points on certain sills (e.g. every Climb roll is an automatic fail with no chance of success, but the character can distribute 26 points in exchange).

Test Game – Perilous Graveyard

Location: ETSU campus

Date: 06/02/12

Duration: app. 2 hours

Audience level: College

Number of Players: 5

Game: Perilous Graveyard

Characters:

Sir Kay (female player) – "Sarcastic, snide, cynical – but generally well meaning." 25 years old

Sir Gareth (male player) – "long blonde hair, blue eyes; chivalrous, kind, good." 23 years old

Niles, Gareth's squire (male player) – "Often worried and stressed, rather intelligent. Special ability: nigh unbreakable calm save for Sir Gareth's idiocy." 19 years old

Dante, wizard (male player) – "Calm, snarky know-it-all. Special abilities: MAGIC." 33 years old

Caden, healer (male player) – "Ages very well. Lonely but fiercely loyal. Magic often backfires, has to be very focused to heal." 25 years old

Episodes:

Abduction of the cupbearer

Sir Gawain is dead

Perilous Graveyard

Escanor

Red Fortress

Confronting Sir Gawain

Observations

Before and during character creation I talked to the players trying to assess their knowledge of Arthurian legends. Some of them had a working knowledge mostly from school and some reading. The player of Gareth was familiar with the original story of Sir Gareth and explained it to Kay, who proceeded to make up more nicknames for the character and practice playing Kay's special skill in mocking people. Gareth and Niles worked on their characters together, creating the character of the squire in a way that would complement Gareth's weaknesses. They worked really well together, and the result of Gareth the strong but intellectually challenged knight and Niles the neglected squire who looks after his master was truly amusing and touching at the same time. We discussed options for magic with the player of Dante; he needed to decide on limitations for his character's abilities, and we came up with a variety of solutions. The conversation continued after the gaming session, and I included the results in the game module.

The players took the initiative right at the beginning of the game. Sir Kay, responsible for organizing the feast, grumbled about all the work. When the lady was abducted and Gawain rode after her, everyone failed their Willpower rolls, and thus they had to wait till the spell wore off. Once the spell was gone Sir Gareth instantly started after his brother (whom he declared to idolize), and all his squire had to say was "I'll bring the horses." Sir Kay followed them out of honor, the healer out of curiosity, and Dante because he wanted to see if he can make a broomstick fly. After a successful roll he was the first one to notice the weeping ladies in the forest. The healer proceeded to bandage the wounds of the youth but he could not give his sight back, while Gareth calmed the ladies down. When he heard their story about the death of "Sir Gawain", he immediately started after the two knights, not even asking more questions, and the rest of the group followed him, leaving the ladies behind, not even

suggesting to inspect a body to see if it was truly Gawain; Gareth claimed he had to avenge

his brother's death and that was enough for everybody.

The group reached the Perilous Graveyard and started negotiation with the guards on

the wall, Kay demanding loudly for the gates to be opened in the name of the king. Dante

used his magic to start opening the lock from the outside, and when that failed, he flew over

the wall and opened the gates from within. In the meantime Gareth fended off the undead

creatures with Kay's help. Once inside the gates (leaving their horses behind because they did

not fit through the small door on the gates) Niles requested a sword of his own, and Kay sent

Gareth to the kitchens while he negotiated with the lord of the castle. They found out that

Gawain had been there before them and the direction he left. As a gift for their hospitality,

Dante made a magic lock for the gates to make it easier to guard the castle but allow travelers

in. In the morning the group left in pursuit of Gawain.

When they encountered Lady Luna, the group was suspicious at first, but because

Dante did not detect magic on her person, they decided to believe her. First Kay wanted to

take her back to the three ladies and their brother and then to Camelot, but the rest of the

group allowed themselves to be convinced by Luna to go look for Gawain. Upon arriving at

the Red Fort, Gareth, who was the first to go to the kitchens, found the Red Knight, and they

were all convinced that Gawain had lost his mind. Because the Red Knight claimed that

Gawain had not been fighting fair, Gareth volunteered to fight for his brother's honor in the

morning. However, that never came, because the Red Knight was stabbed to death during the

night. The group assumed that Gawain was near so they decided to lure him into a trap. First

they used Kay as bait, and when that failed, they used Lady Luna in a bedroom, but still

nothing happened. At this point Gareth had the idea of looking around the castle for tracks

because Guingalet has hoof prints that are unmistakable, but he could find no tracks that were

younger than a few days. Dante decided he was going to use his magic on the dagger and find

out where it came from. His first attempt failed, but then Niles agreed to combine his magic with Dante's and enhance the spell, even though he knew that was going to knock him out for half a day at least. The roll was a success, the spell worked, and Dante found out the lady had stabbed the Red Knight. Lady Luna denied everything, making the group think she had been possessed, and they suspected either Escanor's ghost or the dagger was responsible for her actions. They decided to move on and look for Gawain.

At this point because time was running out, I decided to skip to the end; they found Gawain fighting the two wandering knights but decided not to intervene. Thus they soon found out that Gawain was not on a rampage, in fact, he was fighting valiantly, not trying to kill his opponents. Gareth stepped forward to talk to him, and Gawain greeted his brother and fellow knight with a good-natured smile (kneeling on Roche Faée's chest). The group proceeded to interrogate Gawain and piece by piece they puzzled out what really happened to him. Kay sat down to give a talk to the two wandering knights about women, and he did so with such conviction and humor that the Game Master decided he indeed managed to talk them out of killing Gawain (and possibly out of ever loving a woman, as Kay is famous for his misogyny). The group decided to take Lady Luna back to Camelot to answer for her crimes, and Gareth, for his loyal service and bravery, finally granted Niles's wish and made him a knight of the Round Table after 5 years as his squire. The group rejoiced, and Kay remarked that he was not going to arrange for the celebratory feast.

Feedback

Dante suggested a few possible solutions for placing limitations on the abilities of wizard or sorceress characters. I made a list of these suggestions and included them in the game module.

Players commented that they learned a lot about Gawain's and Gareth's background and their original stories from the game. The player of Kay mentioned that she only knew this character from the Disney movie (Sword in the Stone) and she learned to like and understand him a lot more through this game. They also claimed that hearing about the source after the game made them remember more about Arthurian legends. When the game was over they had several questions about the original story and how it was similar or different from the game. They also liked how Gawain's adventures were incorporated into the adventure but told by other characters from their point of view.

Some players claimed that the fighting system could be improved and made suggestions about a success-based rolling system much like the one used in White Wolf games. We discussed the possibilities and drawbacks of using such a system. I included some of their ideas in the generic game system chapter.

Results of the survey:

Creating a character 24/25

Learning the game rules 25/25

Using skills (Jump, Hide, etc.) 23/25

Using abilities (Endurance, Perception, etc.)23/25

Using special powers 23/25

Attacking 24/25

Defending 24/25

Solving puzzles/mysteries 24/25

Working together with other characters 25/25

The world of the game 25/25

The story of the game 25/25

The timing of the game (scenes, quests, etc.)   25/25

Challenges and quests 25/25

Using your own ideas in the game 25/25

Learning from the game (folklore, mythology, etc.) 25/25

Total: 365/375

      Players were generally satisfied with the story and world of the game and the creative options for working with other characters. There were some concerns and suggestions about the dice system, as mentioned before. This game included a lot less rolling than the others had and almost no fighting at all.

Appendix C: General Game System

The system of character creation, dice rolls, stats, and experience varies from game to game. While some games, like *Dungeons and Dragons*, are based on 20-sided dice (d20 system), others like the *World of Darkness* games rely more heavily on storytelling a creative improvisation (storytelling system). But even the story-heavy games follow a set of rules based on dice and mathematics for an element of chance in the story. These systems developed together with the games are part of the final product and usually also part of the copyright.

When designing role-playing games for the classroom, the emphasis is naturally on the story of the game. The easier the system the faster can teachers and student learn to apply it, which is essential when classroom time is already limited. My goal by designing this system for the example games was to come up with the simplest possible rules and a fast and clear way of creating a character that is ready to spring into action. I decided to base the rules on the use of six-sided dice that can be found in most basing came sets and are easy to acquire. The rolls do not require complicated mathematical formulas, and every character comes with the same basic set of skills and abilities. I had two reasons for cutting a significant part of rules that are usually included in role-playing games:

1. The emphasis in these games is on the story. The educational value of role-playing is not on mathematics but rather on improvisation, creativity, teamwork, and interactive storytelling. All dice rolls are called by the Game Master, but their significance is restricted to moments of chance and risk, and good role-playing can surpass them any time (e.g. instead of a Negotiation roll, actually dialogue is preferred, and if the Game Master is convinced, there is no need for the roll at all).

2. The characters in these games will not develop to further levels. Educational games based on myths and folktales all come with their own characters, and because of that there is not much chance that the same characters will move on to further adventures (not within the classroom anyway). For this I have not included a development system for "leveling up" the characters. During the game the Game Master can grant extra points or extra dice when needed or earned, but the characters are mostly created for one campaign only, and because of that there is no need for a complicated system of additional skills and stats.

On the next few pages I present the system I created for testing the example game modules. The description of the system is divided into two parts: Character creation (before the game; including a blank character sheet) and Game mechanics that describes the use of stats and dice within the game.

Character Creation

Personal traits

Personal traits on the character sheet are: name, gender, age, looks, attitude, and background. These traits are represented by short descriptions. Players are advised to fill out this part of the character sheet first because it creates a basic idea and description of the character and makes the next step (deciding on skills and attributes) more consistent.

Name: The character's name

Gender: The character's gender

Age: The character's age

Looks: Short description of the character's physical appearance (might include height, weight, build, eye and skin color, hair color and style, clothing and jewelry, scars, tattoos and make-up, visible items, general first impression, etc.)

Attitude: Short description of the character's personality

Background: Short description of the character's past life and adventures up to the time when the game story starts. It can also include the character's "calling", which is a one-sentence summary of what the character really is ("traveling musician in search of his lost love", "blind archer who likes to teach young heroes," etc.)

Skills and attributes

The stats (skills and attributes) of the character are divided into five groups: every attribute (Strength, Smarts, Agility, Perception, Endurance) includes four skills that are based mainly on that ability. Each skill has three levels, represented by dots or points.

One dot means the character knows the basics of the skill and has done it before with success.

Two dots mean the character is practiced and confident in that skill.

Three dots mean the character has an affinity for that skill and shows exceptional talent in using it.

The skills used on the character sheet are:

Climb (Strength): The character's skill in climbing on any surface or structure, including trees, walls, ropes, rocks, etc.

Jump (Strength): The character's skill in jumping in any given direction (over something, up to something, down from something, onto something, etc.)

Swim (Strength): The character's skill in swimming. Characters with no dots in Swim can paddle at best – they are allowed to roll one die but only if they roll 6 can they stay on the surface.

Fight (Strength): The character's skill in unarmed fight and using melee weapons (ranged weapons are listed under Agility). The character is practiced in using one weapon for

every dot, and two for the third dot (a character with three dots in Fight is trained in the use of four different weapons).

Education (Smarts): The character's knowledge of the world. Does not necessarily mean schooling; knowledge can be acquired any number of ways. Characters without dots in education are illiterate; however, even though they are naïve and do not know much about the world, they are not necessarily dumb.

Profession (Smarts): The character's skills in a chosen profession. This profession has to be specified during character creation. Even though some characters may be skilled in more than one profession, this one represents the main one, the one they have been practicing the longest and most often.

Languages (Smarts): The character's knowledge of foreign languages. For each of the first two dots the character knows one foreign language; for the third dot, two languages are added. Thus a character with three dots knows four foreign languages. Allowed languages are included in game modules and they should be specified by the player and approved by the Game Master before the start of the game.

Negotiation (Smarts): The character's skill in communicating with other people (or sentient creatures) including, but not limited to, casual conversation, diplomacy, negotiation, bargaining, bluffing, manipulation, seduction, convincing, etc.

Sleight of Hand (Agility): The character's skill in using her hands. Includes theft, magic tricks, opening locks, tying knots, dealing with delicate mechanisms, or any kind of activity that requires fine movement skills. A character with no dots in Sleight of Hand is considered clumsy.

Hide (Agility): The character's skill in hiding or disguising itself, or in other ways remaining unnoticed. A character with no dots in Hide tends to draw attention even when she does not want to.

Dodge (Agility): The character's skill in dodging and avoiding attacks, flying objects, people, etc. Used in combat for avoiding hits from the opponent.

Ranged weapon (Agility): The character's skill in using ranged weapons (longbow, recurve bow, crossbow, slingshot, sling, thrown objects, etc.). The character is skilled in the use of one ranged weapon for each of the first two dots, and two for the third one (a character with three dots in Ranged is trained in the use of four different ranged weapons).

Search (Perception): The character's skill in finding things. The use of this skill requires active action, which means a character has to have the intention to search for the desired object, place, or person. For accidentally noticing things, use Awareness.

Track (Perception): The character's skill in finding and following tracks, directions, and orientation. Navigation and the steering of ships and other inanimate vehicles also fall under this skill.

Awareness (Perception): The character's awareness of her surroundings and her skill in noticing things with any of the five senses. This skill is used when the character is not actively searching for something and because of that its use has to be initiated by the Game Master.

Investigate (Perception): The character's skill in investigating facts, finding clues, and gathering information. The use of this skill requires role-playing from the players: they need to describe exactly how they are looking to investigate something before the Game Master allows them to roll for it.

Willpower (Endurance): The character's strength of mind and her resistance against mental manipulation of the mundane (bluff, lie, intimidation, etc.) or the magic (mind control, sleep spells, etc.) kind.

Health (Endurance): The character's resistance against sickness and poisons both natural and magical.

Stamina (Endurance): The character's physical endurance and her resistance to physical effects such as pain, blood loss, sleep deprivation, exertion, etc.

Ride (Endurance): The character's skill in riding a mount (horse, mule, dragon, etc.). Characters without this skill have a hard time even staying in the saddle.

At the beginning of character creation, the player receives 25 points to distribute among the 20 skills. The player can put one, two, or three points in any skill. The player can decide which skills are important for the character and which ones match best the character's background story, training, special abilities, and personality.

Once the 25 skill points are distributed, the player can calculate the attribute points. Every attribute is the summary of the skill points spent on the four skills that belong to that attribute. For example if one has 2 dots in Jump, 1 dot in Climb, 3 dots in Fight, and no dots in Swim, that character's Strength will be 7.

Some special abilities require certain skills. Unless otherwise stated, these skills have to be bought from the 25 original points. Some abilities grant extra points on top of the original 25. During the course of the game the Game Master can decide to grant extra points to characters as he or she sees fit.

Special abilities

Special abilities are things that make the character unique. They can be natural, learned, or magical; possibilities depend on the game world and module and have to be approved by the Game Master. The use of special abilities does not always require a skill or a roll; all the player has to do is announce his or her intention of using one and describe the actions. Special abilities are described in detail within the game modules. For new games they have to be designed by the Game Master.

Items

The list of items the character carries, including weapons. The list has to be approved by the Game Master before the start of the game.

Life Points

Every character has a total of 25 life points. Their significance will be further discussed in the Game Mechanics section.

Game Mechanics

Dice

This simplified game system uses six-sided dice. The number of dice used varies depending on what the players are trying to do (see below). The maximum number of dice required for one roll is 12; it is advised to have at least this many dice ready for a gaming session.

Using Skills

When the player wants to use a skill, first the player has to check how many dots the character has in that skill. Having no dots can mean automatic fail in the attempt, or a single die roll that is only successful if the player rolls a 6 (this option represents the idea that even someone who has almost no chance of succeeding can be lucky). It is the Game Master's responsibility to choose which option applies to the situation. Some skills are reasonable to use even without any previous experience (e.g. Jump); others cannot be used without points (e.g. Languages).

When using a skill the player has to roll as many six-sided dice as dots she has in that skill (one die for each dot). She has to add the results of the roll. The Game Master compares

the sum to a threshold number of her own choosing; if the roll is equal or higher than the threshold number, the character succeeded in using the skill. If it is lower, something went wrong, and the action failed. Threshold numbers represent the difficulty of the action the player proposed to do; the higher the threshold the more difficult the task. For skills, threshold numbers can be anywhere between 4 (very easy, almost natural) and 18 (extremely difficult, almost impossible). Average difficulty can range from 9 through 11.

Sometimes the threshold number is another character's skill or ability. For example, if two characters (PCs or NPCs) are having a swimming competition, whoever gets the higher roll in Swim wins. Similarly, if a character is trying to convince another using Negotiation, the threshold number will be the other character's Smarts score. In Fight, as it will be demonstrated later, the roll is the attacker's Fight skill against the defender's Endurance.

No matter what the threshold number is, a roll that includes all 6's is always a success. If three dice are involved, rolling an 18 is a critical success and brings extra advantages in whatever the character was trying to achieve. These bonuses are to be decided by the Game Master.

Similar to the success system, a roll that includes all 1s is always a critical fail; the character did not only fail at what was being attempted, but the botched attempt also had additional negative consequences (e.g. did not only fail to jump over the fence – also fell down and broke a leg).

Using abilities

Sometimes, instead of a skill the Game Master might call for an ability roll for any of the five abilities. This usually happens when an action involves a complex series of skills and actions or when there is not one skill to describe what the character is about to attempt. Using abilities works with the same mechanics as using skills, except more dice are involved, and

thus the threshold scale is more elaborate as well. Technically the threshold can be anywhere between 1 through 72; however, there is a chance the character has less than 10 dots in one ability and because of that has no mathematical chance of reaching the threshold. Similarly to skills, a roll of all 6's is always a success, a roll of all 1's is always a fail.

Fight

Fight happens in rounds; the characters (and opponents) with the highest Agility can act first, and the round is only over when everyone had their turn.

When the character attempts to attack an opponent, the character has to use the Fight or the Ranged Weapons skill. Fight applies to unarmed combat and melee weapons; Ranged Weapons applies to ranged and thrown weapons. The player rolls the number of dice they have under those skills and adds the results of the roll. Then, the Game Master compares the results to the Endurance or Agility of the opponent (Endurance if the opponent is trying to block, parry, or just stand the attack; Agility if the opponent is trying to dodge). If the roll total is equal or bigger than the opponents Endurance or Agility, the attack was a successful hit. If the roll total is lower, the opponent was successful in defense. If the roll includes a 6, the attack was an automatic success. In this case, the minimum Damage of the attack is 6, even if the difference of the Endurance or Agility and the roll total was less than 6.

Characters also have the opportunity to join forces in battle. If two players declare their intention to combine their attacks and present a convincing enough description for the Game Master to approve the plan, they have the chance to add up their Fight or Ranged weapons dice into one roll. This "joint force" roll works the same way single attacks do except it will deal more damage to the opponent.

Successful attacks deal damage, which is represented by the loss of the opponent's Life Points. Damage can be calculated by subtracting the Endurance or Agility points from

the attack roll total. The result of the subtraction is the number of Life Points lost by the opponent. For example, if the opponent's Endurance was 6, and the roll total of the attacker was 10, the opponent loses 4 Life Points.

Life Points

Every character has 25 Life Points. When 15 points have been lost (and the character is down to 10), the player needs to make a successful Stamina roll to keep fighting. After losing 20 Life Points (and down to 5), the character falls unconscious. If a character loses all 25 Life Points, it dies.

Regaining Life Points can work in different ways. As a natural healing process, the character regains as many Life Points per day as dots the character has in Health. In complete rest the healing process is twice as fast. This process can be further sped up by a successful Profession: Healing, Profession: Botany, Profession: Alchemy or any healing-related skill roll. The character regains as many Life Points as the difference of the roll total and the threshold number.

Basic Character Sheet

Name:…………………………..

Gender:……………

Age:………

Looks:……………………………………………………...……………

…...……………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………….......

Attitude:………………………………………………………………....

Background:…………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………........

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
OOO	OOO	OOO	OOO	OOOOOOOOOOO

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
OOO	OOO	OOO	OOO	OOOOOOOOOOO

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
OOO	OOO	OOO	OOO	OOOOOOOOOOO

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
OOO	OOO	OOO	OOO	OOOOOOOOOOO

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
OOO	OOO	OOO	OOO	OOOOOOOOOOO

Special abilities:

……………………………………………..…………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………….……

Items:………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Appendix D: Extraordinary Companions

Sources and variations

For this particular game I have collected 36 versions of the folktale type from 19 different countries. Even though other related folktale types (AaTh 301 and AaTh 653) also include teams of people with extraordinary powers, I limited my work for this game on AaTh 513. I believe that 36 versions present enough options for characters, settings, and quests for creating a game for the whole classroom.

I have arranged the stories alphabetically by title and numbered them. For clarity's sake, throughout this game module the individual tales will be referenced by their number on this list.

1. A boat for land and water *(Italy)*

Calvino, I. (1980) *Italian folktales*. (pp. 362-365) New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

2. Ashfart, the Princess, and the Three Helpers *(Sweden)*

Kvideland, R. (1999). *All the world's reward: folktales told by five Scandinavian storytellers.*
  (pp. 228-233). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

3. Boots and his crew (*Scandinavia*)

Asbjørnsen, P.C. (1970). *Tales from the Fjeld.* (pp. 341-352). New York: Blom.

4. Chet Huat Chet Hai *(Thailand)*

Vathanaprida, S., MacDonald, M.R. & Rohitasuke, B. (1994). *Thai tales: folktales of*
  Thailand. (pp. 96-103). Englewood: Libraries Unlimited.

5. Csinosomdrága *(Hungary)*

Illyés, Gy. (1977). *Hetvenhét magyar népmese*. (pp. 131-136). Budapest: Móra Ferenc
  Könyvkiadó.

6. Dyeermud Ulta and the King in South Erin (*Ireland*)

Curtin, J. (1971). *Hero tales of Ireland*. (pp. 182-197). New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc.

7. Feunn Mac Cüail and the bent grey lad (*Ireland*)

MacInnes, D. (1973). *Folk and hero tales.* (pp. 34-67) New York: AMS Press.

8. Fin MacCool, the three giants, and the small men (*Ireland*)

Curtin, J. (1971). *Hero tales of Ireland*. (pp. 438-462). New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc.

9. Fin MacCumhail, the Seven Brothers and the King of France (*Ireland*)

Curtin, J. (1968). *Myths and folk-lore of Ireland*. (pp. 270-280). Detroit: Singing Tree Press.

10. Four clever men *(Tamilandu, India)*

Beck, B.E.F. (1987). *Folktales of India*. (pp. 19-22). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

11. Four sworn brothers (*Korea*)

Zong, I. (1982). *Folk tales from Korea*. (pp. 162-166). Elizabeth: Hollym International Corp.

12. Hardy Hardback (*Southern Blue Ridge*, USA)

Gordon Carter, I. (1928) Mountain white folk-lore: Tales from the southern Blue Ridge. *The Journal of American Folklore* 38(1925) 346-349.

13. Hardy Hardhead (*Appalachia*, USA)

Chase, R. (1993). *The Jack tales*. (pp. 96-105). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

14. How Fin went to the Kingdom of the Big Men (*Ireland*)

Jacobs, J. (1968). *More Celtic fairy tales.* (pp. 194-203). New York: Dover Publications.

15. How Finn kept his children for the Big Young Hero of the ship, and how Bran was found (*Ireland*)

MacDougall, J. (1973). *Folk and Hero tales*. (pp. 1-9). New York: AMS Press.

16. Jack and the Flying Ship *(USA)*

Haley, G.E. (1992). *Mountain Jack tales*. (pp. 53-66). New York: Dutton Children's Books.

17. Juan and his Six Companions (*Tagalog*, Philippines)

Eugenio, D.L. (2007). *Philippine folk literature: An anthology*. (282-286). Diliman:

University of the Philippines Press.

18. Longshanks, Girth, and Keen *(Czech Republic)*

Fillmore, P. (1919). *Czechoslovak fairy tales*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

19. Six soldiers of fortune *(Germany, Grimm KHM 71)*

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. (2009). *The complete Grimm's fairy tales*. (pp. 176-179). Lawrence:

Digiread.com Publishing.

20. The Ashlad and his crew (The land and water ship) *(Norway)*

Kinnes, T. (2008). *The ashlad and his crew*. Retrieved from http://oaks.nvg.org/ntales68.html

21. The Clever Companions (*Sea Islands*, SC, USA)

Parsons, E.W.C. (1923). *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*. (pp.130-131).

Cambridge: American Folk-lore Society.

22. The Companions (*Andros Island*, Bahamas)

Parsons, E.W.C. (1918). *Folk-tales of Andros Island, Bahamas*. (pp. 32-35). Lancaster:

American Folk-lore Society.

23. The Five Scapegraces *(Italy)*

Calvino, I. (1980) *Italian folktales*. (pp. 432-437) New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

24. The Flying Ship (*Ukraine*)

Symchych, V. & Vesey, O. (1975). *The flying ship and other ukrainian folktales*. (pp. 81-92)

Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston of Canada.

25. The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship *(Russia)*

Ransome, A. (1968). *The fool of the world and the flying ship: a Russian tale*. New York:

Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

26. The Great Bear (*Buriat*)

Holmberg, U. (1927). *The mythology of all races 4: finno-ugric, siberian*. (pp. 427-428).

Boston: Jones.

27. The Great Bear *(Ordos Mongol)*

Jablow, A. & Withers, C. (1969). *The man in the moon: sky tales from many lands.* (pp. 105-112). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

28. The ignorant youth (*Italy*)

Basile, G.B. (1927). *Il Pentamerone, or, the tale of tales.* (pp. 253-259). New York: Horace Liveright, Inc.

29. The King of Lochlin's Three Daughters (*Scotland*)

Campbell, J.F. (1969). *Popular tales of the West Highlands.* (pp. 244-258). Detroit: Singing Tree Press.

30. The little boat which sailed on land and sea (*Missouri French*)

Carriére, J.M. (1937). *Tales from the french folk-lore of Missouri.* (pp. 144-148) Evanston: Northwestern University.

31. The six servants *(Germany, Grimm KHM 134)*

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. (2009). *The complete Grimm's fairy tales.* (pp. 301-303). Lawrence: Digiread.com Publishing.

32. The Tall One, the Broad One, and the Sharp-Eyed One (*Czech Republic*)

Peters, A. & Kabátová-Táborská, Z. (1997). *Strange and spooky stories.* (pp. 28-39) Brookfield: Millbrook Press.

33. The Self-propelled carriage *(French)*

Delarue, P. (1956). *The borzoi book of French folk tales.* (pp. 157-163) New York: Alfred A Knopf.

34. The Ship that Sailed on Water and on Land *(Italy)*

Withers, C. & Johnson, J.E. (1968). *A world of nonsense: strange and humorous tales from many lands.* (pp. 9-17). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

35. The Wonderful Travellers (*Philadelphia*, USA)

Huff Fauset, A. (1928). Tales and riddles collected in Philadelphia. *The Journal of American Folklore* 41(1928) 537-540.

36. Velvakandi (Good-Walker and his brothers) (*Iceland*)

Klaeber, F., Fulk, R.D., Bjork, R.E. & Niles, J.D. (2008). *Klaeber's Beowulf and the fight at Finnsburg*. (pp. 314-315). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Character options and character creation

The game begins with character creation. At the beginning every participant receives a blank character sheet and one card that represents and extraordinary power (cards are assigned randomly by draw). The card only includes the description and mechanics of the power and weakness options to balance it out. The player has to decide on one weakness – either chosen from the list or created by them and approved by the Game Master.

In the next step players create a character around the chosen power according to the rules of character creation (see the General Game System). They have a freedom to shape their characters to their own liking because folktales are formulaic and do not supply much information on the helpers, the gender, ethnicity, personality, and background of the character is entirely up to the player's imagination and creativity. Ideally, the introduction of the game and character creation takes up the first game session, allowing the Game Master time to adjust the campaign to the set of characters represented by the players.

The 36 versions of this folktale provide a list of 27 individual powers and abilities. For the sake of the game these should be printed on individual cards. At the creation of the descriptions below the original tales have been taken into consideration and occasionally modified to balance out powers within the group. Weaknesses have been taken from the original sources when possible, and created with power balance in mind. Players and Game

Masters are encouraged to research the original tales for further information; the numbers of sources are included on the list right after the title.

1. Bird Speech (26.)

Description: The person can understand the speech of birds.

Weaknesses: 1. The character can't talk to the birds, it can only listen to what the birds say. 2. Birds have limited intelligence and only say or understand things that are relevant to them. 3. The person can hear all birds in the area, all the time, and that gets disturbing very fast.

Game Mechanics: Character receives an extra dot in Languages after character creation is complete. If the character already has three dots in Languages, the player can spend the extra dot in any skill within Perception or Smarts.

2. Botany (10.)

Description: The person is an expert on botany – they know everything about plants including their natural uses and healing abilities.

Weaknesses: A person with this ability is educated but not trained in many other skills such as fighting.

Game Mechanics: The character has to take Profession: Botany and spend at least one dot in it. This skill can be used for healing.

3. Carpenter (7., 8., 9., 15.)

Description: The person can make virtually anything out of wood, including ships.

Weaknesses: 1. Make them but not use them: the character can create any item but cannot use them. 2. Everything is a boat: whatever the character sets out to create, it always

turns out as a boat or a ship in the end. This weakness can work with any other item chosen by the player.

Game Mechanics: Character has to have at least one dot in Profession: Carpentry. If the character has three dots in this skill, it has the ability to create magical items out of wood (e.g. a flying ship). Making these items requires a successful skill roll and the approval of the Game Master.

4. Climbing (7., 8., 9., 14., 15., 36.)

Description: The person can climb like a spider on any surface including glass, marble, and eel skin. No rolls needed for climbing, unless otherwise decided by the Game Master.

Weaknesses: 1. Afraid of heights. 2. Can only climb up, but not down; gets stuck in high places. 3. Weak; can only climb alone, cannot carry anyone.

Game Mechanics: The person has to have three dots in Climb but does not need to roll to use the skill unless otherwise stated by the Game Master because of special circumstances.

5. Drinking (1., 2., 3., 5., 6., 12., 13., 16., 20., 24., 25., 26., 27., 29., 30., 31., 32., 33., 34., 35.)

Description: The character can drink any liquid and digest it regardless of the amount.

Weaknesses: 1. Constant thirst. The person feels thirsty even while and after drinking. The longer the character has to go without drinking the weaker it grows. 2. Only water can clench the thirst and only for a limited amount of time.

Game Mechanics: As long as the character goes without drinking, it loses one Life Point every hour. Drinking restores all Life Points instantly (the amount of drinks needed for that is to be determined by the Game Master). However, it does not make the feeling of thirst go away.

6. Eagle Vision (5., 10., 13., 16., 17., 21., 22., 31., 32.)

Description: The person has extraordinary vision. Can see anything and everything.

Weaknesses: Can see anything and everything. In order to avoid seeing the chaos that results from this ability, the character has to wear a blindfold and be blinded for most of the time. When using the ability the character can only focus on a limited time to filter out what it wants to see; after a few minutes it starts experiencing disorientation, headaches, pain, etc.

Game Mechanics: The character can focus on using this ability for 1 minute; after that, it loses one Life Point with every minute until it covers its eyes again or passes out. This character does not have to roll for Search when using this power.

7. Eating (1., 2., 3., 5., 6., 12., 13., 16., 20., 22., 24., 25., 29., 30., 33., 34., 35.)

Description: The person can eat anything and digest it. The quality or the amount of food does not matter. The person's teeth and jaw are strong enough to bite through rock.

Weaknesses: Constant hunger. The person feels constantly famished, even during and after a meal. The longer the character has to go without eating the weaker it grows. Things with no nutritional value (rocks, dirt, furniture) do not help in regaining these points.

Game Mechanics: As long as it goes without eating, the character loses one Life Point per hour. Eating restores Life Points to the original number.

8. Freezing Breath (2., 3., 5., 11., 19., 20., 22., 24., 25., 28., 31., 35.)

Description: The character can cool the air down to freezing point with its breath or cool objects down with its touch. This ability only works within a limited radius.

Weaknesses: 1. Temperature affects the character in a reversed fashion: in a warm environment it feels cold, and in cold weather it feels hot; it can get frostbite instead of

sunburn and a heat stroke instead of a cold. 2. Allergies. The character keeps sneezing cold air uncontrollably whenever the allergen is nearby. 3. The character can only use this ability a limited number of times (in some versions of the tale it is 7, 10, or 15). Once all those are spent the character has to spend time in a cold environment to "refill".

Game Mechanics: The use of this ability does not require dice rolls unless otherwise stated by the Game Master.

9. Heavy Lifting (4., 19.)

Description: The character can lift huge weights several times its own body weight.

Weaknesses: 1. The person can lift but not carry the object for an extended period of time. 2. The person can lift things but can't break them – unlike superhuman strength, this ability does not give the strength to a person to break through a wall, etc., solely the ability to lift weights off the ground.

Game Mechanics: The character does not need to roll for lifting things unless otherwise stated by the Game Master. After the character creation, the character gains two extra points the player can spend in Endurance or Strength.

10. Higher Wisdom (6., 8., 9.)

Description: The character has uncanny knowledge of many things, even things that it had never actively learned or encountered. Once a question is posed to the character, it can find the answer solely by using this ability.

Weaknesses: The person cannot see the future, only the present and the past. 1. Cassandra: even though the person is telling the truth, no one is even believes their answers. 2. Physical weakness: the character can take no fighting skills. 3. Question limit: the person can only answer a limited number of questions per day, and the accuracy of the answers

depends on the wording of the question. 4. Physical injury: the person loses a Life Point for every question answered – the more the character uses its knowledge the weaker it grows, until it needs to rest.

Game Mechanics: The character does not necessarily need to spend points in Education in order to use this ability. Because answers come to the character through using its ability, its normal intellect does not have to match them. It is reasonable to say, however, that unless the background requires otherwise, the character should have points in Education.

11. Iron Grip (7., 8., 15., 36.)

Description: The person has an iron grip that is impossible to break free from regardless of the strength of the opponent. When gripping something the character becomes an immovable object, rooted to the ground (unless the character was airborne in the moment of the grip, in which case it is just rooted to the object).

Weakness: Once in a grip the character requires time to let go, even if it wants to. Once rooted in the "immovable object" state, he or she has to stay that way until the effects of the power wear off. The time limit is negotiable and could be measured in in-game time (minutes) or rounds.

Game Mechanics: The character needs to spend three points on Stamina. Getting out of the grip before it wears off can only be attempted by a character who has at least 10 dots in Strength or a critical success on a Strength roll.

12. Mighty Breath (6., 9., 11., 17., 19., 23., 28., 30., 33.)

Description: The character can manipulate air through breath. It can exhale a windstorm or knock people and objects over with a sneeze.

Weaknesses: 1. This ability cannot be turned off; every breath, if not taken carefully, has the danger of causing damage in the immediate area. 2. The character has the qualities of the wind because it is one with the wind – light enough to float and has to be grounded in some way or will be carried away by the slightest breeze. 3. Allergies.

Game Mechanics: The player does not need to roll to use this ability unless otherwise stated by the Game Master.

13. Mighty Strike (36.)

Description: this power means the person has mastered the use of one weapon and can use it with extraordinary skill and perfection (the weapon should be named and noted on the character sheet before the beginning of the game).

Weakness: this power only allows the person to use one weapon and only works with melee weapons (ranged weapons are discussed under Marksmanship).

Game Mechanics: The character can only use one weapon but must have three dots in Fight. When using other weapons than the chosen one, the Fight or Ranged weapon skill is automatically 0 and cannot be raised (the only successful roll is a 6). When using the chosen weapon, damage on every attack roll is doubled, and the minimum damage is six.

14. Perfect aim (3., 5., 7., 8., 9., 10., 12., 13., 15., 16., 17., 19., 20., 22., 23., 24., 25., 26., 27., 28., 33.)

Description: The person has uncanny aim with one ranged weapon (longbow, recurve bow, crossbow, sling, blowpipe, thrown objects).

Weaknesses: 1. One-weapon proficiency: character cannot use any other weapon. 2. Shot limit: character only has a limited number of shots before it has to retrieve the arrows or acquire new ammunition. 3. Blind: character needs a sound to aim for. Aim is perfect.

Game Mechanics: The character can only use one weapon but must have three dots in Ranged Weapons. When using weapons other than the chosen one, the Fight or Ranged Weapon skill is automatically 0 and cannot be raised (the only successful roll is a 6). When using the chosen weapon, damage on every attack roll is doubled and the minimum damage is six.

15. Ranged Touch (8.)

Description: The character has a sixth sense that is an extension of touch. By touching a surface the character can send its touch sense out to any place that is directly or indirectly connected to the surface. For example, in the original tale Far Feeler can put his hand on a wall and tell that someone was climbing up the other side of that wall.

Weaknesses: 1. Touch sense has a limited radius. 2. An object has to be directly connected to the object the person is touching to be registered by this ability. The ground serves as insulation. 3. The ability cannot be turned off; the character is constantly overwhelmed by sensory overload.

Game Mechanics: When using this ability the character's Awareness and Search rolls are automatically rolled with three dice.

16. Sharp Eyes (18., 22., 31.)

Description: The gaze of the person causes physical damage: break things into pieces or sets object on fire.

Weaknesses: The vision cannot be turned off; the character needs to wear a blindfold to protect its environment. That renders the character blind (or it might be blind to begin with). Extended use of the vision causes pain; it can only be used for a limited amount of time before the person needs to rest.

Game Mechanics: The character starts losing Life Points the moment it opens its eyes; it loses one Life Point every 5 seconds until it passes out (100 seconds max.). The gaze causes damage at the same rate (the longer it looks the more damage it does).

17. Soothsay (7., 14.)

Description: The person can look into the future and seek answers to certain questions.

Weaknesses: The information acquired from the use of this ability is up to the Game Master – future visions are rarely ever clear, and they do not necessarily come to pass. For additional weaknesses see Higher Wisdom.

Game Mechanics: The player does not need to roll to use this ability unless otherwise stated by the Game Master.

18. Speed of Wind (3., 5., 6., 12., 13., 16., 17., 19., 20., 21., 22., 23., 24., 25., 26., 27., 28., 30., 33., 35.)

Description: the person can run with the speed of sound.

Weaknesses: 1. Running at top speed requires a short burst of energy; after that energy is spent the runner has to stop and rest. The rest has to last twice as long as the running lasted. 2. The runner cannot physically stop unless it is slowed down or anchored. This can be achieved by limiting the person's movement in some form (in the folktales one leg is usually tied behind the person's back or otherwise bound) or by applying weights to the person's ankles.

Game Mechanics: The number of minutes spent running is equal to the character's Endurance points (which means the character with maximum Endurance can run a maximum distance of app. 250km before it has to stop).

19. Staying Awake (36.)

Description: In the original story this power allows the person to stay awake and not suffer the consequences of sleep deprivation. In the game this could also mean that the person never grows tired, as well as acquiring bonus points in Awareness. Another possibility is that the person has an aura that keeps everyone else alert within a limited radius (3-10ft).

Weaknesses: This power is limited enough not to require a weakness. If the aura option is chosen, the weakness means that anyone who spends an extended period of time within the aura without sleep will suffer the consequences of severe sleep deprivation the moment they leave the aura.

Game Mechanics: This ability is constantly active. The loss of Life Points for people who spend an extended amount of time in the aura and then leave it is to be determined by the Game Master.

20. Strong Bones (4., 6., 12., 13., 16., 21., 22.)

Description: One part of the person's body is covered in natural armor. In different versions of the folktale this means an unbreakable head, iron back, or even a tough bottom. The body part with this armor cannot be harmed, wounded, or broken by any force.

Weaknesses: Only the chosen part of the body is protected this way. It can be head, torso, arms, legs, fists, or feet. The rest of the body is no different from an average human body.

Game Mechanics: When attacking the armored body part, the attack of the opponent is an automatic fail. Hitting someone with the armored body part deals double damage.

21. Talented Thief (7., 8., 15., 17.)

Description: The person can steal anything from anyone or anywhere without having to roll for it.

Weaknesses: 1. Suspicious looks: no one trusts this character, not even its friends. 2. Kleptomania: the character has a strong urge to steal anything when the opportunity presents itself.

Game Mechanics: The character has to spend three dots on Sleight of Hand but does not need to roll to use this ability unless otherwise stated by the Game Master.

22. Towering Height (18., 22., 31., 32.)

Description: The character can stretch its body to grow taller. A lot taller.

Weaknesses: 1. The body only stretches lengthwise, it cannot stretch in any other direction. 2. Regaining the original shape of the body takes time. 3. The person can only stretch one limb at a time.

Game Mechanics: The player does not need to roll to use this ability unless otherwise stated by the Game Master.

23. Tracking (7., 9., 15., 36.)

Description: The character can track anything anywhere and has an uncanny sense of direction and navigation. Once on a trail it never loses it.

Weaknesses: 1. Similar to a bloodhound, the person requires a trace to follow. It does not need to be a scent because this ability works as a magical sixth sense – but it has to be direct contact with an object that belonged to the person, object, or place the character seeks. 2. The character gets lost and disoriented if it has nothing to follow. Without a trail and a goal it gets lost all the time even on a straight road.

Game Mechanics: The character has to spend three dots in Tracking but does not need to roll the ability unless otherwise stated by the Game Master.

24. Unbreakable Strength (1., 4., 9., 17., 23., 26., 27., 28., 34.)

Description: The person has superhuman strength.

Weaknesses: Superhuman strength is uncontrollable; whenever the character handles anything, object or a weapon, there is a high chance that it will break or get otherwise damaged.

Game Mechanics: The character can only fight bare-handed. Of the 25 character creation points, at least 10 need to be spent in Strength.

25. Uncanny hearing (3., 6., 8., 12., 13., 15., 16., 17., 20., 21., 22., 23., 24., 25., 26., 27., 28., 29., 30., 31., 33.)

Description: The person has an uncanny sense of hearing that has no natural limitations in terms of distance. Simply put, the character can hear everything.

Weaknesses: Simply put, the character can hear everything simultaneously. In order to prevent itself from going mad with all the sounds of the world, the character has to cover its ears constantly and thoroughly, which makes it deaf most of the time. When the abilities are needed the character has to focus to filter out the sounds wanted. The one-time limit on the use of the ability is 1-5 minutes, after which the character will suffer headaches, disorientation, and physical pain.

Game Mechanics: After the initial 1-5 minutes of focus (or, in case of a failed Perception roll, instantly) the character loses one Life Point every minute until passing out. Focusing on distant or difficult sounds might require a successful Search, Awareness, or Perception roll.

26. Wide Girth (18., 22., 32.)

Description: The character can gain weight out of nothing at an incredible speed, up to the body mass of several times its original size and then can go back to the original state without a diet or exercise.

Weaknesses: Losing weight is a lot slower process than gaining it.

Game Mechanics: The player does not need to roll to use this ability. Gaining weight works at a rate of 10lbs/sec; losing weight works at a rate of 1lb/minute.

27. Wooden Soldiers (24., 25., 35.)

Description: The person can turn trees or any object made of wood into soldiers.

Weaknesses: 1. Time limit: the soldiers created will turn back into the original object after a limited length of time. 2. Number limit: only a limited number of soldiers can be created. 3. Limited intelligence: the soldiers do not act on their own, they need instructions from their creator and they follow them blindly. 4. Rebellious nature: the soldiers are very independent and need to be convinced, bribed, threatened, or tricked in order to follow instructions.

Game Mechanics: The player does not need to roll to use this ability unless otherwise stated by the Game Master. In the case of the Rebellious nature weakness, the character needs to have successful Negotiation rolls in order to make the soldiers obey orders.

Setting

Given the diverse sources of this folktale and the generic nature of most of the variations, this campaign can be set anywhere or nowhere. It is the Game Master's decision to include real-world settings mentioned in the tales (e.g. France), general directions (e.g.

Eastern World), imaginary places (e.g. Land of Giants), or no specific settings at all. Compared to published role-playing systems, this campaign would best work as a generic pseudo-Medieval fantasy setting (similar to the world of *Dungeons and Dragons*). Because it is not required from folktales, the game does not need to name specific places; it only needs to include the main plot points e.g. the King's castle, the hag's tower, the forest, etc. In the game module below an example is given to the use of settings taken from the original tales.

Nonplayer Characters

The game module includes a series of NPCs. Not every NPC needs to have a character sheet; only the ones that play an important role in the campaign, such as the young hero (fool), and the final enemy (in the case of this campaign, the Hag). Monsters and generic opponents (soldiers, giants, etc.) only need enough stats for fight rolls and will be included in the campaign module.

As examples, the character sheets of the two main NPCs are included below. The Game Master is free to adjust them to the needs and limits of the group.

The Hero

Name: Moscione

Gender: Male

Age: 16

Looks: Handsome, with an open, friendly face, dark hair, and brown eyes. Dresses in colorful clothes, obviously wealthy, complete with a ridiculously large hat and feathers. Carries a rapier that is more for show than for actual fighting.

Attitude: Overly cheerful, overly confident, foolish, very friendly but very annoying. Dreams of being a hero but has no common sense. He trusts everyone he meets.

Background: He is the only son of a wealthy merchant, sent on his way to see the world, and, hopefully, learn some common sense on the way.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
X	X	XX	X	XXXXX(5)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
	X	XX	XX	XXXXX(5)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
X	X	XX		XXXX(4)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
X	X	XX		XXXX(4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
	XXX	X	XXX	XXXXXXX(7)

Special abilities: He has an eye for talent. He recognizes people with special abilities. He does not even realize why he is drawn to them.

Items: A purse filled with gold. One rapier. Food and drink enough for the next few days.

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

The Hag

Name: Unknown

Gender: Female

Age: Ancient

Looks: An ugly old woman with grey-green skin, tangled greasy white hair, beady eyes, and sharp teeth. She looks old and frail but terrifying.

Attitude: Evil through and through. Vengeful, bitter, and cruel.

Background: Once the sister of the King of the Giants, she gave herself over to dark magic and turned into an evil hag. Now she only lives for making people's life miserable.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total

XX	X		XXX	XXXXXX(6)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XXX			X	XXXX(4)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
	XX	XXX	XXX	XXXXXXXX(8)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
	XX	XX		XXXX(4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	XXX	XXX		XXXXXXXXX(9)

Special abilities: She can turn into a bolas spider. In her spider form she is taller than a human and has all the abilities of a spider; she has venom, silk, and the sticky thread she uses to catch her prey and pull it in. In her spider form her Endurance is 12. Once she has changed into a spider, she cannot go back to her original form.

Items: None

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Game Module

This campaign is largely episodic; as in the original tales, it is constructed from a series of tasks and shorter quests that all require the skill and creativity of the whole group. For the sake of this example game, I have created a frame story out of the original sources and a series of example episodes that can be used or left out based on time, participants, and the Game Master's consideration.

For further reference, the numbers of the original tales used have been included in the module.

Call to adventure

The young hero, Moscione, travels the world, hiring people with special skills. He offers to pay in gold and cover all the expenses of people who enter his service. Moscione is the only son of a wealthy merchant who knows nothing about the world, but he is out to make his fortune, gain fame and riches for himself, and possibly marry a princess and become royalty. He is overly friendly, trusting, and extremely curious – he asks a lot of questions to the point of being annoying. If he meets someone with a special power, he inquires about that person's talents and insists that he or she take service with him.

Moscione will visit the characters one by one (unless they have been in groups before, traveling or working together, siblings, etc.), and hires them for his "questing team". The goal of the game is to have all the playing characters hired, but some might need convincing rather than money. Moscione will offer them fame, riches, positions at his future royal court, or anything else it takes to make them agree.

Winning the Princess

Once the team of heroes is assembled, Moscione will lead them to the court of the nearest King, who has just announced that his three daughters will marry the people who can win the most challenges he has set for them. In the main hall of the castle visitors and suitors can greet the King and his three beautiful young daughters, and then they can go to the long desk where the King's wise but quite exhausted counselors are signing up heroes, princes, adventurers, and other guests for a series of challenges.

There should be a challenge for every member of the group here, although they do not need to complete all of them (and the Game Master is not required to tell them which challenge was designed for which power). According to the rules of the game, the three suitors who complete the most challenges win the three princesses. Depending on the time

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frame of the whole campaign, the number of people in the group, and how fast the players

solve the challenges, the Game Master can decide on a number of challenges they will have to

face. If there is no time for all the players to get a challenge, the Game Master can just

announce that the challenges were halted by an unexpected event and move over to the next

part – *Princesses Lost*.

The most common challenges suitors have to face in the original tales are as follows:

Eating contest: Originally designed for the Eating power (1., 2., 3., 5., 6., 12., 13., 16.,

20., 22., 25., 29., 30., 33., 34., 35.). Whoever can eat the most meat from the King's table will

be announced as winner. The participating character has to roll Stamina (threshold number:

9). Every successful roll signifies another piece of meat consumed. Every fail signifies a Life

Point lost until the character passes out. Characters with the Eating power can roll four dice

against a threshold number of 10. The Game Master can either set a record ("the most a suitor

could eat so far was 20 pieces"), or roll for a few (2-5) NPC suitors who compete against the

player.

Drinking contest: Originally designed for the Drinking power (1., 2., 3., 5., 6., 12., 13.,

16., 20., 24., 25., 29., 30., 33., 34., 35.). Whoever can drink the most wine, beer, or water

from the King's cellar will be announced as winner. The participating character has to roll

Stamina (threshold number: 9). Every successful roll signifies another goblet, pitcher, or

drinking horn of beverage consumed. Every fail signifies a Life Point lost until the character

passes out. Characters with the Drinking power can roll four dice against a threshold number

of 10. The Game Master can either set a record ("the most a suitor could drink so far was 20

pints") or roll for a few (2-5) NPC suitors who compete against the player.

Archery contest: Originally designed for the Marksmanship power (21., 27.). Archery

contest includes a series of targets designed to provide a challenge even to the best archers.

Examples include shooting one particular orange out of a tree full of oranges or one particular

duck out of a flock of ducks. For a challenge like that the character with Marksmanship only has to roll a successful Awareness roll to notice which specimen is the one to shoot, and then roll Ranged weapons. The shot will be an automatic success unless the roll is a critical fail (all ones). Characters without the Marksmanship power have to do the same process except their shot is not an automatic success but an actual roll against a threshold number determined by the Game Master. The number and nature of the targets is up to the Game Master's decision.

Running race: Originally designed for the Speed of Wind power (3., 6., 12., 13., 16., 19., 20., 21., 22., 23., 24., 25., 27., 28., 33., 35.). The character has to run a race with another suitor (sometimes, with a princess herself) to a distant goal (usually a well, a fountain, or the sea) and retrieve a vial or bucket of water first. For this, characters without the Speed of Wind power have to roll a Stamina roll against the other competitor. The additional catch in the tales is that at the distant goal there is usually someone or something that makes the competitor fall asleep – a hag, a giantess, a spell, and enchanted rock, etc. The group needs someone with extraordinary senses or knowledge to find out what happened (according to the rules of the use of their powers) and then someone with the Marksmanship power to break the spell (shoot the hag, giantess, rock, etc.). Characters with Speed of Wind, once woken up, can win the race without a roll; characters without that ability have to roll Stamina again to catch up with their competitor.

Bullfight: Originally designed for the Unbreakable Strength or the Heavy Lifting powers (21.). In this challenge the character has to restrain and tie up a raging bull. Other characters might try as well but will need to be creative with their methods in order to defeat the bull. Killing the bull disqualifies the participant from the challenge. Skill and ability rolls may be called by the Game Master according to the actions of the payers. Possibilities include: Dodge (for jumping out of the way of the charging bull), Jump (for jumping over the

raging bull), Fight (for grappling the bull), Ride (for riding the bull), and Stamina (for holding the bull down for an extended period of time).

Challenge of bravery: Originally designed for the Freezing Breath power (2., 3., 5., 11., 19., 20., 24., 25., 27., 31., 35.). Participants will be locked into a room that is heated from the outside with fire and quickly becomes hot as an oven. Suitors have to stay in there as long as they can stand the heat; if they ask to be let out, the guards will let hem out, but only the ones that stayed in there the longest have a chance at winning a princess. Characters with Freezing Breath can stay the heat indefinitely (provided they use their powers). If the Game Master thinks it makes the challenge more interesting, it is possible not to tell the group what the "challenge of bravery" is before someone volunteers to do it. This way there is a possibility that a character without the Freezing Breath power will volunteer. In that case the character has to roll Stamina every 5 minutes and if the roll fails lose a Life Point. After losing 19 Life Points (one point before they faint), the character is encouraged to call for the guards and give up the challenge.

Flying ship: Originally designed for the Carpenter power (1., 2., 3., 6., 17., 20., 22., 24., 25., 30., 33., 34.). In many versions of the tale the King demands from the suitors a flying ship, a ship that sails on land and water, a self-propelled carriage, or some other magical vehicle. A character with a Carpenter power can craft such a ship, provided it has the materials it needs (others might have to cut and collect wood, etc.), three dots in Profession: Carpentry, and a successful skill roll. One needs the Track skill to navigate and steer the ship.

Bed of nails: Originally designed for the Strong Bones power (6., 13., 16.). Suitors are required to jump onto a bed of long iron nails and survive. To a normal person without any protective armor or the Strong Bones power, the damage of the nails is an instant damage of a roll of 10 dice. Even if the character survives, it will be severely incapacitated. Not recommended to characters without Strong Bones, or another kind of magical or natural trick.

Game Masters are encouraged to come up with challenges of their own design.

Princesses Lost

The challenges have been completed, or the Game Master decided to move the story along – either way, the next step in the campaign is the announcement that the princesses have been kidnapped (12., 16., 36.). The group can use Higher Wisdom, Soothsay, or simple investigation to find clues about what happened. Rolls and information given should be determined by the Game Master.

The three princesses have been kidnapped by an evil hag who long has been the enemy of the King. She resides somewhere in the Eastern World. She kidnapped the princesses to hurt the King and to leave him without an heir to the throne. Instead of keeping them with her, she transformed the princesses into other shapes and hid them in separate places (18., 31., 32.). The group has to go find the three hidden objects first and then defeat the hag and make her break the curse and turn them back into their original form. The King offers rich rewards (and a princess's hand) in return; but the players' team is not the only one who sets out to complete the quest.

To gain a head start over the other suitors, this is the time for the group to acquire a flying ship, if they have not done it before. They can acquire on a number of ways, depending on the members of the group and the Game Master's choice: they can create one (Carpenter), steal one from other suitors (Thief), or encounter an old beggar on the road, treat him well as required in folktales and receive the ship in return (3., 13., 20., 29., 30., 35.).

The following episodes can happen in any order. If the group already knows where to find the three princesses, they can choose to rescue them one by one, or they can split up into teams; when they have all three, they can go to the hag's palace. If they do not know where the princesses are, they can go straight to the hag's palace, gain knowledge of the princesses

(by trickery or by defeating the hag), and come back with them to make the hag break the spell. Princesses have to be present for the hag to be able to do that, and the hag has to be alive. If she dies before the spell is broken, the princesses cannot be changed back.

The First Princess: Storm Island

This episode is the reason why the group needs to acquire a ship – all the other episodes can be done without one. This princess, however, has been turned into a golden egg and hidden within a tree on a distant island (17.). The island is surrounded by underwater rocks and reefs as well as sea monsters lurking under the waves (14.).

The goal is to get to the island, find the biggest oak tree, and cut it down to find the golden egg hidden inside. Finding the tree requires a successful Track or Search roll from at least one member in the group, cutting it down requires a successful Strength roll and the appropriate tool or method.

There are two sea monsters in the original tale; it is the Game Master's decision when and how they appear. One possibility is to have one monster attack (and be defeated) on the way to the island, and the other attack on the way back; another would be for the second one to attack while the group is on the island and divide their attention from finding the golden egg. The monsters can be any kind, ranging from serpents or Krakens to dragons, giant crabs, or land-sharks. An example profile can be seen below:

Creature: Sea Monster

Description: Giant serpent, app. 100ft long. Hard blue-green scales, white fangs as long and sharp as knives; long, agile body that moves fast in water and on land alike. Has sharp spikes at the end of its tail.

Endurance: 18 (can only be hit if the Attack roll includes at least one 6)

Smarts: 10 (not sentient and raging, relatively hard to trick)

Agility: 8

Life Points: 50 (does not fall unconscious)

Attacks: Fangs (Fight 3), Crushing Coils (Fight 3), Tail Spikes (Fight 3)

Monsters like this one have been designed to be defeated by teamwork rather than one opponent alone. Even though it would be very hard to defeat for one person, people working and using their skills and powers together (see "joint force" attacks) have a chance of defeating the monster without seeming too easy.

The Second Princess: The Giants' Cave (29.)

This princess has been transformed into a pearl and hidden underground in a cave guarded by giants. There are four entrances to the cave and four giants. To find an entrance a successful Track or Search roll is needed from at least one of the members of the group or the use of a special power.

Giants can be tricked or defeated in combat. The group can get in through one entrance, so they only need to defeat one giant; but the others might show up while they are in the cave, or on the way out, to make the quest more challenging. Giants have the same generic profile:

Creature: Giant

Description: Humanoid, app. 30ft tall. Tough grey skin, long yellow fingernails, sharp teeth, clothes stitched together from animal skins.

Endurance: 15

Smarts: 6 (relatively easy to trick)

Agility: 5

Life Points: 35

Attacks: Fight 4 (fist, claws, bite, simple weapons), Ranged weapons 3 (thrown)

In addition to their general traits, each giant has its own specialty. One has his heart in his right palm, and will not die unless that palm is hit (shot, stabbed, crushed, etc.). He will not use that hand to attack, which can be a warning sign (15.). The second giant has blood that burns everything it comes in contact with, as the characters will find out once it is wounded (9.). The blood deals one die of damage to everything it splatters on until the fire is put out. The third giant can shape rock as if he is shaping clay with his hands (14.). He will fashion blunt weapons out of it or throw it at people. The fourth giant can shape object made of wood the same way (which is especially interesting if someone in the group uses the Wooden Soldiers power) (14.).

Once the giants are defeated or tricked, the group is free to take the pearl that is kept in a small box in the deepest cave and go on their way.

The Third Princess: The Khan's Army

The third princess has been turned into a golden ring and hidden in the Khan's army that is about to invade the kingdom (27.); the Khan wears the ring on his finger. The heroes have to find a way to reach the Khan in the middle of his army camp and take the ring from him. The Khan is protected by tiger-shifter – tigers who can take human form and hide in plain sight (11.). There are five of them; in their human form they have their feline senses and speed (Awareness 3, Agility 10). At the first sign of fighting, they will shift back into their tiger forms. There is a weakness: they cannot shift if they are being touched or held by someone; they can only revert back to their animal shape if they are completely free to move.

Creature: Tiger-shifter

Description: Feral tiger, slightly larger than a normal tiger

Endurance: 15

Smarts: 8 (sentient, can be tricked)

Agility: 12

Life Points: 25

Attacks: Fight 4 (claws, bite)

The Khan also has soldiers and archers in his army surrounding the tent.

If the group is looking for a more diplomatic solution, they can investigate news from the army and find out the Khan's only son is sick and on his death bed (26.). In exchange for healing his son, the Khan would give the adventurers the ring, though he does not even know its origins. Healing can work the way described in the Game Mechanics section. People with the Botany or Bird Speech powers can investigate the surrounding forests and find plants that can cure the son's illness.

If the characters fail to go unnoticed while taking the ring from the Khan, they might end up being pursued by an entire army – a common motif in this folktale type (19., 24., 25., 28., 31., 33.).

Facing the Hag

Once the princesses have been recovered from their hiding places, the only thing left to do is break the curse and help them regain their original form. In order to make the Hag do that, they have to defeat her first (or trick her into doing it). The Hag's description is included in the Nonplayer Characters section. She is an evil old witch who can turn herself into a bolas spider that catches her prey with a lasso (4.). Her palace only has one entrance, on the top of the highest tower, and is guarded by giant grasshopper-like insects (4., 8.). It is the Game Master's decision whether to include the insects or not; if the group needs more challenges or to fill up time, fighting giant insects is always an easy recourse.

Creature: Giant insect

Description: Feral grasshopper-like insects about the size of a horse with bee-like stings.

Endurance: 10

Smarts: 5

Agility: 10

Life Points: 25

Attacks: Fight 3 (bite, sting)

The Hag will first try to frighten and threaten the heroes; she might even use spells like turning people into iron statues (18., 32.) (casting a spell on someone counts as a Ranged weapon attack). Only if pressed will she change into her spider form to fight.

Once defeated, the Hag will break the spell on the princesses and turn them back to their original form.

Wrapping Up

Once the princesses are rescued, the only things left to do are return to the King and receive the reward. The conclusion is entirely up to the players and their characters (and the Game Master). Moscione, the leader of the group, should marry one princess and become the heir to the throne, as it happens in the original tales. As for the group, they can make their own decisions about the end of the story.

Follow-up exercises

1. Questions for discussion

- Can you mention modern-day characters from TV, movies, books, or comics who have similar abilities to your character? Compare and contrast.

- If you could choose any special power, what would you choose and why?

- If you had to assemble a team of five, what would your team be like? What do you think makes a good team?

- If you could go back and play the game again, what would you do differently?

- Do you think the special power determines the character? What would happen to your character if she or he suddenly lost this special power?

- Discuss the character of the NPC hero (Moscione). Do you think he was a good leader? What makes someone a good leader?

- What do you think qualifies as a "special power" in the real world?

- What elements of the game have you seen before in folktales and fairy tales?

- What would you have done if all the characters in the game had been ordinary humans with no special powers? How would you have solved the quests?

2. Writing assignments

- Write down the story of the game from your character's point of view.

- Write a journal from the point of view of the leader of the group (the NPC hero)

- Write down the story of what happened to your character after the game ended.

- Work in pairs: describe how your two characters would work together in an imaginary situation.

- Create a character sheet for yourself in the real world. Include everything you are good at.

- Write a journal entry from the point of view of your character about his or her special power. Does she or he like it? Why, or why not?

3. Reading assignments

- Find and read one original version of the story; compare it to what happened in the game (choose readings according to the character the student played in the game)

- Read other stories from the same country or collection. Look for similar characters, plots, motifs.

- Read one contemporary day book (or comic) that includes a character similar to yours. Compare and contrast.

4. Group assignments

- Tell the story of what happened in the game in the third person. Take turns: give the floor to someone else after a few sentences.

- Create a poster for your team of heroes together.

- Create a map and mark all the places this story can be found (use the source list as a guide). Mark the imaginary journey of your group on the map.

- Organize a debate between the characters of the story (Hag, princesses, Khan, giants, Moscione, etc.) Discuss questions such as: Who should receive the reward from the king? Who should marry the other two princesses? How to convince the Khan not to attack the kingdom? What should we do with the Hag now that she is defeated?

- Design your own game. Find a folktale or fairy tale that you like and use your characters to go through the story. Observe what happens. Enjoy.

Similar stories

Many folktales have characters, plots, and motifs that can be used for role-playing campaigns. As demonstrated in this example game, collecting more than one tale produces a variety of options for characters and episodes. One can either collect versions of the same folktale type, as I have done with AaTh 513; or collect different tales based on other criteria such as cultural background (e.g. Grimm tales, see the published game *Grimm* in the Review of Literature chapter), hero (e.g. Jack tales), or motifs (e.g. giant tales; dragon tales; tales

about the sea; changeling tales). Working several tales into one campaign makes the game more diverse and easily adjusted to the needs of the participating group.

Examples of folktale types that could be turned into role-playing campaigns include:

AaTh 301: Quest for a Vanished Princess. The hero sets out to rescue a princess who has been kidnapped. Companions with extraordinary powers join him on the way, although he is often betrayed by them in the end.

AaTh 306: The Danced-out Shoes. The hero is hired to investigate what the princesses do every night that wears out their shoes. He follows them into another world, to discover their secret.

AaTh 451: The Brothers Who were Turned into Birds. The hero sets out on a journey to find his log-lost brothers and break the curse to help them regain their human forms.

AaTh 550: The Golden Bird. The hero is sent on a quest to find the legendary Firebird and a series of other valuable things including a princess.

AaTh 653: The Four Skillful Brothers. Similar to the Extraordinary Companions type but without a leading hero; brothers skilled in different professions join their forces to save a princess.

Sources and variations

I have worked with three original sources while creating this game:

Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica*

Apollodorus, *The Library*, I. 9. 15-28.

Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*

Mentions and references to the voyage of the Argo can be found in various Greek and Latin sources. I have restricted my work to these three because they are the fullest and most well-known of the written versions of the Argo myth. They have provided enough both in terms of characters and episodes to create a coherent and entertaining game campaign.

Character options and character creation

In the original story the leader of the Argonauts' mission and the captain of the ship was Jason, son of Aeson. In the beginning of character creation, the group of players has to come to a democratic decision on who is going to take the role of Jason in the game. Being the leader comes with the power and responsibility of decision-making throughout the journey as well as the responsibility of representing the Argonauts as a whole. The favor or wrath of the gods and goddesses depends on Jason's decisions as well as Medea's help that has a great influence on the outcome of the mission.

Apart from Jason, there are 25 Argonauts mentioned in all three of the sources. These are the first character choices for the players; but from the 25, only the ones with distinctive attributes, skills, or personal traits have been chosen for this list. Some other characters that are not mentioned in all sources have also been included in this list for their unique skills, traits, or their connections to other Greek myths such as the Iliad and the Odyssey.

At the beginning of the game the players are provided with character options and can choose whichever character they would like to work with. Only basic information is included in these options; the players are encouraged to do further research and build up the character's personality, goals, physical appearance, and general description.

In terms of character creation, the issue of gender has to be addressed: all but one of the known Argonauts are male. The only woman on the ship, Atalanta, is not included in all the sources, but she has been included in the list below for she is a unique and well-known character in Greek mythology, with ties to important myths such as the Calydonian Hunt. However, for the sake of gender balance within the classroom, I would like to propose the option of the "Tiresias rule": any character can be redesigned as female if the player feels more comfortable with it. The rule is named after the blind prophet of Greek mythology who lived as a woman for several years, and alone he experienced life both as a man and as a woman.

There are certain posts on the Argo that need to be filled. Jason is, as we have mentioned before, the captain. In the story of the Argonauts, several people have steered the ship; the most well-known is Tiphys, and, after his death on the voyage, Erginus, son of Poseidon took over his task. Any son or descendant of Poseidon can possess the ability to steer the ship and navigate the seas; another possible candidate would be Argus, the builder of the Argo who also gave the ship its name. The sources mention that there was a lookout on the ship at all times, watching for news and danger; the most fitting candidate for this post would be Lynceus who possesses uncanny eyesight. Orpheus was known to keep the beat with his music while others rowed. Depending on the size and needs of the participating class, the Game Master has to make a decision which characters should be included in the game. The person of Jason is mandatory; as for Orpheus and Tiphys (or any other navigator), they

can be turned into NPCs if no one volunteers to take the role. Anyone can take the role of the lookout even without superhuman sight.

Everyone except for these characters has to be rowing throughout the journey. For the sake of the game and the size of the average classroom, the Argo can be portrayed as a triaconter, which means a smaller ship with 30 oars. For this reason, even if the participating group is small, there have to be enough people on the Argo to make the voyage back and forth, which means adding NPCs that stay in the background on the ship while the players do the creative thinking and overcome all obstacles.

On the list below, 38 possible characters are included; if none of them appeals to them, players can be advised to create their own character either based on original sources or on their own ideas (new characters, however, have to be approved by the Game Master). Based on experiences with testing this game it is suggested that the Game Master selects, some of the original characters that best fit his or her plans for the game and offers them to the players to choose from; having too many options can confuse beginner players and make character creation take up too much time.

A note on names: Greek names are often hard to pronounce and remember. During the testing, many players created nicknames or modified names for their characters (e.g. Zet instead of Zetes, Calli instead of Calaia). This is a completely valid option in gaming and makes it easier for the players to communicate with each other in character.

Profile is a short definition of the special skill, talent, or lineage that makes the character unique. *Sources* includes the sources out of the three listed above that mention the character by name. *Female* includes suggestions for female names for the characters where the "Tiresias rule" applies. *Additional Information* provides a starting point for further research and character creation. *Game Mechanics* describes additional rules for character creation and play.

Jason, son of Aeson

Profile: Captain of the Argonauts

Sources: He is mentioned in all the sources

Female: -

Additional Information: Destined to become the next king of Iolcus after Pelias's death. Usually described as very charismatic.

Game Mechanics: Jason's character receives an extra dot in Negotiation even if it raises the number of dots to four. He has the ability to inspire people; every time he delivers an inspirational speech to the group they can reroll ones in their rolls (except for critical fails) during the entire scene.

Acastus, son of Pelias

Profile: The son of King Pelias

Sources: Apollodorus, Apollonius Rhodius

Female: Acaste

Additional Information: The son of the King who sends the Argonauts on their mission. After the death of Pelias, he becomes King of Iolcus.

Game Mechanics: Should be fairly skilled in diplomacy and leadership (points in Negotiation) and well equipped for the journey.

Admetus, son of Pheres

Profile: King of Pherae, favored by Apollo

Sources: Apollodorus, Valerius Flaccus

Female: Admete (his wife Alcestis would also be an interesting female hero option)

Additional Information: Famous for his hospitality and justice; friend of Heracles. Apollo served as a herdsman in his court for a year and rewarded Admetus for his

treatment. Admetus received the gift that he does not have to die if someone else is willing to die instead of him. His wife volunteered but was rescued by Heracles.

Game Mechanics: Admetus is marginally immortal. When he is about to die (loses all Life Points), he can have a roll of Negotiation (threshold number 7); if the roll is a success, Thanatus the god of death was too afraid to take his soul, and Admetus lives. In the presence of Heracles, the roll is not necessary.

Aethalides, son of Hermes

Profile: Archer and herald with infinite memory, who can talk to the dead

Sources: Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus

Female: Aethalida

Additional Information: Brother of Eurytus and Echion; the herald of the Argonauts. He was granted infinite memory by his father as well as the ability to pass between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Ranged weapons, Negotiation and Education. During the course of the campaign he has three chances of crossing over to the other world and talking to the shadow of a dead person. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Hermes (roll one die for 6).

Ancaeus, son of Lycurgus

Profile: Wild warrior

Sources: Apollodorus, Apollonius Rhodius

Female: Ancaea

Additional Information: Because his armor and weapons were hidden by his grandfather, Ancaeus went to join the Argonauts wearing a bear's skin as a cape and wielding a two-headed axe (labrys).

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Fight. At the start of a battle he can roll one die; if the result is 6, he has intimidated the enemy and it might run, surrender, or defend itself but not attack (depending on the decision of the Game Master). For convincing intimidation, dice roll might not be required.

Argus, son of Arestor

Profile: The builder of the Argo

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Argea

Additional Information: The chosen and follower of Athena, this skilled shipwright joined the Argonauts to make sure they take good care of the ship – and in case it needed repairs. Some descriptions claim Argos wears a bull's hide as a cape. Not to be confused with Argus son of Phrixus (see NPCs).

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Profession: Shipwright. Capable of performing all the repairs the ship might need. Also has the skill to craft various tools and instruments.

Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus

Profile: Huntress

Sources: Apollodorus. Apollonius Rhodius mentions her but says she was not allowed on the ship because she was a woman.

Female: -

Additional Information: A princess from Arcadia. Her father wanted a son and left the girl child out on the mountains. Atalanta was raised by bears, learned to hunt and fight, and became a virgin priestess of Artemis.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Fight or Ranged Weapons and Track. Main weapon options are bow and javelin. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Artemis (roll one die for 6).

Augeias, son of Helios

Profile: Wealthy King of Elis

Sources: Apollodorus, Apollonius Rhodius

Female: Auge

Additional Information: Famous for his immortal livestock and his stables. Heracles's cleaning said stables should be placed later in time than the Argo's voyage because it results in Augeias's death.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Negotiation. Because of his wealth, he is allowed to carry 100 gold drachmae. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Helios (roll one die for 6).

Autolycus, son of Hermes

Profile: Thief

Sources: Apollodorus

Female: Autolyce

Additional Information: The maternal grandfather of Odysseus. Skilled thief and musician. Has the ability to become invisible.

Game Mechanics: should have three dots in Hide and Sleight of Hand. If a Hide roll includes a 6, the character becomes invisible till the end of the scene. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Hermes (roll one die for 6).

Butes, son of Teleon

Profile: The beekeeper

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Erycina

Additional Information: Mentioned as "warlike" and a good fighter but better known as a beekeeper. From Athens.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Profession: Beekeeper. He has a hive of bees that travel with him and follow his orders. In combat they qualify as a ranged weapon.

Calais, son of Boreas, brother of Zetes

Profile: Son of the North Wind

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources.

Female: Calaia

Additional Information: One of the twin sons of Boreas, god of the North Wind. Has wings of golden scales on his ankles that enable him to fly. Described as dark-haired, hair constantly moving in the wind.

Game Mechanics: This character can fly (unless the wings on his ankles are tied down or he is restrained some other way). Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Boreas (roll one die for 6).

Castor, son of Zeus, brother of Pollux

Profile: The mortal twin

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Castra

Additional Information: One of the twin sons of Leda from Sparta (portrayed in the constellation Gemini). He has a special talent in horse riding.

Game Mechanics: Should have 3 dots in Ride. Also known as a good fighter, he should have dots in Fight. When fighting together with his brother, receives an extra dot in Fight, even if that brings the number of dice to four.

Deucalion, son of Minos

Profile: The grandson of King Minos

Sources: Valerius Flaccus

Female: Deucalia

Additional Information: His weapon is the javelin. Grandson of King Minos, from Crete.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Ranged weapons because the javelin is primarily a thrown weapon. Also can have three dots in Jump, and adept in the Cretan art of bull-leaping.

Echion, son of Hermes, brother of Eurytus

Profile: Herald

Sources: Apollonius Rhodius, Vlaerius Flaccus

Female: Echidna

Additional Information: Described as "skilled in craftiness". Plays the role of the herald, messenger, and diplomat during the voyage of the Argo.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Negotiation. When he carries a herald's staff, law protects him from any harm. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Hermes (roll one die for 6).

Erginus, son of Poseidon

Profile: Navigator

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Ergina

Additional Information: From Miletus. Described as skilled in seacraft and war and a good navigator. After the death of Tiphys, he takes over the steering of the Argo.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Track, Fight, or Ranged Weapons and Negotiation (the skill used for leadership in battle). Should also have three dots in Swim, but does not have to roll for it (automatic success). Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Poseidon (roll one die for 6).

Euphemus, son of Poseidon

Profile: Swift runner and swimmer

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Euphemia

Additional Information: As a gift from his father, he can run on water. He also have naval skills.

Game Mechanics: The character can run (walk) on water and swim well – should have three dots in Swim but does not need to roll for it (automatic success). Can also have dots in Track for navigation skills. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Poseidon (roll one die for 6).

Eurytus, son of Hermes, brother of Echion

Profile: Swordsman

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Euryte

Additional Information: Described as "skilled in craftiness", and a good swordsman.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Sleight of Hand and Fight. Chosen weapon is the sword. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Hermes (roll one die for 6).

Heracles, son of Zeus

Profile: The mighty son of Zeus

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Heracleia

Additional Information: Extraordinary strength and skill in archery. Wears the impenetrable skin of the Nemean Lion. Joined the Argonauts with Hylas as his squire.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots each in Ranged weapons, Fight and Stamina. Only needs to roll Stamina at five Life Points, and if the roll is successful, does not faint at all. Before the start of combat can roll one die for 6 and intimidate the enemy that runs, surrenders, or defends himself but does not attack (based on the Game Master's decision). For convincing intimidation, dice roll might not be required. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Zeus (roll one die for 6).

Hylas

Profile: Heracles's squire

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Hyle

Additional Information: Travels with Heracles as his squire and apprentice. Described as a handsome youth.

Game Mechanics: Should have dots in Negotiation (people trust him instinctively) and Ranged weapons because he is Heracles's apprentice.

Ialmenus, son of Ares

Profile: The son of Ares

Sources: Apollodorus

Female: Ialmene

Additional Information: Should be very young because he is still alive after the Trojan War.

Game Mechanics: Should have because dots in Fight or Ranged because he is the son of Ares. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Ares (roll one die for 6).

Idas, son of Aphareus, brother of Lynceus

Profile: Strong warrior

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Ida

Additional Information: He is the brother of Lynceus but does not possess the superhuman vision. His great strength is mentioned in the sources.

Game Mechanics: Should have at least 10 of the 25 dots spent in Strength.

Idmon, son of Apollo

Profile: Prophet

Sources: Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus

Female: Idme

Additional Information: Knows the art of prophecy; joined the Argonauts despite warning omens. From Argos.

Game Mechanics: The character can see the future as shifting, misty images (presented by the Game Master). He can use his ability to look into the future once a day; it does not require a roll. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Apollo (roll one die for 6).

Iphiclus, son of Thestius

Profile: The old mentor

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Iphicleia

Additional Information: Jason's uncle on his mother's side. He is an old man but gives good counsel and described as still adept in hand-to-hand combat and wielding the javelin.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Education and four dots distributed between Fight and Ranged weapons. Can't spend more than five dots in Strength and Endurance each.

Iphitus, son of Eurytus

Profile: Archer

Sources: Apollonius Rhodius

Female: Iphite

Additional Information: His father had the bow of Apollo – he taught archery to Heracles. The bow was passed down to Iphitus.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Archery. Apollo's bow and arrows shine with a bright golden light (but he only has six arrows).

Lynceus, son of Aphareus, brother of Idas

Profile: Seer

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Lynceia

Additional Information: Possesses keen sight that can penetrate walls or even the ground. Served as a lookout on the Argo.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Awareness and Search but does not have to roll for using those skills. He sees normally unless he specifically announces to use his superhuman sight. After 5 minutes the sight starts to fade.

Meleager, son of Oeneus

Profile: The second strongest

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Meleagra

Additional Information: The strongest Argonaut except for Heracles. Also a good hunter. His life is tied to a log that his mother keeps hidden away.

Game Mechanics: Should have at least 10 of the 25 points spent within Strength.

Mopsus, son of Manto

Profile: Augur

Sources: Apollonius Rhodius, Valerisu Flaccus

Female: Mopsa

Additional Information: Son of Manto (who was the daughter of Tiresias). He learned the art of augury from Apollo. Could speak the language of birds.

Game Mechanics: Should have points in Profession: Augury and roll to see prophetic signs tied to birds and decipher them. One dot in Languages signifies birds.

Nestor, son of Neleus

Profile: King of Pylos

Sources: Valerius Flaccus

Female: Nestra

Additional Information: Grandson of Poseidon. Known for his wisdom. Lived to see the Trojan War.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Education and Languages.

Orpheus, son of Oeagrus and Calliope

Profile: Legendary singer and musician

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Orphia

Additional Information: His instrument is the lyre; he is from Thrace. His music tames animals, animates rock and trees, and breaks magic spells like that of the Sirens'.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Profession: Music. If the skill roll includes a 6, the song has magical abilities as described above. Further rolls might be required by the Game Master.

Palaemon, son of Hephaestus

Profile: Blacksmith

Sources: Apollodorus, Apollonius Rhodius

Female: Palaeme

Additional Information: Crippled like his father but still strong, and skilled in making and mending weapons as well as other kinds of metalwork.

Game Mechanics: Cannot have dots in Jump or Climb. Should have three dots in Profession: Blacksmith and Fight and/or Stamina. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Hephaestus (roll one die for 6).

Peleus, son of Aeacus

Profile: Father of Achilles

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Pelea

Additional Information: Father of Achilles, husband of Thetis. His main weapon is a spear made of ash he received as a wedding gift. The spear was made by Athena and Hephaestus and given to him by Chiron the centaur. Achilles inherited the spear.

Game Mechanics: Wounds caused by the spear do not heal unless the person is wounded by the spear once again. Life Points lost from a wound by the spear are only regained if equal amount of damage is made once again to the person with the same weapon. Should have three dots in Fight.

Periclymenus, son of Neleus

Profile: Shape-shifter

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Periclymene

Additional Information: Received the gift of shape-shifting from his grandfather Poseidon. He can turn into any animal form.

Game Mechanics: Changing into and back from an animal form requires a successful Willpower roll (threshold number 7 the first time, 5 every time after that for the same animal), and can only be attempted every half a day. Animal forms automatically wear off within 24 hours.

Phalerus, son of Alcon

Profile: Young hero

Sources: Apollonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus

Female: Phalera

Additional Information: He is mentioned both as an archer and as a fighter with a spear. His father's only son, he was sent to join the Argonauts to win fame for himself and his family.

Game Mechanics: Should have points in Fight and/or Ranged weapon. Because he is driven by his ambition, he can roll a Willpower roll before every combat (threshold number 9), and if the roll is successful, he can reroll one die in his attack rolls.

Phlias, son of Dionysus

Profile: Son of Dionysus

Sources: Apo llonius Rhodius, Valerius Flaccus

Female: Phlie

Additional Information: Described with long hair like his father.

Game Mechanics: Has powers that he inherited from his father. The player can choose from the following: 1. turning any liquid into wine, 2. turning any piece of wood back into the living plant, 3. one tame animal (lion, tiger, leopard, etc.) Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Dionysus (roll one die for 6).

Pollux, son of Zeus, brother of Castor

Profile: The immortal twin

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Polydeuce

Additional Information: One of the twin sons of Leda, from Sparta (portrayed in the constellation Gemini). He has a special talent boxing.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Fight. Also known as a good rider, should have dots in Ride. When fighting together with his brother, receives an extra dot in Fight, even if that brings the number of dice to four. Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Zeus (roll one die for 6).

Polyphemus, son of Elatus

Profile: Old warrior

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Polypheme

Additional Information: From Larisa, Thessaly. He used to fight against the centaurs when he was still young. His exceptional strength is mentioned.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Fight but cannot spend more than 10 of the 25 points in Strength and Stamina together. Receives an extra dot in Fight against supernatural enemies.

Tiphys, son of Hagnias

Profile: Navigator

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources

Female: Tiphe

Additional Information: Skilled in navigation; steers the ship for most of the voyage. Athena's chosen.

Game Mechanics: Should have three dots in Track and Profession: Helmsman.

Zetes, son of Boreas, brother of Calais

Profile: Son of the North Wind

Sources: Mentioned in all three sources.

Female: Calaia

Additional Information: One of the twin sons of Bores, god of the North Wind. Has wings of golden scales on his ankles that enable him to fly. Described as dark-haired, hair constantly moving in the wind.

Game Mechanics: This character can fly (unless the wings on his ankles are tied down or he is restrained some other way). Once in the campaign can roll for divine intervention from Boreas (roll one die for 6).

Setting

Even though there are many debates over the time and place of the Argonautica, for the purpose of the game it is still possible to place it both geographically and historically. Traditionally, the voyage of the Argo is dated one generation before the Trojan War at the beginning of the 12th century BC, which places the story in the Mycenaean Period of the late Bronze Age. This is the age of heroes in Greek legends and mythology. Historical details and archaeology only paint a vague background to the fluid mythical time in which the Argonauts lived, and for this reason, time does not need to be any further specified for the game.

The geographical setting, on the other hand, plays a significant role in the story. Most of the Argo's voyage can be traced based on clues in the sources, and even mythical elements like the Sirens have been associated with real places on the map of the Mediterranean. The starting and ending point of the journey are real: Iolcus in the eastern part of Thessaly, Greece, and Colchis on the western part of modern day Georgia. Other places like the island of Lemnos and the Bosporus are also real geographical locations.

Within the game not all episodes need a real world setting; in most cases, "island" or "shore" are enough to describe short stops on the way. However, there are plenty of studies detailing the real world path of the Argo, and several maps found both in studies and on the Internet. Rather than presenting the players with a complete map, it can be part of the learning experience to allow them to research and map out the route the ship takes on the way to Colchis and back (see Follow-up activities). While designing and testing this game my starting point was the map Robert Graves provides in his book The Golden Fleece (1944.). He tried to present the whole voyage the most plausible way, drawing a map that could be traced even in modern time by ship.

The most important setting in the game is the ship itself. As we have mentioned before, the Argo could be presented as a triaconter. It has one square sail and 30 oars, 15 on each side, and is steered by a tiller rather than a wheel like on Medieval ships. The design and colors are to be decided by the Argonauts. The most important feature is that the ship can talk, even though it does not do that very often. This device is for the Game Master to use; if the group needs help or some steering towards the right direction, the Argo can speak to them and give short warnings or advice. However, even in the original story this is a very rare occurrence, and it can only be special if carefully used.

Nonplayer Characters

Basic character sheet

Name: King Pelias

Gender: Male

Age: 51

Looks: Tall, humorless man with grey hair and a grey beard. He wears royal clothes and a golden crown.

Attitude: Pelias is proud, but he is also greedy and drunk on power. He is constantly afraid someone will try to take his throne; he is also afraid of death and growing old. He pretends to be calm and determined, but he does not really care about the people in his kingdom.

Background: Pelias is the son of Poseidon and a mortal woman; to seize the throne of Iolcus, he exiled or imprisoned all his brothers, including Jason's father, Aeson. By killing a woman in her temple, he angered Hera who decided to aid Jason in becoming the new king of Iolcus. He has been given a prophecy that a man who shows up in Iolcus wearing only one sandal is the one who is going to cause his death. When he saw Jason in one sandal, he decided immediately that he needed to get rid of him.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		X	XX	XXX (3)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XX		X	XXX	XXXXXX (6)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
				(0)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
X		X	X	XXX (3)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	X	X	XX	XXXXXXX (7)

Special abilities: -

Items: Golden crown, royal robes, scepter

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Name: Hypsipyle

Gender: Female

Age: 20

Looks: Attractive young woman who wears robes and dresses in the colors or royalty and a golden crown. Under her robes she wears gold and silver armor.

Attitude: Hypsipyle is brave and strong and willing to do anything to keep women on her island safe. She does not trust strangers, especially men. She tries to be a just and good queen and does not enjoy fighting; she is stern but not cruel.

Background: Hypsipyle rules over the women of Lemnos out of necessity. She let her old father escape instead of killing him (nobody knows about this) and the only thing she wants is to protect her island. She has not had a husband when the killing happened, and she has been alone ever since.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		XX	XX	XXXX (4)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XXX		XX	XXX	XXXXXXXX (8)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
		XX	X	XXX (3)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
		XX	XX	XXXX (4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	X	X	XX	XXXXXXX (7)

Special abilities: None

Items: Golden crown, gold and silver armor, royal robes, short sword with a golden hilt

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Basic character sheet

Name: King Amycus

Gender: Male

Age: 32

Looks: Tall, muscular, menacing man with black beard and thick black hair. He wears a thin golden band as a crown and plain clothes, except for his crimson cloak that is embroidered with golden thread.

Attitude: Cruel, impatient, and ambitious. The King enjoys fighting, violence, and is not friendly to strangers by any means – he often dishonors the laws of hospitality by killing his guests and his opponents in the boxing ring. He wants everyone to fear him.

Background: King Amycus challenges every stranger who comes to his land to a boxing match; so far he has never been defeated, and he has killed all his opponents in the ring.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
X	X	X	XXX	XXXXXX (6)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
			X	X (1)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
		XX	XX	XXXX (4)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
		XX	X	XXX (3)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	XX	XXX	XX	XXXXXXXXXX (10)

Special abilities: King Amycus does not fight clean.

Items: Golden crown, royal cloak, leather gloves and straps for boxing, sword.

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Basic character sheet

Name: King Phineus

Gender: Male

Age: 75

Looks: An old man with white hair and long grey beard, wearing tattered robes that once have been his royal outfit. He goes barefoot like a beggar, and there is a blue glaze over his eyes, showing that he is blind. He walks leaning on a wooden staff.

Attitude: King Phineus is wise, patient, and desperate. He knows a lot and sees the future, but he has been tortured so much he lost his faith in the gods and in men. He wishes for someone who could save him for his curse, and he will be eternally grateful and help the hero any way he can in return.

Background: King Pihenus has been given the gift of seeing the future even though he is blind. But because he has told too much about the gods' plan to mortals, he has been punished with the curse of the Harpies. Ever since then he has been waiting for the Argonauts to save him from the curse.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		X	X	XX (2)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XXX		XXX	XXX	XXXXXXXXX(9)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
				(0)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
		XXX	X	XXXX (4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XX	X	X		XXXX

Special abilities: Future sight. He can see everything that is going to happen but he has learned from his past mistakes and he never tells everything. He gives advice based on his visions of the future but never reveals what will happen exactly.

Items: Wooden staff.

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Basic character sheet

Name: Medea

Gender: Female

Age: 18

Looks: Long dark hair, golden eyes, gold-brown skin. She is young and beautiful, but more importantly, she carries herself with pride and grace. She wears the robes of priestesses and a purple cloak and a thin golden crown showing that she is a princess.

Attitude: Medea despite her young age is a powerful sorceress. She is brave, confident, intelligent, and independent. She is also thirsty for adventure and wants to leave her home and travel the world. She likes heroes and tales about heroes, and she is willing to help them if they are willing to take her with them on their voyage of adventures.

Background: Medea is the younger daughter of King Aeetes. She comes from a lineage of Helios, the Sun. Circe the sorceress is her aunt. All her life she has been living in Colchis, she became a priestess of Hecate at an early age, and she has been tending to the Serpent of Ares that guards the Golden Fleece. She has never been married or been in love.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
	X	XX	X	XXXX (4)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XXX	X	XX	XXX	XXXXXXXXX(9)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total

	XX	X		XXX (3)
Perception				
Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
X		XX	XX	XXXXX (5)
Endurance				
Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	X	X	X	XXXXXX (6)

Special abilities:

Potions: Medea can create many different kinds of potions: poisons, healing potions, sleeping powder, or the ointment that protects one from fire. However, these potions need a lot of work, preparation, and ingredients. She can only create one at a time, and it takes one day to make a potion that can be used on one person.

Sleep: Medea can enchant and put to sleep any person or creature. The target of the spell has to make a successful Willpower roll to stay awake. The spell lasts for 1 hour on one person, but the more people or creatures it is used on, the shorter the sleep will be.

Storm: Medea can create a storm with a spell. Once invoked, the storm is out of her control and it will rage until it has run its natural course.

Spirits: Medea can invoke dark spirits and shadows and make them attack her enemies. This is a powerful spell and takes a lot of time and energy; it can only be used once in the campaign. The spirits cannot be harmed by mortal weapons and will not rest until their target is gone.

Items: Golden crown, priestess robes, cloak, box of potions and ingredients.

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Basic character sheet

Name: Argus son of Phrixus

Gender: Male

Age: 25

Looks: Strong young man with brown eyes and dark hair. It is obvious at first glance that he is noble even when he is only wearing tattered clothes after the shipwreck.

Attitude: Argus is brave and has a good heart. He does not like violence, but he loves adventures, and believes in heroes. He is a good friend and always keeps his word.

Background: Argus is the son of King Aeetes's older daughter and Phrixus, the man who took the Golden Fleece from Iolcus to Aea. He recently set out on a journey with his brothers and friends to visit Iolcus, the home of his father, but he was caught in a storm on the way and his ship sank. He barely got away with his life, looking for someone to come to the rescue.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
X	X	XX	XX	XXXXXX (6)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XX			XXX	XXXXX (5)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
X		XX	X	XXXX (4)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
	XX	XX		XXXX (4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	XX	XX	XX	XXXXXXXXX(9)

Special abilities: -

Items: Sword

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Basic character sheet

Name: Apsyrtus

Gender: Male

Age: 17

Looks: Very young, dark haired, dark skinned, golden eyed like his sisters and father. He has a ready smile, but it is obvious that he has been trained to fight.

Attitude: Apsyrtus has a friendly nature, and he loves his family dearly. Aeetes has been raising him as his heir, so he is well educated and intelligent, and he is a good leader. He can be fierce in combat, and he loves adventure, but he is very responsible for his age.

Background: As Aeetes's only son, Apsyrtus was born for the throne. He has none of his sister's magical powers, but he learned fast about politics and war from his father. He believes he is ready to lead his people, and he is not willing to give up the Golden Fleece or any other treasure of Colchis to strangers.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
X	X	XX	XXX	XXXXXXX (7)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XX		X	XXX	XXXXXX (6)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
X	X	XX		XXXX (4)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
XX	XX	XX		XXXXXX (6)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XX	XX	XX	XX	XXXXXXXX(8)

Special abilities: -

Items: Crown, spear, shield, sword, bronze armor

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Basic character sheet

Name: King Aeetes

Gender: Male

Age: 64

Looks: Old but still strong, dark grey beard and hair, golden eyes, jeweled crown, and rich robes. One can tell he must have been a mighty hero in his youth. He always looks stern and measures people up with a menacing look.

Attitude: Above all, King Aeetes is proud. He comes from divine lineage and a strong family. He does not like or trust strangers.

Background: King Aeetes is the son of Helios. He rules over Colchis and the sea trade on the Black Sea, and he possesses many magical things such as the Golden Fleece and the serpent guarding it. So far he has been successful in keeping adventurers away from his treasures.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		XX	XXX	XXXXX (5)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XX		X	XXX	XXXXXX (6)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
X		XX		XXX (3)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
	X	XX	X	XXXX (4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	X	XX	X	XXXXXXX (7)

Special abilities: -

Items: Shield, sword and spear; jeweled crown

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Game Module

The game module follows the original storyline but consists of a series of shorter episodes that can be included or left out of the campaign. Only the frame story – the beginning, the events in Colchis, and the return – is set; everything else between is the Game Master's choice based on time, preference, and the needs and skills of the players.

Call to Adventure: Sacrifice in Iolcos

Pelias, King of Iolcos, received a prophecy about the man who is going to kill him, and he figured out it was Jason, son of Aeson. Looking for a way to get rid of him (without telling anyone why), Pelias announces to all the people gathered in Iolcos for a sacrifice and a feast that he is trusting Jason with the leadership of a very important mission: he has to sail to Colchis and retrieve the legendary Golden Fleece from King Aeetes. It is a task and a challenge the young man cannot refuse – but he does not have to face it alone either.

First of all, Jason needs a ship. If Argos is not among the chosen characters, he will show up as an NPC and offer to build the Argo. King Pelias provides the materials and everything else he needs.

Next, Jason needs a team. He is allowed to choose them on his own, and people are allowed to volunteer for the voyage. It will be long and dangerous but filled with adventures and glory – something no adventurer, traveler or hero would ever refuse. Still, in order to establish relations within the group, the player of Jason should be allowed to role-play this part out with the others; this gives them a chance to introduce themselves in character and present themselves as heroes ready for adventure.

A crowd of people will follow the heroes down to the beach where they have to push the Argo onto the water; once that is done, the only thing left to do is for the group to build an altar to Apollo, god of embarking on new journeys, and for Jason to deliver an inspirational speech. With the altar made and the speech done, the heroes can grab the oars and start rowing.

To set the mood the Game Master might occasionally quote from the original sources. The start of the journey is described in great and enjoyable detail in Apollonius Rhodius's work (*Argonautica* I. 520-560).

Lemnos, the Island of Women (Apollonius Rhodius I. 610-910.)

The first stop on the Argo's voyage is Lemnos, where they have to go ashore to find fresh water and supplies. What they do not know when they arrive is that the island had been taken over by its women the year before. The women became jealous of the female captives their husbands brought home from Thrace, took weapons, and killed or chased away every man on the island, and now they live in an all-women society. At the sight of the Argo they line up on the beach with their queen, Hypsipyle, wearing armor and weapons, but more curious than hostile. The Argonauts will need to send someone on shore to negotiate with the women (preferably a female Argonaut, one of the heralds, or Jason himself).

Hypsipyle will tell the Argonauts the story that all women will be repeating if they decide to ask around: their husbands and sons have left them to live with their new wives and mothers in Thrace, and now they have to care for themselves. They invite the Argonauts into their city, offering them supplies, and arranging a big feast in their honor. The celebrations can take several days, and the women will be very insistent on keeping their guests from leaving.

A few things can happen while the Argonauts are on Lemnos. It is the group's decision if they want to leave someone behind on the shore to guard the Argo. At some point during the festivities a few women will sneak up to the ship at night and try to ruin it so the Argonauts won't escape. If someone is guarding the ship, the women can try to set fire to it (and, ideally, be stopped by the guardians); if the ship has been left alone, they can drill holes into it that will be discovered later and hopefully be repaired by Argos. These two options are by no means the only choice of the Game Master. They have been designed for different scenarios with possible outcomes in mind: setting fire to the unguarded ship would possibly destroy the legendary Argo before anyone notices. Drilled holes can be fixed when they are discovered.

If someone decides to look around the island, successful Search rolls will reveal suspicious clues – men's clothes and armor still in the houses, fresh graves dug outside the city walls, the ruins of ships in a hidden bay on the island, broken weapons and shields stored in hidden rooms. Even though the local women will stick to their story of the men having left on their own accord, the clues might make the players suspicious.

Finally, the female Argonauts might be approached by women who drop hints about how good life can be on the island without men. They will talk about freedom, equality, justice, and other positive aspects, while hinting at the "disappearance" of the male Argonauts. They will try to turn the women to their side before they move on with their plan.

The women of Lemnos decided a year ago that no one who knows about them shall be allowed to leave the island alive. They fear that if someone hears they live without men they will show up to take the island over and punish them for their crimes. That is why they try to destroy the Argo and kill the male Argonauts.

No matter how or when the Argonauts find out about this, they will need to leave Lemnos in a hurry, possibly chased by a band of armed women. There is a number of ways they can get out alive: by negotiation, trickery, manipulation, stealth, brute force, or divine intervention. The women of Lemnos do not sail; once the ship is on the sea (and out of range for arrows), they are safe.

When it comes to combat, Lemnian women have the stats of generic human fighters:

Creature: Human (Amazon)

Description: Women armed with various human-made weapons.

Endurance: 9

Smarts: 10

Agility: 8

Life Points: 25 (fall unconscious at 5)

Attacks: Fight 1-3 (sword, spear), Ranged 1-3 (bow)

The Earthborn (Apollonius Rhodius I. 940-1100.)

Sailing through the Hellespont, the Argonauts have to put to shore once again because of bad weather that makes it impossible to continue their journey. On the shore they are "greeted" by Earthborn, savage creatures sent by the goddess Hera to torment Heracles.

Creature: Earthborn

Description: The creature is a cross between bear and human, with six arms that end in bear paws and a jaw full of sharp yellow fangs. They walk on two legs and use their arms for fighting. Their body is covered is thick brown or black fur.

Endurance: 15

Smarts: 5

Agility: 6

Life Points: 30

Attacks: Fight 3 (claw, bite)

Because of the bad weather, the Argonauts can't leave the shore; people with knowledge in omens (Mopsus or Idmon) can tell that the storms will not clear up in the next few days. If they go looking for food, shelter, or help on the rocky seashore, successful Search rolls will reveal paths and signs of civilization. Not far from the Argo's landing live the civilized neighbors of the Earthborn, the Doliones, with their young king Cyzicus. They have been fighting the Earthborn for a long time. Although suspicious at first, they are open to negotiation about providing help, supplies, and/or shelter to the Argonauts until the storms are over. They will want favors in return, but the payment is up to Jason and his crew to decide on (money, work, etc.). The Doliones, however, suspicious of foreigners. Failed Negotiation rolls

will raise the threshold number of the next attempt with one. If more than three attempts are failed in a row, the Argonauts will be forced to leave the city.

The storms clear up after a few days, and the Argonauts are free to move on.

The Nymphs of Cius (Apollonius Rhodius I. 1180-1360.)

This episode needs significant changes from the original story. In the sources this is where the Argonauts leave Heracles and Polyphemus behind. Hylas is kidnapped by nymphs, and the two heroes are searching for him when Jason decides to leave them behind (in Apollonius Rhodius's version, it is the will of the gods that Heracles does not continue the journey). Because in the game no one should be left behind for the rest of the journey – and because it is not guaranteed that Heracles and Hylas are among the playing characters - this episode can be modified.

The Argo has to put to shore once again for supplies, above all, fresh water. Before they cross the Bosporus in the strong current, one of the oars breaks (Game Master can decide by dice roll who it belongs to); spotting trees on the shore, the Argonauts can decide to go and find wood for fashioning a new oar, while some of them search for water.

A successful Search roll will reveal the signs of water nearby, and a spring deeper in the woods that trickles into a small lake. The lake is inhabited by nymphs. Whoever attempts to draw water from the lake will be instantly noticed by the nymphs protecting their home. Unless they succeed in a Dodge roll they will be grabbed and pulled down underwater, where they lose one Life Point every turn until they are freed (or drowned). If there are no female Argonauts involved, the nymphs might try to charm the people at the lake and make them stay with them – getting away from the spell needs a successful Willpower roll. If no one returns from the lake, successful Awareness rolls might remind the rest of the group that some people have been missing for a suspicious amount of time, and they can organize a rescue party.

Creature: Water Nymph

Description: Beautiful women with bodies made of water and weeds.

Endurance: 6

Smarts: 10

Agility: 8

Life Points: 20

Attacks: Fight 2. Willpower 3, Dodge 3.

Royal Fight (Apollonius Rhodius II. 1-160.)

The next stop on the voyage is the kingdom of the Bebrycians, just before the Argo sails through the Bosporus. Their king, Amycus, challenges every stranger to a boxing match. He has many warriors and does not care who the opponent is as long as he gets his fight right in the ring on the seashore. The Argonauts are challenged by him to present their best fighter.

Amycus's profile can be found in the NPC section of this module. He is a giant of a man, strong and fierce, but not very smart. In the original story Polydeuces, the son of Zeus, defeats (and kills) him easily in the fight. Seeing their king dead, Amycus's people rush at the Argonauts and a fight breaks out between them. In the game several outcomes are possible: if the champion wins, the Argonauts are free to leave. If the champion loses, the Argonauts have to pay tribute to King Amycus in gold and other valuables. If the King dies in the fight, his soldiers will rush at the Argonauts; it is up to the group to decide if they want to fight or flee.

The Harpies (Apollonius Rhodius II. 175-500.)

The Argo sails through the Bosporus and travels to its next destination. On the seashore they can see the palace of King Phineus, son of Agenor. The once magnificent

building is in ruin now and looks abandoned, but the old king still dwells there and waits the arrival of the Argonauts. King Phineus's profile can be found in the NPC section.

The King has been punished by Zeus for telling people their future: he is blind, ancient, but still alive, and constantly haunted by the Harpies that snatch the food from his table and stain the palace with a terrible stench that can be felt all the way from the shore. The old blind king knows who the Argonauts are; he still has his gift of prophecy. He begs them to rid him of the Harpies, and in return he promises to tell them what awaits them on their journey.

Harpies appear every time the King is about to eat; they can be baited with food. The rest is up to the Argonauts. There are two Harpies. In the original story, the sons of Boreas, Calais and Zetes, chase the Harpies until they grow exhausted and fall into the sea.

Creature: Harpy

Description: Half woman, half bird, roughly human-sized. Sharp talons and teeth, very quick. Strong enough to lift one person up into the air.

Endurance: 8

Smarts: 6

Agility: 8

Life Points: 25 (fall unconscious at 5)

Attacks: Fight 3 (talons and bites). They will also attempt to lift people up into the air and then drop them. The stench they give off is strong enough that it makes a character sick if it fails its Stamina roll.

Once the Harpies are eliminated, King Phineus can finally have a meal. As a sign of gratitude, he can reveal information that will be useful for the Argonauts for the rest of their journey. This information depends on the Game Master's consideration; if the Argonauts have

their own prophets and soothsayers, they do not need as much as a team that lacks those characters.

The Clashing Rocks (Apollonius Rhodius II. 550-610.)

King Phineus warns the Argonauts about the most imminent danger on their voyage, the Clashing Rocks. They are not fixed but constantly move back and forth; whenever something (a ship or even a bird) tries to pass between them, they clash together and crush whatever is caught in the middle. The Argonauts can learn this on their own or observe it when they get close to the rocks. The only thing that helps the passage is the fact that once the rocks have clashed they have to retreat to their original positions before they clash again. In the original story, the Argonauts send a dove through first, and when the rocks clash (nipping the feathers off the dove's tail) and start to move apart again, the Argonauts start rowing with all their strength and get through the passage just in time before they are crushed.

Physics and geography can also come into play in this episode. When the rocks clash, they send an outward wave of the water surging out from between them; when they part, suction is created that pulls the water in between. The ship can ride both of these waves to make it to the other side faster. Also if someone happens to swim to the bottom that person can discover that the rocks are floating like icebergs, and there is space under them above the sea floor, with a current flowing towards the other side. In testing, one group used Periclymenus in a whale form to ride this current while towing the ship, in order to make it to the other side faster. This current exists in real life on the bottom of the seat between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea; ancient Greek traders used it to tow their ships to the Black sea against the opposite current on the surface.

This episode requires more thinking than rolling. It depends on exciting descriptions on the Game Master's part and a team effort. Rolling would be complicated and unnecessary;

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if the Argonauts fail this obstacle, they all die at once, and the story ends. Once they come up with a solution for getting through the passage, the rest is just storytelling.

The Birds of Ares (Apollonius Rhodius II. 1030-1090.)

The Argo has to pass the island of Ares that is guarded by the god's sacred birds. These birds fly in large flocks, and their feathers are sharp as blades; when the ship gets close to the shore, they will attack the Argonauts. The birds outnumber the heroes and are very swift, but they are sensitive to noise; loud yells, clanking armors, etc. scare them away. The heroes just need to figure that out.

Creature: Bird of Ares

Description: Large eagle-like birds, grey and black, with feathers sharp as blades.

Endurance: 5

Smarts: 3

Agility: 6

Life Points: 10 (they fall at 5)

Attacks: Fight 3 (talons and feathers)

The Sons of Phrixus (Apollonius Rhodius II. 1090-1285.)

As the Argo sails on, with a successful Awareness roll they can notice a small group of people floating in the water, holding on to a piece of wood. They are survivors from a ship that sunk in a storm; they are also the sons of Phrixus, the man who took the Golden Fleece to Colchis. The four sons were on their way to Iolcus to visit the home of their father when the storm broke up their ship. Hearing what the Argonauts are looking for, they promise to help them because they are grateful to Jason for saving their life. The profile of the oldest son, Argos, can be found in the NPC section.

This is also a convenient point in the story to bring in new characters. This episode can be moved almost anywhere in the storyline of the campaign and provides an entry point for characters that missed the beginning of the game. The Game Master has a certain freedom in deciding how many survivors are found and who they are; the only NPC that needs to be among them is Argus.

Arrival to Colchis

Finally, the Argo reaches its destination, and sails up the river Phasis to the city of Aea, the capital of Colchis. The city lies by the river at the foot of Mount Caucasus. In Greek mythology, this is where Prometheus is chained up, and if the Game Master wants to tie the campaign in with other myths, the Argonauts might see the vulture flying over their heads on its way to torture Prometheus (Apollonius Rhodius II. 1240-1260.).

There are plenty of places to hide the ship and approach the city walls unnoticed. Argus, however, will suggest that they try to peaceful approach first; he is sure his grandfather, King Aeetes, will be grateful to the Argonauts for saving his life, and it might be possible to convince him to give the Golden Fleece to them as a gift.

From this point on, the outcome of the mission depends largely on the decisions of Jason and the Argonauts. This module follows the original storyline; but if the group decides against a peaceful negotiation, they can skip straight to the fighting part.

King Aeetes's Challenge (Apollonius Rhodius III. 299-438.)

Jason and the Argonauts will be admitted to the King's presence where Argos, son of Phrixus, volunteers to speak for them. He tells his grandfather how Jason saved his life and treated him with respect and hospitality (provided that this is the case, although Argos might color his speech to show the Argonauts in a more favorable light). He asks Aeetes to hand the

Golden Fleece over to Jason as a gift for saving his own grandson. Kind Aeetes, however, sneers at this request and refuses to give his most treasured possession away to a nobody like Jason and his rag-tag group of adventurers.

The only way he is willing to give up the Fleece is if the Argonauts perform tasks that he himself can easily accomplish. The first task is to capture, wrestle, and yoke two bulls that have hooves of bronze and can breathe fire and plow the Field of Ares outside the city with them. The bulls have to be captured alive and not killed. To wrestle a bull one needs to roll a successful attack roll and then a successful Ride or Stamina roll, depending on what he intends to do, to hold on to it.

Creature: Bulls of Ares

Description: Large, menacing bulls with copper-colored fur and hooves and horns made of bronze.

Endurance: 12

Smarts: 3

Agility: 5

Life Points: 30

Attacks: Fight 3 (horns and hooves), Ranged weapons 2 (fire breath)

Once the bulls are wrestled and yoked, plowing is easy. When the field is plowed, Aeetes will present a handful of dragon teeth to Jason and order him to sow them in the field. The moment they fall into the earth the seed will grow into warriors in full armor that have to be defeated on the spot.

Creature: Warriors of Ares

Description: Skeletal warriors wearing bronze armor and wielding bronze weapons.

Endurance: 8

Smarts: 3

Agility: 7

Life Points: 10 (they do not faint)

Attacks: Fight 3 (swords and spears)

The warriors are strong, but not quite sentient; it is easy to distract them or turn them on each other. Noise especially works well in catching their attention.

Depending on the number of the Argonauts, the length of the gaming session, and the consideration of the Game Master, the number of the warriors can vary. It is also up to the GM to decide if one chosen person has to wrestle the bulls and fight the warriors or if more than one Argonaut can participate in completing the task. In the original story Jason has to accomplish all of this alone but because the role-playing game has to emphasize team effort, the campaign can be adjusted to the needs and skills of the whole group.

If Medea has been established as the Argonauts' ally by this point in the story, she can provide an ointment that makes a person resistant to fire for a whole day. She only has enough to cover two people.

A side note on Medea

Medea's description can be found in the NPC section. In the original story the gods make Medea fall in love with Jason in order to help him on his quest. Medea, Aeetes's younger daughter, is a powerful sorceress. Her family has a very special place in Greek mythology: they are the descendants of Helios, the god of the Sun. Aeetes's sisters are Circe, the sorceress of the Odyssey, and Pasiphae, the mother of the Minotaur; his parents are Helios and a nymph, and his wives are also nymphs of the waters. Medea comes from this divine line of magic and powerful female characters, which is why the gods chose her to be Jason's helper and lover.

When playing this game with a group that is based on teamwork, especially in high school, this part of the storyline can be used in several different ways. She can either fall in love with Jason as in the original story and help him, or she can prefer someone else in the group. She might not fall in love with anyone, but her help can still be won through negotiation, friendship, or any other mean the group can think of. Medea is not necessary for the completion of the campaign, but she can be a very useful ally, especially on the way back from Colchis. The group can enlist her help any time they want while they are in the city of Aea.

Taking the Golden Fleece (Apollonius Rhodius IV. 92-211.)

Even if the Argonauts succeed in the tasks, Aeetes will refuse to hand over the Golden Fleece. He insists that Jason and his men leave at once. However, it is not hard to find out where the Fleece is kept; with a successful Investigation roll anyone can find out that Phrixus has placed this treasure in a grove upstream on the river, dedicated to Ares. A giant serpent is coiled around the tree where the Golden Fleece hangs, guarding it, and it never sleeps.

If Medea has joined the Argonauts' cause by this point, she has the power to lull the serpent to sleep. If they are on their own, they will have to find another way to seize the treasure and get away.

Creature: Serpent of Ares

Description: Giant snake with steel-hard scales, glowing red eyes and poison fangs. It can move on dry land as fast as a running human, and it can swim.

Endurance: 12

Smarts: 4

Agility: 6

Life Points: 35

Attacks: Fight 3 (bite and crush). Characters who suffer damage need to roll a successful Health roll to avoid being poisoned. If the roll fails, the characters is poisoned and loses one Life Point every hour until healed or dead. Medea (and other priestesses) has antidote ready for the serpent's poison.

Flight from Colchis (Apollonius Rhodius IV. 212-337.)

Once the Golden Fleece is stolen, the Argonauts' mission is accomplished. Depending on the time limit on the campaign and the Game Master's consideration, the following section of the journey (return to Iolcus) can be shortened or even left out completely. All the episodes included in the *Argonautica* as part of the voyage back home can be used on the way there as well.

When Aeetes finds out the Golden Fleece has been stolen, he will pursue the Argo with his fleet of ships. Because the Colchians have been sailing these waters for a long time they can gain on the Argo quite quickly, or even cut their way at the Clashing Rocks (that are not clashing anymore since the Argo passed them). If that happens, the Argo needs to find another way home. The Colchians, when they catch up to the Argo eventually, will demand the Golden Fleece back. If at this point Medea is on the Argo, she will help the negotiations (or, if it comes to that, the fight). She has to power to raise a storm and scatter the Colchian fleet. Because her younger brother Apsyrtus is commanding the fleet, she will be able to start negotiations in which the Argonauts can come up with possible diplomatic solutions (or they can capture Apsyrtus, as in the original story, and take the Golden Fleece as ransom). Apsyrtus's profile can be found in the NPC section of this module.

In the original story the Argo sails up the Ister (Danube) river and ends up in the Adriatic Sea (ancient Greeks believed there was a direct link that way between the Black Sea and the Adriatic). The original story also states that some of the gods (like Ares and Helios)

were angered by the actions of the Argonauts and they cursed them to get lost on the sea and wander on a long voyage much like Odysseus before they found their way back home. Either of these two options provides an excuse for the Game Master to add more adventures on the way back home.

Adventures on the Way Home (Apollonius Rhodius IV. 885-981.)

While they are wandering the waves of the Mediterranean, the Argonauts might come across the island of the Sirens. This is the same island that Odysseus will pass a generation later. The Sirens lure sailors into the water and onto their island with their magic song, and they drown them or kill them.

Creature: Siren

Description: Beautiful woman with a fish tail, or bird feet and wings. Usually seen swimming in the sea or sitting on rocks on the beach, singing an enchanting song.

Endurance: 5

Smarts: 10

Agility: 8

Life Points: 20

Attacks: The Siren's weapon is her song (Profession: Musician 3). It only affects men. Every male character has to roll a successful Willpower roll to resist jumping overboard and swimming towards the Sirens. In close combat against opponents that resist their song, the Sirens are surprisingly weak (Fight 1), and they will take the first chance to flee rather than fighting.

The song of the Sirens can be countered with music. Any character who can play a musical instrument or sing can roll for Profession: Musician and if the roll is higher than the Siren's roll, the song has been cancelled out for as long as the character keeps

playing or singing. If more than one character tries to do this, they can join their forces just as in combat.

The Sirens are not the only threat on the way home. The Argo might have to sail between the Wandering Rocks or Scylla and Charybdis – it a choice both Jason and Odysseus has to make in the original stories. Jason chooses the Wandering Rocks (Planctae) and Odysseus chooses the monsters. In the game the Argonauts can make this choice for themselves.

The Wandering Rocks are a narrow passage in the sea, with a smooth rock on one side and a volcano on the other that lets out fire, sparks, and fumes straight from Hephaestus's workshop. Whoever wants to steer the ship through this passage of extremely violent waters, needs to make successful Track rolls. It is also a good place to appeal for divine intervention: through this passage gods who are aiding the Argonauts are more likely to intervene (roll one die for 5 or 6 instead of just 6). Geographically, the Planctae have been placed around mount Etna because of the volcanic activity.

Similarly, passing through between Scylla and Charybdis needs good navigation. If the track roll is failed the ship will come too close to one side or the other (the Game Master can decide by dice roll which one). Charybdis is nothing more than a whirlpool that pulls ships down into the depth of the sea; getting out of the whirlpool need a successful Track roll, or divine intervention (once again 5 or 6 on a one die roll).

Creature: Scylla

Description: A six-headed, scaly sea monster that coils up on the rocks by the see and snatches up sailors in its fangs as ships pass by.

Endurance: 8

Smarts: 2

Agility: 8

Life Points: 30 (5 for each head)

Attacks: Fight 3 (fangs)

Scylla and Charybdis have been placed by scholars in the Strait of Messina, between mainland Italy and Sicily.

If the Argo sails close to the island of Crete, the Argonauts might have to face Talos, the guardian of Crete (Apollonius Rhodius IV. 1638-1693.). Talos is a giant made of bronze, with only one vulnerable spot on his body: a vein on his ankle. According to Apollonius he is the last of the race of men from the age of bronze; others claim he was a mechanism created by Daedalus. Talos is guarding the island of Crete against strangers, keeping ships away by hurling rocks at them, but it will not attack unless the Argonauts come on shore.

Creature: Talos

Description: Giant human figure entirely made of bronze.

Endurance: 20 (only vulnerable on his ankle where the Endurance is 5)

Smarts: 2

Agility: 6

Life Points: 50 (if hit on the vulnerable spot, loses all instantly)

Attacks: Fight 2 (fists), Ranged weapons 3 (rocks)

Return to Iolcus

Once their wanderings are over, the Argonauts will finally return to Iolcus, carrying the Golden Fleece. At this point the mission is accomplished and the campaign done. Everything that happens in the original story after Jason's return can be part of the follow-up discussions, further games, or independent readings.

Follow-up exercises

1. Questions for discussion

- What have you found out about your character during the game?

- If you would have been leading the Argonauts, what decisions would you have made differently?

- If you had to choose one of the Greek gods, which one would you want to help you on your journey? Why?

- Which mythical monster would you add to the adventures of the Argo? How would you defeat them with the team you had in the game?

- Which other Greek myths would you like to see in a game?

2. Writing assignments

- Write the story of the Argo from your character's point of view.

- Make a list of characters in the Iliad who had one parent or close relative on the Argo.

- Write about your character's life before or after the voyage.

- Write a part of the story from an NPC's point of view.

- Design your own fictional character for the Argonautica. Describe the character and make a character sheet.

3. Reading assignments

- Read and find out how the Golden Fleece ended up in Colchis.

- Read the Argonautica by Apollonius Rhodius. Compare the story to the game.

- Read two versions of the Argonautica. Compare them to each other.

- Read about your own character in mythology. Find as many stories as you can. If you can't find any, try reading about the character's family (parents, siblings, children).

- Read the story of Medea. Discuss it with your group.

- Read about what happened to Jason after the Argonautica.

- Read books based on Greek mythology (e.g. Percy Jackson). Discuss how the writers change the original stories.

- Read about a part of Greek culture and history related to this age: weapons, clothes, buildings, ships, trade, arts, pottery, etc. Present your findings to the class.

4. Group assignments

- Design a map of the voyage of the Argo. Trace the original story on the map and then trace the story of the game as well.

- Tell the story of the game together, allowing everyone to take a turn in the telling until the story is finished.

- Draw or paint the Argo or make a model of it based on pictures of ancient Greek ships. Mark your characters' place inside the ship.

- Find pictures or books about places in the real world that are associated with places in the Argonautica. Note which countries they belong to now.

- Make a list of gods and goddesses who have been helping the Argonauts, and another list of those who have been working against them.

- Collect all the Greek heroes who have been raised by Chiron the Centaur.

- Find constellations on the night sky connected to the myth of the Argonauts.

- Design your own game campaign based on Greek mythology.

Similar stories

Several stories from classical mythology could be easily turned into role-playing campaigns. The Odyssey is the most obvious example, even though using a story that is well known can take away some of the creativity of the players. The Aeneid could also be used, as well as Lucian of Samosata's *True History*, which is regarded as the first science-fiction writing in world literature (accidentally, Lucian of Samosata also wrote the first recorded

example of role-playing games in his dialogue *The Ship*). The adventures of Theseus could also provide good episodes for a longer game campaign. Several shorter myths can also be strung together for a series of adventures within Greek mythology.

Appendix F: The Perilous Graveyard

Sources and variations

I have used two publications of the text translated into English:

Arthur, R.G. (1996). *Three Arthurian romances*. London: J.M. Dent.

Black, N. B. (1994). *The perilous cemetery*. New York: Garland.

In addition to the primary sources, I have also used several secondary sources on the Arthurian cycle for creating the characters and settings.

Character options and character creation

In this campaign participants have a choice for character creation: they can either select to play one of the Knights of the Round Table or they can create their own Arthurian character from scratch. In this chapter I list some of the stock characters available from the original legends, but players are encouraged to look up their own favorite knights from their readings. Any knight except for King Arthur and Sir Gawain can be used as a Playing Character. I also provide generic character descriptions for other character types as a starting point for creation.

Once again, the question of female characters needs to be addressed. Arthurian legends are sadly devoid of female knights, but that does not mean an original character like that cannot be created. There are also other character options open for female players, such as sorceress or archer. Noble ladies, although not armed, are also often found questing together with renowned knights in Arthurian legends, helping them with advice.

For demonstrating the use of known characters I have chosen 10 of the Knights of the Round Table. Instead of just selecting the most popular ones, I have also considered minor characters who have interesting and unique traits that are very important in role-playing. It is

also useful to note that less well-known characters allow a lot more freedom to players to add their own personal touch and not be influenced by the several stories and adaptations surrounding that character.

Note: For Arthurian heraldry, see Brault (1972) and Pastoureau (1983). Heraldic language has been simplified for easier visualization.

Sir Balin

Profile: The Knight with the Two Swords

Coat of arms: Black boar on a white field surrounded by three blue stars

Background: Balin was not knighted by Arthur; he was a captive in Camelot for a while before Arthur set him free. After receiving his freedom he took on a quest from King Arthur's court. He has a twin brother, Balan. There is a prophecy that says they are destined to kill each other.

Game Mechanics: Balin fights with two swords instead of sword and shield, for which he needs at least two dots in Fight. Wounds inflicted by his swords do not heal naturally, they need to be healed by magic or potions.

Sir Bedivere

Profile: The loyal friend

Coat of arms: Red sign on gold

Background: One of the first Knights of the Round Table, and Arthur's closest friend. Usually portrayed as the silent and strong person who always protects Arthur. One of the few survivors of Arthur's last battle.

Game Mechanics: Bedivere has no special skills or attributes, but his personality and his friendship with Arthur makes him special among the Knights.

Sir Bors

Profile: The Grail knight

Coat of arms: Stripes of ermine (white fur with black tufts) and stripes of red

Background: The only knight to see the Holy Grail and return alive to tell the tale. He is cousin to Sir Lancelot and brother to Lionel, raised by the Lady of the Lake.

Game Mechanics: Bors has a sixth sense of recognizing magic. He needs to have three dots in Awareness, and if his roll is successful, he can automatically tell what kind of magic is at work; he can also see through illusions.

Sir Dinadan

Profile: The Jester of the Round Table

Coat of arms: Black lion with red tongue and claws on a silver shield

Background: The jester, and sometimes also the minster, of the Round Table. He is not a very good fighter, but he is quick, smart, and has a set of skills usually associated with jesters, such as Sleight of Hand.

Game Mechanics: Can have points in Profession: Musician (chose preferred musical instrument), and has to spend at least 10 of the 25 points in Agility.

Sir Gareth

Profile: The strong knight with the white hands

Coat of arms: Two-headed golden eagle on a purple field crossed with a red stripe

Background: The youngest brother of Sir Gawain, the son of King Lot and Morgause, Arthur's sorceress sister. Gareth arrives to Camelot disguised as an ordinary peasant boy and is promptly confined to the kitchens by Kay who does not like him (and names him Beaumains, "Pretty Hands"). Gareth later proves to be a strong and good knight.

Game Mechanics: Gareth gets an extra dot in Fight even if it raises his score to four. Because he has been raised as a fighter, he cannot spend more than three dots in Smarts.

Sir Kay

Profile: The Sénéchal of the Round Table

Coat of arms: Two silver keys on a blue field

Background: King Arthur's foster brother. As the seneschal, he is responsible for keeping up the household of Camelot, organizing feasts and tournaments, etc. He is known for his sharp tongue and ever since he fell from a horse at an early fight he has been walking with a limp. (Side note: students like describing him as "the Doctor House of Camelot")

Game Mechanics: Can only have one dot in Ride, and one dot in Fight and Ranged. He is entitled to a taunting toll before every fight: by mocking the enemy, he can make them fight carelessly out of anger. If his Negotiation roll for taunting is successful, the attacker loses one Fight dot for the scene. If the taunting is convincingly played, the Game Master might not require a Negotiation roll at all.

Sir Melion

Profile: The werewolf knight

Coat of arms: Unknown

Background: Melion's story is told in a Breton lai from the 13th century (Kittredge, 1966). He possesses a ring that allows him to transform into a wolf. His wife betrays him and he has to live as a wolf for a long time before King Arthur finds him and helps him regain his human form.

Game Mechanics: As long as Melion has the magic ring, he can transform into wolf and back any time he wants. Clothes, weapons, etc. are not affected by the transformation, he has to shed them. He needs to touch the ring for shifting back and forth, every time. If the ring is stolen or lost, he is stuck in the form he last shifted into.

Sir Palomides

Profile: The Saracen knight

Coat of arms: Checkered black and white

Background: Palomides is an Arabian warrior who arrived to Camelot from the Middle East and joined the Knights of the Round Table.

Game Mechanics: Palomides has a unique fighting style; instead of heavy Western armor and longsword, he wields scimitars and light armor. Against Western knights he gains a +1 die bonus on his Fight rolls.

Sir Pellinore

Profile: The knight of the Questing Beast

Coat of arms: Blue crosses strewn on a golden field

Background: Sir Pellinore is the king of Listenoise. His family is cursed with the eternal task of chasing the Questing Beast, a hideous monster that is very hard to capture. Pellinore has been chasing it all his life.

Game Mechanics: Every time Sir Pellinore encounters a suspicious footprint or hears a suspicious sound he has to stop and investigate in case it is his nemesis, the Questing Beast. For this reason, he needs to have three dots in Track and three in Awareness. He is also compelled by the curse to drop everything and chase the beast if it ever shows itself.

Sir Ywain

Profile: The Knight of the Lion

Coat of arms: Golden lion on a blue field, with red tongue and claws

Background: During one of his quests Ywain rescued a lion from a serpent and the lion has been his companion ever since.

Game Mechanics: Ywain is always acoompanied by his lion that obeys only his orders, although it does not harm anyone else unless ordered to. The lion's stats are: Endurance 8, Agility 10, Smarts 5, Fight 3 (fangs and claws), Life Points 20.

Apart from knights from the original stories, as we have mentioned before, players also have an opportunity to create their own Arthurian characters. These original characters can also be knights, male or female, but there is a series of different options to add other skills and talents to the group. Some of the character classes that fit in well with Arthurian legends are:

Archer: Hunters or soldiers who are skilled in the use of ranged weapons; should have dots in Ranged weapons and Track (for hunters).

Bard or Minstrel: Musicians and storytellers who entertain audiences and use small-scale magic woven into their music (sleeping spells, inspiration, minor sound illusions). Should have dots in Profession: Musician or Profession: Storyteller and Negotiation. Spells have to be decided and approved by the Game Master in advance.

Healer: People skilled in the art of healing – closing and bandaging wounds, collecting and using herbs, making potions, recognizing illnesses. They should have dots in Profession: Healing.

Nobleman or Lady: People from rich families with lands and servants. These characters possess wealth and influence and should have dots in Negotiation. They have to be respected and obeyed by minor knights.

Squire: Young men preparing to become knights, usually serving an older knight as helpers and companions. They have beginner fighting skills and are expected to do work for the knights they serve, like polishing their armor and tending to their horses.

Wizard or Sorceress: Men or women born with magic. Most of them have faery blood in their veins that allows them to bend the rules of reality. The use of magic has to be well balanced within the game. One way to ensure this is to have the Game Master approve every spell before it is used and decide on a skill role that determines the success of the spell; the other is to have a ready set of spells before the start of the game. Another interesting option is to allow any spell made up on the spot, but all of them can be used only once. During the testing phase other options were explored: Having a limited number of spells per day (this is how the magic system works in some games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*); the possibility that spells only work properly if the magic user says them in rhyme; losing a Life Point every time a spell is used; and having to sleep for a certain number of hours after each spell. Players can choose to apply any of these weaknesses or even create new ones, if the Game Master allows them. In the test session the skill rolls and sleeping hours were used, and both resulted in a balanced, manageable magic system within the game.

Settings

The world of Arthurian legends is a pseudo-medieval setting. Instead of historical places and dates, it floats in a not specified time of chivalry, knightly tournaments, stone castles, and magic. The setting, thus, is very fluid; it draws from people's ideas about Arthurian legends, actual Arthurian legends, and as much research on the history of the Middle Ages as the Game Master is willing and able to put into the preparation of the game. It opens up several opportunities for pre- and postgame research projects (see Follow-up activities) that can add details to the setting.

There are places in Arthurian legends that everyone knows. The center of this half-imaginary world is the castle of Camelot. Camelot does not need to be placed on a map, and settings like "the woods" or "the Red Fortress" do not need to be placed either. While playing

the game, similar to listening to a story told by a storyteller, players and listeners suspend disbelief and accept that those castles, woods, rivers, etc. are indeed there, without questioning the decisions of the teller of the tale. How much or how little she draws from actual geography and history is the Game Master's own decision.

Nonplayer characters

<div align="center">Sir Gawain</div>

Name: Sir Gawain of Orkney

Gender: Male

Age: 25

Looks: Tall, strong, red hair and red beard. Coat of arms: golden two-headed eagle on a purple field. Travels on a huge, mean-looking black steed.

Attitude: Gawain is not always friendly, but he is good at heart, very loyal to Arthur, and he usually thinks before he acts. He does not enjoy violence, he sees duels as a form of exercise.

Background: Gawain is King Arthur's nephew, the oldest son of Morgause and King Lot, and thus the heir to the throne of Orkney. He was the first among his brothers to join the Round Table and he is regarded as one of Arthur's best and most loyal knights.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		X	XXX	XXXX (4)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XX		X	XXX	XXXXXX (6)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
		XXX	X	XXXX (4)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
X	X	X	X	XXXX (4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	XX	XX	XXX	XXXXXXXXXX

				(10)

Special abilities: His strength grows as the sun goes higher in the sky; he is the strongest at noon. At that time he gets an extra die for Fight rolls; in the evening and at night he loses one die.

Items: Sword, shield, armor, food and provisions for questing

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Lady Luna, the Cupbearer

Name: Lady Luna

Gender: Female

Age: 20

Looks: Young, pretty, with light brown hair and green eyes. She rarely ever smiles but always carries herself with dignity.

Attitude: Not friendly but always very polite; a well-educated young lady.

Background: A lady who arrived to Camelot and asked King Arthur to allow her to be his cupbearer. She did not reveal where she came from, but it is obvious that is of noble birth.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		X		X (1)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XXX		X	XXX	XXXXXXX (7)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
	X	X		XX (2)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
X	X	X	X	XXXX (4)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XX	XX	X	XX	XXXXXXX (7)

Special abilities: -

Items: Carries a dagger concealed under her cloak.

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Roche Faée

Name: Roche Faée, Faé Orgueilleux

Gender: Male

Age: 19

Looks: Young knight with blonde hair and beard and blue eyes. He smiles a lot and has a certain otherworldly look to him that suggests that he has fae blood in his veins. He travels in plain armor.

Attitude: Friendly but very proud and arrogant. He does not really care for others and he is easily angered. He is used to getting everything he wants and he prefers winning to fighting fair.

Background: Roche Faée does have fae blood in his veins. His mother was an enchantress, and she raised him to be proud and greedy. He courted a young damsel but she was in love with Gawain, which is why Roche Faée swore to murder the knight to prove he is better.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		X	XXX	XXXX (4)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
XX			XX	XXXX (4)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
		XXX		XXX (3)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total
		XX		XX (2)

Endurance

Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XXX	XXXX	XX	XXX	XXXXXXXXXXX (12)

Special abilities: Healing. Roche Faée can heal any injury with a touch of his hand. To heal he has to roll his own Health (4) and he restores as many Life Points as the number he rolled. He can only attempt a healing once every hour, and he can only heal 20 Life Points a day.

Items: Plain armor, plain shield, longsword, dagger

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Gomeret

Name: Gomeret Sans Measure

Gender: Male

Age: 20

Looks: Young, dark haired, dark eyed, looks very strong.

Attitude: Silent and suspicious. He is not very smart and usually follows Roche Faée's lead and orders.

Background: He has been a wandering knight until he met Roche Faée. He has been in love with a damsel who refused his advances because she was in love with Sir Gawain. Joining Roche Faée he decided to take revenge.

Strength

Climb	Jump	Swim	Fight	Strength total
		X	XXX	XXXXX (5)

Smarts

Education	Profession	Languages	Negotiation	Smarts total
X			XX	XXX (3)

Agility

Sleight of Hand	Hide	Dodge	Ranged weapon	Agility total
		X	X	XX (2)

Perception

Search	Track	Awareness	Investigate	Perception total

	X	X		XX (2)
Endurance				
Willpower	Health	Stamina	Ride	Endurance total
XX	XXX	XXX	XX	XXXXXXXXXX (10)

Special abilities: -

Items: Plain armor, plain shield, longsword, dagger.

Life Points: OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO//OOOOO

Game module

The Abduction of the Cupbearer

The game begins at King Arthur's cour, at a feast on the day of Pentecost. There is a lady serving drinks to King Arthur. She has arrived the day before and asked for a knight's protection; Sir Gawain took the task of being her guardian. Now, as the feast goes on, suddenly a knight bursts into the hall through the door, riding a huge black charger, grabs the lady, and rides away with her. With the knight comes a spell so powerful it renders everyone motionless, frozen in place as they watch the events unfold. Only Gawain seems to be able to move, as he leaps up and follows the abductor out the door, and disappears.

The spell wears off within an hour. Anyone who can roll a successful Willpower roll against a threshold number of 15 can move earlier, but even if they follow Gawain and see him riding away after the abductor, both the black charger and Gawain's Guingalet (who is a magical steed) are too fast for ordinary horses to keep up with, and the pursuers will eventually be left behind as the abductor and Gawain disappear in the nearby woods.

King Arthur will order his knights to stay behind, trusting that his best knight will be able to handle this on his own (especially because it is a disgrace to Gawain's reputation as the lady's guardian that she was abducted). However, even if they stay behind, Arthur will

grow worried after a few days, and assemble some of his knights and friends (the players) to send them in search of Gawain.

Sir Gawain is Dead

The group, as they travel through the ancient woods of England, can notice the sound of weeping with a successful Awareness roll (threshold number 6). The come upon three ladies in a clearing, weeping hysterically over a young man who lies on the ground. He is not wearing armor, just a squire's outfit, and there is a sword lying nearby. The young man is about 16 years old, and he has been blinded by a slash across his eyes. The three ladies are his sisters.

If the ladies are calmed down somehow (Negotiation, threshold 8, for each) the first thing they will claim is that "Sir Gawain is dead". They can tell the group what happened. They were traveling through the woods when they heard the sounds of fighting; the brother rushed ahead and came upon an unarmed knight fighting two other knights (who were both fully armed). He went to the aid of the unarmed knight, but was slashed and blinded, and the knight was butchered by his attackers, who repeatedly called him Gawain, and showed no mercy. The ladies buried the body nearby under and oak tree.

The dead body, upon closer inspection, turns out to be a stranger and not Gawain at all. The ladies, however, cannot be convinced of this, and they will go on claiming it can only be Sir Gawain, and that the news should be taken to Camelot.

The Perilous Graveyard

Moving on with their journey, with a successful Track roll (threshold number 8) the group can find a path that leads to a castle. By the time they arrive there, the sun has just set, and the gates of the castle are locked and bolted, and the walls high and strong. Surrounding

the walls is a huge graveyard filled with old crypts and graves covered with slabs of stone. With a successful Search (if they are looking, threshold number 8) or Awareness (if they are just passing through, threshold number 9) roll, the group can find signs of disturbance around the graveyard. Stones have been chipped and scratched as if a sword has struck them, the earth is torn up by many feet, and there are bones and rags scattered around among the graves. Some of the crypt doors and stone slabs look like they have been recently opened and not properly closed again.

As the sun goes down, the graveyard comes to life. It is filled with ghosts, ghouls, and the living dead in great numbers. The only two safe places are the castle and a small church in the middle of the graveyard.

The castle is locked. If the party tries to knock or yell, eventually a guard will look down from the walls, but he will refuse to let them in; the gates have to remain closed till morning, against the evil creatures. He cannot be persuaded to open them because everyone inside is terrified of the monsters.

The church building is small, dark, and cold; it is just a square of rocks, a wooden roof, and a cross on the roof. However, it cannot be entered by any unclean creature. If the group makes it that far, they are safe till the morning.

Creature: Creatures of the night

Description: Ghosts, zombies, ghouls, skeletons; undead creatures crawling out of the graves and the crypts of the Perilous Graveyard in great numbers.

Endurance: 5

Smarts: 2

Agility: 6

Life Points: 6

Attacks: Fight 1-3 (hands, nails, bites, rusty pieces of weapons). Anyone who encounters these creatures has to roll a successful Willpower roll (threshold number 7), or the character will panic and run away. Wizards and sorceresses are immune to this fear.

When morning comes, people in the castle will be willing to open the gates and let the party in. An old lord lives in the castle with his young daughter and his nephew. If asked, they will tell the group that a knight wearing plain armor (but described as Sir Gawain) showed up a few days before, and rescued the young lady from the graveyard (she was held captive by a ghost knight). He told them he was pursuing another knight and left without telling them his name. The young lord rode with him a short distance, and he can tell the group which way he went.

Escanor

After some traveling, the group will find a witness of Gawain's adventures once again: the Lady Luna, the cupbearer who has been abducted. She is wandering through the woods alone, riding the knight's horse who abducted her, weeping and confused. She will try to flee when the group shows up, but a successful Ride roll (threshold number 6) can enable anyone on a horse to catch up with her.

The truth: The lady had been working with her abductor from the start. The knight, Escanor, and Gawain were born on the same day with the same magical ability (their strength grows with the sun), and they were declared nemeses by a prophecy that announced that one will have to kill the other. Escanor's plan was to lure Gawain away from Camelot and ambush him far away from everyone's eyes. He knew he can't defeat Gawain in a fair combat, so he did not want any witnesses of his style of fighting. Gawain fell for the trap and followed him

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all the way into the woods, where the lady (Escanor's lover) had been waiting as bait. Escanor sneak-attacked Gawain and they fought for more than a day, before finally Gawain managed to defeat and kill his attacker, even though he was also wounded in the process. The lady fled, scared for her own life, but with a new plan in mind.

What she says: She weeps and claims that Gawain had indeed found her and rescued her, killing her abductor; but with his last breath, the demon-knight cursed him, and he turned evil. She fled, fearing he would kill her next, and barely got away. She has been wandering around, lost, ever since. If they ask her she can tentatively point them in the direction where she has last seen Gawain (hoping to trick them into killing him in the end). She will claim he is on a rampage, nobody is safe, and he has to be stopped.

The Red Fortress

After some wandering the group will finally come upon another castle, with the gates wide open and the walls painted red. Until recently, a Red Knight ruled over this land, declaring himself the best knight in the realm and defeating everyone who challenged him (and then murdering them). When a lady claimed that King Arthur has better knights than him in his court, he ordered her to be thrown into the dungeons. When Gawain came along (he is now traveling to find the two knights who claim they killed him, the same ones who blinded the young man), the Red Knight challenged him too, but Gawain won the fight, freed the lady, and continued on his way.

When the group arrives, the castle is empty except for a man who is hiding in the kitchen (a successful Awareness or Search roll can reveal that there is someone in there). It is the former Red Knight, the lord of the castle. One of his arms is broken, his hair and beard are wild. He looks like he is a strong person, but he looks confused and very unfriendly towards strangers. When they talk to him, he starts yelling about an insane knight who came to his

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castle, beat him in an unfair fight, and kidnapped his lady. It does not take much asking to find out the knight he is talking about is Gawain.

If they Search around (with high threshold numbers 15 or more), they can find a storage room with several sets of armor. With a successful Education roll they can determine that they all belonged to young and inexperienced knights who went questing a while ago and never returned to Camelot. If confronted, the former Red Knight will claim that those belong to knights he has defeated in tournaments and won their armor, but if the players roll a successful Negotiation roll (threshold number 8) they sense that he is not telling the complete truth.

Suspicions or not, the Red Knight will invite the group to spend the night in his castle, and volunteers to continue traveling with them in the morning in search of Gawain. However, Lady Luna, who feels like the Red Knight endangers her plans of making people think Gawain has gone evil, will sneak into his room at night and stab him to death, then in the morning she will pretend to have found him dead (with the appropriate theatrics). The dagger the lady has been carrying concealed under her dress is one that used to belong to Gawain, and other knights of the Round Table might even recognize it from the carvings on its hilt. This just adds more to the suspicion of Gawain being nearby and murdering innocent people.

The Stolen Damsel

Traveling on in search of Gawain the group will arrive to another castle. When they get near, they are greeted with great commotion: the lord of the castle seems to be gathering knights and soldiers for some quest. If asked, Lord Raguidel will tell them that his daughter has been abducted by three knights, one of them matching Gawain's description, but wearing plain armor. The lady was being escorted to her future husband's castle by 20 men, but she

was abducted and five men were lost, the rest severely wounded and barely made it back to the castle alive.

If the group talks to one of these survivors, this is the tale they will hear: on their way to the castle, escorting the young damsel, they were attacked by two young knights, one bearing a shield with a silver star on a blue field, and the other having a plain shield. They attacked and tried to kidnap the lady, but were outnumbered, and not really skilled in battle; they were going to lose until a third knight showed up (the one described as Gawain) and attacked the escort with such force and skill that they had to run. The lady was taken by the three knights, god knows where. The parents (Lord Raguidel and his wife) are desperate to find her.

The truth: The damsel (Lady Sylvia), the only daughter of Lord Raguidel, has long been in love with a young knight by the name of Cadret (the one with the silver star). Her parents did not approve of the marriage because Cadret was the third son of a small noble house, and they decided to marry her off to the rich old lord of the neighboring castle instead. Cadret wanted to run away with his love, but he needed to defeat the escort first; he enlisted the help of Sir Gawain whom he met in the woods, and another young knight, his best friend. He took the damsel to a hermitage in the woods and married her before they ran away to Camelot, because Cadret's dream was to become a knight of the Round Table.

If they go to the place where the attack happened, the group can follow the tracks of the three knights to the hermitage in the woods with a successful Track roll (threshold number 11). The hermit who lives there will tell them the young knight with the silver star and the damsel got married 2 days ago and went on their way, but he has not seen Sir Gawain. The group, however, can start being suspicious about Gawain's true intentions. Lady Luna will start coming up with another plan, and in the meantime stall for time by pretending she is just a naïve, confused noble damsel.

Food from the Table

Once again, the group will arrive to a castle in the woods; this one is in a sad state of disrepair, although people still live in it, obviously it has seen better days. As they approach the gates will slam closed and archers will appear on the low walls, aiming to kill. The lady of the castle, Lady Melisande, will appear on the wall over the gate and will tell the group that they have had enough of thieves and bandits and if they do not turn away she will have to order her men to shoot. She will also claim that she does not trust knights anymore; just the day before a knight rode in through the open gates, took her dinner right from her table, and injured three men on his way out. She is not willing to open the gate for anyone.

The truth: She is actually telling the truth. Gawain has been traveling for a long time now, and he did not only run out of food, he also felt responsible for supplying young Cadret and his friends with food for their journey to Camelot. Because he is still traveling in plain armor, not telling people who he is, he succumbed to necessity and took food from Lady Melisande. This is playing right into the hands of Lady Luna: knights are not always perfect.

If they ask the right questions, Lady Melisande will confirm that the knight who robbed her did indeed look like Gawain, and she can even point them in the direction he went.

Wandering Knights

Leaving the castle of Lady Melisande, the group can attempt a Track or Search roll (threshold number 9) and find the unmistakable tracks of Sir Gawain's steed, Guingalet. The tracks are a day old the most; they are getting closer and closer to catching up with Gawain. But they can also find other tracks that belong to other horses that passed after Gawain; they are not the only ones looking for the knight.

Because they can come upon Gawain any minute now and figure out the truth, Lady Luna has to put her new plan in motion. She will sneak away from the group at the first possible opportunity (at night, when they camp, etc.) and disappear in the woods (leaving everything behind to make the group think she has been abducted), looking for the mysterious people following Gawain. When she finds them she will find out that they are the same two knights who blinded the young boy and claimed to have killed Gawain. They found out Gawain was still alive and kept hunting for him; they both are courting ladies who are in love with him and that is reason enough for the two knights, Roche Faée and Gomeret, to want him dead to prove they are better. Lady Luna makes a deal with the knights: she will lead them to Gawain and promise him dead if they play along. She goes to find Gawain, and sends the two knights in the group's way.

When the group starts looking for Lady Luna, Track rolls will reveal the direction she went, until they disappear at a stream or rocky ground. However, they will soon encounter the two traveling knights who claim that they have heard a lady's screams not long ago and were just on their way themselves to rescue her. They will claim they have heard there is a rogue knight on rampage on these lands, and they wanted to do King Arthur a service and capture him. Anyone who is suspicious can roll Negotiation against their rolls and tell if they are lying.

Confronting Sir Gawain

The party will eventually catch up to Sir Gawain. When they find him he will be riding on Guingalet with Lady Luna sitting in the saddle behind him, her wrists bound, as a prisoner. He is taking her to Camelot to answer for her crimes. When Roche Faée and Gomeret see him they will try to attack him immediately, and Lady Luna will take her first

chance to slide off the horse and yell for help, claiming Gawain abducted her. Gawain will defend himself from the attack.

Anyone with a successful roll in Fight (threshold number 5) can tell that Gawain is not trying to kill the knights, merely disarm them and stop the attack. He is a skilled knight and very strong because the meeting happens in the early afternoon just after his strength has reached its peak. He could kill both of them if he wanted to, but he does not seem enraged the way Lady Luna described him. While the fighting goes on, Lady Luna will keep weeping and telling the group that Sir Gawain treated her poorly. The two knights will not stop their attack unless they are restrained or disarmed. In the end they will both yield to Sir Gawain, however, when he turns his back to talk to the group they will try to backstab him; it can only be stopped by someone from the party.

The truth will eventually come to light. Sir Gawain was never cursed or evil; Lady Luna has been lying all along. The two knights are responsible for killing an unarmed knight and blinding a young boy. Roche Faée, however, has fae blood in his veins and he has magical healing powers; if convinced (by any means) to do it, he can heal any wound or injury, such as restoring the sight to the boy.

Return to Camelot

Sir Gawain, once again traveling under his own name and his honor restored, will travel back to Camelot to tell King Arthur his story. He will ask the party to accompany him and tell their part of the tale so it can be recorded for generations to come. Lady Luna and the two knights will be sent to prison. Peace will be restored to King Arthur's court… until next Pentecost.

Follow-up exercises

1. Questions for discussion

- What makes someone a good knight? Discuss the rules of chivalry.

- Why did you choose your character? How did it feel to play that character? If there was another game, would you make the same choice? Why or why not?

- What roles did women play in the world of King Arthur? How was their life different from women nowadays?

- Sir Gawain was not cursed, but he still did things that upset many people. Do you think all of his actions can be justified?

- If you could live in King Arthur's world, what or who would you want to be?

2. Writing assignments

- Design your own coat of arms and explain why you chose it.

- Tell the story the way your character would have told it to King Arthur.

- Tell the story from one of the villains' point of view. Try to convince your readers or audience that you were right.

- Choose your favorite character from Arthurian legends. Research that character.

3. Reading assignments

- Read the original version of the story. Compare and contrast it with the game.

- Read a book based on an Arthurian legend (Gerald Morris, T.H. White, Kevin Crossley-Holland, etc.). Observe how the stories change in adaptation.

- Read and research one aspect of life in King Arthur's world (customs, food, dresses, armor, weapons, travel, etc.) Present the results of your research.

4. Group assignments

- Create your own Round Table complete with names, shields, and the code of honor.

- Design and play your own Arthurian game.

- Draw a map of the game, with the places the group visited, and the route Sir Gawain took. Mark all places of importance.

- Present art related to Arthurian legends such as Medieval music, dance, storytelling, etc.

- Watch a movie related to Arthurian legends. Discuss why you liked or disliked it. Read the original story and compare.

Similar Stories

Any knightly quest from the legends of the Round Table can easily be turned into a quest for a role-playing game. Most quests are episodic in their original form, with different encounters stringed loosely together as the main hero works towards a final goal or destination. The Kitchen Knight, the story of Sir Gareth (Beaumains) consists of duels mostly, while others, like the 13th century legend of Escanor, are more based on treachery and politics. The most famous story associated with the character of Sir Gawain, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, has been used as a template for quests in computer games before (Harrigan & Wardrip-Fruin, 2007).

The ultimate quest of the Arthurian world if the quest for the Holy Grail. Even though it is deeply rooted in religion, it is one of the most famous stories ever told in Western culture, embedded in the common cultural heritage. Because more than one knight attempted to find the Holy Grail, there are several quests that episodes can be drawn from.

Turning an Arthurian legend into a role-playing campaign for a group has its challenges. One of them is that the rules of chivalry forbid fights when one party is outnumbered; one-on-one duels are considered the most noble and fitting for a knight. In that sense, the group cannot work together in defeating a single opponent if they do not want to lose their reputation (unless they have a very good reason to do so). Finding and using quests

that enable the group to either work as a team or take turns taking on challenges takes time, research, and creative thinking. However, the Arthurian legends undoubtedly have a romantic, adventurous appeal that makes them extremely popular as a role-playing world (see *Pendragon* in the Review of Literature).

VITA

CSENGE V. ZALKA

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: January 1, 1986
	Place of Birth: Győr, Hungary
Education:	Public Schools, Győr, Hungary
	M.A. Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary, 2010
	M.A. Reading (Storytelling), East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, 2012
Professional Experience:	International Storytelling Center (2008)
	University School (K-12), East Tennessee State University (Performance, Scholarship, (2011-2012)
	Twisted Tribe Ltd. – Nadirim project (2011)
	Job description: Screenwriter
Scholarships and Fellowships:	Kellner Scholarship (2007/2008)
	A.V. Davis Summer Research Fellowship (2008)
	Fulbright Scholarship (2011/2012)