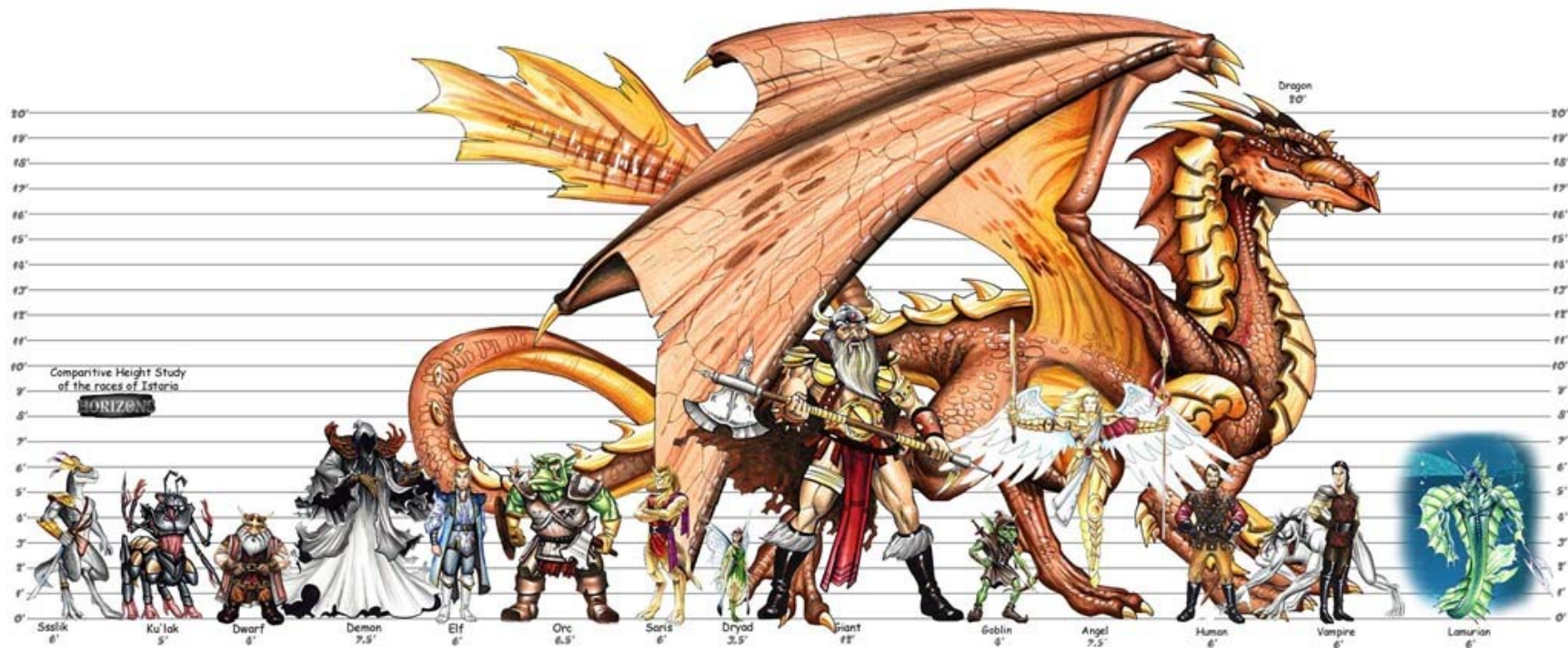


How can I develop a quest-based course involving Istaria, incorporating language arts and entrepreneurship?

An Inquiry-Based Adventure

by Angela Jurgensen



Introduction

Using games to assist us deliver content is not only a great way to reach our students, but also the path of least resistance; as Gee (2003) points out, “Wouldn’t it be great if kids were willing to put in this much time on task on such challenging material in school and enjoy it so much?” Well, guess what... they are. Every time we use computers, I have to give the kids ten minutes playing either a typing game or a math game *as a treat!* If they are willing to interact with these simple games with such energy, what if the game was more complex? What if it was somehow bigger and provided a richer experience?

I greatly enjoyed watching Jim Gee’s video, Principles on Gaming (2003), and how they pertain to this project. I want my students to be empowered and to want to participate without much involvement on my part; this adventure creates empowered learners because the decisions the student makes affect the game and the outcome, not just for themselves but also for other players. They are able to customize the way they solve problems, which helps attract different types of learners. Each quest has a clear goal, and a clear sense of the road ahead; the quests interconnect and form a complex system, which makes the learning all the more rich and long-lasting. Finally, each quest builds on the knowledge and experiences lived on the previous quests, so the problems are sequential and the harder quests become easy to do because students have worked towards that level of understanding.

When I started this inquiry adventure, I thought at first that it would be a good idea to develop my own video game app. This is something I always wanted to try; there are so many possible ideas to tackle, and it would be fun to put it all together.

My original question became “How can I create an educational game to help my students become better at grammar?” and I set off to learn about app building through videos and tutorials. I had played with Scratch a little bit, as well as Adobe Flash, and I knew that the simplest drag-and-drop engines available were pretty similar to the drag-and-drop found on Scratch. A long time ago, when Gamesalad was still free, I had downloaded it to my computer, but never took the time to learn it; why not now?



GameSalad[®]

However, when I actually tried working through the tutorials available for GameSalad, I found it to be disappointingly buggy for Windows. The system is set up in a way that you create “actors” which will be your moving pieces, and you can assign actions or behaviours for them; however, every time I tried to layer behaviours, it stopped working, and a quick search online revealed that this was an issue for others as well. Besides Gamesalad, there are many other options available for building apps; I checked Unity, Buildbox and App Game Kit, and all of them had strengths and weaknesses.

Due to the time that would be required to learn and build the app, I decided to change my initial question and instead continue my exploration of MMORPGs, which I had started on a previous project, and explore the use of such programs in education.

I wanted to dive into the idea of MMORPGs and how this immersive experience could not only help me teach advanced skills, but also help build a strong classroom community. However, for my age level, World of Warcraft still seemed a little advanced. The world is also very crowded; I played it for a while, and at any time, I could see at least ten strangers roaming and questing on my screen. There is violence as well, and some of the possible outcomes seemed quite scary. So, I started looking online for another game to use in my classroom.

I remembered a game I played a long time ago. It was called Horizons back then, and you could play it as a dragon. I loved that game, and played it until one day I logged in and my dragon had turned into a pitch-black defect... and their customer service could not fix the bug. I abandoned the game and never came back to it, but still remembered it as being fun and having some good quests. I also enjoyed the fact that there weren't many people on it while I was playing, even back then. After World of Warcraft came out, I thought it was probably even more empty, if it still existed.

To my surprise, the game was still available online; it is now called Istaria. I downloaded the engine to my computer and started looking around; I copied the descriptions for races, to be used when building the course, and created a new dragon to explore the world of Istaria. While the graphics look dated, the gameplay feels similar to World of Warcraft, and so far, I have not seen any players around... a perfect place for a class of middle-schoolers.

According to Ulicsak (2010), one of the ways to see if the game will make a teacher's life easier is to ask yourself a few questions. Two of them jumped to my mind when thinking of this adventure: first, how does the game content (experiences, activities and mechanics) relate to the learning goals, and how will the learning “be transferred beyond the game context (pg.7).” The first question is an interesting one... since the game itself is set as an adventure, and rather open-ended, the supporting materials and

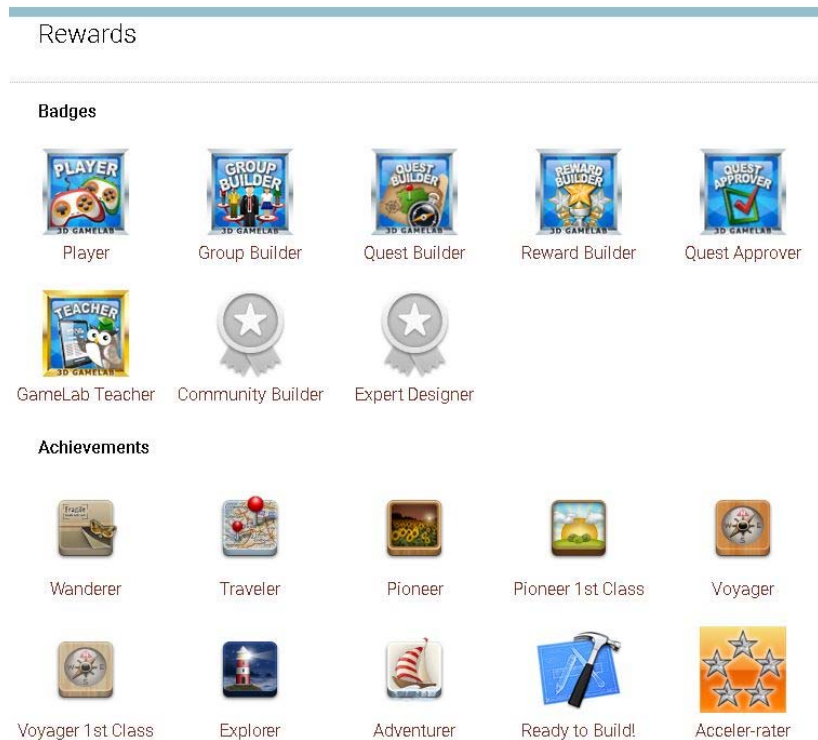
the way the quests are set up are most important when creating the context and the learning. According to Barko and Sadler (2012), “video games keep players interested because they offer active control over the environment in which they are interacting”, which is more control than students have normally in a classroom; for this reason, it is important to have a proper umbrella that organizes all the activity and ensures students still reach their learning goals.

The second question interests me because I do want students to take something away with them after this adventure is over. This is why I thought of the entrepreneurial angle. My quests will be set up in order to build a sense of adventure and of trying things without fear of failure... this will be a big theme throughout. Linking entrepreneurship to the quests brings a sense of adventure to real life. The fire needed to follow your dreams is the same, no matter what the dreams may be.

After looking at all these options, I decided to work towards creating a gamified learning environment while using the game Istaria to engage my students.

My question became, ***“How can I develop a quest-based course involving Istaria, incorporating language arts and entrepreneurship?”***

Delivery



I was very impressed with the organized and automated aspect of 3D GameLab, which changed names to Rezzly a while back. So, I knew this is what I wanted to try when building my gamified learning environment. I had a student account, and needed to apply to change it into a teacher's account, otherwise I would have been unable to use my usual email address. It took them a couple of days to respond and fix it for me, but after that, I was able to log in again and access The Academy, a quest group geared towards teaching you how to create your own quests, how to organize them into groups and how to create and dispense rewards, among other things.

I found out that once your designation changes to teacher, Rezzly does not allow you to create quests right away. The tutorials are all mandatory, and I really recommend them, as they train you exactly on how to set everything up. As you complete quests, more advanced quests become available, training you in a variety of topics. You also will collect rewards (badges, achievements and awards).


After working on it for a few days, my rewards page (above) is starting to look much better. If I am excited about the different badges, I imagine the kids will be even more excited; this is, however, not enough to keep them playing, and so I need to create quests that are intrinsically fun and exciting, in order for the students to keep going.

The cool thing about the badges and achievements is, if you click the ones you have not received yet, the engine tells you exactly what you need to do in order to get them. For instance, I have not yet received the community builder badge; when I click on it, I see that while I have achieved the “It’s broken, help” quest, I have not finished the “Sharing your thoughts” quest and the “Cooperative Questing” quest.

The same way that the awards remain locked unless you complete a certain quest or achieve a certain number of points, the same is true for the quests themselves. This is one of the strengths of this set-up: the students will very likely enjoy playing as a dragon, and part of the fun will be exploring the world with their friends. So, they will be more likely to work hard on the quests that require writing and reflecting in order to continue and reach the game quests. At the same time, I can see students pushing their friends on in order to have their whole team entering the game together. I think the game itself will be a huge spark for the students.

If they rush through a quest just to be “done” with it, they will soon learn that this only takes them longer because the quests have to be approved by me, and I will return any work that is not acceptable.

Community Builder ✕



For you social types, an advanced badge to show you've gone above and beyond to reach out to your fellow educators in the pursuit of great learning, you rock!

Awarded Points: 20

Requirements:

- 'Sharing your Thoughts' quest
- 'Cooperative Questing' quest
- 'It's broken, help!' quest

COPPA/FERPA Regulations

COPPA- Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

Drop Quest

Because 3D Gamelab is a learning management tool for all ages, we must comply with all regulations surrounding the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

What the Law Says

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, effective April 21, 2000, applies to the online collection of personal information from children under 13. These rules spell out what a Web site operator must include in a privacy policy, when and how to seek verifiable consent from a parent and what responsibilities an operator has to protect children's privacy and safety online. <http://www.coppa.org/comply.htm>

Personal Information

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and Rule apply to individually identifiable information about a child that is collected online such as:

- full name
- home address
- email address
- telephone number
- or any other information that would allow someone to identify or contact the child.

The Act and Rule also cover other types of information – for example,

- hobbies,
- interests
- and information collected through cookies or other types of tracking mechanisms – when they are tied to individually identifiable information.

One of the quests served as a great reminder regarding online safety, which is always a concern when dealing with an online environment where the child can have access to others that are not a part of their classroom. This is why one of my quests is focused on becoming a smarter online citizen.

When I was on Julia Hengstler’s class on online safety, I planned on creating a program for training students to be smarter online; as it turns out, what I came up with was very similar to another website which also had some training available (although the site was not only for kids). Now that I started this project, I am now rethinking that project, and thinking that I could change one of the quests to reflect this spirit of adventure.

Maybe e-Warriors?

The Quests

As it turns out, this project is far too huge to be completed in time for OLTD 508. It has so many layers and details, and so much to think about, that it would take me probably a couple of months working on it full-time until I am finally happy with the result (hello, Summer!) I feel it will be worthwhile, however, and useful for me as a teacher.

Angela Jurgensen Rezzly Group Planning Roadmap ☆ 📁

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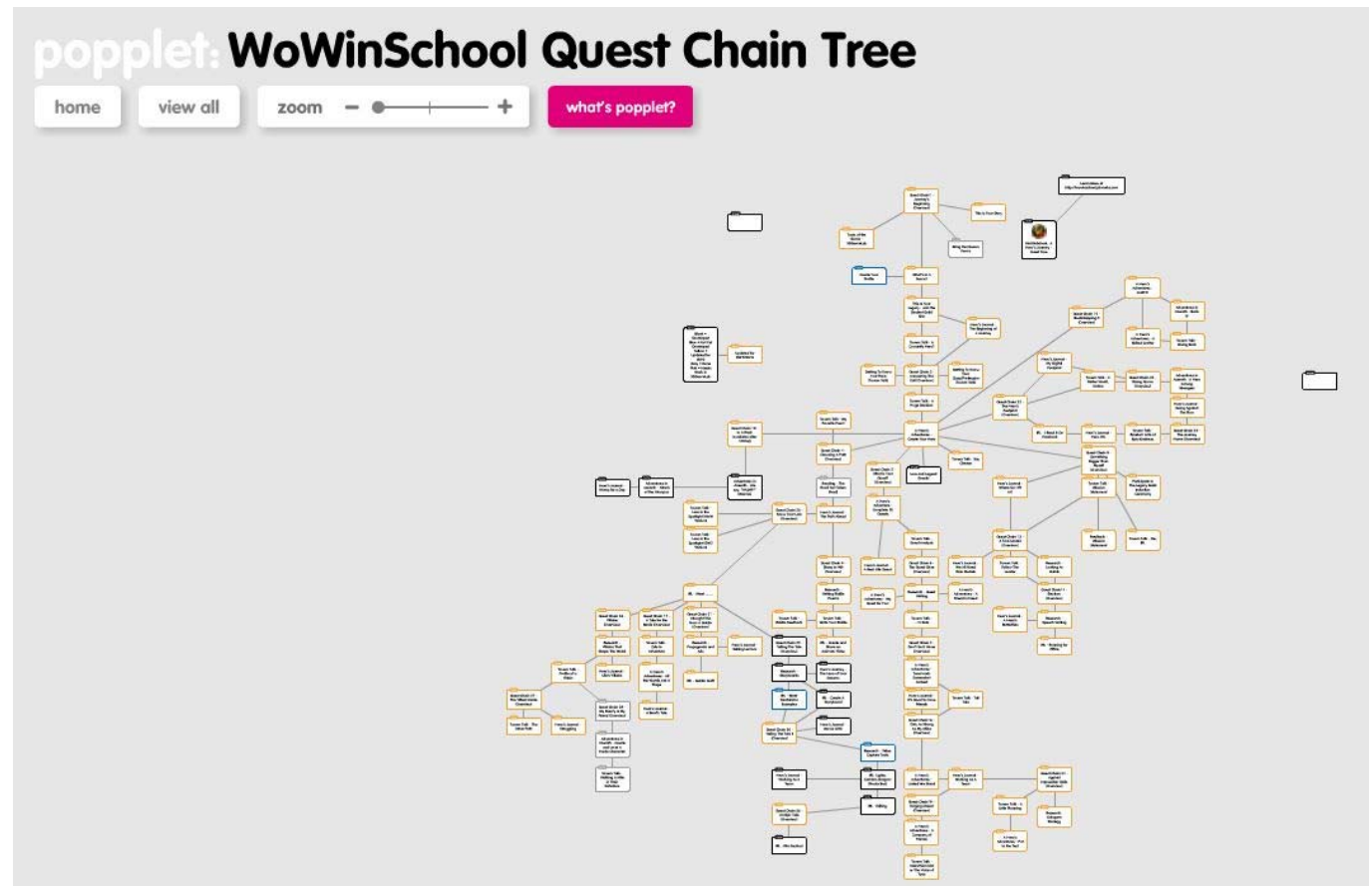
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Quest Group	Quest Name	Requires approval	Estimated Time	XP	Prereq	Type	Topic/Task
Heroes of Istaria							
	Total available QUEST XP			305		1	visable quests at startup
	Available Reward XP			575		7	Solo quests
	Total POSSIBLE XP			880		1	Solo/Coop quests
	Winning condition XP			2500	(what is the maximum number of points students need to "win" the case?)	0	Coop only quests
	Estimated time to complete total quests in group			115.0	minutes	0	Event Related Quests
				22			
Initiation							
	The Hero's Syllabus		15	30	None	Solo	Beginning journey - Syllabus
1	A Safe Hero is an e-Knight at Heart						Online safety course
1	Journey's Beginning		10	25	Welcome to the Movement	Solo/Coop	Create an avatar/join Rezzly
1	Hatching an Idea (chapter 1 of Eragon)		10	25	Welcome to the Movement	Solo	Read chapters 1 through 4 of Eragon/reflection
2	Answering the Call						
2	Fireside Talk						
2	Hatching an Idea (chapter 5 of Eragon)						Read chapters 5 through 9 of Eragon/reflection
3	What's In a Name						Pick a good name that matches the game
E	Your True Class						First Entrepreneurial Quest
3	Create your Dragon Alter-Ego						Talk about classes/Create dragon
3	Fireside Talk						
3	Hatching an Idea (chapter 10 of Eragon)						Read chapters 10 through 14 of Eragon/reflection

During the tutorial training provided by Rezzly, one of the quests was to create a quest tree using a template provided, and I am currently working through it. I have a pretty good idea on how the program will work until quest 10 or so, but then I will need to play the game a little more and read Eragon until the end, so that I can bring some relevant and interesting quests to the students, that don't feel forced.

I also took a look at the Popplet for WoWinschools, which gave me a great visual idea of what a complete, quest-based, year-long program would look like.

On the quest chain tree, you can see how each quest relates to other quests, and it helps me understand how to make some quests unlockable only after some achievements, as well as why it is necessary to organize your ideas before plopping down all the quests in Rezzly.



Home of Istaria

Quest Details

Quest: The Hero's Journey

Parent: Quest

Group: Quest

Discipline: Quest

Advanced Settings

Quest Manager

Quest Editor

Parent Editor

Quest Opposer

Currently, I have one quest created and posted on my groups: it is the syllabus quest. I still need to go over a few points, but so far so good. I used the first quest by WoWinschools as a starting point, but modified it to fit Istaria and the world of dragons.

From this one quest, I will create the other quests, as well as paper hand-outs, and then hopefully be able to share all of this with other teachers.

Introduction, Human!

Greetings, human! You have been selected to participate in an important adventure, filled with quests which will stretch your mental abilities and test your will to continue and thrive.

In order to participate in this journey you will drink a magical potion which will split your consciousness between two separate entities: a human form which will grow in experience in this realm, and a *magical beast*, which will be imbued with powers far beyond your wildest dreams, and grow in experience on a mythical world. But first, you must understand the road ahead. You must decide to embark on this journey.

What kind of journey is this, you may ask? Well... it is **a Hero's journey**.

This letter contains all the information you need to know about your training, transformation and challenges you will face. Read on, friend. Your path is laid out before you, and should you choose to embark on this road, we will be here to guide and assist you.



The Road Ahead

The challenges you will face on the path ahead will take place in three separate areas:

1. Greetings:

During this journey you will experience the trials of a young hero/heroine. In the first challenge you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria. Here you will choose what role you will play and how you will fit into the good culture of this world, while reflecting on your appearance there. Most of the challenges you will face will take place here. You must face these alone, however, together with your fellow heroes (your classmates), you will be able to gain and support each other on this journey.

2. The Road Ahead:

All of your challenges will be set in the form of an outer form. In the outer form, you will choose your own path and you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria. You will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria and you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria. You will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria and you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria.

How do I get a good grade?

Do heroes get grades?

Well, there are no grades in this quest, as the quest is designed to be a journey of discovery and growth. Instead of grades, you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria and you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria. You will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria and you will be asked to explore the outer world of Istaria.

A Hero's Reputation

One of the things most heroes have is their own reputation. Your reputation is a critical part of your success on this quest. All heroes must agree to the following:

- **Common:** A hero will never cheat, cheat, or lie. This applies to your actions in the classroom as well as in the outer world.
- **Respect:** You must always respect the Lorekeeper and your fellow heroes, and to those you meet in Istaria.
- **Prepared:** You should always be prepared to embark on whatever challenge the Lorekeeper has for you and with your own challenges completed on time.
- **Focused:** Your challenges will require you to be completely focused. Anybody who is not focused will be asked to leave the quest.

Quest Instructions / Details *

Heading 1 B I U S X₂ X²

The Hero's Syllabus

Greetings, human!

I am Jartanis, your Lorekeeper and guide.

You have been selected to participate in an important adventure, filled with quests which will stretch your mental abilities and test your will to continue and thrive.

In order to participate in this journey, you will be drinking a magical potion which will split your consciousness into two separate entities: a human form, which will grow in experience in this realm, and a *magical beast*, which will be imbued with powers far beyond your wildest dreams, and grow in experience on a mythical world... but first, you must understand the road ahead. You must decide to embark on this journey.

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The Road Ahead

Add Attachment

The Added Lore and Entrepreneurship

WoWinschools uses *The Hobbit* as companion reader, taking the readings as opportunities for reflection and growth. For my project, I thought of selecting a book that had more to do with the story; the book *Eragon* came to mind. Besides being about a boy and his dragon, from the time he finds her egg to how they solved problems and quests together, the book is also inspirational to younger children. The book's author, Christopher Paolini, started reading fictional books when he was 10, and this influenced him to start writing *Eragon* when he was only 14. He persevered, wrote and edited the book until it was finally ready; his parents read it, saw promise in the book and decided to give it a shot, self-publishing the book with him.

This may seem like an easy story – after all, how many kids have their parents turn publishers just to give them a hand – but in reality, Christopher had to go through over 135 talks and presentations, and he sometimes would spend the whole day working hard to sell a few copies of his books. Promoting the book in a time when social media was not a viable method of reaching an audience was extremely hard, but Christopher persevered for over a year in a grueling fashion. Once his book was picked up by Alfred A. Knopf, re-edited and published, his book received poor reviews, with many calling his work derivative and often a straight copy of far better, more original stories. This could have crushed many well-established authors, but young Christopher continued pushing forward, and wrote three more books to complete the story of *Eragon* and his dragon.

His book became extremely successful among tweens, leading to a movie deal which grossed approximately 75 million dollars in North America.

This is the reason why I chose this book as a backbone of my game environment; it is not the best written book about dragons, and it is by no means the most creative. In fact, the book's similarities with other works of fiction will require a special quest about copyright, and the difference between homage and plagiarism. But it is a book that persevered, just like his author, and that shows that achieving a goal is often very hard, taking years of work, many failures and bumps along the way.

Istaria is heavily into crafting and selling products. It is also one of the reasons why this book would fit in so well. The quests would be interspersed throughout the timeline, so that they come about at the right time, and so that their location adds to the students' reflections.



Tolkien	Paolini
Aragorn	Eragon
Arwen	Arya
Isengard	Isestar
Angrenost	Angrenost
Morgoth	Morgothal
Elessar	Elessari
Fornost	Furnost
Melian	Melian
Valinor	Vanilor
Eriador	Eridor
Imladris	Imiladris
Caranthir	Ceranthor
Isildur	Isidar

The entrepreneurial quests will be roughly as follows:

1. Your true class – While you can pick your class on a game, often your talents would be very different in the real world. Maybe your passion lies in drawing; maybe you are interested in making crafts, or maybe you love sports. This quest would help students define what their strengths, sparks and interests are.
2. What is your egg? – Products versus services. In the beginning of the story, Eragon was foraging for things to sell, and finally found a weird rock (which turned out to be Saphira’s egg.). While he was not able to sell it, the egg became much more valuable than any coin. Looking at your talents and strengths, what would be your potential egg – what product could you envision in order to make money immediately, or perhaps use it in the future? Think of a problem associated with one of your interests. How could you fix it? For instance, if you like to draw, and love funny comics, maybe you want to create a product with drawings that will make people laugh. If you like hiking boots, but don’t like how they get muddy, maybe you want to figure out a way to stop that from happening.
3. SCAMPER! Think of your favourite product from the previous entrepreneurial quest. How can you Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, change Purpose, Eliminate or Rearrange from this product? Change it and improve it until you are happy with the result.
4. Market Research. Draw your product and add the description. Create a survey with some questions. Ask five of your classmates to help you by responding to the survey. After your product description, add a few questions (for instance, would you be willing to pay \$10 for this? If you could improve this, what would you do? Does this sound like a useful idea, and how would you rate it from 1 to 5?) Now that you received your answers, will you change your product, and how?
5. Set-up costs, profit and growth – Here, students analyse how much it would cost them to develop and launch their product. Would they need a loan? If so, how much?
6. Final quest – create a classroom marketplace. Each student will have a certain amount of funds, and play as large purchasers. In the end, students would compare this to their previous quest and figure out if they were able to pay for any loans they may had, and if they made profit; will they be able to reinvest money in their business?

The entrepreneurial quests will work in tandem with the other quests to create a rich experience for the students. All quests will build upon previous quests, and as they go forward, students should learn a lot about themselves and each other. The final quest should be a group activity in which students are able to create some sort of artifact (hopefully digital) summarizing all that they have learned with this adventure. A list of keywords will be given to students, and all quests will be left available for viewing as reminders.

Conclusion

This inquiry-based project started off with one thing certain: that I wanted to incorporate games and play to my teaching. I have always loved games, even though I didn't have access to many when growing up. When I was a little girl, we didn't have any board games; we played cards, but nothing else. My cousin had a Monopoly game that was brought to her by a common uncle who lived in Rio, and every time I would visit her, I would beg her to play it with me.

In our city, there was an old, small airport which served as mandatory stop from flights coming from Europe. Despite this, security was minimal at that time. Every weekend, my father and I would trek to it, watch airplanes land and fly away from an open area on the second floor of the building – there was no window and the noise was unbelievable, and they came so close we could almost touch them!



After watching the planes for a few minutes, we would retreat to a small, air-conditioned book store located on the second floor. My father and I would sit on our small oasis, a pleasant contrast to the 40 degree weather outside, and flip through books hour after hour. We were the only ones sitting on the floor, but my father didn't care; he knew that as long as we took a few books home, we would always be welcomed there. I can't remember when we started this weekly tradition, but I know that by the time I left home, I had more children's books than I could count.

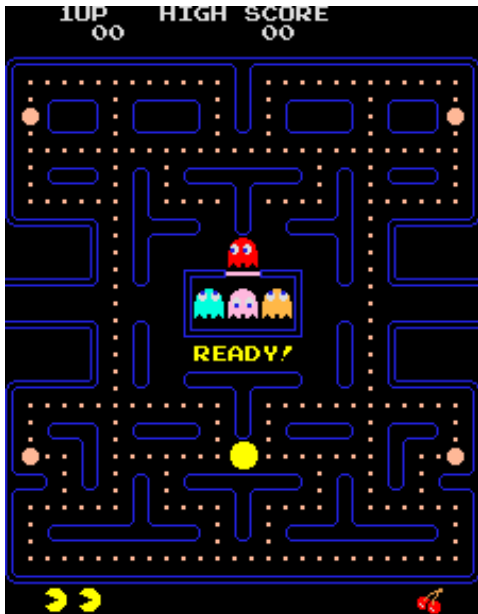
When I was about ten years old, they closed off a small area near the bookstore and started construction on what was to be the first arcade in the city. One day, all the black tarp was gone, and in its place,

there were colours and lights and music. I had never seen video games before, and remember how curious and excited I was. My father went in with me, and we were sold; we played pinball for the first time, and Pacman, and Space Invaders, and soon we added a visit to the arcade to our weekly routine.



Games became a passion of mine. I spent the weeks eagerly looking for coins, taking change whenever possible and saving it for the weekend. One day, my father arrived home with a large box, and told me we would no longer be going to the arcade every weekend. Before I could protest, he sets the box on the floor, and together we open our first home console, an Intellivision.

Playing video games – and the losing, and dying, and trying again -- helped me learn and grow my mind in different areas. According to Griffiths (2002), spatial visualization ability is considered one of the things that can be improved with video game playing; depending on the way the game is designed, you can teach a child any subject using video games. These are all practical skills which are easy to observe, but video games also teach a child some subtler skills. They learn to take more risks, as well as to not be afraid of trying and failing.



This is a focus that is most exciting to me: helping children develop a sense that they are able to do anything. Nowadays, there is a visible anti-movement on social media against people that say to children “You can do anything you set your mind to.” I think that the whole point of this sentiment has been lost somewhere, and we have somehow devolved into an “everyone gets a trophy” situation in part because people want to make sure that children always feel like winners. This causes dissonance when they finally grow up and realize that successes take hard work, and failures are a part of life. The truth is somewhere in between.

Games teach children that you may get there, but you will probably die miserably many times before you do. It teaches you that true victories feel so good because they take so much hard work. In real life, when a child fails and is able to rise again, and finally succeeds, there is no better feeling. Athletes everywhere know this; even if they believe they have what it takes to win a marathon, they may still lose. However, if they don’t believe they can, they will most likely never win.



Currently, the New Curriculum in the province of B.C. is trying hard to change education’s focus towards creativity and critical thinking. They are working towards fostering children who have the tools to become entrepreneurs, and inventors, and world-shakers. A properly designed game experience can bring all these necessary elements together, and in a subtle way, build resilience in our children, as well as minds that are able to mold themselves around different situations.

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