

The Verbal Arts Centre Alternative Reality Games

3 draft ideas for games to help promote the Children's Literary Festival run at The Verbal Arts Centre between the 20th and 21st April 2013. These games are designed to be small scale ways to promote engagement with the festival for an audience of 10>18 year olds. They are designed to have a slow lead in to the festival playing out over 5 days between the 15th and 19th of April with events on the 20th and 21st of April



The Seekers

Narrative:

The reading of texts for the festival across the city has attracted the attention of seekers, half human creatures who are enchanted by the reading of set passages, it is important that they are stopped, or at least slowed down. Seekers are looking for set texts, paragraphs from books, they collect words and stories but can also be enchanted by certain story elements. (Seekers will be based on the idea of Dementors and could resemble [this](#) produced by a recent graduate of the interactive media arts program).

Play:

Players are issued with an item which highlights them as a player (a coloured hat, a coloured tabard) players are given to the count of 100 to run and hide with Verbal Arts as the starting point, they must stay on the walls for the duration of the game. There are 3 seeker characters who are stalking the walls of Derry looking for players, each one can become enchanted through reading a piece of text to them (only one works on each character). Players are issued a sheet with 5 excerpts from books relating to the festival, these are emailed to players who have signed up to the game through the website. If they spot a seeker then they can enchant them, freezing them by reading the passage allowed. If the seeker will need to hear the whole section to freeze, and will be frozen for 20 seconds. If players are captured then their passages, and marker (hat, tabard etc) removed.

Players must make it back to the Verbal Arts Centre without being tagged by a seeker to receive a prize. The game will run twice a day in the city over the weekend. Passages of text will be released through email and clues on social network sites

Benefits:

- Promotes play and reading allowed
- Fast activity for the city based on capture the flag
- Will document well on the day through film
- Could be used for the horror festival for Halloween

Draw Backs:

- Heavy on physical resources, printed passages, flyers, prizes, costumes, markers
- May produce health and safety hazards through play in the city
- Low digital engagement (site, trailer, emails)

Saving The City

Narrative:

There is a mystery within the walls of Derry, a secret society is meeting within the city at a secret location to try and prevent the resurrection of a spirit that has been locked within the walls since they were built. Using words found scattered around the city, encoded into the streets, the society is collecting these words, and trying to piece them together to help save the city. Some words have been lost in time but some can still be found within the streets. Players must visit the locations around the city and find the words, taking pictures of them and sharing them with the group during the week. Meeting together in the Verbal Arts Centre (where all the words will be printed and stuck on the walls of the meeting room) players must use them to try and recreate a lost passage that could stop the spirit from rising and destroying the City of Culture.

Play:

Players are drip fed clues during the week through social networks and email to locations of words around the city, these will lead to specific words (in shop fronts, post boxes, phone calls to phone boxes etc). Players will be encouraged to document and share these words on a Facebook page. An atmospheric facilitated writing workshop on the Sunday will help players to write (and chant) a passage together in Verbal Arts at a ritual (party)

Benefits:

- Encourages collaboration
- Light on physical resources as most work is done digitally
- Uses the spaces of the city outlined by Verbal Arts
- The challenge is continuous throughout the week with an event at the weekend

Draw Backs:

- Would need Facebook to participate
- Would need planted players to make sure that all of the clues were found if there was low engagement at certain points
- Will need a facilitated workshop
- Will need a large live event/ritual/party at the end

The Hunt

Narrative:

There is a hidden treasure within the walls of the city left there from generations passed, and can be found in the brick and mortar of the streets. A group of treasure hunters are gathering to try and unlock the treasure, which can be found just before the full moon every April. Treasures take many forms but the hunters will have to decipher clues and avoid traps to unearth the literary riches of the city.

Play:

Players are given a map on sign up to the site with some clues, the first clue should lead them, with research to The Roaring Meg Canon, the Fishmongers 1641 inscription will lead players to the next location (Guild Hall), which will be marked with a fish (and 1641) on their maps. The Stain Glass in the guild hall will unlock the next location. Players will move through 8 locations solving puzzles before they are eventually lead back to the Verbal Arts Centre which they can collect their treasure. Each location will give them a work or phase that they will need to use to piece together the unlock paragraph, read allowed in the foyer of Verbal Arts for all to hear.

Benefits:

- Uses the locations outlined by Verbal Arts as key to the city
- Is quite resource light in production
- Encourages reading inside Verbal Arts
- Players must navigate the city

Draw Backs:

- Hard to track player participation on the day(s)
- Hard to document engagement
- May be heavy on prizes dependant on the "treasure" Verbal Arts is willing to put forward.