

The Role of Character Creation in Role Playing Gamification

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About me...

- Graduate Student in Jewish Education at American Jewish University
- 5th and 6th Grade Judaic Studies Teacher at Briskin Elementary School
- 10 years of Summer Camp Programming Experience
- Moderate Dungeon Master
- Player a variety of Tabletop Role Playing Games (TRPG)
 - Dungeons and Dragons
 - No Thank You Evil
 - Spirit of 77
 - Too Many Bones
 - Etc.

Goals for Today

- Define Role Playing Games and Long Form Role Playing Education
- Define Character Creation and explore its origins.
- Review a variety of modern Character Creation methods.
- Conceptualize Character Creation methods and subsequent Long Form Role Playing Education for different subjects.
- Dissect Character Creation methods in Long Form Role Playing Education.

Tabletop Role Playing Games

A tabletop role-playing game (TRPG) is a form of role playing game (RPG) in which the participants describe their characters' actions through speech. Participants determine the actions of their characters based on their characterization, and the actions succeed or fail according to a set formal system of rules and guidelines. Within the rules, players have the freedom to improvise; their choices shape the direction and outcome of the game.

-Wikipedia

How does this translate to Education?

“Participants determine the actions of their characters based on their characterization, and the actions succeed or fail according to a set formal system of rules and guidelines. Within the rules, players have the freedom to improvise; their choices shape the direction and outcome of the game.”

Participants determine the actions of their characters based on their characterization

- “But what I do have are a very particular set of skills, skills I have acquired over a very long career, skills that make me a nightmare for people like you.”
-Liam Neeson
That Movie Where Bad Guys Stole His Daughter
- Students choose actions based on the character they created.
- The skills they choose affect their successes and failures, as well as what their character will naturally excel in and what will be more difficult.

The actions succeed or fail according to a set formal system of rules and guidelines.

- Problem Solving and Experiential.
- They cannot do anything they want.
- The rules set up obstacles the students must face and overcome.
- The way they choose to operate within those guidelines is their own.

Within the rules, players have the freedom to improvise; their choices shape the direction and outcome of the game.

- The most difficult facet of Long Form Role Playing Education.
- Students choices cannot be anticipated.
- They can be hypothesized; which can allow for some preplanning.

Since the direction of the experience cannot be easily articulated, Character Creation becomes the a fantastic tool to plan an engaging long-form roleplaying gamification.

Character Creation

Character creation is the process of defining a game character or other character. Typically, a character's individual strengths and weaknesses are represented by a set of statistics.

-Wikipedia

**Character
Creation
Began with...**

**Dungeons and
Dragons**



6 Ability Skills

1. Strength, measuring physical power
2. Dexterity, measuring agility
3. Constitution, measuring endurance
4. Intelligence, measuring reasoning and memory
5. Wisdom, measuring Perception and Insight
6. Charisma, measuring force of personality

& Tomato Applications

- Strength is being able to crush a tomato.
- Dexterity is being able to dodge a tomato.
- Constitution is being able to eat a bad tomato.
- Intelligence is knowing a tomato is a fruit.
- Wisdom is knowing not to put a tomato in a fruit salad.
- Charisma is being able to sell a tomato-based fruit salad.

Ability Point Allocation Affects Skills

1. Strength- Athletics, Hammer Attack
 2. Dexterity- Acrobatics, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Swift Attack
 3. Constitution- Health Points, Holding Breath
 4. Intelligence- Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, Religion, Learned Magic
 5. Wisdom- Animal Handling, Perception, Medicine, Survival, Insight, Magic From Inside
 6. Charisma- Performance, Persuasion, Deception, Intimidation, Magic through performance
- A High Ability Score means that the character is naturally gifted in that ability and associated skills.
 - A Low or Negative Ability Score means they're bad at them.
 - When creating a character, the player decides what kinds of things they want to excel in, often based on what type of character they want to play.

The Basics of Playing DnD



For any skill, you roll a 20 sided die, and add your skill modifier.

What your character is trying to do effects the roll you need. This number is called a “skill check.”

A skill check of...

- 5 is very easy
- 10 is easy
- 15 is medium
- 20 is hard
- 25 is very hard
- 30 is nearly impossible

**Different
Characters
need different
skills to
succeed.**

- A Fighter should have points in Strength.
 - A Thief should have points in Dexterity.
 - A Magician should have points in Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma.
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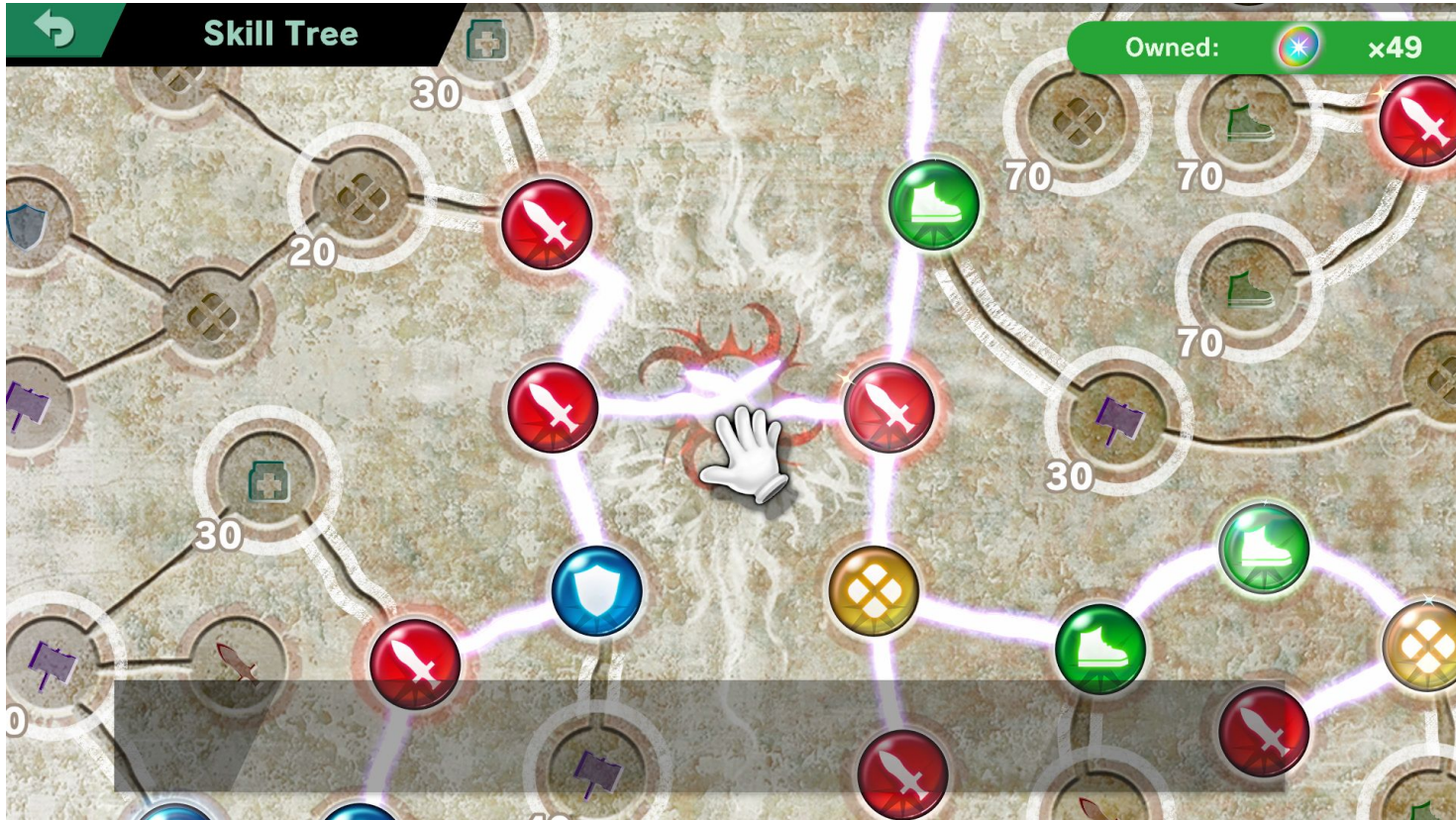
Modern Examples of Character Creation

Fallout: New Vegas





Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild



Super Smash Brothers: Ultimate

POKÉMON

 **Grookey** 
40/40 Lv. 14

 **Yamper** 
35/35 Lv. 11


 **Rookidee** 
37/37 Lv. 13

 **Nicket** 
28/28 Lv. 10

 **Chewtle** 
34/34 Lv. 11

 **Dottler** 
35/35 Lv. 11



 To Boxes

 Confirm  Swap Held Items  Swap Pokémon  Back

Pokemon: Sword and Shield

**Students as
young as 8 years
old play these
games.**

They inherently understand character creation and can articulate the value of skills for the game they are playing.

**Utilizing the mechanics
of skill building in
educational settings can
unlock understandings
simply by design.**

Hypothetical Applications

Gear in Mathematics

- Different Gear represents different pieces of PEDMAS (Parentheses, Exponents, Division, Multiplication, Addition, Subtraction)
 - There is one equation that needs to be solved, but the player cannot see the equation in its entirety without the 6 pieces of PEDMAS gear.
 - Each adventure practices a different part of PEDMAS, thus earning the gear.
-

Skill Trees in Literature

- Pick a Variety of Genres of books that have the same theme (or vice versa)
 - The first books are easy, simple, and basic.
 - After a student reads that book, they have the choice to follow the skill tree and read one of a newer difficulty, or read one in a different part of the tree.
 - They have to read a certain number of books.
-

Party Building in Chemistry

- Each different Element has different abilities that are specific to that element.
 - As the students go through the adventures/activities, they have the opportunity to change their party to strengthen their abilities.
 - The different elements can either react with other elements encountered or be used to create substances with other elements in the party
 - (EX: Hydrogen and Oxygen give the ability to conjure Water).
-

**Those are just a
couple ideas.**

**Let's look at 2 ways
character creation has
been used in a Long Form
Role Playing game for US
immigration in the 1900's
for 5th Grade.**

Immigrant Role Playing Goals

- In this roleplaying game, students will:
 - Be processed through Ellis Island as an immigrant would.
 - Determine institutions and buildings being built in their new American city.
 - Go on Strike because of unfair working conditions.
 - Create a Yiddish Theatrical Performance.
- Immigrants brought with them to/had in America:
 - Money
 - Skills
 - Relationships
 - Their Previous Experience in the Old Country

PASSPORT APPLICATION



Please provide the following information in order to approve and process your passport. Enjoy your travels.

Name: _____

Home Country: _____

Occupation: _____

TRAITS:(Choose One for Each: 0, +1, +2) XP:

Money	Skills	Relationships

TYPE: Check One (For every 5 XP, check another box)

- The Creative:** You are good with your hands. On any Skill Roll, you can roll twice, taking the highest number.
- The Good Citizen:** You always do your best to help others. On any Relationship Roll, you can roll twice, taking the highest number.
- The Investor:** You know how to use your money. On any Money Roll, you can roll twice, taking the highest number.
- The Partner:** You are best when you help others. You can add your Skill Points to another Player's Skill Roll.
- The Matchmaker:** You help others solve problems. You can add your Relationship Points to another Player's Relationship Roll.
- The Generous:** You give money to those who need it. You can add your Money Points to another Player's Money Roll.
- The Lucky One:** You are just lucky. You get 6 Luck Points you can use during the whole unit to add to any roll to change the outcome.
- The Thoughtful:** You put your heart into your work. On any Skill Roll, you can use your Relationship Points.
- The Helping Hand.** You help those in need. On any Relationship Roll, you can use your Skill Points.
- The Wealthy:** You are very rich. Instead of a +2, you have a +3 in Money. (ONLY WORKS WITH A +2 IN MONEY POINTS)

Your character has chosen to bring one small, personal, special item with you. What is it? Why is it special?

What is your character's family life like? Will they be traveling with you?

Your character has something from their past they would like to keep a secret in America. What is it?

Complete one of the following tasks in the space below:

- Draw a picture of your character doing a favorite activity. (Comics are acceptable)
- Write a paragraph about your character's morning routine from their perspective. (or another activity)
- Make a resume/timeline with at least 5 of your character's life events. (draw it out)
- Write a short dialogue between your character and another classmate's character. (A story about them is also acceptable)

5th Grade
1900 Immigration
Spring 2019

Experience

- Students used 0, +1, and +2 to fill in Money, Skills, and Relationships.
 - A High Money meant they were rich. Low Money meant Poor.
 - High Skill meant they were good at their job. A Low Skill meant they were bad.
 - High Relationships meant they were People Persons. Low Relationship meant they weren't.
- They each chose 1 type. The type gave them an extra ability to use that emphasized their abilities or evened them out.
- Students who were skilled in...
 - Money excelled in Creating a town
 - Skills excelled in Going on Strike
 - Relationships excelled in Making a Jewish/American performance
- The game operated on Dice Rolls. These skills were completely superficial other than as a mechanic to play the game.

How did Gameplay work?

Results

In post game discussions, students easily articulated the value of money, skills, and relationships in the Immigrant experience.

They applied the skills to the associated activities and demonstrated empathy with immigrants due to the situations they were hypothetically in.

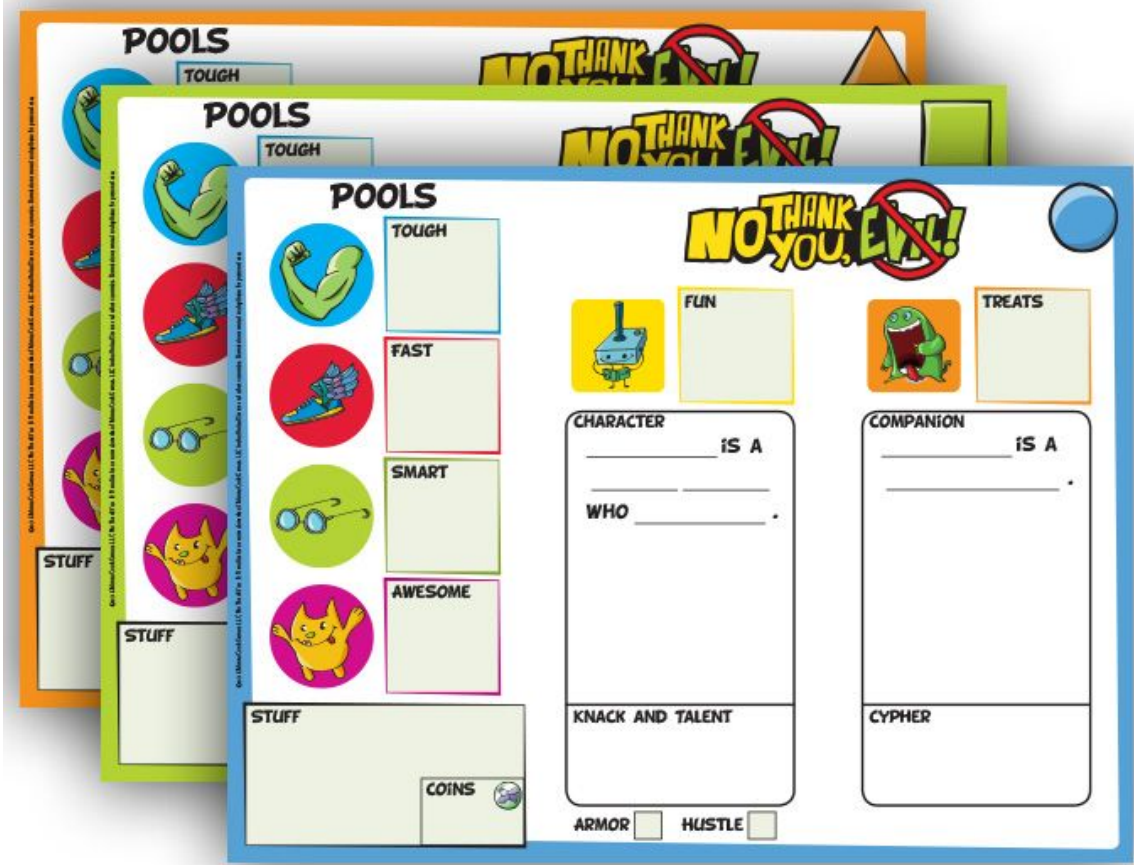
Changes made for this year

Since the goal for this is more empathetic than content based, the types of activities and character creation mechanic was changed.

No Thank You Evil is a children's Tabletop Role Playing Game purposefully made to be simple.

The Character Creation process is literally a mad lib sentence.

"I am a (ADJECTIVE ie: Ferocious, Scary, Silly, Brave) (TYPE OF CHARACTER ie: Kid, Dragon, Ninja) who (VERB ie: Roars, Flies, Fights, Sneaks).



No Thank You, Evil! Character Sheet

Immigrant Character Sheet

You are a Jewish immigrant who is leaving "The Old Country" to move to America. Choosing from the list of options, complete the sentence below:

I'm a _____ Jew who _____. I'm moving to America so I can _____.

(Immigrant) (action) (goal)

1900's Immigration Spring 2020

Immigrant Character Sheet

Immigrant Options

Sephardic

Very Religious, cares a lot about studying Torah, celebrating the Holidays, and Prayer. An intelligent Jew who thinks often about how their actions represent the Jewish community.

Ashkenzi

Loves living in the community. Prays and studies Torah in private and celebrates holidays at home. In public, stays in the background and tries to fit in. A politically savvy Jew who wants citizenship in the country they are living in.

Eastern European

A Hard Worker. Cares about the Jewish community and making it thrive. Brings the spirit of holidays and Judaism to work and life. A social Jew who fights for their freedom to be Jewish.

Action Options

Builds

Makes things with wood and cement

Drives

Handles a horse, donkey, or camel

Leads

Speaks for those who are too nervous to speak

Teaches

Explains hard to understand things.

Earns

Saves Money quickly.

Cleans

Makes places nicer to live in.

Farms

Makes food out of seeds.

Protects

Keeps places safe

Goal Options

Raise a big family- I care about having good schools and hospitals and a welcoming community.

Get a good career- I care about a thriving city with industry and jobs.

See exciting new things- I care about art and culture and tasting delicious food.

Be free from oppression- I care about my safety and the fairness of law.

Help make change- I care about making the world a better place.

**1900's
Immigration
Spring 2020**

How did Gameplay work?

**The gained
understanding of the
value of each “Ability”
still has proven
relevant in post game
discussions.**

In general, character creation is a crucial step for Long Form Role Playing Gamification.

**It informs the
different kinds
of activities that
can be used.**

**It directs the
students
through proper
avenues to learn
content and gain
understandings.**

**It communicates
core concepts to
the students and
ingrains them in
their learning.**

Any Questions?