

1 Year As a Drama Teacher:

How I Incorporated Larp Into My Curriculum

by Lindsay Wolgel

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What You'll Be Hearing About

- Background info/goals
- Benefits of each larp activity I tried
- What inspired them
- Our shenanigans in the drama classroom!

Who Am I?



Lindsay Wolgel



- Performer
- Larp Actor/Facilitator
- This will be my 4th Edularp Conference
- Teaching performing arts for 11 years
- I have my own virtual voice studio

Background Info



New Heights Academy Charter School

- Middle School in Washington Heights, Manhattan
- Ages 10-14
- Charter School
- Funded by the Dept of Ed
- Different restrictions from public schools.



New Heights Academy Charter School

- Lottery System
- Class size 25-27, 5th grade is half that
- 4 sections per grade
- I have 25% of each grade each quarter
- Electives - Health, Art, Phys Ed, Drama
- Start fresh each quarter
- Drama should be creative, low-stress!
- Freedom in my curriculum!

Teaching Intentions

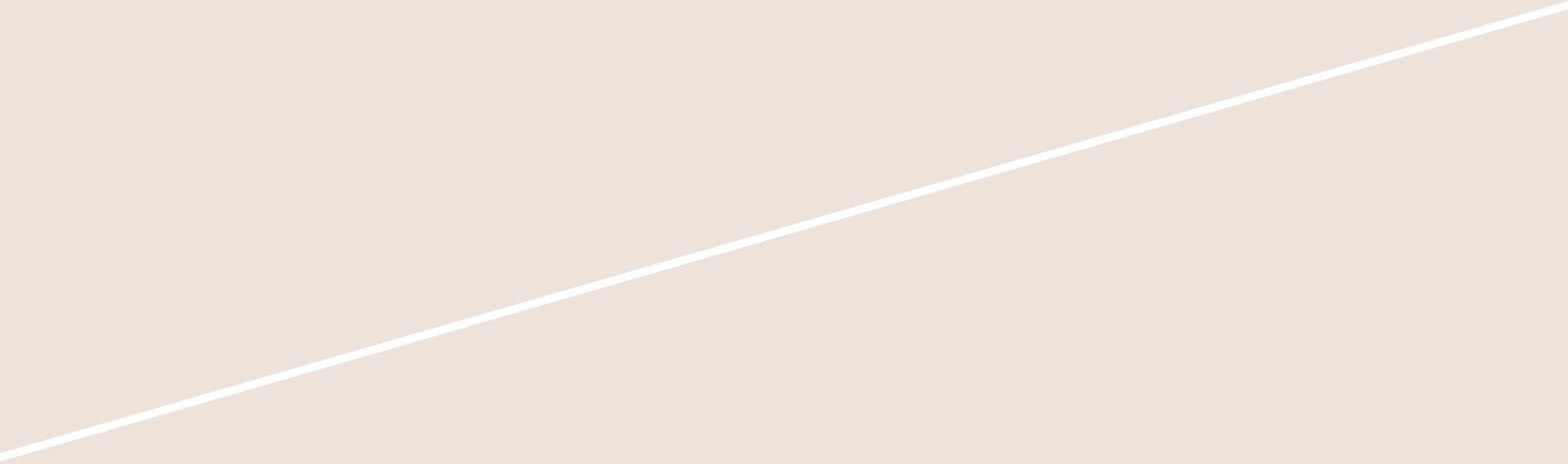
My Lore's 4th Grade Classroom

- Song called "Come to the Mountain"

My dream was to have a full-time job where I could teach drama and larp!

- Co-created experiences
- Ephemeral experiences

Drama Club Podcast



How did It Emerge?

Born during Drama Club!

Here's a little preview:

- Welcome from host
- Invite a guest
- Audience callers
- Audience pretends to read a tweet



Podcast

Benefits

- Audience is forced to be quiet!!!!
- Familiar setting
- Alibi can be adjusted! Students can play themselves or not
- Can run short or long
- Roles can be customized for class size
 - Host
 - Guests being interviewed
 - People calling in
 - People reading tweets
 - Person filming

Podcast

Cont'd

- Dress Up Days, Halloween
- Get to know the 7th Grade Class
- Students LOVE Drama
- Change up the setting!
 - Barbershop
- Could be connected to content
 - Interview someone you're learning about in History
 - Interview the number zero
 - After a scene ends if you're reading Shakespeare
- Increases engagement with the topic
- Great for
 - Days before break
 - End of class
- You can use In Character/ Out Of Character meta-technique (fist on forehead to denote OOC)

In Class Parties



In-Class Party Larp

Benefits

- Everyone knows/loves a party!
- Great way to “celebrate” their hard work
- Easy to find, cheap materials
- Fill time with music, dancing, food
- Culturally Responsive
 - Great way to let students incorporate aspects of their culture
 - This is a big focus at my school!
- Lots of opportunity for students to take ownership/leadership
 - Playlist
 - Bring Food

The Baby Shower



In-Class Party #1

The Baby Shower

How it emerged:

Student came into class every day stuffing a sweatshirt into his shirt and pretending he was pregnant!

Party/Baby Shower Larp

Benefits

- Easy alibi and character ties
 - Everyone knows the person whose party it is
 - Family, friends, co-workers, neighbors - instant groups
- Used Google Classroom to generate ideas - will come back to this!
- Many opportunities for students to be involved
 - Make a speech!
 - Bring a gift, wear a costume or bring supplies.
- If they did any of these, that could count for their final grade.

What worked about the formation of this
larp idea?



In-Class Party #1

The Baby Shower

How it emerged:

A “bit” - a repeated joke

Example of a bit

Kid: “Can I get a glass of water?”

Teacher: I don’t know, can you?

(kid rolls eyes)

- The joke is it’s more proper to be saying “May I?” rather than “Can I”?)
- It’s a bit if the teacher answers like that EVERY TIME the kid asks if they can get a glass of water.

The potential of “the bit”

- Is it for attention?
- It becomes the seed for something special!
- By acknowledging the bit versus shutting it down, positive things emerged.
- I am on the lookout for these seeds because of my commitment to *emergence*.

What is emergence?

“the process of coming into existence or prominence” - the Oxford Dictionary.

Focus on Emergence

- Came from my training and experience with devised theatre!
- *Devising is loosely defined as the process of collaboratively creating a new work without a pre-existing script wherein the collaborators are also the performers* - the Kennedy Center
- Brind School of Theatre - University of the Arts, Philadelphia
- Cast in a musical by César Alvarez - KP alum who also introduced me to larp!!
- Andrew Neisler, Director - “What does it want to be?”
- Fresh Ground Pepper NYC Summer Apprentice

Devised theatre is not the same as an improv performance

- Improv may be USED during the creation process for devised theatre, but once it is created, the script may be set and there is no improv in the performance (it depends).

Other activities that enable one to make use of emergence

From Anni Tolvanen and James Lorien Macdonald's article "Ensemble Play":

Musical jam sessions, devised theatre, and other co-creative art forms share a specific characteristic with larp: they all rely on the players' ability to constantly calibrate their play, and collaboratively negotiate and renegotiate what belongs into the piece, and what is left out.

“Wyrding the Self” – Jonaya Kemper

- Throwing a baby shower for Jadiel - unforgettable, if a tad strange.
- Enjoyable because of its “weirdness”.
- Jonaya Kemper’s “Wyrding the Self”, which also draws from Sarah Bowman’s work.

“The word *weird* has its root in the Anglo Saxon word, *wyrd*, which roughly boils down to the action of controlling one’s fate. To be weird, is to control one’s fate, rather than let society determine your place and fate. To be weird, is to be outside the normal aspects of society, yes, but to also collectively decide who you would like to be, not based on societal pressure. It is my belief that larp affords us the actual ability to *wyrd* ourselves, that is to shape ourselves and our conceptions of self through play.”

Weird & Wyrd are great!

- Incorporating aspects of “weirdness” (against the norm) because it helps free students up!
- Works with some groups and not others.
- The practice of wyrding the self (Jandiel actually got to experience a baby shower) is really powerful and valuable.

A 47 Year Old's Birthday Party in Europe



Theodore's Birthday Party

Google Classroom Benefits

- Do Now - quick warm up activity usually 5 mins at beginning of class
- Prompt: “Come up with something strange/wacky about Theodore that would make this party more interesting. (funny is okay, but nothing inappropriate)”
- I love using Google Classrooms to generate details of the larp, character, setting, etc.
- Could also use Google surveys
- Choose top 3

Theodore's Birthday Party

- Students could choose whether they wanted to play close to home
 - whether role was culturally similar to themselves
- Coworkers group got to choose where they work
- Tried my hand at creating plot
 - Could use improvement!
 - He got arrested by an undercover spy for embezzling
 - Some students took the bait and reacted in character - collaborative storytelling occurred!

In Character Teacher Dress-Up Days



Teacher IC (In Character) Days

How did this emerge?

- Some of my best days were dress up days and I decided to stay in character
- Wednesday Addams
 - I was sassy and the kids loved it!

Me as Wednesday Addams



Teacher IC (In Character) Days

How did this emerge?

- Lion new to NYC from the North Pole
 - Ranted about Rudolph
 - Everyone knows Christmas Characters!

Christmas Lion character emerged.



Teacher IC (In Character) Days

Benefits

- Teachers are MADE for this!
- Working with kids = improvisational skills
- Invigorates students and teacher!
- Can be tailored to content you are currently learning!
- Try recording a podcast interview episode =D
- The myraid of benefits for students that comes from improvisation and role-playing.

Seasonal Themes: Leprechaun Academy



Seasonal Themes: Leprechaun Academy

Benefits



- Timely! Students always remember each year when the holidays roll around, gain a new appreciation
- Took just 5 minute a day for character creation, (using the Do-Now).
- Used leprechauns for inspiration around St. Patrick's Day
 - Create your own leprechaun
 - Create your own name, outfit, personality
- Taught OK check-in, in character & out of character mechanic.
- Different scenes on different days gave me time to process/plan in between

Seasonal Themes: Leprechaun Academy

Benefits

- 5th grade larped!!! Whole class was in character
- 6th grade didn't - they made Google Slides presentations on their character
- Added an element of roleplay (headmistress, new students sharing a presentation about themselves)
- Added NPC's
- Created ephemera, added de-rolling

If this was year 1, who knows what we'll do in year 2?



Thank you for
coming on this
journey with me!

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Lindsay Wolgel

I'd love to chat!

