



Role Playing Game: Library Version

Welcome to the library pack, a storytelling game event for Book Week Scotland 2021.

This is an alternative and simplified version of The Book Shop, our new Role Playing Game. You might find it useful to look at that version for ideas and more information on Role Playing Games in general.

It is designed to be played by a group and run by one or two people.

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What are Role Playing Games?

A Role Playing Game (RPG) is a story created by a group of people who make decisions and choices in an imagined world.

The players meet challenges and obstacles described by the person running the game and try to overcome them.

Role Playing Games allow you to take all those moments when you read a book or watch a film and think to yourself, 'I wouldn't have done that, there's a much better way!' and gives you that chance to try it your way.

Why two versions?

The original version is aimed at people each playing individually as a character, in person or on a video conference call, with one person running the game. That version is closer to a typical RPG.

This version, known as the Library Version, is aimed at a group of people who decide between them how a small number of characters will act within the scenario that is described by one or more people running the game.

Both versions follow a similar story, with the original version set in a book shop and this version set in a library.

You will need to read this document all the way through and do some preparation before running a game event. This pack contains all you need to prepare and run a storytelling game session, with some optional extras:

- An introduction for you to adapt to your needs.
- A printable 'Book of Spells' cover that you can wrap around a book and use as a visual prop.
- A 'Wanted!' poster, for you to print out and add dates, times and other details about the event to.
- A map of the island that you can use however you see fit.

There is a basic path to a story, but don't feel you have to stick to this. In fact, we highly recommend that you make your own version, so that each event tells a story like no other.

It may also be useful to read over Parts One and Two of The Book Shop, for further ideas and to give a fuller understanding of RPGs.

How is this version different?

In this storytelling game, you will play a Librarian. You are going to lead a small team of characters created by the group into a book and get them, the audience, to offer suggestions on how to resolve the events that unfold there.

In this version of the game, you are offered a chance to invite a group of people to experience an RPG. One or more people (staff members) tell the story and bring the audience together to represent the heroes of the tale. Normally in an RPG, a group of people play a character each. In this version, you will create two or more characters for everyone to control.

If you like, you could split the audience into groups who then discuss what they want the individual characters to do, then you describe what happens when they try something out.

For example, the participants may suggest you make a character who is strong and good at fighting and one who is smart and is good at riddles. You may then get requests for a sneaky character too, so decide if you need more characters or if the smart character gets to be quiet on his feet. Try not to pin too many skills onto one character, or they will just be able to walk through the encounters with no bother.

The story will work best with some balance and co-operation. For example, the fighter and the sneaky character may want to get past some pirates, but there are too many of them to take on single-handedly and the fighter would be spotted. They need to find a way around the obstacle that suits their skills. The fighter could look up to see that there are a number of trees with sturdy branches that they could pull themselves and the other character up into. The sneaky character could then explain the best way to creep across the branches.

Introduction

Make sure you have read the rest of this document before you launch into playing a game, as you will need to prepare some encounters and think about scripting some scenes before launching a game.



The Librarian(s) explain the situation

Please feel free to adapt this script to your own style. This section is written for two Librarians to read out, but you can easily adapt this if only one person is leading the game.

Librarian 1: *'Welcome to the library, We are [insert names].'*

Librarian 2: *'We need your help! The other day, we found a book of spells [hold up the book] while we were tidying up an old cupboard. We thought it was a joke and one of us, ahem, tried out a random spell.'*

[If there are two or more of you can pretend to blame each other, or an out-of-sight member of staff.]

Librarian 1: *'Well, what happened was this: the spell was read aloud and. . . nothing happened. . . at first.'*

Librarian 2: *'Then, just as we closed the door behind the last visitor for the day, everything went wild! Books leapt from shelf-to-shelf, lights flickered, ominous sounds shook the windows and then—'*

Librarian 1: *'A dragon flew out of the pages of this book! It started as just the word 'dragon', but grew in size, sprouted wings, did a circuit or two of the library, and then plunged straight into the pages of Treasure Island.'*

[I recommend using *The Hobbit* as the book in question and having Smaug as your dragon, but this is entirely up to you. If you have very young players, you may want to choose a picture book dragon instead.]

Librarian 2: *'We need some brave adventurers who can go into this book and convince the dragon to come away from Treasure Island and go back to the book it belongs in. We think we've found a way, but we need your help!'*

Librarian 1: *'Now, we've found the spell to get the dragon out of Treasure Island. So, if we create new characters for the book and give them the spell, you can tell them what to do once they are inside the story.'*

[Here you can get a couple of volunteers to come up and describe the kind of character they think would be able to get the job done or just ask for suggestions from the audience as a whole and write up the skills on some paper.]

With a flip chart or similar, the group will create the player characters. Feel free to use the **Character sheet** (Page 18) to note down the character details and you can make a show of putting them inside a copy of *Treasure Island* to signify the characters are now in the book.]



Arrival at sea

Describe the following events:

Librarian 1: *'Now we need to use our imaginations to follow our characters to Treasure Island. Picture yourselves in a rowing boat. You are surrounded by clear calm sea and brilliant blue skies. Ahead of us is a tropical island – yellow beaches surround lush rainforest with hills breaking through.'*

Librarian 2: *'What's that noise? It's breaking the otherwise restful scene. Oh! Over to our right (that's starboard in sailing terms) is a large schooner, a ship with two great sails. Musket shots are being fired and there is a lot of shouting. I think we need to pull away from that encounter and find a safe place to land.'*

Librarian 1: *'Hang on, I see smoke from the island. I think we could row to a beach near that, or investigate another part of the island by rowing round the other side. What do you all think?'*

Over to you

And now it is over to you. You might want to talk this through with colleagues first, run a practice session or ask others for ideas.

You then lead the group of characters through a series of encounters, asking the audience for ideas on how to resolve them. Will they sneak past the soldiers, fight the pirates or fast talk their way out of peril?

Your job, as the Librarian(s), is to tell the story, but let the audience decide what happens next.

Now, you need to have made a plan for how you want this story to go. We will provide some information on the characters and locations, along with suggestions, but we want this game to be unique to every location that plays it, so some preparation and a familiarity with the book *Treasure Island* is going to be very helpful.

From here on out, you will describe the surroundings, ask the audience what they want to do and describe the results. For example, with the characters now in a small rowboat, ask them, *'Shall we investigate the smoke? Visit the ship (where the gun noises are coming from) or has anyone got another idea?'*

Create paths through the story (see **Basic path to the story** on Page 7) and refer to the encounters you will have made.

Things to think about

If you need to speed things along, or people have not cottoned on to any clues you have described, have some prompts ready. For example, the dragon may have left a trail of gold coins.

If things are progressing too quickly, have some extra scenes at the ready. For example, some pirates may be blocking the way. The sailors might find them and ask where they came from.

The rest is up to you! Will you have Long John Silver make the players walk the plank? Will the players lose the spell and have an extra quest to contend with? Make a plan with some strong hints for the players to pick up on and point them in the right direction.

Adding obstacles

Encounters like the ones above can have added interactive elements. Why not have two pirates arguing over a puzzle or a riddle, and the players need to solve the puzzle to please the rather dim-witted pair and get past them.

Perhaps a monkey will steal the spell you gave the characters to get the dragon out of the book. This encounter will have the players trying to work out how to get it back (bananas are usually the answer!).



Optional encounters

A few ideas for you to bounce around and make your own:

Ben Gunn

Ben has a telescope that he will lend the players in exchange for a favour. He is especially keen to lay his hands on some cheese. This is a fun character to play – he says odd things due to his time alone on the island and can pretend to be the ghost of Captain Flint to distract the pirates.

Using the telescope up on Spyglass Hill, the players can spot the dragon, a treasure chest in its claws, flying further inland to a cave.

The stockade

Once the captain and his men leave the *Hispaniola*, they take refuge here.

These sailors are going to be confused by talk of or the arrival of a dragon. You may want to suggest that the players try not to interact with the main characters for fear of changing the book, or just have fun watching the pirates try and bring down a dragon with cannons, it's up to you.

Basic path to the story

This brief story path is a bit like a 'pick-a-page adventure book'. This is a handy way to keep track of the encounters the players have done, so feel free to write your ideas on cards which you can have to hand to keep the story flowing. You could mark a copy of the map with numbers that correspond to the notes you have made.

1. Arrival

If they investigate the smoke, go to **2**.

If they row round the island, go to **3**.

If they investigate the ship, go to **4**.

2.

They meet Ben Gunn. He might lend them a telescope, or he might tell them the treasure he spent months moving from where it was buried into his cave has now been taken by a dragon. Go to **5**.

3.

Beaching the boat, the only way to go is into the jungle. They quickly get lost. Perhaps a monkey turns up and steals the spell. Once they get it back, have Ben Gunn find them. Go to 2.

4.

The battle between the mutineer pirates and the other sailors is a dangerous place to be. Perhaps they should row ashore. A musket ball nearly hits them if they need further persuading. Go to 3.

5.

Climb Spyglass Hill and look for evidence of the dragon. Spot the dragon going into a cave. Go to 6.

6.

Several possible encounters with sailors, pirates or anything else they might find on the island. Once they get past these and arrive at the cave, go to 7.

7.

Encounter with the dragon in its lair. Players need to get the dragon out of the book and return the treasure to Ben Gunn's cave. Then, go to 8.

[Here is how it went when my players got this far:]

Librarian: *'You enter the cave having eluded the gang of pirates and leaving their 'Avast there' and 'Shiver me timbers' behind you. As your eyes acclimatise to the dark contrast from the bright sun outside, a glittering persists. A large dragon sits upon a relatively small pile of treasure. Don't get me wrong, it's a lot of treasure, but it's a BIG dragon. . .'*

[One of the players had to use their silver tongue skill to convince Smaug that their own treasure, back in *The Hobbit*, was far more impressive and if they could help the party bring this horde back to the cave they found it in, they had a way to reunite the dragon with said treasure. They were doing okay, but a more suspicious member of the team felt that there might be a betrayal on the deal. They told Smaug that, back in the library, they

had spotted an *Atlas of Middle-Earth*, and that it would tell them where other treasure was stored in the land Smaug would be returning to. With a weary demeanour, the deal was struck and the dragon was expelled from *Treasure Island*, and the players had just enough time to leg it round the other side of Ben Gunn's cave and hear the book characters wonder at the treasure. They then found themselves whisked back to the library.]

8.

The players have hopefully succeeded and their characters can be pulled out of the book. You can congratulate them and hint that there might be some other books that need to be visited for any future events of your own devising:

Librarian 1: *'Well done everyone, hopefully getting that dragon out of the book will make Treasure Island read as it always has done and future generations will get to enjoy the story as it should be told. Thanks to your help!'*

Librarian 2: *'Now, we are going to put this spell book under lock and key, so no more accidents can happen. If we need some brave adventurers in the future, just in case there are other books in here that got mixed up, we will put up a notice to encourage you all and your friends to come back and help!'*

The end. . . ?

If this event works well for you, there can be other books to explore of your own invention. Perhaps you can talk to other libraries who have taken part and swap stories and ideas!

Cast of characters

This is a brief rundown of *Treasure Island*'s main characters. Feel free to refer to the original text for more, or go with a 'random pirate' if you need another **Non-Player Character** (NPC) to move the story along.

Jim Hawkins

Narrator of the story and cabin boy.

Jim is resourceful, brave, modest and true. Although young, and rather less powerful than the pirates he finds himself in the company of, his other qualities help him survive.

Long John Silver

A single-minded pirate posing as the ship's cook.

He's after treasure, make no mistake. He's missing his left leg and uses a crutch to get around.

Long John's dogged determination makes him a force to be reckoned with.

Dr Livesey

A wise and practical man who will treat the injury of friend or foe.

His skills as a surgeon might come in handy and his open mind to negotiation and fair play could be used to your players' advantage.

Captain Smollett

Lives by the book. There are pirates and they need hanging.

'A dragon? Don't be ridiculous!'

Ben Gunn

Marooned here by Captain Flint, he is slightly unhinged by his time alone on the island.

He has moved the treasure from where the map says it is to his cave. This is a character you can have a lot of fun with – his desire for 'real food', the fun he has pretending to be Captain Flint's ghost and calling out to confuse the pirates.

A dragon

Not meant to be here. They have ended up in the book by magic and the players must try and get them away from the treasure and out of the book, so that the story can go back to normal.

Other sailors and pirates

For the purposes of battles and obstacles.

Locations

Feel free to add locations from the book and make them into possible places for encounters.

The main locations are the stockade, the *Hispaniola* (a ship), and various caves and beaches.

The island

Surrounded by seemingly endless clear blue seas, this is a tropical paradise.

Long sandy beaches, lush rainforests and a series of hills make up the landscape.

The *Hispaniola*

The ship that sailed from Bristol to the island.

It is a two-mast schooner – the blueprint for high seas adventure!

Below decks, hammocks are slung from the beams, Silver's kitchen sits deserted and there is a small brig. On board deck, there is access to the cabins of the senior crew, including a large room with a map table and windows to the aft, giving clear views of the ocean and the tropical paradise of the island.

It requires a reasonably sized crew to sail and players should be advised not to meddle with it as this would affect the story as it was originally told.

On board is the usual checklist of cannons, salted meat, ships biscuits, rum and gunpowder. Cutlasses and pistols are also to be found.

The stockade

This wooden fortress built of upright logs with pointed tops, is not invulnerable to attack, but is sturdy and secure and requires a large number of pirates or soldiers to take it. It has lodgings, fresh water and supplies. It was built by Captain Flint and his crew. It will be occupied by the Doctor and his men, then taken by the pirates.

Ben Gunn's cave

A comfortable, dry cave where the treasure has been moved to over the past three years, by its inhabitant. Ben will have collected food, wood and basic survival essentials here.

You must decide whether the dragon has moved in or if it has snatched away the treasure and gone to a larger cave, more befitting of its size.

Spyglass Hill

The tallest hill on the island. A great spot to see what is going on and check if the characters in the book are where they should be.

From here you can see all across the island. I added a cave to one of the other hills and made that the temporary home of my dragon, but you should feel free to use the map as you like or even make your own.



Series of events on the island

The players arrive after Jim Hawkins has met Ben Gunn.

Events are destined to play out as follows, but it is possible (although not desirable) that the players will interfere with this. You might want to condense the action to a specific point or shorten the number of days. A clever player may call out to you to flip a couple of pages if they know which part of the book they want to get to. What could possibly go wrong with that?

Day One

On board the *Hispaniola*, Flint's old crew mutiny and take arms against the more honest sailors.

Captain Smollett and the rest of his trusted aids flee the ship and move into an abandoned stockade.

A battle between Silver's crew and those in the fort goes on overnight, with no one besting the other.

Day Two

Silver approaches for parley. He tries to take control of the stockade under a white flag, but they cannot reach an accord.

Jim heads for the ship to try and cut it adrift and encounters Israel Hands.

A battle for control of the ship ends with Hands accidentally shot after the ship is run aground in the North Inlet.

Day Three

Silver has taken the stockade by now, after negotiations with the Doctor and his own crew.

A hunt for the treasure starts with Jim in tow.

Following the map brings them to a skeleton pointing the way.

Ben Gunn has got there first and has hidden the treasure in a cave.

The pirates are confronted by the Captain and the Doctor and taken care of with the help of Silver.

The crew set sail with the treasure, stranding the pirates that were not shot down already.

As the Librarian, it is up to you what the dragon does and when.

Example scenario encounters

Here are some encounters I had ready for a play test.

If you like any of the ideas here, feel free to use or adapt them for your game.

Ben Gunn

Librarian: *He appears to be talking to a coconut.*

Ben Gunn: *'A dragon? I don't remember seeing one of them before. Nicked all the treasure he has! I'm Ben Gunn, that's who I am, I've not seen a soul for the past three years and now there's a load of you visiting me. I don't suppose you'd have any cheese on you? I dream of cheese, I do, mostly grilled. Oh, what I'd do for some grilled cheese!'*

[In one play test the players offered to get the treasure back for Ben and so he lent them his spyglass.]

Two Pirates

[The players chose to head down a path that leads through the lush plant life of the island.]

Librarian: *It seems the island is now awash with pirates and finding a clear path looks to be a challenge. Ahead, you hear two pirates arguing. They are deep in discussion so it might be possible for you to sneak past. . .*

Pirate 1: *'No, no no! A Long John is an extra-long glass vessel!'*

Pirate 2: *'A glass ship?'*

Pirate 1: *'No, you lily-livered fool! A drinking vessel, not a sailing vessel. A glass you use for drinking out of.'*

Pirate 2: *'I drink out of a tankard, Pirate Union rules. . . Hang on, 'lily-livered'? How am I a coward for asking etymological questions?'*

Pirate 1: *'What?'*

Pirate 2: *'Lily-livered comes from the medieval belief that courage comes from the liver, but if it's white, like a lily, you lack blood there and have no courage to speak of.'*

Pirate 1: *'You are a right oddball, do you know that?'*

Pirate 2: *'Jury's out on whether you can use that one. Some say it's from the twelfth century based on a Scandinavian word, but more people associate it with aviation terms, or even pinball machines, and obviously we are unaware of such progress in historical innovations yet to be. . .'*

[The players chose to join in with the discussion, but they could just as easily have crept past the pirates.]

Meeting Robert Louis Stevenson

Librarian: *On a beach. You see a pale young man in clothes not entirely fitting with the setting, his prominent nose and facial hair make him somewhat familiar. He is paddling in the surf playing with a paper boat.*

Robert Louis Stevenson: *'Oh! Hello! You've caught me playing pirates again. What brings you to these shores? You're not characters I wrote or authors that I recognise.*

As the author of this book, I am invested with certain holidaying privileges within its pages. Also, I like to pop in and check on things from time-to-time and make sure no one is modernising the text. It's a privilege of being a member of the – now what did that fellow, Conan Doyle, call it? – 'litra-sphere' or 'author-verse', something like that.

A dragon in Treasure Island? Oh! I like that! This sounds like the time that fellow Dickens told me about, when someone went into A Christmas Carol with a ghost trap and caused havoc. Well, it all got sorted in the end. Speaking of which, here you go.'

[He hands the players a ghost trap]

Robert Louis Stevenson: *'This might come in handy. Charles let me have it, but I think you might need it. Let's just say, some of my minor characters have taken on an afterlife of their own and, boy, do they like to talk about it. I'd better go, there seem to be a few too many extras in the pages today. Good luck!'*

Librarian: *And with this, he disappears.*

The Ghost of Captain Flint

Librarian: *You enter a clearing. It is suddenly eerily still and a chill is creeping into the air. A pale blue spectre materialises before you. His classic pirate garb leaves little question of his occupation when he was alive.*

Captain Flint: *'Ah! More writers, no doubt! Come to pick the bones of Captain Flint! You are not the first and you shan't be the last, I'd wager. Why, it seems like only yesterday that Howden Smith fellah was bothering my grave side to ask about my life. Then there was that Russian chap, he made a very popular version of my tale, that was quite the hit I'm told! John Drake came along, and once, I swear, I saw a talking frog. Now was that before or after the Black Sails bunch. . . ?'*

[The players start to feel the life drain out of them. They are starting to fade as the Captain seems to be becoming more corporeal by the moment. If they had the ghost trap, they could use it. In one play test they did not, and had to come up with a promise and a trade to get past him.]

Long John Silver

[Before entering the dragon's cave, the players hear Silver's parrot.]

Parrot: *'Pieces of eight, stand by to go about.'*

Librarian: *You are about to enter the cave when the formidable wooden crutch of Long John Silver bars your way.*

Long John Silver: *'Avast there, you swabs! Let me tell you a story. I was wandering away from the stockade when I spy your merry band and I think to myself, 'that's new', and that stops me in my tracks. This nagging sense of déjà vu I've had for a while now starts to itch some more, so I follow you. Then I hear you talking to that Stevenson chap and it all becomes clear. I want out of this book and I think that thing you have what looks like a map [the spell given to them by the book shop owner] is what's going to get me out! Now be so kind as to hand it over.'*

Librarian: *He levels a pistol at you.*

Dragon

Librarian: *You enter the cave. Despite the gloom compared to the bright skies outside, your eyes are still dazzled. Gold lies in piles ahead of you and sat atop that gold is a fearsome dragon.*

Smaug: *'I am Smaug! My armour is like tenfold shields. My teeth are swords and my claws are spears. The shock of my tail is like a thunderbolt, my wings like a hurricane and my breath like death! Tell me why I should not eat you now.'*

[A bit of fast-talking and Smaug agreed to leave the book in this play through, but the treasure was still in the wrong cave and the players had to come up with a way to resolve the situation, which they did.]

The end

With *Treasure Island* back to normal, the players were rewarded with any rare book they wanted and all agreed that they would like to return to fix one of the other books affected by the spell. It was there we finished up the game.

About the Author

Adrian L Barber has been playing, writing and illustrating games since the 1980s. He is a freelance artist, storyteller and model maker.

He was delighted when Scottish Book Trust's Philippa Cochrane and Nyla Ahmad asked him to create this game for Book Week Scotland.

He had the privilege to be the main carer for his two children as they made their way up to high school. This game is dedicated to them, his wife and to everyone who finds pure joy in entering the worlds we find inside books.

He would like to thank Hannah Sycamore, Petko Nekezov, Ella McLellan and Chris Leslie for volunteering to play this game during its development. Their participation was of invaluable help.

Book Week Scotland is an annual celebration of books and reading that takes place across the country. Book Week Scotland 2021 will take place 15–21 November and is supported by Creative Scotland and SLIC.

Character sheet

EX LIBRIS: _____ NAME: _____

R My Character Is :

LUCK: _____

Notes: _____

What I have found: _____

