

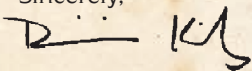
Dear Educator,

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a storytelling game where anything can happen. And it does, when players use creativity and higher-order thinking skills – the same learning skills integral to academic success.

This free educational program developed by Wizards of the Coast and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired has activities that will excite students to work collaboratively and flex their storytelling and critical-thinking skills. It also draws on students' knowledge of ancient civilizations and citizenship, supporting learning in language arts, history, and civics.

We hope that you will share this program with other teachers at your school. Please let us know your opinion of these materials at [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-unlockdd](https://www.ymiclassroom.com/feedback-unlockdd). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

UNLOCK LEARNING SKILLS WITH

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

Grades 9-12

COMPONENTS

Available at [ymiclassroom.com/unlockdd](https://www.ymiclassroom.com/unlockdd):

- This teaching guide
- Four reproducible student activities
- D&D Game Overview handout
- D&D Start with a Monster handout
- Standards alignment chart
- An online feedback form

CONCEPTS & SKILLS

Character development	Analytical thinking
Storytelling	Creativity
Historical knowledge	Problem solving
Civics	Brainstorming
Collaboration	Planning

ABOUT DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

D&D is a collaborative storytelling game in which players create their own adventures with customized characters and the help of a lead storyteller, called the Dungeon Master, who directs the gameplay. Dice are used to determine if actions are successful, which adds chance and unpredictability. To be effective, players use critical thinking, knowledge of narrative development, character analysis, reasoning, and interpersonal skills, as well as logic and probability.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM

This program can be used with or without prior knowledge of D&D. Make photocopies of the activity sheets and D&D Game Overview handout which provides basic gameplay information (available at [ymiclassroom.com/unlockdd](https://www.ymiclassroom.com/unlockdd)) and distribute them to students. Students should work in small groups to complete the activities.

ACTIVITY 1:**BEAST MODE: CRAFTING CREATURES**

Supports character development, brainstorming, creative thinking, and planning skills.

Ask students to share some things they've learned about character development. They may talk about human characters and character development arcs. But what about characters that aren't human, like monsters?

Monsters have appeared in stories for thousands of years – from ancient Greek, Roman, and Chinese mythology to modern classics for children and adults. In storytelling, monsters can appear as villainous creatures designed to threaten the other characters or as “helpers” who guide the other characters toward moral truths.

Where does the inspiration for these fantastical creatures come from? Ask students to share their ideas, then explain that for modern-day storytellers, inspiration may come from ancient myths, pop



Questions? Contact YMI
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or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.

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Artists: Polar Engine, Hocheal Ryu, Billy Christian, Nathaniel Hirawan

culture, real-world creatures, or even something offbeat. For example, the rust monster in D&D was inspired by a plastic toy belonging to D&D co-creator Gary Gygax's child.

Tell students that they are going to create their own monsters. Pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions. Have the student groups brainstorm monster creations using the guidelines provided. If needed, give some additional examples of monsters or ask students to describe something that scared them when they were children. Once done, have students share their monster bios. Discuss similarities and differences among the monsters, and ask students what type of stories might feature their monsters. For more background on D&D monsters and game-playing, go to [ymiclassroom.com/unlockdd](https://www.yomiclassroom.com/unlockdd) to find the Start with a Monster handout to distribute to students.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY MODE: ROLEPLAY

Supports problem solving, reasoning, creative thinking, and narrative development.

Ask students if they listen to audiobooks or podcasts. Tell them that the oral tradition of telling stories dates back at least thousands of years and is found in every culture.

Explain that oral storytelling is fundamental to D&D, where players roleplay a chosen character — improvising, problem solving, and pivoting as challenges arise — all while creating an original and exciting story.

Tell students that they will be working in small groups to do their own roleplaying. Pass out the activity sheet, and go over the instructions, including the list of characters and story starter. Explain that the goal is to keep the story going, evaluate details presented, and anticipate potential encounters and outcomes, while having fun. As students roleplay, listen in, encourage all students to participate, and provide suggested challenges or perspectives to help expand the stories. Have the groups share their final stories and discuss their experiences while collaborating to achieve a common goal in their story.

ACTIVITY 3: WORLD-BUILDING WITH HISTORY

Supports historical knowledge, storytelling, world building, analytical thinking, and planning skills.

Ask students to share the titles of their favorite novels or games. What do they have in common? Are they set in fantastical realms or kingdoms with elaborately detailed settings? The inspiration for stories and games often comes from the real world and history.

Explain that the original D&D game was set in a world heavily influenced by the Middle Ages. Today, players develop worlds and story ideas from a wide array of time periods and past events. Ask students what time period they think would make a good setting for a D&D story.

Tell students that they will build their own fantasy worlds using history and real-world events for inspiration. Pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions. For each bullet point, you might brainstorm ideas as a group and reflect on topics you've been discussing in class that students might integrate into their worlds — for example, types of government (democratic, monarchy, dictatorship) and economic factors (currency, industry, trade).

Allow time for students to research past time periods and collaborate to design their story worlds. Once done, have the groups describe their worlds in class, then discuss the decision-making process they went through to bring their worlds to life.

ACTIVITY 4: CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

Supports historical and civic knowledge, problem solving, analytical thinking, and planning skills.

Now that students have created their worlds, they will consider the societies that inhabit them. Tell students that they are going to brainstorm civic actions in response to an unexpected event that takes place in the world that they created in Activity 3. Pass out the activity sheet and review the instructions. Discuss the scenarios, and ask the students which they think might be the most challenging to address and why. Once students complete their plans, have the groups share their scenarios and responses. As a class, discuss each group's approach to the scenario and the effectiveness of the action.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Ask students to bring the monsters they created in Activity 1 to life using pencil and paper, paint, modeling clay, a 3D printer, or other resources available to them. Consider collaborating with the art and/or tech department on this endeavor.

RESOURCES

dnd.wizards.com/resources/educators
[ymiclassroom.com/unlockdd](https://www.yomiclassroom.com/unlockdd)



CONTINUE THE ADVENTURE!

Visit [ymiclassroom.com/dd](https://www.yomiclassroom.com/dd) for additional classrooms kits for grades 3-5 and 6-8. Consider starting an afterschool D&D club to engage students and further build collaboration, creativity, and math skills. Check out special offers for teachers at dnd.wizards.com/resources/educators and digital tools at dndbeyond.com.

BEAST MODE: CRAFTING CREATURES

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a game in which the players create an adventure with the help of a lead storyteller, called the Dungeon Master, who directs the gameplay. Dice determine if actions are successful, which adds chance and unpredictability. No adventure is complete without challenges, including encounters with monsters who present obstacles for the players.

Think like a master storyteller and follow the steps below to create a legendary monster. Write your answers for each step on the back of this sheet or on separate paper.

- 1. Type:** Choose a monster type from the list below.
- 2. Looks and traits:** To brainstorm your monster's traits, think of three "monsters" you already know: one from folklore or mythology (like the Cyclops), one from pop culture (like Godzilla), and one from the real world (like the Great White Shark). Take the most interesting physical features, magical talents, or interesting skills from each monster and create a mash-up to make a monster of your own. Include strengths and weaknesses – for example, perhaps your monster has rapid reflexes, but cannot see very well and must rely on its keen sense of smell. Or maybe your monster dwells in the shadows and can be injured if exposed to sunlight. On the back of this sheet, describe what your monster might look like and its unique traits. Then sketch it.
- 3. Motives, actions, and consequences:** Like all characters, monsters have motives, actions, and consequences. Considering the connections between these three elements will help you create a monster that makes sense. Use the questions below to guide you:
 - **Motivation:** What does the monster want and how will he get it?
 - **Actions:** What are the monster's special powers and when and how does it use them? Where does the monster live and what does it eat?
 - **Consequences:** Who does the monster oppose? What if the monster is stopped, or alternately, what if it goes unchallenged?
- 4. Environment:** Now consider where the monster lives. Add details about the monster's ecosystem.
- 5. Backstory:** Brainstorm the monster's backstory. Consider adventures it might have encountered or secrets it might have that have shaped it.
- 6. Monster bio:** Use the information you've compiled to write a descriptive paragraph about your monster. Don't forget to give your monster a name!

D&D's Monster Types

There are more than 500 monsters in the D&D Monster Manual. Here are just a few:

- **Beasts:** Nonhumanoid creatures that are part of fantasy ecology (ordinary animals, dinosaurs, etc.)
- **Dragons:** Large reptilian creatures of ancient origin and tremendous power – there are both good and evil dragons
- **Fey:** Magical creatures tied to the forces of nature
- **Fiends:** Wicked creatures like demons and devils
- **Monstrosities:** Unnatural creatures made from magical experiments gone awry or curses
- **Oozes:** Gelatinous creatures that rarely have a fixed shape



STORY MODE: ROLEPLAY

As a team, use the art of storytelling to craft your own Dungeons & Dragons-inspired adventure.

PART 1: First, appoint a Dungeon Master (DM), who will introduce and direct the story. Then choose which team member will roleplay each character below. (You can make up a character if you like.) These characters will be your adventuring party.

- **Cleric:** Spiritual; can cast helpful healing spells and can also fight in physical combat.
- **Fighter:** Master of a wide range of weapons and combat styles. First into battle and protector of the party.
- **Paladin:** A holy knight in shining armor. Always on the side of good, casts spells, extremely loyal.
- **Rogue:** Rule-benders, tricksters, good at picking locks and problem solving. They are very cunning and clever.
- **Wizard:** Powerful spellcaster, does not usually wear armor or wield weapons.

Also assign a scribe to take notes about the story you create.



Artist: Julie Dillon

PART 2: Tell your story using the story starter and tips below. The DM's job is to provide you with information as your adventure progresses, such as introducing obstacles and monsters, forks in the road, as well as positive encounters. It's up to your party to analyze each new situation, assess options, and make decisions. For example, if you encounter a dragon, what will you do? Fight it? Sneak past it? Barter with it? How will you decide? Discuss with your teammates. Collaborate, think critically, and be creative. Then see where your imagination, problem-solving, and roleplaying skills take you!

Story starter: Your adventuring party is on a quest to retrieve a lost treasure. To retrieve it, you must enter a dungeon and work together to overcome any obstacles in your path.

TIPS:

1. Use all senses to describe the setting. Be as creative as possible. Instead of just focusing on visuals, describe the smell of a swamp, or what the party hears in the distance.
2. Adventurers always face challenges. Just like in most novels, your story should have a problem, climax, and solution. Perhaps the party encounters a monster, gets lost in a maze, or must solve a riddle to move forward.
3. Build your world. What strange plants and animals inhabit it? What creatures do you encounter, and do they want to help or harm you? Consider incorporating a monster created in Activity 1.
4. Keep notes so your story remains consistent as you create it. Use the back of this page or a separate piece of paper.

PART 3: Once you complete the roleplay, write a summary of the story that you created on the back of this page or separate paper.

Learn more about Dungeons & Dragons at playdnd.com.



Artist: Zuzanna Wuzyk

WORLD-BUILDING WITH HISTORY

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) players create fantasy worlds for their immersive storytelling and fun. But these fantasy worlds usually reflect elements of the real world recorded in history.

If you were building a fantasy world, how could history help you? Here's your chance to find out! Start by setting the scene. With your team, create a fantastical setting for an imaginary D&D storytelling adventure that combines or reimagines historical facts. Collaborate with your group to build on what you know about ancient civilizations, such as the Roman Empire, Ancient Greece, Ancient Egypt, or Mesopotamia, as well as the civilizations of more modern times. As you brainstorm, consider the following questions:

1. Who are the inhabitants of this world? Are there different groups?
2. What is the basic social structure of this world? Tribes? Towns? Cities? Empires?
3. What is the system of governance?
4. Describe the natural resources.
5. Describe the economy. Are goods and services produced and/or traded?
6. What are some of the beliefs of the inhabitants?
7. What is valued in this world? What is scorned?
8. Describe some cultural practices of your world.
9. What is the name of your world?

Now, bring your realm to life. Create a slide show to present it to the rest of the class. Include a map, sketches, and details related to the items above that represent your world. Compare it to the real-world societies you built on.

PLANNING NOTES

Learn more about Dungeons & Dragons at playdnd.com.



CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

In every civilization, the actions of its citizens are driven by its customs, beliefs, system of governance, and other factors. In democratic societies, for example, voting is an important way to make changes or maintain the status quo. When the unexpected happens and trouble arises, the actions taken by citizens can often change the course of history.

In great stories, trouble always arises. Nowhere is this more apparent than when teams of adventurers set off to roleplay across the realms of Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). It's always only a matter of time before disaster strikes and the team must analyze the situation, collaborate, and solve problems to save the day – something like what happens in the real world, when citizens work together to solve problems.

PART 1: Merge the real world with fantasy. Below are community scenarios inspired by D&D. Your mission is to choose a scenario and come up with real-world civic actions to address the problem. Begin by analyzing the situation and assessing what must happen to bring change. Then brainstorm what real-world actions you could take and how you would put your ideas into practice. Actions might include drafting legislation, peaceful protests, negotiations with leaders, letter-writing campaigns to raise awareness, organizing fundraisers or evacuations, and the like. After you choose your actions, create a plan to save your realm!

SCENARIOS

1. The leadership passes new laws discriminating against dragons.
2. A monster has taken over the park at the center of the capital city.
3. Climate change is causing rivers to flood and threaten nearby towns.
4. A contagious virus is spreading through the land and is rendering people unable to perform magic.
5. A rare species that is a symbol of your realm is in danger of becoming extinct.

Scenario selected: _____

Now, brainstorm and develop a plan. Consider the following points:

- Analyze the scenario: What needs to change?
- What is your goal or desired outcome? Why?
- What action will you take, and what will you need to make it happen?

PART 2: Present your plan. This could be a bulleted list of action steps, a descriptive paragraph, or both.

