Creating Campus Escape Classrooms to Enhance Student Engagement

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Virginia Wesleyan University invites you to …
Escape to Virginia Beach

Virginia Wesleyan University

Session Outline

- Escape Room basics
- Creating an Escape Room as a test review
- Incorporating an off-campus Escape Room field trip into a course
- Integrating the course topics into assignments in which students actively create Escape Room clues
- Creating an Escape Room for a larger campus audience
- Audience participation

Escape Room Basics

Escape Room Basics

An **Escape Room** is a theme-based game, played live by a team, that incorporates clues, puzzles, challenges, and props to reach a goal in a limited amount of time.

- The concept of an Escape Room originated in 2007 in Japan, and quickly grew more popular in the rest of Asia, then Europe, Canada, and the USA (Nicholson, 2015).
- Today's Escape Rooms incorporate a theme, props, and an immersive environment (Wiemker et al., 2015).

Escape Room Basics

- Escape Rooms are now being incorporated in education in various venues (Stone, 2016).
- Educational Escape Rooms are frequently content-based.
- A noted benefit is the development of transferable skills.
  - Working as a team
  - Experiential learning
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Creativity
  - Critical thinking
  - Other transferable skills

Escape Room Basics

- Classroom Inclusions:
  - Escape Room activities can be created as an alternative to a test or culminating final project.
  - An upper level content-based course can create an "Escape Classroom" for students in a lower-level course that contains similar content.
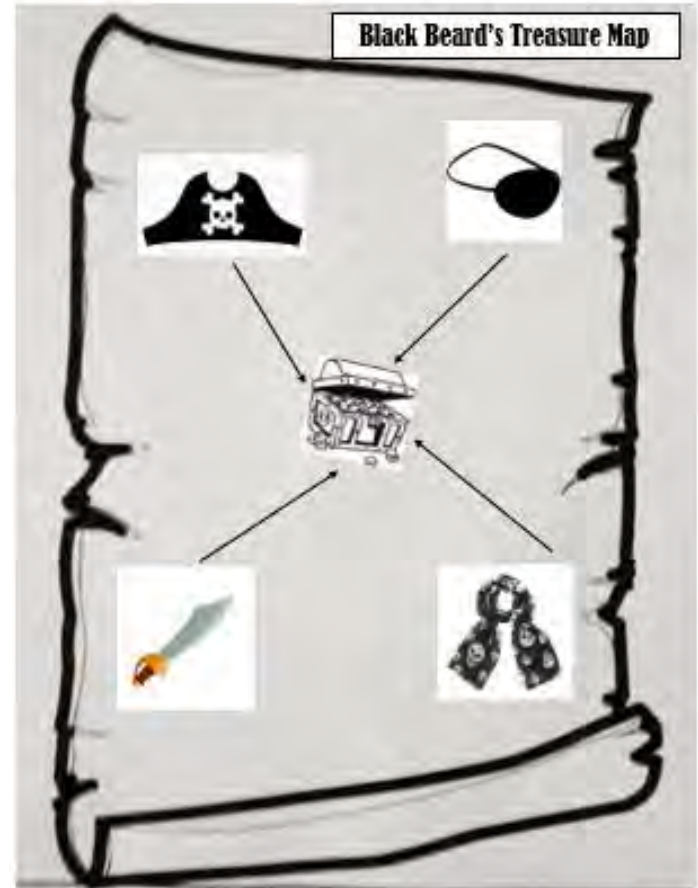
(Todd, 2018)

Creating an Escape Room as a Test Review

Theme:
Finding Blackbeard's Treasure

Are you and your mates ready for an adventure? Today your challenge is to work together with your Math 104 maties to solve the puzzles and find the clues that lead you to where Captain Blackbeard hid his treasure. Some things to know: all clues and puzzles are located in this room only – no need to leave the room. Also because Blackbeard's thugs are also looking for the treasure, you have a limited amount of time.
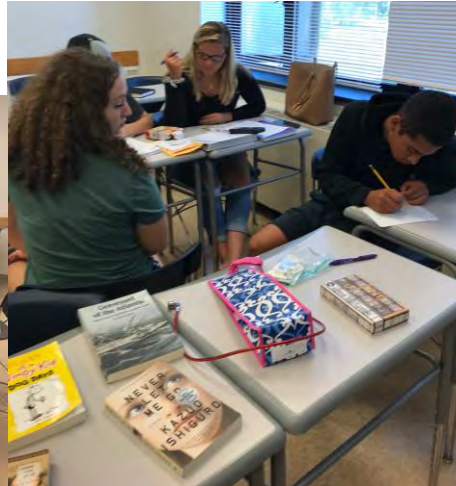

Black Beard's Treasure Map

Path Set up

I used 4 clue paths for 4 groups of students - all leading to the final treasure box

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Clue

Students Engaging in Escape

Anonymous Feedback Math 104 Fall 2019

Out of 13 responses, 11 responded positively to the question, "Did you find the Escape Room (Finding Blackbeard's Treasure) in-class test #1 review helpful? Explain."

Comments included:

I enjoyed working as a team. Group work of better than independent work to me.

It was very fun and helpful because you had to have the right answer to move on.

it was a new, more interactive way of learning material.

It was fun and a good review of what we learned in class in a fun way.

It showed me how other students think through problems.

No, I was the only one in the group who contributed so this didn't improve my math skills

Not really, an actual review would have been more helpful. (2)

Escape Rooms
and Learning/Building
Transferable Skills
in Courses

Incorporating an Off-campus
Escape Room Field Trip into a Course

Integrating the Creation of Escape Room Clues as Assignments into Your Course

Theme/Task:
Find the holiday gifts hidden by a rogue elf.

Student Comment:
"It was cool to see our project come to life."

Follow-up Survey on Transferable Skills

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
   4=strongly agree, 3= agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree

The class participation in the off-campus Escape Room experience helped me to better understand the concept of …

concept	4	3	2	1
Team-formation (forming, storming, norming, performing)				
Norms				
Roles				
Groupthink				
Social loafing				
Communication (verbal)				
Communication (non-verbal)				
Listening				
Creativity				
Leadership				
Decision-making				
Problem-solving				
Conflict resolution				
Diversity				
Power				

Anonymous Feedback SOC 303/Small Groups Fall '19

What was the most valuable aspect of the (off-campus, group project, observation) Escape Room experience?

- Bonding with classmates
- Seeing how emergent leadership happens
- Learning how to work as a team
- (Practicing and seeing the value of) communication skills
- Thinking creatively, helping people to think outside of the box
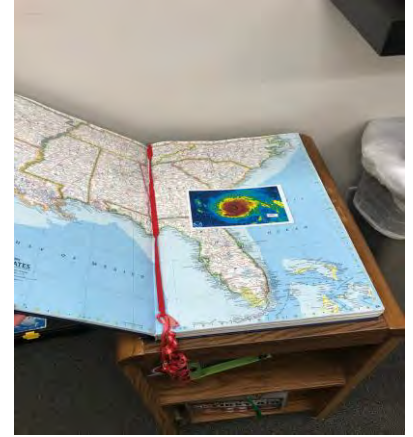
In what way could the project activity be improved?

- More time throughout the semester to prepare for the event itself
- Include practice run-through time
- Dedicated space for the activity
- More clues included in the Escape Room

Creating an Escape Room in the Campus Library:

Developing Information Literacy Skills
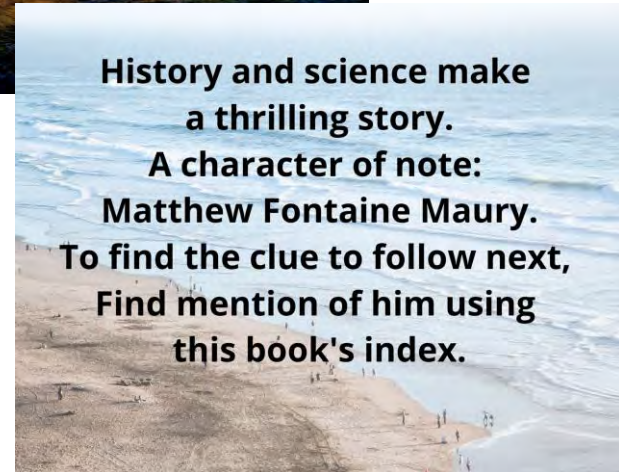
Similar to the "Classic" Escape Room

- Designated space
- Immersive environment
- Tactile objects
- Locks, hidden clues, riddles, symbols
- Timed (1 hour limit)
- Requires teamwork
- Hints available by request

Goal: Practice Information Literacy Skills

Content-based:

- Evaluating sources of information for reliability and credibility
- Finding and using research guides on library's loaner iPad
- Searching for print books on the shelves
- Using an index in a scholarly book

Reading your research is an absolute must,
How else will you know which sources to trust?
Hurry now; it's not too late;
Find two articles to evaluate.

History and science make
a thrilling story.
A character of note:
Matthew Fontaine Maury.
To find the clue to follow next,
Find mention of him using
this book's index.

Utilizing Existing Spaces and Resources

Library's physical spaces:

- Study room (including TV and DVD player)
- Collection locations
- Book displays
- Checkout desk

Library and university resources on hand:

- Library's loaner iPad
- Discarded books and magazines
- Storage closet finds (posters, office supplies)
- Student workers!
- Studio on campus for filming intro video

Audience

Originally designed to be integrated into a course called "Read, Research, Respond," co-taught by English instructor and librarian

Decided to open to student groups, faculty, and staff
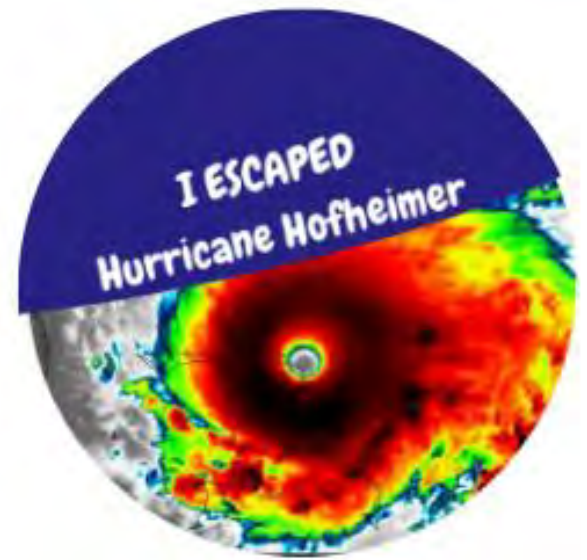
Participants:

- Friend groups for fun
- Students completing a class assignment
- Students seeking extra credit
- Campus staff for team-building

Results

- 18 groups (53 students & 6 faculty/staff)
- Average completion time of 30 minutes
- Student reflections focused on:
  - teamwork
  - critical thinking
  - transference of soft skills
  - "library literacy"
  - connections to course material

I ESCAPED Hurricane Hofheimer

Activity:
Escape to Virginia Beach

Your group's goal is to find your way to the hotel to find the treasure. Begin at the beach blanket and follow the footprints to the next clue. As you solve each clue, keep track of the answer to use at the end of the puzzle.

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