

# LEVEL UP YOUR CLASSROOM



The Quest to Gamify  
Your Lessons and Engage  
Your Students



# JONATHAN CASSIE



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# LEVEL 1



## Four Guides for One Hero

*You awake to a nearly blinding blast of light from the corridor outside your classroom. Startled, you look at the clock. 8:45 p.m.? Your red marking pencil is behind your ear. When did you put it there? Had you fallen asleep? You're the sort of teacher who never leaves your classroom when that final bell rings for the day. You've got too much to do. Your kids need your best effort, and that's what the time after school is for. But 8:45 is quite late, even for you. Papers are scattered across your desk. Your laptop screen is up, but dark. Your tablet rests in its stand, awaiting your instructions. Your smartphone has a host of text messages, most of them along the lines of "When are you coming home?" You shake the sleep from your tired mind . . . and your mind turns to that flash of light. What was that about?*

*Being the intrepid teacher you are, you set out to investigate.*

*You cross your classroom, straightening the pencils on Jane's desk for the morning and putting Anwar's books inside his desk. (One day, he'll come to value organization, you're sure of it!) You hesitate, but only for a fleeting moment, before you open the door. Its hinges creak a bit as it opens. (You must remember to get some WD-40 when you go to the store . . . that creak is driving you and the kids crazy.) You step out into the hallway and look right. Nothing. You look left, and backlit from a source you can't discern, four figures stand in the hallway.*

*"Hello?" you hear yourself ask as you wonder who among your colleagues has decided to arrange such an elaborate prank.*

*“Hero,” says one of the figures, her voice strong. She steps forward, her presence commanding. Her hand grips a staff at least two feet taller than her graceful six-foot height. Her face is radiant and youthful. Her smile is confident; her stance unmistakable in its authority. She is robed in purple silk. You’re certain you’ve never seen her before.*

*“I am Lady Agon,” she says. “My colleagues and I are to be your guides on a journey that will transform you.”*

*“If you dare to risk taking it,” comes a young voice—male but still with a hint of youthful enthusiasm. He somersaults in front of Lady Agon and tosses five dice in your direction. They clatter on the hard tile floor. You look at them. Five fours. You can’t help yourself. “Yahtzee!” you say.*

*“The luck of the dice, hero,” the young man says. A mustache graces his upper lip, and his smile is rakish. He can’t be more than five feet tall and he’s wearing some sort of, well, leather armor? He looks a bit like a character from one of those fantasy movies your students like.*

*He then announces, “You may call me Alea, Prince of Fortune.”*

*“The prince is prone to drama,” Lady Agon says. “But that’s part of his charm.” Dumbfounded, you have nothing to say.*

*“Let me introduce my other two companions, equally fitting guides as you embark on this journey,” she says, gesturing to two figures whom you can’t quite make out yet. The first comes into your sight. Taller than Lady Agon, he (she? you can’t really tell) is dressed in loose-fitting white clothing and wears a mask you instantly recognize. It’s the comedy mask from the Greek theater. Or wait a minute. Is it the tragedy mask? No, it’s comedy. You can’t be sure—it seems to morph back and forth.*

*“Our friend is called The Mimic,” Prince Alea says. “We don’t know much else, but The Mimic represents the spirit of mimicry and role-playing.”*

*As the last of the four steps forth, you are shocked and momentarily disoriented. Standing as tall as Lady Agon, this figure looks like a sharply dressed business executive but has the head of a fierce tiger. You step back, but as you do, the tiger-headed figure vanishes and reappears a split second later right behind you. You turn in shock to see the tiger’s face dissolve in a swirling vortex of light and transform into a panda’s.*



*“Surprised yet?” the now panda-headed figure says. “If not, you will be.” He extends a human hand and winks. “My friends call me Ilinx.” He leans in and whispers in your ear. “I’m not what’s expected.”*

*“You’ve been at your work a long time, educator of children,” Lady Agon says. “And throughout the land, you have the respect of young and old.”*

*You acknowledge her words, cocking your head slightly, attempting to discern at last what this is all about.*

*“New adventures await you and your students. Surely you’re interested in learning more.”*

*“I am,” you say.*

*Lady Agon smiles knowingly. Prince Alea leaps up from his crouch with a whoop. The Mimic now displays the fiery red mask of a luchador. And Ilinx has taken on the form of a sand-colored domestic house cat, purring and coiling in delight at your feet.*

*“Let’s begin,” Lady Agon says.*



## Welcome to the Journey

By picking up this book, you’ve begun a journey that will add a powerful new set of ideas and practices to your teaching toolkit. Remember, you’re a teacher of kids first and content second. It doesn’t matter if you teach kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, high school, or university; you want to find new methods and approaches to stimulate your students. In short, you are the hero of this story. And as the hero of this story, you’re Bilbo Baggins, Frodo Baggins, Harry Potter, and all the other great heroes integrated together. You’ve picked up this book, so you’ve committed yourself to beginning your heroic journey. You’re ready to leave the Shire or the Dursley’s. You’re ready to begin.

Maybe you’re like me. You’ve always enjoyed playing games but only recently begun to think about games more broadly—not only as a player