

Gaming The Gothic

Over the summer, I read Matthew Farber's *Gamify Your Classroom: A Field-Guide to Game-Based Learning*. For my course on Gothic literature, I combined pedagogical gamification with the learning outcome of having students practice close reading to develop *The Castle of Otranto* Treasure Hunt. Students were assigned to teams and told they had 30 minutes to locate Gothic tropes in Horace Walpole's novel (scaffolded in prior classes). They had to provide a page number and brief textual excerpts for each trope. The first team to locate all of the tropes would "escape the *Castle*" and earn extra credit participation points for the day.

This activity is inherently a team-building activity. We know from texts such as *Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching*, that teams transform technique into strategy, have a substantial impact on the quality of student learning, and promote active learning (4). The best part of this team-based, gamified activity was that my students practiced close reading, made choices about the textual evidence, and demonstrated that they could cite textual evidence. The rhetorical message of this activity was threefold: (1) students need to do the reading in this course; (2) students need to provide evidence to support analysis; and (3) students can also have fun learning. The next time I have students do this activity, I would use the entire class period and adjust the extra credit points. The first time I tried this activity, I had some warm-up elements that took up about 30 minutes. About half the teams were able to finish in 30 minutes, but 45 minutes would have allowed more to finish and "escape the Castle." I might also ask them to list at least two examples for each trope to emphasize the thematic patterns of the text.