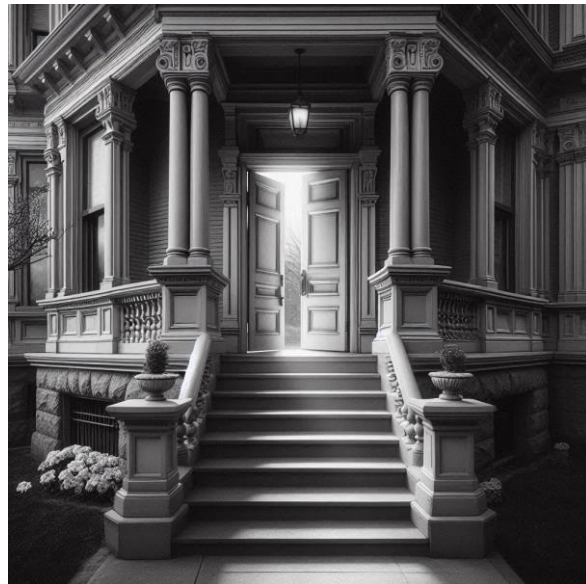




Immersive Adventures in Narrative: Education Game Experiences



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What is an IAN?

In a Nutshell

Immersive Adventures in Narrative (IANs) are educational game experiences designed to enable participants to explore questions of rights and justice through a story. Players are presented with an initial mystery, and need to complete a number of challenges and puzzles to access elements of the story surrounding it (e.g. letters, official records, audio recordings of interviews etc). Once all of the evidence has been revealed, participants sit down to piece the narrative together, working out what happened and why.

After the game has been completed, there is space for reflection on what has come to light. How do the themes and issues in the story relate to wider questions about fairness, justice and fundamental rights?



How Does An IAN Work?

Core Elements of the Game

- There are a number of key elements:
- Introduction
- Phase 1 Physical Activity/Exploration of an Environment
- Phase 2 Puzzles/Accessing the Evidence
- Phase 3-Putting the Story Together
- Phase 4-Reflection

General Points

- The different phases of the IAN have distinct purposes (explained further below) but as a whole are designed to make the overall experience as fun and inclusive as possible for all participants. Individual players are likely have distinct strengths and weaknesses, meaning that all team members are able to contribute.
- The primary purpose of the IAN is to enable to players to access and engage with the story. If the team are struggling with a particular problem, the facilitator will step in to assist and move things along.

Introduction

- The facilitator will normally be in character and remain so throughout the game. For some IANs, it is necessary, or at least desirable, to have more than one in-character facilitator. To avoid breaking the flow, practical matters and any essential health and safety information should be given before the Introduction. Mobile phones, smart watches and other electronic devices should be handed over for safekeeping (they would actually be of limited use in solving the IAN in any event, but are an unhelpful distraction).
- The facilitator sets the scene, explaining how the game will work, and introducing the question at driving the story e.g. How or why did an individual disappear? Was the person usually identified as

the perpetrator of an historic crime genuinely responsible, or a convenient scapegoat?

- The usual premise is that new information has come to light, but in order to access this, the investigating team must successfully complete a number of challenges to find the combinations needed to unlock several boxes e.g. because an eccentric testator/testatrix has made it a condition of their will, and forbidden simply breaking into the boxes.
- The participants are not required to role-play in the sense of taking on a character other than their own.

Phase 1- Physical Activity/Exploration of an Environment

- The players will have to complete some physical challenge in order to obtain information needed in due course for opening the boxes.
- This phase will continue the theme of the story and help participants to understand more about the backdrop.
- Sometimes the challenge relates to a geographical location and its history e.g. the Manchester Suffragette IAN requires participants to walk a route through an historic area of the city, finding information from buildings, statues and memorials, all related to the development of democracy in the UK, and the part played by local characters (e.g. Emiline Pankhurst and her family) and events (e.g. the Peterloo Massacre).
- Sometimes the challenge is quite active e.g. two of the IANs have plotlines revolving around rock-climbing, and the Phase 1 for each involves the team completing a series of climbs (with appropriate supervision and instruction) either on cliffs or a climbing wall, in order to retrieve tags with numbers and symbols.
- With physical challenges there are questions of accessibility that need to be considered when choosing an appropriate IAN for a particular group. However, wherever possible IANs involving routes through urban areas are designed to be suitable for

wheelchairs, and appropriate places are indicated where participants can rest and use toilet facilities.



Phase 2 Puzzles/Accessing the Evidence

- This helps the team to transition from the physical, often outdoor, element of the IAN, into the more cerebral part. Players need to complete a number of escape room style puzzles and games to find the combination for the locked boxes.
- As might be expected, the puzzles continue the theme of the story, often relating to the possessions of characters e.g. one features the toy soldiers and fort that two of the protagonists are known to have played with as children, and like the Bronte family, used in their imaginative games.
- The puzzles are intended to be enjoyable, not too challenging and a way of building participants' confidence when it comes to problem solving. The creators found that this progression was less daunting for players than going directly from a physical activity to a collection of evidence.

Phase 3-Putting the Story Together

- Having opened the boxes, the players will then have all of the evidence needed to piece the full story together and solve the overarching mystery.
- Again, the facilitator will be on hand to nudge the process along if it becomes stuck, unduly chaotic or some voices around the table are not being heard.
- The facilitator can also provide input in relation to some of the historical and cultural aspects of the evidence that might be unfamiliar to the players e.g. some of the IANs are set in Wales, and Welsh words appear in one or two of the documents, as well as references to folklore and customs. In addition to assisting in advancing the narrative and finding the solution, this also enhances the overall learning experience.
- Unravelling the clues within the evidence frequently involves questioning assumptions based on gender, race, sexuality etc. Some teams make these connections more naturally than others, and the facilitator can gently nudge the participants if this is proving a barrier to making progress.

Phase 4-Reflection

- One the story has been constructed, and the core mystery solved, there should be time for a period of reflection and debriefing. It is usually helpful if the facilitator comes out of character for this part.
- How this is structured depends, to a degree, on the context and purpose of the IAN in question, but it is always important to allow participants to express themselves and draw out their own reflection and conclusions.
- One aim of the IAN is to give individuals and groups the opportunity to develop their authentic cognitive and emotional response to issues of rights and justice. The idea is absolutely not to tell people how they “should” think or feel, but to enable participants explore complicated topics in a supportive and respectful environment. It is hoped that groups react with empathy and

compassion towards the struggles of the fictional characters, and connect this to the experiences of people in the real world, but this cannot be forced or engineered.

- In many cases the participants have questions about the historical contexts and characters that inspired the IAN, and developments since (e.g. When were laws passed giving all citizens equal voting rights? When were wives given access to divorce on the same terms as husbands?) The facilitator can naturally provide further explanation in the course of the discussion, and all of the IANs come with a resource pack with opportunities to take a deeper dive into the material discussed.

Uses of IANs

Exploring issues of rights and justice, both historical and contemporary

- This is the primary purpose of the IAN project. These educational games were developed to enable players to imagine their way into situations confronting human beings whose lives were radically different from their own. They were developed by academic lawyers who wanted to humanise abstract debates, and reveal the individual pain, struggle, creativity, courage and resilience that so often underlie them.
- As a related aim, they also wished to increase knowledge and understanding of the past, and to use immersive storytelling as a means to do this.

Development of Analytical Skills and Critical Thinking

- Solving an IAN requires participants to sift through a variety of sources, in order to find and assess evidence, ultimately using it as a basis for deductive reasoning.
- Participants need to interrogate source material for prejudice, subjectivity and possible mistakes.
- It is also often necessary for players to recognise their own default assumptions and unconscious bias, because certain clues can only be correctly interpreted if this is done e.g. In the absence of pronouns or other indication, why would you assume that a particular character being referred to in a document/statement is male?
- All of these are extremely valuable and transferable skills.

Confidence Building

- As with other forms of game-based learning, IANs provide a means of enabling participation from individuals who experience barriers within more conventional educational environments. Those who feel as though they do not belong, or doubt their ability to cope with classrooms, museum displays etc, may regard games as a more appealing and less off-putting.
- In a university setting, students who have doubted their ability to read and process a bundle of documents given to them in preparation for a seminar, have successfully assimilated and analysed the information in a similar sized bundle when this has been “won” as evidence in an IAN, and they have been invested in solving the mystery. When their achievement was pointed out in the reflection session afterwards, they realised that they had surprised themselves, and were in fact far more capable than they had imagined.

Team Building

- The experience of carrying out a shared task and relying on the diverse skills of the group members is an effective way of developing mutual ties and understanding.

- The support and encouragement that participants give to one another in order to complete the various challenges often has a powerful cohering effect in and of itself.
- Although done with a serious purpose, a lot of the IAN is play, and one of evolutionary drivers for play behaviour is the strengthening of social ties.
- The IAN gives participants an opportunity to interact with one another in a setting radically different from their usual learning, work or social context, allowing them to discover aspects of themselves and their companions that may be overlooked in different settings.

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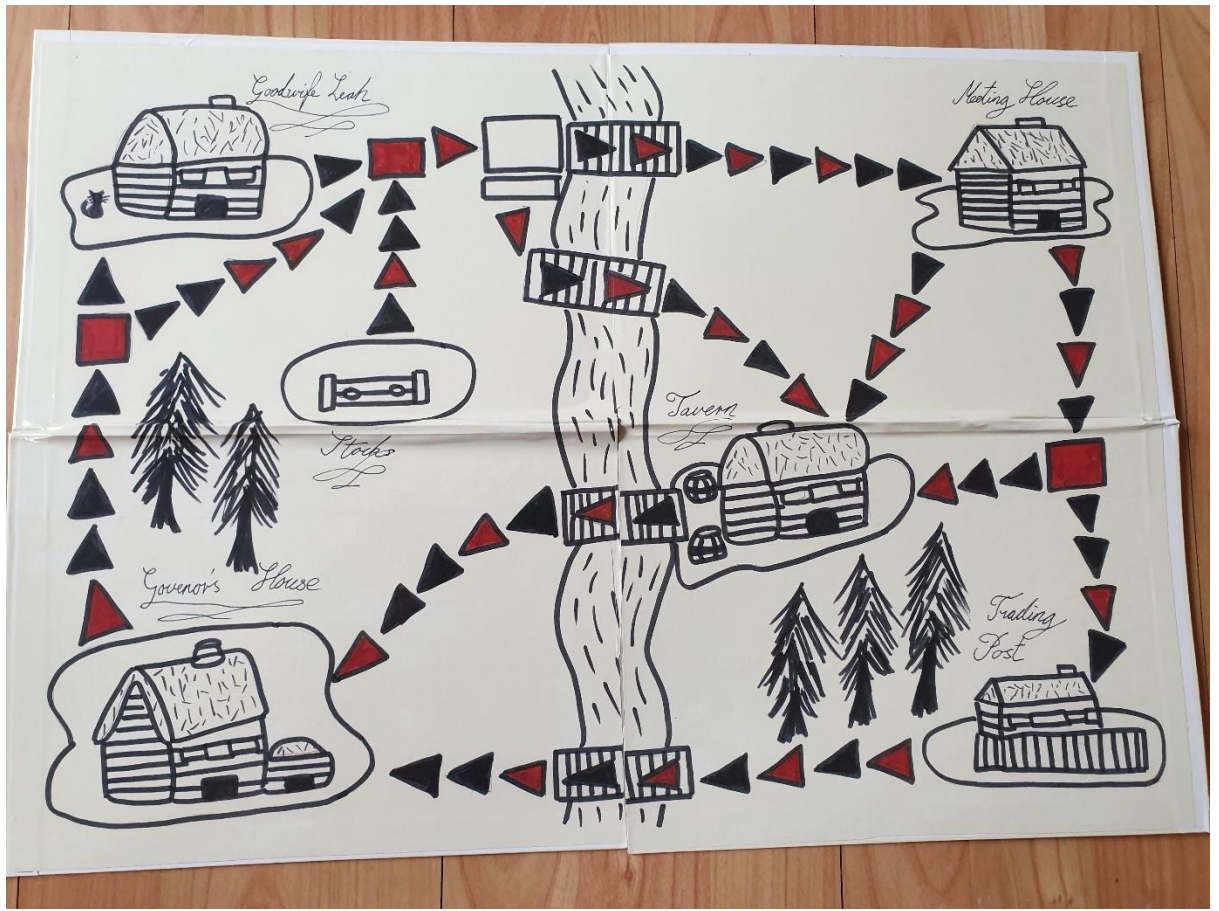


Where did the idea come from?

- IANs came about through the earlier work of the team on game-based learning, and collaboration between colleagues at Nottingham Trent University and the University of Manchester.
- They have produced the “Brave New World” boardgame series, allowing players to experiment with different legal rules governing a society, in either fantasy or historical worlds. These had been successful, but the back story of both the individual characters, and the society as a whole, were key drivers for the learning at the heart of the experience. This narrative dimension was essential for participants to understand *why* the injustices that arose within the game were significant and needed to be addressed, not just within the confines of the game, but within real life as well.
- However, within the Brave New World context, this narrative dimension could only be take so far. The resource had been designed to be quick and easy to set up and start, meaning that introducing too much in the way of plot or information would be counterproductive. The team were therefore curious about pursuing other forms of game-based learning that allowed for story-telling to take a more central place, but avoided the need for role playing or extensive preparation for participants.
- The team therefore experimented with educational escape rooms. These were successful, in that players enjoyed the experience, but the degree of interest that individuals had in the backstory varied dramatically. It was not uncommon for players to simply want to solve all of the puzzles, win the game and not care about the context.
- To deal with this, IAN was developed as a means of ensuring that piecing together the story, and solving the mystery, was the core objective, rather than simply window-dressing or context. Elements of team building and puzzles were introduced to provide diverse ways of accessing parts of the story, and to gradually develop the narrative, in preparation for the final phase of players assembling the evidence and discovering what actually happened.

- After extensive testing and experimentation, the IAN emerged in its current form.

Brave New World-Pilgrim



Example Stories

- We deliberately do not state here the particular rights and justice issue at the heart of stories referred to. Sometimes this is easy to guess, but on other occasions deducing it is part of solving the mystery.
- Partner organisations interested in a new or existing IAN to tackle a particular theme can of course talk to the team, and we will be happy to explain the options available.

Example Themes

- The brilliant young climber Hywel Morgan went climbing on the Pembrokeshire coast in 1924, never to return. The police investigation at the time failed to find sufficient evidence to prosecute any of the suspects, but the inspector in charge was convinced that it was a case of foul play, rather than a tragic accident. The story has been the topic of speculation, books and documentaries ever since. Then, unexpectedly, around the 100th anniversary of Hywel's disappearance, a member of the local community came forward with some battered boxes found in the attic of a cottage. Could these finally solve the mystery?
- On August 7th 1913, Sir Charles Chadwick MP was killed in an explosion at his home, Blackfoss Hall. Suffragist Susan Hunt died in the same incident, and authorities concluded that she had been responsible for the bomb. Her friends and family never accepted this however. Susan had always been adamant that violence was neither justified nor helpful in winning votes for women. This year, new owners of Blackfoss Hall found a collection of papers which shed fresh light on the mystery. Can you discover the truth?
- In 1973 a group of friends went climbing on the Welsh coast. When the rain came, they scrambled into two cars and headed for the pub. Nobody realised that Scott was left behind at the foot of the cliffs, with the tide rapidly coming in. Everyone all thought that he was safe in the other car.....or did they? Can you discover what happened to this promising young journalist, whose career ended before it really began?

- In 1923 a party gathered for a séance in a Nottingham hotel. The attendees included passionate believers in the abilities of the medium, Aida McDonald, sceptics determined to prove her a fraud and the undecided but curious. According to the convention, Aida allowed her hands and feet to be secured before she stepped into a box, and the lights were extinguished. Tragically, she failed to emerge alive. Did she simply have a heart-attack as the inquest concluded, or was there a more sinister explanation?



About the Team

Javier García Oliva



Prof Javier Garcia Oliva studied Law at the University of Cádiz, where he obtained his first degree, LLM and PhD (cum laude and European distinction). After finishing his first degree, he took up a lectureship at the University of Cádiz and subsequently, a Research Fellowship at the Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University. Javier became a lecturer at the University of Wales Bangor in 2004. In January 2011 he moved to the University of Manchester, where he became a Senior Lecturer, and a Professor of Law in 2021. Javier is also a Lecturer in Spanish Law at the University of Oxford and a Teaching Fellow at University College London (U.C.L.). He is passionate about teaching at all levels, and enabling wider society to engage with legal and ethical debates. His research interests span Public and Constitutional Law, Human Rights, in particular freedom of Religion and Belief and Law and History.

Tom Lewis



Before entering academia Tom studied Jurisprudence and History at Jesus College, University of Oxford, before going on to qualify and practice as a solicitor, specialising in civil litigation at a major law firm. Tom has researched and written extensively in the field of human rights and constitutional law with a particular emphasis on freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Human Rights Act. He currently working on the intersection of

human rights, history, heritage and collective memory with particular reference to controversies over memorials such as statues in public space.

Helen Hall



Helen studied law at Peter Cambridge, and qualified as a solicitor before entering academia. Her research interests span a wide range of topics, brought together by Law and Anthropology. She writes on Tort, Public and Constitutional Law, Human Rights (especially freedom of religion/belief and children's rights), Law and the Supernatural and Legal History.

Jane Jarman



Jane is a solicitor and Professor of Legal Practice at Nottingham Law School. Jane has a special interest in the integration of legal education into compliance and risk management frameworks in the workplace. She has advised regulators on legal education and professional regulation in the UK and internationally.

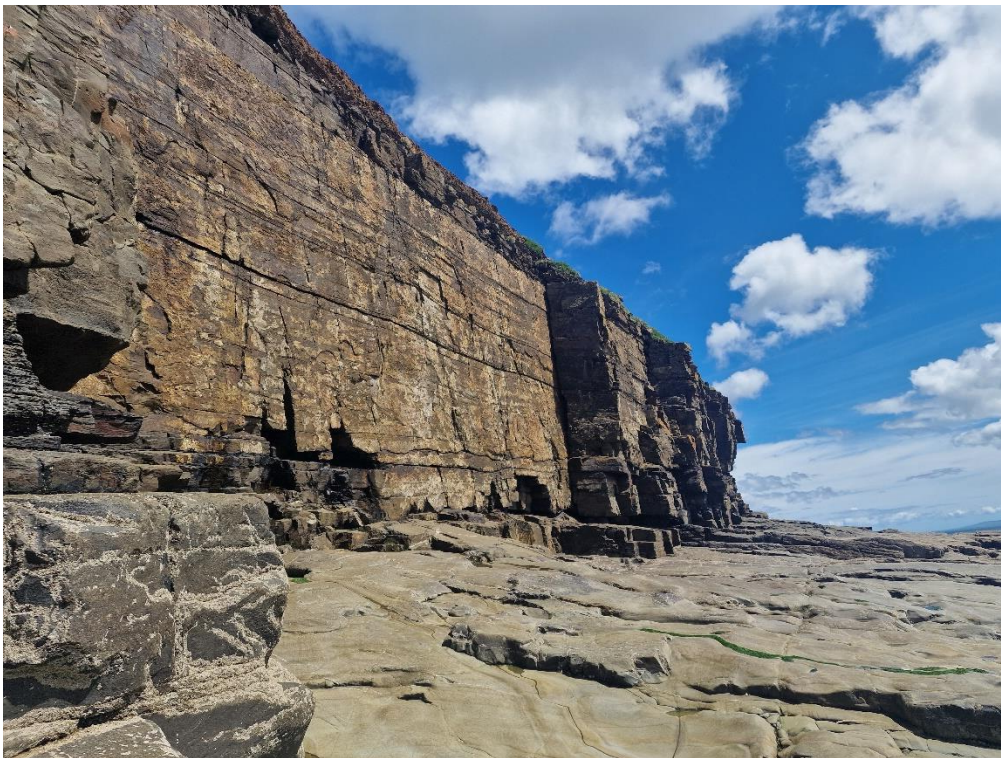
Jane is a professional indemnity litigation solicitor and professor in legal education. Her expertise is in intellectual property, legal professional privilege and professional ethics as well as the education of legal practitioners and regulation of legal practice. Jane supports and advises on regulatory and compliance matters within the Centre and utilises her expertise to support our Business and Enterprise Law Service and Intellectual Property Service, over and above her academic commitments. She has also an interest in Law and Literature.

Sophie Gallop



Dr Sophie Gallop is a Senior Lecturer in Law at Nottingham Law School. Her primary area of interest is in international human rights law and its intersection with public law. . She read LLB (Hons) Law at the University of Warwick before studying an LLM in International Law at the University of Bristol, and a PhD at the University of Birmingham.

With respect to her research, Sophie has worked on various externally funded research projects and has published a number of journal and media articles



Further Information

If you are interested in IANs, or have any questions or feedback we would love to hear from you. Please contact:

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