Encounters

Encounters are events that occur entirely within the fictional world of the Heroes, and provide students with a chance to use their characters' skills and abilities, while developing the greater narrative of their Hero.

The primary concept behind an *Encounter* is that it is an event that requires the characters to take action. It may involve a wandering monster, a bandit or gang that try to accost the Hero, forcing them into a Conflict, or requiring an escape. An *Encounter* could likewise be a natural disaster that threatens a small town of village, and the Heroes must intervene to save the lives of those at risk. Ultimately, when creating encounters, the only limit is your imagination.

Encounters can be incredibly simple, or can involve multiple dimensions that require greater problem solving and involvement from the students. Here you will find instructions on how to develop simple encounters, with suggestions for making them more complex.

The key principles of *Encounters* in (Class RPG) are:

Narrative: Encounters place problem solving, literacy and numeracy activities within a narrative framework that offers students a more engaging way to deal with key learning outcomes. *Encounters* also build up the overarching narrative of each Hero, allowing a student to see the benefit of the XP they have earned through *Missions and Quests.* Chances of success of failure within this overarching narrative then further build the significance of learning activities that occur in between each *Encounter.*

Problem Solving: Each *Encounter* requires students to overcome an obstacle though use of their characters' Attributes, Skills and Special Abilities. Such obstacles encourage students to engage in strategic thinking, and XP rewards given for creative solutions can further encourage such behaviour.

Literacy: To earn XP from an *Encounter*, each student must write an account of their characters experience. Higher XP rewards are given for more complex styles of writing, with bonus XP available for editing, neatness, accuracy, or other desired qualities that may need to be encouraged.

Numeracy: The game mechanics of (Class RPG) require students to deal with addition, multiplication, subtraction, as well as chance. Students could also be encouraged to develop graphs recording sequences of events, or calculating percentage chances of success/failure prior to acting.

Creativity: *Encounters* are ultimately about creativity, the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Problem solving is an inherently creative act, and students should be encouraged to come up with new and interesting ways to overcome each obstacle. XP rewards for new and creative solutions would be a good idea, and research shows that giving people the explicit instruction to 'be creative' results in more creative thought as people feel more free to explore unusual ideas.

Teamwork: While an *Encounter* can be attempted by a single Hero, they should get increasingly difficult as the game develops and require Heroes to work together to successfully overcome them. See the game rules on Teamwork for how to resolve collective actions.

How to create an encounter

The following steps are intended as a guide, not as hard and fast rules. Ultimately you should create encounters to suit your students and the needs of their story. The following steps are also summarised on the Enconter Design sheet.

A) Developing the Narrative

1. **Consider continuity:** is this *Encounter* connected to any previous or future encounters? Or is it a random event that the Heroes must deal with?
2. **Determine the Goal/Stakes:** This is a crucial aspect of sequencing encounters together into an extended narrative. Remember how the point of Mario Bros. was to rescue the princess, and failure implied that horrible things were going to happen to her? That's what we're talking about here.

   Think about what the characters might be trying to achieve in this Encounter, and what is at stake if they succeed or fail? This must be something completely independent of the mechanics of the game, and may require a narrative background to the encounter. This is important, because it provides the emtional motivation for the students to persever with trying to resolve a difficult challenge.

   For example, the encounter may begin with the characters being asked to retrieve medicine for a dying child (don't be afraid of melodrama!) and while crossing a dangerous mountain pass, they are attacked by a dragon! The encounter might be resolved as a simple Conflict, but those students who may not wish to risk failure and choose to flee the encounter are provided with a motivation to keep on going. Their Goal is to cross the mountains (to attain or deliver the medicine), at at stake is the life of a child.
3. **Establish location:** Where does the event take place? What are the key features of the location? What is the general mood or atmosphere the characters experience there?
4. **Define the obstacle:** What is the obstacle that stands in the character's path? Or that otherwise requires them to act? Is it an Antagonist they must defeat through Conflict? Is someone fleeing from them who must be captured? Is it a natural disaster or cosmic event that threatens to halt the Hero's important mission? Or is it an undefeatable beast that the Hero must flee from, clutching the treasure the Hero has recovered?
5. **Prepare a Narrative Introduction:** Once you have determined all of the above factors, prepare a brief narrative that delivers the key information to the students. A few short lines of narrative that deliver the information of points 2, 3 and 4 should suffice in leading the students up to the point at which they have to take action. Consider the use of visual aids, muisc and/or sound effects to help establish mood, and provide the students with a springboard for their imaginations.

B) Determining the mechanics

1. **Determine the Encounter Rating**: Encounter Ratings fulfill the the same role as a characters' Action Rating, and provide the target that a Hero must beat in order to successfully pass the encounter. The easy way to determine an Encounter rating is to simply assign it a number based on how difficult you want the Encounter to be. The Encounter Rating table below gives an outline of how difficult an encounter might be.

If your Encounter involves the possibility of direct Conflict with an Antagonist, you might consider using the Character Creation rules to develop the Antagonist as a character, to allow for a more varied and dynamic Encounter.

2. **Determine the Rewards:** What do the Heroes gain if they suceed? Coin? A Gadget or Magic Item? These rewards are things which exist within the framework of the Narrative, but can also have real world applications. See the section on Rewards for more detailed information.

3. **Determine Exclusions & Penlaties:** Not all of a Heroes skills are useful in every situation. A team of Heroes trying to recover treausre from the mouth of an erupting volcano are going to have little use for their Ranged Combat skills. Some encounters may negate the use of particular skills, though any such Exclusion should be justified within the narrative of the Encounter. Alternatively, rather than excluding a particular skill, the encounter may apply a penalty by saying that certain skills suffer a negative to their rating, or only operate at half their usual rating (rounding up). While this rule is intended to encourage more diverse and creative thought, and prevent a student from resorting to the same tactics with each encounter, the teacher may also choose to allow students to overcome the penalty or exclusion if they can think of a particularly creatve or interesting way to use that skill. **Note:** Be careful not to exclude the same skills too often, as this may have a negative effect on students motivation toward Encounters and the game.

C) Delivering the Encounter

1. Present students with the Narrative introduction to the encounter.
2. Once they are familiar with the challenge before them, give them a period of time to come up with a solution.
3. Using the rules for Conflict, determine whether their strategy is successful or not, and describe the effects of their success or failure.

D) Encounters and XP

Regardless of wither students succeed or fail in an encounter, they have an opportunity to earn XP for their character by writing an account of the event. As with lessons, XP awards are divided into levels, with bonuses available to encourage specific literacy skills or behaviours.

See the sample Encounters XP table, however the teacher may modify the values or XP awards as suits their class and game.

The table presented is base don the idea that incounters should be infrequent (Once a fortnight) and significant events (take an hour or more to complete, including narrative writing), hence the XP awards are significant. If a teahcer wishes to run more frequent Encounters, or make them less significant activities, then smaller XP awards would be appropriate.

Encounter Ratings		
Rating	**Difficulty**	**Description**
<10	Easy	A single, newly created Hero should be able to suceed in this encounter.
11-20	Moderate	A single hero would require signifcant XP to be able to overcome this encounter on their own, but a team of 2 or more Heroes would be able to succeed in this encounter.
21-30	Difficult	Only the most legendary and powerful of heroes would even attempt these encounters on their own, while a large team (5+) of new heroes, or a team of experience heroes would be able to succeed easily in this encounter.
31-40	Heroic	Individuals would surely fail if they attempted this alone, and teams of heroes will find it challneging, but still should expect success.
41+	Legendary	A team of experienced heroes would place their lives in the hands of fate to succedd at this encounter. Success is possible, but only with thoughtful planning and teamwork!