

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

An encounter for the *Last Word Role-playing Game*, a classroom RPG

Background:

Players by this point should have solidly worked their way into the rebellion and should be comfortable in their abilities. Things are starting to get harder as we practice persuasion in the wild.

Objectives:

This in-class activity will test students' ability to apply lessons in rhetorical listening and both logic and emotion based appeals, all of which will have been taught in abstract through mini-lectures and readings.

Play begins as soon as class starts. Students go to their different groups and answer the first question below, then, based on teacher response, choose a scenario. The best answer (see criteria) gets to choose first, and so on.

- A group of factory workers have occupied the factory where they used to work and are using it as an impromptu shelter.
- A disillusioned Hansa employee has secretly started a rebel cell among his coworkers. They are meeting at a taproom downtown.
- A former member of the Resistance, who broke from the movement because of differing viewpoints, has shown back up in the Sprawl after a prolonged absence.
- Hit the streets for more information. This results in two story threads: running into either a pair of police officers or a pair of low-tier Hansa employees.

Students can then riff off of any of these that they choose to. The GM should do some narration to set the scene for each adventure.

READ ALOUD

Now that you've gained some reputation within the Resistance, your higher-ups have decided to send you on some field work. The Resistance is scattered after Hansa and the government cracked down a few years ago. With the government now distancing itself from Hansa, it's the perfect time to strike. It's time to gather the forces. That's where you come in. You're given your choice of assignments, each one of which poses its own challenges.

Possible Narrations

- You find your way to the factory. It seems to be still in use. Lights are on throughout. The door opens before you arrive. Two large, rather stern looking men walk out. They're holding rifles. "Looking for something?" one says. What do you do?
- The bartender directs you upstairs. The creaky steps lead you to a small room, dimly lit. Six people, gather around a table. They look at you, unsure. Several hands go beneath the table. One in a suit looks you over. "You're new."
- The old deserter, Hiram Young, is a grizzled old man with a white mustache and whiter hair. He smokes an e-cig when you meet him in what used to be a parking garage. "So," he says. "Resistance must be getting desperate."
- As you wander the streets, you come across two police officers. They're already wearing riot gear. They all seem to these days. They don't notice you yet, but they're blocking your way. You can duck into a back alley, or continue on.
- A couple of suits stumble out of a bar. Young, severe haircuts. These are Hansa, company men. They stumble off without noticing you.

The GM should determine which type of skill check (roll) is best given the students' choice of action

Discussion Questions

Note: Students will have read selections from Krista Radcliffe's "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a "Code of Cross Cultural Conduct"" before this class, and this exercise will put lessons from that into practice, as well as offering practice in on-the-spot invention

Beyond Question 1, these ask students to extend what they read and apply it to what they've learned. They are not comprehension questions. Each sub-question is for expanding, and should be used to determine difficulty for students' next most significant efforts in the game narrative.

Question 6 is the most difficult to grapple with, so it should be reserved for the group attempting the most difficult action.

1. Offer a brief, one-sentence definition of what you believe "rhetorical listening" means.
2. How does "rhetorical listening" impact our notions of invention?
 - a. Cite some specific examples where your ideas were shaped by understanding others' ideas.
3. What does rhetorical listening have to do with our understanding of the audience's role in rhetoric?
 - a. Radcliffe mentions a problem being our culture's privileging of sight. How can we as rhetors combat that?
4. What do you gain by listening rhetorically?
 - a. Beyond a means of manipulating your audience?
5. Explain how listening builds understanding (and Radcliffe's definition of "understanding"). What's required for listening for understanding in the listener?
 - a. How does this tie in with identification, and its cousin, identity.
6. How does this notion of listening for understanding change our notion of stasis, or agreeing where we disagree? (It does, now tell me why)
 - a. Cite some specific ways you might use this in your work.

(Stealth) Assessment

The questions are designed to lead students toward listening in-game: observational actions in game should be rewarded with lower difficulty ratings (-10 to dice roll). Active choices, or choices that don't take into account some factor of "listening" or responding to what other characters say, should receive higher difficulty ratings (+10 to dice roll)

Note that apart from all other modifiers (see note above questions), difficulties for anything requiring effort beyond everyday, normal activity start at +10 to dice roll. [There should be incentive to perform well on the questions]

Criteria	Modification to dice roll
Answered Question Adequately	-10
Answered Question and added something new to conversation	-20
Above and beyond; blows question out of the water.....	-30
Inadequate Answers	+10
Answers but mostly misses the point	+20
No answer or otherwise severely inaccurate	+30

NB: Last Word runs on a d10 (or percentile) roll-under system