

## The Harry Potter Alliance's "Make It IRL" Workshop

The Harry Potter Alliance turns fans into heroes. We're changing the world by making activism accessible through the power of story. Since 2005, we've engaged millions of fans through our work for equality, human rights, and literacy.

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### Overview

#### WORKSHOP 1 (2 Hours)

**Workshop description:** This workshop is designed to encourage participants to make connections between popular culture and real-world issues. They will be introduced to the concept of cultural acupuncture and learn how to take action to affect change in their communities.

The Make It IRL title refers to the phrase, "In Real Life," generally used to mean interacting with the outside world beyond one's computer screen. Make It IRL here means taking a fictional story and online tools and using them to enact real-world change.

#### Supplies needed:

- A whiteboard or easel and large pad of paper
- Scratch paper for groups
- Writing utensils
- Optional: Computer and projector screen

Recommended one facilitator per ten participants.

#### Ice Breaker (3 minutes)

*Facilitator Note:* If you did not already have a set number of participants, count how many participants there are during the ice breaker and begin thinking how many might be in a group when divided up.

### **Introduction to vocabulary and activity (5 minutes)**

Define “content worlds:” Content worlds is the term that will be used in this workshop to refer to the stories that exist in books, TV shows, movies, comic-books, and other popular culture or fan spaces. You should introduce the participants to the term using this definition at the beginning of the workshop.

*Facilitator’s Note:* If it becomes apparent that your participants are mostly using, for example, movies as their content worlds, you can adapt your language to just say movies instead of content worlds. Similarly, if your participants are familiar with language like “fandom” and are comfortable referring to themselves as “fans,” you might want to use that language to make the environment less clinical. However, you should still introduce the definition of content worlds at the beginning as an option for vocabulary.

In this workshop, participants will be making connections between their favorite popular culture content worlds and a pre-determined issue that affects their community or the world at large. They will divide themselves into groups based on content worlds and be asked to develop a plan for taking action on the issue, using themes and parallels from their chosen content world.

This practice is called **cultural acupuncture**. Cultural acupuncture was coined by Andrew Slack, the co-founder of the Harry Potter Alliance. It refers to identifying both content worlds as well as causes that are particularly popular and resonant in society at a particular time and combining them in discourse or a plan for action.

To quote Slack, cultural acupuncture is, “Finding where the psychological energy is in the culture, and moving that energy towards creating a healthier world.” By tying a content world to the cause, you can inspire people who are interested in that content world to work passionately on the cause as well as leverage media, through the hook of the popular content world, to pay more attention to the cause than they might have otherwise done.

### **Content World Brainstorm (2 minutes)**

Have the participants shout out some of their favorite content worlds and write suggestions down on a large sheet of paper or the blackboard.

### **Dividing Into Groups (3 minutes)**

Each participant will be choose to be in a group associated with a different content world. This will most likely require you to narrow down the content world suggestions.

Narrow down the content world by letting participants vote on each one or freely determine which are the most popular with the overall workshop group.

Participants should be familiar with and enthusiastic about the content world they're assigned to so encourage them to keep this in mind when they're deciding which to keep. Also keep this in mind as you decide how many content worlds (and therefore how many groups) you decide to have.

For example, if you have twenty-four participants, you might decide to divide them in six groups of four or in four groups of six depending on how the participants naturally align with the content worlds. It's okay for the groups to be slightly uneven. What's more important is that every participant feels an attachment to the story of their group.

*Facilitator's Note:* You may observe varying levels of interest from different participants. Some will be naturally inclined to express their enthusiasm for content worlds and others may need a bit of probing to find an attachment to one. Participants will run the gamut from identifying as active fans of a content world to being more passive observers. It may help to acknowledge this and be encouraging to participants who are originally less enthusiastic.

### **Instructions for the Group (5 minutes)**

Tell the groups that they will be creating a campaign about an issue of social justice using themes and parallels from their chosen content world.

Define a "campaign." A campaign in this workshop is a plan of action for raising awareness, educating about, taking action on, or empowering individuals around a certain topic. It should target people interested in your content world, but also consider ways to spread it beyond people who share an interest in the content world. It should also draw on themes, parallels, metaphors, or specific events from the content world and connect them with the issue.

Provide examples of one or two past Harry Potter Alliance campaigns.

Suggestions:

*Superman Is An Immigrant*

Website: <http://wearetheamericanway.tumblr.com>

Drawing on public excitement around the release of the new Superman movie, *Man of Steel*, as well as anticipation that 2013 would be the "summer of immigration reform," the Harry Potter Alliance in partnership with Define American launched a campaign to change the discourse around immigration reform.

The main connection to Superman was the idea that Superman, as a brand, is one of the most popular symbols of America, after perhaps McDonalds and Mickey Mouse. Superman, as a character, is someone who lived in the United States, worked in the United States, and saved the United States from all out destruction on multiple occasions. Yet, Superman was not born in the United States. He was born on Krypton

and brought to the United States as a small child. One of the most American figures of all time was not born in America.

This connection to the content world served to remind people of their own personal or family histories. Many Americans come from a past of migration. So, for this campaign, the Harry Potter Alliance and Define American asked individuals to submit photos of themselves holding signs on which they'd written their family's history, drawn the Superman logo, and included the phrase, "I Am The American Way."

### *Odds In Our Favor*

Website: <http://oddsinourfavor.org>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmVJaBuoEYA>

In conjunction with the release of the second *Hunger Games* movie, the Harry Potter Alliance launched a campaign to raise awareness about economic inequality.

The *Hunger Games* series takes place in a dystopian future where the majority of the nation's wealth is hoarded by a corrupt capitol government, who forces the rest of the nation to send their children to fight for the death in order to receive meager subsidies of food.

Being rife with connections to a myriad of economic inequality issues, the Harry Potter Alliance first chose to use the symbol of the three-finger salute from the story to bring people together in support of the issue. The symbol, which stands for solidarity and resistance in the books, was used in branding, posted on social media in photos by fans at the movie's release, and eventually adopted by organizations working at marches and rallies around the U.S. on workers' rights.

### **Introduce the issue. (3 minutes)**

*Facilitator's Note:* You should choose the issue ahead of time, based on any known demographic or interest-based information you have on your participants. Or, choose three different issues and allow the participants to quickly vote on which to use.

Do a bit of your own research on the issue before beginning the workshop so that you're able to explain it to the participants and answer any questions that may come up. Bring along a list of your resources and organizations that are working on that issue to provide at the end of the workshop to participants who are interested in continuing work on this issue.

Some examples of issues might be student loans, immigration reform, net neutrality, or any current legislation that resonates with your group of participants.

It may be necessary to give a brief overview of the issue for participants who are less familiar with it.

### **Groups decide on main connection to content world (15 minutes)**

Provide the groups with scratch paper to jot down ideas as they brainstorm parallels they can draw between the issue and their content world.

For example, in *Harry Potter*, many characters such as Remus Lupin and Rubeus Hagrid have to hide parts of their identity that aren't accepted by society. This is a strong parallel for the struggles of LGBTQ+ or undocumented individuals. Or, in *The Hunger Games*, the *tesserae* (a ration of food and fuel that families are given each month by the Capitol) could be compared to food stamps in our world.

Facilitators should go from group to group listening, asking questions, guiding groups, and keeping them on track with the time.

*Facilitator's Note:* If you're unfamiliar with the content world of one or more of the groups, that's okay! Ask the groups to explain the parallels they're drawing. This is an opportunity for them to think more critically about their ideas by having to explain it to someone unacquainted with the details of the content world.

### **Groups work on actions that will happen during campaign (20 minutes)**

After agreeing on their chosen parallels between the issue and their content world, groups will begin brainstorming an action for other people in their community or the world at large to take.

Examples of this could be signing petitions, writing letters to legislators, or more creative awareness-building actions such as creating art that ties the issue and the content world together.

Groups should be encouraged to use their parallel to build a story around their action and help make the issue appeal to others who enjoy their chosen content world.

For example, when encouraging members to contact legislators in support of raising the minimum wage, the Harry Potter Alliance branded the messages as "Congressional Howlers," a nod to letters in the book series, which scream at their recipients. Members were additionally prompted to send their hand-written letters in red envelopes to further resemble the howlers from the books.

### **Introduction of Presentation (1 minute)**

Once every group is just about to the point of deciding on an action, inform them that they will be presenting their campaign to the whole workshop group. They will have two minutes each and should choose a spokesperson. They will present their campaign as if

they are pitching it to a peer, someone also interested in the content world. Their goal is to convince their peer to participate in the campaign. They should explain their parallel as well as their action and how they fit together.

### **Groups work on presentation (10 minutes)**

Groups choose their spokesperson and discuss the points they need to hit on to explain the campaign to a peer.

*Facilitator's Note:* You should continue migrating from group to group to make sure each one is ready and keep them aware of how much time they have left.

### **Presentations (10-20 minutes depending on number of groups)**

Each group's spokesperson presents to the whole group while the facilitator times them for one minute each.

### **De-brief**

Facilitators introduce ways for participants to turn their campaigns into realities, including providing them with further resources on the issue and pointing them towards information on how to start a Harry Potter Alliance chapter ([thehpalliance.org/chapters](http://thehpalliance.org/chapters)) or sign up for the Harry Potter Alliance emailing list ([thehpalliance.org/hpa-signup](http://thehpalliance.org/hpa-signup)). Starting a chapter is a great way for participants to get involved with other people in their community and use cultural acupuncture to work on issues they care about. They've already created their first campaign today!

If possible, try to allow time for participants to give feedback on the experience by discussing their thoughts on the workshop as a group. You may also want to provide a handout with some short-answer questions for participants about their experience.

## **WORKSHOP 2 (5 Days)**

**Workshop description:** This workshop is designed to encourage participants to make connections between popular culture and real-world issues. They will be introduced to the concept of cultural acupuncture and learn how to take action on the connections they've made to affect change in their communities.

### **Supplies needed:**

- White board or easel and large pad of paper
- Writing supplies for participants
- Computer with projector screen
- Internet access for participants (via computers, tablets, or personal smart phones)

## **DAY ONE - Deciding on an issue**

### **Ice Breaker**

*Facilitator Note:* If you did not already have a set number of participants, count how many participants there are during the ice breaker and begin thinking how many might be in a group when divided up.

### **Introduction to vocabulary and activity**

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### **Issue brainstorm**

Participants brainstorm issues that are important to them that they might like to create a campaign on. Write the suggestions on a large piece of paper or a blackboard.

## **Narrow down the issues**

Narrow the issues down to three to five choices by voting or allowing participants to freely debate which issues should be chosen. If one clear issue stands out at this phase, even better. In some cases, it might be possible to combine issues. For example, if there is a suggestion of “student debt” and “income inequality,” participants might consider combining them into “economic inequality.” While specificity make help participants when they break into smaller groups, at this phase it is more helpful to have a topic that would be applicable to any pop culture story the groups choose.

Decide on the one issue before breaking for the day.

## **DAY TWO - Breaking into groups based on content worlds** **Ice breaker**

### **Second day introduction**

#### **Content World Brainstorm**

Have the group shout out some of their favorite content worlds and write suggestions down on a large sheet of paper or the blackboard.

#### **Dividing Into Groups**

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Narrow down the content world by letting participants vote on each one or freely determine which are the most popular with the overall workshop group.

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### **Groups decide on main connection to content world (5 minutes)**

Provide the groups with scratch paper to jot down ideas as they brain storm parallels they can draw between the issue and their content world.

Facilitators should go from group to group listening, asking questions, and guiding groups.

## **DAY THREE - Working on the campaign plan Ice breaker**

### **Third Day Introduction**

#### **Groups work on actions that will happen during campaign**

Groups move on from deciding on connections to brainstorming ways for other people in their community or the world at large to get involved with this campaign and take action.

#### **Introduction of Presentation**

Tell the groups that they will be presenting their campaign to the group. They will have five minutes each and each person in the group needs to be a part of the presentation. If anyone in the group is uncomfortable with speaking, they can elect to be the Documenter. They can take pictures, livetweet, or otherwise creatively document the presentation.

Groups will present their campaign as if they are pitching it to a peer, someone also interested in the content world. They need to convince their peer to participate in the campaign.

A required element of the presentation is the creation of a graphic that advertises the campaign to people who might be interested in the story. It could be a logo, a drawing, or a photoshopped graphic, but should be created with the objective of what would be appealing to other people interested in the story as well as be entertaining or thought-provoking enough to spread beyond that group and be enjoyed by the general populace.

#### **DAY FOUR - Groups work on presentation**

**Ice breaker (5 minutes)**

**Introduction (5 minutes)**

**Work on presentation (50 minutes)**

#### **DAY FIVE - Presentations**

**Brief introduction (2 minutes)**

**Presentations (30 minutes)**

**De-brief (28 minutes)**

Facilitators introduce ways for participants to turn their campaigns into realities.

Time is also given for participants to give feedback on the experience.