Library Lines by Lily Collins, CCS senior and KTL staff member

Storytelling exists everywhere, in so many different forms. From the obvious, like books, to less obvious parts, like crafting or playing a game. One of my favorite forms of storytelling is tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs). These are games like Dungeons & Dragons or Pathfinder. Games where players act like they are their character with a group of other players. D&D is a game in which the players are characters often in a magical, Lord of the Rings type world. These games are not only super fun, but are also a great way to tell stories.

Admittedly, these games often have a reputation of being very complex and hard to understand. I would argue that although there are a lot of rules, you don't need to know all of them to play. It's okay to not know all of the rules, a lot of them are something that can be picked up by playing these games. For example, in D&D, the random aspect of the game is that the players roll a 20-sided die to see if characters are able to successfully complete actions- from talking to a non-player character to hitting one the bad guys. As the character gets more experience, they can level up, which lets them get stronger and increase what they add to what they roll on the dice. Eventually, even if you roll low on the dice, you might still be able to succeed, because the character has gotten stronger. Although D&D doesn't have to be in a fantasy setting, it often is, (in part because there are better games to play in a different setting), so the players get to play through quests and adventures.

This is where the storytelling aspect takes place. In most games, there is one Game Master (GM, or DM for Dungeon Master), and 4-8 Player Characters (PC). The GM runs the game, which includes playing the NPCs and the villains, setting the scene, and keeping track of combat. Additionally, they are in charge of guiding the story. There are published modules to run games off of, or you can choose to do a homebrew game, or a combination of both. In a fully homebrew game, the GM creates the world that the story takes place in, along with all the NPCs. The PCs play one character, and they drive that character's story. For example, if a PCs backstory includes their family being betrayed and forced out of the world of magic, the GM might bring the story to a point where they can get justice for their family. Or, it could be that the wizard feels that their family never supported their magical ambitions, so they go back to show their parents that they've become a powerful wizard. One of the most common themes in D&D, in my personal experience, is found family. There are so many stories that can be told through TTRPGs.

The thing that makes TTRPGs a very different form of storytelling is that it is a collaborative story. Instead of writing, where you have complete control over what happens and what characters do and say, whereas in a game, other people can do things to surprise you, and you can be surprised by what other people do in the game. Most importantly, you all work together to make a story. D&D is such a collaborative game, even if the GM is sending monsters and plot twists at the PCs, everyone is working together to make a beautiful story.

Although "tabletop" is in the name, games like these can be done safely through video calling. There are several sourcebooks for D&D available through the Mid-York system that can

be put on hold. Additionally, there are a ton of great resources available online for free- you really don't need much to play the game- just an online dice roller and an imagination!