

*Indiana Jones*TM Adventure World: Narrative for Social Games

Steve Williams

Senior Game Designer, Zynga Boston

Jonathon Myers

Game Writer

Who Are We?



Owlchemy
Labs



Who Are We?



Who Else Made Narrative Happen?

- Lead Designer Seth Sivak
- Content Designers
- Some Other Cool People
 - Hal Barwood
 - Lee Sheldon
 - Paul Neurath
 - Toby Ragaini

What Game Did We Make?

Facebook

Hand-crafted Isometric Maps


Light RPG - Powerful IP

Map Releases = Episodic Stories




This Talk is Not About...

- Nitty gritty of writing social game text
 - Feeds, copywriting, marketing text
- *Core Gameplay* and how we got there
 - Seth Sivak's 2012 GDC talk is great!



DESIGNING CORE GAMEPLAY FOR EVERYONE

Seth Sivak
Lead Designer – *INDIANA JONES* Adventure World
Zynga Boston



GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
MARCH 5-9, 2012
EXPO DATES: MARCH 7-9

2012

Focus – We Done Did Some Narrative



Presentation “Episodes”

- The Show Must Go On
- Story IP for a Social Game
- How We Did What We Did
- Collaborative Narrative Design
- Two Weeks in the Life

The Show Must Go On



It's 8AM, do you know where your content is?





Social Game to Human Dictionary

- Release – one package of content
- Cadence – our weekly schedule
- Metrics – Zynga's best practice (Statistics)
- Retention – likelihood of player returning
- DAU – Daily Active Users



Narrative for a Tough Crowd

Short Play Sessions = No
Subtlety

Varied Time Gap Between
Sessions



The Case for Quick Narrative Bites



≠

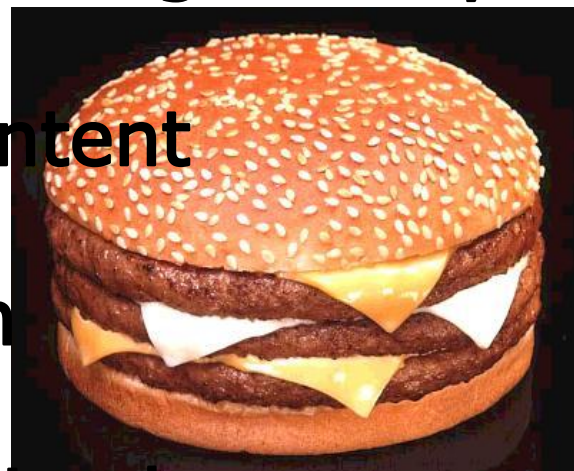


The Case for Quick Narrative Bites

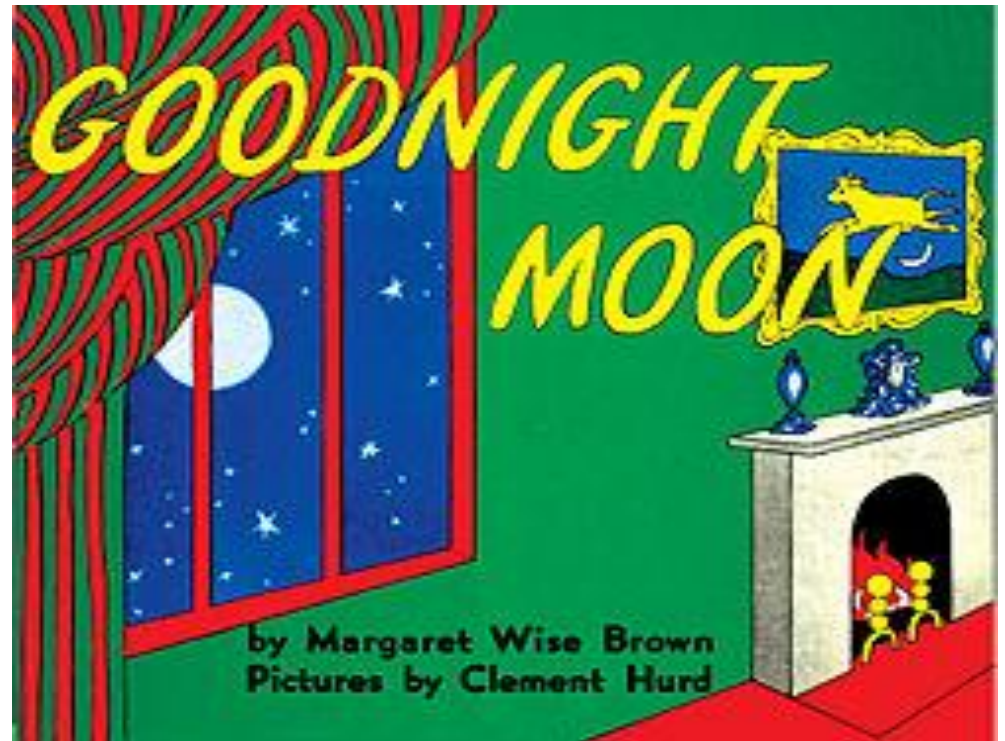
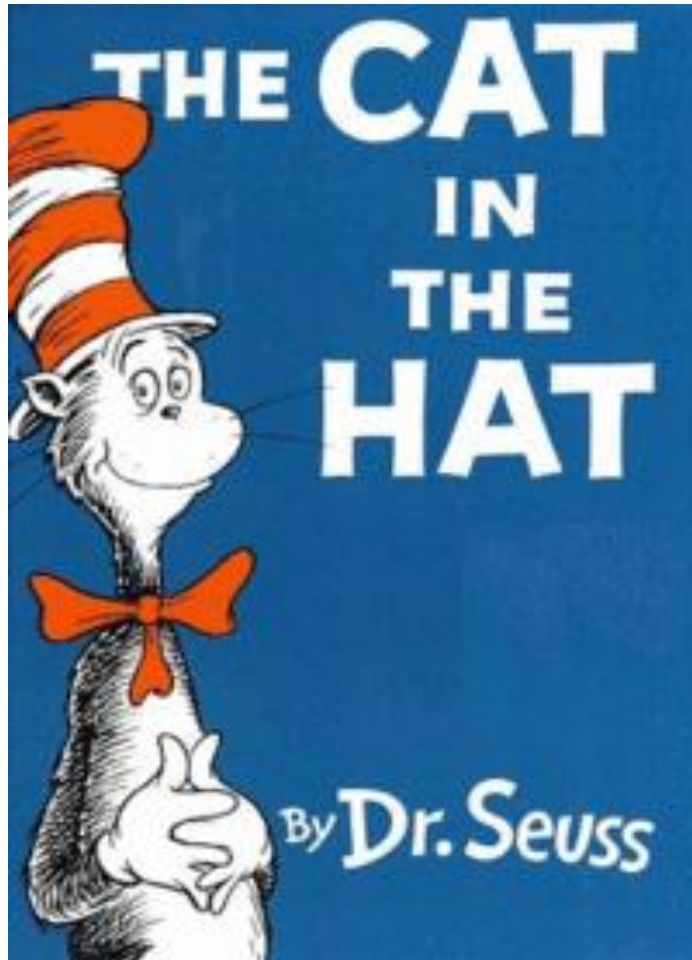
- Remind Players: “We’re Telling a Story”
- Serve them Sliders of Content
- Repeat Information Often
- Keep Stories Short and Simple



≠



Simple Storytelling Moments



Simple Storytelling Moments

- The Legend of the Pharoah's Family Jewels
 - Go to the Thematic Place
 - Get the Thing
 - Deal with the Looming Antagonist
 - Or Else... What?



Doing It Live!!!



- Ship It, Ship It, Ship It...
- ... And How Did They Like It?



Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends



Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends



Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends

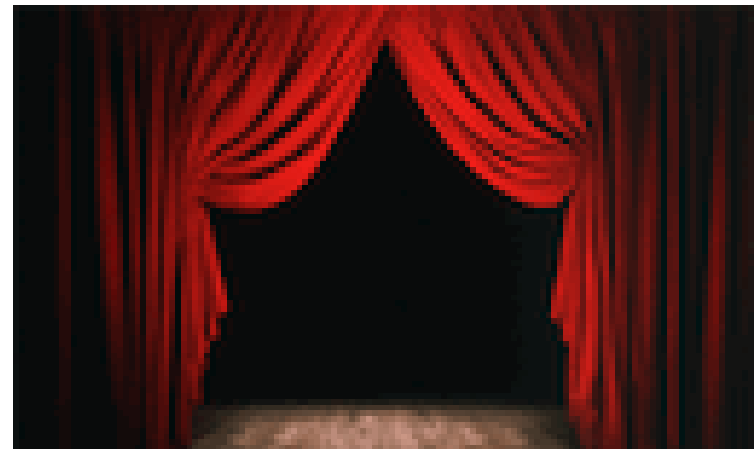


Get By With A Little Help From Our Friends



The Show Must Go On

- Short/Varied Play = No Subtlety
- Serve Sliders of Content
- Simple Storytelling Moments
- Ship It, Fix It... Pause to Evaluate
- Learn from Predecessors



Story IP for a Social Game



Before Indy, It Was Quest



LucasArts Partnership



“No Time for Love, Doctor Jones”

- Backstory Already There!
- No Exposition Necessary!
- Social Games + Pop Culture = Player Love



Characters = Locations

South America 1936



Characters = Locations



"I Am the Monarch of the Sea!"



Collaborative Relationship

- LucasArts Gave Us Creative Freedom
- Respect the Franchise
- We Complied!
- It Paid Off

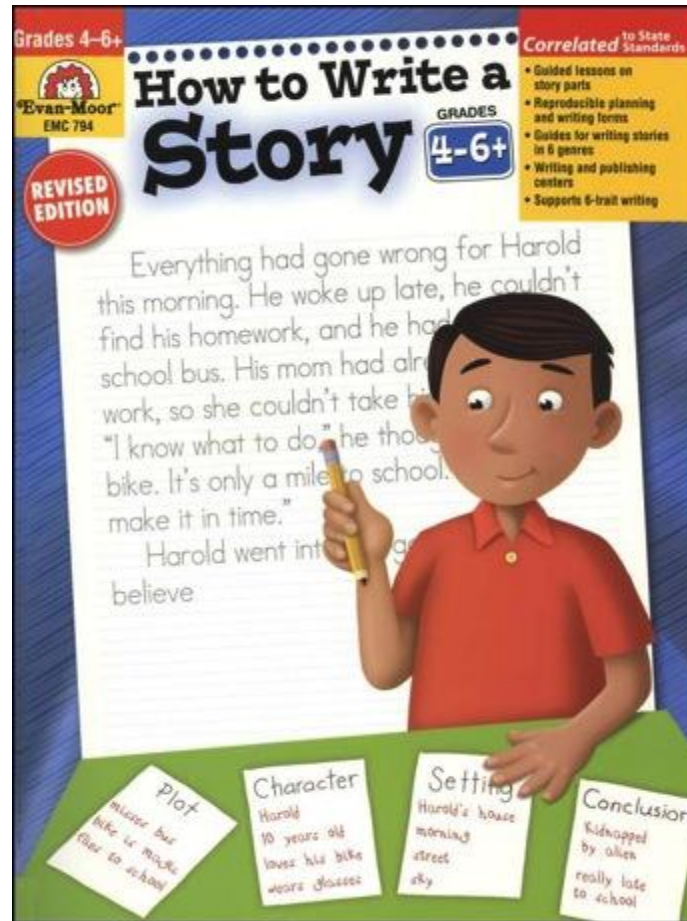


Story IP for a Social Game

- Less Time Necessary For Worldbuilding
- Characters Came With Pre-Associations
- Delivered Iconic Moments to Fans
- Encouraged Retention & Replay



How We Did What We Did



Back to the Source

- Watch all the movies
- Read the books
- Explore the entire canon

"RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK"

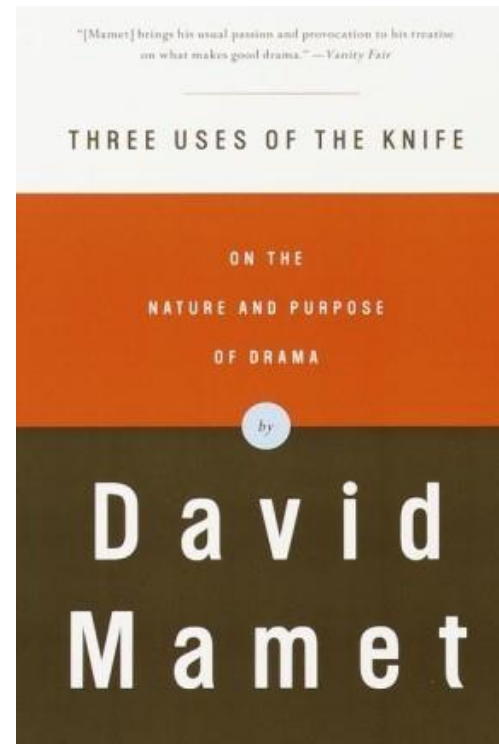
Story Conference Transcript

January 23, 1978 thru January 27, 1978

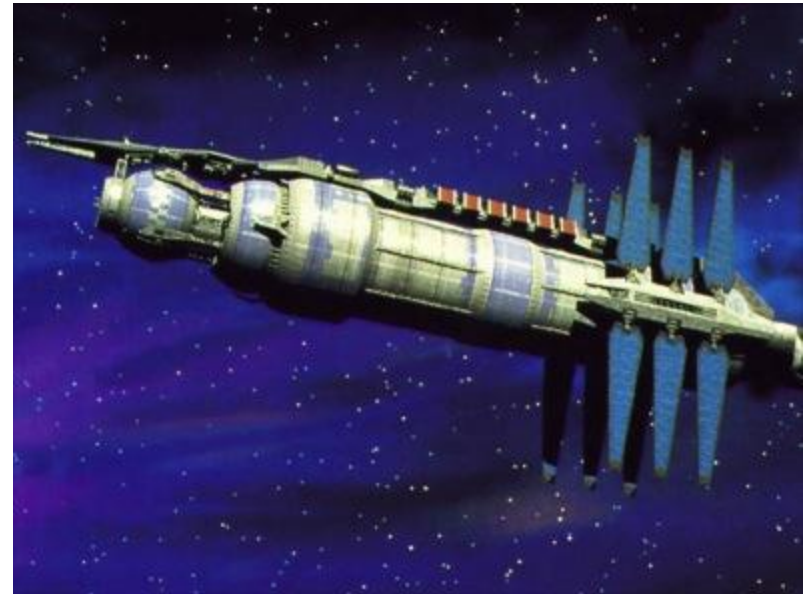
George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Larry Kasden¹



Story Techniques from Jon



Story Touchstones From Steve



Dramatic Conflict

- Jon: What is the object?
- Steve: What is the outcome?

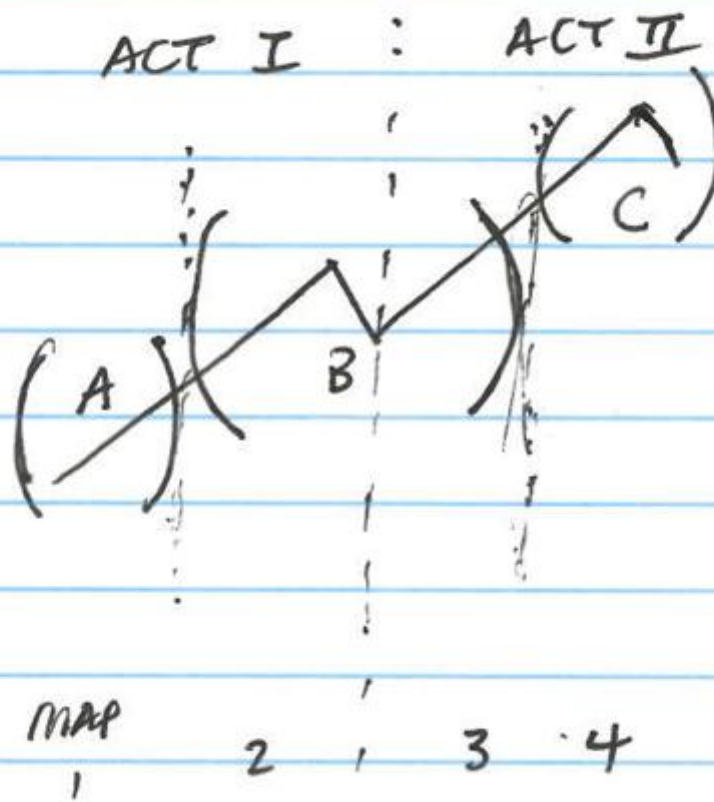


Who is the Hero?



Formulaic Structure

TWO ACT PLAY STRUCTURE



$A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$

THREE ACT
STRUCTURE

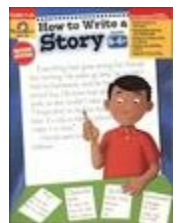
SPREAD

ACROSS

TWO ACTS

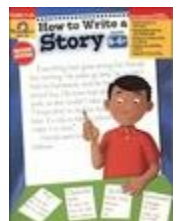


We're Still Making a Game!

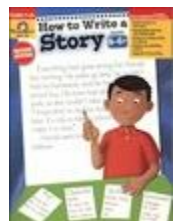


We're Still Making a Game!

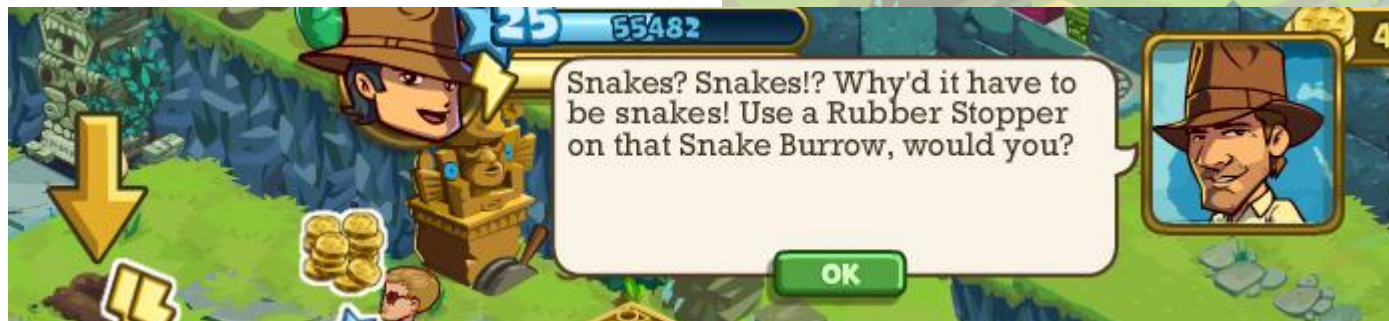
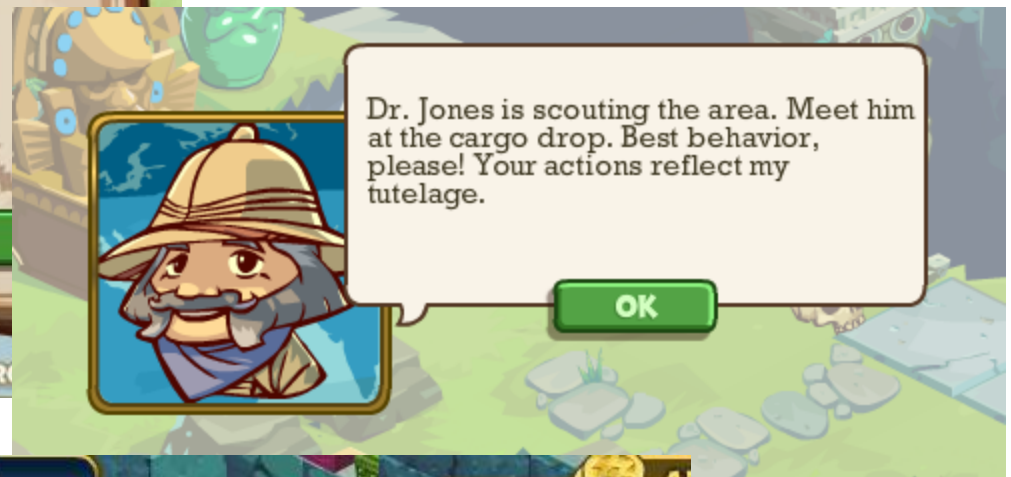
- Location - Tileset
 - Map Chain – Connected Maps
 - Map – Level of gameplay
 - Quest – Storytelling Element of the Map
 - Quest Task – Gameplay Actions



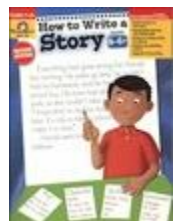
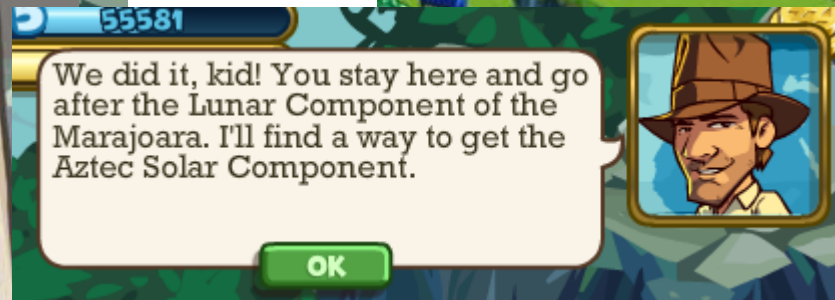
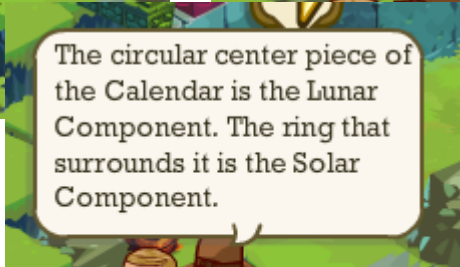
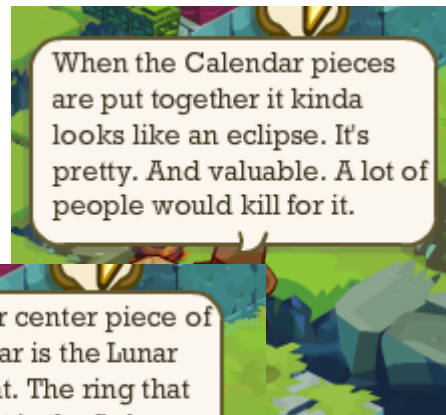
Connective Tissue



More Connective Tissue



Still More Connective Tissue



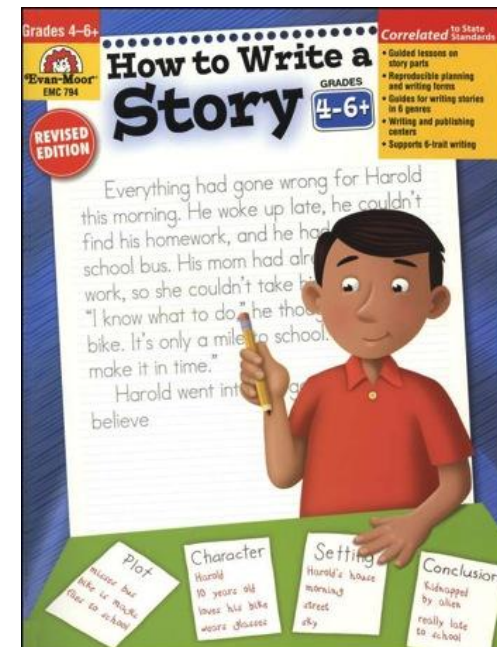
Revisiting Formula

- Three Acts = Three Maps (ideal formula)
 - “Guardian of the Underworld”
- Four Acts = Four Maps (more difficult)
 - “Warriors of the Sky”
 - Fun, an ability to explore character
- More Acts = Proceed with Caution
 - “Calendar of the Sun”
 - “Riddle of the Sphinx”



How We Did What We Did

- Player and Indiana Jones Are Heroes
- No Shying Away From Formula
- Game System = Story Delivery Mechanism
- Fill Gaps With Connective Tissue



Collaborative Narrative Design



In Development

- Zynga desired good narrative pre-Indy
- Used excellent part-time contract writers
- Designers had writing chops, but no time for the big picture
- One Big Chapter for launch



Still In Development



The Need for a Staff Writer

- Overseer of the Big Picture
- Consistency Editor of Text
- Champion of Characters and Story
- Record-keeper of Stories
- Builder of Narrative Voice



Pre-Indy: First Narrative Steps



Player Choice



"Be Sure to Drink Your Ovaltine"

11-04-2011, 09:21 PM

#18

swaggers ◦

Cream Corn Champion

Join Date: Sep 2010
Posts: 390



"Many Years before The Mask, beasts were the hunters of men."

"As the hunters of men, beasts controlled the fate of all humans, who neared extinction."

"So it came to pass a Hero lived among the hunted humans: a craftsman warrior."

"Keeping the people safe from the hunter beasts was this Hero's sole purpose."

"Outward the Hero looked, seeking to craft stronger weapons to fend off the beasts."

"For the great beasts would claim its victims from among the Hero's people."

"They were lost. As the hunted ones, never could the Hero's people find safety."

"Heartbroken with loss, with little spirit remaining, the Hero began to look within."

"Each day for seven days the Hero walked among the tall trees. They called the Hero mad."

"Hungry and tired, the Hero came upon a Great Tree. It took the Hero deeper within."

"Under the earth the Hero slept, breathing soil. The seeds were planted in the Hero."

"Needing air, the Hero rose from the earth below the Great Tree with plans for The Mask."

"The Great Tree offered up a sacrifice. From its wood the Hero carved The Mask."

"Every Hero to face the greatest of beasts has since called upon the Mask of the Hunter."

"Retreating no more, with The Mask of the Hunter intact, the hunted became the hunters."



"Be Sure to Drink Your Ovaltine"

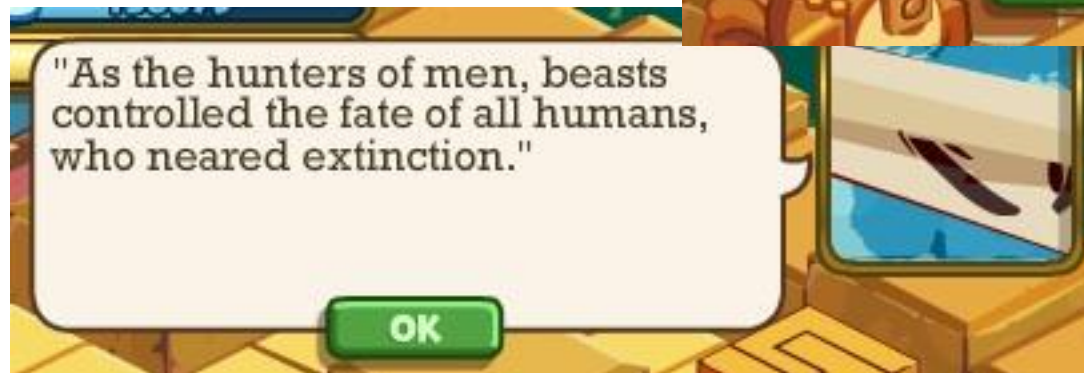
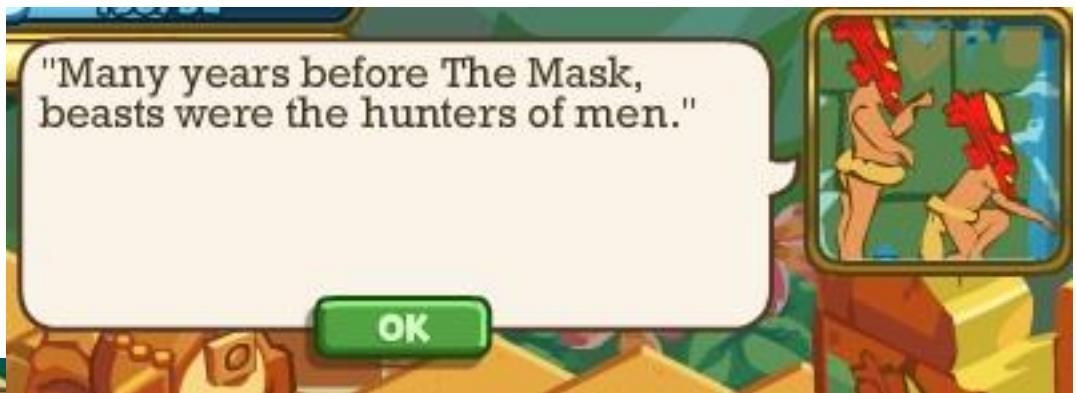


Steve needs help on the trail of the Mask of the Hunter.

The mask is strange, powerful and dangerous. Send Steve Decoder Rings and you get one too!



via Indiana Jones Adventure World



Grab Your Fedora!

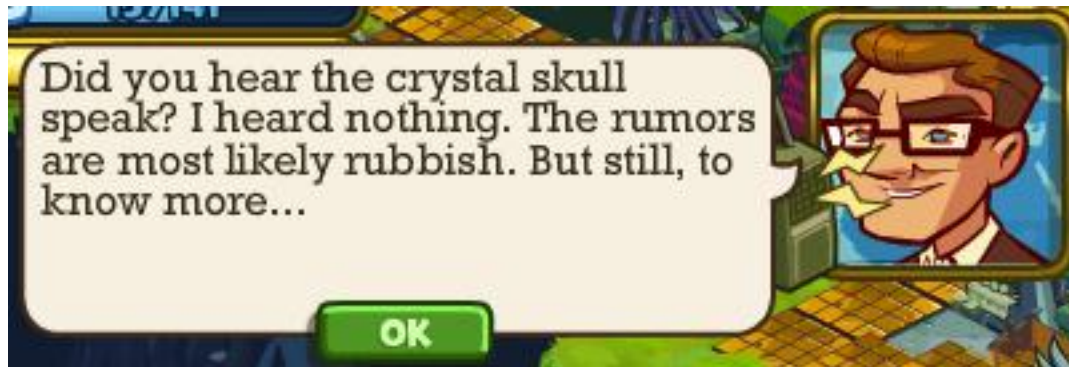
- We're an Indy Game!
- First Story with Indy
 - Calendar of the Sun
- IP: Important Voice
 - Use Sparingly



Grab Your Fedora!



Refining the Story Drive



The Looming Antagonist



Riddle of the Sphinx



Thrilling Conclusion to the Library Incident



Thrilling Conclusion to the Library Incident



Big Carrots, Little Carrots



“We’re Gonna Need A Bigger Boat”



"I Love It When a Plan Comes Together"



Collaborative Narrative Design

- Narrative important in the design process
- Collaboration quickly led to experiments
- Limits to our ambition emerged
- Stay on cadence!



Two Weeks in the Life



T-minus Two Weeks



T-minus Two Weeks

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Team A	WRITE PITCH	PRESENT PITCH	PRESENT PITCH	BUILD
Team B	BUILD	ROUGH TEXT	REVISE TEXT	PAC



T-minus Two Weeks

	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	We
Team A	BUILD	BUILD	BUILD	RC
Team B	PACKAGE TEXT	QA	RELEASE?	REL



T-minus One Week



T-minus One Week

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Team A	ROUGH TEXT	REVISE TEXT	PACKAGE TEXT
Team B	RELEASE?	PRESENT PITCH	BUILD



T-minus One Day & Launch



T-minus One Day & Launch

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Team A	QA	RELEASE?	RELEASE?
Team B	BUILD	BUILD	ROUGH TEXT



T-plus One Day



Two Weeks in the Life

- T-Minus 2 Weeks: Pitch and Rough Draft
- T-Minus 1 Week: Text, Revise, Package Up
- T-Minus 1 Day: Grammar QA and Approval
- Launch Day: Maybe?
- Can Launch Late, But...



Final Thoughts



The Show Must Go On



Final Thoughts

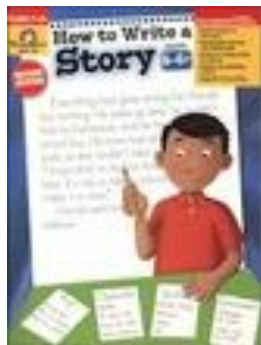


The Show Must Go On

Story IP for a Social Game



Final Thoughts



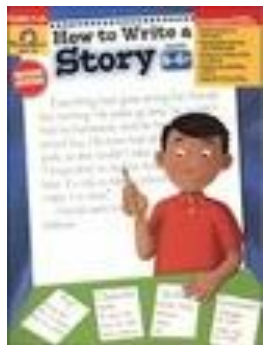
The Show Must Go On

Story IP for a Social Game

How We Did What We Did



Final Thoughts



The Show Must Go On

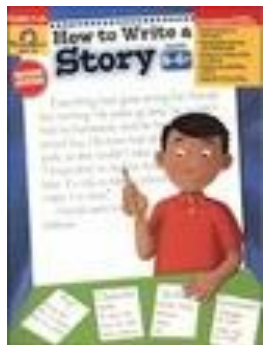
Collaborative Narrative Design

Story IP for a Social Game

How We Did What We Did



Final Thoughts



The Show Must Go On

Collaborative Narrative Design

Story IP for a Social Game

Two Weeks in the Life

How We Did What We Did



Questions?



INDIANA JONES and all related characters, names and indicia are trademarks of & © 2012 Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved. Used under license.