Application of Puzzle Theory
Written by Scarpia, (c) 2003

Good puzzles alone do not make a great adventure game. Essentially, it is all about plot consistency, puzzle integration, well-developed character personalities, and plenty of humor. But forget all that for a second, and Let's Talk PUZZLES!

Why this article?

I'm still fairly new to the independent game developer community, but adventure game puzzles have been a strong passion of mine ever since my 'first encounters' with them in Beneath A Steel Sky way back in '94. Anyways, after having lurked around in the community for a while, it has surprised me how little this topic is actually being discussed.

I went on to frantically Googling the web for "adventure game puzzles", "puzzle design", "puzzle theory" and the like, but -- to my astonishment -- the material available on the topic is limited to Esseb's old topic from the DOSUser boards [Note from Scummbuddy: This Is Posted After This Article], an article by Blake Speers from the AGDZine (which went 404 on me, too!) and one, ONE!, actual structured article from 1997 on the topic of puzzle design, by Bob Bates of Legend Entertainment [Note from Scummbuddy: This Is Available On LucasStyle].

Well - that's not entirely true. I did also find a short article by Johnathan Partington somewhere, and another one on GamaSutra, and a few more; but these are hardly worthwhile from a game designer's point of view.

Now, although there are literally dozens of amateur adventure games currently in the works, using engines like AGS, AGAST, WME or SLUDGE, the one thing amateur designers *still* aren't discussing, is how to make good puzzles.... which, in the eyes of someone like me, is a pity beyond belief.

Theory vs. Practice

I'm not here to re-invent the wheel, though. Go read Bob Bates' article on Puzzle Theory if you haven't already done so. C'mon, go there. Go! Now! [Note from Scummbuddy: This Is Available On LucasStyle].

Good. Every adventure game developer should know the basics of puzzle theory. However, my intent is another. I want to dig in a little deeper, into the practice and *application* of puzzle theory. To me, at least, this calls for a different angle. When designing puzzles, I need to distinguish between different kinds (or 'implementations') of "sequence puzzles", for example, whereas it does not make sense to consider "ordinary use of an object in the way it was obviously designed" a puzzle, at least not by itself.

In a practical approach, we must categorize puzzles not by similar goals, but by the types of actions that a player must perform in order to solve them. To clarify: I wanted my classification of puzzle types to reflect that two subsequent puzzles of the *same type* will make the player feel like he's doing the same all over again, only in a different

context. With two subsequent puzzles of *different types*, the player will get a more rewarding and diverse experience.

Applied Puzzle Types

- Quid Pro Quo / Exchange Puzzles
- Inventory / Combination Puzzles
- Timing Puzzles
- Distract-n-Grab Puzzles
- Maze Puzzles
- Escape Puzzles
- Disguise Puzzles
- Cryptogram Puzzles
- Memory-based Sequence Puzzles
- Logic Sequence / Device Puzzles
- Repeated-Action Puzzles
- Dialogue Puzzles
- Forced Dialogue Puzzles
- Riddles and Logic Puzzles
- GUI / Board Puzzles
- Dead Ends, Red Herrings and Faux Puzzles

Quid Pro Quo / Exchange Puzzles. The most basic of all puzzles, from an implementer's point of view. The objective is for the player to get a certain item, and in order to get it, he will have to give up something else, be it from his inventory, or something he must first acquire.

(Often, the item you need belongs to an NPC who will give you a clue as to what he is willing to trade it for. All there is to the switch itself, is then trading one object for another by finding the item he wants and giving it to him, and in return, he will give you the item you need.)

The other typical kind of QPQ puzzle is the Indiana Jones switch, in which you must use an object with the item you need, in effect switching the two, to get the item you need. Strictly speaking, the objects do not always 'switch', but after getting item B, you will no longer have item A in your inventory.

Be aware that badly-designed QPQ puzzles become boring in no time, and that many (if not most) amateur adventure games suffer from an excessive use of them. If half (or more, eek) of your puzzles are QPQ puzzles, your game play is likely to bore the players. To make a QPQ puzzle more interesting, a game designer can use a number of techniques:

- Make the clues from the NPC as vague as possible without spoiling the puzzle altogether. "Oh no, my dress is all torn up…" is vague, and opens up to a variety of solutions. In short, the obstacle is merely presented to

the player. "My dress needs mending. Could you find me a pair of tailor's scissors?" not only reveals the complete obstacle, it also tells the player exactly how to complete the puzzle. The 'how' should always be left to the player, and this is accomplished by being vague. On the other hand, do not make your 'how'-clues too ambiguous, or you may lead the player completely and helplessly off track. Always leave good hints.

- When it comes to the items themselves, don't be too obvious either. If the NPC (vaguely) asks for an orange, don't just leave an orange lying around in the next room. You could instead (and I'm just brainstorming here) have a sarcastic bartender NPC, who, earlier in the game, had been refusing to serve anything but orange juice to a wimpy looking character in the corner of the inn, and make it possible (through subtle hints) for the player to recall this incident, go back to the inn, get the glass of orange juice, and complete the exchange.

- Use QPQ puzzles in combination with other puzzle types to make more unique puzzle structures. Don't make it too easy for the player to get the item for the exchange - use an additional puzzle here, or two, or five, or whatever - as long as you always remember to switch between different puzzle types.

Inventory / Combination Puzzles. Rarely a puzzle in itself, but it deserves mentioning nevertheless. It isn't easy for a game designer to pull off a good inventory puzzle, since the combination of items must be somehow logical without being too obvious (of the gun-bullet or flashlight-batteries type) or too arbitrary, which will throw the player into use-everything-with-everything hell. The balance is best achieved, I think, through good beta testing. Whenever a beta tester attempts a combination of objects, that should signify some kind of logic connection between those objects, even if the game designer didn't think of it.

If you know beforehand that the player is likely to try a certain combination which isn't the right one, the least you can do is reward him with some kind of witty comment when he does. After all, cracking that use-violin-with-bible combo takes a pretty awesome imagination... Okay, so it may be completely and utterly wrong, but at least let him know you're *way* ahead of him...

The best way to balance your inventory puzzles is using the object descriptions to leave hints about their possible future use. Always do this.

Always reward the player
Solving a puzzle, especially a hard one, should **always** be rewarded!! But what can you give him? How about this:

- A funny or surprising dialogue (very small reward)
- A unique character animation (small reward)
- Access to a new location (small/medium reward)
- Access to a new area of locations (medium/big reward)

- A cutscene (medium/big reward)
- Access to a new player character (big reward)

These are exciting for the player to watch, and every time you reward him with one of these for solving a puzzle, he'll want to solve the next one more. Dave Gilbert pointed out that a funny or surprising dialogue can also be used as a reward, and I agree completely. But unless the dialogue is wrapped in a cutscene, it is a very small reward compared to the others, even if it's really funny. When I break out a new amateur adventure game, I **expect** humor but hope for animations. Nuff said.

Timing Puzzles. Very possibly the most underestimated puzzle type of all. It is almost never seen in amateur adventure games, mostly because it takes some less-than-trivial scripting. To me, timing puzzles are often what makes an adventure game come to life.

My definition of a timing puzzle differs from that of "an action that will not yield an instant effect, but instead will cause something to happen at a particular point in the future", as formulated by Bob Bates. If you ask me, that definition would fit half the puzzles in Beneath a Steel Sky or Day of The Tentacle. If a puzzle is well integrated in the game plot, it will invariably trigger some kind of effect later on in the game, no matter what kind of puzzle it is. *Instead*, I define a timing puzzle as a puzzle that has an actual *timer*, like an invisible stopwatch, and in which the player must take specific action between time A and time B for his action to succeed.

Example **[spoiler]**: Monkey Island 1 & 2 had wonderful timing puzzles: Grabbing the cartographer's monocle at the right time; walking into the kitchen of the Scumm Bar when the cook was out of sight; the spitting contest puzzle (my favorite adventure game puzzle of all time) had no less than two great timing puzzles, etc. **[/spoiler]**

I could go on like this, but what's special about timing puzzles is that they can be amazingly simple and logical, all the while being surprisingly rewarding to solve. Ditch half a dozen QPQ puzzles for one or two timing puzzles, and watch that game come to life before your eyes.

Distract-n-Grab Puzzles. Another real classic, but this one is much more rewarding than the plain old QPQ puzzle. Sometimes the distraction part includes a timing element of some sort (kicking it up a notch), but lots of DnG puzzles keeps the NPC busy until the player has grabbed what he needs.

Too many DnG puzzles in one game might feel awkward, but so would an amateur adventure game without them ;)

Examples **[spoiler]**: the infamous "three-headed-monkey" trick; Getting rid of the 'Carpenter' in Monkey Island II, the General and his secretary in Broken Sword II, or the mechanic in the beginning of Beneath a Steel Sky. **[/spoiler]**

Maze Puzzles. Mazes are so cliché. Fortunately, it is not terribly easy to create a maze puzzle, or I'm sure there'd be one in every amateur adventure game out there, one more heinous than the other. Poorly designed mazes are absolute game killers, whereas really good mazes are just slightly annoying. Okay, I'm sure there are lots of people who actually enjoy working through mazes, but unless your maze design is really good, even

they will get frustrated long before they get it right.

Most mazes in commercial adventure games will provide good in-game hints, such as clues, maps, parrots, dancing lesson charts, ways of leaving a trail behind, etc. Why? Because walking into a maze blind is bound to get you stuck. That's the original idea of any maze, of course: to get you stuck so you won't find the secret on the other side! "But my maze isn't *that* hard", I hear you saying. But if it's really that easy, why is it there in the first place? Did the villains of your story think that only really dumb people would enter their labyrinth? Or are you basically just wasting the player's time? Is a maze really necessary? Does it make sense to even *have* a maze in the context of your game's plot? Think about it for a while, before you decide to script that maze.

To summarize: If you want to include a maze, fine. Just remember this: In-game hints. In-game hints! IN-GAME HINTS!

Aim to integrate puzzles and plot

Whenever the player acts in your world, the world should react to the change. Avoid having too many puzzles that don't affect anything other than the immediate state of an object / location. Instead, have the player's solutions affect other characters, the scenery, or (my favorite) the primary plot. This helps make the game seem much more non-linear.

Imagine that the solution to one puzzle later turns out to present an obstacle for the player, that is, another puzzle? E.g. the player needs to pass a huge boulder, so he pushes it over the cliff's edge. Later, at the bottom of the cliff, he finally arrives at the cave holding the big treasure, only to find the boulder from earlier landed exactly there, blocking the entrance... You'll get the picture.

Great example: Beneath a Steel Sky does this *a lot*.

Escape Puzzles. Oh no - our hero is locked up in chains on the floor of a tiny prison cell, and the prison is engulfed in flames. All he has left is a dry bone, a hungry rat and five thousand rubber bands. Now what?

Escape puzzles are fun because we know the answer lies right in front of us, but we just can't see it. There is no risk of frustration due to walking between locations, talking to the same characters over again, etc., since the solution is obviously there in that one location. This *basically* allows for more difficult puzzles, e.g. in the form of intricate logic sequence or device puzzles. But don't overdo it - spending too long in the same room, stuck with an escape puzzle in the same room, trying different approaches in the same room, listening to the **same music over and over again, in the same room!!!!** - will eventually get tedious, or worse.

Again, it's all about being unconventional when supplying the player with inventory items. And remember - even prison cells have more exits than one. Make the player wonder whether he's supposed to dig his way out, bend the bars in the window, or reach the keys on the table beside the sleeping guard. Guards in movies and adventure games sure seem to sleep a lot on the job, don't they? ;)

Disguise Puzzles. Sometimes, you need to look different in order to get inside a certain place, and you will need a disguise. Some games take the easy way out and supply a costume shop, complete with wacky shopkeeper and everything, while others require you to make your own nose, wig or peg leg from the items you can find. Both approaches can be hilarious.

These are rarely seen in amateur adventure games, probably in part because they require additional character art, sometimes even extra animation. But animations are not merely superfluous, time-consuming eye candy, although I'm sure many amateur game designers wish they were. I believe lots of animations are necessary for an adventure game to be good. The graphics don't have to be great, but if there are no extra animations, the game will always have that 'static' feel to it that many amateur adventure games have.

Cryptogram Puzzles I hate these. In real life, I enjoy a challenging cryptogram as much as the next man, but in adventure games, cryptograms have always been pathetically, painfully, *monumentally* crappy. Probably because any half-decent cryptogram would throw off 60% of the core players then and there, and few game designers are willing to take that risk. I know I'm not.

With that rant out of my system, I can go on with the description. Cryptogram puzzles are basically just encoded text messages written with either letters or symbols / numbers that *represent* letters. Now, in order to decipher the cryptogram (thus making it readable), one needs some sort of 'key'. Most adventure games use trivial ciphers such as ROT13 (which 'rotates' the individual letters alphabetically by 13 places) in order to keep the difficulty level down, and, on top of that, they add in-game clues to make sure even the last 15% will get it right without too much frustration. I suggest you do the same if you choose to include a cryptogram puzzle in your game.

Epic plot structure

Game plots should follow the same basic rules of story-telling that movies or books do. These epic principles have been refined for centuries, and only fools do not abide by them:

- Use the first few puzzles mainly to introduce and establish characters, locations and the basic plot outline.
- Spend a lot of effort developing the core characters, and make sure the player sympathizes with and cares about the protagonist.
- Build up tension throughout the game, reaching a climax at the final endgame puzzle.
- If you are making a large game, try to divide the plot into a couple of logical "chapters", *each* following these epic principles.

Memory-based Sequence Puzzles. Most puzzles consist of a sequence of events leading up to the solution in one way or another. What distinguishes this category of puzzles is that the puzzle basically relies on the player to remember and recreate a sequence of steps or actions. **[spoiler]** Like the safe combination in Monkey Island I: At one point, you watch the shop manager open the safe with a combination of push/pull

actions, and when he leaves, you must perform the same sequence to open the safe.
[/spoiler]

Memory-based sequence puzzles are quite satisfying, because they are naturally split in four separate, consistent parts:

- Observing the sequence (often this part is a small puzzle in itself)
- Figuring out you'll need this information, possibly checking the sequence again
- Memorizing the sequence (or writing it down)
- Recreating the sequence from memory

Logic Sequence / Device Puzzles. These are puzzles that constitute some sort of mechanical-causal relationship between the events leading up to the final solution. There are many different kinds of classic device puzzles, like the *rig-a-trap puzzle*, the *excluded-middle / preparing-the-way puzzle* as explained by Bob Bates, or the *machine puzzle*, in which the player must figure out how to operate a machine in order to complete the puzzle.

Logic sequence puzzles must be logical; the more steps you add to the sequence, the more difficult it gets; and this makes it crucial that each step is as unambiguous as possible to the player.

As a side-note, have you ever completed a logic sequence puzzle in a commercial adventure game, and *not* gotten a funny little animation when it finally worked out - and possibly even when it failed? I think not. Always reward the player with something after solving a hard puzzle, and not with 'money' or 'points'. Players don't care about points. They don't play the game for the points. They play to see all the fun stuff. So make sure you give 'em some.

Smart clues

I believe I read about this somewhere, and it is certainly worth looking into. Some games have "smart clues", that is, clues that automatically appear if and when the player needs them. Imagine a puzzle that you know is hard, and you have added 4 different hints near the puzzle location, one of which is kinda unambiguous about the solution. You know from beta testing that 6 out of 10 will solve it without the final clue (and they generally tell you that the fourth clue makes it too obvious). The rest, 4 out of 10, will not solve the puzzle without it.

To make this clue 'smart', write a script that checks the player's actions on this stage of the game: if he has found the three (more vague) hints, and still doesn't solve the puzzle within a certain time limit, the extra clue is placed where the player is likely to find it.

Now that's a smart clue.

Repeated-Action Puzzles. A simple yet highly adaptable puzzle type is the repeated-action puzzle. The Reality-on-the-Norm game *Purity of the Surf* uses this in a very

humorous way: **[spoiler]** the main character being a surfer dude, walks around barefoot. When he enters the Italian restaurant, Chef Lucca comes out from the kitchen, yelling at him to get out. Entering again, the Chef once again comes running, this time yelling even more (and it is a different dialogue this time, hint hint..). After returning a few more times like this, you have finally made the Chef so angry that he tosses a fish at you, which you, conveniently, need for another puzzle. **[/spoiler]**

Oh, and as Esseb kindly reminded me, repeated-action puzzles will easily get players stuck, unless the player is likely to attempt the action again. Using the action of entering a location is fine, since you always walk everywhere when you're stuck, but interacting with a squirrel is hardly something you'd try if it failed the first time.

Dialogue Puzzles. With dialogue puzzles, you attempt to choose the right path through a conversation, saying the right things or asking the right questions, in order to accomplish something, get a piece of information, get a hint, etc. If you choose the wrong path, you can always just try again, but that will take a while.

If the puzzle is too complex, or the dialogue isn't humorous, the player will soon stop reading the dialogue and just click frantically through different choices until he's explored all the possible combinations of the dialogue tree. This kind of 'puzzle' should be avoided unless there is good reason to use it (I suppose certain types of detective stories would use them, for interrogation sequences etc.).

As the following examples show, a dialogue puzzle can actually be quite funny, provided that: 1) it shouldn't be too complex; 2) it should be obvious that there is a puzzle; and 3) there should not be a lot of these in one game. Pointed out to me by Creed Malay, here are a few good dialogue puzzles:

- Manny trying to talk the security girl into giving him her metal detector in Grim Fandango
- Guybrush convincing Elaine that he's in love with her in Monkey Island II
- The V.K. test in Blade Runner
- And perhaps the finest dialogue puzzle of all: Insult Sword Fighting, also Monkey Island II

Forced Dialogue Puzzles. Many game developers refrain from using these, because they tend to become a nuisance to the players (Bad Marketing Strategies 101). The basic idea is this: in order to get the response you need (and solve the puzzle), you must choose the right path through the conversation with one or more NPC's. If you get it wrong, you will have to restore a saved game or you're stuck.

Naturally, you may provide a forced dialogue puzzle merely as an alternative, allowing the puzzle to be solved in a different manner even if the dialogue puzzle fails. In my opinion, this is the best way to avoid frustrating the player unnecessarily by forcing him to go through Restore Game-purgatory every time he makes a wrong choice. Some games have an auto-restore function which allows you to automatically return to before you made the wrong choice, but that's for rare events like deaths. With frequent events like these, auto-restoring would become rather annoying too.

Puzzle repeating
We all know we shouldn't do the same puzzle twice in a game. The player will find it tedious the second time around. However, in Monkey Island II, that's *exactly* what the designers did with the "Voodoo Doll" puzzle. **[spoiler]** The fortune teller woman handed you the recipe for the first doll, and later on in the game, you received subtle hints that you would need to make another voodoo doll. You then had to recall what items you needed for the doll and find them, only this time, some of the items from earlier were no longer available, so you had to improvise, which turned out to be a very amusing puzzle. **[/spoiler]**
Credits for this one to Cerulean

   Riddles and Logic Puzzles. Bob Bates claims this is one of the least satisfying puzzle types, since *"if the player doesn't get it, he just doesn't get it"*. This may be true to a point, but the same could easily be said for many other puzzle types. I believe riddles, when used with caution, can add greatly to the atmosphere of an adventure game, and certainly to the personality of the character presenting the riddle. Same goes for logic puzzles.
   An example of a good logic puzzle is the 'how many fingers'-code on Phatt Island in Monkey Island II. If you didn't get it, you could keep trying until you got it right, or figure it out by yourself. I believe there was an in-game hint somewhere, too, but I don't remember exactly where.
   With riddles as well as logic puzzles, always leave hints or provide alternative solutions. That way, chances are the player will - eventually - 'get it'.

   GUI / Board Puzzles. Probably the most script-heavy puzzle type, and often, it is not worth the effort. There are thousands of classic board games, from chess to tic-tac-toe, all of which could be adapted as puzzles in an adventure game. This, however, is not always trivial, as you will likely need to create a new GUI for the game, as well as do some scripting for the 'game' to have a realistic look-and-feel.
   Some puzzles, such as certain machine puzzles, cryptogram puzzles and others, often use separates GUIs as well, which certainly justifies their use, but board game puzzles are hard to fit into a plot in any reasonable way, and should be used only when there is a tight connection between that specific game and the main characters of your plot.
   With that said, alternating interfaces can make a game look much more professional, given that their use is justified. A good example is in Pleurghburg: Dark Ages, in which several additional GUI's are nicely integrated into the story: a computer interface, a top-down view of a building, a wall-mounted elevator panel, etc. Sure, none of those are used as puzzles, but they add to the game play without seeming out-of-place, and that's what you'll want with your GUI puzzles as well.

   Dead Ends, Red Herrings and Faux Puzzles. Dead ends are inevitable in adventure games, whether we as designers aim to put them there or not. Unless our puzzles are ridiculously easy, the player will get stuck in one or more of them. Sometimes, especially with poorly designed puzzles, the player will be clueless when faced with the obstacle,

but most of the time, he will have several logical and / or obvious solutions to try out; then he will move on to a couple of more imaginative ones, before getting stuck trying out irrational combinations, more or less at random.

When this happens, the good adventure games don't abandon the player altogether. They supply parallel puzzles to be solved. While stuck in one puzzle, the player can move on with another puzzle elsewhere, instead of getting frustrated by the fact that he's stuck. Most amateur adventure games are very linear, leaving the player with only one puzzle to solve at any time, and are thus more prone to player frustration.

When non-linearity (parallel puzzles) is done elegantly, the player won't even notice that he was stuck; after all, "it could be part of the plot that you have to finish *these* two puzzles before you can move on with the other one." As long as you succeed in maintaining this illusion, the players won't mind being stuck in the first place.

Remember however, not to create side-stories which are separate from the main plot, or your game will fall apart. Two, or even three, simultaneous puzzles or 'goals' are fine, but if two of them are obstacles on your way to rescue a princess, and the third is stealing an egg from a bird's nest, then you better make damn sure the player knows *exactly* why he'll need that egg later on, or he simply won't bother (well, most players will, but only because they see the bird's nest and go "This is probably a puzzle. I should solve this and see what I get." -- which is just idiotic, if you ask me).

The "faux puzzle" is when you intentionally design a dead end, to let the players know they're on the wrong track (or just to mess with them a bit). Sometimes you'll want to create one after a beta-testing phase when several of the testers were stuck trying fruitlessly to solve a certain puzzle in the same - wrong - way. And at other times, you just want to be mean and place a hammer in a place where the player can't reach it, just when his current puzzle is to break something. Oh, don't do that; that's just cruel. Heh.

Actually, adding a faux puzzle can be an interesting twist to an otherwise dull puzzle. In the hammer example from before, allow the player to reach the hammer (with a little luck and perhaps a simple inventory combination), but then let the hammer turn out to be a useless rubber hammer, or make it break or something, indicating that the puzzle has to be solved differently.

Classics & Inspiration

- Multiple solutions to one puzzle increase realism. Like, cutting a rope can be accomplished using a rusty sword, a shard of glass, or a pair of scissors.
- 'Caught in the dark' puzzles, where you wind up in a dark place and must find a way to shed some light. They take very little drawing / animating, and are a nice gimmick in any game. Don't put too many in one game, though.
- Partially deaf NPC's. If you want a character to come off especially annoying and cliché, make him / her partially deaf.
- Who decided that players could only Use, Pick Up, Talk To, etc.? Why not have a dog as player character: Eat, Smell, Bark At, Poop, Pee.. or a mean biker: Break, Hurt, Kick, Yell At..?

- Remember the ship's horn in Monkey Island II? Blowing it next to the blind lookout man would make the guy from the nearby spitting contest come running and talk to the old lookout geezer, which was pretty funny in itself. **[spoiler]** Later, you could use this knowledge in the "Spitting Contest" puzzle. **[/spoiler]** Making a funny dialogue sequence made sure the player would remember this effect.

Example of an applied puzzle structure

Let's have a look at a puzzle I was playing around with, set in Reality-on-the-Norm, the main characters being a mean little kid named Moe, and his nervous sidekick, Wilbur. The goal of the puzzle is getting inside the kitchen of Chef Lucca's Italian restaurant (to steal the birthday cake Lucca is making for his naked brother Guido), and an additional goal of gaining access to the hospital morgue. Here goes:

When the kids enter the restaurant, they see Chef Lucca walking around and occasionally entering the kitchen. He is busy decorating the restaurant and servicing a single customer who is eating some kind of pasta dish and complaining that it has no parmesan. Talking to Lucca, the kids learn that he is making a delicious birthday cake out back. If they try to enter the kitchen while Lucca is in the restaurant, he will yell at them to keep out of there. If they enter while he's in the kitchen, he will throw them out (but they will get a quick peek of the cake on the table).

If they enter the kitchen like that a few times, the chef gets more and more angry, and finally tosses a mortar (not a bomb; the kitchen kind) at them (*small reward: animation*), which they pick up. (*Repeated-Action*)

While Lucca is in the kitchen, the kids can steal the hammer and scissors he's using for the decorating. (*Timing Puzzle*)

Not far from the restaurant is the hospital. If the kids enter there and ask if they can get inside the morgue, a guard will tell them to leave. Enter again, and he will get angry at them, wave his gun around (he's under a lot of stress) and tell them if anyone walks through those doors within the next two minutes, they'll be seeing the morgue sooner than they think - hint, hint.. (*small reward: animation*) If they DO enter again within 2 minutes despite the guard's warning, he will shoot them dead. If they enter after the two minutes have passed, he will merely throw them out and repeat his threat. (*Repeated-Action and Timing*)

Back in town square, there is a closed fast-food place called Dominatrix' Pizza (or at least we think it's a fast food place - nobody knows for sure). Behind the window is a pill jar (Larry 1 reference, heh). The kids must use the hammer to smash the window (the brats!) and take the jar of pills (*small reward: animation*), but to get away with it, they must distract a character who's standing nearby. (*Distract-n-Grab*)

The jar of pills has a label on it that indicates danger. If Moe eats the pills, he will drop dead (I kill my characters a lot. I know it's bad, I just can't help it). If he makes Wilbur eat a couple (which is quite likely since Moe's a real jerk), poor Wilbur will start to vomit and look very pale for the rest of the game. The mortar must be used with the jar to grind the pills into a powdery substance. (*Inventory / Combination Puzzle*)

In the restaurant, the kids can now use the jar with the pasta dish (*small reward: animation*). The customer will think what they're sprinkling over his food is parmesan, and thank them as he starts to eat. (I could have made a Quid Pro Quo puzzle here as

well, but I chose not to)

As the kids leave the restaurant, there is a cutscene (*medium reward*) with a 911 call from the restaurant.

The kids should now go back to the hospital and enter again, piss the guard off, and then go wait outside. Within seconds (that is, *less than* two minutes), Lucca arrives, carrying the unconscious customer (*small reward: animation*), and enters through the hospital doors. Two loud shots are heard, and a lot of cursing. (*the funny sequence earlier makes the player remember the effect of entering the hospital*)

Another 911 call cutscene (*medium reward*), and this time the police are alerted. The kids decide to get the hell out of there before the police show up.

After this, the kids can return to the restaurant, enter the kitchen and get their hands on the cake - not! The restaurant doors are locked. When the police have sealed off the hospital and brought the guard back to headquarters, the kids can enter the hospital again (using the scissors to cut the 'Police Line Do Not Cross' tape) and get inside the morgue (*final reward: new location*). Also, they will find the chef's bloody apron on the floor, with the key to the restaurant in its pocket. Voilá.

As you have probably noticed, I include quite a few animations in the minor puzzles. This is key, I think, if you want to keep the players interested. Also, I try to use different types of puzzles so the player doesn't get bored having to do the same over and over again. And finally, the player can enter the hospital at any time to discover the guard's bad temper, which makes the puzzle a little bit less linear (and of course, there are other puzzles to solve at the same time: something to do with the mayor, bribes and a large genetic research corporation, heh, cliché is good).

Esseb
Newbie
(6/6/01 2:08:21 pm)
Reply | Edit

A little bit of theory..

Never having been any good with presentations, I'll just say that this thread is meant as a place to put up theories and ideas about puzzles in adventure games to help make it easier for budding adventure game developers when thinking up puzzles (i.e the 'reinventing the wheel' thingie). Puzzles, of course, being the most important part in any adventure game is sadly the last thing people actually think about when they start making an adventure game (graphics/GUI/programming and actually releasing the game being stressed the most).

So what I suggest is that we collect thoughts we have made about puzzle-build up here with practical examples so that we'll hopefully end all those pick-up-key/use-key-in-locked-door-you-didn't-even-notice-before-after-you-had-picked-up-the-key puzzles.

So I'll just start then:

Remember in Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis when you had to persuade you female side-kick Sophie(?) to volunteer as an assistance in a knife-throwing act. No matter what you did or said to persuade she'd reply something like "You'll have to PUSH me into this one." Which is literally what you had to do. I even think the sword-thrower spurted out "..anyone who wants to, just step up." every once in a while.

What does this mean, you might ask. Well, the push and pull commands where seldom used in the LEC games so without the hints the only way to solve the puzzle would be by dumb luck. (Which is how I solved the push-the-beardy-guy-in-MI3-to-get-jawbreaker puzzle (I can't remember any hints in the game on how to solve that) Besides helping the player out with a difficult puzzle which would otherwise just irritate him (or her), the added bonus with these kinds of hints are that the player will feel i n c r e d i b l y stupid after finally solving it for not having figured it out earlier.

Then there are the classic 3-quests puzzle which is common in most adventure games. The 3 tasks you have to do before becoming a pirate in MI being one (there is of course the 4 items you have to find to make the Largo voodoo doll in MI2, but those rhymed (and you had them written down on a piece of paper as well) so is was easy to remember what it was you needed. Also, the number 3 is evident in other aspects of games as well (3 being a magic number in most folklore etc.), the 3 islands in MI2 for instance and there were 3 controllable players in DOTT.

Don't let the player loose almost every inventory item when a

new act starts. It is possible to use an item more than once in the game (but preferably not in the exact same manner unless you want the puzzles after the first one to be real simple. A crowbar can be used to open a manhole, but don't expect it to tax the players mind if you have another manhole that needs to be opened later in the game)

I though of another as well but can't remember what it was now. Remember that the point of this thread is to prevent puzzles a 5 year old could come up with in games you are working on and to still retain the spirit of adventure games of the past. (The real reason is actually that I'm currently devising puzzles for my own game and am stumped).

Remember that I only really thought these "guide lines" up in a few minutes and they mustn't be followed if you don't want to (it may not be appropriate in your game for instance or you just simply hate well-thought up puzzles (in that case, why?)).

Guh, me wrote a lot.

Esseb
Newbie
(6/6/01 2:29:06 pm)
Reply | Edit

Re: A little bit of theory..

Um, oh yeah. If you have a really good puzzle you've thought up but don't need yourself, post it here as well.

Now I remembered the last example: The nail file in FotAQ. The missionary wife will only trade her pygmy-english dictionary for a nail file (she doesn't say it directly, but after she say's that she's willing to trade the dictionary for something, she says that her nail file is worn). Close by is a pair of explorers (?). One of which is filing his fingers with a nail file. He says that the one thing he really wants is a rash-medicine. (At this point I assumed he'd exchange the nail file for a rash-medicine) At Trader Tom's you learn that the medicine woman outside can make you a rash-medicine. She doesn't speak english, of course, so you'll need the english-pygmy dictionary that you can only get if you get a nail-file which you need a rash-medicine to get which you.. etc. It took a while before I figured out that "Hey, that doesn't work". Instead you'll have to get the nail file somewhere else (can't remember where now though).

What I meant with that last paragraph is that it's a-OK to trick the player. It doesn't have to be that complicated though. A chainsaw without gas for instance. Let's say that you can only get the gas by giving a shop keeper a fake Nolex. You could for instance let it be possible to buy fake Dolex's, Golex's etc, from the local bum, but no Nolex. Then suddenly you realize that you can use liquor in the chainsaw instead of gas. (The liquor could for instance only be acquired if you tell a police officer that the local bum's selling fake Rolex's without permit. When the police officer chases the bum he'll drop his compulsory bottle of whisky (I'm not really

sure if whisky could be used as a substitute for gas, but still (the last puzzle was sort-of nicked from Flight of the Amazon Queen as well).)

dgmacphee
Expert
(6/6/01 2:47:58 pm)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

Your 'three' theory is very correct... mainly because most media types conform to the ideas of threes... it stems all the way back to Aristotle's Poetics where he devised the idea of the "three-act structure" that most plays and movies conform... Beginning, middle, and end... I guess it's the standard really...

Davis
Expert
(6/6/01 4:07:57 pm)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

LOL, all that and at the end

(The real reason is actually that I'm currently devising puzzles for my own game and am stumped.)

Hee hee.

That's a good idea Esseb, to start a kind of generic free puzzle place. Of course, we'd get to recognizing them if they got used to much, but maybe we could offer non specifics, like, hints on constructing puzzles. "Try to use items that blah blah blah." I don't know what I'm saying. Nevermind. If I think of any good ones I'll post.

Esseb
Newbie
(6/6/01 4:21:15 pm)
Reply | Edit

Re: A little bit of theory..

That, and information on how puzzles in the LEC/Sierra etc. games were built up (many of them share similarities without being similar, if you get my drift), the nail file puzzle could be used in a variety of ways, but it's hard to notice that was intentional by the designer. The unused puzzle idea was added as an afterthought (mostly so I could nick some good ones).

Cerulean
Knows their stuff
(6/7/01 2:56:29 am)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory...

One of the devices that the Monkey Island games demonstrated was to walk the player through something at the beginning of the game and then bring it back in a new form later. In the first act of MI2, you had the obvious task of making a voodoo doll, and a shopping list for doing it. At the finale of the game, you have to realize on your own that it might be a good idea to make another one. In Curse of MI, you had to follow a recipe for a hangover cure. Later, transformed at the carnival, the only clues you have are that you feel groggy and that similar ingredients are available. It's good to require the players to remember what they've learned.

Las Naranjas
Break out the Bubbly

Re: A little bit of theory...

Then there's the trinity. An extremely cynical view would say that the Holy Spirit was added just to make 3.
Any theologists here, because I don't exactly know what the Holy Spirit is.
There is a certain repetition in adventure game puzzles. Problem is then, since the player has got so used to this, they won't think of the solutions you present, no matter how logical.
The whiskey in the chainsaw thing, that's also in Teenagent.
Very computer game logic, but so are many puzzles (the monkey wrench in MI2)

Esseb
Newbie

Re: A little bit of theory..

Whisky in chainsaw, yeah, teenagent. I'm playing FotAQ now for the first time since I played the talkie demo back in '95. And I finished Teen Agent seconds before I typed in that so I suppose that's understandable. (btw, Teen Agent was disappointingly short at the end. A no-no for adventure games in my view)

A few more things I just remembered/made-up:

WARNING: There's somewhat of a spoiler below if you haven't
played Monkey Island 2 yet. Excuse me for describing the puzzles instead of typing in a scientific theory)

The boat captain in MI2 says he can't leave because he's lost his lucky-necklace which were his navigators eye put on a string. (was there an eye-necklace in MI1, I can't remember?). This is both a clue and a way to trick you into looking for a necklace made with eyes) Wally, the map-maker (I think he says he was a navigator as well, that's a hint as well if I remember that one correctly) continually looses his monockle. When he looses it you can pick it up. That is the necklace Captain Dread[lock] needs.

You can only pick up Wally's monocle when he drops it. That's a repeating event (diff name?) and may be difficult to implement in your game if you're not careful. (It took a long while before I noticed that I could pick it up when it lay on his table) It's really a simple way to extend the playing time because unless you're lucky and hit it or specifically look there you're most likely just gonna sweep the mouse past the area when the hotspot is 'off'. An idea is to give some sort of clue like for instance making the animation really easy to spot or mentioning it in a conversation or something.

You can also give the monocle back to Wally. That's just a simple trick to make you unsure whether or not you actually need it. (He continually says that he can't see without it and won't shut up 'till you give it to him. I gave it to him and get any further in the game without a solve (I was 11 years old and barely knew any english at the time so don't mock me)

On Scabb Island(?) (which you get to after you give the captain the monocle) you can pick up a magnifying lens from a model lighthouse. You can give that to Wally so he can see. This is a repetition puzzle of some sort because with the monocle/eye-necklace you realized that a thing could be used several ways. When you then pick up the magnifying lens it shouldn't be too hard to remember Wally who cries for his monocle.

In Teen Agent, in order to get a nut from a squirrel you have to repeatedly click it with the left mouse button (left is action and right is walk). Each time you click the player character says something different so unless you're really dumb (like

me: how was I to notice that?   ) you'll click the squirrel 'till he repeats himself.

Also, another way to hide the solution to a puzzle is to let the player be convinced that in order to solve it he has to use a particular inventory item. (The banana at the start in FotAQ for instance)

Damn, I thought I knew a bunch of puzzle theories. I'm drawing a blank here. Anyone else know some more? (And hopefully better than what I've come up with)

[edit]I'm sounding increasingly more stupid. Can someone else please post so I won't have to show the world how stupid I really am. After all, the reason I started this thread was because I couldn't really think of any.

Also, if someone happens to actually not cringe just at the thought of it, a lexica with made-up latin sounding scientific names of the different theories could be a good resource.[/edit]
Edited by: Esseb at: 6/7/01 2:36:54 pm

Rogslate
Expert
(6/7/01 6:39:38 pm)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

Two comments, one reasonable and one anal....

Reasonable: I sort of assumed that the reason puzzles weren't discussed much was because no one wanted to give theirs away, saving them for the games. On the other hand,

it's refreshing and does stem new ideas to recall puzzles of some of the classics.

For myself, I've been getting more puzzle ideas via reading novels than playing past games. Plot twists and character details logically build themselves into puzzles. And if it isn't logical, it doesn't seem fair.

Anal: Why does everyone always say "3 controllable characters like in DOTT" as if DOTT invented it. Maniac Mansion, Maniac Mansion, Maniac Mansion, Maniac Mansion. =P
(plus throwing in some Zak McKracken for good measure)

Esseb
Knows their stuff
(8/23/01 1:21:43 pm)
Reply | Edit

Re: A little bit of theory..

I hope the world is ready for this thread now. If nothing else,

it'll get people to shut up about unoriginal threads.

Bah, why didn't anyone respond to this thread anyway?

Oh, and Rogslate, with example puzzles I meant either on-the-spot made up puzzles just for this thread or puzzles from released games, not upcoming (I think, I couldn't bother re-reading my posts).

Helm21
Fountain of Knowledge
(8/23/01 2:24:08 pm)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

Some theoretical combos as to puzzles:

1.The annoyance rule: Multiple look at's [image missing] look at more than once, you get the drift)
2.On your feet rule: timed responses[image missing] a character is preoccupied, et his wiskey, that sort of thing)
3.too many items rule: completely inventory based puzzles[image missing] OPEN a shovel, COMBINE a stick with white sheet to make treaty flag)
4.IQ rule: Memory based puzzles(which book to get a the library)
sub4:memory based puzzles which use repeated images(indy4,the wheel design in atlantis)
5.Do what I say rule: converstation based puzzles(indy4,the end dialogue)
6.Trial and error rule: Clue based puzzles with various degrees of randomness(the location on atlantis with Platos mathematical fault)
7.If at first you don't succeed rule: Multiple solution puzzles, could be all of the above.

8. The Minotaur rule: Mazes. Lots of them.
Does it surprise you that all of those puzzle rules showed up in Indy4? It's not the best adventure game of all time for no reason…

Anyway, that's all I use as a guideline. Sometimes I choose this method:

Long term puzzles:6,sub4,4,7
Short term puzzles:1,2,3,4(sometimes),8

using 4 as a long term puzzle is a big nono, and quite furstrating. Also 8 as the last puzzle is a big letdown.

Feel free to add to this list. I'm certain I'm missing stuff, like the multiple time-era puzzles of DOTT, and other stuff.

-=Everything I say, except from the contents of this particular post, is a lie=-

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Spyros21
Break out the Bubbly
(8/23/01 4:56:45 pm)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

eehhh I don't know the category puzzles: They were in a text adventure I had played many years ago (don't remember the title). When you moved from one room to another sometimes time changed and you were in the present or the past. What you did in the present affected the things in the past (and the opposite) for the next time you will enter the room. So you had to combine actions in the present and the past to solve the puzzles.
Does someone know this game?

Home of the "Book of Spells"
...and other games
Spyros

Esseb
Knows their stuff
(8/23/01 5:17:52 pm)
Reply | Edit

Re: A little bit of theory..

09. Monkey see, monkey do: The shopkeepers safe in MI.
10. (you think of a name): The IRS audit in DOTT where you have to do 3 or 4 things within 30 seconds or so. If you failed you were sent down to the lobby I think. Even if you save this puzzle(s) is difficult 'cos you only really get a short look at the room and 'cos our memory is so fickly it's impossible to think rationaly about the puzzle(s) because a) you can't see the room while thinking about it (pausing obscures the screen) and b) you don't remember what's in the room until after you've been there a few times. I suppose most people solved this puzzle(s) in about the same amount of tries.

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zaxxon4
Expert
(8/23/01 10:21:54 pm)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

What we need to do, is make a database of puzzles. It can contain all of the Sierra, Lucas, and other, puzzles that have been used. With this database we can categorize them and find the type of puzzle we want (for inspiration). It would also be helpful to make sure we do things in new and different

ways, rather than finding out your puzzle has been done before.

An example of a puzzle might be useful, but multiple examples for each type would be great. Imagine having a database of every maze that adventures have used. It would be even better, if we could rate the puzzles enjoyability. For example the monkey/monkey-wrench (MI2) might get low marks, and the sell the orium to Fester (SQ3) might get high marks. This database could make our games better; since we can have our filler puzzles follow this fun puzzle standard.

Esseb
Knows their stuff
(8/23/01 10:30:41 pm)
Reply | Edit

Re: A little bit of theory..

Bah, that'd be like stealing, plus far to time consuming. Why not just play the games themselves or read a walkthrough? I was thinking more in the lines of a dictionary with made up latin-sounding words for each puzzle rules mayhap with some popular examples if need be. Oh yeah, and Helms idea about long-term short-term puzzles needing different kinds of puzzles should be incorporated somehow. Any volunteers?

Gee, I hope I spelled that right.
Edited by: Esseb at: 8/23/01 11:34:29 pm

zaxxon4
Expert
(8/24/01 12:46:18 am)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

Stealing? no
cheating? yes

I have only played a few games with mazes, and I would rather read about them when I want to know more about them than to delay my game just to play far enough to see an example. Not to mention the worry of accidentally copying something done before. If I had a maze planned where all you had to do was push a button on the wall to bypass it, then I would want to find out if this had been done before. Am I the only one who wants to avoid this problem? While I prefer object based puzzles, mazes might fit in a game I do someday (not my first one though). The goal is to be able to come up with puzzles when you need them right? So why would examining how the pro's do it, be a bad thing. My game is partially inspired by LSL2, but they will have very little in common.

Las Naranjas
Moderator
(8/24/01 7:52:52 am)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

I'd have to say that the end puzzles that really pissed me off were in the Broken Sword series.

The first, you use your only inventory item with the only object.
The second, you pull a few levers (the only objects in rooms" and walk down a flight of stairs.
I was all geared up for a final puzzle, then "Oh, that was it".

I want a good final puzzle.
My favourites would be the ones in MI2 and CMI.

Os quests da casa não me começam mesmo que começa em quests da casa!

Esseb
Knows their stuff
(8/24/01 9:36:22 am)
Reply | Edit

Re: A little bit of theory..

That would be useful, unfortunately it's not really applicable until a decent AI program is made which has a penchant for adventure games. You'll just have to rely on your good judgment in the meantime I suppose. ((How can time be mean?)

But no one can be bothered to make a lexica with puzzle theory? Just take the ones from here and write them Lexica style in a 94 esque simple homepage. I'd do it if my attention span for this thread weren't already wearing thin.

Gee, I hope I spelled that right.

Las Naranjas
Moderator
(8/25/01 12:54:51 am)
Reply

Re: A little bit of theory..

Do it for the AGD zine

Os quests da casa não me começam mesmo que começa em quests da casa!

Hueij13
AGS User
(8/25/01 9:39:31 am)
Reply

Time Quest

__eehhh I don't know the category puzzles: They were in a text adventure I had played many years ago (don't remember the title). When you moved from one room to another sometimes time changed and you were in the present or the past. What you did in the present affected the things in the past (and the opposite) for the next time you will enter the room. So you had to combine actions in the present and the past to solve the puzzles.
Does someone know this game? --

You mean Time Quest? Great game, a little too easy…

Las Naranjas
Moderator
(8/25/01 10:16:32 am)
Reply

Re: Time Quest

I remember a game where you moved from room to room, and each room was in a different time.

There was also a giant mechanical eye, and some really sexy pants.

Os quests da casa não me começam mesmo que começa em quests da casa!

Spyros21

Re: Time Quest

Break out the Bubbly
(8/25/01 10:59:43 am)
Reply

No it wasn't time quest. Something like "shoby" was in the title

Home of the "Book of Spells"
…and other games
Spyros

Rodekill77
Moderator
(10/17/01 2:55:08 pm)
Reply

Re: Time Quest

Wooooo
Good thread.
I've been thinking about puzzles a lot recently, since I started working on RK2 again.
I'm trying to come up with new kinds of puzzles, beyond the 'get stuff and use it with stuff to get more stuff' kind.
It's damn hard.
I already tried it with the math-puzzle-of-death and it kind of backfired because most people didn't get it.
I was thinking the only other kind of puzzles would be visual, like connect the dots or match the colours or other crap like that, but in a way, it kind of breaks the game. You know?
Like, you're playing this game of pick up sticks to poke the old man and all of a sudden you have to line the sticks up in a certain pattern to get him to come out of his house.
All of a sudden you have to change the way you're thinking and it breaks the feel of the game, kind of like the action sequences in the old sierra games. I didn't have a problem with them really, but when you're forced into it, it can get frustrating. Everyone remembers the speeder thingy in Space Quest, as an example.
You got to this part in the game where you had no choice but to pass this action sequence. If you hated it, or sucked, too bad for you. Poobungies.
I guess the alternatives would be making it optional, like the later Sierra games did, make it so there are other puzzles to do in the meantime, which just delays the inevitable, or just making it a pointless mini-game with no effect on the main game.
I hope at this point that you realize I'm using this post to brainstorm. If nothing makes sense then that's fine.

:::::::::::::::::::::::…………….
For Rode Kill goodness,

Click Here
"It makes me pee" - Little Willy
"Rode Kill didn't cure my prostate cancer, but it did an excellent job of soothing my anus rash." - The Octompus

---

Esseb
Posts too much

Re: Time Quest

I'm doing something like that for my "I do believe it'll never be completed" RON game, but I'm incorporating the puzzle into my game. A guy's sucked into a ventilation system and you have to direct him to one particular tube by pulling three or four levers. The levers are in one room and the tube you need to direct him to is in the hallway outside it. It's fairly apparent that you need to direct him there, and you know which tube he currently is in from the "kachunk" sounds, so it's just a matter of pulling them in the correct order. If you pull 4 levers and it's not in the correct order, it'll reset and the guy's back in the first yellow tube again.

Gee, I hope I spelled that right.

Re: A little bit of theory..

A lot of games will RARELY use same room puzzles, like pick a key up from a room and use it on a door in the same room. It's usually only ever entrapment cases, like, being in a prison or dungeon this kind of thing happens. Shut up Mods.

Secondly, another puzzle strategy I've found is that all games seem to at some point is MAP puzzles. Or, MAZE puzzles. For example, in MI2 you follow the parrot around the many jungle screens on Dinky Island. Also, on Indy & FoA you go in a hot air balloon all over the map and ask for directions. These puzzles are frustrating, but add a good chunk of playing time to a game. Shut up Mods.

Finally, the only puzzles methods I've noticed that you haven't mentioned… or probably have, are:
- Inter-island puzzles. A lot of games like to use different locations that are far apart, and you may have to travel from island to island to get the puzzle solved. Yay and all that.
- Conversation puzzles. Learn of something and have to talk to someone to get an item from them or a clue. But you mentioned that one.
- Inventory diagnosis. Sometimes you are required to read a book or pages from a book, like the Lost Dialogues of Plato (beard) in FoA.

I think the best adventure game puzzles I've ever played have to be those in Little Big Adventure II - the way they are intertwined are stunning. That or the ones from FoA. But I hate having to land that damn submarine in some random rock!! grrr.

Puzzles I don't think I've ever seen are:
Well, I can't actually think of any but I'm sure there are some. Like trivial puzzles that you might face in everyday life, like, Mr. X needs to get past box… instead of using a super-knife and some super-petrol, he could just walk round the

other way. [image missing]Shut up Mods

Mods

Mark "Mods" Lovegrove

*"Why is it always you MODS?
Why? - Las Naranjas"*

Screen 7 | AGDzine | Anarchy Pictures | Adventure Workshop - coming soon!!

Helm21 **Fountain of Knowledge** (10/17/01 7:28:30 pm) Reply	**Re: A little bit of theory..** I wish someone would compile a list of those damn it. Just for future reference. I'm not doing it :P
ScurvyEye **Expert** (10/17/01 11:15:59 pm) Reply	**Re: A little bit of theory..** Aghh, Esseb, that sounds like an Abe idea! Heh, I was actually thinking about the puzzle with levers(skulls actually, something like Indy3).I don't know how to do it still, but that idea with sounds is great….hmmm…have to think it over….darn scripts.