

= Adventure ( Atari 2600 ) =

Adventure is a video game for the Atari 2600 video game console , released in ca. late 1979 ? 1980 . In the game , the player controls a square avatar whose quest is to explore an open world environment to find a magical chalice and return it to the golden castle . The game world is populated by roaming enemies : three dragons that can eat the avatar and a bat that randomly steals and hides items around the game world . Adventure introduced a number of innovative game elements to console games , including a playing area that spanned several different screens and enemies that continued to move even when not displayed on the screen .

Adventure was conceived as a graphical version of the 1977 text adventure Colossal Cave Adventure . It took developer Warren Robinett approximately one year to design and code the game , during which time he had to overcome a variety of technical limitations in the Atari 2600 console hardware , as well as difficulties with management within Atari . In this game , he introduced the first widely known video game Easter egg , a secret room containing text crediting himself for the game 's creation . Robinett 's Easter egg became a tradition for future Atari 2600 titles .

Adventure received mostly positive reviews at the time of its release and has continued to be viewed positively in the decades since , often named as one of the industry 's influential titles . It is considered the first action @-@ adventure and console fantasy game , and inspired other titles in the genres . More than one million cartridges of Adventure were sold , and the game has been included in numerous Atari 2600 game collections for modern computer hardware . The game 's prototype code was used as the basis for the 1979 Superman game , and a planned sequel eventually formed the basis for the Swordquest games . The Easter egg concept pioneered by the game has transcended video games and entered popular culture .

= = Gameplay = =

In Adventure , the player 's goal is to recover the Enchanted Chalice that an evil magician has stolen and hidden in the kingdom and return it to the Golden Castle . The kingdom includes two other castles ( White and Black ) and various obstacles and mazes within them . Further , the kingdom is guarded by three dragons : Yorgle ( yellow dragon ) , Grundle ( green dragon ) , and Rhindle ( red dragon who moves much faster than the other two ) , that protect various items in the game and will try to chase and eat the player 's avatar . There is also a bat that can roam across the kingdom freely , carrying a single item ( which can include the player 's avatar or a dragon ) around ; the bat was to be named Knubberrub but the name did not make it into the manual . The bat has two states , agitated and non @-@ agitated ; when in the agitated state , the bat will either pick up or swap what it currently carries with an object in the present room , eventually returning to the non @-@ agitated state where it will not pick up an object . The bat continues to fly around even if not present on the player 's current screen and may continue moving or swapping around objects .

The player 's avatar is represented by a simple square shape that can move within and between rooms , each represented by a single screen . While Robinett originally intended for all rooms to be bidirectionally connected , a few such connections ( including one inside the White Castle ) were unidirectional , which he considered to be bugs . Such problems were explained away as " bad magic " in the game 's manual . The player 's goal is to find objects to help defeat the dragons and recover the Chalice . These include various keys that open the castles , a magnet that pulls items towards the player , a magic bridge that the player can use to cross certain obstacles , and a sword which can be used to defeat the dragons . Only one object can be carried at a time . The player can be eaten by a dragon if it is caught in its " bite " cycle , at which point the avatar is stuck in the dragon 's stomach . At this point , the player can opt to restore their avatar 's life instead of completely restarting the game , reappearing at the Golden Castle while leaving all objects where they were last left , but this will also regenerate any dragon previously killed as well . The ability to reset the player 's avatar without resetting the entire game is considered the first known " continue game " option in video games .

The game offers three different skill levels . Level 1 is the easiest , as it uses a simplified room

layout missing one of the castles and one of the mazes , and doesn 't include the bat and one of the dragons . Level 2 is the full version of the game , with the various objects appearing in set positions at the start of the game . Level 3 is similar to Level 2 , but the location of the objects is randomized to provide a more challenging game . In addition , the player can use the difficulty switches on the Atari 2600 to further control the game 's difficulty by affecting the behavior of the dragons : one switch controls the dragons ' bite speed , and one causes them to flee when the player is wielding the sword .

= = Development = =

Adventure was published by the developer of the 2600 console , Atari , Inc , and programmed by Atari employee Warren Robinett . At the time , Atari programmers were generally given full control on the creative direction and development cycle for their games , but this required them to plan for their next game as they neared completion of their current one to stay productive . Robinett was finishing his work on Slot Racers when he was given an opportunity to visit the Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory by Julius Smith , one of several friends he was sharing a house with . There , he was introduced to the 1977 version of the computer text game Colossal Cave Adventure , created by Will Crowther and modified by Don Woods . After playing the game for several hours , he was inspired to create a graphical version of the game . Adventure was named after Colossal Cave Adventure .

Robinett began designing the graphics @-@ based game , loosely based on the text game , on a Hewlett @-@ Packard 1611A microprocessor computer around May to June 1978 . Robinett was aware early on that memory use was going to be critical : Atari 2600 cartridges had room for only 4096 bytes ( 4 KB ) on the cartridge ROM , and 128 bytes for program variables in the 2600 's RAM ; in contrast , Colossal Cave Adventure took over hundreds of kilobytes of memory . The final game used nearly all of the available memory ( including 5 % of the cartridge storage for Robinett 's Easter egg ) , with 15 unused bytes from the ROM capacity . Robinett credits Ken Thompson , his professor at University of California Berkeley , with teaching him the skills needed to use the limited memory efficiently . Thompson had required his students to learn the C programming language ; Robinett carried techniques from that language into his programming of Adventure .

Robinett first identified ways to translate the elements of Colossal Cave Adventure into simple , easy @-@ to @-@ recognize graphics that the player could interact with directly , replacing text @-@ based commands with joystick controls . Due to the limitations of the system 's graphical hardware , Robinett noted the dragons ended up looking more like ducks . Robinett developed workarounds for various technical limitations of the Atari 2600 . The system has only one playfield and five memory @-@ mapped registers available to represent moving objects . Only two of these registers are capable of representing more complex sprites . Robinett used those for objects and creatures within the game . He used the register originally designated for the ball in games such as Pong to represent the player 's avatar . Finally , he used the registers assigned for missiles , such as the bullets in Combat , for additional walls in the playing field to be able to represent different rooms within the game with the same playfield . Another hardware limitation forces the left and right sides of nearly every screen to be mirror images of each other ; this fostered the creation of the game 's confusing mazes . The notable exceptions are two screens in the black castle catacombs and two in the main hallway beneath the Yellow Castle . These two hallway screens are mirrored , but contain a vertical " wall " object in the room in order to achieve a non @-@ symmetrical shape , as well as act as a secret door for an Easter egg .

Despite the limitations , Robinett was able to introduce concepts that at the time were unfamiliar to players . He had been able to construct different rooms in the games ( thirty in the final version ) , in days where most games took place only on a single screen . Further , off @-@ screen objects such as the bat would continue to move according to their programming behavior .

In addition to the technical limitations , Robinett had struggled with Atari 's management over the game . Around the time of Adventure 's development , Atari , now owned by Warner Communications , had hired Ray Kassar as general manager of their Consumer Division , and he

was later promoted to president and CEO of Atari in December 1978 . Kassir interacted with the programmers rarely and generally treated their contributions with indifference . Robinett was initially discouraged from working on Adventure by his supervisor , George Simcock , who said the ambitious game could not be done based on knowing how much memory Colossal Cave Adventure used . When Robinett developed a working prototype within a month , the management at Atari were impressed , encouraging him to continue the game despite his supervisor 's initial response . The management later tried to convince Robinett to make it a tie @-@ in work for the upcoming Superman movie , which was owned by Warner Communication . Robinett remained committed to his initial idea . Instead , Atari had developer John Dunn offered to take Robinett 's prototype source code to make the 1979 Superman game .

A second prototype , completed near the end of 1978 , had only about eight rooms , a single dragon , and two objects , and Robinett recognized that the game , though demonstrating what he had set out to do , was boring . He put the game aside for a few months and came back with additional ideas to improve the game , finishing it by June 1979 . Two changes that Robinett added were the possibility of being eaten by the dragon , as well as the means to reset the avatar if this should happen , and the addition of the sword object , which could kill the dragon . Robinett found the various possibilities that arose from this combination of elements improved the excitement of the game , and subsequently made three dragons , reusing the same code for the behavior of all three . The magnet was created to work around a potential situation where the player could drop an object into a wall space and make it irretrievable .

Robinett worked with Steve Harding , the author for nearly all Atari 2600 game manuals at that point in time , to develop the plot for the game . Harding developed most of the plot after playing the game himself , with Robinett revising elements where he saw fit . Robinett states that he had come up with the names for the three dragons as well as offering a friend 's suggestion for " Knubberrub " for the bat .

Robinett submitted the source code for Adventure to Atari management in June 1979 ; he left Atari soon afterward . The game was released by Atari some time later , though the exact date is unclear . In a 2003 interview , Robinett recalled the release date as being Christmas 1979 though noted he had left the company by this point and was traveling in Europe at that time , but knew the game had been released worldwide by early 1980 . A 1979 date is also listed in various other sources . Atari began advertising the game as " coming soon " in its 1980 catalog , and several sources indicate the game was released that year , after the Atari 2600 version of Space Invaders was released in early 1980 .

== = Easter egg = = =

Generally defined as a " message , trick , or unusual behavior hidden inside a computer program by its creator " , the Easter egg concept was popularized by Adventure , influenced by the corporate culture at Atari . Atari removed the names of game developers from their products , seeing it as a means to prevent competitors from identifying and luring away Atari 's programmers . Atari 's decisions led to several programmers leaving the company ; notably , David Crane , Larry Kaplan , Alan Miller , and Bob Whitehead all left Atari due to lack of recognition and royalties from the company , and formed Activision .

Robinett , as a means to maintain his name on his game , included a hidden message in Adventure identifying himself as the creator , inspired by the supposedly hidden messages left on various songs recorded by The Beatles . In discussing the game in 2015 , Robinett considered the message as a means of self @-@ promotion , noting that he had only been paid around \$ 22 @,@ 000 a year from Atari without any royalties , while Atari would sell a million units of a game at \$ 25 a piece . This secret is one of the earliest known Easter eggs in a video game .

Within Adventure , the Easter egg is located inside the black castle catacombs ( on difficulty level 2 or 3 ) , embedded in the south wall of a sealed chamber ( accessible only with the bridge ) , where there is an invisible 1 @-@ pixel object referred to as the Gray Dot . The player must bounce the avatar along the bottom wall to pick up the dot . The dot is not actually invisible , but is simply the

same color as the wall and is easily seen when placed in a catacombs passage or over a normal wall . The dot is not attracted to the magnet , unlike most other objects in Adventure . Bringing this dot to the east end of the corridor below the Yellow Castle while other differently colored objects are present causes the wall object to similarly become effectively invisible , allowing the player to pass into a room displaying the words " Created by Warren Robinett " .

Robinett kept the Gray Dot a secret for over a year , and did not mention it to anyone at Atari prior to his departure . He was unsure of whether or not it would be discovered by other Atari personnel prior to publishing ; the dot was not mentioned in the game 's manual , as the manual 's author was unaware of the dot 's existence . After the game was released , Adam Clayon , a fifteen @-@ year @-@ old from Salt Lake City , discovered the Dot and sent a letter to Atari explaining how to retrieve it . Robinett had already quit the company by this point , so Atari tasked designers with finding the responsible code . The one who found it said that if he were to fix it , he would change the message in the game to say " Fixed by Brad Stewart " . Further , the cost of creating a new read @-@ only memory ( ROM ) mask , or memory chip , was around \$ 10 @,@ 000 US at the time of the game 's release , making this change a costly endeavor . Steve Wright , the director of software development of the Atari Consumer Division , argued for retaining the message , believing it gave players additional incentive to find it and play their games more , and suggested these were like Easter eggs for players to find . Atari eventually decided to leave the Dot in @-@ game , and dubbed such hidden features Easter eggs , saying they would be adding more such secrets to later games . Wright made it an official policy at Atari that all future games should include Easter eggs , often limited to being the initials of the game developer .

The Easter egg text with Warren Robinett 's name was removed from the version on the Atari Classics 10 @-@ in @-@ 1 TV Games standalone gaming unit , replaced with " TEXT ? " .

= = Reception = =

Adventure received mostly positive reviews in the years immediately after its release and has generally been viewed positively in subsequent decades .

Bill Kunkel and Frank Laney in the January 1981 issue of Video magazine called Adventure a " major design breakthrough " and said that it " shatters several video @-@ game conventions " such as scoring and time limits . They added that it was " much more ambitious " than average home video games , but noted that the graphics were underwhelming , such as the hero being a simple square . The 1982 book How to Win at Home Video Games called it too unpredictable with an " illogical mission " , concluding that " even devoted strategists may soon tire of Adventure 's excessive trial and error . " Electronic Games in 1983 stated that the game 's " graphics are tame stuff " , but it " still has the power to fascinate " and that " the action adventure concepts introduced in Adventure are still viable today " .

Atari Headquarters scored the game 8 of 10 , and noted its historical importance while panning the graphics and sound , concluding that Adventure was " very enjoyable " regardless of its technological shortcomings .

Jeremy Parish of 1UP.com wrote in 2010 that Adventure is " a work of interpretive brilliance " that " cleverly extracted the basic elements of exploration , combat and treasure hunting from the text games and converted them into icons " , but also conceded that it " seems almost unplayably basic these days " .

= = Legacy = =

Atari 's Adventure yielded sales of one million copies . As the first action @-@ adventure video game and first console fantasy game , Adventure established its namesake genres on video game consoles . In addition to being the first graphical adventure game on the Atari 2600 console , it is the first video game to contain a widely known Easter egg , and the first to allow a player to use multiple , portable , on @-@ screen items . The game is also the first to use a fog of war effect in its catacombs , which obscures most of the playing area except for the player 's immediate

surroundings . The game has been voted the best Atari 2600 cartridge in numerous polls , and has been noted as a significant step in the advancement of home video games . GamePro ranked it as the 28th most important video game of all time in 2007 . In 2010 , 1UP.com listed it as one of the most important games ever made in its " The Essential 50 " feature . Entertainment Weekly named Adventure as one of the top 10 games for the Atari 2600 .

A sequel to Adventure was first announced in early 1982 . The planned sequel eventually evolved into the Swordquest series of games . In 2005 , a sequel written by Curt Vendel was released by Atari on the Atari Flashback 2 system . In 2007 , AtariAge released a self @-@ published sequel called Adventure II for the Atari 5200 , which is heavily inspired by the original ; its name is used with permission from Atari Interactive . Robinett himself took the idea of using items from Adventure into his next game , Rocky 's Boots , but added the ability to combine them to form new items .

The Adventure Easter egg became a cornerstone of the hunt for the Easter egg hidden in the fictional virtual reality game OASIS in the novel Ready Player One .

= = = Ports and re @-@ releases = = =

Adventure has been ported to or re @-@ released on several platforms :

Atari Classics 10 @-@ in @-@ 1 TV Games ( Standalone hardware unit , 2003 )

Atari : 80 Classic Games in One ( PC , 2003 )

Atari Flashback ( Standalone hardware unit , 2004 )

Atari Anthology ( PlayStation 2 , Xbox , 2004 )

Atari Flashback 2 ( Standalone hardware unit , 2005 )

Game Room ( Xbox 360 , PC , 2010 )

Atari Greatest Hits ( Nintendo DS , iOS , 2010 )

Atari Flashback 3 ( Standalone hardware unit , 2011 )

Atari Flashback 4 ( Standalone hardware unit , 2012 )

Atari Vault ( PC , 2016 )