= Myst =

Myst is a graphic adventure puzzle video game designed and directed by the brothers Robyn and Rand Miller . It was developed by Cyan , Inc . , published by Brøderbund , and initially released on the Macintosh platform on September 24 , 1993 . Remakes and ports of the game have been released for platforms including Sega Saturn , PlayStation , 3DO , Microsoft Windows , Atari Jaguar CD , CD @-@ i , AmigaOS , PlayStation Portable , Nintendo DS , iOS , and OS X. The game puts the player in the role of the Stranger , who uses a special book to travel to the island of Myst . There , the player solves puzzles and travels to other worlds known as " Ages " . Clues found in each of these Ages help to reveal the back @-@ story of the game 's characters . The game has several endings , depending on the course of action the player takes .

After producing several interactive games aimed at children , the Miller brothers decided to create an adult @-@ targeted game with a non @-@ linear story , believable characters , and an ethical dilemma . Initially turned down by Activision , Cyan was later approached by Sunsoft , who helped fund Myst . The game took two years to develop and was Cyan 's largest project .

Upon release , Myst was a surprise hit , with critics lauding the ability of the game to immerse players in the fictional world . The game was the best @-@ selling PC game until The Sims exceeded its sales in 2002 . Myst helped drive adoption of the then @-@ nascent CD @-@ ROM format . Myst 's success spawned four direct video game sequels as well as several spin @-@ off games and novels .

= = Gameplay = =

The gameplay of Myst consists of a first @-@ person journey through an interactive world . The player moves the character by clicking on locations shown on the screen ; the scene then crossfades into another frame , and the player can continue to explore . Players can interact with specific objects on some screens by clicking or dragging them . To assist in rapidly crossing areas already explored , Myst has an optional " Zip " feature . When a lightning bolt cursor appears , players can click and skip several frames to another location . While this provides a rapid method of travel , it can also cause players to miss important items and clues . Some items can be carried by the player and read , including journal pages which provide backstory . Players can only carry a single page at a time , and pages return to their original locations when dropped .

To complete the game , the player must explore the seemingly deserted island of Myst . There the player discovers and follows clues to be transported via " linking books " to several " Ages " , each of which is a self @-@ contained mini @-@ world . Each of the Ages ? named Selenitic , Stoneship , Mechanical , and Channelwood ? requires the user to solve a series of logical , interrelated puzzles to complete its exploration . Objects and information discovered in one Age may be required to solve puzzles in another Age , or to complete the game 's primary puzzle on Myst . For example , in order to activate a switch , players must first open a safe , after discovering its combination , and then use the matches found within to start a boiler .

Apart from its predominantly nonverbal storytelling , Myst 's gameplay is unusual among adventuring computer games in several ways . The player is provided with very little backstory at the beginning of the game , and no obvious goals or objectives are laid out . This means that players must simply begin to explore . There are no obvious enemies , no physical violence , and no threat of " dying " at any point , although it is possible to reach a few " losing " endings . There is no time limit to complete the game . The game unfolds at its own pace and is solved through a combination of patience , observation , and logical thinking .

= = Plot = =

Players assume the role of an unnamed person known as the Stranger , who stumbles across an unusual book titled " Myst " . The Stranger reads the book and discovers a detailed description of an island world called Myst . Placing his hand on the last page , the Stranger is whisked away to the

world described , and is left with no choice but to explore the island . Myst contains a library where two additional books can be found , colored red and blue . These books are traps that hold Sirrus and Achenar , the sons of Atrus , who once lived on Myst island with his wife Catherine . Atrus writes special " linking books " that transport people to the worlds , or " Ages " , that the books describe . From the panels of their books , Sirrus and Achenar tell the Stranger that Atrus is dead ; each brother blames the other for the death of their father , as well as the destruction of much of Atrus ' library . Both plead for the Stranger to help them escape . However , the books are missing several pages , rendering the sons ' messages initially unclear and riddled with static .

 As the Stranger continues to explore the island , books linking to more Ages are discovered hidden behind complex mechanisms and puzzles . The Stranger must visit each Age , find the red and blue pages hidden there , and return to Myst Island . These pages can then be placed in the corresponding books . As the Stranger adds more pages to these books , the brothers can speak more clearly . After collecting four pages , the brothers can talk clearly enough to tell the Stranger where the fifth page is hidden . It also allows the player to more accurately judge each brother 's personality . If the Stranger gives either brother their fifth page , they will be free . The Stranger is left with a choice to help Sirrus , Achenar , or neither .

 Sirrus and Achenar beg the Stranger not to touch the green book that is stored in the same location as their final pages . They claim that it is a book like their own that will trap the Stranger . In truth , it leads to D 'ni , where Atrus is imprisoned . When the book is opened , Atrus asks the Stranger to bring him a final page that is hidden on Myst Island ; without it , he cannot bring his sons to justice . The game has several endings , depending on the player 's actions . Giving either Sirrus or Achenar the final page of their book causes the Stranger to switch places with the son , leaving the player trapped inside the Prison book . Linking to D 'ni without the page Atrus asks for leaves the Stranger and Atrus trapped on D 'ni . Linking to D 'ni with the page allows Atrus to complete his Myst book and return to the island . Upon returning to the library , the player finds the red and blue books gone , and burn marks on the shelves where they used to be .

 = = Development = =

 = = = Background = = =

 In 1988 , brothers Rand and Robyn Miller were living apart in the United States . Robyn was taking a year off from university , writing and trying to establish state residency . Rand was a computer programmer for a bank . Rand approached his brother with the idea of making an interactive storybook using HyperCard . The brothers were not big video game players themselves , although they were familiar with Dungeons & Dragons , and had played Zork . In his parents ' basement ? Robyn did not own a computer himself ? Robyn began drawing pictures and creating a nonlinear story that would eventually become their first game , The Manhole . The Manhole and the games that followed ? Cosmic Osmo and Spelunx ? were specifically aimed at children and shared the same aesthetics : black @-@ and @-@ white graphics , point @-@ and @-@ click gameplay , a first @-@ person point of view , and explorable worlds . Robyn recalled that the games were more about exploration than narrative : " In the projects we did for children , we didn 't really tell stories [?] They were just these worlds that you would explore . "

 Around 1990 , the brothers decided to create a game that would appeal to adults . Among their goals were believable characters , a non @-@ linear story , and for the player as protagonist to make ethical choices . The Millers pitched the game to Activision under the title The Gray Summons ; Robyn recalled that Activision told them to stick to children 's games . At the time of the rejection , Robyn recalled they were not doing well financially ? " we were eating rice and beans and government cheese and that [was] our diet . " Facing the end of their game @-@ producing career , Sunsoft of Japan approached the Millers to create an adult @-@ oriented game . Like with The Gray Summons , the Millers wanted their game to have a non @-@ linear story with believable characters and an ethical choice . They also wanted to produce a game with far more impressive

graphics than their previous efforts ? at one point they considered making the game entirely hand @-@ drawn . Finally , they knew their story would be a mystery .

Development of Myst began in 1991 . The game 's creative team consisted of the brothers Rand and Robyn Miller , with help from sound designer Chris Brandkamp , 3D artist and animator Chuck Carter , Richard Watson , Bonnie McDowall , and Ryan Miller , who together made up Cyan , Inc . Myst was not only the largest collaboration Cyan had attempted at the time , but also took the longest to develop . Cyan took inspiration from games like Zork , Star Wars ' mythic universe , portals to other worlds like in C.S. Lewis ' The Chronicles of Narnia , and the mysterious islands of old literature like the works of Jules Verne . The game 's name , as well as the overall solitary and mysterious atmosphere of the island , was inspired by the book The Mysterious Island by Verne .

Sunsoft was not interested in the game for PC , and was instead focused on the video game console market . At the time , consoles had no hard drives and small memory buffers , meaning the game had to be designed around these technical constraints . To solve this issue , they compartmentalized parts of the game 's environments into the different Ages . The Millers decided that most people did not like puzzles . Thus , a good puzzle would feel familiar and part of the world ? not like a puzzle , but something for players to figure out like a circuit breaker in their house , using observation and common sense . Cyan did not have fans to please , and did not know exactly who the game would appeal to ; Robyn felt like they did not have to second @-@ guess their choices and could " explore the world as we were designing " and build a game for themselves . Cyan proposed Myst to Sunsoft with a $ 265 @,@ 000 price tag ? more than double what they thought it would cost to develop the game , but ultimately less than Myst cost to produce . After getting the go @-@ ahead , Cyan play tested the entire game in a role @-@ played Dungeons and Dragons form to identify any large issues before entering full production .

= = = Production = = =

Myst was not only the largest collaboration Cyan had attempted at the time , but also took the longest to develop . According to Rand Miller , the brothers spent months solely designing the look and puzzles of the Ages , which were influenced by earlier whimsical " worlds " made for children . Much of the early development time was spent devising puzzles and the Ages , and the story was secondary . " We were place designers [...] and the maps kind of fueled the story , " Rand said . The plot evolved in tandem with the changing environment , developing new story details with each new building in the world . The climactic ending with Atrus was a later development in the game 's story after Cyan realized they wanted to create a more complicated ending . In retrospect , Robyn felt that Myst did not quite provoke the emotional reaction and ethical quandary they set out to create .

When Cyan began development , developing believable characters was a major hurdle . The brothers were limited to one @-@ way communication with the player , and at any point a player could choose to walk away and " break the spell " of the game . Displaying video in the game was initially infeasible . Designing around the limits , the designers created the trap books , which were location @-@ specific , one @-@ way communication devices . The release of QuickTime halfway through development of the game solved the video issue .

At first , the developers had no idea how they would actually create the physical terrain for the Ages . Eventually , they created grayscale heightmaps , extruding them to create changes in elevation . From this basic terrain , textures were painted onto a colormap which was wrapped over the landscapes . Objects such as trees were added to complete the design . Rand noted that attention to detail allowed Myst to deal with the limitations of CD @-@ ROM drives and graphics , stating " A lot can be done with texture ? Like finding an interesting texture you can map into the tapestry on the wall , spending a little extra time to actually put the bumps on the tapestry , putting screws in things . These are the things you don 't necessarily notice , but if they weren 't there , would flag to your subconscious that this is fake . "

The game was created on Macintosh computers , principally Macintosh Quadras . The graphics were individual shots of fully rendered rooms . Overall , Myst contains 2 @,@ 500 frames , one for

each possible area the player can explore . Each scene was modeled and rendered in StrataVision 3D , with some additional modeling in Macromedia MacroModel . The images were then edited and enhanced using Photoshop 1 @.@ 0 .

 The original Macintosh version of Myst was constructed in HyperCard . Each Age was a unique HyperCard stack . Navigation was handled by the internal button system and HyperTalk scripts , with image and QuickTime movie display passed off to various plugins ; essentially , Myst functions as a series of separate multimedia slides linked together by commands . As the main technical constraint that impacted Myst was slow CD @-@ ROM drive read speeds , Cyan had to go to great lengths to make sure all the game elements loaded as quickly as possible . Images were stored as 8 @-@ bit PICT resources with custom color palettes and QuickTime still image compression . Animated elements such as movies and object animations were encoded as QuickTime movies with Cinepak compression ; in total , there were more than 66 minutes of Quicktime animation . This careful processing made the finished graphics look like truecolor images despite their low bit depth ; the stills were reduced in size from 500 kB to around 80 kB .

 Cyan playtested the game with two people sitting in front of the game , finding that they would converse with each other and vocalize their likes and dislikes compared to one person silently playing . Rand and Robyn sat behind the testers taking notes , and could make on @-@ the @-@ fly changes and fixes . Cyan wanted the interface of the game to be invisible , and to craft a game that all kinds of people would enjoy . Early on they had decided that there would be no inventory , enemies , or ways to die ; eventually they included a save system as a concession to the fact that it would take most players months to complete the game . Among the problems testers discovered with the story was that Myst initially had no inciting incident . In response , Cyan added a note from Atrus to Catherine that clued players into the existence of a chamber by the dock that played a message from Atrus and explained the game 's objectives .

= = = Audio = = =

 Chris Brandkamp produced most of the ambient and incidental sounds in the game . To make sure the sounds fit , Brandkamp had to wait until the game 's visuals were placed in context . Sound effects were drawn from unlikely sources ; the noise of a fire in a boiler was created by driving slowly over stones in a driveway , because recordings of actual fire did not sound like fire burning . The chimes of a large clock tower were simulated using a wrench , then transposed to a lower pitch .
 At first , Myst had no music , because the Millers did not want music to interfere with the gameplay . After a few tests , they realized that the background music did not adversely affect the game and , in fact , " seemed to really help the mood of certain places that you were at in the game . " Robyn Miller ended up composing 40 minutes of synthesized music that was used in the game and later published as Myst : The Soundtrack . Mixing and effects were done on an E @-@ mu Proteus MPS synthesizer . The soundtrack was recorded over the course of two weeks ' evenings . Initially , Cyan released the soundtrack via a mail @-@ order service , but before the release of Myst 's sequel , Riven , Virgin Records acquired the rights to release the soundtrack , and the CD was rereleased on April 21 , 1998 .

= = Reception = =

 Myst was commercially successful on release . Along with The 7th Guest , it was widely regarded as a killer application that accelerated the sales of CD @-@ ROM drives . The game 's success also led to a number of games which sought to copy Myst 's success , referred to as " Myst clones " . Myst was the bestselling PC game throughout the 1990s , until The Sims exceeded its sales in 2002 . The PC version of Myst holds an average score of 82 @.@ 57 % at GameRankings based on seven reviews , although the subsequent remakes of the game and the console ports have generally received lower average scores . Myst 's success baffled some , who wondered how a game that was seen as " little more than ' an interactive slide show ' " turned out to be a hit .
 Myst was generally praised by critics . Computer Gaming World in 1993 assured readers that the

game was not like other CD @-@ ROM games that were " high on glitz and low on substance ... Myst is everything it 's touted to be and is , quite simply , the best [Macintosh] CD @-@ ROM game " . It praised the game 's open world nature , lack of death , and " straightforward and simple " storyline . The magazine stated that the " mesmerizing " and " stunning " graphics and sound were " not the star of the show ... the substance of the game is every bit as good as its packaging " , and concluded that Myst " is bound to set a new standard " .

Wired and The New York Times suggested that Myst was evidence that video games could in fact evolve into an art form . Entertainment Weekly reported that some players considered Myst 's " virtual morality " a religious experience . Aarhus University professor Søren Pold pointed to Myst as an excellent example of how stories can be told using objects rather than people . Laura Evenson , writing for the San Francisco Chronicle , pointed to adult @-@ oriented games like Myst as evidence the video game industry was emerging from its " adolescent " phase .

GameSpot 's Jeff Sengstack wrote that " Myst is an immersive experience that draws you in and won 't let you go . " Writing about Myst 's reception , Greg M. Smith noted that Myst had become a hit and was regarded as incredibly immersive despite most closely resembling " the hoary technology of the slideshow (with accompanying music and effects) " . Smith concluded that " Myst 's primary brilliance lies in the way it provides narrative justification for the very things that are most annoying " about the technological constraints imposed on the game ; for instance , Macworld praised Myst 's designers for overcoming the occasionally debilitating slowness of CD drives to deliver a consistent experience throughout the game . The publication went on to declare Myst the best game of 1994 , stating that Myst removed the " most annoying parts of adventure games ? vocabularies that [you] don 't understand , people you can 't talk to , wrong moves that get you killed and make you start over . You try to unravel the enigma of the island by exploring the island , but there 's no time pressure to distract you , no arbitrary punishments put in your way " .

Some aspects of the game still received criticism . Several publications did not agree with the positive reception of the story ; Jeremy Parish of 1UP.com noted that while Myst 's lack of interaction and continual plot suited the game , it helped usher in the death of the adventure game genre . Edge stated the main flaw with the game was that the game engine was nowhere near as sophisticated as the graphics . Heidi Fournier of Adventure Gamers noted a few critics complained about the difficulty and lack of context of the puzzles , while others believed these elements added to the gameplay . Similarly , critics were split on whether the lack of a plot the player could actually change was a good or bad element . In a 2000 retrospective review , IGN declared that Myst had not aged well and that playing it " was like watching hit TV shows from the 70s . ' People watched that ? , ' you wonder in horror . "

= = = Legacy = = =

In addition to the numerous remakes and ports of the game , Myst 's success led to several sequels . Riven was released on October 29 , 1997 , in which Atrus asks the Stranger to return to help him rescue his wife from Gehn . Myst III : Exile was released simultaneously for Macintosh and Windows systems in North America on May 7 , 2001 , and was later ported to the PlayStation 2 and Xbox consoles . Exile was not developed by Cyan ; Presto Studios developed the title and Ubisoft published it . Taking place 10 years after the events of Riven , Exile reveals the reasons for Atrus ' sons being imprisoned and the disastrous effects their greed caused . The fourth entry in the series , Myst IV : Revelation , was released on September 10 , 2004 , and was developed and published entirely by Ubisoft . The music was composed by Jack Wall with assistance from Peter Gabriel . The final game in the Myst saga was Myst V : End of Ages , developed by Cyan Worlds and released on September 19 , 2005 .

In addition to the main Myst saga , Cyan developed Uru : Ages Beyond Myst , which was released on November 14 , 2003 . Uru allows players to customize their avatars , and renders graphics in real @-@ time . The multiplayer component of Uru was initially cancelled , but GameTap eventually revived it as Myst Online : Uru Live , which was in turn cancelled . The game was later resurrected as an open source title . The newest and current iteration of online Uru was made open source and

various fan ages have been created . The Miller brothers collaborated with David Wingrove and wrote several novels based on the Myst universe , which were published by Hyperion . The novels , entitled Myst : The Book of Atrus , Myst : The Book of Ti 'ana , and Myst : The Book of D 'ni , fill in the games ' backstory and were packaged together as The Myst Reader .

By 2003 , the Myst franchise had sold over twelve million copies worldwide , with Myst representing more than six million copies in the figure . The game was the best @-@ selling PC game until The Sims exceeded its sales in 2002 .

The game 's popularity has led to several mentions in popular culture . References to Myst made appearances in an episode of the The Simpsons (" Treehouse of Horror VI ") , and Matt Damon wanted The Bourne Conspiracy video game to be a puzzle game like Myst , refusing to lend his voice talent to the game when it was turned into a shooter instead . Myst has also been used for educational and scientific purposes ; Becta recognized a primary school teacher , Tim Rylands , who had made literacy gains using Myst as a teaching tool , and researchers have used the game for studies examining the effect of video games on aggression . A parody computer game , Pyst , was released in 1996 ; the game is a satirical free roam of Myst island which had been apparently vandalized by frustrated visitors .

The television streaming service Hulu has obtained the rights to create a television series around Myst in May 2015 . The series would explore the origin of the main island featured in Myst . The series is being produced by Legendary Television , which had acquired the television rights from Cyan for the series in late 2014 . The show will be produced by Matt Tolmach and written by Evan Daugherty .

= = Re @-@ releases and ports = =

Myst 's success led to the game being ported to multiple platforms , including the Saturn , PlayStation , PlayStation 3 , PlayStation Portable , iPhone , Nintendo 3DS , Jaguar CD , AmigaOS , CD @-@ i , and 3DO consoles .

= = = PC remakes = = =

Myst : Masterpiece Edition was an updated version of the original Myst , released in May 2000 . It featured several improvements over the original game , with the images re @-@ rendered in 24 @-@ bit truecolor instead of the original Myst 's 8 @-@ bit color . The score was re @-@ mastered and sound effects were enhanced .

realMyst : Interactive 3D Edition was a remake of Myst released in November 2000 for Windows PCs , and in January 2002 for Mac . Unlike Myst and the Masterpiece Edition , realMyst featured free @-@ roaming , real @-@ time 3D graphics instead of pre @-@ rendered stills . Weather effects like thunderstorms , sunsets , and sunrises were added to the Ages , and minor additions were made to keep the game in sync with the story of the Myst novels and sequels . The game also added a new Age called Rime , which is featured in an extended ending. realMyst was developed by Cyan , Inc. and Sunsoft , and published by Ubisoft . While the new interactivity of the game was praised , realMyst ran poorly on most computers of the time . Robyn Miller expressed frustration with realMyst , saying : " I only saw realMyst after it was released . As a remake , it was a lapse of reason and directionless ; overt merchandising of the original Myst . It definitely wasn 't how we originally envisioned Myst , as was promoted . "

realMyst : Masterpiece Edition , a visually enhanced revision running on the Unity engine that also includes the graphics of the original Myst game , was released on Steam on February 5 , 2014 .

= = = Console and handhelds = = =

On May 18 , 2012 , the PlayStation Network released a port for Myst in the form of a PSone classic for the PlayStation 3 and PSP .

In November 2005 , Midway Games announced that they would be developing a remake of Myst for

the PlayStation Portable . The remake would include additional content that was not featured in the original Myst , including the Rime age that was earlier seen in realMyst . The game was released in Japan and Europe in 2006 , and the US version was released in 2008 .

A version of Myst for the Nintendo DS was also released in December 2007 . The version features re @-@ mastered video and audio , using source code specifically re @-@ written for the Nintendo DS . The remake features Rime as a playable Age , with an all new graphic set . This version of the game was released in Europe on December 7 , 2007 , courtesy of Midway . It was released in North America on May 13 , 2008 , originally published by Navarre and later reissued by Storm City Games . The version was heavily panned by the gaming press , with an aggregate score of 43 / 100 on Metacritic . This version was again later re @-@ released for Nintendo 3DS , published by Funbox Media in Europe , and Maximum Family Games in North America and Australia . The game later appeared in digital format via the Nintendo eShop in North America on November 15 , 2012 , and in Europe on September 5 , 2013 .

In February 2005 , Cyan and Mean Hamster Software released Myst for the Microsoft Windows Mobile platform ; Riven was ported shortly after . In August 2008 , Cyan announced that the company was developing a version of Myst for Apple 's iOS . The game was made available to download from the iTunes App Store on May 2 , 2009 . The original download size was 727 MB , which was considered very large by iPhone standards . An updated version of realMyst was released for iPad 2 and above , with improved graphics over the original PC release , on June 14 , 2012 .