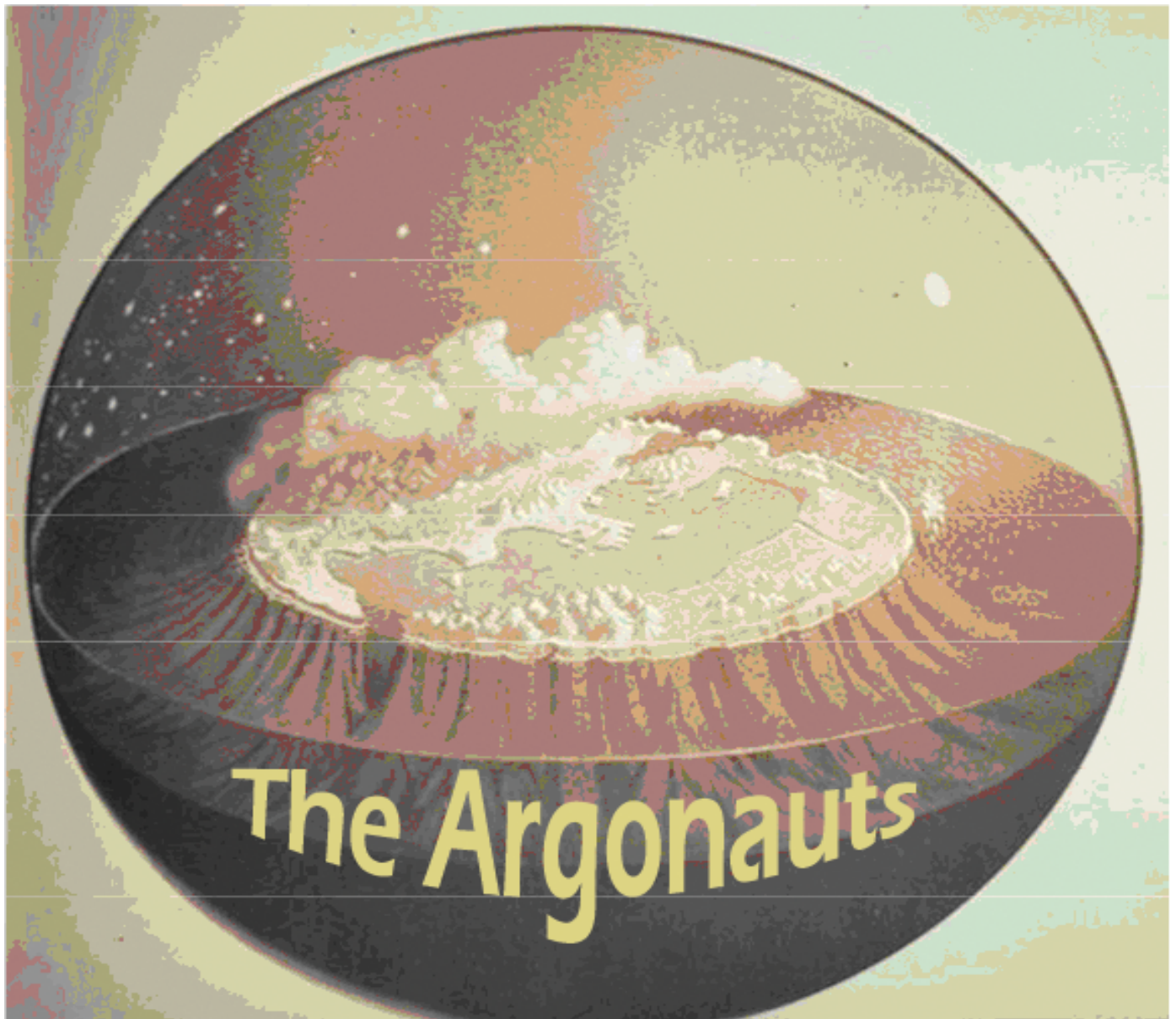




Disclaimer: The Argonauts game concept was written for a class project in game design. This proposal is for academic purposes only and should not be construed as having any commercial purpose or intention. In particular some embedded elements of the artwork in this document are copyrighted by Blizzard Entertainment, Inc and is used under their private non-commercial use provision..

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The Argonauts

Overview

Premise

Sail the seas of ancient Greek myth as the hero Jason, the heroine Joanna, the mighty Hercules, magical Orpheus, or swift Atalanta; battle monsters, sorcerers, and the will of the gods themselves. Recreate the adventures of the Golden Fleece as told by the bards of old or find your own path through the challenges of mythic Greece. Explore the Island of the Cyclops with your friends in multiplayer and encounter the sorceress Media in your quest to gain the Throne of Ioclus.

Overall Purpose

This game is intended to provide entertainment. Any educational value would be in teaching the classical mythology of ancient Greece.

Platform

This game will be rendered using the Torque 1.5 Game Engine. Torque supports Apple Macintosh OS X, Windows XP, and Linux. *The Argonauts* will run on all those platforms.

Genre

First Person Fantasy Role Playing/Adventure

Target Demographic

This game will have a rating of E for Everyone. The intended audience age range is six and over. Players will be able to choose between a male, Jason, and a female protagonist, Joanna, this should make audience appeal more gender neutral.

Player Mode

The Argonauts will support 1-4 players. In multiplayer-mode player-controlled Argonauts can travel directly to join Jason and aid him in his adventures. In single player mode Jason must find and recruit all the Argonauts.

Goal

The game experience is a hybrid between open-ended exploration of the game world and completing goal oriented tasks which advance the main plotline. The player's goal is to complete a series of tasks scattered throughout the game world culminating in a final choice about whether to take the throne at any cost or choose a different fate.

Setting

The setting is the world of ancient Greece as described in various legends and mythologies. The places described in the Jason and the Argonauts legend will appear in the game as well as a selection of locations taken from other Greek legends such as The Labors of Hercules, the Adventures of Perseus, etc..

There are two main environments, first *The Argo*, which is the ship the player will used to navigate the Aegean Sea, and second, islands which provide areas the player can explore on foot and are where most of the game tasks will take place. Each island should feel unique to the player, this will be achieved through various terrains and landmarks, such as forests, mountains, grassy plains, statues, ruins and buildings that distinguish each island location.



Map of game area.

Basic Storyline

Back-story

(Note: substitute Joanna for Jason if the player so chooses).

The plot used for this game is a hybrid of the many versions of the classical Jason story that exist. Various plot lines that would be inappropriate for the “E for Everyone” rating have been removed and the central story streamlined. At its heart this is the story of Jason coming of age and so it is filled with rights of passage, those elements have been emphasized.

The King of Ioclus, had been usurped and imprisoned by his brother Pelias. Pelias planned to kill the king’s infant son Jason in order to secure his position but Jason’s mother tricks Pelias into believing that Jason is dead. Instead she hides Jason with the wise old centaur Chiron in a cave on Mount Pelion. Chiron raises Jason as his own son and teaches him everything he would need to know to be king though Chiron does not reveal Jason’s true identity.

In Game Story - Beginning

Once Jason nears adulthood The goddess Hera visits him and disguises herself as an old crone. Hera reveals to Jason that his father was king of Ioclus and offers to help him.

Jason travels to Iolcus, proclaims his identity to cheering crowds, and confronts Pelias. Pelias does not dare simply kill Jason but instead tricks Jason into agreeing to complete a heroic quest. "Bring me the golden fleece from the Kingdom of Colchis at the edge of the world." The fleece is from the sacred ram sent to earth by Zeus himself and is the greatest treasure of Colchis." {Character Arc: *accepting a quest to steal from someone shows Jason's youth since Pelias successfully appeals to Jason's bravado and vanity.*}

Jason agrees to the task and begins to organize the building of his ship the Argo and to recruit the crew. Chiron tells Jason the names of the heroes that he will need for the journey. The building of the Argo and finding the various heroes who will become the Argonauts are each tasks with its own subplot.

Once the ship is completed and the crew assembled (Zetes, Hercules, Orpheus, and Atalanta) Jason and the Argonauts make sacrifices to Poseidon so that he will help them. The Argonauts then set sail to find the Kingdom of Colchis.

In Game Story – Middle

The middle part of the plot consists of the Argo exploring various islands in search of clues about the location of Colchis and the Golden Fleece. Each island has an associated sub plot and can be visited in any order.

1) Thrace. An island ruled by the blind king Phineus who is known for his knowledge and wisdom but who is beset by vile harpies who allow him nothing to eat or drink. The king is so weak from hunger and thirst that he cannot help the Argonauts until the harpies have been driven away. This can be accomplished only by Zetes who can fly and chase away the harpies. An encounter with Iris goddess of the dawn keeps the harpies from returning. Once the king is left in peace by the harpies he can regain his strength and tell the Argonauts which direction to sail in order to reach Colchis. He warns them about dangerous straights called the Symplegades they must sail through surrounded by crashing rocks. The king provides Jason with a dove that will help guide them through the straights and a clue to completing King Aetes' task (see later): "Aphrodite holds the key."

2) Island of [Sirenum scopuli](#). The island is inhabited by beautiful women who sing so entrancingly that the Argonauts are unable to take any action but follow them around the island. The only way to escape the Sirens is for Orpheus to play his lute which is even more beautiful than the siren's song.

3) The Isle of Lemnos. A friendly island inhabited only by women and a center of trade. Here the argonauts can provision themselves. The queen will try to convince Jason to stay on the island and forget his quest.

4) The Island of Kyzikos. A friendly island inhabited by ordinary people. At night however the people mistake the Argonauts for raiders. The player can choose to resolve the situation diplomatically or violently.

5) The Island of Mysia. The rivers and pools are inhabited by dangerous nymphs who try to capture members of the crew. The island is also inhabited by the nymph Thetis who has valuable information for the argonauts. Thetis gives a clue about how to escape the monsters Charybdis and Scylla.

6) The Island of Crete. This island is inhabited by Talos who is a man made of bronze. Medea (see later) can calm him with a spell.

7) The Island of Aeaëa. Inhabited by Circe, sister of King Aeetes and daughter of the sun god. She uses magic to change those who come to the island into pigs. Only by eating the correct herb growing on the island can the Argonauts turn back into humans and speak with Circe.

8) Island of the Cyclopes. Huge one-eyes giants herding their flocks of sheep on this island. On the island is a large cave containing a sumptuous banquet. This cave is the home of the Cyclops Polyphemus, who traps the trespassers in the cave. To pass Polyphemus who guards the entrance the Argonauts must put on sheep skins, knock out the lights and pretend to be sheep.

9) Island of Samothrace. Inhabited by non-greek gods. Egyptian Gods wander the island and can bestow blessings if treated correctly.

Sea Channel 1) This channel is guarded by the sea monsters Charybdis and Scylla. Thetis gives the Argonauts information about how to pass these monsters safely.

Sea Location 2) Symplegades, two crashing cliffs. Exact timing is needed to get through the water passage. That timing can be aided by using the dove of King Phineus.

Navigating past Sea Location 2 leads immediately to:

Colchis, at the edge of the world. King Aeetes agrees to show Jason where the Golden Fleece is only if Jason can perform certain tasks. The tasks are impossible to perform without the aid of Aeetes' sorceress daughter, Medea. Jason can call upon Hera to aid him by making Medea fall in love with him (Jason calls upon Hera who sends Cupid). Medea will then help Jason complete the tasks. (For the female protagonist version I don't see any reason to change the Medea – Joanna relationship at all. The player can interpret the relationship in any way they want since nothing will be explicit except that Medea will do anything for Joanna after Cupid casts his love spell and that she becomes very jealous.)

Aeetes betrays Jason and tries to kill him but Medea helps the Argonauts escape to the Argo with the fleece.

In Game Story - End

Because Medea has betrayed her father, Zeus sends storms that make it impossible for the Argo to sail towards Iolus. Medea is instructed to ask forgiveness of Circe before the storms will abate.

{Character Arc: *Jason used Aeetes; daughter for his own ends ruining her life in the process. He must understand this and seek redemption.*} Circe tells Medea and Jason that if they travel through the straights guarded by Scylla and Charybdis Zeus will stop the storms and they can return to Iolus.

Pelias breaks his vow to give up the throne. Pelias' daughter offers to help Jason, Medea becomes very jealous of Pelias' daughter. Jason must find a way to resolve this conflict and depose Pelias to win. Offending Medea will cause her to turn against Jason, offending Pelias' daughter will leave Pelias as king. The solution is to call upon Hera to remove the love spell she placed upon Medea. Medea will then no longer be jealous of Pelias' daughter who can then help Jason. Alternate ending: if the player does not make Medea fall out of love with Jason she will change Pelias' daughter into a pig and Jason does not gain the throne. Instead he settles down with Medea having chosen love over the throne. {Character Arc: *to complete his arc Jason must successfully resolve the consequences of his selfish actions at Colchis with regard to Medea.*}

Major Challenges

- 1) Building the Argo.
- 2) Gathering the Argonauts.
- 3) Getting the dove from King Phineus.
- 4) Passing through the Symplegades.
- 5) Completing King Aeetes Task of the Fire Breathing Bulls (with the help of Medea).
- 6) Fighting the sleepless dragon that guards the Golden Fleece.
- 7) Escaping from King Aeetes.
- 8) Finding Circe and getting forgiveness for stealing the fleece.
- 9) Surviving the encounter with Charybdis and Scylla
- 10) Regaining the throne from King Pelias.

Characters

Jason/Joanna

The protagonist. Jason is a boy nearing adulthood. He is brave and ambitious but not a superman like Hercules. Jason struggles with trying to achieve heroic tasks

while not always behaving like a hero. At the outset of the journey Jason cries as his homeland disappears. Jason is selfish at times but by the end of the story he is made to recognize the effects of his choices.

Chiron

A wise old centaur who has trained many to be heroes. Chiron is the inventor of medicine but also a skilled warrior and hunter.

King Pelias

The evil antagonist of our story. He stole the throne from Jason's father and now seeks to keep Jason from retaining it. Cowardly but clever.

Hercules

The son of Zeus and possessed of supernatural strength. Since Hercules is part god his passions are outsized. Hercules sometimes experiences uncontrollable anger, but he is also a loyal friend, almost to a fault. His aim in life is to prove his worth as the son of the king of the gods by undertaking heroic tasks.

Orpheus

A famous musician and poet. His skill lies in artistry and beauty rather than in force of arms. He helps Jason because he sees the injustice of King Pelias and thinks Jason would be a fairer ruler.

Zetes

Winged son of the North Wind. Zetes joins Jason's quest at the request of Hera who asked the North Wind for aid.

Atalanta

Her father wanted a son so badly that when Atalanta was born, he left her in the middle of the woods to die. Atalanta was suckled by a wild bear and eventually a group of hunters raised her. She grew to become a fierce hunter in her own right and the swiftest runner in Greece. She promises to help Jason if he can beat her in a race. Jason wins by distracting Atalanta with golden apples he hid along the race course.

King Phineus

The old and kindly King of Thrace who had the gift of prophecy. [Zeus](#), angry that Phineas revealed too much of the plans of the gods, blinded him, and further punished him by setting him on an island with a buffet of food. However, he could

eat none of it because the [harpies](#), vicious, winged women, stole the food out of his hands right before he could eat.

King Aeetes

Son of Helios the sun god Aeetes rules the land of Cholis. One of his prize possessions is a golden Ram created by Zeus and given to Aeetes by his son-in-law. An oracle told the king that should he lose the fleece he would lose his throne.

Media

Daughter of Aeetes.

Circe

Sister of Aeetes. She lives alone except for lions and wolves that prowl around her great stone hall. These lions and wolves are all transmogrified people who came to her island. Circe relies entirely on her magic, once that magic is defeated she becomes completely passive.

The Argo (the Swift)

The Goddess Hera added a magic piece of oak to the prow which had the power of speech. According to legend the Argo was the first sea-going ship, this has lent the Argo's personality a certain arrogance. The Argo sees Jason as its builder and master and so will help him in any way it can.

Gameplay

Scoring

Player's Verb Set

The player takes all actions through an avatar. The Avatar can move forward, backwards, sidestep left and right. The mouse is used to turn the avatar. Flying avatars have a full 360 degrees of motion.

The following actions are available to all characters by clicking a button on a toolbar. Ellipses indicate that the action is taken upon the currently selected object or character.

Attack...

Use...

Speak with... (See Dialog Section)

The following additional verbs are specific to the character being played and are also accessible from the toolbar.

Jason

Call upon Hera.

Pick Up...

Use item...

(Clicking on an item in inventory will attempt to use the item on the currently selected object or character.)

Orpheus

Play Lute.

Medea

Cast sleeping spell...

Lightning bolt...

Zetes

Fly.

Atalanta

Sprint.

Shoot...

Core Gameplay

The player will spend the majority of their time navigating to the island locations, investigating those islands and interacting with the characters they find. Sometimes the player will fight or otherwise subdue the characters and monsters they find, and sometimes they will speak to them

and gain clues about where to go next and how to solve various challenges. The player is expected to change the avatar they control as circumstances change.

The Argonauts not under the control of the player follow the player's avatar and take simple actions to assist him. For example if the player's avatar starts to fight then the Argonauts will attack the currently selected character or creature. If the player selects "Speak to..." then an Argonaut will begin a scripted dialog with the selected character.

Inventory

Jason is the only character with an inventory and the contents are restricted to task related items. For example, Jason can hold and use a yoke to harness the bulls of Aeetes, release a dove to help time the passage through the crashing islands, and carry the Golden Fleece.

Time

There are no time constraints to the game. There will be a night and day effect plus a running clock but these are cosmetic. The rate of the game is fixed.

Lives and Powers of Protagonist

The player has a health meter. When the player's avatar takes damage then his health goes down. If there player has no more health the avatar dies and the player must restore from a saved game to continue. The powers available to the player are described in the Verb section of this document.

Interface

Control Devices

Navigation

Dialog

The "Speak with..." action causes one of the Argonauts to begin a pre-scripted conversation with the selected non-player character. The player's avatar can interject by using one of the following three actions.

Once a conversation has been started three additional toolbar buttons are made available. They are "Yes", "No" and "Bye." "Yes" and "No" give enough feedback for the dialog tree to branch. "Bye" ends the conversation. The player can interject at anytime during a conversation between an Argonaut and a non-player character.

For example:

Player as Jason clicks "Speak to..." while Circe is selected.

Medea: Circe, my father's sister, take pity on us. We have offended the gods and only you can help us!

Circe: You have betrayed your own father and doomed his kingdom. You knew the Prophecy of the Golden Fleece and yet you chose to help this stranger.

Medea: Forgive me Aunt I do not know what strange power he has over me but I would sacrifice all to help him.

Circe: Return the fleece to your father and the prophecy may yet be averted.

Player clicks "No" button.

Circe: So be it. Take the channel to the south between the two islands. If you pass through safely then Zeus has forgiven you and the storms will abate.

If player clicks "Yes" or "Bye" then

Medea (To Jason): have I given up so much so that your heart fails you now? I cannot return to my father after the things I have done to help you!

Circe: So be it. Take the channel to the south between the two islands. If you pass through safely then Zeus has forgiven you and the storms will abate.

Locomotion

There are four main forms of locomotion: Walking, Piloting the Argo, Riding Horses, and Flying. Riding is accomplished by selecting a horse and pressing the use button. The Argo is used in the same way by selecting and "Using..." the helm.

Head's Up Display

The display in The Argonauts consists of a main viewport that displays a 3d rendering of the environment and objects visible to the player, a toolbar at the bottom of the screen from which actions can be selected and a health meter.

Levels

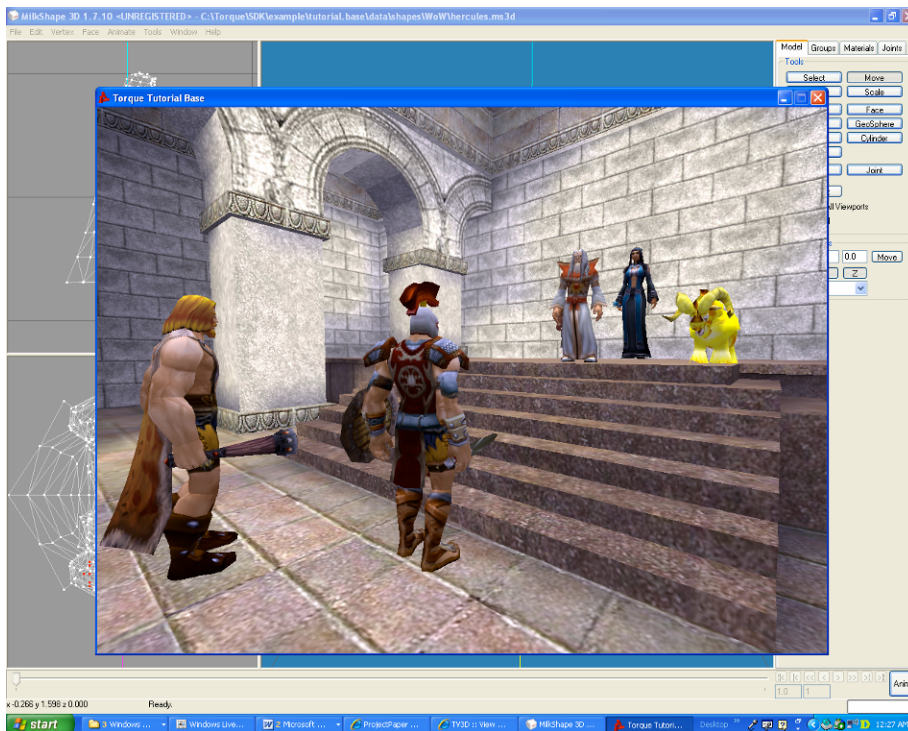
There are no explicit levels but there are sections to the game play. These sections are unlocked by the completion of certain tasks, for example building the Argo unlocks the ability travel to islands and continue the storyline, navigating the crashing islands allows the player to continue on to the Colchis section of the game, etc. Each of the sections are intended to represent transitions in Jason's arc. First he is a boy preparing to embark on his journey represented by building the Argo and assembling the crew under the guidance of Chiron, second he is the archetypal hero questing among the islands, third, he has to negotiate a social situation with Medea and makes a serious compromise and begins to display some anti-hero qualities, lastly Jason attains the throne by resolving the hero and not so heroic sides of his nature.

Audio and Video

General Look



Cyclops herding his flock.



Hercules and Jason petition Aeetes and Medea for the Golden Ram.

Audio

Audio Cues

All dialog will be pre recorded as sound clips. Since this game is intended to be playable by people as young as six so all written text is replaced by dialog spoken by characters other than the current avatar. The player will not be able to select lines, only respond to lines spoken by others with the three action words "Yes", "No", and "Bye."

Special Elements (Weather, terrain, etc)

The island terrains will be as distinctive as possible but all will be rugged, rocky, and mountainous. Some islands will be heavily forested while others will have no vegetation at all. Buildings will be of two basic types: wooden huts for village scenes and stone halls for temples and special characters to reside in, such as Circe, King Aeetes, and King Pelias.

Part of the plotline involves tremendous storms. The torque engine provides sound and visuals to support such weather effects.

Much of the players time will be spent onboard the Argo traveling over the Aegean and Black Seas. The torque engine provides support for wave and sparkle effects which will enhance the realism of the seas.