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Quests... Why did it have to be Quests?

Some people say that Indiana Jones is just a witty playboy, that the only reason for watching his movies is to see the explosive endings. Those people are wrong. These films hold so much more meaning. In *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Indiana makes more than just a physical journey, changing from cold skeptic to breezy believer, he proves himself worthy of the final prize by following the Quest ideas. This is shown in how Indiana is built for the journey ahead, how the obstacles he overcomes relate to who he is, and how the plot points help to create a satisfying ending. Indiana has become a symbol of heroism in modern media by utilizing the Quest format. To find out why, one must first examine what makes him worthy of a quest in the first place.

What makes Indiana worthy of this journey is his passion, professional skill, and room for personal development. From the very beginning Indiana is a passionate archeologist, risking life and limb for objects other less enthusiastic individuals might not see value in. So when two Army Intelligence Officers request his assistance tracking down the mythical Ark of the Covenant, he immediately agrees. When one of his companions named Dr. Brody questions if he is really up to the challenge, Indiana is quick to protest that "that thing represents everything we got into archeology for in the first place", this proves how meaningful this task is to him. However, his eagerness is not his only strong suit - Indiana is incredibly well equipped. Not only is he given funds by a major museum to tour the world in search of priceless artifacts, diving head-first into the most dangerous of places, he is also a professor of archeology at the fictional

Marshall College. Obviously, this suggests that he has many talents that respected institutions seek out. Plus, with this kind of history comes a plethora of connections. Indiana utilizes two of these during his quest for the Ark, Marion Ravenwood and Sallah. Marion is a fellow archeologist that Indiana has a complicated past with, having left her suddenly when they were young. While tragic, this connection is extremely vital to the quest. Marion is the owner of a unique medallion that is used to find the precise burial spot of the Ark. Sallah runs a digging business in Cairo, Egypt. He is necessary to help locate the Ark and uncover it, as well as providing means of escape afterward. It could be argued that Indiana is ultimately the sole man for the job, considering only he would know about the medallion and have the swagger needed to retrieve it. Above all, what makes Indiana most worthy of the quest is his room for emotional growth. While he is successful in all other parts of his life, Indiana has trouble connecting with others, having dedicated himself to his work. This is most evident in his avoidance of Marion. His sole hesitation in taking up the job offer is having to see and speak to Marion again. This and further evidence suggests that he acts this way due to deeply suppressed romantic feelings. Throughout the journey, Indiana gradually begins to accept his feelings for Marion, eventually choosing her over his work. Indiana is shown to be worthy of being sent on the journey for the Ark. But, why does the hero need to be worthy, what will he be facing?

Most obstacles Indiana faces focus on the refusal of his own emotions and various attempts to break down that barrier. One of the trials he faces is the journey to the underworld - the Well of Souls. After finding the Ark, Indiana and his companions are discovered by the evil archeologist Belloq. Indiana is thrown into the well with Marion and sealed inside. Here, Indiana must face one of his greatest fears, inciting himself and viewers to groan, "snakes... Why did it

have to be snakes?” The ground is completely covered with serpents. The only thing separating Indiana and Marion from a violent death is the suffocating flames of their torches, so near to fizzing out. To add insult to the hellish scenario, a frightening statue of the Egyptian God of death, Anubis, looms over with a hungry grin. While Marion begins to unravel, Indiana must steel himself to find a way out. He braves the sea of snakes and climbs the statue, finally toppling it into the wall. The hero overcomes his fear and escapes from the underworld. Although this is not strictly adhering to the underworld plot rules, Indiana still grows from the experience, however inconsequential it seems. Earlier in the story, Marion and Indiana are ambushed in a bustling marketplace. While he is distracted during a sword fight, his attackers separate him from Marion. She tries desperately to escape, hiding in a large straw basket but is quickly captured. Indiana witnesses her being tossed into the back of a truck. Before he can reach her, the truck is consumed in a tremendous explosion, supposedly killing her. Indiana is devastated. This is a side to him that he has never shown before and shatters any argument that he has gotten over Marion. Having no outlet for his emotions and no one he trusts, he throws himself back into his work. While sneaking into Belloq’s camp, he stumbles into the tent where Marion is being held. So overcome with joy, he nearly blows his cover. This is when the hero starts to grow. Near the end, Marion is captured by Belloq and is in the process of being taken to a ritual site. Indiana, unable to deny his feelings any longer, threatens to destroy the Ark. Not giving in to temptation, he sticks to his morals and spares the Ark, surrendering in the process. While some may see this as weakness, the fact is that it took him more strength and resilience to control his emotions than it would have to give in. This is a far cry from the man shown in the beginning of the story. The man who, due to his emotions, fled from and avoided the woman he was in love with. The trials

the hero faces challenge what he thinks of himself and others. Barely any obstacle focuses on the importance of the Ark of the Covenant. Why is this, what is the reason for the hero's growth if the final prize is the Ark?

In a quest story, the plot points bring the viewer insight into the hero, making accuracy highly important. At first glance, it may seem like the only purpose of a Quest story is reaching the final prize, with exciting challenges in between. But like other plot types, there is much more under the surface. The first clue to the real goal of the story is seen in Belloq's character. He is portrayed as the complete opposite of Indiana. Belloq only cares about money, he cheats others, and he works with the enemy. This notion is shattered when Belloq himself expresses to Indiana how similar they really are, how Belloq is only a "shadowy reflection" of him, and how it "would take only a nudge" to push him to the dark side. This gets the viewer to question who Indiana really is. Should he be the hero of the tale? This question is gradually answered through the ordeals he must face. Every trial is meant to form him in preparation for the final push, to prove to himself and the viewer that he is ready. With each new trial, layers of the hero's hard-boiled personality are peeled away, revealing his true self. When facing off with the many goons, one is exposed to Indiana's morals, the reasons he does what he does. Indiana works for Marshall College and the museum to acquire new artifacts to be displayed and studied. Unlike Belloq, he does not do this for the money, rather he gains deep satisfaction from seeing others learn from his discoveries. From looking at his journey to the underworld one learns of his weaknesses, his fears and how he hides them. In the final ordeal one can see his strengths, his bravery and intelligence. Without following the quest plot structure, the hero would not get the characterization needed for a satisfying ending. As it should, the film ends with Indiana

successfully recovering the Ark and beginning to rekindle the flame of his and Marion's romance. This is how the Quest usually ends, the Hero triumphant with his princess. But unlike the typical story, the hero ends up losing the prize. After Indiana returns, he is outraged to find that the Ark will not be placed in a museum and studied but is to be confiscated by the Government. Yet, all that time learning about the hero's motivations come into play. Indiana comes to accept that the Ark may be too powerful to keep, and realizes that he got what he wanted all along - Marion. This surprising ending is one of the reasons that this film is still one of the most beloved quests today. By following the Quest plot, Indiana transformed from a stoic, fun-hating nihilist, to a content and relaxed believer. Perhaps the real focus of the story was not the Ark itself, but the journey to it.

Clearly, Indiana Jones is not just a shallow dream-boat as many critics would have you believe. He is a passionate adventurer jumping the hurdles of an emotional Quest to overcome his barriers, complete his task, and achieve his goals. Because of his attitude and skill, he has proven himself worthy of confronting the specially designed trials to win the prize, and the accuracy of those challenges has moulded him into a cherished hero. *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* is a wonderfully crafted Quest story. It's attention to developing the hero and the satisfying ending will continue to entertain for many years to come.