

Here we are, starting off a new year and a new decade of gaming! Even Fred is feeling a little excited about that. So, draw your chair closer to the fire, settle in with your favorite beverage, and we'll begin 1990 with a smile (hopefully a good omen for the rest of the year!). You've always wanted to be a hero, right?

Hero's Quest I, from **Sierra**, is a cute little gem that combines role-playing and adventuring with a healthy dose of humor to produce a game that is extremely fun to play. While the puzzles are, for the most part, on the easy side, the overall effect (even for the experienced gamer) is satisfying by any measure.

It is also one of the few games that are truly replayable. This is mainly due to the fact that there are three character classes (Fighter, Thief, Mage) and each can solve various puzzles differently, as well as have experiences not available to other classes.

For instance, a thief in this game is really a thief. He's the one who can break into people's houses, clean out all their goodies, and then fence the lot at the Guild for ready cash (hmmm, that sure got your attention, didn't it? Hehe). Just watch out for the sheriff.

You start by creating your character, who comes with a set of basic attributes and skills, depending on class. Then you beef him (or her) up a bit with 50 more points you can put wherever you like. It's possible to make a character who is, say, a fighter/mage or a mage/thief or fighter/thief, but it's really more fun to play the straight character class. Then, you can go back later and try the game as something else.

So, now that you're a graduate of the Famous Adventurers Correspondence School (and you have a diploma to prove it!), it's time to find a place to do all those heroics you've dreamed of doing. The little town of Spielburg is a good place to start.

Spielburg has its share of problems. A recent avalanche has cut off the mountain pass, isolating the town until the snow melts (good thing you made it in before that happened!). So, lots of nasty

Scorpion's Tale

As Told By Scorpia

HERO'S QUEST I



TITLE:	Hero's Quest I: So You Want To Be A Hero
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	\$59.95
DESIGNERS:	Lori and Corey Cole
PUBLISHER:	Sierra On-Line Coarsegold, CA

critters, being likewise trapped, are now roaming the great outdoors. Ah well, no one said a hero's life was a safe one!

In addition, as you discover during your wanderings around Spielburg, various citizens also have problems of their own. The healer has lost a valuable ring and the local Baron has lost both his son and daughter. A band of brigands is terrorizing the vicinity, making life difficult for the merchants in the town. There's even an evil witch, in the person of Baba Yaga, lurking in the background. All in all, you have plenty of work to keep you busy (and heroic) for some time!

The first order of business is to make a complete circuit of the town, talking with everyone available. Since the interface is the standard one used in Sierra's regular adventures, you do this by typing in such commands as "Ask about brigands" or "ask about baron", etc.

A stop at the Guildhall, where you can read the notices on the bulletin board (some rather old...obviously, no other heroes have ventured here for quite some time) about who needs help with what. As a beginner, you probably don't want to take on, just yet, anything like rescuing kidnapped daughters or cleaning out a nest of highway robbers.

Something a little simpler is called for here. So, perhaps a visit to the healer, just outside town, might be a good idea. She's a kindly old soul and will pay money for certain items she needs to make her potions. She also has potions for sale, but they're a trifle expensive. So, don't go buying any right away.

Some of those items, such as cheetah claws and troll's beard, are best left for the very experienced to acquire. Mushrooms and flowers are more your speed at the moment. Still, this does give you a good excuse to explore the woods (do map, or you may get lost) and environs around Spielburg.

As you wander about, you will, inevitably, come across something hostile. Fortunately, unless it's *very* close, you can run (and I do mean run!) away to be heroic another day. Even if you're a fighter, you can't take on just anything at the start. You have

to build yourself up with easy (or as easy as they come) encounters. A goblin now or then is best.

This is especially true as the combat system is like nothing you have seen before and takes some getting used to. The combat screen shows a very detailed close-up of your opponent from about waist to head, straight on in front of you. You also see yourself (as from the rear), sword and shield in hand (if you have 'em), from about the shoulders up.

The cursor keys are used to determine your actions, which include dodging, parrying, and, of course, striking the enemy. In some respects, this is arcade-like, but not really, since the action is slow, rather than lightning-speed. Timing is more important than quick reflexes. One of the neat features here is the expressions of

(Continued on page 56)

HERO'S QUEST I

pain on your opponents' faces when you get in a good shot. They really look like they've been hit. A very nice touch!

So anyway, you wander around, avoiding the nastier critters for the moment, and seeing what's what in the land. There are many curious places and things to see, such as the Spore-Spitting Spirea, the Frost Giant (no, really, don't try fighting him!), Baba Yaga's hut (chicken legs and all), Magic Mountain ("Trespassers will be toad"... my favorite sign), the dryad (a tremendously pretty animation sequence), the Antwerp (weird!), and Erana's Peace (Hint: absolutely the best place to spend the night) among others.

Then, you have to start making some sense of it all. The best way is to go slow, doing a little at a time. There isn't, as far as I could tell, any particular time limit here (although some individual situations are time-dependent when you're actually in them, such as the brigands' mess hall). Gather information by talking to everyone, and put the pieces together as you get them.

Many of the puzzles can be solved in any order (and in different ways), but the big three must be done in order: finding the baron's son, rescuing his daughter, and taking care of Baba Yaga. Of course, you won't be attempting these right at the start; they should be left for late in the game when your character has advanced in ability and staying power.

That still leaves you a quite a lot to do in the game, and since there isn't any specific order you need to follow for much of it, I will just give some hints for various puzzles.

Spirea: grabbing a spore isn't hard. Fighters and thieves can use physical methods; mages have magic at their disposal (read up on the spells). Check your list of skills (for non-mages) to see what might be useful here.

Healer's ring: the location is pretty obvious. The same method that worked with the Spirea will work here.

Frost Giant: It's just a matter of ample supply. Several trips are necessary.

Goblin cave: There is no way inside. The goblins are useful only for fighting to increase your skill.

Brigand Fortress: There is no way in by

the front door. In time, you will learn about a back way in.

Antwerp: Walk carefully and you'll have no problems. The critter is weird, but not hostile.

Fairy dust: They only come out at night.

Baba Yaga: By the time you're ready for her, you should know what you need and have it. However, for an amusing se-



quence, do pay her an early visit. The skull outside on the gate will tell you how to get into the hut.

The Graveyard: A good place to avoid at night, unless you have a death wish or the undead repellent.

The Cave by the waterfall: You can't climb up (although perhaps a thief with very good climbing skill might manage it; I wasn't able to test that out), but you do have to knock on the door. Remember the Spirea. Also, once up there, be very careful where you position yourself when the door opens. Save the game after you get up there as a precaution.

The Wizard: Unless you're a mage, he is only a source of information (some of it important) and a lot of baaaad jokes.

The baron's son: All you need is kindness and a key. Getting the key is, of course, a trifle harder. Visit the tavern in Spielberg afterwards.

Inside the fortress: Once past the Minotaur guard, you should not have to do any real fighting. The most difficult part, due to timing, will be the mess hall. Save before you go in. You are likely to die the first few times, until you have seen everything you're up against, and know exactly what to do. The hardest sequence is dealing with the guys who look like, well, the Three Stooges. This requires using the candelabra, chandelier, and table in the right ways and at the right times. Tricky, this one.

Locked doors around town: Unless

you're a thief, they aren't important. Sorry, but that's how it is.

Troll: He has some treasure, but you can bypass him if you prefer (he's not easy to kill); he isn't important to solving the adventure, even if his name is Fred (but he ain't my Fred, who doesn't have a drop of Troll blood in him).

As you can tell from the above, the puzzles are mainly just a tad over the introductory level. Ordinarily, this would cause the more experienced gamers to skip it. However, while I, myself, prefer the tougher adventures, I found this one fun to play, simple though it was. That in itself is quite an achievement (grin). Combined with the outstanding animation throughout the game, the beautiful graphics, the many touches of genuine humor, and the surprisingly well-integrated role-playing aspects, *Hero's Quest I* is a definite winner. If you need a break from the more serious dungeoneering or adventuring games, pick this one up for a pleasant vacation.

Bug Alert: There are, however, a few problems with the game that you need to know about, especially if you have the original version of HQ. If you are playing in high-speed hero mode, turn it off when: (a) trying to enter Baba Yaga's front door; (b) when entering the secret entrance to the brigand cave; and (c) when leaving the brigand leader's room by the secret exit. Also, you should absolutely avoid the graveyard at night unless you have the undead repellent active. If you are ever chased by ghosts before then, the repellent won't work. Sierra knows about these problems, and they are being repaired. By the time you read this (if not before), corrected versions of the game will be out.

Well, I see by the invisible clock on the wall it's that time again. Remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpio to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States, or Fred will eat your letter!): Scorpio, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

Copyright 1990 by Scorpio, all rights reserved. **CGW**