

TOMB RAIDER

OVERVIEW

The environment and storyline of *Tomb Raider* provides a rich landscape for players to explore through the game's protagonist, Lara Croft. It offers audiences all the nostalgia of old Tomb Raider adventures while still keeping the gameplay fresh with new features and an accessible revamped storyline. The game also allowed designers to address issues of Lara Croft's oversexualization by creating a younger, realistic main character for a modern audience. This sets the 2012 prequel apart as a smart homage to the series' popular roots while ushering this relaunch into a sleek, more accessible future.

CHARACTERS

LARA CROFT is a student archeologist out on her first adventure in the South Pacific. Opinionated, strong-willed and beautiful, Lara is intent on finding the lost kingdom of Yamatai, despite the opinions of veteran archeologists that the island does not exist. Once her ship crashes on Yamatai, Lara endures horrific trials at the hands of both nature and the Solarii Brotherhood as she tries to rescue her friends and secure a way off the island.

SAMANTHA "SAM" NISHIMURA is a twenty-two year old documentarian, college friend to Lara Croft and descendant of the people that once inhabited the island of Yamatai. Sam is the effective damsel in distress of the story. A bubbly and open young woman, she is kidnapped by Mathias and the Solarii to first be burnt in an Ascension ritual and then inhabited by the Sun Queen's spirit to harness her power.



CONRAD ROTH is a former British Royal Marine and friend of the Croft family accompanying the archeological expedition. He is an expert in combat and survival, but his injuries put him out of commission after the shipwreck. He and Lara have a strong student-mentor relationship that Lara draws on for strength and guidance.



MATHIAS or Father Mathias as he is also known, is the fifty-something year old leader of the Solarii Brotherhood on the island. Mathias survived a plane crash that brought him to the island in 1982, after which he discovered the story of the Sun Queen and created a cult around himself to capture Himiko's power for himself. Once the *Endurance* crashes on Yamatai, Mathias hears Sam tell the story of her ancestry and realizes that she is the key to his escape.



STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Though the narrative of Tomb Raider is for the most part a linear one, the game provides smaller narrative goals that are compelling enough to keep the player on the edge of their seat and distracted from the overall game structure. This series of narrative peaks, twists, successes and tragedies turns Tomb Raider into a multi-act character drama rather than a gate-kept level progression that could become frustrating in its length and complexity.

HIGHLIGHTS

One of the key scenes in the Tomb Raider narrative is Lara's capture by Mathias' henchman Vladimir. This scene is pivotal because Lara is forced to fight off an assault by Vladimir and eventually shoots him so she can escape. While the scene is framed as the pivotal moment of transformation for Lara from girl to survival-minded heroine, it also has an element of sexual assault that falls into the common trope of women's transformation through sexual violation. Instead of abusing this commonly used (and problematic) narrative element, the game frames the scene so that any sexual intent from Vladimir is not explicit. The narrative instead becomes about survival through necessary violence rather than the victimization of the game's heroine. That fine line is the key to making this scene impactful rather than exploitative and cliché.

LESSONS

Discovering the supernatural through Lara's eyes makes it easier to accept.

Tomb Raider crafts an authentic origin story that draws players in with fresh gameplay.

Sometimes, less gore is more.