

Hero's Journey Analysis – "Raiders of the Lost Ark"

ORDINARY WORLD

The first thing we see is the whip in his pocket
Then we see the hat from behind
A mysterious figure
GREAT INTRO OF THE HERO

Brave while all around him are scared.

In the South American jungle
He finds the map
His "assistant" tries to shoot him
Indie turns and uses the whip to disarm him
3:50

At the entrance to a cave
No-one's come out of there alive
Forrestal, a "competitor" cashed his chips in here

Spiders crawling all over them

Stay out of the light
If they hadn't would have been pierced by spears
Like Forrestal – whose skeleton is there

His buddy wants to rush in
But again he shows that if you step on the stones
You die

He tiptoes through
Stands next to the gold idol
Weighs the bag
Lifts and replaces
Seems fine
But then it starts sinking

They make a run for it

His "buddy" gets across using his whip
Toss me idol
Toss me the whip
Tosses the idol
But then he doesn't toss the whip
Betrays him

Has to leap across
As a door closes
TICKING CLOCK

Other guy has been killed

Rolling boulder chases Indie
 Emerges to find BELLOCH, his SHADOW
 A fellow archaeologist

And a tribe of natives

Has to hand over the Idol

When they bow down
 Indiana makes his escape

They chase
 Firing arrows

Indie swings out on a vine
 Then swims to the plane

The famous music starts

In the plane
 There is a snake
 I hate snakes
 The character has an achilles heel
 Come on, show a little backbone will ya, says the pilot
 Amusing, given what we've just seen
 12:59

CONTRAST

He's now back in the classroom
 Girls looking goo goo eyed at him
 Boring place for an action man like Indie

He tells his MENTOR, MARCUS, that he wants to go to
 Marrakesh to try to get the idol back

He has people to see him

CALL TO ADVENTURE

These guys from the government tell us some more about
 Indie
 Professor of Archaeology
 Master of the occult
 Obtainer of rare antiquities
 EXPOSITION

Studied under Prof Ravenswood
 Were friends
 Falling out
 FORESHADOWING

Hitler is obsessed with the occult
 Dig going on outside of Cairo
 Intercepted a message
 Tannis
 One of the possible resting places of the Lost Ark of the
 Covenant – the original stone tablets Moses brought down
 from the mountain

Hidden in a cave called the Well of Souls
 Tannis consumed by a sandstorm
 The wrath of God

Abner Ravenwood is the expert
 No Nazi

Headpiece to the staff of Ra
 He shows on a board how it works

Take it to a maproom
 When the light shines through the headpiece
 Shows where the ark was kept

Here is a picture of the ark
 Lightning
 Fire
 The power of God

Explain Hitler's interest
 An Army which carries the Ark before it is invincible
 20:11

Marcus has arranged for Indiana to go after the Ark

MEETING WITH THE MENTOR
 Will she still be with him?
 Marian is the least of your worries
 EXPOSITION

It's like nothing you've ever gone after before
 The hero hasn't refused the call
 He is a WILLING HERO
 So the Mentor is warning us of the danger he is facing

CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD

He climbs aboard a plane
A German is there too

The plane takes off and flies to Nepal

TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES
In a bar, Marian a petite woman
Is trading shots with a big guy
23:39
Wins when they fall over
Collects the spoils
Speaks the local language

Classic Watering Hole scene of this phase

Indiana's shadow appears on the wall
Always knew someday you'd come back through my door
She punches him
In the last ten years, I learned to hate you
I was a child
You knew what you were doing

He needs the headpiece
Abner – her father – is dead

Do you know what you did to me?
She's not a happy camper
She says she doesn't know where it is
It's important

He gives her money
She says come back tomorrow
26:59

After he leaves
She has the piece hanging around her neck
She looks at it

German guys comes in
Good evening, Fraulein
28:15

Willing to offer more?
Almost certainly

Brings a hot poker up to her
Indiana whips the hot poker out of his hand
Gun fire
But the hot poker has lit the curtains
Dual jeopardy – Spielberg uses this a lot throughout the
film. Never just one threat – generally multiple

German grabs the headpiece
But it's hot
Runs into the snow

Marian shoots the guy
And saves Indiana

She has the medallion
I'm your god damned partner

We have established ALLIES and ENEMIES here
There's been a TEST
And a TEAM has been formed

The APPROACH
They are now in Cairo
With Sola – Indian's old mate
Chief digger

Little bit of romantic byplay between Inide and Marian

Belloch is running the Nazi dig

The Germans have found the maproom
But they won't find the Ark without this medallion

MEETING WITH THE MENTOR
Sola warns of the danger

Indie and Marian act like the Monkey is their baby
35:00

They talk about why he hasn't got a wife and kids.
Her father said he was a bum
A gifted bum

The Approach is typically used to develop the romantic
relationship

ORDEAL
They are attacked
He throws her on the back of a cart

She gets chased
Clocks the guy with a pan

Hides in a basket

The monkey gives her away
38:28

Indiana looks for her

The crowd parts
 Guy does his sword trick
 Indiana shoots him

Indiana chases her as she gets carried in the basket
 There are now 50 baskets being carried

She keeps calling Indiana

Gets put aboard an explosives truck
 Shoots and the truck explodes
 Thinks she's dead

WITNESSING DEATH – classic sign of the Ordeal

Indiana comes in and meets Belloch

He says we are very much alike
 Says we have both fallen
 A shadowy reflection of me

Men will kill for the ark
 Do you realise what the ark is?
 A radio for speaking with God

Indiana pulls his gun
 Kids come and save him

In an Ordeal, the hero is very typically confronted with
 their flaw. Belloch telling him how close they are is a
 reminder for Indie that is close to the edge.

See Indiana behind a screen
 Almost a Confessional

Guy comes in and tips poison on the dates

Indiana doesn't know how they've got a replica of the
 headpiece

MEETING WITH THE MENTOR

Tells them how high the staff needs to be
 Belloch's staff is too long
 They are digging in the wrong place

Sola saves him from eating the date
 The monkey is dead

Belloch is under pressure from the Nazis

SEIZING THE SWORD

They need to be in the maproom when the sun comes through
Don't have much time

He drops the staff down into the map room
Drops down the rope
Immediate change of music

Nazis come
Sola has to go

Consults his notebook
Works out which hole to put his staff into

Sun comes through
Choral music
51:48

Sun comes through and lights up where they have to dig
Breaks stick
Calls up
But he's not there
Gets tossed down a rope of Nazi flags

REWARD
Indiana finds Marian
Kisses her

Says he knows where the ark is
If he releases her they'll start looking for her
Says he'll come back for her

ORDEAL
He looks through a theodolite to find where to dig

They are going to torture the girl
Heil Hitler
Our old mate
Has the headpiece markings burned into his hand
(but he only got one side, not the other, which is why
they are digging in the wrong place)

56:37
They start digging
And Indiana puts his hat on
Sunset behind him

They've hit stone
Lightning all around

They find the edges
Lift the lid to the well of souls

Indiana
Why does the floor move
Full of snakes
He hates snakes

58:16
Belloch comes to Marian
He has a beautiful dress for her
I'd like to see you in it

She comes out in the dress
I don't think we need a chaperone

Indiana lands in the cave
A Cobra is poised
Looking at him

He wants Sola to come down
He sprays fuel on them
Lights it

Marian seduces
1:02:10

Outdrinks Belloch

Indiana and Sola are now approaching the Ark
1:03:00

They lift the stone lid

Marian getting pissed
They are drinking his family wine

She grabs the knife
But the German is there waiting for her

He pulls out something that looks like an instrument of
torture but it's a coat hanger

DEFYING EXPECTATIONS

Indiana and Sola lift the Ark

They lift the ark out of the cave

Belloch sees that they are lifting the ark out of the
cave

Belloch waves from the opening

They throw Marian down
He catches her

Belloch is furious
He wanted her for himself

ORDEAL
They push the lid back

Indiana is jealous
Rips part of her dress off

Sees the opening

Rides a big dragon
The light is going out – another source of jeopardy

Pushes a hole through the wall
They see light

Push the stone out
1:13:14

The ark is being loaded onto a plane

Indiana starts fighting a bunch of guys

Big bald guy
Marian pulls the wheel chocks out

Again more than one source of jeopardy
There is the bald guy
Pilot trying to shoot him

Marian kills the pilot
He starts plane moving

Starts firing at Nazis from the plane's gun

She is trapped in the plane
As fuel goes towards it
And fire is near
Bald guy gets taken out by propellor

Indiana fires open the hatch
To get Marian out
And the plane goes up in flames

Have the ark put on a truck

Belloch realises that Jones is alive

No release of tension

The ark is loaded onto a truck
1:18:45

Belloch leads the motorcade
Motorcycles

Tells Marian and Sola to go to Cairo and organise
transport
Be ready for him

He rides out on horse

Chases the truck
Jumps on board

Has control of the truck
Pushes Belloch out of the way

Runs another truck off

Chases Belloch

Runs off motorcycle sidecar
He's enjoying this
1:22:17

Indie pushes another one over the cliff

He's really enjoying himself
Guy comes from the back of the truck

LIFE AND DEATH struggle

Guy climbs over the top
Kicks Indie
Pushes him through the windscreen

He's poised
About to be run over by the wheel

Belloch calls the guy to come closer
Indie goes under

Gets dragged along by his whip

Climbs up
Knocks the guy out
Pushes him out the front
Positions reversed
And he's killed

1:25:26

Indie drives up and forces them off the road
He's very sore

Indie arrives in the market

Doors close
And Belloch doesn't know where he's gone

REWARD
The ark is on board the ship
1:26:57

They get on board the ship

She kisses Sola
Starts singing

The ship is at sea

They are in the cabin
She has on another white dress

He takes his shirt off
I don't need any help

She tends his wounds

She kisses him
1:29:47

Then he goes asleep
She's not happy

On the ship
The ark burns through its crate

THE ROAD HOME
Indie pulls his gun
She reaches for her dress
She's been naked

Nazi sub waiting for them

They have boarded
Grab Marian

They have the ark

Indie eludes them
1:32:20

Belloch is there

Katanga says Jones is dead
He killed him
He wants to hold girl

But no
Belloch takes the girl

Marian is on the sub
There's Jones
Climbing on board the sub
They cheer

They head into an island cave

He seizes one of the guys
Puts on his uniform

His uniform is too small
Gets another guy

RESURRECTION

Indie gives Belloch a nudge

The ark is carried out

Taken to an altar

Indie follows them – the last in line
Ducks aside
1:38:03

He has a bazooka trained on them
Marian smiles

You're going to give mercenaries a bad name

All he wants is the girl
If they refuse
Your Fuhrer has no prize

Belloch says blow it up
He knows he can't do it
Drops the weapon

It's now night

The ark is lifted onto the altar

Indie and Marian and tied to a stake

Belloch invokes some Hebrew
The lid is lifted
There is just sand
Or is it?

Suddenly a powerful force is unleashed

Don't look at it he tells Marian

The others are seduced
And consumed
A wave of flame and wind washes through
Sucked into the heavens

Ark's lid falls back into place

They are alive

SHARING THE ELIXIR

1:44:36

They are together

In Washington
Done your country a great service
Where is the ark?

They hook arms

It's put in a warehouse
1:46:18

Massive warehouse

SUMMARY

This is a wonderful film, an old-fashioned romp. Great hero – brave, funny, smart, with some cute foibles (hates snakes). He controls the tension well – building and releasing. Most of the story elements are there. And they are all so well executed. But we aren't really moved at the end of the film because Indiana hasn't really grown as a character. He's developed his relationship with Marian but his character growth isn't quite so clear. Of course, this makes it possible for us to have sequels. That Resurrection scene isn't the best in the film because Indie is not active and it's not clear how this represents growth for him. What is he able to do here that he couldn't have done in Act 1? Not clear. But these aren't criticisms. I wouldn't change a thing.