

Raiders of the Lost Ark is a flawless classic and my favorite film of all time. It is the benchmark of the action/adventure genre and features one of the most iconic heroes in cinema history.

Structurally, the script is driven by brilliant action sequences and effortless setups and payoffs. One of the most interesting choices is Indiana Jones' "method of defeat" by which he finally wins the ark. After running, driving, swinging, punching and kicking his way through the entire film, his climactic action is a "soft" one: to close his eyes out of respect for the supernatural power of the Ark of the Covenant. The archaeology professor who didn't believe in "hocus pocus" has learned to believe in something beyond history, saving his life and that of his love interest, Marion.



Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)

Action/Adventure

Screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan

Story by George Lucas and Philip Kaufman

Directed by Steven Spielberg

BASIC STORY MAP

PROTAGONIST: INDIANA JONES, teacher and archaeologist

Skill: Fearless adventurer and archaeologist

Misbehavior: Impulsive and clumsy

Achilles Heel/Flaw: Afraid of snakes

EXTERNAL GOAL: To recover the Ark of the Covenant

INTERNAL GOAL: To protect Marion and respect the Ark

MAIN DRAMATIC CONFLICT: Belloq/ the Nazi's

THEME: Respect for the supernatural

CENTRAL DRAMATIC QUESTION: Can Indy recover the ark from the Nazi's?

ENDING: The ark is opened and Indy closes his eyes, saving himself and Marion.

ARC: Indy goes from a lone, jaded atheist to a loving boyfriend and believer.

LOGLINE: A fearless archaeologist teams up with his scrappy, jaded ex-girlfriend to hunt down and capture a religious relic before the Nazi's can obtain it.

FULL STORY MAP

STORY ENGINES

ACT 1: Indiana Jones barely survives a quest in Peru and accepts the mission to find his old mentor and recover the Ark.

ACT 2A: Indy teams up with Marion and Sallah and finds the Ark, but he is thwarted by Belloq.

ACT 2B: Indy chases the Nazi's and recovers the ark.

ACT 3: Indy loses the ark, chases it and survives as it kills the Nazi's. He and Marion make it back home safely, while the Ark is filed away in an anonymous Army warehouse.

THE BEAT SHEET

(note: this is not a complete scene list)

ACT ONE

1-9 – **OPENING**: INDIANA JONES navigates a series of obstacles in a sacred cave to find a golden idol and barely escapes as the cave crumbles around him.

10 – **INCITING INCIDENT**: BELLOQ, Indy's arch-nemesis, takes the idol from Indy.

12 – Indy makes a narrow escape in his buddy's plane.

17-20 – **STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD (EXTERNAL)**: The ARMY INTELLIGENCE MEN hire Indy to find his mentor Abner Ravenwood to locate the Ark of the Covenant before the Nazi's obtain it and use it as the ultimate weapon. The first goal will be to recover the headpiece to the staff of Ra.

22 – **STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD (INTERNAL)**: Indy laughs at Marcus' warning about the power of the Ark. He takes a flight to Asia while a Nazi spy eyes him.

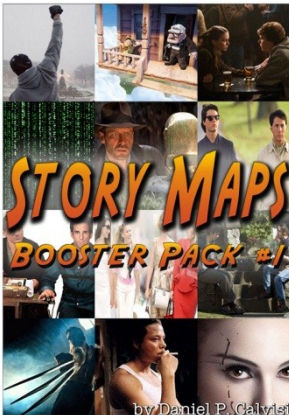
23 – Meet MARION RAVENWOOD, proprietor of a cantina in Nepal, who defeats a larger man in a whiskey drinking contest.

25 – Indy walks in and she punches him. He broke her heart ten years ago. She tells him her father Abner is dead. Indy pays her some money for the headpiece and she tells him to return the next day.

28 – **END OF ACT ONE TURN**: Nazi agent TOHT and his goons arrive, demanding the headpiece.

30 – **DECISION**: Indy returns to save Marion. They get in an extended firefight with the Nazi's.

33 – Marion's bar burns down so she joins Indy on his quest, giving him the headpiece.



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**Story Maps:
How to Write a GREAT Screenplay**