

**Adventures in Time:  
Abe Lincoln and the Velociraptor**  
Pitch Document

(Title Tentative)

**Premise:**

Abraham Lincoln, America's 16<sup>th</sup> President and the Great Emancipator, discovers time travel just before his assassination. Traveling back to the prehistoric era, Lincoln meets a Velociraptor, and the two team up to fight crime – Abe riding on the raptor and using weapons while the raptor tears ravenously through levels.

**Target:**

The game is targeting XBLIG and will thus be developed in XNA. The target audience is semi-casual gamers: those that enjoy fun, quirky, sidescrollers ala Mario or Sonic.

**Gameplay Overview:**

The game is intended to be a fast paced side-scroller, focused on quick platforming and weapon play.

Philosophies driving the gameplay are as follows:

- There should be a constant stream of enemies to provide challenge, but never so much that the player gets stopped for more than a few moments. The goal is to keep the player constantly moving.
- The player should be rewarded with a new “toy” regularly – a new weapon or power. At minimum one new toy per level should be given for the first half of the game.
- Story is secondary to gameplay, but there is room to tell a story every few levels. Never during the middle of a level – between levels is ideal.

**Visual Style:**

The game is played on a 2D plane. Whether the actual rendering is 3D (ala Viewtiful Joe or Shadow Complex) or 2D will largely be determined by the artist.

The story will be told between levels via short, paneled 'comic strips.' Again, the style of this will be determined by the artist.

**Aesthetic Philosophy**

The game, aesthetically, should adhere to a few governing characteristics:

- Relatively simple parallax backgrounds. We want to avoid being too “busy” with big animations.
- Bright and cheerful color schemes even in traditionally “dark” places (caves, etc).
- The detail level will be determined by the artist.

**Controls:**

A => Jump  
B => Pounce  
X => Fire Weapon  
Y => Dino Power  
DPad => Switch Weapon

**Eras:**

A core focus of the game is time travel. The player will travel between five themed 'eras' (potentially multiple times):

- Prehistoric (Dinosaur era)
- Victorian Steampunk
- Revolutionary War
- Modern
- Futuristic

How many times the player travels to each era will be determined by time constraints and scope.

**Weapons:**

Weapons are given the first time a player visits an era (except Victorian Steampunk) and are themed toward that era. Abe fires his weapons while riding on the Velociraptor. Weapons can be switched at any time using the D-Pad.

- Hatchet – Thrown in with an arcing path, hatchets are fairly strong. We'll ignore that humans didn't actually live during the era this is given.
- Bee Canon – Strong but slow, the bee canon is a weapon with a lot of stopping power.
- Dual Pistol – This is where we cross Abe with a John Woo-style action film. Dual posts are fast, relentless, and slightly inaccurate.
- Laser Rifle – The laser rifle is a straight-shot, long-lasting beam that destroys everything in its path but takes a while to recharge.

**Dino Powers:**

Dino Powers are special powers the velociraptor gains periodically through play; when a dino power is gained, the previous one is lost; these function similarly to the powerups in Mario.

- Fireball – A straight ball of fire shoots through the level.
- Discharge – A small shockwave shoots from the center of the dino.
- Float – The dino can slowly float down from a fall instead of dropping.
- Nuke – Everything on the screen is destroyed. Once this is used, it goes away.

NOTE: There is a concern that there are already a lot of moving parts in this game. Between the normal controls, weapons, and simple powerups (next section), there may be too much to keep track of. Dino Powers are a candidate for cutting if this is the case.

**Simple Powerups:**

These are short collectibles the player finds in the level which have a time limit.

- Health
- Speed Boost
- Rapid Fire
- Invincibility

**Rage Mechanic:**

During the Victorian Steampunk era, Abe & Velociraptor are fitted with steampunk parts. These allow them to go into "Rage Mode" after a gauge fills, similar to the super-power mechanics in Devil May Cry or God of War.

While in Rage Mode, the velociraptor will move considerably faster and barrel through enemies. Abe will pull out a gatling gun and fire recklessly. The player will essentially be invincible for a set time period and will then have to wait for the gauge to refill.

### **Level Design Philosophy**

- Fast-paced levels
- Several branches, ala Sonic the Hedgehog.
- No branch is particularly “better,” but some have different powerups and some are quicker
- Lots of little hidden items by way of passable walls, destructible objects, etc
- Each level => 3 or 4 Acts + Boss
- Each act => about 2 or 3 minutes for experienced players
- Shooting for about an hour of gameplay for experienced players that never die; more for inexperienced players. This doesn't seem like a lot but actually isn't bad compared to other sidescrollers.

### **Special Levels**

Special levels are intended to add some variety to the normal 'run gun jump' gameplay.

- Rolling Boulder – player must outrun an oncoming boulder, platforming and moving fast to prevent being crushed
- Last Stand – repeated waves of enemies invade a central location that the player must defend
- Future Bikes – player is riding a fast moving bike and must jump/duck to avoid oncoming obstacles; think the bike levels from Battletoads

### **Potential Story Hooks:**

The story is yet to be determined, but here are some potential hooks:

- Abe builds a time machine. After seeing his own death, he resolves to find some way to stop it.
- Abe builds a time machine and goes to the past, but the machine gets stolen. He finds a series of 'time anomalies' that allows him to jump between eras and track down the thief.
- Abe builds a time machine and goes to the past, but the machine breaks. He searches for pieces to repair it.
- Abe is hired by a secretive organization to fight Time Bandits.

I'm leaning toward the last one but am open to suggestions.

### **Game Modes**

- Story Mode (default)
- Rush – there are no enemies in the level, only traps & powerups. The goal is to race against the clock.
- Versus – 4 players can battle on constrained levels using their own Abe/Velociraptor.
- Last Stand – 4 player co-op on constrained levels against waves of oncoming enemies.
- Boss Bash – 4 players can fight against the bosses, where the bosses progressively get harder after each appearance.

### **Scope Philosophy**

- We are trying to release a game. However, everyone involved will no doubt have time

- constraints and possibly day jobs, and the project scope should account for this.
- There are certain areas we can scope appropriately and cut features as needed.
  - At bare minimum, the story mode should remain intact.
  - Cutable Features/Wishlist:
    - Extra game modes
    - Special levels
    - Dino Powers (may want to cut these to keep the gameplay uncluttered as well)
  - Features we can Tweak Based on Time Available:
    - Boss complexity
  - Exactly which features survive will depend on time, complexity, and comfort levels after the story mode has been fully realized.

### **Development Milestones**

- First Playable – The game is in a playable state. Not all the features are required or even a complete level, but basic concepts – controls, combat, enemy AI – should be on display.
- Vertical Slice – A single complete level should be realized from start to finish. Unpolished versions of weapons should be implemented as well as the rage mechanic. Powerups should be collectible. Enemies should be working against the player, and the final level boss should be functioning.
- Alpha – The game must be feature complete. All features – weapons, powerups, controls, enemy types, etc should be functioning if somewhat rough. All bosses and special levels should be functioning, since these may require new 'features' that deviate from standard gameplay. Approximately 70% of the content should be complete.
- Beta – The game must be content complete. This includes polish items and any items from the wish list which will be implemented. There should be no known high-priority bugs.
- RC – The game is bug free and theoretically ready to ship. The game should be submittable for peer review. If the game fails review, new RC candidates will be created and submitted.