

## Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris – Developer Diary: Puzzles 101

**Scot Amos:** Hello everyone, I'm Scot Amos, executive producer for Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris here to introduce our newest dev diary. Last time around we met some of our design team as well as our new characters in Lara's latest four-player adventure. We also focused on the cooperation and competition mayhem that comes with four simultaneous players.

Today we're here to talk about one of the defining pillars, and a fan favorite of the franchise - puzzles. We are lucky to have with us our lead level designer and the puzzle design guru of both Guardian of Light and Temple of Osiris, Jeff Wajcs!

**Jeff Wajcs:** Amos (<and SA replies: Wajcs>) It's a thrill for me to be on the Lara Croft franchise. As you mentioned, I was on Guardian of Light and when this chance came up at Crystal, I was excited to jump back into it. There were a lot of things I learned from Guardian of Light and from my work on Tomb Raider 2013 that I was eager to bring over to Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris... and I had a few new ideas for puzzles that we could only do now with our latest mechanics and our four-player design.

**SA:** ... Which is kind of Jeff's way of saying that when any of you get stuck or frustrated at some of these crazy things he's come up with... you can please address all your hate mail to him...

**JW:** No, they'll be fine. It's never about punishing the player. We place a huge emphasis on visual language to make sure the puzzles are communicating themselves to the player. After that, they can cooperate and experiment and work until they find their own "Ah ha" moment that solves the puzzle.

**SA:** ...Which is honestly, for us, that's the fun – to see people get through this game, to play it front to back and to see everything. The game is fully playable in single player. In co-op, people need to work together though since we made two different classes and split up their skill sets and we have these custom cooperative puzzles. As we said from our last diary... we've got Archaeologists and Gods – I'll let Jeff talk a little bit about their skills. But certainly, having these characters that have different things – Jeff knows a few examples that tells us how they can work together and what they can do.

**JW:** Sure, so the grapple line is a returning feature from Guardian of Light. It gains a powerful ability with four players in that each player is their own grapple point – you can maneuver in a lot of new and exciting ways. The Egyptian gods bring the staff of Osiris to the table – it shoots a beam of light which solves puzzles and can manipulate anything in the world that has these glyphs of Osiris on them.

**SA:** So even when we had Totec and Lara – these two different classes that were split up in the last game. Now we're talking about having these kind of puzzles where people not only have to work together but, even on the timing side of it – which we talked about at our last play test – we watch people play and saying, “Okay, I'm going to hold the staff... one, two, three!” then they let go too early and their friend jumps across and dies in a pit of spikes! Those seem like those great cooperative puzzles that we're striving for.

**JW:** Exactly, it's one of the fun challenges of designing puzzles that can scale from one player to four players. We try to add different interactive elements as more players enter the game. One of the simple examples that you see here is that in single player Lara must manipulate the mirrors to destroy the rifts in Duat using the staff of Osiris, whereas in co-op, one of the gods must use their staff to lower this platform while Lara manipulates the mirror and another player shoots at it to destroy the two rifts. It's just one easy example without giving away any spoilers.

**SA:** We also have one particular snake boss called Apep that you've put together – want to tell us a little bit about him?

**JW:** Yeah, this is Apep! He had rather humble beginnings. It was me – the designer – that first modeled and animated him and threw him into the game. In the first prototypes, he had these weak spots on his back that only the staff of Osiris could affect.

**SA:** And then even after single player, I remember we had only done it once where you had bunches of mirrors around the level and then for multiple players, you started upgrading that a little differently.

**JW:** So we had this rough version that works with one player then we had to ask, how do we scale this up for 2 players, 3 players, 4 players?! How do we balance

the puzzle elements with combat? It's really taking these bare bone ideas and iterating through them with the rest of the team to bring it to its full fruition.

It's important with these action puzzles and bosses that the player should know immediately what they need to do and the real challenge is executing and working together to get that done. That's where all the fun and hilarity ensues.

**SA:** Having a hand and a voice in everything that you build, we can make pretty extensive changes in a short time – kind of like the Oracle's Chamber Area...

**JW:** Sure! We do a bunch of internal and external play testing. This was one area where we really felt the need to inject a new flavor, a new theme into the game. Here's where we highlighted one of the elemental effects that hadn't gotten a lot of attention yet from us – poison! This gave our artists an excuse to go crazy with the green and the designers re-authored the combat to focus on poison. We took one of our highest rated challenge tombs from later in the game and gave it a poison flavor and installed it here as a puzzle gateway to the Oracle.

**SA:** Which, clearly from the play tests after we made the change, boosted up both puzzle experience in that area and introduced the unique combat that Oracle area with the flashier and dramatic touches with the lighting effects and an eerie, creepy aura that we put throughout.

So everyone, we hope you enjoyed another sneak peek into some of the new puzzle elements coming in Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris. Thank you, Jeff, for walking us through what it takes to build some of these crazy puzzles. We're super excited to put the finishing touches on Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris so you can all play it on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 on Xbox One, PS4, and PC.

**JW:** See you all online!