***Walden, a game* Press Notes**

Overview
Walden, a game, is an exploratory narrative and open world simulation of the life of American philosopher Henry David Thoreau during his experiment in self-reliant living at Walden Pond. The game begins in the summer of 1845 when Thoreau moved to the Pond and built his cabin there.

Players follow in his footsteps, surviving in the woods by finding food and fuel and maintaining their shelter and clothing. At the same time, players are surrounded by the beauty of the woods and the Pond, which hold a promise of a sublime life beyond these basic needs. The game follows the loose narrative of Thoreau's first year in the woods, with each season holding its own challenges for survival and possibilities for inspiration.

The audience for the game is broad: from experimental game players to lovers of Thoreau and Transcendental literature. As such, the game offers opportunities for reflective play rather than strategic challenge. The piece has a subtle narrative arc, in homage to the original text, which is not an adventure of the body pitted against nature, but of the mind and soul living in nature over the course of a New England year.

Background
Supported by grants from the NEA and NEH, and by programs like Sundance New Frontiers Storytelling Lab, *Walden, a game* is an ambitious independent game that strives to break ground in the field of expressive play. Designer Tracy Fullerton conceived of the idea on a visit to Walden Pond, and brought together a team of artists and developers at the USC Game Innovation Lab to realize her vision of an interactive version of Thoreau's experiment in living. The game is the product of a decade of work, a painstakingly crafted translation of Thoreau's ideas and environment, an interactive translation of the classic American work set in a faithful reproduction of its historical and natural contexts.

Topical Issues
There are many reasons why Thoreau's work should be important to us today – from his core environmentalism, to his criticisms of the ways in which technologies change the speed and value of our lives, to his fundamental questioning of the role of government in society – all of which are as critical, if not more, than when he was writing. As the 200th anniversary of Thoreau's birth approaches, the opportunity to relive his famous experiment in simple, self-reliant living in the form of an immersive game seems particularly relevant to those of us living in a world dominated by concerns about our relationship to nature, technology and governments. *Walden, a game* gives digital natives the opportunity to meet Thoreau's ideas in a form that makes them interactive and immersive.

Features
- Dynamic open world – Explore Walden Pond circa 1845 through one in-game year, with dynamically changing seasons, wildlife and gameplay challenges. Enjoy the summer, survive the winter, welcome the spring.
- Six hours of narrative play – Experience the story of Henry Thoreau's experiment at Walden over six hours of play. Interact with historical characters and situations while living your own experiment.
- Beautiful reflective experience – Play deliberately and reveal a world of hidden wonders and small beauties that are unique to the choices you make about how to spend your time at Walden.
- From the team that created the award-winning art game *The Night Journey*, comes a new world of reflective play. Game designer Tracy Fullerton leads a team from the USC Game Innovation Lab in the creation of this expansive, open-world experience.
- First person simulation of the classic American work *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, the game challenges players to survive over the course of a year in the woods of Walden Pond, while also finding inspiration in nature and attending to the tasks of a life well lived.
- Featuring Emile Hirsch (*Into the Wild*) as the voice of Henry David Thoreau.
- Exploration, survival, role playing.
- For lovers of art, nature, beauty, philosophy and literature.
- Production funding form the NEH, NEA and Sundance Institute.
- Companion curriculum guide available with five lesson plans across domains including English Language Arts, United States History, Media Literacy, Environmental Science and more.

Designer Bio
Tracy Fullerton is an experimental game designer, associate professor and director of the USC Games program. Her research center, the Game Innovation Lab, has produced several influential independent games, including *Cloud*, *flOw*, *Darfur is Dying*, *The Misadventures of P.B. Winterbottom*, and *The Night Journey*, with artist Bill Viola. She is currently working on *Walden, a game*, a simulation of Henry David Thoreau's experiment at Walden Pond supported by grants from the NEA and NEH. Tracy is the author of "Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games," a design textbook used at game programs worldwide, and holder of the Electronic Arts Endowed Chair in Interactive Entertainment. Prior to USC, she designed games for companies including Microsoft, Sony, MTV, among many others. Tracy's work has received numerous honors including an Emmy nomination for interactive television, Indiecade's "Sublime Experience," "Impact," and "Trailblazer" awards, Games for Change "Game Changer" award, the Game Developer's Choice Ambassador Award and Time Magazine's Best of the Web.

<u>Release Info</u>
July 4, 2017 for PC, Mac on Itch.io
May 15, 2018 for PlayStation 4
March 18, 2019 for PC, Mac on Steam
July 2, 2021 for Xbox One and Series X (Worldwide)
New "EDU" version for Web and Chromebook coming fall of 2021

<u>Awards</u>
Best Overall Game, Best Educational Game at Intentional Play Summit, September 2018
Game Academy Award at CAFA Beijing Serious Games Exhibit, September 2018
Nominated for Best Game at Terminus Festival, June 2018
Nominated for A MAZE. Berlin Long Feature Award, April 2018
Nominated for New York Videogame Awards, Off Broadway Award for Best Indie Game, January 2018
Shortlisted for BAFTA Game Beyond Entertainment, January 2018
Named to 2017 Top Edtech list by Common Sense Education, December 2018
Developers Choice Award, IndieCade, October 2017
Nominated for Unity Impact Award, September 2017
Game of the Year, Most Significant Impact, Games for Change, July, 2017
Second Place Judges Environmental Impact Award, Earthgames On Tap, May 2017
IDFA canon of 100 most important interactive documentaries
ICIDS Art Exhibition Selection, November, 2016
Most Meaningful Game Award at Meaningful Play, October, 2016
Encounters Documentary Film Festival Selection 2016
Cleveland International Film Festival Selection 2016
Sheffield Doc|Fest 2016, Special Mention: Alternate Realities Interactive Award
Sundance New Frontiers Festival Selection 2016
IDFA Selection 2015
Indiecade Finalist 2015
Sundance Institute New Frontier Storylab 2014
Indiecade Digital Selects 2014

<u>Behind the scenes videos</u>
Behind the Scenes of Walden, a game: https://youtu.be/eOQPgA5aAUM

Behind the Sounds of Walden, a game: https://youtu.be/_C7jIUJvqbg

Meet the Artist: https://youtu.be/QWUdwRixFzg

<u>Screenshots</u>
Hi-resolution files: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/cm6k0zxg2za5bpd/AACVk54vS-FgYKnxwv5zkWkMa?dl=0

Medium resolution files:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/sn5jwqwg0bb7dv8/AABZgz2WoevLhsRtkwF0gjW8a?dl=0

<u>Full Project Credits</u>

Emile Hirsch as the voice of Henry David Thoreau

Tracy Fullerton	Game Director, Designer, Writer
Todd Furmanski	Lead Programmer, Designer
Lucas Peterson	Lead Artist, World Design
Michael Sweet	Composer, Sound Designer, Field Recording

Cast

Jim Cummings	Voice of Ralph Waldo Emerson
Misty Lee	Voices of Sophia Thoreau, Mother
Tony Amendola	Voices of Bronson Alcott, Doctor, Reverend Sewall, Shopkeeper
Victor Brandt	Voices of Horace Greeley, Bartleby the Clerk, Father
Erica Lindbeck	Voices of Margaret Fuller, Ellen Sewall
Damian Cecere	Voices of James Elliot Cabot, Nathaniel Hawthorne

Development Team

Logan Ver Hoef	Level Design, Game Programming, Shader Programming
Alex Mathew	Wildlife Design, Game Programming
Georg Luif	Console & Audio Programming
Sean Bouchard	Prototype Design & Programming
Bryan Jaycox	Prototype Design & Programming
Mike Rossmassler	Prototype Design & Programming
Daniel Batista	Console Programming
Jivitesh Dhaliwal	Console Programming
Yuran (Hesh) Yan	Console Programming

Art Team

Kurosh ValaNejad	Intro and Thaw Animation, UI Design
Ala' Diab	Additional UI Design
Shaun Kim	Thoreau's Hands, Wildlife Animations
Evan Harbuck	Motion Capture Animation
David Hollin	Motion Capture Performance
Kim Cagney	Wildlife Animation
Andrew Malek	Wildlife Animation
Dan Wilson	Wildlife Animation

EDU Team

Rong Deng	Game Programming
Michelle Ma	Additional UI, Curriculum Design
Matthew Farber	Curriculum Design
Matthew Hamilton	Curriculum Design

University of North Texas Libraries

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It Is a Debt We Owe poster	Public domain, courtesy of Boston Public Library
Portrait of President James Polk	by Matthew Brady, public domain
The Liberator masthead	Public domain, courtesy of Fair Use Repository
The Mansion of Happiness game board	Public domain
Portraits of John and Sophia Thoreau	Public domain
Farmer's Almanac	Public domain

Blindlight Voice Over Team
Lev Manovich	Executive Producer
Veronica Brown	Casting, Session Producer
Tim Cubbison	Voice Direction
Mark De La Fuente	Audio Engineering
Jake Gaskill	Voice Production Coordinator

USC Voice Over Session
Melissa Grillo	Casting, Session Producer
Tracy Fullerton	Voice Direction
Bethany Sparks	Audio Engineering
Madeline Maher	Session Coordinator

Music Scoring Team
Michael Sweet	Composer, Session Producer
Louis Robert King	Orchestration, Conductor
Recorded by John Weston	at Futura Productions, Roslindale MA
Travis Karpak	Recording Assistant
Recorded by John Escobar	at Shames Family Scoring Stage

Berklee College of Music
Jeanine Cowen	Berklee Recording Coordination
Timothy Schwerdt	Recording Assistant
Zechun Kenneth Jin	Recording Assistant
Andres Abello	Recording Assistant
Li Xiao'an, East Coast Scoring	Musician Contracting

Musicians

Violin	Angel Valchinov
	Nicole Parks
	Margaritka Valchinova
	Emily Mullaney
	Katharina Giegling
	Kyra Davies
	Jieun (Sarah) Ping
	Natalie Calma
	Dana Ianculovici
	Fariba Hunold
	Subaiou Zhang
Viola	Sam Kelder
	Eve Boltax
	Foxman James
	Oliver Chang
	David Wallace
Cello	Leo Eguchi
	Kevin Crudder
	Alan Toda-Ambaras
Flute	Arielle Burke
Flute and Alto Flute	Michael Avitabile
Clarinet	David Dziardziel
	Alexis Lanz

Test Team
Timothy Lee	QA Manager
Atley Loughridge	Gameplay Testing
Gabriela Purri R. Gomes	Gameplay Testing
Dave Yan	Gameplay Testing
Cristian Guzman	QA Testing
Maria Ferreri	QA Testing
Manolo Rosenberg	QA Testing

Localization Team
Christopher Morales	Spanish
Andres Cureno	
Gabriela Purri R. Gomes	French
Meredith Agran	
David Leblanc	

Production Support
Vincent Diamante	Prototype Music
Kyla Gorman	Research
Kristy Norindr	Meeting Coordinator
George Li	Additional Programming
Elaine Gomez	Additional Research
Carolyn Tanner	SCA Business Office

Layton Hanson	USC Contracts and Grants Office
Katie Rountree	USC Contracts and Grants Office
Emi Kamei	USC Contracts and Grants Office
Madeline Maher	Assistant to Tracy Fullerton

Public Relations Team

Rob Fleischer	Sandbox Strategies
Amanda Young Curtis	Sandbox Strategies
Valerie Turpin	Sandbox Strategies

Advisors

Jeff Cramer	Thoreau Institute at Walden Pond
Whitney Retallic	Thoreau Institute at Walden Pond
Pablo Frasconi	Filmmaker, The Light at Walden
Susan Foster Jones	Concord Museum
Leah Walczak	Concord Museum
Leah Giles	Concord Museum
David Wood	Concord Museum
William Deverell	Chair, USC Department of History
Dan Lewis	Chief Curator of Manuscripts, Huntington Museum

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Dedicated to my father,
Eugene Howard Fullerton,
sine quo non.
(1934~2015)

Press contact: uscgameinnovationlab@gmail.com

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