*Raiders of the Lost Ark*

[*Raiders of the Lost Ark*](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082971/?ref_=nv_sr_1); Paramount Pictures, 1981; Directed by Steven Spielberg; Written by Lawrence Kasdan; Starring Harrison Ford and Karen Allen; Rated PG; [Watch the trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZOcoxjeUYo).

Summary:

When *Star Wars* first opened in 1977, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg went to Hawaii for a vacation. It was there that they decided together, while building a sandcastle, to make the first Indiana Jones film. The quintessential action-adventure story, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* follows Indiana Jones, an archaeologist and professor who spends his spare time locating and acquiring rare artifacts. In 1936 two men from Army Intelligence come to Dr. Jones and ask him to find the Ark of the Covenant before Hitler, who plans to use the Ark’s power to conquer and rule the world. With bullwhip, hat, and leather jacket, Indy travels from South America to Tibet to Egypt in scenes that feel like individual short stories, though at breakneck speed. While *Raiders* has an intentional B-movie feel meant to recall the cliffhanger film serials from the 1930s, it still was the highest-grossing film of 1981, winning five Academy Awards (Best Sound, Film Editing, Visual Effects, Art Direction, and Sound Effects Editing).

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* Indy’s Hat. The hat is Indiana’s trademark. He also never once loses his hat during the film’s action.
* Nazis. The Nazis are never given a break and are presented as unquestionably, irredeemably evil.
* Snakes. Indy’s greatest fear is snakes, which appear at two key points in the film. This fear humanizes Indy but also recalls the snake in the Garden of Eden.
* The Ark. While Hitler seeks the Ark for its powers, Indiana wants it because of its historical significance. Belloq, however, says the Ark is “a transmitter, a radio for speaking to God.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Indy says to his college class that folklore is one of the biggest dangers of archaeology. How so?
2. What clichés, other than the hat, does the film hijack or overturn from old Westerns or comic books?
3. What is it that motivates Indy to go looking for the Ark?
4. Belloq says, “You and I are very much alike. Archeology is our religion, yet we have both fallen from the pure faith.” Is this true?
5. Both Marcus Brody and Sallah issue warnings about finding the Ark. Are their warnings the same? Why does Indy not heed them?
6. Would you agree that Indy is somewhere between hero and anti-hero? Why or why not?
7. Is this film making any sort of statement, or was it intended only to entertain?
8. Contrast Indiana Jones’s character with another leading man, Luke Skywalker.
9. How does the music affect one’s view and viewing of the film?
10. Why are Indy and Marion spared in the climactic opening of the Ark?
11. Consider the last shot. Why does the film end the way it does?