

JUSTIN CUMMINGS

Worldbuilding Samples

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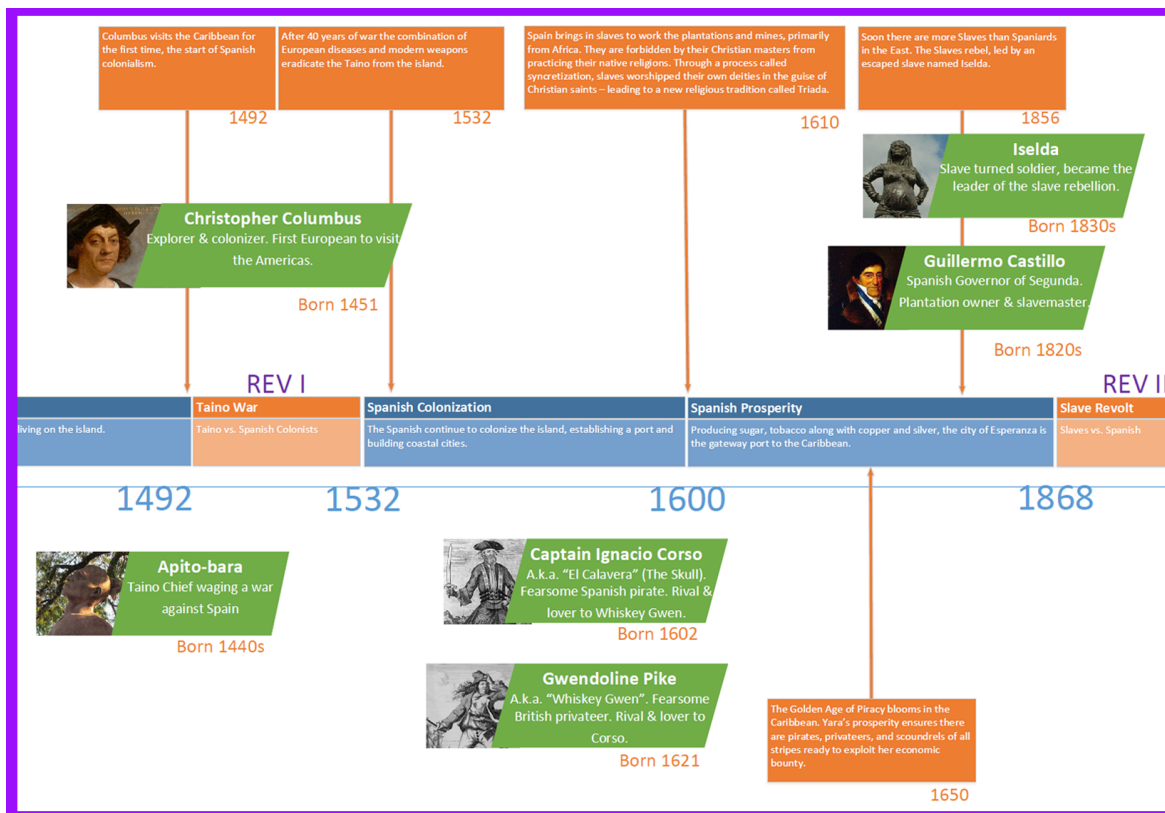
The following are examples of my process related to creating fictional settings in professional video game projects. This work informs the creative and systemic foundation for all of the project's developers and collaborators.

FAR CRY 6 (2021)

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NOTES: *FAR CRY 6* is set in the fictional Caribbean island nation of Yara, which is primarily influenced by Cuba. Months of historical and cultural research were key in establishing its setting, which combined real historical figures & events with our own invented elements.

In concert with our narrative team, our cultural & sensitivity consultants, and our research team, I built a set of documents which formed the basis of this fictional setting. The most important were the Timeline of Yara, the Names of Yara, and the historical reference document called Yara: History & Culture. Here's a few excerpts to illustrate their scope and detail.



A glimpse of the historical timeline I created for *FAR CRY 6*. Note the combination of real-world elements (Christopher Columbus, the Taíno people, etc.) with invented figures (Guillermo Castillo, our villain's ancestor).

The primary purpose of this timeline was to allow our writers to grab quick, at-a-glance information relating to the significant dates in Yara's history. This was crucial when exploring a character's backstory, a particular geographical feature, or any element that needed a year attached to it. The timeline dated from the pre-colonization era (1300s) to the present day (then 2021).

Resort Hotel / Hotel Los Jazmines	Casa del Viento	"House of the Wind"	Rosado (pink), Ave Marina ("seabird"), Sueño Verano ("Summer Dream"), Viaje Nocturno ("Night Cruise")	One of the region's most famous luxury hotels.
Rest Stop (Highway) / Las Barrigonas	Los Borrachos	"The Drunks"		A popular rural rest stop.
Rest Stop (Rural)	Café Pimientos	"Peppers Café"	Café Luna (Moon Café), Barra de Vistas (Vista Bar), Cafetería de Vistas	Used to be a popular rest stop for both locals and tourists.

A section of my naming document showing the different elements involved in naming Yara's locations, including real-life inspirations (eg. Cuba's Hotel Los Jazmines), alternate names, descriptions, and more.

Far Cry 6 required a staggering number of unique names for its locations and geographical elements, and this document was my attempt to keep track of it all. As a live, openly-shared document, it helped many of our teams stay on top of the latest naming information and the inspirations and reasoning behind it. By the time the game shipped, this document grew to include dozens of categorical tabs and thousands of individual entries.

My process for naming had to account for many disparate factors, including the gameplay requirements of the feature and any related real-world inspiration. It also required me to gain a functional understanding of Spanish in order to authentically create a setting with thousands of years of Spanish-speaking history. Thankfully, I had lots of help from Spanish-speaking team members and our cultural consultants.

(Continues below)

2C. Slavery, Imperialism, & Rebellion (1530s – 1900s)

Slavery Under Spanish Rule

In its colonies in the Caribbean and elsewhere, Spain employed a system of forced labour called [encomienda](#) whereby a representative of the crown called an *encomendero* would be granted the (non-consensual) labour of the conquered peoples under their purview. This system was formally abolished in 1542, marking the first major movement towards the abolishment of slavery in the Western world, but indentured and otherwise coerced servitude in many forms remained common in Spanish colonies (including Yara) throughout the following centuries.

Triada

Triada is a fictional religion invented for FAR CRY 6, based heavily on the [Santería](#) faith. [See here for more details on Triada.](#)

The mostly African slaves brought to Yara by the Spanish were forbidden by their Christian masters from practicing their native religions (notably Yoruba). Through a process called [syncretization](#), slaves would worship their own deities in the guise of Christian saints, to fool their overseers into believing

their efforts at proselytization had been successful. Over time, this practice was distilled into a unique religious tradition called Triada.



The central figures in Triada mythology are the Oluwas, guardian deities representing the cycle of life and death, chaos and order, rebellion and stability. They are seen as mortal beings, each with their own personality, flaws, and desires. Yarans consult with these gods to ask for help & advice, to foretell future events, and to speak

with the spirits of the dead.

Ída is the lord of fire, passion, war, and death. Okú is the mistress of darkness, water, justice, and rebirth. Locked in an eternal dance, they are balanced by Mimo Abosi, the trickster who represents chaos and plays both sides.

A section of the *Yara: History & Culture* document related to Yara's early history and the development of its fictional religion, Triada.

This document supplemented our official narrative bible for *Far Cry 6* (which focused on characters, plot, theme, etc) with easily-searchable sections on Yara's background and history. It included links to primary sources, Wikipedia, internal Ubisoft research materials, concept art, and more.

This document was shared across the entire *Far Cry 6* team in order to ensure every developer was working from the same basis of information, both factual and fictional.

STARLINK: BATTLE FOR ATLAS (2018)

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The Starlink writers room, circa summer 2016.

NOTES: I worked with several talented writers to develop a fictitious group of planets in Atlas (which is a real star system in the Pleiades cluster). Using concept art and reference material that matched our intended Saturday-morning cartoon tone (such as *Star Wars*, Nintendo's *Star Fox*, Netflix's *Voltron*, etc), we developed an original history, unique geographic traits, alien flora & fauna, and a cultural/technological infrastructure for the entire system. Here's an example of the worldbuilding I did for one of Atlas's seven planets:



Concept art for a night-time biome on Sonatus.

Planet: Sonatus

Biome: “Musical” (Tranquil Utopia). Meant to contrast with the familiar elemental nature of other planets (fire, ice, desert, etc), which are quite recognizably “videogamey”, to represent something new and unique to the IP.

Flora: Fog Lily / Spice Pop / Gemfruit

Using concept art as a starting base for worldbuilding meant we sometimes had to marry visual designs with conflicting gameplay intentions. The Gemfruit is a perfect example: a fictional mineral resource that could not be used as an *actual* mineral resource for gameplay reasons, so I styled it as a crystalline organic growth instead.

Fauna: Ursataur / Vibrosaur / Chimejay

The game had 6 unique fauna animation rigs that were repurposed as different animals across all 7 planets. The “hulking quadruped” skeleton (which was a large reptilian desert dweller called a Nomadon on the planet Kirite) was used on Sonatus as the furry, broad-headed pack hunter called the Ursataur. Working with artists to invent completely different biological designs with the same basic silhouette was a fascinating challenge.

History: The Wardens, a fictional precursor race, were responsible for the creation of Atlas. Each planet in Atlas was assigned a Warden who would shape it according to their personality and whims. Sonatus was the magnum opus of “The Conductor”, a Warden obsessed with musical perfection. Every cell of the planet was designed to generate sound and rhythm, from the resonance of the crystals, to the cries of the wildlife, and the thundering bass of the Gonglobes as they rolled across the planet’s surface. In the millennia since the Wardens’ disappearance, however, Sonatus’s perpetual song has dimmed to an almost imperceptible level: the rocks lay still, the crystals hum faintly, and creatures sing weakly into a silent sky.