The Inform Beginner’s Guide

Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich

Third Edition: August 2004

With a Foreword by Graham Nelson
The Inform Beginner’s Guide
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Cover: First Steps (watercolour and crayon on paper, 2002) Harry Firth (2000–)

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First Edition: April 2002
Second Edition (with minor revisions): August 2002
Third Edition (alignment with Inform 6.30, further minor revisions): August 2004
Contents

Foreword by Graham Nelson .................................................. 7

About this guide ................................................................. 9
  Scope and approach ......................................................... 10
  Presentation and style ...................................................... 10
  Useful Internet resources .................................................. 11
  Acknowledgements .......................................................... 12

1 • Just what is interactive fiction? ......................................... 13

2 • Tools of the trade ........................................................... 17
  Inform on an IBM PC (running Microsoft Windows) ............. 19
  Inform on an Apple Macintosh (running OS X) .................... 24
  More about the editor ...................................................... 31
  More about the compiler .................................................. 31
  More about the interpreter ................................................. 31

3 • Heidi: our first Inform game ............................................ 33
  Creating a basic source file .............................................. 33
  Understanding the source file ......................................... 35
  Defining the game’s locations ......................................... 37
  Joining up the rooms ..................................................... 39
  Adding the bird and the nest .......................................... 42
  Adding the tree and the branch .................................... 44
  Finishing touches ......................................................... 46

4 • Reviewing the basics ...................................................... 49
  Constants and variables .................................................. 49
  Object definitions .......................................................... 50
  Object relationships – the object tree ............................... 52
  Things in quotes ............................................................. 55
  Routines and statements ................................................ 56

5 • Heidi revisited ............................................................... 59
  Listening to the bird ....................................................... 59
  Entering the cottage ....................................................... 61
  Climbing the tree .......................................................... 63
  Dropping objects from the tree ...................................... 64
  Is the bird in the nest? .................................................... 66
  Summing up ................................................................. 66

6 • William Tell: a tale is born ............................................. 69
  Initial setup ................................................................. 69
  Object classes .............................................................. 72
7 • William Tell: the early years ........................................... 79
  Defining the street ......................................................... 79
  Adding some props ......................................................... 81
  The player’s possessions ............................................... 83
  Moving further along the street ...................................... 85
  Introducing Helga .......................................................... 86
8 • William Tell: in his prime ............................................... 91
  The south side of the square .......................................... 91
  The middle of the square .............................................. 92
  The north side of the square ........................................ 101
9 • William Tell: the end is nigh ............................................ 103
  The marketplace ........................................................... 103
  A diversion: working with routines .................................. 104
  Return to the marketplace ............................................ 107
  Gessler the governor ...................................................... 108
  Walter and the apple ..................................................... 109
  Verbs, verbs, verbs ....................................................... 111
10 • Captain Fate: take 1 ...................................................... 119
  Fade up on: a nondescript city street ............................. 119
  A hero is not an ordinary person .................................. 127
11 • Captain Fate: take 2 ...................................................... 131
  A homely atmosphere .................................................. 131
  A door to adore .......................................................... 136
12 • Captain Fate: take 3 ...................................................... 147
  Too many toilets .......................................................... 147
  Don’t shoot! I’m only the barman .................................... 150
13 • Captain Fate: the final cut ............................................... 157
  Additional catering garnish .......................................... 157
  Toilet or dressing room? ............................................. 158
  And there was light ..................................................... 161
  Amazing technicolour dreamcoats ............................... 166
  It’s a wrap ................................................................. 169
14 • Some last lousy points ................................................... 173
  Expressions ................................................................. 173
  Internal IDs ................................................................. 174
  Statements ................................................................. 174
  Directives ................................................................. 176
  Objects ...................................................................... 177
  Routines ................................................................... 179
  Reading other people’s code ...................................... 181
15 • Compiling your game ...................................................... 189
  Ingredients ................................................................. 189
  Compiling à la carte .................................................... 192
  Switches ................................................................. 193
16 • Debugging your game .................................................. 197
    Command lists .......................................................... 198
    Spill them guts .......................................................... 198
    What on earth is going on? ............................................. 199
    Super-powers ............................................................ 201
    Infix: the harlot’s prerogative ........................................ 202
    No matter what ......................................................... 203
17 • *** You have won *** ................................................... 205
Appendix A • How to play an IF game ................................. 209
Appendix B • “Heidi” story .................................................. 213
    Transcript of play ....................................................... 213
    Game source code – original version ............................... 214
    Game source code – revisited ........................................ 216
Appendix C • “William Tell” story ........................................ 219
    Transcript of play ....................................................... 219
    Game source code ....................................................... 222
    Compile-as-you-go ..................................................... 233
Appendix D • “Captain Fate” story ....................................... 237
    Transcript of play ....................................................... 237
    Game source code ....................................................... 241
    Compile-as-you-go ..................................................... 255
Appendix E • Inform language ............................................. 257
    Literals ................................................................. 257
    Names ................................................................. 257
    Constants .............................................................. 257
    Variables and arrays .................................................. 258
    Expressions and operators ............................................ 258
    Classes and objects ................................................... 259
    Manipulating the object tree ........................................ 259
    Message passing ....................................................... 259
    Uncommon and deprecated statements ............................ 259
    Statements ............................................................ 260
    Routines ............................................................... 260
    Flow control .......................................................... 260
    Loop control .......................................................... 260
    Displaying information ............................................... 261
    Verbs and actions ..................................................... 261
    Other useful directives ............................................... 262
    Uncommon and deprecated directives ............................ 262
t would, I think, be immodest to compare myself to Charles Bourbaki (1816–97), French hero of the Crimean War and renowned strategist, a man offered nothing less as a reward than the throne of Greece (he declined). It may be in order, though, to say a few words about his fictitious relative Nicholas, the most dogged, lugubrious, interminably thorough and clotted writer of textbooks ever to state a theorem. Rather the way Hollywood credits movies for which nobody wants the blame to the director “Alan Smithee” (who by now has quite a solid filmography and even gets the occasional cinema festival), so in mathematics many small results are claimed to be the work of Nicholas Bourbaki. Various stories are told of the birth of Bourbaki, under whose name young Parisian mathematicians have clubbed together since 1935 to write surveys of whole fields of algebra. His initials, it may be noted, are NB. Some say “Bourbaki” was an in-joke at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (much as “zork” and “foobar” were at MIT), going right back to a practical joke in 1880 when a pupil successfully impersonated a visiting “General Claude Bourbaki”. Folklore also has it that the real general was notorious when on manoeuvres for being able to eat anything if need be – stale biscuit, raw turnips, his horse, his horse’s hay, his horse’s leather nosebag that the hay used to be in – just as Nicholas Bourbaki would have to eat everything there was to eat in the theory of algebra, no matter how tooth-grinding or chewy. To give credit where it’s due, Bourbaki’s forty volumes are quite useful. Or, actually, they aren’t, but it’s nice to know they’re there.

It was on reading this present book that I realised the melancholy truth: that my own volume on Inform, the Designer’s Manual, is a Bourbaki. It has to cover every last thing, from Icelandic accents to assembly language to fake actions, not to mention fake fake actions, to grouping together almost-but-not-quite-identical objects such as Scrabble tiles – matters which a dedicated Inform designer might need to look up once in a lifetime, or then again might not. To be sure, the basics do turn up every so often, especially in Chapters II and III, but despite my best intention it is a gentle introduction only if you pick your way through as if on stepping stones. This book, on the other hand, is a follow-as-you-go tutorial, covering the basics thoroughly and a little at a time. Where the Designer’s Manual tries never to retrace its steps, so for instance there is just one section on locations, the Beginner’s Guide works its way through three whole games, giving it three chances to visit every subject, reinforcing and showing a little more each time.

I should like to say that my first reaction, when out of the blue the authors sent me advance proofs, was to exclaim with delight at the lucid, uncluttered, sensible approach. Truthfully, however, that was my third reaction, the first being jealousy (it’s all right for you, you don’t have to document how the parser calculates GNA sets for noun clauses) and the second pique (you’ve cast the gizbru spell: turn dangerous object into a harmless one at my book). When it comes
down to it, though, there is no greater compliment any writer can be paid than to have someone else choose to write a book about his work, so I thank Roger and Sonja for their gesture, as well as the fine job they have done.

That is quite enough talking about myself, as Inform belongs to all its users, to the hundreds of serious writers of interactive fiction who find it helpful, and for almost a decade it has been a collective enterprise. Today nobody remembers who suggested what. Its world-modelling rules now resemble a New England patchwork quilt, to which each house in the village contributes one woven square. As you read this book, you might want to bear in mind that such a quilt is never finished, and always has room for one more square from a newly arrived neighbour.

St Anne’s College
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April 2002
About this guide

If they asked me, I could write a book;
About the way you TALK, and LISTEN; And LOOK.
– with apologies to Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart.

Text adventures, otherwise known collectively as interactive fiction (IF), were highly popular computer games during the 1980s. As technology evolved they faded from the market, unable to compete with increasingly sophisticated graphical games; however, IF was far from dead. The Internet grew, and Usenet discussion forums offered a focal point for fans of the genre. By developing IF programming tools and systems, organising contests and writing tutorials and reviews, these enthusiasts have led a revival responsible for many notable works, including some whose quality arguably surpasses that of the best commercial titles of the 1980s.

Nowadays, IF is a hobby; almost everything that you need to begin writing your own text adventures is available, for free, on the Internet. While expert programmers may relish the considerable challenge of creating interactive fiction using a generalised language such as BASIC or C, specialist IF tools have largely solved the fundamental world-building issues. The most common systems are Graham Nelson’s Inform – our subject matter – and Mike Roberts’ TADS (Text Adventure Development System). New hopefuls arrive each year, but few achieve widespread acceptance; the majority of today’s IF (and virtually all the works generally regarded as interesting, innovative, sophisticated, etc.) have been created with either one or the other. In our view, only TADS bears comparison with Inform in popularity, in being able to handle simple and complex stories, and in availability on PCs, Macs, hand-held devices and a wide variety of other computers. But, since you’re reading our guide, we’ll assume that you’ve already made a choice, and decided to give Inform a try.

We aim to provide a grounding in Inform basics. When you have learnt a little about it, you’ll be able to design simple games for your friends to play and, as you become more accomplished, which you can share via the Internet with enthusiasts worldwide. However, if you simply want to play games written by others – rather than write them yourself – then you don’t need to learn Inform, and this guide isn’t for you.

---

1. If you feel confused about IF in general or about this distinction between writing and playing in particular, try glancing ahead at “Just what is interactive fiction?” on page 13 and at “How to play an IF game” on page 209; also, you may find the Ifaq at http://www.plover.net/~textfire/raiffaq/ifaq/ helpful.
Scope and approach

Because this is only an introduction to Inform, many features are treated rather superficially, or ignored altogether. The definitive text is Graham Nelson’s *Inform Designer’s Manual* (Fourth Edition, July 2001), commonly known as the DM4; you cannot hope to use Inform successfully without having this splendid book by your side. Our guide should be seen merely as a supplement to the DM4, offering step-by-step descriptions of those aspects of Inform which are most important on first acquaintance. In any matter where we seem at odds with what Graham has written, you should assume that he is right and that we are, well, confused.

As a tutorial, this guide is intended to be printed out and then read sequentially; it isn’t meant for online usage or designed as a reference manual, though it does provide brief summaries of Inform’s language and library. Our approach is to teach you about Inform through the creation of three games: all short, all playable to completion. “Heidi” is just about as simple as an IF game can be, but still manages to introduce a range of important concepts. “William Tell”, a retelling of the famous folk tale, is nearly as brief but roams more widely in its use of Inform’s capabilities. Finally “Captain Fate” presents a comic-book hero in urgent need of a change. By the end of the guide, we’ll have touched on less than half of Inform’s capabilities, but we hope we’ll have mentioned most of the things that matter when you’re starting out to design your first Inform game.

One final point: Inform is a powerful system, often offering several different ways of tackling a particular design requirement. We’ve tried to present things as simply and consistently as possible, but you shouldn’t be surprised to discover other approaches, maybe shorter, maybe more efficient, than those shown here.

Presentation and style

Most of the guide’s text appears in this typeface, except where we’re using words which are part of the Inform system (like `print`, `Include`, `VerbLib`) or are extracted from one of our games (like `bird`, `nest`, `top_of_tree`). Terms in bold type are included in the glossary – Appendix G on page 273. We switch to italic type for a placeholder: for example you should read the Inform statement:

```
print "string";
```

as meaning “display on the player’s screen the arbitrary character or characters which are represented here by the placeholder *string*”. Examples might include:

```
print "Hello world!";
print "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, [...] and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.";
```

We place the “*YPE*” symbol alongside game fragments which you can type in as a part of our working examples. This differentiates them from other code snippets whose only purpose is to illustrate some particular feature.
Useful Internet resources

One of our basic assumptions – along with your burning desire to learn Inform and your ability to work comfortably with the files and folders on your computer – is that you have access to the Internet. This is pretty well essential, since almost everything you need is available only via this medium. In particular, you’ll find much helpful material at these locations:

  The Inform home page, maintained by Graham Nelson and a small team of helpers. Most important, this is where you can find the *Inform Designer’s Manual* in PDF format.

- [http://mirror.ifarchive.org/](http://mirror.ifarchive.org/)
  The IF Archive (or actually a high-speed mirror copy of it), from which you can download almost anything that’s free and in the public domain. For a clickable map of Inform-related parts of the Archive, see [http://www.firthworks.com/roger/informfaq/hh.html](http://www.firthworks.com/roger/informfaq/hh.html).

  **NOTE:** prior to August 2001, the IF Archive was located elsewhere, at [ftp://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/](ftp://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/), and references to that location can still occasionally be found. *Do not use* the old location: any information still available from there is likely to be out-of-date.

  Roger Firth’s Inform pages, including the Informary (what’s new in Inform?), and the Inform Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) pages.

- [http://www.plover.net/~textfire/raiffaq/](http://www.plover.net/~textfire/raiffaq/)
  A more general list of FAQs about IF authorship, covering both Inform and the other main systems.

- [news:rec.arts.int-fiction](news:rec.arts.int-fiction)
  The Usenet newsgroup for authors of IF, commonly known by the abbreviation RAIF. Here you’ll find discussion on IF technology, criticism and game design issues, and fast, friendly and knowledgeable assistance with your own “how do I…” questions (but please, look in the manual first).

- [news:rec.games.int-fiction](news:rec.games.int-fiction)
  The complementary newsgroup for IF *players*, often known as RGIF.
Acknowledgements

Becoming sufficiently conversant with Inform to be able to share it with others is not something done quickly or in isolation. In getting to where we are today, we have been assisted at many times and in many ways by the notably supportive and good-natured people, far too numerous to list by name, who make rec.arts.int-fiction such an invaluable IF resource. We are grateful to you all.

In creating this guide, we have received specific help from a number of people. First and foremost we must mention Graham Nelson, who kindly wrote the Foreword, and delighted us with long and detailed lists of helpful comments and suggestions on two of our drafts; also Dennis G. Jerz, who patiently and skilfully edited the text, making innumerable improvements to our often wayward and inconsistent prose. David Cornelson supervised the Second Edition’s transformation into professionally printed respectability. Further assistance came from Barney Firth, Christine Firth, Harry Firth, Megan Firth, Jim Fisher, Rosemary Frezza, Phil Graham, Graham Holden, Paul Johnson, Yoon Ha Lee, Brian Pylant, Jo Quinn, Milos Radovanovic, Muffy St. Bernard, Gunther Schmidl, Emily Short, Curt Siffert, A. Sloe, Pavel Soukenik, Elise Stone, Brent VanFossen and R. Cliff Young. Thank you: it is impossible to overstate the value of this freely given support and assistance.

The drop capitals, and their associated poem, are from “A Picture Alphabet”, digitised from a collection of public domain woodcuts, circa 1834, by Steven J. Lundeen of emerald city fontwerks.

All credit to the generosity of http://briefcase.yahoo.com/ for making international file-sharing such a breeze.

Finally, of course, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Graham Nelson for devising it all, thereby giving us the opportunity – first independently and later in enjoyable collaboration – of using, and eventually of presenting, the Inform text adventure development system.

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August 2004
1 • Just what is interactive fiction?

* A was an archer, who shot at a frog;  
* B was a butcher, who had a great dog.

Before we start learning to use the Inform system, it’s probably sensible to consider briefly how IF, which has many narrative elements, differs from regular storytelling. Before we do that, though, let’s look at an example of a familiar folk tale.

“There was once a man called Wilhelm Tell, from high in the Swiss Alps near the town of Altdorf. A hunter and a guide, a proud mountaineer, he lived by his skills in tracking and archery. It happened one day that Wilhelm visited the town to buy provisions, and he took his son Walter with him.

The region was at the time governed by Hermann Gessler (a vain and petty man appointed as vogt by the Austrian emperor), who attempted a show of power over his subjects by placing his hat on a pole in the town square, for everyone to salute. Reluctant citizens were “encouraged” by a troop of the vogt’s soldiers, who made sure that their bows were sufficiently respectful.

Wilhelm knew of the hat, and of the humiliating exercise in obeisance. So far he had managed to avoid the town’s square, sure that – given his open dislike for the vogt – his refusal to bend the knee would cause trouble. Today, however, he needed to pass near the pole to reach Johansson’s tannery.

If Wilhelm had hoped for a lucky break, we’ll never know. The square was filled with market-day crowds; the soldiers were especially keen in their salute-enforcing duties, challenging everyone with loud shouts and the occasional coarse expletive. Wilhelm threw a protective arm over his son’s shoulder and walked determinedly without looking at the pole or the guards.

A soldier called to him; Wilhelm took no notice. Other guards focused their attention on the archer. “Salute the vogt’s hat,” he was told. A tense silence followed. Wilhelm tried to keep going, but by now he was surrounded. The men knew of him; one counselled Wilhelm to give a cursory nod towards the hat and be done. Everybody in the vicinity was watching, so the disrespect could not be ignored. There was a long pause. Wilhelm refused.

Word was sent to Gessler, who rushed to the square with reinforcements. The little man was delighted at the chance of making an example of the troublemaker. He mockingly recounted the many skills of Herr Tell, speculating that such mastery maybe accounted for the pride that prevented acknowledgement of the Emperor’s authority. The vogt understood all that, and would give him a fair chance. If Wilhelm were able to shoot true at an apple from fifty paces, Gessler would be inclined to show mercy; however, to make things interesting, the apple was to be balanced on Walter’s head.
Everything was set up. Wilhelm selected and mounted an arrow and slowly raised the bow, conscious of the motionless and brave stance that Walter was displaying. He pulled, feeling the tension mount on the string and his fingers, through his hands, into his arms. He’d made much more difficult shots in the past, at fleeting deer, at soaring birds; but this was the life of his son... he could not fail, would not fail.

Wilhelm let loose. The arrow flew straight and true, violently pinning the apple to the tree behind the boy. The crowd exploded in a roar of relief and admiration, and Gessler, disappointed, had no option but to let them go.

Years later, Wilhelm led an uprising against the vogt... but that’s another story.”

And now an extract from the same tale, this time in the form of a tiny text adventure game. If you’re new to interaction with text adventures you’ll find some general instructions in “How to play an IF game” on page 209, and you can see a complete transcript of the game in the “William Tell” story on page 219:

**A street in Altdorf**
The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult.

"Stay close to me, son," you say, "or you'll get lost among all these people."

>GO NORTH

**Further along the street**
People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.

Helga pauses from sorting potatoes to give you a cheery wave.

"Hello, Wilhelm, it's a fine day for trade! Is this young Walter? My, how he's grown. Here's an apple for him -- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest's good enough. How's Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes."

>INVENTORY
You are carrying:
- an apple
- a quiver (being worn)
- three arrows
- a bow

>TALK TO HELGA
You warmly thank Helga for the apple.

>GIVE THE APPLE TO WALTER
"Thank you, Papa."
South side of the square
The narrow street to the south has opened onto the town square, and resumes at the far side of this cobbled meeting place. To continue along the street towards your destination -- Johansson’s tannery -- you must walk north across the square, in the middle of which you see Gessler’s hat set on that loathsome pole. If you go on, there’s no way you can avoid passing it. Imperial soldiers jostle rudely through the throng, pushing, kicking and swearing loudly.

Some of the more obvious differences are highlighted by these questions:

• **Who is the protagonist?**

Our example of narrative prose is written in the third person; it refers to the hero as “Wilhelm” and “he” and “him”, watching and reporting on his activities from afar. In this sample IF game, you are the hero, seeing everything through Wilhelm’s eyes.

• **What happens next?**

The regular narrative is intended to be read once, straight through from beginning to end. Unless you didn’t pay attention the first time, or you’re planning to critique the story, there’s generally no need to go back and read a sentence twice; if you do, you’ll find exactly the same text. The author leads the way and sets the pace; you, as the reader, just go along for the ride.

In IF, that’s usually much less true. The author has created a landscape and populated it with characters, but you choose how and when to explore it. The game evolves, at least superficially, under your control; perhaps you explore the street first and then the square, perhaps the other way round. There usually are multiple paths to be found and followed – and you can be pretty certain that you won’t discover them all, at least on first acquaintance.

• **How does it all turn out?**

You can tell when you’ve come to the end of a regular narrative – you read the last sentence, and you know there’s no more. In IF, it’s clear enough when you reach an end; what’s much less apparent is whether that’s the only conclusion. In the transcript from the example game, you win by shooting the apple from Walter’s head. But what if you miss? What if you hit him by mistake? Or fire instead at the hated vogt? Or even stand the tale on its head by bowing obsequiously to the governor’s hat and then going about your business? All of these are possible ways in which the game could come to an end. The phrase “what if” is the key to writing successfully, and should always be in the forefront of an IF designer’s mind.

• **Where did Helga come from?**

You’ll notice that Helga and her stall don’t appear in the regular narrative; she’s a distraction from the tale’s momentum. But in the IF game, she fulfils
a number of useful functions: mentioning the names “Wilhelm”, “Walter” and “Frau Tell” (so that you know who the tale’s about), introducing the all-important apple in a natural manner and, above all, providing an opportunity for the “I” in IF – some interactivity. Without that – the chance to interact with the tale’s environment – the game is little different from a conventional piece of fiction.

- That item looks interesting; can you tell me more about it?

In the regular narrative, what you see is what you get; if you want to know more about alpine life in the fourteenth century, you’ll need to consult another source. IF, on the other hand, offers at least the possibility of delving deeper, of investigating in greater detail an item which has been casually mentioned. For example, you could have explored Helga’s stall:

"... How’s Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes."

> EXAMINE THE STALL
It’s really only a small table, with a big heap of potatoes, some carrots and turnips, and a few apples.

> EXAMINE THE CARROTS
Fine locally grown produce.

You see those descriptions only if you seek them; nothing you find there is unexpected, and if you don’t examine the stall, you’ve not missed anything important. Nevertheless, you’ve enhanced the illusion that you’re visiting a real place. Such details would rapidly grow tedious if the stall and its contents were described in full each time that you pass them.

- How do I work this thing?

Whereas the presence of Helga is an elaboration of the folk tale, the shooting of the arrow (it’s in the transcript in “William Tell” story on page 219, not in the extract above) illustrates the opposite principle: simplification. The tale builds dramatic tension by describing each step as Wilhelm prepares to shoot the apple. That’s OK; he’s been an archer all his life, and knows how to do it. You, on the other hand, probably know little about archery, and shouldn’t be expected to guess at the process and vocabulary. Let’s hope you know that you need to shoot at the apple – and that’s all it takes. The game explains what was involved, but doesn’t force you through each mundane step.

Of course, all of these are generalisations, not universal truths; you could find fine works of IF which contradict each observation. However, for our purposes as beginners in the craft of IF design, they represent useful distinctions between IF and conventional fiction.

We’ll come back to the “William Tell” tale in a later chapter, but before then we’ll work through an even simpler example. And before either of those, we need to download the necessary files which will enable us to write Inform games.
Conventional – static – fiction can be written using nothing more than pencil and paper, or typewriter, or word-processor; however, the requirements for producing IF are a little more extensive, and the creative process slightly more complex.

- For static fiction, you first write the text, and then you check it by reading what you’ve written.
- For IF, you still have to write all of the text, but you also have to establish what text gets displayed when. Once you have written the necessary Inform instructions, you use a compiler program to convert them into a playable format. The resulting information is played by an interpreter program, which permits you to interact with your developing world.

With static fiction What You Write Is What You Read, but with IF the format in which you initially write the game doesn’t bear much resemblance to the text which the interpreter ultimately displays. For example, the “William Tell” game, in the form that we wrote it, starts like this:

```
!============================================================================
Constant Story "William Tell";
Constant Headline
    "^A simple Inform example
    "by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich."";
Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";
!============================================================================
! Object classes
Class Room
    has light;
...
```

You will never need to look at it in the form produced by the compiler:

```
050000012C6C2C2D1EF6010A0C4416900010303230313031004253FEA90C0000
0000000000000000000000000000168F0000000000000000000001020000000362E3231
...
```

but, as you’ll notice from the full transcript in “William Tell” story on page 219, the player will see the following:
The place: Altdorf, in the Swiss canton of Uri. The year is 1307, at which time Switzerland is under rule by the Emperor Albert of Habsburg. His local governor -- the vogt -- is the bullying Hermann Gessler, who has placed his hat atop a wooden pole in the centre of the town square; everybody who passes through the square must bow to this hated symbol of imperial might...

Clearly, there’s more to writing IF than just laying down the words in the right order. Fortunately, we can make one immediate simplification: the translated form produced by the Inform compiler – those cryptic numbers and letters held in what’s known as the story file – is designed to be read by the interpreter program. The story file is an example of a “binary” file, containing data intended for use only by a computer program. Forget all that unreadable gibberish.

So that leaves just the first form – the one starting “Constant Story” – which represents the tale written as a piece of IF. That’s the source file (so called because it contains the game in its original, source, form) which you create on your computer. The source file is a “text” (or “ASCII”) file containing words and phrases which can be read – admittedly after a little tuition, which is what this guide is all about – by humans.

How do you create that source file? Using a third software program: an editor. However, unlike the compiler and interpreter, this program isn’t dedicated to the Inform system – or even to IF. An editor is an entirely general tool for creating and modifying text files; you’ve probably already got a basic one on your computer (an IBM PC running Windows comes with NotePad, while an Apple Macintosh has SimpleText or TextEdit), or you can download a better one from the Internet. An editor is like a word-processing program such as MS Word, only much less complex; no fancy formatting features, no bold or italics or font control, no embedded graphics; it simply enables you to type lines of text, which is exactly what’s needed to create an IF game.

If you look at the game source on the previous page, or in the “William Tell” story on page 219, you’ll notice Include "Parser"; and Include "VerbLib"; a few lines down from the top of the file. These are instructions to the Inform compiler to “include” – that is, to merge in the contents – of files called Parser.h and VerbLib.h. These are not files which you have to create; they’re standard library files, part of the Inform system. All that you have to do is remember to Include them in every game that you write. Until you’ve a fair understanding of how Inform works, you’ve no need to worry about what they contain (though you can look if you want to: they’re readable text files, just like the ones this guide will teach you to write).

So, we’ve now introduced all of the bits and pieces which you need in order to write an Inform adventure game:

- a text editor program which can create and modify the source file containing the descriptions and definitions of your game. Although it’s not recommended, you can even use a word-processing program to do this, but you have to remember to save your game in Text File format;
some Inform library files which you include in your own game source file in order to provide the model world – a basic game environment and lots of useful standard definitions;

- the Inform compiler program, which reads your source file (and the library files) and translates your descriptions and definitions into another format – the story file – intended only for...

- an Inform interpreter program, which is what players of your game use. A player doesn’t require the source file, library files or compiler program, just the interpreter and the game in compiled format (which, because it’s a binary file not meaningful to human eyes, neatly discourages players from cheating).

All of those, apart from the editor, can be downloaded for free from the IF Archive. One approach is to fetch them individually, following the guidance on Graham’s page: visit [http://www.inform-fiction.org/](http://www.inform-fiction.org/) and look for the “Software” section. However, if you’re using a PC or a Mac, you’ll find it easier to download a complete package containing everything that you need to get started.

**Inform on an IBM PC (running Microsoft Windows)**

Although the Windows operating system is upgraded on a fairly regular basis, its basic capabilities and ways of working have remained more-or-less consistent for many years. The information here applies to PCs running Windows 95 onwards.

### Installing and testing Inform

Follow these steps:


2. Use a tool like WinZip to unzip the downloaded file, giving you a new Inform folder. Move this folder (and its contents) to a suitable location on your PC – a good place would be C:\My Documents\Inform, but you could also use C:\Documents and Settings\yourname\My Documents\Inform, C:\Inform or C:\Program Files\Inform. You should now have this set of folders:
In order to make the download small and fast, these folders include just enough to get you started as an Inform designer – the compiler and interpreter programs, the library files, the *Ruins.inf* example file from the *Inform Designer’s Manual*, and a template for your own first game. A few other folders are included as placeholders where you could later download additional components, if you wanted them. As soon as possible, you should download the *Inform Designer’s Manual* into the *Inform\Doc* folder – it’s an essential document to have, and has been omitted from this download only because of its 3MB size.

3. To verify that the downloaded files work properly, use Windows Explorer to display the contents of the *Inform\Games\MyGame1* folder: you will see the two files *MyGame1.bat* and *MyGame1.inf*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Modified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.bat</td>
<td>1KB</td>
<td>MS-DOS Batch File</td>
<td>1/12/2002 03:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.inf</td>
<td>2KB</td>
<td>Setup Information</td>
<td>1/12/2002 03:06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MyGame1.inf* is a tiny skeleton game in Inform source format. By convention, all Inform source files have an extension of *.inf*; Windows has an inbuilt definition for *.inf* files, and so shows its Type as “Setup Information”, but this doesn’t seem to matter. If you double-click the file, it should open in NotePad so that you can see how it’s written, though it probably won’t mean much – yet.

4. *MyGame1.bat* is an MS-DOS batch file (an old kind of text-only computer program, from the days before point-and-click interfaces) which runs the Inform compiler. Double-click it; a DOS window opens as the game compiles, and you’ll see this:
Press the space bar, then close the DOS window.

NOTE: on Windows NT, 2000 and XP, the DOS window closes of its own accord when you press the space bar.

5. A story file MyGame1.z5 has appeared in the folder; this is the compiled game, which you can play using an interpreter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Modified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.bat</td>
<td>1KB</td>
<td>MS-DOS Batch File</td>
<td>11/02/2002 09:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.inf</td>
<td>2KB</td>
<td>Text Information</td>
<td>11/02/2002 09:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.z5</td>
<td>75KB</td>
<td>zc Game</td>
<td>11/02/2002 15:25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The extension of .z5 signifies that the story file contains a Z-machine game in Version 5 (today’s standard) format.

6. Use Windows Explorer to display the contents of the Inform\Bin\Frotz folder, and double-click Frotz.exe; the interpreter presents an Open a Z-code Game dialog box.

7. Browse to display the Inform\Games\MyGame1 folder, and select MyGame1.z5. Click Open. The game starts running in the Windows Frotz 2002 window.

8. When you tire of “playing” the game – which won’t take long – you can type the QUIT command, you can select File > Exit, or you can simply close the Frotz window.

9. Using the same techniques, you can compile and play Ruins.inf, which is held in the Inform\Games\Download folder. RUINS is the game used as an example throughout the Inform Designer’s Manual.

Setting file associations

The business of first starting the interpreter, and then locating the story file that you want to play, is clumsy and inconvenient. Fortunately, when you first run the Frotz interpreter, it automatically creates an association with story files whose extension is .z5. From now on, you’ll be able to play a game simply by double-clicking its story file. If some any reason this doesn’t work, you can set up the association yourself:
1. Double-click MyGame1.z5; Windows asks you to select the program which is to open it:
   - type Z-code V5 Adventure as the “Description for…”
   - click to select “Always use this program…”
   - click Other…

2. Browse to display the Inform\Bin\Frotz folder, and select Frotz.exe. Click Open.

Changing the Windows icon

If the Windows icon that’s displayed alongside MyGame1.z5 doesn’t look right, you can change it.

1. In Windows Explorer, either select View > Options... and click File Types, or select Tools > Folder Options... and click File Types:
   - select the game file type in the list, which is in order either of application (Frotz) or of extension (Z5)
   - click Edit…

2. In the Edit File Type dialog, click Change Icon.

3. In the Change Icon dialog, ensure that the file name is Inform\Bin\Frotz\Frotz.exe, and select one of the displayed icons. Click OK to close all the dialogs.

The files in the folder should now look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Modified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.bat</td>
<td>1KB</td>
<td>MS-DOS Batch File</td>
<td>11/02/2022 08:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.inf</td>
<td>2KB</td>
<td>Setup Information</td>
<td>11/02/2022 08:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.z5</td>
<td>78KB</td>
<td>Z-code V5 Adventure</td>
<td>19/02/2022 13:25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiling using a batch file

You can view – and of course change – the contents of MyGame1.bat, the batch file which you double-click to run the compiler, using any text editor. You’ll see two lines, something like this (the first chunk is all on one long line, with a space between the MyGame1 and the +include_path):

```bash
..\Lib\Base\Inform MyGame1
   +include_path=..\..\Lib\Base,..\..\Lib\Contrib | more
   pause "at end of compilation"
```

These long strings of text are command lines – a powerful interface method predating the icons and menus that most computer users know. You won’t need to master the command line interface in order to start using Inform, but this section will tell you what these particular command lines are doing. There are four parts to the first line:
1. **Inform** refers to the compiler program, and ..\..\Lib\Base is the name of the folder which contains it (addressed relative to *this* folder, the one which holds the source file). Double-dots stand for “go to the parent folder”.

2. **MyGame1** is the name of the Inform source file; you don’t need to mention its extension of .inf if you don’t want to.

3. `+include_path=\.\.\.\Lib\Base,\.\.\.\Lib\Contrib` tells the compiler where to look for files like Parser and VerbLib which you’ve Included. Three locations are suggested: this folder, which holds the source file (\.\); the folder holding the standard library files (\.\.\.\Lib\Base); the folder holding useful bits and pieces contributed by the Inform community (\.\.\.\Lib\Contrib). The three locations are searched in that order.

   NOTE: on the command line, you sometimes also see a compiler switch such as `-s`, used for controlling detailed aspects of how the compiler operates. Rather than do that here, we find it more convenient to place any necessary switches at the very top of the source file, as we’ll explain in the next chapter.

4. `| more` causes the compiler to pause if it finds more mistakes than it can tell you about on a single screen, rather than have them scroll off the top of the MS-DOS window. Press the space bar to continue the compilation.

   The second line – `pause "at end of compilation"` – just prevents the window from closing before you can read its contents, as it otherwise would on Windows NT, 2000 and XP.

   You’ll need to have a new batch file like this to match each new source file which you create. The only item which will differ in the new file is the name of the Inform source file – **MyGame1** in this example. You must change this to match the name of the new source file; everything else can stay the same in each .bat file that you create.

**Getting a better editor**

Although NotePad is adequate when you’re getting started, you’ll find life much easier if you obtain a more powerful editor program. We recommend TextPad, available as shareware from [http://www.textpad.com/](http://www.textpad.com/); in addition, there are some detailed instructions at [http://www.onyxring.com/informguide.aspx?article=14](http://www.onyxring.com/informguide.aspx?article=14) on how to improve the way that TextPad works with Inform. The biggest single improvement, the one that will make game development dramatically simpler, is being able to compile your source file *from within* the editor. No need to save the file, switch to another window and double-click the batch file (and indeed, no further need for the batch file itself): just press a key while editing the file – and it compiles there and then. You can also run the interpreter with similar ease. The convenience of doing this far outweighs the small amount of time needed to obtain and configure TextPad.
Inform on an Apple Macintosh (running OS X)

Whereas our instructions for using Inform on a PC apply to just about all versions of Windows, on the Macintosh we need to be more precise. Our guidance here is specifically for Mac OS X, rather than for its predecessor OS 9, and it may be helpful if we first mention a few relevant differences.

Mac OS X is a robust system constructed around – or on top of – BSD\(^1\) UNIX. There are several kinds of applications that will run on your Mac OS X:

- Aqua: specifically designed for the Graphical User Interface of Mac OS X, and taking advantage of its underlying technologies. Broadly, there are two types of Aqua application:
  - Cocoa: built with programming tools designed for Mac OS X.
  - Carbon: built with the programming tools designed for Mac OS 9 and earlier versions, but “translated” to take advantage of OS X.
- Classic: designed to work on Mac OS 9 and earlier versions. They need to run in the Classic environment of OS X; roughly speaking, Classic is an emulation of the older Mac systems.
- X11: based on a windowing system designed for the UNIX/Linux world. They need an X-Windows server to run, and their appearance and functionality may seem a lot different to what the Aqua user expects.
- UNIX: most UNIX programs (including Linux) will run on your Mac OS X, but they usually have to be accessed (or configured) from the UNIX core of your Mac, through the Terminal utility.

These differences may be significant, since some of the tools designed to develop and run IF on a Mac system (for example, ones you'll find in the Archive) have been built by programmers working in different environments with varying technologies. We have tried to select tools that will make your life easy as a beginner, but in time you may want to investigate alternative approaches.

Installing and testing Inform

Follow these steps:

2. Use a tool like StuffIt Expander to unpack the downloaded file (if your system configuration is standard, a mere double-click will make it self-extract at the current location, if it hasn’t already expanded all by itself). You’ll now

---

1. “BSD” stands for Berkeley Software Distribution, the name of the UNIX derivative distributed in the 1970s from the University of California, Berkeley, and used collectively for the modern descendants of those distributions.
have a new Inform folder. Move this folder (and its contents) to a suitable location in your Mac.

NOTE: It is a good idea for now to place it in your home directory; otherwise, a few pre-configured items may not work as explained. Once you learn the basics of the configuration, you may move the Inform folder to a different location and hack all the defaults like the professionals do.

You should now have this set of folders:

```
Inform .................. All Inform files are within this hierarchy of folders
  Bin .................... Interpreters and tools
    Gluixe ............... Gluixe interpreter program (placeholder)
    Zoom ................. Zoom interpreter program
    Ztools ............... Ztools utility programs (placeholder)
  Doc .................... Documentation
  Games .................. Your own and others’ games
    Download ............ Other people’s games from the archive
    MyGame1 .............. A template for your own creations
  Lib .................... Compiler and library files
  Base ................... Inform compiler and library files
  Contrib ................ Library packages contributed to the Archive
```

In order to make the download small and fast, these folders include just enough to get you started as an Inform designer – the compiler and interpreter programs, the library files, the Ruins.inf example from the Inform Designer’s Manual, and a template for your own first game, which you may copy and rename each time you begin a new Inform project. A few other folders are included as placeholders where you could later download additional components, if you wanted them. As soon as possible, you should download the Inform Designer’s Manual into the Inform/Doc folder – it’s an essential document to have, and has been omitted from this download only because of its 3MB size.

3. To verify that the downloaded files work properly, use the Finder to display the contents of the Inform/Games/MyGame1 folder: you will see the files MyGame1.command and MyGame1.inf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Modified</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Kind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About.htm</td>
<td>29/06/2004, 20:11</td>
<td>4 KB</td>
<td>HTML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.command</td>
<td>02/07/2004, 23:47</td>
<td>4 KB</td>
<td>Terminal/ShellScript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyGame1.inf</td>
<td>02/07/2004, 23:55</td>
<td>8 KB</td>
<td>FUJI BAS IMG document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MyGame1.inf is a tiny skeleton game in Inform source format. By convention, all Inform source files have an extension of .inf. However, Mac OS X may show its Kind as “FUJI BAS IMG document”, and try to open it with
GraphicConverter. If you’re not a regular user of FUJI BAS IMG documents, you’ll probably want to change this. Either:

- right-click on the file (or Ctrl-click)
- select Open with and choose Other...
- in the Open with dialog, go to the Applications folder and select TextEdit.
- click to select “Always open with”
- click Open.

or:

- right-click on the file (or Ctrl-click)
- press Option, select Always open with and choose Other...
- in the Open with dialog, go to the Applications folder and select TextEdit.
- click Open.

Now, if you double-click the file, it should open in TextEdit so that you can see how it’s written, though it probably won’t mean much – yet.

NOTE: The above process may affect only this specific file. To change the program that opens by default *all*.inf files, try this:

- right-click on the file (or Ctrl-click)
- select Get Info in the Open with tab, select TextEdit as the application
- click the Change All... button, and confirm the change when asked.

4. **MyGame1.command** is a Terminal Shell Script (a UNIX executable command-line file, a kind of text-only computer program from the days before point-and-click interfaces) which runs the Inform compiler. Double-click it; a UNIX window opens as the game compiles, and you’ll see something like this (the working path will reflect your folder hierarchy):

```
Last login: Sat Jul  3 03:07:51 on ttyp1
Welcome to Darwin!
/Users/Dave/Inform/Games/MyGame1/MyGame1.command; [Hal:~] Dave%
/Users/Dave/Inform/Games/MyGame1/MyGame1.command; exit
Inform 6.30 (27th Feb 2004)
logout
[Process completed]
```

5. A story file **MyGame1.z5** has appeared in the folder; this is the compiled game, which you can play using an interpreter:
The extension of .z5 signifies that the story file contains a Z-machine game in Version 5 (today’s standard) format.

6. Use the Finder to display the contents of the Inform/Bin/Zoom folder, and double-click Zoom; the interpreter presents an Open dialog box.

7. Browse to display the Inform/Games/MyGame1 folder, and select MyGame1.z5. Click Open. The game starts running in the Zoom window.

8. When you tire of “playing” the game – which won’t take long – you can type the QUIT command, you can select Zoom > Quit Zoom, or you can simply close the Zoom window.

Setting file associations

The business of first starting the interpreter, and then locating the story file that you want to play, is clumsy and inconvenient. Fortunately, when the system first “sees” the Zoom interpreter (which is a nice Aqua application) it automatically creates an association with story files whose extension is .z5 (and with other Infocom formats). From now on, you’ll be able to play a game simply by double-clicking its story file.

The files in the folder should now look like this:

![File List Screenshot]

Compiling using a command-line file

If you have followed these instructions to configure your system, every time that you need to compile your source code you just have to double-click on the file MyGame1.command. However, this file is good only for this folder and for MyGame1.inf.

If you want to start coding another game, you may copy the folder MyGame1 with all its contents and rename it as you please (for example, MyGame2 or something more appropriate). Inside the folder, you’ll also want to rename the relevant files:

- MyGame1.inf might become MyGame2.inf, or MobyDick.inf, or...
- MyGame1.command would change to match: MyGame2.command, or MobyDick.command.

You can view – and of course change – the contents of MyGame2.command, the command file which you double-click to run the compiler, using any text editor. You’ll see two lines, something like this (the second chunk is all on one long line, with a space between the MyGame1 and the +include_path):

cd ~/Inform/Games/MyGame1/
../../Lib/Base/inform630_macosx MyGame1
   +include_path=./,../../../Lib/Base,../../../Lib/Contrib
These long strings of text are command lines – a powerful interface method predating the icons and menus that most computer users know. You won’t need to master the command line interface in order to start using Inform, but this section will introduce you to a few basic concepts to get your bearings.

The first line changes the working directory to ~/Inform/Games/MyGame1/. The command `cd` (also known as `chdir`, short for “Change Directory to”) lets you travel to the desired folder, specified by the path, in this case: ~/Inform/Games/MyGame1/. The `~` symbol stands for your home directory. That is, if your user name were Dave, the above path is equal to:

/Users/Dave/Inform/Games/MyGame1/

You want to change that line so that it reads: `cd ~/Inform/Games/MyGame2/`

There are three parts to the second line:

1. `inform630_macosx` refers to the compiler program, and `../../Lib/Base` is the name of the folder which contains it (addressed relative to this folder, the one which holds the source file). Double-dots stand for “go to the parent folder”.

2. `MyGame1` is the name of the Inform source file; you don’t need to mention its extension of `.inf` if you don’t want to. You’ll want to change this to match the name of your new file: `MyGame2`

3. `+include_path=./,../../Lib/Base,../../Lib/Contrib` tells the compiler where to look for files like `Parser` and `VerbLib` which you’ve Included in the source file (this may sound confusing now, but it will make a lot of sense after you’ve delved a bit deeper into this Guide). Three locations are suggested, separated by commas: this folder, which holds the source file (`./`); the folder holding the standard library files (`../../Lib/Base`); the folder holding useful bits and pieces contributed by the Inform community (`../../Lib/Contrib`). The three locations are searched in that order.

NOTE: on the command line, you sometimes also see a compiler switch such as `-s`, used for controlling detailed aspects of how the compiler operates. Rather than do that here, we find it more convenient to place any necessary switches at the very top of the source file, as we’ll explain in the next chapter.

Once you’ve finished editing those lines, `Save` the file (not `SaveAs`), overwriting the original, and make sure that your text editor doesn’t append an extension like `.txt` (TextEdit, the default editor that comes with OS X, is polite enough to ask you about this).

You’ll need to have a new command file like this to match each new source file which you create. The only item which will differ in the new file is the name of the Inform source file – `MyGameN`. You must change this to match the name of the new source file; everything else can stay the same in each `.command` file that you create.
Making your own command-line file

There are two peculiarities by which your system understands that `MyGame1.command` is a Terminal Shell Script. One is the extension `.command`, and the other is an attribute of the file which marks it as “executable” (the “executable bits”). If it doesn’t meet both conditions, `MyGame1.command` won’t run as it should.

You have to be careful when editing this file: if you were, for instance, to open it in a text editor and save it to a different location with a different name, the executable bits might get lost, and when you double-click it, you would see:

![Image of Open Command File dialog]

To make a command file from scratch (also, to fix this problem) you can follow these steps:

1. Open any text editor and write (using your own path):
   ```
   cd ~/Inform/Games/MyGame
   N
   /../../Lib/Base/inform630_macosx MyGame
   N
   +include_path=./,../../Lib/Base,../../Lib/Contrib
   ```
   where `MyGameN` stands for the name you have chosen for your Inform project.

2. Save the file in the folder `MyGameN` and call it `MyGameN.command`. Make sure that the text editor doesn’t append a `.txt` extension; if it does, rename the file manually.

3. Go to Applications > Utilities and double-click on Terminal. This opens the utility which provides you with a set of windows to access the UNIX command line. Supposing the computer is named Hal, and the user Dave, you should see something like this:
   ```
   Last login: Wed Jun 30 18:05:55 on tttyp1
   Welcome to Darwin!
   [Hal:~] Dave%
   ```

4. Every time that you open a Terminal window, you’re at your home directory (as noted by the tilde after the computer’s name). You can travel to your working folder by typing:
   ```
   cd Inform/Games/MyGameN
   ```
   You’ll see how the path changes:
   ```
   [Hal:~/Inform/Games/MyGameN] Dave%
   ```
   Now you can make the command file executable with:
   ```
   chmod 777 MyGameN.command
   ```
5. Alternatively, you can omit the `cd` command if you give the full path to `chmod`:

```
chmod 777 ~/Inform/Games/MyGameN/MyGameN.command
```

This sets the executable bits for the file `MyGameN.command`.

6. Close the Terminal window.

Now, every time you need to compile your game, you can just double-click on `MyGameN.command` from the Finder.

Getting a better editor

Although TextEdit is adequate when you’re getting started, you’ll find life much easier if you obtain a more powerful editor program. We’d really like to recommend one – there’s an exciting list of possibilities at [http://osx.hyperjeff.net/Apps/apps.php?sub=5](http://osx.hyperjeff.net/Apps/apps.php?sub=5) – but at the time of writing none of them seems outstandingly suited to IF authorship. If you find one that works really well, please let us know.
More about the editor

As well as the ones that we recommend, other good text editors are listed at http://www.firthworks.com/roger/editors/. One feature that’s well worth looking out for is “hotkey compilation” – being able to run the compiler from within the editor. Another is “syntax colouring”, where the editor understands enough of Inform’s syntax rules to colour-code your source file; for example: red for brackets, braces and parentheses [], {}, and (), blue for reserved words like Object and print, green for items in quotes like ‘...’ and “...”, and so on. Syntax colouring is of great assistance in getting your source file correct and thus avoiding silly compilation errors.

More about the compiler

The Inform compiler is a powerful but undramatic software tool; it does an awful lot of work, but it does it all at once, without stopping to ask you any questions. Its input is a readable text source file; the output is a story file, also sometimes known as a Z-code file (because it contains the game translated into code for the Z-machine, which we describe in the next section).

If you’re lucky, the compiler will translate your source file into Z-code; perhaps surprisingly, it doesn’t display any form of “success” message when it succeeds. Often, however, it fails, because of mistakes which you’ve made when writing the game. Inform defines a set of rules – a capital letter here, a comma there, these words only in a certain order, those words spelled just so – about which the compiler is extremely fussy. If you accidentally break the rules, the compiler complains: it refuses to write a Z-code file. Do not worry about this: the rules are easy to learn, but just as easy to break, and all Inform designers inadvertently do so on a regular basis. There’s some additional information about dealing with these mistakes, and about controlling how the compiler behaves, in “Compiling your game” on page 189.

More about the interpreter

One of the big advantages of the way Inform works is that a compiled game – the Z-code story file – is portable between different computers. That’s not just from one PC to another: exactly the same story file will run on a PC, a Mac, an Amiga, UNIX workstations, IBM mainframes, PalmOS hand-holds, and on dozens of other past, present and future computers. The magic that makes this happen is the interpreter program, a software tool which pretends to be a simple computer called a Z-machine. The Z-machine is an imaginary (or “virtual”) computer, but its design has been very carefully specified, so that an expert programmer can quite easily build one. And that’s exactly what has happened: a Macintosh guru has built an Inform interpreter which runs on Apple Macs, a UNIX wizard has built one for UNIX workstations, and so on. Sometimes, you even get a choice;
for popular machines like the PC and the Mac there are several interpreters available. And the wonderful thing is: each of those interpreters, on each of those computers, is able to play every Inform game that’s ever been written and, as a surprise bonus, all of the classic 1980s Infocom games like “Zork” and “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” as well!

(Actually, that last sentence is a slight exaggeration; a few games are very large, or have pictures included within them, and not all interpreters can handle this. However, with that small pinch of salt, it’s pretty accurate.)

That’s enough waffling: let’s get started! It’s time to begin designing our first game.
3 • Heidi: our first Inform game

_E was an esquire, with pride on his brow;_
_F was a farmer, and followed the plough._

Each of the three games in this guide is created step by step; you’ll get most benefit (especially to begin with) if you take an active part, typing in the source code on your computer. Our first game, described in this chapter and the two which follow, tells this sentimental little story:

“Heidi lives in a tiny cottage deep in the forest. One sunny day, standing before the cottage, she hears the frenzied tweeting of a baby bird; its nest has fallen from the tall tree in the clearing! Heidi puts the bird into the nest, and then climbs the tree to place the nest back on its branch.”

It’s a very simple tale, but even so we’ll cover quite a lot of ground before we have a finished Inform game. We’ll get there in stages, first making a very rough approximation of the story, and then successively refining the details until it’s good enough for an initial attempt (there’s time later for more advanced stuff).

Creating a basic source file

The first task is to create an Inform source file template. Every game that we design will start out like this. Follow these steps:

1. Create an `Inform\Games\Heidi` folder (maybe by copying `Inform\Games\MyGame1`).
   
   NOTE: in this guide, we use the PC convention of placing a backslash between folder names. On a Macintosh, use a regular slash: `Inform/Games/Heidi`.

2. In that folder, use your text editor to create this source file `Heidi.inf`: 
3 • HEIDI: OUR FIRST INFORM GAME

T
Y
P
E

!% -SD
!============================================================================
Constant Story "Heidi";
Constant Headline
"^A simple Inform example
^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^";
Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";
!============================================================================
! The game objects
!============================================================================
! Entry point routines
[ Initialise; ];
!============================================================================
! Standard and extended grammar
Include "Grammar";
!============================================================================

Soon, we’ll explain what this means. For now, just type it all in, paying
particular attention to those seven semicolons, and ensuring that the double
quotes "..." always come in pairs. The first line beginning with “!%” is
special, and we’ll talk about it in a moment; the remaining exclamation mark
lines, on the other hand, are purely decorative; they just make the file’s
structure a little easier to understand.
Ensure the file is named Heidi.inf, rather than Heidi.txt or Heidi.inf.txt.
Remember that, throughout this guide, we place the “TYPE” symbol alongside
pieces of code that we recommend you to type into your own game files as
you read through the examples (which, conversely, means that you don’t
need to type the unmarked pieces of code). You’ll learn Inform more quickly
by trying it for yourself, rather than just taking our word for how things work.
1. In the same folder, use your text editor to create the compilation support file
Heidi.bat (on a PC):
T
Y
P
E

..\..\Lib\Base\Inform Heidi
+include_path=.\,..\..\Lib\Base,..\..\Lib\Contrib | more
pause "at end of compilation"

or Heidi.command (on a Macintosh):
T
Y
P
E

cd ~/Inform/Games/Heidi/
../../Lib/Base/inform630_macosx Heidi
+include_path=./,../../Lib/Base,../../Lib/Contrib

Remember that there’s just one space between “Heidi” and “+include_path”.

34


Type in the file from scratch, or copy and edit `MyGame1.bat` (or `MyGame1.command`). At this point, you should have a `Heidi` folder containing two files: `Heidi.inf` and either `Heidi.bat` or `Heidi.command`.

2. Compile the source file `Heidi.inf`; refer back to “Inform on an IBM PC (running Microsoft Windows)” on page 19 or “Inform on an Apple Macintosh (running OS X)” on page 24 for guidance. If the compilation works, a story file `Heidi.z5` appears in the folder. If the compilation doesn’t work, you’ve probably made a typing mistake; check everything until you find it.

3. You can run the story file in your Inform interpreter; you should see this (except that the Serial number will be different – it’s based on the date):

```inform
Heidi
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 1 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD

Darkness
It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.
```

When you get that far, your template source file is correct. Let’s explain what it contains.

**Understanding the source file**

Although we’ve got a certain amount of freedom of expression, source files tend to conform to a standard overall structure: these lines at the start, that material next, those pieces coming at the end, and so on. What we’re doing here is mapping out a structure that suits us, giving ourselves a clear framework onto which the elements of the game can be fitted. Having a clear (albeit sparse) map at the start will help us to keep things organised as the game evolves.

We can infer several Inform rules just by looking at the source file.

- If the *very first line* (or lines) of the source file begin with the characters “%!”, then the compiler treats what follows on those lines as control instructions to itself rather than as part of the game’s source. The instructions most commonly placed here are compiler switches, a way of controlling detailed aspects of how the compiler operates. These particular switches, two of many, are turning on **Strict mode**, which makes the game less likely to misbehave when being played, and **Debug mode**, which provides some extra commands which can be helpful when tracking down problems.

**NOTE:** actually, the `-S` is redundant, since Strict mode is already on by default. We include it here as a reminder that (a) to turn Strict mode **off**, you
change this setting to \texttt{-s}, and (b) alphabetic case matters here: \texttt{-s} causes a display of compiler statistics (and \texttt{-~s} does nothing at all).

- Otherwise, when the compiler comes across an exclamation mark, it ignores the rest of the line. If the \texttt{!} is at the start of a line, the whole line is ignored; if the \texttt{!} is halfway along a line, the compiler takes note of the first half, and then ignores the exclamation mark and everything after it on that line. We call material following an exclamation mark, not seen by anybody else, a \textbf{comment}; it’s often a remark that we write to remind ourselves of how something works or why we tackled a problem in a particular way. There’s nothing special about those equals signs: they just produce clear lines across the page.

It’s always a good idea to comment code as you write it, for later it will help you to understand what was going on at a particular spot. Although it all seems clear in your head when you first write it, in a few months you may suspect that a totally alien mind must have produced that senseless gibberish.

By the way, the compiler \textit{doesn’t} give special treatment to exclamation marks in quoted text: \texttt{!} within quotes “…” is treated as a normal character. On this line, the first \texttt{!} is part of the sequence (or \textbf{string}) of characters to be displayed:

\begin{verbatim}
print "Hello world!"; \texttt{!} <- is the start of this comment
\end{verbatim}

- The compiler ignores blank lines, and treats lots of space like a single space (except when the spaces are part of a character string). So, these two rules tell us that we \textit{could} have typed the source file like this:

\begin{verbatim}
Constant Story "Heidi";
Constant Headline "\textit{A simple Inform example} by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.\textit{^}";
Include "Parser";Include "VerbLib";
[ Initialise; ];
Include "Grammar";
\end{verbatim}

We didn’t type it that way because, though shorter, it’s much harder to read. When designing a game, you’ll spend a lot of time studying what you’ve typed, so it’s worthwhile taking a bit of care to make it as readable as possible.

- Every game should have the \textbf{constant} definitions for \texttt{Story} (the game’s name) and \texttt{Headline} (typically, information on the game’s theme, copyright, authorship and so on). These two \textbf{string} values, along with a release number and date, and details of the compiler, compose the \textbf{banner} which is displayed at the start of each game.

- Every game needs the three lines which \texttt{Include} the standard library files – that is, they merge those files’ contents into your source file:

\begin{verbatim}
Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";
... Include "Grammar";
\end{verbatim}
They always have to be in this order, with **Parser** and **VerbLib** near the start of the file, and **Grammar** near the end.

- Every game needs to define an **Initialise** routine (note the British spelling):
  ```inform
  [ Initialise; ];
  ```

  The **routine** that we’ve defined here doesn’t do anything useful, but it still needs to be present. Later, we’ll come back to **Initialise** and explain what a routine is and why we need this one.

- You’ll notice that each of the items mentioned in the previous three rules ends with a semicolon. Inform is very fussy about its punctuation, and gets really upset if you forget a terminating semicolon. In fact, the compiler just keeps reading your source file until it finds one; that’s why we were able to take three lines to define the **Headline constant**

  ```inform
  Constant Headline
  "^A simple Inform example
  ^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^";
  ```

Just to repeat what we said earlier: every game that you design will start out from a basic source file like this (in fact, it might be sensible to keep a copy of this template file in a safe place, as a starting point for future games). Think of this stuff as the basic preparation which you’ll quickly come to take for granted, much as a landscape artist always begins by sizing the canvas before starting to paint. So, now that we’ve taken a quick tour of Inform’s general needs, we can start thinking about what this particular game requires.

### Defining the game’s locations

A good starting point in any game is to think about the locations which are involved: this sketch map shows the four that we’ll use:

In IF, we talk about each of these locations as a **room**, even though in this example none of them has four walls. So let’s use Inform to define those rooms. Here’s a first attempt:

```inform
Object "In front of a cottage"
  with description
  "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
  has light;
```

```inform
Object "Deep in forest"
  with description
  "You stand in the heart of the forest.",
  has light;
```

```inform
Object "Top of the tree"
  with description
  "You stand on the top of a tall oak.",
  has light;
```

```inform
Object "A clearing"
  with description
  "You stand in the middle of a clearing.",
  has light;
```
Object "Deep in the forest"
with description
"Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.",
has light;

Object "A forest clearing"
with description
"A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing. The path winds southwest through the trees.",
has light;

Object "At the top of the tree"
with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
has light;

Again, we can infer some general principles from these four examples:

- A room definition starts with the word Object and ends, about four lines later, with a semicolon. Each of the components that appears in your game – not only the rooms, but also the people, the things that you see and touch, intangibles like a sound, a smell, a gust of wind – is defined in this way; think of an “object” simply as the general term for the myriad thingies which together comprise the model world which your game inhabits.

- The phrase in double quotes following the word Object is the name that the interpreter uses to provide the player character with a list of the objects around her: where she is, what she can see, what she’s holding, and so on.

  NOTE: we’re using the word “player” to mean both the person who is playing the game, and the principal protagonist (often known as the player character) within the game itself. Since the latter – Heidi – is female, we’ll refer to the player as “she” while discussing this game.

- A keyword with follows, which simply tells the compiler what to expect next.

- The word description, introducing another piece of text which gives more detail about the object: in the case of a room, it’s the appearance of the surrounding environment when the player character is in that room. The textual description is given in double quotes, and is followed by a comma.

- Near the end, the keyword has appears, which again tells the compiler to expect a certain kind of information.

- The word light says that this object is a source of illumination, and that therefore the player character can see what’s happening here. There has to be at least one light source in every room (unless you want the player to be told that “It’s pitch dark and you can’t see a thing”); most commonly, that light source is the room itself.

A smidgeon of background may help set this into context (there’s more in the next chapter). An object can have both properties (introduced by the keyword with) and attributes (written after the word has). A property has both a name (like
description) and a value (like the character string "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east."); an attribute has merely a name.

In a little while, when you play this game, you’ll observe that it starts like this:

In front of a cottage
You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.

And here you can see how the room’s name (In front of a cottage) and description (You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.) are used.

Joining up the rooms

We said that this was a first attempt at defining the rooms; it’s fine as far as it goes, but a few bits of information are missing. If you look at the game’s sketch map, you can see how the rooms are intended to be connected; from “Deep in the forest”, for example, the player character should be able to move west towards the cottage, or northeast to the clearing. Now, although our descriptions mention or imply these available routes, we also need to explicitly add them to the room definitions in a form that the game itself can make sense of. Like this:

Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
with description
  "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
  e_to forest,
  has light;
Object forest "Deep in the forest"
with description
  "Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.",
  w_to before_cottage,
  ne_to clearing,
  has light;
Object clearing "A forest clearing"
with description
  "A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing. The path winds southwest through the trees.",
  sw_to forest,
  u_to top_of_tree,
  has light;
Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
  d_to clearing,
  has light;

We’ve made two changes to the room objects.

- First, between the word Object and the object’s name in double quotes, we’ve inserted a different type of name: a private, internal identification, never seen by the player; one that we can use within the source file when one object needs to refer to another object. For example, the first room is identified as before_cottage, and the second as forest.
Unlike the external name contained in double quotes, the internal identifier has to be a single word – that is, without spaces. To aid readability, we often use an underscore character to act as sort of pseudo-space: before_cottage is a bit clearer than beforecottage.

- Second, we’ve added lines after the object descriptions which use those internal identifiers to show how the rooms are connected; one line for each connection. The before_cottage object has this additional line:

  e_to forest,

This means that a player standing in front of the cottage can type GO EAST (or EAST, or just E), and the game will transport her to the room whose internal identification is forest. If she tries to move in any other direction from this room, she’ll be told “You can’t go that way”.

What we’ve just defined is a one-way easterly connection: before_cottage→forest. The forest object has two additional lines:

  w_to before_cottage,
  ne_to clearing,

The first line defines a westerly connection forest→before_cottage (thus enabling the player character to return to the cottage), and the second defines a connection forest→clearing which heads off to the northeast.

Inform provides for eight “horizontal” connections (n_to, ne_to, e_to, se_to, s_to, sw_to, w_to, nw_to) two “vertical” ones (u_to, d_to) and two specials in_to, and out_to. You’ll see some of these used for the remaining inter-room connections.

There’s one last detail to attend to before we can test what we’ve done. You’ll recollect that our story begins with Heidi standing in front of her cottage. We need to tell the interpreter that before_cottage is the room where the game starts, and we do this in the Initialise routine:

```inform
[ Initialise; location = before_cottage; ];
```

location is a variable, part of the library, which tells the interpreter in which room the player character currently is. Here, we’re saying that, at the start of the game, the player character is in the before_cottage room.

Now we can add what we’ve done to the Heidi.inf source file template. At this stage, you should study the four room definitions, comparing them with the sketch map until you’re comfortable that you understand how to create simple rooms and define the connections between them.
Constant Story "Heidi";
Constant Headline
"^A simple Inform example
^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^";

Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";

The game objects

Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
with description
"You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
e_to forest,
has light;

Object forest "Deep in the forest"
with description
"Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west.
A track heads to the northeast.",
w_to before_cottage,
ne_to clearing,
has light;

Object clearing "A forest clearing"
with description
"A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing.
The path winds southwest through the trees.",
sw_to forest,
u_to top_of_tree,
has light;

Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
d_to clearing,
has light;

Entry point routines

[ Initialise; location = before_cottage; ];

Standard and extended grammar

Type this in, as always taking great care with the punctuation – watch those commas and semicolons. Compile it, and fix any mistakes which the compiler reports. You can then play the game in its current state. Admittedly, you can’t do very much, but you should be able to move freely among the four rooms that you’ve defined.
NOTE: in order to minimise the amount of typing that you have to do, the
descriptive text in this game has been kept as short as possible. In a real
game, you would typically provide more interesting descriptions than these.

Adding the bird and the nest

Given what we said earlier, you won’t be surprised to hear that both the bird and
its nest are Inform objects. We’ll start their definitions like this:

Object bird "baby bird"
    with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
    has ;

Object nest "bird’s nest"
    with description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.",
    has ;

You can see that these definitions have exactly the same format as the rooms we
defined previously: a one-word internal identifier (bird, nest), and a word or
phrase naming the object for the player’s benefit (baby bird, bird’s nest). They
both have some descriptive detail: for a room this is printed when the player first
enters, or when she types LOOK; for other objects it’s printed when she
EXAMINEs that object. What they don’t have are connections (e_to, w_to, etc.
apply only to rooms) or light (it’s not necessary – the rooms ensure that light is
available).

When the game is running, the player will want to refer to these two objects,
saying for instance EXAMINE THE BABY BIRD or PICK UP THE NEST. For
this to work reliably, we need to specify the word (or words) which relate to each
object. Our aim here is flexibility: providing a choice of relevant vocabulary so
that the player can use whatever term seems appropriate to her, with a good
chance of it being understood. We add a line to each definition:

Object bird "baby bird"
    with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
    name 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
    has ;

Object nest "bird’s nest"
    with description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.",
    name 'bird's' 'nest' 'twigs' 'moss',
    has ;

The name introduces a list in single quotes ‘...’. We call each of those quoted things
a dictionary word, and we do mean “word”, not “phrase” (‘baby’ ‘bird’ rather
than ‘baby bird’); you can’t uses spaces, commas or periods in dictionary words,
though there’s a space between each one, and the whole list ends with a comma.
The idea is that the interpreter decides which object a player is talking about by
matching what she types against the full set of all dictionary words. If the player
mentions BIRD, or BABY BIRD, or NESTLING, it’s the baby bird that she means;
if she mentions NEST, BIRD’S NEST or MOSS, it’s the bird’s nest. And if she
types NEST BABY or BIRD TWIGS, the interpreter will politely say that it
doesn’t understand what on earth she’s talking about.

NOTE: you’ll notice the use of ‘bird’s’ to define the dictionary word BIRD’S;
this oddity is necessary because the compiler expects the single quotes in the
list always to come in pairs – one at the start of the dictionary word, and one
at the end. If we had typed ‘bird’s’ then the compiler would find the opening
quote, the four letters b i r and d, and what looks like the closing quote. So
far so good; it’s read the word BIRD and now expects a space before the next
opening quote... but instead finds s’ which makes no sense. In cases like this
we must use the circumflex ^ to represent the apostrophe, and the compiler
then treats bird’s as a dictionary word.

You may be wondering why we need a list of name words for the bird and its nest,
yet we didn’t when we defined the rooms? It’s because the player can’t interact
with a room in the same way as with other objects; for example, she doesn’t need
to say EXAMINE THE FOREST – just being there and typing LOOK is sufficient.

The bird’s definition is complete, but there’s an additional complexity with the
nest: we need to be able to put the bird into it. We do this by labelling the nest
as a container – able to hold other objects – so that the player can type PUT (or
INSERT) BIRD IN (or INTO) NEST. Furthermore, we label it as open; this
prevents the interpreter from asking us to open it before putting in the bird.

Object nest “bird’s nest”
   with description “The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.”,
   name ‘bird’s’ ‘nest’ ‘twigs’ ‘moss’,
   has container open;

Both objects are now defined, and we can incorporate them into the game. To
do this, we need to choose the locations where the player will find them. Let’s say
that the bird is found in the forest, while the nest is in the clearing. This is how
we set this up:

Object bird “baby bird” forest
   with description “Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.”,
   name ‘baby’ ‘bird’ ‘nestling’,
   has;

Object nest “bird’s nest” clearing
   with description “The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.”,
   name ‘bird’s’ ‘nest’ ‘twigs’ ‘moss’,
   has container open;

Read that first line as: “Here’s the definition of an object which is identified
within this file as bird, which is known to the player as baby bird, and which is
initially located inside the object identified within this file as forest.”

Where in the source file do these new objects fit? Well, anywhere really, but
you’ll find it convenient to insert them following the rooms where they’re found.
This means adding the bird just after the forest, and the nest just after the clearing.
Here’s the middle piece of the source file:
The game objects

Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
  with description
    "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
    e_to forest,
  has light;

Object forest "Deep in the forest"
  with description
    "Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.",
    w_to before_cottage,
    ne_to clearing,
  has light;

Object bird "baby bird" forest
  with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
    name 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
  has ;

Object clearing "A forest clearing"
  with description
    "A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing. The path winds southwest through the trees.",
    sw_to forest,
    u_to top_of_tree,
  has light;

Object nest "bird's nest" clearing
  with description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.",
    name 'bird^s' 'nest' 'twigs' 'moss',
  has container open;

Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
  with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
    d_to clearing,
  has light;

Make those changes, recompile the game, play it and you’ll see this:

Deep in the forest
Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.

You can see a baby bird here.

> 

Adding the tree and the branch

The description of the clearing mentions a tall sycamore tree, up which the player character supposedly “climbs”. We’d better define it:
Object tree "tall sycamore tree" clearing
  with description
    "Standing proud in the middle of the clearing,
     the stout tree looks easy to climb.",
  name 'tall' 'sycamore' 'tree' 'stout' 'proud',
  has scenery;

Everything there should be familiar, apart from that scenery at the end. We’ve already mentioned the tree in the description of the forest clearing, so we don’t want the interpreter adding “You can see a tall sycamore tree here” afterwards, as it does for the bird and the nest. By labelling the tree as scenery we suppress that, and also prevent it from being picked up by the player character.

One final object: the branch at the top of the tree. Again, not many surprises in this definition:

Object branch "wide firm bough" top_of_tree
  with description "It's flat enough to support a small object.",
  name 'wide' 'firm' 'flat' 'bough' 'branch',
  has static supporter;

The only new things are those two labels. static is similar to scenery: it prevents the branch from being picked up by the player character, but doesn’t suppress mention of it when describing the setting. And supporter is rather like the container that we used for the nest, except that this time the player character can put other objects onto the branch. (In passing, we’ll mention that an object can’t normally be both a container and a supporter.) And so here are our objects again:

!============================================================================
! The game objects

Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
  with description
    "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
  e_to forest,
  has light;

Object forest "Deep in the forest"
  with description
    "Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west.
     A track heads to the northeast.",
  w_to before_cottage,
  ne_to clearing,
  has light;

Object bird "baby bird" forest
  with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
  name 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
  has ;

Object clearing "A forest clearing"
  with description
    "A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing.
     The path winds southwest through the trees.",
  sw_to forest,
  u_to top_of_tree,
  has light;
Once again, make the changes, recompile, and investigate what you can do in your model world.

**Finishing touches**

Our first pass at the game is nearly done; just two more changes to describe. The first is easy: Heidi wouldn’t be able to climb the tree carrying the bird and the nest separately: we want the player character to put the bird into the nest first. One easy way to enforce this is by adding a line near the top of the file:

```inform
Constant Story "Heidi";
Constant Headline
  "A simple Inform example
  ^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^";

Constant MAX_CARRIED 1;
```

The value of `MAX_CARRIED` limits the number of objects that the player character can be holding at any one time; by setting it to 1, we’re saying that she can carry the bird or the nest, but not both. However, the limit ignores the contents of container or supporter objects, so the nest with the bird inside it is still counted as one object.

The other change is slightly more complex and more important: there’s currently no way to “win” the game! The goal is for the player character to put the bird in the nest, take the nest to the top of the tree, and place it on the branch; when that happens, the game should be over. This is one way of making it happen:
Object branch "wide firm bough" top_of_tree
   with description "It's flat enough to support a small object.",
   name 'wide' 'firm' 'flat' 'bough' 'branch',
   each_turn [; if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ],
   has static supporter;

NOTE: here’s an explanation of what’s going on. If you find this difficult to
grasp, don’t worry. It’s the hardest bit so far, and it introduces several new
concepts all at once. Later in the guide, we’ll explain those concepts more
clearly, so you can just skip this bit if you want.

The variable deadflag, part of the library, is normally 0. If you set its value to
2, the interpreter notices and ends the game with “You have won”. The
statement:

\[
\text{if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2;}
\]

should be read as: “Test whether the nest is currently in the branch (if the
branch is a container) or on it (if the branch is a supporter); if it is, set the value
of deadflag to 2; if it isn’t, do nothing.” The surrounding part:

\[
\text{each_turn [; ... ]},
\]

should be read as: “At the end of each turn (when the player is in the same
room as the branch), do whatever is written inside the square brackets”. So,
putting that all together:

- At the end of each turn (after the player has typed something and pressed
  the Enter key, and the interpreter has done whatever was requested) the
  interpreter checks whether the player and the branch are in the same
  room. If not, nothing happens. If they’re together, it looks to see where
  the nest is. Initially it’s in the clearing, so nothing happens.
- Also at the end of each turn, the interpreter checks the value of deadflag.
  Usually it’s 0, so nothing happens.
- Finally the player character puts the nest on the branch. “Aha!” says the
  interpreter (to itself, of course), and sets the value of deadflag to 2.
- Immediately afterwards, (another part of) the interpreter checks and
  finds that the value of deadflag has changed to 2, which means that the
  game is successfully completed; so, it says to the player, “you’ve won!”

That’s as far as we’ll take this example for now. Make those final changes,
recompile, and test what you’ve achieved. You’ll probably find a few things that
could be done better – even on a simple game like this there’s considerable scope
for improvement – so we’ll revisit Heidi in her forest shortly. First, though, we’ll
recap what we’ve learnt so far.
HEIDI: OUR FIRST INFORM GAME

48
4 • Reviewing the basics

G was a gamester, who had but ill-luck;
H was a hunter, and hunted a buck.

Going through the design of our first game in the previous chapter has introduced all sorts of Inform concepts, often without giving you much detail about what’s been happening. So let’s review some of what we’ve learnt so far, in a slightly more organised fashion. We’ll talk about “Constants and variables” on page 49, “Object definitions” on page 50, “Object relationships – the object tree” on page 52, “Things in quotes” on page 55, and “Routines and statements” on page 56.

Constants and variables

Superficially similar, constants and variables are actually very different beasts.

Constants

A constant is a name to which a value is given once and once only; you can’t later use that name to stand for a different value. Think of it as a stone tablet on which you carve a number: a carving can’t be undone, so that you see the same number every time you look at the stone.

So far, we’ve seen a constant being set up with its value as a string of characters:

    Constant Story "Heidi";

and as a number:

    Constant MAX_CARRIED 1;

Those two examples represent the most common ways in which constants are used in Inform.

Variables

A variable is a name to which a value is given, but that value can be changed to a different one at any time. Think of it as a blackboard on which you mark a number in chalk: whenever you need to, just wipe the board and write up a new number.

We haven’t set up any variables of our own yet, though we’ve used a couple which the library created like this:

    Global location;
    Global deadflag;

The value of a global variable created in this way is initially 0, but you can change it at any time. For example, we used the statement:
location = before_cottage;

to reset the value of the location variable to the before_cottage object, and we wrote:

if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2;

to reset the value of the deadflag variable to 2.

Later, we’ll talk about the local variable (see “Routines” on page 179) and about using object properties as variables (see “Objects” on page 177).

Object definitions

The most important information you should have gleaned from the previous chapter is that your entire game is defined as a series of objects. Each room is an object, each item that the player sees and touches is an object; indeed the player herself is also an object (one that’s automatically defined by the library).

The general model of an object definition looks like this:

```
Object obj_id "external_name" parent_obj_id

with property value, property value, ...

has attribute attribute ...

;
```

The definition starts with the word Object and ends with a semicolon; in between are three major blocks of information:

- immediately after the word Object is the header information;
- the word with introduces the object’s properties;
- the word has introduces the object’s attributes.

Object headers

An object header comprises up to three items, all optional:

- An internal obj_id by which other objects refer to this object. It’s a single word (though it can contain digits and underscores) of up to thirty-two characters, and it must be unique within the game. You can omit the obj_id if this object isn’t referred to by any other objects.
  
  For example: bird, tree, top_of_tree.

- An external name, in double quotes, which is what the interpreter uses when referring to the object. It can be one or more words, and need not be unique
(for instance, you might have several "Somewhere in the desert" rooms). Although not mandatory, it's best to give every object an external_name.

For example: "baby bird", "tall sycamore tree", "At the top of the tree".

- The internal obj_id of another object which is the initial location of this object (its “parent” – see the next section) at the start of the game. This is omitted from objects which have no initial parent; it’s always omitted from a room.

For example: the definition of the bird starts like this, specifying that at the start of the game, it can be found in the forest room (though later the player character will pick it up and move it around):

    Object bird "baby bird" forest

    The tree starts like this; the only real difference is that, because the player character can’t move a scenery object, it’s always going to be in the clearing:

    Object tree "tall sycamore tree" clearing

    NOTE: there’s an alternative method for defining an object’s initial location, using “arrows” rather than the parent’s internal obj_id. For example, the definition of the bird could have started like this:

    Object -> bird "baby bird"

    We don’t use the arrows method in this guide, though we do describe how it works in “Setting up the object tree” on page 185.

Object properties

An object’s property definitions are introduced by the with keyword. An object can have any number of properties, and they can be defined in any order. Each definition has two parts: a name, and a value; there’s a space between the two parts, and a comma at the end.

Think of each property as a variable which is specifically associated with that object. The variable’s initial setting is the supplied value; if necessary, it can be reset to other values during play (though in fact most property values don’t change in this way).

Here are examples of the properties that we’ve come across so far:

    description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.",
    e_to forest,
    name 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
    each_turn [; if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ];

By happy coincidence, those examples also demonstrate most of the different types of value which can be assigned to a property. The value associated with the description property in this particular example is a string of characters in double
quotes; the value associated with this `e_to` property is the internal identity of an object; the `name` property is a bit unusual – its value is a list of dictionary words, each in single quotes; the `each_turn` property has a value which is an **embedded routine** (see “Embedded routines” on page 58). The only other type of value which is commonly found is a simple number; for example:

```
capacity 10,
```

In all, the library defines around forty-eight standard properties – like `name` and `each_turn` – which you can associate with your objects; there’s a complete list in “Object properties” on page 266. And in “William Tell: in his prime” on page 91 we show you how to invent your own property variables.

**Object attributes**

An object’s attribute list is introduced by the `has` keyword. An object can have any number of attributes, and they can be listed in any order, with a space between each.

As with properties, you can think of each attribute as a variable which is specifically associated with that object. However, an attribute is a much more limited form of variable, since it can have only two possible states: present, and absent (also known as set/clear, on/off, or true/false; incidentally, a two-state variable like this is often called a **flag**). Initially, an attribute is either present (if you mention its name in the list) or absent (otherwise); if necessary, its state can change during play (and this is relatively common). We often say that a certain object currently `has` a certain attribute, or that conversely it `hasn’t` got it.

The attributes that we’ve come across so far are:

```
container light open scenery static supporter
```

Each of those answers a question: Is this object a container? Does it provide light? and so on. If the attribute is present then the answer is Yes; if the attribute isn’t present, the answer is No.

The library defines around thirty standard attributes, listed in “Object attributes” on page 269. Although you *can* devise additional attributes – see “Common properties and attributes” on page 185 – in practice you seldom need to.

**Object relationships – the object tree**

Not only is your game composed entirely of objects, but also Inform takes great care to keep track of the relationships between those objects. By “relationship” we don’t mean that Walter is Wilhelm’s son, while Helga and Wilhelm are just good friends; it’s a much more comprehensive exercise in recording exactly where each object is located, relative to the other objects in the game.

Despite what we just said, Inform relationships are managed in terms of **parent** and **child** objects, though in a much broader sense than Wilhelm and Walter.
When the player character is in a particular room – for example the forest – we can say that:

- the forest object is *the* parent of the player object, or alternatively
- the player object is *a* child of the forest object.

Also, if the player is carrying an object – for example the nest – we say that:

- the player object is *the* parent of the nest object, or that
- the nest object is *a* child of the player object.

Note the emphasis there: an object has exactly one parent (or no parent at all), but can have any number of child objects (including none).

For an example of an object having more than one child, think about the way we defined the nest and tree objects:

```
Object nest "bird's nest" clearing
...
Object tree "tall sycamore tree" clearing
...
```

We used the third of the header items to say that the clearing was the parent of the nest, and also that the clearing was the parent of the tree; that is, both nest and tree are child objects of the clearing.

NOTE: a “room” isn’t anything magical; it’s just an object which never has a parent, and which may from time to time have the player object as a child.

When we defined the bird, we placed it in the forest, like so:

```
Object bird "baby bird" forest
...
```

We didn’t place any other objects in that room, so at the start of the game the forest was the parent of the bird (and the bird was the only child of the forest). But what happens when the player character, initially in the `before_cottage` room, goes EAST to the forest? Answer: the player’s parent is now the forest, and the forest has two children – the bird and the player. This is a key principle of the way Inform manages its objects: the parent–child relationships between objects change continuously, often dramatically, as the game progresses.

Another example of this: suppose the player character picks up the bird. This causes another change in the relationships. The bird is now a child of the player (and *not* of the forest), and the player is both a parent (of the bird) and a child (of the forest).

In this diagram, we show how the object relationships change during the course of the game. The straight lines represent parent–child relationships, with the parent object at the top of the line, and the child object at the bottom.
1. At the start of the game:

2. The player types:
   GO EAST

3. The player types:
   TAKE THE BIRD

4. The player types:
   GO NORTHEAST

5. The player types:
   PUT BIRD IN NEST

6. The player types:
   TAKE NEST

7. The player types:
   UP

8. The player types:
   PUT NEST ON BRANCH

In this short example, we’ve taken a lot of time and space to spell out exactly how the objects relationship patterns – generally known as the **object tree** – appear
at each stage. Normally you wouldn’t bother with this much detail (a) because the interpreter does most of the work for you, and (b) because in a real game there are usually too many objects for you to keep track of. What’s important is that you understand the basic principles: at any moment in time an object either has no parent (which probably means either that it’s a room, or that it’s floating in hyperspace and not currently part of the game) or exactly one parent – the object that it’s “in” or “on” or “a part of”. However, there’s no restriction on the number of children that an object can have.

There’s a practical use for these relationships, covered in detail further on. As a designer, you can refer to the current parent or children of any given object with the parent, child and children routines, and this is one feature that you will be using frequently. There are also other routines associated with the object tree, to help you keep track of the objects or move them around. We’ll see them one by one in the next chapters. For a quick summary, see “Objects” on page 177.

**Things in quotes**

Inform makes careful distinction between double and single quotes.

**Double quotes**

Double quotes “…” surround a string – a letter, a word, a paragraph, or almost any number of characters – which you want the interpreter to display while the game is being played. You can use the tilde ~ to represent a double quote inside the string, and the circumflex ^ to represent a newline (line break) character. Upper-case and lower-case letters are treated as different.

A long string can be split over several lines; Inform transforms each line break (and any spaces around it) into a single space (extra spaces not at a line break are preserved, though). These two strings are equivalent:

```
"This is a string of characters."

"This is a string of characters."
```

When the interpreter displays a long character string – for example, while describing a feature-packed room – it employs automatic word-wrapping to fit the text to the player’s screen. This is where you might insert ^ characters to force line breaks to appear, thus presenting the text as a series of paragraphs.

So far, we’ve seen strings used as the value of a Constant:

```
Constant Headline
  "^A simple Inform example
  ^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^"
```

which could equally have been defined thus:
and as the value of an object description property:

description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly."

Later, you’ll find that they’re also very common in print statements.

Single quotes

Single quotes ‘...’ surround a dictionary word. This has to be a single word – no spaces – and generally contains only letters (and occasionally numbers and hyphens), though you can use ^ to represent an apostrophe inside the word. Upper-case and lower-case letters are treated as identical; also, the interpreter normally looks only at the first nine characters of each word that the player types.

When the player types a command, the interpreter divides what was typed into individual words, which it then looks up in the dictionary. If it finds all the words, and they seem to represent a sensible course of action, that’s what happens next.

So far, we’ve seen dictionary words used as the values of an object name property:

name 'bird's' 'nest' 'twigs' 'moss',

and indeed that’s just about the only place where they commonly occur.

You’ll save yourself a lot of confusion by remembering the distinction: Double quotes for Output, Single quotes for Input (DOSI).

Routines and statements

A routine is a collection of statements, which are performed (or we often say “are executed”) at run-time by the interpreter. There are two types of routine, and about two dozen types of statement (there’s a complete list in “Statements” on page 174; see also “Inform language” on page 257).

Statements

A statement is an instruction telling the interpreter to perform a particular task – to “do something” – while the game is being played. A real game usually has lots and lots of statements, but so far we’ve encountered only a few. We saw:

location = before_cottage;

which is an example of an assignment statement, so-called because the equals sign = assigns a new value (the internal ID of our before_cottage room) to a variable (the global variable location which is part of the library). Later we saw:

if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2;

which is actually two statements: an assignment, preceded by an if statement:

if (nest in branch) ...
The **if** statement tests a particular condition; if the condition is true, the interpreter executes whatever statement comes next; if it isn’t true, the interpreter ignores the next statement. In this example, the interpreter is testing whether the **nest** object is “in” or “on” (which we now know means “is a child of”) the **branch** object. For most of the game, that condition is not true, and so the interpreter ignores the following statement. Eventually, when the condition becomes true, the interpreter executes that statement: it performs an assignment:

```
deadflag = 2;
```

which changes the value of the library variable **deadflag** from its current value to 2. Incidentally, **if** statements are often written on two lines, with the “controlled” statement indented. This makes it easier to read, but doesn’t change the way that it works:

```
if (nest in branch)
    deadflag = 2;
```

The thing that’s being controlled by the **if** statement doesn’t have to be an assignment; it can be any kind of statement. In fact, you can have lots of statements, not just one, controlled by an **if** statement. We’ll talk about these other possibilities later. For now, just remember that the only place where you’ll find statements are within standalone routines and embedded routines.

**Standalone routines**

A **standalone routine** is a series of statements, collected together and given a name. When the routine is “called” – by its given name – those statements are executed. Here’s the one that we’ve defined:

```plaintext
[ Initialise; location = before_cottage; ];
```

Because it’s such a tiny routine, we placed it all on a single line. Let’s rewrite it to use several lines (as with the **if** statement, this improves the readability, but doesn’t affect how it works);

```plaintext
[ Initialise;
  location = before_cottage;
];
```

The `[ Initialise;` is the start of the routine, and defines the name by which it can be “called”. The `];` is the end of the routine. In between are the statements – sometimes known as the body of the routine – which are executed when the routine is called. And how is that done? By a statement like this:

```plaintext
Initialise();
```

That single statement, the routine’s name followed by opening and closing parentheses, is all that it takes to call a routine. When it comes across a line like this, the interpreter executes the statements – in this example there’s only one, but there may be ten, twenty, even a hundred of them – in the body of the
routine. Having done that, the interpreter resumes what it was doing, on the line following the Initialise(); call.

**NOTE:** you may have noticed that, although we’ve defined a routine named Initialise, we’ve never actually called it. Don’t worry – the routine is called, by the Inform library, right at the start of a game.

### Embedded routines

An **embedded routine** is much like a standalone routine, though it doesn’t have a name and doesn’t end in a semicolon. This is the one that we defined:

```plaintext
[; if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ]
```

except that we didn’t write it in isolation like that; instead, we defined it to be the value of an object property:

```plaintext
each_turn [; if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ],
```

which would have worked just the same if we’d written it like this:

```plaintext
each_turn [;
  if (nest in branch)
    deadflag = 2;
],
```

All embedded routines are defined in this manner: as the value of an object property. That’s where they’re embedded – inside an object. The introductory characters [; maybe look a little odd, but it’s really only the same syntax as for a standalone routine, only without a name between the [ and ;.

For calling an embedded routine, thus causing the statements it contains to be executed, the method that we described for a standalone routine won’t work. An embedded routine has no name, and needs none; it’s automatically called by the library at appropriate moments, which are determined by the role of the property for which it is the value. In our example, that’s at the end of every turn in which the player character is in the same room as the branch. Later, we’ll see other examples of embedded routines, each designed to perform a task which is appropriate for the property whose value it is; we’ll also see that it is possible to call an embedded routine yourself, using an `obj_id.property()` syntax – in this example, we could call the routine by writing `branch.each_turn()`.

There’s more about these topics in “Routines and arguments” on page 67, “A diversion: working with routines” on page 104 and in “Routines” on page 179.

That ends our review of the ground covered in our first game. We’ll have more to say about most of this later, but we’re trying not to overload you with facts at this early stage. What we’d like you to do is to look back at the source of the game, and ensure that you can recognise all the elements which this chapter has described. Then, we’ll move on to fix a few of the game’s more important defects.
5 • Heidi revisited

I was an innkeeper, who loved to carouse;
J was a joiner, and built up a house.

n even the simplest story, there’s bound to be scope for the player to attempt activities that you hadn’t anticipated. Sometimes there may be alternative ways of approaching a problem: if you can’t be sure which approach the player will take, you really ought to allow for all possibilities. Sometimes the objects you create and the descriptions you provide may suggest to the player that doing such-and-such should be possible, and, within reason, you ought to allow for that also. The basic game design is easy: what takes the time, and makes a game large and complex, is taking care of all the other things that the player may think of trying.

Here, we try to illustrate what this means by addressing a few of the more glaring deficiencies in our first game.

Listening to the bird

Here’s a fragment of the game being played:

Deep in the forest
Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.

You can see a baby bird here.

> EXAMINE THE BIRD
Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.

> LISTEN TO BIRD
You hear nothing unexpected.

That’s not too smart, is it? Our description specifically calls the player’s attention to the sound of the bird – and then she finds out that we’ve got nothing special to say about its helpless tweeting.

The library has a stock of actions and responses for each of the game’s defined verbs, so it can handle most of the player’s input with a default, standard behaviour instead of remaining impertinently silent or saying that it doesn’t understand what the player intends. “You hear nothing unexpected” is the library’s standard LISTEN response, good enough after LISTEN TO NEST or LISTEN TO TREE, but fairly inappropriate here; we really need to substitute a more relevant response after LISTEN TO BIRD. Here’s how we do it:
We’ll go through this a step at a time:

1. We’ve added a new `before` property to our `bird` object. The interpreter looks at the property `before` attempting to perform any action which is directed specifically at this object:

```plaintext
before [; ... ],
```

2. The value of the property is an embedded routine, containing a label and two statements:

```plaintext
Listen:
    print "It sounds scared and in need of assistance.^";
    return true;
```

3. The label is the name of an action, in this case `Listen`. What we’re telling the interpreter is: if the action that you’re about to perform on the bird is a `Listen`, execute these statements first; if it’s any other action, carry on as normal. So, if the player types EXAMINE BIRD, PICK UP BIRD, PUT BIRD IN NEST, HIT BIRD or FONDLE BIRD, then she’ll get the standard response. If she types LISTEN TO BIRD, then our two statements get executed before anything else happens. We call this “trapping” or “intercepting” the action of Listening to the bird.

4. The two statements that we execute are, first:

```plaintext
print "It sounds scared and in need of assistance.^";
```

which causes the interpreter to display the string given in double quotes; remember that a `^` character in a string appears as a newline. Second, we execute:

```plaintext
return true;
```

which tells the interpreter that it doesn’t need to do anything else, because we’ve handled the `Listen` action ourselves. And the game now behaves like this – perfect:

```plaintext
>LISTEN TO BIRD
It sounds scared and in need of assistance.
>
```

The use of the `return true` statement probably needs a bit more explanation. An object’s `before` property traps an action aimed at that object right at the start, before the interpreter has started to do anything. That’s the point at which the
statements in the embedded routine are executed. If the last of those statements is `return true` then the interpreter assumes that the action has been dealt with by those statements, and so there's nothing left to do: no action, no message; nothing. On the other hand, if the last of the statements is `return false` then the interpreter carries on to perform the default action as though it hadn't been intercepted. Sometimes that's what you want it to do, but not here: if instead we'd written this:

```object
Object bird "baby bird" forest
  with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
  name 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
  before [],
  Listen:
    print "It sounds scared and in need of assistance.^";
    return false;
  ],
has ;
```

then the interpreter would first have displayed our string, and then carried on with its normal response, which is to display the standard message:

```plaintext
>LISTEN TO BIRD
It sounds scared and in need of assistance.
You hear nothing unexpected.
>
```

This technique – intercepting an action aimed at a particular object in order to do something appropriate for that object – is one that we’ll use again and again.

**Entering the cottage**

At the start of the game the player character stands “outside a cottage”, which might lead her to believe that she can go inside:

```plaintext
In front of a cottage
You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.

>IN
You can't go that way.
>
```

Again, that isn’t perhaps the most appropriate response, but it’s easy to change:

```object
Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
  with description "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
  e_to forest,
  in_to "It’s such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.",
  cant_go "The only path lies to the east.",
  has light;
```

The `in_to` property would normally link to another room, in the same way as the `e_to` property contain the internal ID of the `forest` object. However, if instead you
set its value to be a string, the interpreter displays that string when the player tries the IN direction. Other – unspecified – directions like NORTH and UP still elicit the standard “You can’t go that way” response, but we can change that too, by supplying a `cant_go` property whose value is a suitable string. We then get this friendlier behaviour:

```
In front of a cottage
You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.

>IN
It's such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.

>NORTH
The only path lies to the east.

>EAST

Deep in the forest...
```

There’s another issue here; since we haven’t actually implemented an object to represent the cottage, a perfectly reasonable EXAMINE COTTAGE command receives the obviously nonsensical reply “You can’t see any such thing”. That’s easy to fix; we can add a new `cottage` object, making it a piece of scenery just like the tree:

```
Object cottage "tiny cottage" before_cottage
    with description "It's small and simple, but you're very happy here.",
    name 'tiny' 'cottage' 'home' 'house' 'hut' 'shed' 'hovel',
    has scenery;
```

This solves the problem, but promptly gives us another unreasonable response:

```
In front of a cottage
You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.

>ENTER COTTAGE
That's not something you can enter.
```

The situation here is similar to our LISTEN TO BIRD problem, and the solution we adopt is similar as well:

```
Object cottage "tiny cottage" before_cottage
    with description "It's small and simple, but you're very happy here.",
    name 'tiny' 'cottage' 'home' 'house' 'hut' 'shed' 'hovel',
    before [;
        Enter:
            print_ret "It's such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.";
    ],
    has scenery;
```

We use a `before` property to intercept the `Enter` action applied to the `cottage` object, so that we can display a more appropriate message. This time, however, we’ve done it using one statement rather than two. It turns out that the sequence “print a string which ends with a newline character, and then return true” is so
frequently needed that there’s a special statement which does it all. That is, this single statement (where you’ll note that the string \textit{doesn’t} need to end in ^):

\begin{verbatim}
print_ret "It's such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside."
\end{verbatim}

works exactly the same as this pair of statements:

\begin{verbatim}
print "It's such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.^"
return true;
\end{verbatim}

We could have used the shorter form when handling LISTEN TO BIRD, and we \textit{will} use it from now on.

\textbf{Climbing the tree}

In the clearing, holding the nest and looking at the tree, the player is meant to type \textsc{UP}. Just as likely, though, she’ll try \textsc{CLIMB TREE} (which currently gives the completely misleading response “I don’t think much is to be achieved by that”). Yet another opportunity to use a \texttt{before} property, but now with a difference.

\begin{verbatim}
Object tree "tall sycamore tree" clearing
    with description
        "Standing proud in the middle of the clearing, the stout tree looks easy to climb.",
    name 'tall' 'sycamore' 'tree' 'stout' 'proud',
    before [];
    Climb:
        PlayerTo(top_of_tree);
        return true;
],
has scenery;
\end{verbatim}

This time, when we intercept the \texttt{Climb} action applied to the \texttt{tree} object, it’s not in order to display a better message; it’s because we want to move the player character to another room, just as if she’d typed \textsc{UP}. Relocating the player character is actually quite a complex business, but fortunately all of that complexity is hidden: there’s a standard \texttt{library routine} to do the job, not one that we’ve written, but one that’s provided as part of the Inform system.

You’ll remember that, when we first mentioned routines (see “Standalone routines” on page 57), we used the example of \texttt{Initialise()} and said that “the routine’s name followed by opening and closing parentheses is all that it takes to call a routine”. That was true for \texttt{Initialise()}, but not quite the whole story. To move the player character, we’ve got to specify where we want her to go, and we do that by supplying the internal ID of the destination room within the opening and closing parentheses. That is, instead of just \texttt{PlayerTo()} we call \texttt{PlayerTo(top_of_tree)}, and we describe \texttt{top_of_tree} as the routine’s \texttt{argument}.

Although we’ve moved the player character to another room, we’re still in the middle of the intercepted \texttt{Climb} action. As previously, we need to tell the interpreter that we’ve dealt with the action, and so we don’t want the standard rejection message to be displayed. The \texttt{return true} statement does that, as usual.
Dropping objects from the tree

In a normal room like the forest or the clearing, the player can DROP something she’s carrying and it’ll effectively fall to the ground at her feet. Simple, convenient, predictable – except when the player is at the top of the tree. Should she DROP something from up there, having it land nearby might seem a bit improbable; much more likely that it would fall to the clearing below.

It looks like we might want to intercept the Drop action, but not quite in the way we’ve been doing up until now. For one thing, we don’t want to complicate the definitions of the bird and the nest and any other objects we may introduce: much better to find a general solution that will work for all objects. And second, we need to recognise that not all objects are droppable; the player can’t, for example, DROP THE BRANCH.

The best approach to the second problem is to intercept the Drop action after it has occurred, rather than beforehand. That way, we let the library take care of objects which aren’t being held or which can’t be dropped, and only become involved once a Drop has been successful. And the best approach to the first problem is to do this particular interception not on an object-by-object basis, as we have been doing so far, but instead for every Drop which takes place in our troublesome top_of_tree room. This is what we have to write:

```
Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
    with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
    d_to clearing,
    after [;
        Drop:
            move noun to clearing;
            return false;
],
    has light;
```

Let’s again take it a step at a time:

1. We’ve added a new after property to our top_of_tree object. The interpreter looks at the property subsequent to performing any action in this room:

   ```
   after [; ... ],
   ```

2. The value of the property is an embedded routine, containing a label and two statements:

   ```
   Drop:
       move noun to clearing;
       return false;
   ```

3. The label is the name of an action, in this case Drop. What we’re telling the interpreter is: if the action that you’ve just performed here is a Drop, execute these statements before telling the player what you’ve done; if it’s any other action, carry on as normal.

4. The two statements that we execute are first:
move noun to clearing;

which takes the object which has just been moved from the player object to the top_of_tree object (by the successful Drop action) and moves it again so that its parent becomes the clearing object. That noun is a library variable that always contains the internal ID of the object which is the target of the current action. If the player types DROP NEST, noun contains the internal ID of the nest object; if she types DROP NESTLING then noun contains the internal ID of the bird object. Second, we execute:

    return false;

which tells the interpreter that it should now let the player know what’s happened. Here’s the result of all this:

    At the top of the tree
    You cling precariously to the trunk.
    You can see a wide firm bough here.

    >DROP NEST
    Dropped.

    >LOOK
    At the top of the tree
    You cling precariously to the trunk.
    You can see a wide firm bough here.

    >DOWN

    A forest clearing
    A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing. The path winds southwest through the trees.
    You can see a bird’s nest (in which is a baby bird) here.

    >

Of course, you might think that the standard message “Dropped” is slightly unhelpful in these non-standard circumstances. If you prefer to hint at what’s just happened, you could use this alternative solution:

    Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
    with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
    d_to clearing,
    after [];
    Drop:
        move noun to clearing;
        print_ret "Dropped... to the ground far below.";
    ],
    has light;

The print_ret statement does two things for us: displays a more informative message, and returns true to tell the interpreter that there’s no need to let the player know what’s happened – we’ve handled that ourselves.
Is the bird in the nest?

The game ends when the player character puts the nest onto the branch. Our assumption here is that the bird is inside the nest, but this might not be so; the player may have first taken up the bird and then gone back for the nest, or vice versa. It would be better not to end the game until we’d checked for the bird actually being in the nest; fortunately, that’s easy to do:

```plaintext
Object branch "wide firm bough" top_of_tree
  with description "It's flat enough to support a small object.",
  name 'wide' 'firm' 'flat' 'bough' 'branch',
  each_turn []; if (bird in nest && nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ],
  has static supporter;
```

The extended if statement:

```plaintext
if (bird in nest && nest in branch) deadflag = 2;
```

should now be read as: “Test whether the bird is currently in (or on) the nest, and whether the nest is currently on (or in) the branch; if both parts are true, set the value of deadflag to 2; otherwise, do nothing”.

Summing up

You should by now have some appreciation of the need not only to handle the obvious actions which were at the forefront of your mind when designing the game, but also as many as you can of the other possible ways that a player may choose to interact with the objects presented to her. Some of those ways will be highly intelligent, some downright dumb; in either case you should try to ensure that the game’s response is at least sensible, even when you’re telling the player “sorry, you can’t do that”.

The new topics that we’ve encountered here include these:

Object properties

Objects can have a before property – if there is one, the interpreter looks at it before performing an action which in some way involves that object. Similarly, you can provide an after property, which the interpreter looks at after performing an action but before telling the player what’s happened. Both before and after properties can be used not only with tangible objects like the bird, cottage and tree (when they intercept actions aimed at that particular object) but also with rooms (when they intercept actions aimed at any object in that room).

The value of each before and after property is an embedded routine. If such a routine ends with return false, the interpreter then carries on with the next stage of the action which has been intercepted; if it ends with return true, the interpreter does nothing further for that action. By combining these possibilities, you can supplement the work done by a standard action with statements of your own, or you can replace a standard action completely.
Previously, we’ve seen connection properties used with the internal ID of the room to which they lead. In this chapter, we showed that the value could also be a string (explaining why movement in that direction isn’t possible). Here are examples of both, and also of the cant_go property which provides just such an explanation for all connections that aren’t explicitly listed:

```
e_to forest,
in_to "It’s such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.",
cant_go "The only path lies to the east."
```

Routines and arguments

The library includes a number of useful routines, available to perform certain common tasks if you require them; there’s a list in “Library routines” on page 264. We used the PlayerTo routine, which moves the player character from her current room to another one – not necessarily adjacent to the first room.

When calling PlayerTo, we had to tell the library which room is the destination. We did this by supplying that room’s internal ID within parentheses, thus:

```
PlayerTo(clearing);
```

A value given in parentheses like that is called an argument of the routine. In fact, a routine can have more than one argument; if so, they’re separated by commas. For example, to move the player character to a room without displaying that room’s description, we could have supplied a second argument:

```
PlayerTo(clearing,1);
```

In this example, the effect of the 1 is to prevent the description being displayed.

Statements

We encountered several new statements:

```
return true;
return false;
```

We used these at the end of embedded routines to control what the interpreter did next.

```
print "string";
print_ret "string";
```

The print statement simply displays the string of characters represented here by string. The print_ret statement also does that, then outputs a newline character, and finally executes a return true;

```
if (condition && condition) ... 
```

We extended the simple if statement that we met before. The && (to be read as “and”) is an operator commonly used when testing for more than one condition at the same time. It means “if this condition is true and this condition is also true and ...” There’s also a || operator, to be read as “or”, and a “not” operator ~, which turns true into false and vice versa.


NOTE: in addition, there are &, | and ~ operators, but they do a rather different job and are much less common. Take care not to get them confused.

```
moved obj_id to parent_obj_id;
```

The `move` statement rearranges the object tree, by making the first `obj_id` a child of the `parent_obj_id`.

### Actions

We’ve talked a lot about intercepting actions like `Listen`, `Enter`, `Climb` and `Drop`. An **action** is a generalised representation of something to be done, determined by the verb which the player types. For example, the verbs `HEAR` and `LISTEN` are ways of saying much the same thing, and so both result in the same action: `Listen`. Similarly, verbs like `ENTER`, `GET INTO`, `SIT ON` and `WALK INSIDE` all lead to an action of `Enter`, `CLIMB` and `SCALE` lead to `Climb`, and `DISCARD`, `DROP`, `PUT DOWN` and `THROW` all lead to `Drop`. This makes life much easier for the designer; although Inform defines quite a lot of actions, there are many fewer than there are ways of expressing those same actions using English verbs.

Each action is represented internally by a number, and the value of the current action is stored in a library variable called, erm, `action`. Two more variables are also useful here: `noun` holds the internal ID of the object which is the focus of the action, and `second` holds the internal ID of the secondary object (if there is one). Here are some examples of these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player types</th>
<th>action</th>
<th>noun</th>
<th>second</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LISTEN TO THE BIRD</td>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICK UP THE BIRD</td>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUT BIRD IN NEST</td>
<td>Insert</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>nest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROP THE NEST</td>
<td>Drop</td>
<td>nest</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUT NEST ON BRANCH</td>
<td>PutOn</td>
<td>nest</td>
<td>branch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value `nothing` is a built-in constant (like `true` and `false`) which means, well, there isn’t any object to refer to. There’s a list of standard library actions in “Group 1 actions” on page 270, “Group 2 actions” on page 271 and “Group 3 actions” on page 271.

We’ve now reached the end of our first game. In these three chapters we’ve shown you the basic principles on which almost all games are based, and introduced you to many of the components that you’ll need when creating more interesting IF. We suggest that you take one last look at the source code (see “Heidi” story on page 213), and then move on to the next stage.
6 • William Tell: a tale is born

Keeping up the momentum, this chapter (and the three which follow) works steadily through the design of the “William Tell” game that we encountered right at the start of this guide. Many of the principles are the same as the ones we explained when designing Heidi and her forest, so we’ll not linger on what should be familiar ground. “William Tell” is a slightly longer and more complex game, so we’ll move as swiftly as possible to examine the features which are new.

Initial setup

Our starting point is much the same as last time. Here’s a basic Tell.inf:

```plaintext
!% -SD
!============================================================================
Constant Story "William Tell";
Constant Headline
   "^A simple Inform example
    ^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^"
Release 3; Serial "040804"; ! for keeping track of public releases

Constant MAX_SCORE = 3;
Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";

!============================================================================
! Object classes
!============================================================================
! The game objects

!============================================================================
! The player's possessions

!============================================================================
! Entry point routines

[ Initialise;
  location = street;
  lookmode = 2; ! like the VERBOSE command
  move bow to player;
  move quiver to player; give quiver worn;
  player.description =
      "You wear the traditional clothing of a Swiss mountaineer."
  print_ret "^^
  The place: Altdorf, in the Swiss canton of Uri. The year is 1307, at which time Switzerland is under rule by the Emperor Albert of
```
Habsburg. His local governor -- the vogt -- is the bullying Hermann Gessler, who has placed his hat atop a wooden pole in the centre of the town square; everybody who passes through the square must bow to this hated symbol of imperial might.

You have come from your cottage high in the mountains, accompanied by your younger son, to purchase provisions. You are a proud and independent man, a hunter and guide, renowned both for your skill as an archer and, perhaps unwisely (for his soldiers are everywhere), for failing to hide your dislike of the vogt.

It's market-day: the town is packed with people from the surrounding villages and settlements.

You'll see that we've marked a couple of extra divisions in the file, to help organise the stuff we'll add later, but the overall structure is identical to our first game. Let's quickly point out some extra bits and pieces:

- If you look at a game's banner, you'll see two pieces of information: "Release" and "Serial number".

William Tell
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 3 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD

These two fields are automatically written by the compiler, which sets by default Release to 1 and the Serial Number to today's date. However, we can explicitly override this behaviour using Release and Serial, to keep track of different versions of our game. Typically, we will publish several updates of our games over time, each version fixing problems which were found in the previous release. If somebody else reports a problem with a game, we'd like to know exactly which version they were using; so, rather than take the default values, we set our own. When it's time to release a new version, all we have to do is comment out the previous lines and add another below them:

!Release 1; Serial "020128"; ! First beta-test release
!Release 2; Serial "020217"; ! Second beta-test release
Release 3; Serial "020315"; ! IF Library competition entry

- We'll be implementing a simple system of awarding points when the player gets something right, so we define top marks:

   Constant MAX_SCORE = 3;
The Initialise routine that we wrote last time contained only one statement, to set the player’s initial location. We do that here as well, but we also do some other stuff.

The first thing is to assign 2 to the library variable lookmode. Inform’s default mode for displaying room descriptions is BRIEF (a description is displayed only when a room is visited for the first time) and, by changing this variable’s value, we set it to VERBOSE (descriptions are displayed on every visit). Doing this is largely a matter of personal preference, and in any case it’s nothing more than a convenience; it just saves having to remember to type VERBOSE each time that we test the game.

At the start of the game, we want Wilhelm to be equipped with his bow and quiver of arrows. The recommended way of making this happen is to perform the necessary object tree rearrangement with a couple of move statements in the Initialise routine:

```
move bow to player;
move quiver to player;
```

and indeed this is the clearest way to place objects in the player’s inventory at the beginning of any game.

NOTE: wait! you say. In the previous chapter, to make an object the child of another object all we needed to do was to define the child object with the internal identification of the parent object at the end of the header:

```
Object bird "baby bird" forest
```

Why not do that with the player? Because the object which represents the player is defined by the library (rather than as part of our game), and actually has an internal ID of selfobj; player is a variable whose value is that identifier. Rather than worry all about this, it’s easier to use the move statements.

There’s one other task associated with the quiver; it’s an article of clothing which Wilhelm is “wearing”, a state denoted by the attribute worn. Normally the interpreter would apply this automatically, while handling a command like WEAR QUIVER, but since we’ve moved the quiver ourselves, we also need to set the quiver’s worn attribute. The give statement does the job:

```
give quiver worn;
```

(To clear the attribute, by the way, you’d use the statement give quiver ~worn – read that as “give the quiver not-worn”; Inform often uses ~ to mean “not”.)

If the player types EXAMINE ME, the interpreter displays the description property of the player object. The default value is “As good-looking as ever”, a bit of a cliché in the world of Inform games. It’s easy to change, though, once you realise that, since the properties of an object are variables, you can
assign new values to them just as you’d assign new values to location and lookmode. The only problem is getting the syntax right; you can’t say just:

```plaintext
description = "You wear the traditional clothing of a Swiss mountaineer.";
```
because there are dozens of objects in the game, each with its own description property; you need to be a little more explicit. Here’s what to type:

```plaintext
player.description = 
"You wear the traditional clothing of a Swiss mountaineer.";
```

- Finally, the Initialise routine ends with a lengthy print_ret statement. Since the interpreter calls Initialise right at the start of the game, that’s the point at which this material is displayed, so that it acts as a scene-setting preamble before the game gets under way. In fact, everything you want set or done at the very beginning of the game, should go into the Initialise routine.

The game won’t compile in this state, because it contains references to objects which we haven’t yet defined. In any case, we don’t intend to build up the game in layers as we did last time, but rather to talk about it in logically related chunks. To see (and if you wish, to type) the complete source, go to “William Tell” story on page 219.

**Object classes**

Remember how we defined the rooms in “Heidi”? Our first attempt started like this:

```plaintext
Object "In front of a cottage"
  with description
    "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
  has light;

Object "Deep in the forest"
  with description
    "Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.",
  has light;
...```

and we explained that just about every room needs that light attribute, or else the player would be literally in the dark. It’s a bit of a nuisance having to specify that same attribute each time; what would be neater would be to say that all rooms are illuminated. So we can write this:

```plaintext
Class Room
  has light;

Room "In front of a cottage"
  with description
    "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
  has ;
```
We’ve done four things:

1. We’ve said that some of the objects in our game are going to be defined by the specialised word `Room` rather than the general-purpose word `Object`. In effect, we’ve taught Inform a new word specially for defining objects, which we can now use as though it had been part of the language all along.

2. We’ve furthermore said that every object which we define using `Room` is automatically going to have the `light` attribute.

3. We’ve changed the way in which we define the four room objects, by starting them with our specialised word `Room`. The remainder of the definition for these objects – the header information, the block of properties, the block of attributes and the final semicolon – remains the same; except that:

4. We don’t need to explicitly include the `light` attribute each time; every `Room` object has it automatically.

A **class** is a family of closely related objects, all of which behave in the same way. Any properties defined for the class, and any attributes defined for the class, are automatically given to objects which you specify as belonging to that class; this process of acquisition just by being a member of a class is called **inheritance**. In our example, we’ve defined a `Room` class with a `light` attribute, and then we’ve specified four objects each of which is a member of that class, and each of which gets given a `light` attribute as a result of that membership.

Why have we gone to this trouble? Three main reasons:

- By moving the common bits of the definitions from the individual objects to the class definition which they share, those object definitions become shorter and simpler. Even if we had a hundred rooms, we’d still need to specify `has light` only once.

- By creating a specialised word to identify our class of objects, we make our source file easier to read. Rather than absolutely everything being an anonymous `Object`, we can now immediately recognise that some are `Room` objects (and others belong to the different classes that we’ll create soon).

- By collecting the common definitions into one place, we make it much easier to make widespread modifications in future. If we need to make some change to the definition of all our rooms, we just modify the `Room` class, and all of the class members inherit the change.

For these reasons, the use of classes is an incredibly powerful technique, easier than it may look, and very well worth mastering. From now on, we’ll be defining
object classes whenever it makes sense (which is generally when two or more objects are meant to behave in exactly the same way).

You may be wondering: suppose I want to define a room which for some reason doesn’t have light; can I still use the Room class? Sure you can:

```
Room cellar "Gloomy cellar"
   with description "Your torch shows only cobwebby brick walls.",
   has ~light;
```

This illustrates another nice feature of inheritance: the object definition can override the class definition. The class says has light, but the object itself says has ~light (read that as “has no light”) and the object wins. The cellar is dark, and the player will need a torch to see what’s in it.

In fact, for any object both the block of properties and the block of attributes are optional and can be omitted if there’s nothing to be specified. Now that the light attribute is being provided automatically and there aren’t any other attributes to set, the word has can be left out. Here’s the class again:

```
Class Room
   has light;
```

and here is how we could have used it in “Heidi”:

```
Room "In front of a cottage"
   with description
      "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east."

Room "Deep in the forest"
   with description
      "Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west.
      A track heads to the northeast."
...```

You’ll notice that, if an object has no block of attributes, the semicolon which terminates its definition simply moves to the end of its last property.

A class for props

We use the Room class in “William Tell”, and a few other classes besides. Here’s a Prop class (that’s “Prop” in the sense of a theatrical property rather than a supportive device), useful for scenic items whose only role is to sit waiting in the background on the off-chance that the player might think to EXAMINE them:

```
Class Prop
   with before [;
      Examine:
         return false;
      default:
         print_ret "You don't need to worry about ", (the) self, ".";
      ],
   has scenery;
```
All objects of this class inherit the *scenery* attribute, so they’re excluded from room descriptions. Also, there’s a *before* property; one that’s more complex than our previous efforts. You’ll remember that the first *before* we met looked like this:

```python
before [;
    Listen:
        print "It sounds scared and in need of assistance.";
        return true;
],
```

The role of that original *before* was to intercept *Listen* actions, while leaving all others well alone. The role of the *before* in the *Prop* class is broader: to intercept (a) *Examine* actions, and (b) all the rest. If the action is *Examine*, then the *return false* statement means that the action carries on. If the action is *default* – none of those explicitly listed, which in this instance means *every* action apart from *Examine* – then the *print_ret* statement is executed, after which the interpreter does nothing further. So, a *Prop* object can be EXAMINEd, but any other action addressed to it results in a “no need to worry” message.

That message is also more involved than anything we’ve so far displayed. The statement which produces it is:

```python
print_ret "You don't need to worry about ", (the) self, ";"
```

which you should read as doing this:

1. display the string “You don’t need to worry about ”,
2. display a definite article (usually “the”) followed by a space and the external name of the object concerned,
3. display a period, and
4. display a newline and return true in the usual way for a *print_ret* statement.

The interesting things that this statement demonstrates are:

- The *print* and *print_ret* statements aren’t restricted to displaying a single piece of information: they can display a list of items which are separated by commas. The statement still ends with a semicolon in the usual way.

- As well as displaying strings, you can also display the names of objects: given the *nest* object from our first game, *(the) nest* would display “the bird’s nest”, *(The) nest* would display “The bird’s nest”, *(a) nest* would display “a bird’s nest”, *(A) nest* would display “A bird's nest” and *(name) nest* would display just “bird’s nest”. This use of a word in parentheses, telling the interpreter how to display the following object’s internal ID, is called a **print rule**.

- There’s a library variable *self* which always contains the internal ID of the current object, and is really convenient when using a *Class*. By using this variable in our *print_ret* statement, we ensure that the message contains the name of the appropriate object.
Let’s see an example of this in action; here’s a `Prop` object from “William Tell”:

```plaintext
Prop  "south gate" street
    with name 'south' 'southern' 'wooden' 'gate',
    description "The large wooden gate in the town walls is wide open."
... 
```

If players type EXAMINE GATE, they’ll see “The large wooden gate...”; if they type CLOSE GATE then the gate’s `before` property will step in and display “You don’t need to worry about the south gate”, neatly picking up the name of the object from the `self` variable.

The reason for doing all this, rather than just creating a simple scenery object like Heidi’s tree and cottage, is to support EXAMINE for increased realism, while clearly hinting to players that trying other verbs would be a waste of time.

### A class for furniture

The last class for now – we’ll talk about the `Arrow` and `NPC` classes in the next chapter – is for furniture-like objects. If you label an object with the `static` attribute, an attempt to TAKE it results in “That’s fixed in place” – acceptable in the case of Heidi’s branch object (which is indeed supposed to be part of the tree), less so for items which are simply large and heavy. This `Furniture` class might sometimes be more appropriate:

```plaintext
Class Furniture
    with before [;
        Take,Pull,Push,PushDir:
            print_ret (The) self, " is too heavy for that.";
    ],
    has static supporter;
```

Its structure is similar to that of our `Prop` class: some appropriate attributes, and a `before` property to trap actions directed at it. Again, we display a message which is “personalised” for the object concerned by using a `(The) self` print rule. This time we’re intercepting four actions; we `could` have written the property like this:

```plaintext
before [;
    Take: print_ret (The) self, " is too heavy for that.";
    Pull: print_ret (The) self, " is too heavy for that.";
    Push: print_ret (The) self, " is too heavy for that.";
    PushDir: print_ret (The) self, " is too heavy for that.";
],
```

but since we’re giving exactly the same response each time, it’s better to put all of those actions into one list, separated by commas. `PushDir`, if you were wondering, is the action triggered by a command like PUSH THE TABLE NORTH.

Incidentally, another bonus of defining classes like these is that you can probably reuse them in your next game.
Now that most of our class definitions are in place, we can get on with defining some real rooms and objects. First, though, if you’re typing in the “William Tell” game as you read through the guide, you’d probably like to check that what you’ve entered so far is correct; “Compile-as-you-go” on page 233 explains how to compile the game in its current – incomplete – state.
7 • William Tell: the early years

M was a miser, and hoarded up gold;
N was a nobleman, gallant and bold.

Moving along swiftly, we’ll define the first two rooms and populate them with assorted townspeople and street furniture, we’ll equip Wilhelm with his trusty bow and quiver of arrows, and we’ll introduce Helga the friendly stallholder.

Defining the street

This is the street room, the location where the game starts:

```
Room street "A street in Altdorf"
with description [;
  print "The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult."
  if (self hasn't visited)
    print "^~Stay close to me, son,~ you say, ~or you'll get lost among all these people.~^";
],
  n_to below_square,
  s_to "The crowd, pressing north towards the square, makes that impossible."
];
```

We’re using our new Room class, so there’s no need for a light attribute. The n_to and s_to properties, whose values are an internal ID and a string respectively, are techniques we’ve used before. The only innovation is that the description property has an embedded routine as its value.

The first thing in that routine is a print statement, displaying details of the street surroundings. If that was all that we wanted to do, we could have supplied those details by making the description value a string; that is, these two examples behave identically:

```
description [;
  print "The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult."
],
```

TYP
The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult.

However, that isn’t all that we want to do. Having presented the basic description, we’re going to display that little line of dialogue, where Wilhelm tells his son to be careful. And we want to do that only once, the very first time that the street’s description is displayed. If the player types LOOK a few times, or moves north and then returns south to the street, we’re happy to see the surroundings described – but we don’t want that dialogue again. This is the pair of statements that makes it happen:

```python
if (self hasnt visited)
    print "^~Stay close to me, son,~ you say,
    ~or you’ll get lost among all these people.~^";
```

The line of dialogue is produced by the `print` statement, the `print` statement is controlled by the `if` statement, and the `if` statement is performing the test `self hasnt visited`. In detail:

- `visited` is an attribute, but not one that you’d normally give to an object yourself. It’s automatically applied to a room object by the interpreter, but only after that room has been visited for the first time by the player.
- `hasnt` (and `has`) are available for testing whether a given attribute is currently set for a given object. `X has Y` is true if object `X` currently has attribute `Y`, false if it doesn’t. To make the test in reverse, `X hasnt Y` is true if object `X` currently does not have attribute `Y`, false if it does.
- `self`, which we met in the previous chapter, is that useful variable which, within an object, always refers to that object. Since we’re using it in the middle of the `street` object, that’s what it refers to.

So, putting it all together, `self hasnt visited` is true (and therefore the `print` statement is executed) only while the `street` object has not got a `visited` attribute. Because the interpreter automatically gives rooms a `visited` attribute as soon as the player has been there once, this test will be true only for one turn. Therefore, the line of dialogue will be displayed only once: the first time the player visits the street, at the very start of the game.

Although the primary importance of `self` is within class definitions, it can also be convenient to use it simply within an object. Why didn’t we just write this?

```python
if (street hasnt visited)
    print "^~Stay close to me, son,~ you say,
    ~or you’ll get lost among all these people.~^";
```

It’s true that the effect is identical, but there are a couple of good reasons for using `self`. One: it’s an aid to understanding your code days or weeks after writing it.
If you read the line `if (street hasnt visited)`, you need to think for a moment about which object is being tested; oh, it’s this one. When you read `if (self hasnt visited)`, you immediately know which object we’re talking about.

Another reason is auto-plagiarism. Many times you’ll find that a chunk of code is useful in different situations (say, you want to repeat the mechanics of the street description in another room). Rather than writing everything from scratch, you’ll typically use copy-and-paste to repeat the routine, and then all you have to do is compose the appropriate descriptive strings for the new room. If you’ve used `self`, the line `if (self hasnt visited)` is still good; if you’ve written instead `if (street hasnt visited)`, you’ll have to change that as well. Worse, if you forget to change it, the game will still work – but not in the way you’d intended, and the resulting bug will be quite difficult to track down.

Adding some props

The street’s description mentions various items – the gate, the people, etc. – which ought to exist within the game (albeit only in minimal form) to sustain the illusion of hustle and bustle. Our `Prop` class is ideal for this:

```
Prop "south gate" street
  with name 'south' 'southern' 'wooden' 'gate',
  description "The large wooden gate in the town walls is wide open."

Prop "assorted stalls"
  with name 'assorted' 'stalls',
  description "Food, clothing, mountain gear; the usual stuff."
  found_in street below_square,
  has pluralname;

Prop "produce"
  with name 'goods' 'produce' 'food' 'clothing' 'mountain' 'gear' 'stuff',
  description "Nothing special catches your eye."
  found_in street below_square,
  has pluralname;

Prop "merchants"
  with name 'merchant' 'merchants' 'trader' 'traders',
  description "A few crooks, but mostly decent traders touting their wares with raucous overstatement."
  found_in street below_square,
  has animate pluralname;

Prop "local people"
  with name 'people' 'folk' 'local' 'crowd',
  description "Mountain folk, just like yourself."
  found_in [; return true; ],
  has animate pluralname;
```

NOTE: because these objects are not referenced by other objects, we haven’t bothered to given them internal `obj_ids` (though we could have; it wouldn’t make any difference). However, we have provided `external_names`, because these are used by the `Prop` class’s `print_ret` ... (the) `self` statement.
You’ll see a couple of new attributes: animate marks an object as being “alive”, while pluralname specifies that its external name is plural rather than singular. The interpreter uses these attributes to ensure that messages about such objects are grammatical and appropriate (for example, it will now refer to “some merchants” rather than “a merchants”). Because the library handles so many situations automatically, it’s hard to be sure exactly what messages players may trigger; the best approach is to play safe and always give an object the relevant set of attributes, even when, as here, they probably won’t be needed.

You’ll also see a new found_in property, which specifies the rooms – and only the rooms; found_in shouldn’t be used to place objects inside containers or supporters – where this object is to appear. The stalls, for example, can be EXAMINEd both in the street and below the square, so we could have created a Prop object in each room:

```
Prop "assorted stalls" street
with name 'assorted' 'stalls', 
  description "Food, clothing, mountain gear; the usual stuff.",
  has pluralname;
Prop "assorted stalls" below_square
with name 'assorted' 'stalls', 
  description "Food, clothing, mountain gear; the usual stuff.",
  has pluralname;
```

but found_in does the same job more neatly – there’s only one object, but it appears in both the street and below_square rooms while the player’s there.

The local people are even more ubiquitous. In this case the found_in value is an embedded routine rather than a list of rooms; such a routine would generally test the value of the current location and return true if it wants to be present here, or false if not. Since we’d like the local people always to be present, in every room, we return true without bothering to examine location. It’s as though we’d written any of these, but simpler and less error prone:

```
Prop "local people"
with name 'people' 'folk' 'local' 'crowd',
  description "Mountain folk, just like yourself.",
  found_in street below_square south_square mid_square north_square marketplace,
  has animate pluralname;
Prop "local people"
with name 'people' 'folk' 'local' 'crowd',
  description "Mountain folk, just like yourself.",
  found_in [;
    if (location == street  || location == below_square ||
      location == south_square || location == mid_square ||
      location == north_square || location == marketplace)
      return true;
    return false;
  ],
  has animate pluralname;
```
In the second example, you’ll see the `|` operator, to be read as “or”, which we mentioned near the end of “Heidi”; it combines the various comparisons so that the `if` statement is true if any of those individual tests is true. And in the third example we introduce the `or` keyword, which is a more succinct way of achieving exactly the same result.

The player’s possessions

Since our `Initialise` routine has already mentioned them, we might as well define Wilhelm’s bow and arrows:

```plaintext
Object bow "bow"
  with name 'bow',
  description "Your trusty yew bow, strung with flax.",
  before [;
    Drop,Give,ThrowAt:
      print_ret "You’re never without your trusty bow.";
  ],
  has clothing;

Object quiver "quiver"
  with name 'quiver',
  description "Made of goatskin, it usually hangs over your left shoulder.",
  before [;
    Drop,Give,ThrowAt:
      print_ret "But it was a present from Hedwig, your wife.";
  ],
  has container open clothing;
```

Both of these are straightforward objects, with the `Drop`, `Give` and `ThrowAt` actions being intercepted to ensure that Wilhelm is never without them. The `clothing` attribute makes its first appearance, marking both the quiver and the bow as capable of being worn (as the result of a `WEAR BOW` command, for instance); you’ll remember that our `Initialise` routine goes on to add a `worn` attribute to the quiver.

An empty quiver is pretty useless, so here’s the class used to define Wilhelm’s stock of arrows. This class has some unusual features:
The classes we’ve created so far — Room, Prop and Furniture — are intended for objects which behave the same but are otherwise clearly separate. For example, a table, a bed and a wardrobe would generally have their own individual characteristics — a name, a description, maybe some specialised properties — while still inheriting the general behaviour of Furniture objects. The arrows aren’t like this: not only do they behave the same, but also they are indistinguishable one from another. We’re trying for this effect:

```
>INVENTORY
You are carrying:
  a quiver (being worn)
  three arrows
  a bow
```

where the interpreter lumps together our stock of three arrows, rather than listing them individually in this clumsy fashion:

```
>INVENTORY
You are carrying:
  a quiver (being worn)
  an arrow
  an arrow
  an arrow
  a bow
```

The interpreter will do this for us if our objects are “indistinguishable”, best achieved by making them members of a class which includes both name and plural properties. We define the actual arrows very simply, like this:

```
Arrow "arrow" quiver;
Arrow "arrow" quiver;
Arrow "arrow" quiver;
```

and you can see that we provide only two pieces of information for each Arrow object: an external name in double quotes (“arrow” in each case) which the interpreter uses when referring to the object, and an initial location (in the quiver). That’s all: no block of properties, no set of attributes, and no internal identifier, because we never need to refer to the individual Arrow objects within the game.

The name property of the class definition has an odd-looking dictionary word:

```
name 'arrow' 'arrows//p',
```

The word ‘arrow’ refers to a single arrow. So also would the word ‘arrows’, unless we specifically tell the interpreter that it’s a plural reference. That //p marks
'arrows' as being a potential reference to more than one object at once, thus enabling players to type TAKE ARROWS and thereby pick up as many arrows as happened to be available (without it, TAKE ARROWS would have picked up one at random).

There are two other properties not seen previously:

```plaintext
article "an",
plural "arrows",
```

The article property lets you define the object's indefinite article – usually something like “a”, “an” or “some” – instead of letting the library assign one automatically. It's a belt-and-braces (OK, belt-and-suspenders) precaution: because “arrow” starts with a vowel, we need to display “an arrow” not “a arrow”. Most interpreters automatically get this right, but just to be on the safe side, we explicitly define the appropriate word. And the plural property defines the word to be used when lumping several of these objects together, as in the “three arrows” inventory listing. The interpreter can’t just automatically slap an “s” on the end; the plural of “slice of cake”, for example, isn’t “slice of cakes”.

**Moving further along the street**

As Wilhelm moves north towards the square, he comes to this room:

```
Room below_square "Further along the street"
with description
"People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.",
n_to south_square,
s_to street;
```

No surprises there, nor in most of the supporting scenery objects.

```
Furniture stall "fruit and vegetable stall" below_square
with name 'fruit' 'veg' 'vegetable' 'stall' 'table',
description
"It's really only a small table, with a big heap of potatoes, some carrots and turnips, and a few apples.",
before [; Search: <<Examine self>>; ],
has scenery;

Prop "potatoes" below_square
with name 'potato' 'potatoes' 'spuds',
description
"Must be a particularly early variety... by some 300 years!",
has pluralname;

Prop "fruit and vegetables" below_square
with name 'carrot' 'carrots' 'turnip' 'turnips' 'apples' 'vegetables',
description "Fine locally grown produce.",
has pluralname;
```

The only new thing here is the before property of the fruit’n’veg stall. The stall’s description – lots of items on a table – may suggest to players that they can
SEARCH through the produce, maybe finding a lucky beetroot or something else interesting. No such luck – and we might as well trap the attempt.

Having intercepted a Search action, our plan is to respond with the stall’s description, as though the player has typed EXAMINE THE STALL. There isn’t an easy way for us to stealthily slide those literal words into the interpreter, but we can simulate the effect which they’d cause: an action of Examine applied to the object stall. This rather cryptic statement does the job:

```plaintext
<Examine stall>
```

Having diverted the Search action into an Examine action, we must tell the interpreter that it doesn’t need to do anything else, because we’ve handled the action ourselves. We’ve done that before – using return true – and so a first stab at the before action looks like this:

```plaintext
before [; Search: <Examine stall>; return true; ]
```

The two-statement sequence <...>; return true is so common that there’s a single statement shortcut: <<<...>>>. Also, for exactly the same reason as before, our code is clearer if we use self instead of stall. So this is how the property finally stands:

```plaintext
before [; Search: <<<Examine self>>; ]
```

A couple of final observations before we leave this topic. The example here is of an action (Examine) applied to an object (self, though stall or noun would also work at this point). You can also use the <...> and <<<...>> statements for actions which affect no objects:

```plaintext
<<Look>>;
```

( representing the command LOOK), or which affect two. For example, the command PUT THE BIRD IN THE NEST can be simulated with this statement:

```plaintext
<<Insert bird nest>>;
```

### Introducing Helga

One of the trickiest aspects of designing a good game is to provide satisfying interaction with other characters. It’s hard enough to code inanimate objects which provoke appropriate responses to whatever actions the player character (PC) might attempt. That all gets much worse once those “other objects” are living creatures – non-player characters (NPCs) – with, supposedly, minds of their own. A good NPC might move around independently, perform actions with a purpose, initiate conversations, respond to what you say and do (and even to what you don’t say or do); it can be a real nightmare.

But not here: we’ve kept our three NPCs – Helga, Walter and the vogt – as simple as possible. Nevertheless, we can establish some fundamental principles; here’s the class upon which we base our NPCs:
The most important thing here is the `animate` attribute – that's what defines an object as an NPC, and causes the interpreter to treat it a little differently – for example, TAKE HELGA results in “I don’t suppose Helga would care for that”.

The `animate` attribute also brings into play nine extra actions which can be applied only to animate objects: `Answer`, `Ask`, `Order` and `Tell` are all associated with speech, and `Attack`, `Kiss`, `Show`, `ThrowAt` and `WakeOther` are associated with non-verbal interaction. Additionally, a new `life` property – very similar to before – can be defined to intercept them. Here we use it to trap speech-related commands such as `ASK HELGA ABOUT APPLE` and `TELL WALTER ABOUT BABIES`, telling players that in this game we’ve implemented only a simpler `TALK` verb (which we describe in “Verbs, verbs, verbs” on page 111).

Based on the NPC class we’ve created, here’s Helga:

```plaintext
NPC stallholder "Helga" below_square
with name 'stallholder' 'greengrocer' 'monger' 'shopkeeper' 'merchant'
'owner' 'Helga' 'dress' 'scarf' 'headscarf',
description
  "Helga is a plump, cheerful woman,
  concealed beneath a shapeless dress and a spotted headscarf.",
initial [];
  print "Helga pauses from sorting potatoes
to give you a cheery wave.^";
if (location hasnt visited) {
  move apple to player;
  print "^~Hello, Wilhelm, it’s a fine day for trade! Is this
young Walter? My, how he’s grown. Here’s an apple for him
-- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest’s good
enough. How’s Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes.^~";
}
], times_spoken_to 0,       ! for counting the conversation topics
talk [ ]
  self.times_spoken_to = self.times_spoken_to + 1;
  switch (self.times_spoken_to) {
    1: score = score + 1;
      print_ret "You warmly thank Helga for the apple.);
    2: print_ret "~See you again soon.~");
    default:
      return false;
  }
],
has female proper;
```

The new attributes are `female` – because we want the interpreter to refer to Helga with the appropriate pronouns – and `proper`. The latter signifies that this object’s external name is a proper noun, and so references to it should not be preceded
by “a” or “the”: you wouldn’t want to display “You can see a Helga here” or “I don’t suppose the Helga would care for that”. You may notice the library variable `score` being incremented. This variable holds the number of points that the player has scored; when it changes like this, the interpreter tells the player that “Your score has just gone up by one point”.

There are also `life` and `times_spoken_to` properties (which we’ll talk about in “William Tell: the end is nigh” on page 103) and an initial property.

`initial` is used when the interpreter is describing a room and listing the objects you can see there. If we didn’t define it, you’d get this:

```
Further along the street
People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.

You can see Helga here.

> 
```

but we want to introduce Helga in a more interactive manner, and that’s what the initial property is for: it replaces the standard “You can see object here” with a tailored message of your own design. The value of an initial property can be either a string which is to be displayed or, as here, an embedded routine. This one is pretty similar to the description property that we defined for the street: something that’s always printed (Helga pauses...) and something that’s printed only on the first occasion (“Hello, Wilhelm, it’s a fine day... ”):

```
Further along the street
People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.

Helga pauses from sorting potatoes to give you a cheery wave.

"Hello, Wilhelm, it's a fine day for trade! Is this young Walter? My, how he's grown. Here's an apple for him -- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest's good enough. How's Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes."

> 
```

But it’s not quite the same as the street’s description routine. First, we need a slightly different if test: `self hasnt visited` works fine for a room object, but this routine is part of an object in a room; instead we could use either `below_square hasnt visited` or (better) `location hasnt visited` – since `location` is the library variable that refers to the room where the player currently is. And second, some curly braces `{...}` have appeared: why?

On Wilhelm’s first visit to this room, we need to do two things:

- ensure that Wilhelm is in possession of an apple, because that’s mentioned when we...
• display Helga’s cheery greeting.

The move statement does the first of those, and the print statement does the second. And both statements need to be controlled by the if statement.

So far, we’ve used an if statement twice, in both cases to control a single following statement.

```plaintext
if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2;
if (self hasn’t visited)
  print "^~Stay close to me, son,~ you say,
  ~or you’ll get lost among all these people.~^";
```

That’s what an if does – it controls whether the following statement is executed or not. So how can we control two statements at once? Well, we could write two if statements:

```plaintext
if (location hasn’t visited)
  move apple to player;
if (location hasn’t visited)
  print "^~Hello, Wilhelm, it’s a fine day for trade! Is this
  young Walter? My, how he’s grown. Here’s an apple for him
  -- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest’s good
  enough. How’s Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes.~^";
```

but that’s unbearably clumsy; instead, we use the braces to group the move and print statement into a statement block (sometimes known as a code block) which counts as a single statement for the purposes of control by the if statement.

```plaintext
if (location hasn’t visited) {
  move apple to player;
  print "^~Hello, Wilhelm, it’s a fine day for trade! Is this
  young Walter? My, how he’s grown. Here’s an apple for him
  -- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest’s good
  enough. How’s Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes.~^";
}
```

A statement block can contain one, two, ten, a hundred statements; it doesn’t matter – they’re all treated as one unit by if (and by objectloop, which we meet later, and by do, for and while, all of them loop statements that we don’t encounter in this guide).

NOTE: the exact positioning of the braces is a matter of personal choice. We use this style:

```plaintext
if (condition) {
  statement;
  statement;
  ...
}
```

but other designers have their own preferences, including:
if (condition) {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
}

if (condition) {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
}

if (condition) {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
}

Although we’ve not yet needed to use it, now would probably be a good time to mention the else extension to the if statement. Sometimes we want to execute one statement block if a certain condition is true, and a different statement block if it’s not true. Again, we could write two if statements:

if (location has visited) {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
}

if (location hasn’t visited) {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
}

but that’s hardly an elegant approach; an else clause does the job more neatly:

if (location has visited) {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
} else {
    statement;
    statement;
    ...
}

We’ve done a lot of scene-setting, but the real action is still to come. Next, it’s time to define the town square, and create a confrontation between Wilhelm and the vogt’s soldiers. (But first, see again “Compile-as-you-go” on page 233 if you’re typing in the game as you read through the guide.)
8 • William Tell: in his prime

O was an oyster girl, and went about town;
P was a parson, and wore a black gown.

Our game’s action nears its climax in the town’s central square. In this chapter we define the square’s constituent rooms and deal with Wilhelm’s approach to the hat on the pole – does he salute it, or does he remain proudly defiant?

The south side of the square

The town square, notionally one enormous open space, is represented by three rooms. Here’s the south side:

```plaintext
Room south_square "South side of the square"
    with description
        "The narrow street to the south has opened onto the town square,
        and resumes at the far side of this cobbled meeting place.
        To continue along the street towards your destination --
        Johansson's tannery -- you must walk north across the square,
        in the middle of which you see Gessler's hat set on that
        loathsome pole. If you go on, there's no way you can avoid
        passing it. Imperial soldiers jostle rudely through the throng,
        pushing, kicking and swearing loudly."
    n_to mid_square,
    s_to below_square;

Prop "hat on a pole"
    with name 'hat' 'pole',
    before [;
        default:
            print_ret "You're too far away at the moment."
        ],
    found_in south_square north_square;

Prop "Gessler's soldiers"
    with name 'soldier' 'soldiers' 'guard' 'guards',
    description "They're uncouth, violent men, not from around here."
    before [;
        FireAt:
            print_ret "You're outnumbered many times."
        Talk:
            print_ret "Such scum are beneath your contempt."
    ],
    found_in south_square mid_square north_square marketplace,
    has animate pluralname proper;
```

It’s all pretty standard stuff: just a Room and two Props. The “real” pole object is located in the mid_square room, which means that players can’t EXAMINE it from this room (technically, it’s “not in scope”). However, since we’re pretending that Wilhelm can see the whole of the square from where he’s standing, we need to
provide a dummy hat on a pole, found_in both this room and the north side of the square, even if it’s “too far away” for a detailed description.

In fact, it’s “too far away” for anything. We’ve replaced the standard before action for the Prop class (which permits Examine, but rejects other actions with “You don’t need to worry about...”) with one rejecting all actions. Since Wilhelm’s hatred of the vogt’s activities is central to our plot, a message saying “You don’t need to worry about the hat” would be unacceptably misleading.

The obnoxious soldiers are also implemented very sketchily; they need to be there, but they don’t do much. Their most interesting characteristic is probably that they trap two actions – FireAt and Talk – which are not part of the library, but instead new actions that we’ve defined specially for this game. We’ll talk about those actions in “Verbs, verbs, verbs” on page 111, at which time the role of this before property will make more sense.

The middle of the square

The activities here are pivotal to the game’s plot. Wilhelm has arrived from the south side of the square, and now encounters the pole with the hat on top. He can do three things:

1. Return south. That’s allowed, but all it does is waste a little time – there’s nothing else to usefully do south of here.
2. Salute the pole, and then proceed to the north. That’s allowed, though it rather subverts the folk story.
3. Attempt to proceed northwards without saluting the pole. Twice, a soldier will prevent this, and issue a verbal warning. On the third attempt, patience runs out, and Wilhelm is hauled off to perform his party piece.

So, there are two actions that we need to look out for: Salute (trapped by the pole), and Go (which can be trapped by the room itself). Go is a standard library action. Salute is one that we’ve devised; let’s deal with it first. Here’s a first cut of the room:

```plaintext
Room mid_square "Middle of the square"
with description
"There is less of a crush in the middle of the square; most people prefer to keep as far away as possible from the pole which towers here, topped with that absurd ceremonial hat. A group of soldiers stands nearby, watching everyone who passes.",
n_to north_square,
s_to south_square;
```

and the pole:

The pole, the trunk of a small pine some few inches in diameter, stands about nine or ten feet high. Set carefully on top is Gessler’s ludicrous black and red leather hat, with a widely curving brim and a cluster of dyed goose feathers.

No, of course not. `has_been_saluted` isn’t a standard library property; it’s one that we’ve just invented. Notice how easily we did it – we simply included the line:

```python
has_been_saluted false,
```

in the object definition and voilà, we’ve added our own home-made property, and initialised it to `false`. To switch the state of the property, we can simply write:

```python
pole.has_been_saluted = true;
pole.has_been_saluted = false;
```

or just (within the `pole` object):

```python
self.has_been_saluted = true;
selh.has_been_saluted = false;
```

We could also test, if necessary, how the property currently fares:

```python
if (pole.has_been_saluted == true) ...
```

and that is exactly what we’ll be doing in a minute to check whether Wilhelm has saluted the pole, and choose between different outcomes.
Notice that we use `==` (that’s two equals signs) to test for “is equal to”; don’t confuse this usage with `=` (a single equals sign) which assigns a value to a variable. Compare these examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>score = 10;</code></td>
<td><code>score == 10;</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assigns the value 10 to <code>score</code>.</td>
<td>does nothing; <code>score</code> is unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>if (score == 10) ...</code></td>
<td><code>if (score = 10) ...</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>executes the next statement</td>
<td>assigns 10 to <code>score</code>, then always executes the next statement – because <code>score = 10</code> evaluates to 10, which is treated as true, so the test is always true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only if the value of <code>score</code></td>
<td>is 10.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defining a new property variable which, instead of applying to every object in the game (as do the standard library properties), is specific only to a class of objects or even – as here – to a single object, is a common and powerful technique. In this game, we need a `true/false` variable to show whether Wilhelm has saluted the pole or not: the clearest way is to create one as part of the pole. So, when the pole object traps the `Salute` action, we do two things: use a `self.has_been_saluted = true` statement to record the fact, and then use a `print_ret` statement to tell players that the salute was “gratefully” received.

NOTE: creating new property variables like this – at the drop of a hat, as it were – is the recommended approach, but it isn’t the only possibility. We briefly mention some alternative approaches in “Reading other people’s code” on page 181.

Back to the `mid_square` room. We’ve said that we need to detect Wilhelm trying to leave this room, which we can do by trapping the `Go` action in a `before` property. Let’s sketch the coding we’ll need:

```plaintext
before [];  
  Go:    
    if (noun == s_obj) { Wilhelm is trying to move south }  
    if (noun == n_obj) { Wilhelm is trying to move north }  

```

We can easily trap the `Go` action, but which direction is he moving? Well, it turns out that the interpreter turns a command of `GO SOUTH` (or just `SOUTH`) into an action of `Go` applied to an object `s_obj`. This object is defined by the library; so why isn’t it called just “south”? Well, because we already have another kind of south, the property `s_to` used to say what lies in a southerly direction when defining a room. To avoid confusing them, `s_to` means “south to” and `s_obj` means “south when the player types it as the object of a verb”.

The identity of the object which is the target of the current action is stored in the `noun` variable, so we can write the statement `if (noun == s_obj)` to test whether the contents of the `noun` variable are equal to the ID of the `s_obj` object – and, if so, Wilhelm is trying to move south. Another similar statement tests whether he’s
trying to move north, and that’s all that we’re interested in; we can let other movements take care of themselves.

The words *Wilhelm is trying to move south* aren’t part of our game; they’re just a temporary reminder that, if we need to execute any statements in this situation, here’s the place to put them. Actually, that’s the simpler case; it’s when *Wilhelm is trying to move north* that the fun starts. We need to behave in one of two ways, depending on whether or not he’s saluted the pole. But we *know* when he’s done that; the pole’s `has_been_saluted` property tells us. So we can expand our sketch like this:

```c
before [;
  Go:
    if (noun == s_obj)  { "Wilhelm is trying to move south [1]" }
    if (noun == n_obj)  { "Wilhelm is trying to move north...
      if (pole.has_been_saluted == true)
      { "...and he’s saluted the pole [2]" }
      else  { "...but he hasn’t saluted the pole [3]" }
    }
];
```

Here we have one `if` statement nested inside another. And there’s more: the inner `if` has an `else` clause, meaning that we can execute one statement block when the test `if (pole.has_been_saluted == true)` is true, and an alternative block when the test isn’t true. Read that again carefully, checking how the braces `{...}` pair up; it’s quite complex, and you need to understand what’s going on. One important point to remember is that, unless you insert braces to change this, an `else` clause always pairs with the most recent `if`. Compare these two examples:

```c
if (condition1) {
  if (condition2) { here when condition1 is true and condition2 is true }
  else  { here when condition1 is true and condition2 is false }
}

if (condition1) {
  if (condition2) { here when condition1 is true and condition2 is true }
}
else  { here when condition1 is false }
```

In the first example, the `else` pairs with the most recent `if (condition2)`, whereas in the second example the revised positioning of the braces causes the `else` to pair with the earlier `if (condition1).

**NOTE:** we’ve used indentation as a visual guide to how the `if` and `else` are related. Be careful, though; the compiler matches an `else` to its `if` purely on the basis of logical grouping, regardless of how you’ve laid out the code.

Back to the `before` property. You should be able to see that the cases marked [1], [2] and [3] correspond to the three possible courses of action we listed at the start of this section. Let’s write the code for those, one at a time.
Case 1: Returning south

First, Wilhelm is trying to move south; not very much to this:

```javascript
warnings_count 0;  // for counting the soldier's warnings
before [];
Go:
    if (noun == s_obj) {
        self.warnings_count = 0;
pole.has_been_saluted = false;
    }
    if (noun == n_obj) {
        if (pole.has_been_saluted == true)
            { moving north...and he's saluted the pole }
        else  { moving north...but he hasn't saluted the pole }
    }
];
```

Wilhelm might wander into the middle of the square, take one look at the pole and promptly return south. Or, he might make one or two (but not three) attempts to move north first, and then head south. Or, he might be really perverse, salute the pole and only then head south. In all of these cases, we take him back to square one, as though he’d received no soldier’s warnings (irrespective of how many he’d actually had) and as though the pole had not been saluted (irrespective of whether it was or not). In effect, we’re pretending that the soldier has such a short memory, he’ll completely forget Wilhelm if our hero should move away from the pole.

To do all this, we’ve added a new property and two statements. The property is `warnings_count`, and its value will count how many times Wilhelm has tried to go north without saluting the pole: 0 initially, 1 after his first warning, 2 after his second warning, 3 when the soldier’s patience finally runs out. The property `warnings_count` isn’t a standard library property; like the pole’s `has_been_saluted` property, it’s one that we’ve created to meet a specific need.

Our first statement is `self.warnings_count = 0`, which resets the value of the `warnings_count` property of the current object – the mid_square room – to 0. The second statement is `pole.has_been_saluted = false`, which signifies that the pole has not be saluted. That’s it: the soldier’s memory is erased, and Wilhelm’s actions are forgotten.
Case 2: Moving north after saluting

Wilhelm is moving north...and he's saluted the pole; another easy one:

```python
warnings_count 0,   ! for counting the soldier's warnings
Go:
    if (noun == s_obj) {
        self.warnings_count = 0;
        pole.has_been_saluted = false;
    }
    if (noun == n_obj) {
        if (pole.has_been_saluted == true) {
            print "^~Be sure to have a nice day.^";
            return false;
        }
        else { moving north...but he hasn't saluted the pole }
    }
];
```

All that we need do is print a sarcastic goodbye from the soldier, and then return false. You'll remember that doing so tells the interpreter to continue handling the action, which in this case is an attempt to move north. Since this is a permitted connection, Wilhelm thus ends up in the north_square room, defined shortly.

Case 3: Moving north before saluting

So that just leaves the final case: moving north...but he hasn't saluted the pole. This one has more to it than the others, because we need the “three strikes and you’re out” coding. Let's sketch a little more:

```python
warnings_count 0,   ! for counting the soldier's warnings
Go:
    if (noun == s_obj) {
        self.warnings_count = 0;
        pole.has_been_saluted = false;
    }
    if (noun == n_obj) {
        if (pole.has_been_saluted == true) {
            print "^~Be sure to have a nice day.^";
            return false;
        }
        else {
            self.warnings_count = self.warnings_count + 1;
            switch (self.warnings_count) {
                1: First attempt at moving north
                2: Second attempt at moving north
                default: Final attempt at moving north
            }
        }
    }
];
```

First of all, we need to count how many times he’s tried to move north. `self.warnings_count` is the variable containing his current tally, so we add 1 to
whatever value it contains: self.warnings_count = self.warnings_count + 1. Then, determined by the value of the variable, we must decide what action to take: first attempt, second attempt, or final confrontation. We could have used three separate if statements:

```python
if (self.warnings_count == 1)  { First attempt at moving north }
if (self.warnings_count == 2)  { Second attempt at moving north }
if (self.warnings_count == 3)  { Final attempt at moving north }
```

or a couple of nested if statements:

```python
if (self.warnings_count == 1)  { First attempt at moving north }
else {
    if (self.warnings_count == 2) { Second attempt at moving north }
    else  { Final attempt at moving north }
}
```

but for a series of tests all involving the same variable, a switch statement is usually a clearer way of achieving the same effect. The generic syntax for a switch statement is:

```python
switch (expression) {
    value1: whatever happens when the expression evaluates to value1
    value2: whatever happens when the expression evaluates to value2
    ...
    valueN: whatever happens when the expression evaluates to valueN
    default: whatever happens when the expression evaluates to something else
}
```

This means that, according to the current value of an expression, we can get different outcomes. Remember that the expression may be a Global or local variable, an object’s property, one of the variables defined in the library, or any other expression capable of having more than one value. You could write switch (x) if x is a defined variable, or even, for instance, switch (x+y) if both x and y are defined variables. Those whatever happens when... are collections of statements which implement the desired effect for a particular value of the switched variable.

Although a switch statement switch (expression) { ... } needs that one pair of braces, it doesn’t need braces around each of the individual “cases”, no matter how many statements each of them includes. As it happens, case 1 and case 2 contain only a single print_ret statement each, so we’ll move swiftly past them to the third, more interesting, case – when self.warnings_count is 3. Again, we could have written this:

```python
switch (self.warnings_count) {
    1: First attempt at moving north
    2: Second attempt at moving north
    3: Final attempt at moving north
}
```

but using the word default – meaning “any value not already catered for” – is better design practice; it’s less likely to produce misleading results if for some unforeseen reason the value of self.warnings_count isn’t the 1, 2 or 3 you’d
anticipated. Here’s the remainder of the code (with some of the printed text omitted):

```cpp
self.warnings_count = self.warnings_count + 1;
switch (self.warnings_count) {
    1: print_ret "...";
    2: print_ret "...";
    default:
        print "^~OK, ";
        style underline; print "Herr"; style roman;
        print " Tell, now you're in real trouble. I asked you ...
        old lime tree growing in the marketplace.^";
        move apple to son;
        PlayerTo(marketplace);
        return true;
}
```

The first part is really just displaying a lot of text, made slightly messier because we’re adding emphasis to the word “Herr” by using underlining (which actually comes out as italic type on most interpreters). Then, we make sure that Walter has the apple (just in case we didn’t give it to him earlier in the game), relocate to the final room using `PlayerTo(marketplace)`, and finally return true to tell the interpreter that we’ve handled this part of the `Go` action ourselves.

And so, at long last, here’s the complete code for the `mid_square`, the most complicated object in the whole game:
Room mid_square "Middle of the square"  
with description

"There is less of a crush in the middle of the square; most people prefer to keep as far away as possible from the pole which towers here, topped with that absurd ceremonial hat. A group of soldiers stands nearby, watching everyone who passes."

n_to north_square,
s_to south_square,
warnings_count 0,  ! for counting the soldier's warnings before [;

Go:

if (noun == s_obj) {
    self.warnings_count = 0;
pole.has_been_saluted = false;
}
if (noun == n_obj) {
    if (pole.has_been_saluted == true) {
        print "^~Be sure to have a nice day.~^";
        return false;
    }  ! end of (pole has_been_saluted)
else {
    self.warnings_count = self.warnings_count + 1;
    switch (self.warnings_count) {
        1: print_ret "A soldier bars your way. ^^
            ~Oi, you, lofty; forgot yer manners, didn't you?
            How's about a nice salute for the vogt's hat?~";
        2: print_ret "^~I know you, Tell, yer a troublemaker,
            ain't you? Well, we don't want no bovver here,
            so just be a good boy and salute the friggin' hat. Do it now: I ain't gonna ask you again...~";
        default:
            print "^~OK, ~;"
            style underline; print "Herr"; style roman;
            print " Tell, now you're in real trouble. I asked you nice, but you was too proud and too stupid. I think it's time that the vogt had a little word with you.~
            ^^"

            And with that the soldiers seize you and Walter and, while the sergeant hurries off to fetch Gessler, the rest drag you roughly towards the old lime tree growing in the marketplace.^";

            move apple to son;
            PlayerTo(marketplace);
            return true;
    }  ! end of switch
}  ! end of (pole has_NOT_been_saluted)
}  ! end of (noun == n_obj)
]
The north side of the square

The only way to get here is by saluting the pole and then moving north; not very likely, but good game design is about predicting the unpredictable.

```plaintext
Room north_square "North side of the square"
with description
  "A narrow street leads north from the cobbled square. In its
centre, a little way south, you catch a last glimpse of the pole
and hat."

n_to [;
  deadflag = 3;
  print_ret "With Walter at your side, you leave the square by the
  north street, heading for Johansson's tannery."
],
s_to "You hardly feel like going through all that again."
```

There’s one new feature in this room: the value of the n_to property is a routine, which the interpreter runs when Wilhelm tries to exit the square northwards. All that the routine does is set the value of the library variable deadflag to 3, print a confirmation message, and return true, thus ending the action.

At this point, the interpreter notices that deadflag is no longer zero, and terminates the game. In fact, the interpreter checks deadflag at the end of every turn; these are the values that it’s expecting to find:

- **0** – this is the normal state; the game continues.
- **1** – the game is over. The interpreter displays “You have died”.
- **2** – the game is over. The interpreter displays “You have won”.
- any other value – the game is over, but there aren’t any appropriate messages built into the library. Instead, the interpreter looks for an entry point routine called DeathMessage – which we must provide – where we can define our own tailored “end messages”.

In this game, we never set deadflag to 1, but we do use values of 2 and 3. So we’d better define a DeathMessage routine to tell players what they’ve done:

```plaintext
[ DeathMessage; print "You have screwed up a favourite folk story"; ];
```

Our game has only one customised ending, so the simple DeathMessage routine we’ve written is sufficient for our purposes. Were you to conceive multiple endings for a game, you could specify suitable messages by checking for the current value of the deadflag variable:

```plaintext
[ DeathMessage;
  if (deadflag == 3) print "You leave Scarlett O'Hara for good";
  if (deadflag == 4) print "You crush Scarlett with a passionate embrace";
  if (deadflag == 5) print "You've managed to divorce Scarlett";
  ...
];
```
Of course, you must assign the appropriate value to \texttt{deadflag} at the point when the game arrives at each of those possible endings.

We’ve nearly finished. In the concluding chapter of this game, we’ll talk about the fateful shooting of the arrow.
9 • William Tell: the end is nigh

Q was a queen, who wore a silk slip;
R was a robber, and wanted a whip.

Quite a few objects still remain undefined, so we’ll talk about them first. Then, we’ll explain how to make additions to Inform’s standard repertoire of verbs, and how to define the actions which those verbs trigger.

The marketplace

The marketplace room is unremarkable, and the tree growing there has only one feature of interest:

```
Room  marketplace  "Marketplace near the square"
    with  description
        "Altдорf’s marketplace, close by the town square, has been hastily cleared of stalls. A troop of soldiers has pushed back the crowd to leave a clear space in front of the lime tree, which has been growing here for as long as anybody can remember. Usually it provides shade for the old men of the town, who gather below to gossip, watch the girls, and play cards. Today, though, it stands alone... apart, that is, from Walter, who has been lashed to the trunk. About forty yards away, you are restrained by two of the vogt’s men."
    cant_go  "What? And leave your son tied up here?"

Object  tree  "lime tree"  marketplace
    with  name  'lime'  'tree',
    description  "It's just a large tree.",
    before  [
        FireAt:
            if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
                deadflag = 3;
                print_ret "Your hand shakes a little, and your arrow flies high, hitting the trunk a few inches above Walter's head.";
            }
        return true;
    ],
    has  scenery;
```

The tree’s before property is intercepting a FireAt action, which we’ll define in a few moments. This action is the result of a command like SHOOT AT TREE WITH BOW – we could simulate it with the statement «FireAt tree bow» – and it needs extra care to ensure that the second object is a feasible weapon. To deal with silly commands like SHOOT AT TREE WITH HELGA, we must test that second is the bow, one of the arrows, or nothing (from just SHOOT AT TREE). Since this is quite a complex test, and one that we’ll be making in several places, it’s sensible to write a routine to do the job. Which we’ll do shortly – but first, a general introduction to working with routines.
A diversion: working with routines

A standalone routine, like the familiar routines embedded as the value of a property such as before or each_turn, is simply a set of statements to be executed. The major differences are in content, in timing, and in the default return value:

- Whereas an embedded routine has to contain statements which do something appropriate for that associated property variable, a standalone routine can contain statements which do anything you wish. You have total freedom as to what the routine actually does and what value it returns.

- An embedded routine is called when the interpreter is dealing with that property of that object; you provide the routine, but you don’t directly control when it’s called. A standalone routine, however, is completely under your control; it runs only when you explicitly call it.

- If an embedded routine executes all of its statements and reaches the final ]; without encountering some form of return statement, it returns the value false. In the same circumstances, a standalone routine returns the value true. There’s a good reason for this difference – it usually turns out to be the natural default behaviour – but it can sometimes baffle newcomers. To avoid confusion, we’ve always included explicit return statements in our routines.

What this generally boils down to is: if you have a collection of statements which perform some specific task and you need to execute those same statements in more than one place in your game, then it often makes sense to turn those statements into a standalone routine. The advantages are: you write the statements only once, so any subsequent changes are easier to make; also, your game becomes simpler and easier to read. We’ll look at some simple examples; first consider these unexciting foodstuffs:

```dolmen
Object "stale ham sandwich"
with name 'stale' 'ham' 'sandwich',
  description "It doesn't look at all appetising.",
...

Object "elderly jam doughnut"
with name 'elderly' 'jam' 'jelly' 'doughnut' 'donut',
  description "It doesn't look at all appetising.",
...
```

The descriptions are identical: perhaps we could display them using a routine?

```dolmen
[ Inedible; print_ret "It doesn't look at all appetising."; ];

Object "stale ham sandwich"
with name 'stale' 'ham' 'sandwich',
  description [; Inedible(); ],
...

Object "elderly jam doughnut"
with name 'elderly' 'jam' 'jelly' 'doughnut' 'donut',
  description [; Inedible(); ],
...
```
This isn’t a very realistic approach – there are more elegant ways of avoiding typing the same string twice – but it works, and it illustrates how we can define a routine to do something useful, and then call it wherever we need to.

Here’s another simple example showing how, by returning a value, a routine can report back to the piece of code which called it. We’ve once or twice used the test if (self has visited) ...; we could create a routine which performs that same check and then returns true or false to indicate what it discovered:

```c
[ BeenHereBefore;
  if (self has visited) return true;
  else return false;
];
```

Then, we’d rewrite our test as if (BeenHereBefore() == true) ...; no shorter or quicker, but maybe more descriptive of what’s going on.

One more example of using routines. As well as testing if (self has visited) ... we’ve also tested if (location has visited) ... a few times, so we could write another routine to perform that check:

```c
[ BeenThereBefore;
  if (location has visited) return true;
  else return false;
];
```

However, the two routines are very similar; the only difference is the name of the variable – self or location – which is being checked. A better approach might be to rework our BeenHereBefore routine so that it does both jobs, but we somehow need to tell it which variable’s value is to be checked. That’s easy: we design the routine so that it expects an argument:

```c
[ BeenToBefore this_room;
  if (this_room has visited) return true;
  else return false;
];
```

Notice that the argument’s name is one that we’ve invented to be descriptive of its content; it doesn’t matter if we define it as “x”, “this_room” or “hubba_hubba”. Whatever its name, the argument acts as a placeholder for a value (here, one of the variables self or location) which we must supply when calling the routine:

```c
if (BeenToBefore(self) == true) ...
if (BeenToBefore(location) == true) ...
```

In the first line, we supply self as the routine’s argument. The routine doesn’t care where the argument came from; it just sees a value which it knows as this_room, and which it then uses to test for the visited attribute. On the second line we supply location as the argument, but the routine just sees another value in its this_room variable. this_room is called a local variable of the BeenToBefore routine, one that must be set to a suitable value each time that the routine is
called. In this example routine, the value needs to be a room object; we could also check an explicit named room:

```inform
if (BeenToBefore(mid_square) == true) ...
```

Remember that:

1. All routines terminate sooner or later, either because you explicitly write a `return`, `rtrue` or `rfalse` statement, or because execution reaches the `]` marking the routine’s end.

2. All routines return a value, which can be `true`, `false`, or any other number. This value is determined by the `return`, `rtrue` or `rfalse` statement, or by the `]` marking the routine’s end (in which case the default STEF rule applies: Standalone routines return `True`, Embedded routines return `False`). We gave this example of an embedded routine in “Adding some props” on page 81. The `return false` statement is redundant: we could remove it without affecting the routine’s behaviour, because the `]` acts like a `return false`:

```inform
found_in [;
    if (location == street or below_square or south_square or mid_square or north_square or marketplace) return true;
    return false;
],
```

On the other hand, just because a routine returns a value doesn’t mean you always have to use it; you can simply ignore the value if you want to. The `TooFarAway` routine that we showed you earlier in this chapter contains a `print_ret` statement and so always returns `true`, but we didn’t take any notice; the sole purpose of the routine was to display some text. Compare this with the `BeenToBefore` routine, which does nothing except return a value; if we’d ignored that, then calling the routine would have been a waste of time.

For some embedded routines, the value returned by the routine is important; for others it doesn’t matter. We’ve so far seen the following properties whose value can be an embedded routine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Return value is important</th>
<th>Return value doesn’t matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after [; ... ],</td>
<td>cant_go [; ... ],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before [; ... ],</td>
<td>description [; ... ],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>found_in [; ... ],</td>
<td>each_turn [; ... ],</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n_to [; ... ], et al</td>
<td>initial [; ... ],</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For full details on which library property values can be embedded routines, and which return values are significant, see “Object properties” on page 266 and Appendix §A2 of the *Inform Designer’s Manual.*
Return to the marketplace

After all that introduction, finally back to the FireAt action. We want to check on the characteristics of an object, possibly then displaying a message. We don’t know exactly which object is to be checked, so we need to write our routine in a generalised way, capable of checking any object which we choose; that is, we’ll supply the object to be checked as an argument. Here’s the routine:

```java
[ BowOrArrow o;
  if (o == bow or nothing || o ofclass Arrow) return true;
  print "That’s an unlikely weapon, isn’t it?";
  return false;
];
```

The routine is designed to inspect any object which is passed to it as its argument o; that is, we could call the routine like this:

```java
BowOrArrow(stallholder)
BowOrArrow(tree)
BowOrArrow(bow)
```

Given the bow object, or any object which we defined as class Arrow, it will silently return true to signify agreement that this object can be fired. However, given an object like Helga, the apple or the tree, it will print a message and return false to signify that this object is not a suitable weapon. The test that we make is:

```java
if (o == bow or nothing || o ofclass Arrow) ...
```

which is merely a slightly shorter way of saying this:

```java
if (o == bow || o == nothing || o ofclass Arrow) ...
```

The result is that we ask three questions: Is o the bow object? Or is it nothing? Or, using the ofclass test, is it any object which is a member of the Arrow class?

What this means is that the value returned by the call BowOrArrow(bow) is true, while the value returned by the call BowOrArrow(tree) is false. Or, more generally, the value returned by the call BowOrArrow(second) will be either true or false, depending on the characteristics of the object defined by the value of the variable second. So, we can write this set of statements in an object’s before property:

```java
if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
  This object deals with having an arrow fired at it
}
return true;
```

and the effect is either

- second is a weapon: BowOrArrow displays nothing and returns a value of true, the if statement reacts to that value and executes the following statements to produce an appropriate response to the fast-approaching arrow; or
- second isn’t a weapon: BowOrArrow displays a standard “don’t be silly” message and returns a value of false, the if statement reacts to that value and ignores the following statements. Then
in both cases, the `return true` statement terminates the object’s interception of the `FireAt` action.

That whole `BowOrArrow()` bit was rather complex, but the rest of the `FireAt` action is straightforward. Once the tree has determined that it’s being shot at by something sensible, it can just set `deadflag` to 3 – the “You have screwed up” ending, display a message, and be done.

**Gessler the governor**

There’s nothing in Gessler’s definition that we haven’t already encountered:

```
NPC governor "governor" marketplace
with name 'governor' 'vogt' 'Hermann' 'Gessler',
description
"Short, stout but with a thin, mean face, Gessler relishes the
power he holds over the local community."
initial [];
print "Gessler is watching from a safe distance,
a sneer on his face."
if (location hasnt visited)
  print_ret "^-It appears that you need to be taught a lesson,
  fool. Nobody shall pass through the square without paying
  homage to His Imperial Highness Albert; nobody, hear me?
  I could have you beheaded for treason, but I’m going to
  be lenient. If you should be so foolish again, you can
  expect no mercy, but this time, I’ll let you go free...
  just as soon as you demonstrate your archery skills by
  hitting this apple from where you stand. That shouldn’t
  prove too difficult; here, sergeant, catch. Balance it on
  the little bastard’s head.-";
],
life [];
Talk:
  print_ret "You cannot bring yourself to speak to him."
],
before [];
FireAt:
  if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
    deadflag = 3;
    print_ret "Before the startled soldiers can react, you turn
    and fire at Gessler; your arrow pierces his heart,
    and he dies messily. A gasp, and then a cheer,
    goes up from the crowd."
  }
return true;
],
has male;
```

Like most NPCs, Gessler has a `life` property which deals with actions applicable only to animate objects. This one responds merely to `Talk` (as in TALK TO THE GOVERNOR).
Walter and the apple

Since he’s been with you throughout, it’s really about time we defined Walter:

```plaintext
NPC
  son "your son"
  with name 'son' 'your' 'boy' 'lad' 'Walter',
    description [];
    if (location == marketplace)
      print_ret "He stares at you, trying to appear brave and
                remain still. His arms are pulled back and tied behind
                the trunk, and the apple nestles amid his blond hair."
    else
      print_ret "A quiet, blond lad of eight summers, he’s fast
                learning the ways of mountain folk."
  ];
  life [];
  Give:
    score = score + 1;
    move noun to self;
    print_ret "~Thank you, Papa.~"
  Talk:
    if (location == marketplace)
      print_ret "~Stay calm, my son, and trust in God.~"
    else
      print_ret "You point out a few interesting sights."
  ];
  before [;
  Examine, Listen, Salute, Talk:
    return false;
  FireAt:
    if (location == marketplace) {
      if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
        deadflag = 3;
        print_ret "Oops! Surely you didn't mean to do that?"
      }
      return true;
    }
    else
      return false;
  default:
    if (location == marketplace)
      print_ret "Your guards won't permit it."
    else
      return false;
  },
  found_in []; return true; ],
has male proper scenery transparent;
```

His attributes are male (he’s your son, after all), proper (so the interpreter doesn’t mention “the your son”), scenery (so he’s not listed in every room description), and transparent (because you see right through him). No, that’s wrong: a transparent object isn’t made of glass; it’s one whose possessions are visible to you. We’ve done that because we’d still like to be able to EXAMINE APPLE even when Walter is carrying it. Without the transparent attribute, it would be as though the apple was in his pocket or otherwise out of sight; the interpreter would reply “You can’t see any such thing”.

Walter has a found_in property which automatically moves him to the player’s location on each turn. We can get away with this because in such a short and simple game, he does indeed follow you everywhere. In a more realistic model world, NPCs often move around independently, but we don’t need such complexity here.

Several of Walter’s properties test whether (location == marketplace); that is, is the player (and hence Walter) currently in that room? The events in the marketplace are such that specialised responses are more appropriate there than our standard ones.

Walter’s life property responds to Give (as in GIVE APPLE TO WALTER) and Talk (as in TALK TO YOUR SON); during Give, we increment the library variable score, thus rewarding the player’s generous good nature. His before property is perhaps a little confusing. It’s saying:

1. The Examine, Listen, Salute and Talk actions are always available (a Talk action then gets passed to Walter’s life property).
2. The FireAt action is permitted in the marketplace, albeit with unfortunate results. Elsewhere, it triggers the standard FireAt response of “Unthinkable!”
3. All other actions are prevented in the marketplace, and allowed to run their standard course (thanks to the return false) elsewhere.
The apple’s moment of glory has arrived! Its before property responds to the FireAt action by setting deadflag to 2. When that happens, the game is over; the player has won.

```inform
Object apple "apple"
    with name 'apple',
    description [:
        if (location == marketplace)
            print_ret "At this distance you can barely see it.";
        else
            print_ret "The apple is blotchy green and brown.";
    ],
    before [
        Drop:
            print_ret "An apple is worth quite a bit -- better hang on to it.";
        Eat:
            print_ret "Helga intended it for Walter...";
        FireAt:
            if (location == marketplace) {
                if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
                    score = score + 1;
                    deadflag = 2;
                    print_ret "Slowly and steadily, you place an arrow in
                    the bow, draw back the string, and take aim with
                    more care than ever in your life. Holding your
                    breath, unblinking, fearful, you release the
                    arrow. It flies across the square towards your
                    son, and drives the apple against the trunk of
                    the tree. The crowd erupts with joy;
                    Gessler looks distinctly disappointed.";
                }
                return true;
            }
            else
                return false;
    ];
```

And with that, we’ve defined all of the objects. In doing so, we’ve added a whole load of new nouns and adjectives to the game’s dictionary, but no verbs. That’s the final task.

**Verbs, verbs, verbs**

The Inform library delivers a standard set of nearly a hundred actions which players can perform; around twenty of those are “meta-actions” (like SAVE and QUIT) aimed at the interpreter itself, and the remainder operate within the model world. Having such a large starting set is a great blessing; it means that many of the actions which players might attempt are already catered for, either by the interpreter doing something useful, or by explaining why it’s unable to. Nevertheless, most games find the need to define additional actions, and “William Tell” is no exception. We’ll be adding four actions of our own: Untie, Salute (see page 113), FireAt (see page 115) and Talk (see page 116).
Untie

It’s not the most useful action, but it is the simplest. In the marketplace, when Walter is lashed to the tree, it’s possible that players might be tempted to try to UNTIE WALTER; unlikely, but as we’ve said before, anticipating the improbable is part of the craft of IF. For this, and for all new actions, two things are required. We need a grammar definition, spelling out the structure of the English sentences which we’re prepared to accept:

```
Verb 'untie' 'unfasten' 'unfix' 'free' 'release' *
   noun -> Untie;
```

and we need a routine to handle the action in the default situation (where the action isn’t intercepted by an object’s before property).

```
[ UntieSub; print_ret "You really shouldn’t try that."; ];
```

The grammar is less complex than it perhaps at first appears:

1. The English verbs UNTIE, UNFASTEN, UNFIX, FREE and RELEASE are synonymous.
2. The asterisk * indicates the start of a pattern defining what word(s) might follow the verb.
3. In this example, there’s only one pattern: the “noun” token represents an object which is currently in scope – in the same room as the player.
4. The -> indicates an action to be triggered.
5. If players type something that matches the pattern – one of those five verbs followed by an object in scope – the interpreter triggers an Untie action, which by default is handled by a routine having the same name as the action, with Sub appended. In this example, that’s the UntieSub routine.
6. The grammar is laid out this way just to make it easier to read. All those spaces aren’t important; we could equally have typed:

```
Verb 'untie' 'unfasten' 'unfix' 'free' 'release' * noun -> Untie;
```

We can illustrate how this works in the Altdorf street:

```
A street in Altdorf
The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult.

"Stay close to me, son," you say, "or you’ll get lost among all these people."

>UNTIE
What do you want to untie?

>UNFASTEN THE DOG
You can’t see any such thing.
```
The illustration shows four attempted usages of the new action. In the first, the player omits to mention an object; the interpreter knows (from that noun in the grammar which implies that the action needs a direct object) that something is missing, so it issues a helpful prompt. In the second, the player mentions an object that isn’t in scope (in fact, there’s no dog anywhere in the game, but the interpreter isn’t about to give that away to the player). In the third, the object is in scope, but its before property intercepts the Untie action (and indeed, since this object is of the class Prop, all actions apart from Examine) to display a customised rejection message. Finally, the fourth usage refers to an object which doesn’t intercept the action, so the interpreter calls the default action handler – UntieSub – which displays a general-purpose refusal to perform the action.

The principles presented here are those that you should generally employ: write a generic action handler which either refuses to do anything (see, for example SQUASH or HIT), or performs the action without affecting the state of the model world (see, for example, JUMP or WAVE); then, intercept that non-action (generally using a before property) for those objects which might make a legitimate target for the action, and instead provide a more specific response, either performing or rejecting the action.

In the case of Untie, there are no objects which can be untied in this game, so we always generate a refusal of some sort.

Salute

The next action is Salute, provided in case Wilhelm chooses to defer to the hat on the pole. Here’s the default action handler:

```
[ SaluteSub;
  if (noun has animate) print_ret (The) noun, " acknowledges you.";
  print_ret (The) noun, " takes no notice.";
];
```

You’ll notice that this is slightly more intelligent than our Untie handler, since it produces different responses depending on whether the object being saluted – stored in the noun variable – is animate or not. But it’s basically doing the same job. And here’s the grammar:

```
Verb 'bow' 'nod' 'kowtow' 'genuflect'
  * 'at'/'to'/'towards' noun -> Salute;
Verb 'salute' 'greet' 'acknowledge'
  * noun -> Salute;
```

This grammar says that:
1. The English verbs BOW, NOD, KOWTOW, GENUFLECT, SALUTE, GREET and ACKNOWLEDGE are synonymous.

2. The first four (but not the last three) can then be followed by any of the prepositions AT, TO or TOWARDS: words in apostrophes ‘…’ are matched literally, with the slash / separating alternatives.

3. After that comes the name of an object which is currently in scope – in the same room as the player.

4. If players type something that matches one of those patterns, the interpreter triggers a Salute action, which by default is dealt with by the SaluteSub routine.

So, we’re allowing BOW AT HAT and KOWTOW TOWARDS HAT, but not simply NOD HAT. We’re allowing SALUTE HAT but not GREET TO HAT. It’s not perfect, but it’s a fair attempt at defining some new verbs to handle salutation.

But suppose that we think of still other ways in which players might attempt this (remember, they don’t know which verbs we’ve defined; they’re just stabbing in the dark, trying out things that seem as though they ought to work). How about PAY HOMAGE TO HAT, or maybe WAVE AT HAT? They sound pretty reasonable, don’t they? Except that, if we’d written:

```
Verb 'bow' 'nod' 'kowtow' 'genuflect' 'wave'
   * 'at'/'to'/towards' noun  -> Salute;
```

we’d have caused a compilation error: two different verb definitions refer to “wave”. Grammar.h, one of the library files whose contents a beginner might find useful to study, contains these lines:

```
Verb 'give' 'pay' 'offer' 'feed'
   * held 'to' creature       -> Give
   * creature held            -> Give reverse
   * 'over' held 'to' creature -> Give;

Verb 'wave'
   * noun                     -> Wave;
```

The problem is that the verbs PAY and WAVE are already defined by the library, and Inform’s rule is that a verb can appear in only one Verb definition. The wrong solution: edit Grammar.h to physically add lines to the existing definitions (it’s almost never a good idea to make changes to the standard library files). The right solution: use Extend to logically add those lines. If we write this in our source file:

```
Extend 'give'
   * 'homage' 'to' noun       -> Salute;

Extend 'wave'
   * 'at' noun                -> Salute;
```

then the effect is exactly as if we’d edited Grammar.h to read like this:
and now players can PAY (or GIVE, or OFFER) HOMAGE to any object. (Because GIVE, PAY, OFFER and FEED are defined as synonyms, players can also FEED HOMAGE, but it’s unlikely that anybody will notice this minor aberration; players are usually too busy trying to figure out logical possibilities.)

FireAt

As usual, we’ll first show you the default handler for this action:

```
FireAtSub;
if (noun == nothing)
  print_ret "What, just fire off an arrow at random?";
if (BowOrArrow(second) == true)
  print_ret "Unthinkable!";
];
```

NOTE: some designers frown on the use of a rhetorical question like that, since it may provoke a reply from the player. Admittedly the default response from YES and NO covers the situation, but it might be better design practice to reword the message as a statement rather than a question.

Here is the associated grammar:

```
Verb 'fire' 'shoot' 'aim'
  * noun -> FireAt
  * 'at' noun -> FireAt
  * 'at' noun 'with' noun -> FireAt
  * noun 'with' noun -> FireAt
  * noun 'at' noun -> FireAt reverse;
```

This is the most complex grammar that we’ll write, and the first one offering several different options for the words which follow the initial verb. The first line of grammar:

```
* -> FireAt
```

is going to let us type FIRE (or SHOOT, or AIM) by itself. The second line:

```
* noun -> FireAt
```

supports FIRE BOW or FIRE ARROW (or something less sensible like FIRE TREE). The third line:

```
* 'at' noun -> FireAt
```
accepts FIRE AT APPLE, FIRE AT TREE, and so on. Note that there’s only one semicolon in all of the grammar, right at the very end.

The first two statements in FireAtSub deal with the first line of grammar: FIRE (or SHOOT, or AIM) by itself. If the player types just that, both noun and second will contain nothing, so we reject the attempt with the “at random?” message. Otherwise, we’ve got at least a noun value, and possibly a second value also, so we make our standard check that second is something that can be fired, and then reject the attempt with the “Unthinkable!” message.

There are a couple of reasons why you might find this grammar a bit tricky. The first is that on some lines the word noun appears twice: you need to remember that in this context noun is a parsing token which matches any single object visible to the player. Thus, the line:

* 'at' noun 'with' noun  -> FireAt

is matching FIRE AT some_visible_target WITH some_visible_weapon; perhaps confusingly, the value of the target object is then stored in variable noun, and the value of the weapon object in variable second.

The second difficulty may be the final grammar line. Whereas on the preceding lines, the first noun matches a target object and the second noun, if present, matches a weapon object, that final line matches FIRE some_visible_weapon AT some_visible_target – the two objects are mentioned in the wrong sequence. If we did nothing, our FireAtSub would get pretty confused at this point, but we can swap the two objects back into the expected order by adding that reverse keyword at the end of the line, and then FireAtSub will work the same in all cases.

Before leaving the FireAt action, we’ll add one more piece of grammar:

```
Extend 'attack' replace
* noun  -> FireAt;
```

This uses the Extend directive which we’ve just met, this time with a replace keyword. The effect is to substitute the new grammar defined here for that contained in Grammar.h, so that ATTACK, KILL, MURDER and all the other violent synonyms now trigger our FireAt action instead of the Library’s standard Attack action. We’re doing this so that, in the Marketplace, KILL GESSLER and MURDER WALTER have the same unfortunate results as FIRE AT GESSLER and SHOOT WALTER.

Talk

The final action that we define – Talk – provides a simple system of canned conversation, a low-key replacement for the standard Answer, Ask and Tell actions. The default TalkSub handler is closely based on TellSub (defined in library file verblibm.h, should you be curious), and does three things:

1. Deals with TALK TO ME or TALK TO MYSELF.
2. Checks (a) whether the creature being talked to has a *life* property, (b) whether that property is prepared to process a *Talk* action, and (c) if the *Talk* processing returns `true`. If all three checks succeed then *TalkSub* need do nothing more; if one or more of them fails then *TalkSub* simply...

3. Displays a general “nothing to say” refusal to talk.

```plaintext
[ TalkSub;
  if (noun == player) print_ret "Nothing you hear surprises you."
  if (RunLife(noun,##Talk) ~= false) return;
  print_ret "At the moment, you can't think of anything to say."
];
```

**NOTE:** that second condition `(RunLife(noun,##Talk) ~= false)` is a bit of a stumbling block, since it uses `RunLife` – an undocumented internal library routine – to offer the *Talk* action to the NPC's *life* property. We’ve decided to use it in exactly the same way as the *Tell* action does, without worrying too much about how it works (though it looks as though `RunLife` returns some `true` value if the *life* property has intercepted the action, `false` if it hasn’t). The `~=` operator means “not equal to”.

The grammar is straightforward:

```plaintext
Verb 'talk' 't//' 'converse' 'chat' 'gossip'
  * 'to'/'with' creature   -> Talk
  * creature              -> Talk;
```

Notice the use of `t//` to define `T` as a synonym for `TALK`, another way to make life a little easier for the player. (Actually, doing this introduces a minor problem: if the player types just `T` then the library prompts “Whom do you want to *t* to?” The fix for this involves enhancing an internal library routine called `LanguageVerb` – not complex, but a little too heavy for our second game.)

Here’s the simplest *Talk* handler that we’ve seen – it’s from Gessler the governor. Any attempt to TALK TO GESSLER will provoke “You cannot bring yourself to speak to him”.

```plaintext
life [;
  Talk: print_ret "You cannot bring yourself to speak to him."
],
```

Walter’s *Talk* handler is only slightly more involved:

```plaintext
life [;
  Talk:
    if (location == marketplace)
      print_ret "~Stay calm, my son, and trust in God.~"
    print_ret "You point out a few interesting sights."
],
```

And Helga’s is the most sophisticated (though that isn’t saying much):
times_spoken_to 0, ! for counting the conversation topics
life [];
Talk:
    self.times_spoken_to = self.times_spoken_to + 1;
    switch (self.times_spoken_to) {
        1: score = score + 1;
        print_ret "You warmly thank Helga for the apple.";
        2: print_ret "~See you again soon.~";
        default:
            return false;
    }
],

This handler uses Helga’s times_spoken_to property – not a library property, it’s one that we invented, like the mid_square.warnings_count and pole.has_been_saluted properties – to keep track of what’s been said, permitting two snatches of conversation (and awarding a point) before falling back on the embarrassing silences implied by “You can’t think of anything to say”.

That’s the end of our little fable; you’ll find a transcript and the full source in “William Tell” story on page 219. And now, it’s time to meet – Captain Fate!
10 • Captain Fate: take 1

S was a sailor, and spent all he got;
T was a tinker, and mended a pot.

imple though they are, our two games have covered most of the basic functionality of Inform, providing enough solid ground underfoot for you to start creating simple stories. Even if some of what you’ve encountered doesn’t make sense yet, you should be able to browse a game’s source code and form a general understanding of what is going on.

We’ll now design a third game, to show you a few additional features and give you some more sample code to analyse. In “Heidi” we tried to make progress step by step, explaining every bit of code that went into the game as we laid the objects sequentially; in “William Tell” you’ll have noticed that we took a few necessary explanatory detours, as the concepts grew more interesting and complicated. Here we’ll organise the information in logical didactic chunks, defining some of the objects minimally at first and then adding complexity as need arises. Again, this means that you won’t be able to compile for testing purposes after the addition of every code snippet, so, if you’re typing in the game as you read, you’ll need to check the advice in “Compile-as-you-go” on page 255.

A lot of what goes into this game we have already seen; you may deduce from this that the game design business is fairly repetitious and that most games are, when you reach the programming bottom line, another remake of the same old theme. Well, yes and no: you’ve got a camera and have seen some short home videos in the making, but it’s a long way from here to Casablanca. To stick with the analogy, we’ll now construct the opening sequence of an indie B-movie, a tribute to the style of super-hero made famous by a childhood of comic books:

“Impersonating mild mannered John Covarth, assistant help boy at an insignificant drugstore, you suddenly STOP when your acute hearing deciphers a stray radio call from the POLICE. There’s some MADMAN attacking the population in Granary Park! You must change into your Captain FATE costume fast...!”

which won’t be so easy to do. In this short example, players will win when they manage to change into their super-hero costume and fly away to meet the foe. The confrontation will – perhaps – take place in some other game, where we can but hope that Captain Fate will vanquish the forces of evil, thanks to his mysterious (and here unspecified) superpowers.

Fade up on: a nondescript city street

The game starts with meek John Covarth walking down the street. We set up the game as usual:
Constant Story "Captain Fate";
Constant Headline
   "A simple Inform example
    by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.";
Release 3; Serial "040804";  for keeping track of public releases

Constant MANUAL_PRONOUNS;
Constant MAX_SCORE  2;
Constant OBJECT_SCORE 1;
Constant ROOM_SCORE  1;

Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";

Object classes
Class Room
   with description "UNDER CONSTRUCTION",
   has light;
Class Appliance
   with before [
      Take,Pull,Push,PushDir:
      "Even though your SCULPTED adamantine muscles are up to the task,
      you don't favour property damage.";
   ],
   has scenery;

The game objects
Room street "On the street"
   with name 'city' 'buildings' 'skyscrapers' 'shops' 'apartments' 'cars',
   description
      "On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction
      indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving
      lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth.";

The player's possessions

Entry point routines
[ Initialise;
   location = street;
   lookmode = 2;
   "^^Impersonating mild mannered John Covarth, assistant help boy at an
   insignificant drugstore, you suddenly STOP when your acute hearing
   deciphers a stray radio call from the POLICE. There's some MADMAN
   attacking the population in Granary Park! You must change into your
   Captain FATE costume fast...!^^";
];
Almost everything is familiar, apart from a few details:

Constant MANUAL_PRONOUNS;
Constant MAX_SCORE 2;
Constant OBJECT_SCORE 1;
Constant ROOM_SCORE 1;

By default, Inform uses a system of automatic pronouns: as the player character moves into a room, the library assigns pronouns like IT and HIM to likely objects (if you play “Heidi” or “William Tell” and type PRONOUNS, you can see how the settings change). There is another option. If we declare the MANUAL_PRONOUNS constant, we force the library to assign pronouns to objects only as the player mentions them (that is, IT will be unassigned until the player types, say, EXAMINE TREE, at which point, IT becomes the TREE). The behaviour of pronoun assignment is a matter of personal taste; no system is objectively perfect.

Apart from the constant MAX_SCORE that we have seen in “William Tell”, which defines the maximum number of points to be scored, we now see two more constants: OBJECT_SCORE and ROOM_SCORE. There are several scoring systems predefined in Inform. In “William Tell” we’ve seen how you can manually add (or subtract) points by changing the value of the variable score. Another approach is to award points to players on the first occasion that they (a) enter a particular room, or (b) pick up a particular object. To define that a room or object is indeed “particular”, all you have to do is give it the attribute scored; the library takes cares of the rest. The predefined scores are five points for finally reached rooms and four points for wondrous acquisition of objects. With the constants OBJECT_SCORE and ROOM_SCORE we can change those defaults; for the sake of example, we’ve decided to modestly award one point for each. By the way, the use of an equals sign = is optional with Constant; these two lines have identical effect:

Constant ROOM_SCORE = 1;

Another difference has to do with a special short-hand method that Inform provides for displaying strings of text. Until now, we have shown you:

print "And now for something completely different..."; return true;
...
print_ret "And now for something completely different...";

Both lines do the same thing: they display the quoted string, output a newline character, and return true. As you have seen in the previous example games, this happens quite a lot, so there is a yet shorter way of achieving the same result:
That is, *in a routine* (where the compiler is expecting to find a collection of statements each terminated by a semicolon), a string in double quotes by itself, without the need for any explicit keywords, works exactly as if there were a `print_ret` in front of it. Remember that this way of displaying text implies a `return true` at the end (which therefore exits from the routine immediately). This detail becomes important if we don’t want to return true after the string has been displayed on the screen – we should use the explicit `print` statement instead.

You’ll notice that – unusually for a room – our `street` object has a `name` property:

```plaintext
Room    street "On the street"
        with name 'city' 'buildings' 'skyscrapers' 'shops' 'apartments' 'cars', ...
```

Rooms aren’t normally referenced by name, so this may seem odd. In fact, we’re illustrating a feature of Inform: the ability to define dictionary words as “known but irrelevant” in this location. If the player types `EXAMINE CITY` here, the interpreter will reply “That’s not something you need to refer to in order to SAVE the day”, rather than the misleading “You can’t see any such thing”. We mostly prefer to deal with such scenic words using classes like `Prop` and `Furniture`, but sometimes a room’s `name` property is a quick and convenient solution.

In this game, we provide a class named `Appliance` to take care of furniture and unmovable objects. You’ll notice that the starting room we have defined has no connections yet. The description mentions a phone booth and a café, so we might want to code those. While the café will be a normal room, it would seem logical that the phone booth is actually a big box on the sidewalk; therefore we define a `container` set in the street, which players may enter.

```plaintext
Appliance booth "phone booth" street
    with name 'old' 'red' 'picturesque' 'phone' 'booth' 'cabin'
        'telephone' 'box',
    description
        "It's one of the old picturesque models, a red cabin with room
         for one caller."
    ,
    before [;
        Open:
            "The booth is already open."
        Close:
            "There's no way to close this booth."
    ],
    after [;
        Enter:
            "With implausible celerity, you dive inside the phone booth."
    ],
    has enterable container open;
```

What’s interesting are the attributes at the end of the definition. You’ll recall from Heidi’s `nest` object that a `container` is an object capable of having other objects placed in it. If we make something `enterable`, players count as one of those objects, so that they may squeeze inside. Finally, `containers` are, by default, supposed to be closed. You can make them `openable` if you wish players to be able to `OPEN` and `CLOSE` them at will, but this doesn’t seem appropriate behaviour
for a public cabin – it would become tedious to have to type OPEN BOOTH and CLOSE BOOTH when these actions provide nothing special – so we add instead the attribute open (as we did with the nest), telling the interpreter that the container is open from the word go. Players aren’t aware of our design, of course; they may indeed try to OPEN and CLOSE the booth, so we trap those actions in a before property which just tells them that these are not relevant options. The after property gives a customised message to override the library’s default for commands like ENTER BOOTH or GO INSIDE BOOTH.

Since in the street’s description we have told players that the phone booth is to the south, they might also try typing SOUTH. We must intercept this attempt and redirect it (while we’re at it, we add a connection to the as-yet-undefined café room and a default message for the movement which is not allowed):

```
Room street "On the street"
   with name 'city' 'buildings' 'skyscrapers' 'shops' 'apartments' 'cars',
   description
   "On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth.",
   n_to cafe,
   s_to [; <<Enter booth>>; ],
   cant_go
   "No time now for exploring! You'll move much faster in your Captain FATE costume."
```

That takes care of entering the booth. But what about leaving it? Players may type EXIT or OUT while they are inside an enterable container and the interpreter will oblige but, again, they might type NORTH. This is a problem, since we are actually in the street (albeit inside the booth) and to the north we have the café. We may provide for this condition in the room’s before property:

```
before [];
   Go:
   if (player in booth && noun == n_obj) <<Exit booth>>;
],
```

Since we are outdoors and the booth provides a shelter, it’s not impossible that a player may try just IN, which is a perfectly valid connection. However, that would be an ambiguous command, for it could also refer to the café, so we express our bafflement and force the player to try something else:

```
n_to cafe,
s_to [; <<Enter booth>>; ],
in_to "But which way?",
```

Now everything seems to be fine, except for a tiny detail. We’ve said that, while in the booth, the player character’s location is still the street room, regardless of being inside a container; if players chanced to type LOOK, they’d get:

```
On the street (in the phone booth)
On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth.
```
Hardly an adequate description while inside the booth. There are several ways to fix the problem, depending on the result you wish to achieve. The library provides a property called inside_description which you can utilise with enterable containers. It works pretty much like the normal description property, but it gets printed only when the player is inside the container. The library makes use of this property in a very clever way, because for every LOOK action it checks whether we can see outside the container: if the container has the transparent attribute set, or if it happens to be open, the library displays the normal description of the room first and then the inside_description of the container. If the library decides we can’t see outside the container, only the inside_description is displayed. Take for instance the following (simplified) example:

```
Room stage "On stage"
  with description
    "The stage is filled with David Copperfield's magical contraptions.",
  ...

Object magic_box "magic box" stage
  with description
    "A big elongated box decorated with silver stars, where scantily clad ladies make a disappearing act.",
    inside_description
      "The inside panels of the magic box are covered with black velvet. There is a tiny switch by your right foot.",
  ...
  has container openable enterable light;
```

Now, the player would be able to OPEN BOX and ENTER BOX. A player who tried a LOOK would get:

```
On stage (in the magic box)
The stage is filled with David Copperfield's magical contraptions.

The inside panels of the magic box are covered with black velvet. There is a tiny switch by your right foot.
```

If now the player closes the box and LOOKs:

```
On stage (in the magic box)
The inside panels of the magic box are covered with black velvet. There is a tiny switch by your right foot.
```

In our case, however, we don’t wish the description of the street to be displayed at all (even if a caller is supposedly able to see the street while inside a booth). The problem is that we have made the booth an open container, so the street’s description would be displayed every time. There is another solution. We can make the description property of the street room a bit more complex, and change its value: instead of a string, we write an embedded routine. Here’s the (almost) finished room:
Room street "On the street"
   with name 'city' 'buildings' 'skyscrapers' 'shops' 'apartments' 'cars',
   description [;
      if (player in booth)
         "From this VANTAGE point, you are rewarded with a broad view
         of the sidewalk and the entrance to Benny's cafe."
      else
         "On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction
         indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth."
   ],
   before [;
      Go:
      if (player in booth && noun == n_obj) <<Exit booth>>;
   ],
   n_to cafe,
   s_to [; <<Enter booth>>; ],
   in_to "But which way?",
   cant_go
      "No time now for exploring! You'll move much faster in your
      Captain FATE costume."
];

The description while inside the booth mentions the sidewalk, which might invite the player to EXAMINE it. No problem:

Appliance "sidewalk" street
   with name 'sidewalk' 'pavement' 'street',
   article "the",
   description
      "You make a quick surveillance of the sidewalk and discover much
      to your surprise that it looks JUST like any other sidewalk in
      the CITY!"
];

Unfortunately, both descriptions also mention the café, which will be a room and therefore not, from the outside, an examinable object. The player may enter it and will get whatever description we code as the result of a LOOK action (which will have to do with the way the café looks from the inside); but while we are on the street we need something else to describe it:

Appliance outside_of_cafe "Benny's cafe" street
   with name 'benny's' 'cafe' 'entrance',
   description
      "The town's favourite for a quick snack, Benny's cafe has a 50's
      ROCKETSHIP look."
],
   before [;
      Enter:
      print "With an impressive mixture of hurry and nonchalance
      you step into the open cafe.^^";
      PlayerTo(cafe);
      return true;
   ],
   has enterable proper;

NOTE: although the text of our guide calls Benny's establishment a “café” – note the acute “é” – the game itself simplifies this to “cafe”. We do this for clarity, not because Inform doesn’t support accented characters. The Inform Designer's Manual explains in detail how to display these characters in
“§1.11 How text is printed” and provides the whole Z-machine character set in Table 2. In our case, we could have displayed this:

> The town’s favourite for a quick snack, Benny’s café has a 50’s ROCKETSHIP look.

by defining the `description` property as any of these:

```
description
  "The town’s favourite for a quick snack, Benny's cafe\'e has a 50's ROCKETSHIP look.",

description
  "The town’s favourite for a quick snack, Benny's cafe@17e has a 50's ROCKETSHIP look.",

description
  "The town’s favourite for a quick snack, Benny's cafe\{E9\} has a 50's ROCKETSHIP look."
```

However, all three forms are harder to read than the vanilla “cafe”, so we’ve opted for the simple life.

Unlike the sidewalk object, we offer more than a mere description. Since the player may try ENTER CAFE as a reasonable way of access – which would have confused the interpreter immensely – we take the opportunity of making this object also `enterable`, and we cheat a little. The attribute `enterable` has permitted the verb ENTER to be applied to this object, but this is not a container; we want the player to be sent into the real café room instead. The `before` property handles this, intercepting the action, displaying a message and teleporting the player into the café. We return true to inform the interpreter that we have taken care of the `Enter` action ourselves, so it can stop right there.

As a final detail, note that we now have two ways of going into the café: the `n_to` property of the street room and the `Enter` action of the `outside_of_cafe` object. A perfectionist might point out that it would be neater to handle the actual movement of the player in just one place of our code, because this helps clarity. To achieve this, we redirect the street’s `n_to` property thus:

```
n_to [; <<Enter outside_of_cafe>>; ],
```

You may think that this is unnecessary madness, but a word to the wise: in a large game, you want action handling going on just in one place when possible, because it will help you to keep track of where things are a-happening if something goes `ploof` (as, believe us, it will; see “Debugging your game” on page 197). You don’t need to be a perfectionist, just cautious.

A booth in this kind of situation is an open invitation for the player to step inside and try to change into Captain Fate’s costume. We won’t let this happen – the player isn’t Clark Kent, after all; later we’ll explain how we forbid this action – and that will force the player to go inside the café, looking for a discreet place to disrobe; but first, let’s freeze John Covarth outside Benny’s and reflect about a fundamental truth.
A hero is not an ordinary person

Which is to say, normal actions won’t be the same for him.

As you have probably inferred from the previous chapters, some of the library’s standard defined actions are less important than others in making the game advance towards one of its conclusions. The library defines PRAY and SING, for instance, which are of little consequence in a normal gaming situation; each displays an all-purpose message, sufficiently non-committal, and that’s it. Of course, if your game includes a magic portal that will reveal itself only if the player lets rip with a snatch of Wagner, you may intercept the Sing action in a before property and alter its default, pretty useless behaviour. If not, it’s “Your singing is abominable” for you.

All actions, useful or not, have a stock of messages associated with them (the messages are held in the english.h library file and listed in Appendix 4 of the Inform Designer’s Manual). We have already seen one way of altering the player character’s description – “As good looking as ever” – in “William Tell”, but the other defaults may also be redefined to suit your tastes and circumstantial needs.

John Covarth, aka Captain Fate, could happily settle for most of these default messages, but we deem it worthwhile to give him some customised responses. If nothing else, this adds to the general atmosphere, a nicety that many players regard as important. For this mission, we make use of the LibraryMessages object.

```
Include "Parser";
Object LibraryMessages ! must be defined between Parser and VerbLib with before [
    Buy: "Petty commerce interests you only on COUNTED occasions.";
    Dig: "Your keen senses detect NOTHING underground worth your immediate attention.";
    Pray: "You won't need to bother almighty DIVINITIES to save the day."
    Sing: "Alas! That is not one of your many superpowers."
    Sleep: "A hero is ALWAYS on the watch."
    Sorry: "Captain FATE prefers ACTION over apologies."
    Strong: "An unlikely vocabulary for a HERO like you."
    Swim: "You quickly turn all your ATTENTION towards locating a suitable place to EXERCISE your superior strokes, but alas! you find none."

    Miscellany:
        if (lm_n == 19)
            if (clothes has worn)
                "In your secret identity's outfit, you manage most efficaciously to look like a two-cent loser, a good-for-nothing wimp."
            else
                "Now that you are wearing your costume, you project
```
the image of power UNBOUND, of ballooned, multicoloured MUSCLE, of DASHING yet MODEST chic.

*If* (lm_n == 38)

"That's not a verb you need to SUCCESSFULLY save the day."

*If* (lm_n == 39)

"That's not something you need to refer to in order to SAVE the day."

};

Include "VerbLib";

If you provide it, the `LibraryMessages` object must be defined between the inclusion of `Parser` and `VerbLib` (it won’t work otherwise and you’ll get a compiler error). The object contains a single property – before – which intercepts display of the default messages that you want to change. An attempt to SING, for example, will now result in “Alas! That is not one of your many superpowers” being displayed.

In addition to such verb-specific responses, the library defines other messages not directly associated with an action, like the default response when a verb is unrecognised, or if you refer to an object which is not in scope, or indeed many other things. Most of these messages can be accessed through the `Miscellany` entry, which has a numbered list of responses. The variable `lm_n` holds the current value of the number of the message to be displayed, so you can change the default with a test like this:

*If* (lm_n == 39)

"That's not something you need to refer to in order to SAVE the day."

where 39 is the number for the standard message “That’s not something you need to refer to in the course of this game” – displayed when the player mentions a noun which is listed in a room’s name property, as we did for the street.

NOTE: remember that when we are testing for different values of the same variable, we can also use the `switch` statement. For the `Miscellany` entry, the following code would work just as nicely:

```javascript
... Miscellany:
  switch (lm_n) {
    19:
      if (clothes has worn)
        "In your secret identity’s outfit, you manage most efficaciously to look like a two-cent loser, a good-for-nothing wimp."
      else
        "Now that you are wearing your costume, you project the image of power UNBOUND, of ballooned, multicoloured MUSCLE, of DASHING yet MODEST chic."
    38:
      "That's not a verb you need to SUCCESSFULLY save the day."
    39:
      "That's not something you need to refer to in order to SAVE the day."
  }
```
Not surprisingly, the default message for self-examination: “As good looking as ever” is a Miscellany entry – it’s number 19 – so we can change it through the LibraryMessages object instead of, as before, assigning a new string to the player.description property. In our game, the description of the player character has two states: with street clothes as John Covarth and with the super-hero outfit as Captain Fate; hence the if (clothes has worn) clause.

This discussion of changing our hero’s appearance shows that there are different ways of achieving the same result, which is a common situation while designing a game. Problems may be approached from different angles; why use one technique and not another? Usually, the context tips the balance in favour of one solution, though it might happen that you opt for the not-so-hot approach for some overriding reason. Don’t feel discouraged; choices like this become more common (and easier) as your experience grows.

NOTE: going back to our example, an alternative approach would be to set the variable player.description in the Initialise routine (as we did with “William Tell”) to the “ordinary clothes” string, and then later change it as the need arises. It is a variable, after all, and you can alter its value with another statement like player.description = whatever new look anywhere in your code. This alternative solution might be better if we intended changing the description of the player many times through the game. Since we plan to have only two states, the LibraryMessages approach will do just fine.

A final warning: as we explained when extending the standard verb grammars, you could edit the appropriate library file and change all the default messages, but that wouldn’t be a sound practice, because your library file will probably not be right for the next game. Use of the LibraryMessages object is strongly advised.

If you’re typing in the game, you’ll probably want to read the brief section on “Compile-as-you-go” on page 255 prior to performing a test compile. Once everything’s correct, it’s time that our hero entered that enticing café.
11 • Captain Fate: take 2

U was a usurer, a miserable elf;
V was a vintner, who drank all himself.

Viewed from the inside, Benny’s café is warm and welcoming, and packed with lunchtime customers. We’ll try to conjure up some appropriate images, but the main focus of the room isn’t the decor: it’s the door leading to the toilet – and, perhaps, privacy?

A homely atmosphere

Benny’s café is populated with customers enjoying their lunch, so it won’t be a good place to change identities. However, the toilet to the north looks promising, though Benny has strict rules about its use and the door seems to be locked.

CULTURAL NOTE: not for the first time, this guide betrays its origins. In European countries the word “toilet” often refers not only to the white porcelain artefact, but also to the room in which it can be found (also, a “bathroom” is for taking a bath, a “restroom” for taking a rest). Bear with us on this; the dual usage becomes important a little later on.

We define the café room in simple form:

```
Room cafe "Inside Benny's cafe"
with description
"Benny's offers the FINEST selection of pastries and sandwiches. Customers clog the counter, where Benny himself manages to serve, cook and charge without missing a step. At the north side of the cafe you can see a red door connecting with the toilet.",
  s_to street,
  n_to toilet_door;
```

We’ll elaborate on the last line (n_to toilet_door) later, when we define the door object which lies between the café and the toilet.

We’ve mentioned a counter:

```
Appliance counter "counter" cafe
with name 'counter' 'bar',
  article "the",
  description
"The counter is made of an astonishing ALLOY of metals, STAIN-PROOF, SPILL-RESISTANT and VERY EASY to clean. Customers enjoy their snacks with UTTER tranquillity, safe in the notion that the counter can take it all.",
  before [;
    Receive:
      <<Give noun benny>>;
  ],
  has supporter;
```
That `before` property, superficially normal, actually conceals a little surprise. By now you should be entirely comfortable with using an object’s `before` property to intercept an action directed at that object; for example, if the player types `HIT COUNTER` then the counter’s `before` property is potentially able to intercept the resulting Attack action. However, the command `PUT KEY ON COUNTER` generates two actions. First, a PutOn action is offered to the key (effectively saying, do you want to be placed on top of the counter?); that’s the normal bit. And then the surprise: a Receive action is offered to the counter (effectively saying, are you happy to have the key placed on you?) Both actions have the same opportunity of returning `false` to let the action continue, `true` to prevent it.

The Receive action is generated by the library in the PutOnSub action handler, and also in InsertSub (so a command like `PUT BIRD IN NEST` sends a Receive to the nest object). There’s a matching LetGo, generated by the library from commands like `TAKE KEY OFF COUNTER` and `REMOVE BIRD FROM NEST`. Receive and LetGo are examples of what’s called a fake action.

NOTE: in “William Tell” we defined the quiver, way back in “The player’s possessions” on page 83, as an open container. As things stand, the player can put any held object, however inappropriate, into it. We could have trapped the Receive action to ensure that arrows are the only acceptable contents (recollect that `~`, to be read as “not”, turns true into false and vice versa):

```plaintext
before [;
Drop,Give:
    print_ret "But it was a present from Hedwig, your wife."
Receive:
    if (~{(noun ofclass Arrow)})
        print_ret "Only arrows -- clean arrows -- go in your quiver."
],
```

Here, we intercept any attempt to place an item on the counter, and translate it into an attempt to give that item to Benny. Part of the game’s plot depends on the player returning the toilet key to Benny, and also paying him for his delicious cup of world-famous Cappuccino. Putting the key and the money on the counter is a reasonable alternative way for the player to accomplish this.

We’ve also mentioned some customers. These are treated as NPCs, reacting to our hero’s performance.

```plaintext
Object customers "customers" cafe
    with name 'customers' 'people' 'customer' 'men' 'women',
    description [;
        if (costume has worn)
            "Most seem to be concentrating on their food, but some do look at you quite blatantly. Must be the MIND-BEFUDDLING colours of your costume."
        else
            "A group of HELPLESS and UNSUSPECTING mortals, the kind Captain FATE swore to DEFEND the day his parents choked on a DEVIOUS slice of RASPBERRY PIE."
    ],
```
Let’s go step by step. Our hero enters the café dressed as John Covarth, but will eventually manage to change clothes in the toilet, and he’ll have to cross back through the café to reach the street and win the game. The customers’ description takes into consideration which outfit the player character is wearing.

In “William Tell” we’ve seen a brief manifestation of the life property, but here we’ll extend it a little. As we explained, life lets you intercept those actions particular to animate objects. Here we trap Attack and Kiss to offer some customised messages for these actions when applied to the customers. Also, we
avoid conversation by intercepting Ask, Tell and Answer in order just to produce a message which depends on the player character’s attire.

One other feature of animate objects is the possibility of giving them orders: BILL, SHAKE THE SPEAR or ANNIE, GET YOUR GUN. These actions are dealt with in the orders property and, as with the life property, the embedded routine can become quite complex if you want your NPCs to behave in an interesting way. In this case, we don’t need the customers to perform tasks for us, so instead we provide a simple rejection message, just in case the player tries to order people around.

Which leaves us with the daemon bit. A daemon is a property normally used to perform some timed or repetitive action without the need of the player’s direct interaction; for example, machines which work by themselves, animals that move on their own, or people going about their business. More powerfully, a daemon may take notice of the player’s decisions at a particular moment, allowing for some interactive behaviour; this is, however, an advanced feature that we won’t use in this example. A daemon gets a chance of doing something at the end of every turn, typically to (or with) the object to which it’s associated. In our example, the daemon triggers some sneers and nasty comments from the customers once our hero comes out of the toilet dressed in Captain Fate’s costume.

To code a daemon, you need to do three things:

1. First, define a daemon property in the object’s body; the value of the property is always an embedded routine.

2. However, daemons do nothing until you activate them. This is easily achieved with the call StartDaemon(obj_id), which may happen anywhere (if you want some object’s daemon to be active from the beginning of the game, you can make the call in your Initialise routine).

3. Once the daemon has finished its mission (if ever) you may stop it with the call StopDaemon(obj_id).

How does our particular daemon work? The appearance of our hero in full crime-fighting wear will make the customers stare at him and make snarky remarks. This must happen in the café room – the place where the customers are – so we need to make certain that the daemon does something interesting only while the player stays in the right place (and hasn’t wandered, say, back into the toilet):

```plaintext
if (location ~= cafe) return;
```

So if the location is not the café room (remember ~= means “not equal to”), return without doing anything else; on this turn, there’s nothing for the daemon to do. We use a plain return statement because the value returned from a daemon doesn’t matter.
We have defined a customised local property, `number_of_comments`, to control the sequence of customers’ remarks. When the Captain enters the café room from the toilet for the first time, the value of the property should be zero, so the statement block under the test:

```python
if (self.number_of_comments == 0) {
    self.number_of_comments = 1;
    print "^Nearby customers glance at your costume with open curiosity.^";
}
```

will happen only this once. What we intend is to output the text “Nearby customers...” right after the startling entrance of our hero, setting up the scene for the comments which are about to happen. Since we assign a value of 1 to the property, the message will not be printed again. Notice how we use an explicit `print` statement; the execution of the daemon will continue normally to the next line.

We want the customers to indulge in witticisms once they see the costumed Captain, but not on a completely predictable basis.

```python
if (random(2) == 1) ...
```

`random` is an Inform routine used to generate random numbers or to choose randomly between given choices; in the form `random(expression)` it returns a random number between 1 and `expression` inclusive. So our condition is actually stating: if a random choice between 1 and 2 happens to be 1 then perform some action. Remember that a daemon is run once at the end of every turn, so the condition is trying to squeeze a comment from a customer roughly once every other turn.

Next, we proceed as we have already seen in “William Tell”, with a `switch` statement to order the comments in a controlled sequence by cunning use of our tailored local property, `number_of_comments`. We have written just five messages (could have been one or a hundred) and then we reach the `default` case, which is a good place to stop the daemon, since we have no more customers’ remarks to display.

Ah, but when does the daemon start functioning? Well, as soon as our protagonist comes out of the toilet dressed in his multicoloured super-hero pyjamas. Since we want to minimise the possible game states, we’ll make some general rules to avoid trouble: (a) players will be able to change only in the toilet; (b) we won’t let players change back into street clothes; and (c) once players manage to step into the street thus dressed, the game is won. So, we can safely assume that if players enter the café in their Captain’s outfit, they’ll be coming from the toilet. As a consequence of all this, we add an `after` property to the café room object:
Room cafe "Inside Benny's cafe"

... 

first_time_out false, ! Captain Fate's first appearance?
after [;

    Go: ! The player has just arrived. Did he come from the toilet?
          if (noun ~= s_obj) return false;
          if (costume has worn && self.first_time_out == false) {
              self.first_time_out = true;
              StartDaemon(customers);
          }
    ],

    s_to street,
    n_to toilet_door;

There are two useful techniques to detect when the player is entering or leaving a room. We’ll later see in detail how to deal with a player trying to go away and how to avoid it if need be. For now, let’s just mention that, in both cases, you have to intercept the Go action in a room object; if you trap it in a before property, you’re checking for departure from the room; if you trap it in an after property, you’re checking for arrivals into the room. Right now we wish to know if the player just came from the toilet, so we use an after property.

The first line:

    if (noun ~= s_obj) return false;

is telling the interpreter that we want to do something if the player entered the room by typing a GO SOUTH command (this would normally mean “coming from the north”, but remember that nothing stops you from connecting rooms without cardinal logic); the interpreter will apply normal rules for the other available directions.

Then we check whether the player character is wearing the costume, in which case it starts the daemon of the customers object. The use of the local first_time_out property ensures that the condition is true only once, so the statement block attached to it runs also once.

We’ve finished with the customers in the café. Now, we have the toilet to the north which, for reasons of gameplay and decency, is protected by a door.

### A door to adore

Door objects require some specific properties and attributes. Let’s first code a simple door:
We find this door in the café. We must specify the direction in which the door leads and, as we have mentioned in the café’s description, that would be to the north. That’s what the `door_dir` property is for, and in this case it takes the value of the north direction property `n_to`. Then we must tell Inform the identity of the room to be found behind the door, hence the `door_to` property, which takes the value of the toilet room – to be defined later. Remember the café’s connection to the north, `n_to toilet_door`? Thanks to it, Inform will know that the door is in the way, and thanks to the `door_to` property, what lies beyond.

Doors *must* have the attribute `door`, but beyond that we have a stock of options to help us define exactly what kind of door we are dealing with. As for containers, doors can be `openable` (which activates the verbs OPEN and CLOSE so that they can be applied to this object) and, since by default they are closed, you can give them the attribute `open` if you wish otherwise. Additionally, doors can be `lockable` (which sets up the LOCK/UNLOCK verbs) and you can make them `locked` to override their default unlocked status. The verbs LOCK and UNLOCK are expecting some kind of key object to operate the door. This must be defined using the with_key property, whose value should be the internal ID of the key; in our example, the soon-to-be-defined `toilet_key`. If you don’t supply this property, players won’t be able to lock or unlock the door.

This simple door definition has one problem, namely, that it exists only in the café room. If you wish the door to be present also from the toilet side, you can either (a) define another door to be found in the toilet room, or (b) make this one a two-sided door.

Solution (a) seems superficially straightforward, but then you have the problem of keeping the states of the two doors – open/closed, locked/unlocked – in synch. In this scenario, where you can access the toilet only through this door, that wouldn’t be too complicated, since you could leave the door object in the café room opened all the time, regardless of what players do with the door object in the toilet room and vice versa – they are never going to see them at the same time. In general terms, though, such inconsistencies lead to problems; solution (a) is best ignored for most purposes.

Solution (b) is better, since you have only one door object to deal with and its possible states affect both sides. However, the coding gets a little bit complicated and you’ll have to define routines for most properties:
Object toilet_door "toilet door"
   with name 'red' 'toilet' 'door',
   description [],
   if (location == cafe)
      "A red door with the unequivocal black man-woman silhouettes marking the entrance to hygienic facilities. There is a scribbled note stuck on its surface."
   else
      "A red door with no OUTSTANDING features."
],
found_in cafe toilet,
   door_dir [],
   if (location == cafe) return n_to;
   else return s_to;
],
   door_to [],
   if (location == cafe) return toilet;
   else return cafe;
],
   with_key toilet_key,
   has scenery door openable lockable locked;

First of all, the door now needs a found_in property, since it’s going to be located both in the café and the toilet. The description checks which side of the door we are looking at – testing the current value of the variable location, which holds the room the player is in – because we have a scribbled note stuck on one side, but not on the other. And the door_dir and door_to properties must use the same trick, because we travel north from the café into the toilet, but south from the toilet into the café.

Right now, the game will display “the toilet door” every time it needs to refer to this object. It would be nice if we could somehow get the game to distinguish between “the door to the toilet” and “the door to the cafe”, depending on the side we are facing. For this, a short_name property is the thing. We have already talked about the external name defined as part of an object’s header information:

Object toilet_door "toilet door"

That “toilet door” will be the name displayed by the game at run-time to refer to the door. With identical effect, this could also have been coded thus:

Object toilet_door
   with short_name "toilet door",
short_name is a property that supplies the external name of an object, either as a string or an embedded routine. Normally, objects retain the same external name throughout the game – and the header information method is perfect in that case – but if it needs to change, it’s easy to write a routine as the value of short_name:
Notice the `return true` at the end of the routine. You’ll recall that the standard rule says “return false to carry on, true to take over and stop normal execution”. In the case of `short_name`, “carry on” means “and now display the external name from the header information”, which is sometimes handy; for instance, you could write a `short_name` routine to prefix an object’s external name with one of a range of adjectives – perhaps a shining/flickering/fading/useless lantern.

NOTE: what’s displayed if there isn’t an external name in an object’s header? If you’ve read the section “Compile-as-you-go” on page 233, you’ll recall that the interpreter simply uses the internal identifier within parentheses; that is, with no external name and no `short_name` property, we might see:

You open the (toilet_door).

And the same principle applies if we were mistakenly to `return false` from this `short_name` routine: we would get, first, the result of our `print` statement, and then the standard rules would display the internal ID:

You open the door to the toilet(toilet_door).

Doors can get more complicated than this (no, please, don’t throw our guide out of the window). Here comes some optional deluxe coding to make the door object a bit friendlier in game play, so you can skip it if you foresee headaches.

Our door now behaves nicely at run-time. It can be locked and unlocked if the player character has the right key; it can be opened and closed. A sequence of commands to go into the toilet and lock the door behind you would be: UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY, OPEN DOOR, GO NORTH, CLOSE DOOR, LOCK DOOR WITH KEY. After we are finished, let’s go back to the café: UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY, OPEN DOOR, SOUTH. If the player is of the fastidious kind: CLOSE DOOR, LOCK DOOR WITH KEY. This game features only one door, but if it had three or four of them, players would grow restless (at the very least) if they needed to type so many commands just to go through a door. This is the kind of thing reportedly considered as poor design, because the game is suddenly slowed down to get over a simple action which involves no secrets or surprises. How exciting can the crossing of an ordinary door be, after all?

If a few lines of code can make the life of the player easier, it’s worth a shot. Let’s provide a few improvements to our toilet door in `before` and `after` properties:
before [ ks;
  Open:
    if (self hasn't locked || toilet_key notin player)
      return false;
    ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
    <Unlock self toilet_key>; keep_silent = ks;
    return true;
  Lock:
    if (self hasn't open) return false;
    print "(first closing " (the) self, ")";
    ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
    <Close self>; keep_silent = ks;
    return false;
],
after [ ks;
  Unlock:
    if (self has locked) return false;
    print "You unlock " (the) self, " and open it.";
    ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
    <Open self>; keep_silent = ks;
    return true;
],

The basic idea here is to let the player who holds the key perform just one action to both unlock and open the door (and, conversely, to close and lock it). The relevant actions are Unlock and Open, and Lock (Close is not necessary; if players just close the door we shouldn’t assume that they want to lock it as well).

- **Open**: if the door isn’t locked or the player doesn’t hold the key, keep going with the default Open action defined by the library. That leaves a locked door and a player holding the key, so we redirect processing to the Unlock action, giving as arguments the door (self) and the toilet key. Since we are using single angle-brackets <...>, the action resumes after the unlocking is done (note that the Unlock action also takes care of opening the door). Finally, we return true to stop the library from trying to open the door by itself.

- **Lock**: if the door is already closed, keep going with the standard library Lock action. If not, tell players that we are closing the door for them, redirect the action briefly to actually close it, and then return false to let the Lock action proceed as before.

- **Unlock**: we place this action in the after property, so (let’s hope) the Unlock action has already happened. If the door is still locked, something went wrong, so we return false to display the standard message for an unsuccessful unlocking. Otherwise, the door is now unlocked, so we inform the player that we are opening the door and redirect the action to actually open it, returning true to suppress the standard message.

In all processes there is a library variable called keep_silent, which can be either false (the normal state) or true; when true, the interpreter does not display the associated message of an action in progress, so we can avoid things like:
>OPEN DOOR
You open the door to the toilet.
You unlock the door to the toilet and open it.

Although we want to set `keep_silent` to `true` for the duration of our extra processing, we need to reset it afterwards. In a case like this, good design practice is to preserve its initial value (which was probably `false`, but you should avoid risky assumptions); we use a local variable `ks` to remember that initial setting so that we can safely restore it afterwards. You’ll remember that a local variable in a standalone routine is declared between the routine’s name and the semicolon:

```
[ BeenToBefore this_room;
```

In exactly the same way, a local variable in an embedded routine is declared between the `[` starting marker of the routine and the semicolon:

```
before [ ks;
```

You can declare up to fifteen variables this way – just separated by spaces – which are usable only within the embedded routine. When we assign it thus:

```
ks = keep_silent;
```

we are actually making `ks` equal to whatever value `keep_silent` has (either `true` or `false`; we actually don’t care). We then set `keep_silent` to `true`, make the desired silent actions, and we assign:

```
keep_silent = ks;
```

which restores the value originally stored in `ks` to `keep_silent`. The effect is that we manage to leave it as it was before we tampered with it.

Well, that’s about everything about doors. Everything? Well, no, not really; any object can grow as complex as your imagination allows, but we’ll drop the subject here. If you care to see more sophisticated doors, check Exercises 3 and 4 in the *Inform Designer’s Manual*, where an obliging door opens and unlocks by itself if the player simply walks in its direction.

So far, we have the player in front of a locked door leading to the toilet. A dead end? No, the description mentions a scribbled note on its surface. This one should offer no problem:
Object "scribbled note" cafe
  with name 'scribbled' 'note',
  description [;
    if (self.read_once == false) {
      self.read_once = true;
      "You apply your ENHANCED ULTRAFREQUENCY vision to the note and squint in concentration, giving up only when you see the borders of the note begin to blacken under the incredible intensity of your burning stare. You reflect once more how helpful it would've been if you'd ever learnt to read. ^^A kind old lady passes by and explains:
      ~You have to ask Benny for the key, at the counter.~^^
      You turn quickly and begin, ~Oh, I KNOW that, but...~^^
      ~My pleasure, son,~ says the lady, as she exits the cafe."
    }
    else
      "The scorched undecipherable note holds no SECRETS from you NOW! Ha!";
  ],
  read_once false, ! has the player read the note once?
before [;
  Take:
    "No reason to start collecting UNDECIPHERABLE notes.";
],
has scenery;

Just notice how we change the description after the first time the player examines the note, using the local property read_once created just for this purpose. We don’t want the player to walk off with the note, so we intercept the Take action and display something more in character than the default message for scenery objects: “That’s hardly portable”.

We’ve talked a lot about the toilet key; it seems about time to code it. Originally, the key is in Benny’s possession, and the player will have to ask for it, just as the note explains. Although we’ll define Benny in detail throughout the next chapter, here we present a basic definition, largely so that the key has a parent object.

Object benny "Benny" cafe
  with name 'benny',
  description
    "A deceptively FAT man of uncanny agility, Benny entertains his customers crushing coconuts against his forehead when the mood strikes him."
  has scenery animate male proper transparent;
Object toilet_key "toilet key" benny
  with name 'toilet' 'key',
  article "the",
  invent 
    
      if (clothes has worn) print "the CRUCIAL key";
      else print "the used and IRRELEVANT key";
    return true;
  ],
  description
    "Your SUPRA PERCEPTIVE senses detect nothing of consequence
    about the toilet key."
  before [];
  if (self in benny)
    "You SCAN your surroundings with ENHANCED AWARENESS,
    but fail to detect any key.";
  Drop:
    "Benny is trusting you to look after that key.";

While Benny has the key, there’s logically no way to examine it (or perform any
other action involving it), but we want to prevent the interpreter from objecting
that “You can’t see any such thing”. We’ve made the toilet_key a child of the
benny object, and you can see that Benny’s got a transparent attribute; this means
that the key is in scope, and enables the player to refer to it without the
interpreter complaining. Because Benny also has an animate attribute, the
interpreter would normally intercept a TAKE KEY action with “That seems to
belong to Benny”; however, the same wouldn’t apply to other commands like
TOUCH KEY and TASTE KEY. So, to prevent any interaction with the key
while it’s in Benny’s pockets, we define a before property.

  before [];
  if (self in benny)
    "You SCAN your surroundings with ENHANCED AWARENESS,
    but fail to detect any key.";
  Drop:
    "Benny is trusting you to look after that key.";

All of the before properties that we’ve so far created have contained one or more
labels specifying the actions which they are to intercept; you’ll remember that in
“William Tell” we introduced the default action (see “A class for props” on
page 74) to mean “any value not already catered for”. There’s one of those labels
here, for the Drop action, but that’s preceded by a piece of code that will be
executed at the start of every action directed at the key. If it’s still in Benny’s
possession, we display a polite refusal; if the player has it then we prevent careless
disposal; otherwise, the action continues unhindered.

(In fact, the hat-on-a-pole Prop introduced on page 91 had this all-exclusive before
property:

  before [];
  default:
    print_ret "You’re too far away at the moment.";
]
It would have behaved exactly the same if we’d omitted the default label, as we do here for Benny’s key.

Another small innovation here: the invent library property (we didn’t make it up) which enables you to control how objects appear in inventory listings, overriding the default. Left to itself, the interpreter simply displays the object’s external name, preceded either by a standard article like “a” or “some”, or one specifically defined in the object’s article property. Here we replace “the toilet key” with one of two more helpful descriptions, making it a most valuable object in the eyes of John Covarth, and something to be despised haughtily by Captain Fate once it’s of no further use to him.

When we had players in the street, we faced the problem that they might choose to examine the café from the outside. While it’s unlikely that they’ll try to examine the toilet room from the outside, it takes very little effort to offer a sensible output just in case:

```
Object outside_of_toilet "toilet" cafe
  with name 'toilet' 'bath' 'rest' 'room' 'bathroom' 'restroom',
  before [];
  Enter:
    if (toilet_door has open) {
      PlayerTo(toilet);
      return true;
    }
    else
      "Your SUPERB deductive mind detects that the DOOR is CLOSED.";
  Examine:
    if (toilet_door has open)
      "A brilliant thought flashes through your SUPERLATIVE brain: detailed examination of the toilet would be EXTREMELY facilitated if you entered it."
    else
      "With a TREMENDOUS effort of will, you summon your unfathomable ASTRAL VISION and project it FORWARD towards the closed door... until you remember that it's Dr Mystere who's the one with mystic powers."
  Open:
    <<Open toilet_door>>;
  Close:
    <<Close toilet_door>>;
  Take,Push,Pull:
    "That would be PART of the building.";
```

As with the outside_of_cafe object, we intercept an Enter action, to teleport players into the toilet room if they type ENTER TOILET (or to display a refusal if the toilet door is closed). Players may try to EXAMINE TOILET; they’ll get a different message if the door is open – we invite them to enter it – or if it’s closed. OPEN TOILET and CLOSE TOILET inputs are redirected to Open and Close actions for the toilet door; remember that the double angle-brackets imply a
return true, so that the action stops there and the interpreter does not attempt to Open or Close the outside_of_toilet object itself after it has dealt with the door.

You’re right: the toilet looms large in this game (we blame it on early maternal influences). We’ve introduced an ambiguity problem with the outside_of_toilet object, and we’ll need some help in fixing it.
12 • Captain Fate: take 3

W was a watchman, and guarded the door;
X was expensive, and so became poor.

We’ve given ourselves an interesting challenge by overusing that convenient word “toilet”, and here we show you how we resolve the ambiguities that have been introduced. Also, it’s time for the eponymous owner of Benny’s café to be developed in full.

Too many toilets

If you check the name properties of the toilet door, the toilet key and the toilet room, you’ll see that the dictionary word ‘toilet’ occurs in all of them. There won’t be any problems if players mention the words DOOR or KEY, but we reach a strange impasse should they try to perform some action with just the word TOILET. The interpreter has to think fast: is the player talking about the key? About the door? Or about the toilet? Unable to decide, it asks: “Which do you mean, the door to the toilet, the toilet key or the toilet?”

And guess what? Players will never be able to refer to the toilet object (unless they type BATH ROOM or REST ROOM, not an obvious choice since we haven’t used those phrases anywhere visible). If the player answers TOILET the parser will still have three objects with that dictionary word as a possible name, so it will ask again, and again – until we give it some dictionary word which is not ambiguous. A human reader would be able to understand that the word TOILET alone refers to the room, but the interpreter won’t – unless we help it a little.

We could work around this problem in more than one way, but we’ll take this opportunity of demonstrating the use of a third-party library package.

When experienced designers find a problem which is not easily solvable, they may come up with a smart solution and then consider that others could benefit from the effort. The product of this generosity takes the form of a library extension: the solution neatly packaged as a file that other designers can incorporate into their source code. These files can be found in the IF Archive: go to http://mirror.ifarchive.org/indexes/if-archive.html and then select “.../infocom”, “.../compilers”, “.../inform6”, “.../library”, and “.../contributions”. All of these files contain Inform code. To use a library extension (also known as a library contribution), you should download it and read the instructions (usually embedded as comments in the file, but occasionally supplied separately) to discover what to do next. Normally, you Include it (as we have already done with Parser, VerbLib and Grammar), but often there are rules about where exactly this Include should be placed in your source code. It is not unusual to find other suggestions and warnings.
To help us out of the disambiguation problem with the word TOILET, we are going to use Neil Cerutti’s extension \texttt{pname.h}, which is designed for situations precisely like this. First, we follow the link to the IF archive and download the compressed file \texttt{pname.zip}, which contains two more files: \texttt{pname.h} and \texttt{pname.txt}. We place these files in the folder where we are currently developing our game or, if using the environment we proposed in “Tools of the trade” on page 17, in the Inform\Lib\Contrib folder. The text file offers instructions about installation and usage. Here we find a warning:

This version of \texttt{pname.h} is recommended for use only with version 6/10 of the Inform Library.

We’re actually using a later version, but this doesn’t seem to cause a problem. Most extensions aren’t so fussy, but \texttt{pname.h} fiddles with some routines at the heart of the standard library; these may not be identical in other Inform versions.

The introduction explains what \texttt{pname.h} does for you; namely, it lets you avoid using complicated \texttt{parse_name} routines to disambiguate the player’s input when the same dictionary word refers to more than one item. A \texttt{parse_name} routine would have been the solution to our problem before the existence of this file, and it qualifies as an advanced programming topic, difficult to master on a first approach. Fortunately, we don’t need to worry. Neil Cerutti explains:

The \texttt{pname.h} package defines a new object property, \texttt{pname} (short for phrase name), with a similar look and feel to the standard \texttt{name} property: both contain a list of dictionary words. However, in a \texttt{pname} property the order of the words is significant, and special operators \texttt{.p} \texttt{.or} and \texttt{.x} enable you to embed some intelligence into the list. In most cases where the standard \texttt{name} property isn’t enough, you can now just replace it with a \texttt{pname} property, rather than write a \texttt{parse_name} property routine.

We’ll soon see how it works. Let’s take a look at the installation instructions:

To incorporate this package into your program, do three things:

1. Add four lines near the head of the program (before you include \texttt{Parser.h}).
   
   Replace \texttt{MakeMatch};  
   Replace \texttt{Identical};  
   Replace \texttt{NounDomain};  
   Replace \texttt{TryGivenObject};

2. Include the \texttt{pname.h} header just after you include \texttt{Parser.h}.

   \texttt{Include "Parser";}  
   \texttt{Include "pname";}

3. Add \texttt{pname} properties to those objects which require phrase recognition.

   It seems simple enough. So, following steps one and two, we add those \texttt{Replace...} lines before the inclusion of \texttt{Parser}, and we include \texttt{pname.h} right after it. \texttt{Replace} tells the compiler that we’re providing replacements for some standard routines.
Now our source code is ready to benefit from the library package. How does it work? We have acquired a new property – `pname` – which can be added to some of our objects, and which works pretty much like a `name` property. In fact, it should be used instead of a `name` property where we have a disambiguation problem. Let’s change the relevant lines for the toilet door and the toilet key:

```
Object toilet_door with pname '.x' 'red' '.x' 'toilet' 'door',
    short_name [
        ...
    ]

Object toilet_key "toilet key" benny with pname '.x' 'toilet' 'key',
    article "the",
    ...
```

while leaving the `outside_of_toilet` unchanged:

```
Object outside_of_toilet "toilet" cafe
    with name 'toilet' 'bath' 'rest' 'room' 'bathroom' 'restroom',
    before [
        ...
    ]
```

We are now using a new operator – `.x` – in our `pname` word lists. The text file explains

The first dictionary word to the right of a `.x` operator is interpreted as optional.

and this makes the dictionary word `toilet` of lesser importance for these objects, so that at run-time players could refer to the DOOR or TOILET DOOR or the KEY or TOILET KEY – but not simply to the TOILET – when referring to either the door or the key. And, by leaving unchanged the `name` property of the `outside_of_toilet` object – where there is also another `toilet` entry – the `pname` properties will tell the interpreter to discard the key and the door as possible objects to be considered when players refer just to TOILET. Looking at it in terms of the English language, we’ve effectively said that “TOILET” is an adjective in the phrases “TOILET DOOR” and “TOILET KEY”, but a noun when used on its own to refer to the room.
The `pname.h` package has additional functionality to deal with more complex phrases, but we don’t need it in our example game. Feel free, however, to read `pname.txt` and discover what this fine library extension can do for you: it’s an easy answer to many a disambiguation headache.

**Don’t shoot! I’m only the barman**

A lot of the action of the game happens around Benny, and his definition needs a little care. Let’s explain what we want to happen.

So the door is locked and the player, after discovering what the note stuck on the toilet door said, will eventually ask Benny for the key. Sadly, Benny allows use of the toilet only to customers, a remark he’ll make looking pointedly at the menu board behind him. The player will have to ask for a coffee first, thereby qualifying as a customer in Benny’s eyes and thus entitled to make use of the toilet. At last! Rush inside, change into Captain Fate’s costume and fly away to save the day!

Except that the player neither paid for the coffee, nor returned the toilet key. Benny will have to stop the player from leaving the café in these circumstances. To prevent unnecessary complication, there will be a coin near the lavatory, enough cash to pay for the coffee. And that about sums it all up; pretty simple to describe – not so simple to code. Remember Benny’s basic definition from the previous chapter:

```plaintext
Object benny "Benny" cafe
  with name 'benny',
  description
    "A deceptively FAT man of uncanny agility, Benny entertains his customers crushing coconuts against his forehead when the mood strikes him."
  has scenery animate male proper transparent;
```

We can now add some complexity, beginning with a `life` property. In generic form:

```plaintext
life [;
  Give: ... code for giving objects to Benny
  Attack: ... code to deal with player’s aggressive moves
  Kiss: ... code about the player getting tender on Benny
  Ask,Tell,Answer: ... code to handle conversation
],
```

We have seen some of these actions before. We’ll take care of the easier ones:
Attack:
if (costume has worn) {
    deadflag = 4;
    print "Before the horror-stricken eyes of the surrounding people, you MAGNIFICENTLY jump OVER the counter and attack Benny with REMARKABLE, albeit NOT sufficient, speed. Benny receives you with a TREACHEROUS upper-cut that sends your GRANITE JAW flying through the cafe.^^~These guys in pyjamas think they can bully innocent folk,~ snorts Benny, as the EERIE hands of DARKNESS engulf your vision and you lose consciousness."
} else
    "That would be an unlikely act for MEEK John Covarth."
Kiss:
    "This is no time for MINDLESS infatuation."
Ask,Tell,Answer:
    "Benny is too busy for idle chit-chat."

Attacking Benny is not wise. If the player is still dressed as John Covarth, the game displays a message refusing to use violence by reason of staying in character as a worthless wimp. However, if Captain Fate attempts the action, we’ll find that there is more to Benny than meets the eye, and the game is lost. Kissing and conversation are disallowed by a couple of tailored responses.

The Give action is a bit more complicated, since Benny reacts to certain objects in a special and significant way. Bear in mind that Benny’s definition needs to keep track of whether the player has asked for a coffee (thereby becoming a customer and thus worthy of the key), whether the coffee has been paid for, and whether the toilet key has been returned. The solution, yet again (this really is a most useful capability), is more local property variables:

```
Object benny "Benny" cafe
    with name 'benny',
    description
        "A deceptively FAT man of uncanny agility, Benny entertains his customers crushing coconuts against his forehead when the mood strikes him.",
    coffee_asked_for false, ! has player asked for a coffee?
    coffee_not_paid false, ! is Benny waiting to be paid?
    key_not_returned false, ! is Benny waiting for the key?
    life [;
```

Now we are ready to tackle the Give action of the life property, which deals with commands like GIVE THE KEY TO BENNY (in a moment, we’ll come to the Give action of the orders property, which deals with commands like BENNY, GIVE ME THE KEY):
Give:

    switch (noun) {
      clothes:
        "You NEED your unpretentious John Covarth clothes."
      costume:
        "You NEED your stupendous ACID-PROTECTIVE suit."
      toilet_key:
        self.key_not_returned = false;
        move toilet_key to benny;
        "Benny nods as you ADMIRABLY return his key."
      coin:
        remove coin;
        self.coffee_not_paid = false;
        print "With marvellous ILLUSIONIST gestures, you produce the coin from the depths of your ";
        if (costume has worn) print "BULLET-PROOF costume"
        else print "ordinary street clothes"
        " as if it had dropped on the counter from Benny's ear! People around you clap politely. Benny takes the coin and gives it a SUSPICIOUS bite. ~Thank you, sir. Come back anytime,~ he says."
    }

The `Give` action in the `life` property holds the variable `noun` as the object offered to the NPC. Remember that we can use the `switch` statement as shorthand for:

    if (noun == costume) { whatever }
    if (noun == clothes) { whatever }
    ... 

We won’t let players give away their clothes or their costume (yes, an improbable action, but you never know). The toilet key and the coin are successfully transferred. The property `key_not_returned` will be set to `true` when we receive the toilet key from Benny (we have not coded that bit yet), and now, when we give it back, it’s reset to `false`. The `move` statement is in charge of the actual transfer of the object from the player’s inventory to Benny, and we finally display a confirmation message. With the coin, we find a new statement: `remove`. This extracts the object from the object tree, so that it now has no parent. The effect is to make it disappear from the game (though you are not destroying the object permanently – and indeed you could return it to the object tree using the `move` statement); as far as the player is concerned, there isn’t a COIN to be found anywhere. The `coffee_not_paid` property will be set to `true` when Benny serves us the cup of coffee (again, we’ll see that in a moment); now we reset it to `false`, which liberates the player from debt. This culminates with the "..." print-and-return statement, telling the player that the action was successful. In passing, remember that in “A homely atmosphere” on page 131 we defined the counter such that PUT KEY ON COUNTER is automatically translated into GIVE KEY TO BENNY.

Why move the key to Benny but remove the coin instead? Once players qualify as customers by ordering a coffee, they will be able to ask for the key and return it as many times as they like, so it seems sensible to keep the key around. The coin, however, will be a one-shot. We won’t let players ask for more than one
coffee, to prevent their debt from growing ad infinitum – besides, they came in here to change, not to indulge in caffeine. Once the coin is paid, it disappears for good, supposedly into Benny’s greedy pockets. No need to worry about it any more.

The benny object needs also an orders property, just to take care of the player’s requests for coffee and the key, and to fend off any other demands. The Give action in an orders property deals with inputs like ASK BENNY FOR THE KEY or BENNY, GIVE ME THE KEY. The syntax is similar to that of the life property:

```javascript
orders [; ] ! handles ASK BENNY FOR X and BENNY, GIVE ME XXX
    Give:
        if (second !== player or nothing) "Benny looks at you strangely.";
        switch (noun) {
            toilet_key:
                if (toilet_key in player) "But you DO have the key already.";
                if (self.coffee_asked_for === true)
                    if (toilet_key in self) {
                        move toilet_key to player;
                        self.key_not_returned = true;
                        "Benny tosses the key to the rest rooms on the counter, where you grab it with a dextrous and precise movement of your HYPER-AGILE hand.";
                    }
                    else
                        "~Last place I saw that key, it was in YOUR possession,~ grumbles Benny. ~Be sure to return it before you leave.~";
                else
                    "~Toilet is only fer customers,~ he grumbles, looking pointedly at a menu board behind him."
            coffee:
                if (self.coffee_asked_for === true)
                    "One coffee should be enough.";
                move coffee to counter;
                self.coffee_asked_for = self.coffee_not_paid = true;
                "With two gracious steps, Benny places his world-famous Cappuccino in front of you.";
            food:
                "Food will take too much time, and you must change NOW.";
            menu:
                "With only the smallest sigh, Benny nods towards the menu on the wall behind him.";
            default:
                "~I don’t think that’s on the menu, sir.~",
        }
},
```

- We test the value of second in order to trap over-generous gestures such as BENNY, GIVE COFFEE TO CUSTOMERS. Then we consider potential requests.

- Toilet key: first, we check whether players already have the key or not, and complain if they do, stopping execution thanks to the implicit return true of the "..." statement. If players don’t have the key, we proceed to check
whether they’ve asked for a coffee yet, by testing the `coffee_asked_for` property. If this is true, we should also check if the key is actually one of Benny’s possessions – a perverse player could get the key, then drop it somewhere and ask for it again; if this should happen, we indicate that Benny is nobody’s fool with the message “~Last place I saw that key...”. Once all these fitting conditions are true, players will get the key, which means that they have to return it – the `key_not_returned` property becomes true – and we display a suitable message. However, if the player didn’t ask for a coffee, Benny refuses to oblige, mentioning for the first time the menu board where players will be able to see a picture of a cup of coffee when they EXAMINE it. Take care to see how all the else clauses pair up with the appropriate if statements, triggering responses for each of the conditions that wasn’t met.

- **Coffee**: we check whether players have already asked for a coffee, by testing the `coffee_asked_for` property, and refuse to serve another one if true. If false, we place the coffee on the counter, and set the properties `coffee_asked_for` and `coffee_not_paid` to true. The message bit you know about.

- **Food**: we’ll provide an object to deal with all of the delicious comestibles to be found in the café, specifically those (such as “pastries and sandwiches”) mentioned in our descriptions. Although that object is not yet defined, we code ahead to thwart player’s gluttony in case they choose to ask Benny for food.

- **Menu**: our default response – “I don’t think that’s on the menu, sir” – isn’t very appropriate if the player asks for a menu, so we provide a better one.

- **Default**: this takes care of anything else that the player asks Benny for, displaying his curt response.

And before you know it, Benny’s object is out of the way; however, don’t celebrate too soon. There’s still some Benny-related behaviour that, curiously enough, doesn’t happen in Benny’s object; we’re talking about Benny’s reaction if the player tries to leave without paying or returning the key. We promised you that Benny would stop the player, and indeed he will. But where?

We must revisit the café room object:
benny.key_not_returned == true)
"^^~Hey! You've got my key and haven't paid for the coffee. Do I look like a chump?~ You apologise as only a HERO knows how to do and return inside.";
if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true)
"^^~Just waidda minute here, Mister,~ he says. ~Sneaking out without paying, are you?~ You quickly mumble an excuse and go back into the cafe. Benny returns to his chores with a mistrusting eye.";
if (benny.key_not_returned == true)
"^^~Just where you think you're going with the toilet key?~ he says. ~You a thief?~ As Benny forces you back into the cafe, you quickly assure him that it was only a STUPEFYING mistake.";
}
if (costume has worn) {
deadflag = 5;  ! you win!
"You step onto the sidewalk, where the passing pedestrians recognise the rainbow EXTRAVAGANZA of Captain FATE's costume and cry your name in awe as you JUMP with sensational momentum into the BLUE morning skies!";
}
],
first_time_out false,  ! Captain Fate's first appearance?
after [];
Go:  ! The player has just arrived. Did he come from the toilet?
if (noun ~= s_obj) return false;
if (costume has worn && self.first_time_out == false) {
    self.first_time_out = true;
    StartDaemon(customers);
}
],
s_to street,
n_to toilet_door;

Once again, we find that the solution to a design problem is not necessarily unique. Remember what we saw when dealing with the player’s description: we could have assigned a new value to the player.description variable, but opted to use the LibraryMessages object instead. This is a similar case. The code causing Benny to intercept the forgetful player could have been added, perhaps, to a daemon property in Benny’s definition. However, since the action to be intercepted is always the same one and happens to be a movement action when the player tries to leave the café room, it is also possible to code it by trapping the Go action of the room object. Both would have been right, but this is somewhat simpler.

We have added a before property to the room object (albeit a longish one), just dealing with the Go action. As we mentioned in an earlier chapter, this technique lets you trap the player who is about to exit a room before the movement actually takes place, a good moment to interfere if we want to prevent escape. The first line:

    if (noun ~= s_obj) return false;

is telling the interpreter that we want to tamper only with southwards movement, allowing the interpreter to apply normal rules for the other available directions.
From here on, it’s only conditions and more conditions. The player may attempt to leave:

- without paying for the coffee and without returning the key,
- having paid for the coffee, but without returning the key,
- having returned the key, but not paid for the coffee, or
- free of sin and accountable for nothing in the eyes of all men (well, in the eye of Benny, at least).

The first three are covered by the test:

```java
if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true || benny.key_not_returned == true) ...
```

that is, if either the coffee is not paid for or if the key is not returned. When this condition is false, it means that both misdemeanours have been avoided and that the player is free to go. However, when this condition is true, the hand of Benny falls on the player’s shoulder and then the game displays a different message according to which fault or faults the player has committed.

If the player is free to go, and is wearing the crime-fighting costume, the game is won. We tell you how that’s reported in the next chapter, where we finish off the design.
13 • Captain Fate: the final cut

Y was a youth, that did not love school;
Z was a zany, a poor harmless fool.

You’ll probably be pleased to hear that Captain Fate has almost run his allotted span. There are some minor objects still to be defined – the toilet, our hero’s clothes, the all-important costume – but first we need to decorate the café a little more.

Additional catering garnish

We must not forget a couple of tiny details in the café room:

Object food "Benny's snacks" cafe
with name 'food' 'pastry' 'pastries' 'sandwich' 'sandwiches' 'snack'
'snacks' 'doughnut',
before [; "There is no time for FOOD right now."];
has scenery proper;

Object menu "menu" cafe
with name 'informative' 'menu' 'board' 'picture' 'writing',
description "The menu board lists Benny's food and drinks, along with their prices. Too bad you've never learnt how to read, but luckily there is a picture of a big cup of coffee among the incomprehensible writing.",
before [;
Take:
"The board is mounted on the wall behind Benny. Besides, it's useless WRITING.";
],
has scenery;

And a not-so-trivial object:

Object coffee "cup of coffee" benny
with name 'cup' 'of' 'coffee' 'steaming' 'cappuccino'
'cappucino' 'capuccino' 'capucino',
description [;
if (self in benny)
"The picture on the menu board SURE looks good.";
else
"It smells delicious.";
],
before [;
Take,Drink,Taste:
if (self in benny) "You should ask Benny for one first.";
else {
move self to benny;
print "You pick up the cup and swallow a mouthful. Benny's WORLDWIDE REPUTATION is well deserved. Just as you finish, Benny takes away the empty cup."
if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true)
"~That will be one quid buck, sir.~";
```

else
  "",
}

Buy:
  if (coin in player) <<Give coin benny>>;
  else
    "You have no money."

Smell:
  "If your HYPERACTIVE pituitary glands are to be trusted,
   it's Colombian."
```

There’s nothing really new in this object (other than that the name property caters for orthographically challenged players), but notice how we don’t remove it after the player drinks it. In an apparently absurd whim, the coffee returns to Benny magically (although this is not information that the player needs to know). Why? After you remove an object from the game, if the player attempts, say, to EXAMINE it, the interpreter will impertinently state that “You can’t see any such thing”. Moreover, if the player asks Benny for a second coffee, once the first one has been removed, Benny will complain “I don’t think that’s on the menu, sir” – a blatant lie – which was the default in Benny’s orders property. Since the removed coffee object does not belong to Benny, it’s not a noun that the player can ASK Benny FOR. By making it a child of the barman (who has the transparent attribute set), the coffee is still an object that players can refer to. We ensure that they don’t get more cups thanks to Benny’s coffee_asked_for property, which will remain true after the first time.

We also ensure that Benny doesn’t ask for money from players who have already paid, by first printing a “You pick up the cup...” message and then testing Benny’s coffee_not_paid property. If its value is true, we can finish the message with the “quidbuck” print-and-return statement. If its value is false, the player has previously paid, and so there’s nothing else to say. However, we still need to terminate the incomplete message with a newline, and to return true from the property routine; we could have used the statements { print "\n"; return true; }, but an empty "" statement does the same thing more neatly.

### Toilet or dressing room?

Rather more of the latter, actually, since it’s the only place away from curious eyes where our hero will be able to metamorphose from weakling into the bane of all evildoers. And we really don’t want to become, erm, bogged down with details of the room’s function or plumbing.

There’s not a lot about the toilet room and its contents, though there will be some tricky side effects:
Room toilet "Unisex toilet"
with description
   "A surprisingly CLEAN square room covered with glazed-ceramic tiles, featuring little more than a lavatory and a light switch. The only exit is south, through the door and into the cafe.",
   has ~light scored;
Appliance lavatory "lavatory" toilet
with name 'lavatory' 'wc' 'toilet' 'loo' 'bowl' 'can' 'john' 'bog',
   before [];
   Examine,Search,LookUnder:
   if (coin in self) {
      move coin to parent(self);
      "The latest user CIVILLY flushed it after use, but failed to pick up the VALUABLE coin that fell from his pants.";
   }
   Receive:
   "While any other MORTALS might unwittingly throw just about ANYTHING into ", (the) self, ", you remember the WISE teachings of your mentor, Duke ELEGANT, about elderly plumbing and rising waters.";
};
Object coin "valuable coin" lavatory
with name 'valuable' 'coin' 'silver' 'quidbuck',
   description "It's a genuine SILVER QUDBUCK.",
   before [];
   Drop:
   if (self notin player) return false;
   "Such a valuable coin? Har, har! This must be a demonstration of your ULTRA-FLIPPANT jesting!";
},
   after [];
   Take:
   "You crouch into the SLEEPING DRAGON position and deftly, with PARAMOUNT STEALTH, you pocket the lost coin.";
],
   has scored;

We initially place the coin as a child of the lavatory (just so that we can easily make the if (coin in self) one-time test). Since the lavatory does not have the transparent attribute set, the coin will be invisible to players until they try to inspect the lavatory, an action that will move the coin into the toilet room. Once taken, the coin will remain in the inventory until the player gives it to Benny, because we trap any Drop actions to help the player to Do the Right Thing.

The lavatory object includes a load of helpful synonyms in its name property, including our favourite word 'toilet'. That won’t be a problem: the other objects here which may have TOILET in their names – the key and the door – both use the pname property to turn their use of 'toilet' into a lower-priority adjective.

See that here we have the only two scored attributes of the game. The player will be awarded one point for entering the toilet room, and another for finding and picking up the coin.
You might have noticed that we are forcefully clearing the light attribute, inherited from the Room class. This will be a windowless space and, to add a touch of realism, we’ll make the room a dark one, which will enable us to tell you about Inform’s default behaviour when there’s no light to see by. However, let’s define first the light switch mentioned in the room’s description to aid players in their dressing duties.

```plaintext
Appliance light_switch "light switch" toilet
with name 'light' 'switch',
description
 "A notorious ACHIEVEMENT of technological SCIENCE, elegant yet EASY to use.",
before [],
Push:
   if (self has on) <<SwitchOff self>>;
   else    <<SwitchOn self>>;
],
after [],
SwitchOn:
   give self light;
   "You turn on the light in the toilet.";
SwitchOff:
   give self ~light;
   "You turn off the light in the toilet.";
],
has  switchable ~on;
```

Please notice the appearance of new attributes switchable and on. switchable enables the object to be turned on and off, and is typical of lanterns, computers, television sets, radios, and so on. The library automatically extends the description of these objects by indicating if they are currently on or off:

```
> X LIGHT SWITCH
A notorious ACHIEVEMENT of technological SCIENCE, elegant yet EASY to use.
The light switch is currently switched on.
```

Two new actions are ready to use, SwitchOn and SwitchOff. Left to themselves, they toggle the object’s state between ON and OFF and display a message like:

```
You switch the brass lantern on.
```

They also take care of checking if the player fumbled and tried to turn on (or off) an object which was already on (or off). How does the library know the state of the object? This is thanks to the on attribute, which is set or cleared automatically as needed. You can, of course, set or clear it manually like any other attribute, with the give statement:

```
give self on;
give self ~on;
```

and check if a switchable object is on or off with the test:

```
if (light_switch has on) ...
if (light_switch hasnt on) ...
```
A switchable object is OFF by default. However, you’ll notice that the has line of the object definition includes ~on:

```plaintext
has  switchable ~on;
```

Surely that’s saying “not-on”? Surely that’s what would have happened anyway if the line hadn’t mentioned the attribute at all?

```plaintext
has  switchable;
```

Absolutely true. Adding that ~on attribute has no effect whatsoever on the game – but nevertheless it’s a good idea. It’s an aide-mémoire, a way of reminding ourselves that we start with the attribute clear, and that at some point we’ll be setting it for some purpose. Trust us: it’s worthwhile taking tiny opportunities like this to help yourself.

Let’s see how our light switch works. We trap the SwitchOn and SwitchOff actions in the after property (when the switching has successfully taken place) and use them to give light to the light switch.

Uh, wait. To the light switch? Why not to the toilet room? Well, there’s a reason and we’ll see it in a minute. For now, just remember that, in order for players to see their surroundings, you need only one object in a room with the light attribute set. It doesn’t have to be the room itself (though this is usually convenient).

After setting the light attribute, we display a customised message, to avoid the default:

```plaintext
You switch the light switch on.
```

which, given the name of the object, doesn’t read very elegantly. We foresee that players might try to PUSH SWITCH, so we trap this attempt in a before property and redirect it to SwitchOn and SwitchOff actions, checking first which one is needed by testing the on attribute. Finally, we have made the switch a member of the class Appliance, so that the player doesn’t walk away with it.

NOTE: remember what we said about class inheritance? No matter what you define in the class, the object’s definition has priority. The class Appliance defines a response for the Push action, but we override it here with a new behaviour.

**And there was light**

So the player walks into the toilet and

```plaintext
Darkness
It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.
```

Oops! No toilet description, no mention of the light switch, nothing. It is reasonable to think that if we have opened the toilet door to access the toilet, some light coming from the café room will illuminate our surroundings – at least
until the player decides to close the door. So perhaps it would be a good idea to append a little code to the door object to account for this. A couple of lines in the after property will suffice:

```
    after [ ks;
       Unlock:
          if (self has locked) return false;
          print "You unlock ", (the) self, " and open it.\n";
          ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
          <Open self>; keep_silent = ks;
          return true;
       Open:
          give toilet light;
       Close:
          give toilet ~light;
    ],
```

And this is the reason why the light switch didn’t set the light attribute of the toilet room, but did it to itself. We avoid running into trouble if we let the open/closed states of the door control the light of the room object, and the on/off states of the switch control the light of the switch. So it is one shiny light switch. Fortunately, players are never aware of this glowing artefact.

**NOTE:** now, could they? Well, if players could TAKE the light switch (which we have forbidden) and then did INVENTORY, the trick would be given away, because all objects with the light attribute set are listed as (providing light).

So the player walks into the toilet and

```
Unisex toilet
A surprisingly CLEAN square room covered with glazed-ceramic tiles, featuring little more than a lavatory and a light switch. The only exit is south, through the door and into the cafe.
```

[Your score has just gone up by one point.]

**Better. Now, suppose the player closes the door.**

```
>CLOSE DOOR
You close the door to the cafe.

It is now pitch dark in here!
```

The player might try then to LOOK:

```
>L
```

```
Darkness
It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.
```

Well, no problem. We have mentioned that there is a light switch. Surely the player will now try to:

```
>TURN ON LIGHT SWITCH
You can't see any such thing.
```
Oops! Things are getting nasty here in the dark. It’s probably time to leave this place and try another approach:

> OPEN DOOR
  You can’t see any such thing.

And this illustrates one of the terrible things about darkness in a game. You can’t see anything; you can do very little indeed. All objects except those in your inventory are out of scope, unreachable, as if non-existent. Worse, if you DROP one of the objects you are carrying, it will be swallowed by the dark, never to be found until there is light to see by.

The player, who is doubtless immersed in the fantasy of the game, will now be a little annoyed. “I am in a small bathroom and I can’t even reach the door I have just closed?” The player’s right, of course. Darkened rooms are one cliché of traditional games. Usually you move in one direction while looking for treasure in some underground cave, and suddenly arrive at a pitch black place. It’s good behaviour of the game to disallow exploration of unknown dark territory, and it’s a convention to bar passage to players until they return with a light source. However, if the scenario of the game features, say, the player character’s home, a little apartment with two rooms, and there’s no light in the kitchen, we could expect the owner of the house to know how to move around a little, perhaps groping for the light switch or even going to the refrigerator in the dark.

We are in a similar situation. The inner logic of the game demands that blind players should be able to open the door and probably operate the light switch they’ve just encountered. We have been telling you that an object is in scope when it’s in the same room as the player. Darkness changes that rule. All objects not directly carried by the player become out of scope.

One of the advantages of an advanced design system like Inform is the flexibility to change all default behaviours to suit your particular needs. Scope problems are no different. There is a set of routines and functions to tamper with what’s in scope when. We’ll see just a tiny example to fix our particular problem. In the section “Entry point routines” of our game – after the Initialise routine, for instance – include the following lines:

---

1. We’re alluding here to the Classical concept of mimesis. In an oft-quoted essay from 1996, Roger Giner-Sorolla wrote: “I see successful fiction as an imitation or ‘mimesis’ of reality, be it this world’s or an alternate world’s. Well-written fiction leads the reader to temporarily enter and believe in the reality of that world. A crime against mimesis is any aspect of an IF game that breaks the coherence of its fictional world as a representation of reality.”
InScope person;
if (person == player && location == thedark && real_location == toilet) {
PlaceInScope(light_switch);
PlaceInScope(toilet_door);
}
return false;

InScope(actor_obj_id) is an entry point routine that can tamper with the scope rules for the given actor_obj_id (either the player character or a NPC). We define it with one variable (which we name as we please; it’s also a good idea to name variables in an intuitive way to remind us of what they represent), person, and then we make a complex test to see if the player is actually in the toilet and in the dark.

We have told you that the library variable location holds the current room that the player is in. However, when there is no light, the variable location gets assigned to the value of the special library object thedark. It doesn’t matter if we have ten dark rooms in our game; location will be equal to thedark in all of them. There is yet another variable, called real_location, which holds the room the player is in even when there is no light to see by.

So the test:

if (person == player && location == thedark && real_location == toilet) ...

is stating: if the specified actor is the player character and he finds himself in the dark and he actually happens to be in the toilet...

Then we make a call to one of the library routines, PlaceInScope(obj_id), which has a very descriptive name: it places in scope the given object. In our case, we want both the door and the light switch to be within reach of the player, hence both additional lines. Finally, we must return false, because we want the normal scope rules for the defined actor – the player – to apply to the rest of the objects of the game (if we returned true, players would find that they are able to interact with very little indeed). Now we get a friendlier and more logical response:

Darkness
It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

>TURN ON SWITCH
You turn on the light in the toilet.

Unisex toilet
A surprisingly CLEAN square room covered with glazed-ceramic tiles, featuring little more than a lavatory and a light switch. The only exit is south, through the door and into the cafe.

And the same would happen with the door. Notice how the room description gets displayed after we pass from dark to light; this is the normal library behaviour.

There is still one final problem which, admittedly, might originate from an improbable course of action; however, it could be a nuisance. Suppose that the
player enters the toilet, locks the door – which is possible in the dark now that
the door is in scope – and then drops the key. There’s no way to exit the toilet –
because the door is locked and the key has disappeared, engulfed by the darkness –
unless the player thinks to turn on the light switch, thereby placing the key in
scope once more.

Why don’t we add a PlaceInScope(toilet_key) to the above routine? Well, for
starters, the key can be moved around (as opposed to the door or the light switch,
which are fixed items in the toilet room). Suppose the player opens the door of
the toilet, but drops the key in the café, then enters the toilet and closes the door.
The condition is met and the key is placed in scope, when it’s in another room.
Second, this is a simple game with just a few objects, so you can define a rule for
each of them; but in any large game, you might like to be able to refer to objects
in bunches, and make general rules that apply to all (or some) of them.

We need to add code to the InScope routine, telling the game to place in scope all
objects that we drop in the dark, so that we might recover them (maybe going on
all fours and groping a little, but it’s a possible action). We don’t want the player
to have other objects in scope (like the coin, for instance), so it might be good to
have a way of testing if the objects have been touched and carried by the player.
The attribute moved is perfect for this. The library sets it for every object that the
player has picked up at one time in the game; scenery and static objects, and
those we have not yet seen don’t have moved. Here is the reworked InScope routine.
There are a couple of new concepts to look at:

```
[ InScope person item;
  if (person == player && location == thedark && real_location == toilet) {
    PlaceInScope(light_switch);
    PlaceInScope(toilet_door);
  }
  if (person == player && location == thedark)
    objectloop (item in parent(player))
      if (item has moved) PlaceInScope(item);
  return false;
];
```

We have added one more local variable to the routine, item – again, this is a
variable we have created and named on our own; it is not part of the library. We
make now a new test: if the actor is the player and the location is any dark room,
then perform a certain action. We don’t need to specify the toilet, because we
want this rule to apply to all dark rooms (well, the only dark room in the game is
the toilet, but we are trying to provide a general rule).

```
objectloop (variable) statement;
```

is a loop statement, one of the four defined in Inform. A loop statement is a
construct that allows you to run several times through a statement (or a statement
block). objectloop performs the statement once for every object defined in the
(variable). If we were to code:

```
objectloop (item) statement;
```
then the *statement* would be executed once for each object in the game. However, we want to perform the statement only for those objects whose parent object is the same as the player’s parent object: that is, for objects in the same room as the player, so we instead code:

```plaintext
objectloop (item in parent(player)) statement;
```

**What is the actual statement that we’ll repeatedly execute?**

```plaintext
if (item has moved)
    PlaceInScope(item);
```

The test: `if (item has moved)` ensures that `PlaceInScope(item)` deals only with objects with the `moved` attribute set. So: if the player is in the dark, let’s go through the objects which are in the same room, one at a time. For each of them, check if it’s an item that the player has at some time carried, in which case, place it in scope. All dropped objects within the room were carried at one time, so we let players recollect them even if they can’t see them.

As you see, darkness has its delicate side. If you plan to have dark rooms galore in your games, bear in mind that you are in for some elaborate code (unless you let the library carry on with default rules, in which case there won’t be much for your players to do).

**Amazing technicolour dreamcoats**

This leaves us the clothing items themselves, which will require a few tailored actions. Let’s see first the ordinary garments of John Covarth:
Object clothes "your clothes"
with name 'ordinary' 'street' 'clothes' 'clothing',
description
"Perfectly ORDINARY-LOOKING street clothes for a NOBODY like
John Covarth."
before [];
Wear:
  if (self has worn)
    "You are already dressed as John Covarth.";
  else
    "The town NEEDS the power of Captain FATE, not the anonymity
    of John Covarth."
Change,Disrobe:
  if (self hasnt worn)
    "Your KEEN eye detects that you're no longer wearing them.";
  switch (location) {
    street:
      if (player in booth)
        "Lacking Superman's super-speed, you realise that it
        would be awkward to change in plain view of the passing
        pedestrians.";
      else
        "In the middle of the street? That would be a PUBLIC
        SCANDAL, to say nothing of revealing your secret
        identity.";
    cafe:
      "Benny allows no monkey business in his establishment.";
    toilet:
      if (toilet_door has open)
        "The door to the bar stands OPEN at tens of curious eyes.
        You'd be forced to arrest yourself for LEWD conduct.";
      print "You quickly remove your street clothes and bundle them
      up together into an INFRA MINUSCULE pack ready for easy
      transportation."
      if (toilet_door has locked) {
        give clothes ~worn; give costume worn;
        "Then you unfold your INVULNERABLE-COTTON costume and
        turn into Captain FATE, defender of free will, adversary
        of tyranny!"
      } else {
        deadflag = 3;
        "Just as you are slipping into Captain FATE's costume,
        the door opens and a young woman enters. She looks at
        you and starts screaming, ~RAPIST! NAKED RAPIST IN THE
        TOILET!!!~^^
        Everybody in the cafe quickly comes to the rescue, only
        to find you ridiculously jumping on one leg while trying
        to get dressed. Their laughter brings a QUICK END to
        your crime-fighting career!"
    } thedark:
      "Last time you changed in the dark, you wore the suit inside
      out!";
    default:
      "There must be better places to change your clothes!"
  }
]}
has clothing proper pluralname;
See how the object deals only with Wear, Disrobe and Change. Wear and Disrobe are standard library actions already defined in Inform, but we’ll have to make a new verb to allow for CHANGE CLOTHES. In this game, Disrobe and Change are considered synonymous for all purposes; we’ll deal with them first.

The goal of the game is for players to change their clothes, so we might expect them to try this almost anywhere; but first of all we have to check that the clothes object is actually being worn. If not, we display a message reminding the player that this action has become irrelevant. What we do with the switch statement is to offer a variety of responses according to the location variable. The street (in or out of the booth) and the café all display refusals of some kind, until the player character manages to enter the toilet, where we additionally require that he locks the door before taking off his clothes. If the door is closed but not locked, he is interrupted in his naked state by a nervous woman who starts shouting, and the game is lost (this is not as unfair as it seems, because the player may always revert to the previous state with UNDO). If the door is locked, he succeeds in his transformation (we take away the worn attribute from the clothes and give it to the costume instead). We add a special refusal to change in the dark, forcing players to turn on the light and then, we hope, to find the coin. And finally we code a default entry; you’ll remember that, in a switch statement, this is supposed to cater for any value not explicitly listed for the expression under control – in this case, for the variable location. Since we have already gone through all the possible locations of the game, this entry appears only as a defensive measure, just in case something unexpected happens (for instance, we might extend the game with another room and forget about this switch statement). In normal and controlled conditions, it should never be reached, but it doesn’t hurt one bit to have it there.

The Wear action just checks if these clothes are already being worn, to offer two different rejection responses: the goal of the game is to change into the hero’s suit, after which we’ll prevent a change back into ordinary clothes. So now we are dealing with a Captain Fate in full costume:
Object costume "your costume"
with name 'captain' 'captain^s' 'fate' 'fate^s' 'costume' 'suit',
description
"STATE OF THE ART manufacture, from chemically reinforced 100% COTTON-lastic(tm).",
before [],
Wear:
  if (self has worn)
    "You are already dressed as Captain FATE."
  else
    "First you'd have to take off your commonplace unassuming John Covarth INCOGNITO street clothes."
Change,Disrobe:
  if (self has worn)
    "You need to wear your costume to FIGHT crime!"
  else
    "But you're not yet wearing it!"
Drop:
  "Your UNIQUE Captain FATE multi-coloured costume? The most coveted clothing ITEM in the whole city? Certainly NOT!"
],
has clothing proper;

Note that we intercept the action WEAR COSTUME and hint that players should try TAKE OFF CLOTHES instead. We don't let them take off the costume once it's being worn, and we certainly don't let them misplace it anywhere, by refusing to accept a Drop action.

It's a wrap

Nearly there; just a few minor odds and ends to round things off.

Initialise routine

All the objects of our game are defined. Now we must add a couple of lines to the Initialise routine to make sure that the player does not start the game naked:

[ Initialise;
  #ifdef DEBUG; pname_verify(); #endif; ! suggested by pname.h
  location = street;
  move costume to player;
  move clothes to player; give clothes worn;
  lookmode = 2;
  "^^Impersonating mild mannered John Covarth, assistant help boy at an insignificant drugstore, you suddenly STOP when your acute hearing deciphers a stray radio call from the POLICE. There's some MADMAN attacking the population in Granary Park! You must change into your Captain FATE costume fast...!^^";
];

Remember that we included a disambiguation package, pname.h? There were some additional comments in the accompanying text file that should be taken in consideration:
pname.h provides a pname_verify routine. When DEBUG is defined, you may call pname_verify() in your Initialise() routine to verify the pname properties in your objects.

The designer of the package has made a debugging tool (a routine) to check for errors when using his library, and he tells us how to use it. So we include the suggested lines into our Initialise routine:

```c
#ifdef DEBUG; pname_verify(); #endif;
```

As the text explains, what this does is: first check whether the game is being compiled in Debug mode; if this is the case, run the pname_verify routine, so that it tests all pname properties to see if they are written correctly.

Demise of our hero

We have made three possible endings:

1. The player attempts to change in the toilet with an unlocked door.
2. The player tries to attack Benny while wearing the costume.
3. The player manages to exit the café dressed as Captain Fate.

(1) and (2) lose the game, (3) wins it. The library defaults for these two states display, respectively,

```text
*** You have died ***
*** You have won ***
```

These states correspond to the values of the deadflag variable: 1 for losing, 2 for winning. However, we have made up different messages, because our hero does not really die – ours suffers a FATE worse than death – and because we want to give him a more descriptive winning line. Therefore, we must define a DeathMessage routine as we did in “William Tell”, to write our customised messages and assign them to deadflag values greater than 2.

```c
[ DeathMessage;
    if (deadflag == 3) print "Your secret identity has been revealed";
    if (deadflag == 4) print "You have been SHAMEFULLY defeated";
    if (deadflag == 5) print "You fly away to SAVE the DAY";
]
```

Grammar

Finally, we need to extend the existing grammar, to allow for a couple of things. We have already seen that we need a verb CHANGE. We’ll make it really simple:
if (noun has plural name) print "They're";
else
    print "That's";
" not something you must change to save the day."
];

Verb 'change' 'exchange' 'swap' 'swop'
* noun         -> Change;

Just notice how the verb handler checks whether the noun given is plural or singular, to display a suitable pronoun.

A further detail: when players are in the café, they might ask Benny for the coffee (as we intend and heavily hint), for a sandwich or a pastry (both mentioned in the café description), for food or a snack (mentioned here and there, and we have provided for those); but what if they try a meat pie? Or scrambled eggs? There’s just so much decoration one can reasonably insert in a game, and loading the dictionary with Benny’s full menu would be overdoing it a bit.

One might reasonably imagine that the default line at the end of the Give action in the orders property handles every input not already specified:

orders [;
    Give:
        switch (noun) {
            toilet_key: code for the key...
            coffee:    code for the coffee...
            food:      code for the food...
            menu:      code for the menu...
            default:
                "I don't think that's on the menu, sir.~";
        }
],

Not so. The library grammar that deals with ASK BENNY FOR... is this (specifically, the last line):

Verb 'ask'
* creature 'about' topic   -> Ask
* creature 'for' noun      -> AskFor

You’ll see the noun token, which means that whatever the player asks him for must be a real game object, visible at that moment. Assuming that the player mentions such an object, the interpreter finds it in the dictionary and places its internal ID in the noun variable, where our switch statement can handle it. So, ASK BENNY FOR KEY assigns the toilet_key object to the noun variable, and Benny responds. ASK BENNY FOR CUSTOMERS also works; the default case picks that one up. But, ASK BENNY FOR SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE won’t work: we have no object for Spaghetti Bolognese (or any other delicacy from Benny’s kitchen) – the words 'spaghetti' and 'bolognese' simply aren’t in the dictionary. This is perhaps not a major deficiency in our game, but it takes very little to allow Benny to use his default line for any undefined input from the player. We need to extend the existing ASK grammar:
Extend 'ask' * creature 'for' topic -> AskFor;

This line will be added to the end of the existing grammar for Ask, so it doesn’t override the conventional noun-matching line. `topic` is a token that roughly means “any input at all”; the value of `noun` isn’t important, because it’ll be handled by the default case. Now players may ask Benny for a tuna sandwich or a good time; they’ll get: “I don’t think that’s on the menu, sir”, which makes Benny a barman with attitude.

And that’s it; on the slightly surreal note of ASK BENNY FOR A GOOD TIME we’ve taken “Captain Fate” as far as we intend to. The guide is nearly done. All that’s left is to recap some of the more important issues, talk a little more about compilation and debugging, and send you off into the big wide world of IF authorship.
14 • Some last lousy points

Finally our three example games are written; we’ve shown you as much of the Inform language as we’ve needed to, and made a lot of observations about how and why something should be done. Despite all that, there’s much that we’ve left unsaid, or touched on only lightly. In this chapter we’ll revisit key topics and review some of the more significant omissions, to give you a better feel for what’s important, and what can be ignored for the time being; when you become an accomplished designer, you will decide what matters and what can be left on the shelf.

We’ll also talk, in “Reading other people’s code” on page 181, about a few ways of doing things that we’ve chosen not to tell you about, but which you’re quite likely to encounter if you look at Inform code written by other designers.

The tone here is perhaps a little dry, but trust us: in walking this dusty ground we touch on just about everything that is fundamental in your overall understanding of Inform. And as always, the Inform Designer’s Manual provides rounder and more comprehensive coverage.

Expressions

In this guide we’ve used the placeholder expression a few times; here’s roughly what we mean.

• An expression is a single value, or several values combined using operators and sometimes parentheses (...).

• Possible values include:
  • a literal number (-32768 to 32767)
  • something that’s represented as a number (a character ’a’, a dictionary word ’aardvark’, a string ”aardvark’s adventure” or an action ##Look)
  • the internal identifier of a constant, an object, a class or a routine
  • (only in a run-time statement, not in a compile-time directive) the contents of a variable, or the return value from a routine.

• Possible operators include:
  • an arithmetic operator: + - * / % ++ --
  • a bitwise logical operator: & | ~
  • a numeric comparison operator: == ~= > < >= <=
  • an object conditional operator: ofclass in notin provides has hasnt
  • a boolean combinational operator: && || ~~
Internal IDs

Many of the items which you define in your source file – objects, variables, routines, etc. – need to be given a name so that other items can refer to them. We call this name an item’s internal identifier (because it’s used only within the source file and isn’t visible to the player), and we use the placeholders \texttt{obj\_id}, \texttt{var\_id}, \texttt{routine\_id}, etc. to represent where it’s used. An internal ID

- can be up to thirty-two characters long
- must start with a letter or underscore, and then continue with letters A–Z, underscore \_ and digits 0–9 (where upper-case and lower-case letters are treated as indistinguishable)
- should generally be unique across all files: your source file, the standard library files, and any library contributions which you’ve used (except that a routine’s local variables are not visible outside that routine).

Statements

A statement is an instruction intended for the interpreter, telling it what to do at run-time. It must be given in lower-case, and always ends with a semicolon.

Some statements, like \texttt{if}, control one or more other statements. We use the placeholder \texttt{statement\_block} to represent either a single statement, or any number of \texttt{statements} enclosed in braces:

\begin{verbatim}
    statement;

    \{ statement; statement; ... statement; \}
\end{verbatim}

Statements that we’ve met

Our games have used these statements, about half of the Inform possibilities:

\begin{verbatim}
    give obj\_id attribute;
    give obj\_id attribute attribute ... attribute;

    if (expression) statement\_block
    if (expression) statement\_block else statement\_block

    move obj\_id to parent\_obj\_id;

    objectloop (var\_id) statement\_block

    print value;
    print value, value, ... value;

    print\_ret value;
    print\_ret value, value, ... value;

    remove obj\_id;

    return false;
    return true;

    style underline; print...; style roman;
\end{verbatim}
switch (expression) {
    value: statement; statement; ... statement;
    ...
    default: statement; statement; ... statement;
}
"string";
"string", value, ... value;
<action>;
<action noun>;
<action noun second>;
<<action>>;
<<<action noun>>;
<<<action noun second>>;

Statements that we’ve not met

Although our example games haven’t needed to use them, these looping statements are sometimes useful:

    break;
    continue;

do statement_block until (expression)

for (set_var : loop_while_expression : update_var) statement_block

while (expression) statement_block

On the other hand, we suggest that you put the following statements on hold for now; they’re not immediately relevant to everyday code and have mostly to do with printing and formatting:

    box
    font
    jump
    new_line
    spaces
    string

In particular, avoid using the deprecated jump statement if you possibly can.

Print rules

In print and print_ret statements, each value can be:

- a numeric expression, displayed as a signed decimal number,
- a "string", displayed literally, or
- a print rule. You can create your own, or use a standard one, including:

- (a) obj_id – the object’s name, preceded by “a”, “an” or “some”
- (A) obj_id – as (a) but using “A”, “An” or “Some”
- (the) obj_id – the object’s name, preceded by “the”
- (The) obj_id – as (the) but using “The”
- (number) expression – the numeric expression’s value in words
Directives

A **directive** is an instruction intended for the compiler, telling it what to do at compile-time, while the source file is being translated into Z-code. By convention it’s given an initial capital letter (though the compiler doesn’t enforce this) and always ends with a semicolon.

Directives that we’ve met

We’ve used all of these directives; note that for **Class**, **Extend**, **Object** and **Verb** the full supported syntax is more sophisticated than the basic form presented here:

```plaintext
Class class_id
   with property value,
       property value,
       ...
   has property value,
   ... attribute attribute ... attribute;

Constant const_id;
Constant const_id = expression;
Constant const_id expression;

Extend 'verb'
   * token token ... token -> action
   * token token ... token -> action
   ...
   * token token ... token -> action;

Include "filename";

Object obj_id "external_name" parent_obj_id
   with property value,
       property value,
       ...
   has property value,
   ... attribute attribute ... attribute;

class_id obj_id "external_name" parent_obj_id
   with property value,
       property value,
       ...
   has property value,
   ... attribute attribute ... attribute;

Release expression;

Replace routine_id;

Serial "yymmdd";

Verb 'verb'
   * token token ... token -> action
   * token token ... token -> action
   ...
   * token token ... token -> action;

! comment text which the compiler ignores

[ routine_id; statement; statement; ... statement; ];
#Ifdef any_id; ... #Endif;
```
Directives that we’ve not met

There’s only a handful of useful directives which we haven’t needed to use:

- **Attribute** `attribute;`
- **Global** `var_id;`
- **Global** `var_id = expression;`
- **Property** `property;`
- **Statusline** `score;`
- **Statusline** `time;`

but there’s a whole load which are of fairly low importance for now:

- **Abbreviate**
- **Array**
- **Default**
- **End**
- **Ifndef**
- **Ifnot**
- **Iftrue**
- **Iffalse**
- **Import**
- **Link**
- **Lowstring**
- **Message**
- **Switches**
- **System_file**
- **Zcharacter**

### Objects

An object is really just a collection of variables which together represent the capabilities and current status of some specific component of the model world. Full variables are called properties; simpler two-state variables are attributes.

#### Properties

The library defines around forty-eight standard property variables (such as `before` or `name`), but you can readily create further ones just by using them within an object definition.

You can create and initialise a property in an object’s `with` segment:

- `property,` ! set to zero/false
- `property value,` ! set to a single value
- `property value value ... value,` ! set to a list of values

In each case, the `value` is either a compile-time `expression`, or an embedded routine:

- `property expression,`
- `property [; statement; statement; ... statement; ],`
You can refer to the value of a property:

```plaintext
self.property  \! only within that same object
obj_id.property  \! everywhere
```

and you can test whether an object definition includes a given property:

```plaintext
(obj_id provides property)  \! is true or false
```

Attributes

The library defines around thirty standard object attributes (such as `open` or `worn`); creating further ones is done easily with the `Attribute` directive – see “Common properties and attributes” on page 185 – but in most cases you’ll probably fare better by defining a local property.

You can initialise attributes in an object’s `has` segment:

```plaintext
attribute attribute ...  \! initially set
~attribute ~attribute ...  \! initially unset (the default)
```

You can set and clear attributes:

```plaintext
give obj_id attribute attribute ... attribute;
give obj_id ~attribute ~attribute ... ~attribute;
```

and you can test the current setting of an attribute:

```plaintext
(obj_id has attribute)  \! is true or false
(obj_id hasnt attribute)  \! is false or true
```

Classes

You can test whether an object is a member of a given class:

```plaintext
(obj_id ofclass class_id)  \! is true or false
```

The object tree

You can specify an object’s parent (its location at the start of the game) as part of the object definition:

```plaintext
Object obj_id "external_name" parent_obj_id
with ...
```

There’s another syntax, involving arrows `->` `->` like this, which can also be used to establish an object’s initial parent. We touch on it in “Reading other people’s code” on page 181.

You can relocate an object within the tree:

```plaintext
move obj_id to parent_obj_id;
```

and you can move an object out of the tree so that it has no parent:
Given an object’s `obj_id`, you can determine that object’s current parent, its eldest child, and the next younger child – the adjacent object – having the same parent. You can also count how many immediate children it has:

```plaintext
parent(obj_id)
child(obj_id)
sibling(obj_id)
children(obj_id)
```

You can test whether an `obj_id` is an immediate child of another object:

```plaintext
(obj_id in parent_obj_id)  ! is true or false
(obj_id notin parent_obj_id)  ! is false or true
```

If you need to know whether an object is a child, or grandchild, or great-grandchild, etc. of another object, use:

```plaintext
IndirectlyContains(parent_obj_id, obj_id)  ! is true or false
```

Finally, you can determine the object (if any) of which two specified objects are both children, or grandchildren, or great-grandchildren, etc. using:

```plaintext
CommonAncestor(obj_id1, obj_id2)
```

## Routines

Inform provides standalone routines and embedded routines.

### Standalone routines

Standalone routines are defined like this:

```plaintext
[ routine_id; statement; statement; ... statement; ];
```

and called like this:

```plaintext
routine_id()
```

### Embedded routines

These are embedded as the value of an object’s property:

```plaintext
property [; statement; statement; ... statement; ],
```

and are usually called automatically by the library, or manually by:

```plaintext
self.property()  ! only within that same object
obj_id.property()  ! everywhere
```
Arguments and local variables

Both types of routine support up to fifteen local variables – variables which can be used only by the statements within the routine, and which are automatically initialised to zero every time that the routine is called:

\[
\text{routine_id} \text{ var_id var_id ... var_id; statement; statement; ... statement; ];}
\]

\[
\text{property [ var_id var_id ... var_id; statement; statement; ... statement; ],}
\]

You can pass up to seven arguments to a routine, by listing those arguments within the parentheses when you call the routine. The effect is simply to initialise the matching local variables to the argument values rather than to zero:

\[
\text{routine_id(expression, expression, ... expression)}
\]

Although it works, this technique is rarely used with embedded routines, because there is no mechanism for the library to supply argument values when calling the routine.

Return values

Every routine returns a single value, which is supplied either explicitly by some form of return statement:

\[
\text{[ routine_id; statement; statement; ... return expr; ]; ! returns expr}
\]

\[
\text{property [ ; statement; statement; ... return expr; ], ! returns expr}
\]

or implicitly when the routine runs out of statements. If none of these statements is one – return, print_ret, "..." or <<<...>> – that causes an explicit return, then:

\[
\text{[ routine_id; statement; statement; ... statement; ]; returns true and}
\]

\[
\text{property [ ; statement; statement; ... statement; ] returns false.}
\]

This difference is important. Remember it by the letter pairs STEF: left to themselves, Standalone routines return True, Embedded routines return False.

Here’s an example standalone routine which returns the larger of its two argument values:

\[
\text{[ Max a b; if (a > b) return a; else return b; ]};
\]

and here are some examples of its use (note that the first example, though legal, does nothing useful whatsoever):

\[
\text{Max(x,y);}\]

\[
\text{x = Max(2,3);}\]

\[
\text{if (Max(x,7) == 7) ...}
\]

\[
\text{switch (Max(3,y)) { ...}
\]
Library routines versus entry points

A library routine is a standard routine, included within the library files, which you can optionally call from your source file if you require the functionality which the routine provides. We’ve mentioned these library routines:

- `IndirectlyContains(parent_obj_id, obj_id)`
- `PlaceInScope(obj_id)`
- `PlayerTo(obj_id, flag)`
- `StartDaemon(obj_id)`
- `StopDaemon(obj_id)`

By contrast, an entry point routine is a routine which you can provide in your source file, in which case the library calls it at an appropriate time. We’ve mentioned these optional entry point routines:

- `DeathMessage()`
- `InScope(actor_obj_id)`

And this, the only mandatory one:

- `Initialise()`

There are full lists in “Library routines” on page 264 and “Optional entry points” on page 270.

Reading other people’s code

Right at the start of this guide, we warned you that we weren’t setting out to be comprehensive; we’ve concentrated on presenting the most important aspects of Inform, as clearly as we can. However, when you read the Inform Designer’s Manual, and more especially when you look at complete games or library extensions which other designers have produced, you’ll come across other ways of doing things – and it might be that you, like other authors, prefer them over our methods. Just try to find a style that suits you and, this is the important bit, be consistent about its use. In this section, we highlight some of the more obvious differences which you may encounter.

Code layout

Every designer has his or her own style for laying out their source code, and they’re all worse than the one you adopt. Inform’s flexibility makes it easy for designers to choose a style that suits them; unfortunately, for some designers this choice seems influenced by the Jackson Pollock school of art. We’ve advised you to be consistent, to use plenty of white space and indentation, to choose sensible names, to add comments at difficult sections, to actively think, as you write your code, about making it as readable as you can.
This is doubly true if you ever contemplate sharing a library extension with the rest of the community. This example, with the name changed, is from a file in the Archive:

```plaintext
[xxxx i j;
  if (j==0) rtrue;
  if (i in player) rtrue;
  if (i has static || (i has scenery)) rtrue;
  action=##linktake;
  if (runroutines(j,before) == 0 || (j has static || (j has scenery))) {
    print "You'll have to disconnect ", (the) i," from ", (the) j," first.^";
    rtrue;
  }
  else {
    if (runroutines(i,before)==0 || (i has static || (i has scenery))) {
      print "You'll have to disconnect ", (the) i," from ", (the) j," first.^";
      rtrue;
    }
    else {
      if (j hasnt concealed && j hasnt static) move j to player;
      if (i hasnt static && i hasnt concealed) move i to player;
      action=##linktake;
      if (runroutines(j,after) == 0) rtrue;
      print "You take ", (the) i," and ", (the) j," connected to it.^";
      rtrue;
    }
  }
];
```

Here's the same routine after a few minutes spent purely on making it more comprehensible; we haven't actually tested that it (still) works, though that second `else` looks suspicious:

```plaintext
[ xxxx i j;
  if (i in player || i has static or scenery || j == nothing) return true;
  action = ##LinkTake;
  if (RunRoutines(j,before) || j has static or scenery)
    "You'll have to disconnect ", (the) i," from ", (the) j," first.";
  else {
    if (RunRoutines(i,before) || i has static or scenery)
      "You'll have to disconnect ", (the) i," from ", (the) j," first.";
    else {
      if (j hasnt static or concealed) move j to player;
      if (i hasnt static or concealed) move i to player;
      action=##LinkTake;
      if (RunRoutines(j,after)) return true;
      "You take ", (the) i," and ", (the) j," connected to it.";
    }
  }
];
```

We hope you'll agree that the result was worth the tiny extra effort. Code gets written once; it gets read dozens and dozens of times.
Shortcuts

There are a few statement shortcuts, some more useful than others, which you’ll come across.

- These five lines all do the same thing:

  ```
  return true;
  return 1;
  return;
  rtrue;
  ]; ! at the end of a standalone routine
  ```

- These four lines all do the same thing:

  ```
  return false;
  return 0;
  rfalse;
  ]; ! at the end of an embedded routine
  ```

- These four lines all do the same thing:

  ```
  print "string"); new_line; return true;
  print "string^"; return true;
  print_ret "string";
  "string";
  ```

- These lines are the same:

  ```
  print value1; print value2; print value3;
  print value1, value2, value3;
  ```

- These lines are the same:

  ```
  <action noun second>; return true;
  <<<action noun second>>;
  ```

- These lines are also the same:

  ```
  print ";
  new_line;
  ```

- These if statements are equivalent:

  ```
  if (MyVar == 1 || MyVar == 3 || MyVar == 7) ...
  if (MyVar == 1 or 3 or 7) ...
  ```

- These if statements are equivalent as well:

  ```
  if (MyVar ~= 1 && MyVar ~= 3 && MyVar ~= 7) ...
  if (MyVar ~= 1 or 3 or 7) ...
  ```

- In an if statement, the thing in parentheses can be any expression; all that matters is its value: zero (false) or anything else (true). For example, these statements are equivalent:

  ```
  if (MyVar ~= false) ...
  if (~-(MyVar == false)) ...
  if (MyVar ~= 0) ...
  if (~-(MyVar == 0)) ...
  if (MyVar) ...
  ```
Note that the following statement specifically tests whether `MyVar` contains `true` (1), not whether its value is anything other than zero.

```java
if (MyVar == true) ...
```

- If `MyVar` is a variable, the statements `MyVar++;` and `++MyVar;` work the same as `MyVar = MyVar + 1;` For example, these lines are equivalent:

```java
MyVar = MyVar + 1; if (MyVar == 3) ... 
if (++MyVar == 3) ... 
if (MyVar++ == 2) ...
```

What’s the same about `MyVar++` and `++MyVar` is that they both add one to `MyVar`. What’s different about them is the value to which the construct itself evaluates: `MyVar++` returns the current value of `MyVar` and then performs the increment, whereas `++MyVar` does the “+1” first and then returns the incremented value. In the example, if `MyVar` currently contains 2 then `++MyVar` returns 3 and `MyVar++` returns 2, even though in both cases the value of `MyVar` afterwards is 3. As another example, this code (from Helga in “William Tell”):

```java
Talk: self.times_spoken_to = self.times_spoken_to + 1;
switch (self.times_spoken_to) {
  1: score = score + 1;
      print_ret "You warmly thank Helga for the apple."
  2: print_ret "~See you again soon.~"
      default: return false;
}
```

could have been written more succinctly like this:

```java
Talk: switch (++self.times_spoken_to) {
  1: score++; 
      print_ret "You warmly thank Helga for the apple."
  2: print_ret "~See you again soon.~"
      default: return false;
}
```

- Similarly, the statements `MyVar--;` and `--MyVar;` work the same as `MyVar = MyVar - 1;` Again, these lines are equivalent:

```java
MyVar = MyVar - 1; if (MyVar == 7) ... 
if (--MyVar == 7) ... 
if (MyVar-- == 8) ...
```

“number” property and “general” attribute

The library defines a standard `number` property and a standard `general` attribute, whose roles are undefined: they are general-purpose variables available within every object to designers as and when they desire.

We recommend that you avoid using these two variables, primarily because their names are, by their very nature, so bland as to be largely meaningless. Your
game will be clearer and easier to debug if you instead create new property variables – with appropriate names – as part of your Object and Class definitions.

Common properties and attributes

As an alternative to creating new individual properties which apply only to a single object (or class of objects), it’s possible to devise properties and new attributes which, like those defined by the library, are available on all objects. The need to do this is actually quite rare, and is mostly confined to library extensions (for example, the pname.h extension which we encountered in “Captain Fate: take 3” on page 147 gives every object a pname property and a phrase_matched attribute). To create them, you would use these directives near the start of your source file:

    Attribute attribute;
    Property property;

We recommend that you avoid using these two directives unless you really do need to affect every object – or at least the majority of them – in your game. There is a limit of forty-eight attributes (of which the library currently defines around thirty) and sixty-two of these common properties (of which the library currently defines around forty-eight). On the other hand, the number of individual properties which you can add is virtually unlimited.

Setting up the object tree

Throughout this guide, we’ve defined the initial position of each object within the overall object tree either by explicitly mentioning its parent’s obj_id (if any) in the first line of the object definition – what we’ve been calling the header information – or, for a few objects which crop up in more than one place, by using their found_in properties. For example, in “William Tell” we defined twenty-seven objects; omitting those which used found_in to define their placement at the start of the game, we’re left with object definitions starting like this:

    Room street "A street in Altdorf"
    Room below_square "Further along the street"
    Furniture stall "fruit and vegetable stall" below_square
    Prop "potatoes" below_square
    Prop "fruit and vegetables" below_square
    NPC stallholder "Helga" below_square

    Room south_square "South side of the square"
    Room mid_square "Middle of the square"
    Furniture pole "hat on a pole" mid_square
    Room north_square "North side of the square"
You’ll see that several of the objects begin the game as parents: below_square, mid_square, marketplace and quiver all have child objects beneath them; those children mention their parent as the last item of header information.

There’s an alternative object syntax which is available to achieve the same object tree, using “arrows”. That is, we could have defined those parent-and-child objects as:

The idea is that an object’s header information either starts with an arrow, or ends with an \texttt{obj\_id}, or has neither (having both isn’t permitted). An object with neither has no parent: in this example, that’s all the Rooms, and also the \texttt{bow} and the \texttt{quiver} (which are moved to the \texttt{player} object in the \texttt{Initialise} routine) and the \texttt{apple} (which remains without a parent until Helga gives it to William).

An object which starts with a single arrow \texttt{-\rightarrow} is defined to be a child of the nearest previous object without a parent. Thus, for example, the \texttt{tree} and \texttt{governor} objects are both children of the \texttt{marketplace}. To define a child of a child, you’d use two arrows \texttt{-\rightarrow -\rightarrow}, and so on. In “William Tell”, that situation doesn’t occur; to illustrate how it works, imagine that at the start of the game the potatoes and the other fruit and vegetables were actually on the stall. Then we might have used:
Room below_square "Further along the street"
Furniture -> stall "fruit and vegetable stall"
Prop -> -> "potatoes"
Prop -> -> "fruit and vegetables"
NPC -> stallholder "Helga"
...

That is, the objects with one arrow (the stall and stallholder) are children of the nearest object without a parent (the Room), and the objects with two arrows (the produce) are children of the nearest object defined with a single arrow (the stall).

The advantages of using arrows include:

- You’re forced to define your objects in a “sensible” order.
- Fewer obj_ids may need to be used (though in this game it would make no difference).

The disadvantages include:

- The fact that objects are related by the physical juxtaposition of their definitions is not necessarily intuitive to all designers.
- Especially in a crowded room, it’s harder to be certain exactly how the various parent–child relationships are initialised, other than by carefully counting lots of arrows.
- If you relocate the parent within the initial object hierarchy to a higher or lower level, you’ll need also to change its children by adding or removing arrows; this isn’t necessary when the parent is named in the child headers.

We prefer to explicitly name the parent, but you’ll encounter both forms very regularly.

Quotes in “name” properties

We went to some lengths, way back in “Things in quotes” on page 55, to explain the difference between double quotes "..." (strings to be output) and single quotes ‘...’ (input tokens – dictionary words). Perhaps somewhat unfortunately, Inform allows you to blur this clean distinction: you can use double quotes in name properties and Verb directives:

```
NPC stallholder "Helga" below_square
    with name "stallholder" "greengrocer" "monger" "shopkeeper" "merchant"
        "owner" "Helga" "dress" "scarf" "headscarf",
...

Verb "talk" "t//" "converse" "chat" "gossip"
  * "to"/"with" creature -> Talk
  * creature -> Talk;
```

Please don’t do this. You’ll just confuse yourself: those are dictionary words, not strings; it’s just as easy – and far clearer – to stick rigidly to the preferred punctuation.
Obsolete usages

Finally, remember that Inform has been evolving since 1993. Over that time, Graham has taken considerable care to maintain as much compatibility as possible, so that games written years ago, for earlier versions of the compiler and the library, will still compile today. While generally a good thing, this brings the disadvantage that a certain amount of obsolete baggage is still lying around. You may, for example, see games using Nearby directives (denotes parentage, roughly the same as ->) and near conditions (roughly, having the same parent), or with “\” controlling line breaks in long print statements. Try to understand them; try not to use them.
Almost as rarely as an alchemist producing gold from base metal, the compilation process turns your source file into a story file (though the more usual outcome is a reproachful explanation of why – again – that hasn’t happened). The magic is performed by the compiler program, which takes your more or less comprehensible code and translates it into a binary file: a collection of numbers following a specific format understood only by Z-code interpreters.

On the surface, compilation is a very simple trick. You just run the compiler program, indicating which is the source file from which you wish to generate a game and presto! The magic is done.

However, the ingredients for the spell must be carefully prepared. The compiler “reads” your source code, but not as flexibly as a human would. It needs the syntax to follow some very precise rules, or it will complain that it cannot do its job under these conditions. The compiler cares little for meaning, and a lot about orthography, like a most inflexible teacher; no moist Bambi eyes are going to save you here.

Although the spell made by the compiler is always the same one, you can indicate up to a point how you want the magic to happen. There are a few options to affect the process of compilation; some you define in the source code, some with switches and certain commands when you run the program. The compiler will work with some default options if you don’t define any, but you may change these if you need to. Many of these options are provided “just in case” special conditions apply; others are meant for use of experienced designers with advanced and complex requirements, and are best left (for now) to those proficient in the lore.

Ingredients

If the source file is not written correctly the compiler will protest, issuing either a warning message or an error message. Warnings are there to tell you that there may be a mistake that could affect the behaviour of the game at run-time; that won’t stop the compiler from finishing the process and producing a story file. Errors, on the other hand, reflect mistakes that make it impossible for the compiler to output such a file. Of these, fatal errors stop compilation immediately, while non-fatal errors allow the compiler to continue reading the source file. (As you’ll see in a minute, this is perhaps a mixed blessing: while it can be useful to have the compiler tell you about as many non-fatal errors as it can, you’ll often find that many of them are caused by the one simple slip-up.)
Fatal errors

It’s difficult – but not impossible – to cause a fatal error. If you indicate the wrong file name as source file, the compiler won’t even be able to start, telling you:

Could not open source file filename

If the compiler detects a large number of non-fatal errors, it may abandon the whole process with:

Too many errors: giving up

Otherwise, fatal errors most commonly occur when the compiler runs out of memory or disk space; with today’s computers, that’s pretty unusual. However, you may hit problems if the story file, which must fit within the fairly limited resources specified by the Z-machine, becomes too large. Normally, Inform compiles your source code into a Version 5 file (that’s what the .z5 extension you see in the output file indicates), with a maximum size of 256 Kbytes. If your game is larger than this, you’ll have to compile into Version 8 file (.z8), which can grow up to 512 Kbytes (and you do this very simply by setting the -v8 switch; more on that in a minute). It takes a surprising amount of code to exceed these limits; you won’t have to worry about game size for the next few months, if ever.

Non-fatal errors

Non-fatal errors are much more common. You’ll learn to be friends with:

Expected something but found something else

This is the standard way of reporting a punctuation or syntax mistake. If you type a comma instead of a semicolon, Inform will be looking for something in vain.

The good news is that you are pointed to the offending line of code:

Tell.inf(76): Error: Expected directive, '[' or class name but found found_in
> found_in
Compiled with 1 error (no output)

You see the line number (76) and what was found there, so you run to the source file and take a look; any decent editor will display numbers alongside your lines if you wish, and will usually let you jump to a given line number. In this case, the error was caused by a semicolon after the description string, instead of a comma:

Prop "assorted stalls"
  with name 'assorted' 'stalls',
  description "Food, clothing, mountain gear; the usual stuff."
  found_in street below_square,
  has pluralname;

Here’s a rather misleading message which maybe suggests that things in our source file are in the wrong order, or that some expected punctuation is missing:

Fate.inf(459): Error: Expected name for new object or its textual short name
  but found door
> Object door
Compiled with 1 error (no output)
In fact, there’s nothing wrong with the ordering or punctuation. The problem is actually that we’ve tried to define a new object with an internal ID of `door`—reasonably enough, you might think, since the object is a door—but Inform already knows the word (it’s the name of a library attribute). Unfortunately, the error message provides only the vaguest hint that you just need to choose another name: we used `toilet_door` instead.

Once the compiler is off track and can’t find what was expected, it’s common for the following lines to be misinterpreted, even if there’s nothing wrong with them. Imagine a metronome ticking away in time with a playing record. If the record has a scratch and the stylus jumps, it may seem that the rest of the song is out of sync, when it’s merely a bit “displaced” because of that single incident. This also happens with Inform, which at times will give you an enormous list of things Expected but not Found. The rule here is: correct the first mistake on the list and recompile. It may be that the rest of the song was perfect.

It would be pointless for us to provide a comprehensive list of errors, because mistakes are numerous and, anyhow, the explanatory text usually indicates what was amiss. You’ll get errors if you forget a comma or a semicolon. You’ll get errors if your quotes or brackets don’t pair up properly. You’ll get errors if you use the same name for two things. You’ll get errors—for many reasons. Just read the message, go to the line it mentions (and maybe check those just before and after it as well), and make whatever seems a sensible correction.

**Warnings**

Warnings are not immediately catastrophic, but you should get rid of them to ensure a good start at finding run-time mistakes (see “Debugging your game” on page 197). You may declare a variable and then not use it; you may mistake assignment and arithmetic operators (= instead of ==); you may forget the comma that separates properties, etc. For all these and many other warnings, Inform has found something which is legal but doubtful.

One common incident is to return in the middle of a statement block, before the rest of statements can be reached. This is not always as evident as it looks, for instance in a case like this:

```plaintext
if (steel_door has open) {
  print_ret "The breeze blows out your lit match."
  give match ~light;
}
```

In the above example, the `print_ret` statement returns true after the string has been printed, and the `give match ~light` line will never happen. Inform detects the fault and warns you. Probably the designer’s intention was:

```plaintext
if (steel_door has open) {
  give match ~light;
  print_ret "The breeze blows out your lit match."
}
```
Compiling à la carte

One of the advantages of Inform is its portability between different systems and machines. Specific usage of the compiler varies accordingly, but some features should be in all environments. To obtain precise information about any particular version, run the compiler with the -h1 switch – see “Switches” on page 193.

Often the compiler is run with the name of your source file as its only parameter. This tells the compiler to “read this file using Strict mode and from it generate a Version 5 story file of the same name”. The source file is mostly full of statements which define how the game is to behave at run-time, but will also include compile-time instructions directed at the compiler itself (although such an instruction looks a lot like a statement, it’s actually quite different in what it does, and is known as a directive). We have already seen the Include directive:

```
Include "filename";
```

When the compiler reaches a line like this, it looks for `filename` – another file also containing Inform code – and processes it as if the statements and directives included in `filename` were in that precise spot where the Include directive is.

![Diagram](image)

In every Inform game we Include the library files Parser, VerbLib and Grammar, but we may Include other files. For example, this is the way to incorporate library extensions contributed by other people, as you saw when we incorporated `pname.h` into our “Captain Fate” game.

NOTE: on some machines, a library file is actually called – for example – `Parser.h`, on others just `Parser`. The compiler automatically deals with such differences; you can always type simply `Include "Parser"`; in your source file.

As you grow experienced in Inform, and your games become more complex, you may find that the source file becomes unmanageably large. One useful technique is then to divide it into a number of sections, each stored in a separate file, which you Include into a short master game file. For example:
Switches

When you run the compiler you can set some optional controls; these are called switches because most of them are either on or off (although a few accept a numeric value 0–9). Switches affect compilation in a variety of ways, often just by changing the information displayed by the compiler when it’s running. A typical command line (although this may vary between machines) would be:

```
inform source_file story_file switches
```

where “inform” is the name of the compiler, the story_file is optional (so that you can specify a different name from the source_file) and the switches are also optional. Note that switches must be preceded by a hyphen `-`; if you want to set, for instance, Strict mode, you’d write `-S`, while if you want to deactivate it, you’d write `-~S`. The tilde sign can, as elsewhere, be understood as “not”. If you wish to set many switches, just write them one after another separated by spaces and each with its own hyphen, or merge them with one hyphen and no spaces:

```
inform MyGame.inf -S -s -X
inform MyGame.inf -SsX
```

Although there’s nothing wrong with this method, it isn’t awfully convenient should you need to change the switch settings. A more flexible method is to define the switches at the very start of your source file, again in either format:

```
!% -S -s -X
!% -SsX
```

Normally, all switches are off by default, except Strict mode (`-S`), which is on and checks the code for additional mistakes. It’s well worth adding Debug mode (`-D`), thus making the debugging verbs available at run time. This is the ideal setting
while coding, but you should turn Debug mode off (just remove the \texttt{-D}) when you release your game to the public. This is fortunately very easy to check, since the game banner ends with the letter “D” if the game was compiled in Debug mode:

\begin{verbatim}
Captain Fate
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 3 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD
\end{verbatim}

Switches are case sensitive, so you get different effects from \texttt{-x} and \texttt{-X}. Some of the more useful switches are:

\begin{itemize}
\item \texttt{-~S}: Set compiler Strict mode off. This deactivates some additional error checking features when it reads your source file. Strict mode is on by default.
\item \texttt{-v5 -v8}: Compile to this version of story file. Versions 5 (on by default) and 8 are the only ones you should ever care about; they produce, respectively, story files with the extensions \texttt{.z5} and \texttt{.z8}. Version 5 was the Advanced Infocom design, and is the default produced by Inform. This is the version you’ll normally be using, which allows file sizes up to 256 Kbytes. If your game grows beyond that size, you’ll need to compile to the Version 8 story file, which is very similar to Version 5 but allows a 512 Kbytes file size.
\item \texttt{-D -X}: Include respectively the debugging verbs and the Infix debugger in the story file (see “Debugging your game” on page 197).
\item \texttt{-h1 -h2}: Display help information about the compiler. \texttt{-h1} produces information about file naming, and \texttt{-h2} about the available switches.
\item \texttt{-n -j}: \texttt{-n} displays the number of declared attributes, properties and actions. \texttt{-j} lists objects as they are being read and constructed in the story file.
\item \texttt{-s}: Offer game statistics. This provides a lot of information about your game, including the number of objects, verbs, dictionary entries, memory usage, etc., while at the same time indicating the maximum allowed for each entry. This can be useful to check whether you are nearing the limits of Inform.
\item \texttt{-r}: Record all the text of the game into a temporary file, useful to check all your descriptions and messages by running them through a spelling checker.
\end{itemize}
If you run the compiler with the `-h2` switch, you’ll find that there are many more switches than these, offering mostly advanced or obscure features which we consider to be of little interest to beginners. However, feel free to try whatever switches catch your eye; nothing you try here will affect your source file, which is strictly read-only as far as the compiler is concerned.
16 • Debugging your game

Nobody understands the phrase *errare humanum est* quite in the same way as a programmer does. Computers are highly efficient machines capable of wondrous calculations, but they lack imagination and insist that every single item thrown at them must be presented according to certain rules previously defined. You can't negotiate with a computer; you either bow in submission or bite the dust.

Inform behaves no differently. If you make a typing or syntax mistake, the compiler will send you back to revise your work. “It was just a lousy comma!” you cry in disgust. The compiler remains silent. It has nothing to gain by argument, because it’s always right. So you go and change the lousy comma. No harm done except perhaps to your pride.

Errors that are found during compilation may be tedious to correct, but are usually easy to find; after all, the compiler tries politely to point out what and where the mistake was. Trouble begins after you’ve managed to satisfy all of the compiler’s complaints. You are rewarded by a clean screen, devoid of a list of errors, and you are offered – a gift!

A new file has appeared in your folder. A story file. Yes, *the* game. You quickly open your favourite interpreter and begin to play – only to discover the dark side of errors, the bugs. Bugs come in all shapes, colours and sizes: big, small, stupid, absurd, minor, disturbing, nerve-wracking and catastrophic. They are often unpredictable: they regale our eyes with surprising, unexpected behaviour. They defy logic: I can TAKE the key, and the game even says “Taken”, but the key remains in the same place and won’t appear in my inventory. Or: opening the door while wearing the fur coat causes a programming error and a cryptic message “tried to find the attribute of nothing”. And many, many others.

When designing a game you try to take into consideration the states that your objects will find themselves in, but any medium-sized game has such a number of objects and actions that it’s almost impossible to think of all the possible variations, permutations and possibilities.

Debugging consists in finding run-time errors, and then correcting them. Pretty easy, you might think, but no. Detection of such errors is not straightforward, since they tend to manifest themselves only under precise circumstances. Then you have to investigate your code to find out what is causing them. And then, if you discover the offending lines, you must make the appropriate changes. (There is also the case when you can’t find the mistake. Don’t worry, it’s there somewhere. Persistence always pays off in the end.)

To help you out in this daunting task, Inform has a stock of special actions: the debugging verbs. They become available at run-time when the source file is compiled in **Debug mode** (\texttt{-D} switch). When you are ready to release your game,
you’ll have to recompile, switching off Debug to avoid allowing the players to benefit from the debugging verbs. We’ll cover briefly a few of these actions, and tell you what they do.

**Command lists**

The only way to test a game is to play it. As you make progress writing code, the game grows complicated, and it becomes really tiresome to repeat all the commands every time you play. Not unusually, when you fix the behaviour of some object, you are also affecting the behaviour of other objects or actions, so it’s a good idea to test everything now and then; you have to make sure that your recent changes and fixes didn’t spoil something that previously worked fine.

The RECORDING command (RECORDING ON and RECORDING OFF) saves the commands that you type as you play into a text file (you’ll probably be prompted for a file name). When you add a new section to the game, you can play to that point, type RECORDING ON to capture (in another file) the commands which exercise that section, and then later use your editor to append those new commands to the existing list.

The REPLAY command runs the text file created by RECORDING, playing all the stored commands in one go. This way you can very quickly check whether everything is working as it should.

You can open the file of commands with any text editor program and modify the contents as need arises: for instance, if you want to delete some commands no longer necessary because of a change to the game, or if you forgot to test some particular object and you need to add new commands.

This technique (the use of recorded lists of commands) is, and we can’t emphasise it too strongly, one of the most useful testing features for a game designer.

**Spill them guts**

Some debugging verbs offer information about the current state of things.

**TREE**

This action lists all the objects in the game and how they contain each other. You can discover the possessions of just one object by typing TREE _object_. All the objects that you have defined in the source file are turned into numbers by Inform when it compiles the story file; this command also lists those internal _obj_id_ numbers.
SHOWOBJ object

Displays information about the object, the attributes it currently has and the value of its properties. The object can be anywhere, not necessarily in scope. For instance, in “Heidi”:

>SHOWOBJ NEST
Object "bird's nest" (29) in "yourself"
has container moved open workflag
with name 'bird's' 'nest' 'twigs' 'moss',
description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss." (19230),

SHOWVERB verb

Displays the grammar of the verb, just like a standard Verb definition. This comes in handy when you have tampered with Extend and are not sure about the final results of your machinations. An example from “William Tell”:

>SHOWVERB GIVE
Verb 'feed' 'give' 'offer' 'pay'
   * held 'to' creature -> Give
   * creature held -> Give reverse
   * 'over' held 'to' creature -> Give
   * 'homage' 'to' noun -> Salute

The first lines reproduce the verb definition as it’s written in the library. The last line, however, is the direct consequence of our tailored Extend:

Extend 'give'
   * 'homage' 'to' noun -> Salute;

SCOPE

Lists all of the objects currently in scope (in general terms, visible to the player character). More powerfully, you can type SCOPE object to discover which objects are in scope for the named object. This feature becomes useful when you have NPCs capable of tampering with their surroundings.

What on earth is going on?

There comes the time when some actions don’t produce the desired effects and you don’t know why. The following debugging verbs offer information about what the interpreter is up to, which might enable you to identify the moment when things started to go awry.

ACTIONS (or ACTIONS ON) and ACTIONS OFF

Gives information about all the actions going on. Some actions get redirected to others, and this becomes at times a source of mischief and mystery; here you get a clue what’s happening. For example, take this transcript from “William Tell”: 
Further along the street
People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.

Helga pauses from sorting potatoes to give you a cheery wave.

> SEARCH STALL
[ Action Search with noun 35 (fruit and vegetable stall) ]
[ Action Examine with noun 35 (fruit and vegetable stall) (from < > statement) ]
It's really only a small table, with a big heap of potatoes, some carrots and turnips, and a few apples.

... 

CHANGES (or CHANGES ON) and CHANGES OFF

Tracks object movements, and changes to properties and attributes:

Middle of the square
There is less of a crush in the middle of the square; most people prefer to keep as far away as possible from the pole which towers here, topped with that absurd ceremonial hat. A group of soldiers stands nearby, watching everyone who passes.

> GO NORTH
[Setting Middle of the square.warnings_count to 1]
A soldier bars your way.

"Oi, you, lofty; forgot yer manners, didn't you? How's about a nice salute for the vogt's hat?"

> AGAIN
[Setting Middle of the square.warnings_count to 2]

"I know you, Tell, yer a troublemaker, ain't you? Well, we don't want no bovver here, so just be a good boy and salute the friggin' hat. Do it now: I ain't gonna ask you again..."

> SALUTE HAT
[Setting hat on a pole.has_been_saluted to 1]
You salute the hat on the pole.

"Why, thank you, sir," sneers the soldier.

> GO SOUTH
[Setting Middle of the square.warnings_count to 0]
[Setting hat on a pole.has_been_saluted to 0]
[Moving yourself to South side of the square]

... 

TIMERS (or TIMERS ON) and TIMERS OFF

This verb shows you the state of all active timers and daemons at the end of each turn. We haven’t mentioned timers – similar to daemons – in this guide; you might perhaps use one to explode a bomb ten turns after lighting its fuse.
TRACE (or TRACE ON), TRACE number and TRACE OFF

If you turn on this powerful verb, you’ll be able to follow the activity of the *parser* – that part of the library which tries to make sense of what the player types – and this will indeed be a wonderful moment of gratitude that someone else took the trouble of writing it. Since the parser does so many things, you can decide the level of detail about the displayed information with the *number* parameter, which can go from 1 (minimum info) to 5 (maximum info). By default, TRACE ON and TRACE with no number sets level 1. Trace level 1 shows the grammar line that the parser is thinking about, while level 2 shows each individual token on each grammar line that it tries. The information displayed with higher levels may become quite hacky, and you are advised to use this feature only if nothing else helps.

**Super-powers**

**GONEAR object**

This action lets you teleport to the room where the *object* is. This is useful when, for example, certain parts of the map are closed until the player character solves some puzzle, or if the game map is divided in different areas. If the room you want to visit has no objects, you can use...

**GOTO number**

Teleports you to the room with that internal *number*. Since rooms usually have no name, you’ll have to discover the internal number of the room object (with the command TREE, for instance).

**PURLOIN object**

PURLOIN works exactly as TAKE, with the nice addition that it doesn’t matter where the object is: in another room, inside a locked container, in the claws of the bloodthirsty dragon. More dangerously, it doesn’t matter if the object is takeable, so you may purloin static or scenery objects. PURLOIN is useful in a variety of situations, basically when you want to test a particular feature of the game that requires the player character to have some objects handy. Instead of tediously collecting them, you may simply PURLOIN them. Be careful: it’s unwise to PURLOIN objects not meant to be taken, as the game’s behaviour may become unpredictable.

**ABSTRACT object TO object**

This verb enables you to move the first *object* to the second *object*. As with PURLOIN, both objects can be anywhere in the game. Bear in mind that the second object should logically be a container, a supporter, or something animate.
Infix: the harlot’s prerogative

The basic debugging verbs are fairly versatile, easy to use, and don’t consume a lot of memory. Occasionally though, you’ll meet a bug which you simply can’t catch using regular techniques, and that’s when you might want to investigate the Infix debugger. You’ll need to compile using the -X switch, and you’ll then be able to monitor and modify almost all of your game’s data and objects. For instance, you can use “;” to inspect – and change – a variable:

```
Inside Benny's cafe
Benny's offers the FINEST selection of pastries and sandwiches. Customers clog the counter, where Benny himself manages to serve, cook and charge without missing a step. At the north side of the cafe you can see a red door connecting with the toilet.

>; deadflag
; == 0

>; deadflag = 4
; == 4

*** You have been SHAMEFULLY defeated ***
```

In that game you scored 0 out of a possible 2, in 2 turns.

It’s often quite maddening to realise that some variable is still false because the Chalk puzzle didn’t work properly, and that you can’t test the Cheese puzzle until the variable becomes true. Rather than quit, fix the Chalk, recompile, play back to the current position and only then tackle the Cheese, how much easier to just change the variable in mid-stream, and carry right on.

You can use ;WATCH to monitor an object; you’ll see it receive messages and you’ll be told when its property and attribute values change:

```
>;WATCH MID_SQUARE
; Watching object "Middle of the square" (43).

>NORTH
[Moving yourself to Middle of the square]
[Moving local people to Middle of the square]
[Moving Gessler's soldiers to Middle of the square]
[Moving your son to Middle of the square]

Middle of the square
There is less of a crush in the middle of the square; most people prefer to keep as far away as possible from the pole which towers here, topped with that absurd ceremonial hat. A group of soldiers stands nearby, watching everyone who passes.
[Giving Middle of the square visited]

>NORTH
[ "Middle of the square".before() ]
[ mid_square.before() ]
[Setting Middle of the square.warnings_count to 1]
A soldier bars your way.
```
“Oi, you, lofty; forgot yer manners, didn’t you? How’s about a nice salute for the vogt’s hat?”

>NORTH
[ "Middle of the square".before() ]
[ mid_square.before() ]
[Setting Middle of the square.warnings_count to 2]

“I know you, Tell, yer a troublemaker, ain’t you? Well, we don’t want no bovver here, so just be a good boy and salute the friggin’ hat. Do it now: I ain’t gonna ask you again…”

>NORTH
[ "Middle of the square".before() ]
[ mid_square.before() ]
[Setting Middle of the square.warnings_count to 3]

“OK, Herr Tell, now you’re in real trouble.
...

Infix is quite complex – there are more commands than those we have shown you – so while it’s good to have available, it’s not really a tool for novices. If you do use it, be careful: you get a lot of runtime power, and may easily screw up the state of the game. Remember, however, that the changes affect only the current story file while it’s running; to make permanent amendments, you still need to edit the source file.

You won’t need it often, but Infix can sometimes provide quick answers to tricky problems.

No matter what

Your game will still have some undetected bugs despite all your efforts to clean it up. This is normal, even for experienced designers; don’t feel discouraged or demoralised. You might find it reassuring to know that our own example games in this guide – which certainly don’t qualify as “complex programming” – were far from perfect at the First Edition. We blush at the following report from an extremely diligent play-tester:

I found these things when playing “Captain Fate”:

• player is able to wear clothes over the costume,
• player can change into costume in the dark unlocked bathroom without being interrupted,
• player can drop clothes in the dark unlocked bathroom. Try REMOVE CLOTHES. X SELF. REMOVE COSTUME. INV – X SELF says that you are wearing the costume, but the inventory does not reflect this.

The Second Edition fixed those problems, and quite a few more besides. “That’s it;” we thought, “after all this time, our example games are sure to be squeaky clean.” In our dreams… Another diligent play-tester then wrote:
While reading I took notes of some mistakes and inconsistencies:

- **BENNY, GIVE KEY TO CUSTOMERS** and **BENNY, GIVE KEY** will make Benny give the key to the player. The same goes for coffee.
- Benny will force the player back into the cafe even when the key is dropped in the café, or put on the counter (in Benny’s plain sight!).

Of course, the code we’ve offered you in *this* edition takes care of those embarrassing issues, but it might very well happen that a few more undetected absurdities pop up from now on.

The final stage of debugging must happen elsewhere, at the hands of some wilful, headstrong and determined beta-testers; these are the people who, if you’re lucky, will methodically tear your game to shreds and make extensive reports of things that don’t work reliably, things that don’t work as smoothly as they might, things that ought to work but don’t, things that never even crossed your mind (like, uh, dropping the costume in the dark). Once you think your game is finished – in that it does all that you think it should, and you’ve run out of ideas on how else to test it – look for a few beta-testers; three or four is good. The IF community offers some beta-testing resources, or you can always ask in RAIF for kind souls willing to have a go at your game. Remember the golden rules:

- **Expect no mercy.** Although it hurts, a merciless approach is what you need at this time; much better to discover your errors and oversights now, before you release the game more widely. And don’t forget to acknowledge your testers’ assistance somewhere within the game.

- **Never say never.** If your testers suggest that the game should respond better to an attempted action, don’t automatically respond with “No one’s going to try that!” They already have, and will again – be grateful for your testers’ devious minds and twisted psyches. Although a normal player won’t try all of those oddball things, every player is bound to try at least one, and their enjoyment will be greater, the reality enhanced, if the game “understands”.

- **Ask for more.** Don’t treat your testers simply as validators of your programming skills, but rather as reviewers of your storytelling abilities. Encourage them to comment on how well the pieces fit together, and to make suggestions – small or radical – for improvement; don’t necessarily reject good ideas just because implementing them “will take too long”. For example: “the scene in the Tower of London doesn’t somehow seem to belong in an Arabian Nights game”, or “having to solve three puzzles in a row just to discover the plate of sheep’s eyes is a little over the top”, or “this five-room trek across the desert really is a bit dull; perhaps you could add a quicksand or something to liven it up?”, or “the character of the eunuch in the harem seems to be lacking in something”. That is, view the testers collectively not as simple spell-checkers, but rather as collaborative editors on your latest novel.
I might just as well have saved the labor and sweat I had put into trying to make my reports harmless. They didn’t fool the Old Man. He gave me merry hell.


Just a few final words to round things off. All that remains are the appendices, with terse but comprehensive summaries of the Inform language and its IF library, plus the source code and run-time transcripts of the games we have developed here. Our “labor and sweat” have been oriented towards making your introduction to Inform as harmless as possible, but this probably won’t fool you for long. Although we believe we have covered the system’s basic functionality and given you enough grounding to feel comfortably sure-footed as you roam the designing wilderness, there are still many techniques to be mastered and additional aspects to be learnt, including medium and advanced features at which we have not even hinted.

Before you give us merry hell, however, be reassured that the remaining lore, which may at times feel obscure and enigmatic, is fundamentally constructed around the principles that you have already seen. You should now be ready to browse through other documentation and resources without them seeming full of inscrutable hieroglyphs; on the contrary, you’ll be able to focus on those bits you don’t know about (which now, we hope, will be rather less abundant). Inform, like other powerful and flexible IF design tools, is prepared to cope with the needs of demanding authors: “I don’t like the way it handles the TAKE ALL command; I wanna change it.” And so you can. “I’d prefer the listings of objects organised in a prettier way.” Go right ahead. “I want to have a better social life thanks to Inform.” No problem, but you’ll have to be one damn charming designer. Oh, well.

Inform has been designed to let you do simple things intuitively and quickly. Left to its own devices, it offers a wide range of default functionality, and we’ve seen that it’s also easy to alter some of its standard behaviour. The desirable goal is for you to reach a state of such familiarity with the system that you can concentrate on designing your games. By “such familiarity” we are not implying that you should know the innards of the library inside out; such people exist, but they’re few and far between. However, once you become reasonably proficient at typing in code, with a knowledge level similar to the one provided by this guide, a careful look at the appropriate section of the Inform Designer’s Manual should help you through most difficulties. Admittedly, there are problems and problems, from the slap-on-the-head trifle to the teeth-gnashing nightmare. We advise you to put the nightmares on hold for the time being. It may be that one day you discover that their fangs were not as sharp as they seemed.
There are many interesting topics that you could pursue next. Here are a few:

- **Score**: we have seen two ways of scoring a game, but you may decide that scores have no meaning in your game. And there is yet a third built-in system for defining “tasks” worthy of reward, from “wearing the ridiculous bonnet at the Ambassador’s party” to “convincing the unfriendly monkey to play the upright piano”. This technique requires a bit of knowledge about...

- **Arrays**: these are enumerated lists of variables. Instead of having just one variable to play with, you can have a collection of them, indexed by number.

- **Lists and inventories**: there are many functions to let you arrange the way objects are grouped and presented to the player at run-time.

- **Vehicles**: cars, elevators, hot-air balloons, magic carpets, spaceships – or any other device in which the player may travel around.

- **Create verbs and vocabulary**: although we have already nibbled at this concept, you can fine-tune the parser to allow for all sorts of amazing commands (from magical utterances that trigger unfathomable spells, to special actions that affect many objects at once).

- **Changing the player**: who says that the player character must be a boring human being? Metamorphose the unsuspecting mortal into a virtual-reality proxy, a fantastic animal, an untouchable ghost, a powerful telepath or a telekinetic vampire. Undecided about which one? Make your game with multiple starring characters and switch between them when you want.

- **Passing of time, timed machines and events**: set a timer that ticks away, unbeknown to the player and attach it to a bomb; a door which opens only once every ten turns; a dragon with short fuse and little patience; a marching patrol of soldiers; a clock that ominously chimes the arrival of sunset and doom. Change the “turns” count on the status line into minutes, or days.

- **Mutable directions**: north is north? Not necessarily. Change the direction objects of the game to “forward”, “back”, and so on. You are on a ship? “fore” and “aft”, “port” and “starboard” may be the thing for you. Enter a mirror and have the map and all the directions reflected.

- **Complex NPCs**: how unpredictable can the behaviour of that impertinent butler be? Can he talk, move, steal your possessions, poison your tea? Does he react coherently to the player’s actions? Does he have a hidden agenda of his own? Although NPC creation is indeed a knotty craft, it’s one worth mastering. “Living” NPCs increase immensely the reality of your games.

- **Techie features**: change the status line, or the command prompt. Clear the screen, or alter its colour; centre text upon it, and colour the text as well. Wait for the player to press a key and then trigger some action. Display a message one letter at a time. Add a tiny compass showing available exits at all times.
Interactive fiction mixes creativity and narrative skills with coding expertise. Usually, those games which make the biggest impact have a fair amount of both. If you feel yourself lacking one of these qualities at present, contemplate a little teamwork: there are IF collaboration lists on the Internet, where people offer to lend a hand with ideas or programming (and some very good games have come from the mixed efforts of a well-tuned collaboration). Above all, don’t forget the importance of beta-testing, which may produce the feedback inspiring you to turn your decent attempt into a killing machine. There’s little as obnoxious to players as a game which is obviously under-tested. Getting those bugs out is your responsibility; be sure to clean it as best you can, but never ever release a game until it has been kicked around by others. And remember that beta-testers are (almost certainly) experienced players, so their advice beyond the call of bug-hunting is as priceless counsel as you are likely to get. Encourage them to comment on your achievements in both programming and design.

Now: where to go, what to do? Allow us to insist one last time on the importance of reading the Inform Designer’s Manual, an excellent book in all respects. While you are at it, write small games, training exercises; we don’t advise you to try an epic saga for your first scenario, but if nothing else will work for you – the Think Big approach – don’t let us deter you. It’s a good idea to play other people’s games, because you’ll know the average level that players may expect; check the newsgroups for comments on good titles. Be sure around September to keep an eye open for the Interactive Fiction Competition (http://www.ifcomp.org/), an annual showcase for short(ish) works.

And, who knows? It might be that next year we’ll all be smashed by your entry.

Sonja and Roger
17 • *** YOU HAVE WON ***
Appendix A • How to play an IF game

Playing IF requires just a bit of instruction. All you have to do is read the descriptions and situations that appear on the screen and then tell the game what you’d like to happen next. Imagine that you’re saying “I WANT TO ...”; you don’t actually type those three words, but you do type what follows, instructing the game to do something on your behalf.

Commands usually take the form of a simple imperative sentence, with a verb and a direct object (for example, typing EXAMINE THE KETTLE will display a description of the kettle, TAKE KETTLE will make it one of your belongings, and so on). If there’s more than one kettle around, you can be specific (TAKE RED KETTLE); otherwise, the game will ask you something like “Which do you mean, the red kettle or the rusty kettle?” Answering RED is enough in a case like this. Some commands refer to two objects, like: PUT KETTLE ON TABLE.

To make them stand out on the page, we’re showing the words that you type in capital letters. You can actually use upper-case or lower-case letters – it makes no difference – and you can usually omit words like THE (though TAKE A BATH and TAKE THE BATH may have different effects, as will TAKE A COIN and TAKE THE COIN if there are several to choose from).

To move around, use the verb GO and one of the cardinal points: GO NORTH will move you in the desired direction. Movement happens quite a lot, so you can shorten that to just NORTH, and you can even use the initial(s) of the direction in which you want to travel (easier and faster to type): N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE and SW. Also available are UP (U), DOWN (D) and, occasionally, IN and OUT.

There is quite an impressive stock of standard actions which can generally be relied upon to do something, even if only to tell you that you’re wasting your time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Command</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASK</td>
<td>DROP</td>
<td>INVENTORY</td>
<td>PUSH</td>
<td>SWIM</td>
<td>TRANSFER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURN</td>
<td>EAT</td>
<td>JUMP</td>
<td>PUT</td>
<td>SWITCH OFF</td>
<td>TURN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUY</td>
<td>EMPTY</td>
<td>KILL</td>
<td>READ</td>
<td>SWITCH ON</td>
<td>UNLOCK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLEAN</td>
<td>ENTER</td>
<td>KISS</td>
<td>SEARCH</td>
<td>TAKE</td>
<td>WAIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIMB</td>
<td>EXAMINE</td>
<td>LISTEN</td>
<td>SHOW</td>
<td>TASTE</td>
<td>WAVE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSE</td>
<td>EXIT</td>
<td>LOCK</td>
<td>SING</td>
<td>TELL</td>
<td>WEAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUT</td>
<td>FILL</td>
<td>LOOK</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>THINK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIG</td>
<td>GIVE</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>SLEEP</td>
<td>THROW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISROBE</td>
<td>GO</td>
<td>PRAY</td>
<td>SMELL</td>
<td>TIE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRINK</td>
<td>INSERT</td>
<td>PULL</td>
<td>STAND</td>
<td>TOUCH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You don’t have to play IF with a list like this open in front of you; the idea is that a good game should understand whatever seems logical for you to try next. Sometimes that will be a standard action, sometimes a verb like SALUTE or PHOTOGRAPH which, although less common, makes perfect sense in context.
You’ll discover that usually many of these actions are fairly irrelevant. Try logical things first (if you have a torch, BURN may be promising, while EAT probably not). Of special interest are LOOK (or just L), to print a description of the current location; EXAMINE (or X) object, which gives you a detailed description of the object; INVENTORY (INV or I) lists the objects you are carrying.

You may combine some of these verbs with prepositions to expand the possibilities: LOOK THROUGH, LOOK AT, LOOK IN, LOOK UNDER all perform different actions. Remember that we’re mentioning only a selection of the possible verbs; if you feel that something else ought to work, try it and see.

You can change the way the game offers descriptions of locations as you arrive in them. The default setting is usually BRIEF, which provides you with long descriptions only the first time you enter a new location. Some people like to change this to VERBOSE, which always gives you long location descriptions. Here are some other special commands and abbreviations you should know:

AGAIN (G) repeats the action you’ve just performed.
WAIT (Z) skips one turn of action while you loiter and see what happens.
QUIT ends the game.
SAVE saves your current position in the game.
RESTORE reloads a previously saved position.
RESTART starts again from the beginning.
SCORE tells you the current state of progress.
UNDO goes back one turn so that your most recent action never happened.

Often, there will be characters that you’ll have to interact with. Let’s suppose you find your cousin Maria: you may ASK (or TELL) MARIA ABOUT something, GIVE (or SHOW) object TO MARIA or ASK MARIA FOR object. Characters may be willing to help you, when you can indicate your wishes with: MARIA, GO NORTH or MARIA, TAKE THE GUN. If you are really fond of Maria, you may want to KISS her and if she offends you beyond measure, you might like to ATTACK her.

Once you’ve referred to an object or a character by name, you may use the pronouns IT, HIM or HER to simplify the typing process. These pronouns will remain set until you refer to any other object or character. If you wish to check the current pronoun assignments, type PRONOUNS.

As a rule of the thumb, try to keep your actions simple. Most games will actually understand long commands like TAKE ALL FROM THE BAG EXCEPT THE GREEN PEARL THEN THROW CAMEMBERT CHEESE AT UGLY MATRON, but such things are hard to type without mistakes. Also, you’ll find that other inputs don’t work as well: GO BACK TO THE KITCHEN or GET NEAR THE SINGING PIRATE or READ NEWSPAPER OVER THE SHERIFF’S SHOULDER will all give you error messages of some kind. Understanding the conventions of command typing is fairly intuitive and you’ll quickly master it after a little experimentation.
NOTE: we’re talking here about the core capabilities that most Inform games provide (though much of this is equally applicable to other IF systems). Often the designer will have extended these capabilities by defining additional commands appropriate to the nature of the game; either you’ll be told about these, or they’ll come naturally to mind during play. Less frequently, some designers like to tamper with the default behaviour of the parser, the interface, or with the way that commands work – maybe even disabling some of the standard ones completely. When this happens, it’s common and polite practice for the game to let you know.
Appendix B • “Heidi” story

Heidi in the Forest is our first – and simplest – game. We describe it in three chapters: “Heidi: our first Inform game” on page 33, “Reviewing the basics” on page 49 and “Heidi revisited” on page 59. Here is a run-time transcript, and then the original and extended source files.

Transcript of play

Heidi
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 1 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD

In front of a cottage
You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.

>VERBOSE
Heidi is now in its "verbose" mode, which always gives long descriptions of locations (even if you've been there before).

>GO EAST

Deep in the forest
Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west. A track heads to the northeast.

You can see a baby bird here.

>EXAMINE THE BIRD
Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.

>TAKE BIRD
Taken.

>NE

A forest clearing
A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing. The path winds southwest through the trees.

You can see a bird's nest (which is empty) here.

>PUT BIRD IN NEST
You put the baby bird into the bird's nest.

>EXAMINE THE NEST
The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.

>TAKE NEST
Taken.

>UP
At the top of the tree
You cling precariously to the trunk.

You can see a wide firm bough here.

>PUT NEST ON BRANCH
You put the bird’s nest on the wide firm bough.

*** You have won ***

In that game you scored 0 out of a possible 0, in 10 turns.

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game or QUIT?
> QUIT

Game source code – original version

!===============================================================================
Constant Story "Heidi";
Constant Headline
   "^A simple Inform example
^by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.^";

Constant MAX_CARRIED 1;

Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";

!===============================================================================
! The game objects

Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
   with description
      "You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
      e_to forest,
      has light;

Object forest "Deep in the forest"
   with description
      "Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west.
       A track heads to the northeast.",
      w_to before_cottage,
      ne_to clearing,
      has light;

Object bird "baby bird" forest
   with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
      name 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
   has ;

Object clearing "A forest clearing"
   with description
      "A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing.
       The path winds southwest through the trees.",
      sw_to forest,
      u_to top_of_tree,
   has light;
Object nest "bird's nest" clearing
    with description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.",
        name 'bird^s' 'nest' 'twigs' 'moss',
        has container open;

Object tree "tall sycamore tree" clearing
    with description
        "Standing proud in the middle of the clearing,
         the stout tree looks easy to climb.",
        name 'tall' 'sycamore' 'tree' 'stout' 'proud',
        has scenery;

Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
    with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
        d_to clearing,
        has light;

Object branch "wide firm bough" top_of_tree
    with description "It's flat enough to support a small object.",
        name 'wide' 'firm' 'flat' 'bough' 'branch',
        each_turn [; if (nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ],
        has static supporter;

!===============================================================================
! Entry point routines

[ Initialise; location = before_cottage; ];

!===============================================================================
! Standard and extended grammar

Include "Grammar";

!===============================================================================

215
Game source code – revisited

!===============================================================================
Constant Story "Heidi";
Constant Headline
"A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.";

Constant MAX_CARRIED 1;

Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";

!===============================================================================
! The game objects

Object before_cottage "In front of a cottage"
with description
"You stand outside a cottage. The forest stretches east.",
e_to forest,
in_to "It's such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.",
cant_go "The only path lies to the east.",
has  light;

Object cottage "tiny cottage" before_cottage
with description "It's small and simple, but you're very happy here.",
nname 'tiny' 'cottage' 'home' 'house' 'hut' 'shed' 'hovel',
before [;
Enter:
    print_ret "It's such a lovely day -- much too nice to go inside.";
],
has  scenery;

Object forest "Deep in the forest"
with description
"Through the dense foliage, you glimpse a building to the west.
A track heads to the northeast.",
w_to before_cottage,
ne_to clearing,
has  light;

Object bird "baby bird" forest
with description "Too young to fly, the nestling tweets helplessly.",
nname 'baby' 'bird' 'nestling',
before [;
Listen:
    print "It sounds scared and in need of assistance."
    return true;
],
has  ;

Object clearing "A forest clearing"
with description
"A tall sycamore stands in the middle of this clearing.
The path winds southwest through the trees.",
sw_to forest,
u_to top_of_tree,
has  light;

!===============================================================================
Object nest "bird's nest" clearing
  with description "The nest is carefully woven of twigs and moss.",
  name 'bird^s' 'nest' 'twigs' 'moss',
  has container open;

Object tree "tall sycamore tree" clearing
  with description
    "Standing proud in the middle of the clearing,
     the stout tree looks easy to climb.",
  name 'tall' 'sycamore' 'tree' 'stout' 'proud',
  before [;
    Climb:
      PlayerTo(top_of_tree);
      return true;
  ],
  has scenery;

Object top_of_tree "At the top of the tree"
  with description "You cling precariously to the trunk.",
  d_to clearing,
  after [;
    Drop:
      move noun to clearing;
      return false;
  ],
  has light;

Object branch "wide firm bough" top_of_tree
  with description "It's flat enough to support a small object.",
  name 'wide' 'firm' 'flat' 'bough' 'branch',
  each_turn [; if (bird in nest && nest in branch) deadflag = 2; ],
  has static supporter;

===============================================================================
! Entry point routines
[ Initialise; location = before_cottage; ];

===============================================================================
! Standard and extended grammar
Include "Grammar";

===============================================================================
Appendix C • “William Tell” story

William Tell, our second game, is also very straightforward. See “William Tell: a tale is born” on page 69, “William Tell: the early years” on page 79, “William Tell: in his prime” on page 91 and “William Tell: the end is nigh” on page 103.

Transcript of play

The place: Altdorf, in the Swiss canton of Uri. The year is 1307, at which time Switzerland is under rule by the Emperor Albert of Habsburg. His local governor -- the vogt -- is the bullying Hermann Gessler, who has placed his hat atop a wooden pole in the centre of the town square; everybody who passes through the square must bow to this hated symbol of imperial might.

You have come from your cottage high in the mountains, accompanied by your younger son, to purchase provisions. You are a proud and independent man, a hunter and guide, renowned both for your skill as an archer and, perhaps unwisely (for his soldiers are everywhere), for failing to hide your dislike of the vogt.

It's market-day: the town is packed with people from the surrounding villages and settlements.

William Tell
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 3 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD

A street in Altdorf
The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult.

"Stay close to me, son," you say, "or you'll get lost among all these people."

>EXAMINE YOUR SON
A quiet, blond lad of eight summers, he's fast learning the ways of mountain folk.

>GO NORTH

Further along the street
People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.

Helga pauses from sorting potatoes to give you a cheery wave.

"Hello, Wilhelm, it's a fine day for trade! Is this young Walter? My, how he's grown. Here's an apple for him -- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest's good enough. How's Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes."
INVENTORY
You are carrying:
an apple
a quiver (being worn)
three arrows
a bow

TALK TO HELGA
You warmly thank Helga for the apple.

[Your score has just gone up by one point.]

GIVE THE APPLE TO WALTER
"Thank you, Papa."

[Your score has just gone up by one point.]

NORTH
South side of the square
The narrow street to the south has opened onto the town square, and resumes at the far side of this cobbled meeting place. To continue along the street towards your destination -- Johansson's tannery -- you must walk north across the square, in the middle of which you see Gessler's hat set on that loathsome pole. If you go on, there's no way you can avoid passing it. Imperial soldiers jostle rudely through the throng, pushing, kicking and swearing loudly.

EXAMINE THE SOLDIERS
They're uncouth, violent men, not from around here.

EXAMINE HAT
You're too far away at the moment.

MIDDLE OF THE SQUARE
There is less of a crush in the middle of the square; most people prefer to keep as far away as possible from the pole which towers here, topped with that absurd ceremonial hat. A group of soldiers stands nearby, watching everyone who passes.

X HAT
The pole, the trunk of a small pine some few inches in diameter, stands about nine or ten feet high. Set carefully on top is Gessler's ludicrous black and red leather hat, with a widely curving brim and a cluster of dyed goose feathers.

A soldier bars your way.

"Oi, you, lofty; forgot yer manners, didn't you? How's about a nice salute for the vogt's hat?"

"I know you, Tell, yer a troublemaker, ain't you? Well, we don't want no bovver here, so just be a good boy and salute the friggin' hat. Do it now: I ain't gonna ask you again..."
"OK, Herr Tell, now you're in real trouble. I asked you nice, but you was too proud and too stupid. I think it's time that the vogt had a little word with you."

And with that the soldiers seize you and Walter and, while the sergeant hurries off to fetch Gessler, the rest drag you roughly towards the old lime tree growing in the marketplace.

Marketplace near the square
Altdorf's marketplace, close by the town square, has been hastily cleared of stalls. A troop of soldiers has pushed back the crowd to leave a clear space in front of the lime tree, which has been growing here for as long as anybody can remember. Usually it provides shade for the old men of the town, who gather below to gossip, watch the girls, and play cards. Today, though, it stands alone... apart, that is, from Walter, who has been lashed to the trunk. About forty yards away, you are restrained by two of the vogt's men.

Gessler is watching from a safe distance, a sneer on his face.

"It appears that you need to be taught a lesson, fool. Nobody shall pass through the square without paying homage to His Imperial Highness Albert; nobody, hear me? I could have you beheaded for treason, but I'm going to be lenient. If you should be so foolish again, you can expect no mercy, but this time, I'll let you go free... just as soon as you demonstrate your archery skills by hitting this apple from where you stand. That shouldn't prove too difficult; here, sergeant, catch. Balance it on the little bastard's head."

> X GESSLER
Short, stout but with a thin, mean face, Gessler relishes the power he holds over the local community.

> X WALTER
He stares at you, trying to appear brave and remain still. His arms are pulled back and tied behind the trunk, and the apple nestles amid his blond hair.

> X APPLE
At this distance you can barely see it.

> SHOOT THE APPLE
Slowly and steadily, you place an arrow in the bow, draw back the string, and take aim with more care than ever in your life. Holding your breath, unblinking, fearful, you release the arrow. It flies across the square towards your son, and drives the apple against the trunk of the tree. The crowd erupts with joy; Gessler looks distinctly disappointed.

*** You have won ***

In that game you scored 3 out of a possible 3, in 17 turns.

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game or QUIT?
> QUIT
Game source code

Constant Story "William Tell";
Constant Headline
   "A simple Inform example
   by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich."
Release 3; Serial "040804"; ! for keeping track of public releases

Constant MAX_SCORE = 3;

Include "Parser";
Include "VerbLib";

! Object classes

Class Room
   has light;

Class Prop
   with before [];
       Examine:
           return false;
       default:
           print_ret "You don't need to worry about ", (the) self, ".";
   ],
   has scenery;

Class Furniture
   with before [];
       Take,Pull,Push,PushDir:
           print_ret (The) self, " is too heavy for that.";
   ],
   has static supporter;

Class Arrow
   with name 'arrow' 'arrows//p',
       article "an",
       plural "arrows",
       description "Just like all your other arrows -- sharp and true.",
   before [];
       Drop,Give,ThrowAt:
           print_ret "Your arrows are sharp, and you guard them carefully.";
   ];

Class NPC
   with life [];
       Answer,Ask,Order,Tell:
           print_ret "Just use T[ALK] [TO ", (the) self, "].";
   ],
   has animate;
The game objects

Room street "A street in Altdorf"
with description [;
    print "The narrow street runs north towards the town square. Local folk are pouring into the town through the gate to the south, shouting greetings, offering produce for sale, exchanging news, enquiring with exaggerated disbelief about the prices of the goods displayed by merchants whose stalls make progress even more difficult.";
    if (self hasnt visited)
        print "^~Stay close to me, son,~ you say, ~or you'll get lost among all these people.~^";
],
    n_to below_square,
    s_to
    "The crowd, pressing north towards the square, makes that impossible.";

Prop "south gate" street
with name 'south' 'southern' 'wooden' 'gate',
    description "The large wooden gate in the town walls is wide open.";

Prop "assorted stalls"
with name 'assorted' 'stalls',
    description "Food, clothing, mountain gear; the usual stuff.",
    found_in street below_square,
    has pluralname;

Prop "produce"
with name 'goods' 'produce' 'food' 'clothing' 'mountain' 'gear' 'stuff',
    description "Nothing special catches your eye.",
    found_in street below_square,
    has pluralname;

Prop "merchants"
with name 'merchant' 'merchants' 'trader' 'traders',
    description
    "A few crooks, but mostly decent traders touting their wares with raucous overstatement.",
    found_in street below_square,
    has animate pluralname;

Prop "local people"
with name 'people' 'folk' 'local' 'crowd',
    description "Mountain folk, just like yourself.",
    found_in [; return true; ],
    has animate pluralname;

Room below_square "Further along the street"
with description
    "People are still pushing and shoving their way from the southern gate towards the town square, just a little further north. You recognise the owner of a fruit and vegetable stall.",
    n_to south_square,
    s_to street;
Furniture  stall "fruit and vegetable stall" below_square
    with name 'fruit' 'veg' 'vegetable' 'stall' 'table',
    description
        "It's really only a small table, with a big heap of potatoes,
         some carrots and turnips, and a few apples.",
    before [;
        Search:
            <<Examine self>>;
    ],
    has  scenery;
Prop  "potatoes" below_square
    with name 'potato' 'potatoes' 'spuds',
    description
        "Must be a particularly early variety... by some 300 years!",
    has  pluralname;
Prop  "fruit and vegetables" below_square
    with name 'carrot' 'carrots' 'turnip' 'turnips' 'apples' 'vegetables',
    description "Fine locally grown produce.",
    has  pluralname;
NPC  stallholder "Helga" below_square
    with name 'stallholder' 'greengrocer' 'monger' 'shopkeeper' 'merchant'
        'owner' 'Helga' 'dress' 'scarf' 'headscarf',
    description
        "Helga is a plump, cheerful woman,
         concealed beneath a shapeless dress and a spotted headscarf.",
    initial [;
        print "Helga pauses from sorting potatoes
to give you a cheery wave.^";
        if (location hasnt visited) {
            move apple to player;
            print "^~Hello, Wilhelm, it's a fine day for trade! Is this young Walter? My, how he's grown. Here's an apple for him-- tell him to mind that scabby part, but the rest's good enough. How's Frau Tell? Give her my best wishes.^~";
        }
    ],
    times_spoken_to 0,  ! for counting the conversation topics
    life [;
    Talk:
        self.times_spoken_to = self.times_spoken_to + 1;
        switch (self.times_spoken_to) {
            1: score = score + 1;
            print_ret "You warmly thank Helga for the apple."
            2: print_ret "~See you again soon.~";
            default:
                return false;
        }
    ],
    has  female proper;
Room south_square "South side of the square"
with description
"The narrow street to the south has opened onto the town square, and resumes at the far side of this cobbled meeting place. To continue along the street towards your destination -- Johansson's tannery -- you must walk north across the square, in the middle of which you see Gessler's hat set on that loathsome pole. If you go on, there's no way you can avoid passing it. Imperial soldiers jostle rudely through the throng, pushing, kicking and swearing loudly."

n_to mid_square,
s_to below_square;

Prop "hat on a pole"
with name 'hat' 'pole',
before [];
default:
    print_ret "You're too far away at the moment."
],
found_in south_square north_square;

Prop "Gessler's soldiers"
with name 'soldier' 'soldiers' 'guard' 'guards',
description "They're uncouth, violent men, not from around here."
, before [];
FireAt:
    print_ret "You're outnumbered many times."
Talk:
    print_ret "Such scum are beneath your contempt."
],
found_in south_square mid_square north_square marketplace,
has animate pluralname proper;

Room mid_square "Middle of the square"
with description
"There is less of a crush in the middle of the square; most people prefer to keep as far away as possible from the pole which towers here, topped with that absurd ceremonial hat. A group of soldiers stands nearby, watching everyone who passes."

n_to north_square,
s_to south_square,
warnings_count 0, ! for counting the soldier's warnings
before [;
    Go:
    if (noun == s_obj) {
        self.warnings_count = 0;
        pole.has_been_saluted = false;
    }
    if (noun == n_obj) {
        if (pole.has_been_saluted == true) {
            print "\^~Be sure to have a nice day.\^\";
            return false;
        }  ! end of (pole has_been_saluted)
        else {
            self.warnings_count = self.warnings_count + 1;
            switch (self.warnings_count) {
                1: print_ret "A soldier bars your way. \^\n                    ~Oi, you, lofty; forgot yer manners, didn't you? \n                    How's about a nice salute for the vogt's hat?~";
                2: print_ret "\^~I know you, Tell, yer a troublemaker, \n                    ain't you? Well, we don't want no bovver here, \n                    so just be a good boy and salute the friggin' \n                    hat. Do it now: I ain't gonna ask you again...~";
                default:  
                    print "\^~OK, ~;
                        style underline; print "Herr"; style roman;
                        print " Tell, now you're in real trouble. I asked you \n                        nice, but you was too proud and too stupid. I \n                        think it's time that the vogt had a little word \n                        with you.~\n                        ^^\n                        And with that the soldiers seize you and Walter \n                        and, while the sergeant hurries off to fetch \n                        Gessler, the rest drag you roughly towards the \n                        old lime tree growing in the marketplace.\^";
                    move apple to son;
                    PlayerTo(marketplace);
                    return true;
            }  ! end of switch
        }  ! end of (pole has_NOT_been_saluted)
    }  ! end of (noun == n_obj)
];

Furniture  pole "hat on a pole" mid_square
     with name 'wooden' 'pole' 'pine' 'hat' 'black' 'red' 'brim' 'feathers',
     description
     "The pole, the trunk of a small pine some few inches in diameter, \n     stands about nine or ten feet high. Set carefully on top is \n     Gessler's ludicrous black and red leather hat, with a widely \n     curving brim and a cluster of dyed goose feathers.",
     has_been_saluted false,
before [;
    FireAt:
    print_ret "Tempting, but you're not looking for trouble.\";
    Salute:
    self.has_been_saluted = true;
    print_ret "You salute the hat on the pole. ^^\n            ~Why, thank you, sir,~ sneers the soldier.";
],
has  scenery;
Room north_square "North side of the square"
with description
   "A narrow street leads north from the cobbled square. In its
centre, a little way south, you catch a last glimpse of the pole
and hat."
   n_to E;
   deadflag = 3;
   print_ret "With Walter at your side, you leave the square by the
north street, heading for Johansson's tannery."
   ],
   s_to "You hardly feel like going through all that again."

Room marketplace "Marketplace near the square"
with description
   "Altdorf's marketplace, close by the town square, has been hastily
cleared of stalls. A troop of soldiers has pushed back the crowd
to leave a clear space in front of the lime tree, which has been
growing here for as long as anybody can remember. Usually it
provides shade for the old men of the town, who gather below to
gossip, watch the girls, and play cards. Today, though, it
stands alone... apart, that is, from Walter, who has been lashed
to the trunk. About forty yards away, you are restrained by two
of the vogt's men."
   cant_go "What? And leave your son tied up here?"

Object tree "lime tree" marketplace
with name 'lime' 'tree',
   description "It's just a large tree.",
   before [;
   FireAt:
      if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
         deadflag = 3;
         print_ret "Your hand shakes a little, and your arrow flies
high, hitting the trunk a few inches above Walter's
head."
      }
   return true;
   ],
   has scenery;
NPC governor "governor" marketplace
with name 'governor' 'vogt' 'Hermann' 'Gessler',
description
"Short, stout but with a thin, mean face, Gessler relishes the
power he holds over the local community."
initial [];
print "Gessler is watching from a safe distance,
a sneer on his face."
if (location hasnt visited)
print "~It appears that you need to be taught a lesson,
fool. Nobody shall pass through the square without paying
homage to His Imperial Highness Albert; nobody, hear me?
I could have you beheaded for treason, but I'm going to
be lenient. If you should be so foolish again, you can
expect no mercy, but this time, I'll let you go free...
just as soon as you demonstrate your archery skills by
hitting this apple from where you stand. That shouldn't
prove too difficult; here, sergeant, catch. Balance it on
the little bastard's head.~"
],
life [];
Talk:
print_ret "You cannot bring yourself to speak to him."
],
before [];
FireAt:
if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
deadflag = 3;
print_ret "Before the startled soldiers can react, you turn
and fire at Gessler; your arrow pierces his heart,
and he dies messily. A gasp, and then a cheer,
goes up from the crowd."
}
return true;
],
has male;

!============================================================================
! The player's possessions

Object bow "bow"
with name 'bow',
description "Your trusty yew bow, strung with flax.",
before [];
Drop,Give,ThrowAt:
print_ret "You're never without your trusty bow."
];

has clothing;

Object quiver "quiver"
with name 'quiver',
description "Made of goatskin, it usually hangs over your left shoulder.",
before [];
Drop,Give,ThrowAt:
print_ret "But it was a present from Hedwig, your wife."
];

has container open clothing;
Arrow  "arrow" quiver;
Arrow  "arrow" quiver;
Arrow  "arrow" quiver;

NPC  son "your son"
with  name 'son' 'your' 'boy' 'lad' 'Walter',
description [
    if (location == marketplace)
        print_ret "He stares at you, trying to appear brave and
        remain still. His arms are pulled back and tied behind
        the trunk, and the apple nestles amid his blond hair."
    else
        print_ret "A quiet, blond lad of eight summers, he's fast
        learning the ways of mountain folk."
],
life [;
    Give:
        score = score + 1;
        move noun to self;
        print_ret "~Thank you, Papa.~";
    Talk:
        if (location == marketplace)
            print_ret "~Stay calm, my son, and trust in God.~";
        else
            print_ret "You point out a few interesting sights."
],
before [;
    Examine,Listen,Salute,Talk:
        return false;
    FireAt:
        if (location == marketplace) {
            if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
                deadflag = 3;
                print_ret "Oops! Surely you didn't mean to do that?";
            }
            return true;
        }
        return false;
    default:
        if (location == marketplace)
            print_ret "Your guards won't permit it.";
        else
            return false;
    },
    found_in [; return true; ],
    has  male proper scenery transparent;
Object apple "apple"
with name 'apple',
description [
   if (location == marketplace)
      print_ret "At this distance you can barely see it.";
   else
      print_ret "The apple is blotchy green and brown."
],
before [
   Drop:
      print_ret "An apple is worth quite a bit --
   better hang on to it.";
   Eat:
      print_ret "Helga intended it for Walter."
   FireAt:
      if (location == marketplace) {
         if (BowOrArrow(second) == true) {
            score = score + 1;
            deadflag = 2;
            print_ret "Slowly and steadily, you place an arrow in
   the bow, draw back the string, and take aim with
   more care than ever in your life. Holding your
   breath, unblinking, fearful, you release the
   arrow. It flies across the square towards your
   son, and drives the apple against the trunk of
   the tree. The crowd erupts with joy;
   Gessler looks distinctly disappointed."
         }
         return true;
      }
      else
         return false;
];
Entry point routines

[ Initialise;
  location = street;
  lookmode = 2;  ! like the VERBOSE command
  move bow to player;
  move quiver to player; give quiver worn;
  player.description =
    "You wear the traditional clothing of a Swiss mountaineer."
  print_ret "^^
    The place: Altdorf, in the Swiss canton of Uri. The year is 1307,
    at which time Switzerland is under rule by the Emperor Albert of
    Habsburg. His local governor -- the vogt -- is the bullying
    Hermann Gessler, who has placed his hat atop a wooden pole in
    the centre of the town square; everybody who passes through the
    square must bow to this hated symbol of imperial might.
    ^^
    You have come from your cottage high in the mountains,
    accompanied by your younger son, to purchase provisions. You are
    a proud and independent man, a hunter and guide, renowned both
    for your skill as an archer and, perhaps unwisely (for his soldiers
    are everywhere), for failing to hide your dislike of the vogt.
    ^^
    It's market-day: the town is packed with people from the
    surrounding villages and settlements.";
];

[ DeathMessage; print "You have screwed up a favourite folk story"; ];

Standard and extended grammar

Include "Grammar";

[ TalkSub;
  if (noun == player) print_ret "Nothing you hear surprises you.";
  if (RunLife(noun,##Talk) ~= false) return;  ! consult life[; Talk: ]
    print_ret "At the moment, you can't think of anything to say."
];

Verb 'talk' 't//' 'converse' 'chat' 'gossip'
  * 'to'/'with' creature    -> Talk
  * creature               -> Talk;
APPENDIX C • "WILLIAM TELL" STORY

!----------------------------------------------------------------------------
[ BowOrArrow o;
  if (o == bow or nothing || o ofclass Arrow) return true;
  print "That's an unlikely weapon, isn't it?";
  return false;
];

[ FireAtSub;
  if (noun == nothing)
    print_ret "What, just fire off an arrow at random?";
  if (BowOrArrow(second) == true)
    print_ret "Unthinkable!";
];

Verb 'fire' 'shoot' 'aim'
 *      -> FireAt
 * noun -> FireAt
 * 'at' noun -> FireAt
 * 'at' noun 'with' noun -> FireAt
 * noun 'with' noun -> FireAt
 * noun 'at' noun -> FireAt reverse;

Extend 'attack' replace
 * noun -> FireAt;

!----------------------------------------------------------------------------
[ SaluteSub;
  if (noun has animate) print_ret (The) noun, " acknowledges you."
    print_ret (The) noun, " takes no notice."
];

Verb 'bow' 'nod' 'kowtow' 'genuflect'
 * 'at'/'to'/"towards" noun -> Salute;

Verb 'salute' 'greet' 'acknowledge'
 * noun -> Salute;

Extend 'give'
 * 'homage' 'to' noun -> Salute;

Extend 'wave'
 * 'at' noun -> Salute;

!----------------------------------------------------------------------------
[ UntieSub; print_ret "You really shouldn't try that." ];

Verb 'untie' 'unfasten' 'unfix' 'free' 'release'
 * noun -> Untie;

!----------------------------------------------------------------------------
Your understanding of how the “William Tell” game works will be considerably enhanced if you type in the code for yourself as you read through the guide. However, it takes us four chapters to describe the game, which isn’t complete and playable until the end of Chapter 9. Even if you make no mistakes in your typing, the game won’t compile without errors before that point, because of references in earlier chapters to objects which aren’t presented until later chapters (for example, Chapter 6 mentions the bow and quiver objects, but we don’t define them until Chapter 7). This is a bit of a nuisance, because as a general rule we advise you to compile frequently – more or less after every change you make to a game – in order to detect syntax and spelling mistakes as soon as possible.

Fortunately, there’s a fairly easy way round the difficulty, though it involves a little bit of cheating. The trick is temporarily to add minimal definitions – often called “stubs” – of the objects whose full definitions have yet to be provided.

For example, if you try to compile the game in the state that it’s reached by the end of Chapter 6, you’ll get this:

```
Tell.inf(16): Warning: Class "Room" declared but not used
Tell.inf(19): Warning: Class "Prop" declared but not used
Tell.inf(27): Warning: Class "Furniture" declared but not used
Tell.inf(44): Error: No such constant as "street"
Tell.inf(46): Error: No such constant as "bow"
Tell.inf(47): Error: No such constant as "quiver"
Compiled with 3 errors and 3 warnings
```

However, by adding these lines to the end of your game file:

```plaintext
! ===============================================================
! TEMPORARY DEFINITIONS NEEDED TO COMPILE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 6
Room  street;
Object  bow;
Object  quiver;
```

a compilation should now give only this:

```
Tell.inf(19): Warning: Class "Prop" declared but not used
Tell.inf(27): Warning: Class "Furniture" declared but not used
Compiled with 2 warnings
```

That’s a lot better. It’s not worth worrying about those warnings, since it’s easy to understand where they come from; anyway, they’ll go away shortly. More important, there are no errors, which means that you’ve probably not made any major typing mistakes. It also means that the compiler has created a story file, so you can try “playing” the game. If you do, though, you’ll get this:
Whoops! We’ve fallen foul of Inform’s rule saying that every room must have a description property, to be displayed by the interpreter when you enter that room. Our street stub hasn’t got a description, so although the game compiles successfully, it still causes an error to be reported at run-time.

The best way round this is to extend the definition of our Room class, thus:

```
Class  Room
   with  description "UNDER CONSTRUCTION",
         has  light;
```

By doing this, we ensure that every room has a description of some form; normally we’d override this default value with something meaningful – “The narrow street runs north towards the town square...” and so on – by including a description property in the object’s definition. However, in a stub object used only for testing, a default description is sufficient (and less trouble):

```
William Tell
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 3 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD

(street)
>INVENTORY
You are carrying:
a (quiver) (being worn)
a (bow)

>EXAMINE QUIVER
You can’t see any such thing.
```

You’ll notice a couple of interesting points. Because we didn’t supply external names with our street, bow and quiver stubs, the compiler has provided some for us – (street), (bow) and (quiver) – simply by adding parentheses around the internal IDs which we used. And, because our bow and quiver stubs have no name properties, we can’t actually refer to those objects when playing the game. Neither of these points would be acceptable in a finished game, but for testing purposes at this early stage – they’ll do.

So far, we’ve seen how the addition of three temporary object definitions enables us to compile the incomplete game, in its state at the end of Chapter 6. But once
we reach the end of Chapter 7, things have moved on, and we now need a
different set of stub objects. For a test compilation at this point, remove the
previous set of stubs, and instead add these – south_square and apple objects, and
a dummy action handler to satisfy the Talk action in Helga’s life property:

```
! ===============================================================
! TEMPORARY DEFINITIONS NEEDED TO COMPILE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 7

Room  south_square;
Object  apple;
[ TalkSub; ];
```

Similarly, at the end of Chapter 8, replace the previous stubs by these if you wish
to check that the game compiles:

```
! ===============================================================
! TEMPORARY DEFINITIONS NEEDED TO COMPILE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 8

Room  marketplace;
Object  apple;
NPC  son;
[ TalkSub; ];
[ FireAtSub; ];
[ SaluteSub; ];
```

Finally, by the end of Chapter 9 the game is complete, so you can delete the stubs
altogether.

Used with care, this technique of creating a few minimal stub objects can be
convenient – it enables you to “sketch” a portion of your game in outline form,
and to compile and test the game in that state, without needing to create complete
object definitions. However, you’ve got very little interaction with your stubs, so
don’t create too many of them. And of course, never forget to flesh out the stubs
into full definitions as soon as you can.
Appendix D • “Captain Fate” story

Captain Fate is our third and final game; it’s a little longer and more complex than its predecessors. See “Captain Fate: take 1” on page 119, “Captain Fate: take 2” on page 131, “Captain Fate: take 3” on page 147 and “Captain Fate: the final cut” on page 157.

Transcript of play

Impersonating mild mannered John Covarth, assistant help boy at an insignificant drugstore, you suddenly STOP when your acute hearing deciphers a stray radio call from the POLICE. There's some MADMAN attacking the population in Granary Park! You must change into your Captain FATE costume fast...!

Captain Fate
A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich.
Release 3 / Serial number 040804 / Inform v6.30 Library 6/11 SD

On the street
On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth.

>EXAMINE ME
In your secret identity’s outfit, you manage most efficaciously to look like a two-cent loser, a good-for-nothing wimp.

>INVENTORY
You are carrying:
  your clothes (being worn)
  your costume

>X COSTUME
STATE OF THE ART manufacture, from chemically reinforced 100% COTTON-lastic(tm).

>REMOVE CLOTHES
In the middle of the street? That would be a PUBLIC SCANDAL, to say nothing of revealing your secret identity.

>X BOOTH
It’s one of the old picturesque models, a red cabin with room for one caller.

>ENTER IT
With implausible celerity, you dive inside the phone booth.

>REMOVE CLOTHES
Lacking Superman’s super-speed, you realise that it would be awkward to change in plain view of the passing pedestrians.

>OUT
You get out of the phone booth.
On the street
On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth.

>Cafe
The town's favourite for a quick snack, Benny's cafe has a 50's ROCKETSHP look.

>Enter Cafe
With an impressive mixture of hurry and nonchalance you step into the open cafe.

Inside Benny's cafe
Benny's offers the FINEST selection of pastries and sandwiches. Customers clog the counter, where Benny himself manages to serve, cook and charge without missing a step. At the north side of the cafe you can see a red door connecting with the toilet.

>Open Door
It seems to be locked.

>X It
A red door with the unequivocal black man-woman silhouettes marking the entrance to hygienic facilities. There is a scribbled note stuck on its surface.

>Read The Note
You apply your ENHANCED ULTRAFREQUENCY vision to the note and squint in concentration, giving up only when you see the borders of the note begin to blacken under the incredible intensity of your burning stare. You reflect once more how helpful it would've been if you'd ever learnt to read.

A kind old lady passes by and explains: "You have to ask Benny for the key, at the counter."

You turn quickly and begin, "Oh, I KNOW that, but..."

"My pleasure, son," says the lady, as she exits the cafe.

>Benny
A deceptively FAT man of uncanny agility, Benny entertains his customers crushing coconuts against his forehead when the mood strikes him.

>Ask Benny For The Key
"Toilet is only fer customers," he grumbles, looking pointedly at a menu board behind him.

>Menu
The menu board lists Benny's food and drinks, along with their prices. Too bad you've never learnt how to read, but luckily there is a picture of a big cup of coffee among the incomprehensible writing.

>Benny, Give Me A Coffee
With two gracious steps, Benny places his world-famous Cappuccino in front of you.

>Benny, Give Me The Key
Benny tosses the key to the rest rooms on the counter, where you grab it with a dextrous and precise movement of your HYPER-AGILE hand.

>Unlock Door With Key
You unlock the door to the toilet and open it.

>N
Unisex toilet
A surprisingly CLEAN square room covered with glazed-ceramic tiles, featuring little more than a lavatory and a light switch. The only exit is south, through the door and into the cafe.

[Your score has just gone up by one point.]

>SWITCH ON LIGHT
You turn on the light in the toilet.

>CLOSE DOOR
You close the door to the cafe.

>LOCK DOOR WITH KEY
You lock the door to the cafe.

>X LAVATORY
The latest user CIVILLY flushed it after use, but failed to pick up the VALUABLE coin that fell from his pants.

>TAKE COIN
You crouch into the SLEEPING DRAGON position and deftly, with PARAMOUNT STEALTH, you pocket the lost coin.

[Your score has just gone up by one point.]

>REMOVE CLOTHES
You quickly remove your street clothes and bundle them up together into an INFRA MINUSCULE pack ready for easy transportation. Then you unfold your INVULNERABLE-COTTON costume and turn into Captain FATE, defender of free will, adversary of tyranny!

>UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY
You unlock the door to the cafe and open it.

>S

Inside Benny's cafe
Benny's offers the FINEST selection of pastries and sandwiches. Customers clog the counter, where Benny himself manages to serve, cook and charge without missing a step. At the north side of the cafe you can see a red door connecting with the toilet.

On the counter is a cup of coffee.

Nearby customers glance at your costume with open curiosity.

"Didn't know there was a circus in town," comments one customer to another. "Seems like the clowns have the day off."

>DRINK COFFEE
You pick up the cup and swallow a mouthful. Benny's WORLDWIDE REPUTATION is well deserved. Just as you finish, Benny takes away the empty cup. "That will be one quidbuck, sir."

>PAY COIN TO BENNY
With marvellous ILLUSIONIST gestures, you produce the coin from the depths of your BULLET-PROOF costume as if it had dropped on the counter from Benny's ear! People around you clap politely. Benny takes the coin and gives it a SUSPICIOUS bite. "Thank you, sir. Come back anytime," he says.
"These fashion designers don't know what to do to show off," snorts a fat gentleman, looking your way. Those within earshot try to conceal their smiles.

>PUT KEY ON COUNTER
Benny nods as you ADMIRABLY return his key.

"Must be carnival again," says a man to his wife, who giggles, stealing a peek at you. "Time sure flies."

>S
You step onto the sidewalk, where the passing pedestrians recognise the rainbow EXTRAVAGANZA of Captain FATE's costume and cry your name in awe as you JUMP with sensational momentum into the BLUE morning skies!

*** You fly away to SAVE the DAY ***

In that game you scored 2 out of a possible 2, in 32 turns.

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game or QUIT?
> QUIT
Game source code

!============================================================================
Constant Story "Captain Fate";
Constant Headline
"A simple Inform example
by Roger Firth and Sonja Kesserich."
!Release 1; Serial "020428"; ! IBG first edition (public beta)
!Release 2; Serial "020827"; ! IBG second edition
Release 3; Serial "040804"; ! for keeping track of public releases

Constant MANUAL_PRONOUNS;
Constant MAX_SCORE 2;
Constant OBJECT_SCORE 1;
Constant ROOM_SCORE 1;

Replace MakeMatch; ! required by pname.h
Replace Identical;
Replace NounDomain;
Replace TryGivenObject;

Include "Parser";
Include "pname"; ! pname.h is from the Archive

Object LibraryMessages ! must be defined between Parser and VerbLib
with before {
    Buy: "Petty commerce interests you only on COUNTED occasions.";
    Dig: "Your keen senses detect NOTHING underground worth your immediate attention.";
    Pray: "You won't need to bother almighty DIVINITIES to save the day.";
    Sing: "Alas! That is not one of your many superpowers.";
    Sleep: "A hero is ALWAYS on the watch.";
    Sorry: "Captain FATE prefers ACTION over apologies.";
    Strong: "An unlikely vocabulary for a HERO like you.";
    Swim: "You quickly turn all your ATTENTION towards locating a suitable place to EXERCISE your superior strokes, but alas! you find none.";

Miscellany:
if (lm_n == 19)
    if (clothes has worn)
        "In your secret identity's outfit, you manage most efficaciously to look like a two-cent loser, a good-for-nothing wimp."
    else
        "Now that you are wearing your costume, you project the image of power UNBOUND, of ballooned, multicoloured MUSCLE, of DASHING yet MODEST chic."
if (lm_n == 38)
    "That's not a verb you need to SUCCESSFULLY save the day."
if (lm_n == 39)
    "That's not something you need to refer to in order to SAVE the day."
};

Include "VerbLib";
Object classes

Class Room
  with description "UNDER CONSTRUCTION",
  has light;

Class Appliance
  with before [;
    Take, Pull, Push, PushDir:
      "Even though your SCULPTED adamantine muscles are up to the task,
       you don't favour property damage.";
  ],
  has scenery;

The game objects

Room street "On the street"
  with name 'city' 'buildings' 'skyscrapers' 'shops' 'apartments' 'cars',
  description [;
    if (player in booth)
      "From this VANTAGE point, you are rewarded with a broad view
       of the sidewalk and the entrance to Benny's cafe.";
    else
      "On one side -- which your HEIGHTENED sense of direction
       indicates is NORTH -- there's an open cafe now serving
       lunch. To the south, you can see a phone booth.";
  ],
  before [;
    Go:
      if (player in booth && noun == n_obj) <<Exit booth>>;
  ],
  n_to [; <<Enter outside_of_cafe>>; ],
  s_to [; <<Enter booth>>; ],
  in_to "But which way?",
  cant_go
    "No time now for exploring! You'll move much faster in your
     Captain FATE costume.";

Object "pedestrians" street
  with name 'passing' 'people' 'pedestrians',
  description
    "They're just PEOPLE going about their daily HONEST business.",
  before [;
    Examine:
      return false;
    default:
      "The passing pedestrians are of NO concern to you.";
  ],
  has animate pluralname scenery;
Appliance booth "phone booth" street
with name 'old' 'red' 'picturesque' 'phone' 'booth' 'cabin'
'telephone' 'box',
description
"It's one of the old picturesque models, a red cabin with room
for one caller."
before[];
Open:
"The booth is already open.";
Close:
"There's no way to close this booth.";
],
after[];
Enter:
"With implausible celerity, you dive inside the phone booth.";
],
has enterable container open;

Appliance "sidewalk" street
with name 'sidewalk' 'pavement' 'street',
article "the",
description
"You make a quick surveillance of the sidewalk and discover much
to your surprise that it looks JUST like any other sidewalk in
the CITY!";

Appliance outside_of_cafe "Benny's cafe" street
with name 'benny^s' 'cafe' 'entrance',
description
"The town's favourite for a quick snack, Benny's cafe has a 50's
ROCKETSHIP look.",
before[];
Enter:
print "With an impressive mixture of hurry and nonchalance you
step into the open cafe."
PlayerTo(cafe);
return true;
],
has enterable proper;

----------------------------------------------------------------------------
Room cafe "Inside Benny's cafe"

with description

"Benny's offers the FINEST selection of pastries and sandwiches. Customers clog the counter, where Benny himself manages to serve, cook and charge without missing a step. At the north side of the cafe you can see a red door connecting with the toilet."

before 

Go: ! The player is about to depart. Is he making for the street?
    if (noun ~= s_obj) return false;
    if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true || benny.key_not_returned == true) {
        print "Just as you are stepping into the street, the big hand of Benny falls on your shoulder."
        if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true && benny.key_not_returned == true)
            "^^~Hey! You've got my key and haven't paid for the coffee. Do I look like a chump?~ You apologise as only a HERO knows how to do and return inside.~"
        if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true)
            "^^~Just waidda minute here, Mister,~ he says. ~Sneaking out without paying, are you?~ You quickly mumble an excuse and go back into the cafe. Benny returns to his chores with a mistrusting eye.~"
        if (benny.key_not_returned == true)
            "^^~Just where you think you're going with the toilet key?~ he says. ~You a thief?~ As Benny forces you back into the cafe, you quickly assure him that it was only a STUPEFYING mistake.~"
    }
    if (costume has worn) {
        deadflag = 5;  ! you win!
        "You step onto the sidewalk, where the passing pedestrians recognise the rainbow EXTRAVAGANZA of Captain FATE's costume and cry your name in awe as you JUMP with sensational momentum into the BLUE morning skies!~"
    }
}

first_time_out false,  ! Captain Fate's first appearance?
after 

Go: ! The player has just arrived. Did he come from the toilet?
    if (noun ~= s_obj) return false;
    if (costume has worn && self.first_time_out == false) {
        self.first_time_out = true;
        StartDaemon(customers);
    }
}

s_to street,
n_to toilet_door;
Appliance counter "counter" cafe
with name 'counter' 'bar',
article "the",
description
"The counter is made of an astonishing ALLOY of metals, STAIN-PROOF, SPILL-RESISTANT and VERY EASY to clean. Customers enjoy their snacks with UTTER tranquillity, safe in the notion that the counter can take it all.”,
before [;
Receive:
<<Give noun benny>>;
],
has supporter;

Object food "Benny's snacks" cafe
with name 'food' 'pastry' 'pastries' 'sandwich' 'sandwiches' 'snack' 'snacks' 'doughnut',
before [; "There is no time for FOOD right now.; ”],
has scenery proper;

Object menu "menu" cafe
with name 'informative' 'menu' 'board' 'picture' 'writing',
description
"The menu board lists Benny's food and drinks, along with their prices. Too bad you've never learnt how to read, but luckily there is a picture of a big cup of coffee among the incomprehensible writing.”,
before [;
Take:
"The board is mounted on the wall behind Benny. Besides, it's useless WRITING.";
],
has scenery;
Object customers "customers" cafe
with name 'customers' 'people' 'customer' 'men' 'women',
description [];
  if (costume has worn)
    "Most seem to be concentrating on their food, but some do
look at you quite blatantly. Must be the MIND-BEFUDDLING
colours of your costume.";
  else
    "A group of HELPLESS and UNSUSPECTING mortals, the kind
Captain FATE swore to DEFEND the day his parents choked on a
DEVIOUS slice of RASPBERRY PIE.";
],
life [];
Ask,Tell,Answer:
  if (costume has worn)
    "People seem to MISTRUST the look of your FABULOUS costume.";
  else
    "As John Covarth, you attract LESS interest than Benny's
food.";
Kiss:
  "There's no telling what sorts of MUTANT bacteria these
STRANGERS may be carrying around.";
Attack:
  "Mindless massacre of civilians is the qualification for
VILLAINS. You are SUPPOSED to protect the likes of these
people.";
],
orders [];
  "These people don't appear to be of the cooperative sort.";
],
number_of_comments 0,                   ! for counting the customer comments
daemon [];
  if (location ~= cafe) return;
  if (self.number_of_comments == 0) {
    self.number_of_comments = 1;
    print "^Nearby customers glance at your costume with open
curiosity.^";
  }
  if (random(2) == 1) {  ! do this 50% of the time
    self.number_of_comments = self.number_of_comments + 1;
    switch (self.number_of_comments) {
      2: "^~Didn't know there was a circus in town,~ comments one
        customer to another. ~Seems like the clowns have the
day off.~";
      3: "^~These fashion designers don't know what to do to show
        off,~ snorts a fat gentleman, looking your way. Those
within earshot try to conceal their smiles.";
      4: "^~Must be carnival again,~ says a man to his wife, who
        giggles, stealing a peek at you. ~Time sure flies.~";
      5: "^~Bad thing about big towns~, comments someone to his
        table companion, ~is you get the damnedest bugs coming
out from toilets.~";
      6: "^~I sure WISH I could go to work in my pyjamas,~ says a
        girl in an office suit to some colleagues. ~It looks SO
comfortable.~";
      default: StopDaemon(self);
    }
  }
],
has scenery animate pluralname;
Object benny "Benny" cafe
with name 'benny',
description
  "A deceptively FAT man of uncanny agility, Benny entertains his
  customers crushing coconuts against his forehead when the mood
  strikes him.",
coffee_asked_for false, ! has player asked for a coffee?
coffee_not_paid false, ! is Benny waiting to be paid?
key_not_returned false, ! is Benny waiting for the key?
life [;]
Give:
  switch (noun) {
clothes:
    "You NEED your unpretentious John Covarth clothes.";
costume:
    "You NEED your stupendous ACID-PROTECTIVE suit.";
toilet_key:
    self.key_not_returned = false;
    move toilet_key to benny;
    "Benny nods as you ADMIRABLY return his key.";
coin:
    remove coin;
    self.coffee_not_paid = false;
    print "With marvellous ILLUSIONIST gestures, you produce the
    coin from the depths of your ";
    if (costume has worn) print "BULLET-PROOF costume";
    else print "ordinary street clothes";
    " as if it had dropped on the counter from Benny's ear!
    People around you clap politely. Benny takes the coin
    and gives it a SUSPICIOUS bite. ~Thank you, sir. Come
    back anytime,~ he says.";
  }
Attack:
  if (costume has worn) {
    deadflag = 4;
    print "Before the horror-stricken eyes of the surrounding
    people, you MAGNIFICENTLY jump OVER the counter and
    attack Benny with REMARKABLE, albeit NOT sufficient,
    speed. Benny receives you with a TREACHEROUS upper-cut
    that sends your GRANITE JAW flying through the cafe.^^
    ~These guys in pyjamas think they can bully innocent
    folk,~ snorts Benny, as the EERIE hands of DARKNESS
    engulf your vision and you lose consciousness.";
  }
else
  "That would be an unlikely act for MEEK John Covarth.";
Kiss:
  "This is no time for MINDLESS infatuation.";
Ask,Tell,Answer:
  "Benny is too busy for idle chit-chat.";
orders [; ] handles ASK BENNY FOR X and BENNY, GIVE ME XXX
Give:
  if (second ≈ player or nothing) "Benny looks at you strangely.";
  switch (noun) {
    toilet_key:
      if (toilet_key in player) "But you DO have the key already.";
      if (self.coffee_asked_for == true)
        if (toilet_key in self) {
          move toilet_key to player;
          self.key_not_returned = true;
          "Benny tosses the key to the rest rooms on the
          counter, where you grab it with a dextrous and
          precise movement of your HYPER-AGILE hand.";
        }
      else
        "~Last place I saw that key, it was in YOUR
        possession,~ grumbles Benny. ~Be sure to return it
        before you leave.~";
      else
        "~Toilet is only fer customers,~ he grumbles, looking
        pointedly at a menu board behind him.";
    coffee:
      if (self.coffee_asked_for == true)
        "One coffee should be enough.";
      move coffee to counter;
      self.coffee_asked_for = self.coffee_not_paid = true;
      "With two gracious steps, Benny places his world-famous
      Cappuccino in front of you.";
    food:
      "Food will take too much time, and you must change NOW.";
    menu:
      "With only the smallest sigh, Benny nods towards the menu
      on the wall behind him.";
    default:
      "~I don't think that's on the menu, sir.~";
  }
],
has scenery animate male proper transparent;
Object coffee "cup of coffee" benny
  with name 'cup' 'of' 'coffee' 'steaming' 'cappuccino'
  'cappucino' 'capuccino' 'capucino',
  description [;
    if (self in benny)
      "The picture on the menu board SURE looks good.";
    else
      "It smells delicious.";
  ],
before [;
  Take,Drink,Taste:
    if (self in benny) "You should ask Benny for one first.";
    else {
      move self to benny;
      print "You pick up the cup and swallow a mouthful. Benny's
      WORLDWIDE REPUTATION is well deserved. Just as you
      finish, Benny takes away the empty cup.";
      if (benny.coffee_not_paid == true)
        " ~That will be one quidbuck, sir.~";
      else
        " =;";}
Buy:
if (coin in player) <<Give coin benny>>;
else "You have no money."
Smell:
"If your HYPERACTIVE pituitary glands are to be trusted,
it's Colombian."

Object outside_of_toilet "toilet" cafe
with name 'toilet' 'bath' 'rest' 'room' 'bathroom' 'restroom',
before {};

Enter:
if (toilet_door has open) {
    PlayerTo(toilet);
    return true;
}
else
    "Your SUPERB deductive mind detects that the DOOR is CLOSED."

Examine:
if (toilet_door has open)
    "A brilliant thought flashes through your SUPERLATIVE brain: detailed examination of the toilet would be EXTREMELY facilitated if you entered it."
else
    "With a TREMENDOUS effort of will, you summon your unfathomable ASTRAL VISION and project it FORWARD towards the closed door... until you remember that it's Dr Mystere who's the one with mystic powers."

Open:
<<Open toilet_door>>

Close:
<<Close toilet_door>>

Take, Push, Pull:
    "That would be PART of the building."
]
Object toilet_door
  with 
    pname '.x' 'red' '.x' 'toilet' 'door',
    short_name [;
      if (location == cafe) print "door to the toilet";
      else print "door to the cafe";
      return true;
    ],
    description [;
      if (location == cafe)
        "A red door with the unequivocal black man-woman silhouettes
         marking the entrance to hygienic facilities. There is a
         scribbled note stuck on its surface.";
      else
        "A red door with no OUTSTANDING features.";
    ],
    found_in cafe toilet,
    before [ ks;
      Open:
        if (self hasnt locked || toilet_key notin player) return false;
        ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
        <Unlock self toilet_key>; keep_silent = ks;
        return true;
      Lock:
        if (self hasnt open) return false;
        print "(first closing ", (the) self, ")^";
        ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
        <Close self>; keep_silent = ks;
        return false;
    ],
    after [ ks;
      Unlock:
        if (self has locked) return false;
        print "You unlock ", (the) self, " and open it.^";
        ks = keep_silent; keep_silent = true;
        <Open self>; keep_silent = ks;
        return true;
      Open:
        give toilet light;
      Close:
        give toilet ~light;
    ],
    door_dir [;
      if (location == cafe) return n_to;
      else return s_to;
    ],
    door_to [;
      if (location == cafe) return toilet;
      else return cafe;
    ],
    with_key toilet_key,
    has scenery door openable lockable locked;
Object toilet_key "toilet key" benny
with
  pname '.x' 'toilet' 'key',
  article "the",
  invent [],
  if (clothes has worn) print "the CRUCIAL key";
  else print "the used and IRRELEVANT key";
  return true;
],
description
  "Your SUPRA PERCEPTIVE senses detect nothing of consequence about the toilet key."
before [];
  if (self in benny)
    "You SCAN your surroundings with ENHANCED AWARENESS, but fail to detect any key."
    Drop:
    "Benny is trusting you to look after that key.";
];

Object "scribbled note" cafe
with
  name 'scribbled' 'note',
description [];
  if (self.read_once == false) {
    self.read_once = true;
    "You apply your ENHANCED ULTRAFREQUENCY vision to the note and squint in concentration, giving up only when you see the borders of the note begin to blacken under the incredible intensity of your burning stare. You reflect once more how helpful it would've been if you'd ever learnt to read. ^^A kind old lady passes by and explains: ~You have to ask Benny for the key, at the counter.~ ^^You turn quickly and begin, ~Oh, I KNOW that, but...~ ^^~My pleasure, son,~ says the lady, as she exits the cafe.";
  }
  else
    "The scorched undecipherable note holds no SECRETS from you NOW! Ha!";
],
read_once false,  ! has the player read the note once?
before [];
  Take:
    "No reason to start collecting UNDECIPHERABLE notes.";
],
has scenery;

!----------------------------------------------------------------------------
Room toilet "Unisex toilet"
with
  description
    "A surprisingly CLEAN square room covered with glazed-ceramic tiles, featuring little more than a lavatory and a light switch. The only exit is south, through the door and into the cafe.",
  s_to toilet_door,
  has ~light scored;
Appliance light_switch "light switch" toilet
with name 'light' 'switch',
description
  "A notorious ACHIEVEMENT of technological SCIENCE, elegant yet
  EASY to use.",
before [
  Push:
    if (self has on) <<SwitchOff self>>;
    else  <<SwitchOn  self>>;
],
after [
  SwitchOn:
    give self light;
    "You turn on the light in the toilet.";
  SwitchOff:
    give self ~light;
    "You turn off the light in the toilet.",
],
has  switchable ~on;

Appliance lavatory "lavatory" toilet
with name 'lavatory' 'wc' 'toilet' 'loo' 'bowl' 'can' 'john' 'bog',
before [
  Examine,Search,LookUnder:
    if (coin in self) {
      move coin to parent(self);
      "The latest user CIVILLY flushed it after use, but failed to
      pick up the VALUABLE coin that fell from his pants.";
    }
  Receive:
    "While any other MORTALS might unwittingly throw just about
    ANYTHING into ", (the) self, ", you remember the WISE teachings
    of your mentor, Duke ELEGANT, about elderly plumbing and rising
    waters.",
],

Object coin "valuable coin" lavatory
with name 'valuable' 'coin' 'silver' 'quidbuck',
description "It's a genuine SILVER QUIDBUCK.",
before [
  Drop:
    if (self notin player) return false;
    "Such a valuable coin? Har, har! This must be a demonstration of
    your ULTRA-FLIPPANT jesting!";
],
after [
  Take:
    "You crouch into the SLEEPING DRAGON position and deftly, with
    PARAMOUNT STEALTH, you pocket the lost coin.";
],
has  scored;

!============================================================================
! The player's possessions
APPENDIX D • "CAPTAIN FATE" STORY

Object clothes "your clothes" with name 'ordinary' 'street' 'clothes' 'clothing',
description
 "Perfectly ORDINARY-LOOKING street clothes for a NOBODY like John Covarth."
before [];
Wear:
 if (self has worn)
  "You are already dressed as John Covarth.";
 else
  "The town NEEDS the power of Captain FATE, not the anonymity of John Covarth.";
Change,Disrobe:
 if (self hasnt worn)
  "Your KEEN eye detects that you're no longer wearing them.";
 switch (location) {
  street:
   if (player in booth)
     "Lacking Superman's super-speed, you realise that it would be awkward to change in plain view of the passing pedestrians.";
   else
     "In the middle of the street? That would be a PUBLIC SCANDAL, to say nothing of revealing your secret identity.";
  cafe:
    "Benny allows no monkey business in his establishment.";
  toilet:
    if (toilet_door has open)
      "The door to the bar stands OPEN at tens of curious eyes. You'd be forced to arrest yourself for LEWD conduct.";
    else
      "Then you unfold your INVULNERABLE-COTTON costume and turn into Captain FATE, defender of free will, adversary of tyranny!";
  }
 else {
    deadflag = 3;
    "Just as you are slipping into Captain FATE's costume, the door opens and a young woman enters. She looks at you and starts screaming, ~RAPIST! NAKED RAPIST IN THE TOILET!!!~^^
    Everybody in the cafe quickly comes to the rescue, only to find you ridiculously jumping on one leg while trying to get dressed. Their laughter brings a QUICK END to your crime-fighting career!";
  }
 thedark:
  "Last time you changed in the dark, you wore the suit inside out!";
 default: ! this _should_ never happen...
  "There must be better places to change your clothes!";
}
]

has clothing proper pluralname;
Object costume "your costume"
  with name 'captain' 'captain^s' 'fate' 'fate^s' 'costume' 'suit',
  description
    "STATE OF THE ART manufacture, from chemically reinforced 100%
    COTTON-lastic(tm).",
  before [
    Wear:
      if (self has worn)
        "You are already dressed as Captain FATE."
      else
        "First you'd have to take off your commonplace unassuming
        John Covarth INCOGNITO street clothes."
    Change,Disrobe:
      if (self has worn)
        "You need to wear your costume to FIGHT crime!"
      else
        "But you're not yet wearing it!"
    Drop:
      "Your UNIQUE Captain FATE multi-coloured costume? The most
      coveted clothing ITEM in the whole city? Certainly NOT!";
  ],
  has clothing proper;

!============================================================================
! Entry point routines
[ Initialise;
  #ifdef DEBUG; pname_verify(); #Endif;   ! suggested by pname.h
  location = street;
  move costume to player;
  move clothes to player; give clothes worn;
  lookmode = 2;
  "^^Impersonating mild mannered John Covarth, assistant help boy at an
  insignificant drugstore, you suddenly STOP when your acute hearing
  deciphers a stray radio call from the POLICE. There's some MADMAN
  attacking the population in Granary Park! You must change into your
  Captain FATE costume fast...!^^"
];

[ DeathMessage;
  if (deadflag == 3) print "Your secret identity has been revealed";
  if (deadflag == 4) print "You have been SHAMEFULLY defeated"
  if (deadflag == 5) print "You fly away to SAVE the DAY"
];

[ InsScope person item;
  if (person == player && location == thedark && real_location == toilet) {
    PlaceInScope(light_switch);
    PlaceInScope(toilet_door);
  }
  if (person == player && location == thedark)
    objectloop (item in parent(player))
      if (item has moved) PlaceInScope(item);
  return false;
];
APPENDIX D • “CAPTAIN FATE” STORY

!============================================================================
! Standard and extended grammar

Include "Grammar";

[ ChangeSub;
    if (noun has pluralname) print "They're";
    else print "That's";
    " not something you must change to save the day.";
];

Verb 'change' 'exchange' 'swap' 'swop'
  * noun -> Change;

Extend 'ask'
  * creature 'for' topic -> AskFor;

!============================================================================

Compile-as-you-go

“Captain Fate” suffers from the same difficulty as “William Tell”: if you type the
code sequentially as you read through the guide, the game won’t compile until
you reach the end of Chapter 13. To compile and test as you go, add these stubs
to the end of the game file when you reach the end of Chapter 10:

! ================================================================
! TEMPORARY DEFINITIONS NEEDED TO COMPILE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 10
Room cafe;
Object clothes;

Replace those stubs with these at the end of Chapter 11:

! ================================================================
! TEMPORARY DEFINITIONS NEEDED TO COMPILE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 11
Room toilet;
Object clothes;
Object costume;

and with these at the end of Chapter 12:

! ================================================================
! TEMPORARY DEFINITIONS NEEDED TO COMPILE AT THE END OF CHAPTER 12
Room toilet;
Object clothes;
Object costume;
Object coin;
Object coffee;
Object food;
Object menu;

At the end of Chapter 13 the game is complete, so you can delete the temporary
stubs.
Refer to this appendix for a succinct but essentially complete summary of the Inform programming language; it covers everything that we’ve met in this guide, plus various constructs which didn’t occur naturally, and others of an advanced or obscure nature.

**Literals**

In the specialised language of computing, the basic unit of data storage is an eight-bit byte, able to store a value 0..255. That’s too small to be useful for holding anything other than a single character, so most computers also work with a group of two, four or eight bytes known as a **word** (not to be confused with Inform’s dictionary word). In the Z-machine a storage word comprises two bytes, and you can specify in various ways the literal values to be stored.

- **Decimal**: -32768 to 32767
- **Hexadecimal**: $0$ to $FFFF$
- **Binary**: $$0$$ to $$1111111111111111$$

- **Action**: `##Look`
- **Character**: ‘a’
- **Dictionary word**: ‘aardvark’ (up to nine characters significant); use circumflex “^” to denote apostrophe.
- **Plural word**: ‘aardvarks/p’
- **Single-character word**: “a” (name property only) or ‘a//’
- **String**: “aardvark’s adventure” (maximum around 4000 characters); can include special values including:

  ^ newline
  ~ double quotes “ ”
  @064 at sign “@”
  @092 backslash “\”
  @094 circumflex “^”
  @0126 tilda “~”
  @0’a a with a grave accent “à”, et al
  @&00 pound sign “£”, et al
  @00 ... @031 low string 0..31

**Names**

The identifier of an Inform **constant**, **variable**, **array**, **class**, **object**, **property**, **attribute**, **routine** or **label**. Up to 32 characters: alphabetic (case not significant), numeric and underscore, with the first character not a digit.

**Constants**

Named word values, unchanging at runtime, which are by default initialised to zero:

```
Constant const_id;
Constant const_id = expr;
```

Standard constants are **true** (1), **false** (0) and **nothing** (0), also **null** (-1). Additionally, **WORDSIZE** is the number of bytes in a storage word: 2 for the Z-machine, 4 for Glulx.

To define a constant (unless it already exists):

```
Default const_id expr;
```
Variables and arrays

Named word/byte values which can change at run-time and are by default initialised to zero.

A global variable is a single word:

Global var_id;
Global var_id = expr;

A word array is a set of global words accessed using array -->0, array -->1,... array -->(N-1):
Array array --> N;
Array array -> expr1 expr2... exprN;
Array array --> "string";

A table array is a set of global words accessed using array -->1, array -->2,... array -->N, with array -->0 initialised to N:
Array array table N;
Array array table expr1... exprN;
Array array table "string";

A byte array is a set of global bytes accessed using array -->0, array -->1,... array -->(N-1):
Array array -> N;
Array array -> expr1 expr2... exprN;
Array array -> "string";

A string array is a set of global bytes accessed using array -->1, array -->2,... array -->N, with array -->0 initialised to N:
Array array string N;
Array array string expr1... exprN;
Array array string "string";

A buffer array is a set of global bytes accessed using array -->(WORDSIZE),
array -->(WORDSIZE+1),...
array -->(WORDSIZE+N-1), with the first word array -->0 initialised to N:
Array array buffer N;
Array array buffer expr1... exprN;
Array array buffer "string";

In all these cases, the characters of the initialising string are unpacked to the individual word/byte elements of the array. See also Objects (for property variables) and Routines (for local variables).

Expressions and operators

Use parentheses (...) to control the order of evaluation.

Arithmetic/logical expressions support these operators:

\[ p + q \]  addition
\[ p - q \]  subtraction
\[ p \ast q \]  multiplication
\[ p / q \]  integer division
\[ p \% q \]  remainder
\[ p++ \]  increments p, returns orig value
\[ ++p \]  increments p, returns new value
\[ p-- \]  decrements p, returns orig value
\[ --p \]  decrements p, returns new value
\[ p \& q \]  bitwise AND
\[ p | q \]  bitwise OR
\[ \sim p \]  bitwise NOT (inversion)

Conditional expressions return true or false; q may be a list of choices q1 or q2 or... qN:

\[ p = q \]  p is equal to q
\[ p =< q \]  p isn’t equal to q
\[ p > q \]  p is greater than q
\[ p < q \]  p is less than q
\[ p => q \]  p is greater than or equal to q
\[ p <= q \]  p is less than or equal to q
\[ p ofclass q \]  object p is of class q
\[ p in q \]  object p is a child of object q
\[ p notin q \]  object p isn’t a child of object q
\[ p provides q \]  object p provides property q
\[ p has q \]  object p has attribute q
\[ p hasnt q \]  object p hasn’t attribute q

Boolean expressions return true or false; if p has determined the result, q is not evaluated:

\[ p \&\& q \]  both p and q are true (non-zero)
\[ p || q \]  either p or q is true (non-zero)
\[ \sim p \]  p is false (zero)

To return –1, 0 or 1 based on unsigned comparison:

UnsignedCompare(p, q)

To return true if object q is a child or grandchild or... of p:

IndirectlyContains(p, q)

To return the closest common parent of two objects (or nothing):

CommonAncestor(p, q)

To return a random number 1..N, or one from a list of constant values:

random(N)
rando(value, value, ... value)
Classes and objects

To declare a class_id – a template for a family of objects – where the optional \( (N) \) limits instances created at run-time:

\[
\text{Class class_id}(N) \\
\text{class class_id class_id... class_id} \\
\text{with prop_def,} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{has attr_def attr_def... attr_def;}
\]

To declare an obj_id, “Object” can instead be a class_id, the remaining four header items are all optional, and arrows (->, -> ->,...) and parent_obj_id are incompatible:

\[
\text{Object arrows obj_id "ext_name"} \\
\text{parent_obj_id} \\
\text{class class_id class_id... class_id} \\
\text{with prop_def,} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{has attr_def attr_def... attr_def;}
\]

The class, with and has (and also the rarely-used private) segments are all optional, and can appear in any order.

To determine an object's class as one of Class, Object, Routine, String (or nothing):

\[
\text{metaclass(obj_id)}
\]

has segment: Each attr_def is either of:

\[
\text{attribute} \\
\text{~attribute}
\]

To change attributes at run-time:

\[
\text{give obj_id attr_def... attr_def;}
\]

with/private segments: Each prop_def declares a variable [or word array] and can take any of these forms (where a value is an expression, a string or an embedded routine):

\[
\text{property} \\
\text{property value} \\
\text{property value value... value}
\]

A property variable is addressed by obj_id.property (or within the object’s declaration as self.property).

Multiple values create a property array; in this case obj_id.#property is the number of bytes occupied by the array, the entries can be accessed using obj_id.&property->0, obj_id.&property->1, ..., and obj_id.property refers to the value of the first entry.

A property variable inherited from an object’s class is addressed by obj_id.class_id:property; this gives the original value prior to any changes within the object.

Manipulating the object tree

To change object relationships at run-time:

\[
\text{move obj_id to parent_obj_id;} \\
\text{remove obj_id;}
\]

To return the parent of an object (or nothing):

\[
\text{parent(obj_id)}
\]

To return the first child of an object (or nothing):

\[
\text{child(obj_id)}
\]

To return the adjacent child of an object’s parent (or nothing):

\[
\text{sibling(obj_id)}
\]

To return the number of child objects directly below an object:

\[
\text{children(obj_id)}
\]

Message passing

To a class:

\[
\text{class_id.remaining()} \\
\text{class_id.create()} \\
\text{class_id.destroy(obj_id)} \\
\text{class_id.recreate(obj_id)} \\
\text{class_id.copy(to_obj_id,from_obj_id)}
\]

To an object:

\[
\text{obj_id.property(a1,a2, ... a7)}
\]

To a routine:

\[
\text{routine_id.call(a1,a2, ... a7)}
\]

To a string:

\[
\text{string.print()} \\
\text{string.print_to_array(array)}
\]

Uncommon and deprecated statements

To jump to a labelled statement:

\[
\text{jump label;}
\]

\[
... \\
\text{label; statement;}
\]

To terminate the program:

\[
\text{quit;}
\]

To save and restore the program state:

\[
\text{save label;}
\]

\[
... \\
\text{restore label;}
\]

To output the Inform compiler version number:

\[
\text{inversion;}
\]

To accept data from the current input stream:

\[
\text{read text_array parse_array routine_id;}
\]

To assign to one of 32 ‘low string’ variables:

\[
\text{string N "string";} \\
\text{Lowstring string_var "string";} \\
\text{string N string_var;}
\]
Statements
Each statement is terminated by a semicolon “;”. A statement block is a single statement or a series of statements enclosed in braces {...}. An exclamation “!” starts a comment – the rest of the line is ignored. A common statement is the assignment:
var_id = expr;
There are two forms of multiple assignment:
var_id = var_id = ... = expr;
var_id = expr, var_id = expr, ...

Routines
A routine can have up to 15 local variables: word values which are private to the routine and which by default are set to zero on each call. Recursion is permitted. A standalone routine:
• has a name, by which it is called using routine_id(); can also be called indirectly using indirect(routine_id,a1,a2, ... a7)
• can take arguments, using routine_id(a1,a2, ... a7), whose values initialise the equivalent local variables
• returns true at the final “]”
[ routine_id()
  local_var local_var... local_var;
  statement;
  ...
  statement;
];
A routine embedded as the value of an object property:
• has no name, and is called when the property is invoked; can also be called explicitly using obj_id.property()
• accepts arguments only when called explicitly
• returns false at the final “]”
property [ local_var local_var... local_var;
  statement;
  ...
  statement;
]
Routines return a single value, when execution reaches the final “]” or an explicit return statement:
return expr;
return;
return;
rtrue;
rfalse;

Flow control
To execute statements if expr is true; optionally, to execute other statements if expr is false:
if (expr)
  statement_block
if (expr)
  statement_block
else
  statement_block
To execute statements depending on the value of expr:
switch (expr) {
  value: statement;...
  value: statement;...
  ...
  default: statement;...
}
where each value can be given as:
constant
lo_constant to hi_constant
constant,constant,... constant
And, if you really must:
jump label;
...
.label; statement;

Loop control
To execute statements while expr is true:
while (expr)
  statement_block
To execute statements until expr is true:
do
  statement_block
until (expr)
To execute statements while a variable changes:
for (set_var : loop_while_expr : update_var)
  statement_block
To execute statements for all defined objects:
objectloop (var_id)
  statement_block
To execute statements for all objects selected by expr:
objectloop (expr_starting_with_var)
  statement_block
To jump out of the current innermost loop or switch:
break;
To immediately start the next iteration of the current loop:
continue;
Displaying information

To output a list of values:

```
print value, value, ... value;
```

To output a list of values followed by a newline, then return `true` from the current routine:

```
print_ret value, value, ... value;
```

If the first (or only) `value` is a string, "print_ret" can be omitted:

```
"string", value, ... value;
```

Each `value` can be an expression, a string or a rule.

An expression is output as a signed decimal value.

A string in quotes "..." is output as text.

A rule is one of:

- `(number) expr` the `expr` in words
- `(char) expr` the `expr` as a single character
- `(string) addr` the string at the `addr`
- `(name) obj_id` the external (short) name of the `obj_id`
- `(a) obj_id` the short name preceded by "a/an", by "some", or by nothing for proper nouns
- `(A) obj_id` the short name preceded by "A/An", by "Some", or by nothing for proper nouns
- `(the) obj_id` the short name preceded by "the"
- `(The) obj_id` the short name preceded by "The"
- `(routine_id) value` the output when calling `routine_id(value)`

To output a newline character:

```
new_line;
```

To output multiple spaces:

```
spaces expr;
```

To output text in a display box:

```
box "string" "string" ... "string";
```

To change from regular to fixed-pitch font:

```
font off;
```

To change the font attributes:

```
style bold; ! use any of these
style underline; !
style reverse; !
...;
style roman;
```

Verbs and actions

To specify a new verb:

```
Verb 'verb' 'verb' ... 'verb'
* token token... token -> action
* token token... token -> action
... * token token... token -> action;
```

where instead "Verb" can be "Verb meta", "action" can be "action reverse"; tokens are optional and each is one of:

- `word` that literal word
- `'w1'/`'w2'/... any one of those literal words
- `attribute` an object with that attribute
- `creature` an object with animate attribute
- `held` an object held by the player
- `noun` an object in scope
- `noun=routine_id` an object for which `routine_id` returns `true`
- `scope=routine_id` an object in this re-definition of scope
- `multi` one or more objects held by the player
- `multi` one or more objects in scope
- `multiexcept` as `multi`, omitting the specified object
- `multiinside` as `multi`, omitting those in specified object
- `topic` any text
- `number` any number
- `routine_id` a general parsing routine

To add synonyms to an existing verb:

```
Verb 'verb' 'verb' ... = 'existing_verb';
```

To modify an existing verb:

```
Extend 'existing_verb' last
* token token... token -> action
* token token... token -> action
... * token token... token -> action;
```

where instead "Extend" can be "Extend only" and "last" can be omitted, or changed to "first" or "replace".

To explicitly trigger a defined action (both `noun` and `second` are optional, depending on the action):

```
<action noun second>;
```

To explicitly trigger a defined action, then return `true` from the current routine:

```
<<action noun second>>;
```
Other useful directives

To set compiler switches at the very start of the source file:

```
!% list_of_compiler_switches;
```

To include a directive within a routine definition [...], insert a hash “#” as its first character.

To conditionally compile:

```
Ifdef name; ! use any one of these
Ifndef name; !
Iftrue expr; !
Iffalse expr; !
...
Ifnot;
...
Endif;
```

To display a compile-time message:

```
Message "string";
```

To include the contents of a file, searching the Library path:

```
Include "source_file";
```

To include the contents of a file in the same location as the current file:

```
Include ">source_file";
```

To specify that a library routine is to be replaced:

```
Replace routine_id;
```

To set the game’s release number (default is 1), serial number (default is today’s yymmdd) and status line format (default is score):

```
Release expr;
Serial "yymmdd";
Statusline score;
Statusline time;
```

To declare a new attribute common to all objects:

```
Attribute attribute;
```

To declare a new property common to all objects:

```
Property property;
Property property expr;
```

Uncommon and deprecated directives

You’re unlikely to need these; look them up in the Designer’s Manual if necessary.

```
Abbreviate "string"... "string";
End;
Import var_id var_id ... var_id;
Link "compiled_file";
Stub routine_id N;
Switches list_ofCompiler_switches;
System_file;
```
Appendix F • Inform library

Library files define Inform’s model world, turning a conventional programming language into a text adventure development system. Here are the library constants, variables and routines, the standard object properties and attributes, the verb grammars and actions.

Library objects

compass
    A container object holding the twelve
direction objects d_obj e_obj in_obj n_obj
    ne_obj nw_obj out_obj s_obj se_obj
    sw_obj u_obj w_obj.

LibraryMessages
    If defined (between Includes of Parser and
    VerbLib), changes standard library messages:
    Object LibraryMessages
        with before [],
        action: "string";
        action: "string";
        action: switch (lm_n) {
            value: "string";
            value: "string";
            (a) lm_o,
        }
    }
    ];
    ...;

selfobj
    The default player object. Avoid: use instead
    the player variable, which usually refers to
    selfobj.

thedar
    A pseudo-room which becomes the location
    when there is no light (although the player
    object is not moved there).

Library constants

In addition to the standard constants true (1),
false (0) and nothing (0), the Library defines
NULL (−1) for an action, property or pronoun
whose current value is undefined.

LIBRARY_PARSER, LIBRARY_ENGLISH,
LIBRARY_VERBLIB and LIBRARY_GRAMMAR are
defined to mark the end of inclusion of
Parser.h, English.h, VerbLib.h and
Grammar.h respectively.

User-defined constants

Some constants control features rather than
represent values.

AMUSING_PROVIDED
    Activates the Amusing entry point.
COMMENT_CHARACTER = 'char'
    Introduces a comment line ignored by the
    parser (default "*").
DEATH_MENTION_UNDO
    Offers “UNDO the last move” at game end.
DEBUG
    Activates the debug commands.
Headline = "string"
    Mandatory: game style, copyright info, etc.
MANUAL_PRONOUNS
    Pronouns reflect only objects mentioned by
    the player.
MAX_CARRIED = expr
    Limit on direct possessions that the player
    can carry (default 100).
MAX_SCORE = expr
    Maximum game score (default 0).
MAX_TIMERS = expr
    Limit on active timers/daemons (default 32).
NO_PLACES
    "OBJECTS" and "PLACES" verbs are barred.
NO_SCORE
    Game doesn’t use scoring.
NUMBER_TASKS = expr
    Number of scored tasks (default 1).
OBJECT_SCORE = expr
    For taking a scored object for the first time
    (default 4).
ROOM_SCORE = expr
    For visiting a scored room for the first time
    (default 5).
SACK_OBJECT = obj_id
    A container object where the game places
    held objects.
START_MOVE = expr
    Initial value of turns counter (default 0).
Story = "string"
    Mandatory: the name of the story.
TASKS_PROVIDED
    Activates the task scoring system.
USE_MODULES
Activates linking with pre-compiled library modules.

WITHOUT_DIRECTIONS
De-activates standard compass directions (bar “IN” and “OUT”). Place alternative directions in the compass.

Library variables

action
The current action.

actor
The target of an instruction: the player, or an NPC.

deadflag
Normally 0: 1 indicates a regular death, 2 indicates that the player has won, 3 or more denotes a user-defined end.

inventory_stage
Used by invent and list_together properties.

keep_silent
Normally false; true makes most group 2 actions silent.

location
The player’s current room; unless that’s dark, when it contains thedark, real_location contains the room.

notify_mode
Normally true: false remains silent when score changes.

noun
The primary focus object for the current action.

player
The object acting on behalf of the human player.

real_location
The player’s current room when in the dark.

score
The current score.

second
The secondary focus object for the current action.

self
The object which received a message.
(Note: a run-time variable, not a compile-time constant.)

sender
The object which sent a message (or nothing).

task_scores
A byte array holding scores for the task scoring system.

the_time
The game’s clock, in minutes 0..1439 since midnight.

turns
The game’s turn counter.

wn
The input stream word number, counting from 1.

Library routines

Achieved(expr)
A scored task has been achieved.

AfterRoutines()
In a group 2 action, controls output of “after” messages.

AllowPushDir()
An object can be pushed from one location to another.

Banner()
Prints the game banner.

ChangePlayer(obj_id, flag)
Player assumes the persona of the obj_id. If the optional flag is true, room descriptions include “(as object)”.

CommonAncestor(obj_id1, obj_id2)
Returns the nearest object which has a parental relationship to both obj_ids, or nothing.

DictionaryLookup(byte_array, length)
Returns address of word in dictionary, or 0 if not found.

DrawStatusLine()
Refreshes the status line; happens anyway at end of each turn.

GetGNAOfObject(obj_id)
Returns gender-number-animation 0..11 of the obj_id.

HasLightSource(obj_id)
Returns true if the obj_id has light.

IndirectlyContains(parent_obj_id, obj_id)
Returns true if obj_id is currently a child or grand-child or great-grand-child... of the parent_object.

IsSeeThrough(obj_id)
Returns true if light can pass through the obj_id.

Locale(obj_id,"string1","string2")
Describes the contents of obj_id, and returns their number. After objects with own paragraphs, the rest are listed preceded by string1 or string2.

LoopOverScope(routine_id, actor)
Calls routine_id(obj_id) for each obj_id in scope. If the optional actor is supplied, that defines the scope.
MoveFloatingObjects()
    Adjusts positions of game’s found_in objects.

NextWord()
    Returns the next dictionary word in the input stream, incrementing wn by one. Returns false if the word is not in the dictionary, or if the input stream is exhausted.

NextWordStopped()
    Returns the next dictionary word in the input stream, incrementing wn by one. Returns false if the word is not in the dictionary, –1 if the input stream is exhausted.

NounDomain(obj_id1, obj_id2, type)
    Performs object parsing; see also ParseToken().

ObjectIsUntouchable(obj_id, flag)
    Tests whether there is a barrier – a container object which is not open – between player and obj_id. Unless the optional flag is true, outputs “You can’t because ... is in the way”. Returns true is a barrier is found, otherwise false.

OffersLight(obj_id)
    Returns true if the obj_id offers light.

ParseToken(type, value)
    Performs general parsing; see also NounDomain().

PlaceInScope(obj_id)
    Used in an add_to_scope property or scope= token to put the obj_id into scope for the parser.

PlayerTo(obj_id, flag)
    Moves the player to obj_id. Prints its description unless optional flag is 1 (no description) or 2 (as if walked in).

PrintOrRun(obj_id, property, flag)
    If obj_id.property is a string, output it (followed by a newline unless optional flag is true), and return true. If it’s a routine, run it and return what the routine returns.

PronounNotice(obj_id)
    Associates an appropriate pronoun with the obj_id.

PronounValue('pronoun')
    Returns the object to which ‘it’ (or ‘him’, ‘her’, ‘them’) currently refers, or nothing.

ScopeWithin(obj_id)
    Used in an add_to_scope property or scope= token to put the contents of the obj_id in scope for the parser.

SetPronoun('pronoun', obj_id)
    Defines the obj_id to which a given pronoun refers.

SetTime(expr1, expr2)
    Sets the time_to expr1 (in mins 0..1439 since midnight), running at expr2 – +ve: expr2 minutes pass each turn; –ve: -expr2 turns take one minute; zero: time stands still.

StartDaemon(obj_id)
    Starts the obj_id’s daemon.

StartDaemon(obj_id, expr)
    Starts the obj_id’s daemon, initialising its time_left to expr. The object’s time_out property will be called after that number of turns have elapsed.

StopDaemon(obj_id)
    Stops the obj_id’s daemon.

StopTimer(obj_id)
    Stops the obj_id’s timer.

TestScope(obj_id, actor)
    Returns true if the obj_id is in scope, otherwise false. If the optional actor is supplied, that defines the scope.

TryNumber(expr)
    Parses word expr in the input stream as a number, recognising decimals, also English words one..twenty. Returns the number 1..10000, or -1000 if the parse fails.

UnsignedCompare(expr1, expr2)
    Returns –1 if expr1 is less than expr2, 0 if expr1 equals expr2, and 1 if expr1 is greater than expr2. Both expressions are unsigned, in the range 0..65535.

WordAddress(expr)
    Returns a byte array containing the raw text of word expr in the input stream.

WordInProperty(word, obj_id, property)
    Returns true if the dictionary word is listed in the property values for the obj_id.

WordLength(expr)
    Returns the length of word expr in the input stream.

WriteListFrom(obj_id, expr)
    Outputs a list of obj_id and its siblings, in the given style, an expr formed by adding any of: ALWAYS_BIT, CONCEAL_BIT, DEFACT_BIT, ENGLISH_BIT, FULLINV_BIT, INDENT_BIT, ISARE_BIT, NEWLINE_BIT, PARTINV_BIT, RECURSE_BIT, TERSE_BIT, WORKFLAG_BIT.

YesOrNo()
    Returns true if the player types “YES”, false for “NO”.

ZRegion(arg)
    Returns the type of its arg: 3 for a string address, 2 for a routine address, 1 for an object number, or 0 otherwise.
Object properties

Where the value of a property can be a routine, several formats are possible (but remember: embedded “]” returns false, standalone “]” returns true):

- property [; stmt; stmt; ... ]
- property [; return routine_id(); ]
- property [; routine_id(); ]
- property routine_id

In this appendix, “⊕” marks an additive property. Where a Class and an Object of that class both define the same property, the value specified for the Object normally overrides the value inherited from the Class. However, if the property is additive then both values apply, with the Object’s value being considered first.

add_to_scope

For an object: additional objects which follow it in and out of scope. The value can be a space-separated list of obj_ids, or a routine which invokes PlaceInScope() or ScopeWithin() to specify objects.

after ⊕

For an object: receives every action and fake_action for which this is the noun. For a room: receives every action which occurs here.

The value is a routine of structure similar to a switch statement, having cases for the appropriate actions [and an optional default as well]; it is invoked after the action has happened, but before the player has been informed. The routine should return false to continue, telling the player what has happened, or true to stop processing the action and produce no further output.

describe ⊕

For an object: called before the object’s description is output. For a room: called before the room’s (long) description is output.

The value is a routine which should return false to continue, outputting the usual description, or true to stop processing and produce no further output.

description

For an object: its description (output by Examine).

For a room: its long description (output by Look).

The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

door_dir

For a compass object (d_obj, e_obj, ...): the direction in which an attempt to move to this object actually leads.

For a door object: the direction in which this door leads.

The value can be a directional property (d_to, e_to,...), or a routine which returns such a property.

cant_go

For a room: the message when the player attempts an impossible exit. The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

capacity

For a container or supporter object: the number of objects which can be placed in or on it – the default is 100.

For the player: the number which can be carried – selfobj has an initial capacity of MAX_CARRIED.

The value can be a number, or a routine which returns a number.

d_to

For a room: a possible exit. The value can be:

- false (the default): not an exit;
- a string: output to explain why this is not an exit;
- a room: the exit leads to this room;
- a door object: the exit leads through this door;
- a routine which should return false, a string, a room, a door object, or true to signify “not an exit” and produce no further output.

daemon

The value is a routine which can be activated by StartDaemon(obj_id) and which then runs once each turn until deactivated by StopDaemon(obj_id).

describe

For an object: called before the object’s description is output. For a room: called before the room’s (long) description is output.

The value is a routine which should return false to continue, outputting the usual description, or true to stop processing and produce no further output.

description

For an object: its description (output by Examine).

For a room: its long description (output by Look).

The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

door_dir

For a compass object (d_obj, e_obj, ...): the direction in which an attempt to move to this object actually leads.

For a door object: the direction in which this door leads.

The value can be a directional property (d_to, e_to,...), or a routine which returns such a property.
door_to
For a door object: where it leads. The value can be
- false (the default): leads nowhere;
- a string: output to explain why door leads nowhere;
- a room: the door leads to this room;
- a routine which should return false, a string, a room, or true to signify “leads nowhere” without producing any output.

e_to
See d_to.
each_turn ⊕
Invoked at the end of each turn (after all appropriate daemons and timers) whenever the object is in scope. The value can be a string, or a routine.

found_in
For an object: the rooms where this object can be found, unless it has the absent attribute. The value can be
- a space-separated list of rooms (where this object can be found) or obj_ids (whose locations are tracked by this object);
- a routine which should return true if this object can be found in the current location, otherwise false.

grammar
For an animate or talkable object: the value is a routine called when the parser knows that this object is being addressed, but has yet to test the grammar. The routine should return false to continue, true to indicate that the routine has parsed the entire command, or a dictionary word (‘word’ or ‘–word’).

in_to
See d_to.

initial
For an object: its description before being picked up.
For a room: its description when the player enters the room.
The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

inside_description
For an enterable object: its description, output as part of the room description when the player is inside the object.
The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

invent
For an object: the value is a routine for outputting the object’s inventory listing, which is called twice. On the first call nothing has been output; inventory_stage has the value 1, and the routine should return false to continue, or true to stop processing and produce no further output. On the second call the object’s indefinite article and short name have been output, but not any subsidiary information; inventory_stage has the value 2, and the routine should return false to continue, or true to stop processing and produce no further output.

life ⊕
For an animate object: receives person-to-person actions (Answer, Ask, Attack, Give, Kiss, Order, Show, Tell, ThrowAt and WakeOther) for which this is the noun. The value is a routine of structure similar to a switch statement, having cases for the appropriate actions (and an optional default as well). The routine should return false to continue, telling the player what has happened, or true to stop processing the action and produce no further output.

list_together
For an object: groups related objects when outputting an inventory or room contents list. The value can be
- a number: all objects having this value are grouped;
- a string: all objects having this value are grouped as a count of the string;
- a routine which is called twice. On the first call nothing has been output; inventory_stage has the value 1, and the routine should return false to continue, or true to stop processing and produce no further output. On the second call the list has been output; inventory_stage has the value 2, and there is no test on the return value.

n_to
See d_to.

name ⊕
Defines a space-separated list of words which are added to the Inform dictionary. Each word can be supplied in apostrophes ‘... ’ or quotes “... ”; in all other cases only words in apostrophes update the dictionary.
For an object: identifies this object.
For a room: outputs “does not need to be referred to”.

ne_to
See d_to.
number
For an object or room: the value is a general-purpose variable freely available for use by the program. A player object must provide (but not use) this variable.

nw_to
See d_to.

orders @
For an animate or talkable object: the value is a routine called to carry out the player's orders. The routine should return false to continue, or true to stop processing the action and produce no further output.

out_to
See d_to.

parse_name
For an object: the value is a routine called to parse an object's name. The routine should return zero if the text makes no sense, –1 to cause the parser to resume, or the positive number of words matched.

plural
For an object: its plural form, when in the presence of others like it. The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

react_after
For an object: detects nearby actions – those which take place when this object is in scope. The value is a routine invoked after the action has happened, but before the player has been informed. See after.

react_before
For an object: detects nearby actions – those which take place when this object is in scope. The value is a routine invoked before the action has happened. See after.

s_to
See d_to.

d_to

short_name
For an object: an alternative or extended short name. The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string. The routine should return false to continue by outputting the object's actual short name (from the head of the object definition), or true to stop processing the action and produce no further output.

short_name_indef
For a non-English object: the short name when preceded by an indefinite object. The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

sw_to
See d_to.

time_left
For a timer object: the value is a variable to hold the number of turns left until this object's timer – activated and initialised by StartTimer(obj_id) – counts down to zero and invokes the object's time_out property.

time_out
For a timer object: the value is a routine which is run when the object's time_left value – initialised by StartTimer(obj_id), and not in the meantime cancelled by StopTimer(obj_id) – counts down to zero.

u_to
See d_to.

w_to

when_closed

when_open
For a container or door object: used when including this object in a room's long description. The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

when_off
when_on
For a switchable object: used when including this object in a room's long description. The value can be a string, or a routine which outputs a string.

with_key
For a lockable object: the obj_id (generally some kind of key) needed to lock and unlock the object, or nothing if no key fits.
Object attributes

absent
For a floating object (one with a found_in property, which can appear in many rooms): is no longer there.

animate
For an object: is a living creature.

clothing
For an object: can be worn.

concealed
For an object: is present but hidden from view.

container
For an object: other objects can be put in (but not on) it.

door
For an object: is a door or bridge between rooms.

edible
For an object: can be eaten.

enterable
For an object: can be entered.

female
For an animate object: is female.

general
For an object or room: a general-purpose flag.

light
For an object or room: is giving off light.

lockable
For an object: can be locked; see the with_key property.

locked
For an object: can’t be opened.

male
For an animate object: is male.

moved
For an object: is being, or has been, taken by the player.

neuter
For an animate object: is neither male nor female.

on
For a switchable object: is switched on.

open
For a container or door object: is open.

openable
For a container or door object: can be opened.

pluralname
For an object: is plural.

proper
For an object: the short name is a proper noun, therefore not to be preceded by “The” or “the”.

scenery
For an object: can’t be taken; is not listed in a room description.

scored
For an object: awards OBJECT_SCORE points when taken for the first time. For a room: awards ROOM_SCORE points when visited for the first time.

static
For an object: can’t be taken.

supporter
For an object: other objects can be put on (but not in) it.

switchable
For an object: can be switched off or on.

talkable
For an object: can be addressed in “object, do this” style.

transparent
For a container object: objects inside it are visible.

visited
For a room: is being, or has been, visited by the player.

workflag
Temporary internal flag, also available to the program.

worn
For a clothing object: is being worn.
Optional entry points

These routines, if you supply them, are called when shown.

AfterLife()
* Player has died; deadflag=0 resurrects.

AfterPrompt()
* The “>” prompt has been output.

Amusing()
* Player has won; AMUSING_PROVIDED is defined.

BeforeParsing()
* The parser has input some text, set up the buffer and parse tables, and initialised wn to 1.

ChooseObjects(object,flag)
* Parser has found “ALL” or an ambiguous noun phrase and decided that object should be excluded (flag is 0), or included (flag is 1). The routine should return 0 to let this stand, 1 to force inclusion, or 2 to force exclusion. If flag is 2, parser is undecided; routine should return appropriate score 0..9.

DarkToDark()
* The player has gone from one dark room to another.

DeathMessage()
* The player has died; deadflag is 3 or more.

GamePostRoutine()
* Called after all actions.

GamePreRoutine()
* Called before all actions.

Initialise()
* Mandatory; note British spelling: called at start. Must set location; can return 2 to suppress game banner.

InRange()
* Called during parsing.

LookRoutine()
* Called at the end of every Look description.

NewRoom()
* Called when room changes, before description is output.

ParseNoun(object)
* Called to parse the object’s name.

ParseNumber(byte_array,length)
* Called to parse a number.

ParserError(number)
* Called to handle an error.

PrintRank()
* Completes the output of the score.

PrintTaskName(number)
* Prints the name of the task.

PrintVerb(addr)
* Called when an unusual verb is printed.

TimePasses()
* Called after every turn.

UnknownVerb()
* Called when an unusual verb is encountered.

Group 1 actions

Group 1 actions support the ‘meta’ verbs. These are the standard actions and their triggering verbs.

CommandsOff “RECORDING OFF”
CommandsOn “RECORDING [ON]”
CommandsRead “REPLAY”

FullScore “FULLSCORE”, “FULL [SCORE]”

LMode1 “BRIEF”, “NORMAL”
LMode2 “LONG”, “VERBOSE”
LMode3 “SHORT”, “SUPERBRIEF”

NotifyOff “NOTIFY OFF”
NotifyOn “NOTIFY [ON]”

Objects “OBJECTS”
Places “PLACES”

Pronouns “[PRO]NOUNS”

Quit “DIE”, “QUIT”

Restart “RESTART”
Restore “RESTORE”
Save “CLOSE”
Score “SCORE”

ScriptOff “[TRAN]SCRIPT OFF”, “NOSCRIPT”, “UNSCRIPT”

ScriptOn “[TRAN]SCRIPT [ON]”

Verify “VERIFY”

Version “VERSION”

and the debug tools.

ActionsOff “ACTIONS OFF”
ActionsOn “ACTIONS [ON]”

ChangesOff “CHANGES OFF”
ChangesOn “CHANGES [ON]”

Gonear “GONEAR”

Goto “GOTO”

Predictable “RANDOM”

RoutinesOff “MESSAGES OFF”, “ROUTINES OFF”

RoutinesOn “MESSAGES [ON]”, “ROUTINES [ON]”

Scope “SCOPE”

Showobj “SHOWOBJ”

ShowVerb “SHOWVERB”

TimersOff “DAEMONS OFF”, “TIMERS OFF”

TimersOn “DAEMONS [ON]”, “TIMERS [ON]”

TraceLevel “TRACE number”

TraceOff “TRACE OFF”

TraceOn “TRACE [ON]”

XAbstract “ABSTRACT”

XPurloin “PURLOIN”

XTree “TREE”
Group 2 actions

Group 2 actions usually work, given the right circumstances.

Close
  “CLOSE [UP],” “COVER [UP],”
  “SHUT [UP]”
Disrobe
  “DISROBE”, “DOFF”, “REMOVE”,
  “SHED”, “TAKE OFF”
Drop
  “DISCARD”, “DROP”, “PUT DOWN”,
  “THROW”
Eat
  “EAT”
Empty
  “EMPTY [OUT]”
Enter
  “CROSS”, “ENTER”, “GET
  IN|INTO|ON|INTO|TO”
  “GO IN|INSIDE|INTO|THROUGH”,
  “LEAVE IN|INSIDE|INTO|THROUGH”,
  “LIE IN|INSIDE|ON”,
  “LIE ON TOP OF”,
  “RUN IN|INSIDE|INTO|THROUGH
  ”,” SIT IN|INSIDE|ON”,
  “SIT ON TOP OF”, “STAND ON”,
  “WALK IN|INSIDE|INTO|THROUGH
  H”
Examine
  “CHECK”, “DESCRIBE”,
  “EXAMINE”, “[LOOK] AT”, “READ”,
  “WATCH”, “X”
Exit
  “EXIT”, “GET OFF|OUT|UP”,
  “LEAVE”, “OUT[SIDE]”,
  “STAND [UP]”
GetOff
  “GET OFF”
Give
  “FEED [TO]”, “GIVE [TO]”,
  “OFFER [TO]”, “PAY [TO]”
Go
  “GO”, “LEAVE”, “RUN”, “WALK”
Goin
  “CROSS”, “ENTER”, “IN|SIDE|”
Insert
  “DISCARD IN|INTO”,
  “DROP DOWN IN|INTO”,
  “INSERT IN|INTO”,
  “PUT IN|SIDE|INTO”,
  “THROW DOWN IN|INTO”
Inv
  “[INV]”, “INVENTORY”,
  “TAKE INVENTORY”
InvTall
  “[INV] TALL”,
  “INVENTORY TALL”
InvWide
  “[INV] WIDE”,
  “INVENTORY WIDE”
Lock
  “LOCK WITH”
Look
  “LOOK”
Open
  “OPEN”, “UNCOVER”, “UNDO”,
  “UNWRAP”
PutOn
  “DISCARD ON|INTO|”,
  “DROP ON|INTO|”,
  “PUT ON|INTO|”,
  “THROW ON|INTO|”
Remove
  “GET FROM”, “REMOVE FROM”,
  “TAKE FROM|OFF”
Search
  “[LOOK] IN|INSIDE|INTO|THROUGH
  UGH”, “SEARCH”
Show
  “DISPLAY [TO]”,
  “PRESENT [TO]”, “SHOW [TO]”
SwitchOff
  “CLOSE OFF”, “SCREW OFF”,
  “SWITCH OFF”, “TURN OFF”,
  “TWIST OFF”
SwitchOn
  “SCREW ON”, “SWITCH ON”,
  “TURN ON”, “TWIST ON”
Take
  “CARRY”, “GET”, “HOLD”,
  “PEEL [OFF]”, “PICK UP”,
  “REMOVE”, “TAKE”
Transfer
  “CLEAR TO”, “MOVE TO”,
  “PRESS TO”, “PUSH TO”,
  “SHIFT TO”, “TRANSFER TO”
Unlock
  “OPEN WITH”, “UNDO WITH”,
  “UNLOCK WITH”
VagueGo
  “GO”, “LEAVE”, “RUN”, “WALK”
Wear
  “DON”, “PUTE ON”, “WEAR”

Group 3 actions

Group 3 actions are by default stubs which output a message and stop at the “before” stage (so there is no “after” stage).

Answer
  “ANSWER TO”, “SAY TO”,
  “SHOUT TO”, “SPEAK TO”
Ask
  “ASK ABOUT”
AskFor
  “ASK FOR”
Attack
  “ATTACK”, “BREAK”, “CRACK”,
  “DESTROY”, “FIGHT”, “HIT”,
  “KILL”, “MURDER”, “PUNCH”,
  “SMASH”, “THUMP”, “TORTURE”,
  “WRECK”
Blow
  “BLOW”
Burn
  “BURN [WITH]”, “LIGHT [WITH]”
Buy
  “BUY” “PURCHASE”
Climb
  “CLIMB [OVER|UP]”, “SCALE”
Consult
  “CONSULT ABOUT|ON”,
  “LOOK UP IN”,
  “READ ABOUT IN”, “READ IN”
Cut
  “CHOP”, “CUT”, “PRUNE”, “SLICE”
Dig
  “DIG [WITH]”
Drink
  “DRINK”, “SIP”, “SWALLOW”
Fill
  “FILL”
Jump
  “HOP”, “JUMP”, “SKIP”
JumpOver
  “HOP OVER”, “JUMP OVER”,
  “SKIP OVER”
Kiss
  “EMBRACE”, “HUG”, “KISS”
Listen
  “HEAR”, “LISTEN [TO]”
LookUnder
  “LOOK UNDER”
Mild
  “VARIOS MILD SWEARWORDs.”
No
  “NO”
Pray
  “PRAY”
Pull
  “DRAG” “PULL”
Fake actions

Fake actions handle some special cases, or represent “real” actions from the viewpoint of the second object.

LetGo
Generated by Remove.

ListMiscellany
Outputs a range of inventory messages.

Miscellany
Outputs a range of utility messages.

NotUnderstood
Generated when parser fails to interpret some orders.

Order
Receives things not handled by orders.

PluralFound
Tells the parser that parse_name() has identified a plural object.

Prompt
Outputs the prompt, normally “>”.

Receive
Generated by Insert and PutOn.

TheSame
Generated when parser can’t distinguish between two objects.

ThrownAt
Generated by ThrowAt.
Appendix G • Glossary

During our travels, we’ve encountered certain terms which have particular significance in the context of the Inform text adventure development system; here are brief definitions of many of those specialised words and phrases.

**action** – the generated effect of the player’s input, usually by the parser but also occasionally by the designer’s code. It refers to a single task to be processed by Inform, such as DROP KETTLE, and it’s stored in four numbers: one each for the action itself and the actor object who is to perform it (the player or an NPC), one for the noun – or direct object, if present – and a fourth for the second noun – if it exists, for example the “POT” in THROW KETTLE AT POT. See also **fake action**.

**alpha-testing** – the testing which is carried out by the game’s designer, in a futile attempt to ensure that it does everything that it should and nothing that it shouldn’t. See also **beta-testing**.

**argument** – a parameter supplied in a call to a **routine**, which is the actual value for one of the routine’s defined local variables. For example, the argument is 8 in the call `MyRoutine(8)`. The definition of the routine includes the variable that will hold the argument, in this case `x`:

```
[ MyRoutine x; ... ];
```

**ASCII file** – see **text file**.

**assignment** – a statement which sets or changes the value of a **variable**. There are three in Inform: = (set equal to), + (add one to the current value), - (subtract one from the current value).

**attributes** – named flags that can be defined for an object after the keyword **has**. An attribute is either present (on) or not present (off). The designer may test from any other part of the program if an object **has** a certain attribute, **give** an attribute to an object or take it away as need arises. For instance, the attribute **container** states that the object is capable of having other objects placed inside it.

**avatar** – see **player**.

**banner** – information about a game which is displayed at the start of play.

**beta-testing** – the testing which is carried out by a small band of trusted volunteers, prior to general public release, during which the gross inadequacy of the designer’s **alpha-testing** effort becomes painfully apparent.

**binary file** – a computer file containing binary data – 0s and 1s – which is created by a program and which only a program can understand.

**bold type** – used to highlight a term explained in this glossary.

**child** – see **object tree**.

**class** – a special **object** template from which other objects can inherit **properties** and/or **attributes**. The template must begin with the word **Class** and must have an internal identifier. Objects that wish to inherit
from a class usually begin with the internal ID of the class in place of the word `Object`, but may instead define a segment class followed by the class’s internal ID. The designer may test whether an object belongs to — is a member of — a class.

**code block** — see **statement block**.

**comment** — text which starts with an exclamation mark `!` and which is ignored by the compiler when it reads the **source file**; added to improve the file’s layout or for explanatory notes.

**compile-time** — the time when the **compiler** is at work making the **story file**. See also **run-time**.

**compiler** — a program that reads the source code written by the designer and turns it into a **story file**, which can then be played by a Z-machine interpreter.

**constant** — a particular value which is defined at **compile-time**, always stays the same and cannot be changed while the game is being played. Common examples include numbers, strings and the internal IDs of objects, any of which can be either written out explicitly or set as the value of a named `Constant`.

**Debug mode** — an option which causes the compiler to include extra code into the story file, thus making it easier for the designer to understand what’s happening while a game is being tested prior to release. See also **Strict mode**.

**designer** — a person who uses Inform to create a text adventure game: in other words, gentle reader, you.

**dictionary** — the collection of all input words “understood” by the game.

**dictionary word** — a word written in single quotes ‘...’ within the **source file**, usually (but not exclusively) as one of the values assigned to an object’s `name` property. All such words are stored in the dictionary, which is consulted by the parser when attempting to make sense of a player’s command. Only the first nine characters are significant (thus `'cardiogram'` and `'cardiograph'` are treated as the same word). Use `'coins/p'` to mark “coins” as plural, referring to all coin objects which are present. Use `'t//'` to enter the single-character word “t” into the dictionary (`'t'` is a constant representing a character value).

**directive** — a line of Inform code which asks the **compiler** to do something there and then, at **compile-time**; typical examples are to include the contents of another file, or to set aside some space within the story file where a variable value may be stored. Not to be confused with a **statement**, which asks the compiler to compose an instruction which the interpreter will obey at **run-time**; typical examples are to display some text, or to change the value held within a variable’s storage space.

**editor** — a general-purpose program for creating and modifying **text files**.

**embedded routine** — a routine that is defined in the body of an object, as the value of one of its properties. Unlike a **standalone routine**, an embedded routine doesn’t have a name of its own, and returns `false` if execution reaches the terminating marker `]`.

**entry point** — one of a predefined list of optional routines which, if you
provide it, will be called by the library either to produce some supplementary output or to return a value causing the library to change its default behaviour.

**fake action** – an action generated indirectly by the library rather than directly by what the player types. For example, PUT X IN Y triggers a real action of Insert (which can be intercepted by X) and a fake action of Receive (which can be intercepted by Y).

**false** – a logical state which is the opposite of **true**, represented by the value 0.

**flag** – a variable which can take only two possible values.

**function** – see **routine**.

**global variable** – a variable not specific to any routine or object, which can be used by any routine in the game.

**inheritance** – the process by which an **object** belonging to a **class** acquires the properties and attributes of said class. Inheritance happens automatically; the designer has just to create class definitions, followed by objects having those classes.

**interpreter** – a program that reads the **story file** of a game and enables people to play it. Interpreters must be platform-specific (that is, they will be different programs for each operating system), thus allowing the story file to be universal and platform-independent.

**italic type** – used for emphasis, and as a placeholder to represent a value which you should supply.

**library** – a group of text files, part of the Inform system, that includes the **parser**, definitions for the **model world**, language files, grammar definitions and a customised stock of default answers and behaviour for the player’s actions. The library will make frequent calls to the game file to see if the designer wants to override those defaults.

**library files** – the actual files containing the source code of the library. There are basically three (although these three include other files as well): **parser.h**, **verblib.h** and **grammar.h**, and they should be included in every Inform game.

**library routine** – one of a set of routines included as part of the library which the designer can call to perform some commonly useful task.

**local variable** – a variable which is part of only one **routine**; its value remains unavailable to other routines in the game. The value of a local variable is *not* preserved between calls to the routine.

**model world** – the imaginary environment which the player character inhabits.

**newline** – the ASCII control character(s) used to mark the end of a line of text.

**NPC** – a non-player character; any character other than the protagonist. Could range from an opponent or love interest to a pet gerbil or a random pedestrian.

**object** – a group of **routines** and **variables** bundled up together in a coherent unit. Objects represent the
items that make up the model world (a torch; a car; a beam of light; etc.), a fact which organises the designer’s code in sensible chunks, easy to manage. Each object has two parts: the header, which comprises the internal ID, the external name and its defined parent (all fields are optional), and the body, which comprises the property variables and attribute flags particular to that object, if any.

**object tree** – a hierarchy that defines objects’ relationships in terms of containment. Each object is either contained within another object – its parent – or is not contained; objects such as rooms which are not within another object have the constant **nothing** (0) as a parent. An object contained within another is a child. For example, a shoe inside a box: the box is the shoe’s parent and the shoe is a child of the box. Consider now this box being inside the wardrobe. The box is a child of the wardrobe, but the shoe is still a child of the box, not the wardrobe. In a normal game, the object tree will undergo many transformations as the result of the player’s activities.

**parent** – see **object tree**.

**parser** – part of the **library** which is responsible for analysing the player’s input and trying to make sense of it, dividing it into separate words (verb, nouns) and trying to match them against the words stored in the game’s **dictionary** and the actions defined in the game’s grammar. If the player’s input makes sense, the parser will trigger the resulting **action**; if not, it will complain that it didn’t understand.

**PC** – 1. a personal computer; 2. the player character (see **player**).

**player** – 1. the final user of the game, normally a person full of radical opinions about your capabilities as a designer; 2. a variable referring to the **object** – sometimes known as an “avatar” – which currently represents that user within the **model world**.

**print rule** – a customised rule to apply while in a **print** or **print_ret** statement, to control the manner in which an item of data is to be displayed. For example:

```
print (The) noun, "is mine." is telling the game to use a capitalised definite article for the noun. The library defines a stock of print rules, and designers may create some of their own.
```

**properties** – variables attached to a single **object**, of which they are a part. They are defined in the body of the object after the keyword **with** and have a name and a value. The latter (which defaults to 0) can be a number, a string "...", a dictionary word ‘...’ or an embedded routine [;...]; it can also be a list of those separated by spaces. The value of an object’s property can be tested and changed from any part of the game. The fact that an object provides a property may be tested.

**RAIF** – the rec.arts.int-fiction Usenet newsgroup for IF designers.

**RGIF** – the rec.games.int-fiction Usenet newsgroup for IF players.

**room** – an **object** which defines a geographical unit into which the map of the **model world** is divided. Rooms have no parent object (or, more precisely, their parent object is **nothing**).
and they represent the places where
the player character is at any given
moment – the player character can’t be
in more than one room at a time. Note
that the name “room” does not imply
necessarily “indoors”. A clearing, a
sandy beach, the top of a tree, even
floating in outer space – these are all
possible room objects.

routine – in general terms, a routine is
a computer program that makes some
specific calculation, following an
ordered set of instructions; this is the
only unit of coherent and executable
code understood by Inform. More
practically, a routine is a collection of
statements which are written between
markers [...]. When a routine is
“called”, possibly with arguments –
specific values for its defined variables,
if they exist – the interpreter executes
the statements in sequence. If the
interpreter encounters a return
statement, or reaches the ] at the end of
the routine, it immediately stops
executing statements in the routine
and resumes execution at the
statement which called that routine.
Every routine returns a value, which is
either supplied by the return statement
or implied by the ] at the end of the
routine. See embedded routine and
standalone routine.

run-time – the period of time when
the interpreter is running a story file
(that is, someone is playing the game).
See also compile-time.

source file – a text file containing
your game defined using the Inform
language.

standalone routine – a routine
which is not part of an object. Unlike
an embedded routine, it must
provide a name of its own, and it
returns true when execution reaches
the terminating marker ].

statement – a single instruction to be
executed at run-time. See also
directive.

statement block – a group of
statements bundled up together
between braces (…), which are then
treated as a single unit – as if they were
only one statement. They commonly
appear in loops and conditions.

story file – a binary file which is the
output of the compiler and can be
played through the use of an
interpreter (also known as Z-code file
or game file). The format of story files
is standard and platform-independent.

Strict mode – an option which causes
the compiler to include extra code
into the story file, thus making it easier
to detect certain design mistakes while
a game is being played.

string – a piece of text between
double quotes “…” to be displayed
for the player’s benefit at run-time.

switch – 1. an optional keyword or
symbol to operate special features of
the compiler. 2. a statement which
decides among different paths of
execution according to the value of an
expression.

text file – a computer file containing
words and phrases which a human can
read.

true – a logical state which is the
opposite of false, represented by any
value other than zero (typically 1).

variable – a named value which can
change during run-time. It must be
declared before use, either as a Global variable (available to any routine within the game), or as a local variable (part of one specific routine and usable by that routine alone). Variables have a name and a value; it’s the value which is capable of change, not the name. Object properties behave as variables.

Z-code file – see story file.

Z-machine – a virtual machine (an imaginary computer simulated by the interpreter) on which story files run. Z stands for “Zork”, the first ever Infocom title.
Index

Symbols

! (comment character) 36
"..." (character string) 36, 55
"..." (statement) 122, 183
& (bitwise AND operator) 68
&& (boolean AND operator) 66, 67
(. . .) (in an expression) 173
= (property operator) 72
; (terminating character) 37, 38

...
(statement) 122, 183

.<.>.> (statement) 86, 183


= (assignment operator) 56, 94
== (equality operator) 94
++ (increment operator) 184
-- (decrement operator) 184
-> (indicating object parentage) 186
[ . . . ] (routine definition) 180
^ (apostrophe in dictionary word) 43, 56
^ (newline in string) 55
 (. . .) (statement block definition) 88
| (bitwise OR operator) 68
|| (boolean OR operator) 67, 83
~ (bitwise NOT operator) 68
~ (double quotes in string) 55
~ (unsetting compiler switches) 36, 193
~ (used to negate attributes) 71, 74
~= (inequality operator) 117, 134
~ (boolean NOT operator) 67, 132

A

accented characters 125
action (library variable) 68
actions 60, 64, 68, 199, 270
false 132
after (library property) 64, 66
ambiguous objects 147
animate (library attribute) 82, 87, 143
apostrophes 42, 43, 56
Apple Macintosh 24
Archive, IF 11, 19, 147
arguments (of a routine) 63, 67, 105, 180
article (library property) 85, 144
assignment statements 56, 184
Attribute (directive) 185
attributes 50, 52, 74, 178, 185, 269

B

banners 36, 70
before (library property) 60, 62, 63, 66, 75
beta-testing 204, 207

C

cant_go (library property) 62, 67
capacity (library property) 52
“Captain Fate” story 119–172, 237–255
child (built-in routine) 179
children (built-in routine) 179
class (directive) 72
classes 72–76, 178, 259
clothing (library attribute) 83
comments 36
CommonAncestor (library routine) 179
compiler (software tool) 17, 19, 23, 28, 31, 189, 193
Debug mode 194, 198
ers and warnings 189
Strict mode 35, 193, 194
switches 23, 28, 35, 193
Constant (directive) 36, 49
container (library attribute) 43, 52, 122

D

d_to (library property) 40
daemon (library property) 134, 200
darkness 163
deaf (library variable) 47, 101
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Entry</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeathMessage (entry point routine)</td>
<td>101, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debug mode</td>
<td>194, 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>default (in switch statement)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>description (library property)</td>
<td>38, 51, 72, 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dictionary words</td>
<td>42, 56, 187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directives</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door (library attribute)</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door_dir (library property)</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door_to (library property)</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOSI (mnemonic)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e_to (library property)</td>
<td>40, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each_turn (library property)</td>
<td>47, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>editor (software tool)</td>
<td>18, 23, 30, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NotePad 18, 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SimpleText 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TextEdit 18, 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TextPad 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>else (in if statement)</td>
<td>90, 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embedded routines</td>
<td>47, 58, 60, 104, 179, 260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endif (directive)</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enterable (library attribute)</td>
<td>122, 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entry point routines</td>
<td>181, 270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>errors (from the compiler)</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressions</td>
<td>173, 258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend (directive)</td>
<td>114, 116, 199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fake actions</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>false (built-in constant)</td>
<td>60, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAIF 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (library attribute)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>files</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library 18, 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library extension</td>
<td>147, 185, 192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source 18, 31, 189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source template</td>
<td>33, 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>story 18, 19, 31, 189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flags, see attributes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>found_in (library property)</td>
<td>82, 92, 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general (library attribute)</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give (statement)</td>
<td>71, 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global (directive)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global variables</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar definitions</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar.h (library file)</td>
<td>37, 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has (object operator)</td>
<td>80, 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has (part of Object directive)</td>
<td>38, 50, 52, 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hasnt (object operator)</td>
<td>80, 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline (library constant)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Heidi” story</td>
<td>33–68, 213–217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM PC</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if (statement)</td>
<td>56, 66, 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF Archive</td>
<td>11, 19, 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF Competition</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ifdef (directive)</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in (object operator)</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in_to (library property)</td>
<td>40, 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include (directive)</td>
<td>36, 192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IndirectlyContains (library routine)</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indistinguishable objects</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infix debugger</td>
<td>194, 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infocom games</td>
<td>32, 194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform FAQ</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform home page</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informary, The</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inheritance</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initial (library property)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initialise (entry point routine)</td>
<td>37, 40, 58, 71, 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InScope (entry point routine)</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inside_description (library property)</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interpreter (software tool) 17, 19, 31, 189
invent (library property) 144

K
keep_silent (library variable) 140

L
library actions 270
library attributes 263
library constants 263
library files 18, 36
library objects 263
library properties 264
LibraryMessages (library object) 128
different (library property) 13
light (library attribute) 38, 52, 72, 74
lm_n (library variable) 128
local variables 105, 180
location (library variable) 40, 88, 110, 164
lockable (library attribute) 137
locked (library attribute) 137
lookmode (library variable) 71

M
male (library attribute) 109
MANUAL_PRONOUNS (library constant) 121
MAX_CARRIED (library constant) 46
MAX_SCORE (library constant) 121
mimesis 163
move (statement) 64, 68, 71, 178
moved (library attribute) 165

N
n_to (library property) 40
name (library property) 42, 51, 56, 84, 149, 187
ne_to (library property) 40
new_line (statement) 183
non-player characters, see NPCs
NotePad editor 18, 23
nothing (built-in constant) 68, 107
notin (object operator) 179
noun (grammar token) 112
noun (library variable) 65, 68
NPCs 86, 110
number (library property) 184
nw_to (library property) 40

O
Object (directive) 38, 73
object attributes 50, 52, 74, 178, 185, 269
object classes 72–76, 178, 259
object header 50
object names
  external 38, 42, 50, 81, 138
  internal ID 39, 42, 50, 51, 81, 174, 257
object properties 50, 51, 66, 74, 177, 185, 266
object stubs 233, 255
object tree 52, 198
  changing 53, 65, 259
  setting up initial state 43, 53, 178, 185
OBJECT_SCORE (library constant) 121
objects 38, 50–55, 177–179, 259
ofclass (object operator) 107, 178
on (library attribute) 160
open (library attribute) 43, 52, 123
openable (library attribute) 122
operators 173
or (keyword used in conditions) 83, 107
orders (library property) 153
out_to (library property) 40

P
parent (built-in routine) 179
differentes 173
parse_name (library property) 148
parser 147, 201
Parser.h (library file) 37
phrase_matched (attribute) 185
PlaceInScope (library routine) 164
player (library variable) 50, 65, 71
player character 38, 86
PlayerTo (library routine) 63
plural (library property) 85
pluralname (library attribute) 82
pname (property) 149, 159, 185
pname.h (library extension) 148, 185, 192
print (statement) 60, 67, 121, 183
print rules 75
print_ret (statement) 63, 67, 121, 183
prouns 121
proper (library attribute) 87
properties 50, 51, 66, 74, 177, 185, 266
Property (directive) 185
provides (object operator) 178
Q
quotes, single versus double 55, 187
R
RAIF 11, 12, 204
random (built-in routine) 135
real_location (library variable) 164
rec.arts.int-fiction (RAIF) 11, 12, 204
rec.games.int-fiction (RGIF) 11
Release (directive) 70
remove (statement) 179
Replace (directive) 148
replace (part of Extend directive) 116
return (statement) 60, 65, 67, 106, 134, 180, 183
return values 180
RGIF 11
ROOM_SCORE (library constant) 121
rooms 37
routines 37, 56, 179, 260
  embedded 47, 58, 60, 104, 179, 260
  entry point 181
library 63, 67, 181, 264
returning values 104, 105, 106, 180
standalone 57, 104, 179, 260
  with arguments 63, 67, 105, 180
Ruin.inf (example game) 21
S
s_obj (library object) 94
s_to (library property) 40
scenery (library attribute) 45, 52
score (library variable) 88, 110, 121
scored (library attribute) 121, 159
se_to (library property) 40
second (library variable) 68
self (library variable) 75, 80
semicols 37, 38, 174, 176
Serial (directive) 70
short_name (library property) 138
sibling (built-in routine) 179
SimpleText editor 18
source files 18, 31, 189
  template 33, 37
standalone routines 57, 104, 179, 260
StartDaemon (library routine) 134
statement blocks 89
statements 47, 56, 174, 260
  assignment 56
static (library attribute) 45, 52
STEF (mnemonic) 106, 180
StopDaemon (library routine) 134
Story (library constant) 36
story files 18, 19, 31, 189
  versions 5 and 8 194
Strict mode 35, 193, 194
strings of characters 36, 55, 187
stub objects 233, 255
supporter (library attribute) 45, 52
sw_to (library property) 40
switch (statement) 98
switchable (library attribute) 160
switches (compiler control) 193
  unsetting 193
syntax colouring 31
T
TADS 9
TextEdit editor 18, 30
TextPad editor 23
thedark (library object) 164
topic (grammar token) 172
transparent (library attribute) 109, 143
true (built-in constant) 60, 68

U
u_to (library property) 40

V
variables
  global 49
  library 264
  local 105, 180
  property 51
Verb (directive) 112, 187, 199
VerbLib.h (library file) 37
verblibm.h (library file) 116
visited (library attribute) 80, 88

W
w_to (library property) 40
warnings (from the compiler) 189
white space 36, 181
“William Tell” story 13–16, 17,
  69–118, 219–235
with (part of Object directive) 38, 50,
  51, 177
with_key (library property) 137
words in the dictionary 42, 56, 187
worn (library attribute) 71

Z
Z-code files, see story files
Z-machine 31