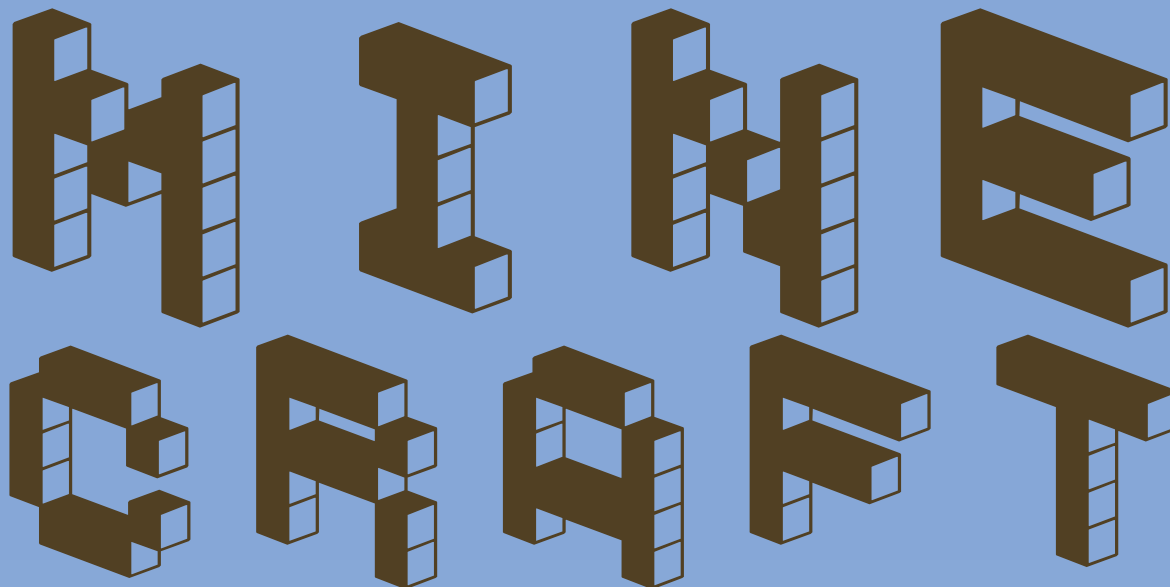


In February, Wiley Publications released *Minecraft for Dummies, Portable Edition*, a guide for beginners and those who want to explore some advanced features of the game. Here, the 16-year-old author of that guide shares what got him hooked on *Minecraft* and how it has inspired him to new levels of creativity.

The Creative, Collaborative Universe of



by Jacob Cordeiro

If you enjoy games about building, survival, engineering, and adventuring, Minecraft is for you. Having attracted more than 8 million players, Minecraft is a loose-ended yet adventurous sandbox game that becomes whatever you make of it.—from *Minecraft for Dummies, Portable Edition*, by Jacob Cordeiro

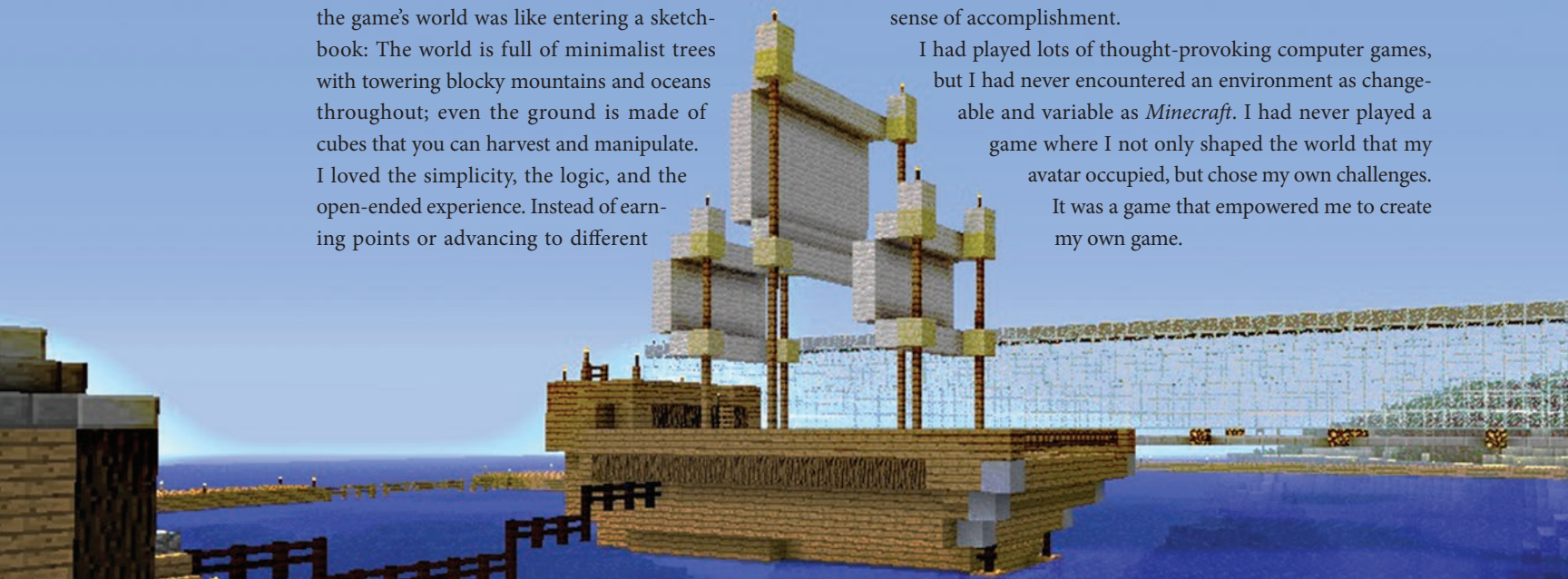
I started playing *Minecraft* a few years ago when it was an under-construction sandbox game. Even then, it was immediately appealing. Instead of offering a static setting where everything was pre-made and pre-determined, the game's algorithm generated detailed, randomized landscapes that expanded as players explored them. Entering the game's world was like entering a sketchbook: The world is full of minimalist trees with towering blocky mountains and oceans throughout; even the ground is made of cubes that you can harvest and manipulate. I loved the simplicity, the logic, and the open-ended experience. Instead of earning points or advancing to different

levels, the only goal was to build what you liked.

For example, players could dig through underground caves, breaking the rock into efficient formations so they could build structures or extract resources to build powerful gear. My first buildings—a wooden fort and a ladder up the face of a cliff—weren't exactly majestic, but they gave me a sense of accomplishment.

I had played lots of thought-provoking computer games, but I had never encountered an environment as changeable and variable as *Minecraft*. I had never played a game where I not only shaped the world that my avatar occupied, but chose my own challenges.

It was a game that empowered me to create my own game.



Creativity and Survival

After *Minecraft* Classic—as that early version of the game is now called—the game offered two modes that allowed players to interact with the world in two different ways. In Creative mode, which retains the sandbox characteristics of Classic, players could continue to build and explore the world according to their own goals. The addition of redstone, a collectible “mineral” that can be placed like a block and arranged in such a way that it powers mechanisms, allows players to build everything from elevators and computers to automated improvements such as self-managing farms in their worlds.

In Survival mode, however, manipulation of the environment is essential to your avatar’s survival. In this mode, the game is a challenge that entails collecting resources such as food, armor, and tools, and maintaining the health and safety of your now-mortal avatar. Collecting and moving blocks now requires time and the proper tools, and luxuries like large houses and precious metals have tangible value. Along with the addition of limited resources such as food, tools, and minerals, Survival mode introduced the challenge of fighting blocky monsters that roam the landscape. This mode not only encourages creativity but requires it, as players must become increasingly devious in the face of adversity.

Sharing Ideas, Mods, and Adventures

Activities like building a house and crafting a collection of survival items open up opportunities to collaborate and share interesting ideas. Some players build entire adventures and challenges that incorporate their own assortment of monsters or economic difficulties, which other players can then download and attempt. I’ve attempted some ingenious user-made adventures, puzzles, and challenges for surviving in harsh conditions.

One of the biggest catalysts of this collaboration is Multiplayer mode, which allows multiple players to create, survive in, or adventure through the same shared world. Players can share their ideas in a way that directly benefits their friends, while experiencing the added challenges of sharing resources and building a solid online economy. Residents of a shared world can trade, team up, duel, or divide a list of tasks to make their world grow much faster.

Minecraft’s rich gameplay derives from the intricate balance of the world’s resources and the ingenuity of the players. Even in the Classic version of the game, players had the ability to program new features into the world and share these modified or “modded” games with others. That spirit of invention and sharing remains pervasive, and there are huge communities and forums where players share ideas, worlds, mods, and other relevant content.

Inspired Education

For me, *Minecraft* provides inspiration that extends beyond the game itself. I’ve always had a passion for world-building, which I have pursued through writing, drawings, and sketching maps, but *Minecraft* is one of the best ways I’ve found to express myself. Building in both Survival and Creative modes has given me the mindset to build worlds in much more detail; in fact, my first major creative writing project is a trilogy set in the *Minecraft* world.

I’ve also gained skills I can use to build my own games. *Minecraft* allows you not only to play a game, but to design and analyze your game experience at the same time. This helped me realize that I really enjoy designing games, especially games that teach or are built on interesting ideas in mathematics and science. I’ve built some simple games like a block-sliding puzzle and a shooter with a counter-intuitive spell system, and I’ve sketched many others, such as a defensive survival game that involves controlling the evolution of hostile creatures.

In building games based on grid formats or based on the clever employment of resources, I’ve drawn from some of the characteristics I most admire in *Minecraft*. The various in-game challenges I’ve encountered in *Minecraft* (such as building a bridge from an arrangement of limited-capacity pistons) have inspired me to new levels of technical mastery in my own games.

M*inecraft* has provided me with both a creative outlet and a community. I think this is what makes *Minecraft* such an enriching and rounded experience. It is an entertaining, open-ended game based firmly on logic and analysis, and it has attracted a community of creators who are passionate about exploring its unlimited possibilities. **i**



Jacob Cordeiro, 16, attends the Stanford University Online High School. A math and gaming enthusiast, he was a panelist at the Games for Change conference in 2012. Jacob wrote *Minecraft for Dummies* out of his love for inventive games, and he hopes to design interdisciplinary games in the future.



Cave spiders are mobs (mobile entities) that inhabit the *Minecraft* world. Neutral in daylight, these spiders turn hostile and dangerous in the dark.

